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The Frankfurt Girl's Grave

A Search for Traces of the Contacts with the North

ABSTRACT

Based on the famous grave of a young Frankish girl, which was found almost half a century ago under the Frankfurt collegiate church of St Bartholomew and was associated with a cremation burial, the work examines the cultural relationships to the North of the Rhine-Main region between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (5th to 9th century AD). The Frankfurt archaeologist E. Wamers has made a great contribution with his in-depth analysis of the finds and features and their classification in a European cultural context. The great prominence of this »Frankfurt girl« is due to him, his publications and exhibitions. This study follows two paths of knowledge. On the one hand, the archaeological evaluations are presented and assessed, which continue to the present day, and on the other, the written sources are examined regarding their statements on the historical context. In a concluding chapter, the two sets of results are brought together, and an overall assessment is made.

KEYWORDS

Frankfurt am Main / Early Middle Ages / history / archaeology / methodology

A Discovery and its Controversial Debate

In Frankfurt am Main, the search for contact zones with the north usually begins with the grave of a girl, which was uncovered some time ago during excavations under the present-day collegiate church of St Bartholomew (Cathedral) and has since become famous; it has been described as a »bi-ritual burial« of two infants (Wamers 2015g). This find is undoubtedly an extraordinary and spectacular discovery, the findings of which touch on many aspects of intercultural relations in the 1st millennium AD. The symbiosis of pagan and Christian customs, especially since the religious transformation of areas in the declining Roman Empire, which began in late antiquity, can be traced primarily on the basis of archaeological sources. In this respect, the interpretation of these unwritten remains from the »dark centuries« is of particular importance. The grave of the Frankfurt girl has been dated either to the late Merovingian period, to the years 700 to 730 (Wamers 2015f, 173–175 esp. 175), or to the period 750 to 794/795, with the most likely date in the third quarter of the 8th century (Stauch 2004, 85–98 esp. 89. 97). The date of the burial is therefore controversial in archaeological research and is thus the subject of expert discussion (Saal 2014, 208 with notes 240–242).

On the other hand, we only reach the written sources – tradition in methodological contrast to the physical remains – about contacts with the north back in the 9th century with the reports about the stay of the Danish king, Harald Klak, at the court of Louis the Pious in Ingelheim am Rhein and Mainz (see also Gierszewska-Noszczyńska/Kaiser, this vol-

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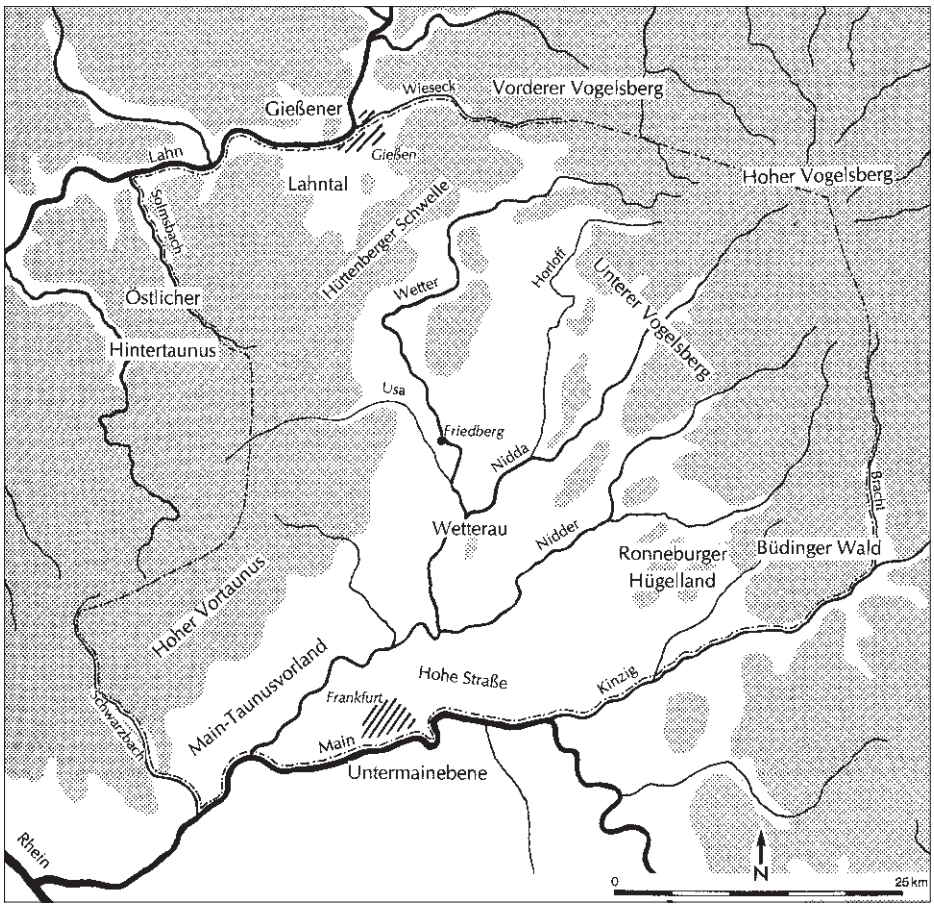

Fig. 1 The geography of the Wetterau as a historical landscape. – (After Steidl 2000, fig. 1).

ume). Harald was baptised here, bringing Denmark closer to Christianity earlier than other Scandinavian countries. Although this is well known, the following will attempt to find out what other – and older – remnants and traditions of contacts with the north can still be found for the historical landscape of the Rhine-Main region.

The Wetterau: Natural and Cultural Conditions

The Rhine-Main region has been a cultural area since prehistoric and early historical times, as evidenced by the numerous finds from prehistoric, Celtic and Roman times that keep coming to light. The special geological composition of fertile soils, natural salt deposits and a favourable morphology that promoted the expansion of the land were the reason that the Romans created a large arc in the Limes here, and ultimately also for the Alamanni and Franks to move into the area abandoned by the Romans. This »Landnahme« took place in accordance with the natural and infrastructural conditions (Meier 2019, in particular 309–397. 895–923) (**fig. 1**).

Another characteristic of the Rhine-Main region that can still be recognised today is its extremely favourable location between the rivers; above all, the river Main served as an east-west connection, and the river Rhine as the long-distance trade routes to the north and south, which had been used since early history, but also through the river valleys and natural depressions on the way through the low mountain ranges to Thuringia and the area of the East Saxons (understood in the old sense) and via northern Hesse ultimately to the coasts and Scandinavia (**fig. 2**).

We are primarily informed about these phases of the settlement of the Wetterau and the entire Rhine-Main region by archaeological finds and features; there are only a few written sources. The rich finds reflect continuities and breaks, intercultural exchange (both peaceful and violent) and above all provide evidence of the early onset of dense settlement, for example in the regions around Frankfurt am Main and into the Wetterau. The large terraced cemeteries provide information about cultural change, population growth or the abandonment of settlement areas or new settlements (cf. Biegert 2001; Böhme 2018; Greule et al. 2006; Grönke 2010; Hardt 2018; Lindenthal 2007; Rupp 2000; Saile 2004; Schmidt 2017; Thiedmann 2001; 2008; Thiedmann/Wigg-Wolf 2004/2005).

Ultimately, the Frankfurt girl and the child cremation directly associated with her belong in this context.

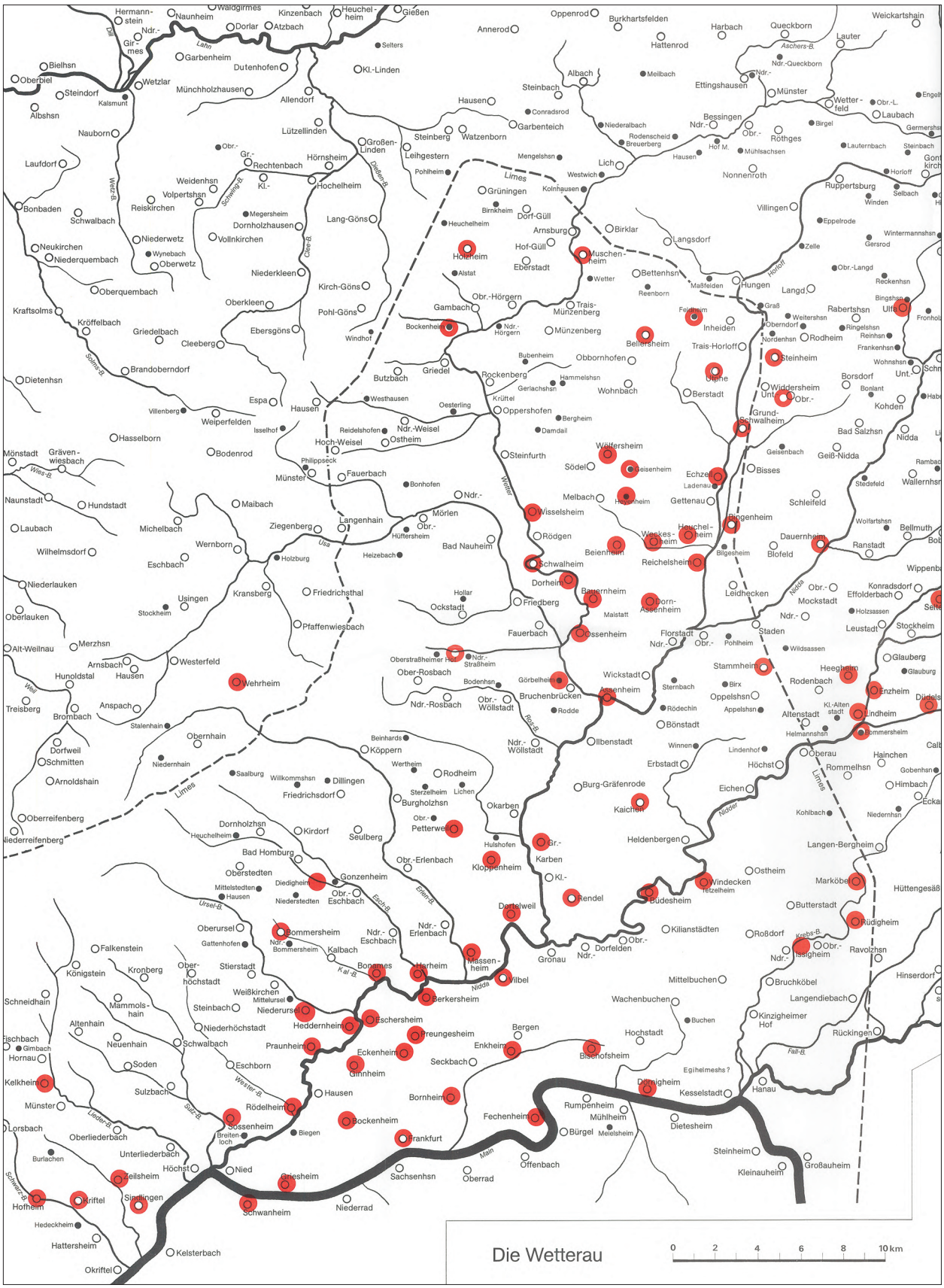

Fig. 2 The early medieval period of land occupation in the Wetterau: ● Probable sites. – ○ Dubious sites. – (After Steen 1979, map 6, »Landnahme«, western section).

Structure of the Study

The following article is divided into two main parts. The first is devoted to the archaeological finds and their evaluation over the past 30 years, particularly with regard to possible indications of a connection between the two burials and the north. The second, on the other hand, takes a historical approach. It discusses the theories derived from the findings on the political and social situation in Frankfurt and the Rhine-Main region from the end of the Merovingian period to the decades of Carolingian rule in the first third of the 9th century. Both parts are summarised in a concluding chapter.

In the concluding third part, the questions that arise are briefly summarised and avenues for further research are outlined.

The Frankfurt Double Burial

During excavations by A. Hampel between 1991 and 1993 under the collegiate church of St Bartholomew on Frankfurt Cathedral Hill (for the archaeological chronology see, among others, Wamers 2001), the grave of a noble Frankish girl of no more than five years of age was found, which may have been associated with the cremation remains of an equally young child buried at the same time (Hampel 1994a; 1994b).

Since its discovery, this grave has been the subject of discussion in archaeological-historical research, which cannot be discussed in detail here. In 2007, M. Wintergerst (2007) presented a new interpretation of Hampel's excavation findings, which also concerned the girl's grave. The author of this essay commented on this in his review: »The reconstruction of the Merovingian conditions depends heavily on the interpretation of the girl's grave found under the Cathedral, to which a second volume will be dedicated, the publication of which is awaited. In any case, the assignment of the deceased to historically verifiable families in the area seems questionable to the reviewer without any further evidence« (Ehlers 2008, 331).

It is to E. Wamers' undeniable credit that he has repeatedly looked at this burial in a new light and enriched the debate in many ways. In particular, the use of modern dating methods, ^{14}C and aDNA, brought new insights in connection with archaeological and historical analysis, though these were not sufficient to resolve the discussion.

