

**UNWILLING PILGRIMAGE:
VIKINGS, RELICS, AND THE POLITICS OF EXILE
DURING THE CAROLINGIAN ERA (c. 830-940)**

by

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List of Abbreviations

AASS	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> , third edition. 62 vols (Brussels-Paris, 1863-1925).
BHL	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina</i> . 2 vols. and supplement (Brussels, 1898-1911).
Concilia	Mansi, Gian Domenico, et al. <i>Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio</i> . 57 vols. (Venice-Florence, 1759-1927).
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> : Capit Capitularia regum Francorum Epp Epistolae LL Leges Poetae Poetae aevi Karolini SRG Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi SRL Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum SRM Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum SS Scriptores
PL	<i>Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i> , J.-P. Migne (ed.). 221 vols. (Paris, 1844-64).

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the flight and exile of Christian clergy during the Viking attacks along Europe's Atlantic coasts during the ninth and early tenth centuries. These displaced clerics invariably brought the relics of their saints with them as they fled into exile. Because of this, these flights into exile carried broad repercussions in societies that looked on relics as healers, guarantors, patrons, and protectors. This dissertation argues that the movements of churchmen and their relics had vast religious, political, economic, and ideological significance that resounded far beyond churches and monasteries.

The wanderings of dislocated Carolingian relic cults have been overlooked as a coherent phenomenon, but studied as a group, relic transfers c. 830-c. 930 offer a counterpoint to the triumphal narrative of Christian expansion in Europe. The unwilling movements of relics also help chart the political changes that unfolded in the West Frankish Kingdom as Carolingian hegemony gave way to the feudal age.

The dissertation examines the literary traditions surrounding the movements of relics in three key Atlantic provinces of the Carolingian empire (Brittany, Neustria, and Aquitaine), and argues that relics, in addition to being

material objects of devotion, provided a stable source of “spiritual capital” during the Viking attacks. Such "capital" could be leveraged by monks and clerics seeking to recoup losses sustained during the Viking raids, and also by local political leaders eager to legitimize themselves through protection of cult institutions threatened by the attacks. The dislocation of West Francia’s relic cults facilitated widespread re-localization of cult patronage relationships, weakening central Carolingian authority and empowering new groups of aristocrats to replace them.

Chapter 1

Introduction

PREFACE: Relics in the Early Middle Ages

The history of relics and relic shrines during the continental Viking attacks is, by and large, a history of failure. Armies failed to defend relic shrines from destruction, political leaders failed to devise a coherent strategy against the pagan raiders, and even the saints themselves failed to protect their own graves. The staunchest pillars of early medieval society proved unable to defend Europe from attacks that left enduring scars on cathedrals and monasteries throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. These failures, and their effects on relic cults, had important implications for the future course of continental medieval political and religious history.

This string of failures expressed itself most strikingly through movement. Movement was, of course, a key factor in the success of Norse raiders, whose swiftness was notorious. But the attacks also forced Franks to move in reaction. Throughout the Viking attacks, which started on the continent as early as the

830s and lasted well past the conversion and permanent settlement of the raiders in Normandy in the early tenth century, Frankish lay and ecclesiastical figures packed up the movable contents of their churches, palaces, and monasteries and fled into exile to avoid the Scandinavian invasions that consistently overwhelmed their defenses. The result was a vast circulation of people and goods propelled by the threat of Viking violence and cupidity.

These panicked movements were particularly disquieting in an age when stability was very highly regarded. The movement of churchmen was perhaps most striking of all, since churches and monasteries were among the most firmly rooted medieval institutions. Monks, priests and bishops were not supposed to relocate, but to remain forever wedded to cathedrals and monasteries that were, in theory, under the perpetual ownership of the Church. According to the Benedictine monastic ideal, stability of place was a prime guarantor of spiritual purity. The *Rule of St. Benedict*, one of the most important documents governing monastic life during the Carolingian period, condemned the false spirituality of ascetics who wandered the countryside with no fixed abode.¹ Lodged even more firmly in place than Benedictine monks and their landed property were the corpses of the empire's saints, whose tombs served as important geographical markers and permanent anchors of extensive religious, social, and economic networks.

Yet churchmen and relics both were forced to move in large numbers by the approach of Scandinavian raiders. Relics were extracted from their

¹ Benedict of Nursia, *Regula Benedicti* (ed. T. Fry), *The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English* (Collegeville, MN, 1981), 67 (ch. 29).

sepulchers and carried by monks evicted from their cloisters by the threat of violence in nearly every part of western Francia. The departure of these monks and their relics was a logical, but also troubling, reaction to the sudden arrival of non-Christian invaders. Frankish holy men, both living and dead, were not supposed to yield to such threats. St. Martin of Tours, the half-cloaked patron saint of the Frankish kingdom, for example, never abandoned his city of Tours during his lifetime at the turn of the fifth century; he endured the menacing threats of pagan Gauls and apostate emperors, and used his own fiery brand of Christian violence to expand the Gallic church. But in death, 500 years later, St. Martin was unable to muster the a similar show of force against the Vikings. On the contrary, the keepers of St. Martin's tomb meekly evacuated his corpse on a number of occasions during the latter decades of the ninth century when the region around Tours was threatened by small bands of Scandinavian pillagers. The comparison between St. Martin's earlier steadfastness and his post-mortem mobility was a worrisome indication that he and other Gallic saints seemed to have lost some of their ardor.

Similar incidents in which saints, monks, bishops, and lay defenders were uprooted by the Viking attacks unfolded throughout the west Frankish kingdom. Never before and never since were western Europe's religious institutions evacuated on such a scale, encompassing the kingdom's entire Atlantic coast and stretching inland along every navigable river. To be sure, monks and relics had moved before, but never under such disadvantageous and unstately circumstances. Frankish monks, especially Benedictines, idealized a life spent

entirely behind monastery walls, separated from the temptations of the world. Likewise, relics were meant to remain in their tombs, to be roused only by God's final Judgment. The idealized permanence of their entombment is reflected in the contrast between the elaborate ceremonies that marked relics' arrival for burial in a new shrine, borrowed from the traditional pageantry surrounding a Roman emperor's triumphal entry into a city (*adventus*), versus the total absence of any corresponding ceremony for relics' departure.² The departure of relics was simply not allowed for within medieval Christian ceremonial vocabulary. Once ensconced, relics were meant to stay put.

The departure of relics from their proper location was rare under any circumstances; for them to be *forced* out was unthinkable. Saints and their relics were conduits of holy power, channeling divine justice, order, mercy, and protection in a world of troubles. Their miraculous potency (*potestas*) was the first and greatest line of defense against impious outsiders. The unwillingness of medieval monks and clerics' to stay in place and depend on their relics for defense indicates yet another, more profound failure: the failure of the monks' own faith in the saints to protect them. This breakdown in faith inspired a great deal of soul searching among contemporary churchmen, who struggled to emphasize the continuing value of their relics. Although clerical writers frequently attempted to deflect criticism for defensive failures towards lay civil

² This despite the fact that, in addition to *adventus*, there was a ready-made imperial ceremony (*profectio*) for emperors upon their departure from a city. *Profectio*, unlike *adventus*, never became part of early medieval cult ceremony. Also absent from cult practice was the related ceremony of triumphal return (*reditus*). M. McCormick's *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1990), traces the evolution *adventus* and *profectio* in a variety of court settings, from Rome to the Carolingians. See also G. Sumi, *Ceremony and Power: Performing Politics in Rome Between Republic and Empire* (Ann Arbor, 2005), 35-41.

authorities, the manifest unwillingness of their relics to come to their aid was doubly distressing when combined with the simultaneous ineffectualness of the Carolingian dynasty.

The panic and dislocation of the Viking era was unique in the middle ages first because of its scope and duration, but also because it was one of the few times that the movement of relics, however closely controlled, fit into a narrative of collapse and retreat. Medieval saints' relics had moved from place to place on some occasions prior to the mid-ninth century onset of Viking attacks, but always under more auspicious circumstances. In fact, as shall become clear below, the movement of relics helped create the Christian world north of the Alps in the eighth and early ninth century. The carefully regulated transportation of relics into and within the Carolingian kingdom during the early period of their rule provided a basis for the growth of Church institutions and helped solidify the dynasty's grip on its expanding kingdom.

But what migrating relics could build up, they could also bring down. During the later ninth and tenth century Scandinavian invasions, the evacuation of relics out of formerly Christianized territories marked the undoing of the religious and political advances of earlier centuries. As early victories gave way to mounting losses during the Viking era, the triumphal march of relics to the new provinces of the expanding empire became a contraction, in which relics along the kingdom's exposed edges were withdrawn to the relative safety of the interior of a shrinking realm. This process had disastrous effects on the fortunes of Frankish cathedrals and monasteries. It also accelerated the disintegration of

Carolingian political power, which depended on its alliances with relic cults for much of its legitimacy.

The movements of monks, relics, and raiders during the ninth and tenth centuries represent the ultimate failure of the Carolingian political and religious order. Carolingian military power, so impressive during the empire's expansion under Charlemagne, proved no match for the pagan raids that plagued his successors. Because Carolingian princes were unable to protect Frankish religious institutions, relic evacuation during the Viking era also represented the failure of the Carolingian Christianization project. Carefully nurtured patronage alliances between Frankish saints and Carolingian princes were rudely severed by the attacks despite attempts on both sides to maintain them in the deteriorating security environment.

Fortunately for Francia's relic cults, the destruction of existing relic patronage networks also created an opportunity for redemption. With the Carolingians discredited by their failures, dislocated monks and clerics used their movements to their advantage. In spite of the trauma they caused, their "unwilling pilgrimage of exile"³ brought them into contact with new groups of regional aristocrats who were eager to prove their worth as patrons and protectors. Together, Francia's exiled monks, its discredited saints, and its fledgling replacement dynasts built a new political and religious order out of the ruins of the receding Carolingian empire.

³ Fulbert of Jumièges, *Vita Romani*, f. 120 (ed. and trans. in F. Lifshitz's, *The Dossier of Romanus of Rouen: The Political Uses of Hagiographical Texts*, PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, (1988), 196: "...invitam exilii peregrinationem..."

This dissertation considers the impact of these failures as Carolingian religious and political life foundered upon the rocks of the Viking attacks in ninth and tenth century Francia. It sets out to describe the fate of relics during the Viking invasions in the most deeply affected provinces in the western empire. It identifies the most informative contemporary sources and outlines the common themes of their shared story in order to chronicle the widespread effects of the attacks on cult practice, monastic life, and religious belief. Its most important conclusion is that these effects reverberated well beyond cloister walls, throwing delicately balanced social and economic relationships into doubt in every province of the empire. All sides continued to seek out the support of Francia's dead saints during the Viking attacks, even as attacks threatened relic shrines across the continent. In scenes worthy of the Book of Revelation, Francia's holy corpses rose from their graves under the onslaught of pagan raiders to preside over the transformation of dynastic politics and political geography that marked the closing centuries of the first millennium. The movements of Frankish relics displaced during the Viking attacks helped foster a dramatic reconfiguration of political hierarchy, one that unfolded as the Carolingian empire gave way to a patchwork of successor states, each eager to harness the strength of Gaul's dead saints.

RELICS IN EXILE

The sudden emergence of the Vikings on Europe's Atlantic coasts had a profound effect on west Frankish history, and on the history of the kingdom's churches and relic cults in particular. Both the speed and breadth of the Viking advance was unprecedented: continental raids began in the 830s, and within three decades had touched virtually every part of the west Frankish kingdom. Every church, town, and monastery within sight of Francia's lengthy Atlantic coastline was under threat of surprise attack at any time during the summer sailing season. Scandinavian incursions also advanced up the kingdom's many navigable rivers, following transportation routes that were heavily populated with religious institutions. The Norse raiders seized the imagination of Frankish ecclesiastical writers, who in text after lachrymose text, bewailed the damage suffered at religious institutions anywhere within striking distance of navigable water. Many west Frankish and Breton churches and monasteries were completely destroyed. More still were evacuated.

The evacuation of exposed churches and monasteries was a natural response to a novel situation. Many church institutions were wealthy, and most were under-protected and highly vulnerable to attack by people who did not share the Franks' high opinion of their sacredness. Unable to defend themselves, monks and clerics had little choice but to flee before the leering prows of invading longships. They took to rivers and roads in every direction, their escape routes crisscrossing or going in opposite directions. The odysseys

of these wayfarers occupy pages of chronicles; their flights, returns, and renewed flights paint a picture of perfect disarray. When they left, they took their movable treasures with them, including, as we have already seen, the precious relics of their dead saints.

Given the value of relics as religious symbols, and often, the material value of the precious caskets (or reliquaries) in which they were encased, it is no surprise that in the words of medieval chroniclers “fear of the Northmen caused many and the best holy bodies to be transported to safer places.”⁴ Yet the inclusion of these disinterred holy bodies among the fleeing communities makes these evacuations into something more than straightforward migrations of defenseless populations during a time of violence. It makes them into *de facto* relic translations. Relic translation, or the official, ecclesiastically sanctioned process of transporting of relics from one place to another, was an act fraught with social and ideological significance.⁵ Relic translations were occasions for epic ceremonial throughout the medieval Christian world. They were an ideal occasion for relic cults to demonstrate the miraculous power of their holy bodies to new populations as they moved from shrine to shrine. Relic translations also provided an opportunity for cults to seek special patronage from lay aristocrats, and for lay aristocrats to be seen by the community at large as magnanimous cult patrons.

⁴ Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum Lobbiensium*, MGH SS, 4, 61 (no. 16) [anno 919]: “[Nordmannorum] metu plura sanctorum corpora et optima quaeque ad tutiora loca deportantur.”

⁵ S. Boesch Gajano (ed.), *Agiografia altomedioevale* (Bologna, 1976), 261-300, contains a thorough bibliography on relic translation and on hagiography and the cult of saints in medieval Europe more broadly. A more general but no less extensive annotated bibliography is contained within S. Wilson’s *Saints and their cults: studies in religious sociology, folklore and history* (Cambridge, 1983).

Relic translations were common occurrences during the Carolingian era, and a carefully delimited exception in a religious culture that prized immobility. As such, they were meticulously managed and regulated. Standardized procedures governed each segment of a relic's journey. Examples of choreographed translations abound, ranging from local translations of minor saints removed from rural graves and re-interred in modest town shrines, up to the carefully orchestrated translations that brought the corpses of important martyrs from Rome across the Alps to Frankish royal chapels. Although the scale of these translations differed, they shared common features and that reflected the social and political links between the translating parties and the religious communities they served.

The translation of St. Vitus from the Parisian royal abbey at St.-Denis to the newly founded border monastery at Corvey in 836 is typical in many regards, and can serve as an illustration of how relics were supposed to move within the Carolingian empire. Corvey had been constructed by members of the Carolingian dynasty, with help from Emperor Louis the Pious in 822, "among the barbarians" in the freshly-conquered eastern marchland of Saxony. The new monastery was meant to provide a foundation for the conversion of the region's notoriously rebellious population, and for the further extension of religious institutions throughout the area. Since there were no local relics in the previously un-Christianized province, Corvey's abbot asked "whether there were any bodies of holy martyrs buried in [Francia] that could be granted [to Corvey] in order to

help confirm the faith of the people.”⁶ Sensing an opportunity to further the Carolingian subjugation and Christianization project in Saxony, Louis the Pious obliged by forwarding the relics of St. Vitus from the royal chapel to Corvey. According to the anonymous hagiographer who described the relics’ translation, the journey from Paris to the Saxon frontier took three months. The hagiographer assiduously marked down each place the relics passed through as they headed east, as well as the scores of healing miracles (nearly 40) that the relics performed during the journey. When the relics arrived at Corvey, the translation account states, the local community staged a grand celebratory parade, or *adventus*, presided over by the emperor’s emissaries and local ecclesiastics. “The fields around the monastery were filled,” the account concludes, “with the tents of thousands or more men and women who had gathered there from all parts of Saxony out of respect and reverence for the sainted martyr Vitus and the relics of other holy martyrs in that place.”⁷ This lavish, very public, imperially-sponsored ceremony helped establish what would soon become one of the most important and lasting relic cults in Saxony.

St. Vitus’ translation, one of the last major relic translations to be carried out before the commencement of the first continental Viking raids, contains most of the standard characteristics of a classic translation narrative, including a formal explanation of the need to move the relics, the inclusion of lay aristocratic

⁶ *Translatio Sancti Viti*, MGH SS, 2, 581: “...ut de sanctis martyribus venerabilibus quorum corpora in loco praefato [Francia] humata quiescebant, aliquem ei ad confirmandam fidem gentis suae tribueret...”

⁷ *Translatio S. Viti*, MGH SS, 2, 584: “...adeo ut per miliarium et eo amplius, per circuitum monasterii, tabernaculis ... virorum ac mulierum replerentur campi et agri, qui ex omnibus partibus Saxoniae propter religionem et reverentium beatissimi martyris Viti aliorumque sanctorum martyrum reliquias in ipso loco ... convenerant.”

patrons during the planning and execution of the translation, and close attention to routes of travel and miracles that occurred along the way, capped with an impressive and highly public *adventus* celebration to mark the relics' arrival, complete with improvised encampments for the enthusiastic throngs of beholders who gathered to witness the spectacle. Each step emphasized the continuing power of the dead saint, explained and justified the relics' movement, and advertised the roles played by living ecclesiastical and lay authorities in the establishment of the cult in its new home.

Relic translations that occurred during the Scandinavian attacks, by contrast, lack most of these characteristics. The *translations forcées*⁸ (forced translations) of the Viking era diverged sharply from the grand ceremonial that characterized other kinds of relic translations. On the contrary, they tended to be hastily arranged, ignominious affairs, carried out with little fanfare, sometimes even secretly, by decidedly unwilling participants. With a few interesting exceptions analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4 below, *adventus* ceremonies or other celebrations were out of the question given the dangerous circumstances that prompted the evacuation of relics during the Viking era. Most were carried out without forward planning, eliminating the carefully mapped itineraries and lengthy stopovers that marked ordinary relic translations. Indeed, keeping the local community in the dark about what was happening was probably crucial to the

⁸ This is how Pierre Riché has described these evacuations, to distinguish them from the more ordinary type of *translations volontaires*. Riché's *translations forcées* also includes relic thefts, relic translations mandated by lay authorities against local opposition, and the recovery of "lost" or "abandoned" relics. These topics extend beyond the context of relic translation during the Viking era. P. Riché, "Translations de reliques à l'époque carolingienne. Histoire des reliques de Saint-Malo," *Le Moyen Age*, 82 (1976), 210.

success of these forced relic evacuations. Justification for retreat, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, was in fact a major problem for monks accustomed to thinking of their relics as invincible and immovable agents of divine power and special protectors of the inhabitants of their regions. The one constant in all types of relic translations was the critical role played by lay and ecclesiastical elites in facilitating the movement of holy bodies.

These forced translations, or relic evacuations, were therefore a new and distinct phenomenon. The dislocation of cults during the attacks affected generations of Frankish churchmen, who produced an impressive corpus of contemporary texts describing the experiences of the scores of monks, clerics, and relics that were cut loose and cast adrift across West Francia by the storm of the Viking attacks.

The West Frankish kingdom inherited by Charles the Bald and his successors is a particularly good place to observe the effects of Viking attacks, forced relic translations, and the political changes they accompanied. The first reason for this, alluded to already above, is the wealth of surviving west Frankish sources that describe the evacuation of threatened relics. Relic cult evacuations occurred outside of Francia, like the well-known withdrawal of the relics of St. Cuthbert from Lindisfarne in Northumbria (c. 875) or, at the other end of the Carolingian universe, the removal of St. Bartholomew from Lipari off Sicily in 838, but the isolated nature of these notices makes it difficult to outline the full impact of Viking-era relic translation outside of western Francia with any precision.

Geography is another reason to look to West Francia. Viking activity, at least during the ninth and early tenth centuries, was a largely Atlantic phenomenon. Carolingian West Francia, with its lengthy coastline, was one of the lynchpins of the early medieval Atlantic world.⁹ This separates it from the eastern part of the Carolingian empire, which was more insulated from seaborne Viking attacks, though certainly not immune given the Vikings' uncanny ability to sail their boats on rivers and streams. Although it would soon flower under the Ottonians, eastern Francia of the ninth century was also less developed and offered far fewer wealthy monasteries, churches, or towns to draw the attention of Norse pillagers or to produce written accounts of their adventures.

Moreover, unlike England or Ireland, which were also deeply affected by Viking raids in the north Atlantic, western Francia has the additional advantage of being politically unified. Because it was not fractured into a variety of competing kingdoms, it is much easier to trace the changes in aristocratic (and especially royal) patronage that accompanied the dislocation of relics during the Viking attacks in West Francia. The relative stability and hegemony of the Carolingian monarchy (and, as we shall see in Chapter 2, of the occasionally independent Breton monarchy) before the Viking invasions brings clearer contrast to the distinctive role played by evacuated relic cults in rise of the Carolingians' successors.

⁹ For a recent attempt to conceptualize the postclassical Atlantic maritime community, see C. Loveluck and D. Thys, "Coastal Societies, Exchange and Identity along the Channel and southern North Sea Shores, 600-1000," *Journal of Maritime Archaeology*, 1, no. 2 (2006), 140-69.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS OF EXILE

The records monks and clerics left behind outline the different ways they attempted to grapple with the political, military, and economic reverses that accompanied the Vikings' arrival. The number of texts mentioning "forced" translations in Atlantic Francia reaches into the hundreds. Most are hagiographical texts composed by monks serving the cults of evacuated relics. These are supplemented by the many notices of Viking-era relic translations contained within annals, personal correspondence, and diplomatic sources preserved in collections throughout Francia. It is worth considering some of the important features of these texts, as well as the way the interpretations they present continue to dominate our understanding of what occurred during the Viking attacks. As we shall see in the following sections, a number of common features and goals defined the Viking-era relic translation sub-genre, including i), establishing the continuing value and efficacy of relics during periods of wandering and exile; ii) justifying the removal of the cult from its original home; and iii) fixing dislocated cults within a new geographical and political context.

i. Value and Efficacy

The majority of Viking-era translation accounts follow the same rough trajectory. They begin with a description of the removal of the relics from their original location. Without exception, these initial exhumations and translations

were hasty affairs, devoid of the pomp that distinguished more quotidian relic translations. The lack of ostentation, however, does not imply a lack of respect for the holy bodies involved. Just the opposite, forced translation accounts underscore the many different sorts of value that relics continued to hold for their communities.

The first indication of the value placed on relics is that evacuees appear to have *always* brought their relics with them into exile. This makes sense within a hagiographical context: if no relics were involved, there would be no reason to write about them. But Viking-era translation accounts also give other indications of the special importance of relics during the evacuations. Most importantly, Viking-era relic translation accounts clearly differentiate relics from other kinds of expensive church property which were only evacuated when conditions permitted. This is an indication not just of relics' ready portability, but also of the manifestly greater value that monks and clerics placed on relics compared to other ecclesiastical treasures (*thesauri*). Relics always ranked above the many objects that fleeing monks sought to safeguard from pillagers, like precious liturgical utensils, vestments, illuminated manuscripts, or other church *ornamenta*. The preeminence of relics over other kinds of church wealth is evident in contemporary texts about the attacks, where church treasuries containing vast riches might rate only a sentence or two, buried within much longer descriptions of the shifting whereabouts of relics.

From a practical perspective, of course, relics were much harder to replace than other kinds of church decorations. Certain relics were so closely

tied to particular institutions that, once lost, they may have been impossible to replace with other holy bones. Moreover, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, the behavior of monastic evacuees also shows the distinction they drew between the relics themselves and the richly decorated coffins in which they were contained. Often, these reliquaries were masterpieces of early medieval ostentation and craftsmanship. An inventory from the monastery of St.-Trond dated to 870s, near the high tide of the Viking attacks, provides an example of one such priceless object, “made of gold and silver... and covered in gold and jewels.”¹⁰ Certainly, pagan raiders would have been interested in seizing these treasures.¹¹ It is tempting to suppose, therefore, that the reason relics were evacuated during the Viking attacks had more to do with their glittering containers than with the bones themselves. Expensive reliquaries were indeed cherished church possessions, but within the context of Frankish religious institutions, their value paled in comparison to the relics they contained. Decorated reliquaries were not without their purpose to the function of the cult; possession of such a reliquary could be useful, for example, in authenticating a dislocated saint’s identity. But as we shall see below, the relics inside these reliquaries differed from other kinds of movable assets because of the other

¹⁰ *Gesta abbatum Trudonensium*, MGH SS, 10, 230: “Repperimus de thesauro aecclisae sancti Trudonis rebam [the shrine] ipsius corporis auro argentoque fabricatam... Capsam gemmis auroque insignitam”

¹¹ For the increasing opulence of shrines and reliquaries during the Carolingian period, see J. Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Medieval Christian West, c. 300-1200* (Oxford, 2000), 251-3. With scant evidence, Julia Smith argues that Breton churchmen preferred less ostentatious reliquaries, which may have made them less tempting targets for raiders: “Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles, and Relics in Brittany c. 850-1250,” *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 326, and note 65.

value they continued to provide over time.¹² The value relics provided was cultural and social in addition to economic, and was continually renewed as they guided, protected, and performed miracles for their communities.

Relics did, however, still have a special economic worth. Relics, unlike coins or other fungible assets, continued to generate steady, dependable wealth to monks and clerics in exile, and in this capacity to create wealth they far surpassed the more fixed cash value of the gold and jewels that adorned their chapels. Possession of a well-known saint's body could be quite lucrative for monks and clerics on the road. As Chapters 2 and 3 below will show, monks who possessed such relics enjoyed enthusiastic welcome in areas through and to which they traveled. These welcomes were often accompanied by lavish gifts of land, buildings, or rents to support the community during its stay. These donations served to cement burgeoning alliances with new lay cult patrons during the community's time in exile. Relics also attracted smaller but more numerous pious donations from pilgrims who came to visit temporary shrines set up to house them.¹³

¹² B. Buettner, "From Bones to Stones - Reflections on Jeweled Reliquaries," in B. Reudenbach and G. Toussaint (eds.), *Reliquiare im Mittelalter*, (Hamburg, 2005), 21-42. On the subject of the value of relics, it is worth noting that refugee *translationes* differ markedly from *furta sacra* (relic thefts), another well-studied sub-genre of translation literature. Despite the fact that relic thefts and relic evacuations are often conflated, the forced relic translations of the Viking era were not the simple opportunistic redistributions of spiritual wealth that P. Geary described in his seminal study of relic theft (see in particular ch. 3-5 of his *Furta Sacra*; see also H. Silvestre, "Commerce et les vols des reliques au moyen âge," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 30 (1952), 721-39). It is impossible to fit relic evacuations under the rubric of relic thefts, not least because (at least in most cases) the same institutions maintained control over the same relics before translation, during exile, and after their return.

¹³ The *Vita Remacii*, MGH SSRM 5, 441, for example, describes the throngs of pilgrims that participated in the passage of the relics of St. Remacius through the village of Soumagne during Viking attacks in the 880s: "At paululum ab oppido digredimur, prosequente nos non parva virorum pariter mulierumque caterva divina nobis coelitus apparuere miracula...." It seems likely that refugee processions through the Frankish countryside generated the same kind of revenue

Finally, the contrast between relics and other kinds of movable wealth becomes clearer still when they are compared to that other, better-studied indicator of violence and social dislocation: coin hoards.¹⁴ The symmetry between coin hoards and relic evacuations is striking: both are unambiguous symptoms of upheaval and loss of economic and social stability, though they work in opposing directions. Coin hoards are buried in the ground to protect them from seizure, while relics are lifted up out of the ground for precisely the same purpose. Coins, which are meant to circulate as objects of exchange, stopped circulating during times of danger. Relics, which were meant never to leave their places of rest, began to move about. Coins were simply another piece of expensive, but ultimately replaceable church property; only relics had the versatility of purpose and significance that gave them continuing value under the many different circumstances that fleeing monastic communities were likely to encounter on the road.

that relic tours did for ecclesiastical fundraisers in later centuries described by P. Hélot and M.L. Chastang, "Quêtes et voyages de reliques au profit des églises françaises du moyen âge," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 59 (1964), 789-822.

¹⁴ Coin hoards, it should be noted, are rare for the Viking period in Francia, though some have been discovered. The greatest frequency of Viking-era coin hoards have been found in Brittany. A. Chédeville and H. Guillotel, *La Bretagne des Saints et des Rois*, 384, describe one, as do J. Smith, *Province and Empire: Brittany and the Carolingians* (Cambridge, 1992), 42, and W. Davies, *Small Worlds: The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany* (Berkeley, 1988), 56. M. Dolley and J. Yvon, "A group of tenth-century coins found at Mont-Saint-Michel," *British Numismatic Journal*, 40 (1971), 1-16, cite one at Mont-St.-Michel in Normandy, and J. Yver, "Les premières institutions du duché de Normandie," *Settimane de Studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, 16 (1969), 341, describes a tenth century hoard found at Fécamp. Meginhard of Fulda's description of the Viking attacks along the Meuse and Rhine Rivers in 882 describes the (ultimately futile) hiding of his church's treasures: *Annales Fuldenses*, MGH SRG, 7, 99 [anno 882]. The anonymous *Miracula S. Bertini*, MGH SS. 15, no. 1, 515 (ch. 10), also indicates that hiding treasure was a common practice in the late ninth century when it describes Norman fighters who were worried that a long siege would give Frankish defenders too much time to hide their riches.

ii. Justifications

The flights of monks and clerics gave rise to a second obligatory feature of forced translation accounts: the justification for evacuating the saint from his or her domicile. Evacuation of monks and relics required a certain amount of rationalization. First, many authors felt the need to explain the abandonment of the local lay populations their monasteries served. Not only did those who fled deprive the remaining populace of the spiritual services they provided, they also robbed them of their patron saints. This disturbed the foundations of local social order, even while the need for flight called into question the saint's potency. If the saints failed to defend even their own shrines from pagan violators, what good were they for more commonplace concerns?

The most common justification for the evacuation of relics was by emphasis on the overwhelming destructive force of the Viking attacks. Translation accounts present a nearly uniform picture of widespread destruction, flight, and loss of life. *Depopulatio* is a paradigmatic trope of the genre: nearly every text describing an evacuation portrays towns and countrysides entirely abandoned to the Vikings, stripped of movable wealth, and left devoid of Christian institutions. Custodians of relic shrines, according to most translation accounts, were blindsided by the ferocity of the Viking attacks, and had little choice but to make a hasty (and hopefully temporary) exodus.

Most other forms of justification involved shifting the blame onto lay authorities who failed to protect the cults they patronized. Crucially, the

condemnation of local and imperial civil authorities hastened the breakdown of systems of local patronage and helped make the case for abandoning long-standing local social arrangements in favor of new ones in new places.

The Viking attacks turned large populations of Frankish monks and clerics into refugees, and it is possible to conceptualize what transpired in Atlantic Francia as a refugee problem. However, the ninth and tenth century refugees about which we know the most bear only passing resemblance to refugees of the twenty first century. In the modern world, refugee status is unfortunately a large-scale phenomenon that is highly politicized and contested.¹⁵ In some ways the movements analyzed in this dissertation were also politicized and contested, but it is important to realize that the monks and clerics who fled with their relics were, as we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3 below, mostly members of a well-connected elite who share little with the disenfranchised inhabitants of modern refugee camps.¹⁶ Suffering was certainly a part of their story, but insofar as it is possible to measure suffering, theirs was on a much smaller scale than that experienced

¹⁵ R. Preston, "Researching Repatriation and Reconstruction: Who is Researching What and Why?," in R. Black and K. Koser (eds.), *The End of the Refugee Cycle?: Refugee Repatriation and Reconstruction* (Oxford, 1999), 18-36. Modern definitions of "refugee" do, however, seem to describe the ninth century experience, including the one provided by Preston (p. 24-5): "The term 'refugee' includes all persons who may be deemed to have been coerced for one reason or another to leave their country and/or stay in another country."

¹⁶ Important debates continue to linger about the nature and intensity of cult practice (and by extension, the importance of relic translation) within different social strata. R. Sullivan, F. Prinz, and L. Mikoletsky restrict the importance of relic cults to "a narrow, power wielding elite," while P. Geary, H. Röckelein and others see relic cults and relic translation ceremonies taking willing root among non-elites and blossoming at a popular level. R. Sullivan, "The Carolingian Age: Reflections on Its Place in the History of the Middle Ages," *Speculum*, 64 (1989), 267-306 (quotation here is from p. 302); F. Prinz, "Stadrömisch-italische Märtyrerreliquien und fränkischer Reichsadel im Maas-Moselraum," *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 87 (1967), 1-25; L. Mikoletsky, "Sinn und Art der Heiligung im frühen Mittelalter," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 57 (1949), 83-122; P. Geary, "The ninth-century relic trade. A response to popular piety?" in James Obelkevich (ed.), *Religion and the People, 800-1700* (Chapel Hill, 1979), 8-19; H. Röckelein, *Reliquientranslationen nach Sachsen*, 139-40.

by modern refugees. In addition, the modern refugee experience is often characterized by mass dislocations of entire populations, while the population of affected monks and clerics could not have amounted to more than a few thousand people during the century of the Viking attacks. Overall, then, it seems better to think of ninth and tenth century refugees who fled with their relics as refugees in the simpler, literal, early medieval sense of the word – those who sought *refugium* from a danger that, though intermittent, was worrying enough to have major ideological and political consequences for those who endured it. It is in this sense that the term “refugee” is used in this dissertation.

iii. Relocation

After attempting to explain their reasons for leaving, Viking-era hagiographical texts typically move on to the journey itself into exile. These sections are often very concise, focused only on the beginning and end points of the trip. Routinely, the few clues to events during the journey are restricted to conventional miracle stories. This can make the wanderings of displaced communities seem brief and unremarkable, however dramatically unsettling to monastic communities they might be when gauged by other measures. As we have already seen, such indifference to itinerary sets surviving accounts of Viking-era translations apart from accounts of normal relic translations, in which precise routes and schedules were carefully pre-arranged to maximize the impact of a saint’s presence.

Much longer passages are devoted to justifying the choice of refuge and describing negotiations with locals over the terms of their stay. Fleeing religious communities always sought safety and security, but specific requirements for safety and security shifted considerably over time, leading to a gradual evolution in the kinds of shelter sought out by fleeing monks. Earlier mid-ninth century escapes seem to have been straightforward flights in the direction opposite from surprise attacks, but by the tenth century this haste had been replaced by more deliberate processes of deal-making and mutual assurance before any moves were made.

Throughout the attacks, most monks and clerics preferred to flee temporarily to their own rural *villae*, and remain there for the shortest possible amount of time. The monks of Marmoutier, outside Tours, were initially content to move their relics of St. Martin a mere 15 miles south to their *villa* at Cormery when Vikings threatened their monastery in 853. But when a monastery's own possessions were unsuitable as places of refuge, monks might flee instead to fortified cities or throw themselves at the mercy of the king or other aristocrats for protection. This, too (as we shall see in Chapter 3), happened the monks of Marmoutier, who asked Charles the Bald for a better refuge from the Vikings when Cormery proved insecure. While the duration of exile was typically brief – less than a year in most cases – some communities (like the monasteries of Noirmoutier or Fontanelle) remained on the road with their relics for decades, and more than a few made their temporary refuges into permanent new homes.

Because the journeys involved so much travel, Viking-era translation accounts were obliged, at least to some extent, to deal with questions of place and geography. Relics have always functioned as important geographical markers because of their close association with particular locations. Moreover, as we shall see, their associations with lay political authorities also made them *de facto* markers of political control over a given area. When saints' tombs were abandoned during the Viking attacks and these landmarks lost their moorings, exiled monks and clerics were forced to recalculate their position within the rapidly shifting political and spiritual geography of western Francia at the turn of the tenth century. Wherever they found themselves, fleeing religious placed great significance on their experiences during the attacks and wrote about them profusely, stressing that they continued to carry the *virtus* (power) of their saints with them during their wanderings.

These common characteristics, plus others, define the Viking-era relic translation phenomenon. Because these texts function as explanations for the migration of monks and relics that were not supposed to migrate, Viking-era relic translation accounts all share a certain "logic." Their focus on the movement of relics, as opposed to the movements treasure or even the of the monks themselves, is a function of the intense interest monasteries had in how their relics were perceived by the wider Christian community. To this end, the authors of Viking era translation accounts inserted copious miracle stories to emphasize that their relics could still perform as they were supposed to even though they had been removed from their normal resting places. They also paid special

attention to the patronage they received from lay benefactors during their time in exile. This was a way of recognizing the generosity of good patrons, and defaming patrons who had not protected or provided for the cult. By calling attention to miracles and to the efficacy of lay patronage, clerical writers sought to avoid showcasing their own failures and the failures of their relics. The narrative of the many “failures” that led to Viking-era relic translation is, in other words, a modern one. Within the confines of their translation accounts, contemporary monks and clerics chose rather to portray themselves as penitents or victims of failures that lay elsewhere, carefully preserving the most powerful symbols of religious practice for a better day in the future.

PART ONE: *Translationes* and Other Sources

Evidence for the effects of Viking attacks on monastic life comes in a variety of forms, but hagiographical sources are typically the most effusive. The pages of translation accounts (*translationes*), saints’ lives (*vitae*), miracle collections (*miracula*), and martyr catalogs (*martyrologia*) describe the practical realities of Viking-era translation and reveal the deeper political, theological, and ideological uncertainties that underlay the activities they describe.

1.1 *Translatio* as Genre

Translaciones, one part of the much broader genre of hagiographical literature, are an obvious touchstone for any discussion of Viking-era relic translations. They have been well-studied as a group, and much utilized in recent decades by medieval historians.¹⁷ Yet *translaciones* set in contexts of flight from danger form a distinct subgroup within the *translatio* genre, complete with their own literary history and forms. Aside from brief mentions by relic translation historians like Pierre Riché and Martin Heinzemann, this kind of relic translation has languished largely unstudied. One aim of this dissertation is to introduce “forced” translations into historical discourse as a free-standing literary category.

Relic translation has been a visible aspect of Christian practice since the first centuries of the common era.¹⁸ “Forced” translations have always accounted for a certain number of these, starting as early as the fifth and sixth century barbarian invasions in Europe, and continuing sporadically through the Muslim conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries. These early translations, however, merely foreshadowed the dramatic increase in *translations forcées* during the Viking attacks of the ninth and tenth centuries. For a hundred-year

¹⁷ M. Heinzemann, “Translationsberichte und andere quellen des Reliquienkultes” *Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental*, 33 (Paris, 1979), remains the starting point for any discussion of the genre and the factors that shaped it. Geary’s *Furta Sacra* (1978) focuses on the movement of relics through theft. Other scholars like F. Lifshitz, “The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria: Historiographic Discourse and Sainly Relics, 684-1090” *Studies and Texts*, 122. (Toronto, 1995), have analyzed the use of relic translation to construct identity during times of political or social upheaval. D. Appleby, “Spiritual Progress in Carolingian Saxony: a Case from ninth Century Corvey,” *Catholic Historical Review*, 82 (1996), 599-613 analyses the role of relic translation in Carolingian church and monastic reforms. Prinz, *Stadtrömische-Italische Märtyrreliquien*, M. Caroli, *Le traslazioni reliquiali dei secoli VIII - X in Occidente: funzione della regalità carolingia?* University of Bologna doctoral thesis (Bologna, 1999), and E. Bozóky, *La politique des reliques de Constantin à Saint-Louis* (Paris, 2006), among others, have all studied the relationship between relic translation and political symbolism.

¹⁸ H. Delehaye, “Les origines du culte des martyrs,” *Subsidia Hagiographica*, 20 (Brussels, 1933), R. Aigrain, *L'Hagiographie: Ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire* (Paris, 1963) 186-192; D. Appleby, *Hagiography and Ideology in the ninth Century: the Narrative Description of the Translation of Relics*, University of Virginia PhD. Dissertation, (1989).

period from c. 840 to c. 940, translations of relics threatened by Viking raiders comprised the majority of all relic translations, and generated a large portion of all translation-related literature produced in Francia. Although *translationes* had begun to appear as self-contained literary genre as early as the eighth century,¹⁹ the rapidly increasing mobility of relics during the Viking era brought about a flowering of the *translatio* genre, along with its own standard motifs and set-pieces.²⁰

Narrative descriptions of the evacuations of relics threatened by Viking raids began with the raids themselves. Alcuin wrote about Norse attacks on monastic targets in northern England during the late eighth century,²¹ but it was not until the major Viking incursions of the mid-ninth century occurred that continental authors began to say more about their effects on relic shrines. As the attacks peaked across western Francia in the 850s and 860s, Hincmar of Reims, Audradus Modicus, Paschasius Radbertus, and other Carolingian men of letters began to intone at greater length on the nature and meaning of the attacks.²² By the end of the ninth century, many of the “classics” of the new Viking-era “forced

¹⁹ Heinzelmann, “Translationsberichte,” 89.

²⁰ Scholars disagree about the extent to which the Viking attacks affected Frankish intellectual production, particularly the composition of translation literature. Some see a decrease in output as the work of Frankish ecclesiastical writers was disrupted by the attacks: J.-C. Poulin, *L'idéal de sainteté dans l'Aquitaine carolingienne, d'après les sources hagiographiques, 750-950* (Quebec, 1975), 9-13; N. Price *The Vikings in Brittany*, (1989) 20. Other historians have argued counter-intuitively that the setbacks of the Viking era prodded Frankish scriptoria to advertise the continuing relevance of monasteries and their saints' cults during times of upheaval: T. Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints. The Diocese of Orléans, 800-1200* (Cambridge, 1990), 56; Lifshitz, “The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria,” 113-4.

²¹ Alcuin, *Carmina*, no. 9, MGH Poetae, 1, 229-235.

²² Audradus Modicus, *Liber Revelationum*, published in L. Traube, “O Roma nobilis. Philologische Untersuchungen aus dem Mittelalter,” *Abhandlungen der philosophisch-philologischer Classe der königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 19 (1982), 378-387. Translated into English by P. Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader* (Peterborough, 2004), 357-358. For Hincmar and Paschasius Radbertus' contributions, see Chapters 2 and 3 below.

translation” genre, like Ermentarius’ narration of the tribulations of St. Filibert of Noirmoutier, had achieved widespread influence.

Occasionally, Viking-era *translationes* survive as stand-alone documents.²³ More often they are preserved as epilogues to a saint’s *vita* or as sections in *miracula* describing miraculous deeds that occurred in exile.

Narrative descriptions of Viking-era translations are also often preserved in institutional narrative documents maintained by affected dioceses and monasteries, including *annales*, *gesta abbatum*, *gesta pontificum*, cartularies, and other documents describing property holdings. By the middle of the tenth century, so many relics had been uprooted at some point during the attacks that translation accounts became a standard part of the textual “dossier” of texts that served a saint’s cult and a typical feature of a saint’s post-mortem résumé.

Outside of hagiography, Viking-era translations are most frequently mentioned in *annales*, the distinctive chronographies of Carolingian monastic historians. This points to the importance of these translations on the empire-wide scale at which most annalists chose to frame their history. The *Annales Bertiniani*, the *Annales Engolismenses*, the *Annales Fuldenses*, the *Annales Vedastini*, the *Annales Xantenses* and others include notices of evacuations both far and near in the same breath as major political and military developments within the empire.²⁴ Finally, cartularies, polyptychs and other property

²³ The BHL lists a number of them, though it contains a rather thin tally of free-standing *translationes* of any kind. See also Heinzemann, “Translationsberichte,” 46; Mikoletzky, “Sinn und Art der Heiligung,” 97-102.

²⁴ N. Hermann-Mascard, *Les reliques des saints. Formation coutumière d'un droit* (Paris, 1975), 59.

documents provide invaluable registers of the movements of monks, clerics, and their relics throughout their far-flung estates.

1.2 *Topoi* and Other Problems

In spite of the wealth of information hagiographic sources contain, it is only recently that they have been allowed back in from the cold as credible witnesses to medieval history. For most of the last century, the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*'s taciturn rejection of any aspects of the genre that lacked identifiable, datable historical protagonists effectively trumped the Catholic broad-mindedness of the *Acta Sanctorum*, which took a broader view of the value of the hagiographical documents its editors included. The debate over the value of hagiographic sources has reopened during the latter half of the twentieth century,²⁵ however, and the staunch positivism of earlier generations of historians has gradually yielded to increasing receptiveness toward hagiographic texts, including *translationes*, making them again a primary subject of inquiry. *Translationes* have benefited from the general broadening of the acceptable topics for historiography that the *Annales* scholars championed in the first third of the 1900s.

This is not to suggest that *translationes* can be read as perfect mirrors of the events they describe. Many of these texts can be – to put it kindly – careless with regard to the details of the Viking attacks and fixated on standardized

²⁵ Fichtenau, "Zum Reliquienwesen," 61-2, wrote about the need to reconsider hagiography as 1952. F. Graus' *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger. Studien sur Hagiographie der Merowingerzeit* (Prague, 1965).

miracle stories cribbed from other texts. Though most scholars today are loath to dismiss the wealth of surviving hagiographic texts as the “over-eager musings” of imaginative scribes,²⁶ the problems of general exaggeration and the employment of *topoi* continues to hang over the genre, driving a wedge between texts describing the attacks and the attacks as they actually unfolded in reality.

It is inappropriate, however, to blame the authors of *translationes* for their dependence upon recycled *topoi*. These texts were, first and foremost, composed as liturgical texts whose function was performative.²⁷ The use of set-pieces, borrowed language and adherence to other “laws of the genre” should not necessarily suggest a lack of authenticity; rather, these kinds of *topoi* represent an attempt to recast local events so that they matched easily recognizable, universal categories of pious deeds.²⁸ These texts were produced for moral instruction or to establish monastic claims, and were never meant to function as proper “histories.” From an anthropological perspective, *translationes* are less a depiction of the real world than a reflection of a political, cultural, and religious ideology shared by the cult community.²⁹ They are exercises in the spirituality of imitation, achieved by adherence to an ideal, and dependent upon the introduction of well-known *topoi* as a way of explaining and situating these

²⁶ Fichtenau, *Zum Reliquienwesen*, 61-2. Smith, “Oral and Written,” 309-43, traces this anti-hagiographical attitude as far back as the twelfth century.

²⁷ J.-L. Derouet, “Les possibilités d’interprétation sémiologique des textes hagiographiques,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Église de France*, 62 (1976), 153-62, suggests that the contextual meaning of hagiographic texts lay in the effects of idealized and repetitive “performance” of the text as liturgy. See also M. van Uytfange, “Le remploi dans l’hagiographie: une ‘loi du genre’ qui étouffe l’originalité?” *Ideologie e pratiche del reimpiego nell’alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 1999), 359-411.

²⁸ van Uytfange, “Le remploi dans l’hagiographie,” 409.

²⁹ Caroli, *Le traslazioni reliquiali*, 14-5.

events in their historical context.³⁰ *Topoi*, in other words, do not obscure the historical content of *translationes*, they merely represent it on different terms.

Of all hagiographic texts, *translationes* are most beholden to their historical context, a fact which further mitigates the issue of *topoi*. *Translationes* were generally written in response to real events that were plainly reflected in the geography of a saint's location, as well as the chronology of the saint's journey. *Translationes* describing the movements of displaced cults were particularly "crisis-led" documents, composed in response to the evacuation of communities in response to discrete episodes of Viking attack.³¹ Their purpose was not simply to echo standardized models for their own sake, but to create a credible narrative that explained and justified the relocation of affected relics. The fact that these sources had a distinctly partisan bent merely brings them into line with every other narrative source from the middle ages. Yet, as with other histories, Viking-era *translationes* had to be plausible to be effective. They had to therefore mirror the wider experience of monks and clerics during the attacks in a way that would be recognizable to their audience, even if certain details might be misrepresented. While any one *translatio* might be factually undependable, the overwhelming weight of the hundreds of notices on the forced translation experience, both from hagiography and from other genres, together add up to a substantial body of evidence about the plight of Frankish relics and their guardians during the Viking attacks.

³⁰ S. Boesch Gajano, *L'agiografia*, 826

³¹ The concept of "crisis led" literature is P. Stafford's, *Unification and Conquest. A Political and Social History of England in the tenth and eleventh centuries* (London, 1989), 16-23; this concept is also mentioned in Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 11, and Caroli *Le Traslazione reliquali*, 12.

Finally, the issue of these documents' "factual accuracy" also underscores the problematic nature of the relationship between these texts *qua* texts on the one hand and the events they purport to describe on the other. Although this is not an issue unique to Viking-era *translationes*, it is important to remember that these relic translations themselves are not directly interchangeable with the texts about them. The attacks drove the creation of a lot of literature, but the motivations for the composition of this literature were often only tangentially related to the motivations for the translations themselves. Fortunately, much of the information in these *translationes* can be corroborated by somewhat less ambiguous diplomatic, annalistic, and property records, particularly with regard to questions of chronology and location.

Overall, the distinction between history and historiography in these texts is a flimsy one. The religious and political spheres in which the cult of relics played out revolved as much around personal intention and cosmology as they did around real world "events."³² Intangible but nonetheless deeply held philosophies governed the actions of relic translators as much as Viking swords did. These kinds of factors, which only partially dodge questions about the accuracy of Viking-era translation accounts as sources of *histoire événementielle*, are nevertheless an authentic reflection of the aspirations, confusion, and anomie – justified or not – that governed the choices made by monks as they fled.

³² H. Beumann, "Methodenfragen der Mittelalterliche Geschichtsschreibung" and "Die Historiographie des Mittelalters als Quelle für die ideengeschichte des Königtums," both in *Wissenschaft vom Mittelalter. Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Cologne, 1972), 1-8 and 201.

PART TWO: Viking Agency

Two terrifying, inscrutable prime movers governed the drama within accounts of forced relic translations. The first was God, the second, the Vikings. Within the context of translation literature, Norse raiders erupt unannounced onto the pages of annals and *translationes*, just as they did on coastal shores, to rain terror over unprotected relic shrines. Yet medieval texts contain very little information about the attackers, their motivations, or their objectives, and medieval scribes remain generally silent on the subject of Viking habits and activities during their raids on the continent.³³ This lack of basic information about the Vikings continues to have consequences today, engendering widespread disagreement about the most fundamental aspects of the attacks. Modern scholars differ over both the basic cause and effects of the Scandinavian migrations.³⁴ Recent research has ferreted out an increasing abundance of data about the Vikings, however, demonstrating that the nimble raiders were far more adaptable and their strategies far more complex than they at first appear.

