

Hildegard of the Vinzgau

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Hildegard (ca. 758^[1] – 30 April 783 at Thionville,^[2] Moselle), was the second^[3] wife of Charlemagne and mother of Louis the Pious. About her life was found little information, because, like all women of Charlemagne, she became important only from a political background, recording her parentage, wedding, death and her role as a mother.^[4]

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Origins

She was the daughter of the Germanic Count Gerold of Kraichgau (founder of the Udalriching family) and his wife Emma, in turn daughter of Duke Nebe (Hnabi) of Alemannia and Hereswintha vom Bodensee (of Lake Constance).^[5] Hildegard's father had extensive possessions in the dominion of Charlemagne's younger brother Carloman, so this union was of significant importance for Charlemagne, because he could strengthen its position in the east of the Rhine and also could bind the Alemannian nobility to his side.^[6]

Life

It's unknown if Charlemagne planned his marriage before the sudden death of Carloman or was just a part of the purposeful incorporation of his younger brother's Kingdom, in detriment of the claims of his nephews.^[7] In any event, the wedding between Charlemagne and Hildegard took place at Aix-la-Chapelle certainly before 30 April 771, after the repudiation of the Lombardian princess Desiderata, Charlemagne's previous wife.

As no exact date of birth of Hildegard was recorded, was assumed that at the time of her wedding she could be between 12 and 14 years old. A marriage at this age is not unusual for that time, since the age of marriage was set at puberty. In Roman law, which was very well received by the Church, the minimum age for marriage for girls of 12 years has been established.^[8]

Hildegard of the Vinzgau



Hildegard from *Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum*

Spouse(s)	Charlemagne
Noble family	Udalriching dynasty
Father	Gerold of Kraichgau
Mother	Emma of Alemannia
Born	758
Died	30 April 783 Thionville
Buried	Abbey of Saint-Arnould, Metz

An intense physical relationship between the spouses was demonstrated by the fact that, during her 12 years of marriage, Hildegard had 8 pregnancies (including one set of twins) and remarkably chronicles never mentioned either miscarriages or stillbirths. She accompanied Charlemagne on many of his military campaigns: she gave birth her second child and first daughter, Adelaide, during the siege of Pavia, capital of the Kingdom of the Lombards (September 773/June 774), but she died during the return journey to France. In 778, Hildegard accompanied her husband as far as Aquitaine, where she gave birth the twins Louis and Lothair.^[9] In 780/781 she traveled with Charlemagne and four of their children to Rome, where the sons Louis and Carloman (renamed Pepin after his baptism by Pope Adrian I) were appointed sub-kings of Aquitaine and Italy, respectively. This contributed to the strengthening of the alliance between the Carolingians and the Papacy.^[10] Because of her frequent pregnancies, can be presumed that Hildegard accompanied her husband on further campaigns, at least temporarily.

Hildegard died on 30 April 783, according to Paul the Deacon, from the after effects of her last childbirth.^[11] She was buried on 1 May in the Abbey of Saint-Arnould in Metz. Following the wishes of Charlemagne, in her grave were burn candles and daily prayers must be said for her soul.^[12]

Interaction with the Church and Donations

Hildegard made several donations to the monasteries of St. Denis and St. Martin of Tours.^[13] She was a friend of Saint Leoba, who reportedly lived some time with her at court. She intervened in Hildegard's religious education and also offered her spiritual advice.^[14] Together with her husband she commissioned the Godescalc Evangelistary,^[15] where for the first time she was explicitly mentioned as Queen -also of the Lombards- through the joint signature of documents with her husband.^[16]

Hildegard enjoyed in her own lifetime from a high reputation, as was demonstrated in her obituary wrote by Paul the Deacon.^[17] However, these compliments are to be regarded with some skepticism. In her Epitaph were included phrases that may have been introduced to flatter Charlemagne: for example, the reference to the fact that Hildegard was the epitome of beauty, wisdom and virtue. This were common words used by medieval writers to their rulers.^[18] Pope Adrian I, in a letter to Charlemagne, expressed his condolences over the untimely death of Hildegard.

Hildegard used her position as Queen consort to obtain for her siblings several territorial and monetary benefits; as far was known, she was the only of Charlemagne's wives or concubines who managed to obtain for a relative an office after her marriage.^[14] In addition, was also assumed that she, like other medieval queens, held several roles, such as ruling the court or being the representative (or regent) of the sovereign during his absence. This could mean that she was in close contact with all the government decision of her husband.^[19]

Together with her husband, she was the main benefactress of the Monastery of Kempten (founded in 752), who received financial and political support. From Italy they brought after the conquest of the Kingdom of the Lombards in 773/774 the relics of the Roman martyrs Saints Gordianus and Epimachus to Kempten, whom, along with the Virgin Mary, are the patrons of the monastery.

