



# From poachers to gamekeepers: Scandinavian warlords and Carolingian kings

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*This article represents the first comprehensive study of the commendation and conversion of Viking leaders by Carolingian rulers, from the first recorded instance under Charlemagne to the agreement with Rollo in the early tenth century. The survey underlines how widespread the practice was, and permits an assessment of its effectiveness as a defensive strategy against Scandinavian incursions. The outcome varied: some Scandinavians found themselves defending Frankish territory against Viking attack, others acted as intermediaries between Franks and Scandinavians, still others were granted Frankish benefices but never trusted, and ultimately killed. Nonetheless, the article demonstrates that in the majority of cases the practice of commendation and conversion worked to the Carolingians' advantage, neutralizing potential enemies or even turning them into useful allies.*

Scholars and schoolchildren alike are aware of the events of 911, when Hrolfr the villainous Viking became Rollo, friend of the Franks, through Charles the Simple's gift of Normandy in benefice and Rollo's baptism as a Christian.<sup>1</sup> Yet less well known are Rollo's antecedents, those many Scandinavians who trod the same path of conversion and commendation before him. A few names are familiar: Harald 'Klak', for instance, the Danish king baptized in 826, Rorik, the holder of a Frisian benefice in the 850s, or Godfrid, who was granted Rorik's territory in the 880s. But what of Hemming and Halfdan, the first recorded Scandinavians at the Frankish court, or Aslak and Bjørn from the reign

<sup>1</sup> E.g. D. Bates, *Normandy before 1066* (London, 1982), pp. 2–24; L. Musset, 'Naissance de la Normandie (V–XIe siècles)' in M. de Bouard (ed.) *Histoire de la Normandie* (Toulouse, 1970), pp. 75–130, at 96–106. Of course the picture was not quite so simple, as Eleanor Searle has convincingly demonstrated in 'Frankish Rivalries and Norse Warriors', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 8 (1985), pp. 198–213.

of Charles the Bald, or Rodulf, Sigfrid and Hundi? The main reason for this lack of awareness is undoubtedly the fact that until now no comprehensive survey of the commendation of Viking leaders at the Carolingian court has ever been undertaken, and it is the purpose of the present article to fill that gap. This will not only underline how widespread the practice was during the ninth century, but also allow an assessment of how effective it was as a means of countering the Viking menace.

Previous studies which have touched on the topic have tended to focus on particular issues related to the practice of commendation, rather than the practice itself. These include the questions of Scandinavian settlement on the Continent,<sup>2</sup> the baptism of Danish royalty,<sup>3</sup> the Viking presence in Frisia,<sup>4</sup> Scandinavian involvement in Frankish politics,<sup>5</sup> and the influence of Christianity in ninth-century Scandinavia.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, the most thorough and careful treatment of the phenomenon of commendation and conversion still remains that of Vogel in his survey of the Viking invasions of the Continent, published in 1906.<sup>7</sup> As will become clear, however, many of the conclusions reached here will differ from or go beyond those of Vogel, particularly with regard to the identities and careers of individual Viking warlords. In addition, by drawing the different instances of commendation and conversion together, as Vogel of course never attempted to do, the article will also permit an assessment of the frequency and significance of the practice. This will make it abundantly clear how the grant of land in Normandy to Rollo was simply the continuation by Charles the Simple of a custom not only established by the precedent of his illustrious forebears, but also proven in its effectiveness as a defensive strategy against the Viking invasions.

<sup>2</sup> H.-W. Goetz, 'Zur Landnahmepolitik [der Normannen im Fränkischen Reich]', *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 183 (1980), pp. 9–17.

<sup>3</sup> A. Angenendt, 'Taufe und Politik [im frühen Mittelalter]', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 7 (1973), pp. 143–68, at 152–6; *idem*, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe* (Berlin, 1984), pp. 215–23.

<sup>4</sup> D. P. Blok, '[De] Wikingen in Friesland', *Naamkunde* 10 (1978), pp. 25–47, at 28–31 and 34–6; W.C. Braat, 'Les Vikings au pays de Frise', *Annales de Normandie* IV (1954), pp. 219–27, at 221–5.

<sup>5</sup> N. Lund, 'Allies [of God or Man? The Viking Expansion in a European Perspective]', *Viator* 20 (1989), pp. 45–59, at 47–51; H. Zettel, *Das Bild der Normannen und der Normanneneinfälle in westfränkischen, ostfränkischen und angelsächsischen Quellen des 8. bis 11. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1977), pp. 165–8.

<sup>6</sup> I. Wood, 'Christians and pagans [in ninth-century Scandinavia]', in B. Sawyer, P. Sawyer and I. Wood (eds) *The Christianization of Scandinavia* (Alingsås, 1987), pp. 36–67, at 36–8, 42–4 and 50–1.

<sup>7</sup> W. Vogel, *[Die] Normannen [und das fränkische Reich bis zur Gründung der Normandie (799–911)]* (Heidelberg, 1906).

## Halfdan and Hemming

The earliest known commendation of a Danish noble took place in 807, when

Northmannorum dux, Alfdeni dictus,  
Augusto magno sese comitante caterva  
Subdidit, atque fidem studuit firmare perennem.<sup>8</sup>

It seems plausible that this is the same Halfdan whom King Sigfrid sent as his envoy to Charlemagne's court in 782,<sup>9</sup> particularly as Halfdan was one of the names employed by the Danish royal family,<sup>10</sup>

Halfdan disappears from the Frankish sources after his act of commendation to Charlemagne, but in 837 one of the defenders of Walcheren who was killed resisting a Viking attack is named as Hemming, Halfdan's son, 'ex stirpe Danorum, dux christianissimus'.<sup>11</sup> The coincidence of names and dates, together with the need to explain the presence of a Danish noble defending Frankish territory, strongly suggests that Hemming was the son of that Halfdan who commended himself to Charlemagne in 807. This is supported by the fact that Hemming was another of the Danish royal names: Hemming I ruled Denmark from 810 until his death in 812, and a second Hemming was recalled to Denmark from Francia by his brothers Harald and Reginfrid when they succeeded to the throne in 812.<sup>12</sup> Surprisingly, the annals offer no indication as to why this latter Hemming was living among the Franks. There is no reason to suspect that he was a hostage, and the question arises whether this was again the son of Halfdan, who had accompanied his father to the Frankish court in 807. Once again, the consistency of names and dates supports this theory, which would also explain the otherwise puzzling disappearance of Hemming from

<sup>8</sup> 'A leader of the Northmen, called Halfdan, submitted to the great Emperor, accompanied by a host of others, and strove to keep lasting faith': *Poeta Saxo* 807, ed. G.H. Pertz, *M[onumenta] G[ermaniae] H[istorica] Scriptorum* [SS] II (Hanover, 1829), p. 263. Although the episode is reported only by the late-ninth-century *Poeta Saxo*, the fact that the rest of the work is soundly based on earlier texts, primarily the *Royal Frankish Annals*, suggests that this incident, too, was derived from a lost early source.

<sup>9</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* [ARF] 782: ed. F. Kurze, *MGH, Scriptorum rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* [SRG] V (Hanover, 1895), p. 60. The text is transcribed by B.W. Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles* (Ann Arbor, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* [AF] 873: ed. F. Kurze, *MGH, SRG VII* (Hanover, 1891), pp. 78–9. An English translation is available: T. Reuter (trans. and ed.), *The Annals of Fulda* (Manchester, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> 'Of the Danish race, a most Christian leader': Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici [imperatoris]*, continuation; ed. E. Tremp, *MGH, SRG LXIV* (Hanover, 1995), p. 256; *AF* 837; ed. Kurze, p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> *ARF* 810–12; ed. Kurze, pp. 133–37.

the Danish political scene after 813. For Harald and Reginfrid had no sooner received their brother back, than the sons of Godfrid, the previous king, invaded the kingdom and drove all three brothers out.<sup>13</sup> Reginfrid was killed the following year in a vain attempt at reconquest,<sup>14</sup> and Harald's subsequent career is well documented, as will be seen below. Yet of Hemming nothing further is known. One possible explanation is that he was given Walcheren as a benefice, and remained there until his death in 837.

In support of this hypothesis is the fact that Walcheren was definitely granted in benefice to two other Danes, Harald and Rorik, in 841 (see below), and such a step would have been all the more natural if it had been established by precedent. The fact that there was a local Frankish count, Eccihard, who was killed alongside Hemming in the raid of 837, is no obstacle.<sup>15</sup> It is possible that the two men were jointly responsible for the region, or that Hemming may have held a neighbouring benefice, and joined Eccihard because the defence of the Frisian coast was regarded as the common concern of all the local counts.<sup>16</sup> Either of these interpretations would do justice to the fact that Hemming is named first in one casualty list, followed by 'Eccihardus alius dux et multi optimates imperatoris', clearly implying Hemming's prominence.<sup>17</sup> A third possibility is that Hemming had remained in the imperial entourage, and was despatched to the area to strengthen the local defences; as we shall see, other, later Danish emigrés definitely stayed at the Frankish court.

If Hemming did have a benefice in Frisia, the question arises as to when he was granted it. Was it in 813, when he apparently abandoned hope of returning to Denmark? Or did he perhaps inherit it from his father Halfdan, pushing the date of the grant even further back in time? Of course we do not know, but we can at least entertain the possibility that the first grant of Frisian territory to a Danish convert took place as early as the reign of Charlemagne, some years before the well-known gift of Rüstingen to the Danish king Harald in 826, the events to which we shall now turn.

<sup>13</sup> *Chronicon Moissacense* 813 ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH, SS I* (Hanover, 1826), p. 311; *ARF* 813: ed. Kurze, pp. 138–9.

<sup>14</sup> *ARF* 814: ed. Kurze, p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> *AF* 837: ed. Kurze, p. 28; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici*, continuation: ed. Tremp, p. 256.

<sup>16</sup> A capitulary of 821 referred to 'the counts who are responsible for coastal defence': *Capitula missorum* c. 5: ed. A. Boretius, *MGH, Capitularia I* (Hanover, 1883), p. 301; see also *Annales Bertiniani [AB]* 837: F. Grat, J. Viellard and S. Clémencet (eds), *Annales de Saint-Bertin* (Paris, 1964), p. 22. There is a translation of the text: J.L. Nelson (trans. and ed.) *The Annals of St Bertin* (Manchester, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> 'Another leader, Eccihard, and many of the emperor's nobles'. Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* continuation: ed. Tremp, p. 256.