The clerical bent of surviving Frankish sources undoubtedly colors our understanding of the attacks. Monastic scribes probably magnified the effects of the attacks by focusing myopically on the destruction of churches and monasteries at the hands of the Vikings. These institutions may indeed have

³³ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Vikings In Francia," in idem, *Early Medieval History* (1975), 222-6; A. d'Haenens, *Les invasions normandes en Belgique au IX^e siècle. Le phénomène et sa répercussions dans l'historiographie médiévale* (Louvain, 1967), 13-14.

³⁴ A summary of the various theories on the causes of the invasions can be found in H. Zettel, *Das Bild der Normannen und der Normanneneinfälle in wesfränkische, ostfränkische und angelsächsischen Quellen des 8. bis 11. Jahrhunderts*, (Munich, 1977), 22-4.

been disproportionately affected, exaggerating destruction that may have been modest elsewhere.³⁵ Ecclesiastical authors may also have failed to report profitable interactions they enjoyed with the Norse raiders, and certainly minimized the impact the raids and the removal of holy patrons had on rural communities in West Francia. Whatever the case, it remains impossible to talk about the effects of Viking activity without focusing on the plight of churches and monasteries.

Cloisters and cathedral churches were hit equally hard by Viking raids over the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, leaving no shortage of writers to commit their personal experiences of the attacks to parchment. Almost none of these Christian commentators, however, present themselves as having meaningful, personal interactions with the Scandinavians that came to their land.³⁶ This separation is an integral part of the way Frankish writers represented the attacks, which they always couched in purely antagonistic, even tragic terms. They borrowed heavily from the rhetoric of lamentation that had developed in response to earlier barbarian invasions, itself politically charged by Roman authors in late antiquity. Ninth and tenth century authors equated Vikings with Goths, Vandals, and other bogeymen of the fifth and sixth centuries. They also found precedents for the Viking attacks in the plagues and persecutions of the Old Testament.³⁷ This tendency to look backward for historical parallels reflects

³⁵ Zettel, *Das Bild der Normannen*, 264; A. d'Haenens, "Les invasions normandes dans l'empire franc au IX^e siècle. Pour un renouvellement de la problématique in I Normanni e la loro espansione," *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo*, 16 (Spoleto 1968), 286.

³⁶ d'Haenens, *Les invasions Normandes en Belgique*, 13-4.

³⁷ P. Riché, "Conséquences des invasions normandes sur la culture monastique de l'occident franc," *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, 16 (Spoleto, 1969), 714; d'Haenens, *Les invasions normandes en Belgique*, 17-20; M. Sepet, *Saint-Gildas de Ruis*.

a failure among contemporary authors to consider the Scandinavian invaders as a new and unique threat. It is also a testament to the general resignation of Frankish ecclesiastics to the attacks. Frankish writers rarely bothered to ponder the attacks' underlying causes or motivations; when they occasionally did so, clerics most commonly ascribed them to Frankish sinfulness, with the Vikings as agents of God's dissatisfaction over the political and ecclesiastical order of the Christian Frankish empire.³⁸

The gloomy tone and emotional distance with which most medieval chroniclers approached the Scandinavian newcomers has, by dint of its overwhelming consistency, continued to dominate the modern historiographical debate over the proper interpretation of the attacks. M. Bloch suggested in the 1930s that modern historians, with the benefit of hindsight, might be in a better position to assess the scope and effects of the Viking invasions than contemporary witnesses were,³⁹ but this remains a debatable proposition, especially in light of the sharply divergent assessments of the Viking assault that have developed in the last few decades.

The classic picture of the attacks, which descends directly from the cheerless narratives produced by ninth and tenth century hagiographers, placed swift-attacking pillagers in opposition to a decadent, bloated Carolingian empire

Aperçus d'histoire monastique (Paris, 1900), 11-12; D. Planavergne, "Les Normands avant la Normandie: les invasions scandinaves en Neustrie au IX^e siècle dans l'hagiographie franque," in P. Bauduin (ed.), *Fondations scandinaves en Occident et les débuts de la Normandie* (Caen, 2005), 38.

³⁸ F. Lifshitz, "The Migration of Neustrian Relics in the Viking Age: The Myth of Voluntary Exodus, the Reality of Coercion and Theft," *Early Medieval Europe*, 4 (1995), 176, blames this narrative on Orderic Vitalis, but it long predates his twelfth century career.

³⁹ M. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, L.A. Mayon (trans.), 1 (Chicago, 1961), 16.

already collapsing from its own internal divisions.⁴⁰ This interpretation, favored by such figures as Bloch, E. Lesne, and G. Duby, laid primary blame for the deleterious effects of the attacks at the feet of civil authorities, both at the local and the imperial levels, and on a general moral decay that sapped the empire of its vigor. Under this schema, the withdrawal of monks and relics during the Viking assault amplified the pattern of social and institutional disarray that hastened the collapse of centralized Carolingian authority by the turn of the tenth century.⁴¹

By the 1960s and 1970s, however, renewed interest in the later Carolingians gradually led to a reappraisal of the health of the empire during and after the Viking attacks. A groundswell of studies began to show that the evidence for the widespread *devastatio* and *depopulatio* described in hagiographic sources was not as complete as it should have been. Among the discrepancies were the surprising lack of archaeological evidence to support the epidemic abandonment of monasteries and the remarkably quick resurgence of these institutions, many of which seem to have regained their former prosperity only a short time after their supposed “destruction.” This, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, has led a new generation of historians to recast the effects of the attacks as being primarily psychological, and to consider them more as a mental than a physical shock to the Frankish monks and clerics who wrote about

⁴⁰ For example, G. Duby, *Adolescence de la chrétienté médiévale* (Geneva, 1967), 58: “l’armée du roi, faite pour l’agression préméditée, lente à se rassembler, lente à se mouvoir, se montrait tout à fait incapable de résister, de repousser, de prévenir les incursions [Normands]...”

⁴¹ Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 1, 39-42. E. Lesne, *Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique*, 4, (1940), outlines the damage and loss of monastic property during the attacks, highlighting its impact on subsequent European economic and intellectual development.

them. For some historians, this line of reasoning culminated in the rejection of hagiographic sources as reliable documents on the effects of the Viking attacks on Francia's monasteries, or worse still, as a conspiracy hatched by eleventh and twelfth century hagiographers to artificially magnify the attacks for their own purposes.⁴²

The backlash against the older, classic narrative of the Viking attacks has more recently, however, itself come in for reexamination. While many of the critiques of the older interpretation of the Viking attacks are justified, others argue that the complete rejection of the hagiographic narrative of the attacks has gone too far. Critics tore down the image of the Vikings as ruthless pagan church burners, but they replaced it with an equally unlikely caricature, that of the Viking as (in the words of J.M. Wallace-Hadrill) "long-haired tourists who occasionally roughed up the natives."⁴³

This dissertation is one of a number of recent studies that have looked again at Viking-era hagiography. These documents must be interrogated more carefully in light of the objections made by revisionists in order to yield insight into late Carolingian writers' rhetorical strategies, as well as into the situation on the ground. Contemporary forced translation accounts are too valuable to discount or to downplay as mere indicators of purely psychological effects, since these effects were nevertheless an important aspect of late- and post-Carolingian history. This is all the more true when it comes to the effects on ideological

⁴² This position is advanced most forcefully by Lifshitz, "The Migration of Neustrian Relics," 175-192. See also N. Lund, "Allies of God or Man? The Viking Expansion in a European Perspective," *Viator*, 20 (1989), 45-59.

⁴³ Wallace-Hadrill, "The Vikings in Francia," 220.

constructions like relic cults, which were particularly susceptible to ideological upset by “fear of the Normans” (*metus Normannorum*). It would be naïve to return to the overly-credulous approaches of the nineteenth century, but in the words of H. Delehaye, the occasional rhetorical excesses of generations of dislocated monks may, like all great fiction, hold claim to a higher truth than “history.”⁴⁴

PART THREE: The Politics of Relic Translation

The appearance of Viking raiders shook up religious life throughout West Francia, but the movements of monks, clerics, and relics had implications that, this dissertation argues, stretched far beyond the confines of the monasteries and churches that they left behind. Some of the most far-reaching effects of the dislocation of relics during the Viking era were felt in political circles, which were heavily interlinked with relic cults in long-standing relationships of mutual support and patronage. Close reading of “forced translation” texts suggests that the movement of relics and the subsequent disruption of these relationships helped usher in the momentous transformations of dynastic and geopolitical order (sometimes called the “feudal mutation”) that marked the turn of the tenth century in West Francia.

In addition to having a religious role, relics have always been fixtures in medieval politics as well. Hagiographical texts, as a consequence, almost

⁴⁴ Paraphrased from Delehaye’s defense of the Bollandist project. H. Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography*, V.M. Crawford (trans.), (London, 1907), 230-1.

always feature some kind of contemporary political content. Indeed, there seems to have been a direct relationship between writing about kings and writing about saints – many of the most prominent Carolingian literary figures did both, often in the same text.⁴⁵ This interconnectedness is a product of the common themes that link medieval hagiography and medieval political rhetoric. Both, for instance, place primary emphasis on powerful human beings at the center of historical developments. Both are also preoccupied with the desire for order, stability, and dependable patronage. These parallels formed the basis of an all-pervasive “relic politics” (*Reliquienpolitik*) that defined both political life and relic cult practice during the Carolingian era.

The movement of relics is a useful way to shed light on Frankish political developments, first because of the many hagiographical texts that describe the changing political situation. A great deal of information about late Carolingian politics would have been lost if relic cults had not been caught up in the Viking crisis, since monks and clerics would have been less inclined to write about events that did not involve the movement of their saints. But there is more to the role of relics in politics than the mere availability of sources. One could suppose that it was the movements of monks or clerics – and not the movements of relics – that caused so much concern among contemporary ecclesiastical writers. Although it is true that the forced migrations of threatened churchmen had important effects on their own, relics cannot be removed from the equation. Relics concentrated fleeing religious communities’ sense of identity, without which many would have lost their cohesion. The presence of relics in exile, as

⁴⁵ Caroli, *Le Traslazione reliquali*, 9.

we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3, brought a sense of continuity to religious communities, and helped attract patronage that would have been hard to secure in the absence of relics. The lay patrons who supported relic cults like those of St. Martin on the Loire and St. Maxentius in Brittany made explicit reference to their relics when making gifts to these communities, gifts which, combined with the communities' liturgical focus on their relics, helped them maintain functioning, cohesive institutions despite spending decades in exile far from their homes.

In addition to their role as focal points for religious communities, relics also had important freestanding political roles on their own. Relic translations and written accounts describing relic translation were both dominated by three main political factors, each discussed in turn below. The first was that saints' relics themselves had a certain intrinsic political importance everywhere within the empire. Relic translations in particular, because of their emphasis on public ceremony and tendency to cross jurisdictional boundaries, highlight crucial political relationships of power and loyalty between the translating parties.

The second factor, derived from the first, is that holy corpses, which existed both as material objects and as symbols of powerful religious ideologies, actually functioned as physical tokens of political influence. More so than any other political symbol, relics were commoditized into a highly fungible "spiritual capital" that could be accumulated, warehoused, and redeployed in exchange for political advantage.

Third, the political benefits of participation in relic cults were enjoyed not only by lay elites but also by the monks and clerics who maintained the cults.

These benefits did not come free to lay cult patrons, but had to be earned over time through generous patronage and physical protection. When this symbiotic relationship of mutual support was abrogated, as it often was during the Viking invasions, the social contract between kings and their relics dissolved. This freed the relics' keepers to engage in more favorable relationships with new political actors. While the first two factors influence all relic translations, the third is a symptom of the dislocation and political upheaval almost exclusively associated with the forced translations of the later ninth and tenth centuries.

3.1 The Political Importance of Relics

The intermixing of relic cults and politics was an inevitable consequence of the overlap between the heavenly and earthly power structures that governed medieval life. This interaction was built on a tradition that long predated the evacuation of Frankish relics during the Viking era. Although forced translations made up only a fraction of the politically important relic translations of the ninth and tenth centuries, the political implications of all kinds of relic translation are worth focusing on here because they underscore the sharp contrast between the process of relic translation at the beginning of the Carolingian dynasty and at its end.

The alliance between kings and saints, the twin heavyweights of their respective patronage spheres, was a natural fit. Carolingian princes and saints each benefited from the other's prestige, and both could expect concrete rewards

from the other. For monarchs and other powerful lay people, the political advantages of close association with important saints' cults were plentiful. Relics were tied to the exercise of official authority, assigned with a conspicuous role in guaranteeing oaths, dispensing justice, and other activities associated with public power.⁴⁶ Political and religious practices increasingly converged as the association between kings and relic cults matured. Even before the reign of Charlemagne, Carolingian monarchs took on liturgical/religious functions, and their sponsorship of relic translations is a notable example of this new role. Conversely, relic cults increasingly incorporated into their own vocabulary aspects of royal ceremony, like the *adventus* rituals monarchs used to mark their arrivals in significant places.⁴⁷

Rather than being subsumed into the palace, however, royally sponsored relic cults remained highly public affairs. There were a number of reasons for this, not least of which was the longstanding notion that relics were objects God had placed on earth for the common good of all believers, not to be privately owned even by the most powerful lay authorities. Moreover, relic cults also needed to be exposed to the widest possible number of people if they were to be useful in a political context. Long before the evacuation of Frankish relics during the Viking attacks, relic translation ceremonies of all sorts had proven a particularly good opportunity for advertising royal cults and cementing them in the public memory. In the case of royally-sponsored translations, these ceremonies

⁴⁶ Fichtenau, *Zum Reliquienwesen*, 69-70.

⁴⁷ Heinzelmann, *Translationsberichte*, 35; S. MacCormack, "Change and Continuity in Late Antiquity: the ceremony of *adventus*," *Historia*, 21 (1972), 721-52 (esp. p. 747); McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 64.

also created a clear institutional role for the monarch, one that emphasized his connection with the saint.⁴⁸

There were also practical benefits. Saints' relics radiated divine *virtus* upon those associated with them, which could lend precious legitimacy to political actors in precarious times. The Carolingian dynasty, although not the first to employ relics for political purposes,⁴⁹ possessed a particularly "heightened Christian consciousness" that brought this kind of *Reliquienpolitik* to an unparalleled intensity.⁵⁰ Some of the most politically charged moments in Carolingian history were marked by the translation of relics. Certainly, the translation of Roman relics across the Alps into Francia played an essential role in the cementing of crucial political ties with the papacy.⁵¹ Spectacular transalpine relic translations, such as the papally sanctioned translations of Sts. Vitus and Petronilla from Rome, were part of the pageantry of the young Frankish empire at the height of its radiance.⁵² By the ninth century, the injection of politics

⁴⁸ M. Caroli "Bringing Saints to Cities and Monasteries: 'translationes' in the Making of a Sacred Geography (Ninth-Tenth Centuries)," in G.P. Brogiolo and N. Gauthier (eds.), *Towns and their territories between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages*, (Boston, 2000), 266.

⁴⁹ Many historians cite the politicization of religious symbolism as a major innovation of the Carolingian dynasty, but others have shown that the phenomenon has deeper roots. See, for example, U. Swinarski, *Herrschen mit den Heiligen. Kirchenbesuche, Pilgerfahrten und Heiligenverehrung früh- und hochmittelalterlicher Herrscher (ca. 500-1200) (Geist und Werk der Zeiten, 78)*, (Bern, 1991): 25-51, 247-268; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983), 53-74.

⁵⁰ H. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000. Cambridge* (Cambridge, 2005), 27; See also M. de Jonge, "Carolingian Monasticism: The Power of Prayer," in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History, 2* (1995-8), 622-53, on Louis the Pious' conception of himself at the head of a distinctly "Christian empire."

⁵¹ Prinz, "Stadtrömische-Italische Märtyrreliquien"; Geary, *Furta Sacra*; J. McCulloh, "From Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change in Papal Relic Policy from the Sixth to the Eighth Century," in E. Dassmann and K. Frank (eds.), *Pietas: Festschrift für Bernhard Kötting, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband, 8* (1980): 313-324.

⁵² The appeal of Roman relics continued under other dynasties, including the Ottonians, who nurtured a similar self-image as heirs to the Roman Empire. Both Ottonians and Carolingians sought to import cults with strong ties to Rome and the papacy in order to bring the thaumaturgic power of the ancient martyrs north of the Alps into their own territory, and also to claim credit for

into relic cults and relic cults into politics was *de rigueur* everywhere in Christian Europe.⁵³

Even after the dynasty's position was secure, relic translations of all kinds continued to be a major imperial preoccupation. Carolingian princes, together with local elites working on a smaller scale, looked to relic cults as localized sources of prosperity and defense, decisive to the "stability of the realm" (*stabilitas regni*).⁵⁴ Relics strengthened local institutions by attracting pious donations and provided a rallying point and a critical source of support for lay political officials in good times and bad.⁵⁵ The malleability of dead saints made them particularly attractive in this regard; they could be pressed into service to defend against anything from conquest by foreign armies to the encroaching power of domestic rivals. Since they were so useful in building support for the lay patrons of their cults, competition to control the most illustrious relics, and of course their movements through space, was intense.

Although harder to assess, relics also functioned as valuable tools of political unification. The most important cults – those with widespread, trans-regional appeal – fused together disparate social sub-units into a single polity or family (*familia*) jointly governed by the patronage of "national saints" (*Staatsheiligen*) and the patronage of the lay magnates that sponsored their cults. In the instrumentalist framework of Benedict Anderson's "imagined

having done so. Caroli, *Le traslazioni reliquiali*, 129-94; Appleby, *Hagiography and Ideology*, 29-34.

⁵³ E. Bozóky, *La politique des reliques*, 51-9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ The role of saints as patrons and protectors of cities was well-established at least since Ambrose of Milan's day in the fourth century. M. Heinzelmänn, *Translationsberichte*, 33; Riché, "Translations des reliques," 208-10; Fichtenau, "Zum Reliquienwesen," 71-2.

communities,” this sort of relic cult, patronized by the king, was a primary means of reminding citizens of their shared identity as the king’s subjects.⁵⁶ The cults of Sts. Martin and Denis fulfilled this role for the Carolingians, but other cults came to perform similar duties for rulers in other regions, such as the cult of St. Boniface in Saxony, St. Martial in Aquitaine, or St. Anskar in Denmark, to name a few. On the provincial scale, the giving and receiving of relics strengthened connections between local ecclesiastics, lay leaders, and ordinary worshippers. Like all gifts, their circulation reiterated hierarchy; recipients of Carolingian relic largesse knew the subordinate terms under which they gained access to the power of relics. The Carolingian archbishop of Reims, Hincmar (806-882), for example, was a master at promoting the unifying effects of the circulation of relics within his ecclesiastical sphere. He distributed relics associated with his own cathedral to subordinate bishops, and collected other relics from around the region to his church at Reims as a means of strengthening hierarchical relationships and demonstrating the unity of the province.⁵⁷ Relic translations helped to further export this kind of unity to all corners of the empire. Translations and other relic-related rituals had the power to integrate all segments of Frankish society, linking people from different places and different social strata as dynamic participants and consumers of shared relic ceremonies. The presence of holy relics validated the communal rituals that bound the empire’s heterogeneous population together. Sponsorship of cult activities by

⁵⁶ White, *Saints and their Cults*, 172-3.

⁵⁷ J. Devisse, *Hincmar, Archevêque de Reims*, 1 (Geneva, 1975), 69, note 203, discussing Hincmar’s program of relic redistribution: “Hincmar souhaitait peut-être symboliser l’unité de sa province en rassemblant à Reims des reliques venus des divers diocèses.”

political elites did the same, reiterating the shared political identity of participants, as well as the hierarchies of power by which they were ruled.⁵⁸ Relic cult liturgy, in the words of F. Paxton, “weld[ed] various linguistic, ethnic and legal groups into some form of unified society,” ideally with a single, stable dynasty at its head.⁵⁹

In time, the translations of important relics could become a matter of deeply self-conscious “national” pride. Widukind of Corvey boasted that the translations of St. Vitus from Paris to Corvey in Saxony in 836 (a translation, noted above, which predated the Viking attacks on the continent) sapped the Franks of their strength and “weakened the Frankish kingdom to the benefit of Saxony.”⁶⁰ Widukind was not the first to express such zero-sum sentiments about relics’ potency, but his is the clearest distillation of the idea that relic translation, power, and the prosperity of a territory were firmly linked.⁶¹

Taken all together, these factors demonstrate that the translation of relics had, by the Carolingian period, become a necessarily political act. This was true for the carefully orchestrated, triumphal translations that marked the empire’s expansion during the early ninth century and, as we shall see in ensuing

⁵⁸ Swinarski, *Herrschen mit den Heiligen*, 167-206; E. Bozóky, “La politique des reliques des premiers comtes de Flandre,” in E. Bozóky and A.-M. Helvétius (eds), *Les reliques. Objets, cultes, symboles: actes du colloque international de l’Université du Littoral-Côte d’Opale (Boulogne-sur-Mer), 4-6 septembre 1997* (Brussels, 1999), 271-92.

⁵⁹ F. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY, 1990), 4; see also R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789-895* (London, 1977), 115-54.

⁶⁰ Widukind of Corvey, *Res gestae Saxonicae*, 1, in *Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters, Freiherr vom Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe*, 8 (Darmstadt, 1971), 66: “...ex hoc res Francorum coeperunt minimi, Saxonum vere crescere.”

⁶¹ Bozóky, “La politique des reliques des premiers comtes de Flandre,” 283; Heinzelmann, *Translationsberichte*, 34-5.

chapters, it was also true for the hasty, forced relic translations that came to characterize the empire's undoing in the later ninth and tenth centuries as well.

3.2 "Spiritual Capital" and Territorial Expansion

In the century of Carolingian rule before the Vikings' arrival, the regulated, state-sanctioned movement of relics was an unerring indicator of the expansion of Carolingian influence. Carolingian elites instigated larger numbers of ordinary relic translations than anyone before them, and nearly all of these early translations either took place wholly within the empire or brought in new relics from abroad. The kingdom's growing and more widely disseminated relic collection quickly began to pay political dividends. To put it in economic terms, as the Carolingians' stock advanced, so too did the "spiritual capital" they amassed in their expanding stable of holy bodies.

The "capital" contained in Frankish relics is, on one hand, a function of their status as valuable physical objects. Saints' relics could, under proper circumstances, be exchanged for money like other commodities.⁶² They also made for very important prestige objects hungrily coveted by medieval aristocrats of all stripes. On the other hand, relics differed from other kinds of economic capital in important ways. First, in addition to being material goods, they were also people – dead people, but powerful dead people who nevertheless played

⁶² For a lengthy treatment of relics as commodities, see P. Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 5-8, and idem, "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics," in A. Appaduri (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), 169-191; H. Röckelein, *Reliquientranslationen nach Sachsen im 9. Jahrhundert. Über Kommunikation, Mobilität und Öffentlichkeit im Frühmittelalter* (Stuttgart, 2002), 152.

an active, continuing role in the life of the cult community. This meant that they could not be traded from hand to hand like chattel, but had to be handled with a certain degree of respectful solemnity. As a result, their translations were typically justified in religious rather than commercial terms (i.e., as an aid to conversion in newly Christianized areas, or to move important relics to a grander tomb more befitting of their status).

Second, unlike other forms of capital, relics actually increased in value the more they were circulated. The ceremonial procession and exhibition of relics throughout their territories did not deplete them, but rather recharged their strength and relevance. The more often relics were made available, the more often they could work their wonders, become sought out for cures, justice, and other services, and thus the more valuable they became. The lay and ecclesiastical authorities who controlled relics knew this and regulated access to their power as a way of reinforcing social hierarchy, sharing them with subjects and allies and withholding them from enemies.

Saints' relics were thus not purely economic objects of exchange, but they still possessed high value. The "spiritual capital" represented by saints' relics promoted important social relationships. In this sense, spiritual capital inhabits a middle ground between the classic Marxist description of capital as an economic asset that can be used to enforce social relationships, and the modern sociological framework of "social" or "cultural" capital. J. Coleman has described "social capital" as the value assigned to intangible resources like trust, goodwill,

prestige, or obligation within human social networks.⁶³ Similarly, P. Bourdieu has advanced the concept of “cultural capital,” which consists of other immaterial assets (like education or knowledge of social norms) that help reinforce social status.⁶⁴ These other kinds of capital were, like medieval relics, difficult to attain and carefully deployed for maximum benefit by any aristocrat who had them. Carolingian princes in particular sought to advance their own interests by acquiring and redistributing this “capital” to strengthen existing political alliances and bolster their control in newly conquered regions, among other goals.

The deployment of this kind of spiritual capital was a very effective means of consolidating Carolingian strength in the eighth and early ninth century. The social and economic networks established by the circulation of relics were, however, turned on their head by the arrival of Norse raiders. Not only did the attacks roll back Carolingian influence on the battlefield, but accounts of Viking-era translations show that they also pushed out the relics that undergirded that earlier expansion. These texts indicate that the dislocation of relics caused by the attacks freed up Carolingian “spiritual capital” so that, by the turn of the tenth century, it could flow to new generations of lay cult patrons eager to commandeer it.

Before the Vikings’ arrival, relics and relic translation were closely tied to Carolingian territorial expansion. Alongside other kinds of religious politicking,⁶⁵

⁶³ J. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA 1990), 300-318.

⁶⁴ P. Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford, 1998), 19-31. See also B. Verter, “Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu,” *Sociological Theory*, 21, no. 2 (June 2003), 150-174.

⁶⁵ Such as support for monastic reforms, for example, or the establishment of new religious foundations, which often went hand-in-hand with relic translation.

relics and relic translation had been a primary means of affirming political dominance within a given territory. Ecclesiastical and political leaders benefited simultaneously from the use of relic translations to expand church institutions within the expanding empire, which acted both as springboards for the political assimilation of the local population and as anchors of continuing political support for their patrons.⁶⁶ Churches and monasteries became instruments of political control, functioning as repositories of administrative expertise, outposts for territorial claims, waystations for royal officials, centers of propaganda production, and other services vital to the strength of the dynasty's grip on its conquests.⁶⁷ In return for benefices and other gifts, lay authorities built stable, multi-generational links with churches and monasteries and gained access to indispensable monastic resources. Because of their vast proprietary wealth and networks of smaller donors, churches and monasteries became powerful sources of support for ambitious lay aristocrats whose control was otherwise tenuous.

Relic translation proved to be the quickest means of bolstering nascent political and religious establishments, particularly along the frontiers where indigenous saints were scarce. Newly imported saints acted as forward agents both of God and of the conquering polities from which they had been translated. Frontier institutions were transformed into outposts of political and religious forms emanating from the heart of the empire. Since everyone gained in the transaction, these translations engendered a mutual solidarity (*amicitia*) that

⁶⁶ J. Giraud, "Le commerce des reliques au commencement du IX^e siècle," *Mélanges G.B. de Rossi (Supplément aux Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire publ. par l'École Française de Rome)*, 12 (Paris, 1892), 76; Appleby, *Hagiography and Ideology*, 177.

⁶⁷ C. Potts, *Monastic Revival and Regional Identity in Early Normandy* (Rochester, 1997), 34.

linked all parties involved in their translation, further tying the empire's center to its peripheries.⁶⁸ Lay elites eagerly sought to establish themselves as *committentes*, or sponsors, of these translations to harness these benefits for themselves.⁶⁹

Relics were deployed in this way throughout the Frankish marches. The most impressive utilization of this kind of spiritual capital occurred in Saxony. It was by means of well-publicized translations of Frankish relics to newly-founded frontier abbeys and cathedrals that the Carolingians merged the twin processes of conquest and conversion in Saxony. By organizing the new Saxon church from the moment of conquest around monasteries and cathedrals supported by Frankish patronage and populated with Frankish relics, Saxons were forced to accept not only Frankish political domination but also the hegemony of Frankish clerics and saints, each mutually reinforcing the other to the advantage of the Carolingians.⁷⁰ Similar processes of translation and consolidation unfolded in other newly conquered provinces.⁷¹

⁶⁸ K. Hebers, "Mobilität und Kommunikation in der Karolingerzeit: die Reliquienreisen der heiligen Chrysanthus und Daria," in N. Miedma and R. Suntrup (eds.), *Literatur- Geschichte- Literaturgeschichte* (Frankfurt 2003), 658-660; H. Röckelein, *Reliquientransaktionen nach Sachsen*, 49, 141-2, 260-1.

⁶⁹ The potential political benefits of relic translation went hand in hand with the spiritual rewards of sponsoring evangelizing missions to newly converted territories. Frankish elites were keen to link themselves with such efforts, and have a long history of doing so. The preamble to the Salic Law, MGH LL, 4, no. 2, 6-8, for example, explicitly describes the Franks as the direct heirs of the Roman mission to expand Christianity, without the prior history of persecution that stained the Roman past. Their role in the history of salvation included a special responsibility to care for the relics of Christian saints: "Romanorum iugum durissimum de suis ceruicibus excusserent pugnando, atque post agnitionem baptismi sanctorum martyrum corpora, quem Romani igne cremauerunt uel ferro truncauerunt uel besteis lacerando proiecerunt, Franci [reperta] super eos aurum et lapides preciosos ornauerunt."

⁷⁰ H. Röckelein's exhaustive study of the political aspects of relic translation into Saxony, *Reliquientransaktionen nach Sachsen im 9. Jahrhundert. Über Kommunikation, Mobilität und Öffentlichkeit im Frühmittelalter* (Stuttgart, 2002), points out that local Saxon nobles were not always powerless in these relic exchanges. Local aristocrats also gained by receiving relics distributed by the Carolingians. See also K. Honselmann, "Reliquientransaktionen nach Sachsen,"

The transportability of relics bore a double edge, however. If the controlled, imperially-sponsored circulation of relics exemplified Carolingian success, its unregulated acceleration could also symbolize their political downfall later. As the steady diffusion of relics into all territories of the Carolingian empire reversed into a panicked evacuation during the Viking attacks, the wellspring of sacral legitimacy provided by Carolingian-sponsored cults began to dry up. The Frankish dynasty's dependence on a transferable asset as a primary basis of legitimacy left their position increasingly vulnerable to usurpation by others. These new patrons included the counts, viscounts, and other aristocrats that dominated local politics throughout the empire, a class of middle-elites that often resented Carolingian interference in local affairs. Relics' portability, an asset in the expansionary phase of Carolingian history, later turned into a liability as they provided these local aristocrats with a mechanism to advance their own political and social interests at the expense of centralized Carolingian authority.

Because of the political importance of relics during the Carolingian era, the flight of the kingdom's displaced relics during the Viking attacks was all but guaranteed to further destabilize the fading Carolingian dynasty. Regional competitors, better able to protect and patronize these dislocated cults took them in turn as the basis for their own legitimacy as they sought to carve out new principalities from within the former empire.

in Victor Elbern (ed.), *Das erste Jahrtausend*, 1 (Dusseldorf, 1962), 159-63, and R. Schieffer's identically titled "Reliquientranslationen nach Sachsen," in C. Stegmann and M. Wemhoff (eds.), *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Beiträge zum Katalog der Ausstellung Paderborn* (Mainz, 1999), 484-497.

⁷¹ Examples are plentiful. See, for example, Hummer, *Politics and Power*, on Alsace, and W. Hotzelt, "Translationen von Martyrerreliquien aus Rom nach Bayern im 8. Jh.," *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens*, 53 (1935), 286-343, on Bavaria.

3.3 Relics and Reciprocity

In return for the practical advantages that they provided to lay aristocrats of all strata, the keepers of Frankish relic cults expected to be recompensed for the use of their relics. This repayment came in many forms. The simplest were gifts of land or rents on lucrative assets. In the case of newly founded religious institutions, relics themselves often constituted the most important bequest made by sponsoring patrons. Above all, however, monasteries also expected lay patrons to protect them from physical and economic harm.

Lay aristocrats existed in close symbiosis with the custodians of Francia's relic cults, each using its own powers to provide something the other lacked. The relationship between relic cults and their lay patrons was a system of *donner oblige* (obligatory giving), in which obligations were exchanged in addition to wealth and favors. Most recently, J.P. Devroey, building on the earlier studies of the sociology of gift exchange by M. Mauss, has emphasized the prevalence of such systems of mutual obligation and reciprocity in early medieval Europe.⁷² Devroey has shown that the exchange of gifts set up relationships of power and subordination between the parties involved. In the case of relic cults and their lay patrons, this relationship reflected a certain degree of equality, with secular elites

⁷² J.-P. Devroey, *Économie rurale et société dans l'Europe franque (VI^e-IX^e siècles)* (Paris, 2003), 147-214; idem, *Puissants et misérables: Système social et monde paysan dans l'Europe des Francs (VI^e-IX^e siècles)* (Brussels, 2006), 203-353; M. Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, W. D. Halls (trans.), (New York, 1990).

providing material support to monks and clerics in return for less tangible but no less critical political and spiritual benefits.⁷³

The demands of this system of reciprocity manifested themselves in a kind of social contract that brought positive relations and mutual advantage to all parties. The interlocking nature of these reciprocal relationships further amplified their rewards. Royally sponsored cults could, for example, call upon the king's protection from encroachment on their interests by the king's own vassals. For their part, aristocrats that sponsored relic cults could claim a certain preeminence over all those who were in the saint's spiritual debt. In this way, aristocratic magnificence and saintly *virtus* reinforced one another – as long as both sides held up their part of the patronage bargain.⁷⁴

With the decline in Carolingian fortunes during later ninth and tenth centuries, however, the reciprocal relationship between Francia's cults and its ruling aristocrats was thrown into imbalance. The inability of late ninth century aristocrats to provide the wealth and protection required by relic cults brought

⁷³ These transactions between patrons and cults need not, however, always be considered as exchanges of physical resources for abstract benefits. Following Karl Polanyi, Devroey emphasizes that gifts of property must be considered within a social (rather than purely economic) context. Beyond their considerable economic value, the benefices that aristocrats provided to relic cults also functioned as indicators of prestige necessary to the institutions' success (*Economie rurale*, 194). Conversely, Devroey also suggests that close association with relic cults brought concrete, long-term rewards for aristocratic families. Among these, cult institutions provided an institutional link between generations, providing a clearer sense of family identity and preventing aristocratic families from subdividing themselves into obscurity (*Economie rurale*, 190). See also Hummer, *Politics and Power*, esp. pp. 77 and 104, for the use of monasteries as depositories of family wealth that could be saved and redistributed to aristocratic families in times of need.

⁷⁴ On the interdependence between royal and ecclesiastical institutions more generally, see K.F. Morrison, *The Two Kingdoms: Ecclesiology in Carolingian Thought* (Princeton, 1964). J. Nelson, "Kingship and Empire in the Carolingian World," in J. H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 359-1450* (Cambridge, 1988), 211-51, offers an alternate description of this social contract, including certain "rights of resistance" reserved by Carolingian ecclesiastics.

increasing opportunities for newcomers to usurp the role of the Frankish monarchy within this alliance. The current revisionist trend convinces most scholars that even the later generations of Carolingian stock were successful in clinging to the associations with relic cults that had flowered under their predecessors,⁷⁵ but Viking-era translation texts leave little doubt that, as the empire fragmented, so too did the pattern of mutual allegiances that governed relic cult patronage. By the tenth century reigns of Charles the Simple and Louis IV, Carolingian kings found themselves to be just some among many competing potentates struggling to establish themselves in Normandy, Brittany, Frisia, Aquitaine, and other parts of the former empire. Where their forebears confidently exported relics as standardbearers of their expanding influence, the last Carolingians struggled to staunch the steady trickle of forced translations that bled away the foundations of their sacral legitimacy and handed it over to more effective upstart regional protectors. In other words, the failure of Carolingian patrons to honor their reciprocal obligations to religious institutions or to prevent the evacuation of their relics hastened the dynasty's replacement by different sets of aristocrats.

The loss of Carolingian influence over Frankish monasteries also signaled the end of other aspects of the dynasty's religious policy, including the Benedictine monastic reforms they sponsored. The upheaval that affected churches and monasteries, plus the new and increasingly widespread social

⁷⁵ See, for example, P. Godman and R. Collins (eds.), *Charlemagne's heir: New perspectives on the reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)* (Oxford, 1990); J. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*; S. MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series, no. 57) (New York, 2003).

networks that developed among dislocated monks in exile, were probably important catalyzing forces for the new schools of reform blossoming at Gorze and Cluny, championed by non-Carolingian aristocrats.⁷⁶ Chapter 3 below discusses the debt owed by Cluny in particular to the ideas of cult-related reciprocity and proper social interaction first promulgated in Viking-era *translationes*.

Bishops felt the effects of Viking-era disruption as acutely as abbots. They, too, eventually became free to chose sides when their own patrimonies were threatened during periods of evacuation ahead of Viking raids. The scores of abandoned sees and bishops governing in exile bore witness to the Vikings' effects on churches and cathedrals, even as *ad hoc* regional episcopal assemblies struggled to manage the disruption of religious order throughout western Francia.

Recourse to the idea of a broken "social contract" between reciprocal partners was a convenient rhetorical strategy to justify cults' abandonment of their former patrons. But even if clerical writers inflated their own sense of betrayal by their former protectors, property documents and other non-hagiographical sources show that the dislocation they suffered was real, and that by the end of the Viking attacks patronage networks across the kingdom had been completely re-wired. By the turn of the tenth century, powerful local families provided a viable alternative to Carolingian patronage,⁷⁷ and relic

⁷⁶ L. Musset, *Les invasions: le second assaut contre l'Europe chrétienne* (Paris, 1965), 230.

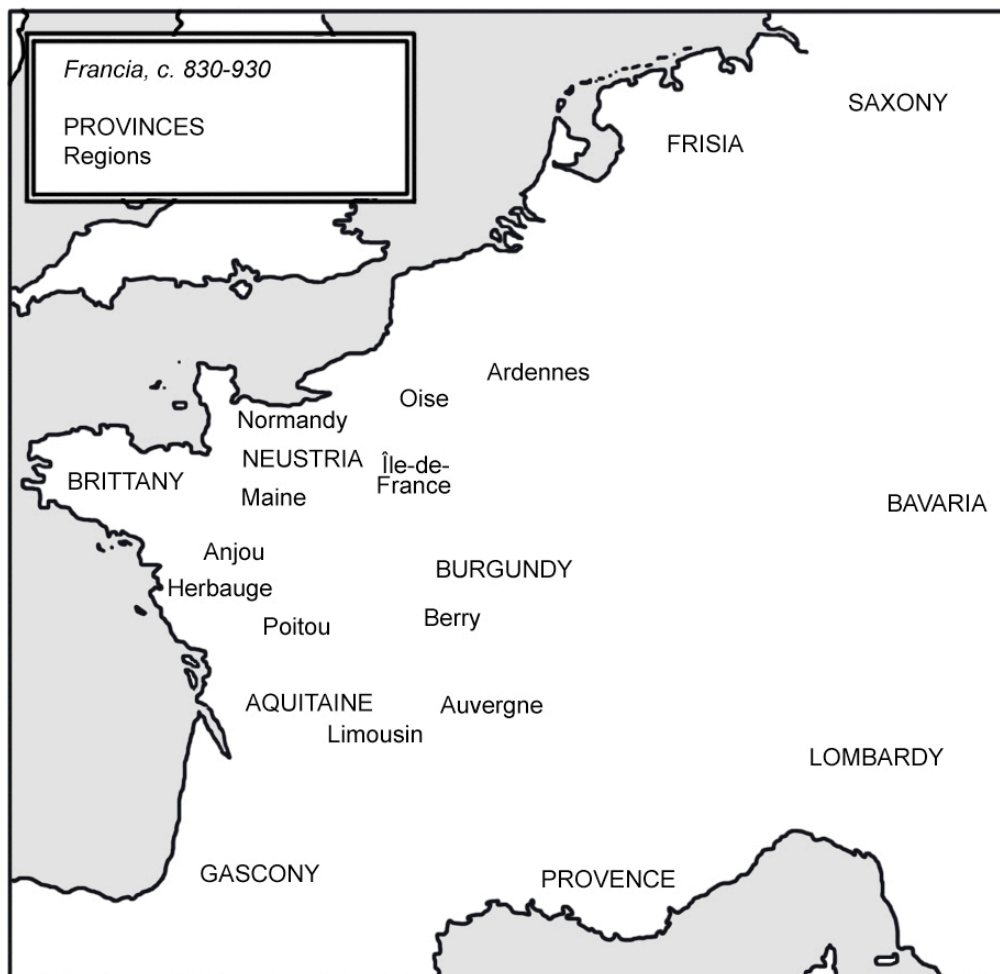
⁷⁷ For a post-Carolingian treatment of the development of patronage relationships between local aristocrats and relic cults, consult P. Bertrand and C. Mériaux, "Cambrai-Magdebourg: les

translation remained crucial to the legitimizing strategy of all of these newcomers, just as it had been for the young, expanding Carolingian dynasty a hundred years before. With the Viking-effected decline of centralized Carolingian authority as a dominant source of patronage, the sponsorship of relic cults in western Europe quickly reverted to a pre-Carolingian, multi-polar arrangement. This left the liberated capital of saints' bodies free to flow in any direction and to support new reciprocal relationships with budding post-Carolingian powers.

PART FOUR: Relics and Geography

Alongside changes in dynastic politics, relic translation was also intimately tied to political geography. No matter if they occurred in the context of Carolingian expansion in Saxony or Carolingian contraction in Aquitaine, relics moved either to solidify or escape conquest by political rivals. The forced translations of the Viking era were especially strong symptoms of and reactions to vulnerability, collapse, conquest, or other shifts in geopolitics wherever they occurred. The ninth century movements of relics, in expansionary surges or retreat, sketch out a definitive map of the geography of Carolingian political power, outlining the rise and fall of Carolingian hegemony over the landscape of West Francia as surely as the movements of kings and armies.

reliques des saints et l'intégration de la Lotharingie dans le royaume de Germanie au milieu du X^e siècle," *Médiévales*, 51 (Fall, 2006), 85-96.



Map 1: The Frankish Empire, c. 830-930.

4.1 Relics and the Sacralization of Landscape

Relics were woven into the fabric of power, but they were no less important in the definition of physical space. Above all, relics were instrumental in the Christianization and sacralization of the medieval landscape. Saints' tombs formed a (supposedly) inviolable holy place (*locus religiosus*) that tied relics to particular pieces of real estate and imbued those places with

sacredness.⁷⁸ These “sacred centers” provided public spaces where heaven and earth overlapped, where the transcendent could be experienced by the faithful and pressed into service by the powerful.⁷⁹

Because of the identification of relics with certain pieces of real estate, they came to function almost like deeds to property, which is another reason why religious communities and lay aristocrats alike were so keen to receive them. The more important the relic, the broader the sweep of its territorial associations. While minor relics like those of Sts. Scubilion and Pair (described in Chapter 2 below) might have had only limited, sub-regional importance in northeastern Brittany, more famous cults like that of St. Martin of Tours enjoyed a reach that drew pilgrims and gifts from across western Francia, and saw St. Martin’s home monastery sitting atop a pyramid of associated foundations that spread the cult’s influence throughout the region. In general, relic shrines that contained whole bodies exerted more influence over wider areas than those containing fragmentary relics or other kinds of lesser relics.

Without question, relics were the chief vectors for the Christianization of territory. This was true on a provincial scale as well as on the civic level, where the presence of important relics could elevate towns into major Christian centers.⁸⁰ Relic translation was at the center of this trend, providing a means of

⁷⁸ A. Thacker notes that although the degrees of “localness” could vary widely, the belief in relics as definers of Christian landscape was all pervasive during the medieval period: “The Significance of Place in the Study of the Saints,” in Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds.) *Local saints and Local Churches in the Medieval West* (Oxford 2002), 1.

⁷⁹ J. Howe, “Creating Symbolic Landscapes: Medieval Development of Sacred Space,” in J. Howe and M. Wolfe (eds.), *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe* (Gainsville, 2002), 208-23.

⁸⁰ It also engendered intermural competition over the prominence of specific relics. Rome and Constantinople epitomized this struggle, as each emphasized its own colossal relic collection and

distributing sanctity from cities and territories that possessed a surplus to those where it was lacking. Even a brief passage of traveling saints through a region could permanently mark the landscape. Einhard's *Translatio SS. Marcellini et Petri* mentions rustic crosses that were erected in memory of the saints' passage from Rome to Seligenstadt in eastern Francia. These monuments dotted forest crossroads as beacons of Christianity in the churchless wilderness. Einhard and his men were able to find their way home after becoming lost in an eastern forest thanks to their miraculous discovery of one of these structures, which still stood many years after the relics had passed through.⁸¹

Yet if the injection of relics into a territory helped Christianize it, then the withdrawal of relics seems to have had the opposite effect. If relics were the standardbearers of sacralization, their departure signified a certain loss of sacrality. Widukind of Corvey's aforementioned description of the translation of St. Vitus suggests as much: the transfer of the saint's body "weakened" Francia just as it "strengthened" Saxony.⁸² The dislocation of West Francia's relics during the Viking attacks had the same destructive effect on the kingdom's Christian landscape. Religious institutions that depended on the presence of relics as anchors of wealth, patronage, and stability, faded from the scene as their relics were evacuated to other regions. The perceived effects of these changes dominate Viking-era *translationes* and other administrative ecclesiastical documents that record the movement of relics during the invasions.

vied to possess the bodies of the most illustrious saints: Fichtenau, "Zum Reliquienwesen," 81-4; Thacker, "The Significance of Place," 1-17.

⁸¹ Einhard, *Translatio et Miracula SS. Marcellini et Petri*, MGH SS, 15, part 1, 255.

⁸² See above, section 3.1.

At the intersection of sacralization and political control lay the question of whether or not God and the saints were thought to favor a given area over another. Since relics could not be moved without the implicit consent of the powerful saints themselves,⁸³ translation necessarily suggested that God and the saints had changed their minds about the supernatural value of a geographical location. Transporting the thaumataugical locus of a cult meant stripping away sacral value from the old place and reattaching that value to the new place.⁸⁴ Adrevald of Fleury, for example, clearly assigned a negative spiritual value to the “desolate wasteland” from which his fellow monks “rescued” the relics of St. Benedict in the mid-eighth century: he felt it would have been impious to allow St. Benedict’s relics to remain buried in the ruins of Monte Cassino, which, “having once been home to men, had now become a wilderness.”⁸⁵ Other Frankish monks expressed similar sentiments about the “dilapidated tombs” from which they “rescued” neglected relics from Muslim Spain and Africa.⁸⁶

On the other hand, relic translations could also carry the implication that the receiving location lacked sufficient sacrality of its own before new relics arrived.⁸⁷ This was undoubtedly the case in the newly Christianized eastern marches, and also stoked demand within the empire itself for relics imported from

⁸³ Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 108-9, examines the “complicity” of relics in their own translations.

⁸⁴ Caroli, “Bringing Saints to Cities,” 268-71.

⁸⁵ Adrevald of Fleury, *Historia Translatio S. Benedicti*, 1-2 (ch. 1): “...in eremi vastitatem loca prius desiderabilia conversa viderentur...Hac itaque patrata eversione, et multis effluentibus annorum curriculis, idem locus ad eremum redactus, coepit esse ferarum, qui prius fuerat habitatio hominum.”

⁸⁶ The two best known examples are the mid-ninth century translation of St. Vincent from Valencia to Conques described in Chapter 4 below, and the removal of St. Mark from Alexandria to Venice in 829. For the latter, see N. McCleary, “Note storiche ed archeologiche sul testo della *translatio Sancti Marci*,” *Memorie storiche forogiulesi*, 27-29 (1931-1933), 235-264.

⁸⁷ Michalowski, “Le don d’amité,” 403.

already Christianized areas. The question of a given territory's sacral value became a major concern for the authors of Viking-era translation accounts as they reconciled their feelings about their old homes and their places of exile during the attacks.

4.2 Space and Ideology

Like relic cults themselves, political geography reflects both a physical reality and an ideological construct with distinct psychological, historical, and spiritual facets. Because political geography existed in the mind as much as in reality, it is perhaps better to think of a kaleidoscope of individualized early medieval "geographies" rather than a universally shared concept of European boundaries. This makes the geographical content of each *translatio* a unique memorialization of the psychologically constructed aspects of the terrain across which it transpired.

This early medieval "ideology" of space largely conforms to more generalized anthropological models developed in other contexts. Although it comes from a radically different setting, H. Morphy's work on indigenous Australian peoples is very instructive in this regard.⁸⁸ Like Morphy's Aborigines, the authors of medieval relic translation texts used geographical information to link places with events from the mythic past. In Europe, medieval *translationes* telescope the passage of time by describing long-dead saints as current

⁸⁸ H. Morphy, "Landscape and the Reproduction of the Ancient Past," in E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlon (eds.), *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space* (Oxford, 2005), 184-209.

inhabitants of the lands in which they lay buried. This temporal foreshortening was reinforced by the propensity of ecclesiastical authors to weave translation accounts into longer *vitae* and *miracula*, making them inseparable from events that occurred during the saint's lifetime. Contemporary inhabitants experienced the same landscape inhabited by saints of old, a fact which transformed local landmarks into permanent mnemonics that recalled the entire Christian history of the region. Location is thus a crucial ingredient of any medieval miracle story; past miraculous events become part of place and continue to be represented in space. Constant reference to location demonstrated the spatial reach of a saint's *virtus* and mirrored the medieval proclivity towards place names that associated saints and their deeds directly with the places where they occurred. When dead saints performed new miracles, as they often did during relic translations, they created new mnemonics for new places to which the saint's power now extended.⁸⁹

One of the corollaries of Morphy's model is that possession of land is tantamount to ownership of the land's *sacra*, or the full extent of the land's mythological associations. This made a land's sacred geography another source of strength for anyone who could claim it as their own. Strategic deployment of carefully plotted ceremonies reinforced control over land and *sacra* together.⁹⁰

When a new group claimed ownership of the land, they inherited the land's

⁸⁹ In this instance, Francia's saints do not adhere perfectly to Morphy's Aboriginal model. Unlike the ancient gods of the Yolngu, Christian saints remained active after their deaths and retained the continuing ability to sanctify new places.

