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Carolingian Frisia and the Vikings
Confrontation and Cohabitation

ABSTRACT

Carolingian Frisia stretched from the southern Scheldt estuary to the Weser, where it met Viking-Age Denmark. Within this expanse of territory, relationships with Scandinavians were varied and nuanced. The stereotypical image of Vikings raiding, looting and killing is certainly not unjustified: there is clear evidence of attacks from the late 8th century onwards, peaking in the mid-9th century but continuing on into the 900s. Central Frisia appears to have borne the brunt of these incursions. In West Frisia, a series of members of the Danish royal family were granted benefices by Frankish rulers from Charlemagne to Charles the Fat in the 880s. Scandinavian chieftains were thus drawn into Frankish politics in a way unmatched on the Continent until the later establishment of Normandy. Ordinary Danes also settled in Frisia, and thanks to metal detection increasing numbers of objects revealing their presence are being discovered. Frisia was neither Frankish nor Scandinavian, but a frontier region lying between and engaging with both kingdoms, resulting in conflict and coexistence.

KEYWORDS

Francia / Scandinavia / warfare / tribute / border

For most people mention of »the Vikings in the Netherlands« conjures up an image of axe-wielding Scandinavian raiders carrying loot to their longships against a backdrop of burning buildings and dead bodies. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, a revisionist movement downplayed this image of Viking violence. Archaeologist W. Holmqvist thus wrote in 1979 about the Swedish emporium of Birka: »The foremost task of the fleets of armed traders was not to raid and to plunder. It was the very opposite. Their task was to establish and maintain the peaceful exchange of trade. It was the era of the peaceful Viking« (Holmqvist 1979, 70). One reason for this shift in focus was the excavation of markets such as Birka and York which turned up evidence of trade rather than conflict. When I wrote my PhD thesis about the Vikings on the Continent in the 1980s there was an almost complete absence of archaeological evidence to support the contemporary texts which said that the Scandinavians »reduced the land to a desert by their burning and killing« (Annals of St Vaast 887: de Simson 1909, 63; Coupland 1987; cf. Coupland 1995).

Since then excavations have found burned layers at sites said to have been torched by the Vikings in the Netherlands, as well as France, Belgium and Germany (Morden 2007). At Zutphen in Gelderland apparent victims of the Northmen were uncovered lying where they were slain (Groothedde 2004). This material evidence is consistent with the testimony of the many contemporary texts – not only annals and chronicles, but also letters, charters, and even poems and prayers – which bear consistent and credible witness to the Viking attacks on Francia and

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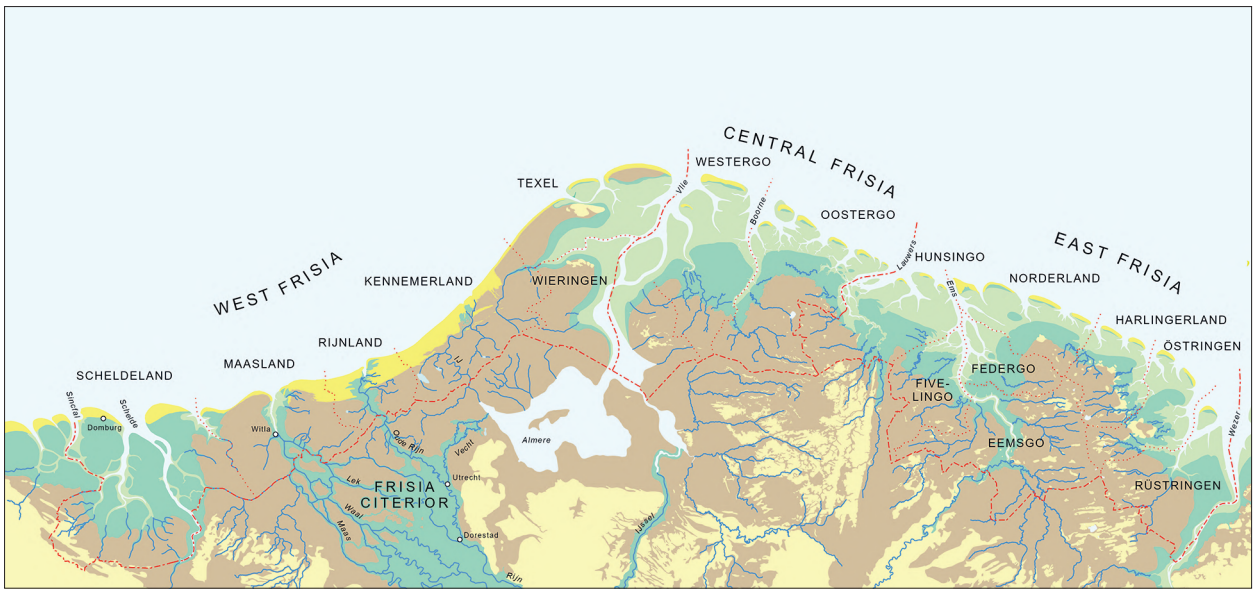