In addition to these questions, and in line with the overarching theme of this anthology, the following section will also discuss implicit evidence from the grave goods of both infants for a connection to northern Europe. What reliable evidence do the Frankfurt girl and the cremation burial provide for early medieval relations between the Rhine-Main region and northern Europe, considering other findings?

The Place of Burial

The contemporary site of the double burial could be identified as a rectangular building, which has probably been located on the western site of the present Cathedral since late antiquity. Contrary to A. Hampel's initial assumption, the building was identified by M. Wintergerst as a »residential building« and not an early church. In any case, the furnishings of this tomb shed light on the Europe-wide cultural networks of the Merovingian period, including in the Rhine-Main region (Wamers 2015b, 210–211). Above all, the fact that this ensemble of buildings is located under today's »Cathedral«, the site of the collegiate church of the Palatinate district since the Carolingian period, links it to the beginnings of Frankfurt am Main as an early medieval central location (Hampel 2017a; for older findings, see Orth 1983, 144–150; Hampel 1993; 2009; 2012; 2015; 2017b; Timpe 2015; Denkmalamt Frankfurt 2016) (**fig. 3**).

The condition of this pre-existing »residential building« when the children were buried is disputed. The fact that the grave was dug into its northwestern corner, which in any case was not built for a burial, may indicate that it had not been used »for many decades« (Wamers 2013, 164). M. Wintergerst (2007, 28–30) assumes that the building had already fallen into ruin because the collapse of the adjacent wall of the building can be observed archaeologically, as can the fact that »an entire compact clod of earth must have slipped away. The same sequence of layers can be found in the slipped part as in the upper part of the grave shaft that remained in place« (Wintergerst 2007, 30). This, E. Wamers (2015b, 16–17. 25–26) rejects without investigating the findings from the slipped clod of earth, but he offers far-reaching considerations about the function of this building, perhaps even as a »residence for a bishop«.

Other graves from the 7th to 9th centuries are scattered around the »cleric's dwelling« (Possnert 2015),

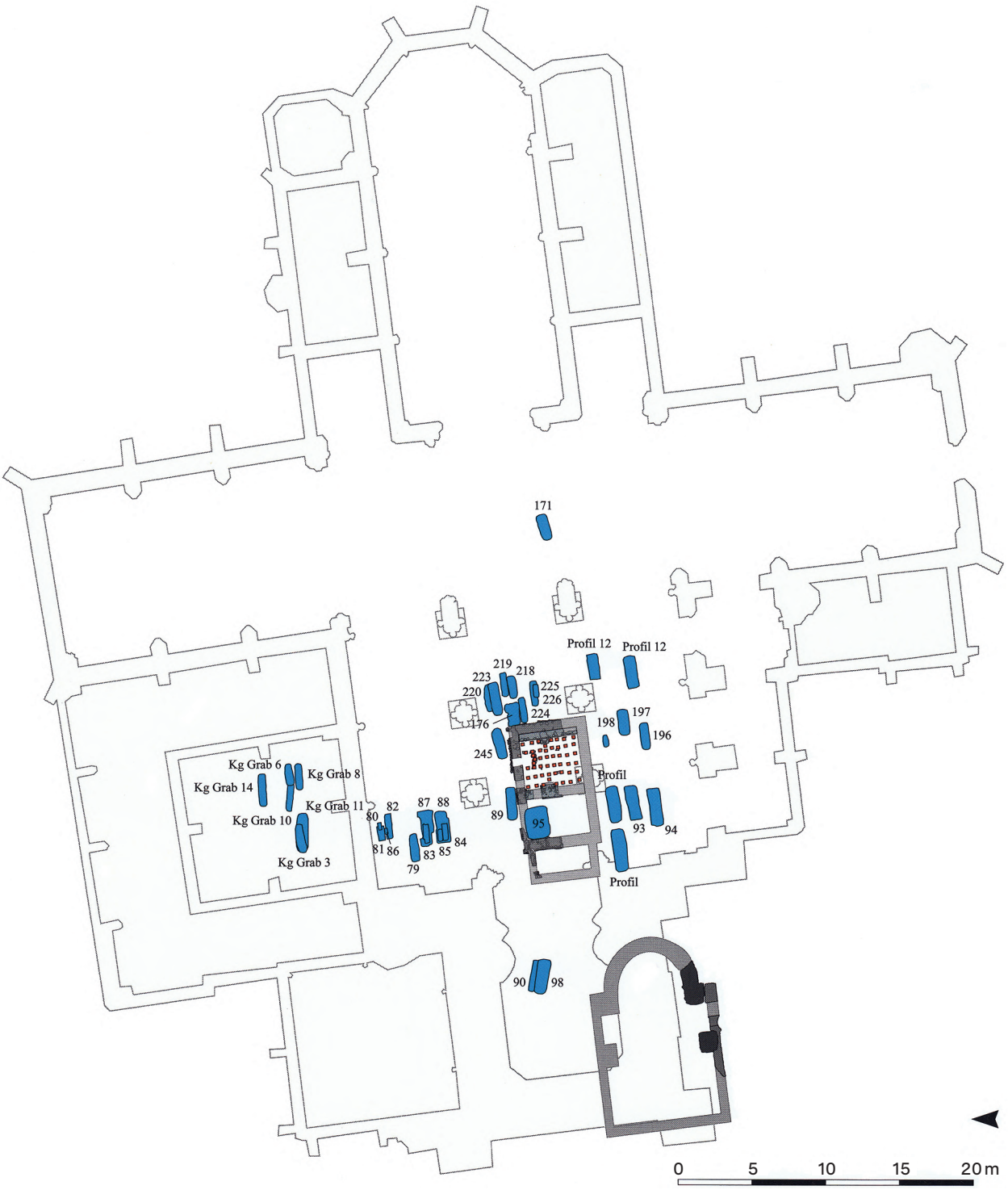

Fig. 3 The building features around the girl's grave, so-called Phase I according to Wintergerst (2007, plan 5).

one of which is even directly adjacent to its western side (Wintergerst 2007, plan 1). In this respect, it is not possible to speak of a singular burial on the Cathedral hill in Frankfurt am Main, and it can therefore be assumed that the building in question had served an unspecified sacral function since the construction of the girl's grave. In terms of building terminology – but not building function – it is therefore the earliest sacred building under the later Salvatorkirche, today's Frankfurt Cathedral (Wintergerst 2007, plan 5: »Building I« and Tomb 95, around 700). The few clearly datable archaeological finds point to a Merovingian-period development which, in addition to the later Palatinate Church, was also the orientation of the 9th century Carolingian-period *aula regia* (Hampel 2017a, 103. 108. 110), but the

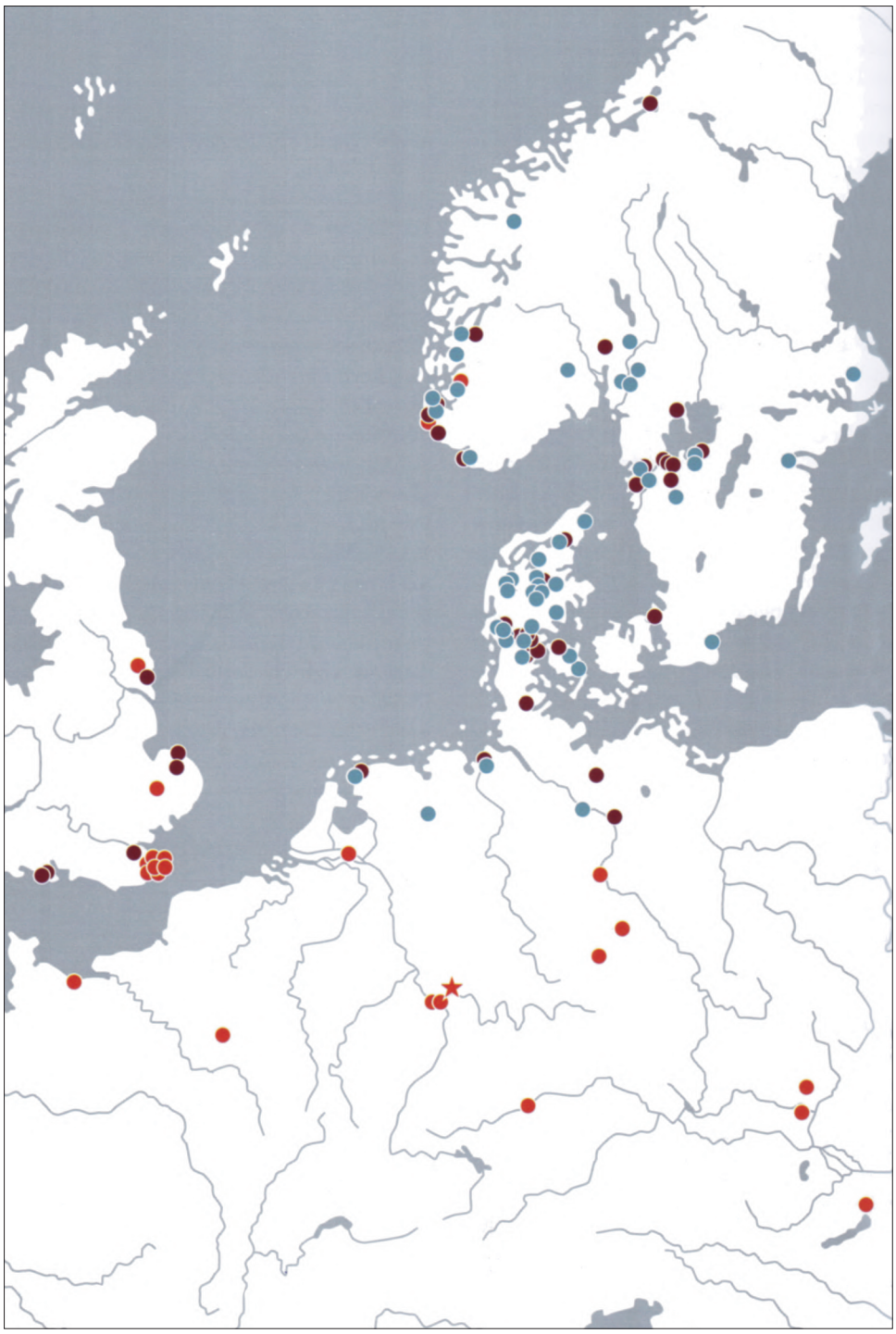

Fig. 4 Distribution map of type D bracteates according to A. Pesch: ✱ Frankfurt am Main. – ● Grave find. – ● Hoard find. – ● Other find. – (After Pesch 2015, fig. 43; design A. Pesch; graphics E. Quednau).

lack of written evidence prevents proof of such a sub-center of Merovingian kingship (a *Franchonfurt fiscus* is first attested in 817 [Schalles-Fischer 1964, 266], then again in 823).

E. Wamers assumes that »from the special veneration of both children associated with the extraordinary grave«, conclusions could be drawn about the »fact of the central placement of the new Frankfurt Palatinate Basilica by Louis the German some 120–150 years later« (Wamers 2015i, 217). This continuous veneration of the burial site has been postulated time and again, usually with reference to the geographical orientation of the Carolingian buildings and the special location under the collegiate church of St Bartholomew. E. Wamers' own dictum of the »secret«, which was »forgotten after 150 years« (Wamers 2015i, 218), as well as the undiscussed topography of the Frankfurt »Cathedral hill«, which could not have permitted a significantly different layout of the Carolingian-era new buildings, speaks against this, especially as Louis the Pious' complex from around 822 must have provided

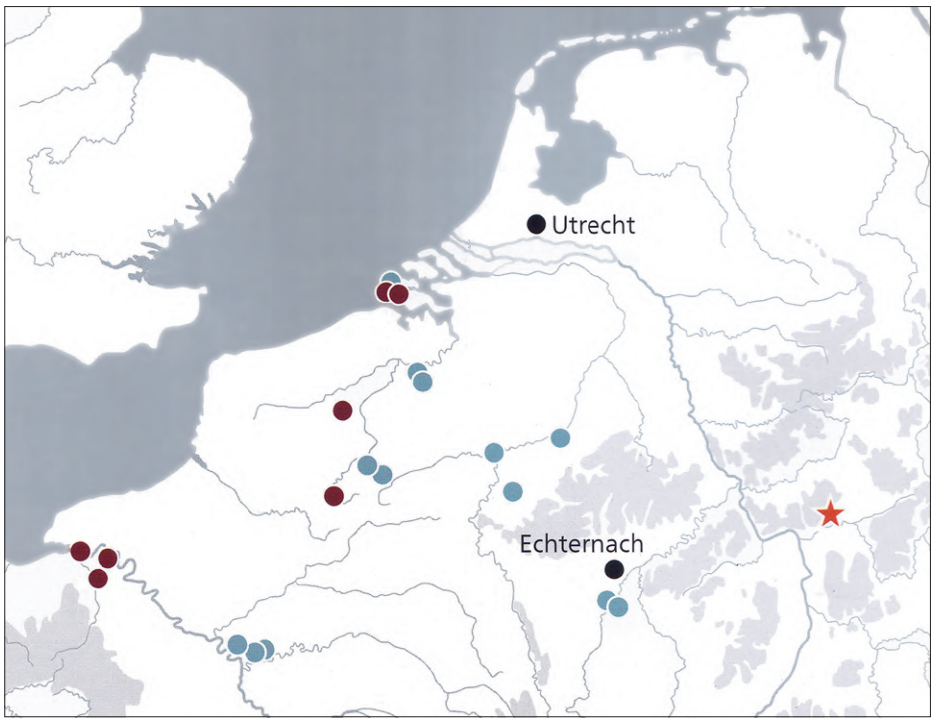

Fig. 5 Distribution map of equal-armed fibulae according to S. Thörle: ✱ Frankfurt am Main. – ● Hoard find. – ● Other find. – (After Thörle 2001, reprinted in Wamers 2015a, 109 fig. 51).

the framework for Louis the German's extensions around 855, meaning that he could only »indirectly« refer to Roman or late antique Merovingian predecessors.