⁹⁰ The semiotics of such ceremonies have been studied by V. and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Oxford, 1978). Turner's functionalist study of pilgrimage rites are directly applicable to relic translations, which can be thought of as a kind of reverse pilgrimage in which relics travel to the worshipper instead of the opposite.

sacra. From the “ancestral perspective,” however, nothing changed: the *sacra* that resides in the land simply passes to a new caretaker. Here, too, geography retained an ideological power that could be pressed into political service. The sacralization of space was another bridge that linked aristocratic landowners with divine power in the interest of political stability.⁹¹ During the age when migrating monks traveled widely with their relics, the shifting location of sacred remains had the effect of sacralizing new lands and legitimizing the power of those who controlled those lands.

4.3 Local vs. Regional Perspectives

The authors of Frankish Viking-era translation accounts typically relied on a highly abstracted, allegorical Christian notion of geography, drawn as much from biblical exegesis as from practical experience, and suffused with ideological consequence.⁹² They expected a certain congruence between the divine order in heaven and the political order on earth. Each system ontologically reinforced the other, with lay authorities in the saints’ service and the saints in the service of earthly rulers in a version of the reciprocity outlined above.⁹³ Since most cults

⁹¹ Although medieval authors clearly grasped the spiritual significance of the geography they inhabited, their consciousness of expressly political geography may well have been less acute. D. Smail, *Imagined Cartographies: Possession and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille* (Ithaca, NY, 1999). Cf., however, D. Krallis, “The Army that Crossed Two Frontiers and Established a Third: The uses of the frontier in an eleventh century author,” in O. Merisalo (ed.), *Frontiers in the Middle Ages* (Louvain-La-Neuve, 2006), 335-48, who takes a more optimistic view of pre-modern geographical awareness.

⁹² N. Lozovsky, *The Earth Is Our Book: Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400-1000* (Ann Arbor, 2000), 66, 111-2; idem, “Carolingian geographical tradition: was it geography?,” *Early Medieval Europe*, 5 (1996), 25-43.

⁹³ Caroli, *Le Traslazioni Reliquiali*, 128-9.

and most political leaders within the empire operated on a local scale, the sacralization of space and the association of space with the power of saints tended to reinforce local hierarchies.⁹⁴ Yet brocaded over this patchwork of local loyalties was the superstructure of “Christian Empire” (*Imperium Christianum*). Carolingian thinkers from the reigns of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious championed the ideal of a unity of purpose between their empire and God’s plan for salvation,⁹⁵ a conception reinforced by the obvious complicity of Francia’s saints in the Carolingian program of conversion and relic translation.

According to authors of Viking-era *translationes*, the evacuation of Francia’s relic cults threw the established dynamic of territorial control into confusion. With the help of dislocated relics, formerly peripheral provinces became centers of strength, and new dynasties sprouted in Brittany, Aquitaine, Normandy, Flanders, Saxony and elsewhere within the former empire. Each energetically adopted a policy of relic translation aimed at building their own legitimizing network of relics and shrines within their territory. *Reliquienpolitik* continued to dominate elite interactions, as it had within the “Christian Empire,” but it was now spread over a decentralized collection of successor states. Thus Gaul’s holy corpses maintained their importance in regional and local settings

⁹⁴ This despite frequent Carolingian attempts to supercede local loyalties by introducing “universal” cults with broader, imperial appeal. I. Wood, “Constructing cults in Early Medieval France: Local saints and churches in Burgundy and the Auvergne,” in R. Sharpe and A. Thacker (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), 179-80.

⁹⁵ J.-M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West, 4000-1000* (Oxford, 1996), 140-163; M. Innes, “People, Places and Power in Carolingian Society” in M. de Jong and F. Theuws (eds.), *Topographies of Power in the Middle Ages, The Transformation of the Roman World*, 6 (Leiden 2001), 397-407; Hummer, *Power and Politics*, 155. Cf., however, Wood’s rejection of the idea of the Carolingian west as a Christian “holy land”: “Constructing Cults in Early Medieval France,” 155.

just as they had before in the broader hegemony created by the Carolingian dynasty.

The interaction between local and regional political geography dramatically complicates our understanding of the role of relics during the period of Viking attacks. It also demands a mixed perspective on the evidence. Most historians of relic translation, noting the varied localized influences that governed individual cases, have attempted to unravel them on a sub-regional or diocesan level.⁹⁶ This approach preserves the uniqueness of each translation within its own context, but it also makes it harder to appreciate the commonalities in what was ultimately a trans-regional phenomenon. Neither relics nor ideas – the underlying military, dynastic, and ideological developments that encouraged their translations – remained within convenient diocesan, regional, or provincial boundaries. Even as they unfolded hundreds of miles and many decades apart, all Viking-era relic translations shared common features and motivations. The continental sweep of the Viking attacks allows for a comparison of responses across provinces as well as within them, and demands attention both to local details and to the broader current of dislocated monks and relics that coursed across the whole empire.

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⁹⁶ The potential for localization in such studies is nearly infinite, down to the level of the “geography” of interior church architecture (Crook, “Enshrinement of Local Saints in Francia” describes the changing architecture of refugee churches established in exile during the Viking attacks), or even to the saint’s corpses themselves, interpreted literally as “loci of the sacred” (C.W. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, (New York, 1991), 183-5, 273-97).

This dissertation proceeds in three sections, each focused on Viking-era relic translations carried out by exiled monks and clerics in a different Atlantic province. Each represents certain distinct facets of the forced translation experience. The next chapter (Chapter 2) examines the evacuation of monks and relics in Brittany. Brittany is a useful starting place because it reflects in microcosm the political and geographical repercussions of relic translation occurring everywhere along western Europe's Atlantic coast. Never fully integrated into the Carolingian world, Brittany at first benefited from the dislocation of relics in the mid-ninth century, as the province's relative security and budding independent monarchy attracted dislocated cults threatened by Viking raids in neighboring provinces. However, as the Breton monarchy stumbled and Viking attacks increased in the province, the flow of relics began to reverse itself. Soon, Breton saints were decamping for Francia, and it was the turn of Frankish lay aristocrats to absorb Brittany's relic "capital" for their own purposes as it flowed from the peninsula.

Chapter 3 examines the situation in Neustria, where Viking-era relic translation reached its apex, both in terms of the number of translations and in the magnitude of their effects. Because of its comparative wealth of source material, Neustria is the best place to consider the various problems that plague the use of hagiographical texts around the turn of the tenth century. This chapter argues that in spite of recent revisionist attempts to downplay the effects of Viking raids in western Francia, these raids had important consequences for relic

cults and their lay patrons. Further, because of Neustria's location at the heart of Charles the Bald's west Frankish kingdom, it is also the ideal setting to assess how Carolingian political and military failures affected the pace and scope of relic evacuation throughout the region, and how local aristocrats exploited these failures to increase the strength of their own relationships with disaffected cults. Moreover, the number and variety of well-documented churches and monasteries in the province allows a better picture of the different strategies adopted by institutions serving particular cults as they attempted to maintain control over their broadly distributed patrimonies during the upheaval caused by the attacks. Neustrian monastic and clerical commentators also provide some of the most thoughtful and detailed ruminations on the ideological consequences of the attacks, particularly with respect to questions of blame and the continuing efficacy of imperial patronage in this time of upheaval.

A fourth chapter moves the discussion southward to Aquitaine, which was home to one of the best known and best-documented relic translations of the Viking era. Using Ermentarius' description of the translation of St. Filibert of Noirmoutier as a starting point, this chapter considers the way Aquitaine's peripheral status affected the ability of its relic shrines to weather the Viking invasion. Because Aquitaine was distant from the center of Carolingian power, Aquitanian relic cults endured a much sharper downturn in royal patronage during the attacks, particularly during periods when Carolingian princes were distracted by events in other, more central provinces. The accelerated decline of Carolingian power hastened the appearance of local cult patrons within the

province. Aquitaine's early experience with Scandinavian raids also provides the opportunity to consider the ways monastic and episcopal responses to the attacks changed over time, as initial confusion gave way to increasingly standardized models of relic evacuation. Finally, this chapter also treats the matter of the Christian geography of Aquitaine, which like neighboring Spain, seemed (to some observers, at least) poised to break away from western Christendom as pagan attacks destroyed cult patronage networks and uprooted the province's saints.

By the time Viking attacks ceased and West Francia's exiled relics returned home in the mid-tenth century, all three provinces had been transfigured by dramatic changes in their political and spiritual landscapes. Francia's dislocated holy bodies helped midwife these changes, proving as powerful on the road as they were in their tombs. Wherever Viking attacks ejected them from their shrines, the relics of saints carried with them into exile the kernels of divine *potestas* around which new topographies of power and patronage would coalesce.

Chapter 2

Brittany: an Abandoned Province

INTRODUCTION

Brittany's peculiar position, jutting like an outstretched limb off the northeastern edge of the European continent, long proved both a strength and a weakness for those who tried to govern it. Insulated on three sides by the wide embrace of the Atlantic, Brittany remained impervious to many of the cultural and military developments that shaped the rest of Gaul in late antiquity and the early middle ages. Because of its distinctive geography, the peninsula pointed as much outward to the Celtic world of the British Isles as it did inward to Frankish Gaul. Brittany formed a breakwater of Celtic and continental interaction, and its divided cultural and geographic allegiances guaranteed that it would remain to some degree peripheral to both spheres. Throughout the ninth and tenth centuries, Brittany oscillated between periods of Celtic-oriented independence and continental domination by the Frankish Carolingians. While Brittany's status with respect to the rest of the continent was continually in flux, the hundred year

period stretching from the mid-ninth to mid-tenth centuries proved an especially climactic time. Forced to navigate the violent storm of Norman invasions from its exposed position, the province's course alternated wildly between increasing domestic autonomy, Viking-induced chaos, and finally, permanent subjugation to its Frankish neighbors.

The general picture of Brittany's political and cultural history between c. 840 and c. 940 can only be pieced together from the vantage point of its suffering churches and monasteries. These religious institutions, by and large, alone took on the task of composing and maintaining what are now the only surviving records of events of this tumultuous period in Breton history. These writings preserve a detailed and complex picture of the ebbs and surges in Brittany's fortunes from their own distinct political and ideological perspective. Not surprisingly, the narratives of Breton history they transmit are dominated by the ongoing participation of Breton saints. To the cloistered monks who wrote about them, the remains of these dead saints appeared to work alongside the province's living political and military leaders in the same capacity as patrons and protectors in times of both strength and weakness. Breton monastic writers put a heavy emphasis on the central role and conspicuous power of their holy relics throughout the century of the Viking attacks. Together, the Breton writers tell a coherent story of political and religious collapse and rebuilding out of the chaos that shaped the province during the course of the ninth and early tenth centuries.

Brittany's political, military, and religious reverses unfolded in three broad phases. Each was defined at least in part by changes in the plight of the

province's relics. The first phase corresponds with the establishment the increasingly independent Breton monarchy, lasting from the rise of the first Breton king Nominoë in the 840s to the death in 907 of Alan I ("the Great"), the last man to make a serious claim to the royal title in Brittany. This was a time of widespread, stable prosperity for Breton monks and their relics, in contrast to the many churches and monasteries further east in Francia that were suffering from devastating Scandinavian raids.

The second, briefer phase came during the decades-long, leaderless interregnum of civil war and Viking attacks that lasted from Alan I's death to the eventual restoration of the kingdom by his grandson, Alan II, c. 938. During this period, Brittany's formerly stationary relics began to move in large numbers, dislodged from their graves by the growing threat of Viking destruction and plunder. These relics, borne hurriedly on the backs of panicked monks and clerics, were generally moved outside of the province. The dislocation and loss of Brittany's holy bodies stirred up a deeply unsettling ideological crisis, with serious effects on Breton politics, geography, and self-conception. This disruption represented, in fact, perhaps the first major retrenchment from the resoundingly successful Christian expansion of the Carolingian era.

Once Alan II and his successors were able to reestablish some measure of security and stability on the peninsula, Breton relics slowly returned from their exile. This instigated a third era of Breton political and religious reintegration with the rest of Christian Europe (and particularly with Francia). By the 940s, however, the confident, expanding Brittany of Nominoë's day, flush with relics,

monasteries, and political power was little more than a pleasant memory for the Breton monks and clerics who now sought to rebuild the province. Brittany's relic cults, just like its political leadership, were slowly reconstructed after the disaster of the first decades of the tenth century, though with a diminished legitimacy and diminished independence from their Frankish neighbors. The plight of Brittany's relics closely mirrored the tribulations of its political leadership, and not by accident. Breton kings and saints shared fates that were fundamentally intertwined. Brittany's relics, as much as its royals, were central actors in the province's rise, fall, and rise again.

PART ONE: Historical Context

The ninth and tenth centuries, as noted above, were times of great change for Brittany. The peninsular province had, on the death of Louis the Pious and the subsequent weakness of his fourth son Charles the Bald, finally graduated to the rank of independent kingdom. The Breton duke (now king) Nominoë was, of course, no match for the heirs to the Frankish empire in terms of political import or legitimacy, but he had succeeded in using the Frankish civil wars of the 830s and 840s to inflict a series of victories over his neighbors to the west, and to expand his kingdom significantly at their expense. Once Nominoë succeeded in solidifying his own dominance within Brittany proper, the weakly held territories of the former Breton March were the first to fall to him. Preoccupied with the struggle against his brothers, Charles the Bald was helpless to prevent the

Breton king's seizure of the territory around Nantes and the mouth of the Loire. By 846, fighting on all fronts against his brothers to his east, his nephew to his south, and Viking raiders in their first tentative assaults to his north, Charles was forced to acknowledge Nominoë's ascendancy to his west. Charles recognized first Nominoë's ally Lambert II and then Nominoë himself as *de facto* rulers of the counties of Nantes and Anjou and acquiesced to the areas' absorption into an expanding Brittany.⁹⁷

1.1 Toward a Breton *Reichskirche*

The tendency of volatile marchlands to spin away in times of central weakness is not unique to ninth century Brittany. However, it is clear that Nominoë sought more than free rein as a local potentate: he sought the status of kingdom for Brittany and royalty for himself. To this end, Nominoë looked to the effectiveness of the Carolingian church, which had proven a durable foundation for Carolingian political legitimacy since Pippin III's anointing in the mid-eighth century, and sought to create his own autonomous Breton church. Unfortunately for the Breton king, any plans for Breton ecclesiastical independence were complicated by the fact that since the earliest days of Christianity in the province the Breton church had been directly subject to the Frankish archbishops of Tours. The bishops inhabiting the sees of Brittany were thus appointed by

⁹⁷ J. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), 165-66; Price, *The Vikings in Brittany*, 23-4. For Charles' strategy of dangling royal insignia and other trappings of kingship before Nominoë and his successors as a way of maintaining a kind of lordship over them, see J. Smith, *Province and Empire: Brittany and the Carolingians* (Cambridge, 1992), ch. 4.

Franks, shared Frankish sympathies, and looked unhappily on Nominoë's ambitions. Forced to drastic action, Nominoë first tried to have the four Frankish-appointed bishops of Quimper, Vannes, St.-Pol-de-Léon, and Alet ousted for simony. When Pope Leo IV balked at Nominoë's demands, the Breton prince made his secessionist intentions clear by deposing all four bishops himself, dividing their four dioceses into seven, and promoting one of these, Dol, to metropolitan rank by his own authority. The Franks in Tours immediately



Map 2: Religious institutions in Brittany, 840-940.

petitioned to regain their prominence, vainly threatening Nominoë with excommunication. By the time of Nominoë's death in March 851, he had pushed the Breton church into a serious, decades-long schism with the Frankish church.⁹⁸

The increase of Brittany's political and ecclesiastical fortunes continued under Nominoë's successor. His son Erispoë stabilized Nominoë's military gains and even extended them through negotiations after his crushing military defeat of Charles the Bald at the battle of Jengelend.⁹⁹ These negotiations resulted, among other things, in Breton control over the monastery of St.-Aubin in Angers. Erispoë immediately engaged in a program of relic translation to solidify these gains, translating the relics of St. Brioc to St.-Aubin,¹⁰⁰ and the relics of St. Claire de Réguiny to Nantes in order to expand the influence of his Breton church in these formerly Frankish territories. A coalition of Frankish bishops would eventually respond by convening the Council of Savonnières in 859, which condemned all the bishops who condoned the Bretons' innovations.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ F. Lot, "Le schisme breton du IX^e siècle," *Mélanges d'histoire bretonne* (Paris, 1907), 58-96. J. Smith, "The 'Archbishopric' of Dol and the Ecclesiastical Politics of Ninth Century Brittany," *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), 59-70, casts doubt on Nominoë's role in creating the schism, placing it instead a decade later during the reign of Salomon.

⁹⁹ Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 165-6: "The marshes of the Vilaine valley, like Roncesvalles, were a graveyard of Frankish power." According to the *Annales Bertiniani*, MGH SRG, 5, 41 [*anno* 851], Charles "received Erispoë and gave him his hands and endowed him with royal vestments and his father's power" ("Respogius, filius Nomenogii, ad Karolem veniens, in urbe Andegavorum datis manibus suscipitur et tam regalibus indumentis quam paternae potestatis ditone donatur...").

¹⁰⁰ There is some controversy over whether this actually happened at this time or simply appeared to happen. H. Guillotel suggests that although St.-Aubin had connections with the Breton royal house, Bretons did not gain control of the church of St.-Serge, the actual site of the relics' reburial, until the reign of Alan I. The chronology is less important, however, than the point that Breton interests were rapidly expanding their scope into western Francia. H. Guillotel, "L'exode du clergé breton devant les invasions scandinaves," *Mémoires de la Société historique et d'archéologie de l'arrondissement de Saint-Machutus* (1979), 251-266.

¹⁰¹ Smith, "The 'Archbishopric' of Dol," 64-5.

Politically and ecclesiastically, Brittany reached its zenith under Salomon, who assassinated his cousin Erispoë to claim the Breton throne in 857. Salomon's forces pushed the frontiers of Brittany still further outward into Maine and the Contentin Peninsula. He also wrangled from a position of strength with Popes Nicholas I, Hadrian II, and John VIII to maintain *de facto* independent control over the Breton church. Salomon also turned the Viking raids from a weakness into a strength by striking up informal alliances with Scandinavian leaders. These negotiations succeeded in deflecting Viking raids from Salomon's own coasts and earned him willing partners in his war against Charles the Bald, Robert the Strong, and other western Carolingian rulers.¹⁰²

Yet the newly autonomous province's momentum began to falter after Salomon's own assassination in 874. Despite its successes to that point, the fragility of the Breton kingdom was made clear in the civil war between Vannes and Rennes which followed Salomon's demise. A short period of disputed succession followed in the later 870s, during which time Viking raiders took advantage of Breton disunity. Within a few years, the peninsula finally rallied behind Alan I of Vannes (soon to earn his sobriquet "the Great"). Given his reputation, surprisingly little is known about this man, except that in the decades surrounding the turn of the tenth century he was successful in pacifying Brittany

¹⁰² F. Lot, "La Loire, l'Aquitaine, et la Seine de 862 à 866. Robert le Fort," *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 76 (1915), 505. The *Annales Bertiniani*, 57-8 [*anno* 862], record Salomon's continuing willingness to seek alliance with the Vikings, including the hiring of twelve Danish ships to fight against Robert the Strong in 862. This act forced Robert to hire his own Norse mercenaries. ("De quibus Rotbertus duodecim naves, quas Salomon in contrarietatem eius locario iure conduxerat, in fluvio Ligeri capit omnesque qui in illo fuere navigo interfecit, praeter paucos, qui fuga lapsi delituerunt...").

and earned a lasting respect among Breton chroniclers of the later tenth and eleventh centuries who fêted him as the ablest of Breton monarchs.¹⁰³

1.2 The Failure of Breton Political Leadership

Yet just as soon as Brittany's independent future seemed assured, the province fell into pitched political decline. The death of Alan I without an heir in 907 signaled the start of another round of internecine struggle among members of the Breton nobility. This time Brittany would not recover. The chaos of Alan I's death robbed Brittany of its most important protector and, in the words of the annalist Flodoard, opened "all of Brittany...to be despoiled by Northmen, crushed and annihilated, its people kidnapped, sold, or driven out."¹⁰⁴

Marauding Scandinavians were hardly new to the Breton coast: both Nominoë and Erispoë were forced to contend with serious attacks as far up the Vilaine River as Redon in the diocese of Rennes. Most famously, Viking raids forced Salomon to break off his official pilgrimage to Rome in 871, a trip which, had it occurred, might have been the consummation of the Breton "royalization" project.¹⁰⁵ However, the Norman attacks of the early tenth century were much larger in scope and importance than these earlier forays. Strong Breton

¹⁰³ Alan I first teamed with Judicaël to rule the province together, then ruled it alone after the latter's death fighting the Vikings in 889. Alan I's reputation was sealed by his subsequent triumph over that year's Scandinavian raids. J. Quaghebeur, "Norvège et Bretagne aux IX^e et X^e siècles: un destin partagé," in P. Bauduin (ed.), *Fondations scandinaves en Occident et les débuts de la Normandie* (Caen, 2005), 118.

¹⁰⁴ Flodoard, *Annales*, MGH SS, 3, 368 [anno 919]: "Nordmanni omnem Britanniam in Cornu Galliae, in ora scilicet maritima sitam depopulantur, proterunt atque delent, abductis, venditis, ceterisque cunctis ejectis Brittonibus."

¹⁰⁵ J.-C. Cassard, *Le Siècle des Vikings en Bretagne* (Paris, 1996), 27.

leadership had managed to keep Brittany largely free of Vikings for 30 years longer than West Francia. By the turn of the tenth century, however, the relentless raids by sea and river that plagued the west Frankish empire became increasingly commonplace in Brittany. The three-decade period following Alan I's death in 907, referred to by some scholars as the "Scandinavian interregnum,"¹⁰⁶ saw Brittany subside into political free-fall, divided against itself and unable to mount any coordinated defense against the Vikings, who, having been granted a large portion of northern Francia by the treaty of St.-Clair-sur-Epte in the autumn of 911, now had a permanent base nearby from which to harass Brittany's towns and monasteries continually.

Ironically, the treaty of St.-Clair-sur-Epte also marked the beginning of the end of the chronic raids that dogged western Europe by Christianizing and settling the Normans within northern Francia. The Scandinavian interregnum came to a close in Brittany in 936 with the rise of Alan I's grandson, Alan Barbetorte. The resurrection of the Breton monarchy under Alan Barbetorte roughly corresponds to the rise of Louis IV d'Outremer and the resurgence of Carolingian monarchy in West Francia. With the fading of Norman terror, the old political structures of the pre-Viking era appeared ready to reassert themselves.¹⁰⁷ The difference this time, perhaps, was that Alan Barbetorte was a mere "duke" again, and not, it seems, king of an independent Brittany. The pontiffs in Rome ultimately refused to recognize the metropolitan authority of the diocese of Dol, though the institutional *status quo* remained largely unchallenged

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 43; A. Chédeville and H. Guillotel, *La Bretagne des saints et des rois, V^e-X^e siècle* (Rennes, 1984), 374.

¹⁰⁷ Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne des saints*, 402-3.

until the matter was settled in favor of Tours by Innocent VIII in the twelfth century. Norman attacks on Brittany did not halt completely with Alan Barbetorte's enthronement. Still, the Breton duke did succeed in bringing his province back to the relative safety it had enjoyed under Salomon and the earlier kings of Brittany, even if the dream of Breton political and ecclesiastical independence had died in the interim.

PART TWO: *Reliquienpolitik* in Brittany

One century separated King Nominoë from Duke Alan Barbetorte. The tremendous changes that Brittany experienced during that period are manifest in the politics of the Breton monarchy, the geography of Breton expansion, and the religious affairs of the upstart Breton church. The rise, fall, and rise again of Brittany's fortunes in these areas is clearly reflected in the fate of the province's relics as well.

The tumult that marked the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth deeply affected the fate of relics locked away in the altars and reliquaries throughout Brittany. More often than not, the disruptions were sufficient to shake the province's holy bones from their tombs and send them, along with the monks and clerics that cared for them, fleeing to whatever refuges they could find. Monks and relics flowed in and out of the province like the tides at times, with a rhythm closely tied to the changes brought about by Nominoë, his successors, and the Vikings. During the good times of strength and expansion in

the province, relics left troubled Francia to find safer harbors in Brittany, as when the relics of St. Maxentius fled there from Poitou in 869 at the peak of Salomon's reign. At the height of their independence, Breton rulers even instigated their own relic translations to secure their territorial conquests.¹⁰⁸ Afterward, however, when Viking violence peaked in the early tenth century, the process of relic translation in Brittany was pointedly reversed. As Norman attacks intensified and the Breton monarchy foundered after Alan I's death, relics like those of St. Machutus actually departed the province in significant numbers. The retreats of Breton relic cults are among the clearest indicators of the geopolitical shifts that wracked the peninsula during and after the Viking attacks. They show the undoing of the relic-centered patronage networks that had been so carefully constructed in Brittany (as in other provinces) during earlier periods of strong centralized authority, and are symptomatic of the province's long, Viking-driven slide into political fragmentation and institutional collapse during the tenth century.

2.1 Breton Hagiographic Sources

Brittany's political ebbs and surges can be charted in chronicles and administrative documents, but any consideration of the role of relics in these

¹⁰⁸ See above, section 1.1. Breton rulers can not be shown to have directly involved themselves in importing relics into their territory from outside the province the way Carolingian rulers did, but Breton abbots hungered for Roman relics as much as their Frankish counterparts and occasionally tried to acquire them. The *Gesta Sancti Rotonensium*, published in C. Brett, *The Monks of Redon* (Woodbridge, 1989), 171-83 (book 2, ch. 9-10), 189-203 (book 3, ch. 1, 5), describes Abbot Conuuoion's successful attempts to acquire relics imported from Angers and Rome for his monastery at Redon in the 830s. Nominoë was almost certain to have been involved in this translation.

changes necessarily requires heavy use of Breton hagiographical sources. Hagiographical texts have their biases, but there is little extant information about ninth and tenth century relic translation in Brittany outside them. *Translationes* form the bulk of our source material beyond the occasional Breton cartulary or stray reference in Frankish annals. In the absence of corroboratory evidence, the content of any single one of these texts could be considered suspect. Taken together, however, the sizeable body of Breton translation literature supports a consistent narrative of relic in- and outflow during the era of the Viking attacks.

This is particularly apparent when analysis of these texts moves past tangible issues like physical geography to focus on more clearly “imagined” concepts, like shifting local political boundaries, or the boundaries of Christendom itself. The borders of the kingdom of Brittany, for example, although restricted by the ocean and cut through with rivers, are also ideological constructions borne of the same worldview that is reflected in contemporary Breton hagiographical texts.

Brittany is an ideal location to begin delving into the hagiographical corpus for the relationship between relics and geopolitics. Brittany cannot compare with Neustria in terms of the number of surviving translation accounts, but a healthy number of well-informed, detailed sources have survived to describe developments on the peninsula.¹⁰⁹ The territories around Redon and Nantes,

¹⁰⁹ According to N. Price, *The Vikings in Brittany*, 14-7, Viking raids had a devastating effect on the production and survival of hagiography in Brittany. Before the arrival of Norse attackers, Breton scriptoria at Léhon, Redon and Dol enjoyed strong reputations as a center of literary production. After the ninth century, book production at all these places dwindled to zero.

although the latter was only intermittently within the Breton orbit, are especially well documented.

The Breton hagiographical canon has been subject to extensive study, with different scholars favoring a variety of approaches to these texts. The nineteenth century editors of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* largely ignored Breton *vitae* and *translationes* and, when they did publish them, only did so in heavily redacted versions. A. de la Borderie, writing just before the turn of the twentieth century, popularized the notion that hagiographical texts could be used to reconstruct a faithful picture of Breton history.¹¹⁰ The next generation of Breton historians reacted strongly to this, however. F. Lot and his students R. Fawtier and R. Latouche produced excellent editions of some of the most important Breton *vitae*.¹¹¹ However, these scholars took a dim – indeed hypercritical – view of these texts as reliable historical sources. In their eyes, they were of more use to folklorists than historians.¹¹²

Study of Breton hagiographic texts languished as long as this view predominated, but by the middle of the twentieth century, La Borderie's more open-minded approach began to find renewed favor. New generations of scholars have begun to make important contributions to Breton historiography

¹¹⁰ Particularly in his *Histoire de Bretagne*, 6 vols. (with B. Pocquet) (Rennes, 1896-1913). Vol. 2 covers the relevant period (753-995). See also de la Borderie's edition of the *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Landévenec* (Rennes, 1888), which includes an edition of the *vita* of St. Winwaloe.

¹¹¹ F. Lot, *Mélanges d'Histoire Bretonne* (Paris, 1907), includes the standard editions of the *vitae* and *translationes* of St. Machutus and St. Gildas; R. Fawtier, *La vie de saint Samson* (Paris, 1912); R. Latouche, *Mélanges d'Histoire de Cornouaille* (Paris, 1911), 97-112, which includes another edition of the *vita* of St. Winwaloe.

¹¹² F. Lot, "Les diverses rédactions de la vie de St. Malo," *Mélanges d'histoire bretonne* (1907), 97-206: with the exception of the first *vita* of St. Samson, Lot writes, all the *vita* of Armorican saints "are nearly entirely devoid of historical value and are more or less influenced by Nominioë's church schism" (p. 97).

through careful re-analysis of these neglected texts, focusing on them less as objective “histories” than as genuine attempts to establish the claims of a monastery, see, or cult.¹¹³

2.2 The Breton “Exodus”

Beyond its source material, Brittany also makes a good subject for the study of relics simply because so many of its relics were evacuated during the Viking attacks. Indeed, Brittany is the source of many of the most frequently cited examples of relic translation in the face of Norman invasions.

At least three scholarly works focus on Brittany’s clerical and monastic “exodus” in some depth, and a great many others deal with individual translations or attacks. F. Plaine’s *Invasions Normandes en Armorique*,¹¹⁴ published in 1899, was the most widely cited treatment of the issue until H. Guillotel modernized and expanded Plaine’s approach eighty years later.¹¹⁵ Guillotel engaged the topic by narrowing his attention to only the most dependable versions of Breton translation texts. The conclusions he drew from these sources are conservative, eschewing the enthusiasm with which Plaine and other earlier historians had approached ninth and tenth century Breton sources. Guillotel’s restraint,

¹¹³ See, for example, P. Riché, “Translations de reliques à l’époque carolingienne. Histoire des reliques de Saint-Malo,” *Le Moyen Age*, 82 (1976), 201-218; Guillotel, “L’exode du clergé breton”; Cassard, *Le siècle des Vikings*. Interestingly, a new criticism from a different corner has recently arisen in the form of J. Smith’s attempts to reconstruct Breton oral traditions, many of which contradict Breton written hagiography. J. Smith, “Oral and written: saints, miracles and relics in Brittany, c. 850-1250,” *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 309-43.

¹¹⁴ F. Plaine, “Les Invasions des Normandes en Armorique et la translation générale des Saints bretons,” in *Bulletin de la Société archéologique du Finistère*, 26 (1899), 209-38, 310-35.

¹¹⁵ Guillotel, “L’exode du clergé breton.”

although never as dismissive as Lot's, does force him to omit sources that other historians have made good use of, notably the *vitae* of Sts. Machutus and Paul Aurelian.¹¹⁶ Guillotel's analysis, moreover, is directed much more toward discovering the institutional connections between Breton clergy and relations with the Franks than it is about the peculiar role relics played in contemporary social and political culture. The only historian to reexamine Plaine's and Guillotel's work in depth since has been J.-C. Cassard, whose *Le siècle des Vikings en Bretagne* narrates something of a "decline and fall of the Breton kingdom," and, while providing perhaps the most thorough recounting of Breton military reverses, reflects only briefly on clerics or relics.

These historians and others have credibly established the reality of the Breton monastic and clerical exodus of the early tenth century. That said, it is important to recognize the limits of these accounts of monastic emigration from Brittany. The enormous scope of the destruction as described in the sources is undoubtedly exaggerated. It remains true that nearly every remotely contemporary source on the Viking attacks refers to the complete *devastatio* and *exitium* of affected areas, terms used by their monastic writers in the technical sense of physical destruction and ruin of monastic buildings. But since the distinction between total or only partial destruction of monastic buildings is made in only one or two such sources,¹¹⁷ it appears that to the monks who composed these texts the actual level of destruction their institutions suffered was less

¹¹⁶ P. Riché, "Translations de reliques," depends upon the *Vita Machutis*; J. Smith, "Oral and Written," explores the *Vita Sancti Pauli Aureliani* (ed. F. Plaine), *Analecta Bollandiana* (1882), 208-58.

¹¹⁷ Like the *Annales Bertiniani*, for example, which is a Frankish source. See Zettel, *Das Bild der Normannen*, 264-67.

important than the fact that some sort of serious attack had occurred. Although the actual amount of destruction may have implications for the speed with which monastic communities were able to return and rebuild, the specter of Viking raids was sufficiently threatening that in any case the safest course was to flee.

Yet the frequent declaration that every person left the area to escape the violence is surely hyperbole. The very same sources, for instance, also suggest that there was never any shortage of local people nearby to join in the procession as monks and relics marched off to exile. Rather, monastic authors seem to imply that everyone who “mattered” left; in other words, although the province may not have literally been emptied of its population, there was a widespread and significant abandonment of Brittany by ecclesiastical and lay elites. Monks appear to have decamped from the peninsula in large numbers, large enough so that even a century after the Viking attacks there remained plenty of derelict monasteries for later generations of Frankish monks to rehabilitate and repopulate, as we shall see in Section 5 below.

In addition to monks fleeing their monasteries, bishops also left their sees. Bishop Salvator of Alet, “despairing of any help to endure longer,” fled ultimately to Paris with a large collection of relics, probably in 920/25.¹¹⁸ Bishop Hesdren of

¹¹⁸ *Translatio Sancti Maglorii* (ed. Guillotel), “Fragments of the *Translatio Sancti Maglorii*,” *Mémoires de la Société historique et d'archéologie de l'arrondissement de Saint-Machutus* (1979), 310-15 (ch. 1). See also the earlier edition of the full version of the *Translatio*, with commentary, in R. Merlet, “Les origines du monastère Saint-Magloire de Paris,” *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* (1895), 237-273, and A. de La Borderie, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 2, 364-369. Cf., however, E. Corvisier, “L'exode et l'implantation des reliques des saints de l'ouest de la France en Ile-de-France aux IX^e et X^e siècles”, 289-298, and others who regard the *Translatio S. Maglorii* as a later forgery. Guillotel's edition, published nearly at the same time as Corvisier's work, makes a compelling case for the early tenth century authorship of the most relevant parts of the manuscript, sidestepping the anachronistic interpolations added to other sections of the text by later compilers.

Nantes, who presided there in the mid-tenth century, also fled to Fleury with the relics of St. Maur.¹¹⁹ Bishop Actard of Nantes was one of the earliest to leave, his episcopacy having been done in by a combination of Viking attacks and Breton opposition as early as 868.¹²⁰ In Actard's case, Hincmar of Reims saw his departure as an act of cowardice and took it as a sign that Actard was "not a pastor but a mercenary... when the wolf [i.e., the Vikings] comes, the mercenary flees."¹²¹

The Chronicle of Nantes condemns the aristocrats who abandoned the province in even harsher terms:

"The evil race of Normans, a most cruel and perverse people, sailed across the ocean with a huge fleet of ships, and laid waste to all of Brittany. Frightened counts, viscounts, and machtierns fled in panic before them, scattering to Francia, Burgundy, and Aquitaine. Only poor Bretons tilling the soil stayed under the domination of the barbarians, without leaders or defenders."¹²²

¹¹⁹ A number of necrologies and other documents commemorate this translation. See A. Vidier, *L'historiographie à Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire et les Miracles de saint-Benoît* (Paris, 1965), 98-100.

¹²⁰ *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve, roi de France* (ed. Tessier), 2 (Paris, 1943-55), 176-7 (no. 305); F. Lot, "La grande invasion normande de 856-862," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 69 (1908), 5.

¹²¹ Hincmar, of Reims, *Epistola*, 31, *De quibus apud*, PL, 126, col. 229: "Non pastor, sed mercenarius vocatur... lupus venit et mercenarius fugit."

¹²² *Chronicon Namnetense* (ed. Merlet), 81-83: "...tunc ipsi Normanni, viri diabolici, crudelissimique et perversi homines, cum ingenti navium classe per mare oceanum navigantes, totum Britanniam devastarunt; fugientesque inde prae pavore Normannorum terrii comites, vicecomites ac mathiberni [machtierns] omnes dispersi sunt per Franciam, Burgundiam, et Aquitiniam. Pauperes vire Britanni terram colentes sub potestate Normannorum remanserunt absque rectare et defensore." Although compiled in the eleventh century, well after the events it describes, the *Chronicon* contains passages directly borrowed from contemporary tenth century sources. See Price, *The Vikings in Brittany*, 75; F. Lot and L. Halphen, *Le Règne de Charles le Chauve*, *Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études, sciences historiques et philologiques*, 175 (Paris, 1909), 79-80; S. Coupland, "The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History," *History*, 88, no. 290 (2003), 186-193. Drawing upon the *Annales Bertiniani*, Wendy Davies' *Small Worlds: The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany* (Berkeley, 1988), 23, 55, suggests that Breton farmers may have in fact faced little danger, since Viking raiders and settlers appear to have deliberately avoided damaging the agricultural sector in order to allow production to continue.

The Breton exodus, widespread as it may have been, was a fundamentally elite phenomenon. While the Breton peasantry may have actually had little to lose in trading their old masters for new the Norman conquerors who began to settle permanently on the Breton peninsula in the 920s, the keepers of Breton cults stood to lose everything, including both their riches and their relics, and so made sure to take with them into exile the most important sources of wealth and protection for the already beleaguered province.

2.3 Chronology of Attack and Evacuation

The Breton exodus was also persistent across time. Although the Viking-motivated translations in Brittany may seem panicky and disconnected, in fact, the ongoing phenomenon spread out across the length of more than a century. In order to make sense of precisely why these translations occurred as they did, it is worth looking past individual translations to the longer *durée* to follow the turbulent period of the formation and disintegration of the independent Breton kingdom.

Relics are translated in and out of Brittany at specific moments in the peninsula's history, moments associated with changes not only in actual geopolitical conditions but also, as we shall see below in Section 4, in contemporary ideas about politics and geography. At first, these flights appear simply to correlate with Norse raids whose success was closely dependent upon the power of the Breton kingdom to resist them. It is undeniable that the political

weakness that followed the death of Alan I allowed Viking raiders to advance as they never had before, and it is from these attacks in the early tenth century that Breton monks and clerics fled with their relics, but there is more to the story of the exodus of relics out of Brittany.

The history of displaced relic cults in Brittany begins much earlier, and on a grim note. Normans had been active as early as the 830s in the Basse-Loire and the county of Nantes, just as Nominoë began to exert Breton control over the region for the first time. Viking raiders seized upon the disorder between the lapse of Frankish suzerainty and the solidification of Breton control and pushed deep up the Loire. It was during this period that St. Filibert, whose monastery at Noirmoutier in Aquitaine lay completely exposed on the Atlantic coast below the mouth of the Loire, was evacuated upriver first to Déas in the Loire estuary and ultimately to Tournus in Burgundy.¹²³

By 843, these “Normans of the Loire” began to overwinter regularly in the neighborhood of Noirmoutier. This placed the entire region in imminent danger of surprise Viking attack. The Vikings captured Nantes, whose walls had recently been damaged by Nominoë during his own conquest of the city. The raiders martyred the city’s bishop, Gunhard, along with the cathedral clergy. They made the city their temporary base of raiding operations in the region.

¹²³ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Philiberti* (ed. R. Poupardin), *Monuments de l’histoire de l’abbaye de Saint-Philibert*, 1 (Paris, 1905), 29 (ch. 10). This event is addressed again below in Chapter 4 in greater detail, but it has important implications for the rise of Nominoë and the Breton monarchy.

The Normans then withdrew back to the mouth of the Loire after only a short time.¹²⁴ This allowed Nominoë to rehabilitate the cathedral in Nantes and re-establish his authority over the city. Nantes' bishop was dead, but before Nominoë could overcome Tours' archiepiscopal primacy within Breton territory, the Franks awarded the city's ecclesiastical leadership to their man, Actard, who would spend the next twenty five years alternately battling Viking raids and local attempts by kings Erispoë and Salomon to depose him in favor of bishops appointed by Dol. By 868, Actard's situation had deteriorated to the point that he fled the city and sought Charles the Bald's help in urging the pope to allow him to transfer to Tours, blaming the pagan attackers for "turning his see into a desert."¹²⁵ It is unclear if Actard took his cathedral's relics with him to Tours.

Actard's flight from Nantes, though complicated by the fact that he was at odds with his Breton masters, set the pattern for later evacuations from areas threatened by Vikings. Outside of the Basse-Loire, however, Actard's experience was unusual in Brittany during the 860s and 870s. During these decades, which correspond to the height of Scandinavian attacks in neighboring Francia, Brittany managed to acquire a reputation as a haven for relics from throughout the region that came to find safety there.

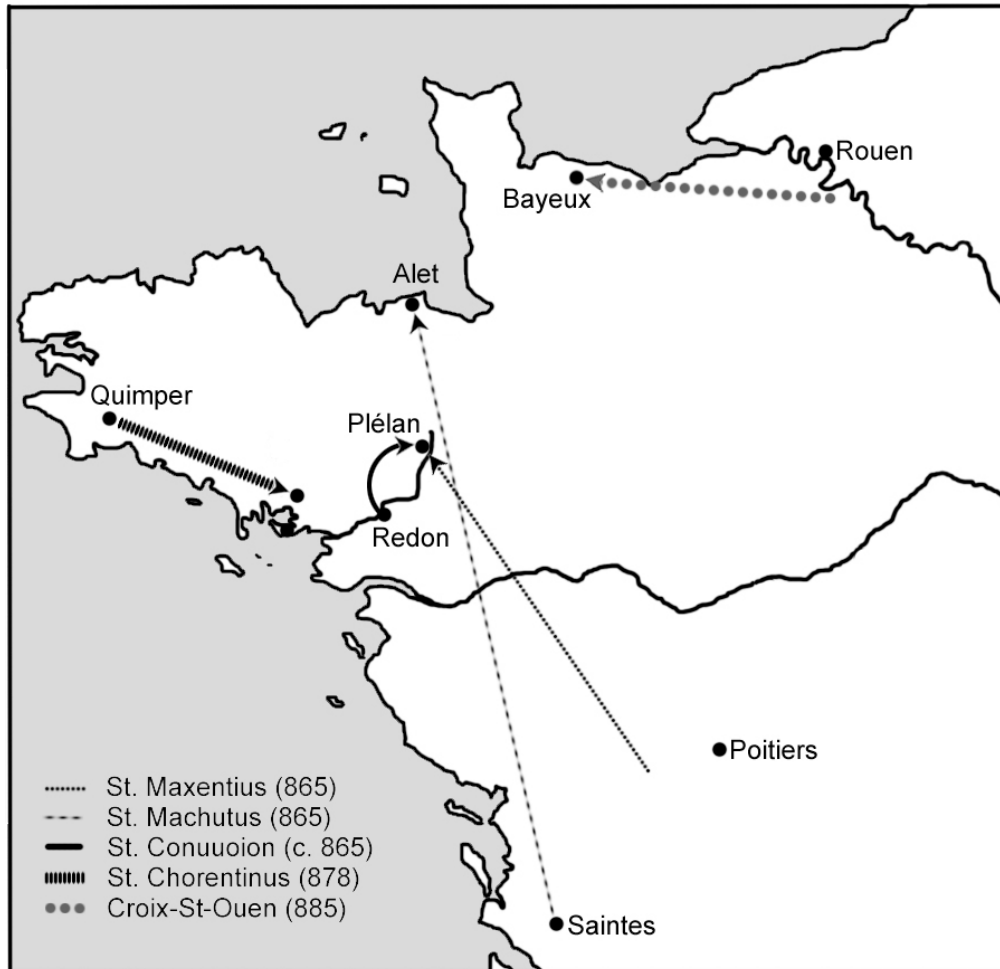
¹²⁴ Adrevald, *Miracula Sancti Benedicti*, MGH SS, 15 no. 1, 493-4 (ch. 33); Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, in R. Poupardin (ed). *Monuments de l'histoire des abbayes de Saint-Philibert*, in *Miracles de Saint-Philibert*, (Paris, 1905), 59-60.

¹²⁵ Charles the Bald, *Epistola* 5, PL, 124, col. 871-5. "Actardum Namneticae quondam sedis venerabilem episcopum, exsilium, vincla, mare, dura pericula passum, sed gratia Dei liberatum, Northmannis...vicinum, ac perinde civitas sibi commissa, olim florentissima, nunc exusta et funditus diruta, redacta per decennium cernitur in eremum..." See also further discussion of Actard's career below, section 4.2. Actard's departure was hastened by Salomon's opposition to his episcopacy, but the presence of Viking attackers hastened his departure by making his position even less tenable. See M. Sommar, "Hincmar of Reims and the Canon Law of Episcopal Translation," *Catholic Historical Review*, 88, no. 3 (2002), 429-445.

2.4 A Safe Haven For Relics

The strength of King Salomon and the cresting power of the Breton monarchy presented a sharp contrast to the weakness of Charles the Bald and his allies in West Francia during the 860s and 870s (explored in depth in Chapter 3). Frankish relic cults were entering into their most difficult period of dislocation, while Breton cults were enjoying growing patronage emanating from Salomon's court. Salomon's ability to protect Breton relic cults quickly made his kingdom a tempting alternative for less fortunate cults beyond his borders. In one such instance during the year 865, monks fleeing Viking destruction in Poitou retreated north to Brittany, bringing with them the relics of St. Maxentius and a large amount of treasure. Salomon welcomed the Frankish monks and housed them at his *palatium* at Plélan, near the center of Brittany at the headwaters of the Vilaine River.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Today called Plélan-le-Grand. Maxentius' primary "*translatio*" is contained within the Cartulary of Redon: *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon*, A. de Courson (ed.) (1863), 228-230 (ch. 283). See also G. DePoerck, "Les reliques de SS. Maixent et Léger," *Revue Bénédictine*, 72 (1962), 61-95; A. Richard, *Chartes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Maixent*, 1 (Poitiers, 1885), 5.



Map 3: Early Breton forced translations, 865-885.

Another group of monks fled to Breton territory in 885. That year, a major Viking offensive up the Seine drove the monks of Croix-St.-Ouen in the Eure Valley to Bayeux on the Breton-controlled Contentin peninsula. Evacuating southward away from the Viking assault, the monks first made a brief stop with their relics in Orléans. Notice of this translation survives in a letter by Bishop Gautier of Orléans to Bishop Lambert of Mans in which the former asks the latter to help the monks make their way to safety “in Bayeux where they owned some

property.”¹²⁷ The monks of Croix-St.-Ouen kept to a safe route on their journey, passing well south of the main Viking offensive as they crossed Neustria from Orléans to Mans heading for the safety of Breton territory.

Even at the peak of its strength, Brittany was not immune from Viking attacks. Still, it is noteworthy that instead of fleeing the province, the guardians of Breton relic cults simply clung more closely to the patronage offered by Breton political authorities. The monks of the Breton monastery at Redon, for example, petitioned Salomon for a shelter of their own during another period of Viking terror within Brittany later in the 860s.¹²⁸ Salomon stationed these monks, plus the relics of their founder, St. Conuuoion, on his domains at Plélan. Plélan, which had already accepted the Frankish relics of St. Maxentius, was quickly becoming the central stockpile of the Breton monarchy’s expanding relic collection.

Slightly later, after Salomon’s assassination in 874, yet another party of monks, fearing Norman attacks along Brittany’s western coastline, left their

¹²⁷ “Nunc ergo deficientibus eis victualibus sumptibus per vestrum episcopatum Baiocensem comitatum, ubi rerum suarum aliqua habetur fiducia, in praesenti eos adire cogit necessitas.” This letter was first published by Bernhard Bischoff, “Briefe des neunten Jahrhunderts,” *Anecdota novissima. Texte der vierten bis sechzehnten Jahrhunderts*, B. Bischoff (ed.), *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie*, 7 (Stuttgart, 1984), letter no. 1, 126-127. It has been studied in more detail and identified with Croix-St-Ouen by J. Le Maho, “Une nouvelle source pour l’histoire du monastère de la Croix-Saint-Ouen à la fin du IX^e siècle,” *Tabularia. Sources écrites de la Normandie médiévale* (2005), 1-15. Bayeux might seem an odd choice of refuge considering that Dudo of St.-Quentin records a major Norman attack there in 885. Dudo, however, is a notoriously unreliable historian and may have simply been providing spurious early evidence for Rollo’s control of the Continent. For more on Dudo, see Chapter 3.

¹²⁸ This came after Redon had miraculously survived a Viking attack in 854 thanks to the monks’ fervent prayers. No monks were forced to leave the monastery at that time, but the *Gesta Sancti Rotonensium*, 212-18 (book 3, ch. 9), written by Ratuili between 868-876 (during the reign of Salomon), praises Salomon for preventing similar catastrophes in his own day. The monk Wrdisten of St.-Pol-de-Léon similarly described a worrying Viking attack on the nearby Isle of Batz in 884, but still more miracles saved him and his colleagues from having to abandon their monastery. Quaghbeur, “Norvège et Bretagne,” 115.

monastery near Quimper with relics of St. Chorentinus. They fled east, but again, did not leave Brittany, traveling only as far as the fortified castle of Count Pascweten of Vannes.¹²⁹ Lay authorities like Salomon and Pascweten were eager to cater to the needs of these cults in order to keep the relics within the province. Notably, there is not a single documented instance of a relic translation that originated within Brittany because of Viking attacks and ended outside of the province during the ninth century, despite the frequent occurrence of Scandinavian raids along the peninsula's edges during the 860s and 870s.

