

Before They Were Vikings: Scandinavia and the Franks up to the death of
Louis the Pious

By

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Abstract

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Using textual and archaeological evidence to examine patterns of interaction and relationship between Francia and Scandinavia from 700-840 this dissertation demonstrates that the Viking attacks of the ninth century were not a sudden rupture of relations between Scandinavia and the wider world, nor a demonstration of unbridled violence. Rather, the attacks were part of an ongoing narrative of commerce, diplomacy, and strife between the Frankish Empire and its northern neighbors which began long before the Viking Age.

Coin finds and excavations, accounts of merchants bearing luxury goods between trade sites, and stories of Frankish slaves taken from their homes connect Francia and Scandinavia across the North Sea. Chapter One of this dissertation focuses on these long lasting commercial links. At the heart of this trade lay Frisia, home of the emporium of Dorestad. Dorestad's location as the cross roads between the North Sea and the heart of the Frankish Empire allowed Frankish, Frisian, and Scandinavian merchants to carry goods back and forth across the North Sea while at the same time facilitating the movement of ideas and cultural exchange. Annalists gathered information from these merchants, kings used them for diplomatic communication, and missionaries traveled with them. The steady growth of economic activity facilitated contact and communication between Franks and Scandinavians of all stations over several centuries.

Chapter Two describes the political, diplomatic and military relationship between Scandinavia and Frankia until the death of Charlemagne in 814. It examines the first Frankish contacts with the North, the growing influence and impact that this contact had on Scandinavia and the North Sea area, and the ways in which these two peoples forged new diplomatic and political relationships. By the end of Charlemagne's life, the Danes had moved from a shadowy people on the margins of Frankish consciousness to key

players in the works of Frankish historians and poets. Both Frankish sources and archaeological evidence from Scandinavia demonstrate that Danish leaders, in large part due to increased contact with their powerful southern neighbors, became intent not only on wielding wider power in Scandinavia but on challenging Carolingian supremacy over the North Sea area at large.

Beginning with the death of Charlemagne, Chapter Three examines the heightened intensity of relations between Francia and Scandinavia until the death of Louis the Pious in 840. In an effort to cement Frankish hegemony over northern Europe Louis attempted to bring Scandinavia firmly under Frankish control through diplomacy and missionary work. These efforts created new opportunities for interaction and engagement as Franks, Danes, and Swedes travelled back and forth across the North Sea. Though Louis' work failed to last beyond his death, the raids and later interactions between Franks and Scandinavians were directly shaped by the policies of Louis and Charlemagne.

When we look at the networks of trade forming across the North Sea in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, and at the growth of political and social meetings on the borders of Frisia, Saxony, and the Jutland Peninsula, we come away with a narrative of communication and contact that is far more vibrant and complex than our primary sources reveal at first glance. The relationship between Scandinavia and Francia during this time actively informs the conflict that follows. During the raids and strife of the ninth century, the conquering Franks became victims; in their quest for the wealth and power of their southern neighbors, the disparate and diverse Scandinavian tribes became, for lack of a better word, Vikings.

In loving memory of my parents,
Frank Alexander Melleno and Charlotte Mina Melleno
and
to my wife,
Kathleen Seiter Melleno,
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Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i>	iii
<i>Abbreviations</i>		iv
<i>Introduction</i>		v
1. Commercial Connections – Frisians, Franks and Northmen		1
2. The <i>Regnum Francorum</i> and the <i>Gens Danorum</i> - Political Engagement up to the Death of Charlemagne		25
3. The Reign of Louis the Pious - New Contacts and New Dangers		53
Concluding Remarks		83
<i>Bibliography</i>		85

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Abbreviations:

ASB:	Annals of Saint-Bertin (<i>Annales Bertiniani</i>)
AF:	Annals of Fulda
AMP:	Annales Mettenses priores
AX:	Annals of Xanten (<i>Annales Xantenses</i>)
CCCM:	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
CM:	Chronicon Moissiacense
Fred:	Fredegarii Chronicorum Liber Quartus
Fred-con:	Fredegarii Chronicorum Liber Quartus – Continuationibus
PL:	Patrologia Latina
RFA:	Royal Frankish Annals (<i>Annales Regni Francorum</i>)
RFA-Rev:	Royal Frankish Annals – Revisions (<i>Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi</i>)

MGH: Monumenta Germaniae Historica

AA	Auctores Antiquissimi
Capit.	Capitularia regum Francorum
Conc.	Concilia aevi Karolini
DD Kar	Die Urkunden der Karolinger I: Die Urkunden Pippins, Karlmanns und Karls des Großen / MGH Diplomata Karolinorum I
Ep.	Epistolae (in Quarto)
Form.	Formulae Merovingici et Karolini aevi
Poetae	Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini
SS	Scriptores (in Folio)
SRG	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi
SRG NS	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova series
SRM	Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum

Introduction

Between Louis the Pious' death in 840 and the founding of Normandy in 911 Frankish historical annals contain no fewer than 130 individual accounts of Scandinavian raids. In sources such as *The Annals of Saint-Bertin*, Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés' poem *Bella parisiacae urbis*, and Regino of Prüm's *Chronicle*, Frankish authors report attacks on trading ports, monasteries, and towns. A common vocabulary of violence emerges from these sources: Scandinavians – called Northmen (*Nordmanni*) or pagans (*pagani*) – devastate (*vastare*), pillage (*praedare*), and burn (*incendere*).¹ Even before the second half of the ninth century, when raiding became endemic and whole armies of Northmen roamed throughout Francia, signs of the coming hostilities can be observed. In 793 the monastery of St. Cuthbert on the island of Lindisfarne was sacked. Multiple letters on the subject by the Carolingian court intellectual Alcuin have cemented this first recorded moment of violence firmly in the minds of medievalists. Six years later a passing reference, once again in a letter by Alcuin, mentions the actions of pagan marauders in Aquitaine, the first sight of Scandinavian activity on the Continent.² Over the next several decades, scattered mentions of pirates striking in the British Isles and along the coasts of Francia appear in the Frankish sources. With the 834 sacking of northern Europe's most important trade port, Dorestad, the raids of the Northmen suddenly come to the forefront. As the *Annales Xantenses* put it, "The pagan Northmen hurled themselves upon Dorestad and ravaged it with savage cruelty ... and from then on the misfortunes of men increased day by day."³

Given the weight of this narrative in the Frankish sources, we should not be surprised that when historians speak of interactions between Francia and Scandinavia it is this period of raids and conflict that receives the lion's share of their attention. Those who specialize in the history and archaeology of Scandinavia have gone so far as to label this period (generally dated from the raid of 793 until the 1060s) the "Viking Age," explicitly linking these centuries to the raiding and aggressive expansion that the word "Viking" carries with it. Yet the violence that is so often the central focus in medieval depictions of meetings between Frank and Northman was only one part of a much larger array of interaction and engagement between Scandinavia and the Continent. Political and cultural ties were developing well before the first longboats were sighted off Frankish shores.

The neglect that these earlier relationships suffer is in large part a direct result of the paucity of available source material. Compared to the large number of works that touch on Viking raids and on conflict between Franks and their northern neighbors, we

¹ Pierre Bouet, "Les chroniqueurs francs et normands face aux invasions vikings," in *L'héritage maritime des vikings en Europe de l'Ouest*, ed. Elisabeth Ridet (Caen: Office Universitaire d'Études Normandes, 2002), 59.

² Alcuin, MGH Ep. 4, p. 309: "Paganae vero naves, ut audistis, multa mala fecerunt per insulas oceani partibus Aquitaniae."

³ *Annales Xantenses*, ed. B. von Simson, MGH SRG 12 (Hanover: MGH, 1909), s.a. 834, p. 9, "Interea, dum haec agerentur, inruerunt pagani in vicum nominatissimum Dorestatum eumque inmani crudelitate vastaverunt ... et infelicitas hominum multipliciter cotidie augebatur."

have only a few sources that provide information on political, cultural, or economic ties prior to the death of Louis. The *Royal Frankish Annals* are our main source for political interaction, detailing envoys sent between kings, meetings of nobles, and moments of major political drama such as the attack by the Danish king Godfrid on Frisia in 810 or the baptism of the exiled Dane Harald Klak at Louis the Pious' court in 826. The revised annals, compiled sometime after the ascension of Louis the Pious, exhibit somewhat more interest in the Northmen than the original source material. They provide a few important details, such as the name of the Danish king to whom the Saxon Widukind fled in 777. A few other annals, such as the *Annales Mettenses priores* and the *Annals of Lorsch*, provide an occasional reference to moments of contact as well.

Alongside the historical annals are a selection of useful capitularies; a scattering of letters, such as those of Alcuin mentioned above; a few poems, most notably Ermoldus Nigellus' *Carmina in honorem Hludowici Caesaris*; and a variety of biographies, such as Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni* and Thegan's *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*. All of these documents allow us to get a better sense of the relationships forming between Franks and Northmen in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Rounding out this collection of documents are several *Vitae*. The *Vita Willibrordri* tells us of a (possibly fictional) visit by Saint Willibrord to a Danish "king" sometime in the late seventh century. Among these *vitae* is also counted the *Vita Anskarii*, which details the life of arguably the most important missionary to the Danes and Swedes and provides rare glimpses of life in Scandinavia, albeit through the lens of hagiography.

In all of these sources, whether purportedly factual annals or flowery verse, we are faced with the problem that our understanding of Scandinavia is entirely shaped by Frankish perceptions. Our image of Scandinavian politics and of Scandinavian peoples is dictated by the viewpoints of Franks, many of whom were operating only on second-hand information, and all of whom presented the north within the context of Frankish and Christian political and cultural ideals. From the Franks we receive an image of a cohesive Danish kingdom and a Danish people led by kings operating in much the same way that the Franks did. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure whether the peoples of Jutland and the Danish archipelago actually conceived of themselves as a single "*gens Danorum*" let alone part of a "*regnum Danorum*," or whether figures such as Godfrid thought of themselves as "*reges*."

The peoples of Scandinavia in the eighth and ninth century were largely pre-literate. A form of writing did in fact exist in this period: a runic system known as "futhark."⁴ In the *Vita Anskarii*, reference is made to a message sent from King Björn of the Swedes to Louis the Pious written "in letters shaped in the manner of the Swedes."⁵ But as Eric Christiansen points out, "Despite the thousands of survivors, it appears that rune-stones were rare events, or unknown in much of Scandinavia and all of Iceland – extremely rare until after the conversion to christianity [sic], and therefore always liable to produce skewed results if used for quantitative analysis in the field of viking-age [sic]"

⁴ R. I. Page, "Scandinavian Society, 800-1100: The Contribution of Runic Studies," in *Viking Revaluations*, ed. Anthony Faulkes and Richard Perkins (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1993), 145–60; Birgit Sawyer, *The Viking-Age Rune-Stones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Henrik Williams, "Runes," in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 281–90.

⁵ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SRG 55 (Hanover: MGH, 1884), c. 12, p. 33: "Cum litteris regia manu more ipsorum defromatis"

social history; as they must be.”⁶ The growth in the study of rune-stones and of runic-inscriptions has opened up new avenues for understanding Viking Age Scandinavia, but can do little to aid in our attempts to understand the nature of Scandinavian society during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

The sagas and poetry that are the bread and butter of Scandinavianists and scholars of the Viking Age are similarly difficult.⁷ While they may have their origins in the oral culture of this period, they were only committed to the forms to which we have access in the thirteenth century. They subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) reflect the political, cultural, and religious developments of these later centuries. Moreover, as with the majority of our Frankish sources, those Old Norse sources that touch on activity abroad deal not with the period of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious but with the great raiding and adventuring periods of the later ninth and tenth centuries.

Archaeology can in some ways address this lack of contemporary evidence from Scandinavia. Excavations of towns, of major building projects such as the Danevirke, and of items such as Danish coins provide a window into the world of Scandinavian politics and daily life unmediated by Frankish bias or agendas. The presence of Frankish items in Denmark and Sweden and of Frankish styles in homegrown crafts likewise can illuminate contact between peoples. By its very nature archaeological evidence often points to longer developments and trends than the brief references available in written sources. On the other hand, archaeological data is often difficult to interpret, lacking an explicit narrative or access to information about the actors responsible for the construction or placement of the objects in question. Even when we have narrowed down the time and location of an item, we still come away with a picture of societies and cultures quite different from the specific information on people or moments of interaction available in written material. We can thus see the growth of kingship in the undertaking of the Kanhave Canal project in the eighth century but are left without the names of those responsible for such undertakings. An excavation of a great hall littered with pieces of imported Frankish glass can likewise tell us much about practices of power, but it is impossible to know who stood in these halls, what they called themselves, or what they thought about their southern neighbors. In some cases archaeological data from Scandinavia and written data from Francia can be combined to directly confirm each other, but we must be very wary of forcing conclusions. Scandinavian self-conception and the role that the Danes and Swedes claimed in the relationships forming between Scandinavia and the Continent remain frustratingly vague.

Even with all of these difficulties of source material, a range of interactions and relationships emerges, visible from at least the 770s in the written sources and even earlier in the archaeological record, that predate and inform the violent encounters and conflict so prevalent in later ninth century sources and in modern historiography. Evidence of trade throughout the North Sea points to one such point of contact between these two worlds. Scandinavian chieftains eagerly sought the luxuries of the Franks and

⁶ Eric Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 306.

⁷ For a brief summary of Scandinavian poetry and sagas see Judith Jesch, “Poetry in the Viking Age,” in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 291–98; Terry Gunnell, “The Performance of the Poetic Edda,” in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 299–303; Lars Lönnroth, “The Icelandic Sagas,” in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 304–10.

in turn offered raw materials such as amber and fine furs, creating relationships of buyers and sellers based around a desire by both peoples for the exotic. Work by archaeologists such as Richard Hodges, Björn Ambrosiani, and Ulf Näsman has uncovered the many trade goods, including pottery, swords, and slaves, that merchants carried throughout the North Sea and across the Alps into Italy and the Mediterranean. Alongside these trade goods, archaeologists have unearthed and made visible the development of urban centers not just in Francia but in Scandinavia as well.⁸ Simultaneously, numismatists have demonstrated that the new coin economy – based not on gold, but on silver – that emerged under the Carolingians arose not merely due to changes in available metals, but also out of a conscious desire on the parts of both rulers and traders for a more useful currency.⁹ In the North Sea and the Baltic, Scandinavian rulers also minted their own silver coins, sometimes in unique styles, sometimes in imitation of the coins of their powerful southern neighbors. In place of older ideas of an insular, stagnant agrarian society posited by historians such as Henri Pirenne, a picture of an active North Sea economy based not merely around manors and farming but also on trade and commerce has thus emerged in the last several decades. This focus on the growing and active economy of the North Sea region has revealed a world almost entirely absent from the minds of Frankish authors whose focus was nearly always on the actions of political and religious elites of Francia and Scandinavia. Yet for all of this focus on the bustling activity of the North Sea, with its growing trade centers at Dorestad, Hedeby, and Birka, until recently little attention has been paid to the social connections that this trade brought with it.

The world of trade served not merely to move goods but also as a connective force that fundamentally shaped the relationship between Scandinavia and Francia. Trade cannot occur without communication; the exchange of money and goods can only be accomplished by people willing to make the effort to travel and to engage with foreign worlds.¹⁰ The Frisian trader has become a by-word for Frankish commerce and much work has been done on the economy of the North Sea, but only recently have economic and social historians begun to find common ground, looking not just at the mechanisms of trade but at its effects on the peoples and societies of northern Europe.¹¹ In an attempt to address this neglect scholars such as Stéphane Lebecq have teased out passing

⁸ Richard Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: The Origins of Towns and Trade A.D. 600-1000* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982); Björn Ambrosiani and Helen Clarke, *Towns in the Viking Age* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991); Ulf Näsman, "Exchange and Politics: The Eighth-Early Ninth Century in Denmark," in *The Long Eighth Century*, ed. Inge Lyse Hansen and Chris Wickham (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 35–68.

⁹ D. M. Metcalf, "Viking-Age Numismatics 2: Coinage in the Northern Lands in Merovingian and Carolingian Times," *The Numismatic Chronicle* 156 (1996): 399–428; Simon Coupland, *Carolingian Coinage and the Vikings: Studies on Power and Trade in the 9th Century* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate/Variorum, 2007).

¹⁰ Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 16; Søren Sindbæk, "Networks and Nodal Points: The Emergence of Towns in Early Viking Age Scandinavia," *Antiquity* 81, no. 311 (March 2007): 119–32.

¹¹ Dirk Jellema, "Frisian Trade in the Dark Ages," *Speculum* 30, no. 1 (1955): 15–36; Stéphane Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1983); Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik, eds., *Dorestad in an International Framework* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

references to merchants from annals and *miracula* to put a human face on the men who moved goods between cultures.¹² Michael McCormick's groundbreaking *Origins of the European Economy* has made it clear that commerce and communication go hand in hand and that where we see goods, we can infer people. His focus, however, is firmly on the Mediterranean, with only forty or so pages out of nearly one-thousand devoted to the economic activity of the North Sea and Baltic. Anders Winroth's recently published work, *The Conversion of Scandinavia*, demonstrates the ways in which trade and luxury goods could foster communication and change in Scandinavia as powerful leaders actively sought contact with the south to further their standing at home. Yet Winroth's focus is on the Viking raiders and chieftains of the late ninth and tenth centuries, with little attention paid to the creation or nature of commercial networks and relationships in the previous decades and centuries.¹³

In an effort to address these earlier connections and to give a sense of the breadth and active nature of communication between Scandinavia and Francia, Chapter One of this dissertation focuses on these long lasting commercial links. At the heart of this trade lay Frisia, home of the emporium of Dorestad. Dorestad's location as the cross roads between the North Sea and the heart of the Frankish Empire allowed Frankish, Frisian, and Scandinavian merchants to carry goods back and forth across the North Sea while at the same time facilitating the movement of ideas and cultural exchange. Annalists gathered information from these merchants, kings used them to pass word back and forth, and missionaries traveled with them. The steady growth of economic activity thus actively facilitated contact and communication between Franks and Scandinavians of all stations over several centuries.

In chapters Two and Three I focus on the political and social interactions of the Franks and their northern neighbors from the first visible meetings in the 780s up to the death of Louis the Pious in 840. Over the past several decades social historians have begun to focus on the variety of interactions between Franks and Vikings, rather than just conflict. In large part this revision is a result of the ongoing debate over one major aspect of that relationship: violence. From the sources of the later ninth century, all Christian and all the product of those suffering under Viking raids, it is easy to come away with a picture of Vikings as devastatingly and overwhelmingly violent. Early works on the Vikings, most notably those of Walther Vogel and Ferdinand Lot, embraced this picture of devastation wrought by pagan invaders. In the 1960s these older views began to be revised, with Peter Sawyer's *The Age of the Vikings* leading the pack. "Once the prejudices and exaggerations of the primary sources are recognized," he writes, "the raids can be seen not as an unprecedented and inexplicable cataclysm, but as an extension of normal Dark Age activity."¹⁴ Despite John Michael Wallace-Hadrill's complaint that revisionist accounts of the Vikings rendered them little more than "long-haired tourists," by the 1990s, historical consensus had more or less coalesced around an understanding

¹² Stéphane Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1983).

¹³ Anders Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia: Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 90–92.

¹⁴ Peter Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, 2nd ed. (London: E. Arnold, 1971), 202–3.

somewhere between these two extremes.¹⁵ Timothy Reuter's point that "for most of Europe in the eighth and ninth century it was the Franks who were the Vikings" cannot be dismissed.¹⁶ Indeed, the wealth generated by Frankish expansion south into Italy and north into Saxony and the ongoing pressure exerted by the most powerful people in Europe on their neighbors is in part responsible for the very developments that led Scandinavian raiders to seek their fortunes in Francia itself. Yet we should not be too quick to dismiss the woes of Frankish clerics. Those who were the victims of Viking raids certainly would not have regarded their experiences as "normal." The Frankish sources of the period resound with anger and fear concerning the Northmen, showing us just how traumatic these events could be.¹⁷

Interest in violence has driven historians to closely examine interactions between Vikings and Franks in an attempt to better understand the variety of possible relationships that could form between these two peoples. Instead of merely focusing on moments of conflict, over the last three decades several historians have published work that looks instead at the ability of Carolingian kings and Viking invaders to form lasting, productive relationships. In his 1989 article "Allies of God or Man?" Niels Lund seeks "to view the Vikings in a European perspective, to study them as participants in European history rather than as an alien element."¹⁸ Similarly, Simon Coupland, in the article "From Poachers to Gamekeepers," published a decade later, examines several examples of Viking chieftains and leaders entering into the Frankish world as allies or servants of Carolingian Kings.¹⁹ Following on these and other articles Pierre Bauduin's *Le monde franc et les Vikings*, published in 2009, is the first book to actively examine the concept of peaceful communication between Vikings and the Franks, focusing on accommodation and methods of integration as a means of better understanding how Franks responded to ongoing Scandinavian threats and how Viking raiders and invaders could, over time, transform into Franks themselves.²⁰

These attempts to understand the social connections that could form between Scandinavians and Franks have added tremendous depth to the conversation on the Viking period. Yet all of these works also focus the majority of their attention on interaction post 840. Discussions of Harald Klak's baptism in 826 treat this event not as part of an ongoing and developing relationship with roots back into the eighth century, but rather as the first visible moment of interaction between Vikings and Franks. This

¹⁵ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Vikings in Francia," in *Early Medieval History: Collected Essays of J. M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1975), 220; Sarah Foot, "Violence against Christians? The Vikings and the Church in Ninth-Century England," *Medieval History* 1, no. 3 (1991): 3–16; Guy Halsall, *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1998); Simon Coupland, "The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History," *History* 88, no. 290 (2003): 186–203.

¹⁶ Timothy Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5, 35 (1985): 91.

¹⁷ Delphine Planavergne, "Les Normands avant la Normandie: les invasions scandinaves en Neustrie au IXe siècle dans l'hagiographie Franque," in *Les fondations scandinaves en Occident et les débuts du duché de Normandie*, ed. Pierre Bauduin (Caen: Publications du CRAHM, 2005), 37–52.

¹⁸ Niels Lund, "Allies of God or Man: The Viking Expansion in a European Perspective," *Viator* 20 (1989): 45.

¹⁹ Simon Coupland, "From Poachers to Gamekeepers: Scandinavian Warlords and Carolingian Kings," *Early Medieval Europe* 7, no. 1 (1998): 85–114.

²⁰ Pierre Bauduin, *Le monde franc et les Vikings: VIIIe-Xe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2009).

despite the fact that Harald, an exiled Danish king, could hardly be considered a “Viking” by any standard definition of the word. For these scholars it is the Viking Age that is of primary interest. One notable exception is Herbert Jankuhn’s 1965 article “Karl der Grosse und der Norden,” but works that touch on relationships, whether political or social, between Franks and Scandinavian before the 840s overwhelmingly treat this period as an aside or a brief prologue as they move towards their actual focus on the activity of the later ninth and early tenth centuries.²¹

In an attempt to address this imbalance, Chapter Two of this dissertation focuses on the ways in which the Saxon Wars brought Franks and Scandinavians into contact and how the growing presence of the Franks in Northern Europe influenced the political development of the Danes. By the end of Charlemagne’s life, the Danes had moved from a shadowy people on the margins of Frankish consciousness to key players in the works of Frankish historians and poets. Both Frankish sources and archaeological evidence from Scandinavia demonstrate that Danish leaders, in large part due to increased contact with their powerful southern neighbors, became intent not only on wielding wider power in Scandinavia but on challenging Carolingian supremacy over the North Sea area at large.

Chapter Three begins with the death of Charlemagne and examines the varied relationships between Louis the Pious and several rulers of Scandinavia. Inheriting a vastly enlarged empire and intent on continuing the consolidation begun during Charlemagne’s last years, Louis conceived of new methods of engaging with the North in order to ensure the security of the empire and extend Frankish authority north of the Elbe. Taking advantage of civil discord among the Danes, Louis chose to champion one particular branch of the Danish royal dynasty, led by the exiled king Harald. These relationships would draw Danes and Franks closer as elites from both worlds traveled back and forth. Even as Louis meddled in the political world of the north, he also undertook the first efforts at Christianization, bringing about the baptism of Harald in 826 and dispatching missionaries as far as Sweden in his efforts to bring Scandinavia into the orbit of the Franks.

By combining these two threads of historiography, one focused on the economic development of the North Sea zone and the other on social and political interaction during the reigns of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, it is possible to address the lack of focus on the origins of contact between the Frankish and Scandinavian worlds. When we look at the networks of trade forming across the North Sea in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, and at the growth of political and social meetings on the borders of Frisia, Saxony, and the Jutland Peninsula, we come away with a narrative of communication and contact that pre-dates and actively informs the Viking Age and that is far more vibrant and complex than our primary sources reveal at first glance. With the right approach we can see a period before the Franks transformed from conquerors to besieged and before the various peoples of Scandinavia became, for lack of a better word, “Vikings.”

²¹ Herbert Jankuhn, “Karl der Grosse und der Norden,” in *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, ed. Helmut Beumann, vol. 1 (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1966), 699–707.

Chapter One

Commercial Connections – Frisians, Franks and Northmen

Well before the end of the eighth century commercial and cultural links were forming between Scandinavia and the Continent, created by a growing interest in trade and luxury goods on the part of people in both areas. The origins of commerce between Francia and the North Sea are found in the border regions of an empire that did not yet exist in the seventh century. In Frisia (which corresponds roughly with the present-day Netherlands), we find an area that was as connected to the northern reaches of Scandinavia as it was to the Frankish heartlands of Austrasia and Neustria. As the Franks cemented their authority over Frisia in the first half of the eighth century they likewise gained access to a bustling trade network. During the reign of Charlemagne (768-814) trade links would grow stronger even as political contact increased. The North Sea trade would reach its zenith in the reign of his son, Louis the Pious (814-40) as Frankish traders travelled as far as Birka in Sweden, and Scandinavians became increasingly familiar with the great Frankish emporium of Dorestad and the world of the Franks.

The goods of the Frankish world, including fine pottery, glassware, and Frankish blades, flowed down the Rhine to the emporium of Dorestad. From here merchants, some wealthy servants of Frankish aristocrats, others likely just making ends meet, travelled north with these goods, stopping at beach markets and the newly developing urban centers along the Jutland coast and into the Baltic. As they bartered and traded for the raw goods of Scandinavia such as amber, furs, and soapstone, they also formed relationships with their Scandinavian counterparts. Trade and communication went hand-in-hand; merchants from both cultures thus came to act not just as movers of goods but as messengers and informants for powerful figures in both Francia and Scandinavia. The steady growth of economic activity, visible in both the archaeological and written record, actively facilitated contact and communication between these two worlds over several centuries, well before the start of the “Viking Age.”

Francia and the North Sea

Few sources exist for the pre-Christian history of Frisia other than archaeological evidence and the occasional fleeting reference in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon writings. The earliest interactions between Frisia and the Merovingians are decidedly unclear, though historians such as Ian Wood argue that during the early seventh century the coastal area of Frisia may have been under Frankish authority.²² The very nature of early medieval Frisia, its scattered population centers and non-centralized political organization, makes it difficult to determine just what Frankish control would have entailed. As with other neighboring groups such as the Saxons and the Slavs, we can see in Frankish texts a conscious representation of Frisia as a singular cohesive political and ethnic unit. Whether this representation fits with reality is much harder to say.²³

²² Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London: Longman, 1994), 54.

²³ Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 1:110–11; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, 269; H. A. Heidinga, *Frisia in the First Millennium: An Outline* (Utrecht: Matrijs, 1997), 14; Ildar Garipzanov, “Frontier Identities: Carolingian Frontier and the *gens Danorum*,” in *Franks*,

When Frisia as a distinct kingdom becomes visible around the late seventh and early eighth centuries, it seems to be due to the growing influence of its Frankish neighbors to the south and east as well as to the growing importance of North Sea trade. From as early as the seventh century Franks and Frisians were vying for control of the strategically important Rhine delta. During the reign of Dagobert I (623-39) the town of Utrecht was apparently granted to Chunibert, the bishop of Cologne, for the purpose of converting the Frisians, though Boniface, in a letter to Pope Stephen III, points out that nothing came of this attempt.²⁴ At Dorestad – not yet the grand emporium it would become in the eighth and ninth centuries – there is also evidence for Merovingian control in the minting of golden coins known as *tremisses*. Struck by two moneyers who had moved (probably at royal urging) from the nearby Frankish town of Maastricht, these coins, especially those of Madelinus, would serve as the model for a large number of Frisian imitations.²⁵ Evidence for Merovingian minting ceases around 650, and this decline corresponds with signs of renewed Frisian control of the area and of Dorestad itself. The *Vita Wilfridi* contains the first written reference to a “king” of Frisia, one Aldgisl, who in 678 appears at odds with the Franks.²⁶ Around the same time a new form of currency, silver pennies known as *sceattas*, begin to appear in Frisia. Though the information is fragmentary, everything seems to point towards renewed Frisian independence from Merovingian power. The rise to prominence of the Frisian’s most famous leader, Radbod (c. 680-719), continued this trend.

Radbod looms large in the affairs of the Franks, and especially the Pippinids, during the last decades of the seventh and first decades of the eighth century.²⁷ Referred to as the *regem Fresonum* in Willibald’s *Vita Bonifatii*, but more dismissively as a *dux* in the continuation of Fredegar’s *Chronicle*, his ongoing dealings with his Frankish neighbors make it clear that Radbod intended for Frisia to be a major player in the politics of the time.²⁸ He first appears in the sources in 695, suffering defeat at the hands of Pippin II in the struggle for control of Dorestad. Following Radbod’s defeat a move was made towards rapprochement with the marriage of Radbod’s daughter, Theudesinda, to Grimoald, Pippin’s second son by Plectrude. By 714 these ties had clearly been severed. Radbod, now an ally of the Neustrians under the leadership of the *maior* Ragamfred and his Merovingian king Chilperic II, was once more in conflict with the

Northmen, and Slavs, ed. Ildar Garipzanov, Patrick Geary, and Przemyslaw Urbanczyk (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 114–15.

²⁴ Boniface, MGH Ep. 3, pp. 395-96.

²⁵ Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 1:51–55; Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage: The Early Middle Ages*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 137; Adriaan Verhulst, *The Rise of Cities in North-West Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27–28; Arent Pol, “Madelinus and the Disappearing of Gold,” in *Dorestad in an International Framework*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 92–94.

²⁶ Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi* in *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), c. 27, p. 52: “Eodem quoque tempore Eferwine dux Theoderici regis Francorum misit nuntios suos cum litteris ad Aldgislum regem Fresis”

²⁷ Willibald, *Vita Bonifati*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SRG 57 (Hanover: MGH, 1905), c. 4, p. 16; *Fredegarii Chronicorum Liber Quartus cum Continuationibus*, ed. and trans. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1960), c. 102, p. 86.

²⁸ Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 27, p. 52: “Eodem quoque tempore Eferwine dux Theoderici regis Francorum misit nuntios suos cum litteris ad Aldgislum regem Fresis”

Pippinids, led by Charles Martel. The alliance between Radbod and the Neustrian Franks arose from a desire by both parties to prevent further growth of Pippinid political power. There may also have been an economic interest on the part of the Neustrians in limiting competition along the Atlantic coast by their Austrasian rivals, as the primary Neustrian emporium, Quentovic, lay to the south of contested Dorestad. Frisian antipathy towards Charles Martel, who had replaced Radbod's grandson Theudoald as leader of the Pippinids, may also have played a part in the alliance. By 716 Dorestad was once more in Frisian hands, though it would not remain so for long. Conflict with the Pippinids would continue until the death of Radbod in 719. The passing of the Frisian ruler seems to have marked the end of centralized Frisian resistance to Frankish authority and there is evidence not just of growing political control but of inroads being made by missionary figures under the protection of the Franks, such as Boniface and Willibrord, whose efforts only a few years earlier had found little success in the area.²⁹ In 734 Charles Martel returned once more to Frisia at the head of army, an act that both the Continuator of Fredegar's *Chronicle* and the writer of the *Annales Mettenses priores* describe as a response to rebellion, an indication of the relative positions of the two sides, at least from the Frankish perspective.³⁰

By the 740s Frisia had been brought under the uneasy control of the Franks. Integration and Christianization would take some time, especially in those northern areas bordering the still-intractable Saxons, but as H. A. Heidinga points out, for much of the Frisian aristocracy these "political changes [probably] did not entail anything more than entering into new alliances and patron-client relations."³¹ By the time the Carolingians took the throne in 751, the Frisian kingdom was considered to be part of the Frankish realm. With the publication of a *Lex Frisonum* under Charlemagne, the Frisians were conceived of as a coherent *gens* alongside the various other groups absorbed into the Frankish kingdoms, such as the Saxons, Swabians, or Alamans.³² And though there are signs of discontent, such as an unsuccessful rebellion in 784, by the reign of Louis the Pious Frisia had become an important piece of the Frankish empire.³³

Geographically Frisia as a Carolingian *regnum* ran from the Zwin River in the south to the Weser in the north, though Frisian influence and settlement seems to have projected farther north prior to the Carolingian period. Frisian settlement was largely

²⁹ Stéphane Lebecq, "Francs contre Frisons (VIe-VIIIe Siècles)," in *La guerre et la paix, frontières et violences au moyen âge* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1978), 61.

³⁰ *Fred-con*, c. 17, p. 92; *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. B. von Simson, MGH SRG 10 (Hanover: MGH, 1905), s.a. 734, p. 27.

³¹ H. A. Heidinga, "From Kootwijk to Rhenen: In Search of the Elite in the Central Netherlands in the Early Middle Ages," in *Medieval Archaeology in the Netherlands: Studies Presented to H. H. van Regteren Altena*, ed. J. C. Besteman, Johannes Maria Bos, and H. A. Heidinga (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), 35.

³² Patrick Wormald, "*Lex Scripta and Verbum Regis*: Legislation and Germanic Kingship, From Euric to Cnut," in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. Peter Sawyer and Ian Wood (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1977), 138; Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 37–38; Dirk Meier, "The North Sea Coastal Area: Settlement History From Roman to Early Medieval Times," in *The Continental Saxons From the Migration Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. D. H. Green and Frank Siegmund (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003), 50.

³³ Timothy Reuter, "Charlemagne and the World beyond the Rhine," in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 187.

coastal, limited to the relatively few highland areas, to islands, or to artificial mound villages known as *terps*. These nucleated structures remained largely separated by rivers, inlets, and bays with communication between settlements made primarily by means of water-travel. Water was in fact one of the defining qualities of the area and thus of the communities that developed there. Where agriculture was the rule in most parts of the Frankish world, Frisia's geography and ecology lent itself to the pursuit of maritime activities and to trade rather than farming. By the seventh century Frisians were engaging in long-distance trade and exchange to make ends meet and to compensate for the area's limited agricultural potential. The growth of Frisia and the rise of Dorestad as the preeminent trading port of the early medieval period can be seen as a direct result of these activities.³⁴ Frisia's connection via rivers and seas served to link it not just internally but also into the wider world. The presence of multiple important river systems, especially the Rhine, linked Frisia to the heartland of the Franks. These regional ties were increasingly emphasized as the area was brought more firmly into the orbit of the Austrasian Franks. At the same time, Frisia's ties to the sea allowed for unrivaled access to Scandinavia. It would thus come to stand as a frontier zone linking these two worlds, becoming the Franks' "gateway" to the North Sea and the Baltic.

As early as the mid-sixth century there existed limited economic ties between Frisia and what would become Denmark. Iron Age Scandinavia, while never directly connected to the Roman world, nevertheless participated in exchange of a sort with its southern neighbors. Archaeological evidence in the form of glassware, pottery, and coinage all point to trade based primarily on ties to the eastern Roman empire, with routes moving through the Baltic and into central Europe.³⁵ However, with the arrival of the Avars and various Slavic peoples in the sixth century these links were severed. It is at this juncture that a North Sea "zone" truly began to take shape.³⁶ Beginning in the late seventh century and especially in the eighth century, the Frisians would come to hold a veritable monopoly over trade with Scandinavia.