The Grave of the Frankfurt Girl

The grave of the unknown young girl in Franconian costume was richly endowed. This will be discussed in further below. In the following, those items from her grave goods that could indicate a connection to the north are presented. This question will be revisited below using the example of the cremation burial, as the rite as such already provides a reliable indication.

Indications of Connections to the North: Type D Bracteates

The type D bracteate, which was given to the girl as an amulet on her necklace, could be seen as an indication of a northern European cultural influence. A. Pesch (2015, 92. 95) uses the »gold bracteates from the Migration Period« as a »reference group for understanding the Frankfurt pendant«. This would therefore provide a link to the north, but whether it was just a fashion accessory of the time or actually an indigenous symbol remains to be seen. Nevertheless, the Rhine-Main region is notable for such finds, as A. Pesch's map shows (**fig. 4**).

This bracteate from the Frankfurt girl's grave can be placed in the context of the cultural contact zone »from the Rhine-Main area via the Saale-Elbe region to Scandinavia«, which can also be reconstructed on the basis of other finds of »objects of Scandinavian coinage« and fits spatially with the »Rhineland-Palatinate bracteate region« (Pesch 2015, 95–96).

Indications of Connections to the North: The Equal-Armed Bow Brooch

At the time of her burial, the Frankfurt girl was also given a small silver-hilted Domburg-type brooch (»Gleicharmige Fibel«) from the »first half of the 8th century« (Wamers 2015d, 109), which has a »completely similar pin holder to the secondary round disc brooch«[1]. This disk brooch is also part of the Frankfurt girl's equipment. In any case, both mounts were attached to the objects secondarily. However, due to the different state of preservation and the gilding of the pin on the disk brooch, it was not possible to clarify whether both mounts could have been made later by the same workshop (cf. Ströbele 2015, 67. 69) (**fig. 5**).

1 Wamers 2015d, 106–109 with a distribution map (fig. 51), the Frankfurt brooch (fig. 48) and an example from Domburg (fig. 49) is based on the categories of S. Thörle (2001) and refers to the specimen »Domburg 33«.

The brooch with the same arm shows strong signs of wear, so it cannot have been worn only by the little girl, while the stylistic classification of the decoration of the piece by E. Wamers as the »Tassilo chalice style« indicates an origin in the second half of the 8th century, if not later (Wamers 2015d, 108–109). This Domburg-type Frankfurt brooch points to an origin in Friesland, which could represent a further cultural connection to the north, as does another piece recently found in the immediate vicinity.

In the Frankfurt district of Berkersheim, a Merovingian cemetery with graves of women, men and children was recently (again) archaeologically investigated which – like other cemeteries in the Frankfurt area, but also in the Wetterau – dates to the »middle third of the 6th century« (Hampel/von Freeden 2021, 201)[2]. The grave of a girl (St. 3) in particular aroused interest, as this child had also been provided with rich garments (Hampel/von Freeden 2021, 201–202). These all show strong traces of use, which suggests that they were »heirlooms« of a »wealthy family« (Hampel/von Freeden 2021, 202). Based on the grave goods, the archaeologists concluded that the »founders of Berkersheim« had connections »to northern Germany and the Franconian west and beyond to England« (Hampel/von Freeden 2021, 203). In particular, a pair of bow brooches from the Berkersheim girl's grave (Hampel/von Freeden 2021, 200 fig. 2C–D), which S. Thörle described as belonging to the »Lincoln type«[3], points north to the Frisian region around Walcheren. They therefore originate from a region of the so-called Scheldt Vikings (Roxburgh 2020, 13–14), the Hemmingen or Halfdans (lat. *scaldingi*)[4], to which the in this respect comparable, but much younger, example of the Frankfurt girl also seems to point, although her brooch is said to have been repaired again in the 9th century[5].

The Cremation of Another Child

»Immediately to the right of the girl, on her right hand and probably inside the coffin, the excavators uncovered a roundish accumulation of bone char, which had probably been in an organic container such as a cloth or leather bag« (Wamers 2015b, 37)[6] (**fig. 6**).

E. Wamers made the following assessment of the striking finding in 2001 (2001, 84 n. 71 with references): »In the area of the inner burial chamber, a ›nest‹ with burnt bones was uncovered approximately to the right of the center of the girl's body[7]. According to the excavation photo, it lay on the floor of the burial, presumably still somewhat sunken. […] The osteologist who carried out the investigations kindly expressed to the author the cautious suspicion that this could possibly be the remains of an older cremation burial. This suspicion is supported not only by the nest-like accumulation of burnt bones, which is reminiscent of organic cremation nests, and by the slightly sunken position in the floor of the grave, but above all by the fact that this site has been known as a burial place for Germanic tribes since late antiquity and that there is increasing evidence of cremation burials from the 3rd–5th centuries in the Lower Main region (including in the city of Frankfurt am Main)[8]. […] This raises the serious question of whether this bone cremation ›burial‹ is not an old cremation grave that was cut into when the grave pit for the girl's grave was excavated at the end of the 7th century«.

The latter suggestion was taken up by F. Siegmund in 2021, who pointed out that the »possibility of the later burial of already older cremated remains and its accompanying vessel is not discussed by Wamers« (Siegmund 2017, 398), because in 2015 everything was seen quite differently when E. Wamers emphasised that the cremated remains could not have been in this place either later or earlier than the time of the girl's burial (Wamers 2015c, 42–43).

E. Wamers (2013) had already revised his opinion earlier and it did not initially appear to be supported by the renewed investigation of the bones from both burials, which refrained from dating the death of both children[9]. However, E. Wamers concluded that the »cremated remains and vessel form a cremation«, »which had been placed directly next to the right hand of the girl of the same age, inside

2 Cf. on a possible epidemic in the 6th century, not only in the Rhine-Main region but throughout central and southern Europe with convincing arguments Hampel/von Freeden 2021, 202-203. - Cf. Krause 2019, 187-190; 2022, 274-279.

3 I would like to thank W. Giertz (Aachen) for this information.

4 See also Coupland 1998 on the contacts between Friesland and Jutland and the Carolingians in the 9th century, which of course included the baptism of Harald Klak in Mainz in June/July 826, see Coupland and Gierszewska-Noszczyńska/Kaiser, this volume.

5 Written communication from W. Giertz dated November 6, 2022 »To make matters worse, the fibula shows a makeshift repair of the needle apparatus, which can only be archaeologically proven for the 9th century.« I would like to thank W. Giertz for many further references on this topic.

6 See the documentation of the excavation of the tomb in Hampel 1994b, 112-171. On the cremation, see page 125 with fig. 75.

7 The text provides a reference to »Hampel 1994, 170 fig. 71. 75«.

8 Reference to »Steidl 2000, 15«.

9 Rehbach 2015, 39-40 on the Frankfurt girl aged five years at most, 40-41 on the cremated child, whose sex cannot be determined but whose age can be stated to be around four years.

Fig. 6 The contents of the cremation grave according to E. Wamers. – (After Wamers 2013, fig. 129).

the coffin«[10]. He therefore distanced himself from his 2001 assessment quoted above (Wamers 2015c, 42–43) and introduced more recent ^{14}C analyses into the debate[11], which – as will be discussed – appear to lack any clear significance, something that even a more recent aDNA analysis was unable to change (Cemper-Kiesslich et al. 2021).

As early as 2015, nothing could be discovered about the regional origin of the two infants, except that »none of the values determined here [...] indicate that the individuals moved here« (Schweissing 2015, 49), which would have been of particular significance for the question of the cultural contact of the Franconian girl and her immediate (family) environment with northern Europe that was postulated due to the cremation.

Indications of Connections to the North: Burials with Remains of Bears and the Bi-Ritual Burial

In 2009, E. Wamers compiled and examined the written sources and artifacts relating to bear cults in the Early Middle Ages in a comprehensive and comparative article[12]. The context of the Frankfurt cremation burial only plays a marginal role, although bear claws, but not bear skulls, for example, were found here – as is common in Germanic burials (Wamers 2009, 8–13)[13] (**fig. 7**).

Wamers notes that, after a significant decline, the custom of such burials reappeared in the 6th century and then only in cremations in the »Anglo-Saxon and continental Saxon area and occasionally further south« (cf. **fig. 7**)[14]. Research assumes that this burial

10 Statement by E. Wamers on Rehbach 2015 in Wamers 2015a, 42. This view is also adopted by Päffgen 2021, 204.

11 Hüls 2015; cf. the critical statement by Päffgen 2021, 206, who sees the results as confirmation of his dating approach to »ca. 680«, cf. in the following.

12 Wamers 2009, this includes a »Draft of a distribution map of graves with bearskin additions« from the 1st century BC to the end of the 1st millennium (fig. 5 on 9). See also the extended explanations on this topic in Wamers 2015g, 180-193.

13 On burials with bear claws, see Ljungkvist/Lindholm 2023 for Sweden and Mansrud 2023 for Norway. Cf. also recently Grimm 2023; Grimm et al. 2023 on around a dozen, mostly Migration period, graves with actual bearskin remains in Norway and Sweden, the only such finds for northern Europe. There are no comparable finds for central Europe.

14 Wamers 2009, 10-11 with reference in n. 46 to the Frankfurt burial, which »however was not recognized as a cremation burial« (with reference to Eichinger/Losert 2003), but this does not apply to the evaluation of the excavation by A. Hampel (1994b, 125).

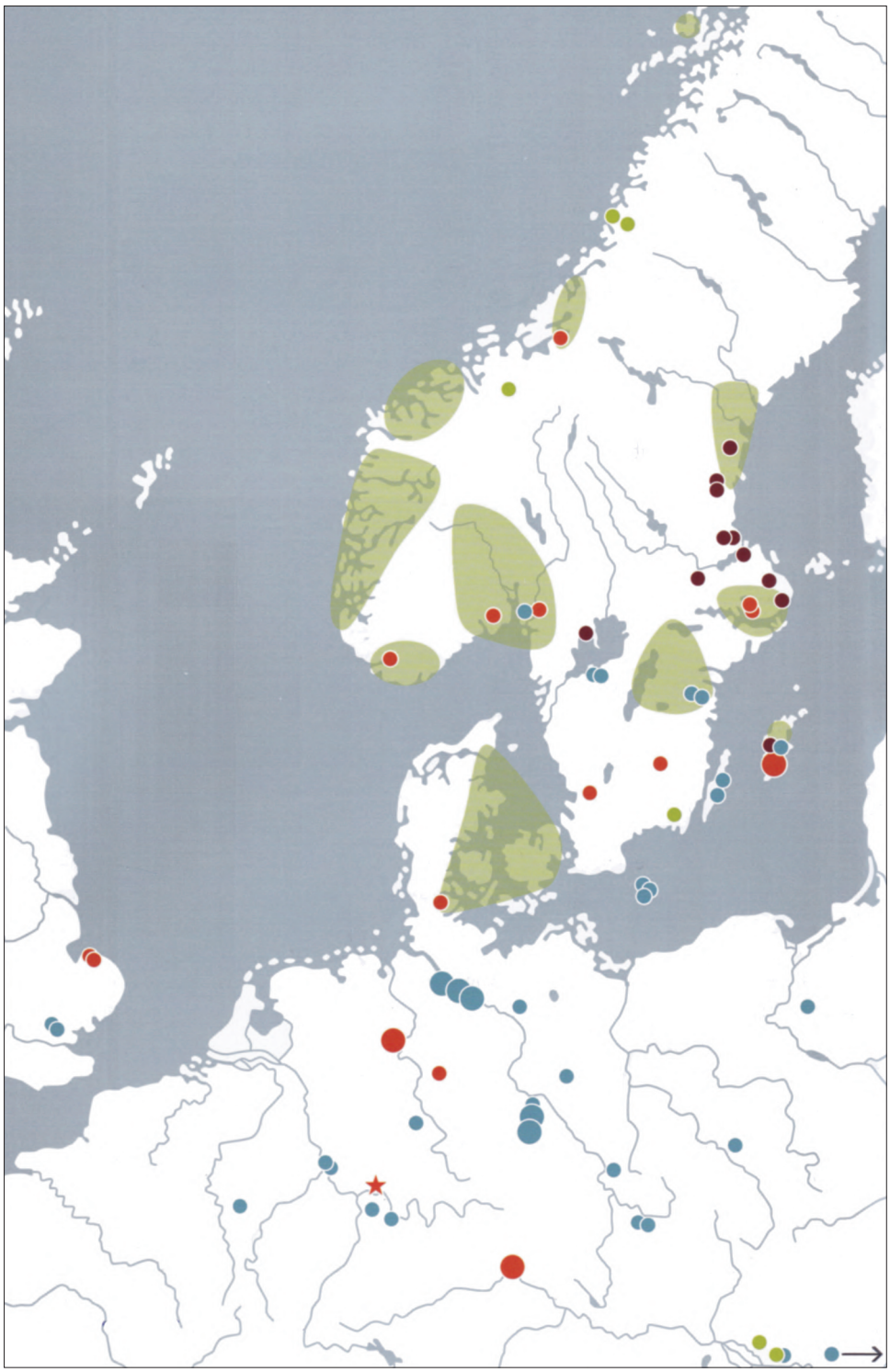

Fig. 7 Distribution map of graves with bearskin additions according to E. Wamers: ✱ Frankfurt am Main. – ● 1st century BC – 1st century AD. – ● ca. 2nd–5th century AD. – ● ca. 6th–8th century AD. – ● ca. 9th–10th century AD. – (After Wamers 2015a, fig. 98).