Fig. 1 Map of Frisia in the Carolingian era. – (Map S. de Bruijn / G. J. de Langen / H. Mol, Provinsje Fryslân/Fryske Akademy).

their psychological impact. There is in addition now numismatic evidence which also sheds light on the Scandinavian raids (Coupland et al. 2021; Coupland 2022). Today historians and archaeologists agree that the Vikings were both traders and raiders, so that one warband could switch from peaceful to violent behaviour, and perhaps back again, during a single expedition. It is particularly important to grasp this in the context of Carolingian Frisia, where there is evidence that Scandinavians came at times in peace to buy and sell, and at times with hostile intent to plunder and enslave. There were also individual Scandinavians who made their home in the Netherlands, some in an uneasy relationship with their Frankish lords, others embracing Christianity and even siding with the Franks against Danish raiders (Coupland 1998 and below). It was thus a complicated picture, more so than in other parts of the Carolingian realms, and this chapter will consider the different aspects of this multifaceted relationship.

The Context: Carolingian Frisia and the Vikings

Carolingian Frisia (**fig. 1**) was much larger than present-day Friesland, stretching from the Sincfal, the coastal basin south of Walcheren, in the southwest to the Weser in the northeast, a long coastal territory traditionally divided into West, Central and East Frisia (de Langen/Mol 2021). West Frisia, from the Sincfal to the Vlie, was linked by the Rhine, the Meuse and the Scheldt to a fourth region, »Frisia citerior«, the inland region containing the regions of Veluwe, Betuwe and Teisterbant and including the bishopric of Utrecht and the port of Dorestad. The latter area was the one most closely linked to the Frankish world, even if it became more detached following the division of the Carolingian Empire in 843 (cf. Coupland, this volume p. 205–216). Central Frisia – the counties of Westergo and Oostergo – was the traditional heart of Frisia, where the many inhabited mounds (terps) acted as hubs of agricultural production and, to judge by the many coinage finds, accumulated wealth (Coupland 2024, 84–86). East Frisia, beyond the river Lauwers, was apparently less densely populated and less prosperous (Coupland 2022).

Three factors about Carolingian Frisia are highly significant when it comes to discussing the role of the Vikings in the region in the 9th century. The first is Frisia's liminality, not only geographically but also politically. There was a disconnect between Frisians and Franks, and by reason of longstanding commercial connections, strong ties with Danes and Anglo-Saxons (IJssennagger 2013). Attitudes towards Frankish power were undoubtedly also shaped by the second factor, namely that Carolingian rule was a recent development. Frisia was only subjugated by the Franks in the first half of the 8th century. It is scarcely surprising that when Dorestad was sacked four years in a row in the 830s, Louis the Pious blamed the disobedience of the Frisians and sent »strenuous abbots and counts« to sort things out (Annales Bertiniani 837: Grat et al. 1964, 21–22, trans. Nelson

1991, 37). The third factor is linked to the first two, namely that unlike most Carolingian regions, Frisia contained hardly any monasteries, abbeys or cathedrals, and none with significant wealth (de Langen/Mol 2021). The rich repositories of gold and silver which formed such attractive targets to Vikings in other parts of Christian Europe (Coupland 2014) were consequently absent here.