These translations into and within Brittany did not simply involve moving relics away from the places of greatest exposure to Norman attacks. In one case in the Breton town of Alet, Viking raids in the area actually precipitated the translation of relics toward the front line of attack. Sometime around 865, Bishop Rethwalatr of Alet in northern Brittany sent a party of twelve notables down to the cathedral of Saintes in Aquitaine to acquire the relics of their patron, St. Machutus, who had died in Saintes and been interred in that city since the seventh century. Arriving in Saintes, they found that the local clergy were disinclined to part with Machutus' relics,¹³⁰ and the Alétiens were forced to petition the Frankish king to force the relics' return. In the end, a compromise

¹²⁹ Plaine, "Les Invasions des Normandes en Armorique," 213. Other, similar translations within Brittany are likely to have occurred but have gone undocumented. While major, royal-sponsored translations were commemorated for a variety of reasons, only foundations that felt they had some explaining to do as a result of some sort of disruption or discontinuity were likely to preserve their activities through periods of upheaval. Brief, short-distance translations like those that probably occurred in the relative safety of ninth century Brittany are the least likely to have been recorded, and indeed few manuscript collections from any western province contain more than a few local *translationes* of this type. See Heinzelmann, "Translationsberichte," 95-96.

¹³⁰ Their literal response, "Are you insane? Are you confused? Go and do not wander." Bili, *Vita Machutis*, book 2, ch 6, (ed. F. Lot), *Melanges d'Histoire Bretonne* (Paris, 1907), 415: "Illo vero sacerdotes, qui tunc errant, respondententes dixerunt: 'Numquid et vos insani estis? Quis vos conturbavit? Ite et nolite errare.'"

was worked out in which the Bretons were allowed to remove the head and right arm of their patron and return north to their cathedral. Part of Rethwalatr's goal in acquiring the relics, the sources tell us, was to safeguard the city of Alet from Viking attacks.¹³¹ From the same source, we learn that the presence of Machutus' miraculous relics was enough to prevent at least one Norse raid in the early 870s.¹³²

2.5 The Departure of Brittany's Cults

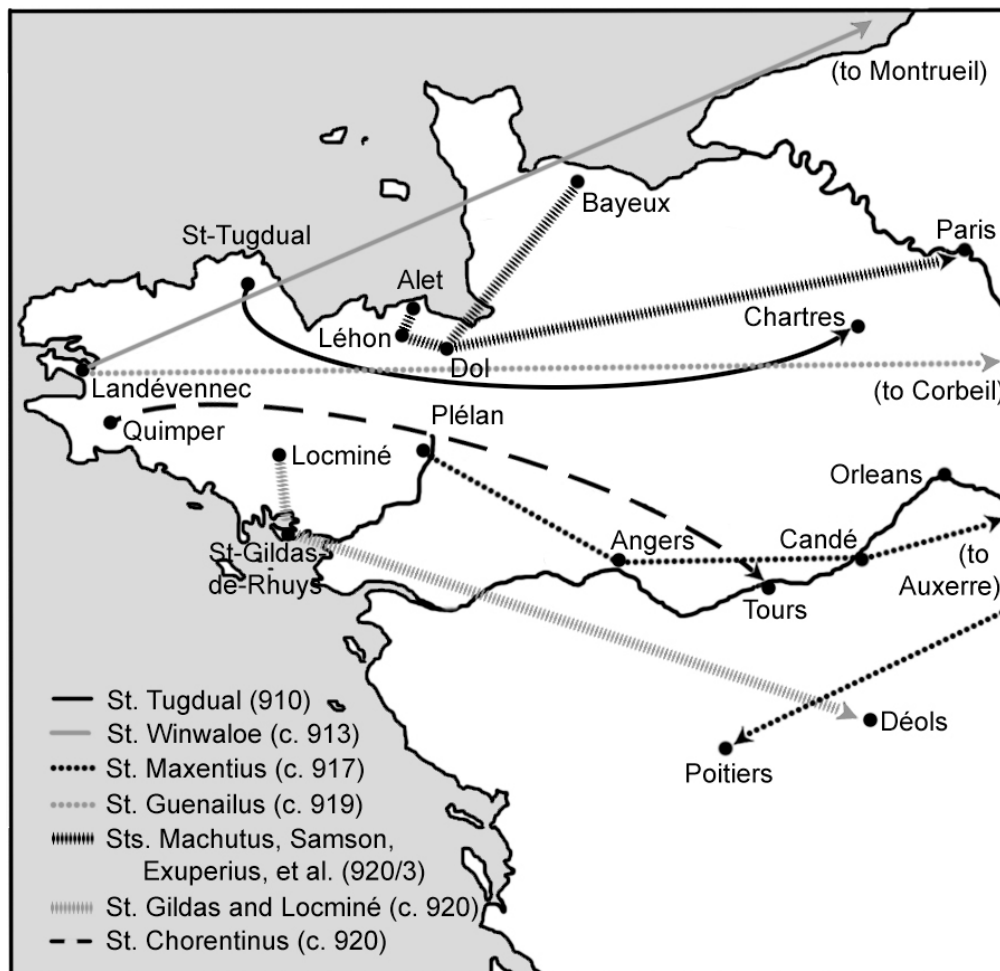
By the second decade of the tenth century, however, the flow of relics reversed dramatically. Relics left Brittany in large numbers, starting not long after Alan I's death in 907. The very same relics that had been brought into Brittany for safekeeping a few decades before were now among the first to be evacuated.

It was at this time, for example, that the relics of St. Maxentius were withdrawn back into Francia, nearly fifty years after they were first translated into Brittany. As the situation in Brittany deteriorated, the Frankish viscount of Thouars, Aimeri, sent an agent north to Brittany in c. 917 to press for the return of Maxentius' relics from Plélan back to the relative safety of their original home in Poitou. The monks tending to his cult at Plélan, now a mix of the remaining

¹³¹ Bili, *Vita Machutis*, 331. For F. Lot's dismissal of Bili's text as a forgery designed to camouflage the flagrant theft of St. Machutus' relics, see "Les diverses rédactions de la vie de St. Malo," 120-36. P. Riché's rehabilitation of Bili's value as an author refutes Lot's criticisms point for point. Riché, "Translations de reliques," 202-208.

¹³² Bili, *Vita Machutis*. The *Vita Machuti* (ch. 15-6) provides a fanciful story in which half of the city offered coins to St. Machutus in hopes of thwarting a Norse attack, while the other half of the village tried to cheat the saint of his offering. St. Machutus, annoyed, left their half of the city to be destroyed by the plunderers.

Poitevin exiles who had initially fled the Normans into Brittany and their newer Breton acolytes, agreed that the situation dictated that the relics should be returned. Ironically, their return journey was interrupted by the news of a new Viking raid near Poitiers. The traveling monks, hesitant to brave the rest of the trip home yet unwilling to backtrack to Brittany, purchased yet a third property



near Blois and waited for the danger to pass.¹³³ Within a short time, this place, too, became exposed to attack and the monks fled yet again further east to the protection of Duke Richard of Bourgogne in the *pagus* of Auxerre, well beyond the borders of Breton territory.

Similarly, the relics of St. Machutus, which had been brought to Brittany in part to act as a defense against Norman aggression, were finally overcome and removed from the saint's home province as well. Bishop Rethwalatr's successor, Salvator of Alet, took up St. Machutus' relics in 920/23 and headed first for the nearby abbey of Léhon in his own diocese,¹³⁴ and then on toward Francia. On the way, he and his attendants joined up with another caravan of monks fleeing east with their own relics. These monks from the neighboring diocese of Dol were transporting the corpse of their patron, St. Samson, plus the remains of their former bishop St. Senier and the priests Sts. Scubilion and Pair. Along with them came monks from Bayeux, one of the cities that had been annexed by Salomon during his war of expansion but which had since been absorbed into the new duchy of Normandy. The monks of Bayeux had evacuated the relics of their patron St. Exuperius ahead of them to Corbeil in Francia a few years previously.¹³⁵ Together, these travelers wandered around western Francia for an unknown period until "the imminent madness of the barbarians" drove them to

¹³³ They "bought a church at Candé (Condadensem)...for 60 solidi, together with all its lands." *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon*, 228-9: "Deinde, cum ibidem castrametaremur, audivimus quod pagani devastabant pictavensem regionem; plorantes et ejulantes in faciem cecidimus, eo quod beatum virum a suo mausoleo quem Christus sibi preparaverat expulimus, quatinus redire retro non poteramus, nec in antea eum ad propria potare. Et quid inde noster luctus requievit; deinde movimus ad Condadensem ecclesiam, super illud flumen quod vocatur Bebronus, comparantes eam LX solidis cum omni suo territorio; et ibi demorantur enim nostri monachi in honore beati Maxentii, cum una capsula eburnea plurimorum sanctorum reliquiis plena."

¹³⁴ The diocese of Alet was renamed after St. Machutus (St. Malo) in the twelfth century.

¹³⁵ Guillotel, "L'exode du clergé breton," 281-2.

Paris.¹³⁶ In Paris, they fell under the patronage of Hugh the Great, who cast around for “a place worthy of being the location of the bodies of so many saints” before finally granting them the basilica of St.-Barthélemy.¹³⁷

Around the same time, the body of St. Chorentinus, which had remained inside Brittany during the attacks of the 870s, was subjected to re-eviction from his tomb at Quimper. But where these monks had been previously content to find a fortified refuge within their own province, this time they fled outside of the province, deep into Francia to the region near Tours.¹³⁸

Near to Quimper, the monastery of Landévennec seems to have been the source of two different forced translations leading outside of the province. First, the bones, chasuble, and cloak of St. Winwaloe, founder of the abbey, were translated from Landévennec in about 913.¹³⁹ St. Winwaloe’s keepers initially hoped to flee to England, but found themselves welcomed to Francia instead by Count Hilgold of Ponthieu, who hoped to enrich his church at St.-Saulve through the presence of these relics. To entice the Breton exiles to stay, Hilgold

¹³⁶ *Translatio S. Maglorii*, 244 (ch. 2): “...ob imminentem rabiem paganorum Parisius...adierunt.”

¹³⁷ *Translatio S. Maglorii*, 245 (ch. 2): “...Hugone Francorum duce, locus ad tantorum sanctorum corpora digne collocanda largiretur.” The cult of St. Maglorius also received rural donations, including a *villa* near Belleville. Corvisier, “L’exode et l’implantation des reliques,” 295.

¹³⁸ *Translatio S. Chorenti* (ed. F. Plaine), in “Vie inédite de Saint Corentin,” *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique du Finistère*, 13 (1886); G. Oury, “La dévotion des anciens moins aux saintes reliques: Saint Corentin à Marmoutier,” *Bulletin Trimestriel de la Société Archéologique de Touraine*, 39 (1979), 88-108.

¹³⁹ F. Morvannou, “Guénolé et Guénaël,” *Annales de Bretagne* (1974), 29-36. Quaghebeur, “Norvège et Bretagne,” 118, 127, suggests that the Norman attack on Landévennec may have been precipitated by the close association of the Breton royal family with the territory of Landévennec. Nominoë, Erispoë and Salomon were all born there, and the site could have been a rallying point for royalist resistance against Norman colonization.

presented them with an estate at Cavron and personally promised to add to their treasure if they remained at St.-Saulve.¹⁴⁰

Later, a second group of monks from Landévennec appear to have been “driven from the region in fear,” with the relics of St. Guenailus, Winwaloe’s successor as abbot, to Paris in c. 919. Teudo, the prefect of Paris, “housed them honorably” in a manor called Courcouronnes after their arrival, which he ceded to the monks in perpetuity along with all its rights and revenues.¹⁴¹ Sometime later they left Courcouronnes for Corbeil, where another local count, the “most generous and illustrious” Haimon, received and housed them. Haimon “hoped to keep such an invaluable treasure and to use [the relics] to defend his castle.... Aware of this importance” he built the exiled monks an impressive chapel close to the comital residence and endowed them with a portion of the district’s tax receipts in perpetuity.¹⁴²

Following the same pattern, the monks of St.-Gildas-de-Rhuys made a caravan with the monks of the nearby monastery of Locminé in southeastern Brittany and fled with the relics of their respective patrons south to Berry in

¹⁴⁰ This from a charter affirmed by St.-Saulve’s abbot, Rameric, around the year 1000 that reconfirmed Hilgold’s donations. H. Guillotel, “L’exode du clergé Breton,” p. 283.

¹⁴¹ The second *Vita Guenaili*, [BHL 8818-9], published with a new French translation by F. Morvannou, *Saint Guénaël. Etudes et documents* (Brest, 1997), 96-7: “... metu compellente, ab illis regionibus deportantes, in Franciam in Parisiacos fines, Domino ducente, pervenerunt. Ubi a Teudone urbis Parisiacae praefecto honorifice suscepti, in quadam eius villa, Curcorona nomine, sacras deposuerunt reliquias.” Morvannou states that Teudo is known from other sources to have been active in Paris from c. 925-41.

¹⁴² *Vita Guenaili*, 96-7: “...Haimonis illustrissimi et munificentissimi Corboliensium comitis devotio satis enituit. Hic siquidem inaestimabilis pretii thesaurum retinere et tali tantoque praesidio castrum suum munire desiderans.” Courcouronnes (*Curcorona*) was located five miles north of Corbeil. This second translation is recorded in the latter part of the second *Vita Guenaili*. St. Guennail’s translation is also mentioned in the *Translatio S. Maglorii*, which states less precisely that they were evacuated to “Paris.” Haimon of Corbeil was also active in enrolling and supporting new local recruits for the refugee cults that came under his patronage. Corvisier, “L’exode et l’implantation des reliques,” 289-298.

Francia. There, Count Ebbo and his son Raoul constructed a new monastery to house them on an island in the Indre River.¹⁴³ St. Tugdual was probably also evacuated east to Chartres and beyond to the Gâtinais, where monks from his monastery arrived by 910.¹⁴⁴ In total then, of nine translations from five different Breton dioceses¹⁴⁵ were carried out within a few years of the death of Alan I and the resurgence of Viking attacks on the Breton peninsula.

The large number of translations both into and out of Brittany resulting from Viking attacks in the region should not suggest, however, that all relic translations within the province were motivated by Norse pillaging. King Erispoë, for one, arranged the translations of the relics of St. Brioc to Angers and St. Clair to Réguiny not to safeguard them from pagan raiders, but to increase Breton political (and ecclesiastical) influence over these two cities, which had been recently subsumed by Brittany's expanding eastern frontier.¹⁴⁶ Likewise, although Abbot Mabbo of St.-Pol-de-Léon left his monastery in northern Brittany for Fleury in Francia around 960 with the relics of his predecessor St. Paul Aurelian, he simply retired there and took the occasion to bring some of his

¹⁴³ *Gildae vita et translatio* (ed. Lot), *Mélanges d'histoire bretonne*, 431; de la Borderie, *Histoire de la Bretagne*, 366.

¹⁴⁴ The third *vita* of St. Tugdual, published by A. de la Borderie, "Commentaire historique sur les trois vies de saint Tudal," *Mémoires de la Société historique et archéologique des Côtes du Nord* (1887), 284-366, describes this translation in some detail. The text was compiled in its present form in Tréguier in the early eleventh century, but according to de la Borderie, depends on tenth century sources.

¹⁴⁵ This would be a count of only of unique translations with unique starting points, not a count of translated saints, since many of these translations (especially those traveling in caravans) brought the relics of multiple saints into exile. The *Translatio S. Maglorii*, for example, lists a total of eighteen saints arriving in Paris at the same time from four different monasteries in two diocese. The *Translatio Gildae* claims that abbots Daioc and Taneth arrived in Berry with the relics of at least six saints in their entourage. Corvisier, "L'exode et l'implantation des reliques," 290, 297 (note 1), counts as many as thirty saints who were evacuated from the peninsula, including those of the so-called "Maglorien" group.

¹⁴⁶ Plaine, "Les Invasions des Normandes," 211; Hermann-Mascard, *Les reliques des saints*, 55, note 197.

house's relics with him.¹⁴⁷ He was not forced to evacuate by Vikings. Overall, however, the great majority of ninth and tenth century Breton relic translations can be categorized as forced translations, particularly those inbound translations that clustered around the years 865-875 and those outbound translations that clustered around 917-925.

PART THREE: Ideology and Geography

One of the primary outcomes of forced relic translation in Brittany was that the movement of relics brought spiritual geography into line with the changes in political geography that overtook the peninsula around the turn of the tenth century.¹⁴⁸ The growing congruence between these parallel Breton geographies belies the mutual ideological significance that politics and relic cults held for each other during the Viking period. The evacuation of holy bodies within Brittany, in other words, reflects the strong practical and ideological desire of both sides to maintain the alliance between the custodians of Brittany's saints and the most powerful lay leaders in the region. Both depended on the power of the other to augment their own strength; together, Christian lay authorities and the ecclesiastical keepers of relic cults made up the twin pillars of Christian civilization in Brittany. The failure of these institutions was of tremendous

¹⁴⁷ A. Oheix, "Notes sur la translation des reliques de Saint Paul Aurelian à Fleuri (vers 960)," *Bulletin de la Société archéologique de Nantes et du département de la Loire-Inférieure*, 41 (1900), 216-21. Paul's epithet "Aurelian" commemorates his subsequent association with Fleury, near Orléans. R. McKitterick erroneously counts this as a Viking-inspired refugee translation, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians 751-987* (1983), 245.

¹⁴⁸ The phraseology is M. Carli's, *Le Traslazione Reliquali*, 129.

consequence not just for the livelihoods of the kings and religious involved, but for Brittany's status as a Christian province.

3.1 Relics and Power in Brittany

Political power and legitimacy were tightly linked with relic translation in Brittany, as they were elsewhere. The involvement of civil authorities at the highest ranks in Brittany's Viking-era translations was natural, especially since these translations were largely driven by elites. In nearly every Breton translation outlined above, kings, counts, or other lay figures were involved on some level, in addition to ecclesiastical and monastic dignitaries. Generally, the primary function of civil authorities in these translation narratives was simply to receive the fleeing monks and their relics and to provide new places of refuge for them after their arrival in exile. The provision of new buildings or benefices to displaced religious communities was an expensive proposition for lay authorities, often involving significant outlays of money and land. However, for kings, counts and others, exercising this kind of largesse brought numerous advantages.

First, the presence of relics allowed political elites in and around Brittany to build up their own strength. The kind of spiritual power contemporary lay authorities believed relics could bring to bear on ninth and tenth century politics cannot be underestimated. When a community of monks living in the valley of the Rance River asked Nominoë to give them some land to start a monastery, he "asked them how many saints they had, because if he was to give them any land,

it would only be in order to claim the aid of the saints for the business of his kingdom.”¹⁴⁹ He added that if God provided them with relics “whose power could sustain a monastery and defend me myself in my peril, you would have my confidence.”¹⁵⁰ Not having any, the monks stole the body of St. Maglorius from a monastery on the island of Sercq by falsely claiming the king’s authority to do so. Only when they had these relics in hand did Nominoë deed them the land that was to become the monastery of Léhon.¹⁵¹ This arrangement worked well for both sides: the monks earned a new home and the king gained a new cult.

Relics also occasionally served a defensive role against foreign attack, particularly before the final collapse of Breton political authority in the tenth century. It was for the purpose of their community’s protection, for example, that the relics of St. Machutus were first brought to Alet by Rethwalatr in 865.¹⁵²

In addition to these practical uses, Breton relics also functioned as talismans of political legitimacy during this period. By acting as *committentes*, or sponsors of relic translations, authorities of all ranks in and around the Breton peninsula benefited by linking themselves with powerful holy patrons in reciprocal relationships of mutual promotion. Relics dislocated by the Viking attacks of the

¹⁴⁹ *Miracula S. Maglorii*, in A. de la Borderie, “Miracles de Saint Magloire,” *Mémoires de la Société Historique et Archéologique des Côtes-du-Nord*, 4, (1891) no. 15, 239: “tunc rex qualia sanctorum pignora secum haberent inquiri, ut, recepta ab illo terra, illorum sanctorum precibus iuvandum in otio et negotio se commendaret.” On the ninth century date of this text, see J.-C. Poulin, “Recherche et identification de la littérature hagiographique du haut moyen âge: l’exemple breton,” *Revue d’histoire et de l’église de France*, 71 (1985), 120-1.

¹⁵⁰ *Miracula S. Maglorii*, 239: “Si deus omnipotens... aliquem ex numero sanctorum habendum quandoque concesserit, cuius patrocinio valeat locus iste fulciri et ego possim in rebus arduis adjuvari... tunc larga terrarum praedia ad illius honorem daturum me promitto.”

¹⁵¹ It was to Léhon that Bishop Salvator fled after 920 on his way to Paris with St. Machutus’ relics. The monks of Léhon joined him on his trip into exile and brought the relics of St. Maglorius with them. *Translatio S. Maglorii*, 310. See above, section 2.5.

¹⁵² See above, section 2.4. More detail on the use of saints’ relics for military and protective purposes can be found in Chapter 3.

ninth and tenth centuries provided especially good opportunities for this kind of patronage, since these displaced cults had clear and immediate needs that secular authorities could easily fill. Evacuated cults were also “new” cults, unencumbered by local ties or other complicating factors, but came complete with staffs of monks and clerics to service and promote them. They also presented local potentates with the advantage of filling empty space within their domains, spaces that lacked developed religious institutions. This completed the process of Christianization within the region, and reinforced the political subjugation that typically accompanied the extension of religious institutions into new areas.¹⁵³

The patronage given by civil authorities was also of obvious advantage to the fleeing monks and clerics themselves. Escape from Brittany had cost these monasteries a great deal of patrimony which now lay essentially abandoned back home. But with the help of kings and other powerbrokers eager to help them, they were able to acquire new patrimonies, now spread over much greater territory on both sides of the Breton march.¹⁵⁴

Even when medieval aristocrats did not find themselves directly involved in conducting a translation, they could also take the opportunity to impose their authority as arbitrators between other *committentes*. In the case of the return of

¹⁵³ The “spiritual space” filled by these new arrivals was not always empty. The relics of St. Gildas and St. Paternus of Vannes were housed at Déols (near modern-day Châteauroux), where they competed with the already-established monastery of Notre-Dame-de-Déols for the patronage of Count Ebbo of Berry. *Gildae vita et translatio* (ed. F. Lot). The same was true for the monks of Redon who were granted exile at Plélan by Salomon, despite the fact that he had already housed the relics of St. Maxentius there at an earlier date. *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon*, 228-9.

¹⁵⁴ Though monks might also acquire places of refuge through outright purchase using their own funds, as the monks of St.-Maxentius did at Blois on their way home to Poitiers in the early tenth century. See above, section 2.5.

the relics of St. Maxentius to Poitou, Count Aimeri and the monks of Maxentius' Breton refuge sought the assistance of Ebalus of Aquitaine,¹⁵⁵ Count of Poitou and Aimeri's feudal lord. Simply by the fact of his presiding over these negotiations, Ebalus' power over the events that transpired in Poitou was confirmed. Charles the Bald often served in such an intermediary role between the two parties of translations in Francia, each time reinforcing his status and relevance.¹⁵⁶

The involvement of kings, dukes, and counts in these matters was aimed at the construction and maintenance of mutually beneficial patronage networks. These networks might be spiritual, as when a local aristocrat inserted himself into the religious hierarchy by establishing or patronizing a local cult, or rather more worldly, using relics as a lever with which to enhance their own political power. Whether the aims of a sponsoring *committens* in any one instance were primarily spiritual or political, they were mutually reinforcing: provision of spiritual patronage as *committentes* made Breton civil leaders into allies of the saints. Brittany's saints, in turn, rewarded them with the benefits of their own kind of patronage.

These spiritual benefits readily translated themselves into political and military advantage. Political success allowed for more opportunity to patronize yet more cults, further amplifying the cycle of patronage and return. On the other end of the equation, the exiled monks and clerics bearing relics also enjoyed the

¹⁵⁵ Ebles Manzer (c. 870-935). See Chapter 4 for more on Ebalus' career as a patron of displaced relic cults.

¹⁵⁶ As he did in the negotiations between the monks of Saintes and Alet over the relics of St. Machutus in 865. See above, section 2.4.

material fruits of civil patronage and were thus eager to enter into such relationships as quickly as possible.

3.2 Salomon and the Seizure of Carolingian “Spiritual Capital”

The relationship of mutual support between saints, monks, and their *committentes* could, however, cut two ways. The sacralizing ideological component that underpinned the legitimacy so important to lay authority figures could give reason for monks and relics to flee not just *to* civil patrons but also *away* from them. This is indeed a major factor governing the pattern of importation and withdrawal of relics from Brittany in the ninth and tenth centuries.

By the end of the ninth century, while Carolingian Francia seemed to barely resemble the Christian Empire of Charlemagne, Brittany’s political star was on the rise. Brittany’s ability to maintain its own defense and preserve stability during the late ninth century allowed the province to keep hold of its own relics, and even attract new relics from threatened areas within the Carolingian heartland. Particularly during the apogee of Salomon’s rule in the third quarter of the ninth century, the Breton principality was able to preserve at least a stable core around Salomon’s strongholds in the central and eastern parts of the peninsula. Within this zone, monks, clerics, and their relics could feel secure, generally safe from Viking attack and subject to the rewards of the Breton monarchy’s generous patronage.

Salomon's willingness to accommodate exiled monks and their relics was motivated in part by concern for his own soul, as well as a more calculating kind of piety. By drawing relics to himself, Salomon hoped to increase his temporal power with the help of the saints whose cults he patronized in exile, and also, perhaps, to commandeer some of the "spiritual capital" of the faltering Carolingian kings. The powerful saints that had been literally in the employ of the Carolingian dynasty during their push into Saxony, Bavaria, and elsewhere had now, it seemed, manifestly abandoned the Franks. Frankish monks like those who guarded St. Maxentius sought to make that spiritual abandonment a physical reality by escaping with their relics to the court of the only king in the region who still seemed to enjoy the assistance of God against the pagan raiders. Salomon was happy to expropriate the saintly bounty that rushed to his embrace. A diploma of Salomon to the exiled monks of Redon in April, 869, sums up the many inducements to patronage, and hints at Salomon's rivalry with the Carolingians:

Salomon..., prince of all Brittany and a large part of Gaul lets it be known to the bishops, priests, clergy, counts, dukes, and all other officers and others in our dependence..., that we with our wife Guenwreth now cede both our palace and the monastery there [at Plélan]..., to serve for the fleeing monks [of Redon] as a retreat against the Normans. Moreover, in the hope of amending our sins ... and to win for our family not only temporal success, but also eternal happiness, and to assure the tranquil stability of our reign as well as those of our vassals, we order that a grand monastery be built there in honor of the Savior, which we hope will bear our own name. Interred there are the relics of blessed abbot Conuuoion, and our wife Guenwreth, and we hope that we too will come to repose there.... And, in order to strengthen the prosperity and peace throughout Brittany..., we give the following objects from our treasury: [a long list of gold, silver, and silken ornaments follows, including] a precious priest's

chasuble brocaded with gold which had been given to me as a great gift by my godfather Charles, most pious king of the Franks.¹⁵⁷

Salomon clearly hoped that the relics of Conuuoion would assure him not only a “tranquil reign,” but also an amplification of his role as patron of a major Breton cult. Salomon emphasizes his personal role in harboring the displaced monks, taking credit for the new abbey and naming it after himself. The fact that he buried his wife at the new foundation and planned it as his own burial place is evidence enough for the significance he attached to his role as protector of Redon’s relics in exile. Salomon was constructing for himself a central role in the Breton church akin to the one Carolingian kings enjoyed in Francia.¹⁵⁸ Here, he even seems to suggest a certain equivalence between himself and Charles the Bald. By mentioning the chasuble, he implies that he has quite literally taken over the mantle of the beleaguered king of the Franks. In this document, Salomon puts himself forward as a legitimate protector of relics in danger, and, although the purpose of the diploma was not necessarily to advertise his new

¹⁵⁷ *Cartulaire de Redon*, 189-91: “Salomon...totius Britanniae magneque partis Galliarum princeps, notum sit cunctis Britanniae tam episcopis quam sacerdotibus totoque clero necnon etiam comitibus ceterisque nobilissimis ducibus fortissimisque militibus omnibusque nostre ditioni subditis..., ante Nortmannis...nos venerabil[is]que nostr[a] conjug[a] Guenuureth...quibus assensum prebentes, non solum supradictam aulam [Plélan] eis tradidimus, set etiam in eodem loco monasterium..., ad refugium supradictis monachis, pro...redemptione animarum nostrarum..., perpetuaque prosperitate totiusque regni nostri fideliumque nostrorum tranquillissima stabilitate, construere iussimus, quemque etiam locum monasterium Salomonis vocare volumus, in quo etiam reverentissimus abbas Conuuoion sepultus jacet, ibi et venerabilis nostra conjunx Guenuuret honorifice sepulta quiescit, in quo etiam et ego..., corpus meum sepeliendum.... Necnon, ad augmentum felicitatis et pacis totius Britanniae... munum transmissum ex nostro thesauro... Casulamque sacerdotalem preciosam extrinsecus interstinctae ex auro cooperatam, quam mihi meus compater Francorum piissimus rex Karolus, pro magno, sicut est, transmisit dono.” The list also mentions many precious gifts associated with St. Maxentius, who had been translated to Plélan from Saintes, in Aquitaine, at an earlier date. See above, section 2.4.

¹⁵⁸ Bózoky, *La politique des reliques*, 62, suggests that Salomon intended to make Plélan into a Breton St.-Denis, serving simultaneously as the dynasty’s mausoleum and as a repository for its relic collection. Even the charter itself, Bozóky argues, borrows directly from Carolingian models affirming their authority over royal monasteries.

status expressly, the implication is that relics like those of St. Maxentius should abandon the sinking ship of Francia for the triumphant kingdom of the Bretons.¹⁵⁹

3.3 The Collapse of Patronage and the Withdrawal of Breton Relics to Francia

Unfortunately for Brittany, a reversal was nigh. As the dream of Breton royalty began to miscarry in the civil war following Salomon's assassination in 874, rival Breton counts Pascweten and Gurwand each invited Scandinavian mercenaries into Brittany. Both counts soon saw the Vikings, whom they were unable to control, aim their attacks as much at Breton religious foundations as at their enemies' *castra*. The internal upheaval that followed saw the province "cruelly destroyed as much by its own people as by foreigners."¹⁶⁰ Alan I halted the political disintegration of the peninsula for two decades, but so few sources survive about this last Breton king that it remains impossible to determine whether he continued the monarchical policies of his predecessors. It seems likely. The reprieve from Viking attacks under Alan I proved elusory, however. After Alan I's death in 907, Brittany was without an effective leader to stem the Viking threat. Norse raids on monastic targets immediately spiked, and the commencement of the Breton "exodus" followed straightaway.

¹⁵⁹ Charles the Bald's weakness was also recognized within Francia. L. Musset has cataloged explicit criticisms of Charles' ineffective defense of Francia from the likes of the *Annales Xantenses*, Ermentarius, and Poeta Saxo, as well as the well-informed and generally pro-Charles *Translatio S. Germani* and others. L. Musset, *Les invasions: le second assaut contre l'Europe chrétienne* (Paris, 1965), 227. The significance of Salomon's self-promotion at Charles' expense could not have been lost on the monks of Redon.

¹⁶⁰ *Gildae vita et translatio*, 460 (ch. 32): "Itaque Britannia... eo tempore tam a suis quam ab extraneis crudeli modo vastabatur."

Once the collapse of Breton leadership was evident, both because of the succession crisis and the abandonment of the province by lay elites, it was the turn of Frankish aristocrats to benefit from the dislocation of relics. West Frankish authorities located along the primary routes of escape from Brittany were quick to lay claim to the relics that came flowing from the peninsula.

Crucially, it was not Carolingian kings, but rather a new breed of West Frankish aristocrats who capitalized on Brittany's loss of its relics. Men like Counts Aimeri and Ebalus of Poitou, not Charles the Simple, were the ones who assisted the monks fleeing with the body of St. Maxentius. The two Poitevin aristocrats were, in fact, direct competitors with Charles the Simple, and within a few years would both be in open revolt against his rule. The relics of St. Maxentius appear to have been an important part of their rise to power in northern Aquitaine considering the lengths they went to in order to secure them. Aimeri showered wealth on the cult of Maxentius in order to coax the relics' return from Brittany to Poitiers. Unfortunately for Aimeri and Ebalus, they were not alone in wooing the cult. Aimeri was ultimately forced into a bidding war with Richard, first duke of Burgundy and ally of the Carolingians, over who would play host to St. Maxentius' relics. Both magnates promised the monks of St.-Maxentius "many benefices, riches, and estates given in devotion with free spirit." After a period of negotiation, Aimeri's offer proved the more attractive; according to the Cartulary of Redon, Aimeri promised to deliver "100 pecks of bread and wine per year, a mill in Aimeri's own name, and an equal amount of land both cultivated and uncultivated," plus unfettered custodianship of the relics' shrine

forever.¹⁶¹ All this was guaranteed with further gifts from Ebalus, and the relics were finally brought at great expense under Aimeri's control just as the two men were surging toward independence from the Carolingian crown.

Hugh the Great was another important non-Carolingian recipient of displaced Breton relics. Duke Hugh received the relics Sts. Maglorius, Machutus, Samson, Guenailus, and many others at Paris c. 919.¹⁶² The *Translatio sancti Maglorii* heaps praise on Hugh for the "prodigious amounts of gold" he provided to the fleeing monks, as well as "other munificence from Hugh himself, as though he were a king of antiquity." Although clearly identified as a "duke" in the text, the Breton author of the *Translatio sancti Maglorii* was happy to assign Hugh a higher status commensurate with the level of patronage he provided.¹⁶³ This was precisely the kind of attitude Hugh hoped that his patronage activities would cultivate as he increased his own standing among the next generation of Frankish leadership just as they were on the cusp of superseding the Carolingians.

¹⁶¹ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon*, 229-30: "Haemaricus autem et noster abbas promiserunt nobis C modios inter panem et vinum hoc anno presenti gratulanter dare, et unum molendinum cum cartula, ex parte Haemericici, et terram cultam et incultam pariter dividere; et nos simus ipsius corporis sine fine custodes, cum auctoritate Eubuli comitis et securitate."

¹⁶² St. Guenailus was actually harbored by Count Teudo of Paris, one of Hugh's vassals, who moved them outside of Paris to a villa at Courcouronnes. See above, section 2.5. St. Guenailus' attachment to Hugh, however, is demonstrated by the fact that St. Guenailus's relics had to be evacuated from the area in 946, not because of Viking attacks but because of "the furor of the Saxons" (furore saxonum regno francorum ingruentior), or more specifically, Otto I's invasion of west Francia against Hugh the Great that year. Had these relics not been an important aspect of Hugh's attempts to promote himself over west Frankish competitors like Louis IV d'Outremer, it seems unlikely that the monks who protected them would have felt sufficiently threatened by Otto to abandon the city. *Vita Guenaili*, 96. For the date of 919, see Morvannou, *Saint Guénaél*, 15-6.

¹⁶³ *Translatio S. Maglorii*, 245 (ch. 2-3): "...tanti prodigii novitas pricipis aures aggreditur....Sublatis autem inde sacris sanctorum artubus ab ipso Hugone, strenuissimo duce, in ecclesiam, que regum antiquitus munificentia fuerat constructa...." The text rather lamely appends a brief notice at its conclusion stating that the largesse of Hugh and his wife Adelaide were also confirmed after the fact by Carolingian Kings Lothar (d. 986) and Louis V (d. 987). *Ibid.*, 247 (ch. 5).

On both sides of the Breton border, therefore, the withdrawal of relics from troubled provinces and their reacceptance in exile safe within well-protected zones reflects the political and ideological dimensions of Viking-era forced relic translation. In this way they are comparable to the great relic translations of the ninth century into places like Saxony. Yet where the ninth century translations of Sts. Vitus and Liborius to the Carolingian eastern frontier represented an extension of a royal power on the rise, the forced translations out of Brittany in the tenth century represent a retrenchment that signaled the shrinking power of Christian institutions and an unraveling of the Christian expansion of previous centuries.

PART FOUR: Breton “Hagio-Geography” and the Boundaries of Christendom

Since matters of political control and legitimacy are closely intertwined with questions of place and territory, the subtext of these translations reaches past politics to political geography. In the same way that accounts of Breton relic translations during the Viking era mixed politics and religious ideology, these sources also inject Christian metaphysics into their description of contemporary political geography. They do not confine themselves to the simple boundaries between rival principalities, instead presenting a much broader interpretation of the geographical consequences of Brittany’s relic exodus.

4.1 The De-Christianization of Brittany

From the perspective of the writers of forced translation accounts, the withdrawal of relics from peripheral territories like Brittany¹⁶⁴ represented an inversion of the Carolingian agenda of expansion and Christianization. The loss of the province's relics was also deemed symptomatic of the breakdown of dependable Christian authority there, and, the texts suggest, a degradation of the territory's Christian status. Tenth century Brittany did not perhaps find itself separated from Christendom in the same way that Spain was after its seizure by the Muslims, for example. However, denuded of most of its relic shrines, the province looked much more like an un-Christianized frontier territory than an energetic fulcrum of Celtic and Frankish Christianity, as it had during the ninth century.

The dynamic of cores and peripheries, each waxing and waning in proportion to the strength of individual leaders, also helps to unravel the changing spiritual geography described by Breton the authors of Viking-era translation accounts. A strong interest in maintaining holy relics within one of these cores helps explain why these relics traveled to Francia, for instance, rather than deep into the isolated hill country of the Breton interior, or, after 911, to the relative stability of the new Norman principality. The monks and clerics who fled Brittany in the early tenth century were highly conscious of the fact that they were traveling beyond the bounds (*ultra fines*) of their own land, "into the

¹⁶⁴ Peripheral in the sense that it is located at the extreme northwestern edge of the European continent and that it now found itself on the margins of western Christendom.

territory of the Gauls.”¹⁶⁵ They could not have been unaware of the irony of finding refuge in Francia, which had been steadily losing territory to Breton military advances for fifty years and whose bishops were still irked by the unresolved schism over the metropolitan status of Dol. Evidently, however, the caretakers of Breton relics were more concerned about the “external” pagan threat to their relics than they were about Frankish domination.¹⁶⁶ Most chose to flee to a potentially hostile territory where they faced the danger of never returning because it was better than being consumed by the pagan wilderness which was poised to gobble up whatever Breton religious institutions failed to flee before its advance.

The question of Brittany’s fading status within Christendom was destined to remain a matter of individual opinion rather than unanimous certainty. It is unclear why, for example, if Brittany was indeed undergoing widespread de-Christianization, a certain number of established relic cults remained in place. Perhaps the guardians of cults such as that of St. Paul Aurelian on the northern coast lacked the wherewithal to flee. Perhaps they simply did not share the

¹⁶⁵ *Translatio S. Maglorii*, 244 (ch. 1): “...Galliarum in partes secederet...”

¹⁶⁶ Problems did arise, however, when Franks refused to return relics to Brittany following Norman attacks. The *Translatio S. Chorentini* indicates that the religious community at Quimper were still waiting for the “greedy Franks” (cupidi Francigenae) to return the relics of St. Chorentinus from their place of exile in Tours well after the Norman incursions. *Translatio S. Chorentini* (ed. F. Plaine), 156. Duke Hugh the Great, despite his generosity towards Breton cults in Paris, also comes in for some light criticism for “delaying the bodies of those saints” who wished to leave Paris “after peace flowered in all of Gaul and Normandy.” He quickly relented, however, and allowed the monks to translate their relics out of Paris to Corbeil, Orléans, and “elsewhere in Gaul.” *Translatio S. Maglorii*, 247 (ch. 4): “Pace itaque in tota Gallia et Normannia...florente, quidam eorum qui de Britannia Parisius advenerat... sanctorum corporibus... quidam eorum patriam repedare, quidam ad alia Gallie loca migrare disposerunt. Quod, cum duci nunciatum fuisset, licet egre tulisset, vim tamen eis nolens inferre, retentis quibusdam membris sanctorum, abire permisit.”

bleaker estimations of the degree of the peninsula's marginalization.¹⁶⁷ The ebb-and-flow history of relic translation into and out of Brittany also shows how fluid the conception of Brittany's status could be across time. It is better perhaps to imagine a series of Christian cores within the innumerable different "Christendoms," the changing shape of which existed in the minds of individual Frankish and Breton writers during the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁶⁸

The weighty question of whether Brittany was or was not a part of Christendom at any given time can be sidestepped by more abstractly comparing Brittany's status with that of other provinces. The earlier, expansive translations into Saxony, Bavaria, and other west Frankish territories imparted a certain sacral value to the places on both ends of the translations. The precise locus of a saint's burial and other sites important in a saint's life held tremendous value as places of pilgrimage, cult practice, and as venues for pious patronage. Since newly Christianized areas lacked these sorts of holy focal points, Carolingians used translation to impose a portion of Francia's already-developed spiritual surplus onto these conquered, sacrally neutral landscapes. The saints themselves signified their alliance with these projects by allowing themselves to

¹⁶⁷ The abbey of Mont-St.-Michel, balanced *in periculo maris* on the fringes of competing Breton, Norman, and Frankish influence throughout the ninth and tenth centuries, is another important example of a cult that remained *in situ*. C. Potts has examined the way in which Mont-St.-Michel managed to maintain itself in spite of its precarious position. Potts suggests that it maintained good relations with its neighbors thanks to its defensibility and the extraordinary "political skill" of its abbots, who used the monastery's well-established prestige to balance competing Breton, Norman, and Frankish regional interests against one another for more than forty years around the turn of the tenth century. C. Potts, "Normandy or Brittany? A Conflict of Interests at Mont Saint Michel (966-1035)," *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 12 (1989), 135-156.

¹⁶⁸ P. Brown popularized the notion of "micro-christendoms" in *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity 200-1000 AD*, second ed. (2002), esp. pp. 13-15. A. Remensnyder, "Topographies of memory: center and periphery in High Medieval France," *Medieval Concepts of the Past* (Washington, 2002), 193-214, also emphasizes a more individualized approach to medieval geography.

be translated and dutifully performing miracles as soon as they were placed in their new tombs.¹⁶⁹ If sacralized lands, the territory inhabited by *bona fide* saints, could be extended in this way, the withdrawal of relics from tenth century Brittany demonstrates how this procedure could come undone by sustained pressure from non-Christian invaders. Each holy bone and ornament that Breton monks and clerics translated out of their home province represented the increasing spiritual impoverishment of the landscape there, and a truncation of the land area that could truly be said to be “Christianized.” Combined with the interlocking process of political decline in Brittany, the peninsula came to lack both a strong Christian king as well as relics to anchor its cults. Both factors knocked Brittany from its position at the vanguard of the Christian struggle against the pagan Vikings in the 860s to little more than a no-man’s land beset by perpetual Norman raids by the 920s.

4.2 Brittany and “Christendom”

Writers who commented on the collapse of Breton religious institutions and the loss of the province’s relics took different measures of the province’s sacrality after the early tenth century monastic exodus. Breton writers were of course a lot less sanguine about using relic translation to reconfigure the Christian landscape than writers like Widukind of Corvey or Einhard who wrote

¹⁶⁹ The compliance of the relics themselves is a key factor in establishing the worthiness of their new *loci*. Fichtenau, “Zum Reliquienwesen,” 73, and K. Schreiner, “Zum Wahrheitsverständnis im Heiligen- und Reliquienwesen des Mittelalters,” *Saeculum*, 17 (1966), 65, both examine this complicity and the role of God and the saints in determining whether or not a place is holy or worthy of holiness.

optimistically about the opening up of new territories to salvation. After all, Breton exiles gave up long-Christianized territory and retreated from the vanguard of evangelism to safety well away from the Viking front lines.

There is little cheer in retreating before a fearsome threat, and little interest among Breton writers in celebrating the sacralizing effect that their translated relics brought to their places of exile. Quite the contrary, they often went out of their way to make their refuges seem dreary and inhospitable, while waxing nostalgic about the homeland they abandoned. In its description of the abandonment of the Breton monastery of Redon, the *Vita Sancti Conuuoionis* does refer to the monastery as having been reduced to “desolation and abandonment ... by the command and judgment of God,”¹⁷⁰ but also complains of Plélan as a poor and “lonely hermitage,” a depiction which is not supported by the Cartulary of Redon’s lengthy list of royal bequests and benefices that the monastery received during the ninth century.¹⁷¹

The Breton monks’ negative attitude towards their new homes is understandable: a triumphalist attitude would not have been appropriate for writings composed during a time of defeat and banishment. Instead, most Breton authors chose to cast themselves as penitents, emphasizing their suffering and unhappiness and acceptance of the punishment of God, with flavors of the “white

¹⁷⁰ Composed by an anonymous monk of Redon sometime in the early eleventh century, though perhaps as early as the late tenth. *Vita Conuuoionis* (ed. C. Brett), *The Monks of Redon* (Suffolk, 1989), 244-5: “In eremi vastitatem redacto, Dei exigente iudicio, quondam gloria renitenti venerabili Rothonensi monasterio a regibus et ceteris magnificis viris fundato, Conuuoionus solitudinem appetens, non frequentiam Plebiano [Plélan, their place of exile] cum fratribus morabatur, corpus suum ieiuniis atque vigiliis macerans et indesinenter perenni oculorum imbre populi christiani stragem et patriae suae cladem Heremiae in lamentationibus Iudaici regni exemplo deplorans.”

¹⁷¹ C. Brett, *Monks of Redon*, 14. *Cartulaire de Redon*, nos. 222, 244, 253, 279, and 281.

martyrdom” of the itinerant Celtic monks that been so active in Brittany in previous centuries.¹⁷² They resignedly complained of being driven by “pagan persecution..., sent out as exiles from their own lands...beyond their ancestral boundary,”¹⁷³ or “driven by fear to leave [their own] region for Francia.”¹⁷⁴ While Widukind might have reveled in Saxony’s annexation into Christendom thanks to Frankish relic translations, Breton monks were less likely to commemorate their move or to dwell on the loss of their own homeland, particularly since they had contributed to its forsakenness by robbing it of its relics.

It was only from the relative safety of Francia that Brittany’s Christian status could be best discerned. Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, himself a Frankish outsider, provided the clearest early indication of Brittany’s increasing estrangement. Hincmar pointedly described the condition of Christian institutions along the Viking front line near Nantes and the mouth of the Loire in the 870s. His description prefigures the de-Christianizing trend that would come to affect the rest of the Breton kingdom in the coming decades. Hincmar composed a treatise chastising Bishop Actard of Nantes for seeking to abandon his post because of the Viking threat. Actard, who also had to contend with Salomon’s machinations against himself, had complained to Rome that his city had been

¹⁷² The Breton attitude also fits with the common *translatio*-related trope of describing relic translation and the foundation of new monasteries in terms of a journey from a Christianized *locus amoenus* to a wild and inhospitable *locus horribilis*. The job of the newly arrived monks was to convert the *locus horribilis* into a pleasant, civilized place. See J. Howe, “Creating Symbolic Landscapes: Medieval Development of Sacred Space,” in J. Howe and M. Wolfe (eds.), *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe* (Gainsville, 2002), 210-12. Breton refugees, in this case, were forced to exaggerate the difficulties of their “*loci horribili*,” since they were heading back into Christianized territory with the promise of abundant patronage from local authorities.

¹⁷³ *Translatio S. Maglorii*, 244 (ch. 1): “...urgente persecutionis [paganorum] tempore... exules egrediuntur a finibus suis... metas excesserant patrie...”

¹⁷⁴ *Vita Guenaili*, 96: “... metu compellente ab illis regionibus deportantes in Franciam Parisiacos fines, Domino ducente, pervenerunt.”

utterly destroyed by *Nordmanni* and asking for a transfer to another, safer diocese.¹⁷⁵

Hincmar responded, evoking the general suspicion of mobility that was common during the era:

“It is contrary to the canons of the church... to pass from one see to another, and above all when there is no absolute necessity to do so.... The work of Actard should be to seek to convert the numerous pagans who now inhabit his city.... His material situation at its worst is hardly different from that of the patriarch of Jerusalem or of the Christians of Cordoba and other cities in Spain, all of which are dominated by infidels who never cease to put diverse and varied pressures on the indigenous Christians there, yet still they remain in the cities and abbeys that were allotted to them. How should we admit that an ecclesiastic who has no wife or children to support should decline to live among pagans...? Who would know if there were not many pagans now in the city of Nantes who have been predestined by God for eternal life, and who might thus be converted through good words and deeds?”¹⁷⁶

In Hincmar’s estimation, Jerusalem, Spain, and the Basse-Loire were equivalent. All were formerly Christian lands that now suffered under the domination of non-Christian foreigners. This is relevant to Brittany’s “outsider” status, because four decades later, when the rest of Brittany found itself embroiled in the same chaos that Nantes had experienced in the 870s, it also suffered the exile of its prominent ecclesiastics. Had Hincmar still been alive in the 910s, it seems likely that he would have voiced the same criticisms about

¹⁷⁵ Actard was not alone among Frankish bishops petitioning Pope Nicholas for a transfer in the face of Viking attacks. Bishop Hunfrid of Thérouanne wrote to Rome in c. 860 for a new see far from the Viking threat. Pope Nicholas ordered him instead to stay and rebuild. Musset, *Les invasions Normandes*, 206-7.

¹⁷⁶ Hincmar of Reims, *Epistola* 31, *De quibus apud*, PL, vol. 126, col. 210-230. It is ironic that Hincmar himself fled when Reims became a Norman target ten years later. Conscious of how bad it would look, he slunk from his see under the cover of night. See Devisse, *Hincmar*, 788-9, and Sommar, “Hincmar of Reims,” 429-445, which places Hincmar’s letter into the wider context of his own personal interactions with Pope Hadrian II.

Bishop Salvator of Alet, abbots Daioc of St.-Gildas and Taneth of Locminé, or any of the other Breton ecclesiastics who fled before later waves of Viking attack. If the Basse-Loire had fallen outside of Hincmar's idea of "Christendom" during the ninth century, it is certain that all of Brittany would have been outside of it after the turn of the tenth century.