rite in the southern regions, such as the Rhine-Main area, can be explained by immigrant populations or their cultural influence »from the Saxon-Elbe-Germanic and Thuringian areas« (Slavic influences may also have played a role)[15], but rules out the possibility that such a rite could have existed in Frankfurt am Main around 700/730, so the »cremated child [...] must have had a different cultural and ethnic background, especially if the burial on a bearskin is also taken into account« (Wamers 2015g, 179).

As mentioned, E. Wamers has mapped the distribution of burials with bearskin grave goods twice. In

15 Wamers 2015g, 177-179. The cemetery near Regensburg-Großprüfening from the second half of the 6th century, on the other hand, seems to point to Slavic influences, cf. Eichinger/Losert 2003, but this does not yet seem to have been conclusively clarified, see Wamers 2015g, 189-190. On Slavic settlements and archaeological finds in Upper Franconia and the Nordgau, see Haberstroh 2004, 15-17, and Schuh 2004, 37-39 on the Slavic place names in Franconia, which show a concentration on the Upper Main.

both maps, the continental finds date mainly to the first pre-Christian and first post-Christian centuries; in addition to the Frankfurt find, two finds from the Danube Bend in Slovakia from the Marcomannic period date from the 2nd to 5th centuries, and four more from the 6th to 8th centuries. Based on this spatial and chronological distribution, to conclude that there was »a continuous tradition up to the Merovingian period« of the »Germanic ›bearskin burial custom‹« (Wamers 2015g, 181) seems somewhat daring to me.

There is no evidence of more recent burials of this type on the continent, but there are isolated finds in northern Europe (Wamers 2015a, fig. 98). Four finds from the oldest phase have been recorded along the Main and at the mouth of the Nahe.

After another overview of this special rite, which he sees as a sign of high social status, E. Wamers concludes for the Frankfurt example that the cremated child »buried directly next to the expensively dressed girl in the same coffin« was »quite equal to the uncremated girl« (Wamers 2015g, 193). The aspect of a »bi-ritual double burial« that he derives from this is even rarer archaeologically; E. Wamers lists 16 examples from the Thuringian-Hessian and Bavarian-Swabian regions, three of which are »not completely certain« (Wamers 2015g, 193–198), with the cemetery at Schretzheim in the Ostalbkreis district playing a special role (Wamers 2015g, 196), and he attributes »a common cultural-historical background« to the burials by the Werra and Lower Main rivers (Wamers 2015g, 198).

The Scientific Evaluations: ^{14}C and aDNA

In recent decades, scientific progress has also introduced new methods for the analysis of archaeological finds: archaeogenetics in particular has attracted public attention. It was therefore an obvious step to re-examine the anthropological remains from the Frankfurt burial site.

The interpretation of the ^{14}C analyses is an essential argument for supporting the previous theses on the Frankfurt girl's grave[16]. Only by consulting them should it be possible to fit the findings at the archaeological site into the assumed time frame.

In 2015, the results of various ^{14}C analyses carried out in Kiel and Mannheim in 2007 and 2014 were published. In the case of the cremated child, they point to the second half of the 7th century, with the skull sample from the Frankfurt girl (Kromer 2015) and some bone samples from both corpses (Hüls 2015) suggesting the early or middle 8th century (Wamers 2015f, 173 with reference to Hüls 2015 and Kromer 2015). In this context, it is worth noting M. Hüls' reference to a possibly different date – or the use of differently aged wood for the cremation – as the reason for the differing results of the ^{14}C analyses of the four samples, which he attempts to explain as resulting from the use of fresh and old combustion materials (waste wood) (Hüls 2015, 47). In his commentary on Hüls 2015 and Kromer 2015 (Wamers 2015a, 47–49), E. Wamers does not find an explanation for this that is satisfactory from his point of view, but in view of the rather »soft« ^{14}C analysis results, he opts for the »archaeological dating« to the early 8th century, which seems convincing to him. His »summarizing« argument of 2015 therefore reads as follows: »Even if the ^{14}C analyses prefer a dating of the tomb to the second half of the 7th century, a large number of objects from the double tomb point to the early 8th century or its first half. As this period can also by no means be ruled out for the central ^{14}C dates of the skulls of the unburnt and burnt child, the burial of the two children is most likely to have taken place between 700 and 730« (Wamers 2015f, 175).

Ultimately, therefore, the interpretation of the finds takes precedence, the divergent scientific dating possibilities take a back seat, and the postulate of the simultaneous burial of the girl and the cremated child takes precedence over the indications suggested by radiocarbon analysis of the possibility of historically separate events.

A comparable methodological approach can also be observed in the evaluation of the rather sparse results of the investigation of the aDNA from the Frankfurt grave. The previously cited cautious evaluation in 2015 merely revealed that there were no indications »that the individuals had moved in« (Schweissing 2015, 49). B. Päffgen pointed out that, based on the isotope values determined, an »area between the Danube and the Alps as well as the North German Plain« is a possibility (Päffgen 2021, 207), which E. Wamers (2015i, 212) also concedes.

The report published in 2021 on the »aDNA analyses of the late Merovingian child's double grave under Frankfurt Cathedral« (Cemper-Kiesslich et al. 2021) begins with a summary of the interpretation of the findings by E. Wamers, who presents his assumptions from 2015 as a given (Cemper-Kiesslich et al. 2021, 283–288). However, only the girl's skull fragment could be sampled, as it was not possible to take »a promising sample« from the cremated child (Cemper-Kiesslich et al. 2021, 288–289). An

16 See Päffgen 2021, in detail 206-207, and Siegmund 2017, 397. The historian I. Eberl (2017), on the other hand, reviewed the book quite positively.

autosomal DNA analysis was able to »verify the archaeological identification of the burial as a ›girl's grave‹ via the (molecular) biological sex diagnosis« (Cemper-Kiesslich et al. 2021, 291–292). The mitochondrial analysis revealed that the haplotype of this girl belonged to the »typical West Eurasian haplogroup« U5, which – determined on the basis of the recent European population – »can be found practically throughout Europe« and is likely to be »one of the oldest in Europe«. The sampling also revealed that the girl belongs to subgroup U5b2a1a, which is »characteristic of Central and Eastern European populations« (Cemper-Kiesslich et al. 2021, 292–293 with fig. 7).

In summary, the geneticists state: »The hoped-for delimitation of the bio-ethno-geographical assignment of the female (mitochondrial) line of the girl could only be fulfilled to a limited extent within the framework of these investigations […]. From a prehistoric perspective, a central to eastern European picture emerges here, whereas from a recent perspective […] an Iberian localization seems more likely – ultimately, this finding does not contradict a pan-European localization« (Cemper-Kiesslich et al. 2021, 294). However, the following statement, which touches on the different dating methods, is remarkable for the topic dealt with here: »Although there are already first systematic DNA findings from Hungary and Italy from the early Middle Ages, i. e. the period in which the girl lived (according to calibrated radiocarbon dating, late 7th century: according to archaeological dating, early 8th century AD), the haplotype of the girl is not found there«[17].

E. Wamers summarises: »The archaeological, antiquarian, scientific and (cultural) historical re-evaluation of the singular ›bi-ritual child double grave‹ from Frankfurt, published in 2015, has come to a preliminary conclusion with the presented molecular genetic analysis of the human aDNA. […] Although the antiquarian and cultural-historical evaluation of the grave has provided some indications of the »ethnic« and cultural location of the girl and her co-buried ›co-child‹, the determination of the girl's haplotype can only be of limited help: The current international database of this Old European, Central-Eastern European type is too small, but according to current data it is also represented in the North and Baltic Sea coastal zone and in Scandinavia« (Cemper-Kiesslich et al. 2021, 294–295).

Where the evaluation of written sources cannot help, as their transmission only begins at the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries and there are no reliable reports on the time horizon of the Frankfurt girl's burial, scientific investigation is of particular importance. However, neither radiocarbon analyses nor archaeogenetics were able to provide any reliable results for the interpretation of the Frankfurt burial. With both methods of investigation, there were either deviations from the »antiquarian« classification or no further insights into the girl's origins.

Summary

Based on the bracteate and the fibula, the child's corpse (with bear claws), which was cremated in accordance with Scandinavian pagan custom, was found to have something in common with the Frankfurt girl, which points to northern Europe. For »chronological reasons«, E. Wamers ruled out the Frankfurt girl's twisted silver bracelet as a further indication of Scandinavian provenance, as such bracelets did not appear there until the 9th and 10th centuries (Wamers 2015e, 112).

The simultaneous burial of both children is a theory put forward by E. Wamers between 2002 and 2013/2015. It must be tested against the question of whether or not the cremation grave was deepened, i. e. whether it was cut when the girl's grave pit was excavated, or whether it was placed in a bag on the ground directly next to the girl's body at the assumed time of her burial in the first third of the 8th century. The grave of the Frankfurt girl is dated to the late Merovingian period (Wamers 2015f, 175) and is comparable with those of queens from the Merovingian royal family (Wamers/Périn 2013), even if their burial sites were of a completely different quality than those in Frankfurt am Main at this time (Päffgen 2021, 203), about which very little is known before the 9th century.

17 Cemper-Kiesslich et al. 2021, 294 with reference to Hüls 2015, Kromer 2015 and the results from research into Lombard cemeteries in Hungary and northern Italy.

E. Wamers' comprehensive documentation of the finds from the Frankfurt girl's grave (Wamers 2015a), published in 2015, has provided an excellent insight into the material culture of the Early Middle Ages, deepened previous findings and placed them on a solid foundation.

In the second part of this article, the most important findings of previous research on the Frankfurt girl will be presented based on the written sources and the proposed interpretations critically summarised.

On the Attempts to Identify the Girl

Of course, it is in the nature of such a find that questions surrounding who the deceased young girl might have been, why she was buried on the Frankfurt hill in a Roman-late antique cultural context and the meaning of the cremation are considered.

According to E. Wamers, the girl found in Frankfurt am Main was a member of the »high Frankish nobility of the early 8th century«, whose burial, as mentioned, he dates to the years 700 to 730 (Wamers 2013, 161; 2015f, 175). A life portrait of the girl was created on the basis of the grave goods (compilation in Wamers 2015b) and the textile remains (**fig. 8**).

E. Wamers initially linked the deceased child with a predecessor of the administrator of the Frankfurt treasury (»*actor noster, qui praedictum fiscum nostrum in ministerio habet*«), Gerold (perhaps a brother-in-law of Charlemagne[18]), who is mentioned in a document of Louis the German in 823 (DLdD 219). The latter was the successor of a certain Nantcharius, who had been an administrator (*actor dominicus*) in Charlemagne's time; both are said to have been »higher-ranking representatives of the king« (Schlesinger 1987, 313). Although it is known that they were not related, it remains a matter of speculation to which family group they belong, as does the question of whether the girl, buried more than a century earlier, can be linked to them[19], so E. Wamers previously abandoned this thesis[20].

Overall, it is not possible to reliably identify the Frankfurt girl. This was also confirmed by the examinations of her extracted DNA, as explained above.