It is also important to appreciate the diversity among the Scandinavians commonly referred to as »the Vikings«. One significant difference is between the kings who ruled Denmark and the leaders of Scandinavian warbands (some of them members of the Danish royal family) who went out from their homelands to raid, trade and settle. The relevance of this distinction will become clear when the raids on the Netherlands are discussed. More problematic is the way in which some commentators speak of »the Vikings« as if they were a united force following a Scandinavian master-plan. For example, in a documentary on »Viking Art« A. Graham-Dixon stated, »By the end of the 9th century the Vikings were engaged in a full-scale conquest of vast swathes of Europe, expanding eastwards into Russia, establishing colonies as far afield as Iceland and the Faeroes, and conquering large parts of England« (BBC television, March 2014). This is misleading: there was no common or concerted effort to conquer the world from Scandinavia. In the raids on Francia individual fleets pursued their own enrichment and sometimes territory, at times banding together and at others turning against one another, but always willing to change tack and allegiance if it promised greater gain (Cooijmans 2021, 235). This variety of aims and loyalties is very evident in Scandinavian activity in the Netherlands.

Viking Raids on the Netherlands: The First Incursions

The first Scandinavian attack on the Netherlands is often dated to 810 (Henderikx 1995, 81–82; IJssennagger 2013, 69, but see 76). Charlemagne was in Aachen, reportedly planning to invade Denmark, when he was told that 200 Danish ships had landed in Frisia. The fleet ravaged certain islands before landing on the mainland, defeating the Frisians and taking a tribute of 100 pounds of silver (Annales regni Francorum 810: Pertz/Kurze 1895, 131, trans. Scholz/Rogers 1972, 91–92). This was the work of the Danish king Godfrid, already known to the Franks as a powerful and ambitious ruler. Charlemagne commanded his fleet to assemble and led the army towards Denmark, but before he advanced further, news arrived that Godfrid had been murdered by one of his retainers and the Danish fleet had returned home. Soon afterwards Godfrid's successor Hemming made peace with the Emperor (Annales regni Francorum 810: Pertz/Kurze 1895, 133, trans. Scholz/Rogers 1972, 93). This attack was consequently part of a territorial dispute between neighbouring monarchs and so in a different category from the Viking raids which plagued the Continent throughout the 9th century.

In the Netherlands it appears that these attacks had actually begun as early as the late 8th century, because in the year 800 Charlemagne ordered the construction of a fleet and the deployment of guards to defend the North Sea coast against an enemy identified as »Northmen« (Annales regni Francorum revision 800: Pertz/Kurze 1895, 111, omitted from Scholz/Rogers 1972, 78). In 811 Charlemagne inspected newly constructed ships at Ghent, indicating that the Scheldt was one of the rivers where the fleet was based (Annales regni Francorum 811: Pertz/Kurze 1895, 135, trans. Scholz/Rogers 1972, 94). These measures were costly in terms of both effort and expense, implying that Scandinavian raids were already perceived as a serious threat in the north.