Thus even as political developments were drawing Frisia more firmly into the orbit of the Frankish world, the pull of the North Sea was of equal importance in the development of Frisia both territorially and culturally. Though information on these areas is sparse in our written sources, archaeological evidence shows the first signs of

³⁴ Detlev Ellmers, "The Frisian Monopoly of Coastal Transport in the 6th-8th Centuries," in *Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons*, ed. Seán McGrail (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1990), 91; Heidinga, *Frisia in the First Millennium*, 51; Stéphane Lebecq, "Entre terre et mer: la mise en valeur des contrées littorales de l'ancienne Frise," *Histoire, économie et société* 16 (1998): 184–85; Dries Tys, "The Scheldt Estuary as a Framework for Early Medieval Settlement Development," in *Dorestad in an International Framework*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 169.

³⁵ A. N. Zadoks-Josephus Jitta, "Looking Back at 'Frisians, Franks and Saxons,'" *Bulletin van de Vereeniging Tot Bevordering Der Kennis Vande Antieke Beschaving* 36 (1961): 49; Svend Nielsen, "Urban Economy in Southern Scandinavia in the Second Half of the First Millennium AD," in *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Judith Jesch (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002), 183.

³⁶ Hayo Vierck, "*Imitatio imperii* und *Interpretatio Germanica* vor der Wikingerzeit," in *Les Pays du Nord et Byzance*, ed. Rudolf Zeitler (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1981), 65; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 563.

Frisian inroads into Saxony and Scandinavia.³⁷ Signs of colonization and active trading, including habitations, cemeteries, and Rhenish pottery and glass shards, are visible from at least the seventh century in the islands along the western coast of Jutland, particularly at Amrum, Föhr and Sylt. The dubbing of the archipelago as the Frisian Islands is further confirmation of a Frisian presence.³⁸ We cannot be sure whether the gradual expansion by Frisians into what would become Saxony and Denmark by the ninth century was undertaken in any organized fashion or whether it was merely the slow drift of a maritime people seeking new homes and opportunities

Frisia's pride of place in the world of early medieval trade would arise from its straddling of these worlds. Home to Dorestad, the wealthiest emporium in the Frankish kingdoms, Frisia provided not just the geographic link between the North Sea and Francia but also the expertise of a people long familiar with the practices of long-distance maritime trade. As the foremost participants in long-distance trade and exchange, the word "Frisian" would itself become synonymous with "merchant" in medieval sources.³⁹ And Frisians did not just carry items to and from their homeland. They also cultivated colonies of merchants at the various trading centers they frequented, creating a permanent presence in foreign lands.⁴⁰ Settled at the various crossroads of the North Sea and the Baltic, Frisian merchants could tap into local markets and acquire the raw materials of Scandinavia in exchange for goods produced throughout the Rhine valley. This situation created opportunities for the exchange not only of goods but also of culture and ideas.

Coinage and Trade Goods

Although certain scattered references to traders and commerce exist in the written sources, it is the archaeological record that provides the clearest signs of connections between Scandinavia and the Continent. Numismatic evidence of these links dates from the mid-seventh century in the form of scattered finds of gold coins, both the Madelinus type referred to above and another, known as Dronrijp, at sites such as Sylt, Altenwalde, Limfjord in the far north of Jutland, and especially at Danekirke, which served as one of the first proto-emporium in Scandinavia.⁴¹ These gold *tremissis* appear only in small numbers, but from the second half of the seventh century the number of finds of Frisian

³⁷ Dirk Meier, "Transalbanorum Saxonum populi sunt tres: Das Dithmarchser Küstengebiet im frühen und hohen Mittelalter," in *Studien zur Archäologie des Ostseeraumes: von der Eisenzeit zum Mittelalter*, ed. Anke Wesse (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1998), 83.

³⁸ Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 1:85; Martin Segschneider, "Trade and Centrality between the Rhine and the Limfjord around 500 AD. The Beachmarket on the Northfrisian Island Amrum and Its Context," in *Central Places in the Migration and Merovingian Periods*, ed. Birgitta Hårdh and Lars Larsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002), 247–56.

³⁹ Stéphane Lebecq, "On the Use of the Word 'Frisian' in the 6th-10th Written Sources: Some Interpretations," in *Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons*, ed. Seán McGrail (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1990), 85–90.

⁴⁰ Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 1:237–243; Johan Callmer, "Archaeological Sources for the Presence of Frisian Agents of Trade in Northern Europe ca. AD 700-900," in *Studien zur Archäologie des Ostseeraumes: von der Eisenzeit zum Mittelalter*, ed. Anke Wesse (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1998), 469.

⁴¹ Metcalf, "Viking-Age Numismatics 2: Coinage in the Northern Lands in Merovingian and Carolingian Times," 400–2.

coins in Scandinavia, both in isolation and in hoards, becomes much more substantial. In place of the earlier gold coins comes the introduction of a new currency, typically called *sceattas*.⁴² Made of silver and generally of high quality, *sceattas* came in a variety of styles. While their origin seems to be English, the practice of minting these silver coins quickly crossed the channel. Strikingly, *sceattas* bear no inscription of any sort; rather than being issued by specific kings or rulers they seem to have been created at numerous sites in a more ad-hoc fashion. In contrast to most of the gold coinage of the early medieval period, these coins were tools designed for easy exchange in the growing market of the North Sea rather than for cultural or political ends. From Frisia sprang the so-called “Porcupine” type, named for the image that adorns them. In Scandinavia a second type, known as “Wodan-Monster,” was minted, particularly at Ribe (perhaps using silver from Frisian coins). The diffusion of these *sceattas*, not just in Scandinavia but in large numbers throughout England and Frisia (at Dorestad, on the island of Domburg to the south, along the northern coast-line and down the Rhine), shows the routes of exchange that stretched from Frisia north into Scandinavia, west into the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and south-east into the Frankish kingdoms by the beginning of the eighth century.⁴³

The rise of Carolingian power brought about a new stage in the economic and monetary practices of the Franks. Perhaps in part inspired by the usefulness of the *sceat*, and certainly due to changing availability of metal, the Franks abandoned gold coinage and began minting a new silver coinage, called the *denarius*.⁴⁴ The shift in currency demonstrates a central aspect of the developing Carolingian economic policy. On the one hand, a desire to bring minting back under centralized control, and on the other, a goal of creating a currency useable in both local and long-distance trade.⁴⁵ Beginning in the reign of Charlemagne, and especially following his decision to reform coinage weights and minting practices in c.793, the numismatic evidence grows significantly. Charlemagne’s reform should be viewed, at least in part, within the context of a growing focus on commerce, including that with Scandinavia.⁴⁶ Alongside Dorestad’s central role as a site for export and import, the town also continued its function as a mint, this time

⁴² This term has come under periodic attack due to its somewhat anachronistic associations with later Anglo-Saxon coins of the same name. Both Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, 299; and Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 1:54–55 use the term in quotations and make it clear that they might prefer to use the term “penny” instead. Given the weight of scholarship, however, it seems that the *sceat* is here to stay.

⁴³ Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 1:54–61; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 1:153–54; Metcalf, “Viking-Age Numismatics 2: Coinage in the Northern Lands in Merovingian and Carolingian Times,” 402–9; Michael Müller-Wille, “Ribe - Reric - Haithabu: Zur frühen Urbanisierung im südsandinavischen und westslawischen Gebiet,” in *Haithabu und die frühe Stadtentwicklung im nördlichen Europa*, ed. Klaus Brandt, Michael Müller-Wille, and Christian Radtke (Münster: Wachholtz, 2002), 330.

⁴⁴ Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 1:81–154; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, 218; Pol, “Madelinus and the Disappearing of Gold,” 94.

⁴⁵ Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, 39; Jean-Pierre Devroey, *Économie rurale et société dans l’Europe franque* (Paris: Belin, 2003), 161–64.

⁴⁶ Philip Grierson, “Money and Coinage under Charlemagne,” in *Karl Der Grosse: Lebenswerk Und Nachleben*, ed. Helmut Beumann, vol. 1 (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1966), 501–36; Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, 43; Simon Coupland, “Charlemagne’s Coinage: Ideology and Economy,” in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 221–23.

under Carolingian authority. The so-called Dorestad *denarii* attest to the emporium's growing importance and to the continuing expansion of trade between Francia and Scandinavia. These coins, which bore the name of the *vicus* where they were minted and sometimes an image of a ship, have been found widely throughout the Netherlands as well as along the routes north into Scandinavia. Finds of these coins in the Baltic indicate the further development of the North Sea network. The minting of knock-off coins at Hedeby and elsewhere in imitation of the Dorestad *denarii* demonstrates the influence that these growing trade links had in the north.⁴⁷ The reign of Louis the Pious saw increased control over coinage throughout the Carolingian Empire and a corresponding rise in the number of Frankish coins circulating throughout Europe.⁴⁸

The presence of southern coinage in Scandinavia indicates the existence of active, ongoing trade. But what were these Frisian merchants using these coins to purchase? What were the key items of exchange that linked the world of the Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians with those of their southern neighbors? On the Scandinavian side of the equation there are major gaps in the archaeological record that mirror those in the written sources. The major trade goods of the north, raw materials meant for consumption, such as salt, honey, and beeswax, or for the shops of Frankish craftsmen, like furs and leather, tend to leave little in the way of physical evidence. There are, however, some exceptions to these perishable items. Whale bones, walrus tusks and reindeer antlers were an important trade good both within Scandinavia and with the outside world.⁴⁹ From Norway came soapstone and whetstones that were exported to Denmark and Francia in large quantities.⁵⁰ Even more important was amber from Sweden and the Baltic. Massive quantities of unworked amber, as well as numerous finished and in-progress amber and glass items such as beads, have been found at Dorestad, indicating the importance of the site as an entry point for this exotic luxury into Francia.⁵¹

While the movement of goods from north to south is only dimly visible, when we look for evidence of Frankish imports in Scandinavia a much richer picture emerges. Luxury goods manufactured in the Frankish kingdoms, and especially in the Rhine and Meuse valleys, linked the Continent to the North. Ceramics and glassware are by far the most common Frankish items found in Scandinavia. Glass drinking vessels from areas

⁴⁷ Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, 116; Klavs Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark: The Formation of a State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 89; Ellmers, "The Frisian Monopoly of Coastal Transport in the 6th-8th Centuries," 92.

⁴⁸ Simon Coupland, "Money and Coinage Under Louis the Pious," *Francia* 17, no. 1 (1990): 23–54.

⁴⁹ Ohthere, *Two Voyagers at the Court of King Alfred: The Ventures of Ohthere and Wulfstan, Together with the Description of Northern Europe from the Old English Orosius*, ed. Niels Lund, trans. Christine E. Fell (York: Sessions, 1984), 19–20; Stig Jensen, *The Vikings of Ribe* (Ribe: Den Antikvariske samling, 1991), 13; Nielsen, "Urban Economy in Southern Scandinavia in the Second Half of the First Millennium AD," 184.

⁵⁰ Herbert Jankuhn, *Haithabu: ein Handelsplatz der Wikingerzeit* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1956), 167–69; Heid Resi, "Reflections on Viking Age Local Trade in Stone Products," in *Proceedings of the Tenth Viking Congress*, ed. James E. Knirk (Oslo: Universitetets Oldsaksamling, 1987), 95; Lise Bender Jørgensen, "Rural Economy: Ecology, Hunting, Pastoralism, Agricultural and Nutritional Aspects," in *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Judith Jesch (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002), 139–40.

⁵¹ W. A. van Es, "Dorestad Centred," in *Medieval Archaeology in the Netherlands: Studies Presented to H. H. van Regteren Altena*, ed. J. C. Besteman, Johannes Maria Bos, and H. A. Heidinga (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), 174–75.

such as Eifel and the Ardennes begin to appear in large numbers from the late seventh century all along the North Sea coastal routes with substantial finds as far east as Sweden. Many of these finds are connected to particularly rich burial sites, indicating the high value placed on these foreign wares by local elites. Glass drinking vessels, sometimes in great numbers, have also been located in the remains of the halls that housed powerful chieftains and their bands of followers. These vessels would have been items of great prestige and their use a conspicuous display of wealth and power.⁵² In addition to these finished pieces, archaeologists have located numerous glass beads used in jewelry, mirroring those found in the soil of Dorestad.

Rhenish ceramic wares allow us to trace similar lines of communication and interaction stretching from the heart of Francia into the Baltic. Pottery is particularly useful for gauging trade in the pre-Viking period as, unlike jewelry and other luxury goods, it tends not to appear in later Viking Age hoards, which may contain coins and objects plundered long after their creation. Badorf ware, a style of ceramic popular from c. 750 onward and named for its origin site in the Cologne region, is found throughout the Netherlands as well as along the Jutland peninsula, especially at the Danish emporium of Hedeby.⁵³ Another style, Tating ware, is even more useful as an indicator of growing links between Francia and Scandinavia from the mid-eighth century. Badorf ware most likely served a largely utilitarian function, as a transport for wine or more frequently as a utensil for Frisian merchants.⁵⁴ Tating ware, on the other hand, is demonstrably a luxury good. These high-quality Carolingian pitchers, decorated with tin foil, were, as Richard Hodges put it, “The finest pottery available in north-west Europe in the period between c. 770 and c. 825.”⁵⁵ They can be used to trace the growing popularity of Frankish goods and the rising levels of contact between these two worlds decades before the ninth century. Tating ware is found in large numbers at all of the major emporia of Scandinavia, including Kaupang in Norway and Birka in Sweden.⁵⁶ Not just a vessel for carrying goods to Scandinavia, these pitchers have been found in pagan graves in Sweden an indication of their status as a luxury good. The existence of imitation styles produced at these Scandinavian sites also indicates the popularity of Frankish pottery.⁵⁷

Glass and ceramic-wares demonstrate the growth of commerce and the creation of

⁵² Peter Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe, A.D. 700-1100* (London: Methuen, 1982), 72; Heiko Steuer, “Der Handel der Wikingerzeit zwischen Nord- und Westeuropa aufgrund archäologischer Zeugnisse,” in *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa*, ed. Klaus Düwel et al., vol. 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 146–51; Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia*, 17–18; Näsman, “Exchange and Politics: The Eighth-Early Ninth Century in Denmark,” 37–46.

⁵³ Christoph Keller, “Pottery Production in Badorf and Walberberg during the Carolingian Period,” in *Vikings on the Rhine*, ed. Rudolf Simek and Ulrike Engel (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2004), 162–63.

⁵⁴ Claus Feveile, “Ribe: Emporium and Town in the 8th and 9th Centuries,” in *Dorestad in an International Framework*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 145–46.

⁵⁵ Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, 59.

⁵⁶ Richard Hodges, “Dark Age Economics Revisited,” in *In Discussion with the Past: Archaeological Studies Presented to W. A. van Es*, ed. H. Sarfatij, W. J. H. Verwers, and P. J. Woltering (Zwolle: Stichting Promotie Archeologie, 1999), 230; Björn Ambrosiani, “Birka and Dorestad,” in *In Discussion with the Past: Archaeological Studies Presented to W. A. van Es*, ed. H. Sarfatij, W. J. H. Verwers, and P. J. Woltering (Zwolle: Stichting Promotie Archeologie, 1999), 241.

⁵⁷ For a discussion on just how telling pottery can be for the changing political and commercial face of the eighth and ninth centuries see McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 659–61.

networks between Frankish craftsmen, Frisian traders and Scandinavian elites. Produced at the great estates in the heart of Austrasia, these goods were shipped down the Rhine to Dorestad, packed into small Frisian boats and carried over the sea to trading towns along the Jutland coast and even as far as Sweden. A variety of other materials (some traceable in the archaeological record, others through documentary evidence) provide further proof that this was a trade based around luxury and prestige items. Basalt millstones, produced in the same region as the luxury glassware, have been found at all of the major trading ports of the North Sea.⁵⁸ The numerous wooden barrels found at Dorestad, crafted from fir trees from far up the Rhine river, are indicative of a trade in wine; we can also see evidence of the wine trade from the Frisians referenced in a diploma from 753 concerning the fair at Saint-Denis, known for its central role in the wine trade.⁵⁹ Fine Frankish swords have been found at Hedeby, and there is evidence that Frankish blades were shipped without hilts to Sweden, where they could be finished in local styles.⁶⁰ Frisian textiles are regrettably lacking from the physical record due to their perishable nature but textual references attest to their popularity as an item of prestige. In Notker's *Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, the emperor is said to have sent to Harun al-Rashid, the Abbasid Caliph, "Frisian cloaks of white, grey, red and blue that were rare and very expensive."⁶¹ Finds of brooches and combs, and metal goods such as keys and tools likewise show the value of transporting small but highly sought after goods.

Alongside the pottery, glass, and amber carried in merchant ships came another commodity unlike any of the others, slaves. The slave trade in the North Sea is unfortunately quite difficult to get a clear view of, especially if we depend on archaeology to trace the flow of goods between Francia and Scandinavia.⁶² Unsurprisingly, given the scant interest of medieval writers in commerce in general, we do not find much more on the slave trade in the North Sea. In many ways slaves suffer from the same lack of attention in medieval sources that merchants do, though for different reasons. Where merchants seem to have been regarded as largely unimportant – and perhaps occasionally distasteful – to the elite Christian world that most interested the churchmen writing in the early medieval period, slaves were effectively not even a part of

⁵⁸ Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark*, 67; Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 1:78; Steuer, "Der Handel der Wikingerzeit zwischen Nord- und Westeuropa aufgrund archäologischer Zeugnisse," 142–146; Näsman, "Exchange and Politics: The Eighth-Early Ninth Century in Denmark," 47–8.

⁵⁹ MGH DD Kar. 1, no. 6, pp. 9-11; and see McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 651 on the centrality of wine to the Saint-Denis fair.

⁶⁰ Jankuhn, *Haithabu*, 154–63; Steuer, "Der Handel der Wikingerzeit zwischen Nord- und Westeuropa aufgrund archäologischer Zeugnisse," 151–56.

⁶¹ Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*, trans. Howard B. Clarke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 106; Chrystel Brandenburg, "Textile Production and Trade in Dorestad," in *Dorestad in an International Framework*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 82–88; Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, ed. H. Haefele, MGH SRG NS 12 (Berlin: MGH, 1959), bk. 1, c. 34, pp. 46–48; *Ibid.*, bk. 2, c. 9, p. 63: "... pallia Fresonica alba, cana, vermiculata vel saphirina, que in illis partibus rara et multum cara comperit."

⁶² Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes, and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 341; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 654; for a recent archaeological approach see Joachim Henning, "Gefangenensesseln im slawischen Siedlungsraum und der europäische Sklavenhandel im 6. bis 12. Jahrhundert," *Germania* 70, no. 2 (1992): 403–26.

that society. They were, as Orlando Patterson puts it, “socially dead,” forever outside of the community, in effect non-entities.⁶³ Little wonder, then, that slaves tend to flit on the margins of medieval sources, nameless, often lumped together in groups and only occasionally coming to the forefront, and then generally as lenses through which other more important figures, almost always saints, could be seen.⁶⁴

The secondary literature reflects this lack of available source material. Studies of slavery in the Carolingian empire are almost completely focused on the question of when, why, and whether slavery slowly disappeared or morphed into other forms of servility such as serfdom.⁶⁵ When the study of the slave trade, as opposed to the everyday structures of slavery, is discussed, the eighth- and early ninth-century North Sea trade seems to invariably end up appearing as a brief aside to the larger discussion of trade in the Mediterranean or with the Islamic world of the east.⁶⁶ Works on slavery in Scandinavia tend to focus either on the second half of the ninth century and the Viking raids and slave-taking made famous by the various annals, or on the period when written laws and sagas can provide some sort of framework for a more comprehensive study of slavery as a social system.⁶⁷ In the last twenty years there has been a move by scholars such as David Wyatt and David Pelteret, both of whom focus primarily on the British Isles, to view slavery in a cultural rather than a legal or economic context, but such an approach has yet to be applied to Francia or Scandinavia in any concerted way.⁶⁸

The earliest evidence for Frisian involvement in the slave trade appears in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, where he describes a Frisian trader purchasing captives at London for sale in Merovingian Gaul.⁶⁹ Most of these slaves were probably

⁶³ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 38.

⁶⁴ Ruth Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), n. 36, p. 203; David Pelteret, “Slave Raiding and Slave Trading in Early England,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981): 105; Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 9.

⁶⁵ Marc Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages: Selected Essays*, trans. William Beer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Pierre Bonnassie, *From Slavery to Feudalism in South Western Europe*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Carl I. Hammer, *A Large-Scale Slave Society of the Early Middle Ages: Slaves and Their Families in Early Medieval Bavaria* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002).

⁶⁶ Charles Verlinden, *L’esclavage dans l’Europe médiévale*, vol. 1 (Brugge: De Tempel, 1955), 717; Peter Johanek, “Der fränkische Handel der Karolingerzeit im Spiegel der Schriftquellen,” in *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa*, ed. Klaus Düwel et al., vol. 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 37–40; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, chap. 25; Gene W. Heck, *Charlemagne, Muhammad, and the Arab Roots of Capitalism* (New York: De Gruyter, 2006), 284–85.

⁶⁷ Niels Skyum-Nielsen, “Nordic Slavery in an International Setting,” *Medieval Scandinavia* 11 (79 1978): 126–48; Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*; Tore Iversen, “Thralls’ Manumission, Land Clearing, and State Building in Medieval Norway,” in *Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Bjørn Poulsen and Søren Sindbæk (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 263–76; for a critique of this practice see Stefan Brink, “Slavery in the Viking Age,” in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 49–50.

⁶⁸ David Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1995); David Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain and Ireland, 800-1200* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

⁶⁹ Bede, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) bk.4, c. 22, pp. 404-5.

destined for Frankish estates. By the Carolingian period, however, we can safely say that members of the Christian west were finding themselves in the hands of pagan owners. In his study of slavery in early medieval England, Pelteret points out that “the frequent enactment of legislation against the sale of Christians abroad supports the evidence ... that Englishmen regularly transported slaves across the sea to sell.”⁷⁰ The same concerns are present in the conciliar legislation from Francia. An episcopal council convened in 743 declared that “Christian slaves were not to be handed over to pagans.”⁷¹ A similar statement was made in 772 in Bavaria, when it was forbidden to sell slaves across the borders.⁷² In the ninth century Agobard of Lyon wrote angrily of kidnappings occurring in the heart of Francia, where free Christians were carried off into captivity.⁷³

As the eighth century comes to a close we begin to see signs of active predation by Scandinavian raiders on the Continent and in England, adding to and perhaps supplanting the established slave trade of other peoples with more direct methods of acquisition. Though these attacks are far less frequent before the 830s and described in far less detail, they certainly involved the capture of Christians, as well as of Christian goods. An Irish annal from 821, for instance, recounts a Viking attack upon the Kingdom of Ulster in which a large number of women were carried off.⁷⁴ The frequent mentions in Frankish annals of slave taking from the 830s on reinforce the idea that when Vikings came to Christian lands in search of wealth, they were not just thinking about silver.

Most of the slaves who ended up in Scandinavian hands were destined for warmer climes; Scandinavia depended far less on large numbers of slaves than the eastern Islamic world. And yet Scandinavians, like the Anglo-Saxons and Franks, not only traded in slaves, they also used them at home, and at least some of those they carried off would have ended up in Denmark, Sweden and Norway.⁷⁵ When Anskar first came to Birka in 829-30 it was not just the king and his subjects who were happy to receive the missionary. Rimbart writes, “There were, moreover, many captive Christian being held amongst the Swedes who rejoiced since now they would at last be able to participate in the divine mysteries.”⁷⁶ Just how many of these captives there actually were, we cannot say. But if these Christian slaves were glad to see Anskar, no doubt he was also glad to see them. While slaves were outsiders to those who owned them, the fact that they are consistently referred to as *captivi* rather than as *servi* or *mancipia* in the *Vita Anskarii* indicates that to missionaries they remained fellow Christians, a source of familiarity in a foreign world.

⁷⁰ Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England*, 76.

⁷¹ MGH Conc. 2, no. 2, c. 3, p. 7: “... ut mancipia Christiania paganis non tradantur.”

⁷² MGH Conc. 2, no. 16, c. 1, p. 99: “... ut nullus a provincia sua mancipium limine venundare vel proprium vel fugitivum presumpserit, et si quis hoc decretum non observaverit, wergeldo suo culpabilis permaneret.”

⁷³ Agobard, *De Insolentia Judaeorum*, ed. L. van Acker, CCCM 52 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1971), 195.

⁷⁴ *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, ed. and trans., Séan Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), 276-77.

⁷⁵ Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 47-49; Joachim Henning, “Strong Rulers - Weak Economy? Rome, the Carolingians, and the Archaeology of Slavery in the First Millennium AD,” in *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe*, ed. Jennifer R. Davis and Michael McCormick (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 47.

⁷⁶ Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 11, p. 32: “Multi etiam apud eos captivi habebantur christiani, qui gaudebant iam tandem se mysteriis divinis posse participari.”

Slaves in Scandinavia could thus provide a means for communication and community for those Franks who ventured willingly north. We also know that not all of these captives remained permanently enslaved. The written sources contain several accounts of the redemption and return of slaves from Scandinavia. Rimbert writes several times of Anskar's habit of seeking out and freeing Christian slaves from Sweden and Denmark. In the anonymous *Vita Rimberti* Rimbert himself is similarly said to have been instrumental in the redemption of Christians.⁷⁷ While this is in part a topos of the genre (the redemption of slaves appears as a standard saintly act as early as Merovingian *vitae*), that does not preclude it from reflecting reality. The specific stories of Anskar or Rimbert freeing Christians from the yoke of the heathen may be exaggerated or in part invented, but that does not mean they are purely fictitious. After all, if *vitae* present an idealized picture of saintly behavior, then it makes sense for those engaging in pious activities to emulate and enact those deeds.

And it was not only through the good deeds of saints that Christian slaves might return from Scandinavia. Captured Christians could also engineer their own freedom. In the *Vita Anskarii* Rimbert tells us of "a group of miserable captives who, having been seized from their homes and carried off to the land of the barbarians suffered greatly at the hands of these foreigners. Hoping to escape captivity, these slaves fled to those Christians called the Nordalbingen who are the neighbors of the pagans."⁷⁸ We also see evidence for the possible return of slaves in an annal for 845, where a Viking chieftain, facing a plague, sent home a group of Christian slaves in an attempt to propitiate their angry god.⁷⁹ While they probably did not have anything positive to say about their experiences, these former captives also make up a part of the web of engagement between these two lands.

Christian captives in Scandinavia and those who had been freed from such captivity form one part of the slave network that stretched between Francia and Scandinavia. But another type of slave also played a part in these exchanges. From as early as the time of Gregory the Great pagan slaves, especially young boys, were utilized by Christian missionaries to help them make headway in their proselytization. In preparation for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, the pope wrote a letter instructing those priests serving in Gaul to use the money from their positions to purchase and place Anglo-Saxon slave-boys into monastic orders.⁸⁰ Several centuries later Anskar engaged in similar activities. In 831, to aid in his Scandinavian mission, he was given possession

⁷⁷ Ibid., c. 34, pp. 65-66; Ibid., c. 35, pp. 69-70; *Vita Rimberti*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SRG 55 (Hanover: MGH, 1884), c. 17, p. 95: "Ad redemptionem captivorum cunctis pene quae habebat expensis, cum multorum adhuc apud paganos detentorum miseriam cernere cogeretur, etiam altaris vasa ad redemptionem eorum impendere non dubitavit."

⁷⁸ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 38, pp. 72-73: "Videlicet cum nonnulli miseri captivi, qui de christianis terris rapti et ad barbarorum terras perducti, nimis apud exteros affligebantur, spe evadendi inde fugerent et ad christianos venirent, ad praedictos videlicet Nordalbingos, qui proximi noscuntur esse paganos."

⁷⁹ AX, s.a. 845, p. 15: "Suadente autem eos quodam captivo Christiano, ut coram deo Christianorum sortem ponerent, quod et fecerunt, et salubriter sors eorum cecidit. Tunc rex eorum nomine Rorik una cum omni populo gentilium XIII dies a carne et medone abstinuit, et cessavit plaga, et omnes Christianos captivos, quos habebant, ad patriam propriam dirigunt."

⁸⁰ Gregory I, MGH Ep. 1, pp. 388-89: "Volumus ut dilectio tua ex solidis quos acceperit vestimenta pauperum vel pueros Anglos, qui sint ab annis decem et septem vel decem et octo ut in monasteriis date Deo proficiant."

of the monastery of Turholt in modern day Belgium by Louis the Pious. According to Rimbart, “at the time when he was in possession of Turholt, and because all of his energy was focused on his calling to the heathen, in order that his work might be of benefit to them he purchased a number of boys from the Northmen and Slavs and placed them in that monastery so that they could be trained for his holy campaign.”⁸¹ Both Gregory in the sixth century and Anskar in the early ninth were interested in how communication could be fostered between their culture and that of the pagan. These former slaves could act as a link between these worlds, since they spoke both tongues and had a better understanding of the mind and world of their birth. The slave trade, in this case, provided the raw materials necessary for missionary work and another opportunity for exchange.

Slaves, pottery, fine glass, and other goods were transported throughout the North Sea area, linking cultures and peoples. Through trade treasures could be acquired, flaunted, sold again, or gifted. For both Scandinavian chieftains and Frankish aristocrats, fine luxury items from distant lands served to demonstrate their power and wealth. The Danish ruler who could offer Frankish wine in delicate glass goblets instead of local mead was demonstrating to his followers just how worthy he was to lead them. Likewise, amber jewelry and luxurious furs from the distant north could make an impressive gift from a Frankish ruler to a loyal supporter. In a world driven by gift giving, trade functioned alongside warfare, and raiding as a means of acquiring and distributing the goods that greased social wheels. As the authors of *The Carolingian World* point out, “patterns of exchange were wrapped up in social relationships between groups and individuals, from which they cannot be separated, and market transactions that we would see as ‘economic’ were inextricably connected to ‘extra-economic’ forms of social obligation and political domination.”⁸² At both a local level and on a growing international scale productive commercial relationships based on an increasing flow of money, goods, and communication were forming between Francia and Scandinavia.

Trade Centers

In comparison to modern or even later medieval trade, eighth- and ninth-century commerce might seem small-scale and restrained, yet trade played a key role in the development of the Carolingian world. Signs of growing North Sea activity appear in a variety of locations, both inside and outside Francia. Aside from the rise in the number of physical objects discussed above, the appearance and growth of several emporia dotting the shores of the North Sea is further evidence of how important these international links were becoming.⁸³

⁸¹ Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 36, p. 71: “Eo quoque tempore quando cellam praedictam Turholt habuerat, quoniam omnis ei cura de vocatione gentium erat, ut eis in sua legatione prodesse potuisset, nonnullos pueros ex Nordmanis vel Slavis emptos in eadem cella causa discendi ad sacram militiam nutriendos posuerat.”

⁸² Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 330; Elisabeth Vestergaard, “Gift-Giving, Hoarding, and Outdoings,” in *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, ed. Ross Samson (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1991), 97–104; Janet Nelson, “The Settings of the Gift in the Reign of Charlemagne,” in *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 146–48.

⁸³ Hodges, “Dark Age Economics Revisited,” 230–31; Näsman, “Exchange and Politics: The Eighth-Early Ninth Century in Denmark,” 52–60; Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 338–47.

Two major Frankish emporia held pride-of-place along the Atlantic coast. On the river Canche, near the modern town of Étaples, sat the Neustrian emporium of Quentovic. From as early as the start of the seventh century it functioned as an important site linking the Continent to Anglo-Saxon England (especially the kingdom of Kent).⁸⁴ In addition to the physical evidence of coin-finds and artefacts such as Frankish pottery, these connections are also visible in anecdotes from the *Vita Wilfridi* and Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. In both of these texts Quentovic is linked with the authority of the Neustrian *maior* Ebroin and served as the landing point for Anglo-Saxon missionaries.⁸⁵ In terms of trade with Scandinavia, however, Dorestad was by far the most important and successful of the Frankish trading ports. Located south of Utrecht, at the site of modern day Wijk bij Duurstede in the Netherlands, Dorestad first appears in the textual record in the *Ravenna Cosmographer*, written sometime around 670.⁸⁶ As discussed above ownership of Dorestad was apparently contested between the Franks and Frisians throughout the second half of the seventh century. By 720 it had come firmly into the hands of the Franks and by 750 it had entered into its peak period, which would last until at least the 830s or 840s.⁸⁷ At its height Dorestad would encompass some forty hectares of land and would have had a population numbering in the thousands (though numbers may have varied greatly depending on the season). This stands in dramatic contrast to those urban centers that served an administrative or political function and that typically covered between one and five hectares of land, with a population typically confined to the hundreds.⁸⁸ As the anchor for two major trade routes, one stretching north into Scandinavia and the other travelling east along the Rhine into the heartland of the empire, Dorestad was the entry and exit point for numerous trade goods and also served as a crafts center: a place where items such as blades, glass beads, and cloth could be prepared for export to Scandinavia, and where raw materials such as amber could be transformed into luxury goods for the elites of Francia.⁸⁹ Its location also allowed for the collection of tolls on trade goods. In a diploma issued at Herstal in 779 Charlemagne granted an exemption to the monks of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and their *negociantes* (merchants) to all tolls at Dorestad, among other places.⁹⁰ Similarly, in 815 Louis the Pious confirmed the privileges of the church of Saint Martin in Utrecht to property in Dorestad. "To that church we have conceded one-tenth from the slave trade, from rents,

⁸⁴ Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, 35–36; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751*, 295–96; Adriaan Verhulst, "Roman Cities, *emporia* and New Towns (sixth-Ninth Centuries)," in *The Long Eighth Century*, ed. Inge Lyse Hansen and Chris Wickham (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 112–13.

⁸⁵ Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 25, pp. 50-51; Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* bk. 4, c. 1, pp. 330-33.

⁸⁶ Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 2:207–8.

⁸⁷ Simon Coupland, "Trading Places: Quentovic and Dorestad Reassessed," *Early Medieval Europe* 11, no. 3 (2002): 225–26; Simon Coupland, "Boom and Bust at 9th-Century Dorestad," in *Dorestad in an International Framework*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 96.

⁸⁸ Richard Hodges, *Early Medieval Archaeology in Western Europe- Its History and Development* (Bangor, Gwynedd: Headstart History, 1991), 18.

⁸⁹ Juke Dijkstra and Gareth Williams, "New Research in Dorestad," in *Dorestad in an International Framework*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 65; Clasina Isings, "Some Glass Finds From Dorestad," in *Dorestad in an International Framework*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 115.

⁹⁰ MGH DD Kar. 1, no 122, pp. 170-71.

and from tolls on merchants and any other royal privilege that gets collected by royal officials.”⁹¹ How large a revenue was generated from the trade that took place at Dorestad is not known, but it can be presumed that there were royal officials present in the emporium to collect tolls. Likewise, the presence of one of the most productive mints in Francia is another indication of the importance of the port to the Carolingian court.⁹²

If Dorestad was the powerhouse of the North Sea network, we can also see a growing interest in the benefits of trade with Francia in the increasingly more organized and controlled emporia developing in Scandinavia. Sites such as Gudme, on the island of Funen, and Helgö, located in eastern Sweden, had served as important central places during the first half of the millennium. Although nowhere near as large or organized as the emporia of the eighth and ninth centuries the presence of large halls and crafts workshops as well as imported goods indicates their importance.⁹³ Evidence also exists for numerous beachside markets, many of which seem to have developed in the early seventh century. These sites were initially seasonal affairs where well-to-do peasants and local elites could gather to exchange their own surplus goods for luxuries from the south. Finds of Frankish glass and coinage indicate active trade at Danekirke, Dejbjerg, and elsewhere along the Jutland peninsula.⁹⁴ Significantly, these temporary sites gave way to several larger more permanent trading ports by the mid-eighth century.⁹⁵ While beachside markets certainly didn't disappear entirely, they become stopovers in a much more organized and bustling network.