Hildegard was extensively mentioned in Kempten as one of the founders; her bust graced the pin crest and some coins of the later Imperial Abbey. In the late Middle Ages it was alleged that Hildegard was buried in Kempten, as well as her son Louis the Pious; there was built the called Hildegard Chapel (*Hildegardkapelle*), who quickly became in a place of pilgrimage and were several miracles are reported. This explains that the Queen was revered as a saint in the Allgäu and always presented with an aureola. In the 17th century the building of another Hildegard Chapel at the *Fürstbätliche* of Kempten was projected, but this was abandoned after the secularization.

Even in modern times, the memory of Hildegard and her importance in the urban development at Kempten is still very noticeable: The central square in front of St. Lorenz Basilica was named the Hildegard Square (*Hildegardplatz*) in her honor. In 1862 was erected in the square the Neo-Gothic Hildegard fountain (*Hildegardsbrunnen*), who was closed in the 1950s. At the facade of the local *Landhaus*, appeared her idealized portrait painted by Franz Weiß. Also, in 1874 was founded the originally exclusive for girl *Hildegardis-Gymnasium Kempten* Lyceum. At the Lindau Road, close to the school, was also located another Hildegard Fountain. On the facades of some houses were shown the image of the Queen, and on the edge of Kempten forest was located the Hildegard Oak (*Hildegardseiche*) for several years until was replaced by a new plantation. Until the 1950s, many girls born in Kempten were named after Hildegard.

Children

Although Charlemagne already had an older son (Pepin the Hunchback) from his first union with Himiltrude, he was never considered an heir by his father. In his will of 806 (the called *Divisio Regnorum*), he divided his domains between the three surviving sons of Hildegard. Because her son Louis the Pious succeeded Charlemagne as Emperor, Hildegard is often called "mother of Kings and Emperors".

- Charles (772/73 – 4 December 811 in Bavaria^[20]), the eldest son according to Paul the Deacon, who recorded his parentage.^[21] His father associated him in the government of Francia and Saxony in 790, and crowned joint King of the Franks at Rome on 25 December 800, but died before his father.^[16]
- Adelaide (September 773/June 774 in Italy – July/August 774, buried Metz, Abbey of Saint-Arnould). Born during the siege of Pavia, she was named after an early deceased sister of Charlemagne.^[22] She died during the return journey to France.^[23] She is named daughter of King Charles by Paul the Deacon, when recording her place of burial,^[21] who also wrote an epitaph to "*Adeleidis filia Karoli regis*" specifying that she was born in Italy.^[24]
- Rotrude (775 – 6 June 810^[25]), named after her paternal great-grandmother. "*Hruodrudem et Bertham et Gislam*" are named daughters of King Charles and Hildegard by Einhard.^[26] Angilbert's poem *Ad Pippinum Italiae regum* names (in order) "*Chrodthrudis...Berta...Gisla et Theodrada*" as daughters of King Charles.^[27] She was betrothed in 781 with Constantine VI, Emperor of Byzantium, and received the name *Erythro* in preparation for her future wedding. The betrothal was broken in 787,^[28] and she, like all her sisters, remained unmarried. From a liaison with Rorgo of Rennes she had one son, the latter Louis, Abbot of Saint-Denis.
- Carloman (777 – 8 July 810 in Milan, buried Verona, San Zeno Maggiore), renamed *Pepin* in Rome on 15 April 781 by Pope Adrian I, and crowned King of Italy that day. He also predeceased his father.
- Louis (Chasseneuil-du-Poitou, Vienne, 16 April/September 778 – 20 June 840 in Ingelheim, buried Metz, Abbey of Saint-Arnould). He is named, and his parentage recorded, by Paul the Deacon, which specifies that he was his parents' third son, born a twin with Lothair.^[21] Crowned King of Aquitaine in Rome on 15 April 781 by Pope Adrian I, his father named him as his successor at Aix-la-Chapelle, crowning him as joint Holy Roman Emperor on 11 September 813.
- Lothair (Chasseneuil-du-Poitou, Vienne, 16 April/September 778 – 779/80). He is named, and his parentage recorded, by Paul the Deacon, which specifies that he was his parents' fourth son "*qui biennis occubuit*", born a twin with Louis,^[21] and also wrote an epitaph to "*Chlodarii pueri regis*" naming "*Karolus...rex genitorque tuus, genitrix regina...Hildigarda*" and specifying that he was a twin.^[29]
- Bertha (779/80 – after 11 March 824), named after her paternal grandmother. An offer by Offa of Mercia to arrange a marriage between her and his son, Ecgfrith, led to Charlemagne breaking off diplomatic relations with Britain in 790, and banning British ships from his ports.^[30] Like her sisters, she never married, but from her liaison with Angilbert, a court official, she had two sons: Hartnid (about whom little is known) and the historian Nithard, Abbott of St. Riquier.
- Gisela (before May 781 – after 800, maybe after 814). Named after her surviving paternal aunt, she was baptized in Milan in May 781.^[31]