There is, however, only one possible report of a specific attack in this region at this early date. The Chronicon Moissiacense described a raid on Frisia in 813 which prompted Louis the Pious to »station garrisons on the coast where it was necessary« (Chronicon Moissiacense 813, 814: Pertz 1826, 311). It is possible but unlikely that this was a misdated reference to the royal attack of 810 (Cooijmans 2021, 103–104). No other coastal raids on Frisia are recorded until 834, when a Danish fleet attacked Utrecht and Dorestad. The latter was sacked and partly burned, some inhabitants killed and others enslaved before the fleet returned to Scandinavia (Annales Bertiniani 834: Grat et al. 1964, 14, trans. Nelson 1991, 30). The following year witnessed a fresh raid on Dorestad, and despite the subsequent reinforcement of Frisian coastal defences, there was yet another attack in 836, this time also targeting Antwerp and Witla, a trading-place on the Meuse whose precise location is uncertain (Annales Bertiniani 835, 836: Grat et al. 1964, 17–19, trans. Nelson 1991, 33. 35; Annales Fuldenses 836: Pertz/Kurze 1891, 27, not in Reuter 1992).

The Danish king, Horik, not only disavowed these attacks but also claimed to have executed some of the raiders (Annales Bertiniani 836: Grat et al. 1964, 19–20, trans. Nelson 1991, 35), underlining

the distinction between these raids and the invasion of 810. Whatever the truth of his assertion, Dorestad was sacked again in 837 and tribute taken from the Frisians. This time the raiders also attacked Walcheren, where they killed Count Eccihard and Hemming, a member of the Danish royal family who was probably holding the area in benefice (see below; Annales Bertiniani 837: Grat et al. 1964, 21–22, trans. Nelson 1991, 37; Thegan, Gesta Hludowici, continuation: Tremp 1995, 256–258).

Louis the Pious was sufficiently alarmed that he cancelled a planned trip to Rome and mustered the army at Nijmegen. Although the Danes withdrew, Louis held an assembly to discover the reasons for the failure to defend Frisia. It was recognised that it was difficult to protect the entire coastline, but the local Frisian leadership was also blamed. As noted above, the Emperor despatched Frankish magnates to sort out the »insubordinate Frisians«, and fresh orders were given to construct a fleet (Annales Bertiniani 837: Grat et al. 1964, 21–22, trans. Nelson 1991, 37). Louis returned to Nijmegen the following year to ensure that guards were in place and the ships ready, but the defences were not tested, since the Viking fleet which put to sea in 838 sank in a storm (Annales Bertiniani 838: Grat et al. 1964, 24, trans. Nelson 1991, 39). The year 839 was also relatively quiet, with a single attack somewhere in Frisia not reported in any detail (Annales Bertiniani 839: Grat et al. 1964, 34, trans. Nelson 1991, 47); in 840 no Viking activity was recorded at all.

The first notable feature of these early raids is that they targeted the south of Frisia, that part most closely linked with Francia, and apart from the attack of 839 were described in some detail in several annals. As we will see, this differs from most accounts of Frisian incursions in subsequent decades. The second is the timing of the attacks on Dorestad, the most prosperous market in northern Europe at this time (cf. Coupland, this volume p. 205–216), beginning in 834 and ceasing in 837 or 838. This is consistent with the contemporary claim that the eldest son of Louis the Pious, Lothar, engineered the Danish attacks in order to harm his father. For Lothar was exiled by Louis in 834 and restored to favour in 839, when Frisia and Dorestad formed part of the territory granted to him (Annales Bertiniani 839: Grat et al. 1964, 32; trans. Nelson 1991, 45). The claim is lent credibility by its appearance in two separate sources: the Annals of St Bertin, which stated that in 841 Lothar gave land to the Viking leader Harald as a reward for attacks on Frisia over several years, and Nithard's history of the Frankish civil war, which claimed that »Lothar had brought in the Northmen to help him, had submitted part of the Christian populace to them, and gave some of them licence to plunder the rest« (Coupland 1998, 90–91, with references). There is therefore every reason to believe that these first attacks were encouraged by Lothar I to undermine his father's rule and represented deliberate and systematic attempts to harm the Carolingian economy by striking at important commercial centres.