### Harald: king, Viking leader and royal *fidelis*

After being expelled from Denmark by the sons of Godfrid in 813, the former king Harald commended himself to Louis the Pious the following year. He was not a Christian at this time, and was not given a benefice, but was sent to Saxony to await military assistance from the emperor.<sup>18</sup> This was by no means an unusual or innovative step by Louis, for several precedents can be found from the reign of his father. In 797 Charlemagne supported the Saracen Abdellah when he was driven out of his Mauretanian kingdom; in 805 he welcomed Theodor, the ruler of the Huns, who had been forced out by the Slavs, and in 808 Eardulf, deposed king of Northumbria, was welcomed and promised imperial backing in his attempt to recover his throne.<sup>19</sup>

In 815 Louis ordered an invasion of Denmark by the Obodrites and Saxons on Harald's behalf, but the sons of Godfrid avoided giving battle, and the campaign accomplished little, and Harald consequently remained in Saxony.<sup>20</sup> Four years later the emperor's application of pressure, again using the Obodrites, met with greater success, and Harald was accepted as joint ruler by two of Godfrid's sons, while another two fled the country.<sup>21</sup> Louis' increasing interest and interference in Danish affairs became even more apparent in 822–3, when Archbishop Ebbo of Rheims undertook his first missionary journey to Scandinavia, and certain Frankish counts were sent to examine conditions in Denmark.<sup>22</sup> It is questionable whether Louis was planning a military invasion and occupation of Denmark, as some authors have claimed,<sup>23</sup> but such measures suggest that the emperor may have been hoping to make Denmark a dependent state of the same type as the neighbouring Slav lands.

The political situation in Denmark remained extremely tense, and the storm finally broke in 826. In that year Harald travelled to Mainz to be baptized, accompanied by his wife and family and an entourage numbered by one source as 400 strong.<sup>24</sup> The space accorded to the baptism in contemporary texts reveals the significance which the Franks attached to the event: in his eulogistic poem to Louis the Pious,

<sup>18</sup> ARF 814: ed. Kurze, p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> ARF 797, 805 and 808: ed. Kurze, pp. 100, 119–20 and 126.

<sup>20</sup> ARF 815: ed. Kurze, pp. 141–2.

<sup>21</sup> ARF 819: ed. Kurze, p. 152.

<sup>22</sup> ARF 823: ed. Kurze, pp. 162–3.

<sup>23</sup> H. Shetelig, *An Introduction to the Viking History of Western Europe, Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. I (Oslo, 1940), p. 106; P.C.J.A. Boeles, *Friesland tot de elfde eeuw*, 2nd edn (The Hague, 1951), p. 387.

<sup>24</sup> *Annales Xantenses* [AX] 826: ed. B. von Simson, *MGH, SRG XII* (Hanover and Leipzig, 1909), pp. 6–7.

Ermold the Black devoted no less than 350 lines to the Danes' visit.<sup>25</sup> The emperor himself became Harald's godfather, while the empress Judith stood sponsor for Harald's wife, and Louis' eldest son Lothar fulfilled the same function for Harald's son Godfrid. The Danes were presented with costly gifts, including crowns for the royal couple, which underlines the political significance of this ostensibly religious event.<sup>26</sup> Even so, Ermold's proud boast that in Harald's homage to the emperor 'the Danish kingdoms are joined to the pious Franks'<sup>27</sup> was exaggerated and premature, as subsequent events would reveal. Harald returned to Denmark, while his son and nephew remained in the Frankish Empire, serving in the imperial palace.<sup>28</sup>

In Denmark, it appears that Harald's baptism had fatally compromised him in the eyes of his fellow rulers, and the following year the sons of Godfrid expelled him from the kingdom. Harald withdrew to the benefice which his godfather Louis had far-sightedly given him, the county of Rüstingen in northern Frisia, between the Weser and the Ems.<sup>29</sup> Here Harald remained for at least two years, continuing his feud with the sons of Godfrid along the Danish border,<sup>30</sup> but his name then disappears from contemporary sources. The last mention of him is in 829, and it may well have been Harald who that same year spread a rumour that the Danish kings were planning to invade Saxony, causing Louis to muster the army before the report was found to be groundless.<sup>31</sup>

There is no further mention of any Harald until 841, when the *Annals of St Bertin* recorded that Lothar granted Walcheren and the surrounding area as a benefice to Harald in return for the attacks which the latter had launched against Louis the Pious over several years.<sup>32</sup> A similar, but independent, testimony is offered by Nithard, who stated that Lothar had brought the Northmen into the civil war, submitting part of the Christian populace to them, and giving them

<sup>25</sup> Ermold the Black, *Carmen in honorem Hludowici*, ll. 2168–518: E. Faral (ed.), *Ermold le Noir: Poème sur Louis le Pieux et épîtres au roi Pépin* (Paris, 1932), pp. 166–90. The baptism is also described in *ARF* 826: ed. Kurze, pp. 169–70; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* c. 33: ed. Tremp, p. 220; Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris* c. 40: ed. E. Tremp, *MGH, SRG LXIV* (Hanover, 1995), p. 432.

<sup>26</sup> Ermold, ll. 2254–79: ed. Faral, pp. 172–4. The symbolism and significance of the event is discussed at length by Angenendt, 'Taufe und Politik', pp. 152–6; *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe*, pp. 215–23.

<sup>27</sup> Ermold, l. 2487: ed. Faral, p. 188.

<sup>28</sup> Ermold, ll. 2510–11: ed. Faral, p. 190.

<sup>29</sup> *ARF* 826 and 827: ed. Kurze, pp. 169–70 and 173; Ermold, ll. 2512–3: ed. Faral, p. 190. The testimony of these texts is to be preferred to that of the later *Vita Anskarii* c. 7: ed. G. Waitz, *MGH, SRG LV* (Hanover, 1884), p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> *ARF* 828: ed. Kurze, p. 175.

<sup>31</sup> *Vita Anskarii* c. 10: ed. Waitz, p. 31; *ARF* 829: ed. Kurze, p. 177.

<sup>32</sup> *AB* 841: ed. Grat, p. 39.

licence to plunder the rest.<sup>33</sup> This grant was also mentioned by the *Annals of Fulda* under the year 850, where it was stated that Harald had previously held a benefice around Dorestad together with his brother Rorik.<sup>34</sup> Nithard also recorded the presence of Harald in Lothar's army during the civil war, in 842.<sup>35</sup> The question is: was this the same Harald who had reigned in Denmark, and who was last heard of in Rüstringen in 829?

Although most modern historians have assumed that the two men were one and the same, on balance this seems unlikely.<sup>36</sup> The main reason is the generation gap between the two men. Two of King Harald's brothers, Anulo and Reginfrid, died in 812 and 814 respectively, and a third, Hemming, in 837.<sup>37</sup> His cousins Reginhold, Hemming and Sigfrid were all dead by 812, while of his other cousins Horik I seems to have been the sole survivor by 836. Yet Rorik, brother of Harald the Viking leader, was still alive in 873.<sup>38</sup> Surely these therefore represent two different generations. Secondly, although the *Annals of Fulda* and *Annals of Xanten* both referred to Rorik as Harald's brother, the *Annals of St Bertin* described him as Harald's nephew.<sup>39</sup> This apparent contradiction is easily resolved if there were two Haralds, the elder of whom was the uncle of the younger.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the Xanten annalist referred to Rorik as 'frater iam dicti Herioldi *junioris*', thus implying that there were two Haralds, an older and a younger.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Nithard, *Historiarum* IV.2: ed. P. Lauer, *Nithard: Histoire des fils de Louis le Pieux* (Paris, 1926), p. 122.

<sup>34</sup> *AF* 850: ed. Kurze, p. 39. Although this account dates Harald's acquisition of a Frisian benefice to the reign of Louis the Pious, there is good reason to believe that it is mistaken (it is clearly inaccurate in other respects, in that it includes events from 852–3), and that there was only one grant, that located by Nithard and the *Annals of St Bertin* in the year 841.

<sup>35</sup> Nithard III.7: ed. Lauer, p. 114.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. Goetz, 'Zur Landnahmepolitik', pp. 13–14; Lund, 'Allies', pp. 48–9; Wood, 'Christians and pagans', pp. 42–3.

<sup>37</sup> *ARF* 812 and 814: ed. Kurze, pp. 136 and 141; *AF* 837: ed. Kurze, p. 28. The reasons for identifying Hemming as Harald's brother were discussed above.

<sup>38</sup> *ARF* 808 and 812: ed. Kurze, pp. 125 and 136; *AB* 836: ed. Grat, p. 19; *AF* 873: ed. Kurze, p. 78.

<sup>39</sup> *AF* 850: ed. Kurze, p. 39; *AX* 850, ed. von Simson, p. 17; compare *AB* 850: ed. Grat p. 59.

<sup>40</sup> It would not be unusual in the Danish royal family for uncle and nephew to share the same name: we have already seen how the names Halfdan and Hemming recurred in different generations, as indeed did the names Godfrid, Sigfrid and Horik.

<sup>41</sup> 'Rorik the Northman, brother of the aforementioned Harald the younger': *AX* 850, ed. von Simson, p. 17. Because the only Harald mentioned earlier in the text was the Danish king baptized in 826, the passage seems to identify him as Rorik's brother, and thus as the Viking leader of the 830s and 840s. However, this 'iam dicti' is not necessarily significant. What may well have happened here, as certainly occurred in other passages in the *Annals of Xanten*, is that the original author of the annals mentioned the younger Harald, either with reference to the attacks on Frisia under Louis the Pious or the

The former king Harald thus appears to have stayed quietly in his Frisian benefice of Rüstingen after 829. He presumably therefore remained faithful both to the emperor and to his adopted faith. One of his nephews, also named Harald, was incited by Lothar to raid the Empire from 834, for which he and his brother Rorik were rewarded by the gift of Dorestad as a benefice in 841. This Harald subsequently fought in Lothar's army in 842, but apparently did not live long thereafter. This can be deduced from a retrospective report in the *Annals of Fulda* under the year 850, which records that Rorik had had to flee Lothar's kingdom after Harald's death, and had then spent 'several years' at the court of Louis the German.<sup>42</sup> This therefore places Harald's death somewhere in the early to mid-840s.