The Frankfurt Girl's Outfit

The Frankfurt girl's individual grave goods reflect her wider environment, coming as they do from the Frankish-Alamannic area from the Middle Rhine region via the middle Main and Neckar regions to the western northern Alps (the multi-fibula costume), the Alamannic-Bajuwaric area (the pom-pom earrings, the filigree pendants on the necklace, the round brooch, the cob bracelet and the belt chain), the Frisian region (the Domburg-type brooch with the same arms and the bracteate), and the western French region (the jewelry pendant, the box and the finger rings).

In addition, as already mentioned, the type D bracteate and the twisted silver bracelet provide evidence of links to northern Europe which, together with the cremation burial, have been interpreted as an indication of a close relationship between the parents of the children, who died at the same time, and which have been referred to as Franconian-Scandinavian cultural contact. However, this find presents methodological difficulties in terms of dating, as it points to the 9th/10th century (Wamers 2015e, 112–113).

The Circumstances of the Cremated Child's Burial

The crucial question here is whether the cremated remains were placed in the floor of the cleric's house before or at the same time as the girl's body. While E. Wamers was certain in 2002 that a simultaneous burial could be ruled out, ten years later he changed his mind about the interpretation of the excavator, A. Hampel (1994a; 1994b). As shown above, the results of the radiocarbon dating of the various samples are open to interpretation, but from a historiographical point of view it is difficult to play them off against each other.

Reliable information about the geographical origin of both the cremated person and the rite used would be helpful for the question posed in this article about cultural contacts with the north, as only a few of the Frankfurt girl's grave goods suggest a Nordic connection in the broadest sense (Friesland and Scandinavia).

18 Schalles-Fischer 1964, 338 with reference to Metz 1958, 480 with n. 44. However, Metz explicitly asks here about the relationship without having an answer ready.

19 Cf., however, Wintergerst 2007, 38 n. 144 with reference to F. Schmieder's habilitation thesis from 1999, which is currently in print (see Schmieder in print); Schmieder 2005.

20 Wamers 2015i, 208-209. 216, initially considered this thesis but then called it an open question. See Wamers 2013, 163, who also questions this assumption on page 180.

Fig. 8 The girl in the reconstructed life picture according to E. Wamers. – (After Wamers 2015a, fig. 79).

The Bi-Ritual Burial

In any case, this simultaneous burial of two children from different cultural and religious spheres in Frankfurt am Main would represent a special case. The theory cannot be categorically ruled out from the outset; after all, there are a good dozen comparable examples in the wider geographical area of Frankfurt (Wamers 2015g, 193–198) (**fig. 9**).

The Arguments

E. Wamers (2013) explained his thoughts on cremation burial, which also clearly addressed the ambiguities: »At the beginning of the 8th century, a high representative (potential relative?) of Saxon or Scandinavian nobility and his family are staying at the royal court of *Franconofurd*, the Frankish and Saxon (?/Scandinavian) children die at the same time (of an illness?), and because of a diplomatic, familial or friendly connection between the Frankish and the Saxon (?) family, it is decided to bury both children in one grave – the Frankish one according to an elaborate late Merovingian rite with the richest grave goods, the other according to an elaborate Pagan-Scandinavian-Saxon (?) rite by cremation in a bearskin«[21].

Two years later, this interpretation was developed even further (Wamers 2015i[22]), as it now benefited from previously unknown details about the Frankfurt girl's individual grave goods and the circumstances of the cremated child's burial. After the Merovingian victory over the Alamanni at the beginning of the 6th century, the Rhine-Main region became »one of the core landscapes of the Frankish Empire« and »large areas of land became the property of the Frankish king«, which E. Wamers proves on the basis of Carolingian documents from the 9th century. The »royal court of *Franconofurd*« is considered to have existed for more than 200 years before it was mentioned in writing, as what can be proven to have existed in Carolingian times »was probably also true for the Merovingian period«.

With this in mind, the question of the administrators of the royal estate in the early period of Frankish rule in the region, who also cannot be traced before the 9th century, will now be discussed. »There is

21 Wamers 2013, 180–181, the punctuation follows the original.

22 The follow up to page 403 in this article (The Problems) is a summary of Wamers 2015i, which proceeds in several steps: pages 207–213 are initially devoted to the royal court of Frankfurt and the girl buried in the grave, the others to cremation, the bi-ritual rite, the shroud and the historical context (see below in each case). However, individual references are only provided here if absolutely necessary.

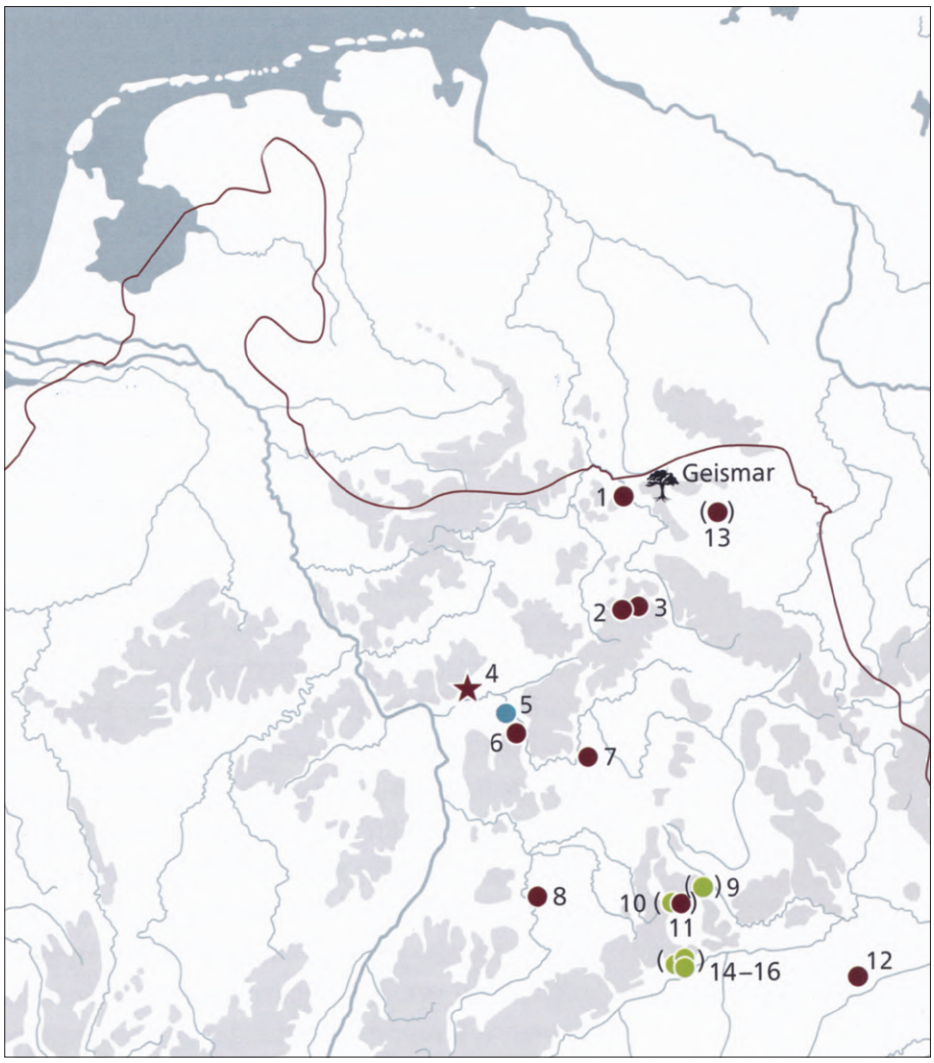

Fig. 9 Distribution map of bi-ritual burials according to E. Wamers: Dating to the 7th/8th century: Eschwege-Niederhone (**1**), Kaltenwestheim (**2**), Kaltensundheim (**3**), Frankfurt am Main (**4**), Kleinwelzheim (**5**, undated), Wenigumstadt (**6**), Kleinlangheim (**7**), Hessigheim (**8**) and Ergolding (**12**). In addition, there are »uncertain findings« from the 6th century: Dittenheim (**9**), Westheim (**10–11**) and Schretzheim (**14–16**) and from the 7th/8th century Urleben (**13**). The dark red line somewhat ahistorically represents the »border of the Merovingian Empire«. – ★ Frankfurt am Main. – ● 6th century AD. – ● 7th/8th centuries AD. – ● Undated. – **( )** Uncertain. – **Tree** So-called »Jupiter-Eiche«. – (After Wamers 2015a, fig. 100).

some evidence that the family of Fastrada, Charlemagne's fourth wife, had some influence here«. She died in Frankfurt during Charlemagne's stay there in 794 but was buried in Mainz. E. Wamers (2015i, 207) classifies this historical fact as »explainable by the now high position of the queen«. However, this argument indirectly contradicts his stated theses on the significance of Frankfurt as the memorial site of the girl's grave, which is said to have been created half a century earlier. In any case, it would no longer have played a role at the time of Fastrada's death. However, the Frankfurt girl is said to have been a relative of Fastrada from the Hedenen family, who »still had influence in Frankfurt am Main even after 717«. This will be discussed later.

The rich furnishings of the girl's body indicate the high status of the parents, who wanted to »ensure the physical well-being« of their beloved child, who may have died of »a serious illness«. As mentioned above, the accompanying objects point to the Franconian-Alamannic region »from the Middle Rhine area via the Middle Main and Neckar regions to the western northern Alps« (the multi-fibula costume) on the one hand, and to the Alamannic-Bajuvarian region (the pom-pom earrings, the filigree pendants on the necklace, the round brooch, the cob bracelet and the belt chain) on the other. The brooch with the same arms had references to northern France (»Frisian«, in the terms of the time), while the »ivory pectoral«, the »smelling box« and the finger rings had references to western France.

The brooch with the same arm is said to have come into the possession of the girl's family from the Frisian missionary Willibrord († 739 in his monastery foundation, Echternach), who came from the area around Utrecht, on one of his journeys from Würzburg to Thuringia in the early 8th century[23], when he »probably stopped off in Frankfurt«: »Doesn't it stand to reason that such a rare foreign piece most likely came into the hands of the noble

23 Willibrord had been given Würzburg and estates in Thuringia by Duke Heden II, and in 741 Boniface founded the diocese here, see also below.

family on the Main ford via the early Anglo-Saxon mission?«.

Two other grave good items showed links to Scandinavia: Firstly, the gilded type D bracteate from the middle of the 6th century, which had come into their possession from Thuringia as »an old family heirloom«, and secondly the sewing kit, which had been part of noble women's grave furnishings »in Scandinavia, among Frisians and Saxons« according to »old Germanic tradition«.

This contextualization is followed by Wamers' reflections on the cremation. After an overview of the temporal and spatial distribution of the rite itself, which still reveals »according to the current state of research a gap of around 100 to 150 years« with regard to the »Frankfurt special case«, he uses the Scandinavian custom of cremation »with a bearskin« (Wamers 2015i, 213–214, quote on page 213) and the gold bracteate to establish a connection between the Scandinavian origin of the cremated child's parents and the symbiosis of such families with Thuringian origins. The bracteate perhaps testifies to »long-standing relationships between the two families«. The form of the bi-ritual burial of both infants as a »Thuringian-Scandinavian component« would also support this. The Frankfurt girl's sewing kit, which was added in accordance with Scandinavian customs, may not even have been part of the Frankfurt girl's outfit, »but that of the cremated child«. The silver bracelets may also point to this connection, although they do not seem to fit in with the assumed chronology.

E. Wamers mentions as the last addition the cloth decorated with two woven gold braids, each 15 cm long and in the shape of a cross, with which both burials are said to have been covered before the coffin was closed (Wamers 2015i, 214–215). The »carrier material« of the gold border cross is »completely gone today [...]. In a few areas under, between and next to the gold threads, there are dark discolorations in the soil from the degraded organic carrier material« that cannot be examined, which is why it is no longer possible to determine whether the »cross was applied to a textile carrier or, for example, to leather«. What is certain, however, is »that the gold textile was placed on the corpse during the burial« (Schneebauer-Meißner/Nowak-Böck 2015, 161–164). The production method of the gold threads »fits in well with the previously known types of the rovingian period«, but it is not possible to localise the workshop that made them. »What is unique to date is the arrangement of the border strips to form an isosceles golden cross and the presumably deliberate positioning at the level of the deceased girl's knees« and, due to the past carrier material, it is also not possible to decide with certainty »whether the cross was originally applied to a garment such as a dress or cloak or – more likely – to a cloth that covered the deceased girl and perhaps also the enclosed cremation burial« (Schneebauer-Meißner/Nowak-Böck 2015, 170).