- Hildegard (March/April 783 in Thionville – 1/8 June 783, buried Metz, Abbey of Saint-Arnould), named after her mother (an unusual practice at that time), she is named daughter of King Charles by Paul the Deacon, when recording her place of burial,^[21] and also wrote an epitaph to "*Hildegardis filiae [Karoli regis]*" specifying that she lived 40 days and her mother died after giving birth to her.^[32]

Sources

- Einhard: *Vita Karoli Magni* (Chapter 18).
- Notker the Stammerer: *Gesta Karoli Magni* (Book I, Chapter 4)
- Paul the Deacon: Epitaphium Hildegardis reginae
- *Royal Frankish Annals* (years 780, 781 and 783)
- Thegan of Trier: *Vita Hludowici* (Chapter 2)
- *Annales Mettenses priores* (years 780 and 783)
- *Annales mosellani*

Epitaphium Hildegardis reginae

Latin	English
<p>[1] Aurea quae fulvis rutilant elementa figuris, Quam clara extiterint membra sepulta docent. Hic regina iacet regi praeclsa potenti Hildegard Karolo quae bene nupta fuit. [5] Quae tantum clarae transcendit stirpis alumnos, Quantum, quo genita est, Indica gemma solum. Huic tam clara fuit florentis gratia formae, Qua nec in occiduo pulchrior ulla foret. Cuius haut tenerum possint aequare decorem [10] Sardonix Pario, lilia mixta rosis. Attamen hanc speciem superabant lumina cordis, Simplicitasque animae interiorque decor. Tu mitis, sapiens, solers, iocunda fuisti, Dapsilis et cunctis condecorata bonis. [15] Sed quid plura feram cum non sit grandior ulla Laus tibi, quain tanto complacuisse viro? Cumque vir armipotens sceptris iunxisset avitis Cigniferumque Padum Romuleumque Tybrim, Tu sola inventa es, fueris quae digna tenere [20] Multiplicis regni aurea scepra manu. Alter ab undecimo iam te susceperat annus, Cum vos mellifluus consotiauit amor Alter ab undecimo rursum te sustulit annus, Heu genitrix regum, heu decus atque dolor! [25] Te Francus, Suevus, Germanus et ipse Britannus. Cumque Getis duris plangit Hibera cohors. Accola te Ligeris, te deflet et Itala tellus, Ipsaque morte tua anxia Roma gemit. Movisti ad fletus et fortia corda virorum, [30] Et lacrimae clipeos inter et arma cadunt. Heu, quantis sapiens et firmum robore semper Ussisti flammis pectus herile viri. Solatur cunctos spes haec sed certa dolentes, Pro dignis factis quod sacra regna tenes. [35] Iesum nunc precibus, Arnulfe, exores eorum Participem fieri hanc, pater alme, tuis</p>	<p>[1-14] Here lies Hildegard, once Charles happy wife, by her charm, but even more by the merits of her heart the other women surpassed. [15 - 35] Her greatest fame, however, is the pleasure of such a man, as Karl is . To have attracted you was worthy Queen of alone . To be so powerful empire now complain all nations their death and even defiant warrior can the tears to not included. pain consumes the heart of her husband. Only one consolation is left all, that they will find their reward in heaven.</p>

Note: translated from the German translation recorded in Karl Neff: *Critical and explanatory edition of the poems of Paul the Deacon* in: *Sources and Studies on Latin Philology of the Middle Ages*, Ludwig Traube, 3rd volume, 4th book, Munich 1908 (ed.) (<https://es.scribd.com/doc/59451639/Neff-Die-Gedichte-des-Paulus-Diaconus-1908>)