The earliest of these major Scandinavian trading ports, Ribe, located close to Danekirke on the Atlantic side of the Jutland peninsula, seems to have developed some time in the early 700s through the actions of local elites who must have begun to see the benefits of access to and control over the increasing influx of Frankish goods. The layout of the town is fairly regular and shows early evidence of a deliberate undertaking to make the area hospitable for shipping and commercial activities.⁹⁶ Much smaller than

⁹¹ Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 2:411, LXXX, 5: “ad ipsam ecclesiam concessissent omnem decimam de mancipiis, terris et de teloneis vel de negotio vel de omni re, undecumque ad partem regiam fiscus teloneum accipere aut exigere videbatur ...”

⁹² Coupland, “Charlemagne’s Coinage: Ideology and Economy,” 215; Dijkstra and Williams, “New Research in Dorestad,” 60.

⁹³ J. Ulriksen, “Danish Sites and Settlements with a Maritime Context A.D. 200-1200,” *Antiquity* 68, no. 4 (1994): 797–811; Tina Thurston, *Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict* (New York: Kluwer Academic, 2001), 54–56; Dagfinn Skre, “Centrality, Landholding, and Trade in Scandinavia C. AD 700-900,” in *Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Bjørn Poulsen and Søren Sindbaek (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 204; Olof Sundqvist, “An Arena for Higher Powers: Cult Buildings and Rulers in the Late Iron Age and the Early Medieval Period in the Mälars Region,” in *Ideology and Power in the Viking and Middle Ages*, ed. Gro Steinsland et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 163–210.

⁹⁴ Nielsen, “Urban Economy in Southern Scandinavia in the Second Half of the First Millennium AD,” 183; Skre, “Centrality, Landholding, and Trade in Scandinavia C. AD 700-900,” 204–7.

⁹⁵ Bente Magnus, “Dwellings and Settlements: Structure and Characteristics,” in *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Judith Jesch (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002), 18.

⁹⁶ Claus Feveile, “The Latest News from Viking Age Ribe: Archaeological Excavations 1993,” in *Developments around the Baltic and the North Sea in the Viking Age*, ed. Bjørn Ambrosiani and Helen Clarke (Stockholm: The Birka Project for Riksantikvarieämbetet and Statens Historiska Museer, 1994), 92–98; Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age*, 73; Feveile, “Ribe: Emporium and Town in the 8th and 9th Centuries,” 144–45.

Dorestad, at roughly ten hectares, it nonetheless can be distinguished from earlier Scandinavian market sites. By the mid-eighth century there is archaeological evidence for permanent structures that would have served both commercial and residential purposes. Glass beads, molds for brooches, as well as quite a few pieces of finished jewelry all attest to the presence of the specialized craftsmen we expect to find at an emporium. Frisian pottery, *sceattas*, and unworked amber all indicate the presence of long-distance trade. As Chris Wickham so succinctly puts it, “By the eighth century Ribe was an active commercial settlement which it would be cavilling not to call urban.”⁹⁷ Although its height seems to have been in the late eighth century it remained an important site well into the ninth. In the late 850s the *Vita Anskarii* states that the Danish king Horic II gave land in Ribe to Saint Anskar to construct a church.⁹⁸

On the Baltic coast of Jutland a second urban center, Hedeby, was at least lightly inhabited by the mid-eighth century.⁹⁹ By 804 the town, built on the banks of the Schlei, was developed enough to support the presence of royalty, as we can see in the *Royal Frankish Annals*, which records that Godfrid, king of the Danes, “accompanied by a fleet and cavalry, came to the place called Sliesthorp [Hedeby], on the border of his kingdom and Saxony. For he had promised to come to a meeting with the emperor, but on the counsel of his magnates he became too afraid to come any closer. Instead he committed all of his words to envoys.”¹⁰⁰ Already at this point Hedeby served as a convenient place where the Danish king could reside while facing off with Charlemagne. Four years later, in 808, Godfrid confirmed the importance of the location when he transformed Hedeby into a fully functioning emporium. Following an expedition into the land of the Abodrites, a Slavic tribe allied with the Franks, the Danish ruler “destroyed the [Slavic] emporium, called Reric in Danish, built on the seashore, that was a great advantage to his kingdom due to the taxes it paid. Taking the merchants from there, he weighed anchor and came to the *portus* of Sliesthorp [Hedeby] with his whole army.”¹⁰¹ The use of the word *portus*, also used when referring to sites such as Dorestad and Quentovic, indicates the transformed nature of the settlement, which only four years earlier had been casually referred to as a *locus*. The actions of Godfrid and the words of the annalist demonstrate just how important the North Sea trade and the sites that supported it were becoming by the beginning of the ninth century. If Reric, in contested Slavic territory, could provide

⁹⁷ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 54.

⁹⁸ Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 32, pp. 63-64.

⁹⁹ Unlike Ribe and Birka, Hedeby bears multiple names; referred to in German as Hiathabu and in certain sources, such as the *Royal Frankish Annals* as Sliesthorp, I have preferred the name most commonly used in the English literature. On the first phase of inhabitation at Hedeby see Jankuhn, *Haithabu*, 115–16; Ole Crumlin-Pedersen, *Viking-Age Ships and Shipbuilding in Hedeby/Haithabu and Schleswig* (Schleswig, Roskilde: Archäologisches Landesmuseum der Christian-Albrechts-Universität, 1997), 68; Müller-Wille, “Ribe - Reric - Haithabu: Zur frühen Urbanisierung im südsandinavischen und westslawischen Gebeit,” 331.

¹⁰⁰ *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH SRG 6 (Hanover: MGH, 1895), s.a. 804, p. 118: “Eodem tempore Godofridus rex Danorum venit cum classe sua necnon et omni equitau regni sui ad locum, qui dicitur Sliesthorp, in confinio regni sui et Saxoniae. Promisit enim se ad conloquium imperatoris venturum, sed consilio suorum territus propius non accessit, quicquid voluit, per legatos mandavit.”

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, s.a. 808, p. 126: “Godofridus vero, priusquam reverteretur, destructo emporio, quod in oceani litore constitutum lingua Danorum Reric dicebatur et magnam regno illius commoditatem vectigalium persolutione praestabat, translatisque inde negotiatoribus soluta classe ad portam, qui Sliesthorp dicitur, cum universo exercitu venit.”

the benefits of wealth to the Danish king, how much better to have a major trading center directly under his authority. The minting of numerous coins, including knock-offs modeled after Dorestad coins, at the new trade center further emphasizes the economic importance of the site. Archaeological evidence from Hedeby, including excavation of walls, dwellings, and a large number of artifacts and animal bones, in numbers far greater than at Ribe, points to the formation of the town in the ninth century (perhaps directly at the behest of Godfrid) as well as a rise in population and indicates just how successful the new emporium was.¹⁰² Large amounts of Rhenish pottery again indicate the presence of Frisians, most likely occupying their own enclave; pottery in Slavic styles points to Hedeby's eastern connections as well.¹⁰³ Further proof of Hedeby's importance as a trade center, an important royal site, and as a major site for communications between Franks and Scandinavians can be seen in the numerous references it receives in the *Vita Anskarii*. It is likely that Hedeby was the site where Anskar established a school for boys upon reaching Denmark with Harald Klak after the Danish king's baptism in 826.¹⁰⁴ We are also told that in the 840s Anskar frequently met with the Danish king Horic I at Hedeby and that at one of these meetings the missionary was given permission to found (or perhaps better, re-found, given the failed efforts in the 820s) a church there.¹⁰⁵ Hedeby also seems to have served as the point of departure for the numerous missions to Sweden that are chronicled throughout the *vita*.¹⁰⁶

The destination of those missions in Sweden was the emporium of Birka, the farthest east of the major Scandinavian trading ports, and in some ways the least connected to the Frankish world. Yet even at this distant port, with its face turned toward Russia and the world of the Greeks and Arabs beyond, the ties that bound Scandinavia and Francia are visible. As with the other Scandinavian sites, numerous archaeological finds indicate trade links with the west; glass shards, millstones, beads, pottery, and coins have been unearthed in the same styles as those found at both Dorestad and Ribe. Perhaps more intriguing are the metalworking molds that have been found. Nearly sixty molds for bronze keys, quite unusual in Scandinavia and directly linked to a style made and used in Dorestad, have been excavated. Molds for a type of brooch that is closely related to the Anglo-Carolingian style popular in the ninth century have also been found.¹⁰⁷ Alongside the physical evidence stand the numerous stories of Anskar's time at the Swedish port. The first mission was undertaken in c. 829. Describing the trip to

¹⁰² Jankuhn, *Haithabu*, 91–116; Henrik Jansen, "The Archaeology of Danish Commercial Centers," in *Voyages to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo*, ed. Calvin Kendall and Peter Wells (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 177; Näsman, "Exchange and Politics: The Eighth-Early Ninth Century in Denmark," 56–58.

¹⁰³ Hodges, *Dark Age Economics*, 79; Näsman, "Exchange and Politics: The Eighth-Early Ninth Century in Denmark," 46–47; Sindbæk, "Networks and Nodal Points," 122–23.

¹⁰⁴ Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 8, p. 30: "Sicque factum est, ut scolam inibi parvo tempore statuerent duodecim aut eo amplius puerorum." And see, *Anskar, the apostle of the North. 801-865.*, trans. Charles H Robinson (London: Society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts, 1921), n. 2, p. 83.

¹⁰⁵ Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 24, p. 52: "Quod ille benignissimo concessit affectu et in portu, quodam regni sui ad hoc aptissimo et huic regioni proximo Sliaswich vocato, ubi ex omni parte conventus fiebat negotiatorum, ecclesiam illi fabricare permisit, tribuens locum in quo presbiter maneret."

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, c. 33, pp. 64-65: "Quo cum ad hoc satis idoneus et tantae perfectioni valde esset voluntarius, dum ad portum memoratum Sliaswich, in quo naves cum negotiatoribus, qui cum eo ituri erant, constabant ..."

¹⁰⁷ Ambrosiani, "Birka and Dorestad," 241.

Sweden, Rimbert states that “in the midst of the journey they encountered pirates. While the merchants whom they were travelling with defended themselves valiantly for some time, they were eventually defeated by the pirates, who seized their ships and all of their goods. Anskar and his fellow travellers barely escaped on foot to dry land.”¹⁰⁸ Here is evidence for the presence of merchants (*negotiatores*) making the journey to Sweden from Denmark, though whether these were Frisians or Scandinavians is unknown. The appearance of pirates is also interesting, indicating that there was profit to be made preying on the traffic moving from one North Sea emporium to the next. At Birka, which the missionary saint did eventually reach, an audience with the Swedish ruler Björn shows how intimately the fortunes of these trading ports were tied to the interests of the developing monarchies of the north, as does the presence of a royal agent, dubbed a prefect (*praefectus*) by Rimbert. In the archaeological record we can see further signs of royal presence. In a recent excavation of the terraced area overlooking the harbor of Birka a major hall was discovered, built in the last half of the eighth century and measuring more than sixty feet by thirty feet. At the western end of the hall a considerable collection of high quality items including glass beakers and bronze and gilt decorative items were unearthed.¹⁰⁹

Merchants

From the mouth of the Rhine to the distant shores of the Baltic a network of ports was developing and thriving in the eighth and ninth centuries. All of these sites, whether powerhouse *emporia* like Dorestad or newer planned sites like Hedeby, existed primarily because of their ability (both geographically and economically) to create links and networks between the Franks and their neighbors. Royalty, whether Frankish, Danish, or Swedish could count on these developing port towns as a source of revenue, and also of power, as the luxuries they accumulated fed into the gift-giving and prestige-based politics of their courts. The fine items that circulated among these emporia – the foil decorated Tating ware, bronze brooches, Frisian cloth, glass bowls, and amber beads – were the physical bones of trade; they speak, in their own silent way, of commerce and of communication. Yet these objects did not just appear of their own accord on the docks of the emporia or at the courts of Danish and Frankish kings. They were carried, sometimes vast distances, by men willing to brave the elements and the hazards of leaving their homelands in search of profit.

Specific details about the merchants who bridged the worlds of Franks and Scandinavians are hard to come by. While we can trace their physical movement through the artifact record, when we turn to the written sources for further details we find a dearth of information. The standard title for these figures is *negotiator*, which functions as

¹⁰⁸ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 10, pp. 31-32: “Dum in medio fere essent itinere, in pyratas offenderunt. Et cum negotiatores, qui cum eis ibant, se viriliter defenderint, et primo quidem victoriam coeperint, in secundo tamen ab eisdem pyratibus devicti ac superati sunt, ita ut naves et omnia quae habebant eis tulerint, et ipsi vix pedibus ad terram fugientes evaserint.”

¹⁰⁹ L. Holmquist Olausson, “Patterns of Settlement and Defence at the Proto-Town of Birka, Lake Mälaren, Eastern Sweden,” in *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Judith Jesch (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002), 158–59.

something of a catchall word.¹¹⁰ A few examples show the wide variety of situations in which the term appears. We have already seen that Rimbert used *negotiator* quite frequently for both Frankish and Scandinavian merchants. In the *Miracula Sancti Goaris*, written by Wandalbert of Prüm in the mid-ninth century, a Frisian *negotiator*, saved from drowning on the Rhine by the intercession of the saint, gives a silk robe to the monks of the abbey of Prüm in thanks.¹¹¹ In secular documents the same term appears in the capitulary from Thionville, issued in 805, where tolls for merchants are discussed. We also see it used in one of Louis the Pious' formulae, a *praeceptum negotiatorum*, laying out the privileges for those merchants serving the royal court.¹¹² Nevertheless, though they appear across a wide range of genres, it is striking how infrequently the activities of merchants are featured or detailed in the writing of the Carolingian period. Michael McCormick writes that "like peasants and women, merchants are severely underrepresented in the surviving source material from early medieval Byzantium and the west."¹¹³ A combination of growing ecclesiastical contempt for commerce and profit, on the one hand, and the aristocratic focus on martial power and gift-giving on the other, may in part explain this underrepresentation.¹¹⁴ It probably also stems from the fact that most writing, whether ecclesiastical or secular, was concerned with the deeds of the great and powerful. When we do see *negotiatores* in miracle stories or in the legislation of kings, it is generally at moments when their activities bring them into contact with the powerful, often as servants or supplicants; they are supporting players, witnesses to a saint's power or subjects of a specific royal decree.¹¹⁵ They are almost always anonymous figures, referred to simply by their role. We are told about large groups of merchants or of singular figures identified only as "Frisian" but moments where we learn the name of a trader, as when Alcuin mentions one Hrotberct, are exceptionally rare.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Less often the term mercator is used, but these words appear to be interchangeable; see Peter Kneißl, "Mercator - Negotiator: Römische Geschäftsleute und die Terminologie ihrer Berufe," *Münstersche Beiträge zur Antiken Handelsgeschichte* 2, no. 1 (1983): 73–90; Dietrich Claude, "Der Handel im westlichen Mittelmeer während des Frühmittelalters," *Abhandlungen Der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* 144 (1985): 169.

¹¹¹ Wandalbert, *Miracula Sancti Goaris*, PL 121, col. 667C-667D: "Consimili prope eventu cum quidam ex Fresonum gente negotiator navem circa ripam ulteriorem ageret, neque littori in quo monasterium situm est propinquare disponeret, ubi ad scopulos illos, de quibus supra diximus, navis acta pervenit, subito rapta et in gurgitem undarum violentia tracta, praesenti cunctos discrimine perculit. Sed cum dominus navis Goaris saepe nomen et meritum iterans subsidium expetiisset, in portum continuo navis illaesa devehitur; ille ut continentem attigit, oratum perrexit, ac pro salutis munere vestem holosericam venerandae memoriae tribuit, quae etiam vestis postea ab eo qui haec mihi retulit Theodrado clerico ad Prumiam monasterium est delata."

¹¹² MGH Capit. 1, no. 44, c. 13, pp. 124-25; MGH Form., no. 37, pp. 314-15.

¹¹³ McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 12.

¹¹⁴ Vito Piervigiani, "The Itinerant Merchant and the Fugitive Merchant in the Middle Ages," in *Of Strangers and Foreigners*, ed. Laurent Mayli and Maria Mart (Berkeley, CA: Robbins Religious and Civil Law Collection, 1993), 82.

¹¹⁵ Michael McCormick, "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy," *Past and Present* 177 (2002): 29; Peter Sawyer, "Kings and Merchants," in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. Peter Sawyer and Ian Wood (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1977), 139.

¹¹⁶ Alcuin, MGH Poetae 1, l. 12, p. 221; Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983 provides a comprehensive catalog of sources that reference, explicitly or implicitly Frisian trade and merchants. Of the sixty-five works or authors presented, only five provide a proper name for the merchant in question. See also McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 14.

The combination of disinterest and the problem of limited literacy and haphazard record preservation thus leaves us with little to work with.

Although merchants are difficult to track or to study in depth, we can still make certain observations about these obscure figures. From at least the time of the late Roman Empire the term *negotatores* identified someone who made their living primarily or exclusively through the act of buying and selling goods. The term thus distinguished them from craftsmen and farmers who might appear at emporia or markets to sell but who were directly responsible for the production of the goods in question.¹¹⁷ In addition, based on the evidence provided by both written sources and by archaeology, the term *negotiator* seems generally to refer to those engaged in long-distance trade, men who travelled in order to make a profit rather than shopkeepers or local dealers. The *praeceptum negotiatorum* of Louis the Pious, for instance, provides a picture of merchants who each year (or every other year) presented themselves at court at the end of May to renew their service to the emperor. In return they received royal protection and exemption from tolls at the various trading sites around Francia, such as Dorestad and Quentovic, which they would frequent on business.¹¹⁸ We are already familiar with those merchants whose business took them along the northern trade routes, sometime as far as Sweden. Lest we think that trade was merely a Frisian or Frankish practice, the *Vita Anskarii* provides evidence that Scandinavian merchants, too, were in the habit of making long trade journeys. During an assembly at Birka, reported in the *Vita Anskarii*, an elderly Scandinavian trader defended the saint, declaring, “Some of us, who have traveled to Dorestad, have found the Christian religion to be beneficial and have taken it up of our own accord.”¹¹⁹ We also know that at least some of these merchants undertook their business as the representatives of the great and powerful. The *praeceptum negotiatorum* makes this abundantly clear, as do references to the trading privileges of ecclesiastical institutions such as Saint-Germain-des-Prés or the cathedral of Worms.¹²⁰ It is likely that this was not the case for every merchant. Although benefits such as immunity from tolls and legal protection made serving under the auspices of a powerful monastic house attractive, there were almost certainly independent merchants as well, making a profit of their own accord and forced to pay full measure on the goods they transported.

At least some merchants were quite wealthy. The *Miracula Sancti Goaris* has several accounts of merchants travelling up the Rhine in the company of slaves. In one of these stories the slaves are almost certainly the property of the merchant rather than a commodity, as they are seen serving as manual labor. The wealth of this merchant is further confirmed by his gift of a pound of silver to the church of St. Goar in thanks for rescuing of one of these slaves from drowning.¹²¹ If some merchants could afford to give

¹¹⁷ Claude, “Der Handel im westlichen Mittelmeer während des Frühmittelalters,” 168.

¹¹⁸ MGH Form., no. 37, pp. 314-15: “Ita ut deinceps annis singulis aut post duorum annorum curricula peracta dimidiante mense Maio ad nostrum veniant palatium, atque camaram nostram fideliter unusquisque ex suo negotio ac nostro deservire studeat hasque litteras auctoritatis nostre ostendat.”

¹¹⁹ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 27, p. 58: “Aliquando nempe quidam ex nobis Dorstadum adeuntes, huius religionis normam futuram sibi sentientes, spontanea voluntate suscipiebant.”

¹²⁰ MGH DD Kar. 1, no. 122, pp. 170-1; *Ibid.*, no. 257, p. 371-2; Johanek, “Der fränkische Handel der Karolingerzeit im Spiegel der Schriftquellen,” 55-68.

¹²¹ Wandalbert, *Miracula Sancti Goaris*, PL. 121, col. 667D-669A.

gifts of silver or fine silk to saints, others probably were not so lucky. While those whose business led them to the great assemblies of nobles and churchmen might expect to reap rich rewards, other *negotiatores* might be small time peddlers, travelling shorter routes along the coast and dealing in small numbers of goods.

Whether a successful servant of the emperor or a simple Frisian trader moving up and down the coast of Jutland, merchants were more than just the movers of physical goods and money. As Heidinga says, “The long distance trader was not only the intermediary in goods exchange, but also the go-between for various social systems, and as such was able to take on different roles.”¹²² Meetings between those from the Frankish world and their northern neighbors involved the exchange of information, news, and ideas as much as trade goods. Many of these encounters were likely seasonal, occurring at market beaches or at emporia during the summer months of trade, before the weather made travel difficult and unprofitable. Yet we also know that the Frisians had a tendency to set up colonies at the sites they frequented. At Hedeby and Ribe archaeological finds of non-indigenous building styles on the outskirts of the town have been discovered. These were likely built to serve as homes and shops for Frisian traders and to provide a sense of security and community by separating them from the local inhabitants.¹²³ Colonization and settlement would have allowed for longer periods of contact, with Frisians and Scandinavians living as neighbors.¹²⁴ Thus alongside the presence of Frankish items in graves, halls, and ports, we can also see signs of Frankish influence on crafts native to Scandinavia from at least the seventh century. Weapon styles, jewelry, pottery, and bronze casting such as the keys at Birka mentioned above and brooches at Ribe, all show the ways in which Scandinavian craftsmen emulated and utilized styles and artistic motifs from their southern neighbors.¹²⁵ The appearance of Scandinavian influenced brooches in Frisia and the Rhineland indicates that cultural exchange was not uni-directional.¹²⁶

If merchants facilitated the gradual diffusion of artistic styles and techniques they also aided in the movement of ideas and information. Commerce could not exist without lines of communication. The very act of trading, of knowing where proper markets existed, what goods were in demand and whom to seek out for protection or profit, created a network of people with knowledge of the language, customs, and land of their foreign neighbors. And not every instance of communication would be limited to matters of trade. If Scandinavian merchants could learn of Christianity through their travels to Dorestad, they also must have received at least some information from the Christian

¹²² Heidinga, *Frisia in the First Millennium*, 30.

¹²³ Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, 1:237–38; Stéphane Lebecq, “Les marchands au long cours et les formes de leur organisation dans l’Europe du nord et du nord-ouest aux VII–XI siècles,” in *Voyages et voyageurs à Byzance et en Occident du VIe au XIe siècle*, ed. Alain Dierkens, Jean-Marie Sansterre, and Jean-Louis Kupper (Genève: Droz, 2000), 333.

¹²⁴ Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut moyen âge*, 1983, vol. 1, chap. 10, see especially pp. 237–38.

¹²⁵ Signe Horn Fuglesang, “‘The Personal Touch’ On the Identification of Workshops,” in *Proceedings of the Tenth Viking Congress*, ed. James E. Knirk (Oslo: Universitetets Oldsaksamling, 1987), 220–21.

¹²⁶ Jellema, “Frisian Trade in the Dark Ages,” 20; Zadoks-Josephus Jitta, “Looking Back at ‘Frisians, Franks and Saxons,’” 53.

merchants who traveled north.¹²⁷ This is one explanation for the initial interest in Christianity (perhaps over-emphasized by the nature of the source) that Anskar encountered on his arrival in Scandinavia. Merchants probably also served as a source of information for those writing about foreign events, such as the detailed accounts of Danish politics present in the *Royal Frankish Annals*. We know that at least some merchants made their way to court on a regular basis, as well as to the great assemblies. And information need not have come only from Christians; discussions with Scandinavian merchants would not have been out of the question. In the later ninth century a wealthy Norwegian trader named Ohthere would have his accounts of travel and trade in Scandinavia – including a stop at Hedeby – immortalized as an addendum to the Old English translation of Orosius made at King Alfred’s court.¹²⁸ The gathering and sharing of information would not have been confined only to the annalists writing at court; local annalists would also have depended on merchants for news of distant events, even as they utilized the “major” annals for much of their information.¹²⁹ In a world where few people travelled, those who did so regularly must have served as links between distant points, in much the same way that pilgrims or diplomats might. A stop at a monastery to pray or to spend an evening, an encounter with officials at a toll site, a layover at an estate to collect goods, all of these would have provided opportunities for gossip and communication about events occurring both inside and outside the realm.

A growing familiarity with neighboring lands is evident on the part of the Scandinavians as well. The first major continental Viking attacks of the 830s demonstrate that Scandinavians had a clear idea of the wealth as well as the location of sites such as Dorestad, Quentovic, and Walcheren.¹³⁰ The fact that these initial raids on Francia targeted trade sites, not the rich and vulnerable monasteries and churches that would later become favorite targets, is a further indication of the importance of the commercial links between Scandinavia and Francia. These northern pirates were almost certainly also northern traders playing a different part.¹³¹ The Frankish merchants who made their living in the North Sea and Baltic networks must also have become quite familiar with the coasts and emporia of Scandinavia. Merchants did not go wherever the wind or their impulses took them. As McCormick writes, “For all their brevity, the ‘snapshots’ of merchants that crop up in acts, saints’ lives and toll regulations usually show us *where the merchants were* at the moment they were mentioned. Analyzing the disparate mentions reveals that traders were not randomly distributed. They cluster in a small number of places, like customs posts and towns. In other words, they unveil nodes

¹²⁷ Stéphane Lebecq, “Long Distance Merchants and the Forms of Their Ventures at the Time of the Dorestad Heyday,” in *In Discussion with the Past: Archaeological Studies Presented to W. A. van Es*, ed. H. Sarfatij, W. J. H. Verwers, and P. J. Woltering (Zwolle: Stichting Promotie Archeologie, 1999), 235–37.

¹²⁸ Ohthere, *Two Voyagers at the Court of King Alfred*, 18–22.

¹²⁹ Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 37.

¹³⁰ Rudolf Simek, “The Emergence of the Viking Age,” in *Vikings on the Rhine*, ed. Rudolf Simek and Ulrike Engel (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2004), 13.

¹³¹ Klavs Randsborg, “Les activités internationales des Vikings: raids ou commerce?,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales* 36, no. 5 (1981): 862–68; Timothy Reuter, “The End of Carolingian Military Expansion,” in *Charlemagne’s Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 403–4, and see also n. 62.

in a network of commercial communications.”¹³² Traders would have been quite familiar with these routes and foreign locations. For Anskar and his fellow missionaries, Scandinavia was a frightening and unfamiliar world. It makes sense that they would turn to merchants as their guides and protectors during their voyages into what was, for them, the unknown.¹³³ It is also likely that the detailed description of the Baltic provided by Einhard in his *Vita Karoli Magni* owed at least something to discussions with those who had primary knowledge of the area.

Merchants could also serve as official sources of information and go-betweens for their rulers, playing a role in diplomatic and political matters.¹³⁴ In a quite fragmentary capitulary issued sometime in the first half of Louis the Pious’ reign, counts and officials are apparently urged to seek out merchants as sources of information on proper coinage.¹³⁵ In the entry for 809, the *Royal Frankish Annals* provides further evidence for the ways in which merchants could function as links between peoples. “Meanwhile, Godfrid, the king of the Danes, sent certain merchants to the emperor, having heard that the emperor was angry at him because he had lead an army against the Abodrites in the previous year.”¹³⁶ Although the subsequent meeting was conducted by nobles (*primoribus Danorum*), the first steps of this tense negotiation were undertaken by more neutral and far less important figures. It is interesting to note that the annalist gives us no hint as to the origins of these merchants. Were these Danish merchants who were familiar enough with Francia to serve as effective diplomats, or were these merchants Franks who were pressed into service at the will of the Danish king? Both possibilities are plausible; the dearth of written sources dealing with merchants unfortunately makes it difficult to find an answer, just as it makes it hard for us to know whether Godfrid’s use of merchants was unusual or part of a wider pattern.

Conclusion

So merchants moved goods, and they moved ideas and information. From as early as the mid-seventh century, links were being formed between continental Europe and Scandinavia and these links would only grow stronger as time passed. Frisia straddled these two worlds. Even as her inhabitants were establishing colonies along the northern coast – in Saxony, the Jutland Peninsula and beyond – they were forging connections, sometimes unwillingly, with the world of the Franks. The trails of silver coins, first minted independently and then under the aegis of kings, attest to growing Frankish trade with their northern neighbors. Built around a network of urban centers and the desire of powerful figures in both cultures for luxury goods and the esteem that they brought, an impressive and ever growing number of archaeological finds demonstrate just how lively North Sea trade could be. Trade created not just physical

¹³² McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 617.

¹³³ Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400-1050* (New York: Longman, 2001), 250–51.

¹³⁴ F. L. Ganshof, *The Middle Ages: A History of International Relations* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 30–31.

¹³⁵ MGH Capit. 1, no. 147, pp. 299-300.

¹³⁶ *RFA*, s.a. 809, p. 128: “Interea Godofridus rex Danorum per negotiatores quosdam mandavit, se audisse, quod imperator ei fuisset iratus, eo quod in Abodritos anno superiore duxit exercitum”

links but social ones as well. The people responsible for propping up this luxury network – some merchants and others the very merchandise itself – moved back and forth and interacted with customers near and far. New goods were accompanied by new skills, new information, and new ideas. And while the churchman in his cell in the heart of Francia might still regard the pagan north as a dark and dangerous place, there were some in the Frankish kingdoms who would have thought otherwise. Even in the written sources penned by those same churchmen, we begin to see how much more familiar and attuned to the north Francia was becoming by the time of Louis the Pious. Commerce, an inherently communicative act, thus served as one strand in a growing web of interaction between the Carolingian Empire and the burgeoning kingdoms of Scandinavia.

Chapter Two

The *Regnum Francorum* and the *Gens Danorum* - Political Engagement up to the Death of Charlemagne

Even as traders from Francia and Scandinavia conducted their business, creating links of money, goods, and ideas, from the middle of the eighth century Frankish leaders were becoming more and more aware of the world to the north. The conquest of Saxony created for the first time a shared border between the Frankish kingdoms and Scandinavia, a new frontier that served as the site of conflict, cultural exchange, and communication.¹³⁷ In court poetry, *vitae*, and contemporary historical records we can see the Franks' growing interest in Scandinavia. By the end of the eighth century Frankish and Danish envoys began to travel regularly between rulers. These diplomatic interactions were sometimes cordial, but towards the end of Charlemagne's life they were overwhelmingly concerned with conflict and warfare. It is during these last years that the first signs of Scandinavian piracy appear in our sources, but these scattered raids and the efforts at defense made by the Carolingians are only vaguely reminiscent of later interactions.

This new relationship with the Frankish kingdoms spurred fundamental changes in the social and political structures of Scandinavia. As the editors of the recent book, *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs* put it, "[Francia] not only interacted [with] and influenced the development of state structures on its northern and eastern borders, but it also provided models of discourse about the relationship between centralizing power and group solidarity."¹³⁸ By the close of the eighth century we can see in Denmark figures who truly deserve the title of king: men who in many ways sought to emulate, and even challenge, the authority and practices of Charlemagne himself. Undertaking major building projects, encouraging the growth of trade centers, minting coinage, and engaging in foreign relations, these rulers paved the way for the creation of a true Danish kingdom in the coming centuries.

For the Franks, growing engagement with the North brought with it new challenges. During and after the Saxon Wars the Carolingians found their authority in northern Europe threatened. Their methods of control were undermined by Danish upstarts who harbored Saxon fugitives and struck down Charlemagne's handpicked Slavic leaders. Diplomatic conferences between large groups of Frankish and Danish nobles, an act unseen in any of the Franks' other political relationships, indicates just how much effort was put into controlling the situation on their northern border. These meetings point to a variety of possible interactions, as nobles from both sides, almost certainly accompanied by a now invisible retinue of servants, translators, and soldiers, met and discussed peace, the return of fugitives, and the boundaries of borders. By the end of Charlemagne's life, the Franks and their Scandinavian neighbors had become fully

¹³⁷ Joachim Henning, "Civilization versus Barbarians? Fortification Techniques and Politics in the Carolingian and Ottonian Borderlands," in *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 24.

¹³⁸ Ildar Garipzanov, Patrick Geary, and Przemyslaw Urbanczyk, eds., *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 6.

engaged in an ongoing relationship, sometimes cordial, other times cold, that would have repercussions for both peoples throughout the ninth and well into the tenth century.

First Meetings and Shared Borders

The earliest reference we have to contact between Scandinavia and Francia comes from Gregory of Tours' report of a raid on the kingdom of the Merovingian king Theuderic sometime around the year 515. According to Gregory a Danish fleet, led by their king Chlochiliach, came to Gaul

devastated a part of the realm of Theuderic and took captives. They loaded the captives and the spoils they had taken onto the ships and prepared to set sail for home. Their king remained on the beach, waiting until the boats reached the open sea, at which time he planned to join them. When Theuderic heard that his land had been invaded by foreigners, he dispatched his son Theudebert to those parts with a powerful, well-equipped army. The Danish king was killed, the enemy fleet overcome in a naval battle and all the spoils were returned to shore.¹³⁹

The significance of this encounter – the only record of a meeting between Danes and Franks prior to the eighth century – is hard to gauge. While at first glance the sixth century attack resembles the endemic raiding of the later ninth century, there are several factors that complicate any comparisons. For one thing, the event is the only one of its kind we hear about until the late eighth century. Whether Chlochiliach's raid was an odd venture out of the normal range of Scandinavian activities, or whether the defeat suffered at the hands of the Franks was sufficient to check further ventures south, the attack is too far removed from the ninth century to be easily linked. Moreover, the information provided by Gregory differentiates the attack from later raids. At first glance the details may seem familiar. An unexpected Scandinavian fleet arrives and ravages the area, seizing booty and captives. However, Theuderic's ability to dispatch a royal army that could respond in ample time to inflict defeat on Chlochiliach is quite different from the constant inability of later Frankish forces to respond in time to lightning-quick Viking raids. Gregory also states that the final confrontation involved not only a battle on the shore, where Chlochiliach was killed, but also a naval battle (*navali proelio*) where the enemy fleet was destroyed and the booty recovered, a feat never repeated in later encounters where the Northmen displayed consistent naval superiority. Ian Wood argues that the very fact that Gregory, generally silent on the world of the northeast and the Rhine, thought it worth recording demonstrates both the importance of the event and its unusual nature.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum*, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SRM 1, 1 (Hanover: MGH, 1951), bk. 3, c. 3, pp. 99: "Egressique ad terras, pagum unum de regno Theudorici devastant atque captivant, oneratisque navibus tam de captivis quam de reliquis spoliis, reverti patriam cupiunt; sed rex eorum in litus resedebat, donec navis alto mare conpraehenderent, ipse deincept secturus. Quod cum Theudorico nuntiatum fuisset, quod scilicet regio eius fuerit ab extraneis devastata, Theudobertum, filium suum, in illis partibus cum valido exercitu ac magno armorum apparatu direxit. Qui interfectu rege, hostibus navali proelio superatis oppraemit omnemque rapinam terrae restituit."

¹⁴⁰ Ian Wood, *The Merovingian North Sea* (Alingsås, Sweden: Viktoria Bokförlag, 1983), 6.