4.3 Choices of Refuge

The ideology of geopolitics was important, but the choices of refuge made by fleeing Bretons were also shaped by more immediate, practical factors. Physical geography imposed strict limits on the routes available to monks and clerics as they sought to outrun the Vikings. The primary limiting factor was the Atlantic Ocean, which forced all of the relevant translations through a relatively narrow bottleneck of land to Brittany's east,¹⁷⁷ a strip made even narrower by the establishment of the permanent Norman settlements along the coast of the English Channel. This drove Breton emigrants southeast through Maine, Anjou, the Touraine, and Poitou as they moved into exile. These routes, too, could be

¹⁷⁷ Other obvious potential refuges would have been England, Wales or Ireland, though evidence for any verifiable translations to these places is problematic and no *translationes* survive describing one. The monks of Landévennec who carried the relics of St. Winwaloe seem to have hoped to continue northward from Montreuil into England, but they never completed the journey. Cassard, *Le siècle des Vikings*, 50. For evidence of the presence of substantial numbers of Breton relics that somehow ended up in tenth and eleventh century English relic collections, see D. Grémont and L. Donnat, "Fleury, le Mont-Saint-Michel, et l'Angleterre à la fin du X^e siècle," *Millénaire monastique du Mont Saint-Michel* (1967), 751-93; L. Gougaud, "Les mentions anglaises des saints bretons et de leurs reliques," *Annales de Bretagne*, 34 (1919), 272-7.

closed off, as when the monks of St.-Maxentius had to turn east toward Auxerre after their route south into Poitou was cut off by Norman presence in the area.¹⁷⁸

Besides the ocean, Brittany found that its plentiful rivers, once a blessing, now had become a curse. The monastery of Redon is many miles from the sea, but the Vikings ascended the Vilaine River and sacked it in 869, emboldened, perhaps, by their successful deep raids up the Seine, Loire, and other Frankish rivers in the 850s and 860s. The Redon monks' place of exile at Plélan was consequently located deep in Brittany's central hill country. By the 910s, however, Normans were more or less permanently established in the region and capable of attack practically anywhere. Even those parts of Brittany well-insulated from major rivers and Roman roads became unsafe, evidenced by the striking fact that none of the early tenth century forced translations for which we possess a useful itinerary were content to find refuge anywhere on the peninsula.

There was less of a divide between urban and rural choices of sanctuary. Plélan was a royal country estate before it became a monastery for various exiles. The monks of St.-Gildas-de-Rhuys and Locminé fled first to the town of Déols in Berry, but eventually found refuge on an isolated island in the Indre just outside the town, in part because of a conflict with a preexisting institution already located there.¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, "the fortified city of Paris" came to house a large number of relics in the urban church of St.-Barthélemy (soon to be rededicated to St. Maglorius), and other towns like Auxerre and Tours, where the

¹⁷⁸ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon*, 228-9, see above, section 2.5; de la Borderie, *Histoire de la Bretagne*, 362.

¹⁷⁹ See above, section 2.5.

relics of St. Maxentius, St. Chorentinus and other saints spent time, became conduits for relics leaving Brittany.¹⁸⁰

Institutional links spread across the landscape also helped determine their place of refuge. The presence of “daughter” institutions was crucial. The Poitevins who translated St. Maxentius’ relics to Brittany seem to have enjoyed preexisting links of some sort with a priory dedicated to St. Maxentius in the area of Plélan, since they refer to its abbot as “our deacon.”¹⁸¹ Historical links could also provide direction in times of desperation. It is possible, for example that the reason the monks of Landévennec sought shelter at far away Montreuil-sur-Mer dated back to the Breton diaspora that followed the fifth century Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain.¹⁸² Whatever the particulars, it is frequently only because of the Viking invasions and the forced movement of these communities that the formal and informal links that bound Breton institutions become visible.¹⁸³

Flight and exile, moreover, created new links where before there had been none. Grants of land given to Breton cults were located across northern Francia, creating lasting links that crisscrossed both sides of the former Breton march even after the Viking attacks were over. Cults formerly confined to Brittany leveraged their new possessions to spread the popularity of their relics across northern Francia. For some, therefore, exile could in fact be a lucrative

¹⁸⁰ *Translatio S. Maglorii*, 244 (ch. 2).

¹⁸¹ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon*, 228: “...et locutus est cum nostro diacono nomine Moroc...”

¹⁸² This is suggested by Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne des Saints*, 381.

¹⁸³ The relic “convoys” that make up such a distinctive part of the Breton relic evacuation process undoubtedly fostered further links among unrelated monastic communities that traveled together into exile or met up at one of the gathering points for exiled Breton relics, like Paris. Corvisier suggests that such links were fleeting however, citing the fact that the “Maglorien” group split back into its component parts as easily as it had coalesced, with some relics remaining permanently in Paris, others moving to suburban *villae*, and still others returning home to Brittany. Corvisier, “L'exode et l'implantation des reliques,” 296.

proposition, replacing patrimony in Brittany lost during the chaos of the attacks with new patrimony in Francia. Monasteries could also have it both ways, however, gaining new patrimony while maintaining effective control over lands they had left behind. The monks of Redon had little trouble maintaining not just possession but also day-to-day control over their former headquarters at Redon while they were in exile at Plélan. They enjoyed the benefits of remaining relatively close to their original home as well as the unfailing support of Salomon, both of which ensured that they later regained all of the lands and privileges that they had enjoyed under Nominoë and Erispoë, plus more.¹⁸⁴ Not all foundations were as fortunate, especially after the collapse of Breton royal authority in the tenth century. Yet in Brittany, as in Neustria and Aquitaine, those monastic communities that managed to survive the dislocation of the Viking attacks could sometimes pay offsetting dividends.

CONCLUSION: The Return of Brittany's Cults

Long-distance institutional links also point the way toward the end of the story of Brittany's displaced relics. On the one hand, the presence of Breton relics was enough to significantly broaden the appeal of Breton cults in Francia. Some Breton cults found permanent homes in Francia, as St. Guenailus had by 946 at Corbeil. St. Chorentinus's relics were ultimately entombed at Marmoutier

¹⁸⁴ C. Brett, *The Monks of Redon*, 4.

near Tours, and his cult flourished there for centuries.¹⁸⁵ Hugh the Great insisted that most of St. Maglorius's relics remain at the basilica he provided for them in Paris, and they enjoyed a substantial cult following both there and back in Léhon.¹⁸⁶ The power of the cult in Paris is evident from the rededication of the basilica which housed the relics, formerly called St.-Barthélemy, which henceforth bore St. Maglorius' name. The church of St.-Saulve in Montreuil-sur-Mer was likewise permanently rechristened "St-Woloy," after the local pronunciation of the name of St. Winwaloe, a portion of whose were translated there following the Viking attacks.¹⁸⁷

On the other hand, the experience of St. Maglorius also demonstrates that Breton relics returning home from their "Frankish captivity" now carried with them a great deal of Frankish influence. Although a portion of St. Maglorius' relics eventually found their way back to Brittany, the saint's monastery at Léhon was never again anything more than a dependent priory of the newer foundation in Paris.¹⁸⁸ Even when Breton monasteries were finally established after the cessation of Norse raids, they were reestablished more often by missionary

¹⁸⁵ Oury, "La dévotion des anciens moins aux saintes reliques," 88-108. J. Smith cites a later (possibly thirteenth century) *vita* of Corentin composed at Quimper indicating that the saint's relics clearly still rested in Francia. According to the text, however, St. Corentin's physical absence is no obstacle to the continued popularity of his cult at Quimper. St. Corentin's love for Quimper, according to the source, is all the more obvious thanks to the miracles he continues to work there in spite of the "greedy Franks" who kept him captive in Tours. Smith, "Oral and Written," 327.

¹⁸⁶ *Translatio S. Maglorii*, 246 (ch. 3). Having gone to such trouble to attract them, Hugh at first refused to allow any of the Breton relics housed at St.-Bartholomew to leave after the Norman threat had passed. He quickly relented, though only the caretakers of St. Samson's relics opted to return all the way home to Brittany.

¹⁸⁷ A half century after St. Winwaloe's arrival in Montreuil-sur-Mer, Rameric identifies himself not as abbot of St.-Saulve but as *ecclesiae beati Winwaloloei in Monsterolo humilis minister*. Guillotel, "L'exode du clergé Breton," 283.

¹⁸⁸ Cassard, *Le siècle des Vikings*, 56-57. Corvisier, "L'exode et l'implantation des reliques," 289-298, notes that the renovated Breton monastery of St.-Samson at Léhon was manned by as few as a dozen monks, a much smaller foundation than it had been in the ninth century.

Franks than by returning Bretons. It was a Frankish monk named Felix sent from the Clunaicized monastery of Fleury who re-founded the monastery of St.-Gildas (despite the fact that “the eight principal bones” of Gildas remained behind in Berry¹⁸⁹). Teudo, another monk from Fleury, spearheaded the reestablishment of Redon in the first decade of the eleventh century. Indeed, thanks in large measure to the books brought there by Abbot Mabbo of St.-Pol-de-Léon c. 960,¹⁹⁰ Fleury became a collection point and clearinghouse for newly reestablished Breton monasteries seeking copies of their *vitae* and *translations* lost during the Norman attacks.¹⁹¹

The reestablishment of these monastic foundations and the (partial) return of Breton relics came as a result of the gradual subsidence of the Scandinavian threat on the peninsula. Norman raids in Brittany continued after the death of Alan I in 907 and only increased in spite of the Norman “conversion” in 911, but they were gradually brought under control by resurgent Breton leadership under Alan II Barbetorte.¹⁹² By 937, Alan Barbetorte forced the Normans back to the Loire, finally defeating them decisively at the battle of Trans in August of 939. He reestablished his capital at Nantes, and took the title *brittonum dux* (not *rex*) by Breton and Frankish consent. Although still largely autonomous, Alan Barbetorte abandoned Breton claims to Maine, the Contentin Peninsula, and other territories

¹⁸⁹ *Gildae vita et translatio*, (ed. F. Lot), *Mélanges d'histoire Bretonne* (Paris, 1907), (ch. 33), 461-2: “Hic sub altare hujus sanctae ecclesiae reliquias beati Gildae, octo scilicet de majoribus ossibus in sarcophago ipsius recondidit...”

¹⁹⁰ See above, section 2.5.

¹⁹¹ Grémont and Donnat, “Fleury, le Mont-Saint-Michel, et l’Angleterre,” 751-55.

¹⁹² (r. 938-952), Alan I’s grandson. Quaghebeur, “Norvège et Bretagne,” 120-125, suggests that Alan I may have ironically enjoyed the support of important populations of Norman colonizers living in Brittany by the 930s. Price, *The Vikings in Brittany*, 45, envisions a rather more adversarial relationship between Bretons and Norman colonizers.

won during the heyday of King Salomon, and was perhaps the last Breton leader to adhere to any pretense of real Breton independence.

Brittany was no longer a “kingdom,” but by the middle of the tenth century it was at least a functioning province again under the relatively unified control of a Christian duke. By the turn of the eleventh century, Brittany’s status was clear enough that it could be fully reintegrated back into the landscape of Christian Europe. A long period of slow, deliberate reincorporation followed, which stitched Brittany back into the fabric of the religious topography of western Christendom. This was accomplished by the re-importation of Breton relics in a process strikingly similar to the carefully managed relic importation by which Frankish influence was extended into the newly conquered provinces of Saxony and Bavaria a century earlier. This time, perhaps, the relics were themselves of Breton origin, but they still came from Francia and the effect of their presence was the same: in the wake of the Norman attacks there would no longer be any room for an independent Breton church, no metropolitan status for the cathedral at Dol,¹⁹³ and ultimately, no independent Breton kingdom. In fact, the articulation of French control in Brittany appears to have been even more effective than it was among the Saxons, who, although they adopted many Frankish norms, had by the eleventh century long tossed off the Frankish yoke in the east.

The peregrinations of Brittany’s displaced relics clearly mark out the province’s vacillations between Christian “core” to pagan no-man’s land in the

¹⁹³ Dol’s effective control over other Breton diocese slowly withered until it was finally and officially demoted from metropolitan status by Pope Innocent III in May, 1199. Although the bishops of Dol would retain the insignia of archbishops until the French Revolution, they enjoyed none of the privileges of that office. Smith, “The ‘Archbishopric’ of Dol,” 59-70.

century from the mid-ninth to mid-tenth centuries, and eventually back again to stable, normalized Christian territory again by the eleventh century. Breton hagiographical sources echo in microcosm the panicked drama of relic translation during the Viking attacks that unfolded throughout northwestern Europe, in which the previously comfortable Benedictine monasteries of the Frankish empire were forced to cope with the loss of political cohesion and the attendant breakdown of the carefully constructed, sacral-political partnership between church and king in West Francia. However, just as the spiritual capital residing in the bones of saints could be withdrawn in times of trouble, monks, clerics, and saints together managed to build new and perhaps more lasting alliances with resurgent future generations of Christian leadership in the west, carrying forward the power and centrality of the cult of saints that they had so carefully safeguarded in exile.

Chapter 3

Neustria: Relic Evacuation at the Center of the Empire

INTRODUCTION

It was in the *regnum* (royal domain) of Neustria, at the strategic core of Charles the Bald's west-Frankish kingdom, that continental Viking attacks reached their peak.¹⁹⁴ Here, the Viking presence affected the largest number of people and inspired the greatest outpouring of texts. It was also here that the attacks succeeded in definitively transfiguring the geography of the empire, carving out the entirely new principality of Normandy from what had formerly been one of the strongholds of Carolingian power.

Viking attacks repeatedly punctured the sheen of late Carolingian society in Neustria, upending the delicate matrix of political and religious institutions throughout the province. Neustrian sources detailing the attacks paint an unrelenting tableau of rapacious Viking raiders burning Neustria's monasteries

¹⁹⁴ Although Neustria's significance as a geographical entity had waned since the Merovingian period, "Neustria" continued to refer rather imprecisely to the lands between the Seine and the Loire, though it also typically included border areas beyond those two rivers. It served as one of the principal *regna* which could be handed down to heirs of the Carolingian throne.

taking “great pleasure in pillaging coffins and profaning relics of saints.”¹⁹⁵ If these sources are to be believed, monks across northwestern Francia scrambled to secure the corpses of their patrons, “breaking open jeweled reliquaries... and pulling out the bones with their bare hands before escaping on horseback” to places of safety.¹⁹⁶ Throughout Neustria, according to one source, “the defenseless populace was slaughtered, monks and clerics scattered, and the bodies of saints were either forgotten, unvenerated in their tombs amongst the ruins, or carried by faithful worshippers to remote places.”¹⁹⁷

That, at least, is the classic picture of the effects of the Scandinavian raids in Neustria. Today, Neustria continues to find itself a battlefield – this time between sharply divided modern interpretations of the scope and effects of Norman attacks in the ninth and tenth centuries. Some modern historians, we will see below, have gone so far as to suggest that most surviving Neustrian sources are more useful as commentaries on the politics of the eleventh and twelfth centuries than as realistic depictions of Viking turmoil in the ninth and tenth centuries. The recent tendency toward deemphasizing Viking violence has cast doubt on some of the most colorful narratives of the attacks and forced more nuanced interpretations of others, but there nevertheless remains no shortage of compelling contemporary documentation to illuminate the rapid changes in Neustrian politics, geography, and cult practice during the era of the attacks.

¹⁹⁵ Legris, “L'exode des corps saints au diocèse de Rouen (IX^e-XI^e siècles),” *Revue Catholique de Normandie*, 28 (1919), 132.

¹⁹⁶ From the *Translationes et Miracula S. Honorinae* (BNF, lat. 13774), *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, Marjorie Chibnall (ed. and trans.), 2 (Oxford, 1969–80), 6-7.

Neustria is blessed with an abundance of contemporaneous ninth and tenth century manuscript sources on relic translations motivated by Scandinavian attacks. Because of this wealth of annalistic, hagiographical, and diplomatic texts, it is possible in Neustria to answer a number of questions about the larger phenomenon of forced relic translation that are muddled by lack of sources in other provinces.

Foremost among these is the question of how to interpret the wide assortment of evidence for Viking-era translations in Neustria. The first part of this chapter attempts to distill the information derived from the patchy collection of contemporary texts into a useful corpus that more clearly establishes the deleterious effects of the Viking presence on religious foundations in Neustria. The second part outlines the pattern of Viking attacks in Neustria before the settlement of Normandy and probes the question of how proximity to the monarchy affected the political fallout from forced relic translation within the province. A third section reflects on some of the day-to-day practicalities of the functioning of relic cults in exile as described in Neustrian sources. These practicalities include the maintenance of monastic patrimonies, the spread of information about the attacks, the reestablishment of patronage links, and the effects of the redistribution of Neustria's holy relics on Neustria's politics around the turn of the tenth century. Concluding sections discuss the re-establishment of relic cults in Normandy after it was ceded to the Vikings in 911 and the competition between the new Norman dynasty and its rivals to recapture the legitimating power of their province's dislocated relics.

THE *REGNUM NEUSTRIAE* ON THE EVE OF ATTACK

Neustria's prosperity made it a critically important province for the Carolingians, and also an alluring target for Viking raiders. Paris was located there, of course, as was Charles the Bald's regular capital at Compiègne. Its southern Loire border was home to the preeminent episcopal cities of Tours and Orléans, while the Seine and Loire valleys were rich in important monastic



foundations. All of them would be subject to the disruptive effects of the Northmen's violence, or *persecutio Normannorum*, before the end of the ninth century.

As in other provinces, the *virtus* of Neustria's relics was central to the smooth functioning of the *regnum*. Neustria's centrality, however, ensured that its experience would differ from that of other provinces. First, the political implications of the dislocation of relic cults stand out in sharper relief here in the empire's heartland than they did on its peripheries. Responsibility for protecting Neustria's cults reflected more acutely on the strength of the king in Neustria than it did in places like Brittany or Aquitaine. Charles the Bald and his successors spent more of their time in Neustria than in any other *regnum*, and maintained stronger personal and dynastic ties with Neustrian cults than perhaps any others. This makes Neustria the ideal laboratory for testing the relationship between Viking-era relic translations and political changes in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. The Carolingian dynasty had enjoyed excellent relations with Neustria's relic cults, but over time, the dynasty's failure to meet the Viking threat undercut its credentials as benefactor and protector of the Neustrian church. By the tenth century, the increasing number of forced relic translations throughout the province provided an opportunity for more locally-based lords, like Hugh the Abbot, ancestor to the Capetian dynasty, or even the freshly-converted Christian dukes of Normandy, to seize the legitimizing power of Normandy's dislodged spiritual capital as they displaced the withering Carolingians.

Neustria's experience is also unique because there are relatively few examples of cults that abandoned the territory entirely during the attacks. Broad areas of the *regnum* were drained of their relics, but in relatively few cases were the relics and their cults removed to neighboring territories. Some cults were able to remain because accidents of Neustrian geography preserved "islands of stability" within the province. More often, however, cults were kept from fleeing the province by Charles the Bald, who worked tirelessly to maintain patronage links with as many of Neustria's cults as possible even at the height of the attacks. Finally, Neustria's location at the epicenter of the West Frankish kingdom meant that there was no obvious alternative location for its dislocated cults to flee to outside the province. These factors combined to reshuffle relics within the province, particularly to "safe" sub-regions like northern Burgundy, the Auvergne, and parts of the future Normandy, rather than driving them completely outside the province as happened in Brittany.

Finally, Neustria also differs from other provinces in the amount of modern controversy that surrounds the Viking attacks in the province. In part because of the province's wealth of surviving narrative, hagiographic, and archaeological information, ongoing scholarly debate has increasingly called into question the fundamental importance of the Viking attacks and the extent of their effects on relic cults in the province. Controversy over this issue has forced a more careful consideration of the evidence for monastic disruption and the political and social changes that this disruption helped precipitate in the province.

By the time Viking attacks began to wind down in the tenth century, both Neustrian politics and Neustrian relic cults had undergone great changes. The attacks affected Neustria's most distinguished monasteries, scattering relics and cults to safe havens across the region. Neustrian relics turned up in a remarkable variety of places by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, even (as mentioned in note 175 above) in England. The remarkable distribution of Neustria's relics is quite unusual and cannot be explained by the normal dispersion of relic fragments through gift exchange, since nearly all of Neustria's relics (with the exception of a few big-league cults like that of St. Martin of Tours) were of only limited local appeal and confined to localized annual liturgical practice. It seems more likely that these relics were divided and distributed either because that is where they came to remain as permanent exiles, or left behind in fragments as a way of repaying the hospitality of the institutions that housed them during the attacks.¹⁹⁸

By some estimates, this *dispersion osseuse*, coupled with other effects of the Viking presence, led to the permanent disappearance of as many as three quarters of the identifiable relic cults in some parts of the province.¹⁹⁹ Along with the bones, many local traditions were also lost, and large numbers of texts had to be generated to replace them. These texts record the political, geographical, and institutional confusion that wracked Neustria as relics evicted from their former

¹⁹⁸ J. Fournée, *Le culte populaire et l'iconographie des saints en Normandie, vol. 1: Étude générale* (Paris, 1973), 47-50; C. Potts, "When the Saints Go Marching: Religious Connections and the Political Culture of Early Normandy," in W.H. Charles (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Political Culture and the Twelfth Century Renaissance* (Woodbridge, 1997), 24-6; L. Musset, "Les translations de reliques en Normandie (IX^e-XII^e siècles)," in P. Bouet and F. Neveux (eds.), *Les Saints dans la Normandie Médiévale* (Caen, 2000), 99-101.

¹⁹⁹ Musset, "Les translations de reliques en Normandie," 101; Fournée, *Le culte populaire*, 47-9

resting places sought comfort in new ones with a new breed of protectors to look to their defense.

PART ONE: Sources of the *Exode des Corps Saints*

1.1 Source Problems

Even in the face of Neustria's relative wealth of source material, the history of the Viking attacks there and of the plight of the province's displaced relics can be frustratingly obscure. Detailed itineraries of relics' travels are few, not surprisingly, but even matters of the highest political import can be difficult to untangle. The texts of critical documents such as the Treaty of St.-Claire-sur-Epte, which ceded the northern part of Neustria to Viking control and would be vital to understanding such matters as the timing and nature of early Scandinavian settlement, have not survived.

Hagiographical texts exist in larger quantities than diplomatic sources, a fact which is hardly surprising given the continual need for local institutions to preserve them for liturgical purposes. Even among these documents, however, precise dates and identifiable place names are often lacking. This makes plotting out successive "waves" of Norman terror in northern Francia difficult, especially given the complex overlapping of the activities of various Viking bands active along the region's many coasts and rivers. Neustrian hagiographical sources have the same tendencies toward myopia and propaganda as they do

elsewhere, but their constant focus on their “most precious saints’ relics” (*pretiosissima pignora sanctorum*) has at least illuminated one aspect of the attacks: their effects on relic cult practice in the province. Taken as a group, Neustria’s hagiographical texts tell a relentless story of upheaval and destruction that rent asunder the cloistered life of the province’s monks and upset the delicate symbiosis between the province’s civil and religious institutions.

The effects of the attacks on these Frankish institutions, however, remain a matter of sharp controversy among modern scholars. The near-unanimity of the surviving sources on the expansive scope of the destruction is unfortunately undermined by the checkerboard pattern in which the sources have been preserved. This is particularly true in the ninth and early tenth centuries, when the survival of hagiographical texts was haphazard and accidental. A number of charters from the Carolingian period have survived, but very few after the Scandinavian takeover of Normandy.²⁰⁰ Other administrative sources, such as episcopal *vitae*, are also rare before the Norman settlement.²⁰¹

Annals and chronicles are somewhat more plentiful. The ninth century *Annales Bertiniani*, *Annales Xantenses*, and *Annales S. Bavonis*, all recount

²⁰⁰ Charters from Charles the Bald’s period are relatively plentiful but diminish during the short reigns of his immediate successors, plus Odo of Paris, up to Charles the Simple. None at all survive from the reigns of Rollo or William Longsword in Normandy. A handful of charters have been ascribed to Richard I of Normandy, but these are all suspected forgeries. Bates, *Normandy Before 1066* (London, 1982), xiii.

²⁰¹ The available body of archaeological evidence is little help. The number of surveys of Neustrian sites during the Viking era is small, and their findings often inconclusive or contradictory. H. Noizet, “Les chanoines de Saint-Martin de Tours et les Vikings,” in P. Bauduin (ed.), *Fondations scandinaves en Occident et les débuts de la Normandie*, (Caen, 2005), 57, provides an overview of the limited archaeological work done within the diocese of Tours. A. Renoux has also worked on the site of Fécamp, “Le château des Ducs de Normandie à Fécamp (X^e-XII^e siècles): quelques données archéologiques et topographiques,” *Archéologie Médiévale*, 9 (1979), 5-36. The best survey of archaeological evidence for Viking attacks throughout the kingdom is L.A. Morden’s *How Much Material Damage Did the Northmen Actually Do In Ninth Century Europe?* PhD Dissertation, Simon Fraser University (2007).

specific incidents from the attacks, as does the mid-tenth century Chronicle of Flodoard. Later Norman chroniclers Dudo of St.-Quentin,²⁰² William of Jumièges,²⁰³ William of Poitiers,²⁰⁴ and Orderic Vitalis²⁰⁵ recount the attacks in some detail, but look back on events from the radically different political and religious environment of the eleventh century. In the process, they project many anachronisms from their own day back into the ninth and early tenth centuries, particularly with regard to the strength and role of nascent Norman political structures.

The deficiencies of these sources – hagiographical texts for their narrow perspective and reliance on *topoi*, and chronicles for their lateness and brevity – has left a great deal of latitude for differing interpretations of the true impact of the Vikings' arrival on churches, monasteries, and their relics.

1.2 Identifying the Extent of Viking Destruction in Neustria

The problems with Neustria's sources are often blamed on the attacks themselves. Lost monastic libraries, gaps in monastic and episcopal histories, and the profusion of later "reproductions" of lost texts have all been laid at the feet of wanton Viking destruction aimed at the very institutions responsible for

²⁰² Dudo of St.-Quentin, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, J. Lair (ed.), *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie*, 23 (Caen, 1865), composed c. 1010-1030.

²⁰³ William of Jumièges, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, E. Van Houts (ed. and trans.), *Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni*, 2 vols., (Oxford, 1992-5), composed c. 1070.

²⁰⁴ William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi ducis Normannorum et Regis Anglorum*, R. Foreville (ed. and trans.), "Histoire de Guillaume le Conquérant," *Classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Age*, 23, (Paris, 1952), also written c. 1070.

²⁰⁵ Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, completed in the early twelfth century.

maintaining these records. The absence of these manuscripts leaves the true magnitude of the Viking attacks in Neustria difficult to assess, though not for want of trying.

Since the 1960s, a sharp controversy has raged between the standard view of the attacks as a force of widespread disruption, and a new school that points to strong indications of institutional and social continuity in pre- and post-Carolingian Neustria in spite of the attacks.²⁰⁶ This dialectic between “disruption” and “continuity” is worth lingering over, since it aims at the heart of the evidence for the departure of Neustria’s relics during the Viking invasion.

Neustria’s location at the epicenter of the Viking attacks seems logical for a number of reasons. The province’s lengthy coastline, flat plains, and navigable rivers favored the invaders. It was also well-endowed with wealthy towns and religious institutions. Neustria was a tempting target for invaders, and its allure gives instant plausibility to the conventional narrative of widespread destruction during the attacks, accompanied by a grand “exodus of holy bodies.” This narrative resonated all but unanimously among modern historians for most of the twentieth century.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ The tendency among historians to divide themselves optimistic “continuists” and pessimistic “catastrophists” has also been examined by Bryan Ward-Perkins with specific reference to the question of urbanization in late Roman and early medieval Italy. B. Ward-Perkins, “Continuists, Catastrophists and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy,” *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 65 (1997), 157-76.

²⁰⁷ The number of scholars who adhered to this narrative is too great to fully enumerate, but among them are Legris, “L’exode des corps saints,” 125-36, 168-74, 209-21; F. Lot “Etudes critiques sur l’abbaye de Saint-Wandrille,” *Bibliothèque de l’École des hautes études*, 204 (Paris, 1913); Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 1, 54-67; R. Latouche, *The Birth of the Western Economy* (London, 1961), 217-221; Heinzelmann, *Translationsberichte*, 99; Wallace-Hadrill, “The Vikings in Francia,” 217-236.

Ironically, at the same time as the reawakening of interest in hagiography began to accelerate in the 1970s, a new group of researchers began to uncover systemic problems with the scenario of widespread Viking destruction and cult dislocation described in hagiographic texts. The first to question the level of destruction following the Viking attacks were economic historians who had trouble reconciling contemporary descriptions of total institutional collapse with the apparent swiftness of the monastic recovery in Neustria after the attacks.²⁰⁸ This inconsistency suggested that the consequences of the attacks, while potentially highly disruptive, might have been quite localized, with a “noisy minority” of affected churchmen potentially magnifying their effects.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Among these historians, Lucien Musset has been the most prolific. A tacit supporter of the “exodus” thematic, the title of Musset’s “L’exode des reliques du diocèse de Sées au temps des invasions normandes,” *Bulletin de la Société historique et archéologique de l’Orne*, 88 (1970), 3-22, seems calculated to evoke the “discontinuity” thesis. In it, he grapples with the inconsistency of the apparent devastation at a place like Sées, while monasteries at St.-Ouen and Jumièges appear to have quickly rebounded to a position of strength even greater than before the Viking attacks. See also his “Les translations de reliques en Normandie,” 97-108. See also section 2.3 in this chapter below, and L. Musset, “Ce qu’enseigne l’histoire d’un patrimoine monastique: Saint-Ouen de Rouen du IX^e au XI^e siècle,” *Aspects de la société et l’économie dans la Normandie médiévale, X^e-XIII^e siècles. Cahier des Annales de Normandie*, 22 (Caen, 1988), 115-130; idem, “Les domaines de l’époque Franque et les destinées du régime dominal du IX^e au XI^e siècle,” *Bulletin de la Société des antiquaires de Normandie* (1946), 7-97; idem, “Monachisme d’époque franque et monachisme d’époque ducal en Normandie: Le problème de la continuité,” *Aspects du monachisme en Normandie (IV^e-XVIII^e siècles): Actes du Colloque scientifique de l’Année des Abbayes Normandes, Caen 18-20 octobre 1979* (Paris, 1982), 55-74.

²⁰⁹ Musset, “Monachisme d’époque franque,” 55, 63; Le Maho, “Les Normandes de la Seine,” 161; d’Haenens, “Les invasions normandes dans l’empire franc,” 233-298, 581-588. Cf., however, M. Garaud, “Les invasions Normands en Poitou et leurs conséquences,” *Revue Historique*, 180 (1937) 241-267, who doubts that destruction was as widespread as contemporary sources indicate, although he grants that raiders could be particularly hard on individual monasteries. David Bates and Elisabeth Van Houts (both of whom label themselves as opponents of the “exodus” scenario) suggest a temporal as well as a geographical localization of Viking destruction: devastation was common, but limited only to the short term. Even as late as the eleventh century, when documentation is better, rural estates still largely retained Carolingian forms, as did ducal government after Rollo’s seizure of his part of the province. Bates, *Normandy Before 1066*; Van Houts, *The Normans In Europe*, 23. Jean Yver’s expansive study of institutional continuity in the Neustrian church before and after the foundation of the duchy of Normandy showed that institutional life in the province appeared to still proceed as normal after the attacks. J. Yver, *Les premières institutions du duché de Normandie*, 299-366. L. Musset’s “Les domaines de l’époque Franque et les destinées du régime dominal,” 7-97, also focused on continuity in rural life during the attacks. Cf. also C. Potts, “When Saints Go Marching,” 22-3, who does not

The deconstruction of the Viking destruction scenario reached its apogee with the work of F. Lifshitz, who laid out an entirely new paradigm for explaining the departure of Neustria's relics. First, she sought to demonstrate that not all late ninth and early tenth century Neustrian relic translations can be shown to have been precipitated by that particular type of fear, the *metus Normannorum*.²¹⁰ More provocatively, she suggested that most of Neustria's best-known forced *translationes* are in fact later fabrications invented to justify the theft, purchase, or seizure of Neustrian relics during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These relics were requisitioned by the Capetians, Lifshitz argued, as part of a campaign to build up their own power and impugn the duke of Normandy's status as a patron of Neustria's relic cults.²¹¹

Lifshitz's "reconsideration" of the dispersion of Neustria's relics sidesteps the perennial problem of hagiographic *topoi* in these sources by re-categorizing them as counterfeits, and explains why so many eleventh and twelfth century writers were so preoccupied with the memory of the attacks.²¹² But the

deny that relics moved into exile, but suggests that local cults continued to function normally without them.

²¹⁰ Lifshitz "The Exodus of Holy Bodies Reconsidered," 329-30; idem, "Migration of Neustrian Relics," 187-9.

²¹¹ Even among the Normans themselves, argues Lifshitz, "Migration of Neustrian Relics," 178-9, this "myth of the voluntary exodus" of Neustrian relics was championed by loyalist Norman chroniclers like Orderic Vitalis, Dudo of St.-Quentin and other supporters of eleventh and twelfth century monastic reform who looked back on the pre-reform period with disdain. Although they were themselves the heirs of Viking attackers, these writers exaggerated ninth and tenth century destruction in order to undermine the traditional power of religious houses that pre-dated or were opposed to the monastic reforms they championed.

²¹² Lifshitz, "Migration of Neustrian Relics," 187-88. Other critics of the "discontinuity" scenario have carried Lifshitz's standard, including S. Coupland, "The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History," *History*, 88, no. 290 (2003), 186-203, who has rightly admonished modern historians for too eagerly accepting early medieval ethnographic stereotypes about Viking savagery, and T. Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 35 (1985), 91, who suggests that Franks were responsible for as many attacks on religious institutions as the Vikings were.

reappraisals of Viking-era evidence proffered by Lifshitz and others raise as many problems as they resolve. The first problem is that although the detractors of the “discontinuity” thesis have managed to debunk a number of the best known Viking-era translations in Neustria, many more well-documented translations cannot be so easily impeached.²¹³ Moreover, there are no grounds to suggest that Neustria was a particularly attractive target for eleventh and twelfth century relic thieves.²¹⁴ There were plenty of other sources of relics for would-be cult patrons at that time, and easier ways to acquire them than “coercion and theft.”²¹⁵

As far as the economic evidence is concerned, one is certain to find evidence for continuity if one looks hard enough, given the problematic source base. Musset saw signs of continuity, for example, in the ongoing prosperity of monasteries like Jumièges, which enjoyed healthy patrimonies both before and after the Viking attacks.²¹⁶ While no one would doubt the *ombres de continuité*

²¹³ Lifshitz thoroughly dismantles the incorrectly dated translation of St. Gildard (“Exodus of Holy Bodies,” 329). Her attack on St. Ouen’s translation from Rouen is less convincing. Lifshitz also criticizes Bloch for relying on Ermentarius, but does not attempt to refute his conclusions based on that source (“Migration of Neustrian Relics,” 192). Ensuing sections contain many more examples of other well-documented translations in Normandy and the rest of Neustria.

²¹⁴ Lifshitz, “Migration of Neustrian Relics,” 178, cites Musset’s “Les invasions scandinaves et l’évolution des villes de France et de l’Ouest,” *Revue Historique du Droit Français et Etranger*, 43 (1965), 320-22, for evidence of Rouen’s economic resilience during the ninth and tenth centuries, but fails to provide any attestation of the popularity of Neustria’s relics over relics from other regions during the eleventh century. Some relics were stolen from Neustria during the central middle ages, but Lifshitz’s broader conclusions are untenable. Potts, “Monastic Revival,” 19, note 19.

²¹⁵ Like purchase, gift exchange, or “invention” of lost relics. P. Geary, “Sacred Commodities,” 196-210.

²¹⁶ Musset, “Notes pour servir d’introduction à l’introduction à l’histoire foncière de la Normandie: les domaines de l’époque franque et les destinées du régime domaniale du IX^e au XI^e siècle,” *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie*, 69 (1942/5), 7-97. But cf. Musset’s “Monachisme d’époque franque,” 58-59, and “Les destins de la propriété monastique durant les invasions normandes (IX^e-XI^e siècles). L’exemple de Jumièges,” *Jumièges. Congrès scientifique du XIII^e centenaire*, 1 (Rouen, 1955), 50, in which he demonstrates a high level of destruction at Jumièges.

that Musset's research uncovered, it is telling that he also finds a great deal of evidence for large-scale *réédification* of monastic patrimony after the period of attacks.²¹⁷ This suggests that monastic patrimonies, though ultimately redeemed, were heavily affected in the interim. Musset's work suggests a model of post-Viking "continuity" in Neustria that is therefore of a rather different than the type others have envisioned: by the eleventh century, a facsimile of the prior Carolingian order had been reconstructed out of the ashes of Viking destruction.

The appearance of continuity before and after the attacks is not the same as real continuity. In an age that was so often obsessed with the renewal of old forms, the continuation of religious life at the sites of former Carolingian and Merovingian-era religious institutions after the Viking attacks is as much an indicator of restoration as of preservation.²¹⁸ Whether or not this ersatz reenactment of Carolingian monastic life counts as true "continuity" is less important than the fact that the new dukes of Normandy clearly recognized the formidable legitimating power of the old interrelationship between monasteries and the sacralized monarchs who ruled Neustria before them. As shall become

²¹⁷ Musset, "Monachisme d'époque franque," 58, 68-74, describes these rebuilding efforts. Musset's work on the diocese of Sées and the Contentin Peninsula has also uncovered major upheaval during and after the Viking attacks, which, though localized, demonstrate the dramatic collapse of ecclesiastical and cult institutions in the region. According to Musset, only two of the Sées many cults can be shown to have remained in the area during the attacks. On the Contentin Peninsula, more than half of the indigenous relic cults may have disappeared, with the remainder clinging only to a precarious existence. Musset, "L'Exode des reliques du diocèse de Sées," 7-8. J. Le Maho counts as many as 15 cults that fled Coutances, largely to the area around Rouen: "Les Normands de la Seine à la fin du IX^e siècle," in P. Bauduin (ed.), *Fondations scandinaves en Occident et les débuts de la Normandie* (Caen, 2005), 170. For an overview of the considerable archaeological evidence supporting widespread Viking damage, see Morden, *How Much Material Damage*, passim.

²¹⁸ Jumièges, Fontanelle and St.-Ouen were all rebuilt on their original sites. N. Gauthier, "Quelques hypothèses sur la redaction des Vies des saints évêques de Normandie," *Memoria sanctorum venerantes. Studi in onore di Victor Saxer* (Rome, 1992), 465-6; L. Musset, "Les destines de la propriété," 49-55.

clear in Part Three below, the new Duke of Normandy, Rollo, and his successors sought to redeem this alliance and reinvent themselves as the heirs of Carolingian sacral legitimacy in northern Neustria. Rather than insisting on a matrix of coercion, theft, or deception, to explain the departure of Neustria's relics during the Viking attacks, it is better to think of translations in terms of cooperation and reciprocal benefit across a long period by new dynasties seeking symbiotic partnerships with old monastic institutions.

The criticisms raised by the "continuity" school must be taken seriously, but in the end, they cannot dislodge the standard narrative of the "exodus" of Neustria's holy bodies. Wave after wave of contemporary sources, however problematic, describe a scene of distinct rupture with the Carolingian past and widespread dislocation of relics in Neustria throughout the Viking era. The forgery or falsification of such a wide range of documents across such a large space would require an impossible conspiracy.²¹⁹

More importantly, the sources themselves are not completely beyond redemption. Contemporary authors like Fulbert of Jumièges were certainly not part of any eleventh century conspiracy when they saw Neustria's "bones...removed from their own seats for fear of that overcoming nation [of pagans], to assume an unwilling pilgrimage of exile, and carried through alien territories, to seek new seats for themselves."²²⁰ Sufficient numbers of

²¹⁹ Potts, *Monastic Revival*, 18-9.

²²⁰ Fulbert of Jumièges, *Vita Romani*, 196: "Nam et ego ossa tua et et aliorum servorum dei pro metu superventure gentis [paganorum] a sedibus propriis remota, invitam exilii peregrinationem assumere, et girovaga deportatione faciam per alienas regiones sedes sibi querere." Full disclosure: this is an excerpt from a prophesy placed by Fulbert in the mouth of St. Romanus to explain the saint's future indifference to the destruction of his shrine during the ninth century.

contemporary narrative sources survive, and supplemented by other credible data from cartularies, synodal decrees, royal *acta*, and archaeology, they support the standard picture of Viking disruption in Neustria.²²¹

Still, the criticisms raised by the “continuity” thesis demonstrate with some *éclat* that the impact of the Viking attacks on Neustrian relic cults was more complicated than contemporary notices imply. Thus the best approach to discontinuity in the Viking era is to give contemporary sources the benefit of the doubt, and compromise on the three most controversial aspects of the attacks. The first is a recognition of both short-term destruction during the Viking attacks and long-term prosperity for Neustria’s religious institutions – albeit in a very different post-Carolingian political environment after the formation of Normandy. Second is a differentiation between the effects of the attacks on elites versus others. This allows for the (likely) possibility that the record of Viking violence is largely an elite artifact, without negating the considerable impact that Viking violence had on the highest circles of Carolingian ecclesiastical and court politics. Third, it is imperative to make the fullest use of roughly contemporary sources on the attacks without ignoring their deficiencies.

PART TWO: Patterns of Attack

What is the status of the evidence for a broad-scale “exodus” of Neustrian relics during the Viking attacks? Source problems with individual texts cloud the issue, but these obstacles are surmounted by the profusion of hagiographical,

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diplomatic, and annalistic evidence that supports the departure of Neustria's relics. This evidence remains thin during the 840s and 850s, but by the 860s and later, evidence for widespread disruption of Neustrian relics (and their patronage networks) is overwhelming.

2.1 Earliest attacks in Neustria

The dawn of Viking attacks in Neustria may have commenced as early as the early 840s, not long after Louis the Pious' death. Unfortunately, these early attacks are difficult to substantiate. Many of them were finally recorded only in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when later writers bent their accounts of these attacks to serve their own contemporary political purposes. The deficiencies of these early translations have lent ammunition to the backers of the Neustrian "continuity" thesis. However, enough contemporary evidence has in fact survived to suggest that the pattern of withdrawal and dislocation of Neustria's spiritual capital had begun to take shape as early as the 840s.

Proponents of the "grand exodus" of Neustria's relics have placed the first forced relic translations in the province as early as 841.²²² Later reexamination of some of these early relic translations, however, has shown many of them to be impossible to authenticate. Unfortunately, surviving descriptions of these translations are all suspect, either because they long post-date the events of 841

²²² A. Noblet, "Les monastères francs et les invasions normandes," *Revue Mabillon*, 3 (1907), 297; Legris, "L'exode des corps saints," 133.

or because notices are so brief that it is difficult to determine whether or not any relics actually moved during these early attacks.²²³

Other, better-known attacks on monasteries are more reliably attested, though still not incontestable. According to its own *Annales*, for example, Fontanelle was struck by Vikings and “burned” in late May, 841.²²⁴ More famously (and controversially), Vikings also beset Jumièges during the same raid, a short way up the Seine from Fontanelle. The monastery was likely attacked in 841, though the results, as at Fontanelle, are difficult to discern. Regrettably, the best authority on this early attack is William of Jumièges eleventh century *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*. William’s “melodramatic assertion” that the monastery had reverted to a habitation for wild animals seems to be clearly overstated.²²⁵ A charter of 862 shows the monastery continuing to function at that date, and early abbatial lists continue uninterrupted until the 880s.²²⁶ The possibility of early Viking attacks at Jumièges and Fontanelle would

²²³ It is hard to be precise, for example, about the early translation of St. Honorina from Bayeux to a *castrum* near the confluence of the Seine and Oise, which according to the anonymous *Translationes et Miracula S. Honorinae*, 135-147, likely composed in the tenth century, also transpired during the attacks of 841. Relics of Sts. Nicasius, Quirinus, Scuviculus and Pientia may also have been translated out of Rouen at the same time to protect them from Vikings (Legris, “L’exode des corps saints,” 133-134, 170), though Lifshitz points out that the sources for these translations are all eleventh century or later, and that other contemporaries believed that these relics were still in Rouen (“Exodus of Holy Bodies Reconsidered,” 338).

²²⁴ On the other hand, a charter issued to Fontanelle by Charles the Bald in 849 makes no mention of the recent Viking attacks. If attacks occurred at Fontanelle, the monastery seems to have recovered quite quickly after each attack, and no relics appear to have been evacuated. Potts, “Monastic Revival,” 21. Fontanelle may have paid a great deal for the light treatment it received from the Vikings; Legris and Noblet suggest that the monastery ransomed itself with a large sum. Legris, “L’exode des corps saints,” 131-2; Noblet, “Les monastères Francs et les invasions normandes,” 298.

²²⁵ Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*, 125-6.

²²⁶ For the charter, see J.-J. Vernier, *Chartes de l’abbaye de Jumièges (824-1204) conservées aux archives de Seine-Inférieure*, 1 (Rouen, 1916), 5-10. For the abbatial list, see Laporte, “Les listes abbatiales de Jumièges,” *Jumièges*, 1, 454-55.

form a clear starting point for the undoing of Carolingian control over Neustrian relic cults, but their obscurity makes this a matter of speculation.

Evidence runs deeper that the city of Rouen was also sacked during 841. The *Chronicon Fontanellense* mentions the attacks of this year,²²⁷ as do the *Annales Bertiniani*,²²⁸ in addition to other sources.²²⁹ After passing Fontanelle and Jumièges on their way up the Seine, Viking raiders appear to have caused the relics of St. Audoenus to be translated to a dependent abbey at Gasny-sur-Epte at the furthest boundary of the diocese. Gasny was among the richest of St.-Ouen's domains, conveniently located near the confluence of the Seine and the Epte, but still reasonably close to Rouen. Perhaps more importantly, Gasny also enjoyed the symbolic distinction of having been the site of St. Audoenus' primitive tomb.²³⁰ All of these factors made Gasny an ideal first choice for refuge. The location of St. Audoenus' relics after 841, however, as well as the precise chronology of the movement of his bones, are difficult to plot. The lacunae and confusion in the sources mirrors the confusion of the monks at St.-

²²⁷ *Chronicon Fontanellense*, MGH SS, 2, 301: "Anno dominicae incarnationis 841, indication 4, quarto Idus Maii venerunt Nortmanni, Oscheri quoque dux. Pridie Idus Maii incensa est ab eis urbs Rothomagus; 17 Kal. Iunii regressi sunt a Rothomago...."

²²⁸ *Annales Bertiniani*, 25 [anno 841]: "Interea pyratae Danorum ab oceano Euripo devecti, Rotumam irruentes, rapinis, ferro ignique bachantes, urbem, monachos reliquumque vulgum et caedibus et captivitate pessumdederunt et omnia monasteria seu quaecumque loca flumini Sequanae adhaerentia aut depopulati sunt aut multis acceptis pecuniis territa reliquerunt."

²²⁹ The eleventh century continuator of the second *Vita Audoeni* (BHL 751b) mistakenly places the attack in 842, before later stating that it occurred "[r]egnante post obitum Ludovici imperatoris Lothario et Carolo anno primo," that is, 841. The *Annales Rotomagenses* repeat this incorrect date of 842: *Translatio S. Audoeni*, "quando Normanni vastaverunt Rothomagum, succederunt monasterium eius idibus maii."

²³⁰ Musset, "Ce qu'enseigne l'histoire d'un patrimoine monastique," 118-28; Gauthier, "Quelques hypotheses," 451.

Ouen, who seemed not to know at any one time whether it was safer for them to remain in Rouen or to flee.²³¹

Precursory Neustrian translations such as these form a tantalizing but ultimately unsound foundation upon which to build an image of Viking-era forced relic translations in the province. Some early translations must be ignored because of lack of sources, and others cannot be definitively located in the 840s. That said, many of these translations (like that of St. Audoenus of Rouen) are supported by satisfactory evidence. Supporters of Viking-era “continuity” in Neustria may quibble about the early date of these evacuations, but they do not doubt that many of these translations occurred at some point during the century of Viking attacks.²³²

2.2 The First Sack of Paris (845)

Another well-documented early Viking attack in Neustria is the audacious sack of Paris by the Viking chief Ragnar in 845. A number of contemporaries commented on this event and the obvious monastic dislocation that it caused early in Charles the Bald’s reign. Paschasius Radbertus and Prudentius commemorated the attack, though it is given its fullest narrative treatment in the

²³¹ For the criss-crossing charters that seem to show St. Audoenus’ relics moving back and forth to Gasny, see Potts, *Monastic Revival*, 21-2; Lifshitz, “Exodus of Holy Bodies Reconsidered,” 338; P. Lauer’s “Les translations des reliques de St. Ouen et de St. Leufroy du IX^e-X^e siècle,” 127-9; Le Maho, “Les Normands de la Seine,” 168.

²³² Beyond the confines of the Seine valley, there is scattered evidence for a few other early translations. Monks of St.-Martin-de-Vertou, for example, appear to have fled their home on Neustria’s extreme southwestern border with Brittany in the direction of St.-Jouin-de-Marnes in the Auvergne in 843. Musset, *Les invasions*, 228; Noblet, “Les monastères Francs et les invasions normandes,” 297-98. Jumièges may have also been targeted a second time by Vikings in 845, according to the *Chronicon Fontanellense*, 302 [*anno* 845].

Translatio S. Germani. The *Translatio S. Germani* recounts the evacuation of the relics of St. Germanus from his Parisian monastery as the attack continued into 846. A classic example of an early Neustrian forced relic translation account, this text was composed by an anonymous monk of St.-Germain-des-Prés just a few years after the attacks.²³³ Written at the request of Abbot Ebroin of St.-Germain, a faithful partisan of Charles the Bald during the civil war of the early 840s, the *Translatio S. Germani* presents a sympathetic picture of Charles' attempts to protect the city during the early part of his reign.²³⁴

According to the *Translatio S. Germani*, the Viking raiders “pierced the Christians’ frontier”²³⁵ and advanced up the Seine, encountering little Frankish resistance. They then set about committing “innumerable sins and grievous crimes against the Christian people there.”²³⁶ The territory’s Christian defenders, better equipped though they were than the “naked and almost clumsy” Northmen, were abandoned by their God on account of their unworthiness and “were put to flight, some fleeing to mountain passes, some to valley hollows, some through open fields, and others to the murkiness of forests.”²³⁷

²³³ *Translatio Sancti Germani*, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 2 (1883), 69-98. For the near-contemporary date, see F. Lot and L. Halphen, *Le règne de Charles le Chauve* (Paris, 1909). 131, note 3, and 133, note 2. The composite *Translatio S. Germani* was later redacted by the monk Aimoin of St.-Germain on the occasion of another subsequent forced translation of the same relics in 867. Aimoin’s redaction is published as the *Translatio et Miracula S. Germani*, ed. Migne, (PL 126, 1027-50), with excerpts printed in MGH SS, 15, no. 1, 10-16.