The younger Harald received a bad press from some Frankish authors: in particular, Prudentius called him a 'persecutor of the Christian faith and demon-worshipper', and regarded the grant of a benefice to him as an 'utterly detestable crime'.<sup>43</sup> Yet this is history as propaganda, in this instance, written from the West Frankish perspective against Lothar and the Danes who carried out attacks in his support. Nithard, who had a similar political axe to grind, was equally clear that it was wrong to invite pagans to plunder Christians or to rule over them, but he made no personal comment about Harald's character.<sup>44</sup> It would be wrong to deduce from these accounts that Harald was particularly treacherous or evil; rather, his crimes were that he was one of the heathen Northmen (although, as we shall see below, there is reason to believe that Harald himself may have been baptized with his uncle in 826), and that he was an ally of Lothar. If these texts had been written from a Lotharingian perspective, they would surely have read very differently.

In 852, the *Annals of Fulda* report the death of another Dane named Harald, in this instance one who lived in the East Frankish kingdom ruled by Louis the German. According to the report, this Harald had fled from the wrath of Horik some time earlier and had been welcomed by King Louis, particularly as he showed himself willing to be baptized. After living for several years among the Franks, he was suspected of plotting treachery by the magnates who controlled the Danish border region, and killed by them in 852.<sup>45</sup> Clearly this was not

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occupation of Dorestad in 841, but that this reference was subsequently excised by the work's later compiler. For other examples see H. Löwe, 'Studien zu den Annales Xantenses', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 8 (1951), pp. 59–99, at 72.

<sup>42</sup> *AF* 850: ed. Kurze, p. 39.

<sup>43</sup> *AB* 841: ed. Grat, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> Nithard IV.2: ed. Lauer, p. 122.

<sup>45</sup> *AF* 852: ed. Kurze, pp. 41–2.

Rorik's brother, since the same annal reported his death under the year 850. But could it conceivably refer to King Harald, who disappeared from the sources in the late 820s? Certainly the order of events closely parallels King Harald's career, Rüstringen is indeed in the northern border region, and the timing presents no great problem, as King Harald's cousin Horik the Elder survived until 854.<sup>46</sup> In sum, it seems quite possible that this was the death of King Harald which was reported in 852; if not, this was yet another Harald who converted to Christianity and lived among the Franks, but who is otherwise unknown. It is worth underlining that the annalist notes that this Harald had indeed lived honourably among the Franks for several years, and describes the charges laid against him, which led to his killing, as based on nothing more substantial than the suspicion of potential disloyalty.<sup>47</sup>

### Godfrid Haraldsson

As we have seen, King Harald's son Godfrid was baptized at Mainz along with the rest of his family in 826, with Louis' eldest son Lothar standing as his sponsor. Ermold relates that Godfrid and his cousin remained behind in the imperial court, and Godfrid evidently remained in the retinue of his godfather Lothar until some point in the 840s, when for some undisclosed reason the two men fell out, and Godfrid returned to Denmark.<sup>48</sup>

After his defection from Lothar and return 'to his own people,'

<sup>46</sup> *AB* 854: ed. Grat, p. 70; *AF* 854: ed. Kurze, pp. 44–5. The one striking discrepancy, namely that the annals state that 'King Louis' welcomed this Harald, whereas we know that it was Emperor Louis the Pious who baptized King Harald in 826, is by no means conclusive, since Charlemagne's biographer Einhard more than once described the Emperor as *rex*, even when referring to events after 800, and Thegan did the same in his *Deeds of Louis the Pious: Einhard, Vita Karoli Magni* cc. 14 and 15: ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH, SRG XXV*, 6th edn (Hanover, 1911), p. 17; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* c. 41: ed. Tremp, p. 226.

<sup>47</sup> 'Cum per plures annos honorifice inter Francos haberetur, tandem ... quasilubricae fidei et molimine prodicionis coepit esse suspectus, unde ab eis occisus est': *AF* 852: ed. Kurze, p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> Ermold, ll. 2244–5 and 2510–11: ed. Faral, pp. 172 and 190; *AB* 852: ed. Grat, p. 65. Was this unnamed cousin of Godfrid who remained with him at the Carolingian court perhaps the younger Harald? We have already seen that the latter could have been King Harald's nephew, and that one of Harald's nephews was baptized at Mainz with Godfrid in 826. We have also seen that the younger Harald was said to have been allied with Lothar in the mid-830s and early 840s, as was Godfrid. Is it not therefore plausible that this Harald was baptized with his uncle in 826, and then remained at Lothar's court until he began raiding Louis the Pious' realm in 834, an act for which he was rewarded with a Frisian fiefdom in 841? Although Prudentius says that the Harald who was granted a benefice in 841 was a 'demon-worshipper', and Godfrid's unnamed cousin was baptized, this is not an insurmountable problem. For as we have already noted, Prudentius was writing bitter polemic, not careful biography, and Rorik at least was still a pagan.

Godfrid teamed up with his cousin Rorik, Harald's brother, whose career will be discussed at length below. In the year 850 the two men then proceeded to raid the lands of their former master, Lothar.<sup>49</sup> Their first target was Dorestad, which Rorik occupied, leaving Godfrid empty-handed. He therefore led part of the fleet south to ravage the coast of Flanders and the Artois, before probably returning to Denmark for the winter.<sup>50</sup> In 851 Godfrid again raided Frisia and around the mouth of the Rhine, then entered the river Schelde and attacked Ghent, and perhaps also the nearby abbey of Drongen (Tronchiennes).<sup>51</sup> Once again Godfrid's fleet then sailed back to Scandinavia for the winter,<sup>52</sup> only returning to Francia in the autumn of 852, entering the Seine on 9 October.<sup>53</sup> The fleet advanced as far as *Augustudunas*, possibly Les Damps, near Pont-de-l'Arche, then encamped on an island at Jeufosse. Charles the Bald summoned not only his own army, but also that of the middle kingdom, under Godfrid's godfather Lothar, to oppose the Viking army. The two sides remained encamped facing each other throughout the winter, the Vikings unable to raid because of the besieging Franks, and the Franks unable to attack because of their lack of assault ships.<sup>54</sup>

Faced with this stalemate, Charles made a deal with Godfrid early in 853.<sup>55</sup> It is unlikely that this involved Godfrid receiving a grant of land, as the *Annals of Fulda* reported, since Godfrid had joined Rorik in Lotharingia by 855, something he would scarcely have done had he

<sup>49</sup> *AB* 852: ed. Grat, p. 65. There are convincing reasons for believing that this passage encapsulates the events of several previous years, in particular the absence of any other reference to the Vikings' presence on the Schelde in 852.

<sup>50</sup> *AB* 850: ed. Grat, p. 59; *AF* 850: ed. Kurze, p. 39; *Annales Fontanellenses* [*AFont*] 850: ed. J. Laporte, 'Les premières annales de Fontanelle', *Mélanges de la Société de l'histoire de Normandie*, XVe série (Rouen and Paris, 1951), p. 85.

<sup>51</sup> *AB* 851 and 852: ed. Grat, pp. 63 and 65; *AX* 851; ed. von. Simson, p. 17; *Annales Elmarenses* 851: P. Grierson (ed.), *Les annales de Saint-Pierre de Gand et de Saint-Amand* (Brussels, 1937), p. 82.

<sup>52</sup> I am here following the local source, the *Annals of Fontanelle*, which state that a second fleet entered the Seine under the command of Oskar (*AFont* 850: ed. Laporte, pp. 87–9), in preference to the *Annals of St Bertin*, which report that it was the fleet that attacked Gent which went on to enter the Seine (*AB* 851: ed. Grat, p. 63). This assumption is corroborated by the absence of any Viking activity in Oskar's former area of operations, the Atlantic seaboard, throughout 851 and most of 852.

<sup>53</sup> For what follows, see *AFont* 852: ed. Laporte, p. 89; *AB* 852 and 853: ed. Grat, pp. 65–6; *AF* 850 [*sic*]: ed. Kurze, pp. 39–40.

<sup>54</sup> See my unpublished PhD thesis, 'Charles the Bald [and the Defence of the West Frankish Kingdom Against the Viking Invasions, 840–877]' (University of Cambridge, 1987), pp. 130–1. Also B. Almgren, 'Vikingatåg och vikingaskepp', *Tor* VIII (1962), pp. 186–200, at 192.

<sup>55</sup> *AB* 852 and 853; ed. Grat, pp. 65–6; *AF* 850 [*sic*]: ed. Kurze, pp. 39–40; *AFont* 852: ed. Laporte, p. 89.

held a benefice in the West Frankish kingdom.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, it seems highly probable that Charles paid Godfrid a tribute to leave the kingdom, a supposition which is supported by his presence on Lothar's territory two years later. The lack of any reference to a specific sum in contemporary sources is not necessarily significant, since the ransom was apparently paid only to Godfrid and perhaps his immediate following, and was probably not particularly large. By way of comparison, the Viking leader Sigfrid is said to have been bought off for sixty pounds of silver at the siege of Paris in 886.<sup>57</sup>

As has been indicated, the next that is heard of Godfrid is in 855, when the *Annals of St Bertin* imply that he travelled back to Denmark with Rorik from his cousin's benefice in Dorestad.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps Godfrid had joined Rorik in administering the territory, or perhaps he had been granted an adjoining benefice by Lothar: the sources are silent. What we do know is that in 855 Rorik and Godfrid had to leave Frisia because Lothar I had decided to give control over the territory to his son Lothar II. The two Danes saw this as an enforced opportunity to try to win a new power base in their homeland, for the previous year the death of the Danish king Horik the Elder had provoked civil war in Denmark.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, their attempt failed, and later that same year, 855, Rorik and Godfrid returned to Lotharingia and took control of Dorestad and most of Frisia.<sup>60</sup> At this point Godfrid disappears from the sources, and we can only assume that he died shortly afterwards.