Gregory's report has received considerable attention as one of the first visible signs of Scandinavian interaction with the south. The identity of Gregory's *Dani* remains an open question. It has long been the practice to associate King Chlochiliach with the Geatish king Hygelac of Beowulf fame. Accepting that these two kings were one and the same, however, does nothing to answer the question of the ethnic identity of these raiders. Debates about the origins of the Geats have been ongoing since the mid-nineteenth century. Opposing sides have claimed that the Geats should be regarded either as synonymous with the Gautar, a Swedish people from Östergötland and Västergötland, or with the Jutes, a group associated with the Jutland peninsula and later with the founding of Kent in England.¹⁴¹ Within the context of this debate, Gregory's use of the ethnic term *Dani* is often attributed to a lack of any true knowledge about matters in Scandinavia and the tendency of Latin authors to apply classical ethnic terms to those groups beyond their borders, regardless of actual facts.¹⁴² Yet others have argued that Gregory may not have been completely incorrect in his labeling of Chlochiliach as a Dane. Jane Leake argues that the Geats were not in fact an actual historical *gens* at all but rather a creation of the Beowulf author, drawing on attractive mythic and historical information, and that later sources such as the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and the *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus both corroborate Chlochiliach's Danish origins.¹⁴³ Lars Gahrn states more tentatively that perhaps there were two Chlochiliachs, one Danish and the other Geatish, later conflated by the Beowulf author and modern historians.¹⁴⁴ We are thus left with an open question as to the actual origins of these sixth-century raiders. Regardless of whether Gregory's *Dani* hailed from Jutland, the Danish archipelago, or Sweden, it is not until the late eighth century, with the rise of the Carolingians and their subsequent push northward into Saxony, that Scandinavians once more appear in the Frankish literary record.¹⁴⁵

In Frankish sources such as the continuation of Fredegar's *Chronicle*, the *Annales Mettenses priores*, and the *Royal Frankish Annals*, the conquest of Saxony is depicted as an effort to reaffirm control over an area that traditionally owed its allegiance to the Franks.¹⁴⁶ The Franks had a long history of imposing tribute upon the various Saxon tribes but there is little doubt that the conquest undertaken by Charlemagne was at its core an aggressive, expansionist undertaking designed to bring new lands and booty into Frankish hands.¹⁴⁷ Whatever the reasons, the eventual success of Charlemagne's

¹⁴¹ For a brief summary of the debate over the nature of the Geats see Jane Acomb Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 1–12; Lars Gahrn, "The Geatas of Beowulf," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 11, no. 2 (1986): 97–103.

¹⁴² Fr. Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1960), xlvi–xlvi; Augustine Thompson, "Rethinking Hygelac's Raid," *English Language Notes* 38, no. 4 (2001): 12; Garipzanov, "Frontier Identities: Carolingian Frontier and the *gens Danorum*," 118.

¹⁴³ Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf*, 120–26; Michael Müller-Wille, "Das Frankenreich und der Norden," in *Völker an Nord- und Ostsee und die Franken*, ed. Uta von Freeden, Ursula Koch, and Alfried Wiczorek (Bonn: GmbH, 1999), 1–2.

¹⁴⁴ Gahrn, "The Geatas of Beowulf," 96–97, 107.

¹⁴⁵ Reuter, "Charlemagne and the World beyond the Rhine," 183.

¹⁴⁶ *Fred-con*, c. 11, p. 90; *AMP*, s.a. 691, pp. 12–13 and s.a. 744, p. 36; *RFA*, s.a. 772, pp. 33–34.

¹⁴⁷ Angelika Lampen, "Sachsenkriege, sächsischer Widerstand und Kooperation," in *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff, vol. 1 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 264–72; Matthias Hardt, "Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire," in *The*

campaign brought with it entirely new challenges for the Carolingians as they came into direct contact with new worlds and cultures. To the north of the Saxons lay the Danes. To the east a collection of Slavic tribes populated the area around the Elbe and the Baltic coast, most notably the Abodrites and the Wilzi. Even as Frisian traders were making economic inroads into Scandinavia via the North Sea, the Franks found themselves in increasing political contact with their northern neighbors due to their shared border and their mutual interest in the trans-Elben world.

References to Northmen begin to appear in Carolingian sources well before the end of the conquest of Saxony. The close connections between the pagan Saxons and their northern neighbors are demonstrated by the fact that the first historical reference to the Northmen in a Frankish source after Gregory of Tours appears in the *Royal Frankish Annals* in the context of Charlemagne's Saxon Wars. In the annal for 777, one of the important leaders of the Saxons, Widukind, is said to have fled north rather than submit to Charlemagne at Paderborn. The *Royal Frankish Annals* further states that Widukind "sought refuge in the region of Nordmannia along with his followers."¹⁴⁸ The revised version of the annals, compiled somewhat later, provides further details. Widukind did not just flee into the wastes to avoid the Frankish king but in fact found shelter with a rival ruler. The annalist states that Widukind, "one of the leaders of the Westphalians, conscious of his many crimes and on account of this fearful of the king, fled to Sigfrid, the king of the Danes."¹⁴⁹

Widukind's ability to find a safe haven with the Danes is indicative of the close connections between the Saxons and the Danes, geographically but also socially, and culturally. The shared name for the border area occupied by these two peoples, *Sinlendi* in Saxon and *Silænde* in Old Danish, is indicative of the larger linguistic connections between these two Germanic peoples.¹⁵⁰ Likewise, the prehistoric road running through the Jutland peninsula into Saxony, known variously as both the "Ox Road" and the "Army Road," tied these two areas together.¹⁵¹ Archaeological evidence, such as the presence of pottery with distinctive Elben features, demonstrates that active exchange existed between the Jutland Peninsula and Saxony well before the arrival of the Franks.¹⁵² At Danish Ribe archaeologists have also unearthed wooden wells built from

Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians, ed. Walter Pohl, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 219–24; Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 73–75.

¹⁴⁸ *RFA*, s.a. 777, p. 48: "... in partibus Nordmanniae confugium fecit una cum sociis suis."

¹⁴⁹ *Annales Regni Francorum qui dicuntur Einhardi*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH SRG 6 (Hanover: MGH, 1895), s.a. 777, p. 49: "Nam cuncti ad eum venerunt praeter Widokindum, unum ex primoribus Westfalaorum, qui multorum sibi facinorum conscius et ob id regem veritus ad Sigifridum Danorum regem profugerat."

¹⁵⁰ Garipzanov, "Frontier Identities: Carolingian Frontier and the *gens Danorum*," 129–30.

¹⁵¹ P. Glob, *Denmark: An Archaeological History from the Stone Age to the Vikings*, trans. Joan Bulman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 252–59; Else Roesdahl, *Viking Age Denmark*, trans. Susan Margeson and Kirsten Williams (London: British Museum Publications, 1982), 16; Thurston, *Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict*, 44–45.

¹⁵² Ole Klindt-Jensen, *Foreign Influences in Denmark's Early Iron Age*, trans. W. E. Calvert (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1950), 179–83.

tar and wood imported from the Harz forest in Lower Saxony sometime in the early eighth century.¹⁵³

Socially, in the eighth century both Saxony and Denmark were politically far less hierarchical and rigidly organized than the Frankish kingdoms. Chieftains might choose one of their own to exercise higher authority for various reasons (leadership in war being the most obvious), but remained largely independent nonetheless.¹⁵⁴ In religion, too, Saxons and Danes had common ground, linked by shared pagan beliefs that became all the more important as a declaration of self-identity in the face of aggressive conversion efforts by Frankish invaders. For John Hines, by fleeing to Scandinavia “Widukind was thus fighting to be part of one politico-religious system – non-Christian and north Germanic – rather than another, the Carolingian empire.”¹⁵⁵ Widukind and those other Saxons who were actively seeking to defy the power of Charlemagne and his God could thus turn to their northern neighbors for support based on long-standing familiarity.

The *Royal Frankish Annals* provides evidence of the ways in which Frankish activity in Saxony brought Scandinavia more directly into the affairs of the Franks. Other non-historical documents also further demonstrate that the Northmen were becoming a topic of interest for Charlemagne and his courtiers. Amidst the witty banter and poetic endeavors of Charlemagne’s so-called “court school” of the 780s, the very same King Sigfrid of the annal of 777 makes an appearance. In the first of two dueling poetic epistles Peter of Pisa, writing in the guise of Charlemagne, raises the question of whether Paul the Deacon would prefer to be crushed by a giant weight, locked in a savage prison, or sent to convert the “puffed up Sigfrid.”¹⁵⁶ In his response, Paul confidently dismisses the danger of the Scandinavian ruler, pointing to his oafish nature and his inevitable defeat at the hands of the wise and Christian Charlemagne.¹⁵⁷ Among the adjectives used to describe Sigfrid are “ferocious” (*truculentus*), “brutish” (*brutus*), “ignorant” (*indocto*), and “shaggy” (*hirsutus*). Indeed in lines 23-24, Paul writes that “since he [Sigfrid] is so hairy and so like a shaggy billy goat, / let him govern and give orders to the kids and she-goats.”¹⁵⁸ These poems were not just letters to be read by the stated recipient; they were also performative pieces, meant to be read aloud before the

¹⁵³ Mogens Bencard and Lise Bender Jørgensen, *Ribe Excavations 1970-76. Volume 4* (Esbjerg: Sydjysk Universitetsforlag, 1990), 145; Jørgensen, “Rural Economy,” 139.

¹⁵⁴ M Beecher, “‘Non Enim Habent Regem Idem Antiqui Saxones’: Verfassung Und Ethnogenese in Sachsen Während Des 8. Jahrhunderts,” in *Sachsen Und Franken in Westfalen: Zur Komplexität Der Ethnischen Deutung Und Abgrenzung Zweier Frühmittelalterlicher Stämme*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Hässler, Studien Zur Sachsenforschung 12 (Oldenburg: Isensee, 1999), 1–31; Ian Wood, “Beyond Satraps and Ostriches: Political and Social Structures of the Saxons in the Early Carolingian Period,” in *The Continental Saxons From the Migration Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. D. H. Green and Frank Siegmund (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003), 271–98.

¹⁵⁵ John Hines, “The Conversion of the Old Saxons,” in *The Continental Saxons From the Migration Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. D. H. Green and Frank Siegmund (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003), 306.

¹⁵⁶ Peter of Pisa, MGH Poetae 1, ll. 15-17, p. 51: “Si cupis ingenti ferri tu pondere frangi, / Carceris aut saevo fessus recubare sub antro, / Aut si pompiferi Sigifrit pendere vultum”

¹⁵⁷ Paul the Deacon, MGH Poetae 1, p. 51-52.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., ll. 23-24, p. 52: “Sit licet hirsutus hirtisque simillimus hircis, / Iuraque det hedis imperitetque capris.”

Carolingian court to amuse and impress the emperor and his followers.¹⁵⁹ Written probably around 783 and certainly before 787 (by which time Paul the Deacon had returned to the monastery of Monte Cassino) these works are the first literary depictions we have of Scandinavians. Shortly thereafter the image of the shaggy Northman reappears in a brief reference by another member of Charlemagne's literary circle. In a moral exegesis on Ecclesiastes 5.9, Theodulf of Orleans mentions the Danes in passing as part of a long list of various peoples and places, using the adjective "hairy" (*crinitus*).¹⁶⁰ In these poems the beginnings of a common literary description of Scandinavians appears, which itself seems to have sprung from earlier classical descriptions of barbarians, including works by Pliny, Tacitus, and Sidonius Apollinaris.¹⁶¹ Patrick Geary points out that "the result [of Roman ethnographic practice] is a sort of law of conservation of peoples: no people ever disappeared, no trait ever changes. At best, a group might acquire a new name and novel, even contradictory customs and characteristics."¹⁶² Early medieval writers were as prone to such behavior as their classical and late antique counterparts. In addition to a reliance on older images of the barbarian, Paul Dutton argues for another possible reason for a focus on hair. Discussing the conscious shift of the Carolingians away from the older Frankish and Germanic models of the long-haired king, he writes, "The Carolingians were also to have another powerful reason for keeping their hair short in the ninth century, for their enemies were a long and blond-haired pagan people."¹⁶³

The chances that Peter, Paul, or Theodulf knew anything concrete about Sigfrid, or that any of these court intellectuals had direct experience with the Northmen, are low. We cannot look to them for any reliable, realistic, or balanced presentation of Scandinavia or the true character of its inhabitants or their rulers. But the Danes and their leaders were becoming a topic of interest not just to those recording historical events but to some of the leading intellectuals of the Carolingian Renaissance as well, men who hailed from Mediterranean Italy rather than from the Rhine valley and had only entered the Frankish world a short time before.¹⁶⁴ While the actual chances of the author of the

¹⁵⁹ Peter Godman, *Poets and Emperors: Frankish Politics and Carolingian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 11–12.

¹⁶⁰ Theodulf of Orleans, MGH *Poetae* 1, l. 27, p. 461: "Quod crinitus amat Danus, flavusque Suevus, / Quaeque sub extremo gens Aquilone iacet."

¹⁶¹ Walter Pohl, "Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity," in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 51–61.

¹⁶² Patrick Geary, "Barbarians and Ethnicity," in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Graber (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 107; and see Ralph Mathisen, "Catalogues of Barbarians in Late Antiquity," in *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World*, ed. Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 17–32.

¹⁶³ Paul Edward Dutton, *Charlemagne's Mustache and Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 23; and see also Philip Shaw, "Hair and Heathens: Picturing Pagans and the Carolingian Connection in the Exeter Book and Beowulf Manuscript," in *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini et al. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006), 351–53.

¹⁶⁴ Theodore M. Andersson, "The Viking Image in Carolingian Poetry," in *Les Relations Littéraires Franco-Scandinaves Au Moyen Age*, ed. Maurice Gravier Delbouille (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1975), 217–21; Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 54–55.

Historia Langobardorum being sent north on mission were slim to vanishing, as both Peter and Paul demonstrate in their satirical tones, the involvement of the Danes in the conquest of Saxony had made them a topic of discussion for the Carolingian emperor and his entourage.

It should not surprise us, then, to see Scandinavia and the Danes in particular, surface in the work of the most famous of Charlemagne's intellectual elite. Alcuin of York was intently interested in the goals and nature of the Saxon Wars and the conversion of pagan peoples. Within this context he wrote a letter in 789 to Willehad, bishop of Bremen, asking for information about the possibility of extending Frankish Christianization efforts north to the Danes as well as to the Slavs in the area.¹⁶⁵ Willehad's death in the same year may explain why we have no record of a response to Alcuin's inquiry, but Bremen, as the northernmost Saxon bishopric, would become central to efforts to ensure the spread of Christianity not just to the Saxons but also to the Danes as well under its future bishop Anskar.¹⁶⁶ In 793, following the sack of Lindisfarne, Alcuin wrote a letter to Æthelred, king of Northumbria, again touching on the pagan Northmen. "Consider," he writes, "the immoderate dress, hairstyle, and habits of your leaders and people. Indeed, behold your own hairstyle, which you wish to be similar to the hair and beards of the pagans. Is not the terror of those same pagans looming over you, whose hair you wish to imitate?" Admonishing the king and placing the blame for the shocking attack firmly on the shoulders of his own Anglo-Saxon brethren Alcuin's letter again emphasizes long hair and shaggy beards as particularly Scandinavian and barbarian features.¹⁶⁷

It was not only in letters that Alcuin touched on the Danes; the *Vita Willibrordi*, written sometime around 796 provides another glimpse of his growing interest in Scandinavia. For Alcuin the *Vita Willibrordri* was a chance not just to write about an important missionary saint but also to demonstrate his own pedigree as a direct descendant (both spiritually and genealogically) of an earlier Anglo-Saxon missionary whose work on the Continent was emblematic of the great conversion effort spurred on by the Carolingians.¹⁶⁸ In chapter nine of his work, Alcuin describes the saint's voyage northward from Frisia following an unsuccessful visit to King Radbod's court. Again the bestial and obdurate nature of the Northmen are emphasized:

And when the man of God realized that his efforts there would not bear fruit he turned his evangelizing course toward the most ferocious Danes. There, it is said, the ruler was Ongendus, a man more cruel than any beast and harder than any stone. Nevertheless, through the authority of God he dealt honorably with the herald of truth. But when Willibrord perceived that the Danes were stubborn in their ways, devoted to idolatry, and absolutely uninterested in the hope for a better

¹⁶⁵ Alcuin, MGH Ep. 4, p. 31: "Mandate mihi per litteras, quomodo habeatis vel quid faciatis; et quomodo consentiant vobis Saxones in praedicationes; et si spes ulla sit de Danorum conversione."

¹⁶⁶ Eric Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbart, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 33–47.

¹⁶⁷ Alcuin, MGH Ep. 4, p. 43: "Considerate habitum, tonsuram et mores principum et populi luxuriosos. Ecce tonsura, quam in barbibus et in capillis paganis adsimulari voluistis. Nonne illorum terror inminet, quorum tonsuram habere voluistis?"

¹⁶⁸ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 80.

life, he chose thirty boys from that land and quickly returned to the chosen people of the Frankish kingdom.¹⁶⁹

Considerable debate exists about whether Alcuin's account of Willibrord's early contact with Scandinavia should be taken at face value. For some scholars, especially those of earlier generations, the *vita* serves as a tantalizing glimpse into a period otherwise very poorly illuminated.¹⁷⁰ Ongendus is often credited with the construction of the first part of the *Danevirke*, usually dated to the first half of the eighth century.¹⁷¹ Some historians, in an attempt to both historicize the epic poem *Beowulf* and provide more context for Alcuin's anecdote, have also argued for the possibility that Ongendus could be the same person as the poem's King Ongenthow.¹⁷² In the last several years, however, a growing consensus holds that Alcuin may well have fabricated the entire event. Anders Winroth, for instance, argues that the very presence of a Beowulfian king points to Alcuin accessing the epics of his youth for story material rather than recounting actual historical fact.¹⁷³ Ildar Garipzanov, citing the distance of the source from the events it describes as well as inconsistencies in Alcuin's own vocabulary, likewise states that "a reference to the *gens Danorum* in *The Life of Willibrord* that Alcuin wrote in the late eighth century . . . seems to be nothing but a geographical topos."¹⁷⁴

Whether or not we trust Alcuin's account, his works, along with those of other prominent thinkers and writers of Charlemagne's court, demonstrate an increasing awareness of and interest in the world of the North Sea. Increased political contact due to the Saxon Wars, the ongoing interest in Christianizing the pagan north, and the first signs of Scandinavian raiding all made the Danes a people worth discussing. Yet while the barbarian Danes might elicit interest, their common depiction in writing of this period as obdurate, brutish, wild, and especially hairy, demonstrates that they remained largely a cliché. Scandinavia was increasingly on the minds of the court in the last decades of the eighth century, but it was a Scandinavia rooted more in fantasy and classical history than in reality.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹ Alcuin, *Vita Willibrordi*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SRM 7 (Hanover: MGH, 1920), c. 9, pp. 123-24: "Et dum apud eum vir Dei fructifere non posse agnovit, ad ferocissimos Danorum populos iter evangelizandi convertit. Ibi tamen, ut fertur, regnabat Ongendus, homo omnino fera crudelior et omni lapide durior, qui tamen iubente Deo, veritatis praeconem honorifice tractabat. Qui dum obduratam moribus et idolatria deditam et nullam melioris vitae spem habentem offendit, acceptis tunc triginta eiusdem patriae pueris, ad electos a Deo populos regni Francorum revertere festinavit."

¹⁷⁰ Richard E. Sullivan, "The Carolingian Missionary and the Pagan," *Speculum* 28, no. 4 (1953): 734-35; Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, 134; Niels Lund, "Harald Bluetooth - A Saint Very Nearly Made by Adam of Bremen," in *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century*, ed. Judith Jesch (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002), 303.

¹⁷¹ Roesdahl, *Viking Age Denmark*, 144; Thurston, *Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict*, 86-87.

¹⁷² Luitpold Wallach, "Review of: Alcuin, Friend of Charlemagne: His World and His Work by Eleanor Shipley Duckett," *Speculum* 27, no. 1 (1952): 103; C. H. Talbot, trans., *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (London: Sheed and Ward Ltd., 1954), 9, n. 1; Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia*, 15.

¹⁷³ Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia*, 15.

¹⁷⁴ Garipzanov, "Frontier Identities: Carolingian Frontier and the *gens Danorum*," 119-20.

¹⁷⁵ Karl Neff, *Die Gedichte Des Paulus Diaconus* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1908), 102; Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 341-42; Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia*, 12-14.

So who really were these Danes, intruding so suddenly onto the political scene of Western Europe? Garipzanov makes a compelling point:

[The] *Gens Danorum* was constructed in two different respects. First as a category of ethnic discourse, it was constructed in Frankish narratives from the eighth to the ninth century under the influence of the late classical cosmographic tradition and shaped the Frankish perception of northern neighbours, especially in the first half of the ninth century. This ethnic discourse has in turn affected the modern historiographic tradition of the origins of Denmark and the Danish state. Second, as a historical phenomenon, the *gens Danorum* of the ninth century was constructed in southern Jutland from people of differing ethnicities in response to an approaching Carolingian expansion. The Danish ruling elite from adjacent islands was able to offer military expertise as well as military support from the Danes living to the northeast, and, hence, it defined a unifying frontier identity.¹⁷⁶

The *Dani* of the *Royal Frankish Annals* and other Carolingian sources were almost certainly not identical to those *Dani* mentioned by Gregory of Tours. Between the early sixth and the late eighth century there must have been numerous migrations and shifts in the ethnic and cultural make up of southwest Scandinavia. Nevertheless, for Frankish authors it was standard practice to label a people by classical names. For these writers, the people who lived in the far north were the *Dani*, in large part *because* they lived in the far north where earlier authorities had always placed them. When we speak of the Danes as an *ethnos* or a kingdom we must be mindful of the impact that classical and Frankish sources and their powerful discourses have on our view of Scandinavia and its development. Most of the peoples labeled *Dani* by the Franks were probably more closely tied to local groups than to any over-arching kingdom or tribe. Yet there is also evidence that a common ethnic identity existed for the peoples of the Jutland peninsula and the Danish archipelago. In his analysis of burial practices and death rituals in southern Scandinavia Fredrik Svanberg points out that contrary to much of south-eastern Sweden (where practices varied greatly from settlement area to settlement area) ritual practices across what would become the medieval kingdom of Denmark were quite uniform. In accounts by medieval writers such as Rimbert and the Scandinavian merchant Wulfstan (whose travels were recorded in the Old English *Orosius* of King Alfred), the people of that area are consistently referred to as a single group, the *Dani* (or *Dene* in the Old English). According to Svanberg, then, “the collective identity label of *Dene* or *Dani* existed on a supra-regional level, and applied to a community created partly by a large ritual system, while a whole number of other collective identities were tied to local geographical regions.”¹⁷⁷

The men who came to rule over this large area, of whom Sigfrid represents our first clear example, seem to have had their power base not on Jutland itself but on the large island of Funen, which tended to have better agricultural land than the peninsula and provided a convenient staging point to exert control across the Danish peninsula and archipelago thanks to its geographically central location. As with the topic of ethnic

¹⁷⁶ Garipzanov, “Frontier Identities: Carolingian Frontier and the *gens Danorum*,” 142.

¹⁷⁷ Fredrik Svanberg, *Decolonizing the Viking Age* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), 167–68.

identity, when we discuss the nature of these first Danish kings we are entirely reliant on Frankish sources for our written material. We call rulers like Sigfrid and Godfrid “kings” in large part because that is what the Franks called them, an act that tells us much about the growing power and independence of the Danes in the minds of the Franks, given the propensity for those writing Frankish history to degrade and demean neighboring leaders via titles.¹⁷⁸ We also use the term in part because other possibilities, such as “chieftain” or “warlord,” do not properly convey the growing multi-regional power that these men came to wield from the second half of the eighth century onward.

Beyond glimpses of Sigfrid, Frankish sources provide little in the way of details prior to the ninth century. Archaeological evidence thus become our primary window into the period preceding the so-called “Viking Age,” typically referred to as the “Germanic Iron Age” by archaeologists.¹⁷⁹ The various excavations and finds indicate that what we consider medieval Denmark – consisting of the Jutland peninsula, the several hundred archipelagic islands of the Danish Strait, the four major islands (Funen, Sjælland, Lolland and Falster) as well as Scania, Halland and Blekinge (the southwestern coastal areas of modern day Sweden) – was undergoing major social and political change in the seventh and eighth centuries. In the Roman Iron Age, typical settlements consisted of small agricultural units, centered on important farmsteads where a leading family could exercise control over all of the major day-to-day activities of the community: from planting, to crafting, and even religious rituals. By the late sixth century smaller farmholds began to give way to larger territories controlled by powerful elites living in large manors or halls and exercising their influence over swaths of territory that might include numerous farms and settlements.¹⁸⁰ The growth of proto-urban sites such as Dankirke and its successor Ribe, often spurred directly by these rising elites, allowed for the concentration of craftsmen outside of the context of farming and provided easier control over trade and luxury good traffic. Over time, those men able to most effectively control resources and wield power were able to expand their authority over even larger areas. What we are witnessing is the gradual shift from small scale, largely independent, territorial units to a collection of several larger semi-autonomous chiefdoms, with the most powerful of these chiefs striving to gain singular authority. The undertaking of large-scale construction projects in the early eighth century provides further evidence of the coalescing of power under fewer, more powerful, figures. The most notable of these projects are the digging of the Kanhave canal across the island of Samsø (allowing for easier navigation through the Danish strait) and the construction of the first sections of the Danevirke. Only a ruler with access to considerable resources in terms of wealth, manpower, and authority could bring about such works, designed

¹⁷⁸ A notable example of this practice, referred to in chapter one of this dissertation, is the way that Radbod of Frisia is presented as *dux* by Carolingian sources, even as he is referred to as *rex* in Anglo-Saxon sources.

¹⁷⁹ Glob, *Denmark: An Archaeological History from the Stone Age to the Vikings*, 170; Thurston, *Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict*, 6–7.

¹⁸⁰ Lotte Hedeager, *Iron-Age Societies: From Tribe to State in Northern Europe, 500 BC to AD 700*, trans. John Hines (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 193–206; Magnus, “The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century,” 15–18; Stefan Brink, “People and *land* in Early Scandinavia,” in *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs*, ed. Ildar Garipzanov, Patrick Geary, and Przemyslaw Urbanczyk (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 104–5.

probably for the dual purpose of defense and increased control of commercial traffic.¹⁸¹ Even as the Franks were pushing their way north, imposing control over Saxony and spreading their influence farther into the North Sea and Baltic area, the Danes were coalescing into a more coherent political entity, one with a vested interest in the politics of the wider world and with a growing ability to insert itself into these matters.¹⁸²

In 782 Charlemagne returned to Saxony and held an assembly near Cologne where both the Franks and the Saxons gathered. Notably absent was Widukind, still in exile in the North, as the revised *Royal Frankish Annals* makes clear. At the same assembly the first explicit act of diplomacy between the Danes and the Franks is recorded, with the arrival of Sigfrid's envoy, Haltpanus.¹⁸³ By 782 the Franks had been waging war in Saxony for a decade. Although they faced setbacks and slow-going the assembly at Cologne (clearly geared towards the ongoing incorporation of Saxony) as well the active apportioning of territory to missionaries, and the appointment of new counts were all signs of their growing sway over northern Germany.¹⁸⁴ That the Danes chose this moment to begin diplomatic relations indicates that they were acutely aware of the changing situation to the south. Indeed, shortly after the assembly at Cologne Widukind returned from his northern exile to stir up another revolt against the Franks. And as in 777, when his revolt was brutally crushed by the Franks, Widukind fled, once again seeking refuge with the Northmen. While we cannot be certain to whom in Scandinavia Widukind fled, the ongoing inability of the Saxon leader to stand against the Franks must have further emphasized the power of the Carolingians to his northern hosts.

Despite whatever limited relief the Danes could provide for him, Widukind eventually returned to his homeland and submit to the Franks; in 785 the Westphalian leader was baptized at Attigny, with Charlemagne as his godfather. His family remained important in Saxony in the following generations.¹⁸⁵ The submission of one of the major leaders of the Saxons did not, however, signal the end of hostilities, which flared up again and again for nearly twenty more years. It is in the context of one of these later acts of rebellion that we catch another glimpse of the growing political connections between the Frankish Empire and its northern neighbors. In 798 the northernmost Saxons, the Nordliudi, whose territory beyond the Elbe bordered that of the Danes, rose up in revolt once more, killing several of Charlemagne's legates. The revised annal provides further details, reporting that "along with the others, Godescal, the legate of the king, who had been sent a short time ago to Sigfrid the king of the Danes, was slaughtered. He was

¹⁸¹ Roesdahl, *Viking Age Denmark*, 38–39; Thurston, *Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict*, 86–87; Gareth Williams, "The Influence of Dorestad Coinage on Coin Design in England and Scandinavia," in *Dorestad in an International Framework*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 106.

¹⁸² Callmer, "Archaeological Sources for the Presence of Frisian Agents of Trade in Northern Europe ca. AD 700-900," 469; Brink, "People and land in Early Scandinavia," 104–12.

¹⁸³ *RFA*, s.a. 782, p. 60; *RFA-R*, s.a. 782, p. 61.

¹⁸⁴ Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbert, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, 35; Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 74–75.

¹⁸⁵ *RFA*, p. 70; K Schmid, "Die Nachfahren Widukinds," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 20 (1964): 1–47; Ian Wood, "Before or After Mission: Social Relations Across the Middle and Lower Rhine in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," in *The Long Eighth Century*, ed. Inge Lyse Hansen and Chris Wickham (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 162.

returning at that time, and was captured and killed by the instigators of this rebellion.”¹⁸⁶ From the annals it seems that Godescal was the victim of poor timing and bad luck. Returning from Scandinavia he happened to be travelling through the territory of the Nordliudi at the same time that a number of royal envoys had arrived in the area to enforce justice for some unlisted offense. Even so, Godescal’s legation is another indicator of the ongoing diplomatic links being forged between the Franks and the Danes. The appearance of a Danish envoy in 782 was not a singular event, nor was diplomatic communication between Francia and the *rex Danorum* a one-sided affair.

In response to the actions of the Nordliudi, Charlemagne led yet another campaign into Saxony and with the aid of the allied Abodrite Slavs inflicted defeat upon the Saxons once again. In 804 Charlemagne took even more drastic measures against these northern Saxons, deporting them from their lands across the Elbe and settling them elsewhere. The territory beyond the Elbe was then granted to the Abodrites, with the northernmost border of Francia drawn at the Elbe itself. Far from preventing conflict the Carolingians’ attempt to establish a buffer between Scandinavia and Francia in fact served as a point of ongoing conflict in the coming decades. With the end of the Saxon Wars and the solidifying of Frankish power across the Rhine the relationship between the Carolingian and Danish rulers came into even sharper focus.

Imitatio Regis Francorum and Imperialism

In anthropological terms the kingdom of the Danes can be regarded as a “secondary” state. At its most basic, a secondary state is one whose development into a full-fledged political entity is shaped, both directly and indirectly, by the actions and influence exerted by larger and more developed societies, often dubbed “primary” states.¹⁸⁷ Due to increased contacts with the Carolingian empire the Danes and Scandinavia as a whole were being fundamentally impacted. At times these changes were undertaken consciously by leaders inspired by the model of the great ruler to the south. At others they came about without conscious choice, the result of ongoing contact with the Franks. Signs of these changes are visible in Denmark’s economic activity, its internal structures, and in the ways it interacted with the outside world.

We have already demonstrated in the previous chapter the way in which the economic activities of the Franks influenced those of the Danes, an influence visible in the development of imitation coinage and the use of continental luxury goods as gift and prestige items. The foundation or promotion of trade centers such as Ribe and Hedeby should be viewed, moreover, not just as a sign of the economic growth of Denmark and Scandinavia but of political growth as well. At Ribe archaeologists have excavated and dated a shallow ditch that surrounded the entire town and was built some time in the early ninth century. The ditch, which Claus Feveile describes as “a completely new element

¹⁸⁶ *RFA-R*, s.a. 798, p. 103: “Trucidantes cum caeteris et Godescalcum regis legatum, quem ille ante paucos dies ad Sigifridum regem Danorum miserat. Is cum eodem tempore reverteretur ab huius seditionis auctoribus interceptus atque occisus est.”

¹⁸⁷ Morton Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society* (New York: Random House, 1967), 240–42; Barbara Price, “Secondary State Formation: An Explanatory Model,” in *Origins of the State*, ed. Ronald Cohen and Elman Service (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), 161; Thurston, *Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict*, 3–4.

within Scandinavian archaeology,” seems to have been too narrow and shallow to function as a defensive measure. Instead it is viewed as a means of demarcating the limits of the town as a special place for trading, with rights and protections enforced by royal authority.¹⁸⁸ As with Godfrid’s deliberate creation of Hedeby as the primary emporium of the western Baltic in 808, there is at Ribe an echo of Frankish policies, whether consciously or unconsciously, designed to channel trade (and the authority and power that came with it) into the hands of a singular ruler.

Likewise the decision to mint coins must be seen not merely as an act meant to provide better economic returns on the trade now flowing through Scandinavian markets but also as a conscious political act of kings growing in power and influence.¹⁸⁹ This is readily apparent when we look to Ribe, where “the very large number of local finds of so-called Wodan-Monster sceattas, the complete absence of finds of Carolingian coinage in Ribe and the very well defined stratigraphy of the site all suggest not only that these particular sceattas were minted at Ribe but also that they acted as an indigenous currency, to the exclusion of other foreign coins.”¹⁹⁰ The creation and use of coins that mirrored and co-opted those of the most powerful rulers in Western Europe is highly reminiscent of earlier attempts by barbarian kings, including the Franks, to mimic and thus take on some of the prestige of Roman emperors.¹⁹¹ As early as the Merovingian period and increasingly from the mid-eighth century onward, we can detect in Scandinavia the practice of what scholars have dubbed *imitatio regis Francorum*, a play on the well known idea of *imitatio Romanorum*. In both the material record and in the political activities and behavior of the emerging Scandinavian kings the influence of their more powerful and organized southern neighbors is visible.¹⁹²

The appearance of Danish envoys at the Frankish assembly in 782 is indicative of the Danes’ growing engagement with the larger world around them. Figures such as the envoy Haltpanus point to another way in which Scandinavian rulers were learning from their more politically developed neighbors. By appointing representatives Danish kings could project power farther afield and engage in diplomatic and political relationships with rulers beyond their borders. In 809 Godfrid, in an apparent attempt to prevent an all-out war with the Franks, requested a meeting between a group of his nobles and those of the Franks.¹⁹³ Although this particular meeting did not end fruitfully— as evidenced by

¹⁸⁸ Feveile, “The Latest News from Viking Age Ribe: Archaeological Excavations 1993,” 92–98; Feveile, “Ribe: Emporium and Town in the 8th and 9th Centuries,” 146–47.

¹⁸⁹ Brita Malmer, “Münzprägung und frühe Stadtbildung in Nordeuropa,” in *Haithabu und die frühe Stadtentwicklung im nördlichen Europa*, ed. Klaus Brandt, Michael Müller-Wille, and Christian Radtke (Münster: Wachholtz, 2002), 117–22.

¹⁹⁰ Coupland, “Boom and Bust at 9th-Century Dorestad,” 100; Garipzanov, “Frontier Identities: Carolingian Frontier and the *gens Danorum*,” 140–41.

¹⁹¹ Garipzanov, “Frontier Identities: Carolingian Frontier and the *gens Danorum*,” 141; Williams, “The Influence of Dorestad Coinage on Coin Design in England and Scandinavia,” 106–10; Egon Wamers, “Imitatio Imperii: Silber verändert den Norden,” in *Die Macht des Silbers*, ed. Egon Wamers and Michael Brandt (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2005), 159–64.

¹⁹² Vierck, “*Imitatio imperii* und *Interpretatio Germanica* vor der Wikingerzeit,” 94; Nielsen, “Urban Economy in Southern Scandinavia in the Second Half of the First Millennium AD,” 182, 202.

¹⁹³ *RFA*, s.a. 809, p. 128: “Petebat etiam, ut conventus comitum imperatoris atque suorum iuxta terminos regni sui trans Albium fieret, in quos res invicem gestarum progerii et emendatione digna inter partes enumerari potuissent.”

the outbreak of hostilities in 810 – a similar meeting in 813 between sixteen Danish nobles and an equal number of Frankish and Saxon counts demonstrates that the meeting of 809 was not a unique event.¹⁹⁴ The evidence for a growth in royal authority in Scandinavia, even in the absence of a direct royal presence, appears several more times in ninth-century Frankish sources. The 817 entry of the *Royal Frankish Annals* refers to one Gluomi as the *custos Nordmannici*, a position that at least in the minds of the Frankish annalists seems to be similar to that of a marcher lord. Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* also mentions several important royal officials apparently placed in charge of the emergent royal urban centers of Hedeby and, farther afield, at Birka in Sweden.¹⁹⁵

The developmental effect that the Franks had on the Danes and their rulers is evident in at least one other way. The Franks had long exercised power and authority, both direct and indirect, over the many peoples that surrounded their territories. Whether as conquerors, adjudicators over power struggles, or takers of tribute and granters of favors, the Carolingian court exerted a gravity from which very few of their neighbors could escape. From the early ninth century on, however, even as they continued to send envoys to Aachen, we begin to see that the Danes were no longer content to be merely one of the many subordinate pagan peoples scrambling for Carolingian crumbs. Godfrid and the Danish rulers who followed him expended considerable energy attempting to gain and wield influence in the North Sea and Baltic area, to effectively create a counterweight of political power against the ever-present and threatening Frankish Empire. Thus even as direct engagement and conflict grew between the *regnum Francorum* and *regnum Danorum* there also developed a competitive series of interactions between both these peoples and another of their shared neighbors, the Slavs.