²³⁴ For more on the political implications of this text, see below. See also D. Appleby, *Hagiography and Ideology in the Ninth Century: the Narrative Description of the Translation of Relics*, PhD Dissertation, University of Virginia (1989), ch. 5.

²³⁵ *Translatio S. Germani*, 72 (ch. 2): “...gens Danorum, id est copiosus exercitus Normannorum, superbo tumentique corde...christianorum fines contingerent atque intrarent.”

²³⁶ *Translatio S. Germani*, 71 (ch. 3): “. . . e navibus exeuntes, multa innumeraque ob ingentia iniquitatum nostrarum facinora in populo christiano pergerunt mala, donec Rodoais venirent, diuque optato fruerentur portu.”

²³⁷ *Translatio S. Germani*, 78 (ch. 12): “Videns enim hoc christianus populus, galeatus ac loricator, scutorum ac lancearum munimine tectus, alii per juga montium, alii per concava vallium,

When at last “the rumor among the people” had it that the raiders were about to occupy the monastery of St.-Germain-des-Prés itself, the monks were at a loss for what to do. Finally, the entire community agreed that “they would rather die than abandon the holy bones and godly ashes of Germanus, that distinguished confessor of Christ, to be borne off by impious Northmen.”²³⁸ Unwilling to remain with Germanus’ bones at the monastery, they packed up his relics and moved south as *exules ac peregrini* (exiles and outsiders).²³⁹ They took shelter at Combs-la-Ville, about twenty miles southeast of Paris. According to the author, the monks of St.-Germain were not alone in evacuating Paris with their relics at that time,²⁴⁰ although the nearby monastery St.-Denis managed to escape and was not forced to evacuate its relics due to the personal intervention of Charles and the timely arrival of his army north of the city.²⁴¹

quidam per planitiem camporum, quidam vero per opaca silvarum, ante nudos ac pene inermes atque paucissimos homines (quod sine ingenti effusione lacrimarum dicere nequimus), Domino eum pro peccatis suis deserente, in fugam versus est.”

²³⁸ *Translatio S. Germani*, 73 (ch. 5): “Cumque metus Normannorum ingens fratres ipsius invaderet monasterii, putantes se ab ipsis subito atque improvise, ut rumor erat populi, occupandos, professi sunt omnes, a minino usque ad senem, se magis velle corporaliter mori, quam sanctissima ossa piosque cineres egregii confessoris Christi Germani ibi deserendo relinquere, et ab impia Normannorum gente deferri.”

²³⁹ *Translatio S. Germani*, 86 (ch. 22): “Illud autem quod in eadem ecclesia gestum est, posquam plurima pars fratrum ab exulatu ac peregrinatione ad monasterium reversa est, silentio premere non debemus.” p. 85 (ch. 21): “Illis autem e finibus christianorum ita recedentibus, fratribus monasterii almi Germani continuo nuntiatur, qui tunc in fluvio Jonae contra Acmantum, praefati monasterii villam, exules ac peregrini propriis exigentibus morabantur culpīs, quod Normanni quorum metu e suo egressi fuerant monasterio, a nobilissimo rege Karolo impetrata, suas unde degressi fuerant, reverterentur ad sedes.”

²⁴⁰ *Translatio S. Germani*, 75 (ch. 8): “Venerabile namque corpus beati praesulis Christi Germani quod in monasterio dimissum est, postea propriis humeris monachorum cum honore et reverentia ad ipsius sancti villam quae dicitur Cumbis, delatum est; nec non et cetera sanctorum corpora qui in hac regione multo jacuerant tempore, e propriis effossa sepulcris, propter metum supradictorum Normannorum alias sunt deportata, prffiter corpus beatissimi martyris Dionysii ceterorumque sanctorum qui in eadem monasterio condigno quiescunt honore.”

²⁴¹ St.-Denis won a reprieve in part because of its close ties to the Carolingian family, but it did not pass the 840s entirely unscathed. According to the *Chronicon Fontanellense*, 301, St.-Denis had to pay a substantial sum to ransom hostages taken during the Viking sack of Rouen in 841: “Anno dominicae incarnationis 841...venerunt monachi de sancto Dionysio, redemeruntque captivos sexaginta octo libris viginti sex.”

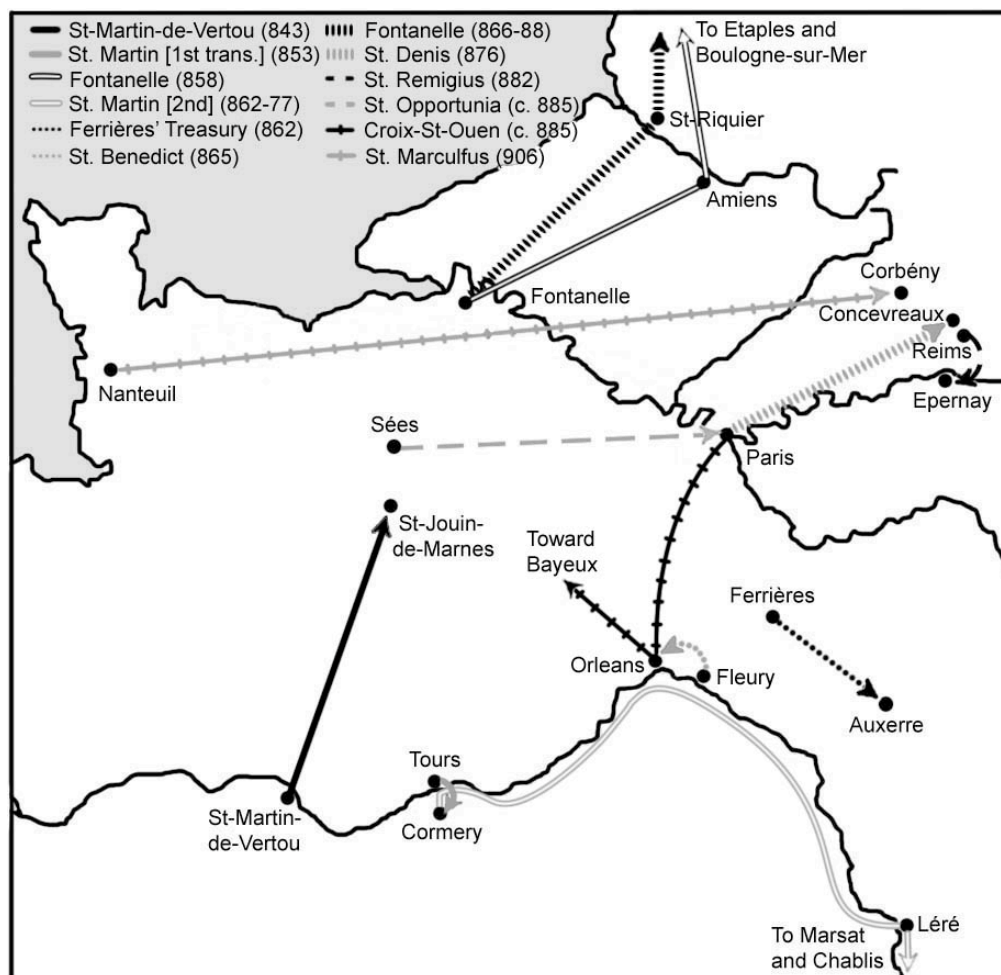
The *Translatio S. Germani* and the attack on Paris represent the earliest record of a major attack against a monastic target closely tied to the Carolingian dynasty. It introduces a number of themes common to many forced relic translations in the ensuing decades. These themes include Charles' hand-wringing inefficacy against the Viking threat, but also his concerted efforts to retain his ties to Neustrian monasteries in the midst of the attacks. The anonymous account of the attack on Paris in 845/6 also presents a detailed, well-informed, near-contemporary source that emphasizes the negative impact both to the morale and to the physical property of Neustrian monks at the outset of the attacks in the 840s.

2.3 Attacks of the 850s

During the 850s, the number of forced relic translations in Neustria increased sharply. Concurrent attacks in the 850s affected the whole province and provoked relic translations in larger numbers. These translations are also easier to substantiate than earlier ones. Major Neustrian relic shrines closely associated with the Carolingian dynasty began to suffer for the first time, allowing for a better definition of the relationship between the twin processes of declining Carolingian political control and the disruption of monastic function in the province. The well-attested scope of monastic disruption during the attacks of the 850s demonstrates that this disruption cannot be written off as an eleventh century fabrication, and that even at this early date, well before the collapse of

the Carolingian dynasty, many of the patterns of relic evacuation in Neustria were already firmly in place. These patterns include Charles the Bald's earnest efforts to maintain his role as royal patron over Neustria's cults, but also the first inklings that the special alliance between king and cult in western Francia was beginning to weaken.

The Viking attacks of the 850s affected most of the province's sub-regions. They landed most burdensomely on the Seine basin, but also struck the ecclesiastical provinces of Thérouanne, Amiens, and Beauvais, where a number



Map 6: Selected forced translations in Neustria, 843-906.

of monasteries were entirely obliterated by the devastation.²⁴² The western end of the province also suffered, with a number of high-profile cult evacuations along the lower Loire. Many relics were evacuated out of affected areas, mostly aimed in the direction of the same few regions: Burgundy, the Auvergne, and Flanders.

In the Seine valley, those monasteries that may have escaped damage in the 840s surely did not survive the 850s unscathed. According to the *Chronicon Fontanellense*, Jumièges was burned in 851. No translation can be shown to have occurred, but the source describes the monastery as *exterminum*, signifying a collective exodus of its monks.²⁴³ The same annals show nearby Fontanelle caught in a recurring cycle of attacks beginning in 851 (with renewed strikes in 855 and 858).²⁴⁴

On the lower Loire, Charles' political weakness contributed to the beginnings of large-scale attacks on monastic targets there. A revolt by Robert the Strong in western Neustria in 853 divided the province's defenses and

²⁴² Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*, 113-114. According to the *Annales Bertiniani*, 51-3 [anno 859], Noyon was destroyed, and the monastery of St.-Valery plus other targets near Amiens were pillaged and burned: "Dani novitur advenientes monasterium Sancti Walarici [Valery] et Samarobriacum Ambianorum civitatem aliaque circumquaque loca rapinis et incendiis vastant...Hi vero qui in Sequana morantur Noviomum civitatem noctu adgressi...." The monks of St.-Valery fled to Podervais, on the Encre River. F. Lot, *La Grande invasion Normande*, 38. Ironically, a decade later during the attacks of the 860s some of these same regions became havens for exiled cults seeking shelter from other parts of the province. See below, section 2.6.

²⁴³ *Chronicon Fontanellense*, 303.

²⁴⁴ The annals fail to mention whether any monks or relics were evacuated. The attacks of 851 appear to have had only minor impact on both Fontanelle and Jumièges; cf. the much more serious attacks of 858 below (Section 2.5). In addition to these important foundations on the Seine, the attacks of the 850s affected minor Neustrian houses. The monastery of Montivilliers suffered in 851. Bouvris, "La renaissance de l'abbaye de Montivilliers et son développement jusqu'à la fin du XI^e siècle," *L'Abbaye de Montivilliers à travers les âges: Actes du colloque organisé à Montivilliers le 8 mars 1986*, 18-20. Attacks at Pavilly appear to have driven the relics of St. Austreberta from her convent to St.-Valery-sur-Somme in Ponthieu. Le Maho, "Les Normands de la Seine," 167-8.

allowed the Vikings to launch raids in the area.²⁴⁵ Vikings sacked the monastery at St.-Florent-le-Vieil that July,²⁴⁶ before striking the city of Tours in early November. The sack of Tours was an unsettling experience for its monks. Vikings “burned the city and its environs,” including the already 500-year-old basilica of St. Martin, one of the best-endowed and best-connected relic shrines in the empire.²⁴⁷ The monastery’s special relationship with the Frankish monarchy, dating back to Clovis’ day, was of little help to it as its monks were evicted by the advancing Normans. The monks took St. Martin’s body to Cormery, about fifteen miles southwest of Tours. As with St.-Ouen’s earlier choice of Gasny, Cormery was an obvious refuge. It was originally a dependent *cella*, spun off in 791, and it enjoyed a continuing relationship with the head institution at Tours.²⁴⁸ It was also at a safe distance from the Loire, and off the principal routes of Viking raiders.²⁴⁹

St. Martin’s sojourn to Cormery was brief, only a matter of months. By the summer of 854, his relics were re-ensconced in his basilica at Tours. Charles

²⁴⁵ Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 173-6; A. Giry, “Sur la date de deux diplômes de l’église de Nantes et de l’alliance de Charles le Chauve avec Érispoé,” *Annales de Bretagne*, 13 (1898), 492-3.

²⁴⁶ *Annales Bertiniani*, 42 [anno 853]: “Dani mense Iulio, relicta Sequana, Ligerim adeuntes, Namnetum urbem [Nantes, see Chapter 2] et monasterium Sancti Florentii ac vicina loca populantur....”

²⁴⁷ *Annales Bertiniani*, 43 [anno 853]: “Item pyratae Danorum a Namnetibus superiora petentes, mense Novembri, 6 videlicet Idus, urbem Turonum impune adeunt atque incendunt cum ecclesia sancti Martini et ceteris adiacentibus locis. Sed quia evidenti certitudine hoc praescitum fuerat, corpus beati Martini ad Cormaricum [Cormery, Indre-et-Loire] monasterium eius ecclesiae... transportatum est.” See also P. Gasnault, “Le tombeau de saint Martin et les invasions normandes,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Église de France*, 47 (1961), 54-56; C. LeLong, “Etudes sur l’abbaye de Marmoutier,” *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique de Touraine*, 39 (1979-81), 283-4.

²⁴⁸ Gasnault, “Le tombeau de saint Martin,” 55.

²⁴⁹ Because of a corrupt passage in the *Annales Bertiniani*, it was long thought that the relics were next taken to Orléans. R. Poupardin, “Notes carolingiennes. I. Une nouveau manuscript des Annales de St.-Bertin,” *Bibliothèque de l’École des chartes*, 66 (1905), 398, demonstrated that in fact only the monastery’s treasures (vessels, ornaments, etc.) were transferred there, not the relics of St. Martin, which stayed at Cormery throughout their short time in exile.

the Bald ensured the city's safety by taking personal control of it that summer. The monks took advantage of Charles' visit to the city that summer to confirm their privileges, particularly those preserved in documents that had been destroyed by the Vikings and for whose destruction in some sense the king was responsible.²⁵⁰

The monks had been sufficiently concerned by the sack of Tours to pick up St. Martin's bones and flee the city, but their speedy return to Tours suggests that the "burning" of their monastery had not been so catastrophic as contemporary accounts suggest. Archaeological evidence also suggests that the conception of the attacks ought to be scaled down, since only one period of burning can be identified in Marmoutier's strata, not the many described in the sources.²⁵¹ In hindsight, it does appear that the dislocation suffered by the monks of Tours has been overstated. To the monks of Tours, however, it would not have been at all clear that their return would be so smooth. Not only were they rattled enough by the Vikings' arrival to decamp with their relics into the countryside, but the breathless agitation of their descriptions of the attack belie the raid's deeply unsettling effect on their community.

The extensive Viking raids along the Seine and Loire in 853 sufficiently disrupted the fabric of monastic life throughout Neustria that they caused concern among West Francia's ecclesiastical leadership. While St. Martin's relics still

²⁵⁰ Tessier, *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 1 (no. 167), 441: "Addidit etiam jam dictus grex, id quod omnium plangit memoria, qualiter saevissimi atque crudelissimi Turonis supervenerint Normanni et lamentabili excidio concremaverint cum caeteris omnibus monasterium praefati sancti et ob hanc causam cartarum instrumenta ex rebus praefatae ecclesiae pertinentibus deperiissent."

²⁵¹ Noizet, "Les Chanoines de St.-Martin," 56-57.

rested in exile at Cormery, a synod was assembled at Servais, near Laon, in November, 853. It determined that corrective action was required, both to restore prior monastic equilibrium and to protect dislocated monks from the power of lay aristocrats seeking to profit from their vulnerability. As if to emphasize the widespread nature of the problem of dislocated monks and relics, the synod authorized those who had “fled the Normans from any part of the kingdom” to return to their place of origin without having to pay any impositions to whatever lord now happened to control the territory.²⁵²

The decree of the Synod of Servais was either premature or prophetic, for attacks only accelerated during the remainder of the 850s. In 854, the same band of Vikings that evicted St. Martin from his grave made a series of even more ambitious attacks along the Loire upstream from Tours. They got as far as Fleury, where their presence so concerned the monks that they exhumed their relics of St. Benedict of Nursia and placed them in a chest on a bier ready to escape to the protection of nearby Orléans at a moment’s notice.²⁵³ In a short time, Benedict’s relics returned to their original setting, but another interjection of Carolingian high politics again destabilized the calm that followed these attacks.

The death of Lothar I at the end of September, 855, plunged West Francia into further political turmoil. Pippin II of Aquitaine also regained his freedom in 855, distracting Charles the Bald’s attention from his duty to protect Neustria’s

²⁵² *Capitulare Missorum Silvacense* (November, 853), MGH LL Capit, 2, 273 (ch. 9): “De advenis, qui oppressione Nortmannorum vel Brittanorum in partes istorum regnorum confugerunt, statuerunt seniores nostri, ut a nullo rei publicae ministro quamcumque violentiam vel oppresionem aut exactationem patiantur; sed liceat eis conductum suum quaerere et habere, donec aut ipse redeant ad loca sua aut seniores illorum eos recipiant. Quodsi inventus fuerit ex rei publicae ministris aut aliis quibuslibet contra hoc pietatis praeceptum facere aut fecisse, bannum dominicum exinde componat.” See also below, Chapter 4, section 4.3.

²⁵³ Adrevald of Fleury, *Miracula S. Benedicti*, ch. 13. See section 2.7 below for a transcription.

religious institutions from Viking attack. By early 856, Scandinavian raiders had also re-mounted the Seine. According to its own annals, Fontanelle was damaged for a second time during this raid.²⁵⁴

Charles surely hoped to stop the violation of relic shrines which he and his family had patronized for generations, but he lacked the strength to resist the Vikings directly. Recognizing the need to solve his domestic problems in order to focus on the Viking threat, Charles called a council in July, 856, at his palace near Compiègne to close the Frankish ranks against the Norse invaders.²⁵⁵ During successful negotiations with his rebellious magnates in Aquitaine, Charles placed a particular emphasis on his desire to put aside internal squabbles and protect the church from pagan raids. He begged his magnates to “have pity on the church cruelly persecuted by pagans” and come to his aid against the Vikings.²⁵⁶ By highlighting the damage to the church and emphasizing foreign enemies over domestic ones, Charles continued to find value in his consecrated role as defender of Frankish Christendom. He laid the protection of religious institutions at the front of his agenda, and used it to unify the disparate elements under his command and strengthen his own leadership position. Charles’ words

²⁵⁴ *Chronicon Fontanellense*, 304. The *Annales Bertiniani*, 46-7 [anno 856], also mention the attacks. The coastal abbey of Montivilliers was also attacked at this time, and suffered to such an extent that it appears to have been completely abandoned and disappears entirely from the historical record. Bouvrin, “La renaissance de l’abbaye de Montivilliers,” 18.

²⁵⁵ *Capitula ad Francos et Aquitanos missa de Carisiaco*, MGH Capit, 2, no. 262, 281 (§ 11).

²⁵⁶ *Secundum missaticum ad Francos et Aquitanos directum*, MGH Capit, 2, no. 264, 284 (§ 3): “Mandat etiam, ut recordemini Dei et vestrae christianitas et condoleatis atque compatiamini huic sanctae ecclesiae, quae et a vobis et ab aliis miserabiliter est oppressa et depredata, et quae crudeliter ex altera parte persequitur a paganis...” For a fuller narrative of Charles’ many challenges during the late 850s, which included enemies both near and far as well as the failure of his own health, see Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 173-189.

succeeded in uniting his allies, and he was able to confront the Seine raiders in late 856 and “strike them with the greatest slaughter.”²⁵⁷

The Viking raids of the 850s had a much larger effect on Neustrian relic cults than those of the 840s. This was due in large measure to Charles’ own political problems. Charles leaned heavily on churches and monasteries as bulwarks of political legitimacy, but as political stability, imperial unity, and access to royal patronage began to fade, so too did the fortunes of the relic cults on which Charles’ sacralized status depended. Already, a number of important institutions closely tied to the monarchy had been disrupted. It is unlikely, however, that anyone yet realized just how big the problem would become in the 860s. Decades remained before Carolingian control in Neustria foundered completely, but Charles the Bald already found himself struggling to maintain meaningful patronage links with the province’s most important relic shrines.

2.4 A Second Attack on Paris (856/7)

Unfortunately for Charles, his victories against the pagan invaders in the summer of 856 were ephemeral. His appeal to his magnates to protect the Neustrian church brought him only a limited amount of support, and his *ad hoc* army quickly dissolved. Soon, Viking raiders were back on the Seine in an even

²⁵⁷ *Chronicon Fontanellense*, 91: “Deinde, iunctus viribus, usque Particum saltum plurimam stragem et depopulationem fecerunt. Quo in loco Carolus rex eis cum exercitu occurrens, maxima eos strage percussit.” Lot, “La grande invasion,” 9-10.

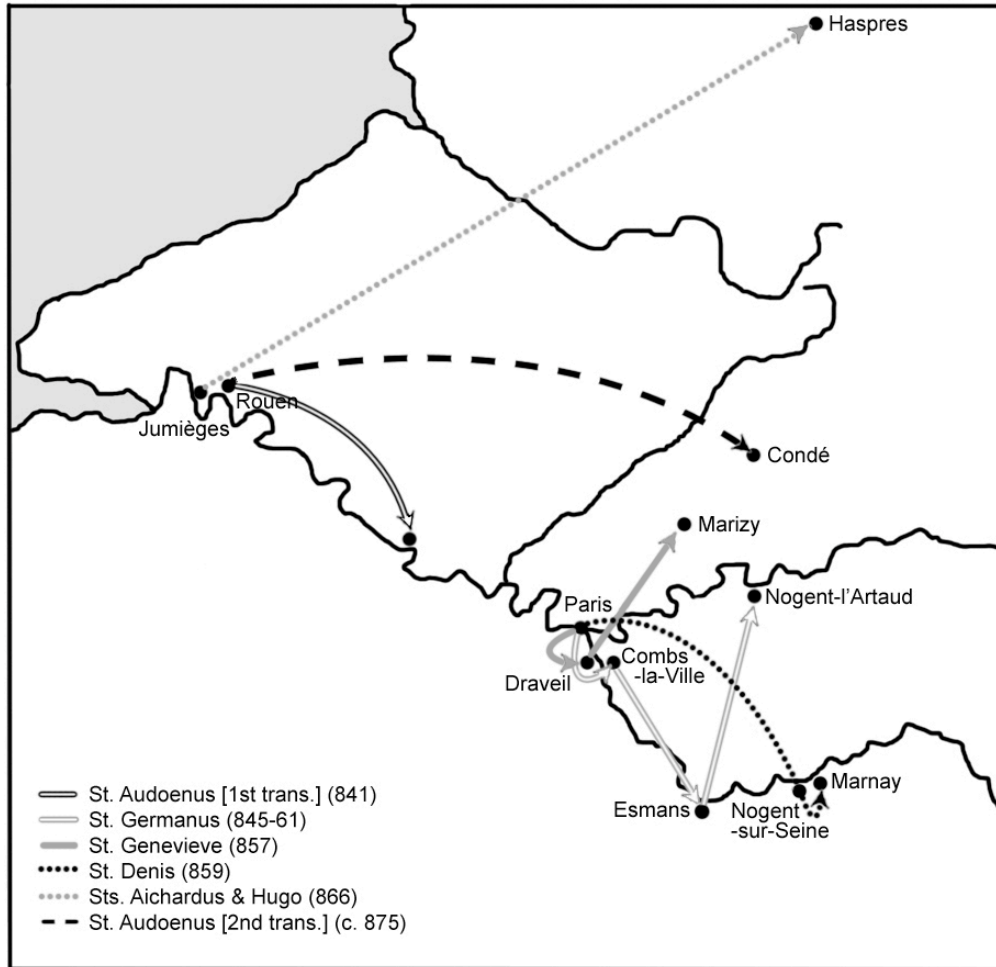
more permanent capacity.²⁵⁸ The Vikings set up a semi-permanent camp to spend the winter on an island in the Seine called Oscellus.²⁵⁹ On December 28, 856, they sacked Paris for a second time.²⁶⁰ A few months later in 857, they returned and put to flame the Parisian churches of St.-Geneviève, St.-Peter and other institutions, “not including the churches of St.-Stephen, St.-Vincent, St.-Germain, and St.-Denis, which were only saved from the torch through the payment of a large sum of cash,” presumably levied with Charles’ help.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ *Chronicon Fontanellense*, 89-91: “...maxima classis Danorum fluvium Sequanae occupat, duce item Sydroc.... Deinde... Berno Nortmannus eum valida classe ingressus est;” *Annales Bertiniani*, 46-47 [anno 856]: “Iterum pyratae Danorum alii mediante Augusto Sequanam ingrediuntur, et vastatis direstisque et utraque fluminis parte civitatibus, etiam procul positus monasteriis atque villis, loquum qui dicitur Fosse-Grivaldi Sequanae contiguum stationique munitissimum deligunt; ubi iemem quieti transigunt.”

²⁵⁹ For differing views on the location of this camp and the effects of this raid, see J. Lair, “Les Normands dans l’isle d’Oscelle,” in *Mémoires de la Société historique et archéologique de Pontoise et du Vexin*, 20 (1897), 169-185; W. Vogel, *Die Normannen und das fränkische Reich bis zur Gründung der Normandie* (Heidelberg, 1906), 162-4; C. Gilmore, “War on the Rivers: Viking Numbers and Mobility on the Seine and Loire, 841-886,” *Viator*, 19 (1988), 84. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 187-88; S. Coupland, *Charles the Bald and the Defense of the West Frankish Kingdoms Against the Viking Invasions*, D. Phil Dissertation, Cambridge University (1987), 46, 56-57.

²⁶⁰ *Annales Bertiniani*, 47 [anno 857]: “Pyratae Danorum V Kal. January Loticiam Parisiorum invadunt atque incendio tradunt.” Since the liturgical year ended on Christmas, just before the attacks, Prudentius included this attack under the following year, 857. Vikings were also active on the Loire in 856/7, raiding as far as Blois. Somehow, St. Martin’s basilica outside of Tours managed to escape damage. Gasnault, “Le tombeau de saint Martin,” 56.

²⁶¹ *Annales Bertiniani*, 48 [anno 857]: “Danae Sequanae insistentes cuncta libere vastant, Lutetiamque Parisiorum adgressi, basilicam Petri et sanctae Genovefae incendunt et ceteras omnes, praeter domum sancti Stephani [possibly the cathedral of Paris, though other churches in the area bore this name] et ecclesiam sancti Wincentii atque Germani [St-Germain] praeterque ecclesiam sancti Dyonisii [St-Denis], pro quibus tantummodo ne incenderentur multa solidorum summa soluta est.” On the identification of the church of St.-Stephen, see Lot, *La grande invasion*, 12, note 1.



Map 7: Forced translations in the Seine Valley, c. 841-c. 875.

The king's manifest inability to successfully secure Paris' churches and monasteries led some to question the established order of royal patronage over the city's cults. Paschasius Radbertus, for one, grieved over the arrival of these "enemies at the gates" of Frankish "Jerusalem":

Who could ever believe, who could ever imagine in our country that in so short a time we would be overwhelmed with the unhappiness which we now see, lament, deplore, and greatly dread? And today we dread no less that pirates, brought together from diverse bands, might reach Paris and burn all the churches of Christ on all sides anywhere near the [Seine] riverbanks. Who would ever believe, I ask you, that such a jumble of brigands would dare to undertake such a thing? Who would suppose that a kingdom so glorious, so strong, so broad, so populous, and so secure

could be humiliated, sullied by such a people? I wonder who could believe that such cheap thugs would have the audacity to carry away so much wealth, seize so much plunder, snatch away Christians into captivity, or even to set foot on our shores? I do not think that, only a short time before now, any person on earth would have believed that foreigners would soon enter into our Paris.²⁶²

Although he does not explicitly criticize the current generation of Carolingian princes, Paschasius clearly longed for a bygone time when a strong emperor defended western Christendom. Paschasius was nearly beside himself over the fact that the patronage relationships that the city's churches and monasteries had carefully cultivated with the kingdom's highest political authorities had bought them little protection. If the Carolingians were unable to protect Paris, what relic shrines were safe anywhere?

Paschasius' confusion and despair, from the relative safety of his monastery at Corbie more than 100 miles to the north, was eclipsed by the even more acute anxiety of those closer to the immediate danger in the Île-de-France. Within a short time, a great efflux of monks and relics gave up waiting for Charles' forces to defend them and poured from Paris into the surrounding countryside. Charles scrambled to remain a useful patron amidst the upheaval,

²⁶² Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Lamentationes Ieremiae*, book 4, *littera Lamed*, PL, 120, col. 1220: "...non crediderunt reges terrae et universi habitatores orbis quod ingrederetur hostis et inimicis Iherusalem...Quis unquam crederet, vel quis unquam cogitare potuisset in nostris partibus, quod, transcurso tempore, omnes accidisse conspeximus, doluimus ac deflevimus et valde pertinuimus? Unde et adhuc hodie non minus pertimescimus ut piratae, diversis admodum collecti ex families, Parisiorum attingerent fines ecclesiae Christi hinc inde igne cremarent circa littus. Quis unquam, quaeso, crederet quod latrones promiscuae gentis unquam talia auderent? Vel quis aestimare potuisset quod tam gloriosum regnum tamque munitum et latissimum, tam populosum et firmissimum, talium hominum humiliari vel foedari sordibus deberet? Et non dico hi quod censum plurimum asportare et praedas diripere vel captives transducere, verum quis credere posset quod tam vilissimi nostros adire fines auderent? Fateor enim ut ne aestimo non longe retro quod nullus habitator nostri orbis audire potuisset quod Parisiam nostrum hostis intraret."

and was forced to dole out more and more refuges behind his steadily receding defensive lines.

The monks of St.-Germain-des-Prés were among the first to leave. In the closing months of 857, Abbot Hilduin II gathered the relics of St. Germain, along with the monastery's library, treasure, and the main part of its *congregatio*, and fled Paris to Combs-la-Ville on the Yères River.²⁶³ Only a handful of monks remained behind to attend to the monastery's immovable property. Alerted to the arrival of Vikings on horseback in Paris at dawn on Easter Sunday, the remaining monks refused to believe it and were surprised by the bashing open of their church doors during the celebration of the mass. They dove for their hiding places, but fortunately for them, the Vikings were only after provisions. A few servants were killed and the monastery's storehouses were burnt, but the monks emerged from hiding to douse the flames and, for the moment, to save their basilica.²⁶⁴ The monastery escaped complete destruction during the attacks, but

²⁶³ Aimoin of St.-Germain, *Miracula Sancti Germani Parisiensis*, PL, 126, col. 1043-44 (book 2, ch. 5-11). Combs-la-Ville, near Melun, is approximately twenty five miles southwest of Paris.

²⁶⁴ Aimoin, *Translatio et Miracula S. Germani*, PL, 126, col. 1045 (book 2, ch. 10): "Restiterant siquidem in monasterio qui ipsum custodirent fratres fere viginti. Quibus matutinale, orto jam crepusculo, Paschalis sacrosanctae festivitatis officium celebrantibus, adsunt Normanni qui, Parasceves die, equis adscendis, iter arripuerant veniendi. Quos quidem nostrorum equites, paullisper praevenientes, eorum eis quamvis sero malignum nuntiaverunt adventum. Illis autem non credentibus, sed magis laudibus divinis insistentibus, pagani sine mora insequentes venerunt, cunctosque ut errant in ecclesia circumcinxere psallentes. Tunc, quod magnum fuit declinandi subsidium, clausis in eorum oculis ecclesiae portis, omnes sese in quaeque latibula vel puteos immergentes absconderunt; quo non ex omnibus, nisi unum equo fidentem, tanti praesulis suffragantibus meritis, interficerent. Itaque fugientes ante conspectum ipsorum ibant, nec aliter inquam verissime nisi ut quidam illorum ante enudatos etiam gladios, cum esset dies, inlaesi transirent. Quibus ita angelica administratione salvatis, interfectis praenuntiis atque aliis in circuitu et in medio monasterii ex familia plurimis, omnia, veluti spurcissimi invasores, quaeque in ecclesia vel extra invenerant diripientes, cum proventus exsultatione, cellario fratrum igne supposito, reversi sunt. Tunc universi de qualibuscumque quibus se abdiderant egressi latebris, concurrente etiam hinc inde populo civitatis, subverterunt, tantum spiritus sancti gratia, ignis ardorem, jam ad cuncta consummenda spatia altiora petentem."

it remained a chilling example of the kind of destruction that Neustrian religious communities feared by surprise Viking raids.

Monks from the monastery of St.-Geneviève were also driven out of Paris at the same time. Unlike St.-Germain-des-Prés, St. Genevieve's monastery was "burned," and the saint's relics were translated south of the city to Athis, then to Draveil, then later to Marizy-Sainte-Geneviève.²⁶⁵ North of the city, the abbey of St.-Denis survived the attack of 857, but its abbot Louis (and his brother Gauzlenus) were kidnapped by raiders and were ransomed for such a heavy price that "many church treasuries in Charles' realm were drained dry at the king's command."²⁶⁶ Abbot Hilduin II of St.-Germain avoided a similar fate only thanks to a fortuitous advance warning from a Frankish mounted patrol.²⁶⁷ Although monks of Paris did not desert Charles for other patrons and continued to willingly support the west Frankish king in his attempts to maintain control of the Neustria, it was perhaps becoming clear that they were receiving less and less from him in return.

²⁶⁵ The monastery continued to bear marks from this attack into the twelfth century. The secondary translation to Marizy occurred at an unknown time before 861. S. Lefèvre, "La reconstitution des monastères après les invasions Normandes en Ile-de-France," *Paris et Ile-de-France, Mémoires*, 32 (1981), 300-1; Lot, *La grand invasion*, 36.

²⁶⁶ *Annales Bertiniani*, 49, [anno 858]: "Pars altera eorundem pyratorum Ludouuicum abbatem monasterii sancti Dyonisii cum fratre ipsius Gauzleno capiunt eisque suae gravissimam multam imponuit. Ob quam multi thesaurorum ecclesiarum Dei ex regno Karli, ipso iubente, exhausti sunt."

²⁶⁷ Aimoin, *Translatio S. Germani*, col. 1045 (book 2, ch. 10): "Quos quidam nostrorum equites paulisper pervenientes, eorum eis quamvis sero malignum nuntiaverunt adventum."

2.5 Monastic and Episcopal Exiles (858-61)

Charles the Bald's "crisis years" of the late 850s were pivotal for the future of West Francia. Simultaneous attacks by Viking warbands and by Charles' own family members ushered in a new level of chaos within the *regnum* of Neustria and unleashed a groundswell of forced relic translations instigated by the turmoil. Neustria's richest and most important monasteries bore the brunt of renewed Viking sorties, further weakening the diminishing value of Carolingian patronage to the province's relic shrines. The frantic burst of forced relic translations also definitively establishes the seriousness and ubiquity of the "exodus of holy bodies" within the province.

In the summer of 858, Charles undertook a major effort to evict the pagan raiders from Neustria. One of his first actions was to assemble a church council at Quierzy-sur-Oise to consolidate the support of Neustrian church leaders, many of whom had begun to wonder if they would be better served by switching sides to support Charles' older brother Louis the German, or even his rebellious son Louis the Stammerer in the face of the pagan threat.²⁶⁸ Charles then concluded other alliances with sympathetic magnates and attempted a counterrattack against the Vikings in mid-858.

But Charles' coalition was weak and dispirited, and the offensive failed. Viking attacks recommenced immediately, and the Seine basin again coursed with monastic flights into exile. The monks of St.-Germain-des-Prés, no longer confident in the security of their refuge at Combs-la-Ville, fled south again

²⁶⁸ MGH Capit, 2, 295-6.

another forty miles to Esmans.²⁶⁹ The abbey of Fontanelle was sacked also again, and its monks successively evacuated the relics of Sts. Wandregisellus and Ansbertus to *villae* at Amiens, Etaples, Outreau and Boulogne-sur Mer.²⁷⁰

Attacks were not limited to monasteries. Episcopal targets succumbed to the Vikings across Neustria as well, including cathedrals at Chartres, Évreux, and Bayeux,²⁷¹ where Bishop Baltfridus was martyred by the raiders.²⁷² In 859, Bishops Ermenfridus of Beauvais, Immo of Noyon, and “other nobles, both cleric and lay,” also met their deaths at Viking hands.²⁷³ In fear, Bishop Guntbertus of Évreux and Archbishop Ganelon of Rouen beseeched Charles the Bald to provide them with a safe refuge in case their lives, too, came under threat. Charles provided them with a *villa* for this purpose at Thiverny, on the Oise near Creil.²⁷⁴

Within the next few years, Charles would be asked to make many more such grants from the royal fisc to bishops and abbots dislodged from threatened

²⁶⁹ Aimoin's *Translatio et Miracula S. Germani* is silent on the precise date of the move from Combs-la-Ville to Esmans, but the same author's *Translatio SS. Georgi, Aurelii et Nathaliae*, PL, 115, col. 939-960 (book 2, ch. 5), shows that Abbot Hilduin II was already in exile at Esmans by 858. This is confirmed by the *Annales Bertiniani*, 51 [anno 858].

²⁷⁰ J. Fournée, “Quelques facteurs de fixation et de diffusion du culte populaire des saints: exemples Normands,” *Bulletin Philologique et Historique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, (Paris, 1986) 123-4; H. Van Werveke, “Saint-Wandrille et Saint-Pierre de Gand (IX^e et X^e siècles),” in D. Block, et al. (eds.), *Miscellanea Medievalia in memoriam Jan Frederick Niedermeyer* (Groningen, 1967), 79-92.

²⁷¹ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti* (book 2), 62: “...Capitur Carnotus, Ebroicas populantur atque Bajocas.” See also F. Lot, “La prise de Chartres par les Normands en 858,” *Recueil des travaux historiques*, 2 (1968-73), 771-80.

²⁷² *Annales Bertiniani*, 52 [anno 859]: “...anno praeterito Baltfridum Baiocassium episcopum necaverant.”

²⁷³ *Annales Bertiniani*, 52 [anno 859]: “Hi vero qui in Sequana morantur Noviomum civitatem noctu adgressi, Immonem episcopum cum aliis nobilibus, tam clericis quam laicis, capiunt, vastataque civitate, secum abducunt atque in itinere interficiunt. Qui etiam ante duos menses Ermenfridum Belvagorum in quadam villa interfecerant...”

²⁷⁴ M. Baudot, “L’abbaye de la Croix-Saint-Ouen à l’époque carolingienne, d’après le témoignage d’un diplôme de Carloman II,” *Bibliothèque de l’École des Chartes*, 141 (1983), 16-18; J. Le Maho, “Une nouvelle source pour l’histoire du monastère de la Croix-Saint-Ouen à la fin du IX^e siècle,” *Tabula. Sources écrites de la Normandie médiévale* (2005), 1-15.

institutions. These grants were a sign both of Charles' continuing commitment to provide for Neustrian relic cults, but also of his weakening ability to defend them in their original locations.

The catalog of royal grants of *loca refugii* in the late 850s and early 860s is striking. The most important Neustrian monasteries received them. In 859, for example, the royal monastery at St.-Denis was forced by renewed attacks to join St.-Germain-des-Prés and St.-Geneviève in exile from Paris. At first, the monks of St.-Denis were satisfied to retire to one of their pre-existing properties outside of the city. On September 21, 859, the bones of Sts. Denis, Rusticus and Eleutherius “were carried away because of the fear of the Normans, to the their *villa* of Nogent-sur-Seine in the Morvois district,” and placed reverently in reliquaries.²⁷⁵ When this exile looked like it was going to last, however, they asked Charles the Bald to grant the monastery, which was now “vexed daily by Norman incursions,” another *locus refugii* on the nearby royal domain at Marnay.²⁷⁶ Since Marnay was so close to Nogent-sur-Seine, it could be that St.-Denis asked for the new grant not because Nogent-sur-Seine was unsafe but because they wanted Charles to prove his continuing value to them as a patron by at least compensating them for the loss of other lands in more exposed areas.

Charles provided more monks with new hideouts as attacks continued unabated across Neustria into the early 860s. Monks of Glanfeuil abandoned their house by the Loire and fled northward through Anjou to a *villa* called Mesle,

²⁷⁵ *Annales Bertiniani*, 52 [anno 859]: “Ossa beatorum martyrum Dyonisii, Rustici et Eleutherii, metu eorundem Danorum, in pagum Mauripensem, in villam sui juris, Novientem, devecta sunt, atque XI kalendas octobris in oculis diligenter conlocata.”

²⁷⁶ Numerous charters and diplomas from 860-862 mention the gift of Marnay. Lot, *La grande invasion*, 36-7.

given to them by Charles the Bald as a refuge during the attacks.²⁷⁷ Further upstream, a combined Norman/Breton raiding force reached as far as the shrine of St. Martin at Tours in 862. While the monks there considered a second flight into exile within the span of eight years,²⁷⁸ Charles issued charters donating certain *villae* to serve as refuges to St. Martin and his monks at Léré and Marsat.²⁷⁹

On the other side of the province, however, abbot Lupus of Ferrières and his monks were also in need of refuge, but chose not to look to Charles to acquire it. In the autumn of 862, Lupus wrote instead to the monks of St.-Germanus of Auxerre to ask if he could transfer some of his monastery's *ornamenta* there.²⁸⁰ By the following spring, Lupus had fully flexed his personal connections with his ecclesiastical peers, writing to bishops and abbots across his region to ask for safe refuge, this time for himself, his monks, and their relics.²⁸¹ Although Charles was making earnest attempts to care for the needs of

²⁷⁷ Odo of Glanfeuil, *Translatio Sancti Mauri*, MGH SS, 15, no. 1, 471 (ch. 13): "Igitur nostro jam tempore, cum, insequentibus nos Nortmannis, huius beati viri corpus de monasterio asportassemus... ad villam quae Merula nuncupatur, quam munifica largitate Serenissimus Rex Karolus ad suggestionem sancti Pontificis Ebroini, beato Mauro et eius famulis per magnificentiae celsitudinis suae contulerat praeceptum..."

²⁷⁸ Martin's relics had earlier been translated to Cormery in 853/4. See above, section 2.3.

²⁷⁹ *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 2, 202 (no. 319): "Unde, quia praefati coenobii venerabiles canonici in jam dictis villis ob infestationem paganorum refugium habere saepius consuescunt..."

²⁸⁰ Lupus of Ferrières, *Epistolae*, MGH Epp, 4, 99: "...terrentem praedonum improbitate [paganorum], ornamenta ecclesiae nostrae occultanda curastis nec ad id praestandum inventi estis difficiles. Quae secum reputans dilectissimus frater noster S. et cum sibi tum in etiam pluribus aliis nostrum multa benigne collata recensens, impendente, ut metuebamus, ruina nostri loci, quam et nostra peccata et pyratarum vicinia minabantur, vos elegit, non apud quos peregrinaretur, sed intra quorum collegium admissus, vicarium nostri loci contubernium possideret."

²⁸¹ In addition to the monks of St.-German d'Auxerre, Lupus also wrote to Bishop Arduicus of Besançon (*Epistolae*, no. 120) and Bishop Fulcrius of Troyes (*Epistolae*, no. 125) to seek out "necessitas latibuli" from the "pyratae pagani crudelissimi."

Neustria's threatened religious institutions,²⁸² Lupus seems to have had greater confidence in his peers as a source of succour than he did in his king.

Charles' dismay at his inability to safeguard Neustria's richest and most important monasteries *in situ* during this time must have been acute.²⁸³ He had managed to save St.-Denis by personally defending it during the first Viking encroachment on Paris in 858,²⁸⁴ but was later forced to watch the symbolic repository of his family's sacralized status beat a hasty retreat from his kingdom's richest city. Relics of St. Martin, St. Germanus, and other saints with royal connections were also driven into hiding. In the "dark days" of 858/9, Charles was himself forced to decamp for Burgundy. As if to underscore the symbolic power of relic translation for the king, Charles organized the translation of the relics of St. Germanus of Auxerre to a new shrine as a kind of "morale booster" during his exile²⁸⁵ – a celebration that was also, perhaps, a way of effacing the ignominy of the many other unplanned relic translations that plainly showed the diminution of his authority throughout Neustria.

²⁸² Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 173-89; Lot, *La grande invasion*, 55.

²⁸³ At the Council of Pîtres in June, 862 (MGH Capit, 2, 303), Charles explicitly acknowledged his dynasty's special role as royal patrons, reaffirming his need for a spiritual partnership with the church (reflected in his consecration) and his responsibility to protect Neustrian religious institutions from pagan attack.

²⁸⁴ Wallace-Hadrill, "The Vikings in Francia," 226, suggests that Charles "turned St.-Denis into a *castrum*" and paid a ransom to ensure its protection.

²⁸⁵ Hericus of Auxerre, *Miracula S. Germani Episcopi Autissiodorensis*, PL 124, col. 1254 (ch. 101); Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 189.

2.6 “Normandy:” a safe harbor

Ironically, during the attacks of the 850s, the regions that would come to make up the future Normandy were some of the areas that were best insulated from Viking attacks. Although the Seine valley and coastal regions were frequently crisscrossed by Viking bands, interior territories remained mostly untouched at this time. Few navigable rivers penetrate the future Normandy’s western sections in the dioceses of Coutances, Sées, or Bayeux. This made these lands a safe place of exile for monks and relics fleeing Viking danger along the Seine and Loire during the third quarter of the ninth century.

Sometime after 853, for example, monks of Glanfeuil abandoned their monastery on the banks of the Loire and fled north to find exile in Sées. They brought with them the relics of their patron, St. Maurus. Bishop Hildebrand of Sées was unable to receive them personally, but his archdeacon offered them shelter at a *villa* called St.-Julien-sur-Sarthe.²⁸⁶

A bit later, sometime after 856, the monks of the monastery at Corbion, heading for a more distant refuge near Avranches, stopped briefly in the diocese of Sées with their body of St. Launomarus. This would shortly be one of the most troubled parts of the future Normandy, but for a few decades during the middle of the ninth century, it was a stable place of refuge for cults fleeing from surrounding areas. The region’s own cults remained safely in place, with the

²⁸⁶ They did not stay long, however, detouring “in partes Burgundiae” before finally arriving in 868 at the monastery of Fossés near Paris. See Odo of Glanfeuil’s mid-ninth century *Translatio Sancti Mauri* (BHL 5775), MGH SS 15, no. 1, 471-2. For the earlier donation of Mesle-sur-Sarthe to St.-Maur, consult Tessier, *Receuil des actes de Charles le Chauve*, 1, 427 (no. 161). Lot placed this translation in 862: “La Loire, l’Aquitaine, et la Seine,” 474, note 5.

shrines of St. Godegrand and the monastery of St.-Evroult d'Ouche, safe in the inland forests near Sées, able to remain in place throughout the 850s.²⁸⁷ Later still, in c. 885-7, monks from the monastery of Croix-St.-Ouen fled the Paris region for the safety of Bayeux.²⁸⁸

This demonstrates the importance of river basins for funneling Viking attacks along a few crucial corridors, as well as the fragmentation and fluctuation that characterized Carolingian control in northwest Francia. It also demonstrates how hinterlands located away from these avenues of attack could survive unscathed even in the midst of a rapidly escalating regional threat. For the Vikings, venturing into the interior probably brought diminishing returns: nearly all of Neustria's richest monasteries were located on navigable coasts and rivers easily accessible to their longships. Whatever the reason, islands of safety dotted the Neustrian hinterland and drew in threatened relics from more exposed areas.

As the ninth century drew to a close, however, the gradual retrenchment of monastic and episcopal institutions slowly dispossessed even Neustria's few safe areas of all of their most important relic shrines. The departure of relics accelerated even in formerly stable areas after the formation of the duchy of Normandy in the early tenth century, when a new militarized border zone emerged along the territory's southern terminus. Conflict between Franks and

²⁸⁷ St. Godegrand's relics were eventually translated out of the diocese as the security situation there deteriorated in the 870s. For more on this later translation, see below, section 2.7. The monastery at St.-Evroult-d'Ouche managed to maintain itself within this border zone throughout the ninth century according to a royal diploma of Charles the Simple (*Recueil des Actes de Charles III le Simple roi de France 893-923*, P. Lauer (ed.), (Paris, 1949), no. 35, 74).

²⁸⁸ See Chapter 2, section 2.4.

Normans brought the threat of violence into new areas and eventually dislodged relic cults that had managed to survive undamaged throughout the century or more of intermittent raids by Viking marauders.

2.7 Forced Relic Translations and the Changing Fortunes of Charles the Bald (861-76)

It should already be apparent that the peaks and troughs in the number of forced relic translations into and out of specific parts of Neustria correlate closely with the ups and downs of Charles the Bald's mercurial reign.²⁸⁹ The staccato rhythm of peace and conflict as Charles struggled to maintain his throne amid threats both foreign and domestic provided a steady cadence for the activity of Viking raiders, who promenaded in and out of the kingdom to the beat of Charles' changing fortunes. Relics were caught up in this dance, too, although unlike in Brittany or Aquitaine, Charles maintained enough influence for his patronage to be of continuing use to them in exile. Periods of peace were common enough for many of these cults to return home during the caesurae between Norman raids. Both Charles and his Neustrian relic cults continued to offer each other a kind of diminished patronage as they leaned on each other in times of extremity, and this symbiosis continued until Charles' death. After that, whatever stability Charles maintained rapidly evaporated once again, forced relic translations increased,

²⁸⁹ There is no need to dwell here on Charles' dynastic problems, which nearly brought him and his west Frankish kingdom to an end in 841, 853, 858, 861, 865, and probably more times as well. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*; F. Lot and L. Halphen, *Le règne de Charles le Chauve (840-877)*.

and relics and their keepers began to look even more seriously for alternative partners.