Vikings in the Netherlands: Cohabitation

The reference to Lothar's grant of land to Harald highlights a remarkable feature of the relationship between Danes and Franks in Frisia which is without parallel elsewhere until much later, namely the granting of benefices to Scandinavian leaders by successive Frankish rulers. As was noted above, the defenders of Walcheren killed in a Viking raid in 837 were the Frankish Count Eccihard and Hemming the son of Halfdan, »a most Christian leader of the Danish race« (Thegan, Gesta Hludowici, continuation: Tremp 1995, 256; Annales Fuldenses 837: Pertz/Kurze 1891, 28, not in Reuter 1992). Both Hemming and Halfdan were names used by the Danish royal family, and these men evidently represented the earliest known examples of Scandinavian commendation. Halfdan pledged allegiance to Charlemagne in 807 and was granted Walcheren in benefice, with his son Hemming succeeding him in the same location (Coupland 1998, 87–88). The exiled Danish king Harald »Klak« was also granted the East Frisian county of Rüstringen in benefice by Louis the Pious in 826 (Coupland 1998, 87–92, with references). Lothar was thus following the precedent set by his father and grandfather when he granted Walcheren and the surrounding area to another Harald and his brother Rorik in the early 840s (Coupland 1998, 90–91). A comment in a later annal entry reveals that the brothers' benefice was larger than that held by Halfdan and Hemming, in that it now included Dorestad as well (Annales Fuldenses 850: Pertz/Kurze 1891, 39, trans. Reuter 1992, p. 30; Coupland 1998, 91. 95–96).

The unfolding story of these Scandinavian benefices in Frisia has been told elsewhere using detailed analysis of the relevant sources, so will not be repeated at length here (Coupland 1998, 93–103. 108–112). What is clear is that Danish chieftains, almost certainly related to the Danish royal family, held large tracts of West Frisia and Frisia citerior under

Frankish overlords for long periods of the 9th century. Rorik's territory (he was the longest-serving benefice-holder) included not only Walcheren and Dorestad but also Kennemerland in present-day Noord-Holland, and extended as far as Gendt to the east of Nijmegen (Coupland 1998, 97). This was thus a sizeable part of Carolingian Frisia, though there is no evidence that Oostergo or Westergo in Central Frisia ever formed part of a Danish benefice; indeed, the Viking attacks on that region in the 840s (see below) imply that it lay outside Scandinavian-controlled territory (Coupland 2024, 82).

In addition to the written sources, two important silver hoards have been discovered at Westerklief on Wieringen in Noord-Holland which provide further testimony to the Viking presence in the Netherlands. Both are typically Scandinavian, consisting of local coins, Arabic dirhams, and the kind of silver rings and ingots which are commonly found in Denmark and the Danelaw (Besteman 1999; 2006–2007). The first was concealed around the year 850, the second some 30 years later. Further evidence of the close contacts between Scandinavians and Franks at this time include single finds in the northern Netherlands of dirhams imported from the Baltic and imitations of Frankish coins manufactured by Vikings and perhaps Frisians as well (Coupland 2022, 122–123). As is explored elsewhere in this volume, the rise and fall of the Dorestad mint also points to strong trade links between Franks, Frisians and Scandinavians. The latter contributed significantly to the port's growth at the beginning of the 9th century and played a pivotal role in maintaining its prosperity under Lothar I. Its demise was evidently due not to the Viking raids discussed in this chapter but rather to the arrival of a flood of Arabic silver from the east around 850 (Coupland, this volume p. 205–216). There is in addition a growing number of finds of Scandinavian silver objects in the Netherlands which could have been brought to Frisia by Danish settlers or exchanged in trade (IJssennagger 2013; 2017).