Slavic Proxy Wars

As the ongoing campaign against the Saxons introduced the Franks to the Scandinavian world, it also brought the large and somewhat amorphous Slavic tribes present on the far side of the Elbe – often referred to in modern historiography as “Western” or “Polabian” Slavs – more fully into the orbit of Carolingian politics.¹⁹⁶ The final effective subjugation of the Saxons in the early ninth century created new sites for

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., s.a. 813, p. 138: “Missi sunt de hoc conventu quidam Francorum et Saxonum primores trans Albim fluvium ad confinia Nordmannorum, qui pacem cum eis secundum petitionem regum illorum facerent et fratrem eorum refferent. Quibus cum pari numero – nam XVI erant – de primatibus Danorum in loco deputato occurrissent, iuramenti utrimque factis pax confirmata et regum frater eis redditus est. Qui tamen eo tempore domi non erant, sed ad Westarfoldam cum exercitu profecti, quae regio ultima regni eorum inter septentrionem et occidentem sita, contra aquilonem Britanniae summitatem respicit, cuius principes ac populus eis subici recusabant.”

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., s.a. 817, p. 147; Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 11, p. 32, c. 31, pp. 63-64; Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark*, 14–15; Näsman, “Exchange and Politics: The Eighth-Early Ninth Century in Denmark,” 66–67.

¹⁹⁶ Frank A. Kmiotowicz, *Ancient Slavs* (Stevens Point, WI: Worzalla Publishing Co., 1976), 214; Christian Lübke, “Slaven zwischen Elbe/Saale und Oder: Wenden - Polalben - Elbslaven?,” *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 41 (1993): 17–43; Christian Lübke, “Forms of Political Organisation of the Polabian Slavs (until the 10th Century AD),” in *The Origins of Central Europe*, ed. Przemyslaw Urbanczyk (Warsaw: Scientific Society of Polish Archaeologists, 1997), 115–17; P. M. Barford, *The Early Slavs: Culture and Society in Early Medieval Eastern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 104–8.

contention between the Danes and Franks, focused more and more on control and influence over their weaker Slavic neighbors, a power struggle that only grew fiercer with Charlemagne's decision in 804 to re-settle one such group in formerly Saxon Nordalbingia, to serve as a buffer for the Frankish Empire.¹⁹⁷

Although it is impossible to date precisely, Slavic tribes seem to have made their way into the area of Central Europe and the middle and lower Elbe sometime in the sixth century, as part of the ongoing migration and movement of ethnic and tribal groups during this period. Although we lack written sources for early westward movement, the considerable archaeological evidence demonstrates the presence of Slavic groups east of the Elbe, based on the excavation of pottery and of settlement sites, from at least the second half of the 500s.¹⁹⁸ It is not until the mid-seventh century, however, that Frankish interactions with the Slavic tribes to the east can be glimpsed. In Fredegar's *Chronicle* we see for the first time the Slavic Wends, led by a former Frankish merchant named Samo. Ostensibly owing some form of allegiance to the Franks, Samo and his Wends would prove to be a major power in Central Europe, defeating an army led by Dagobert in 631 or 632 and in doing so allowing yet another Slavic tribe, the Sorbs, to free themselves, at least for the time being, from Frankish control as well.¹⁹⁹ While Samo's tribe had waned and disappeared by the time of Charlemagne's reign, even in the seventh century the Franks regarded the Slavs as a subordinate ethnic group to be controlled and exploited rather than dealt with on equal footing or actively absorbed. The Wends and Sorbs were located on the borders of Bavaria and Thuringia respectively, somewhat farther south than the tribal-groups encountered on the shores of the Baltic and the banks of the Elbe. The question of just when the northern Slavic tribes of the Wilzi and Abodrites came into active contact with the Franks is a difficult one to answer.

In its entry for 692, the *Annales Mettenses priores* reports that Pippin of Herstal received emissaries from, among others, the *Scлавenes*.²⁰⁰ This account is regarded with some skepticism, given the anachronistic nature of many of the earlier sections of the annals.²⁰¹ Even if we do take it at face value we are still left without any concrete evidence as to which group or tribe of Slavs the author is referring to. Somewhat later the same annals provides another interesting glimpse of potential interaction between the Franks and the northern Slavs. In the annal for 789, the date of a major offensive against

¹⁹⁷ *RFA*, s.a. 804, p. 118: "... et pagos Transalbianos Abodritis dedit."; Raimund Ernst, *Die Nordwestslaven und das fränkische Reich* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1976), 171–74; Matthias Hardt, "The *Limes Saxoniae* as Part of the Eastern Borderlands of the Frankish and Ottonian-Salian Empire," in *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 36–38; Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbart, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, 60.

¹⁹⁸ Francis Dvornik, *The Slavs: Their Early History and Civilization* (Boston: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1956), 32–33; Hansjürgen Brachmann, *Slawische Stämme an Elbe und Saale* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1978), 249–50; Martin Gojda, *The Ancient Slavs* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 10–12, 18–23; Sebastian Brather, "The Beginnings of Slavic Settlement East of the River Elbe," *Antiquity* 78, no. 300 (2004): 314–29.

¹⁹⁹ *Fred*, c. 68, pp. 56–58; Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109–10; Matthias Hardt, "Aspekte der Herrschaftsbildung bei den frühen Slawen," in *Integration und Herrschaft: Ethnische Identitäten und soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Walter Pohl and Maximilian Diesenberger (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2002), 253–54.

²⁰⁰ *AMP*, s.a. 692, p. 15.

²⁰¹ Ernst, *Die Nordwestslaven und das fränkische Reich*, 93.

the Wilzi by Charlemagne, their ruler, one Dragowiz, notably referred to as *rex* by the annalist, is said to have placed his territory under the authority of the Franks, “asserting that this power and authority had in earlier times been granted to him by the unconquered prince Charles.”²⁰² There has been much debate over the identity of the so-called “unconquered prince” and thus the potential time frame for Frankish contact and engagement with the Wilzi. If we identify the “unconquered” figure as Charles Martel, then the most likely point of contact is probably one of his several Saxon campaigns launched during the first decades of the eighth century, with scholars such as Martin Lintzel and Manfred Hellmann pointing to the campaign of 738 as the most probable date for the formation of an alliance.²⁰³ Other scholars, however, have argued against the likelihood of the Franks and Wilzi encountering each other in the 730s. For one thing, the *Annales Mettenses priores* are the only source to mention this particular agreement. Raimund Ernst succinctly states the problem. “Although the uniqueness of a piece of information does not necessarily speak against its veracity, in the *Annales Mettenses priores* critical vigilance is warranted from the outset.” The fifty-year gap between 738 and the campaign by Charlemagne in 789 makes one wonder at the age of Dragovits, if it is he who, as the language of the annal implies, received authority directly from Martel. Moreover, it is hard to imagine under what circumstances Charles Martel’s campaign against the Saxons could have brought him into contact with a Slavic group whose territory was much farther east, across the Elbe itself, than the typical trajectory of a raid against the Saxons would necessitate.²⁰⁴ Whether or not we choose to accept the early eighth-century arrangement as the first signs of a closer engagement between Slavs and Franks, it is only when we reach the second half of the century, during Charlemagne’s Saxon Wars, that the Slavs really enter fully into northern European politics.

The first reference in the *Royal Frankish Annals* to the Slavs is found in the entry for 780 where the annalist states that after crossing the Elbe Charlemagne “dealt with all matters related to the Saxons and the Slavs and then returned to Francia.”²⁰⁵ Even in this first brief reference we can already see that for Charlemagne, the Slavs were in essence a subordinate piece of the larger ongoing northern puzzle rather than a priority in their own right. The 780 meeting is seen by many as a far more likely date at which the Franks made their first arrangements and alliances with Slavic groups.²⁰⁶ It is not until the annal for 789, however, that we are actually given the names for the most powerful of the various Polabian Slavic tribes, the Wilzi and the Abodrites. It is important to note that in both of these cases these names served as umbrella terms for collections and alliances of smaller tribes that were probably far from homogenous or well organized, though the

²⁰² *AMP*, s.a. 789, pp. 77-78: “Venit autem eorumdem Scavarum rex ad eum qui vocabatur Drogovitz et reddidit regnum illi partibus Francorum, asserens sé olim ab invicto principe Carolo eandem potestatem vel dominationem consecutum fuissi.”

²⁰³ Martin Lintzel, “Karl Martells Sachsenkrieg im Jahre 738 und die Missionstätigkeit des Bonifatius,” in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961), 91; Manfred Hellman, “Karl und die Slawische Welt Zwischen Ostsee und Böhmerwald,” in *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, ed. Helmut Beumann, vol. 1 (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1965), 714.

²⁰⁴ Ernst, *Die Nordwestslaven und das fränkische Reich*, 96–97.

²⁰⁵ *RFA*, s.a. 780, p. 56: “Et pervenit usque ad suprafictum fluvium, ubi Ora confluit in Albia; ibique omnia disponens tam Saxoniam quam et Scalvos, et reversus est supradictus praeclarus rex in Francia.”

²⁰⁶ Ernst, *Die Nordwestslaven und das fränkische Reich*, 157–60.

ongoing influence of the Franks may have gradually forced them into more concrete groupings.²⁰⁷

In 789, as stated above, Charlemagne launched a campaign against the first of these tribal-groups, the Wilzi. According to the reviser of the *Royal Frankish Annals*, this campaign was undertaken in order to punish the Wilzi for attacking the Abodrites, a Slavic tribe allied with the Franks, a claim echoed by Einhard in his *Vita Karoli Magni*. Given the large-scale nature of the undertaking, involving the mobilization of not just the Franks but also Saxon and Frisian units as well as an auxiliary force of Abodrites and Sorbs, it is difficult to believe that this was the sole reason for the Frankish campaign.²⁰⁸ It is far more likely that the campaign was part of the larger on-going struggle for control over Saxony itself. The Frankish alliance with the Abodrites was largely undertaken with the specific goal of creating an effective ring of alliances around the tenacious Saxons and further cementing control over the northern edges of the Frankish empire. In 798, for example, an Abodrite army, led by their leader Thrasco and accompanied by a Frankish envoy, shut down a revolt by the Nordliudi, those Saxons on the far side of the Elbe.²⁰⁹ The Frankish attack on the Wilzi several years earlier can thus be regarded as an attempt not merely to defend an ally but also to secure an important part of the Carolingians' northern agenda. This theory makes even more sense if we follow Lothar Dralle's argument that the Wilzi and at least some part of the Saxons were probably themselves attempting to come to some sort of an alliance in order to defend against the ongoing rise of Frankish power.²¹⁰

Tensions between the Abodrites and Wilzi had certainly been exacerbated by the ongoing favor shown to the Abodrites by Charlemagne, most visible in the decision to cede to them the territory of the perpetually troublesome Nordliudi Saxons in 804. This tension became a major point of indirect conflict between the Franks and Danes during the reign of Godfrid. If the links between the Saxons and Wilzi are based largely on supposition, we have direct evidence for the ties between the Wilzi and the kingdom of the Danes. The first recorded Danish attack on the Slavic Abodrites in 808 seems to have been as much an act of aggression towards the Franks as towards the Abodrites themselves. The Abodrites had long been Frankish allies but based on the terms used by the various Frankish sources, such as *auxiliares* and *foedarati*, it was hardly an alliance of equals. The writers of the *Annals Laureshamenses* go so far as to label them "our Slavs."²¹¹ Such language has led scholars to view the relationship between the Franks and the Abodrites as akin to that which existed between the Romans and the various barbarian groups in the later centuries of the Empire.²¹² Peter Heather, in fact, has

²⁰⁷ Wolfgang Fritze, "Die Datierung des Geographus Bavarus und die Stammesverfassung der Abotriten," *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie* 21, no. 2 (1952): 326–42; Lübke, "Forms of Political Organisation of the Polabian Slavs (until the 10th Century AD)," 120–22.

²⁰⁸ *RFA-R*, s.a. 789, p. 85; Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SRG 25 (Hanover: MGH, 1911), c. 12, p. 15.

²⁰⁹ *RFA*, s.a. 798, p. 104.

²¹⁰ Lothar Dralle, "Wilzen, Sachsen und Franken um das Jahr 800," in *Aspekte Der Nationenbildung im Mittelalter*, ed. Helmut Beumann and Werner Schröder (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1978), 206.

²¹¹ *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH SS 1 (Hannover: MGH, 1826), s.a. 798, p. 37: "Sclavi nostri qui dicuntur Abotridi."

²¹² Jankuhn, "Karl der Grosse und der Norden," 700; Henning, "Civilization versus Barbarians?"; Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbert, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, 61.

dubbed the relationship one of “Frankish Imperialism,” pointing to the ongoing active and passive influence that the Franks had on the Abodrites and other surrounding ethnic and political groups.²¹³ The ties between the Franks and their Slavic neighbors thus require us to view Danish attacks on the Abodrites and support of the Wilzi as part of a larger agenda focused on the Frankish empire. Godfrid’s attack was not merely a raid for booty and glory. The expulsion of Thrasco, who had, according to the *Annales Mettenses priores*, been personally chosen by Charlemagne to rule over the Abodrites, was at its heart an attempt by Godfrid to undermine Frankish political authority.²¹⁴ The imposition of a tribute upon two-thirds of the tribes further demonstrates the political ambitions of the Danish king, an attempt, in essence, to assert his authority over a people traditionally subject to the Franks.²¹⁵ The destruction of the Slavic emporium of Reric in 808, discussed at length elsewhere, should be seen in a similar light as well. The immediate reprisals by the Carolingians against the Linones and Smeldingi, two smaller Slavic tribal-groups, should likewise be seen as a direct response to the Danes. According to the *Royal Frankish Annals* both of these tribes “had defected to the king Godfrid.” The Frankish campaign was thus an attempt to reassert control over the area and tip the balance of power back towards the Franks and their Slavic proxies.²¹⁶

The following year brought further wrangling over authority in the Slavic world. Thrasco’s attack upon the Wilzi and Smeldingi with aid from the Saxons continued the ongoing Slavic infighting to establish whether Frankish or Danish influence would have precedence across the Elbe. It is interesting to note, however, that even as he attacked his rival Slavs, Thrasco was obligated to provide his son as a hostage to Godfrid, demonstrating once more the growing political and military power the Danish king could exert on an area over which the Franks had already staked a claim. That same year Godfrid had Thrasco murdered, continuing his ongoing meddling with the “Franks’ Slavs.”²¹⁷ Not since the actions of Radbod in the first half of the eighth century had a pagan ruler behaved in such a way, both emulating and competing with the might of the Carolingians. Yet even as their indirect power struggle continued, Godfrid himself was sending merchant-envoys to the Frankish emperor to ask for clemency and simultaneously requesting a conference of counts to discuss matters of mutual interest, a move that demonstrates the variety of possible points of engagement that could exist, sometimes simultaneously, between these two peoples. It is to Godfrid, the last great rival of Charlemagne, that we will now more fully turn our attention.

Charlemagne’s Last War

²¹³ Peter Heather, “Frankish Imperialism and Slavic Society,” in *The Origins of Central Europe*, ed. Przemyslaw Urbanczyk (Warsaw: Scientific Society of Polish Archaeologists, 1997), 171–72.

²¹⁴ *AMP*, s.a. 804, p. 91: “Transitoque Reno apud Coloniam a urbem, generalem conventum Francorum habuit iuxta Lippiae fontem. Sumptoque inde itinere per Saxoniam profectus, castrametatus est in loco qui vocatur Holdonstat. In quibus castris etiam Sclavorum qui vocantur Abodriti principes affuerunt. Quorum causis discussis et secundum arbitrium dispositis regem illis Trasiconem constituit.”

²¹⁵ *RFA*, s.a. 808, p. 125.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, s.a. 808, p. 125: “Filius autem imperatoris Carlus Albiam ponte iunxit et exercitum, cui praeerat, in Linones et Smeldingos qui et ipsi ad Godofridum regem defecerant.”

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, s.a. 809, p. 128-29.

If Sigfrid is a fairly mysterious figure, his successor Godfrid looms far larger in the Frankish sources. While it is unclear when exactly the transition between these two rulers took place, we know that it occurred sometime between the legation of 798 and 804 when the *Royal Frankish Annals* first mentions Godfrid, naming him as king of the Danes. The tension between this new Danish ruler and Charlemagne is palpable from the first reference. The *Royal Frankish Annals* states that even as Charlemagne was undertaking his massive reorganization of the trans-Elben area:

Godfrid, king of the Danes, came with his fleet and his entire cavalry to Sliesthorp, on the border between his realm and Saxony, for he had promised to come personally to a parley with the Emperor. But, due to the counsel of his men, he became frightened and would not approach any closer to the Franks, communicating instead through legates. The Emperor remained at the banks of the river Elbe for a while, at Hollenstedt, and sent legates to Godfrid to secure the return of some fugitives. In mid-September he departed for Cologne.²¹⁸

There are several intriguing aspects of the first encounter between Charlemagne and Godfrid. What exactly did Godfrid have to fear from Charlemagne? Perhaps his men counseled that to appear in person before the emperor would be a tacit, if not explicit, statement of subordination. As Gerd Althoff explains, “To people in the Middle Ages there existed a refined system of signs, symbols, and patterns of action by which they could demonstrate non-verbally their status, position, rank, and relationship with others.”²¹⁹ Appearing before a foreign ruler was a recognized sign of weakness and subordination, an acknowledgment of his greater authority and prestige. For Godfrid this act would have placed him firmly in the ranks of other subordinate leaders such as the Saxons, Slavs, or Avars and thus have given Charlemagne a claim to intervene directly in Danish affairs.²²⁰

We do not know exactly who the fugitives that Charlemagne sought were. It may be that they were Saxons – likely Nordliudi—who had sought refuge in a manner similar to that of Widukind in the previous decades. However, it is also possible that we are witnessing an early glimpse of tensions between the Franks and Scandinavians over growing piratical activities along the coasts, and that the fugitives in question were Danes responsible for attacks on Frankish soil. Even without definitive answers to these questions, the 804 annal demonstrates both growing interactions between the Franks and their Danish neighbors and the continuing tensions over the political situation in the North. Where Sigfrid and Charlemagne had dispatched the occasional envoy, with

²¹⁸ Ibid., s.a. 804, pp. 118-19: “Eodem tempore Godofridus rex Danorum venit cum classe sua necnon et omni equitatu regni sui ad locum, qui dicitur Sliesthorp in confinio regni sui et Saxoniae. Promisit enim se ad conloquium imperatoris venturum, sed consilio suorum territus propius non accessit, sed, quicquid voluit, per legatos mandavit. Nam imperator super Albiam fluvium sedebat, in loco, qui dicitur Holdunsteti, et missa ad Godofridum legatione pro perfugis reddendis medio Septembrio Coloniam venit.”

²¹⁹ Gerd Althoff, “Demonstration und Inszenierung: Spielregeln der Kommunikation in mittelalterlicher Öffentlichkeit,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 27 (1993): 30: “Den mittelalterlichen Menschen stand ein differenziertes System von Zeichen, Symbolen und Verhaltensmustern zur Verfügung, mit dem er nonverbal Stand, Stellung und Rang, sein Verhältnis zum jeweiligen Gegenüber, Freundschaft und Freude, Feindschaft und Unwillen ausdrücken konnte.”

²²⁰ Ganshof, *The Middle Ages: A History of International Relations*, 50.

Godfrid there was now the possibility for direct contact between rulers. The fact that both Charlemagne and Godfrid were accompanied by large armed forces is further indication of the volatile nature of these contacts. And if Sigfrid was characterized as barbarous and stubborn he still remained more a caricature of a Dane than an actual historical figure. Godfrid receives a more detailed and far harsher treatment in the Frankish sources; Einhard describes him as “inflated with vain ambition.” In 808 the *Royal Frankish Annals* goes so far as dub him insane (*vesanus*).²²¹ These negative characterizations make sense given the tensions and even open conflict that broke out in the early ninth century.

The posturing evident in the abortive meeting of 804 gave way to active military maneuvering in 808 when Charlemagne was forced to dispatch an army under his son Charles to guard the borders of Saxony from the ravages of the Danish king. That same year, as detailed above, Godfrid launched an attack upon the Abodrites. He then immediately extended and repaired the Danevirke in order to fortify his southern border against possible reprisals by the Franks. The undertaking of this major building project also served as a means to further project royal power within his own kingdom. According to the *Royal Frankish Annals*, Godfrid in the following year “sent via some merchants a message saying that he had heard that the emperor was wroth with him because he had led an army against the Abodrites the year before in order to punish them for injuries done to him. He now wished to purge himself of the charges laid against him, as the Abodrites had been the ones to break the peace.”²²² The *Royal Frankish Annals* presents to us here a picture of Godfrid as submissive to and afraid of Charlemagne, an image that we must take with a grain of salt. While certainly no clear thinking neighbor of the Franks wished to earn their enmity, the fact that Godfrid again sent messengers rather than approaching the emperor directly as a supplicant during an assembly once more sets him apart from the rulers of pagan groups such as the Slavs, and Avars, who frequently humbled themselves before the emperor. Moreover, that same year a meeting was held between a group of Danish and Frankish counts to discuss various matters including the on-going Danish meddling beyond their borders.

It is worth digressing briefly to discuss the range of Carolingian diplomatic engagements to see just how unique this meeting of counts was. The practice of sending and receiving envoys between the major powers of Europe was nothing new in the ninth century. Beginning in the reign of Pippin, embassies had begun to move back and forth between the Franks and Constantinople, discussing matters of theology, marriage, and of course, following Charlemagne’s coronation, the *imperium*.²²³ The continuator of Fredegar's *Chronicle* tells us that Pippin likewise sent and received envoys from the Abbasid caliph Al-Mansour. These embassies continued under Charlemagne, with the Frankish ruler receiving such marvelous gifts as an elephant and an elaborate water

²²¹ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 14, p. 17: “... adeo vana spe inflatus erat.”; *RFA*, s.a. 808, p. 125.

²²² *Ibid.*, s.a. 809, p. 128: “Intera Godofridus rex Danorum per negotiatores quosdam mandavit, se audisse, quod imperator ei fuisset iratus, eo quod in Abodritos anno superiore duxit exercitum et suas ultus est iniurias, addens velle se purgare ab eo, quod ei obiciebatus; foederis inruptionem ab illis primo fuisse inchoatum.”

²²³ F. L. Ganshof, “Les relations extérieures de la monarchie franque sous les premiers souverains carolingiens,” *Annali di Storia del Diritto* V–VI (62 1961): 21–22; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 873–74; Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 63–64, 68–69.

clock.²²⁴ These relationships with the great powers of the east became the stuff of legend. Writing for Charlemagne's great-grandson Charles the Fat some seventy-or-so years after the emperor's death, Notker claimed that "even among all those matters which occupied his attention the generous emperor never failed to send letters and envoys bearing gifts to the various kings of the most distant lands, and those same kings likewise sent to him all of the honors of their provinces."²²⁵

Closer to home the Franks engaged in diplomatic relations with many of their neighbors, both Christian and pagan. In 798 Charlemagne received a variety of gifts from King Alfonso of Asturias. We also see in Frankish sources ongoing diplomatic engagement with the Muslim ruler of Barcelona, Sulayman al-Arabi, who in an attempt to stave off the authority of Abd al-Rahman, the emir of Cordoba, sent envoys to Charlemagne at Paderborn in 777. These contacts resulted in a brief campaign across the Pyrenees in the following year and set the stage for the famous death of Count Roland.²²⁶ For the north we have the benefit of numerous letters documenting the ongoing relationship between Charlemagne and various Anglo-Saxon kings, most notably Offa of Mercia, and we know that the many religious figures who moved back and forth across the channel played an active role in communicating between these two kings on matters as varied as possible royal marriages, protection of pilgrims and merchants, and ecclesiastical reform.²²⁷

Diplomatic ties did not only exist between the great powers of the period, vying for standing and prestige with their equals. The yearly assemblies held by Charlemagne also offered a chance for those peoples clustered on his eastern borders to sue for peace and seek Frankish favor. The diplomatic links between the Franks and Polabian Slavs have been discussed. The *Royal Frankish Annals* also tell of several appearances by emissaries of the Avars beginning in the 780s and even the personal, albeit short-lived, submission of their leaders in 796.²²⁸

Letters and gifts were sent and received, envoys were dispatched and welcomed, and in nearly every case these events were centered on Charlemagne's court and assemblies.²²⁹ In part this is due to the picture that sources such as the *Royal Frankish Annals* wish to paint. As Rosamond McKitterick puts it,

²²⁴ Walther Björkman, "Karl und der Islam," in *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, ed. Helmut Beumann, vol. 1 (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1965), 677–82; Dutton, *Charlemagne's Mustache*, 59–61; Philippe Sénac, *Le monde carolingien et l'Islam* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 50–56.

²²⁵ Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, bk. 2, c. 5, pp. 52–53: "Inter huiusmodi tamen occupationes nullo modo magnanimus praetermisit imperator, quin ad longinquissimarum partium reges alios atque alios dirigeret litterarum vel munerum portitores, a quibus illi omnium provintiarum sunt honores directi."

²²⁶ Björkman, "Karl und der Islam," 672–76; Sénac, *Le monde carolingien et l'Islam*, 16–24; McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, 133–34.

²²⁷ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, "Charlemagne and England," in *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, ed. Helmut Beumann, vol. 1 (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1965), 683–98; Joanna Story, "Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxons," in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 195–210.

²²⁸ Walter Pohl, *Die Awaren* (Munich: Beck, 1988), 300, 318–20; Helmut Reimitz, "Conversion and Control: The Establishment of Liturgical Frontiers in Carolingian Pannonia," in *The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. Walter Pohl, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 189; Reuter, "Charlemagne and the World beyond the Rhine," 184.

²²⁹ Ganshof, *The Middle Ages: A History of International Relations*, 38–44; Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, C. 800-1056* (London: Longman, 1991), 30; Julia Smith, "Fines Imperii: The

The narrative of these last fifteen years of Charlemagne's reign, moreover, is constructed as a succession of reports of legates coming to the palace, and reports of various events [in distant places]. Essentially, therefore, the emphasis has shifted away from Charlemagne himself and is placed more on a style of explicitly imperial rulership with the palace as the centre of affairs, the acknowledgement of his power and renown in the form of constant streams of embassies bearing gifts, and a succession of events on the outer rim of the empire to contrast with the relative peace and stability of the Frankish realm itself, where embassies are received and news of the surrounding world is regularly reported.²³⁰

It is only with the Danes in 809 that we see a major divergence from this model of diplomatic behavior. What began as the standard and by now somewhat routine audience with messengers from Scandinavia turns into something altogether different: a full-scale political conference. The *Royal Frankish Annals* states that "a conference was held with the leading-men of the Danes across the Elbe at a place called Badenfliot, and both sides brought up numerous issues and many topics and then they departed leaving them thoroughly unfinished."²³¹ The unprecedented meeting, held not at court, and not even within Frankish territory proper, but across the Elbe in what might ostensibly be considered neutral territory, sheds light on the nature of Frankish and Scandinavian interaction. This is not a relationship based on one party's domination of the other, no matter how much Frankish sources might wish to give that impression. The ability of the Danes to project power in the North Sea area prevented Charlemagne from merely dictating terms as he so often did with groups such as the Abodrites.²³² The event also demonstrates the ability of Franks and Scandinavians to communicate on a common ground. Unfortunately (if unsurprisingly) we lack any information about just *how* they communicated. Were translators present? If so, who were they? Or were the counts capable of speaking with each other directly?

Despite any common ground that a meeting of nobles might presume, tensions continued to escalate between Godfrid and Charlemagne. Matters finally came to a head in 810. The *Royal Frankish Annals* report that even as Charlemagne considered launching a campaign against Godfrid "a fleet of 200 ships from Nordmannia landed in Frisia and ravaged all of the islands along the Frisian coast. Three battles between the Frisians and Danes were fought and the Danes emerged as victors imposing tribute upon the Frisians."²³³ Even as Godfrid attacked Frisia, his long-time allies, the Wilzi, crossed

Marches," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, vol. 2: c.700-c.900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 176.

²³⁰ McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, 51–52.

²³¹ *RFA*, s.a. 809, p. 128: "... colloquiumque trans Albiam habitum cum primoribus Danorum in loco, qui dicitur Badenfliot, multisque hinc et inde prolatis atque enumeratis rebus negotio penitus infecto discessum est."

²³² McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, 129.

²³³ *RFA*, s.a. 810, p. 131: "Classem ducentarum navium de Nordmannia Frisiam appulisse totasque Frisiaco litori adjacentes insulas esse vestatas ternaque proelia cum Frisonibus commisisse Danosque victores tributum victis inposuisse er vectigalis nomine centum libras argenti a Frisonibus iam esse solutas"

into Saxony and sacked the Frankish castle of Hobuoki. Some scholars have viewed this attack as the first truly visible “Viking” attack on Frankish soil. However, conflating Godfrid’s early attack on Frisia with later Viking activity obscures the actual nature of the event and its place in the ongoing relationship between Scandinavia and the Continent.²³⁴ While superficially this early attack may resemble the numerous Viking raids on Frisia of the later ninth century, it is in fact quite different, undertaken directly at the behest of the Danish king as royal policy, the result of an ongoing political and military conflict between the Franks and the Danes. Both the *Royal Frankish Annals* and the *Chronicon Moissiacense* link the event to the ongoing struggle between Charlemagne and Godfrid, with the latter source stating that “Godfrid secretly sent pirates by ship into Frisia, who did great damage there to the Christian people.”²³⁵ And Einhard writes that Godfrid “considered both Frisia and also Saxony to be his territory.”²³⁶ Charlemagne’s decision to muster an army and march to the Weser River also demonstrates that he placed the blame for this attack firmly on the Danish king. Godfrid’s response to Charlemagne’s threats further emphasizes the political nature of the events of 810 and distinguishes it from later raids.²³⁷

The situation looked to grow even bloodier as Godfrid, having achieved one victory, seemed ready to continue on the path to war. The *Royal Frankish Annals* reports that “puffed up with the vain hope of victory, that king boasted that he wished to meet with the emperor in open battle.”²³⁸ Einhard likewise states that Godfrid “boasted that he would arrive shortly at Aachen, where [Charlemagne’s] court was located, with a huge army and although they seemed vain, his words could not be discounted as he seemed the sort to undertake such a thing.”²³⁹ We will never know if this was mere posturing on the part of the Danish king or a legitimate threat, because in that same year Godfrid was struck down by one of his own men, though for what reasons remains unclear. Contemporary Frankish sources remain silent, and it is hard to put much credence in the story told by Notker almost a century later that “while Godfrid was hunting with his falcon, his son, whose mother he had recently abandoned in favor of another woman, pursued him and cut him in half.”²⁴⁰ While it is possible that Godfrid’s death was indeed the result of family politics, it may also be that in his death we are seeing an internal backlash against his ongoing attempts to unify and consolidate power in Denmark.²⁴¹

²³⁴ Lund, “Allies of God or Man,” 45; Ekkehard Eickhoff, “Maritime Defence of the Carolingian Empire,” in *Vikings on the Rhine*, ed. Rudolf Simek and Ulrike Engel (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2004), 51.

²³⁵ *Chronicon Moissiacense*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH SS 2 (Hannover: MGH, 1829), s.a. 810, p. 258: “Et occulte misit pyratas cum navibus in Frisia, qui fecerunt ibi magnam damnum de populo christiano.”

²³⁶ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 14, p. 17: “Frisiam quoque atque Saxoniam haud aliter atque suas provinias aestimabat.”

²³⁷ Jankuhn, “Karl der Grosse und der Norden,” 703.

²³⁸ *RFA*, s.a. 810, p. 131: “Nam rex ille vanissima spe victoriae inflatus acie se cum imperatore congregi velle iactabat.”

²³⁹ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 14, p. 17: “Iactabat etiam se brevi Aquasgrani ubi regis comitatus erat, cum maximis copiis adventurum. Nec dictis eius, quamvis vanissimis, omnino fides abnuebatur, quin potius putaretur tale aliquid inchoaturus ...”

²⁴⁰ Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, bk 2, c. 13, p. 76: “Cum vero falconem suum de aneta vellet extrahere, consecutus eum filius suus, cuius nuperrime matrem reliquit et alteram super eam duxit uxorem, per medium divisit.”

²⁴¹ K. L. Maund, “‘A Turmoil of Warring Princes’: Political Leadership in Ninth-Century Denmark,” *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History* 6 (1994): 35.

Whether Godfrid in fact believed that he had some sort of claim to Saxony, let alone Frisia, or whether, as is more likely, Einhard invented the story, the Danish attack on the Frisians was part of a larger political struggle in northern Europe between the Franks and their most powerful northern neighbor. What had begun as passing contacts during the early period of the Saxon Wars grew into full-scale engagement by the turn of the century. The growth of the Danes into a major political power and threat in the area must at least in part be attributed to the influence of the Franks, whose increasing presence and political activities in northern Europe directly affected all of the local political groups. Contact with the Frankish empire introduced new political, religious, and social practices and provided new opportunities for wealth and political power for some leaders while stirring up resentment and fear in others.²⁴²

Godfrid's death in 810 marked a new period in the relationship between Scandinavia and Francia. His nephew Hemming, the new Danish king, immediately made peace with the Franks, realizing the delicate state of affairs due to his uncle's ongoing antagonistic behavior and no-doubt hoping (via closer ties to the Carolingians) to shore up his own position as king against other royal contenders. And yet in making peace Hemming was not humbling himself or submitting to the Franks. With the conference of 809 serving as precedent a group of nobles from each side met once again in 811. The *Royal Frankish Annals* states that "twelve magnates from each group, that is the Franks and the Danes, gathered at the River Eider, at a place called Heiligen, and there, with oaths given by each according to their rites and customs, peace was confirmed."²⁴³ Once again we see a meeting of equals, with equal numbers on each side coming to a neutral point and swearing mutual oaths. The same 811 annal gives the names of those present. The Danish side included two of Hemming's brothers, Hankwin and Angandeo. The Frankish envoys included counts such as Walach, cousin to Charlemagne, and Burchard, the count of the stables. The presence of such important figures indicates just how important the Franks considered peace with the Danes. This list also contains the names of several counts who were quite active in the trans-Elben area. Count Egbert supervised the construction of a castle at Esesfelth in 809. In 823 Count Theothari would undertake another embassy to the Danes under Louis the Pious.²⁴⁴

Hemming's death in 812 resulted in a war between those favoring his nephew and those favoring the nephew of Godfrid. A year later peace was confirmed by further envoys from Denmark sent by the newly victorious joint kings, Harald and Reginfrid. But the conflict over which branch of the family should hold power demonstrates that for all its moves towards a stable monarchy in the eighth century, Denmark was by no means a cohesive kingdom like those of the south. The events of 812 would have major repercussions for the Franks during the reign of Louis the Pious. But even as the annals continued to focus on the diplomatic and military engagement between Frankish and

²⁴² Garipzanov, Geary, and Urbanczyk, *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs*, 6; Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 171.

²⁴³ *RFA*, s.a. 811, p. 134: "congregantibus ex utraque parte utriusque gentis, Francorum scilicet et Danorum, XII primoribus super fluvium Egidoram in loco, qui vocatur ... , datis vicissim secundum ritum ac morem suum sacramentis pax confirmatur."

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, s.a. 809, pp. 129-30 and s.a. 823, pp. 162-63.

Scandinavian kings in the northern Europe, hints of another front in this relationship also begin to appear in our sources.