## Rorik

Rorik has already featured prominently in this account of Scandinavians who became involved in the Carolingian political scene. As we have seen, he was the brother of the younger Harald and cousin of Godfrid Haraldsson, and both men were at one time or other his close companions. Although Rorik himself is not named in any Frankish source until 850, the reference in question is retrospective, stating that Rorik had previously held Dorestad in benefice together with his

<sup>56</sup> *AF* 850 [sic]: ed. Kurze, p. 40. What is more, the account was written in the eastern kingdom, far from the scene of events, and was included under the wrong year. *AB* 855: ed. Grat, p. 70.

<sup>57</sup> Abbo, *Bella Parisiacae urbis*, book 2, II. 40–1: H. Waquet (ed.), *Abbon: Le siège de Paris par les Normands* (Paris, 1942), p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> *AB* 855: ed. Grat, p. 70.

<sup>59</sup> *AB* 854: ed. Grat, p. 70; *AF* 854: ed. Kurze, pp. 44–5; *AX* 856 [sic]: ed. von Simson, p. 18; *Vita Anskarü* c. 31: ed. Waitz, p. 63.

<sup>60</sup> *AB* 855: ed. Grat, p. 71. The extent of the territory is discussed below.

brother Harald.<sup>61</sup> As has already been demonstrated, Harald's rule in Dorestad can be dated to the year 841, and Rorik's involvement is implicitly corroborated by the comment in the *Annals of Xanten* that in 850 Rorik returned to Dorestad.<sup>62</sup>

Some time in the 840s Rorik was accused of disloyalty to Lothar (falsely, according to the Fulda annalist), and he had to flee to Louis the German's kingdom, where he lived among the Saxons, not far from the Danish border.<sup>63</sup> It is not specifically stated that Rorik commended himself to Louis, but this seems to be the implication of the passage. In 850, as we have seen, Rorik joined forces with Godfrid Haraldsson, raided Frisia, and seized Dorestad back by force of arms. When Lothar saw that he could not expel Rorik, he accepted his fealty and accorded him a benefice comprising Dorestad 'and other counties', in return for which Rorik agreed to pay Lothar the customary taxes and to resist Danish incursions.<sup>64</sup>

It may seem surprising that Lothar could allow one of the most prosperous ports in northern Europe to fall into the hands of a foreigner in this way, even if there were strings attached. Yet two important points need to be borne in mind. The first is that Rorik remained subject to Lothar, so that, for instance, the coins minted at Dorestad continued to bear the emperor's name on them, albeit in a consistently barbarous form, generally reading *Iotamus Imp[erator]* or some variant of this.<sup>65</sup> Secondly, the archaeological and numismatic evidence indicates that trade at Dorestad was already in decline at this time, almost certainly due to the silting up of the river Rhine. By 860 commercial activity at the site seems to have all but ceased.<sup>66</sup> Lothar was thus neither abandoning his sovereignty over the area, as his rule was still recognized, nor taking a major economic risk, since the port was already in decline.

Rorik remained in his Frisian benefice until 855, when, as has been said, he and Godfrid travelled to Denmark to try their luck there. When the attempt failed, the two returned to Lotharingia and subjected the greater part of Frisia to themselves, including Dorestad.<sup>67</sup> It is unclear precisely how large an area this covered, but certain references

<sup>61</sup> *AF* 850: ed. Kurze, p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> *Dorestatum repetit'*: *AX* 850: ed. von Simson, p. 17.

<sup>63</sup> *AF* 850: ed. Kurze, p. 39; see also *AB* 850: ed. Grat, p. 59; *AX* 850: ed. von Simson, p. 17.

<sup>64</sup> *AB* 850: ed. Grat, p. 59; *AF* 850: ed. Kurze, p. 39.

<sup>65</sup> S. Coupland, 'Dorestad [in the Ninth Century: the Numismatic Evidence]', *Jaarboek voor Munt- en Penningkunde* 75 (1988), pp. 5–26, at 15, 18 and 20–1.

<sup>66</sup> W.A. van Es and W.J.H. Verwers, *Excavations at Dorestad 1: The Harbour, Hoogstraat 1* (Amersfoort, 1980), pp. 297–9; Coupland, 'Dorestad', pp. 11–12 and 22–3.

<sup>67</sup> *Dorestado se continent et parte maxima Fresiae potiuntur'*: *AB* 855, ed. Grat, p. 71.

give an indication of the extent of Rorik's influence. For instance, a charter issued by Lothar II in 860 referred to Gendt, on the north bank of the Waal just east of Nijmegen, as 'ex rebus iuris nostri ex beneficio Hrorici'.<sup>68</sup> The Waal thus probably marked the southern limit of Rorik's territory, and at some stage the benefice also included Kenne-merland, the long peninsula to the west of the Zuider Zee, for in 882 the Viking leader Godfrid was granted 'comitatus et beneficia, quae Rorich Nordmannus Francorum regibus fidelis in Kinnim tenuerat'.<sup>69</sup> The fact that Rorik held talks with Louis the German in 873 suggests that his lands stretched as far as the German border in the east; as for the western boundary, there is no indication whether or not the islands of Zeeland, which Harald and Rorik had held in benefice in 841, were part of Rorik's territory after 850.

In 857 Rorik again left the area in the hope of winning power in the north, this time with greater success. Taking a fleet to Denmark with the support of his lord, Lothar II, he apparently forced Horik II to cede him sovereignty over that part of Denmark which lies between the Eider and the sea.<sup>70</sup> Since the Eider formed the border between Denmark and the Carolingian Empire,<sup>71</sup> the region in question must have lain to the north or north-east of the river, and presumably stretched across to the Schlei, perhaps even incorporating the other great northern emporium, Hedeby. Control of this important port would have represented a sufficiently valuable prize to tempt Rorik away from his Frisian benefice, and Lothar presumably approved of the venture because of the likelihood of a consequent increase in trade between Lotharingia and Scandinavia.

If this was the plan, it misfired badly. For Scandinavian raiders, taking advantage of Rorik's absence, fell on Dorestad and Betuwe and plundered the entire region, including Utrecht.<sup>72</sup> Lothar presumably urged Rorik to return to Dorestad at once, although the sources are silent on this point. Certainly nothing more is heard of Rorik's domain on the Danish borders, and by 873 the Eider region was clearly back in the hands of the Danish kings, Halfdan and Sigfrid.<sup>73</sup> When Rorik's

<sup>68</sup> 'Among the possessions under our law, part of Rorik's benefice': *MGH, Diplomata Karolinorum* III, ed. T. Schieffer (Berlin and Zurich, 1966), p. 405.

<sup>69</sup> 'The counties and benefices in Kenne-merland which Rorik the Northman had possessed as a retainer of the Frankish king': *AF* (Vienna manuscript) 882, ed. Kurze, p. 99; see also *Annales Vedastini [AV]* 882: ed. B. von Simson, *MGH, SRG XII* (Hanover and Leipzig, 1909), p. 51.

<sup>70</sup> *AF* 857: ed. Kurze, p. 47.

<sup>71</sup> See, e.g. *AF* 873: ed. Kurze, p. 79.

<sup>72</sup> *AB* 857: ed. Grat, p. 75; *MGH, Diplomata Karolinorum* III, ed. Schieffer, pp. 392-4.

<sup>73</sup> *AF* 873: ed. Kurze, pp. 78-9.

presence was next attested in the Frankish sources, in 863, he was once again ensconced in Dorestad.

In that year the emporium was again attacked by Danish pirates, who also travelled upstream to plunder Xanten and an unidentified royal estate.<sup>74</sup> According to a rumour which reached the ears of Hincmar of Rheims, Rorik had supposedly encouraged this expedition. Since it seems unlikely that Rorik would have welcomed a raid on his own benefice, we might perhaps deduce from this accusation that Rorik had protected his own territory by sending the Viking fleet further upriver, much as Charles the Fat gave the army which besieged Paris in 885–6 permission to plunder Burgundy.<sup>75</sup> Evidently Hincmar took the charge seriously, since he wrote not only to Rorik himself, warning him to give neither counsel nor assistance to pagans against Christians, but also to Bishop Hungarius of Utrecht, instructing him to impose a suitable penance on Rorik if the rumour was found to be true.<sup>76</sup>

From these two letters it emerges that Rorik had recently been converted and baptized, which reveals the surprising fact that he had not been required to profess Christianity before being granted Dorestad in benefice in 841 and 850. The same letters also urged that Rorik should not shelter Baldwin of Flanders, who had recently eloped with the king's daughter, Judith, and been excommunicated as a result. This indicates that Rorik enjoyed a certain measure of political independence, a fact which is also attested by a reference to him as a king in a verse by the theologian and poet Sedulius Scottus, who lived at nearby Liège in the 850s and 860s.<sup>77</sup> In the poem Sedulius, who mentions the Vikings in negative terms in several of his other verses, describes an altar built by one Ratbald 'in the time of King Rorik' (*Rorici tempore regis*).<sup>78</sup> A similar indirect reference to 'Roricus barbarorum rex' can be found in the late-tenth-century *Life of St Adalbert*. Rorik and his followers are about to dig the church of St Adalbert out from under a huge sand dune which has covered the building, but the saint miraculously intervenes to render the work

<sup>74</sup> AX 864 [*recte* 863]: ed. von Simson, pp. 20–1; AB 863: ed. Grat, pp. 95–6.

<sup>75</sup> AV 886: ed. von Simson, p. 62.

<sup>76</sup> Flodoard, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae* III.26 and III.23: ed. J. Heller and G. Waitz, *MGH, Scriptorum XIII* (Hanover, 1881), pp. 541 and 529.

<sup>77</sup> R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751–987* (London, 1983), p. 299.

<sup>78</sup> *Item de quodam altari*: *MGH, Poetae Latini aevi Carolini III* ed. L. Traube (Berlin, 1896), p. 210. This is surely a more plausible interpretation of the reference than the suggestion by N.K. Chadwick that *Roric* is Rhodri Mawr, ruler of Gwynedd: 'Early Culture and Learning in North Wales', in N.K. Chadwick, K. Hughes, C. Brooke and K. Jackson, *Studies in the Early British Church* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 29–120, at 103.

unnecessary.<sup>79</sup> Whatever the historical value of the story, it is interesting to note that although Rorik was remembered as a barbarian king, he was also commemorated as a friend and protector of the Church.