References

1. It isn't recorded an exact date of her birth, because at that time the Queens consorts are important when they became part of the ruling family and previously they were barely mentioned in the chronicles. See Achim Thomas Hack: *Alter, Krankheit, Tod und Herrschaft im frühen Mittelalter*, (= *Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 56), Stuttgart 2009, p. 42.
2. Reinhard Barth: *Karl der Große*, Munich 2000, p. 97.
3. As described by historians such as Pierre Riché (*The Carolingians*, p.86.), Lewis Thorpe (*Two Lives of Charlemagne*, p.216) and others. Other historians list Himiltrude, described by Einhard as a concubine, as Charlemagne's first wife, and reorder his subsequent wives; accordingly Hildegard is sometimes numbered as his third wife. See Dieter Hägemann (*Karl der Große. Herrscher des Abendlands*, Ullstein 2003, p. 82f.), Collins (*Charlemagne*, p. 40.).
4. Ingrid Heidrich: *Von Plectrud zu Hildegard. Beobachtungen zum Besitzrecht adliger Frauen im Frankenreich des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts und zur politischen Rolle der Frauen*, in: *Rheinische Vierteljahresblätter* 52 (1988), p. 10.
5. Reinhard Barth: *Karl der Große*, Munich 2000, pp. 97-98.
6. Matthias Becher: *Karl der Große*, München 1999, p. 108.
7. Martina Hartmann: *Die Königin im frühen Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 2009, p. 97.
8. Achim Thomas Hack: *Alter, Krankheit, Tod und Herrschaft im frühen Mittelalter*, (= *Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 56), Stuttgart 2009, p. 51.
9. Martina Hartmann: *Die Königin im frühen Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 2009, p. 100.
10. Wilfried Hartmann: *Karl der Große*, Stuttgart 2010, pp. 50-51.
11. *Pauli Gesta Episcop. Mettensium*, Monumenta Germaniæ Historica Scriptorum II, p. 267.
12. Klaus Schreiner: "*Hildegardis regina*". *Wirklichkeit und Legende einer karolingischen Herrscherin*, in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 57 (1975), p. 10.
13. Klaus Schreiner: "*Hildegardis regina*". *Wirklichkeit und Legende einer karolingischen Herrscherin*, in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 57 (1975), p. 8.
14. Rosamond McKitterick: *Karl der Grosse*, Darmstadt 2008, p. 91.
15. Klaus Schreiner: "*Hildegardis regina*". *Wirklichkeit und Legende einer karolingischen Herrscherin*, in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 57 (1975), pp. 9-10.
16. Silvia Konecny: *Die Frauen des karolingischen Königshauses. Die politische Bedeutung der Ehe und die Stellung der Frau in der fränkischen Herrscherfamilie vom 7. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert*, Vienna 1976, p. 65.
17. Klaus Schreiner: "*Hildegardis regina*". *Wirklichkeit und Legende einer karolingischen Herrscherin*, in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 57 (1975), pp. 4-5. The "Epitaphium Hildegardis reginae" is printed in *MGH poet. lat. aevi Carolini I*, pp. 58-59. Cf. Franz Bittner: *Studien zum Herrscherlob in der mittelalterlichen Dichtung*, Dissertation Würzburg 1962, pp. 43-44.
18. Klaus Schreiner: "*Hildegardis regina*". *Wirklichkeit und Legende einer karolingischen Herrscherin*, in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 57 (1975), pp. 4-5.
19. Matthias Becher: *Karl der Große*, Munich 1999, p. 111.
20. Scholz, B. W. with Rogers, B. (2000) *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories* (University of Michigan Press) (RFA) 811, p. 94.
21. *Pauli Gesta Episcop. Mettensium*, Monumenta Germaniæ Historica Scriptorum II, p. 265.
22. Wilfried Hartmann: *Karl der Große*, Stuttgart 2010, p. 50.
23. Christian Settipani: *La préhistoire des Capétiens 481-987, 1ère partie, Mérovingiens, Carolingiens et Robertiens*, Villeneuve d'Ascq 1993, p. 203.
24. Pauli Diaconi Carmina, XXIII *Epitaphium Adeleidis filia Karoli regis quæ in Italia nata est*, *MGH Poetæ Latini ævi Carolini I*, p. 59.
25. RFA 810, p. 91.
26. *Einhardi Vita Karoli Imperator* 18, 'Monumenta Germaniæ Historica Scriptorum II, p. 453.
27. *Angilberti (Homeri) Carmina*, I, *MGH Poetæ Latini ævi Carolini I*, pp. 359-60.
28. RFA 787, p. 64.
29. Pauli Diaconi Carmina, XXXIX *Epitaphium Chlodarii pueri regis*, *MGH Poetæ Latini ævi Carolini I*, p. 71.
30. Wilfried Hartmann: *Karl der Große*, p. 50.
31. RFA 781, p. 59.
32. Pauli Diaconi Carmina, XXIV *Epitaphium Hildegardis filia cuius supra*, *MGH Poetæ Latini ævi Carolini I*, p. 59.



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Hildegard of the Vinzgau Udalriching dynasty		
Born: 758		Died: 783
Preceded by Desiderata and Gerberge	Queen of the Franks c. 771–783	Succeeded by Fastrada

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