The use of such a shroud is not frequently documented archaeologically[24], which is also due to the generally less favourable preservation conditions of the early medieval graves, which in contrast were very good for the preservation of all the recovered textiles in the Frankfurt burial chamber (Goedecker-Ciolek 2015, 129–131). However, E. Wamers is not concerned by the fact that research tends to place these textiles in the late 8th century (Wamers 2015i, 215 with n. 743) when dating the burial. He concludes with the statement: »Whoever was responsible here in *Franconofurd*, the relatives or the clerics, with the cross covering, the grave with the child from a Christian family and the one from a pagan tradition was to be explicitly marked as a Christian burial. This is less indicative of faded Christian customs than of the spirit of the new evangelization and missionary work during the insular mission east of the Rhine from 700 AD onwards«.

In addition, E. Wamers (2015i, 215–218) also reconstructs the »historical context of the peculiar bi-ritual child burial«. The Frankfurt girl »may have been the daughter of the *exactor* [i. e. »the administrator at the royal court of *Franconofurd*«, C. E.], who held office here on behalf of the Frankish king – perhaps already in succession«. He is said to have been a member of the Frankish-Thuringian Hedenen, which – by circular reasoning – would be supported by the Thuringian components of the grave furnishings. If this is the case, Wamers continued, it would suggest that there were also Scandinavians in the immediate circle of the steward's family, »as is known from several other cases from the 6th and 7th centuries«. This in turn could have been the explanation for the unusual bi-ritual burial; the »covering of the two in the coffin with a kind of shroud with a gold cross sewn on seems like a sanctioning by the church, which would be most conceivable by the then Archbishop of Mainz [sic] Rigibert, who was

24 Schneebauer-Meißner/Nowak-Böck 2015, 172 n. 539: »The laying down of gold leaf crosses [the authors see a possible counterpart to this in the Frankfurt textile gold cross, C. E.] is comparatively rare in the Franconian region, and in church burials only in isolated cases«. Päffgen 2021, 203–204, points to the example of the »rich women's grave from around 700 AD from the church of St Peter in Rommerskirchen in the Rhine district of Neuss«.

connected to the Hedenen in a distant and complicated way«.

Based on this constructed relationship, to which we will return, E. Wamers now draws a wide arc to the end of the 8th century, to Charlemagne's wife Fastrada († 794), and to the first third of the 9th century and the beginning of the construction of a royal palace under Louis the Pious (around 822). This is because at that time, when planning the construction of the Salvator Chapel, reference was made »exactly« to the burial place of the two children, so they must have been »outstanding figures in both dynastic and sacral terms«.

E. Wamers concludes on the one hand that »the local tradition for Frankfurt in the 6th to 8th centuries, both in terms of written sources and personalizable, meaningful grave finds, is extraordinarily sparse«, and notes that the »ancient mystery of these two so strange and at the same time so familiar little children […] was forgotten after 150 years« (Wamers 2015i, 218).

The Problems

However, some contradictions in the evaluation of the grave findings as well as the assumed premises and conclusions drawn are not insignificant. They should first be addressed from a historiographical perspective.

Despite all attempts at reconstruction, there was no »royal court of *Franconofurd*« at the beginning of the 8th century; the place name is first documented in 794 (Orth 1983, 131). Rather, the area was still part of Mainz's land holdings in 794, as can be seen from the reports on the synod of the same year (Ehlers 2023, 22–26). The fact that the building used for the girl's grave was the ruin of a cleric's house[25] also confirms this finding, which is common from the Early Middle Ages. It was not until 822 that Louis the Pious began to build a royal palace in Frankfurt (Orth 1983) and the Salvator Chapel was consecrated, perhaps in 852 but probably in 855 (Staab 2000, 164–165). All the written sources consulted by E. Wamers date from this period at the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries, which he assumes to be up to two hundred years earlier.

But even if we were to ignore these obstacles, other questions still arise: Which Frankish king would appoint an *exactor* between the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century, especially since the office is only documented for Frankfurt am Main in the time of Louis the Pious? If we accept both the early dating of the tombs under the Cathedral by B. Päffgen (2021, 206) to the year 680 and the late dating by E. Wamers to the years between 700 and 730, seven kings would come into question: Theuderich III (r. 679–690, sole ruler from 679); his son Clovis III (r. 690–694, under the guardianship first of his mother, then under the »supervision« of the head of his Carolingian house, Pippin the Middle); his brother Childebert III (r. 694–711, also under Pippin's »supervision«); his son Dagobert III (r. 711–715, also under Pippin's »supervision« until his death in 714); Chilperich II (r. 715–721, presumably a son of King Childeric II of Austrasia [† 675] and opponent of the early Carolingians); Dagobert III's son Theuderic IV (r. 721–737, appointed successor after the death of his predecessor by the new head of the house, Charles Martel [† 741]), from the early Carolingian family, who was the son of Pippin the Middle, and finally the last of this family, Childeric III (r. 743–751, his father was either Chilperich II or Theuderich IV; under the rule of Karlmann [† 754, eldest son of Karl Martell], who even imprisoned him in a monastery. He was shorn and deposed in 751). After him, the Carolingians were ruled by Pippin the Younger (r. 751–768), also a son of Charles Martel, and after his death by Charles I (r. 768–771) in the southern kingdom and his older brother Charles (the Great, † 814) in the northern kingdom, who was sole ruler of the Frankish kingdom from 771 (Ewig 2012; Schieffer 2014; Scholz 2015).

The answer to the question of »the« Frankish king is rather difficult, especially since all of the Merovingians mentioned, except for Chilperich II (r. 715–721), were more or less ruled by emperors who were members of the Arnulfing-Carolingian family. The first written evidence of a ruler's actions in Franconia related to property are the donations from the head of the Merovingian house, Karlmann (and perhaps Pippin the Younger), to the young bishopric of Würzburg in 741/742 (Störmer 1999, no. 23, 175–178). Although the relevant charters have been lost, the extent of the donations is clear from the confirmation diplomas of Louis the Pious (DLdF 217, the original survives from December 19, 822), Louis the

25 Wamers 2015b, 25, and 2015i, 210, even suspected a bishop's dwelling. Päffgen 2021, 210, on the other hand, argues that nowhere is there evidence of »a royal court as a bishop's seat at the same time« – to which we will return. And since »there is no record of a bishop for Frankfurt, such an idea cannot be seriously discussed«. The source used by E. Wamers for this, a »letter from Pope Gregory II dated December 724 to the ›whole people of Thuringia‹« (Wamers 2015b, 25), is a letter from the pope to Boniface, which Störmer 1999, 173 (no. 20, where the text is also reproduced), dates to »ca. 738«, although it then comes from Pope Gregory III, and assumes that the »ethnic groups« addressed there meant »less […] the population of the Mainland, which was already more strongly Christianized, as long as they were not Slavs« (Störmer 1999, 52). The dating to the years 737/738 seems very plausible against the background of the events in Rome: Boniface was appointed papal envoy.

German (DLdD 41, the original survives from July 5, 845) and Arnulf (DDArn 67 and 69, both originals survive from November 21, 889) which, remarkably, were all issued in Frankfurt am Main. Only four places were awarded in the Rhine-Main region:

- Würzburg: *basilica infra praedictum castrum in honore sanctae Mariae*.
- Nierstein/Rhine: *basilica in villa Neristeine in honore sanctae Mariae*.
- Ingelheim/Rhine: *ecclesia in villa Ingulunheim in honore sancti Remei*.
- Großumstadt: *basilica in villa quae vocatur Otmunttesstat in honore sancti Petri principis apostolorum*.

Only the last three were from the immediate vicinity of Frankfurt (**fig. 10**).

However, the area of Mainz territory can be clearly recognised up to the time of the confirmation by King Arnulf of Carinthia in 889 (Petersohn 2008, 75–77) as a region free of gifts. Bishop Rigibert (reigned before 704/706–724) of Mainz, as referred to by E. Wamers, was of course not yet an archbishop, as the *civitas* only received this rank at the turn of the 9th century under the Boniface disciple, Lul, for the Hessian-Thuringian region (Staab 2000, 136–139). However, the monastery of St Alban in Mainz, the burial place of Queen Fastrada since 794, had already begun to operate in this region from the late 7th and early 8th centuries (Staab 2000, 108–110). Rigibert, Gerold (r. 724–743) and his son Gewilob (r. 743–745, deposed by Boniface) as direct predecessors of Boniface in the 8th century are the first reliably attested bishops of Mainz. According to the *Vita Bonifatii*, written before 769 by the Mainz chaplain, Willibald, Rigibert had consecrated the church in honor of St Dionysius in Nilkheim near Aschaffenburg on the former Roman »wet Limes« from Seligenstadt to Miltenberg, which formed the border of the expansion of the diocese of Mainz in the early Middle Ages (possibly between 711 and 716: Störmer 1999, 39). He had thus asserted a diocesan claim to office that extended geographically far beyond Frankfurt am Main (Störmer 1999, no. 16, 170), and which overlapped with the secular domain of Theotbald, who was probably not related to the Hedenen[26]. Rigibert was also indirectly involved in the foundation of St Peter's monastery in Erfurt (706)[27].

According to the Vita of St Bilhildis[28], which was not written until after 900, Gerold, who died in a battle between Charles Martel and the Saxons in 738, was a supporter of the saint, the wife of the already older Heden (I)[29] and niece of Bishop Rigibert. With his support, Bilhildis had founded the monastery of Altmünster near Mainz after she, according to legend, had left her husband sometime before 717 (Staab 2000, 112–114). Finally, Bishop Gewilob was an opponent of Boniface's founding of bishoprics in 741 (Büraburg and Erfurt and, after a time, Würzburg and Eichstätt) at the expense of Mainz's territorial claims, but was deposed by Boniface on March 1, 744 at a Frankish national council in Flanders after he had taken part in a Saxon campaign the previous year, which Boniface claimed was unworthy of a consecrated man (Staab 2000, 114–116).

If we summarise everything, we can see that these three bishops (Rigibert, Gerold and Boniface) were continuously close to the Carolingians, first in their function as the Merovingians' emperors, then as Frankish kings – but not to the Merovingian kings of the declining Frankish empire. If Rigibert acted as the cleric authorizing the bi-ritual double burial with the gift of a burial shroud, he probably did so in his own interests, especially as he cannot be said to have been particularly close to the Hedenen – except that his niece Bilhildis who was, probably unhappily, married to Duke Heden II, left him, whereupon she was taken in by Rigibert and his successor Gerold and was able to found a monastery near Mainz. This does not suggest a strong role for the Hedenen in Frankfurt, the place near Mainz.

As mentioned, E. Wamers has dedicated an entire chapter to the »East Franconian-Thuringian region in the 7th and 8th centuries« (Wamers 2015h),

26 Petersohn 2008, 147 in n. 147, expresses a cautious opinion on the question of whether Theotbald should be assigned to the Hedenen. Störmer 1999, no. 5, 172, says of Theotbald that he is »attested in the 2nd decade of the 8th century, ducal seat and kinship relations to Heden [the Hedenen, C. E.] cannot be precisely determined«. Mordek 1994, 350, states that »no historical clarity can be gained about the person of Theo(t)bald either«. Werner 1982, 150 in n. 502, rejects the thesis that Theotbald was identical with the Hedenean, Gozbert, father of Heden II, but see Friese 1979, 39 in n. 163 with reference to Bigelmair 1952/1953; Päffgen 2021, 210, with further references. However, Störmer (1972, 36) raises the question of whether Theotbald »could have been a son of Duke Heden II«. If one assumes that Theotrada, the wife of Heden the Younger, was a close relative of Theotbald, then a relationship to the Hedenen would be ruled out in favour of an in-law relationship, see below.

27 Staab 2000, 110-111, who also points out that later legendary tradition has obscured the circumstances of the foundation of St Peter's monastery and the date of the consecration of the Nilkheim church, and therefore Duke Theotbald should be placed before Duke Heden II (r. 704-717), as should the consecration ceremony in Nilkheim and the accession of Rigibert.

28 Weidemann 1994, 70-73. The original is lost and the oldest manuscript tradition dates from the 13th century in Trier. A veneration of St Bilhildis (on November 27) can only be proven from the second half of the 10th century, and the Vita itself may have been written in the first half of the same century. Her veneration was limited to Mainz, and the two calendars of Lorsch Abbey from the end of the 10th and early 11th century do not list her. Petersohn 2008, 69 n. 8; 83 n. 99, is skeptical about the Vita.

29 Cf. Mordek 1994, 352-356 esp. 354 n. 57. Werner 1982, 169 n. 583, argues in favour of Heden II »for chronological reasons«.