In 867 Rorik is said to have been driven out of Frisia by inhabitants known as *Cokingi*, whose precise identity is uncertain.<sup>80</sup> However, either Rorik lost control of only part of his benefice, retaining the area around Dorestad, or else he regained his territory soon afterwards. For we know that when Charles the Bald took over western Lotharingia in 870 he soon held talks with Rorik as a leading local figure.<sup>81</sup> These were held in the palace at Nijmegen, which was almost certainly on the border of Rorik's benefice. The West Frankish king made some kind of treaty with Rorik, and evidently recognized his continued rule over the area north of the Rhine, thus continuing the policy initiated by Lothar I and II.

In February 872 Charles held further talks with Rorik, who was now joined by his nephew Rodulf,<sup>82</sup> at *Monasterium*, probably Moustier-sur-Sambre in the province of Namur, close to the border of Lothar's former kingdom. The reason for the meeting is not recorded, but when the three men came together again in October of the same year at Maastricht, Rorik was welcomed and praised for his faithfulness, while Rodulf was accused of bad faith, and Charles' men were ordered to be on their guard against him.<sup>83</sup>

We last hear of Rorik in the following year, 873, when he visited Louis the German in Aachen, and after taking hostages from the king, swore him fealty.<sup>84</sup> Rorik probably took these precautions because of his association with Louis' rival, Charles the Bald. Rorik was in the unenviable position of controlling a benefice which included lands on both sides of the border laid down by the partition of Meerssen in 870. The date of his death is unknown, although it must have occurred

<sup>79</sup> *Vita et miracula sancti Adalberti* c. 12: ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH, Scriptores* XV<sub>2</sub> (Hanover, 1888), p. 702.

<sup>80</sup> *AB* 867: ed. Grat, p. 137. Although Vogel argued that Rorik was expelled from Frisia altogether in 867, wreaking havoc in revenge on his return, this is one of several accusations he levelled against Rorik without any support from contemporary accounts. Apart from the 867 attack, Vogel also attributed to Rorik raids on Saxony in 858 and 862, Rodulf's demand for tribute in 864, and an incursion into Frisia in 876: Vogel, *Normannen*, pp. 160, 193–4, 196, 225–6 and 246. Yet no Carolingian text associated Rorik with any of these raids, and it is much more likely that other, independent Danish fleets were responsible.

<sup>81</sup> *AB* 870: ed. Grat, p. 168.

<sup>82</sup> *AB* 872: ed. Grat, p. 184, and n. 3. On Rodulf, see further below.

<sup>83</sup> *AB* 872: ed. Grat, p. 188.

<sup>84</sup> *AF* 873: ed. Kurze, p. 78; *AX* 873: ed. von Simson, p. 32.

before 882, since in that year his former territory was granted to another Viking leader, Godfrid.<sup>85</sup>

Rorik stands out as the most powerful and influential of all the Danes drawn into the Carolingian milieu in the ninth century. He was unique in being a *fidelis* of all three royal brothers, Charles the Bald, Lothar I and Louis the German, in addition to Lothar II. His sizeable benefice stretched from the Rhine to the Vlie, and included the bishopric of Utrecht and the emporium at Dorestad, even though the latter declined and all but disappeared during the period in question. His career as a Carolingian *fidelis* was clearly remarkable, and several aspects of it deserve particular mention. First, successive Carolingian monarchs evidently accepted Rorik's presence: there is no evidence that either Lothar I or II, nor Louis the German or Charles the Bald after them, made any attempt to expel him from Frisia. This may of course have been Frankish *realpolitik*: the recognition that militarily Rorik was more than a match for them. This was explicitly acknowledged in 850, and certainly the success of the *Cokingi* in driving him out in 867 appears to have been short-lived. But the reason for the royal inaction was probably more straightforward than this, namely that all of the kings in question were content with the status quo, which as we have seen included a commitment by Rorik to accept their titular lordship, and to prevent other Scandinavians from attacking the region.

Undoubtedly connected with this is a second notable feature of Rorik's long career, namely how little criticism is levelled against him in the diverse Frankish texts which refer to his tenure. We have noted the references to *Roricus rex*, a title which would not be unexpected in the phrase *rex Danorum*, but which is striking in reference to a Frisian benefice, all the more so when it comes from the pen of a monk in nearby Liège. Alongside this we should note comments such as the Fulda annalist's remark under the year 850 that the accusations of treachery made against Rorik in the 840s were said to be false, and Hincmar's comparison of the faithful Rorik with the faithless Rodulf in 873.<sup>86</sup> The one exception to this positive treatment is Hincmar's charge of disloyalty in 863, when Rorik is supposed to have encouraged the Viking raid on Dorestad and the Rhine. Yet from the letters Hincmar wrote at the time, it emerges not only that the archbishop was unsure of the truth of the accusations, but also that he expected Rorik to recognize the ecclesiastical authority of the bishop of Utrecht, who was to impose a suitable penance on Rorik if the rumours turned out to be

<sup>85</sup> *AF* 882: ed. Kurze, p. 99; *AV* 882, ed. von Simson, p. 51. Godfrid's career will be discussed below.

<sup>86</sup> *AF* 850: ed. Kurze, p. 39; *AB* 872: ed. Grat. p. 188.

true.<sup>87</sup> From this it is apparent that Rorik was regarded by the Franks very much as 'one of us' rather than 'one of them'.

The third feature of Rorik's long career as a benefice holder which is worthy of mention is the effectiveness with which he defended his Frisian territory. During the twenty-three years in which Dorestad and its region are known to have been under his control, there were just two recorded Viking raids. The first of these was in 857 when, as has been observed, Rorik was absent in Denmark. The second was the attack of 863, which is therefore the only raid known to have breached Rorik's defences during the long period in question. Indeed, we might ask whether contemporaries concluded that the attackers must have been in league with Rorik, because they had managed to get past him and to reach the Rhine! This is a truly remarkable record, especially when it is remembered how many incursions the western kingdom was suffering at this time. It underlines the point made above, that the Carolingian kings were surely more than satisfied to have Rorik in charge of Frisia when he so successfully kept other Vikings at bay.

### Rodulf

Rodulf, the son of the younger Harald and thus Rorik's nephew, in many ways followed in his relatives' footsteps, but as the black sheep of the family. From the Franks' point of view he represented the unacceptable face of the Danish presence on Carolingian soil. The tenor of the reports about him are exemplified by the comment on his death in the *Annals of Xanten* in 873: 'Quamvis baptizatus esset, caninam vitam digne morte finivit'.<sup>88</sup> Although this and other reports of his death reveal how notorious he had become,<sup>89</sup> we know remarkably little about his career. The passage quoted above shows that he was baptized, but we have no idea when or where. The first time he appears in the sources is in 864, in the Middle Kingdom ruled by Lothar II. In that year Rodulf demanded a tribute payment which required Lothar to raise four *denarii* from every landholding (*mansus*), together with a large amount of flour, wine, beer and cattle.<sup>90</sup> This payment was described, significantly, as a *locarium*, a term which was consistently used by Carolingian authors to refer to payments for

<sup>87</sup> *AB* 863; ed. Grat, p. 95–6; Flodoard, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae* III.23 and III.26; ed. Heller and Waitz, *MGH, Scriptores* XIII, pp. 529 and 541.

<sup>88</sup> 'Even though he had been baptized, he ended his dog's life with a fitting death': *AX* 873, ed. von Simson, p. 33.

<sup>89</sup> *AF* 873, ed. Kurze, p. 80; *AX* 873; ed. von Simson, pp. 32–3; *AB* 873; ed. Grat, p. 193.

<sup>90</sup> *AB* 864; ed. Grat, p. 105.

mercenary service, as distinct from tribute payments, which were denoted by the word *tributum*.<sup>91</sup> This suggests that Rodulf was in some sense entitled to the payment, although the text offers no further clues. Bearing in mind that in 872 Rodulf twice went to see Charles the Bald together with Rorik,<sup>92</sup> it would seem likely that Rodulf held some kind of benefice in Frisia, perhaps one inherited from his father Harald on the latter's death in the 840s. This is of course speculation, but the very few facts at our disposal suggest that Rodulf had some sort of territorial power in Lothar's kingdom in the 860s.

Rodulf's notoriety stemmed from the fact that he carried out Viking raids, principally against the West Frankish kingdom, but also in Frisia and 'across the water', presumably in the British Isles. This accusation is found in all three of the principal contemporary annals: the *Annals of St Bertin* from Charles the Bald's kingdom, the *Annals of Xanten* from the Middle Kingdom and the East Frankish *Annals of Fulda*.<sup>93</sup>

It was on just such a raid that Rodulf met his end, in June 873. In the previous autumn his new overlord, Charles the Bald, had expressed reservations about Rodulf's reliability, and warned his magnates in the north to beware of his machinations.<sup>94</sup> Janet Nelson has suggested that he may have been conspiring with Charles' rebellious son, Carloman,<sup>95</sup> but as we have seen, Rodulf was regarded with suspicion and hostility in all the Frankish kingdoms, and Charles may simply have feared that he was about to turn his rapacious attentions to the West Frankish kingdom once again. In fact, it was in the north that Rodulf sought to enrich himself, in Ostergo on the Frisian coast, in what was now Louis the German's territory.<sup>96</sup> According to the Fulda annalist, he demanded tributes (*tributa* on this occasion) from the local inhabitants; when they refused, a furious battle ensued, and Rodulf was killed along with several hundred of his men. Interestingly, the *Annals of Fulda* report the presence of an unnamed Northman on the Frankish side, a Christian whose advice proved crucial in giving the Frisians the victory. This provides a timely reminder that there were other ordinary Scandinavians who converted to Christianity

<sup>91</sup> *Locarium*: AB 861, 862 and 864: ed. Grat, pp. 86, 89 and 105. *Tributum*: e.g., Hildegarius, *Vita Faronis episcopi Meldensis* c. 122: ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *MGH, SRM V* (Hanover, 1910), p. 200; AB 866 and 877: ed. Grat, pp. 125 and 213; and AF 873: ed. Kurze, p. 80, with reference to Rodulf himself. See also E. Joranson, *The Danegeld in France* (Rock Island, 1923), p. 22.

<sup>92</sup> AB 872: ed. Grat, pp. 184, 188.

<sup>93</sup> AF 873, ed. Kurze, p. 80; AX 873, ed. von Simson, p. 32; AB 873: ed. Grat, p. 193.

<sup>94</sup> AB 873: ed. Grat, p. 188.