Of Things to Come

For many scholars the “Viking Age” begins with the Viking attack on the monastery of St Cuthbert at Lindisfarne in 793. In his letter to bishop Higbald, Alcuin writes,

Your ordeal daily saddens me, so far from you, because the pagans have defiled the sanctuary of God and spilled out the blood of the holy around the altar, laid waste the home of our hope and trampled the bodies of the saints in the temple of God as if they were dung in the streets. Lamenting from our very soul, what words can we utter but to say, “Spare us, O Lord, spare your people, and do not give your inheritance to those gentiles, lest the pagans say, ‘Where is the God of the Christians?’”²⁴⁵

Alcuin’s sentiments would be echoed by numerous churchmen in the ninth century. Yet if Lindisfarne marks the beginning of a new age, it is an age that was slow to begin. No contemporary Frankish Annals mention the attack on Lindisfarne; however, in the entry from the *Royal Frankish Annals* for 800 we are informed of Charlemagne’s attempts to deal with a pirate infestation in the Channel by constructing a fleet and setting up a coast guard. The author of the revised annals adds an important detail, explicitly stating that these pirates were “Northmen.” Charlemagne’s order is reflected in two capitularies, the first from 802 and the second from 808, which command the construction of a fleet.²⁴⁶ In 811, we catch another glimpse of these measures when Charlemagne visited the coastal cities of Boulogne and Ghent for an inspection of his new navy.²⁴⁷ Apart from these defensive efforts there are few references to the problem of piracy. In an account from 812 the *Royal Frankish Annals* report an attack on Ireland, a rare glimpse at foreign matters in the usually far more parochial annals. The *Chronicon Moissiacenses* briefly mentions an attack on Frisia in 813. Not until 820, several years into the reign of Louis the Pious, do we receive any further details of Scandinavian raiding in Francia in the major annals.

In a delightfully anachronistic tale, Notker reports a Viking attack on Narbonnese Gaul that Charlemagne, in disguise no less, just happened to be present for. The tale ends with the great emperor standing at a window staring into the distance and

²⁴⁵ Alcuin, MGH Ep. 4, p. 57: “Sed versa vice vestrae tribulationis calamitas licet absentem multum me cotidie contristat, quando pagani contaminaverunt sanctuaria Dei et fuderunt sanguinem sanctorum in circuitu altaris, vastaverunt domum spei nostre, calcaverunt corpora sanctorum in templo Dei quasi sterquilinum in platea. Quid nobis dicendum est, nisi plangendum animo nobiscum ante altare christi, et dicere ‘Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo, et ne des hereditatem tuam gentibus ne dicant pagani, ‘ubi est Deus christianorum?’”

²⁴⁶ MGH Capit. 1, no. 34, c. 13a, p. 100 and no. 51, c. 10, p. 139.

²⁴⁷ Heinrich Sproemberg, “Die Seepolitik Karls des Großen,” in *Beiträge zur belgisch-niederländischen Geschichte* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1959), 20–24; Reuter, “The End of Carolingian Military Expansion,” 393–94; Eickhoff, “Maritime Defence of the Carolingian Empire.”

shedding tears. When asked about his behavior he is said to have replied, “Do you know, oh faithful ones, why I weep so much? It is not that I fear that those trifling ones might be able to harm me in any way. Rather, it saddens me that they dare to strike our shores with such torment even as I live, for I foresee how much more torment they will cause my descendants and their subjects.”²⁴⁸ Writing with the benefit of hindsight (always the easiest way to write a convincing prophecy) Notker regales his late-ninth century audience with a tale of Viking pirates during the reign of Charlemagne. Yet for those actually writing in the last years of Charlemagne’s reign Scandinavian pirates were at best a minor issue when compared to the emperor’s major political undertakings. We are still a long way from the period where hardly a year went by without a Viking attack. Nonetheless, these brief notes about piracy provide signs of what was to come. It is worth asking what exactly were the causes of increased raiding at the close of the eighth century, such that Charlemagne thought it worthwhile to invest his time and money in coastal defense.

Even as some scholars have undertaken efforts to “rehabilitate” the reign of Louis the Pious, others have argued that the last decade of Charlemagne’s reign was marked by a decline in the smooth functioning of the Frankish Empire. “When declining years limited [Charlemagne’s] powers of intervention, the symptoms of disorganisation and disintegration increased. In 811 Charlemagne himself uttered a cry of alarm: men had ceased to obey him! The state of the empire in 814 was one of profound malaise.”²⁴⁹ Recent work has focused less on “malaise” and more on the fundamental difficulties that the Carolingians faced in restructuring their realm from an expanding kingdom into a settled empire. Particular attention has been paid to the fact that, following the destruction of the Avars in the 790s, the Carolingians ceased any major expansion or external military campaigns. Instead we see a focus on defensive measures, a stance to which the Franks were in many ways ill suited. Timothy Reuter, for instance, argues that “it is in the context of military stagnation, not of an internal ‘decomposition’ produced by moral decline or inadequate administrative structures, that many of the developments of the period 800-830 need to be seen.”²⁵⁰ Where previous raiding activity by groups such as the Saxons, Avars, and Slavs had been met with swift and sharp military reprisal, nothing of the sort can be seen in the so-called war with the Danes. Certainly armies were massed at the Elbe on several occasions in the early ninth century but at no point did a Frankish army ever make its way into Scandinavia proper. For Charlemagne the days of aggressive expansion and conquest were over. His focus now turned to internal reform and military policy shifted from conquest to consolidation and defense. Thus in addition to massing of armies the Franks also constructed several fortified points on both sides of the Elbe.²⁵¹ Both defensive efforts seem to have been fundamentally misguided,

²⁴⁸ Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, bk. 2, c. 14, p. 77-78: “‘Scitis’ inquit ‘o fideles mei, quid tantopere ploraverim? Non hic’ ait ‘timeo, quod isti nugae et nihil mihi aliquid nocere praevaleant. Sed nimirum contristor, quod me vivente ausi sunt litus istud attingere et maximo dolore torqueor, quia praevideo quanta mala posteris meis et eorum sunt facturi subiectis.’”

²⁴⁹ F. L. Ganshof, “Charlemagne’s Failure,” in *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, trans. Janet Sondheimer (London: Longman, 1971), 256–59; cf. Dutton, *Charlemagne’s Mustache*, chap. 6.

²⁵⁰ Reuter, “The End of Carolingian Military Expansion,” 405.

²⁵¹ Hardt, “Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire.”

however, given that when Godfrid did attack Frisia it was by sea not by land. Nevertheless, in spite of the provocations of the Danes the Carolingians were not interested in continuing the process of conquest past the Elbe into an area that had never owed any sort of allegiance, however vague, to the Franks and where the political and economic value of ongoing raids and warfare was hardly apparent. Yet in a world where raiding and pillaging were keys to establishing authority, the Frank's unwillingness to respond in kind placed them firmly in the role of prey rather than their more accustomed place as predator.

The wealth of the Franks was by the start of the ninth century well established in the minds of the Danes. The ongoing trade links that had been growing throughout the eighth century, discussed in the previous chapter, ensured that a steady stream of luxury goods and silver made its way into the hands of the Scandinavian elites, the very same men who could command boats of warriors in search of further goods and glory.²⁵² Alongside the increased flow of goods brought by merchants came increased diplomatic contact between Francia and Scandinavia. Having spent time in the court at Aachen and in the presence of Charlemagne and his nobles, Danish envoys certainly must have come away with enticing stories about the wealth of their southern neighbors as well as a knowledge of Frankish cultural, political, and military practices. Increased contact can also help explain the growth in piracy during the last decades of Charlemagne's reign.

Turning from Francia to Scandinavia, a variety of developments must have played into the growth of piracy. From the archaeological record we know that from the seventh to the eighth century new techniques in shipbuilding were developing in Scandinavia. The so-called "Viking longship" – clinker-built, with a reefed sail and a shallow, narrow draft – allowed Scandinavian mariners to sail farther and carry more. In these new ships they could reach far shores such as Ireland, and get to (and escape from) old familiar sites such as Dorestad more quickly.²⁵³ Political changes accompanied these technological developments. The concentration of power and wealth in the hands of fewer figures, including of course kings, had a two-fold effect. On the one hand, newly powerful men could use their wealth and authority to finance and launch expeditions to acquire further wealth and glory. On the other hand, those who found themselves on the losing side of struggles for authority could take to the seas and hope to make their own fortunes and thus acquire the means to either return triumphant or to settle into a new life in Francia or England. The riches of a grand empire, greater familiarity and communication between north and south, new technology and changes in political climate at home, all of these played a part in the growth of Scandinavian piracy. Peter Sawyer was certainly correct when he wrote that "we may be reasonably certain that developments in Scandinavia before and during the Viking period were as complex as they were in other, and better-

²⁵² Peter Sawyer, "The Causes of the Viking Age," in *The Vikings*, ed. Robert Farrell (London: Phillimore, 1982), 1–7.

²⁵³ Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, chap. 4; Nielsen, "Urban Economy in Southern Scandinavia in the Second Half of the First Millennium AD," 188–89; Christian Lemée, "L'évolution du bateau en scandinavie: de l'âge de pierre aux vikings," in *L'héritage maritime des vikings en Europe de l'Ouest*, ed. Elisabeth Ridel (Caen: Office Universitaire d'Études Normandes, 2002), 178–98; Jan Bill and Neil Price, "Viking Ships and the Sea," in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink (London: Routledge, 2008), 170–80.

documented, parts of Europe. It would therefore be absurd to look for a simple, single explanation of Viking activity.”²⁵⁴

By the death of Charlemagne Scandinavia had gone from being an unknown world, present only as a distant location in the works of a few geographers, to a major player in the politics of northern Europe. The Frankish conquest of Saxony had brought with it a new set of neighbors for the Franks. In the poetry, the religious writing, and most notably in the historical annals of the Franks, Scandinavia and its people grow ever more present. In Scandinavia itself new ideals and ideas arose from these contacts with their southern neighbors. The pressure exerted, both actively and passively, by the most powerful state of the time could not help but shape the political and social world of Denmark. For the first time the archaeological record provides a picture of rulers capable of wielding power beyond a single area, completing building projects, encouraging the growth of trade-sites, and raising armies. In the figure of Godfrid, Charlemagne’s last great foe, we have a Danish king intent on imposing his power on those around him both within Scandinavia and beyond his borders. Even as traders ferried goods up and down the coasts of Frisia, Jutland, and into the Baltic, envoys, both high and low, began meeting at assemblies, in the court of the emperor, and on the banks of rivers. Decades before the Vikings swept into the Frankish world there were ties and bonds being created. The small-scale raids that began towards the end of Charlemagne’s reign are merely a new development in the ongoing relationship between Francia and Scandinavia. Under Charlemagne’s son these relationships continued to grow and develop. New attempts at political engagement were undertaken by both sides and a new mission to the north began even as Scandinavian raids became more and more common.

²⁵⁴ Sawyer, “The Causes of the Viking Age,” 2.

Chapter Three

The Reign of Louis the Pious - New Contacts and New Dangers

The deaths of Godfrid and Charlemagne in 810 and 814, respectively, mark a significant shift in the relationship between Scandinavia and Francia. Inheriting and building upon the consolidation and reforms undertaken during his father's last years, Louis the Pious conceived of new methods of engagement with the north. Even as he maintained ongoing diplomatic relationships using envoys and aristocratic conferences, Louis took advantage of civil war and struggles for kingship in Denmark in order to actively engage the Franks in Danish politics. From the very start of his reign Louis threw his support behind one branch of the Danish royal dynasty in hopes of establishing his chosen candidate, Harald Klak, as king. By supporting Harald, the Franks hoped to gain greater control over northern Europe, where the Danes continued to act as a dangerous counterweight to Frankish power, not only in Scandinavia but also among the major trans-Elben Slavic tribes long subject to Carolingian authority. Active meddling in Danish affairs increased contact and forged new relationships between Franks and Northmen. Louis dispatched Frankish elites to Denmark as envoys, and Harald and his entourage made repeated trips to the Carolingian court to appeal for aid and strengthen the alliance.

Even as they interfered in Danish politics, Louis and his advisors also undertook the first mission to Scandinavia, opening up an entirely new avenue for engagement with the north. From at least the early 820s Ebbo of Reims, one of Louis' closest supporters and archbishop of one of the most important dioceses in the empire, played a key role in the effort to Christianize the north. Ebbo undertook several visits to Denmark himself and supported the foundation of several important monastic and ecclesiastical centers that funded and provided manpower for the mission to Scandinavia. With the baptism of Harald and his family in 826, Ebbo's work bore fruit. Forging spiritual and familial links between themselves and the Danes provided another way for the Carolingians to wield influence beyond their own borders and to continue the spread of God's word to the ends of the earth. The appointment of one Anskar, a monk of Corvey, as Harald's spiritual teacher began the career of the most important figure in the first campaign to Christianize Scandinavia. In the course of time Anskar went from being teacher to missionary among the distant Swedes, to prelate, and eventually to leader of the entire northern missionary effort.

Yet for all the successes enjoyed in the first half of his reign, by the emperor's death in 840 the northern policy of the Franks had largely unraveled. Harald's kingship, so long fought for and contested, ended abruptly in 827 with his defeat and subsequent exile by the sons of Godfrid. From 830 to 834 rebellion and domestic strife held the lions' share of the Franks' attention, distracting them from external matters and preventing any chance at recouping the loss of their preferred Scandinavian leader. Despite Louis' return to full power in 834, the Franks never again enjoyed the type of direct influence over Scandinavia they had held in the 820s. A series of shocking raids on the emporium of Dorestad between 834 and 838, at the hands of the very Danes that Louis had supported, demonstrated that closer relationships with Scandinavia brought dangers as well as opportunities for the Franks. Instead of projecting force northward, Louis' later Scandinavian policy required him to come to terms with the very kings he had long sought to undermine as he worked to secure his own borders and deal with growing Scandinavian incursions into Francia itself.

Civil Wars in Denmark

Unraveling the political history of Denmark in the years just after the death of Charlemagne is no easy task. Our sources are limited to a handful of annals that give few details and little in-depth explanation. Following the brief reign of Hemming (from early in 810 to late 811 or early 812), Denmark entered into a period of on-going political turmoil. The *Royal Frankish Annals*, echoed by the *Annals of Fulda* and the *Chronicon Moissiacense*, informs us that following Hemming's death

both Sigfrid, the nephew of king Godfrid, and Anulo, nephew of both Harald and the former king Hemming, wished to rule and since they could not decide which one should be king they gathered troops and in the following battle both were killed. But the party of Anulo was victorious and with Sigfrid's party defeated and unable to object, they made Anulo's brothers, Harald and Reginfrid, kings. And in that battle ten thousand nine hundred and forty men were killed.²⁵⁵

The exact relation between the various claimants and the two former kings is difficult to determine. The term used, *nepos*, need not refer to brothers' sons and may merely mark them as relatives in a broader sense.²⁵⁶ We have no information on the familial relationship between our first visible Danish king Sigfrid (immortalized in the poetry of Peter of Pisa and Paul the Deacon) and his successor, the infamous Godfrid. For the events of 811 and 812, however, our Frankish sources inform us that the various contenders for power were all related in one way or another. From the *Royal Frankish Annals* we learn that King Hemming was the son of Godfrid's brother, which would mean that Anulo and Sigfrid were in fact cousins, though perhaps only distantly related.

²⁵⁵ *RFA*, s.a. 812, p. 136: "Cui cum Sigifridus nepos Godofridi regis et Anulo nepos Herioldi, et ipsius regis, succedere voluissent neque inter eos, uter regnare deberet, convenire potuisset, comparatis copiis et commisso proelio ambo moriuntur. Pars tamen Anulonis adepta victoriam fratres eius Herioldum et Reginfridum reges sibi constituit; quam necessario pars victa secuta eosdem sibi regnare non abnuit. In eo proelio XDCCCXL viri cecidisse narrantur."

²⁵⁶ Maund, "A Turmoil of Warring Princes': Political Leadership in Ninth-Century Denmark," n. 29.

What we are witnessing is a kingdom whose fundamental power structures were not yet fixed. Instead of a single designated royal line, a group of powerful inter-related families, probably centered on the island of Funen, all vied for authority in Denmark.²⁵⁷

While Frankish written sources seem content to focus on the chaos involved in succession rather than any possible logic behind it, the nature of succession in Anglo-Saxon England may provide us with a useful analog. As David Dumville points out, “there are a good many examples from the heptarchic period of Anglo-Saxon history of succession to the throne by those whose blood-relationship to their predecessors was rather remote.”²⁵⁸ Theoretically at least, any male member of the royal dynasty, referred to as an *ætheling*, was eligible to take the throne, though ruling kings much preferred to keep their particular branch in power. The struggle in Denmark between various cousins, all with some familial ties to previous rulers, is comparable to similar events in seventh- and eighth-century Mercia. Following the death of Wulfhere of Mercia in 674 his brother Æthelred succeeded him, despite the fact that the deceased king had a son, Cenred. It is likely that Cenred was a minor at the time of Wulfhere’s death. However, following Æthelred’s death in 704 Cenred took the throne rather than Æthelred’s own son Coelred, who had to wait until his cousin died in 709 for his own chance to rule. When Coelred died in 716 without an heir, the throne passed to a completely different branch of the family.²⁵⁹

The fluidity of kingship in the *regem Danorum* is further emphasized by the joint-rule established by Anulo’s surviving brothers, Harald and Reginfrid. The *Royal Frankish Annals* lists the two rulers together, sending an embassy to Charlemagne in 812 and leading an army into Westarfolda in southern Norway. The details of their joint-rule are only made more complicated by the appearance of a third brother, yet another Hemming, shortly after Harald and Reginfrid took the throne. While the *Royal Frankish Annals* does not indicate Hemming’s place in the hierarchy of the Danes, in the *Chronicon Moissiacense* he is listed alongside his two brothers as king.²⁶⁰ The Danish practice of joint kingship again suggests similarities between rule in Anglo-Saxon England and the developing kingdom of Denmark, since evidence of joint rule can be found in Essex, Kent, and Sussex. “When [Sæberht, king of the East Saxons] departed to the eternal kingdom, he left three sons as heirs to his temporal kingdom, who had all remained heathens.”²⁶¹ According to Bede these three kings often acted in concert, notably leading an army together in much the same way as Harald and Reginfrid. We have no way of determining whether joint-rule was the norm in Denmark, and almost no information on what exactly the logistics of dual-kingship involved. Was authority divided between the brothers, each generally functioning as an independent ruler over a

²⁵⁷ Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark*, 16; Thurston, *Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict*, 78–79.

²⁵⁸ David Dumville, “The *ætheling*: A Study in Anglo-Saxon Constitutional History,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979): 15.

²⁵⁹ Cyril Hart, “The Kingdom of Mercia,” in *Mercian Studies*, ed. Ann Dornier (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), 54.

²⁶⁰ *CM*, s.a. 813, p. 259.

²⁶¹ Bede, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People* bk. 2, c. 5, pp. 152–53; and see David Dumville, “Essex, Middle Anglia and the Expansion of Mercia in the South-East Midlands,” in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (London: Leicester University Press, 1989), 136–38.

certain area? Did they attempt to rule in a more cohesive manner, sharing power equally? Perhaps the eldest brother functioned as the guiding force, a sort of over-king. That Harald could later rule as joint king not with his own brothers but with several of his cousins, members of a rival dynastic branch, further emphasizes the fluidity of power among the Danes and the difficulty of understanding the changeable nature of “king” and “kingdom” in Scandinavia.

In 813 the ongoing power struggle erupted once again. An unspecified number of Godfrid’s sons, who were probably too young to take the throne following their father’s death in 810, rose up with the support of a group of Danish nobles (*primoribus Danorum*) who had been exiled to the territory of the Swedes following the events of 812. Taking advantage of the absence of the two kings, campaigning in Norway, the sons of Godfrid were able to rally a large portion of the kingdom to their cause and expel their rivals. This internal conflict stretched into the next year when the exiled kings, having regrouped, attempted to recover the kingdom. In the *Chronicon Moissiacenses* we are informed that following their flight one of the brothers (we are not told which one) “accepted many gifts and military aid from the lord emperor Charles and returned with honor and support to his brothers, so that they might once more recover their kingdom.”²⁶²

That Harald and his brothers turned to the Carolingians for aid points both to the preeminent position of the Franks at the beginning of the ninth century and to the familiarity that had been growing between Danes and Franks over the previous decades. Another strong tie also linked the three brothers and the Franks; Hemming had in fact spent time in Francia and could serve as a guide for the dispossessed rulers. While we have only a few scattered references to Hemming, we know from the *Royal Frankish Annals* that shortly after their rise to power “Harald and Reginfrid, the kings of the Danes, sent envoys to the emperor to beg for peace and to request that their brother Hemming be returned to them.”²⁶³ At a meeting between Frankish and Danish nobles a year later, peace was sworn and Hemming was indeed returned to his brothers. This brief anecdote provides a rare glimpse at another of the growing connections between Scandinavia and the Carolingian Empire. We have no explicit information about when or why Hemming was sent to Francia, but it is likely that it had been as part of the earlier peace arrangements made between Charlemagne and one of the previous Danish kings, to whom Hemming was related. The Franks’ willingness to return Hemming in 813 demonstrates their expectation that the new Danish rulers would adhere to a more conciliatory course. As a returned political hostage, Hemming brought back with him a familiarity with the Frankish world. Hostage taking functioned not merely as a means to ensure proper conduct and continued obedience but also as a way for dominant political powers (in this case the Carolingians) to create and foster links with and influence over both hostages and those who gave hostages.²⁶⁴ While in Francia Hemming probably

²⁶² *CM*, s.a. 813, p. 259: “Inde per milicia domni imperatoris Karoli accepit ab eo dona multa, et remisit eum cum honore et adiutorio ad fratrem suum, ut iterum acquirerent regnum ipsorum.”

²⁶³ *RFA*, s.a. 812, p. 137: “Harioldus et Reginfridus reges Danorum missa ad imperatorem legatione pacem petunt et fratrem suum Hemmingum sibi remitti rogant.”

²⁶⁴ Smith, “*Fines Imperii: The Marches*,” 185; Joel Allen, *Hostages and Hostage-Taking in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 29–33; Adam Kosto, *Hostages in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 71.

received at least a basic introduction to Christianity and the world of the Frankish elite. In the *Indiculus obsidum Saxonum Moguntiam deducendorum*, which dates from c. 805-6, we are given a list of Saxon hostages as well as the men entrusted to receive them. Included among the men chosen to host these political prisoners were counts, abbots, and bishops, including such important figures as Egino the bishop of Constance, and Waldo, abbot of the monastery of Reichenau and later of Saint-Denis.²⁶⁵ While we do not know where Hemming lived while in Francia we can judge based on the evidence of the above document that he was probably hosted by a trusted high-ranking Frank, either secular or ecclesiastical, and had the opportunity to become familiar with the world of the Frankish elite. He may even have spent time at the court of Charlemagne. If he was a youth during the tenure of his hostageship he would have been all the more receptive to Frankish and Christian influence.

Hemming's links to Francia can be further confirmed if we look to the *Annals of Fulda* for the year 837. Here we are told that "the Northmen came to the island of Walcheren [in Frisia] to exact tribute and there on the 15th Kalends of July [June 17th] they killed the count of that place, Eggihard, and also Hemming, son of Halfdan, along with many others."²⁶⁶ While there is no definitive proof that these two Hemmings are the same person (we have no information on the name of the father of Harald and Reginfrid) the presence of Hemming in Frisia amongst the Franks in the 830s makes sense given both his previous connections to the Carolingians and the fact that we know that Harald himself had been granted land there in the 820s.²⁶⁷ Moreover, there is little reason to name Hemming's death next to that of Count Eggihard were he not of some standing. The dubbing of Hemming as a "most Christian leader" by the anonymous continuator of Thegan's *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris* and his presence fighting off Scandinavian raiders alongside other Frankish elites shows the long-lasting connections that political hostage-taking could form between Danes and Franks.

The decision by Harald and his brothers to turn to their southern neighbors for aid in their struggle with the sons of Godfrid was thus informed by ongoing ties between them and the Carolingians, by the cordial relations established during their short tenure as rulers, and by pragmatism. Despite whatever support the Franks offered, however, the dispossessed kings met with defeat in the battle that followed. Reginfrid was killed. Harald and Hemming were forced once more into exile. At this point Harald truly comes to the forefront in the ongoing relationship between Scandinavia and Francia. The *Royal Frankish Annals* ends its account of 814 with the report that "despairing at these events Harald came to the emperor and placed himself in his hands. The emperor received him and commanded him to go to Saxony and to wait there until an opportune time, when he

²⁶⁵ MGH Capit. 1, no. 115, pp. 233-4; B. von Simson, "Der Poëta Saxo und der angebliche Friedensschluss Karls der Grossen mit den Sachsen," *Neues Archiv* 32 (1906): 37-42; Adam Kosto, "Hostages in the Carolingian World (714-840)," *Early Medieval Europe* 11, no. 2 (2002): 142-44.

²⁶⁶ *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH SRG 7 (Hanover: MGH, 1891), s.a. 837, p. 28: "Nordmanni tributum exactantes in Walchram insulam venerunt ibique Eggihardum eiusdem loci comitem et Hemmingum Halpdani filium cum aliis multis XV. Kal. Iulii occiderunt"

²⁶⁷ Walther Vogel, *Die Normannen und das fränkische Reich* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1906), 405-6.

would be willing to provide the help that Harald had requested.”²⁶⁸ Harald’s decision to flee to the court of Louis the Pious had major repercussions for the course of Frankish and Scandinavian relations in the coming decades. The appearance of Harald before Louis is the very first time we see a Danish ruler stand directly before a Carolingian ruler as a clear subordinate. Up until now diplomatic interaction took place only through the exchange of envoys and the occasional meeting of nobles. King Godfrid had actively refused to appear before Charlemagne in 804, almost certainly to avoid giving any indication of subordination toward the Carolingians.

As an exiled ruler who had already once failed in his ambition to retake his throne, Harald was in a significantly weaker position than his predecessor. Indeed, his situation was more dire than even the year before when he and his brother had requested Carolingian aid. Harald’s arrival at Louis the Pious’ court and his subsequent submission can be compared to the appearances of several other surrounding subordinate groups and leaders. In 796 an Avar Tudun came before Charlemagne “and submitted himself along with his people and his lands. He and his followers were baptized and given many honorable gifts, after which they returned home.”²⁶⁹ A few years later, in 805, another Avar named Theodore and dubbed a “Kapkhan” by the *Royal Frankish Annals*, came before Charlemagne.²⁷⁰ Unlike the unnamed Tudun, Theodore was not merely submitting to Charlemagne. He also asked the emperor for permission to settle his people in an area on the borders of Austria, within the territory of the Frankish empire, as they were unable to remain in their own lands due to Slavic attacks. Theodore’s situation has striking similarities to Harald’s. In both cases these leaders of neighboring peoples turned to the Carolingians for support when faced with military defeat and loss of standing. Similar acts of direct submission by foreign leaders include that of Widukind before Charlemagne in 785, the many appearances by various Slavic leaders throughout the reigns of both Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, and those of the Breton dukes during the reigns of Louis and his son Charles the Bald. For Harald, the Carolingians were the logical place to turn for support against his enemies. He clearly hoped to use his established diplomatic and personal connections to the Franks not just to find refuge as an exile but also to leverage further attempts to regain his position in Denmark. His hopes were not entirely in vain. We are told that twice during the early months of 815 attempts were made to send a combined Saxon and Abodrite force across the Elbe to return Harald to power, but that due to warmer than expected weather the frozen river could not be crossed safely. Finally in May the army was able to make its way into the territory of the Danes. From here, however, Harald’s plans for a quick victory with the aid of his mighty ally went awry. After entering the area of Silendi the army “remained there for three days, while the sons of Godfrid, who had raised a great army against them as well as a fleet of 200 ships, remained on a certain island [Funen] three miles off the shore

²⁶⁸ *RFA*, s.a. 814, p. 141: “Quo factor Herioldus rebus suis diffidens ad imperatorem venit et se in manus illius commendavit; quem ille susceptum in Saxoniam ire et oportunitatem tempus exspectare iussit, quo ei, sicut petierat, auxilium ferre potuisset.”

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, s.a. 796, p. 98: “In eodem anno tudun secundum pollicationem suam cum magna parte Avarorum ad regem venit, se cum populo suo et patria regi dedit; ipse et populus baptizatus est, et honorifice muneribus donati regierunt.”

²⁷⁰ For an in-depth discussion of Avar titles cf. Pohl, *Die Awaren*, 292–308.

unwilling to engage in battle.”²⁷¹ With no way to effectively engage the sons of Godfrid, the invading army laid waste to the area and then returned to the emperor in Saxony. Shortly thereafter Louis returned to Frankfurt, leaving Harald in Saxony. At this point it would not surprise us if Harald, a pagan king without a kingdom, not even invited to travel with the emperor, disappeared from history. This was not, however, the case. Over the next decade and more the Franks continued to invest time, energy, and political capital in Harald. What did Louis the Pious have to gain by supporting a thrice-failed political refugee from the edges of the empire?

Frankish Foreign Policy

In order to fully understand the logic behind Louis’ ongoing support for the exiled Harald, we must first look at the changing nature of Frankish foreign policy during the first decades of the ninth century. The second half of the eighth century had marked a massive expansion of Frankish power and territory. Charlemagne had almost doubled the size of the realm he had inherited. Modern scholars estimate that the Carolingian Empire measured nearly four hundred thousand square miles at the beginning of the ninth century.²⁷² Charlemagne and his counselors were clearly aware of the difficulties inherent in governing such a huge expanse, and the last decades of the emperor’s life were thus spent responding to these challenges. The growth of Aachen as the major administrative center of the empire, the place where Charlemagne wintered more or less every year from 795 on, and where the symbolic and functional acts of governance took place (ranging from church counsels and assemblies, to the appearance of foreign envoys and leaders, and most notably, the crowning of Louis as co-emperor in 813) was one such response.²⁷³ While Aachen came to have the most symbolic importance for the Carolingians, several other major palaces were also established at locations such as Nijmegen, Frankfurt, and Ingelheim. A network of palaces in the heartland of the empire provided a fixed number of sites where elites from all over the realm could gather and from which imperial largesse and oversight could be dispatched at need.²⁷⁴ The

²⁷¹ *RFA*, s.a. 815, p. 142: “Ibique stativis triduo habitis, cum filii Godofridi, qui contra eos magnis copiis et ducentarum navium classe comparata in insula quadam tribus milibus a continenti separata residebant, cum eis congregari non auderent”

²⁷² Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 15, p. 17; Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 172.

²⁷³ Janet Nelson, “Aachen as a Place of Power,” in *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Mayke de Jong, Frans Theuvs, and Carine van Rhijn (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 217–41; McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, 156–70.

²⁷⁴ Karl Ferdinand Werner, “Hludovicus Augustus: Gouverner l’empire chrétien - Idées et réalités,” in *Charlemagne’s Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 7–8; Matthew Innes, “Charlemagne’s Government,” in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 75–76; Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 34–35.

construction of palaces and their chapels provided not just the practical space for rule but translated the power and majesty of the Carolingians into a physical form.²⁷⁵

A growing focus on internal governance is also apparent when we look at the document record for the early ninth century. Between his elevation as emperor and his death in 814 Charlemagne issued more than fifty capitularies, including the so-called “programmatic” capitulary issues in 802 and known as the *Capitulare missorum generale*.²⁷⁶ This number stands in marked contrast with an output of only twelve such documents during the first thirty-two years of his reign. As Matthew Innes puts it, “The issuing of written decrees from annual assemblies held at palaces in the heartlands of the empire also clearly relates to the changing patterns of contact between the king and the provinces, evident in the development of the royal court and the palace system.”²⁷⁷ The increase in documentation was a direct result of Charlemagne’s attempts to formalize the governance of the realm. It also reflects a growing interest in strengthening ties between Charlemagne and the elites of the empire, a means of connecting center and periphery. Attempts at governmental reform went hand-in-hand with, and were in fact inextricable from, spiritual and ecclesiastical reforms. Even in the last years of his life, when Einhard states that he was “oppressed by illness and old age,”²⁷⁸ the emperor convoked a series of major councils in May and June at Arles, Reims, Mainz, Chalons, and Tours.²⁷⁹ These efforts were preceded by an assembly in early spring at Aachen and were capped with yet another major assembly held there in September. At the same assembly Charlemagne took the step of having Louis, his only remaining heir, raised to the status of co-emperor.

In his biography of Louis, the *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, Thegan tells us about the measures that Louis took to ensure the proper maintenance of the realm upon his accession. In addition to confirming and strengthening previous immunities and privileges for ecclesiastical institutions, we are informed that in 814 the emperor “sent legates throughout his whole kingdom to inquire and investigate if anyone had perpetrated any injustices,” an effort that can be verified by several of Louis’ *formulae*.²⁸⁰ In his efforts to bring elites from all over the empire into his presence and to create ties

²⁷⁵ Karl Hauck, “Der Missionsauftrag Christi und das Kaisertum Ludwigs des Frommen,” in *Charlemagne’s Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 291–93; Ross Samson, “Carolingian Palaces and the Poverty of Ideology,” in *Meaningful Architecture: Social Interpretations of Buildings*, ed. Martin Locock (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 1994), 99–131; Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 175–77.

²⁷⁶ MGH Capit. 1, no. 33, pp. 94–99; F. L. Ganshof, “Charlemagne’s Programme of Imperial Government,” in *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, trans. Janet Sondheimer (London: Longman, 1971), 56; Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 183.

²⁷⁷ Innes, “Charlemagne’s Government,” 77.

²⁷⁸ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 30, p. 34: “Extremo vitae tempore, cum iam et morbo et senectute premeretur”

²⁷⁹ Wilfried Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frankenreich und in Italien* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1989), 128–40; Egon Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1996), 96–97.

²⁸⁰ Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. E. Tremp, MGH SRG 64 (Hanover: MGH, 1995), c. 13, p. 192: “Princeps misit legatos suos super omnia regna sua inquirere et investigare, si alicui aliqua iniustitia perpetrata fuisset.” For the confirmation of immunities by Louis see Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, c. 10, p. 192; as well as MGH Form., n. 11–13, pp. 294–95. For further discussion on Louis’ early reforming actions cf. Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme*, 108–28.

that could bind together his far-flung realm the new emperor also maintained the practice of holding general assemblies, two or even three times a year and almost always at one of the major palaces in the heartland of the empire.²⁸¹ Following in Charlemagne's footsteps these assemblies frequently resulted in the publishing of capitularies focused on proper behavior by royal and ecclesiastical figures, protection of the poor, and maintenance of order and justice.²⁸² Louis' enthusiastic support for ecclesiastical and monastic reform, typified by the major reform synod of 816/17 at Aachen, can also be seen in this context. Louis' religious reform aimed not only at enforcing and enhancing the sanctity of the clergy, both regular and secular, but also continued Charlemagne's goal of firmly identifying the *imperium christianum* with the universal church. An emphasis on unity and cohesion across the entire empire thus informed the ecclesiastical and secular policies of both father and son.²⁸³

The desire of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious to focus on internal matters in a now vastly expanded realm was accompanied by a major shift in the way the Carolingians viewed and interacted with the world surrounding their new empire. The end of the Saxon Wars in 804 marked the final phase of Carolingian expansion. In the same decade the Avars were pacified, shifting from a major threat to a tributary people and eventually fading from the historical record entirely.²⁸⁴ With the successful conclusion of these two major military undertakings the priorities of the Carolingians began to change. As we have already seen, this was in part due to a clear and pressing need to gain a firm handle on a vast territory. There were also other reasons why expansion and active campaigning seem to have become less important to both the emperor and his elites. For one thing, the success of these ongoing wars had tremendously enriched the Carolingian nobility. The *Royal Frankish Annals* reports that having defeated the Avars and entered their so-called Ring (*hringum*), the fortified royal seat, Eric of Friuli "sent the treasure of the ancient kings, which had been collecting for many centuries, to the lord king Charles at his palace in Aachen."²⁸⁵ While the plunder of 796 was remarkable for its grandeur, the practice of sacking enemy territory was very much at the center of Frankish military campaigns, as was the practice of distributing the largess among ones followers. Whether from victory in pitched battle, as with the campaign against the Greeks in 788, where the Beneventans, under the eye of Charlemagne's envoy Winigis, "returned to their camp with numerous captives and much

²⁸¹ Joel T. Rosenthal, "The Public Assembly In The Time Of Louis The Pious," *Traditio* 20 (1964): 25–40; Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme*, 102–3.