Danish control over West Frisia was not uninterrupted (for what follows see Coupland 1998, 93–103). When Harald died in the early 840s, Rorik was accused of treachery and fled to the court of Louis the German. Another, unidentified group of Danes took over Dorestad and Betuwe in 847 (Annales Bertiniani 847: Grat et al. 1964, 55; trans. Nelson 1991, 65), but in 850 Rorik returned, initially with his cousin Godfrid, and seized back his former benefice. He and Godfrid attempted to win the Danish crown in 855 when Lothar I gave Frisia to his son Lothar II, but the Danes returned when their coup failed. Two years later Rorik had another go at winning Danish territory, this time persuading King Horik to recognise his rule over part of southern Denmark, possibly including the port of Hedeby. But other Scandinavians grasped the opportunity offered by Rorik's absence to sack Dorestad and nearby Utrecht, and Rorik was apparently persuaded to return shortly afterwards. For it is important to appreciate that the grant of these benefices was of benefit to Frankish monarchs as well as the Danish recipients. According to the Fulda annalist, Rorik agreed to pay Lothar the usual taxes and to resist Viking incursions (Annales Fuldenses 850: Pertz/Kurze 1891, 39, trans. Reuter 1992, 30), and the few recorded attacks on Dorestad, Utrecht and the valleys of the Rhine and Meuse in the 840s and 850s form a stark contrast to the many raids in the Seine and Loire valleys at this time. The year 863 marks the exception which highlights Rorik's effectiveness. In that year a Viking fleet raided Dorestad before travelling up the Rhine to sack Xanten and an unnamed royal palace. The Bishop of Reims laid some of the blame at Rorik's door, but since it is unlikely that he would have encouraged an attack on his own benefice, presumably this meant that he urged the raiders to leave the emporium in favour of richer pickings upstream. Whatever the truth of the rumour, following an attack by East Frankish forces which killed one of the Viking leaders, the fleet left the river soon after.

In 867 local Frisians named Cokingi forced Rorik out, but there are no details of how much territory he lost or for how long. Certainly it changed little in the long term, since he and his nephew Rodulf held talks with Charles the Bald on the southern border of his benefice in 870 and 872 (twice). Rorik also met with Louis the German in Aachen in 873, a further testimony to his status and his significance in Frankish political circles. It is unclear how long Rorik lived after that, but the benefice was held by another Dane, another Godfrid, between 882 and 885 (Coupland 1998, 108–112). With Godfrid's death the long line of Danish benefice-holders in West Frisia came to an end. The circumstances of that death shed light on the depth of Scandinavian involvement in Frankish court intrigue at the time and the nature of the cohabitation in the Netherlands. Godfrid not only accepted baptism when he commended himself to Charles the Fat in 882, but also married Gisela, the illegitimate daughter of the late king Lothar II. His death was effectively a political assassination, the result of his alliance with his wife's brother Hugh, who had long sought power in the region but was now blinded and banished. Some, particularly clerical writers, viewed these Scandinavian leaders with suspicion and even hostility as outsiders, but as these events show, they were in many respects political insiders, and Rorik's long involvement with a succession of Frankish rulers illustrates the same point.

Viking Raids on the Netherlands: Confrontation

If the Scandinavian incursions in the 830s were limited in scope and duration, after the death of Louis the Pious and the outbreak of hostilities between the emperor's sons and nephew Pippin II, the Viking storm broke over Europe. Rouen and the mouth of the Seine were the victims in 841, Quentovic in 842, and Nantes and the mouth of the Loire in 843 (Coupland 1987, 10–17, with references). There are, however, no reports of attacks on the Dutch rivers, and this may well be due to Lothar's grant of the region to Harald and Rorik in 841. The first raids on Carolingian Frisia are recorded in 845, when Vikings are said to have fought three battles »in Frisia«, losing one but winning two with great slaughter, and it is presumably the first of these which was mentioned in the Annals of Xanten with the unlikely claim that more than 12,000 of the Northmen were killed by the Frisians (Annales Fuldenses 845: Pertz/Kurze 1891, 35; trans. Reuter 1992, 23; Annales Xantenses 845: de Simson 1909, 14). These events may also explain an entry in the Annals of Xanten the following year: »As usual the Northmen ravaged Oostergo and Westergo«, implying that this was just the latest in a string of attacks (Annales Xantenses 846: de Simson 1909, 15). Another source stated that in 846 »Danish pirates« exacted tribute, defeated the Frisians in battle and »took over virtually the whole province« (Annales Bertiniani 846: Grat et al. 1964, 51, translation the author's; trans. Nelson 1991, 62). Was this the work of Rorik in exile? The Annals of Fulda later reported that in the 840s he lived among the Saxons and with his band of Danish warriors »ravaged places in Lothar's kingdom on the North Sea coast« (Annales Fuldenses 850: Pertz/Kurze 1891, 39, translation the author's; trans. Reuter 1992, 30). Clearly Rorik was not the only Viking leader taking loot from Frisia, however, as raids continued after his establishment in Dorestad in 850, targeting »Frisia and Betuwe« in 851, taking tribute from »Frisia« (without any greater precision) the year after, and ravaging East Frisia in 854 (Annales Bertiniani 851, 852, 854: Grat et al. 1964, 63–64. 69, trans. Nelson 1991, 73–74. 79).