<sup>95</sup> Nelson, *Annals of St Bertin*, p. 177, n. 2; p. 180, n. 16.

<sup>96</sup> The events are described in AX 873, ed. von Simson, pp. 32–3; AF 873, ed. Kurze, p. 80; AB 873; ed. Grat, p. 193.

through their contacts with the Franks, but who, unlike Rodulf, kept the faith with their new masters.<sup>97</sup>

Now, as then, the comparison of Rorik and Rodulf shows the strength and the weakness of the practice of drawing Scandinavians into the Carolingian world. Rorik was faithful to his new masters, Rodulf was faithless; Rorik defended Frankish territory against Viking raiders, Rodulf led Viking raiders against Frankish territory; as a result, Rorik was respected, while Rodulf was vilified. At the same time, we should follow the Carolingians' lead in recognizing that Rodulf was the exception which proves the rule. The fact that he apparently ignored his baptism as a Christian and abused his position as a benefice holder (if that is indeed what he was), did not cause the Frankish kings to end the practice of conversion and commendation. They knew all too well from their own families about rebels and renegades!

### Bjørn

All the characters we have considered thus far have been related, and all were evidently members of the Danish royal family. Yet this is not necessarily true of all the Viking leaders who were assimilated into the Carolingian milieu in the ninth century.<sup>98</sup> The first case we shall consider is that of Bjørn (latin *Berno*), who commended himself to Charles the Bald in 858. Bjørn had entered the Seine with a large fleet on 19 August 856, joining another chieftain, Sidroc, who had arrived the previous month. The following year Sidroc left the Seine, while Bjørn built a stronghold on an island at Oissel.<sup>99</sup> From here the Vikings raided Bayeux, Evreux and the surrounding district, apparently meeting little or no resistance. Given the absence of any alternative explanation, it was presumably the promise of a tribute payment which persuaded Bjørn to come to Charles the Bald at Verberie in early 858 to commend himself to the king.<sup>100</sup> This is corroborated by a letter written by the West Frankish bishops to Louis the German in

<sup>97</sup> Similar individuals are mentioned at Angers in 873: *AB* 873, ed. Grat, pp. 194–5; Rheims, perhaps in the 860s: Flodoard, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae* III.22, ed. Heller and Waitz, *MGH, Scriptores* XIII, p. 522; and by Rimbart: *Vita Anskarii* c. 33, ed. Waitz, p. 64. See also the case of Aslak below, and the references given there.

<sup>98</sup> This is of course an argument from silence, since no Carolingian source states 'He was not a member of the Danish royal house', nor would we expect any to do so. All we can say is that it seems highly unlikely.

<sup>99</sup> *AFont* 855 [*recte* 856–7]: ed. Laporte, pp. 89–91. The identification of *Oscellus* as Oissel is established in Coupland, 'Charles the Bald', pp. 46–7.

<sup>100</sup> 'Berno dux partis pyratarum Sequanae insistentium ad Karlum regem in Vermeria palatio venit, eiusque se manibus dedens, fidelitatem suatim iurat'. *AB* 858: ed. Grat, pp. 76–7.

November 858, in which the prelates mentioned an otherwise unknown tribute which was being raised to pay off the Vikings.<sup>101</sup>

Charles evidently welcomed the Viking leader, and the fact that the sources no longer mention Bjørn's name when referring to the army which remained on the Seine suggests that he kept faith with the king. Perhaps he remained at the Frankish court, as we shall see was the case with his fellow Scandinavians Weland and Aslak; perhaps he took the money and left the kingdom. It is, however, extremely unlikely that he was on Oissel when Charles laid siege to the island later in the year, as the author of the *Annals of Fontanelle* implies.<sup>102</sup> According to the fuller account of events in the *Annals of St Bertin*, it was only after Bjørn had sworn fealty that the king besieged the island, and this seems plausible, in that Charles may have been sufficiently encouraged by this turn of events to contemplate trying to force the remaining Vikings to leave the Seine.

### Weland, Aslak and Sigfrid

The Viking army which Bjørn had led nevertheless remained on the Seine and continued its excesses. Charles the Bald's army was evidently unable to deal with the situation, and when in July 859 a second Viking fleet entered the Somme, the king decided to set one Viking army against the other, thereby neutralizing both. In the spring of 860 he therefore offered the Somme Vikings a deal: he would give them three thousand pounds of silver if they would expel or exterminate the Seine fleet.<sup>103</sup>

When it became apparent that the promised sum was going to take some considerable time to raise, the fleet, impatient for further loot, took hostages to keep Charles to his word, and crossed the Channel to try their luck in England.<sup>104</sup> They did not return to the Continent until the spring of 861, when they made their way up the Seine and laid siege to the fortified island at Oissel, where the rival Scandinavian army was encamped. The author of the *Annals of St Bertin* gives us the name of their leader: Weland.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>101</sup> 'Ut ... regnum quod contra eos redimitur, a tributo indebito eripiantur' ('so that the kingdom which is being ransomed should be freed from this undeserved tribute'). *Epistola synodi Carisiacensis ad Hludowicum regem Germaniae directa* c. 6: ed. A. Boretius and V. Krause, *MGH, Capitularia* II (Hanover, 1897), p. 430.

<sup>102</sup> *AFont* 859 [recte 858]: ed. Laporte, p. 91.

<sup>103</sup> *AB* 860: ed. Grat, pp. 82–3.

<sup>104</sup> *AB* 860: ed. Grat, p. 83; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 860, ed. D. Whitelock, D.C. Douglas and S.I. Tucker (London, 1961), p. 45.

<sup>105</sup> *AB* 861: ed. Grat, pp. 84–5.

Another contemporary text, the *Miracles of St Riquier*, offers a rare and fascinating insight into the contacts which had taken place between Charles the Bald and Weland's fleet during the Vikings' absence. The passage in question describes a man named Aslak (*Ansleicus*), who, though 'born of the Danish race, adopted the marks of Christianity, and became a companion of the palace, through the generosity of our most holy lord, King Charles'.<sup>106</sup> According to the *Miracles*, Aslak was responsible for mediating between King Charles and a group of Vikings who were forced to remain in England by rough seas. It is this detail which links the passage with the events of 860–1, since it is the only occasion when Charles the Bald is known to have negotiated with Vikings based in England.

No explanation is offered for Aslak's presence within the palace, nor is he mentioned in any other source. We have no idea when or why he joined the king's entourage. This incident again highlights the fact that our information about the relations between Franks and Scandinavians is extremely limited. It is clear that peaceful contacts existed at a diplomatic and commercial level of which we are only dimly aware. A brief glimpse of such relations is provided by the extraordinary throwaway comment in the *Life of Anskar* that Archbishop Ebbo of Rheims undertook his missionary journey to Denmark in the early 820s because he felt called to the conversion of the heathen, 'and above all the Danes, whom he had often seen in the palace'.<sup>107</sup> Another example can be found in the *Annals of Fulda* in the 870s, which refer not only to high-level diplomatic contacts between the Danish and East Frankish courts at this time, but also to significant levels of cross-border trade.<sup>108</sup> Yet another instance is the well-known visit of the Norwegian merchant Ottar to King Alfred's court in Wessex.<sup>109</sup> Such episodes remind us that then, as now, it was murder, rape and pillage that most often made the headlines: bad news tends to drive out good.

A parallel case to that of Aslak, the intermediary between Weland and Charles the Bald, dates from the 880s. The *Annals of St Vaast* report that in 883–4 a Christian Dane named Sigfrid mediated between the Great Army and Carloman, again in order to settle the size of a

<sup>106</sup> 'Quidam Ansleicus, de propagine Danorum progenitus, Christianitatis sumens insignia, contubernalis palatii domni Caroli regis piissimi munificentia effectus est'. *Miracula sancti Richarii* II.16: *Acta Sanctorum* Aprilis III, p. 456.

<sup>107</sup> 'Et maxima Danorum, quos in palatio saepius viderat': *Vita Anskarii* c. 13, ed. Waitz, p. 35.

<sup>108</sup> *AF* 873; ed. Kurze, pp. 78–9.

<sup>109</sup> Niels Lund (ed.), *Two Voyagers at the Court of King Alfred* (York, 1984).

tribute payment.<sup>110</sup> Sigfrid was said to be the nephew of Horik,<sup>111</sup> presumably King Horik the Younger, and just as in the case of Aslak we have no idea how he came to be living in the West Frankish kingdom as a Christian. In such complex and delicate situations a mediator who was acceptable to both sides was indispensable, and Sigfrid reportedly shuttled back and forth between the two camps, reporting offer and counter-offer, until a figure was eventually agreed. Although the outcome of Aslak's negotiations are not recorded in the *Miracles of St Riquier*, the return of Weland implies that he, too, fulfilled the task requested of him.

Weland and his besieging army now demanded the inflated price of five thousand pounds of silver, possibly because their numbers had grown in the interval. The king agreed to this figure, which was paid in both silver and gold, and also furnished Weland's men with a large supply of livestock and grain so that they would not need to forage in the surrounding area. After the blockade had dragged on for several months, the Vikings at Oissel were eventually driven by hunger and wretchedness to offer terms. They gave Weland's army an additional six thousand pounds of gold and silver, and the two fleets then combined and made for the river mouth. The approach of winter dissuaded the Northmen from putting to sea, however, and they wintered in various ports along the Seine. Weland occupied an island near Melun, while his son accompanied the Scandinavians who had been at Oissel to the monastery of St Maur-des-Fossés.<sup>112</sup> Although some of the Vikings on the Seine then attacked Meaux, there is no reason to suspect Weland of participation in such activity. Indeed, Lupus of Ferrières explicitly distinguished between those Vikings who were camped on an island near the town, that is, Weland and his men, and those who had recently burned it, who evidently belonged to the defeated army from Oissel.<sup>113</sup>

By blocking the Marne at Isles-lès-Villenoy in January 862, Charles managed to trap the troublesome raiders and force them to agree to leave the kingdom.<sup>114</sup> Some twenty days later, Weland came to the king

<sup>110</sup> AV 883 and 884: ed. von Simson, pp. 54–5.