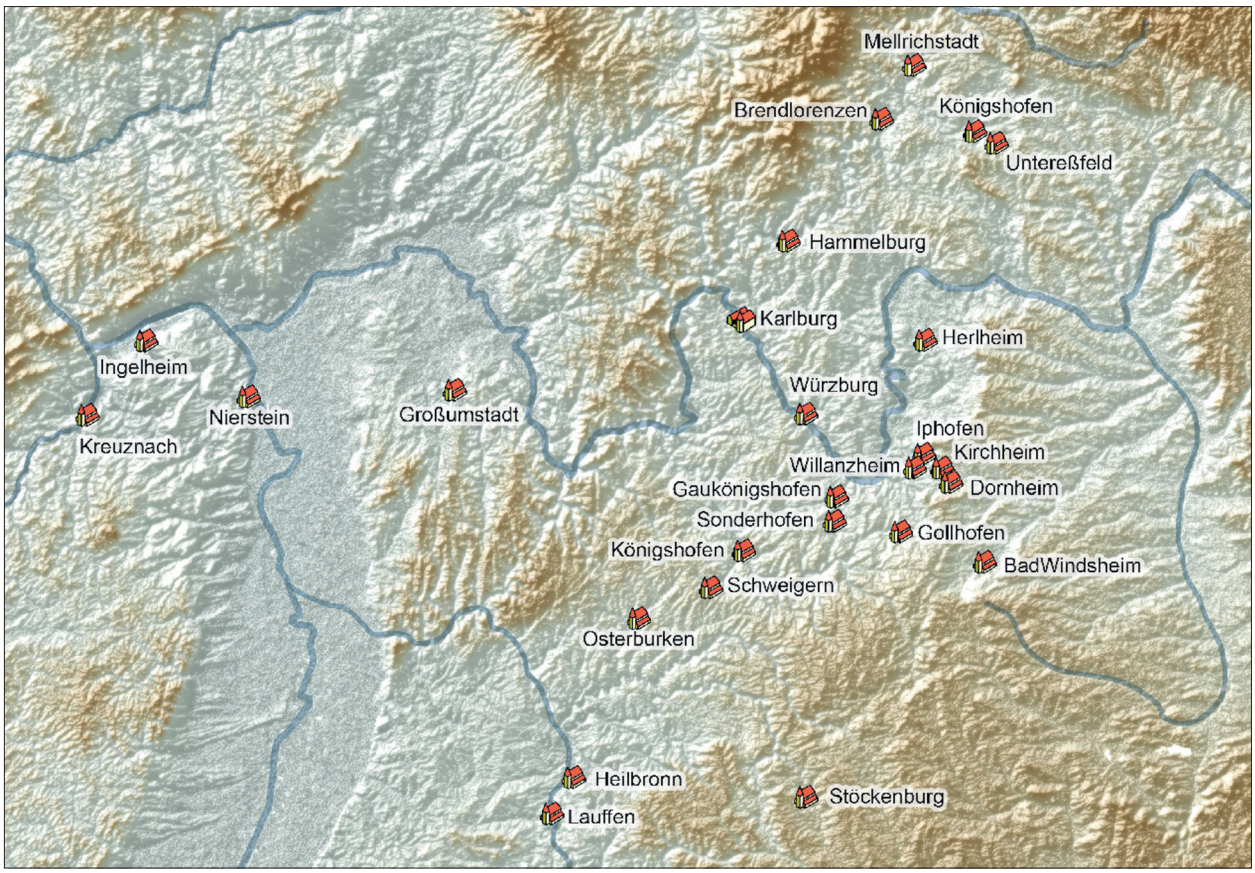

Fig. 10 The spatial extent of Karlmann's donation to Würzburg. – (Draft C. Ehlers according to Störmer 1999, 180–181; cartography maßwerke, U. Haarlammert, Münster 2019).

in which he engages quite freely with the results of regional historical research, especially when it comes to the methodological limits of knowledge. For example, the Theotbald mentioned above in connection with the consecration of the church of Nilkheim was »perhaps a brother of Heden[s] II. wife Theodora«, »whose sphere of influence extended as far as the Aschaffenburg area« and it is conceivable »that, in view of the later importance of *villa* and *fiscus Franconofurd*, Theotbald had his official residence in Frankfurt« (Wamers 2015h, 200). Charles Martel then, in 717/719, dissolved the particular dominions and, with the support of Popes Gregory II (r. 715–731) and Gregory III (r. 731–741) and Boniface (active as a messenger of the faith in what is now central Germany since 723, Bishop of Mainz since 744, martyred in Friesland on 7 June 754[30]) promoted missionary work and created new regional orders, with the result that »Heden II's area of office and rule extended to the districts of the *Suduodi* and Grabfeld inhabitants [a historical landscape in the border region of present-day Thuringia and Bavaria around Mellrichstadt and Bad Königshofen, C. E.] [...], and Theotbald could have administered the Wetterau districts and perhaps also the Lahn district«[31]. Although there is evidence of Mainz's claims as far as Aschaffenburg, it should be noted, according to Wamers in the subjunctive, that »should *Franconofurd* have been Theotbald's official residence«, »the girl from the Cathedral tomb would have belonged to his family« (Wamers 2015h, 203). The Hedenen family is now a much more complex subject of research, which is primarily due to the convoluted tradition in different and diachronically developed historiographical source genres, which posed and continues to pose more major challenges for medieval research

30 See, among others, Becht-Jördens 2005.

31 Wamers 2015h, 201-203. He refers here to the aforementioned letter from Pope Gregory II around 738, addressed to *universis optimatibus et populo provinciarum Germaniae, Thuringis et Hessis, Bortharis et Nistresis, Uudreciis et Lognais, Suduonis et Graffeltis vel omnibus in orientali plaga constituis* (Störmer 1999, no. 20, 173), and reconstructs a map (Wamers 2015h, 202 fig. 102), according to which the *Uedricii* settled in the Wetterau and the *Lognai* in the Lahngau. However, the five groups named before the grave fields cannot be identified or »cannot be localized with certainty«; the *Hessi* are the »Old Hessians north of the Wetterau«: Störmer 1999, 52. Störmer 1999, 48-49, also assumes two ducats for Main Franconia and Thuringia for the time of King Dagobert II (r. 629-639), Heden II was then able to extend his power from Würzburg to Thuringia. See also the formulation *primatus Theotbaldi et [sic] Hedenen* in the aforementioned Vita Bonifatii: Störmer 1999, no. 18, 171-172. Störmer 1999, 51, addresses the difficulty in that this Theotbald »cannot yet be classified«, but does not rule out a »probably close relationship« to Heden because of the »division of power«.

(in a brief selection: Petersohn 2008; Störmer 1999; Wagner 1999; Mordek 1994; Werner 1982) than this chapter by E. Wamers suggests.

Conclusions

What has emerged from the historical and methodological analysis undertaken so far? To answer this, many of the questions already posed must be revisited: Perhaps the cremation burial is older than the girl's grave after all (Siegmund 2017, 398)? Who were the parents of the cremated child? Perhaps the girl's grave is older or younger than Wamers postulated[32]? Whose daughter was the Frankfurt girl? What role does the site's location at the intersection of two traffic routes play?

There are no socially or ritualistically comparable graves from this period in the immediate vicinity of Frankfurt; only around 40 burials without grave goods were found around the cleric's house (Wamers 2015b, 26–29; Wintergerst 2007, 40–43; Possnert 2015, 28).

The network between Thuringians and »Franconians« in the Rhine-Main region must be included, which is not so easy. The Hedenen in particular are, as has often been mentioned, a problem in their own right. Presumably they were initially close to the Merovingians and opposed the *de facto* rule of the head of the Carolingian house (Störmer 1999, no. 14, 168–169; see also p. 48–49)[33]. Only a few contemporary historiographical sources about their family have survived, above all two ducal charters by Heden II[34] and the *Passio minor sancti Kiliani*, which may have been written around 788 (Störmer 1999, 46–48 and no. 13, 165–168).

The actual rule of the Frankish kings from the Merovingian dynasty in this area at the end of the 7th/beginning of the 8th century should not be overestimated; rather, it was the early Carolingians before their assumption of power in 751 (which included the removal of Hedenean rule in 717/719 by Charles Martel) and afterwards who intervened in the region east of the Rhine (Lubich 2004, 60–66; Merz 2004, 45–48. 51–54).

Frankfurt's Territorial Affiliation until the End of the 8th Century

Furthermore, the role of the bishops of Mainz in regional planning in the Early Middle Ages should by no means be underestimated, as their position was probably only consolidated in the 8th century and changed again after the turn of the 9th century.

Until now, however, research has completely ignored the obvious possibility that the Rhine-Main region might not have been an imperial possession but was Mainz »territory« until the end of the 8th century (Ehlers 2023, 22–26). This is because Frankfurt is described in 794 in a source dating from before 821 as an important place (*locus celebris*) located in the foothills of the left bank of the Rhine, and therefore a Frankish, episcopal city of Mainz in the region of Germania on the right bank of the Rhine (*in suburbanis Moguntiae civitatis, regione Germaniae*) (Libellus sacrosyllabus episcoporum Italiae, 130 line 40). It is a convincing theory that a high-ranking cleric could have resided in the »residential building« at some time before the middle of the 7th century. It would then be easy to attribute it to the main town of Mainz, which was also impressively developed in the Merovingian period, with its local branches up the Main as far as Aschaffenburg.

Consequently, all theories that, without written records, presuppose an older Frankish royal court in Frankfurt am Main[35] can be regarded as refuted. Until the turn of the 9th century, it can instead be assumed that Mainz owned the site, which became part of the Carolingian imperial estate from 794 at the earliest, but certainly in the early 1920s. The same applies to the attempt to retroactively include Frankfurt am Main as a Frankish center of the early Christian mission in the Rhine-Main region up to Würzburg (Wamers 2015h)[36] and the equally retro-

32 Päffgen 2021, 206, argues, as already mentioned, on the basis of the ^{14}C-dates for the year 680. The torqued silver bracelet as well as the repair of the pin of the bow brooch (see above in note 5 the interjection by W. Giertz) could just as well justify a late dating to the late 8th/early 9th century.

33 Petersohn 2008, 96-98, explains the inaccurate narrative of the immediate downfall of the Würzburg rule of the Hedenen after the murder of Kilian (689) and his companions in the *Passio* by the background of its origin, when Charlemagne removed the Agilolfing Duke Tassilo of Bavaria. Störmer 1972, 36-37, assesses the eastern Rhineland territories along the Main as far as Bavaria as centers of opposition, whose aim was to challenge the supremacy of the Arnulfingian-Carolingian emperors over the late Merovingians and to advance their own rule in the territories that were remote from the king of (later) Franconia and the Duchy of Bavaria.

34 One from the year 704: Störmer 1999, no. 15, 169-170 and p. 49, with which Heden donates property in Thuringia to Willibrord. The other dates from 716/717: Störmer 1999, no. 17, 170-171 and p. 50. This is Hammelburg's donation, also to Willibrord.

35 Wamers 2013, 179 (»The extraordinarily large complex of royal lands around the royal court of *Franconofurd*, known from the sources around 800, certainly already existed during the girl's lifetime around 700 and will have been administered by a royal official […]«). Wamers 2015i, 208-211 with fig. 103 on the imperial estate district of Frankfurt-Trebur. Cf. Metz 1958, 477-478, and Schalles-Fischer 1964, 266-271. The estate that made the later imperial estate district so strong after 800, the estates north of Frankfurt, did not yet exist »around 700«.

36 On the inconsistencies and contradictions with the state of medieval research, see Päffgen 2021, 209-211 with further references. Orth 1983„ 11, speaks of the Frankization of the Lower Main area, and Störmer 1999, 42, mentions the »Verfrankung«, from 531, of which one cannot say for sure »how quickly and how intensively« it took place.

active statement that Frankfurt am Main was »the ›actual capital‹ of the East Frankish Empire of Louis the German«. It is also the *communis oppinio* of research that the East Frankish-German Empire did not have a capital until the (early) modern period[37].

The Dating Question(s)

First of all, it should be noted that the calibrated radiocarbon analysis of the finds from the girl's grave produced a result that differed from the archaeological evaluation of the features. However, the evaluation of the cremation burial using the ^{14}C method also raised questions that did not necessarily support a uniform or even contemporaneous classification.

A look at the individual grave goods reveals inconsistencies. The traces of use on the fibula, for example, suggest an older date and give no indication of its use by the young child, the twisted silver bracelet points more to the 9th/10th century and, all in all, there is no evidence for a clear attribution to an ethnic or cultural affiliation of the social group burying the child. Above all, if one considers that the young Frankish child's outfit could never have been worn by her during her lifetime but could have been a transcultural conglomeration of burial objects of various origins on the occasion of her burial[38], its historical and social contextualization would have to be undertaken again.

However, it must also be conceded that, due to the state of the customary practices in this particular case, the ^{14}C method did not provide any further information about the geographical origin of the children than the archaeological and aDNA analyses. So basically, all that remains is an attempt at historical classification which, as explained, E. Wamers has also undertaken. In our conclusion, this should be addressed.

Summary: The Historical Background

E. Wamers reconstructs the historical circumstances of the burial on the basis of the finds, without taking the epistemological route and without relying on the state of knowledge of historical science. The unsurprising result is therefore a rewriting of the history of the Rhine-Main region, or the area on the right bank of the Rhine, from the 6th century onwards with the intention of providing teleological interpretations of the, not always congruent, individual finds and using these as supporting evidence for the bi-ritual double burial and for the high position of the Frankfurt girl due to the function of her family for the Frankish rulers from the Merovingian period up to Charlemagne.