²⁸² Gerhard Schmitz, "Zur Kapitulariengesetzgebung Ludwigs des Frommen," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 42, no. 2 (1986): 471–516; Hubert Mordek, "Recently Discovered Capitulary Texts Belonging to the Legislation of Louis the Pious," in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 437–53.

²⁸³ Yitzhak Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy in Frankish Gaul* (London: Boydell Press, 2001), 96–103; Michèle Gaillard, *D'une réforme à l'autre (816-934): les communautés religieuses en Lorraine à l'époque carolingienne* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006), 123–47.

²⁸⁴ Pohl, *Die Awaren*, 323–28; Reimitz, "Conversion and Control: The Establishment of Liturgical Frontiers in Carolingian Pannonia," 189–207.

²⁸⁵ *RFA*, s.a. 796, p. 98: "Thesaurum priscorum regum multa seculorum prolixitate collectum domno regi Carlo ad Aquis palatium misit."

booty,”²⁸⁶ or as the result of the frequent rapid punitive raids into enemy territory at which the Franks excelled, the warfare of the eighth century was extremely rewarding.²⁸⁷ But as Reuter says, “The very success of Frankish imperialism in the eighth century had led to a shortage of victims who were both conquerable and profitable.”²⁸⁸ The Slavs and Danes offered far less in the way of reward for the necessary expenditure and risk required to gather an army, while the Greeks and Saracens in the Mediterranean were a far weightier challenge.

Certainly the Carolingians did not cease hostilities with their neighbors altogether. But the tenor of Charlemagne’s later wars and those of Louis the Pious were far different from the great campaigns into Italy, Spain, and Saxony that marked the zenith of Carolingian militarism. In the opening of the *Divisio regnorum*, drafted in 806 to prepare for Charlemagne’s inevitable death, the emperor’s hopes for the future of the realm are laid out. “The entire realm shall be divided into three sections, each of which a son shall guard and rule. This has been done with the goal that each of my sons should be content with their section, set out by my orders. He should, with the aid of God, strive to protect the borders of his realm that face foreign peoples and to preserve peace and love with his brothers.”²⁸⁹ Instead of conquest, this new approach to warfare focused on defense and limited reprisal with the goal of protecting what had been conquered and preventing raids or aggressive behavior from the various ethnic groups outside of the empire’s borders. The settlement of the allied Abodrites in the area across the Elbe in 804 (discussed in the previous chapter) is one example of these new practices. Similarly, from around the end of the eighth century administrative districts on the borders of the empire were created to defend the realm from hostile attack. The largest of these units came to be known as “marches” (*marcae*). While initially the word *marca* was interchangeable with other words for border or frontier such as *limes*, *terminus*, and *finis*, it took on more and more the specific meaning of a territory consolidated under the command of a single powerful count responsible for the defense and administration of the area bordering a foreign people.²⁹⁰ By the 820s these marches were established on the borders of Brittany, Iberia, Pannonia, and of course Denmark, where the first explicit use of the term march is made in the 828 entry of the *Royal Frankish Annals*. Alongside these administrative efforts, the construction of fortifications along the Elbe, mentioned in the annals and confirmed in several places by archaeological evidence, was designed to strengthen the borders of

²⁸⁶ *RFA-R*, s.a. 788, p. 83: “Commissoque proelio immodicam ex eis multitudinem ceciderunt ac sine suo suorumque gravi dispendio victores facti magnum captivorum ac apoliorum numerum in sua castra retulerent.”

²⁸⁷ Reuter, “Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire.”

²⁸⁸ Reuter, “The End of Carolingian Military Expansion,” 404.

²⁸⁹ MGH Capit. 1, no. 45, pp. 126-27: “Sed trina portione totum regni corpus dividentes, quam quisque illorum tueri vel regere debeat porcionem describere et designare fecimus; eo videlicet modo, ut sua quisque portione contentus iuxta ordinationem nostram, et fines regni sui qui ad alienigenas extenduntur cum Dei adiutorio nitatur defendere, et pacem atque caritatem cum fratre custodire.”

²⁹⁰ Karl Ferdinand Werner, “*Missus - Marchi - Comes*: Entre l’administration centrale et l’administration locale de l’Empire carolingien,” in *Histoire comparee de l’administration*, ed. Karl Ferdinand Werner and Werner Paravicini (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1980), 211–19; Herwig Wolfram, “The Creation of the Carolingian Frontier-System C. 800,” in *The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. Walter Pohl, Ian Wood, and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 234–37.

the empire both physically and conceptually against Slavic incursions.²⁹¹ Of course these incursions continued to occur, and on several occasions armies were dispatched to subdue the neighboring tribes. But the descriptions of these forays across the Elbe are noticeably different from earlier accounts of the Saxon Wars. Instead of major campaigns featuring pitched battles, hostage taking, and the gradual extension of Carolingian authority these were punitive raids, designed to subdue the local inhabitants and return home quickly. Force remained an important part of Carolingian foreign policy, but it was only one of a much wider array of options that Louis utilized to secure his realm and project Frankish authority.

Louis and Harald's relationship thus arose out of the Carolingian's changing domestic and foreign policy. The conflict between Charlemagne and Godfrid in the first decade of the ninth century had demonstrated just how much of a challenge the newly developing Danish kingdom could be to Frankish power in northern Europe. Following the death of Godfrid power had passed to a faction actively invested in cultivating good relations with the Franks; that faction had now been defeated and replaced by the sons of the same troublesome Godfrid. By supporting Harald, Louis could gain a valuable hold over the Danish kingdom. To have a handpicked Danish ruler, in much the same way that Charlemagne had handpicked the Slavic ruler Thrasco, would firmly establish the superiority of the Franks in Scandinavia and the trans-Elben region. Louis' new political agenda resembles that of the Byzantine emperors.²⁹² Dimitri Obolensky notes that one of the central pieces of the eastern empire's foreign policy was "to extend as far as possible the boundaries of Byzantium's political and cultural hegemony by creating beyond the borders a chain of client states, whose loyalty would be ensured by acceptance of the religion and of the political supremacy of the emperor in Constantinople."²⁹³

The importance of gaining authority over the Danes was clearly demonstrated in 817. A revolt against Frankish authority arose among the Slavic Abodrites, who had long been a useful ally and client-people in the trans-Elben world. According to the *Royal Frankish Annals*:

The cause of this revolt was that Sclaomir, who had had ruled over the Abodrites since the death of Thrasco [in 809], was ordered to share that power with Ceadrag, the son of that same Thrasco. Sclaomir was so angered by this that he swore he would never again cross the Elbe and come to the emperor's palace. He at once sent envoys across the sea and swore friendship with the sons of Godfrid, convincing them to send an army across the Elbe to attack Saxony. The Danish fleet went up the Elbe all the way to the castle at Esesfeld and devastated the entire bank of the River Stör. At the same time the Dane Gluomi, lord of the Norse borderlands, led his army, alongside the Abodrites, up to Esesfeld as well.

²⁹¹ Hardt, "Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire," 222–32; Heiko Steuer, "The Beginnings of Urban Economies Among the Saxons," in *The Continental Saxons From the Migration Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. D. H. Green and Frank Siegmund (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003), 168–74.

²⁹² Reuter, "The End of Carolingian Military Expansion," 403; Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 97–136.

²⁹³ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 275.

But since our people strongly resisted them, they gave up on the siege and departed.²⁹⁴

The presence of a powerful, independent kingdom on the borders of the empire was a direct military threat and also served to undermine Frankish control over other ethnic groups, even ones who had served as allies for decades. As long as the Danes existed independent of Frankish control they served as potential allies to any other group who wished to free themselves from Frankish influence. While Sclaomir was captured and exiled from his lands in the following year, the sons of Godfrid continued to serve as convenient allies for recalcitrant Slavic leaders. Indeed, in 821 Louis attempted to return Sclaomir (newly baptized and presumably firmly chastised after his exile in Francia) to power after learning that Ceadrag had himself made alliances with the Danish kings. By aiding Harald the Carolingians hoped to remove a persistent threat to their authority in the wider trans-Elben area.

Though initial attempts to return Harald to power were unsuccessful, continued support for Harald cost Louis little in either political capital or military resources. The various military expeditions sent north were made up of Saxon and Slavic forces and did not require any large-scale mobilization. With minimal effort Louis could continue to keep his Danish rivals off-balance. *The Royal Frankish Annals* hints at the anxiety the Danish rulers must have felt over the situation. “Because of the constant hostile behavior of Harald the sons of Godfrid, kings of the Danes, sent an embassy to the emperor begging for peace and promising on their part to uphold it. But this seemed to the emperor more pretense than reality and was thus dismissed as empty talk and aid was given to Harald against them.”²⁹⁵ Even as they made alliances with Slavic leaders and attacked Frankish castles, the sons of Godfrid could not afford to overly antagonize their southern neighbors. As long as he remained under the protection of the emperor, Harald served as a convenient tool for destabilizing the power of the sons of Godfrid and could provide justification for Louis to intervene militarily and diplomatically in the affairs of his northern neighbors as he pleased.

In 819 Louis’ efforts to re-establish his chosen candidate in Denmark came to fruition. “Harald, by order of the emperor was returned to his ships by the Abodrites and sailed back to his homeland in order to take royal power there. It is said that two of the sons of Godfrid arranged with him to share royal power, and two others were expelled

²⁹⁴ *RFA*, s.a. 817, p. 147: “Causa defectionis erat, quod regiam potestatem, quam Sclaomir eatenus post mortem Thrasconis solus super Abodritos tenebat, cum Ceadrago filio Thrasconis partiri iubebatur; quae res illum tam graviter exacerbavit, ut adfirmaret se numquam posthac Albiam fluvium transiturum neque ad palatium venturum. Statim missa trans mare legatione iunxit amicitias cum filiis Godofridi et, ut exercitus in Saxoniam Transalbianam mitteretur, impetravit. Name et classis eorum per Albiam usque ad Esesfeld castellum venit, quae totam Sturiae fluminis ripam devastavit, et Gluomi custos Nordmannici limitis pedestres copias ducens simul cum Abodritis terreno itinere ad ipsum castellum accessit. Quibus cum nostri fortiter restitissent, omissa castelli obpugnatione discesserunt.”

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, s.a. 817, p. 145: “Filiis quoque Godofridi regis Danorum propter assiduum Herioldi infestationem missa ad imperatorem legatione pacem petunt eamque a se servandam pollicentur; sed cum haec simulata magis quam veracia viderentur, velut inania neglecta sunt, et auxilium contra eos Herioldo datum.”

from the country by treachery.”²⁹⁶ The brief report by the *Royal Frankish Annals* leaves out a good deal of information. What role did the emperor himself play, other than providing an escort, in the negotiations to return Harald to power? What exactly were the treacherous acts undertaken against the exiled sons of Godfrid, and why did the remaining kings feel it worth while to accept Harald back in place of their own brothers? Harald’s new arrangement with two of the sons of Godfrid also demonstrates again the changeable nature of kingship among the Danes. As seen above, Harald and his two brothers very well may have shared rule over the Danes equally. It is hard to believe that the same held true in this new power-sharing relationship. The number of men who could claim to be kings (or perhaps more aptly, who the Franks thought worthy of calling kings) fluctuated rapidly throughout the ninth century. For the Franks the details of Harald’s kingship were much less important than the fact that Harald’s return to power marked a major success.

For the next several years matters in Denmark seem to have run much to the benefit of Louis. The annal for 821 reports that “all was quiet in the Danish region” and attributes this directly to the return of Harald and the arrangement made between him and his rivals.²⁹⁷ The following year the emperor received embassies from both Harald and the other Danish kings during his assembly at Frankfurt, as well as from all of the major Slavic peoples. In 823 Harald’s subordinate relationship to Louis was again made clear when he came before him and appealed for further aid against his rivals, who apparently were once again seeking to drive him from power. Louis’ response shows how much the relationship between the two rulers benefited the Frank’s political agenda. “To fully investigate Harald’s claims the emperor dispatched two counts, Theothari and Hruodmund, to the sons of Godfrid. These counts set off ahead of Harald and examined the cause of the disputes between the Danish kings and the state of the whole kingdom of the Northmen and then returned, informing the emperor of all they had learned.”²⁹⁸ That these two counts could enter Denmark and investigate is a sign of the familiarity they must have had with their northern neighbors. We know from the annal of 811 that Count Theothari had previously been involved in diplomatic relations with the Danes, serving as one of a group of nobles who had met with their Danish counterparts to arrange peace. A capitulary dated to 826 excusing Hruodmund from appearing at the emperor’s court due to his current service abroad, similarly offers evidence of his ongoing experience in foreign affairs.²⁹⁹

The 823 mission was not a mere diplomatic embassy like that mentioned in 798 or a meeting between nobles on the borders of the two realms. Having invested so much time and effort placing Harald in power, Louis was now in a position to intervene directly

²⁹⁶ Ibid., s.a. 819, p. 152: “Harioldus quoque iussu imperatoris ad naves suas per Abodritos reductus in patriam quasi regnum ibi accepturus navigavit. Cui se duo ex filiis Godofridi quasi una cum eo regnum habituri sociasse dicuntur, aliis duobus patria expulsis; sed hoc dolo factum putatur.”

²⁹⁷ Ibid., s.a. 821, p. 156: “De parte Danorum omnia quieta eo anno fuerunt, et Harioldus a filiis Godofridi in scoietatem regni receptus; quae res tranquillum inter eos huius temporis statum fecisse putatur.”

²⁹⁸ Ibid., s.a. 823, p. 162: “ob cuius causam diligentius explorandam ad eosdem filios Godofridi Theotharius et Hruodmundus comites missi fuerunt, qui et causam filiorum Godofridi et statum totius regni Nordmannorum diligenter explorantes adventum Hrioldi praecesserunt et imperatori omnia, quae in illis partibus comperire potuerunt, patefecerunt.”

²⁹⁹ MGH Capit 1, no. 155, p. 314: “De causa Hruotmundi comitis: ut ei liceat hic in palatio sacramentum suum iurare, quia propter nostrum servitium sibi constitum placitum intra patriam observare non licuit.”

in the internal politics of the Danes, sending his counts into Denmark itself to gather information. The emperor was able to put himself forward as an authority not just over Harald but over the other kings as well, presenting himself as the adjudicator over their dispute. Like various other neighboring groups such as the Slavic Wilzi and Abodrites, the Bretons, and the Beneventans, the Danes could now be treated as a subordinate people. In August of 825 at an assembly at Aachen the sons of Godfrid once more sued for peace with the Franks, and now it was granted. Denmark was divided between several kings, one a direct subordinate of the emperor, all at peace with the Franks. A feeling of success and superiority shines through in the sources for 826. The *Royal Frankish Annals* describes Louis at Ingelheim overseeing an assembly packed with foreign envoys: Sorbs, Abodrites, Bretons, and Danes offered gifts and asked for peace. In the case of the Danes, all of the kings were represented; the sons of Godfrid confirmed the peace discussed the year before and Harald himself appeared once again before the emperor. But alongside the standard political rituals of submission already undertaken on previous occasions, a new series of relationships were forged that created long-lasting ties between Harald's family and the Carolingians and established new possibilities for interaction and engagement between Frank and Scandinavian.

The Wolf's Jaws: Harald's Baptism at Ingelheim

In the late ninth century poem, *Annalium de Gestis Caroli Magni Imperatoris*, composed by an anonymous author commonly referred to as the "Saxon Poet," we are told of a submission by a Danish *dux* named Halfdan in 807. "Meanwhile a duke of the Northmen, called Halfdan, submitted himself and a large group of his followers to the great Augustus and firmly established eternal loyalty."³⁰⁰ This Halfdan may well have been the same Halptani mentioned in the *Royal Frankish Annals* who arrived at Charlemagne's court in 782 as the envoy of King Sigfrid. It has also been argued that Halfdan was likely a member of the Danish royal dynasty, and possibly even the father of the kings Harald, Reginfrid, and Hemming.³⁰¹ We have no explicit evidence on whether Halfdan was baptized as a Catholic as part of his submission. Baptism was certainly a common part of submissions and diplomatic agreements between powerful Christian leaders and pagan supplicants, but it was by no means required. In any event, the first submission of a Dane to the Franks had little impact on Frankish memory. The baptism of Harald in 826, on the other hand, made a tremendous impression on the consciousness of Frankish historians and writers. Instead of a *dux* we have a *rex* appearing before the Christian emperor, and while the *Poeta Saxo* focused on political loyalty, Harald had already on multiple occasions demonstrated his subordination to Louis. For the various Frankish authors writing about the events of 826, and undoubtedly for Louis himself, the baptism of Harald was the central and defining act of the meeting at Ingelheim:

³⁰⁰ Poeta Saxo, *Annalium de Gestis Caroli Magni Imperatoris Libri Quinque*, ed. P. von Winterfeld, MGH Poetae 4 (Hannover: MGH, 1899), s.a. 807, ll. 19-21, p. 51: "Interea Northmannorum dux Alfdeni dictus / Augusto magna sese comitante caterva / Subdidit atque fidem studuit firmare perennem."

³⁰¹ Vogel, *Die Normannen und das fränkische Reich*, 405-9; Coupland, "From Poachers to Gamekeepers," 87.

With everything in order and the sacred rites prepared
 Caesar and Harald entered the holy church.
 The Emperor reverently raised Harald from the font
 And with his own hands garbed him in ornate white vestments.
 Judith, the beautiful empress, raised Harald's queen
 from the sacred font, and likewise clothed her.
 And Caesar Lothar, the son of kind Louis,
 received Harald's son from the waters.
 The nobles raised and clothed the king's retainers,
 While the commoners lifted numerous others from the font.
 O Louis, great one, what multitudes you give to God,
 What sweets scents rise to Christ due to your actions?
 These gains will remain safe for you for a great length of time
 For having snatched them from the wolf's jaws you give them to God.³⁰²

The above description comes from the most effusive and detailed account of the events of 826, a panegyric poem written for the emperor by the poet Ermoldus Nigellus. Following the baptism the emperor and his family gave rich gifts – clothing, crowns, jewelry, and Frankish blades – to the new Christians. Mass followed, attended by all of the notables of the realm, and then a grand feast and a hunt. After these ceremonies and festivities the political bonds between Louis and Harald were reaffirmed with Harald once more placing himself in the emperor's service.

Although there is some debate about the veracity and usefulness of Ermoldus' work for the event he so colorfully describes, his account can be largely corroborated through several other sources.³⁰³ The *Royal Frankish Annals* confirms both the presence of Harald's wife and followers at Louis' court and the giving of gifts, though it states that the event took place at St. Alban's in Mainz rather than at Ingelheim itself (the locations are a little over ten miles apart along the Rhine). In the *Vita Anskarii* Harald's baptism serves as the catalyst for the mission of Anskar himself, and much is made of the powerful bond that this act created between Louis and his new godson. Both of Louis' biographers, Thegan and the anonymous Astronomer, mention the event, whose significance resonated after Louis' own life. In Notker's *Gesta Karoli Magni*, written for Louis' grandson, the author describes Louis' role in baptizing the Northmen in order to spread the word of God and again emphasizes the magnificent gifts given and the ties

³⁰² Ermoldus Nigellus, *In Honorem Hludowici Christianissimi Caesaris Augusti*, MGH Poetae 2, bk. 4, ll. 357-70, p. 68: "Ordine his gestis, sacris quoque rite aparatis, / Caesar et Heroldus tecta sacrata petunt. / Caesar honore dei Heroldum suscepit ab undis, / Vestibus albidulis ornat et ipse manu; / Iudith reginam Heroldi pulcra induperatrix / Fonte levat sacro, vestibus atque tegit: / Hlutharius Caesar, Hludowici filius almi, / Heroldi natum sustulit a laticae; / Regis honoratos proceres relevantque decorant, / Ast alois plures turba levavit aquis. / O Hludowice, deo quantas das magne, catervas! / Quantus odor Christo te faviente meat! / Haec tibi lucra diu, princept, servata manebunt; / Abstrahis ore lupi, quae facis esse dei."

³⁰³ Alfred Ebenbauer, *Carmen Historicum*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1978), 148-49; Peter Godman, "Louis 'The Pious' and His Poets," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 19 (1985): 258-66; Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 123-25; Thomas F. X. Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 119-25.

formed between the baptized and their sponsors.³⁰⁴ The *Annales Xantenses*, compiled sometime between the tenth and twelfth century and relying on earlier sources (in this case perhaps Thegan), provides another interesting editorial. Following the description of the baptism of Harald and more than 400 of his followers the annalist writes, “From that time on the many evils of that people inflicted on the Catholic Church grew.”³⁰⁵ An event that contemporaries had regarded as a sign of Louis’ success and superiority over the Northmen, in hindsight, came to be seen as a precursor to a period of strife and doom.

At the time, however, the events of 826 must have seemed the crowning moment in the ongoing struggle for control over northern Europe. The baptism of Harald was rife with both symbolic and practical consequences. At its heart the staging of Harald’s visit, from beginning to end, was designed to display the wealth and power of the Christian emperor, his court, and his people. Louis was demonstrating for all to see who was responsible for Harald’s kingship. Harald approached the emperor once more as supplicant, along with his family, and his followers. Following the baptism the emperor and his family gave rich gifts to the Danes, again in the sight of everyone. In a world where gift giving served as a sign of one’s capacity to rule, the act of gifting not just to Harald but also to his followers must have been particularly striking. Louis’ gift giving in essence usurped Harald’s role among his men, demonstrating his superiority to the Franks as well as the Danes. The nature of the gifts given was also highly significant. After their baptism, the Danes were garbed in Frankish clothes and thus visibly moved from one world, one culture, to another. The very act of dressing and, more importantly, crowning the Danish ruler, his wife, and his son, emphasized the power relationship between the two parties.³⁰⁶ Tales of the meeting must have reverberated throughout the Frankish world and among the Danes.

Besides displaying cultural and political superiority, Louis also wanted to strengthen the ties between Harald and himself and thus between the two peoples. Louis was not merely arranging for the baptism of the Danish king; he was playing a central role. By acting as Harald’s sponsor the Frankish emperor was establishing a spiritual kinship between himself and the newly Christian Dane, with himself in the role of spiritual parent. Rimbert explicitly draws that conclusion in the *Vita Anskarii*. “And when Harald was sprinkled with the holy waters of baptism Louis himself raised him from the sacred font and adopted him as his son.”³⁰⁷ In the eyes of the church and the Christian Franks Harald was re-born; the ceremony of baptism forged a new relationship between the two men that went beyond earlier political submissions. Their relationship was not merely religious. As Joseph Lynch puts it, “Godparenthood involved a patron/client relationship in which the adult sponsor protected and promoted the ‘adopted’ child over a long period of time, perhaps even a lifetime. Such a bond could not ordinarily be symmetrical in its demands, since the godparent and godchild did not

³⁰⁴ Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, bk 2, c. 19, p. 89.

³⁰⁵ AX, s.a. 826, p. 7: “Ex eo tempora multa mala increverunt a gentilibus super ecclesiam catholicam.”

³⁰⁶ Arnold Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe: Kaiser, Könige und Päpste als geistliche Patrone in der abendländischen Missionsgeschichte* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 216–17; Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 136–39.

³⁰⁷ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 7, p. 26: “Et sacro baptismate perfusum ipse de sacro fonte suscepit sibique in filium adoptavit.”

stand on an equal footing. The godparent was the authority figure, freely giving material aid and advice, while the godchild was the client, reciprocating with gratitude and respect.”³⁰⁸ The empress Judith, acting as sponsor in her own right, became spiritual mother to Harald’s wife. Lothar, Louis’ oldest son (and since 817 theoretical co-emperor) took on the role of godfather to Harald’s son, thus cementing ties between the two dynasties in the next generation. As the godparent of Harald’s son, he also functioned as a co-parent with Harald, creating potential horizontal ties between the two families as well. Ermoldus gives us further evidence of the links made between Harald’s family and the Carolingians. When Harald and his following departed for home “the son and nephew of the [Danish] king remained at court to serve among the royal guard, and learn the laws of the Franks.”³⁰⁹ As with their uncle Hemming, this act of fostering and hospitality was designed to create links and influence over the next generation of aristocrats and dependent rulers.³¹⁰ The baptism of 826 created an intricate web of ties between the two royal families, one that Louis hoped would create long lasting connections between Denmark and Francia and cement the hegemony of the Carolingians on their northern borders.

Before the Danish king left Ingelheim Louis undertook one final action designed to bind the two rulers together. He gave Harald “a county, known as Rüstingen, from the province of Frisia, so that he and his followers might find refuge there if necessary.”³¹¹ By handing over a piece of land in Frisia, Louis was able to demonstrate the benefits of continued Frankish support and create deeper political and social ties between the two kings. Even at this moment of success, the granting of Rüstingen as a possible refuge demonstrates how aware Louis was of the ongoing tensions in Scandinavia. While he might hope for the continued success of his chosen candidate, the ongoing struggle for supremacy between the various kings of Denmark made the creation of a safe base of operations a wise political move. Rüstingen’s location on the borders of the empire on the river Weser would also allow Harald to continue on as a disruptive force in Scandinavia should he be forced to flee.

Beyond its function as a refuge, the true nature of Louis’ gift of Rüstingen remains difficult to determine. While the *Royal Frankish Annals* states that a “county” was given, there is no real agreement in the contemporary sources about the size of the territory nor what the gift of this county entailed. Was Harald in fact made a count, with all of the duties and privileges attached to that position? It seems unlikely, given the fact that Harald was expected to return to his kingdom after the baptism rather than to remain in Frisia and serve Louis directly. It is only in the *Vita Anskarii*, written several decades later, that the term “benefice” is used and even here Rimbert indicates that the territory was given as a sort of insurance against exile. No indication of service is made and Harald is never referred to as “count” in any Frankish sources. Rather than a countship

³⁰⁸ Joseph H. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 191.

³⁰⁹ Ermoldus, *In Honorem Hludowici*, bk. 4, ll. 629-30, p. 76: “Filius atque nepos ipsius regis in aula / Excubiis vigilant, Francia iura colunt.”

³¹⁰ Matthew Innes, “‘A Place of Discipline’: Carolingian Courts and Aristocratic Youth,” in *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Catherine Cubitt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 59–76.

³¹¹ *RFA*, s.a 826, p. 170: “In qua provincia unus comitatus, qui Hriustri vocatur, eidem datus est, ut in eum se cum rebus suis, si necessitas exigeret, recipere potuisset.”

or a benefice, with the service that this would entail, Louis' gift was probably offered to both provide material support for Harald and reassure the king of Louis' support and encourage him to seek baptism and closer ties to the Franks, despite potential negative reactions among the Danes. Ermoldus' refers to the gift as an "estate" (*praedium*), which might indicate that Harald was not being given territory so much as a safe base of operations.³¹² That Ermoldus goes on to call the area "rich in vines" (unlikely given Rüstingen's location in the marshy coastlands of Frisia) can probably be attributed to the poet's constant tendency towards exaggeration and aggrandizement.

The significance of Louis' gift, which in many ways seems to have been an afterthought compared with the importance of Harald's baptism, should not be underestimated, however. While Harald's father Halfdan may have received an estate or even a benefice from Charlemagne when he submitted to his authority we have no explicit proof of this. Likewise, while it seems likely that at some point Harald's brother Hemming was granted land near Walcheren where he met his end in 837, it is unclear when exactly that might have occurred or under what terms. The gift of Rüstingen is thus the first explicit evidence we have of a Northman receiving land from a Carolingian ruler, albeit in a quite limited sense. In Louis' gift to Harald we can perhaps see the first signs of a practice that would become commonplace throughout the second half of the ninth century and into the tenth: the granting of land and even of titles to Northmen (many of them in fact related to Harald) in an effort to gain control over and security from Scandinavian raiders.³¹³

The baptism, submission, and gift of Rüstingen to Harald marked a major victory in the ongoing campaign to secure Frankish influence over their northern neighbors. But what did Harald have to gain by humbling himself once again and by so firmly aligning himself within the Frankish world, both politically and spiritually? Ermoldus presents us with an image of the pagan king being impressed by the preaching of the bishop Ebbo, swayed by the power of the Christian God away from his false idols:

By his example and by his honest words
I believe in the true god and I reject hand made idols.
Therefore I have hurried by boat to your kingdom
so that I may join in your faith.³¹⁴

While repeated experiences with the power and might of the Franks may have convinced the Danish king of the glory and efficacy of their religion, Ermoldus' vision of a king motivated by purely spiritual motives seems suspect. Rimbart's account of the meetings between Harald and Louis that preceded the Dane's baptism is somewhat more plausible. "While Louis kept the Danish king with him at court he and others encouraged Harald to

³¹² Ermoldus, *In Honorem Hludowici*, bk. 4, ll. 613-14, p. 75: "Illius est propter tribuit sibi praedia fines, / Et loca vinifera multimodasque dapes."

³¹³ Lund, "Allies of God or Man"; Smith, "*Fines Imperii: The Marches*," 183; Coupland, "From Poachers to Gamekeepers."

³¹⁴ Ermoldus, *In Honorem Hludowici*, bk. 4, ll. 345-48, p. 67: "Cuius ego exemplo verbis recreatus honestis, / Credo deum verum, respuo sculpta manus. / Idcirco ad vestrum properavi remige regnum, / Ut mihi vestra fides consociata foret."

take up the Christian faith. For certainly then there would be greater familiarity between the two people and as a Christian people [the Franks] would be more eager to give aid to Harald and his kingdom if both peoples worshiped the same God.”³¹⁵ When put in these terms the baptism of Harald makes a good deal of sense. Although he had, with the aid of Louis, managed to return to power in Denmark, his position was clearly tenuous. To continue receiving aid from his patron, a new commitment was necessary. The gift of Rüstringen, as well as various expensive material goods, and the promise of future aid indicate that Harald’s hopes were, for the time being, fulfilled. Harald’s decision to convert was thus most likely driven primarily by a desire to reaffirm and expand the political, military, and economic benefits of his relationship with Louis, a largely practical decision.³¹⁶

Christian Inroads in Scandinavia

For Louis, the baptism of Harald brought with it a number of practical political benefits. It also brought with it the chance to fulfill one of his duties as Christian emperor: the spread of God’s word across the world.³¹⁷ By convincing Harald to receive baptism, Louis hoped not only to create tighter links between the two rulers but to effect the salvation of Harald’s soul and ideally the Christianization of the heathen Northmen. Louis was opening up another new front in the ongoing relationship between the Franks and Scandinavians. Harald’s conversion served as the first major success in this new venture, one that ran parallel with Carolingians’ attempts to exert stronger political control over northern Europe.

While there are a few scattered references to attempts by missionaries to make inroads in Scandinavia, most notably in the *Vita Willibrordi* discussed in the previous chapter, we have no record of any attempts by Charlemagne to introduce Christianity to Scandinavia. Charlemagne’s missionary efforts were primarily focused on the Saxons. As the Saxon Wars came to a close the major tool of Christianization on the northern borders had been the founding of churches and dioceses designed to create a permanent Christian presence.³¹⁸ While the establishment of dioceses such as Bremen and

³¹⁵ Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 7, p. 26: “Qui eum secum detentum tam per se quam per alios ad suscipendam christianitatem cohortatus, quod scilicet inter eos ita maior familiaritas esse posset, populusque christianus ipsi ac suis promptiori voluntate in adiutorium sic veniret, si uterque unum coleret Deum.”

³¹⁶ Stéphane Covaux, “Baptême et conversion des chefs scandinaves du IXe au XIe siècle,” in *Les fondations scandinaves en Occident et les débuts du duché de Normandie*, ed. Pierre Bauduin (Caen: Publications du CRAHM, 2005), 70.

³¹⁷ Hauck, “Der Missionsauftrag Christi und das Kaisertum Ludwigs des Frommen,” 289–95; Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 80–110; Ian Wood, “Ideas of Mission in the Carolingian World,” in *Le Monde Carolingien: Bilan, Perspectives, Champs de Recherches*, ed. Wojciech Falkowski and Yves Sassier (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 183–98.

³¹⁸ Heinrich Büttner, “Mission und Kirchenorganisation des Frankenreiches bis zum Tode Karls des Grossen,” in *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, ed. Helmut Beumann, vol. 1 (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1965), 474–75; Ian Wood, “An Absence of Saints? The Evidence for the Christianisation of Saxony,” in *Am Vorabend Der Kaiser Krönung*, ed. Peter Godman, Jörg Jarnut, and Peter Johanek (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 335–40; Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbart, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, 53–59.

Paderborn may have had some effect beyond their borders on the Weser, Charlemagne does not seem to have had an explicit interest in missionary efforts across the Elbe to either the Slavs or Danes. Louis, on the other hand, embraced the idea of a northern mission as a part of his Christian duty and his ongoing attempts to develop a stronger hold over the territories beyond the empire's northern borders.

While Louis had succeeded in restoring Harald to power in Denmark and control over the Slavs had been reestablished, the situation in the north was in need of further dedicated attention if it were to remain stable. The Christianization of Scandinavia could serve to more fully bring the Northmen into the orbit of the Franks, not just politically but culturally and spiritually as well. Thus, another important member of the emperor's court, Archbishop Ebbo of Reims, accompanied the two Frankish counts dispatched to investigate the state of affairs in Denmark in 823. Born to servile parents on a royal fisc in Saxony and patronized from an early age by Charlemagne, possibly due to his mother's role as a wet nurse to Louis, Ebbo was raised at the court and eventually granted his freedom. He served as one of Louis' key advisors in Aquitaine, and when his lord became emperor he went with him to Aachen.³¹⁹ In 816 he was appointed archbishop of Reims, as part of the ongoing campaign by Louis to place loyal supporters in the empire's most important ecclesiastical positions.³²⁰ With his Germanic background and links to the ongoing conversion of Saxony, his high intellectual and clerical status, and his close ties to the emperor, Ebbo was an ideal choice to undertake an evangelical campaign designed to draw the Danes firmly under the empire's influence. In 822 Ebbo was granted a papal mandate to undertake a mission to Scandinavia and made legate to the pagan north (*partis aquilonis*).³²¹ A year later, alongside two other bishops, Haltigar of Cambrai and Willerich of Bremen, he undertook the first foray into the territory of the Danes.

Ebbo's success is hard to gauge. Writing in the 1970s, Peter McKeon called his work "only [a] partial success."³²² Recent scholarship, such as Erik Knibbs' *Ansgar, Rimbert and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, has been more generous.³²³ Certainly the long-term effects of Ebbo's mission seem to have been minor. In the short term, however, the archbishop's mission seemed to have had the desired effect of introducing Christianity to Scandinavia creating new opportunities for communication and contact. Contemporary sources certainly give the impression that the mission to the North was proceeding as planned. Ermoldus directly attributes the decision by Harald to receive baptism to Ebbo's efforts.³²⁴ The *Royal Frankish Annals* states that during his

³¹⁹ MGH Conc. 4, no. 24, pp. 239; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, c. 44, pp. 232-38. For a detailed summary of Ebbo's career as archbishop see Peter R. McKeon, "Archbishop Ebbo of Reims (816-835): A Study in the Carolingian Empire and Church," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 43, no. 4 (1974): 437-47.

³²⁰ Stuart Airlie, "Bonds of Power and Bonds of Association in the Court Circle of Louis the Pious," in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 191-204; Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy in Frankish Gaul*, 116-17; Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme*, 105.

³²¹ Paschal I, MGH Ep. 5, pp. 68-70; Anskar, MGH Ep. 6, p. 163.

³²² McKeon, "Archbishop Ebbo of Reims (816-835)," 439.

³²³ Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbert, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, 67-68.