Charles tried with occasional success to counterattack against Viking advances in the 840s and 850s, but the previous sections of this chapter have shown that none of these offensives achieved the kind of strategic victory needed to permanently safeguard Neustria's relic cults. Fortunately for the cults, toward the end of his reign, during the late 860s and 870s, Charles abandoned the strategy of granting ever more distant refuges to his monastic clients in favor of more effective tactics. Charles embarked on an energetic campaign of fortification throughout the Paris basin and the rest of central Neustria between 862 and his death in 877.²⁹⁰ The new fortifications included rebuilt city walls, fortified bridges to deny river access, and renewed alliances with local magnates that allowed for quicker and more nimble reaction to Viking "lightning strikes," the *Blitzangriffe* of German historians. This new strategy was no doubt aimed at protecting important military and economic assets, but it also extended to relic shrines. Occasional disasters still befell Neustria's shrines during the period, but generally speaking, it was a time of rebuilding and reestablishment of the mutual patronage links that had suffered from c. 851-61.

Monasteries in the regions around Paris enjoyed a 20-year reprieve from Viking attacks during the latter part of Charles' reign, allowing for the return of most of the city's exiled relics starting in 862. Still, it took quite a bit of

²⁹⁰ For a lengthy treatment of Charles' fortification strategy during the last fifteen years of his reign, see F. Vercauteren, "Comment s'est-on défendu au IXe S. dans l'Empire franc contre les invasions normandes?" *Annales du XXXe Congrès de la Fédération archéologique et historique de Belgique* (1935-6), 117-132.

encouragement to coax the return of the relics of important Parisian cults back to the city. In January, 861 – before Charles’ change of tactics – Norse raiders had seized St.-Germain-des-Prés and “burned” some of the monastery’s already-evacuated buildings.²⁹¹ This discouraging news certainly did not inspire the monks to return to the city anytime soon. On the contrary, they decided to move again into even deeper exile to yet another *villa* at Nogent-l’Artaud.²⁹² Just ten miles northwest of the monks of St.-Germain-des-Prés, the already exiled monks of St.-Geneviève sought also better shelter at Marizy at this time.²⁹³

Within a year, however, the monks of St.-Geneviève finally decided it was safe to return to Paris and did so in fall, 862.²⁹⁴ At about the same time, the monks of St.-Denis returned with their cache of relics from exile in Nogent.²⁹⁵ The following spring of 863, the monks of St.-Germain followed their lead and returned to Paris after a continuous absence of nearly six years. They loaded St. Germanus’ relics onto a skiff and drifted downstream to Paris. When they arrived,

²⁹¹ *Annales Bertiniani*, 54 [anno 861]: “Dani mense januario Luteciam Parisiorum et ecclesiam sancti Wincentii martyris et sancti Germani confessoris incendio tradunt.” During the same attack, raiders also struck St.-Maur-des-Fosses, to the east of Paris.

²⁹² Aimoin, *Translatio et Miracula S. Germani*, PL 126, col. 1046 (book 2, ch. 11): “Caeterum... ad ea in Novigento [Nogent] villa nostra super Maternam fluvium sita dum... moraretur... Contingerat ergo terrore paganorum ultra Parisius jam et castelli Milidonis terminos excurrentium, sanctissimum corpus ab Acmato [Esmans], quo nuper delatum abierat, illuc transferri.”

²⁹³ See above, section 2.4.

²⁹⁴ *Miracula Sanctae Genovefae*, AASS, Jan. I, 147-151 (ch. 32). The relics of St. Wandregisellus may also have returned home to Fontanelle on a temporary basis in late 861, according to Fournée, “Quelques facteurs de fixation,” 123.

²⁹⁵ A charter issued at Pîtres on June 25, 862, granting formal possession of Nogent to St.-Denis, seems to suggest the monks were still in exile. Another charter dated to September, 862, just a few months later, seems to indicate that they were back in Paris. Lot, *La grande invasion*, 61, note 1. In a sign of the monastery’s continuing importance to him, Charles named himself lay abbot of St.-Denis in 865, which certainly increased the abbey’s chances of receiving royal patronage; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 214.

...a great mass was said for all. From the monasteries of St.-Peter and St.-Genevieve clerics arrived, following in procession, with the body of the saint raised upon their shoulders, singing hymns in praise: "this is Germanus, *pontifex maximus*...." Then, as was fitting, we...moved forth in reverence, reciting a new hymn of salutation, rising from the ground where we had thrown ourselves prostrate in reverence of Germanus' righteousness.... [As the procession continued] we were afforded a grand view across the city, the nearby part of which was plainly scorched and wrecked [by the Normans]. This devastation led us all to sadness, which we tried to drive away by singing: 'Look, Lord, a city blessed with riches has been emptied out, a queen [of cities] sits abject on her knees. Oh Lord, there is no one who can console us but you.' Many were singing, though many more could be seen crying. And thus we continued up to the monastery.²⁹⁶

The monks were discernably happy to be done with their rural sojourn, but the brave face of the *Miracula S. Germani* cannot hide the depth of the Parisians' disquiet. The wounds suffered by the city and its relic cults under Charles' watch, both material and psychological, would take a long time to heal.

Charles' control over other parts of Neustria improved during the latter years of his reign, though sporadic attacks continued to drive forced relic translations. The death of Robert the Strong at the hands of the Vikings let

²⁹⁶ Aimoin, *Translatio et Miracula S. Germani*, PL 126, col. 1046 (book 2, ch. 13): "Unde Maternae fluvium pariterque Sequanam enavigantes, venerunt citra Biberis ac Sequanae confluentia portum facientes, eductumque sanctissimum corpus a navi excepimus illud multi utriusque sexus et ordinis ibidem congregati, ut miraretur vix clericos ad eum tollendum accedere posse. Nam ex sui quondam episcopii domo canonici primi uti pontifici adsistentes, exceptionis pergere ministerium, hujus antiphonae congruam jubilantes melodiam 'o quam venerandus es, egregie Germane confessor....' Factaque geniculatione ac oratione dominica et missa pro universis solemniter dicta, ex monasterio sancti Petri necnon et beatae Genovefae virginis religiose accedentes clerici, eundem sequentes ordinem coeperunt, sancto humeris suscepto corpore, hanc psallere antiphonam dicentes: 'iste est Germanus pontifex maximus...' Deinde nos, uti decebat...salutationis novum habentes hymnum verenter adfuimus, surgentesque a solo quo dignissima ejus reverentiali prostrati jacueramus...Quo ad finem usque ita completo, fuimus jam, licet ex adverso, proximi partim adustae necnon et permultum dissipatae civitati, cujus demolita facies nos omnes in dolorem adducens, competenter exegit psallere: 'aspice, Domine, quia facta est desolata civitas plena divitiis, sedet in tristitia domina gentium, non est qui consoletur eam nisi tu Deus noster.' Multi namque canentes, plures vero cernebantur plorantes. Sicque processimus in pratum usque quod sub ipso est monasterio." See also R. Giard, "Étude sur l'histoire de l'abbaye de Sainte-Geneviève," *Mémoires de la Société de l'histoire de Paris*, 30 (1903), 45-47.

through a gush of destructive attacks on the Loire in 865. The monks of St.-Martin, who had taken shelter in Léré in Berry from attacks in Tours in 862, lost confidence in their refuge and quit Léré for a more distant *villa* granted to them by Charles at Marsat in the Auvergne.²⁹⁷

Just down the Loire from Léré, the raid of 865 also forced the monks of Fleury to move. The chronicler Adrevald, who composed the *Miracula S. Benedicti* during the “miserable wanderings” which followed, records how the monastery’s careful preparations for just such an attack stood them in good stead when the Vikings finally pushed them into exile:

During the first attack on the city [of Orléans in 854] during the abbacy of Bernard, the body of St. Benedict was taken out from its sepulcher and placed with due honor in a casket. It was made ready for travel in a moment’s notice, in case the necessity of fleeing impelled it to be evacuated at once, and in such a way that it was possible for the brothers to carry it themselves to safety. By the grace of Christ, the monastery was duly prepared for the sudden [attack of] pagan swords, but the sacred corpse was put back in its proper place. By the second enemy incursion [in 865], with the old abbot now in the waning days of his rule, the holy body was borne up, carried by the brothers, roaming this way and that, wherever the opportunity for flight presented itself. [After they left], the monastery was crippled, overrun by flames, and there was no luck left in that land...its walls, which once were things of beauty and glory, now stripped of their bricks, shocked anyone who beheld them...²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ At least, this is the most likely time for their departure to Marsat, which happened between 862 and 868. In January, 869, that Charles the Bald extended royal immunity to Léré and Marsat, “quia praefati coenobii venerabiles canonici in jam dictis villis ob infestationem paganorum refugium saepius habere consuescunt” (*Recueil des Hist. de France*, 8, 613). The fact that these *villae* appear to have been “habitually” used as refuges may suggest that St.-Martin’s monks fled there more often than has been reflected in surviving sources. Perhaps they followed the example of Noirmoutier in Aquitaine, which was evacuated to the mainland every summer to avoid the Viking raiding season. See below, Chapter 4, section 1.1.

²⁹⁸ Adrevald, *Miracula S. Benedicti*, 75 (ch. 34): “Aberat jam tunc corpus sanctissimum confessoris Christi Benedicti; siquidem prima vastatione praefatae urbis [Orléans], curam hujus sacri loci agente [abbate] Bernardo..., levatum a loco sepulchri sanctissimum corpus in scrinio cum honore congruo repositum est, sicque in loculo gestatorio collocatum, qualiter quocumque fugiendi impelleret necessitas, a fratribus fugae praesidio sese tuentibus deferri posset. Sed gratia Christi agente, gentili gladio sedes sibi aptatas repente, sanctissima membra loco

The monks of Fleury, according to Adrevald, had prepared for the worst at the height of the Loire attacks in the 850s. They avoided having to abandon their monastery at that time, but lacked confidence in the peace that Charles established in the 860s. This switch shows how attitudes could change in response to shifting realities, and provides a rare glimpse into the monastic decision-making process. The passage seems to imply that abbot Bernard was able to keep his monastery's relics in place when he was in his prime, but that less courageous members of the community gained the upper hand when the abbot reached old age. Whoever was in charge, Fleury's monks and relics remained in a state of jumpy readiness for more than a decade while they awaited attack.

In a similar situation, the monks of Fontanelle, after having returned home in 861, made another refugee circuit through Austrasia in 866, passing through St.-Riquier, Outreau, and Etaples with their relics of Sts. Wandregiselus and Ansbertus.²⁹⁹ Renewed Viking sorties in early 866 also seem to have definitively

conduntur proprio. Secundo vero incursu hostium, jam praelibato abbate ultimos sui regiminis decurrente soles, iterum levatum sanctissimum corpus atque, in loculo vectatorio depositum, hac illacque, prout opportunitas fugae se obtulit, a fratribus defertur...post exhaustum namque gravi grassante incendio coenobium, nulla jam soli gratia remanente...nudique maceriarum parietes stuporem spectantibus oculis honoremque magis quam decus aut gloriam praeferrent..." Adrevald of Fleury (c. 826-c. 879), a monk of Fleury, who composed the well-known *translatio* describing the "rescue" of the relics of St. Benedict from the ruins of Monte Cassino in Italy at around the same time as his collection of Benedict's miracles. See above, Chapter 1. Adrevald's *Miracula* (BHL 1125), continued by later authors up to the twelfth century, was published by E. de Certain, *Les miracles de Saint Benoît, écrits par Adrevald Aimoin, André, Raoul Tortaire et Hughes de Saint Marie, moines de Fleury, réunis et pub. pour la Société de l'histoire de France* (1858), 173-248.

²⁹⁹ The exact itinerary of Wandregiselus and Ansbert's post-mortem travels during this period is difficult to disentangle. For the best attempt, see Fournée, "Quelques facteurs de fixation," 123-4.

driven the relics of Sts. Aichardus and Hugo from Jumièges to Haspres.³⁰⁰ Sts. Godegrand and Launomarus fled attacks near Sées in the early 870s for Avranches.³⁰¹ St.-Denis was threatened again during the seventh sack of Paris in 876, and the relics of St. Dyonisius were evacuated to Concevreux, near Reims.³⁰² Finally, in 877, one of Charles the Bald's last *acta* makes note of the fact that the relics of St. Martin had likewise fled again, this time to Chablis in Burgundy.³⁰³

Interspersed with these setbacks were indications that Charles' efforts to protect Neustria's cults were paying off. The city of Le Mans, for example, enjoyed a brief renaissance in the late 860s and early 870s despite its position in the troubled west-Neustrian border region. Bishop Robert of Le Mans took the luxury of an ecclesiastical rebuilding campaign around the year 870. The city completely rebuilt its basilica of St.-Vincent, replacing an old structure that had been so thoroughly damaged by Viking attacks that Pope Hadrian II allowed it to be reconsecrated as an entirely new cathedral. Relics of Le Mans' former bishops which had been translated elsewhere to safety were returned to the new

³⁰⁰ The date of Hugo and Aichardus' departure is a matter of conjecture. Laporte, "La date de l'exode de Jumièges," 48; Musset, "Les destins de la propriété monastique," 50-1; Lifshitz, "Migration of Neustrian Relics," 187-9, points out that no evidence expressly links the translation of the relics to *metus Normannorum*, but fails to provide a convincing alternate explanation for their removal.

³⁰¹ Hérard of Tours' mid-ninth century description of this translation is in his *Vita* of St. Godegrand (BHL 1782/1784), AASS, Sept. I, col. 770-1 (ch. 2). See also Musset, "L'Exode des reliques du diocese de Sées," 9-10.

³⁰² Lefèvre, "La reconstitution des monastères," 301. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 246, suggests that the appearance of Vikings on the Seine in 876 is owed to the diversion of Charles' attention to his imperial designs following the death of his older half-brother Louis the German that year.

³⁰³ The *villa* in Chablis to which they fled had been awarded to them in 867 by Charles as a potential *locus refugii*. P. Gasnault, "La 'Narratio in reversione beati Martini a Burgundia' [BHL 5653] du Pseudo-Eudes de Cluny (Sources et influence)," *Studia Anselmiana*, 46 (1961), 159-174;

basilica for reburial in a lavish re-dedication ceremony that year.³⁰⁴ The picture of a newly-pacified west-Neustrian frontier was strengthened by the temporary return of St. Martin's relics to Tours by 871.³⁰⁵ Further east, charter evidence shows that the relics of St. Audoenus also returned home to Rouen sometime before 876.³⁰⁶

Charles the Bald's continuing interest in rebuilding politically important relic collections also comes through in the diploma he issued establishing the basilica of St.-Mary at his royal capital at Compiègne in 875. The diploma explicitly states that it was his intention "to construct, as in the palace at Aachen, a chapel...to serve for the dignity of the imperial crown. He made this place sacred through an accumulation of the greatest possible number of relics and the embellishment of many decorations."³⁰⁷ Just a year before his death, Charles still eagerly hoped to emulate the stockpile of relics that Charlemagne had used to sacralize his own royal palace two generations earlier, and to undo the scattering of his kingdom's relic cults during the attacks of the 850s and 860s.

³⁰⁴ L.P. Piolin, *L'histoire de l'église du Mans*, 2 (Paris, 1871), 416-7.

³⁰⁵ Charter evidence shows Martin's body was back in Tours in August, 871, but that he was gone again by 876. Gasnault, "Le tombeau de saint Martin," 57; Noizet, "Les chanoines de Saint-Martin," 55.

³⁰⁶ Their return was only temporary. A few years later, the *Translatio Prima S. Audoeni* (BHL 0756), AASS, Aug. IV, col. 820, and the *Translatio Sancti Quirini, Nicasii et Scubiculi* (BHL 6084), AASS, Oct. V, col. 545, composed by an anonymous monk of Malmedy, describe the flight of Audoenus' relics into hiding again at another refuge at Condé-sur-Aisne, along with bones of Sts. Nicasius, Quirinus, Scubiculus, and Pientia. Lauer, "Les translations des reliques de St. Ouen," 128-9, and Lifshitz, "Exodus of Holy Bodies' Reconsidered," 337-8, strongly disagree with each other about this translation.

³⁰⁷ *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 2, 451-3 (no. 425): "Proinde quia divae recordationis imperator, avus scilicet noster Karolus ... in palatio Aquensi capellam in honore beate Dei genetris et virginis Mariae construxisse...pariterque ob dignitatem apicis imperialis deservire constituisse ac congerie quamplurima reliquiarum eundem locum sacrasse multiplicibusque ornamentis excoluisse dinoscitur...." E. Bózoky, *La politique des reliques*, 64.

Charles' final status as a patron of Neustrian cults during the Viking attacks was thus decidedly mixed. Charles had attempted to manage the freefall of the 850s by granting of *loca refugii* to dislocated cults as a way of maintaining their loyalty. He switched to a more active defense of Neustrian cults during the 860s and 870s as his domestic political footing improved, but relics continued to migrate occasionally in response to sporadic Viking attacks. Moreover, those relics that did return home remained in a state of readiness to depart again that did not speak well of their faith in Charles' fragile peace. These were not the days of Louis the Pious and Charlemagne, when political and divine institutions seemed joined in the same unstoppable project of Christianization and pacification throughout the expanding empire. Where Charles' forebears used relic translation as tools of expansion, the movement of relics during Charles' era showcased a kingdom on the defensive.

Furthermore, the continuous parade of forced relic translations throughout Charles' reign puts to rest the notion that the departure of relics in Neustria was a limited or isolated phenomenon. Some of these departures were brief, but others kept cults in exile for years or decades. Whatever the duration, monks and clerics throughout Neustria were disturbed on an unprecedented scale, and the frequency of their departures illustrates the depth of fear provoked by the Viking attacks, as well as their lack of faith in the kingdom's lay defenders.

2.8 Forced Relic Translations Under the Later Carolingians

After Charles the Bald's death, the western Carolingian kingdom fell to his short-reigned successors who witnessed the undoing of the fragile equilibrium that Charles had achieved during his final decade. Throughout the remainder of the 870s and into the 880s, neither Louis the Stammerer, Louis III, Carloman II, Charles the Fat, or any Carolingian authority was able to establish security in the province. Nor were they able to maintain wide-ranging ties of loyalty with Neustria's monastic houses.

Renewed attacks in the 880s hit the eastern part of Neustria especially severely.³⁰⁸ These attacks tarnished the last days of archbishop Hincmar of Reims, who was forced to flee Reims despite his fragile health at the age of 74. Among his last acts was to order the evacuation of his cathedral's most precious possessions, including the relics of St. Remigius, to a *villa* at Epernay twenty miles south of Reims. Aged and infirm, Hincmar had to be carried to Epernay on a litter. He died there just before Christmas, 882.³⁰⁹ His successor, Fulk of Reims, wrote in desperation to Charles the Fat and to Popes Stephen V and Formosus begging for the kind of patronly assistance that Charles the Bald had

³⁰⁸ In 880, St.-Vaast-d'Arras had to be abandoned, and in the years following, Amiens, Corbie, Thérouanne, Cambrai, Trier, Liège, Prüm, Tournai and other targets along Neustria's Lotharingian border were all assaulted by Viking raiders. J. Hourlier, "Reims et les Normandes," *Memoires de la Société d'Agriculture, Commerce, Sciences, et Arts du Département de la Manche*, 99 (1984), 87-98; Vercauteren, "Comment s'est-on défendu," 127. In southern Neustria, the Orleanais was also struck repeatedly during the 880s. Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints*, 50.

³⁰⁹ The description of the monks departure from Reims forms the very last chapter of Hincmar's *Annales Bertiniani*, 154, in which he describes his own dread at hearing of Viking attacks striking ever closer to his city and being forced to flee by night "cum corpore sancti Remigii et ornamentis Remensis ecclesiae, sicut infirmitas corporis eius poscebat, sella gestatoria deportatus, et canonicis ac monachis atque sanctimonialibus hac illacque dispersis... Nordmannis...ea quae extra civitatem invenerunt depraedati sunt et villulas quasdam incenderunt..."

occasionally mustered. All he received in reply was assurances that they would pray for him.³¹⁰ St. Remigius, who during his lifetime had baptized Clovis and instigated the long alliance between Frankish kings and the Gallic church, now, four hundred years later, received no assistance from the ineffectual last Carolingian emperor.

In 885, Vikings again raided the Seine. Rouen was sacked in July,³¹¹ and in November, Paris. Abbo's lengthy poem, the *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*,³¹² commemorates the arrival of 700 ships and up to 30,000 Viking raiders who laid siege to Paris. The city was defended only by a small force under Count Odo and Abbot Goslin of St.-Germain-des-Prés.³¹³ Goslin worked closely with Odo, who had by this time also taken over the lay abbacy of St.-Denis, to secure the city. Although the siege was ultimately lifted by the tardy arrival of Emperor Charles the Fat's army in the summer of 886, the siege of Paris established Odo – not any Carolingian – as the protector of the Île-de-France and patron of its cults.³¹⁴ Abbo's unabashed praise for the *rex futuris* signaled the beginning of a new patronage relationship for St.-Germain-des-Prés in the absence of ready Carolingian patronage.

³¹⁰ Remigius' relics were later returned to Reims later during Fulk's episcopate. Fulk, who seems to have felt more secure behind Reims' city walls (rebuilt during the reign of Louis the Pious), began a concerted program to collect the relics of other saints nearby to Reims to churches within the city proper. These included relics of Sts. Rigobert, Callixtus, Nicasius, Eutropius, Rufinus, and others. Hourlier, "Reims et les Normands," 96-7.

³¹¹ *Annales Vedastini*, MGH SRG in us. schol., 57, [anno 885]: "Augusti Rotomagum ingressi cum omni exercitu..."

³¹² Abbo of Paris, sometimes called *Cernuus* ("the crooked"), was a disciple of Aimoin of St.-Germain, author of the *Miraculi S. Germani*. The *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*, MGH Poetae, 4, no. 1, 77-121, has been translated into English with a new edition by N. Dass, *Viking Attacks on Paris: The Bella Parisiacae Urbis of Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés (Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations)* (Louvain, 2007), 18-106.

³¹³ Goslin, who died during the siege in 886, was also the bishop of Paris.

³¹⁴ MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century*, 49-54.

2.9 Emergence of New “Cores” of Relic Patronage

Odo's alliance with St.-Germain-des-Prés portended the emergence of new relic patrons who sought alliances with important saints in the vacuum of post-Carolingian West Francia. This represents a major shift, since most relic cults had remained firmly attached to Charles the Bald even during his least assuring moments of defeat. This loyalty stemmed from Charles' continuing ability to provide for his cults from the still-ample west-Frankish fisc, although he usually failed to prevent their displacement in the first place. Another reason was the lack of appealing alternatives to Charles' patronage. With surrounding territories languishing even more dramatically than Neustria, there were no obvious safe havens outside of the province, and certainly none better than those regions within Neustria that enjoyed at least a modicum of stability during the period of attacks.

The alliance between cults and the Carolingian dynasty, constructed over the course of a century, took many years to collapse. For decades, no real alternative to Carolingian “royal” patronage provided itself. Eventually, churches and monasteries came to the conclusion that patronage, as with defense, was best sought locally. The movement towards increasingly localized patronage heralded the definitive splintering of west-Frankish relic patronage links.

There were precedents for this shift as early as the last years of Charles the Bald. The relics of St. Launomarus, for one, fled Corbion in 872 to the Avranchin where they fell into the embrace of the Breton King Salomon, who was

more than happy to receive relics fleeing from his Frankish rivals.³¹⁵ After Charles the Bald's death in 877, the redistribution of patronage ties accelerated in Neustria. The monks of Fleury, for example, having rebuilt their monastery, faced renewed attacks on the Loire in 879. But rather than turning to the Carolingians, the fleeing monks joined forces with the Welf aristocrat Hugh the Abbot,³¹⁶ who was actively campaigning against Vikings in the region. When Hugh's army next took the field against the Vikings, it was aided by an apparition of St. Benedict himself, who charged the enemy alongside Hugh's troops "with his staff in his right hand, sending many of the enemy down to their deaths."³¹⁷

Other potential localized sources of patronage also developed in central Neustria. Abbo's chronicle of the siege of Paris records that two local nobles named Godefrid and Odo vigorously defended the city of Chartres from the same besiegers that beset nearby Paris during the mid-880s. Their ability to secure Chartres made it a magnet for dislocated Neustrian relics. Behind this curtain of safety, the bishop of Chartres was particularly active in attracting relics to his city. Most notably, on November 21, 885, the relics of Sts. Wandregiselus and Ansbert, originally from Fontanelle,³¹⁸ were brought nearby to Chartres and placed in a church called St.-Chéron ceded to them by the bishop of Chartres. In

³¹⁵ The weakening of Breton power after Salomon's assassination in 874 caused Launomarus' relics to move again and find permanent shelter at Blois, back in Neustria. St. Launomarus' relics were interred there in a preexisting oratory dedicated to St. Calais, and were never returned to Corbion. Piolin, *Histoire de l'église du Mans*, 419; L. Musset, "Les Translations de reliques en Normandie," 104-5.

³¹⁶ An ally of Charles the Bald and later Charles the Fat, Hugh was stepson to Robert the Strong. Hugh was named guardian of Robert's two young sons (and future non-Carolingian kings of France), Odo and Robert I. Although Hugh died before either gained the throne, his descendents would make up the Capetian dynasty. S. MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, 65.

³¹⁷ *Miracula S. Benedicti*, MGH SS 15, no. 1, 499-500: "...dextra vero baculum manu tenens, plurimos hostium prosternendo morti tradidit."

³¹⁸ Sometime earlier in the 880s, the relics of these saints had been taken to a *villa* called Pecq on the outskirts of Paris. Lot, *Études critiques sur l'abbaye de Saint-Wandrille*, 23.

February, 886, when Norman raiders briefly besieged Chartres, the relics of the two saints were brought into the city proper, where the bishop housed them in the episcopal chapel.³¹⁹

The situation in Chartres differed from that of earlier regional “safe havens,” which managed to escape Norman attacks because of their unfavorable geography; in the case of Chartres, an active defense and the potential for local patronage drew threatened relics to the area. This time, however, the defenders were otherwise unknown local aristocrats working largely in the absence of centralized authority. Godefrid and Odo of Chartres quickly fell out of history, but before long, other more important alternative sources of patronage and protection developed, splitting Neustria among competing dynasties struggling to recoup the province’s dislocated relics.

2.10 Continued Attacks After the Creation of Normandy

Upon the death of Charles the Fat in 888, control of West Francia fell by default to Count Odo, who had made his reputation during the aforementioned defense of Paris in 885-6. Because of the lack of documentation that characterizes the turn of the tenth century, it is impossible to tell if he was successful in protecting Neustria’s cults from Viking attack. Records from Charles the Simple’s reign in the early tenth century indicate that forced relic translations continued to occur regularly. The best example during this period is

³¹⁹ The relics remained in Chartres until 888, when they traveled to Boulogne-sur-Mer, and then ultimately to Ghent. J. Lair, *Le siège de Chartres par les Normands* (Caen, 1902), 20.

the departure, yet again, of the relics of St. Martin from their extra-mural monastery to a safer place inside the walls of the nearby city of Tours in 903. Much like St. Germanus during the attack on Paris in 885/6, the monks of St.-Martin managed to hunker down behind Tours' walls, protected by local defenders, and rode out the attacks without having to evacuate more than a few miles from their home at Marmoutier.³²⁰

Carolingian King Charles the Simple surely hoped that the Treaty of St.-Claire-sur-Epte in 911 would finally ease the pressure on Neustria's monasteries, but it brought no halt to Viking raids on Frankish relic shrines. That very year, Rollo's Normans attacked the city of Chartres. Yet Rollo's attack was beaten back not by Charles the Simple, but by an Aquitanian army led by Ebalus Manzer of Poitiers.³²¹ The attack may not have occasioned the reshuffling of any relics, but it did herald the arrival of two new major political actors – and, by extension, relic patrons – on the west-Frankish scene. The first was Ebalus, who became an important post-Carolingian patron in Aquitaine. The second was Rollo himself who, because of the defeat, was finally forced to complete the negotiations surrounding his permanent settlement and conversion to Christianity. Rollo, despite his loss, had successfully demonstrated his permanence. He gained a better claim to be thought of on a more equal footing with Charles the Simple as

³²⁰ Although the siege of Tours lasted only one year, the relics of St. Martin seem to have remained inside the city until May 12, 919, when the monks reinterred St. Martin's relics in their *castrum novum*, the newly fortified monastery on the site of their old one. Noizet, "Les chanoines de Saint-Martin," 55; Gasnault, "La *Narratio in reversione beati Martini a Burgundia*," 159-174.

³²¹ For more on Ebalus Manzer, see Chapter 4, section 3.3. The best near-contemporary sources on the siege of Chartres in 911 are Flodoard's *Historia Ecclesiae Remensis*, MGH SS, 36, (composed before 967) and the *Gesta Episcoporum Autissiodorensium*, MGH SS, 13, 393, also dating from the tenth century.

a regional power, and eventually, as a patron of relic cults in his section of the former Neustria.³²²

Rollo's emergence as a well-entrenched, Christian strongman made him another potential source of stability for wandering relic cults. This was particularly true as Rollo attempted to acquire the same trappings of political legitimacy that the Franks depended on. He quickly became an important relic patron as he worked to win back the spiritual capital that he and his predecessors had liquidated only a short time before. Rollo's interest in partnering with the church is most tellingly reflected in the willingness of Archbishop Witto of Rouen to stay in his city after Rollo's takeover and oversee the conversion of Rollo's men.³²³ In return, Rollo invested heavily in the Rouennais church.

This culminated in his arrangement for the return of the relics of St. Audoenus from exile in c. 918. These relics had rested at their *villa* at Condé-sur-Aisne in the territory of Charles the Simple for forty years since their evacuation from Rouen in c. 875. Rollo took a personal interest in the recovery of the relics, deputizing two agents to accompany St. Audoenus' corpse back to

³²² Lair, *La siège de Chartres*, 37-52.

³²³ Bates, *Normandy before 1066*, 12. According to Dudo of St.-Quentin, when Rollo arrived to settle on the Seine at the dawn of the tenth century, the archbishop of Rouen went out to meet him and arranged a pact (the so-called "Pact of Jumièges") not to attack Rouen, since it had been reduced only to defenseless peasants. Rollo agreed, says Dudo, and began settling people and extending his influence on the Seine both above and below Rouen. LeMaho provides some evidence for believing Dudo's often fanciful narrative in this case: Le Maho, "Les Normands de la Seine," 176.

Rouen, where a grand *adventus* was presided over by Archbishop Franconius.³²⁴
In time, other relics were drawn to his patronage as well.³²⁵

Rollo's efforts to win over important relics to his side should not suggest that Charles the Simple remained idle while Rollo seized hold of Neustria's dislocated cults. Charles the Simple, like his Carolingian forebears, also worked to secure the loyalty of Neustrian relic cults, although some of these efforts look more like *furta sacra* than the forced relic translations described above. The best documented of these is the translation of St. Marculfus of Nanteuil, who was evacuated to Corbény in 906. Still five years before Rollo's conversion, St. Marculfus and his monks fled the "great and long-lasting pagan infestation" in the Contentin Peninsula and found shelter at a royal *villa* called Corbény which Charles the Simple donated to them.³²⁶ Some time later, the monks at Corbény decided to return home to the Contentin with St. Marculfus, but Charles refused to allow them to leave. Instead, he convened a synod with the archbishop of Rouen and other bishops in his province, including the bishop of Coutances, St. Marculfus' own, and convinced them to recognize Corbény as the relics' new home. St. Marculfus' translation was not a true relic theft, since St. Marculfus was translated to Corbény by his own monks, but this episode clearly

³²⁴ Lauer, "Les translations des reliques de Saint Ouen," 119-136; Musset, "Les translations de reliques en Normandie," 102.

³²⁵ Even the most basic facts about this period are subject to confusion and criticism because of the scarcity of contemporary sources. Later texts, however, suggest that Rollo's strongholds around Rouen attracted displaced monks and clerics from across the region. Le Maho uncovers evidence for 14 such translations during this poorly-documented period: "Les Normands de la Seine," 170-2.

³²⁶ "...ob nimiam atque diutinam paganorum infestationem..." The translation of St. Marculfus is recorded in Charles the Simple's foundation charter for the abbey of Corbény, which was built to service St. Marculfus' cult. The charter is based on a lost original, but survives in a twelfth century copy within the cartulary of St.-Rémy. See *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple*, 114-6 (no. 53).

demonstrates Charles the Simple's desire to keep hold of Neustria's free-floating spiritual capital before it could be seized by his adversaries.

After the first few decades of the tenth century, the phenomenon of forced relic translation finally petered out in Neustria. This hardly meant that the competition over relics ceased – indeed, it continued unabated. Political decentralization led emerging regional strongmen to reach out even more vigorously in order to secure the legitimizing power of Francia's saints' relics. The fragmentation of the *regnum* of Neustria into emerging principalities in Normandy, Flanders and elsewhere necessitated further adjustments to the region's spiritual geography. In the absence of a pagan threat to drive relics out under their own power, however, other means to accrue them were devised (including theft, invention, and division of relics). These future translations, well-studied by P. Geary, F. Lifshitz, E. Bozóky, and many others,³²⁷ are however part of a very different tradition.

2.11 A Real *Metus*

On the basis of this deluge of evidence, it is clear that relic translations driven by Viking terror had a marked effect on Neustrian relic patronage networks. Forced relic translations of the 840s may be difficult to substantiate, and certain translations of the mid and later tenth century like that of St. Marculfus might not fit the proper Viking-era “forced translation” mold, but the

³²⁷ Geary, *Furta Sacra*; Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*; Bozóky, *La politique des reliques*; idem, “La politique des reliques des premiers comtes de Flandre.”

abundance of reliable references to the phenomenon prove that forced relic translations cannot easily be filed under the competing rubrics like relic theft or other kinds of *translations forcées*, nor can they all be written off as invented later traditions. Proponents of Viking-era “continuity” have shown that the more alarmist claims of medieval chroniclers should be passed over. But however much Neustria’s forced relic translation accounts overstated the actual destruction, there can be no denying that the terrible fear of attack dominated the thoughts of affected monks and clerics. This *metus Normannorum*, justified or not, prodded scores of relics out onto Neustria’s roads and rivers in search of safe havens during the ninth and early tenth centuries.

As the disruptions continued from the ninth century into the tenth, rulers like Charles the Simple continued to emphasize their interest in “being useful benefactors to the holy churches, above all those that have been destroyed, and from where the bodies of saints expelled by the ferocity of pagans remain today separated from the veneration which is their due.”³²⁸ To Charles the Simple, mutually beneficial cult patronage links were as important in the tenth century as they had been to his forbears in the ninth. But looking back over the decades of attack, he could not help but recognize the violent upheaval that Francia’s cults had endured, as well as the reconfiguration of Neustrian political and spiritual geography brought about by the attacks. The bodies of Neustria’s saints had been turned out of their ancient tombs, and scattered amongst the jumble of

³²⁸ From a charter of Charles the Simple, delivered at Compiègne in March, 918. *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Saint-Germain-des-Prés des origines au début du XIII^e siècle*, ed. R. Poupardin, 1 (Paris, 1919), 69 (no. 41): “...sanctis prodesse ecclesiis, ac praesertim derutis, quibus feritate paganorum pulsa existunt corpora sanctorum hactenus debita veneratione carentium.”

duchies and principalities that replaced the former Neustrian *regnum*. Most of them found their way home, but unfortunately for Charles the Simple, they did so more often than not in the service of local *defensores* who had stepped into the vacuum of the empire's collapse.

PART THREE: Patterns of Patronage

The shifting patterns of invasion and evacuation in Neustria highlight a number of practical concerns surrounding cult function and patronage during the Viking attacks. Neustrian churches and monasteries provide some of the best and most varied examples of the different ways west Frankish ecclesiastics attempted to manage the proceeds of patronage during exile. The survival of the works of important literary and monastic figures like Lupus of Ferrières, Hincmar of Reims, and other writers who commented on the Viking attacks in Neustria also sheds light on the way information about the attacks was communicated and how the psychology of the attacks impacted west Frankish ideologies of patronage and rule.

3.1 Management of Monastic Patrimony During Attacks

During his lifetime, Charles the Bald was generally successful at maintaining mutually beneficial patronage links with Neustrian cults. However, the type and frequency of benefices awarded to important cult centers by Charles

and other lay aristocrats changed considerably over time in response to the Viking attacks.

These changes were highly pragmatic, dictated by the fluctuating level of security in specific locales, but often proved quite beneficial to both sides. Relics were crucial totems of sacral legitimacy for ambitious lay *committentes*, who returned the favor by helping religious institutions maintain their landed wealth. Real estate was not only a source of riches for these institutions, but also provided a physical space for participation in their relic cults – fixed locations that carried, due to their association with the Church, an air of sanctity and inalienability. Forced relic translations represented an abandonment of a good deal of this sacralized West Frankish territory, if only temporarily. The keepers of Neustria's relic shrines looked to political authorities to protect them from such threats to their land holdings. These threats to monastic property evolved over time, underscoring the changing role of the Carolingian monarchy and sketching out, perhaps, a prelude to the far better-known property struggles during the period of "feudal anarchy" that so deeply affected these same monasteries during the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The widely diffused patrimonies that monasteries acquired during the peaceful prosperity of the eighth and early ninth centuries suddenly became a dangerous liability during the Viking attacks. Broadly dispersed monastic lands were vulnerable to surprise raids, impossible to safeguard without the help of powerful lay patrons, and difficult to administer in exile. The shape and importance of monastic patrimony, however, played a major role in governing the

movements of monks and their relics during the Viking attacks as they strove to make the best use of the one aspect of their wealth that they could not bring with them into exile. In addition to economic wherewithal, monks also had to consider the social and spiritual consequences of allowing generations' worth of pious donations to dissipate. The maintenance of these broad, scattered land holdings was a major preoccupation of exiled monks, and their careful attention to property claims is the main reason for their success in rebuilding shattered patrimonies after the attacks.

Before the Norman invasions, large abbeys like St.-Denis, St.-Martin of Tours, St.-Germain-des-Prés, and Jumièges unquestionably possessed huge estates spread across the width of the kingdom.³²⁹ Perhaps the greatest value of these widely distributed holdings was that they provided ready-made refuges during attacks. Suitably located *villae* assured the monks a stable source of revenue from existing resources, without having to gamble on the largesse of lay aristocrats. It also allowed them to continue to directly control at least a part of their pre-existing patrimony. These factors made such *villae* a popular choice of refuge during the attacks. In Section Two above, Sts. Martin, Wandregisellus, Germanus, Denis, and many other Neustrian saints all seem to have been evacuated to *villae* already in their possession when first they were taken from their tombs. The popularity of this type of refuge suggests that Fulbert of Jumièges' description of forced relic translations as "unwilling pilgrimages of

³²⁹ According to late eighth century property registers, for example, Fontanelle possessed 4,264 *manses* dispersed throughout Gaul. The size of such estates, which were composed of pious donations from across the kingdom, peaked in the eighth century before slowly declining under the Carolingians. Musset, "Les destins de la propriété monastiques," 50.

exile” rightly implied an often pre-selected (holy) destination.³³⁰ Such translations brought relics to places that already had long-standing relationships with the mother house, as the term pilgrimage suggests. In this, they resembled the common processions of relics from cult centers to dependent institutions during the normal course of the liturgical calendar. They fulfilled a similar role of binding together disparate pieces of land under a monastery’s control, although in the case of Viking-era forced relic translations the circumstances were obviously rather different, and the will of the pilgrims went in the opposite direction of their footsteps.

Even after monks fled into exile, they adopted a variety of strategies to maintain control over as much of their patrimony as possible with an eye to the day when they would be able to return home with their relics. One approach was to take the precautionary step of having their possessions reconfirmed by the king before any actual damage occurred. This happened at Fontanelle, St.-Ouen, and St.-Bertin in the latter half of the ninth century, where monks knew that Vikings were active in the region and took action before their foundations had actually been raided.³³¹ A second tactic was to leave a group of caretakers behind at otherwise “abandoned” monasteries. These monks included the old and the infirm who were incapable of travel,³³² as well as those who were simply

³³⁰ Fulbert of Jumièges, *Vita Romani*, 196: “...invitam exilii peregrinationem...”

³³¹ See examples in L. Muset, “Les destins de la propriété monastique,” 51; M. Holcombe, *The Function and Status of Carved Ivory in Carolingian Culture*, PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan (1999), 38. Other houses took special care to preserve property documents when they traveled into exile to facilitate the reacquisition of property after the attacks. d’Haenens, *Les invasions Normandes en Belgique au IX^e siècle*, 133-7, counts at least four monasteries that did so.

³³² A certain monk, Woradus, was unable to leave during the evacuation of St.-Bertin in 860 because he was *tunc iam decrepitus*, according to the *Miracula S. Bertini*, 509 (ch. 1).

unwilling to evacuate, choosing instead “to remain and end their lives as martyrs rather than to go on living in some desolate place.”³³³ When the monks of St.-Germain-des-Prés fled for their *villa* at Esmans, they left behind twenty or so of their number to maintain the empty buildings there. Similar custodial arrangements may also have played out at Fontanelle and Jumièges during the 840s and 850s. In both cases, the presence of a small contingent of caretakers would explain how the monasteries appeared to remain active during a time when other evidence suggests they were *undique deserta* (completely deserted).³³⁴

A third strategy was to set up administrations in exile to manage existing patrimonies from afar. Again, Jumièges provides a good example. Surviving documents indicate that Abbot Goslin of Jumièges successfully administered his monastery’s many holdings from the rural safety of their *villa* at Haspres in the Vexin, where they had translated the relics of Sts. Hugo and Aichardus sometime before 866.³³⁵

Fourth, and most popularly, monasteries seeking to maintain a sizeable patrimony attempted to do so by building alliances with secular patrons to defend their possessions – or better still, to provide them with new possessions in exile.

³³³ *Miracula S. Bertini*, 509 (ch. 1): “...qui se devoverunt se, si Deo placuisset, ibi martirio potius velle vitam finire quam desolationi sui loci supervivere.”

³³⁴ See above, section 2.1. This might explain how Dudo of St.-Quentin could describe Jumièges as a functioning monastery in the 840s, while William of Jumièges says that it was completely destroyed. If the monastery was only partially evacuated, perhaps both were right.

³³⁵ Haspres proved an effective safehouse for Jumièges’ relics during the attacks of the later ninth and tenth centuries, as well as its library. A list of abbots of Jumièges from the late ninth century survives there, and these abbots probably all served there in exile. Musset, “Les destins de la propriété monastique,” 50-1.

The king was an obvious choice of protector, since he could provide property defense not only against pagan raiders but also against opportunistic Franks who might seize church property during times of confusion. Aristocratic seizures of church wealth were not uncommon within the context of the Viking attacks: councils at Coulaines and Yütz in the 840s emphasized Charles the Bald's responsibility to guard church possessions and privileges in "peace, concord, and charity" from interference from the lay aristocracy.³³⁶ The appropriation of church lands did not result from any special enmity between the church and the nobility, but in the increasingly factionalized landscape of the late ninth century and afterward, monasteries that had benefited from Carolingian patronage may have become targets for other aristocratic families seeking to undermine or co-opt weakening Carolingian influence in various parts of the empire.³³⁷ What looked from a monastic standpoint like "unjust seizure" was, from the aristocratic perspective, part of a natural and legitimate competition over monastic wealth and "spiritual capital."³³⁸

The most important monasteries may have looked first to the imperial court for support, but as H. Hummer has demonstrated, Frankish monasteries were not at all "sentimental about imperial unity" during periods of domestic weakness.³³⁹ Francia's abbots happily supported whichever aspiring dynasts could best secure their rights. Local nobles, when they were not seeking to

³³⁶ Appleby, *Hagiography and Ideology*, 300-1.

³³⁷ T. Reuter has pointed out that the increasing competition for Francia's internal wealth corresponded with a distinct escalation in allegations of abuse of church property. T. Reuter, "The End of Carolingian Military Expansion," in P. Godman and R. Collins (eds.), *Charlemagne's Heir. New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Oxford, 1990), 391-405.

³³⁸ W. Brown. *Unjust Seizure: Conflict, Interest, and Authority in an Early Medieval Society* (Ithaca, 2001).

³³⁹ Hummer, *Politics and Power*, 207.

despoil religious institutions, could also make for important allies. Regional aristocrats often had a greater stake in the long-term survivability of religious institutions in their territories than distant and distracted Frankish monarchs.³⁴⁰

While some regional authorities may have used their increasing local authority to exploit vulnerable monasteries, others coordinated closely with cults for defense of church property within their territories.

On the other side of the equation, fragmentation and localization of defense also affected the kinds of refuge and protection sought out by Neustria's exiled monks. During the 840s, most houses had chosen, for example, to relocate to their own estates. By the 880s, however, a profusion of localized, independent fortification initiatives drove increasing numbers of rural monasteries to find protection inside the walls of fortified cities.³⁴¹ As *urbes* began their long metamorphosis into *castra* throughout Francia, cities became home to cults that were impossible to protect in the countryside. Adrevald describes how the monks of Fleury hid out behind the walls of Orléans in 879.³⁴² Monks of St.-Mesmin of Micy likely took shelter in Orléans, too.³⁴³ The *castellum* at Corbény successfully guarded the relics of St. Marculfus.³⁴⁴ St. Exuperius fled the Contentin for the safety of Corbeil, St. Taurinus of Évreux fled to Leroux, St.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 24, 104, for the role played by monasteries as repositories of family history, wealth, property claims, and other critical aspects of the maintenance of local aristocratic power.

³⁴¹ Vercauteren, "Comment s'est-on défendu," 117-32. E. Corvisier, "L'exode et l'implantation des reliques des saints de l'ouest de la France en Ile-de-France aux IX^e et X^e siècles," *Paris et Ile-de-France, Mémoires*, 32 (1981), 292, gives credit for the fortification of Paris not to the Carolingians, but to Capetian aristocrats who attracted relics fleeing from across the region.

³⁴² Adrevald, *Miracula S. Benedicti*, 79.

³⁴³ According to Tessier's edition of Charles' *acta*, the charter recording this translation was forged in the eleventh century, but was based on a much older local tradition. *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 2, 666 (no. 504).

³⁴⁴ Flodoard, *Annales*, 385.

Launomarus ultimately landed in Blois – all cities which had been heavily fortified during the Viking ordeals of the late ninth and early tenth centuries.³⁴⁵

In addition to contributing to the increasing urbanization of Francia's relic cults, the influx of relics into walled towns was known to strain the resources of bishops who had to accommodate monastic exiles, despite the benefits new relics could bring. Bishop Gautier of Orléans, for example, wrote to Bishop Lambert of Mans to ask if Mans might alleviate some of Orléans' burden by accepting the displaced monks of Croix-St.-Ouen in the 880s.³⁴⁶ The monks of Croix-St.-Ouen, lacking provisions of their own and hailing from a distant diocese, must have ranked low in the priorities of the bishop of Orléans. Other bishops may have used their episcopal authority to requisition *loca deserta* around their cities, as the bishop of Chartres seems to have done for the displaced monks of Fontanelle.³⁴⁷

The effect of the Viking attacks on monastic patrimonies was, with a few exceptions, disruptive.³⁴⁸ Many of the most famous Neustrian monasteries seem to have eventually regained widespread and expansive patrimonies that they had possessed before the Viking attacks, but this process took many ensuing decades to unfold. Tireless efforts of important houses like Jumièges, St.-Martin of Tours, St.-Germain-des-Prés and many others were focused on regaining lost property, either by reclaiming old lands they had lost title to during the attacks or by acquiring new properties in compensation. By working with rebounding

³⁴⁵ Musset, "Les translations de reliques en Normandie," 103.

³⁴⁶ See above, section 2.6.

³⁴⁷ Lot, *Études critiques sur l'abbaye de Saint-Wandrille*, xxxix.

³⁴⁸ See note 165 on Mont-St.-Michel above.

regional and inter-regional political institutions during the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, the most successful of these monasteries were able to reconstitute their landed wealth through the donations of emerging new patrons.³⁴⁹

3.2 Episcopal Patrimonies

The fate of Neustria's relics during the attacks appears to have differed little whether their tombs were housed in monasteries or behind cathedral altars. However, from the point of view of cult-related property, the episcopal experience differed somewhat from the monastic experience.

From an organizational standpoint, Viking attacks were devastating to many dioceses. Most episcopal sees in Neustria fell into turmoil for at least part of the attacks. In northern Neustria, prolonged vacancies with the absence of any kind of centralized ecclesiastical authority were most common.³⁵⁰ Even when all Neustrian dioceses had bishops again, the province was clearly shaken. When Bishop Robert of Mans returned from exile to his see in 866, for example, he found his church buildings heavily damaged and nearly all of his clergy either

³⁴⁹ Noizet, "Les Chanoines de St.-Martin," 57-66; Musset, "Monachisme d'époque franque," 58, 74.