<sup>111</sup> One manuscript has the variant reading 'Rorik's nephew'. Throughout this article I have translated *nepos* as nephew, though it should be noted that in Carolingian usage the term could also be used to mean 'grandson' (e.g. ARF 813: ed. Kurze, p. 138) or 'cousin' (e.g. Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon* [RP] 892, ed. F. Kurze, MGH, SRG L (Hanover, 1890), p. 139). That 'nephew' is usually the most likely translation is supported by other passages which refer explicitly to the *nepos* as a brother's son (compare, e.g., ARF 808: ed. Kurze, p. 125, with *Chronicon Moissacense* 808: ed. Pertz, MGH, *Scriptores* I, p. 308).

<sup>112</sup> AB 861: ed. Grat, pp. 86.

<sup>113</sup> Lupus of Ferrières, letter 119: L. Levillain (ed.), *Loup de Ferrières: Correspondance*, 2 vols (Paris, 1927–35), vol. II, p. 176.

<sup>114</sup> S. Coupland, 'The Fortified Bridges of Charles the Bald', *Journal of Medieval History* 17 (1991), pp. 1–12, at 2–4.

with a number of his men and commended himself to Charles under oath. The annals offer no indication as to whether this step was a direct result of events or had been agreed between the two men beforehand. According to Hincmar's account, Weland did not then remain with the king, but rejoined the Danish fleet, which then journeyed to the mouth of the Seine to repair their ships and await the spring equinox.<sup>115</sup> Yet Weland did not return to the life of piracy. Later the same year, 862, he brought his wife and children to Charles, and was converted to Christianity.<sup>116</sup>

Thereafter he seems to have remained in the king's entourage, for when he is next mentioned, it is in the context of the royal court's stay at Nevers. Two Northmen who had professed Christianity with Weland, but only in name, as Hincmar adds with the benefit of hindsight, accused their leader of disloyalty to the king. According to their custom, Weland then fought one of his accusers before the king, and was killed in the duel.<sup>117</sup> Thus ended Weland's brief life as a Christian and Frankish *fidelis*.

### Ragnar

If Weland, like Rorik, can be regarded as a Viking poacher who turned to gamekeeping, Ragnar, like Rodulf, is accused of having done the reverse, that is, of having broken faith and attacked the Franks after formerly holding a benefice on Frankish soil. What is unusual about Ragnar, the man who captured mighty Paris in 845, is that this accusation has been made by a modern scholar rather than by a Carolingian annalist.

It is Janet Nelson who has proposed that Ragnar was at one time a follower of Charles the Bald.<sup>118</sup> Her evidence is Rimbert's account in the *Life of Anskar* of one Reginarius (or Reginarius), whom Charles installed at the Flemish abbey of Torhout in the early 840s, but then stripped of his titles and possessions shortly afterwards.<sup>119</sup> The fact that the Viking leader who attacked the West Frankish realm and humiliated Charles the Bald in 845 bore the same name<sup>120</sup> suggests to Janet Nelson that the two men were one and the same.

<sup>115</sup> *AB* 862: ed. Grat, p. 89.

<sup>116</sup> *AB* 862: ed. Grat, p. 90.

<sup>117</sup> *AB* 863: ed. Grat, p. 104.

<sup>118</sup> J.L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), pp. 151–3.

<sup>119</sup> *Vita Anskarii* cc. 21, 36 and 38: ed. Waitz, pp. 46, 71 and 73.

<sup>120</sup> Ragnar is named in four contemporary Carolingian texts: *AX* 845, ed. von Simson, p. 14 (*Reginheri*); *AFont* 845: ed. Laporte, p. 79 (*Ragneri*); *Miracula sancti Richarii* I. 11–12: *Acta Sanctorum* Aprilis III, p. 450 (*Ragimerus*); *Translatio sancti Germani Parisiensis* c. 20: *Analecta Bollandiana* II (1883), p. 85 (*Ragenarius*).

The evidence is unconvincing, however. Nowhere does Rimbert suggest that the Raginarius at Torhout was a Dane, not even in a passage where he is specifically accused of taking Danish and Slav boys from the abbey and using them as his personal servants.<sup>121</sup> Nor does Rimbert associate Raginarius with the raid of 845, or indeed with any form of revenge against Charles the Bald; on the contrary, he describes his fall from grace solely in terms of losing the king's favour and never regaining it. Indeed, none of the Carolingian texts which describes the Viking raid of 845 – and there are many – mentions any previous relationship between the leader of the Scandinavian fleet and the king.<sup>122</sup> Finally, and perhaps most significantly, contemporary texts reveal that Ragnar, in its various Latin forms, was not at all uncommon as a *Frankish* personal name at the time: several counts and bishops named Ragnar are recorded in the ninth century.<sup>123</sup> Taken together, these factors indicate that it is highly unlikely that Ragnar the conqueror of Paris should be identified with the Ragnar who was granted Torhout by Charles the Bald.

### Godfrid and Hundi

The last individual who is known to have taken a Frankish benefice before Rollo in 911 shares a name with one of the Danes we have already considered: Godfrid. Presumably he was therefore a member of the Danish royal family, a thesis which is supported by the description of him in the *Annals of St Vaast* as *Godefridus rex Danorum*.<sup>124</sup> Godfrid was one of the leaders of the so-called Great Army which crossed the Channel from England in 879, going on to cut a devastating swathe across what is now northern France and Belgium.

Part of the reason for the invaders' success was the political instability of the Frankish kingdoms at this time, with rival kings so

<sup>121</sup> *Vita Anskarii* c. 36: ed. Waitz, p. 71.

<sup>122</sup> In addition to the texts cited above, the attack is also referred to in *AB* 845: ed. Kurze, p. 35; Hildegarius, *Vita Faronis* c. 122: ed. Krusch and Levison, *MGH, SRM* V, p. 200; *Miracula sanctae Genovefae* cc. 10–12: *Acta Sanctorum Ianuarii* I, p. 149; *Concilium Meldense-Parisiense* prologue: ed. A. Boretius and V. Krause, *MGH, Capitularia* II (Hanover, 1897), p. 396; Audradus Modicus, *Liber revelationum*: L. Traube, 'O Roma nobilis: Philologische Untersuchungen aus dem Mittelalter', *Abhandlungen der bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-philologische Klasse* XIX (1892), pp. 297–395 at 374–91. *AX* and the *Translatio sancti Germani* also describe Ragnar's return to Denmark and his death from illness shortly afterwards.

<sup>123</sup> For example, a Count Raganarius (or Reginarius) is mentioned in 876, a Count Ragnerus (or Reginarius) in the 890s, a Bishop Ragenarius in 844, and a Chorbishop Reginheri in 853. *AB* 876: ed. Grat, p. 209; *RP* 876: ed. Kurze, p. 112; *AV* 886, 895 and 898: ed. von Simson, pp. 61, 76 and 80; *RP* 898 and 899: ed. Kurze, pp. 112, 145 and 147; *AB* 844, ed. Grat, p. 47; *AF* 853, ed. Kurze, p. 44.

<sup>124</sup> *AV* 880: ed. von Simson, p. 47.

preoccupied with winning or holding on to power that they were unable to pay the Scandinavians the attention they merited. In 882 Charles the Fat at last set out to make a decisive move against the Great Army, which was at this time encamped at Asselt, near Roermond in Limburg province.<sup>125</sup> The contemporary sources all agree that he assembled a huge and impressive army to besiege the Vikings, and further agree that the emperor's subsequent behaviour was lamentable. Hincmar says simply that his courage failed him, but the Fulda annalist compares Charles to the Biblical king Ahab, who earned God's wrath and condemnation by coming to terms with a pagan enemy king.<sup>126</sup> For that was precisely what Charles did: he made a deal with Godfrid and his fellow leader Sigfrid, by which Godfrid was baptized and given a Frankish wife and Rorik's old Frisian benefice, while Sigfrid was paid a tribute to leave the kingdom.<sup>127</sup> Godfrid's wife was moreover no commoner, but Gisela, the illegitimate daughter of the late king Lothar II, thus tying Godfrid even more firmly into the web of Frankish politics than any of his Scandinavian predecessors. So the emperor 'disregarding such an insult to his army, ... made the man who had been his kingdom's greatest enemy and betrayer into a fellow ruler of the realm'.<sup>128</sup>

This acerbic comment from one contemporary observer provides an important reminder that not everyone approved of the royal policy of conversion and commendation. Perhaps it was the sheer scale of the devastation caused by the Great Army that made this particular act by Charles the Fat so uniquely unpopular, particularly when it was now clear that earlier precedents had signally failed to put an end to the Scandinavian invasions. Even so, not all contemporaries were as hostile as the Fulda annalist: for example, the *Annals of St Vaast* reported Godfrid's commendation, benefice and marriage with what sounds like relief, and perhaps even approval, since it was in this way that '[Charles] got the Northmen to leave his realm'.<sup>129</sup> This more positive

<sup>125</sup> That *Ascloha* should be identified as Asselt rather than Elsloo was persuasively argued on archaeological grounds by J. Vannérus, 'Asselt, et non Elsloo, camp retranché des Normands à la Meuse (881–882)', *Bulletin de la Classe des lettres de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, 5th ser. vol. 18 (1932), pp. 223–32. See also A. d'Haenens, *Les Invasions normandes en Belgique au IXe siècle* (Louvain, 1967), pp. 312–15.

<sup>126</sup> *AB* 882: ed. Grat, p. 248; *AF* 882 (Vienna manuscript): ed. Kurze, p. 98, with reference to 1 Kings XX.

<sup>127</sup> *AB* 882: ed. Grat, p. 248; *AF* 882 (Vienna manuscript): ed. Kurze, pp. 98–9; *AV* 882: ed. von Simson, pp. 51–2; *RP* 882: ed. Kurze, pp. 119–20. The Bavarian continuation of the Fulda annals is at odds with the rest, apparently confusing Godfrid and Sigfrid: ed. Kurze, pp. 107–9. It should also be noted that *AF* (Vienna manuscript) places Godfrid's marriage in 883, a year later than *AV* or *AB*.

<sup>128</sup> *AF* 882 (Vienna manuscript): ed. Kurze, p. 99.