The fact that the thesis of a Frankish royal court in Frankfurt am Main since the Merovingian period is untenable has been emphasised several times in the course of this article and need not be repeated here. There is every indication that the city of Mainz was already owned by the archbishop before it became the seat of the archbishop in the early 8th century. The so-called clergy house, the *domus ecclesiae*, which has already been mentioned several times in this article, was part of Mainz's spatial concept on the right bank of the Rhine up to the Main, as was the church in Nilkheim mentioned above, which was probably consecrated by Bishop Rigibert of Mainz between 711 and 716[39]. On the other hand, the above-mentioned thesis that the Merovingian house, which may even have had a Roman predecessor, was the seat of a bishop can be completely ruled out, and the connection with Pope Gregory's mission letter must also be rejected, especially since it dates from the first half of the 8th century, regardless of which pope of that name had the letter written, and must therefore be placed at about the same time (or even half a century later) as the burial of the Frankfurt girl. It should also be noted that the *domus* must already have been in ruins when the burial place was created. If not, then the burial would be very obscure.

At the end of the 8th century or in the first third of the 9th century, the Carolingians succeeded in gaining access to Frankfurt in connection with the relocation of the planned synod of 794 from an unknown location – Worms was most likely the intended site – to Frankfurt am Main. It was Louis the Pious who was finally able to create a stone legacy in the 20s of the 9th century with the construction of a royal palace (Ehlers 2023, 26–27)[40].

E. Wamers' reconstruction of the rulership of the Rhine-Main region up to Würzburg is not as clear-cut as he makes it out to be. The Hedenen family in particular raises major questions for Franconian-Hessian regional history – although the

37 Wamers 2015i, 217. For observations of this kind, see Deutinger 2006, 319-347.

38 Discussion contribution by W. Giertz at the Aachen Conference 2022.

39 Dating according to Störmer 1999, 170; the historical contextualization is in Dassmann 2000, 85-86.

40 The politically difficult beginnings of Louis' autocracy cannot be discussed here, but it should be noted that the archbishops of Mainz, Richulf (787-813, see also below), Haistulf (813-825, possibly a Langobard) and Otgar (826-847, a relative of Richulf) played an important role, see Staab 2000, 146-162.

town of Frankfurt does not play a role here, but rather the Wetterau region of the Lower Main to the west of the Spessart/Odenwald.

In addition, Fastrada (* around 765, † August 10, 794), Charlemagne's fourth wife, is an important reference person in Wamers' argumentation (Wamers 2015i, 209 and more). She is said to have been related to the Frankfurt girl through the Hedenen. However, the only thing that connects the two is the fact that they (presumably, in the case of the girl) died in Frankfurt am Main, but Fastrada was not buried here; she is buried in St Alban's Abbey in Mainz. This alone speaks more for Frankfurt's dependence on Mainz and the strong role of its bishop, Richulf, than for a special Franconian role.

A relationship between Fastrada and the Hedenen cannot be substantiated, especially since she is generally – but with little certainty – assigned to the Main-Franconian family of the Mattones[41]. Fastrada's known relatives from written records are her father Radolf[42] and her two daughters from her marriage to Charlemagne: Hiltrud (although she had the same name as Duke Tassilo's mother, an aunt of Charlemagne, but was not herself an Agilolfing) and Theotrada (with the same name as the wife of Heden the Younger, but not a Hedenean). The latter was abbess of Argenteuil from 814 and then (from 842 at the latest) of Frauenschwarzach am Main, a foundation of the Mattons, perhaps even of Theotrada's mother.

To make matters worse, the assumption of power by the Merovingian period Frankish kings (from the year 531) in the area on the right bank of the Rhine, along the Main and as far as Thuringia, which was transferred as a duchy to a Frank named Radolf around 630 by King Dagobert I (Friese 1979; Mordek 1989; 1994; Störmer 1999, 42–75; Dassmann 2000, 82–86; Haberstroh 2004; Lubich 2004; Merz 2004; Schuh 2004; Weiß 2007), is by no means as clear as E. Wamers makes it appear (Wamers 2015h). The Hedenean Hruodi (who is often, without evidence, equated with Duke Radolf), Heden I, Gozbert and Heden II are only mentioned in the sources on the martyrdom of Kilian and his companions (689), written a century after the events[43]. On May 1, 704, Duke Heden II also donated property in Thuringia to Bishop Willibrord in Würzburg; in the years between 711 and 717, an acting Duke Theotbalt is mentioned in connection with the consecration of a church in Nilkheim near Aschaffenburg by Bishop Rigibert of Mainz. Finally, the donation of the *castellum* Hammelburg and its accessories to Willibrord by a Duke Heden in 716/717 remained incomplete[44].

This is because the rule of the Hedenen was abolished as a result of Charles Martel's crackdown on Franconia on the right bank of the Rhine (717/719). The author of the biography of St Boniface reports on his activities in Hesse and Thuringia and speaks of a »forced rule« of the Christian dukes Theotbalt and Heden the Younger (ca. 719–732) (Störmer 1999, no. 18). In this respect, it can be assumed that at least the power of the Hedenen ceased to exist in the 830s at the latest. This would also be a further argument *e silentio* for the proximity of Fastrada, who had married Charlemagne in Worms in 783 (RI 1.1, no. 264a), to the Mattones. Their monastery foundations at Neustadt am Main (at the beginning of the 860s), Einfirst-Mattenzell east of Hammelburg on the Franconian Saale, Wenkheim near Münnerstadt (before 788) and Megingaudeshausen in 816 (Störmer 1999, 65) and presumably also Frauenschwarzach, fall into the intervening period of the Hedene family and the Conradines from the Lahngau as potentates in Franconia. For their part, the Conradines extended their rule eastwards into the Wetterau from the 9th century (Störmer 1999, 75–77).

41 Scherg 1908, 508. 511-512, with reference to the many possessions of this clan; Störmer 1999, 60, on the other hand, considers a relationship with the Hedenen, but is equally unable to deduce this. Hartmann 1993, 177. 182, also argues for a relationship between Radolf and the Hedenen, whereby the Mattones are also said to have belonged to this family group. Hartmann 1993, 211-212, assigns Radolf, the father of Fastrada, to the »Widons (Nanthare)«, because Radolf's father was a man named Nanther. All of Hartmann's considerations, however, are mostly based on loose associations within the rich name heritage of the Rhine-Main region, Franconia and Thuringia. Cf. the methodologically comparable considerations in Wamers 2015i, 208-211, with leaps in time between the 7th and 9th centuries.

42 *Inde reversus in Franciam duxit uxorem filiam Radolfi comitis natione Francam, nomine Fastradam, ex qua duas filias procreavit*. Annales regni Francorum ad a. 784, 67, cf. RI 1.1, no. 264a. Radolf was possibly a Mattone, who was married to an unknown Bavarian noblewoman, see Weinfurter 2013, 161. Schmieder 2005, 333-334, also names a *Hortlaicus,* killed in Fastrada's presence in Frankfurt in 794 as her grandfather, due to a translation error, but compare RI 1.1, nos 372a and 813.

43 […] *et venerunt* [i. e. Kilian, Colonat and Totnan, C. E.] *in australium partem ad castellum, quod nominatur Wirziburc, ibique per aliquot tempus commorantes, regnante ibi eodem tempore quodam duce nomine Gozberto, filio Hetanis senioros, qui fuit filius Hruodis*. Passio Kiliani, cap. 3, source cited in Störmer 1999, no. 13. The Passio minor of St Kilian and his companions was written between 750 and 850 (perhaps in 788), cf. Petersohn 2008, 95-112 on Würzburg hagiography.

44 Störmer 1999, no. 15 (donation of Arnstadt, Mühlberg and Monra in Thuringia), no. 16 (inscription from Nilkheim) and no. 17 (donation of the *castellum* Hammelburg with its accessories, which Heden had inherited from his father as well as from his mother, Geilana - the term »Fiskus« does not appear in the document, in contrast to Störmer's nod towards it, it was a matter of personal property, cf. Störmer 1999, 50). The later donation of Hammelburg property: Störmer 1999, no. 34, 188-189, cf. p. 55-56) by Charlemagne 50 years later indicates that Heden's donation of Hammelburg had not become effective.

Outlook

A new perspective on the Frankfurt double grave could be gained from the renewed analysis of the finds, findings and interpretations, but not in the sense of an elucidation. Rather, speculations had to be addressed as such, which primarily concerned the historical background of the girl's burial between the years 680 and 730. In addition, a late dating based on the chronological classification of the Frankfurt girl's burial by E. Stauch in the third quarter of the 8th century (Stauch 2004, 85–98 esp. 89. 97) or in the early 9th century cannot be ruled out.

Not only the vast majority of the girl's grave goods (Wamers 2015i, 212–213), but also the background of the group of people who could be identified as acting in the Rhine-Main region from the late 7th to the end of the 9th century can – with some caution – point to a location within the Frankish empire. This applies to the Hedenen as well as to the Mattones and many of the Merovingian-Carolingian officials in the region, regardless of whether they »integrated« or not. Contacts with the north (cf. above to the type D bracteates, the equal armed brooch, and the burials with the remains of bears) can only be assumed based on the grave goods with a craft connection to the Frisian and Scandinavian cultural area (Wamers 2015i, 213). The extent to which the missionaries' origins in Ireland, England or Friesland could have played a role here is beyond our assessment.

However, the historical periods must always be taken into account. This applies above all to the use of written sources, as it is methodologically inadmissible to jump back and forth between centuries in order to affirmatively clarify earlier conditions with significantly later historiographical evidence.

It seems unlikely that Charlemagne's stay in Frankfurt in 794 was at the instigation of Fastrada. The king had travelled from Würzburg after Christmas and stayed in Frankfurt for the Easter celebrations, and he had the synod that had presumably been planned for another location held here as well as the final trial of the previously convicted Agilolfinger Tassilo (Orth 1983, 178–182). It can almost be ruled out that the girl's grave was the reason for the choice of location, as its »quickly forgotten secret« (Wamers 2015i, 218) was probably no longer visible at the end of the 8th century (Wintergerst 2007, 28–30). Rather, Bishop Richulf of Mainz may have been the decisive factor in the choice of location (his family owned property in Frankfurt-Rödelheim[45]), which is also supported by Fastrada's burial in the Mainz monastery of St Alban, which he had founded.

The burials of the Franconian Frankfurt girl and the cremated child of unknown origin (Wamers 2015i, 213–214. 218) should not be accorded too much importance beyond their individual significance – regardless of whether they were buried at the same time or coincidentally close together[46]. Even if they are not regarded as bi-ritual, the individual burials should be seen as trans-cultural, which allows a deep insight into the diversity of the Frankish upper classes (Wamers 2015i, 211–217).

Basically, none of the problems associated with the double burial have been satisfactorily solved to this day; the historical context could not be adequately reconstructed, nor could the function of Frankfurt in the late Merovingian period be explained on the basis of the written sources. However, both would be necessary for addressing the girl's grave in particular, especially as its furnishings also provided some puzzles for which there have been insufficient methodical attempts at a solution by referencing historical persons and their assumed actions and relationships.

In summary, it can be said that many legitimate new questions have been added to the old ones. It must also be conceded that, thanks to E. Wamers' considerations, some details have come to light that provide a better starting point for research into the double grave. Since the linking of the Frankfurt girl with the written tradition of the early Frankfurt period does not work for the reasons mentioned, nor does placing the cremation burial in early Frankish-Thuringian history[47], we will have to continue to rely on archaeological, historical and scientific analyses. Above all, this means not ignoring the state of medieval research and its methods but recognizing

45 Staab 2000, 146, »Richulf's brother Rutekar demonstrably owned estates in Frankfurt-Rödelheim«. Weinfurter 2013, 163, suspects a family relationship between the queen and the Archbishop of Mainz. Wamers 2015i, 209, speaks of Rödelheim as the property of Fastrada's family. He apparently links Richulf's niece, Bilhildis, who left her husband Heden I (see above from note 28), with the queen's family, which would then not have been Hedenean at all, but at most Mattonian.

46 This is also the case with Wamers 2015i, 218, in his extremely balanced conclusion, which ends with the dictum already quoted several times in the course of this article that the »old secret of these two so strange and at the same time so familiar little children […] was certainly already forgotten after 150 years«. A salvatory clause, which admittedly calls into question many of the ideas in the anthology. Wamers 2015a.

47 Störmer 1999, 42-46 offers a brief overview of the Frankish subjugation of the Thuringian kingdom.

them (which also applies *vice versa* to historians in the case of archaeological findings). It is therefore still necessary to create an assessment that is as robust as possible based on the results of the analysis of the individual grave goods and the findings in the burial chamber under today's Frankfurt Cathedral.

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