³²⁴ Ermoldus, *In Honorem Hludowici*, bk. 4, ll. 1-110, 147-72, pp. 59-61, 62-63.

822-23 trip the archbishop “baptized many of the Danes, leading them to the faith.”³²⁵ Writing several decades later, Rimbart also had high praise for his efforts, making it clear that the archbishop not only made several additional trips to Scandinavia but actively supported further attempts by other missionaries in both Denmark and Sweden, including several by his own family members.³²⁶ Among Ebbo’s protégés was the monk Anskar, chosen to minister to the newly baptized Harald.

As Harald’s godfather, the emperor had a responsibility to see to his spiritual education and wellbeing, as well as that of the large retinue that had been baptized alongside him. Harald’s age and his imminent return to pagan Denmark made that a more difficult task. It was necessary to give the Danish king a teacher, a holy man charged with Harald’s spiritual education and the continued spread of the Christian faith both among the newly converted and among the Danes at large. The man chosen was Anskar, who in time became the most important figure in the Carolingians’ attempt to Christianize Scandinavia. Raised at the abbey of Corbie, Anskar was among those chosen in 822 to serve at the foundation of New Corbie (more commonly known as Corvey), on the Weser River, as part of Louis’ efforts to continue the extension of Christianity northward. At Corvey Anskar served as a teacher of the monastic school, responsible for the education and training of oblates preparing to take their monastic vows. Rimbart tells us that “he was found by all to be so admirable and pleasing at this that he was chosen by common assent to preach the word of God to the people in church. And thus it was that he became both the first master of the school at Corvey and the first teacher of the people.”³²⁷ Anskar’s experience in teaching the foundations of Christian life to both an ecclesiastical and lay audience was undoubtedly one reason for the choice of the young monk (not yet 30 in 826) as Harald’s teacher and companion. Another reason, if Rimbart’s *Vitae* is to be believed, was Anskar’s fervent interest in both missionary work and the potential chance for martyrdom that might come with it.³²⁸

When Harald and his following departed, Anskar and a few fellow monks went with him, prepared to solidify the gains already made and to further the goals of Louis and his advisors both spiritually and politically. Ermoldus, certainly overstating his case in his attempt to flatter and win favor from Louis, ends the meeting of 826 with these effusive words:

Louis, you gave this kingdom of Denmark to almighty God
and joined that distinguished realm to your kingdom.
The kingdom that the arms of your father had not been able to gain in war
entreated you by its own will to rule.
The realm that neither Roman power nor Frankish law had held

³²⁵ *RFA*, s.a. 823, p. 163: “Ebo Remorum archiepiscopus, quiconsilio imperatoris et auctoritate Romani pontificis praedicandi gratia ad terminos Danorum accesserat et aestate praeterita multos ex eis ad fidem venientes baptizaverat ...”

³²⁶ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 123–24; James Palmer, “Rimbart’s Vita Anskarii and Scandinavian Mission in the Ninth Century,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55, no. 2 (2004): 252.

³²⁷ Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 6, p. 26: “In qua re ipse per omnia tam probabilis et acceptus inventus est, ut omnium electione publice quoque in ecclesia verbum Dei populis praedicaret. Sicque factum est, ut eiusdem loci ipse primus et magister scholae et doctor fieret populi.”

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, c. 3 and c. 40.

O father, in Christ's name you take them in hand.³²⁹

Within a year, however, the carefully orchestrated political and religious plans of 826, and indeed of the previous ten years unraveled. Louis' unwavering support for his chosen Danish candidate would, in hindsight, come to be seen as a significant waste of resources. In the last decade of Louis' reign, the empire was rent with internal strife. Even as the Franks struggled to come to consensus over issues of authority and filial duty the relationship between Francia and Scandinavia entered a new phase, hinting at the struggles that characterized the next century and more.

The Unraveling of a Northern Policy

The strategic value of Harald's latest turn to the Carolingians was short-lived. Within a year Harald was once more forced from power by his rival kings and driven into exile. While the relationship between the two dynastic branches of Denmark had been deteriorating almost from the moment that Louis had engineered Harald's return to power in 819, the Danish king's choice to throw in his lot so explicitly with the Christian Franks may well have served as the catalyst for his ouster in 827. The struggle over whether the Danes would fall under the sway of their southern neighbors or exercise authority in competition with them had been ongoing since the turn of the century. Despite Louis' best efforts to prop up Harald and his family, in the long run the Carolingians had not counted on the fierce resistance to their influence that the sons of Godfrid used to martial support for their faction. Harald's own suitability both as a ruler and a political pawn can also be questioned. His inability to maintain his position without foreign aid and his continued willingness to demonstrate his weakness to all by submission after submission to the Carolingian emperor must have severely undermined his position among the Danish aristocrats and chieftains.

In 829 Louis made his last serious attempt to champion Harald's cause. A conference between the Franks and the Northmen was organized, with the dual goal of confirming the earlier peace treaties with the sons of Godfrid and returning Harald to power. Like the diplomatic meetings of 809, 811, and 813, this conference was to involve a meeting of nobles from both peoples. The meeting never occurred. The *Royal Frankish Annals* reports that Harald, "too eager for action, broke the peace that had been agreed upon and confirmed by hostages." Harald's rash actions are difficult to understand. It seems likely that he hoped to goad the Franks into open war with his rivals. Perhaps he also feared that his support from the Franks was running out, given his ongoing inability to maintain his power without their aid. Or perhaps he was merely enraged at yet another turn in his fortunes and could not stand to co-exist peacefully with his enemies any longer. Whatever the reason, the exiled king abandoned diplomacy in favor of force, attacking across the border and burning several Danish villages. The *Royal Frankish Annals* gives us a clear view of the resulting diplomatic crisis:

³²⁹ Ermoldus, *In Honorem Hludowici*, bk. 4, ll. 633-38, p. 76: "Haec, Hludowice, deo das tu quoque lucra potenti, / Et socias regnis inclita regna tuis; / Arma patrum nullo quae non valere duello, / Sponte sua, capere, te modo regna petunt; / Quod nec Roma potens tenuit, nec Francicia iura, / Tu retines Christi nomine cuncta pater."

In response to this attack the sons of Godfrid gathered troops and immediately advanced into the Danish march. Our people were stationed on the banks of the river Eider, not expecting any trouble and so the Danes were able to cross the river and put them to flight, driving them from the castle there and seizing all their belongings. They then returned to their own camp and sent envoys to the emperor in order to stave off revenge. The envoys explained that need had driven them to these actions against their will and that they were willing to do whatever the emperor willed to make restitution and preserve the peace between the two parties.³³⁰

From this point on relations between Louis and Harald soured. The gift of Rürstingen turned out to have been prescient. While Harald would use his position in Frisia to further his own political goals, there is no indication that the Franks made any further attempts to return Harald to power.

Instead of dealing with a pliable subordinate, the Franks were forced to engage with the descendants of Godfrid. It is telling that in the same annal where we hear of Harald's final exile from Denmark we are also finally given a name for at least one of his rivals. Horic, son of Godfrid, became the primary ruler of Denmark, featured heavily in both the annals and in other sources, such as the *Vita Rimbertyi*. As with earlier rulers it remains unclear whether he was sole king (his other brothers having been gradually winnowed from power) or whether he was merely the king with whom the Franks interacted, perhaps in a capacity as over-king, or perhaps merely because his chosen territories happened to lie in southern Jutland. For all that he had been successful in removing direct Frankish influence in Denmark, Horic's successes did not render Carolingian power null and void. The immediate move to make peace following the confrontation of 828 demonstrates his fear of bringing the full force of the Franks down on his head. But the Frank's political agenda had been disrupted and had to shift its focus, even as the Danes continued to wrestle with the pressure exerted by the Franks on their political affairs.

827 brought not only a failure in Louis' long-standing northern agenda but a series of other defeats on the borders of the empire that severely rocked the confidence of the Franks. In Pannonia, Duke Baldric of Friuli was unable to prevent a series of raids by the neighboring Bulgars and Slavs. On the southern borders of the empire a Saracen army devastated the Spanish March despite the efforts of Louis, who had dispatched an army led by two of the most important nobles in the empire, Counts Hugh of Tours and Matfrid of Orléans.³³¹ A flurry of action erupted in the following year. Baldric, Hugh, and Matfrid were deposed and publicly shamed, ostensibly for their sloth and inability to

³³⁰ *RFA*, s.a. 827, p. 175: "Quod audientes filii Godofridi contractis subito copiis ad marcam veniunt et nostros in ripa Egidore fluminis sedentes ac nihil tale opinantes transito flumine adorti castris exuunt eisque in fugum actis cuncta diripiunt ac se cum omnibus copiis suis in sua castra recipiunt. Deinde inito consilio, ut ultionem huius facti praevenerent, missa legatione ad imperatorem, quam inviti et quanta necessitate coacti id fecerint, exposuerunt, se tamen ad satisfactionem esse paratos, et hoc in imperatoris esset arbitrio, qualiter ita fieret emendatum ut de reliquo inter partes pax firma maneret."

³³¹ For Hugh of Tours see Philippe Depreux, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781-840)* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1997), 262–64; for Matfrid see *ibid.*, 329–31.

defend the empire (though some historians argue that in the case of Hugh and Matfrid deeper political rivalries were at play as competing aristocratic factions struggled for influence.)³³² Louis' three adult sons were dispatched with armies to the Spanish March and Friuli. And in the north peace negotiations were arranged with the Danes, only to end in disaster. Mayke De Jong notes that "one reason for this sudden action may have been a feeling of panic and fear caused by three major defeats against 'the pagans.'"³³³ How else to explain the sudden shift in fortune and the crumbling of Frankish authority on all fronts? In addition to these political actions Louis, convinced that the empire had somehow strayed off the righteous path, convened four simultaneous church councils (at Mainz, Paris, Lyons, and Toulouse) in 829, accompanied by an empire-wide three-day fast.³³⁴ Rumors of a Danish invasion into Saxony in the summer of 829 nearly interrupted Louis' reforming activities. The calling of troops "from all parts of Francia" demonstrate just how tense matters on the borders were after the previous year's failures of foreign policy and defense. But these rumors turned out to be false and the army was disbanded.³³⁵ With this distraction out of the way, Louis convened a general assembly at Worms during which several important decisions were made. The powerful Aquitainian noble Bernard of Septimania was made palace chamberlain, and the empire was repartitioned to provide a kingdom for Louis' youngest son Charles. Following the assembly Lothar was sent back to Italy, despite (or perhaps as a result of) his vigorous actions as co-emperor throughout the crisis.

Even as the Carolingians worked to stave off further disaster and to reaffirm their position as rulers of a true Christian empire, a new opportunity for influence in Scandinavia arose. Rimbert informs us that "Swedish envoys came to Louis and informed the most merciful emperor that there were many of their people who wished to take up the Christian religion and that their king would happily allow God's priests to come there, if the Swedes were deemed worthy of such a thing."³³⁶ The speed with which the Franks responded to Björn's invitation demonstrates just how disappointing the progress of the mission to Denmark must have been following the loss of Harald as a patron. It is unclear how familiar the Franks actually were with eastern Scandinavia or the political situation there. Certainly there was at least some dim awareness of its inhabitants. The *Royal Frankish Annals* mentions that a group of Danish nobles had

³³² Karl Brunner, *Oppositionelle Gruppen im Karolingerreich* (Vienna: Hermann Böhlau Nachf., 1979), 107; Roger Collins, "Pippin I and the Kingdom of Aquitaine," in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 378–81; Philippe Depreux, "Le comte Matfrid d'Orléans sous le règne de Louis le Pieux," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 152, no. 2 (1994): 355–60; for a dissenting view see de Jong, *The Penitential State*, 148–50.

³³³ de Jong, *The Penitential State*, 39.

³³⁴ MGH Capit. 2, no. 184, p. 2-3 and no 185, pp. 4-6; and see Nelson, "Aachen as a Place of Power"; de Jong, *The Penitential State*, 148–84.

³³⁵ *RFA*, s.a. 829, p. 177.

³³⁶ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 9, p. 30: "Interim vero contigit, legatos Sueonum ad memoratum principem venisse Hludowicum. Qui inter alia legationis suae mandata clementissimo caesari innotuerunt: esse multos in gente sua, qui christianae religionis cultum suscipere desiderarent, regis quoque sui animum ad hoc satis benivolam, ut ibi sacerdotes Dei esse permitteret; tantum eius munificentia mererentur, ut eis praedicatores destinaret idoneos."

sought refuge among the Swedes (*Sueones*) following the civil war in Denmark in 812.³³⁷ But the 829 embassy is the first explicit political contact between the Swedes and the Franks visible in our sources. The thriving North Sea trade was the primary source of information for both Franks and Swedes, with merchants from both peoples travelling between Dorestad and the thriving Swedish emporium of Birka. Indeed, it was at Birka that the curious King Björn ruled, and it was there that Anskar set his course. The mission to Denmark, while not entirely abandoned (we are told that a monk named Giselmar took Anskar's place attending to Harald), was put on the back burner. For Louis the invitation to send missionaries to Sweden must have seemed an excellent way to recoup the losses of 827. Here was a chance to create new political ties in Scandinavia and create a possible counterweight to the growing independence of Horic and the Danes. Moreover, given the concern that the problems of the past few years had their root in spiritual failings, an opportunity to revive and expand the missionary effort to the North must have seemed a literal godsend. Frankish missionaries could both to earn new converts and truly take up the challenge to spread Christ's word to the ends of the earth. For if the Danes were fierce and uncivilized pagans, they were at least familiar neighbors, sharing a border with the Franks for several decades and engaging in ongoing diplomatic and cultural exchange. Sweden, for all the trade links that might exist, was another matter, a distant foreign world. On his trip to Denmark, Anskar accompanied a king. To get to Birka the missionary had to find passage with merchants, avoid pirates, and travel through strange lands by boat and on foot, all with the uncertain hope of a warm welcome from a largely unknown ruler. Indeed, Rimbert, using biblical verses, refers to Sweden as "the ends of the earth."³³⁸ As Wood points out, "mission to the world's end automatically carried apocalyptic overtones, for Matthew 24, 14 announces: 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.'"³³⁹ And yet his journey into the unknown seems to have gone well for Anskar. For the next two years he worked to spread God's word (and alongside it Frankish influence) into the distant north.

If Louis' actions in 828 and 829 were meant to stave off disaster and reaffirm the righteousness, stability, and power of the Franks, he was to be sorely disappointed. In 830 the first in what turned out to be a long series of revolts and challenges to his authority broke out. Between 830 and 834 the emperor faced multiple rebellions by his older sons, backed by powerful aristocratic figures and aimed at removing his chosen officials, his wife, and eventually himself from power.³⁴⁰ During these eventful years the emperor (and the empire as a whole) was more concerned with internal matters than with foreign relations. But concern with northern affairs did not disappear entirely. The one reference in the annals to external contacts during these years, at an assembly in 831, coincides with Louis' return to power following his sons' rebellion in 830. The assembly at Thionville included envoys from the Danes hoping for a new peace treaty. The public display of Louis receiving foreign envoys was as much about visibly representing and performing Louis' restored authority as it was about taking care of administrative and

³³⁷ *RFA*, s.a. 812, p. 139.

³³⁸ Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, c. 25.

³³⁹ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 251.

³⁴⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the crises of 830-834 see de Jong, *The Penitential State*, chap. 4-6; Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme*, 192-214.

diplomatic matters.³⁴¹ During this same period in 831 Anskar returned from Sweden to receive new authority from Louis and from Pope Gregory IV to initiate the next stage in the Scandinavian mission.³⁴² The decision to make Anskar a legate was likely motivated both by his experience as a missionary in the north and by the need to find a more hands-on figure than Ebbo, who seems to have grown increasingly busy with his work as archbishop and court figure.³⁴³ Even as Anskar was given new authority, a new missionary bishop was dispatched to Sweden: one Gautbert, a relative of Ebbo. Anskar himself remained closer to home, working among the Danes and Slavs. The inclusion of the Slavs under Anskar's mandate as legate is an indication of how closely linked the northern mission was to the ongoing goal of extending and cementing Carolingian influence in the trans-Elben world. In 832 Louis, apparently firmly in control once more, was intent on refocusing his efforts to secure the security of the empire's borders and interests.

Louis' respite lasted only a short time before he was again faced with filial rebellion. Both Pippin and Louis the German briefly attempted rebellion in 832, but the real crisis came in 833 when Lothar again rose up against his father. At a place that the Franks subsequently dubbed "The Field of Lies" (*Campus-Mentitius*) the emperor was abandoned by the majority of his supporters and taken prisoner by his son.³⁴⁴ Despite this betrayal, followed by a forced public penance imposed by a council of bishops (including Louis' longtime supporter Ebbo of Reims) and attempts by Lothar to force his father to take monastic vows, Louis regained his freedom by early in 834. Over the next several months Louis was re-crowned and restored to his full authority while those who had engineered his public shaming were punished.

Chief among those was Ebbo, who became the scapegoat for the actions of the rebel bishops in 833. The fall of the main supporter of the northern mission forced a shift in the underlying logistics of the missionary campaign. Not three months after his return to power, Louis issued an immunity for the monastery of Turholt, in modern-day Belgium, and granted the institution to Anskar as a base of operations. Likewise, Corvey was granted new properties and immunity. In place of Reims, these two sites now functioned as the main source of manpower and financial support for Anskar's efforts.

³⁴¹ Alongside Danish envoys there were also Persian and Slavic embassies. In addition Bernard of Septimania, forced out of his position as chamberlain during the rebellion of 830, cleared himself of charges in a public oath to the emperor. Louis' rebellious son Pippin was also expected to appear before the emperor in a sign of public submission but obstinately refused.

³⁴² Unfortunately, the two documents that provide us with information about this new authority, a papal privilege by Gregory IV and Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* are both highly misleading. The actual papal privilege from Gregory IV has been heavily modified and forged (possibly in parts by Anskar himself) resulting in confusion over exactly what privileges Anskar was granted in 831. Rimbert in turn based his own narrative on this misleading document. Both documents state that in 831 Anskar was made an archbishop with the goal of creating a northern see, but careful analysis indicates that this is a later interpolation designed to shore up the episcopal claims of Anskar and his successors. See Christian Reuter, "Ebbo von Reims und Ansgar: Ein Beitrag zur Missionsgeschichte des Nordens und zur Gründungsgeschichte des Bistums Hamburg," *Historische Zeitschrift* 105, no. 2 (1910): 237–84; Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbert, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, 78–99, 209–11.

³⁴³ McKeon, "Archbishop Ebbo of Reims (816–835)," 439; Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbert, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, 99.

³⁴⁴ Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. E. Tremp, MGH SRG 64 (Hanover: MGH, 1995) c. 48, p. 474.

At the same time Anskar himself was elevated to the position of missionary bishop to fill the void left by Ebbo's downfall. Louis' quick actions after his return to power demonstrate that even in the midst of the crisis occupying his attention in Francia, he believed that relations with the north were too important to ignore. Even as he continued to re-establish his authority and deal with the last remnants of resistance by Lothar and his supporters, a Scandinavian raid on Frisia demonstrated that while the Franks might have turned their attention inward, their northern neighbors were still very much interested in the world to the south.

"A fleet of Danes came to Frisia and devastated part of that land. They then travelled by way of Utrecht to the emporium known as Dorestad and utterly destroyed it. They slaughtered some of the people and took others as captives and burned the surrounding area."³⁴⁵ For the next several years, Danish raiders routinely sacked the trade center, killing, capturing, looting, and burning (though the very fact that pirates could strike the town repeatedly for several years does call into question just how utterly destroyed it truly was). Certainly these raids are a testament to the wealth of Dorestad and the familiarity of Scandinavian raiders and traders with the emporium. Beyond this, evaluating the 834 raid on Dorestad is surprisingly difficult. As discussed in the previous chapter, Scandinavian pirates had been a problem in the North Sea and along the coasts of Francia for some time. In 820 the *Royal Frankish Annals* mentions a Danish fleet that had attempted unsuccessfully to raid first in Flanders and then at the mouth of the Seine, before finding more success in Aquitaine at Bouin.³⁴⁶ Other than this one reference there is virtually no information available on the nature or severity of the problem during the first part of Louis' reign. The attacks from 834 to 837 thus stand out as the first clear sign of Scandinavian activity that would become so ubiquitous in the coming decades. Should the multiple raids on Dorestad be viewed as another in a long string of lesser pirate attacks, suddenly made visible because of the prestige of the site and repeated brazen violations? Or do these raids in fact represent the first "true" Viking attacks on Francia, the beginning of a long and on-going series of attacks on Frisia and West Francia that would last well into the tenth century? Certainly in the *Annales Xantenses* the account of 834 is concluded with the dire statement, "And the misfortunes of men daily increased in numerous ways,"³⁴⁷ but this, along with our other records for these events, was written with the benefit of hindsight and years of experience of Viking activity. Those experiencing the first raid on Dorestad had no way of knowing just what the event foreshadowed.

The raids of the 830s must also be viewed within a context of both internal Frankish politics and ongoing political and diplomatic engagement between Francia and Denmark. The timing of the first raid on Dorestad, in the midst of the ongoing conflict between Louis and his rebellious sons, may indicate awareness on the part of Danish raiders of the empire's weakened and distracted state. But the continued raiding over the

³⁴⁵ *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SRG 5 (Hanover: MGH, 1883), s.a. 834, p. 9: "Interim etiam classis de Danis veniens in Frisiam, aliquam partem ex illa devastavit. Et inde per Vetus - Treiectum ad emporium quod vocatur Dorestadus venientes, omnia diripuerunt. Homines autem quosdam occiderunt, quosdam captivos abduxerunt partemque eius igni cremaverunt."

³⁴⁶ *RFA*, s.a. 820, p. 153-54.

³⁴⁷ *AX*, s.a. 834, p. 9: "Et eo tempore regnum Francorum infra semetipsum a valde desolatum est, et infelicitas hominum multipliciter cotidie augebatur."

next several years, even after Louis had returned to power, makes it difficult to see the 834 raid or those that followed as solely driven by well-informed opportunism. Responsibility for these raids may in fact have come from none other than Harald himself, working in conjunction with Lothar. Niels Lund points out that in the *Annals of Saint-Bertin* the 834, 836, and 837 attacks on Dorestad are all placed in close conjunction with moments of conflict between Lothar and his father.³⁴⁸ The 841 entry of the *Annals of Saint-Bertin* lends support to the connections between the raids of the 830s and ongoing Frankish political strife. “Harald, who along with other Danish pirates had brought much grief to Frisia and other coastal regions of the Christians in order to support Lothar’s cause and damage that of his father [Louis], was now granted Walcheren and the surrounding area as a benefice by Lothar.”³⁴⁹ These raids were not merely opportunistic strikes by the Danish pirates who had been active along the coasts for some time but part of the larger ongoing Carolingian power struggle.

Even as the Carolingians struggled amongst themselves the on-going conflict between Harald and Horic, son of Godfrid, continued as well and this too must be taken into account. If Louis had given up on Harald’s bid for kingship, Harald certainly had not. Harald’s activities in Frisia, ostensibly undertaken as part of internal Frankish conflicts, were also part of the complicated political situation in the North Sea. Harald was not merely raiding for fun or profit. His actions were strategically undertaken both to gain himself a new Frankish supporter, Lothar, and to help support further aggressive actions against his Danish rivals. In 836 King Horic explicitly distanced himself from the Northmen responsible for the ongoing raids. Later that same year, and again in 838, the Danish king requested payment from Louis for apprehending and killing Danish raiders involved in these attacks. If these pirates were a plague upon Francia, they were also a thorn in the side of the Danish king, who had a vested interest in keeping trade flowing to the royal emporium of Hedeby and in avoiding the full brunt of Frankish retaliation. If the Dorestad raiders were linked to his enemy Harald, then his motivation for aiding Louis in combating these Scandinavian pirates would have been even stronger.

In some ways these attacks can be linked to the growing hum of Scandinavian piracy on the Continent and the British Isles, but at their heart they appear to be motivated at least as much by contemporary political issues as by a desire for easy money. The raids on Dorestad itself would cease for a short time after 837, due apparently to a combination of natural causes (a storm that waylaid the raiding attempt of 838) and active efforts by both Louis and Horic. Yet from 834 on the pitch of Scandinavian activity would only increase, growing more and more devastating over the next several decades. The success that these Dorestad raids enjoyed, with loot and slaves from one of the richest and most populous urban centers in Francia, must have encouraged further piracy and stood as a sign of the riches to be found if one were daring enough. It is best to regard the attacks of 834 to 837 as liminal, simultaneously the culmination of a longer ongoing pattern of political and raiding activity in the first

³⁴⁸ Lund, “Allies of God or Man,” 48–50.

³⁴⁹ *ASB*, s.a. 841, p. 26: “Herioldo, qui cum ceteris Danorum pyratibus per aliquot annos Frisiae aliisque christianorum maritimis incommoda tanta sui causa ad patris iniuriam invexerat, Gualacras aliaque vicina loca huius meriti gratia in beneficium contulit.”

decades of the ninth century and a harbinger of a new phase in Frankish-Scandinavian interaction.

The frustration that Louis felt over these raids is palpable in contemporary documents. Blame fell not only on the pirates responsible for these activities but on those whose duty it was to protect the coasts of Frisia. Early in 837 in preparation for a journey to Rome to confront Lothar and hoping to stave off another attack, Louis spent time in Frisia arranging for its defense. Yet shortly thereafter, both Walcheren and Dorestad fell victim once again. In response to the failure of these measures, the *Annals of Saint-Bertin* tells us that “the emperor convened a general assembly and held a public inquiry with those magnates to whom he had delegated responsibility for guarding the coasts. This inquiry revealed that in part due to the sheer impossibility of the task, and in part due to the disobedience of some men, it had not been possible to offer resistance to the attackers. The emperor therefore dispatched certain energetic abbots and counts to deal with the disobedience of the Frisians. At the same time, in order to better resist incursions by the Danes, he ordered the creation of a fleet that could diligently pursue raiders in any direction necessary.”³⁵⁰ In hindsight Louis’ actions were clearly not enough to stem the tide of Scandinavian activity in Francia, but they do fit well with the growing belief among historians that the years following Louis’ restoration to power in 834 should not be viewed merely as a lame duck period. Janet Nelson notes that even as Louis focused on rebuilding the consensus shattered in the early 830s and worked at the delicate task of keeping his sons in check, he also “pursued a [vigorous] diplomatic and cultural strategy that was not merely defensive.”³⁵¹ In the first decades of his reign Louis had worked to establish client kings and clear subordinates in the north. He now had to be satisfied with peace treaties, rounds of diplomacy, and the familiar wrangling by both sides to impose their authority on the Polabian Slavs and maintain the upper hand in northern Europe. In fact Louis’ interactions with Horic in some ways resemble those of their fathers, Charlemagne and Godfrid. Horic’s 838 request, deemed “thoroughly inappropriate,” that “the Frisians and Abodrites be given over to him” is remarkably reminiscent of claims by Godfrid for supremacy over Frisia.³⁵² But where Godfrid had launched raids and rattled swords, Horic was actively working to suppress rival Danish war-leaders who threatened both the coasts of Francia and his own royal power.³⁵³ Only

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, s.a. 837, p. 14: “Imperator vero, generali conventu habito, publice cum his quaestionem habuit, quos principes ad eandem custodiam delegaverat. Qua discussione patuit, partim impossibilitate, partim quorundam inoboedientia eos inimicis non potuisse resistere. Unde et ad comprimendam Frisionum inoboedientiam strenui abbates ac comites directi sunt. Verum ut deinceps illorum incursionibus facilius obsisti queat, classis quaquaversum diligentius parari iussa est.”

³⁵¹ Janet Nelson, “The Last Years of Louis the Pious,” in *Charlemagne’s Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 48.

³⁵² *ASB*, s.a. 838, p. 16: “Petentes insuper dari sibi Frisianos atque Abodritos. Cuius petitio, quanto imperatori indecens sive incongrua visa est, tanto vilius spreta et pro nihilo ducta est.”

³⁵³ Horic’s own troubles can most clearly be seen a decade later when the *Annals of Saint-Bertin* informs us that he was forced to partition his kingdom with several of his nephews after war broke out with them; *ASB*, s.a. 850, p. 38.

a few months before Louis' death in June of 840 "the emperor's envoys, sent to Horic, received his oaths and confirmed a permanent peace with him."³⁵⁴

Conclusions

For all the superficial resemblances between the diplomatic relations of Charlemagne and Louis, interactions between Scandinavia and Francia changed dramatically during the reign of Louis the Pious. What had begun as scattered, limited contacts under Charlemagne grew into a steady engagement based on trade, political patronage, and missionary work. Over the course of the relationship between Louis and Harald Klak, the Danish king and his entourage spent considerable time in the Frankish empire, living as exiles in Saxony and Frisia and appearing before the emperor at assemblies and courts on multiple occasions. The alliance between the two kings not only provided exposure to the Frankish world to Harald and his followers but also to the sons of Godfrid who perforce had to engage with their southern neighbors. And Franks, too, grew more familiar with the north. Louis' counts continued to meet at the borders with their Scandinavian counterparts and in some cases traveled even further, voyaging into Denmark itself.

Louis' religious goals brought further opportunities for contact and communication. In seeking the conversion of Harald and his countrymen Louis applied traditional tactics for dealing with neighboring peoples. The baptism and the absorption of foreign leaders into the Frankish world had been a major piece of Charlemagne's agenda in Saxony. But where the Christianization of Saxony had gone hand in hand with its conquest, the expansion of the Christian mission north of the Elbe was undertaken without the use of force, relying instead on the concerted efforts of figures such as Ebbo of Reims and his successor Anskar. These men and their fellow missionaries engaged on a day-to-day basis with Danes and Swedes, met with Scandinavian leaders, and erected Christian structures at places like Hedeby and Birka. While the long-term affects of these first missionary efforts to the north were limited, at the time they provided another venue for contact and engagement between worlds.

Yet even as the Franks sought to more fully control and influence Scandinavia in order to assure the security of the empire, conflict within Francia created opportunities for advancement and wealth for daring Northmen. By the end of Louis' life, Viking raiders had repeatedly struck Frisia and even ventured as far as Aquitaine, frustrating the best attempts of the Franks to defend their coasts. The grand plan to expand Frankish influence into Scandinavia faltered during the last decade of Louis' rule, but the increased familiarity that resulted from these two decades of diplomatic and religious contact in turn allowed the Northmen to enter more fully into the Frankish world than ever before.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., s.a. 839, p. 23: "Sed et legati imperatoris ad Horich pacis gratia directi, receptis sacramentis, indissolubilem pepigerunt."

Concluding Remarks

The initial low level contacts between Scandinavia and the Continent that began with the movement of merchants and trade goods in the seventh century had, by the death of Louis the Pious, blossomed into full scale social, cultural, and political engagement. Merchants from both worlds ferried pottery, glass, amber, and silver throughout the North Sea and Baltic. Trade encouraged the growth of new urban centers in Scandinavia as powerful leaders worked to secure access to luxury goods and the wealth that came with them. At the same time, commerce enabled the flow of information and facilitated contact and communication, bringing Franks, Danes, and Swedes closer together.

Alongside merchants went slaves, missionaries, envoys, and exiles, all part of a growing network of interaction in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

While older scholarship held that the Viking attacks of the 840s and onward put an end to commerce in the North Sea, new archaeological and historical research has demonstrated that this trade and the connections it created flourished well into the Viking Age. The Scandinavian trader Ohthere discussed in Chapter One was visiting the trade emporium of Hedeby in the 880s carrying furs and ivory destined for Francia and England. The disappearance of Dorestad from our records in the 870s, once thought to be the result of repeated Viking raids, has now been attributed to the shifting of river beds and changing

economic patterns following the break up of the empire in 843.³⁵⁵ New trade centers arose in Francia to take its place.³⁵⁶ While the number of Scandinavian raiders increased during this period, there is no reason to believe that Scandinavian traders disappeared, or that trade networks could be completely unraveled by conflict.

As trade created links across all levels of society, relationships were also forming between the most powerful figures in both cultures. Charlemagne's conquest of Saxony brought the Franks into active political contact with the Danes for the first time. In the 770s and 780s the first signs of this contact can be seen in fleeting references to the Danish king Sigfrid in the *Royal Frankish Annals* and in the poetry of the Carolingian court. Brief meetings gave way to full-scale political engagement by the end of Charlemagne's life, as the Franks became deeply involved in the politics of the north. Armies massed, nobles from both peoples met in large-scale conferences, and references to the Danes and to Scandinavia grow more and more common in the Frankish sources. Scandinavian rulers began to emulate and challenge the authority of the Carolingians not just at home, but also beyond their borders in Frisia, Saxony, and among the trans-Elben Slavs.

Louis the Pious would spend much of his reign attempting to deal with these challenges, meddling in dynastic squabbles among the Danes and sending missionaries as far east as Birka in Sweden in an effort to extend Frankish authority across northern Europe. The effects of Louis the Pious' foreign policies extended far beyond his death in 840. The cultivation of the Danish king Harald Klak over two decades, culminating in his baptism in 826 and final exile from Denmark in 827, created ties between the Carolingians and a branch of the Danish royal house that persisted for generations. In the *Annals of Saint-Bertin* and other late ninth century sources, Harald's sons and nephews can be seen seeking patronage and coming to blows with Louis' descendants as they continued their attempts to gain power both in Francia and in Scandinavia.

The Scandinavian mission pioneered by Louis and his advisor Ebbo of Reims continued its efforts to spread Christianity to the Danes and Swedes well into the 870s, led by Anskar and his successor and biographer Rimbert. In the face of shifting political agendas by figures such as Louis the German and with the growth of Viking activity these efforts would eventually falter, in the end bearing little fruit. The Christianization of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway would have to wait several centuries for a period when Scandinavian chieftains and kings would actively seek the benefits it could bring and when Ottonian kings and bishops took up the challenge of spreading God's word north once more. Yet in their time the voyages of Anskar and his fellow missionaries created new relationships between Scandinavians and Franks and spread knowledge between these worlds. When Adam of Bremen came to write his history of the

³⁵⁵ W. A. van Es and W. J. H. Verwers, *Excavations at Dorestad I*, vol. 1 (Amersfoort: Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek, ROB, 1980), 297–303; Verhulst, *The Rise of Cities in North-West Europe*, 45–46; Coupland, "Trading Places."

³⁵⁶ Verhulst, *The Rise of Cities in North-West Europe*, 66; Michel Groothedde, "The Vikings in Zutphen (Netherlands): Military Organization and Early Town Development after the Viking Raid in 882," in *Vikings on the Rhine*, ed. Rudolf Simek and Ulrike Engel (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2004), 114–15.

archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen in the eleventh century, it was to Anskar and his patron Louis the Pious that he attributed the origins of Christianity in the North.³⁵⁷ Even as they struggled to impose and maintain control over northern Europe Charlemagne and Louis the Pious' foreign policy goals unwittingly helped set the stage for the Viking attacks of the second half of the ninth century and beyond. Increased contact made the Northmen aware of just how wealthy the Franks were and brought with it knowledge of the Franks military and political strengths and weaknesses. Social and political changes in Scandinavia, brought about at least in part by on-going contact with the powerful Carolingian empire, encouraged daring Scandinavian kings and chieftains to take to the seas in search of this wealth and the advantages it could bring them back home.

The break up of the empire in 843 fundamentally changed the nature of interaction. While in East Francia, Danish and Frankish kings continued to exchange envoys and engage in diplomacy and saber-rattling, in West Francia and Lotharingia the lack of a common border with the Danes prevented these opportunities, shifting Scandinavians from occasionally dangerous neighbors to invading strangers. Even here, however, decades of interaction and engagement had weight, despite what Frankish sources might suggest at first glance. As the balance of power shifted from the Franks to the Northmen, the tactics that Louis himself had pioneered in his efforts to impose Carolingian power in Scandinavia – gift giving, strategic alliances, and conversion – became tools used by his descendants in their own struggles to check the growing power of Scandinavian raiders and invaders in Francia itself.

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³⁵⁷ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, MGH SRG 2 (Hanover: MGH, 1917), c. 15-34.

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