<sup>129</sup> *AV* 882: ed. von Simson, p. 52.

attitude towards doing deals with the Vikings is also evident from the report under the same year in the same annals that the emperor 'came to an agreement' with the Viking leader Hasting in Aquitaine.<sup>130</sup> This may have involved a tribute payment rather than commendation, for certainly Hasting was still raiding on the Continent in 890.<sup>131</sup>

A similarly positive tone can also be found in the entry for 897 in the *Annals of St Vaast*, which provides the last known description of commendation before 911.<sup>132</sup> An otherwise unknown Viking leader named Hundi (*Huncdeus*) entered the Seine with five large ships in 896, and wintered with reinforcements on the Oise. In an action which appears to parallel Charles the Bald's dealings with Bjørn, Charles the Simple welcomed Hundi in the spring of 897, and he was baptized on Easter Day, while the army continued their depredations. Although Hundi then disappears from the text, earlier precedents suggest that he probably remained in the king's entourage.

As for Godfrid, the next mention of him occurs only in Regino, who claimed that in 884 a group of the Danes who were with Godfrid in Kennemerland sailed up the Rhine and occupied a fortress at Duisburg, where they spent the winter. Although there is no report of any destruction, Regino attributed this to the presence nearby of Duke Henry and his army. When the spring came, they burned their camp and returned downstream.<sup>133</sup> Although Regino explicitly stated that this was done with Godfrid's approval (*adsentiente Godefrido*) it is hard to see how he could have known this. More likely is that the Franks simply assumed that this outsider in their midst, whom they still profoundly mistrusted, must have been party to the expedition, if not actively behind it.

The depth of the Franks mistrust – and the justification for it – are evident from the reports of Godfrid's death in 885. Regino gives the fullest account of events, which is in many respects substantiated by other contemporary annals.<sup>134</sup> All the texts agree that Godfrid entered into a conspiracy with his brother-in-law Hugh, the illegitimate son of Lothar II, who had long been trying to gain power in his late father's kingdom. Regino further asserts that Hugh approached Godfrid with

<sup>130</sup> 'Volens ... Alstingum in amicitiam recipere, quod et fecit': *AV* 882, ed von Simson, p. 52. Compare the way in which Asser and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle use the term 'made peace' with the Vikings to mean 'paid them tribute': S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's 'Life of King Alfred' and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 18–19.

<sup>131</sup> *AV* 890, 891: ed. von Simson, pp. 68–9.

<sup>132</sup> *AV* 897: ed. von Simson, p. 78.

<sup>133</sup> *RP* 884: ed. Kurze, p. 122.

<sup>134</sup> *RP* 885: ed. Kurze, pp. 123–5; *AF* (both manuscripts) 885: ed. Kurze, pp. 102–3 and 114; *AV* 885: ed. von Simson, p. 57.

the offer of half the kingdom if he would launch an attack against Charles the Fat's empire. In this instance Regino's information may well be accurate, since Hugh was later sent to Prüm, where Regino himself tonsured him, and thus had ample opportunity to learn at first hand what had gone on behind the scenes.

Godfrid reportedly sent two of his men, the Frisian counts Gerulf and Gardulf, to Charles with a counter offer. If the emperor wanted him to remain faithful, he should enlarge Godfrid's territory by granting him wine-producing lands from the royal fisc in Koblenz, Andernach and Sinzig! According to Regino, this was all a cunning ploy by Godfrid, but as this can only have been surmise on his or Hugh's part, these remarks should be treated with a measure of scepticism. Meanwhile, the *Annals of Fulda* note that in mid-May Godfrid was gathering an army, ready to sail down the Rhine against the Franks. But the army never set off, as Godfrid and Gisela were summoned to a meeting with Duke Henry and the bishop of Cologne on an island in Betuwe, where the Rhine and the Waal diverge. While the bishop lured Gisela off the island, Duke Henry persuaded a Count Everard, who had a grievance against Godfrid, to pick a quarrel with the Dane, and in the course of their argument, to strike the first blow. Everard faithfully played his part, and Henry's attendants finished off Godfrid and cut down his men. Hugh also paid dearly for his part in the conspiracy, being blinded and banished.

'So the Lord paid [Godfrid] the due reward for his faithlessness' comments the *Annals of Fulda*,<sup>135</sup> and so the line of Scandinavian benefice-holders in Frisia came to an end. As we have seen, there appears to have been a near continuous line of Danes holding important tracts of Frisia, perhaps as early as Halfdan in the reign of Charlemagne, then through Hemming, Harald (briefly), Rorik (at length), and probably also Rodulf, right up to Godfrid's tenure in the 880s. Yet this should not be thought of as a northern Normandy in the making. Careful analyses have revealed the lack of any demonstrable Danish influence on the regional toponymy, laws, language and social structure, and underlined the striking paucity of archaeological evidence of the Scandinavian presence in the region.<sup>136</sup> This is not surprising, for none of the contemporary sources suggest that Rorik or any of his predecessors was accompanied by or encouraged Danish settlers, in

<sup>135</sup> *AF* (Vienna manuscript) 885: ed. Kurze, p. 102.

<sup>136</sup> H.H. van Regteren Altena and H.A. Heidinga, 'The North Sea Region in the Early Medieval Period (400-950)', in B.L. van Beek, R.W. Brandt and W. Groenman-van Waateringe (eds) *Ex Horreo, IPP 1951-1976* (Amsterdam, 1977), pp. 47-67, at 53-62; Blok, 'Wikingen in Friesland', pp. 37-47. See now also Jan Besteman, *Vikingen in Noord-Holland?* (Haarlem, 1996).

contrast with Rollo in Normandy, who commanded a sizeable Viking army in need of land. At first sight Godfrid might appear to have been an exception to this, in that the *Annals of Fulda* record that Charles granted Rorik's counties and benefices 'to this enemy and to his men to inhabit',<sup>137</sup> but it is far from clear that Godfrid's retinue was large enough to make any significant impact on the character of the region. Indeed, the Fulda annals specifically state that the army with which Godfrid hoped to win greater power had to be recruited from Denmark, while Regino's account of Godfrid's end suggests that he was accompanied by so few men that they could all be slaughtered at the same time as their master.<sup>138</sup>

### Conclusion

There may not have been any Yankees at the court of king Arthur, but this survey has amply demonstrated how many Vikings there were at the courts of the Carolingian kings. From the days of Charlemagne, and Halfdan's commendation in 807, to the reign of Charles the Simple, and Hundi's baptism in 897, there seems to have been a steady stream of Scandinavian warlords who were willing to pledge allegiance to the Frankish rulers. Some, indeed nearly all, professed the Christian faith: Rorik appears to have been a rare exception in delaying baptism for so long. Some remained in the royal entourage, while others were granted benefices, but only in Frisia as far as we know. It should be emphasized that all these agreements involved individuals, and there is no evidence that Vikings began to settle in any numbers in any part of the Carolingian Empire during the ninth century. What is more, although elements of the Great Army may have begun to settle at the mouth of the Seine before the agreement of c.911, there is no sign that this received official sanction from either Charles the Simple or any of his predecessors. So although the treaty with Rollo had its precedents, it was also in some respects a departure from established custom.

The study has also shown how effective the practice of conversion and commendation was at winning Viking leaders to the Frankish cause. In the great majority of cases the Scandinavians concerned appear to have given up their life of piracy and remained true to their professions of faith, both religious and secular. There were lapses, it is true, but these were not in the main simple breaches of trust. In some cases – for example, Rorik and Godfrid Haraldsson – the Danes fell

<sup>137</sup> 'Eidem hosti suisque hominibus ad inhabitandum delegavit': *AF* (Vienna manuscript) 882, ed. Kurze, p. 99.

<sup>138</sup> *AF* (Vienna manuscript) 885; ed. Kurze, p. 102; *RP* 885; ed. Kurze, p. 124.

out with their Carolingian lords and fled the court. Such a breakdown obviously sundered the bonds of loyalty, and many comparable instances could be cited from within Frankish society where the aggrieved party subsequently turned against their former master. In other instances, the Danish chieftains were drawn into the tangled web of internecine squabbles which characterized Carolingian politics. This is notably true of Harald the younger, recruited by Lothar in the 830s, and Godfrid, who joined Lothar's bastard grandson Hugh some fifty years later. There is only one clear case of straightforward infidelity, namely Rodulf, whose lack of trustworthiness seems to have been notorious at the time. Indeed, the very fact that Rodulf's faithlessness was seen as so scandalous by the Franks underlines how faithful his fellow Scandinavians were.

Having said that, it is clear that the conversion and commendation of Viking leaders could only ever be of limited effectiveness as a defensive measure against the widespread incursions of the ninth century. There were simply too many fleets, too many warlords, and too few converts for the practice to have any significant impact. More successful was the installation of Scandinavian chieftains in Frisian benefices. Rorik in particular appears to have protected Dorestad and the mouth of the Rhine highly efficiently for almost a quarter of a century, and before him Hemming won a highly favourable reputation as a valiant defender of the Frisian coast. Some poachers can make very effective gamekeepers.

As for the motivation behind the practice of conversion and commendation, on the Frankish side it was surely the belief that by drawing these Scandinavian leaders into the Christian faith and absorbing them into the Carolingian milieu they would thereby become 'civilized', and thus neutralized. As Christians they were no longer barbarians; as 'faithful men' (*fideles*) they were no longer enemies.<sup>139</sup> And even if they retained something of the savagery of their Viking past, this too could perhaps be channelled and turned to the Franks' advantage, as Lothar showed with Harald the younger in the 830s, as Charles the Bald demonstrated with Weland on the Seine, and as a succession of rulers proved to be the case with Rorik in Frisia.

Assessing the Danes' motives for joining the Franks is a greater challenge. For some, such as King Harald, Rorik or the later Godfrid, there was the opportunity to exercise authority over a larger territory than would have been possible in Denmark, and as members of the

<sup>139</sup> See S. Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath or the People of God's Wrath? The Carolingians' Theology of the Viking Invasions', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42.4 (1991), pp. 535-54.

royal family this must surely have had its attractions. In the case of characters such as Aslak, Bjørn or Weland we can only speculate. Perhaps they were impressed by the splendour of the Frankish court and allured by the promise of a share in its wealth; perhaps they were even convinced by the claims of Christianity: we do not know. But between them these men undoubtedly made it easier for Rollo to acquire a parcel of land for himself and his followers in 911, and so helped to pave the way for the establishment of 'the Northmen's land' – Normandy – in the heart of the Carolingian kingdoms.