The lack of precise place-names in these accounts is very different from the more detailed reports of the attacks of the 830s. The likely reason is that Oostergo and Westergo were geographically and politically a long way from the monasteries where the annalists lived and wrote, and East Frisia even more so. By contrast, the southern region attacked in the 830s, which included the see of Utrecht and the trading centres of Dorestad and Domburg on Walcheren, was not only connected to the Frankish heartlands by the rivers Rhine and Meuse, but also part of the same societal landscape.

There are fewer references to raids in the second half of the 850s and 860s, and it is noteworthy that this matches the pattern of hoard deposition in Frisia (Coupland et al. 2021, 128–129). There was a steep rise in the 840s and a significant reduction in the 850s, with the majority of the hoards from the period turning up in Friesland and Groningen (Coupland 2022, 120–121). This reflects the fact that not only were more hoards buried at times of fear and unrest, but also fewer were recovered when local populations were killed or enslaved. It suggests that the annals provide a fair reflection of the general level of incursions in Frisia, even if they were written far from the events they describe.

Incursions did still take place, such as in 865, when the Xanten annalist noted with frustrating brevity, »the heathens wreaked great devastation throughout the rest of Frisia« and 867, with the equally laconic entry, »once again the heathen brutally devastated Ireland and Frisia« (Annales Xantenses 866, 868 [sic]: de Simson 1909, 23. 26). By contrast, later decades witnessed several Frisian victories over the Northmen: one in 876, when the West Frisians reportedly took great spoils from the invaders, one at Norden in East Frisia in 884, and one engagement in 887 with no further details, in which Sigfrid, who had famously taken a tribute at Paris, was killed (Annales Fuldenses 876, 884: Pertz/Kurze 1891, 86. 101, trans. Reuter 1992, 79. 96; Annales Vedastini 887: de Simson 1909, 63).

It is from this period that the best archaeological evidence of the Scandinavian attacks has survived. There are traces of destruction and slaughter in Deventer and Zutphen (Groothedde 2004; cf. Groothedde, this volume). These can be linked to an attack in 882 by a group from the Great Viking Army which ranged across northwestern Francia at this time, establishing base camps at several places in the southern Netherlands: Ghent, Nijmegen and Asselt (Henderikx 1995, 88–94; Cooijmans 2021, 141–151). Excavations have also uncovered evidence of defensive structures built at Deventer and Zutphen in response to the Viking attacks, and these are reminiscent of the circular fortresses which are found all along the North Sea coast, from Flanders to the North Frisian Islands (van Heeringen et al. 1995; ten Harkel 2013; Tys et al. 2016). These have sometimes been linked to the Viking attacks of the 830s, when Louis the Pious established garrisons (»seditiones«) on this stretch of coast, including the fortification

on Walcheren attacked in 837 (Thegan, Gesta Hludowici, continuation: Tremp 1995, 256). However, excavations at certain ring forts have indicated that most if not all were constructed considerably later than Louis's reign (ten Harkel 2013). They have also at times been identified with the »castella ibi recens facta« mentioned in an account of a Viking raid on Flanders in 891 (Miracula sancti Bertini c. 6: Holder-Egger 1887, 512). These fortifications were, however, in Flanders rather than Frisia, and the text certainly cannot be linked to those located in the north of Frisia. There is therefore currently no scholarly consensus as to who erected the forts, when or why, or even how many of them should be connected to the Viking raids on Frisia. Even so, this debate among archaeologists should not obscure the fact there is reliable contemporary textual evidence that some defensive structures were built on the North Sea coast by Louis the Pious in the 830s and others by the Count of Flanders at the end of the century.

Carolingian Frisia and the Vikings: Confrontation and Cohabitation

One episode from 873 deserves particular mention as it provides a fascinating window into the complex web of relationships described above, and contains elements of both confrontation and cohabitation between Frisians and Scandinavians.

As was noted earlier, Rodulf was Rorik's nephew, and the fact that the two men twice met with Charles the Bald on the northern borders of the West Frankish kingdom in 872 suggests that Rodulf either held a benefice of his own or shared his uncle's tenure with him (for what follows see Coupland 1998, 101–103). He first appears in contemporary records in 864, when he was given silver, flour, wine, beer and cattle by Lothar II, who raised the monetary element by taxing every household four denarii. The payment was described not as a tributum, like most other references to money demanded by Vikings in Frisia, but as a locarium, which normally means a payment for military service. Rodulf was therefore presumably seeking financial recompense for defending Frisia from Viking attack (so also Henderikx 1995, 86). On that occasion Lothar II appears to have had no qualms about acceding to Rodulf's request, but the response was very different in June 873, when Rodulf demanded a tribute from Oostergo, now in Louis the German's kingdom (Annales Fuldenses 873: Pertz/Kurze 1891, 80–81, trans. Reuter 1992, 72–73; Annales Xantenses 873: de Simson 1909, 32–33). As has already been mentioned, there is no indication that Central Frisia ever formed part of a Scandinavian benefice, so the inhabitants refused and vigorously defended their territory. In the ensuing battle Rodulf and several hundred of his men were killed, and the Vikings reportedly gave the locals a very large sum (»pecuniam multam valde«) before making for Denmark with the promise never to return. What is noteworthy in the present context is that the man who led the Frisians in battle was a Northman who had become a Christian and lived in that region for a long time. This highlights the fact that there were Scandinavians who cohabited freely and peacefully with the Frisians, just as there were others who saw the region as a place where they could enrich themselves. As an intermediate region between Francia and Scandinavia, Frisia was influenced by, but also distinct from, both (IJssennagger 2013). This is reflected in Frisian silver hoards and single finds, which are more Scandinavian than Frankish, but also more Frankish in character than those from Denmark (Coupland 2006; 2022).

In sum, any account of Carolingian Frisia and the Vikings will present a complex and nuanced picture. There was confrontation from the end of the 8th century which continued throughout the 9th, reaching its peak in the 840s and early 850s. Attacks did continue to be reported in the 10th century, though much less frequently and in less reliable sources (van der Tuuk 2015, 223–234). In the west, a series of members of the Danish royal family were granted Frisian benefices to defend against their compatriots, sometimes seizing these lands but evidently always maintaining a relationship with their Frankish masters. This practice, which began under Charlemagne and continued until the death of Godfrid in 885, embedded Danes at the heart of Frankish politics in a way that would not be matched elsewhere until the ceding of Normandy to Rollo in 911. At the same time, ordinary Danes made their home in Frisia and deposited their silver in Frisian soil but rarely left a record of their presence in Frankish annals. Cohabitation and confrontation went side by side in this frontier region, a province which was neither wholly Frankish nor yet Scandinavian, but a mixture of both, and thus above all distinctively Frisian.

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