³⁵⁰ K. Keats-Rohan, "Francs, Scandinaves, ou Normands? Aperçus sur les premiers moines des monastères normands," in P. Bauduin (ed.), *Fondations scandinaves en Occident et les débuts de la Normandie* (Caen 2005), 195-208; Musset, "Une millénaire oublié: la remise en ordre de la hiérarchie épiscopale en Normandie autour de 990," *Mélanges Marel Pacaut*, 2 (Lyon, 1994), 563-73; Potts, "Monastic Revival and Regional Identity," 19-20, esp. note 20; N. Gauthier, "Quelques hypothèses sur la rédaction des vies des saints évêques," 449-465. For the weakness of church institutions throughout the remainder of the tenth century (with an emphasis on monasteries), see Bates, *Normandy Before 1066*, 31.

fled or killed.³⁵¹ Bishops like Adelmus (Adalhelm) of Sées still faced abduction by Viking kidnappers, and many bishops were forced to govern from exile.³⁵² Five straight bishops of Coutances sought shelter in Rouen, and when Bishop Herbert of Coutances finally “returned” in 1025, he and his successor had to hide out in the fortified town of St.-Lô in fear for their lives. Construction of new cathedrals in Normandy only began in the 1020s, and episcopal control within dioceses took decades to recover.³⁵³

Like abbots, bishops also required the protection of lay benefactors from loss of property during the attacks. To this end, the evacuation of relics played a central role in episcopal strategy. Although some dioceses appear to have been simply vacated in panic by their bishops,³⁵⁴ others carefully managed the withdrawal of episcopal relics, treasure, and other resources in order to preserve a degree of episcopal control over the home diocese even when in exile somewhere else. The bishops of Sées, for example, assured the orderly evacuation of the diocese’s relics when they abandoned their city for a royal

³⁵¹ Piolin, *L'histoire de l'église du Mans*, 413-4. See above, section 2.7.

³⁵² Adalhem of Sées was taken as a slave from his place of exile at Mouciacum in 885. He describes his own abduction in the preface to his *Liber Miraculorum S. Opportunae*, AASS, Apr. III, col. 62.

³⁵³ Potts, “Monastic Revival and Regional Identity,” 19-20.

³⁵⁴ Justifiably, in some cases, since bishops faced a special, personal danger during the attacks. Adalhem of Sées was abducted, for one. Others were martyred, including Bishops Immo of Noyon, Ermenfrid of Beauvais, Balfrid of Bayeux (*Annales Bertiniani*, 52 [anno 859]: “Hi vero qui in Sequana morantur Noviomum civitatem noctu adgressi, Immonem episcopum cum alliis nobilibus, tam clericis quam laicis, capiunt, vastataque civitate secum abducunt atque in itinere interficiunt. Qui etiam ante duos menses Ermenfridum Belvagorum in quadam villa interfecerant, sed et anno praeterito Balfridum Baiocassium episcopum necaverant.”), Lista of Coutances/St-Lô (*Annales Vedastini*, 68-9 [anno 890]). Madalbert of Bourges (*Annales Mascienses*, MGH SS, 3, 169 [anno 910]), and Gunhard of Nantes (see Chapter 2, section 2.3) were also martyred. Frotbald of Chartres was not killed by Normans directly but drowned while fleeing from them: “Frotbaldus episcopus Carnotum, insistentibus sibi Danis in eadem civitate, pedibus fugiens fluviumque Auduram natatu petens, aquis interceptus moritur” (*Annales Bertiniani*, 48 [anno 857]).

domain called Mouciacum sometime between 885 and 890.³⁵⁵ During the time in which the diocese of Sées was subsumed into the internal “no-man’s-land” on the border between the emerging Norman principality and the area still controlled by Odo of Paris, a great many of the diocese’s relic cults found new homes in the area around Paris, including the relics of Sées’ primary patron, St. Opportuna.³⁵⁶ The geographic compactness of the pattern of the evacuation of Sées relics suggests that the bishops of Sées, administering in exile at Mouciacum, helped facilitate the departure of episcopal relics in order to keep hold not only of a sizeable collection of *manses* and *villae*, but also to maintain a tight grip on the “spiritual capital” of the diocese as well.

Similarly, Bishop Adelbold of Utrecht, further to the east, was forced to abandon his bishopric and run his diocese from Deventer, fifty miles away. Radbod, Adelbold’s successor, probably began his episcopacy in exile at Deventer, “never forgetting that his [true] seat was at Utrecht, where he continued to dwell in his heart.”³⁵⁷ Bishop Ragenard, successor of the martyred bishop Lista of Coutances, spent his entire episcopacy in exile at St.-Saveur in the relatively stable city of Rouen.³⁵⁸ In addition to housing the living bishops of Coutances, Rouen also seems to have been a safe resting place for its dead ones: a twelfth century chronicle mentions that relics of Coutances’ episcopal saints Fromond, Rompharius, and Laudus were translated to Rouen during

³⁵⁵ Modern-day Moussy-le-Neuf, approximately twenty miles northwest of Paris

³⁵⁶ The translation of the relics of St. Opportuna is recorded in book 2, particularly chapters 6 and 7, of the *Miracula S. Opportunae*.

³⁵⁷ *Vita Radbodi episcopi Traiectensis*, MGH SS 15, no. 1, 571: “Episcopali vero sede Danorum persecutione Traiecto desolata, Daventriae sedem ipsius elegit, Traiectensis non immemor sedis, quam corde iugiter inhabitavit.”

³⁵⁸ Le Maho, “Les Normands de la Seine,” 170.

Rollo's reign.³⁵⁹ But even the archiepiscopal seat at Rouen itself was subject to frequent vacancy. The archbishops of Rouen governed their see off and on from exile in Condé-sur-Aisne, near Paris, where they had taken the body of St. Audoenus in about 875 (see section 2.10 above).

As the attacks began to diminish, West Frankish bishops who had managed to retain some power began to reassert episcopal control over territories where their authority had lapsed. Thomas Head has shown that this process began relatively early in the Orléannais, where Bishop Waltharius of Orléans worked to re-extend episcopally sponsored cults back out into the parishes of his diocese through carefully managed feasts and festivals in the 880s.³⁶⁰ This process unfolded somewhat later in Normandy, where the archbishops of Rouen succeeded in reestablishing functioning dioceses in all parts of the duchy by the mid-tenth century.³⁶¹

With a few small differences, the management of episcopal patrimony in exile during the attacks thus largely mirrors what happened to monastic patrimony during the attacks. Some dioceses, like some monasteries, appear to have entirely fallen out of existence during the attacks, only to be renewed after the political upheaval began to mellow. Monks and cathedral clergy were both deeply concerned about their property, and both sought to fully leverage the power of their relics to maintain those claims. In all cases, proper administration of patrimony seemed to require the presence of *beata corpora* close at hand.

³⁵⁹ Fournée, "Le culte populaire," 50-51; Potts, "When the Saints Go Marching," 24.

³⁶⁰ Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints*, 50.

³⁶¹ J. Laporte, "Les origines du monachisme dans la province de Rouen," *Revue Mabillon*, 31 (1941), 25-41, 49-68.

The strengthening *virtus* of these bones was a *sine qua non* for continuing power over far-flung estates just as much for bishops and abbots as it was for dukes and kings.

3.3 Spread of Information About the Attacks

Patterns of exile and the dangers of flight both point up the question of how various fleeing ecclesiastics acquired information about the level and location of the Viking threat. Abbots and bishops alike would have required accurate intelligence about where Viking raiders were active and also which regions housed the safest refuges. There were times when Scandinavian raiders appeared completely unannounced before unprepared monastery gates, but they rarely achieved complete surprise.³⁶² This is probably because once the Vikings made their initial landings their movements were easy to predict. The raiders were generally confined to river systems, and locals would know better than the Vikings themselves where the rivers went and which ones were navigable at what time of year. Furthermore, Vikings often established semi-permanent camps at river mouths, indicating an ongoing presence with plenty of time for word to spread about their whereabouts. Sometimes they stayed in certain areas for years, and after the tenth century, many Viking bases evolved into permanent settlements. This suggests that it may not have been difficult for monastic

³⁶² The experience of St.-Germain-des-Prés is a noteworthy example of both foreknowledge and surprise: according to Aimoin of St.-Germain's account, Abbot Hilduin II had enough warning to evacuate most of his monks ahead of the Viking sack of Paris in 857, but the caretaker monks that he left behind were caught entirely unaware by Viking raiders breaking down the doors of their church. See above, section 2.4.

decision makers to acquire information about the level of the local and regional threat from Viking raiders. That is how the “rumor among the people” (section 2.2 above) became useful.

On the other hand, religious communities clearly did not always have access to the full range of information they needed to make the best long-term choices about the timing and location of evacuations during the attacks. Some may have known very little about their proximity to danger. But since threatened institutions frequently received their places of refuge as grants from lay patrons (often from the king), it could be that lay patrons were the ones who made decisions about refuges based on military intelligence unavailable to monks themselves. Even if this was so, however, the high degree of error in choices of initial refuge indicate an imperfect recognition of monastic exposure to Viking attack.

Oftentimes, monks erred by being over-eager to return home before the danger had passed, leading to multiple short-term evacuations in close succession.³⁶³ They also frequently chose refuges that were convenient for practical reasons, only to be forced to decamp again for more distant retreats when their initial choice proved insufficiently secure. The monastery of St.-Germain-des-Prés, for example, which ought to have been as well-informed as any given its closeness to the Carolingian inner circle, withdrew from their initial

³⁶³ During the early years of the attacks, monastic optimism about the duration of the threat was at a peak. The annual peregrinations of the monks of Noirmoutier in Aquitaine are the most striking example of monastic unwillingness to definitively abandon endangered sites (see Chapter 4, section 1.1). Neustrian monasteries likely also engaged in similar irresoluteness during early attacks at Jumièges, Fontanelle and other houses on the lower Seine in the 840s and 850s. See above, section 2.1.

refuge at Combs-la-Ville just south of Paris and moved forty miles further southeast to Esmans in 857. They then moved again a further sixty miles northeast to Nogent-l'Artaud in 861 as Viking raids plunged deeper into the Île-de-France. The vacillations of the monks of St.-Ouen of Rouen took a similar course. Cris-crossing charters seem to show them shuttling back and forth between their refuge at Gasny and their home in Rouen in the 870s with disconcerting regularity (see above, section 2.1).

Bishops and abbots were, however, clearly in communication with each other about where relics could best be safeguarded. These communication networks could be essential to a successful choice of refuge during the attacks. Thanks again to their broadly dispersed patrimonies, most churches and monasteries already had well-established long-distance communication links with far away places. These would have been useful for appraising regional threats, supplementing information received from neighboring churches and monasteries. Although Frankish bishops regularly failed to form a united front against the Viking threat,³⁶⁴ letters like the ones discussed above between Bishops Gautier of Orléans and Lambert of Mans to coordinate the provisioning of the exiled monks of Croix-St.-Ouen, (section 3.2) or between Lupus of Ferrières and various bishops of his region begging for shelter (section 2.5) show that episcopal communication networks could be an essential source of information and encouragement.

³⁶⁴ This was particularly true during the divisive fight over the treasonous activities of Archbishop Ebbo of Reims in the 860s, for example, a struggle which pitted many of West Francia's dioceses against one another and made cooperation impossible.

Letters like these could represent an alternate way of redressing the Viking threat: rather than looking to lay patrons, Lupus of Ferrières consistently used his personal connections among his peers in the church for safe harbor.³⁶⁵ It seems likely that other monks communicated in the same way. The frequency with which exiled monks turned up at other monasteries or massed together in shared relic translation caravans during the Viking exoduses indicates as much.³⁶⁶

3.4 Blame

Hand in hand with material concerns, the downcast vignettes of exile contained in the era's letters, charters, and *translationes* betray the strong emotional response to the attacks and the flustering ideological problems they posed. Monks and clerics in Neustria, as elsewhere, grappled with the threat the attacks posed not just to property but also to foundational ideas of their religious and political order. Pagan violence threatened the fragile sanctity of religious institutions, and eviscerated whatever claim churches and monasteries had to special status in the eyes of God. Long-standing social relationships were also thrown into turmoil as neither lay patrons nor the saints themselves seemed able to fend off Viking advances.

³⁶⁵ In one letter, he wrote to the abbot of St.-Germain-d'Auxerre, fifty miles to his west, in search of a safe place to hide his monastery's treasures. Lupus, *Epistolae*, no. 116.

³⁶⁶ The largest such "caravan" are the so-called Maglorien relics, consisting of monks, clerics and saints from different areas of eastern Brittany that joined together to find safety in Paris (see above Chapter 2, section 2.5). This practice occurred in Neustria as well: the Parisian monasteries of St.-Germain-des-Prés and St.-Geneviève evacuated at the same time to nearly the same area and returned to Paris within very close chronological proximity to one another (see above, section 2.7).

Frankish commentators of the Viking era wrote at length to justify and explain the patent failures of their allies to turn back raids on their relic shrines. Their reflections on the social, ideological and cosmological meanings of the attacks led them to harsh condemnation of Frankish lay aristocrats, and even criticism of themselves. But monks and clerics engaged in a range of ideological acrobatics to avoid implicating their saints and their kings. This was a conservative effort to bulwark the two firmest pillars of Frankish political and religious authority amidst the ferment of the attacks.

To those contemporary thinkers who bothered to reflect on the psychology of the attacks, the most pressing problem was what to make of the fact that their saints seemed unable or unwilling to defend their own institutions. Close proximity to powerful relics was, in conjunction with the king's justice, supposed to protect Frankish churches and monasteries from all kinds of harm. Although relics did occasionally fill a practical battlefield role against pagan raids in Neustria,³⁶⁷ monks and clerics generally focused their criticism for defensive

³⁶⁷ As in Aquitaine and Brittany, there are sporadic but important mentions in contemporary chronicles of relics holding their ground and maintaining a fixed defensive role. Radbod of Utrecht's early tenth century *Miraculum apud Turones Factum anno 903* [BHL 5656] MGH SS, 15, no. 2, 1239-44, recounts a Viking attack on Tours in 903. In it, St. Martin's relics are evacuated from his basilica into the nearby city, but there he holds his ground. Certain clerics parade his reliquary around the gates of the city, bringing courage to its defenders and stupefying the pagan invaders. Thanks to St. Martin's miraculous power, according to Radbod, Tours' defenders were able to slay "nine hundred" Vikings. St. Martin's relics were subsequently returned to a newly fortified extra-mural basilica (*castrum novum*) in c. 915-8. Other saints defended their original homes from afar, even after their relics had been taken into exile. According to the *Translatio S. Germani*, St. Germanus was instrumental in the defense of Paris during the sack of 857 despite the physical absence of his relics, which had been translated to Esmans (p. 81, ch. 15). Working from a distance, St. Germanus' struck dead a number of Vikings (p. 80, ch. 14), and also secured the release of a number of Christian hostages through the miraculous force of his will (p. 93, ch. 31). In all cases, the effectiveness of relics was contingent on the promise of significant civil contribution to defense. This reinforces the notion that secular and saintly authority needed to work in tandem to work at all, and underscores the danger to both when the relationship between them broke down. See also A. de Borbolla, "La hagiographia de frontera: Los santos como defensores de un espacio a partir de los relatos hagiograficos

failures instead on local lay *defensores*. Near-total lack of civil resistance to Viking attacks (*nemine resistente*) became a *Leitmotiv* in ecclesiastical accounts of the raids.³⁶⁸ This criticism of local authorities is no surprise, considering the natural attachment of religious institutions to their own relics and the ease of denigrating lay magnates.

At their simplest, contemporary monastic descriptions of the attacks assign blame for defensive failures based on a straightforward assessment of which local aristocrats had failed to provide soldiers in adequate numbers. Most of the fault was ascribed not to Charles the Bald or other royal protectors, but to members of the local aristocracy. The *Translatio S. Germani*, for example, implicates the Neustrian aristocracy for the failure to stave off the sack of Paris in 857. The anonymous author gives Charles credit for heading out to meet the enemy, but lambasts the unreadiness of the king's men, or *fideles serventes*, for failing to respond to Charles' call to defend Francia. Some magnates were forced to assist, and "God having deserted them because of their sinfulness," they were trounced by the raiders. According to the text, Charles, "that most noble king, saw what had happened and, although he was prepared to die in defense of the holy church, was forced to withdraw, his heart crushed with grief."³⁶⁹

peninsulares (siglos XII-XIII)" in *Frontiers in the Middle Ages*, ed. O. Merisalo (Louvain, 2006), 675-91 for the parallel use of relics in defense of Spanish border territories during a later time period.

³⁶⁸ Vercauteren, "Comment s'est-on défendu," 121-2.

³⁶⁹ *Translatio S. Germani*, 78 (ch. 12): "Contra [Normannos] praecellentissimus rex Karolus adveniens, iussit ut omnis exercitus regni sui ad bellandum eductus illuc confluerat. Multis quidem et innumerabilis populis venit, sed non totus ut iusserat, affuit... Sed non omnes quibus iussum fuerat, abierunt, non plenam, ut putamus seu credimus, circa eum fidem servantes. Cumque hinc inde quasi ad pugnandum infinitus staret exercitus, ipsi implissimi ac crudelissimi Normanni... contra copiosum exercitum sed non omnem ad pugnandum voluntarium, ire coeperunt. Videns enim hoc christianus populus..., Domino eum pro peccatis suis deserente, in

Another monk of St.-Germain-des-Prés similarly ascribed Charles' embarrassing payment of 7000 pounds of silver to the cowardice of Charles' vassals, who were more keen to pay than to fight.³⁷⁰ The consistent pardoning of Carolingian princes as victims of their own unwilling underlings makes sense at a staunchly royalist institution like St.-German-des-Prés,³⁷¹ but also reflects the wider context of growing friction between ecclesiastical institutions and the lay aristocracy. Church councils at Yütz, Ver, and Paris in the mid-ninth century, as we saw above (section 3.2), emphasized the need for the aristocracy to respect a "pact of concord" with the king's mandate to protect monks from violence so that they might focus on praying for the deliverance of the realm.

Later councils were more explicit. Archbishop Herveus of Reims complained bitterly at the synod of Trosly in 909 that God's wrath had been provoked by "false Christians" among the Frankish elite who had brought the attacks upon the kingdom through their violence, immorality, insubordination and usurpation of church property.³⁷² David Appleby has argued that the *acta* of councils like these admonished the nobility by unfavorably comparing them to typological examples of biblical kings who prospered through their attention to religion. These *acta* denounced lay elites for disturbing the equilibrium between

fugam versus est. Karolus namque, nobilissimus rex, cernens quod gestum erat, qui pro defensione sanctae Dei ecclesiae mori paratus erat, tristis et moerens ac delicata pectora tundens, recessit."

³⁷⁰ Aimoin, *Translatio et Miracula S. Germani*, PL 126, col. 1034 (ch. 10). Lot and Halphen, *La règne de Charles le Chauve*, 131, note 3.

³⁷¹ The *Translatio S. Germani* itself was dedicated to Abbot Ebroinus of St.-Germain, former archchaplain to Charles the Bald, who maintained close connections to the Carolingians until his death.

³⁷² *Concilium Troslejanum*, (ed. Mansi), *Concilia*, 18, col. 264 (Praefatio): "Quoniam per aliquot annos...quorundam falsorum Christianorum infestationibus praepediti, juxta decreta canonum nequivimus congregari..."

the first two estates and contributing to a “national sin” in the eyes of God.³⁷³ Accusations such as these were a convenient kind of obloquy for embattled monks and clerics, since they stigmatized lay seizures of church property that were disadvantageous but not always criminal or unjustified.³⁷⁴ It placed the burden of failure to defend church patrimony on a group that royalist monks found to be often unsympathetic to their cause, and deflected culpability for the devastation away from the relics of their saints.

The aristocracy was an easy target, but other ecclesiastical commentators saw a more systematic failure behind the vulnerability of Neustria’s Christian sites. Herveus of Reims heaped most of his scorn on Frankish aristocrats, but reserved a significant share of corporate blame for all Christians in the affected areas. His epilogue to Trosly’s *acta* finishes with an appeal to all Franks suffering under Viking attacks to rededicate themselves to Christ and to regain God’s mercy through good works and pious contrition.³⁷⁵

The view that the Vikings were a latter-day plague sent by God *propter peccata Christianorum* (because of the sins of Christians) to purge the Franks of

³⁷³ Appleby, *Hagiography and Ideology*, 297-99; d’Haenens, *Les invasions Normandes en Belgique*, 13.

³⁷⁴ B. Rosenwein’s *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny’s Property, 909-1049* (Ithaca, NY, 1989) demonstrates that confiscations of monastic property cannot be thought of purely in terms of lay rapacity. Lay families were involved in patronage relationships with monasteries lasting over many generations. Just because they retook land their families had donated to monastic foundations should not necessarily imply that they did this to harm the monastery or that they did not have a legitimate right to the lands in question. See also Hummer, *Politics and Power*, 104, 156.

³⁷⁵ *Concilium Troslejanum*, (ed. Mansi), *Concilia*, 18, col. 308: “Si igitur ex toto corde conversi ad Deum, veram poenitentiam, fructusque poenitentiae dignos fecerimus, crebris et sanctis instantes jejuniis, vigiliis castis, illique bene complacitis, et orationibus falso lacrymarum imbre perfusis, cum eleemosynis justis, caeterisque misericordiae et caritatis operibus, atque profiteamur nos ad pristinae impietatum nostrarum scelera nunquam redituros...”

their sinfulness is a common one in forced relic translation accounts, perhaps epitomized in the *Translatio S. Germani*:

God has permitted that such shame should befall us, that foreign nations should leave their homes...the race of the Danes, the enormous army of Normans, puffed up with prideful hearts...might land on Christian shores and invade.... But since we have offended God by scorning his laws and teachings, our holy Father roused these same barbarians... to be a great burden of punishment on us. [It is better for us to accept that] they have come to censure and correct us [here on earth], than if by wishing for them to be turned back we should suffer eternal damnation [in the afterlife].³⁷⁶

Hincmar echoed these sentiments in the *Annales Bertiniani* when he wrote that “the destruction wrought by the Normans was accomplished not through human strength but through divine will.”³⁷⁷ Even the *Ludwigslied* blames the Franks themselves for the Vikings’ arrival: “[God] permitted the pagans to cross the sea in order to punish the Franks for their sins.”³⁷⁸

Here, too, however, the specific sort of *irreverentia* being committed by “Franks” is probably an indirect proxy for the impious greed of lay Frankish magnates, given the royalist nature of these sources. It is unlikely that any aristocrat shared this appraisal of responsibility for the attacks, though Charles

³⁷⁶ Aimoin, *Translatio et Miracula S. Germani*, 72 (ch. 2): “...Deo permittente flagitiisque exigentibus actum est nostris, ut exterae nationes e propriis egerederentur sedibus...gens Danorum, id est copiosus exercitus Normannorum, superbo tumentique corde...christianorum fines contigerent atque intrarent... Nos autem quoniam Deum offensum habuimus et ejus jura atque praecepta servare contempsimus, excitavit idem velut pius pater quorundam corda gentilium, supradictorum scilicet Normannorum, ut nos pro innumerabili delictorum nostrorum pondere, ad correptionem atque emendationem nostram affligerent, et non ad perpetuam, si ad illum toto corde reverti volumus, condemnationem.”

³⁷⁷ *Annales Bertiniani*, 151 [anno 881]: “...quod a Nortmannis fuerat actum, non humana sed divina virtute paratum extiterit...”

³⁷⁸ *Lietz her heidine man / Obar seolidan / Thiot urancono / Manon sundiono*. A. Wimmer (ed.), *Anthology of Medieval German Literature* (Lima, Ohio, 1987), 36.

the Bald was certainly happy to deflect blame from himself when he declared that “the Normans poured into Gaul as the wages of our [the Franks’] sins.”³⁷⁹

Charles the Simple likewise imputed “the sins of the whole of the church” for “the excessive and prolonged pestilence of the pagans” that “drove away...fleeing clerics from [their] own lands.”³⁸⁰

It would be revealing to trace these attempts to absolve saints and Carolingian kings of their defensive responsibilities through the era of Carolingian collapse and further into the tenth century. It seems likely that the shift from centralized Carolingian defense to localized defense coordinated by regional magnates should be accompanied by a shift in blame for the attacks away from the aristocratic defenders. Unfortunately, the sharp dropoff in surviving hagiographical sources around the turn of the tenth century makes this a matter of conjecture. It is clear by the mid-tenth century, however, that the switch was a *fait accompli* – criticism of competitive local aristocrats continued to be a hallmark of the “feudal revolution,” but monks and clerics now begged the intercession of a wider variety of regionalized *reges* and *duces* instead of a single Carolingian emperor.

In the few sources from the turn of the tenth century that do exist, royal authority seems rather to simply disappear as any kind of factor at all. Saints continued to be held above blame, as they had been before,³⁸¹ but in the

³⁷⁹ *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 2, 116 (no. 274), 135 (no. 287): “Peccatis nostri promerentibus infuderunt se Nortmanni intra Galliam.”

³⁸⁰ *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple*, 114-6 (no. 53).

³⁸¹ There are historical exceptions to monastic unwillingness to blame their relics for their failure to act. P. Geary, “Humiliation of Saints,” in S. Wilson (ed.), *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, (Cambridge, 1983), 123-140, cites examples of monks and clerics who sought to “humiliate” or punish their relics into working miracles. It remained a

absence of centralized, imperial authority, many monks began to look inward to find in themselves contributing factors to the attacks, and at the same time to seek ways of building new alliances with former enemies to defend against further assaults.

Odo of Cluny, writing in the early tenth century, is a particularly good example of this change. He cited a lack of proper *reverentia* among Francia's monks and clerics as the reason Francia's saints appeared to abandon their clients during the Viking attacks. Following the attack on the basilica of St.-Martin at Tours in 903, Odo, a former monk of St.-Martin, delivered a pointed sermon entitled *De Combustione Basilicae* that examines the attacks from a post-imperial, nearly post-Carolingian perspective.³⁸² In the same way that Paschasius Radbertus had earlier found solace during the attacks in the lamentations of Jeremiah,³⁸³ Odo evokes the tribulations of Job to inspire his monks to reexamine the sinfulness of their own lives and their own contribution to the divine reprobation that seemed to be sweeping the kingdom. In the sermon, Odo mentions historical Frankish kings only rarely, and says little that is negative about the role of more localized lay patrons. Odo's unambiguously positive attitude toward patronage links with newly risen regional castellans places the new post-Viking patronage environment at the forefront of Odo's formulation for monastic reform at Cluny. Dependence upon local protectors and the absence of

rare phenomenon ("specific references to humiliation are rare," p. 97), and only became popular in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, long after the Viking era.

³⁸² Odo of Cluny, *De Combustione Basilicae Beati Martini*, PL, 133, col. 729-49. For the sermon's attribution to Odo, see S. Farmer, *Communities of Saint-Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), 313-5.

³⁸³ See above, section 2.4. Paschasius, writing from the 850s, already looked back on the time of strong centralized Carolingian kingship with palpable longing.

imperial authority developed into major themes in Odo's influential *Vita Sancti Geraldii*, a text that presented an immensely popular model of reform and improved relations with lay aristocrats in the eleventh century.³⁸⁴

The so-called *castigatio-interpretation* of the Viking attacks has been examined in depth by others,³⁸⁵ including the many typological parallels contemporaries drew between themselves and the chosen people of the Old Testament.³⁸⁶ From this perspective, the Vikings were not strange, new enemies; they were instruments of divine punishment visited on wayward Christians when they erred. The only proper response, as Odo and others saw it, was to patiently endure God's judgement "with contrition and humility."³⁸⁷ If Viking raids were sent by God, attempting to resist them would be impious.

This stoical prescription suggests that many writers felt that some virtue could be extracted from flight and exile during the attacks. In this light, forced relic translations seem to echo the "white martyrdom" of late antique wandering

³⁸⁴ For Odo's important role in the development of Clunaic monasticism during the tenth century, see B. Rosenwein, *Rhinoceros Bound: The Abbey of Cluny in the Tenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1982).

³⁸⁵ German scholars have been particularly active in this area, though with differing views. Zettel, *Das Bild der Normannen*, 191-204, gives the best summary. E. Auerbach, *Typologische Motive in der Mittelalterliche Literatur*, (Krefeld, 1953), 7, called this way of thinking a kind of historical *Realprophetie*, linked but not confined to biblical exegesis, since it cropped up in chronicles and other kinds of sources; H. Günter, *Psychologie der Legende. Studien zu einer wissenschaftlichen Heiligen-Geschichte*, (Freiburg, 1949), 6, explained this tendency more figuratively, with mere "echoes of meaning" for medieval authors whose thinking essentially revolved around analogies.

³⁸⁶ Perhaps the most striking of these comes from Hraban Maur, for whom the ark of the covenant prefigured the portable reliquaries that monks carried with them during their own wanderings in the Frankish "desert." Hraban Maur, *De clericorum institutione*, PL, 107, col. 358-60.

³⁸⁷ Odo of Cluny, *De Combustione Basilica*, PL, 133, col. 743: "...per cor scilicet contritum et humiliatum." Other examples of passive resignation come through in the interpretation of the attacks by a variety of Carolingian exegetes who noted seemingly relevant prophecies in the books of Isaiah, Malachi, Hezekiel, Jeremiah, Psalms, and in Paul's letter to the Romans. For more examples of resignation to the Viking attacks as a manifestation of God's will ranging from the mid-ninth into the eleventh centuries, see Musset, *Les Invasions*, 224; d'Haenens, *Les invasions Normandes en Belgique*, 144-7; Zettel, *Das Bild der Normannen*, 189-196.

missionaries who left home to gratefully endure the punishments of exile. Those who suffered under the Vikings became latter-day *peregrini pro Christo*, bearing on their shoulders the redemption of the empire alongside the relics of their saints.

CONCLUSION: New Patrons and the Re-Christianization of Neustria

The Viking attacks of the ninth and tenth centuries coincided with the transformation of Neustria from the heartland of a well-entrenched empire into a destabilized frontier zone overturned by invasion and political confusion. Along this shifting frontier, the bodies of dead saints were subject to dramatic tribulations. At the same time, relics played a critical role as signposts of lay political power. In this, the relics of Neustrian saints mimed the peregrinations of relics along the Saxon and Bavarian borders in the early part of the ninth century. The direction of travel was reversed in late ninth and early tenth century Neustria, however, with a steady drumbeat of forced relic translations marking the undoing of the triumphalist march toward Christianization and pacification along the empire's eastern border in earlier decades. During the height of Carolingian dominance, Frankish emperors and monks worked together to export the well-established legitimating power of Neustrian relics to propitiate volatile borderlands; by the turn of the tenth century, large parts of Neustria's own territory became the subject of cacluated efforts to re-Christianize and control the landscape.

By the time Duke Rollo and his descendents claimed control of Normandy, the province needed a thorough rebuilding of its religious institutions and the patronage networks that supported them. At the (invisible) parish level, religious life in Normandy may have continued to function largely as normal, but the only surviving sources describe a territory denuded of important monasteries, stripped of its most famous relics, and hamstrung by vacant sees and abbeys.

This dour vision is borne out by Frankish monks who continued to live in parts of Neustria which had, for all intents, fallen outside the bounds of Christendom. C. Potts' convincing studies of post-settlement Normandy show that these Franks saw themselves as missionaries in a precarious pagan land, always fearful that the province's new masters would revert to their pagan ways "like dogs to their own vomit."³⁸⁸ Moreover, even in the light of recent historical revisions, it is clear that many (if not most) of Neustria's relics had been dislocated from their native tombs at some time or another, and that monastic patrimonies had been heavily disrupted during the attacks. The legacy of the attacks thus loomed large, despite certain "shades of continuity" between the old order and the new.

Just like the management of monastic and episcopal patrimony during the attacks, the return of relics and their cults to their homes within Neustria was an occasion for both conflict and opportunity. Some relics never returned to their original cult centers,³⁸⁹ but others found ways to benefit from the reshuffling of

³⁸⁸ Potts, "Monastic Revival and Regional Identity," 23-24.

³⁸⁹ Among other Neustrian examples, St. Marculfus remained in exile in the Île-de-France (Lifshitz, "The Migration of Neustrian Relics," 183); Sts. Wandregiselus, Ansbert, and Vulframnus found a permanent home in exile in Ghent (N. Huyghebaert, *Une translation de reliques à Gand*

relics that accompanied the internal partitioning of the former Neustria. Norman settlers realized very quickly that there was more long-term benefits, political and otherwise, to supporting religious institutions than in sacking them. Relics that had taken shelter elsewhere began to return to the most deeply affected parts of Neustria from an early date. The relics of St. Audoenus returned to Rouen as early as 918. Jumièges and Fontanelle made tentative steps towards restoration c. 940, with other houses such as St.-Taurin d'Évreux (c. 968) following throughout the remainder of the tenth century.³⁹⁰

The need for re-Christianization in Neustria is evident from the surviving catalog of property destruction and forced *translationes*, and also from the level of hagiographic production in Neustria. These studies show that an initial increase in hagiographic composition (and in translation accounts in particular) was followed by a precipitous decline in liturgical, notarial, and narrative manuscripts from the last decades of the ninth century into the late tenth century.³⁹¹ Not all parts of Neustria were as affected by the pagan presence as Normandy was, but damaged ecclesiastical and monastic institutions throughout the province were, at the very least, everywhere in need of tender rekindling. The fresh faced dynasties of the post-imperial order immediately insinuated themselves into lapsed relic patronage networks, which by the eleventh century worked to prop up both recovering relic cults and the new dynasties themselves.

en 944. *Le Sermo de Adventu Sanctorum Wandregisili, Ansberti et Vulframni in Blandium* (Brussels, 1978), xxxix-xxxv).

³⁹⁰ Keats-Rohan, "Francs, Scandinaves, ou Normands?" 195-6.

³⁹¹ The formerly prolific monks at Fontanelle failed to produce a single verifiable document during the tenth century, for example; Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*, 113-125. The scriptorium at Fleury also fell silent; de Certain, *Les miracles de Saint Benoît*, xv-xvi. Thomas Head suggests that the same trend effected the Orléannais more broadly in the tenth century; Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints*, 56.

This mutual interest in renewing patronage ties contributed to the tremendous surge of post-Viking monastic reforms emanating from Cluny, Gorze, and other innovative foundations during the tenth and eleventh century.

By the end of the Viking attacks, relics had become well-established proxies for political control in the former *regnum* of Neustria. They passed back and forth in struggles between the last Carolingians, the first Capetians, and their regional rivals, to say nothing of the innumerable smaller scale conflicts between less august aristocrats, or between quarrelsome bishops and abbots. The various forgeries, phony *inventiones*, and re-written *translationes* of the eleventh and twelfth centuries are not, as some have suggested, a sign of a pervasive conspiracy to create a false backstory for later developments; rather, they are a testament to the enduring significance of forced relic translations during the Viking attacks, whose full effects often took centuries to flower. The physical disruption of the attacks is impossible to deny, but even if recent scholarship has focused greater attention on the psychological effects of the attacks, these psychological effects manifested themselves in measurable shifts in intangible but nonetheless crucial matters of political legitimacy and Christian rulership at the heart of the aging empire.

Chapter 4

Aquitaine: Ermentarius of Noirmoutier and the Travels of St. Filibert

INTRODUCTION

The history of Viking-era relic translation in Aquitaine hinges, for the most part, on the testimony one monk and his saint. Nonetheless, the adventure of Ermentarius and St. Filibert unfolded on such an epic scale and has been laid down in such detail that it ranks as the best source from anywhere in Francia on what a forced relic translation looked like in practice. Ermentarius' *Miracula sancti Filiberti* is not the only Aquitainian forced translation account, but it includes shades of nearly every experience common to monastic exiles and their relics during the Viking period. Aquitaine played host to the full range of those experiences, but the ordeals of Ermentarius and St. Filibert, supplemented by other Aquitainian forced relic translation accounts, neatly encompass a variety of themes that are particularly well illustrated in Aquitaine.

Most of these themes derive in some way from Aquitaine's distinctive geography. Its lengthy Atlantic coastline and location on the periphery of the

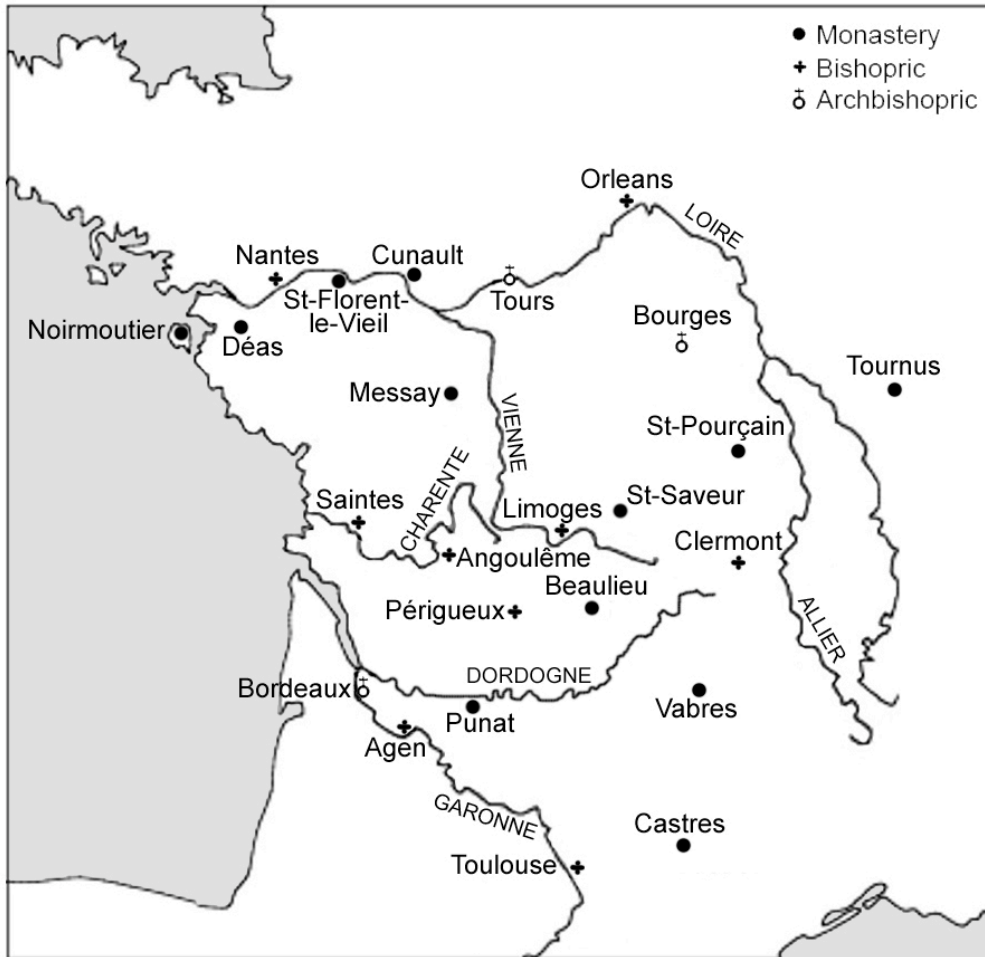
Carolingian empire placed it on the front lines of the very earliest continental Viking attacks. Because the earliest relic evacuations occurred there, Aquitaine is an ideal place to study the way monastic and ecclesiastical responses to the attacks changed over the course of the Viking invasions. The early departure of St. Filibert and other holy relics from their home starting in the 830s made the province a laboratory for the development of “proper” responses to the Vikings’ arrival. During the course of the ninth century, panicked and untidy early relic evacuations in Aquitaine gave way to a more considered monastic and episcopal consensus on orthodox practices for the preservation of monks, monasteries, and their relics during the Viking attacks. In both earlier and later cases these responses contrasted sharply with responses to earlier crises in Aquitaine, specifically the Muslim attacks that had affected the province less than a century before.

Another theme related to Aquitaine’s geography is the appearance of safe regions where relic cults could remain untouched from Viking attacks. As in Brittany and Neustria, these “islands of stability” shifted over time. The safety of certain regions within Aquitaine was first determined by the province’s network of rivers, which channeled the effects of the Viking attacks more directly than in other provinces and left other places less vulnerable. Aquitaine’s distinct pattern of attacks allows for a better understanding of the interplay between relic evacuations, local geography, and local hydrology.

More importantly, however, the safety of Aquitaine’s sub-regions was also dependent upon changes in local and imperial Carolingian politics. Tucked away

in the bottom corner of the Carolingian empire and without an independent royal tradition of its own, Aquitaine sustained a different relationship with the distant centers of royal power than did other provinces within the empire. Carolingian kings remained deeply invested in Aquitainian affairs, but Ermentarius' experience shows that the distance of these authorities and their preoccupation with events in other provinces magnified the political consequences of the evacuation of Aquitaine's relics. Carolingian hegemony crumbled earlier in Aquitaine, accelerating the schedule of Viking attacks and hastening the flight of Aquitainian cults into the arms of eager local aristocrats.

In Aquitaine, as in Brittany and Neustria, Carolingian princes found themselves in competition over the province's dead saints, struggling with local aristocrats to maintain control over the region's spiritual capital. In the ninth and tenth century struggle over which political faction would control Aquitaine, relics played a crucial role as both bearers and bellwethers of political strength. Although Carolingian discord helped set the stage for Viking attacks on monasteries and relic shrines, warring Carolingian princes nevertheless took special care to be seen protecting and patronizing Aquitaine's dislocated relic cults, even when, as Ermentarius notes, failures of leadership and evacuation of holy bodies seemed to make Aquitaine almost unrecognizable as a Christian province within a self-consciously Christian empire.



Map 8: Religious institutions in Aquitaine, c. 830-c. 930.

PART ONE: Ermentarius' *Miracula S. Filiberti*

Ermentarius' description of St. Filibert's translation during the Viking attacks represents one of the few first-hand accounts written by a verifiably direct participant in a relic evacuation.³⁹² Ermentarius, a monk at the monastery of

³⁹² Ermentarius may even have taken a turn bearing St. Filibert's sarcophagus during the relics' evacuation. See R. Poupardin, *Monuments de l'histoire des abbayes de Saint-Philibert (Noirmoutier, Grandlieu, Tournus)* (Paris, 1905), xxx. Ermentarius was a monk at Noirmoutier during the abbacy of Hilbod, whose tenure stretched from c. 826 to about 862. Sometime in the early 860s, he may himself to have been made abbot of Noirmoutier in exile. A certain "Abbot

Noirmoutier in far northwestern Aquitaine, composed the section of St. Filibert's *Miracula* covering the translation sometime after the second evacuation of his saint's body but before his death in exile in the mid-860s.³⁹³ Ermentarius' lucid narrative covers nearly four decades of his monastery's wanderings in search of permanent shelter. Supported by corroborating charters and *chronica*, it serves as the prototype for the first half-century of Viking-era relic evacuations in the province.

Ermentarius' account recapitulates themes common to other translations discussed elsewhere in these pages, and mentions new ones specific to Aquitaine. Among the most dramatic are his descriptions of Noirmoutier's halting initial reactions to the first Viking attacks in Francia, the failure of various Carolingian-sponsored attempts to secure the exposed monastery, the relics' permanent decampment for exile on the Frankish mainland, and perhaps most remarkably, their continuing series of moves throughout the mid-ninth century, heading further and further east in search of increasingly elusive shelter from the spreading Viking menace.

Ermentarius" headed the monastery for a few years after 862, although we cannot know if it is the same person as the author of the *Miracula S. Filiberti*.

³⁹³ Ermentarius first composed a *vita* of his patron saint, written in exile at Déas c. 839. He wrote a second book of Filibert's miracles later in his life on the occasion of their departure from Déas in the 860s. The standard edition of the *Miracula S. Filiberti* can be found in R. Poupardin's *Monuments de l'histoire des abbayes de St. Philibert*, 19-69, along with a detailed description of the *Miracula*'s manuscript tradition. It is also published in heavily redacted form in the MGH SS, vol. 15, part 1, pp. 297-303, though all future references will be to Poupardin's version of the text. For other treatments of St. Filibert's translation, see also R. Vion, "Les lieux de culte de Saint Philibert," *Jumièges. Congrès scientifique du XIII^e centenaire*, 1 (1955), 347; L. Auzias, *L'Aquitaine Carolingienne (778-987)* (Paris, 1937) (reprint 2003), 117-8; Cassard, *Le siècle des Vikings en Bretagne*, 317-20; Hermann-Mascard, *Les reliques des saints*, 48-50.

1.1: Early Steps Toward Evacuation at Noirmoutier (819-30)

Ermentarius' *Miracula* is silent on the precise date of the first appearance of Vikings along the shores of his island at the mouth of the Loire. The monastery of Noirmoutier was an important institution in the early ninth century, home to a well-known regional pilgrimage shrine.³⁹⁴ It was also an easy target for piracy. Ermentarius does not mention it, but as early as 819, Louis the Pious began to assist the monks there to make provisions for a rapid departure in the event of a Viking attack. Louis the Pious issued a diploma that year recognizing Noirmoutier's potential difficulties and giving the monks free reign "to construct a new monastery [elsewhere] on account of the growing frequency of barbarian incursions."³⁹⁵ A site was chosen by Abbot Arnoul (d. 824/5) at the monastery's preexisting *villa* at Déas (Dias). These plans were undoubtedly hastened when the Vikings struck with a fleet of thirteen ships at the nearby island of Bouin the very next year.³⁹⁶

The stormclouds of a more serious Viking threat continued to darken as "the area began to be regularly infested by incursions of pirates, and the monks began to suffer a great deal of trouble and inconvenience."³⁹⁷ Rather than erect

³⁹⁴ See Garaud, "Les incursions des Normands en Poitou," 247-8 for evidence of Noirmoutier's wealth and stature. Cf., however, Vogel, *Die Normannen und das fränkische Reich*, 62, which suggests that Noirmoutier was not a major Viking target.

³⁹⁵ Louis the Pious, *Diplomata Ecclesiastica*, PL, 104, col. 1089: "...propter incursiones barbarorum qui frequenter ipsum monasterium depopulantur, foras in pago qui dicitur Erbadellicus [Herbauges], in loco cujus vocabulum est Deas per nostrum consensum atque adiutorium, novum monasterium edificasse..."

³⁹⁶ *Annales Regni Francorum*, MGH SRG, 6, 153 [anno 820]. There is no evidence that Vikings struck Noirmoutier this year, but the threat would have been obvious.

³⁹⁷ Louis the Pious, *Diplomata Ecclesiastica* (col. 1184-5): "Sed cum idem locus piratarum incursionibus creberrime coepisset infestari et ipsi monachi multas incommoditates atque

defenses to guard their exposed strategic location near the mouth of the Loire, starting in 830 the monks of Noirmoutier sought safety in annual sojourns on the Frankish mainland. When the arrival of the summer navigation season brought the danger of Viking raids, Ermentarius remarks that he and his confreres “struck out for the villa which had been constructed at Déas, and each winter we returned to Noirmoutier,”³⁹⁸ A diploma of 830 corroborates the monks’ extraordinary efforts to evacuate “all the equipment and furniture from their church ... at great expense every year.”³⁹⁹

In the same diploma of 830, Louis the Pious expressed concern that the island was being left each summer “without divine offices,” suggesting a deeper problem than the expense and trouble of relocating to the mainland. The island, once home to a thriving monastery that provided vital spiritual services to its inhabitants, was now a land devoid of the most basic Christian institutions for much of the year. The monastic buildings at Noirmoutier, no longer the Christian center they had been, were now reduced to a part-time outpost in a spiritual wilderness – a state of abandonment for which Ermentarius and his brothers must have felt a glum responsibility.

Still, there was hope that this situation was only temporary. As if to emphasize the uncertainty of this period of partial withdrawal, the monks left behind the body of St. Filibert still entombed beneath the abbey’s floor. During

molestias propter hoc paterentur, eo quod omni anno ipsa necessitas eos compulisset eundem locum ab inicio verni usque ad finem autumnii temporis deserere et quasi desolatum sine divino officio relinquere.”

³⁹⁸ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 23. “Aestivo quippe tempore, quo navigandi aridit temperies, Deas monasterium, quod ob hoc fuerat constructum, petentes, hiemis tantummodo tempore Herium insulam [Noirmoutier] repetebant.”

³⁹⁹ Louis the Pious, *Diplomata Ecclesiastica* (col. 1183): “...et omne ministerium ecclesiasticum vel universam monasterii suppellectilem foras cogeret cum gravi despendio et labore devehere.”

these earliest Viking incursions of the 830s, there was yet little precedent anywhere within Francia for the evacuation of areas threatened by non-Christian raiders. There was yet no reason to believe that these winters would be their last at Noirmoutier before Norse raiders drove them from the island for good.

1.2: Continuing Carolingian Attempts at Patronage (830-6)

Louis the Pious and Pippin I of Aquitaine took steps to relieve pressure on the monks and protect Noirmoutier year-round by allowing Abbot Hilbod to construct a *castrum* on the island before the end of 830. In another diploma of that year, Louis exempted the monastery from its “public charges” to the imperial fisc in return for defending the nearby coast by means of this fort.⁴⁰⁰ The *castrum* does not appear to have stopped the monks’ trips to Déas each summer,⁴⁰¹ although it does seem to have kept the monastery from being burned and likely provided a place of refuge for other islanders during the height of the pillaging season (as well as for “some monks” who stayed).⁴⁰² In 834, the fort served as a base for a successful Carolingian-ordered counterattack against the Vikings in which many Viking fighters were massacred. Even though the monks were gone, St. Filibert’s relics were brought out from his shrine to play a personal

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ademar, *Chronicon Aquitanicum*, MGH SS, 4, 119: “Normanni Herio insulam [a traditional name for the island of Noirmoutier] incendunt mense Junio, et destitute est a generali monachorum habitatione.”

⁴⁰² Ermetarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, (book 2) 61. See Neustria chapter for more examples for other examples of monks who remained at otherwise “abandoned” monasteries. The establishment of the *castrum* went hand-in-hand with other military reforms, including the creation of the new military county of Herbauge in the Bas-Poitou. Poupardin, *Monuments de l’histoire*, 252.

role in the battle: Ermentarius credits the saint with “killing them all in the space of an hour before being returned to his tomb.”⁴⁰³ This miraculous victory, however, brought no peace to the island.

According to Ermentarius, the monks’ annual retreat to the mainland continued for two more years until 836. Viking raids continued to increase despite the Carolingians’ efforts at local fortification, and it soon became unsafe to remain on the island of Noirmoutier even during the winter. On June 7, 836, “while a little peace was still shining on the reign of Louis,” Abbot Hilbod decided to make the departure from Noirmoutier permanent.⁴⁰⁴ Hilbod traveled to the court of Pippin I to acquire the Aquitanian prince’s blessing for a permanent decampment. Pippin I agreed that Noirmoutier was “impossible to defend” and approved their emigration. Noirmoutier thus continued to receive important Carolingian patronage from both Louis the Pious and Pippin I, even if this patronage appears to have been insufficient to allow the relics of St. Filibert to rest in peace. Having secured Pippin I’s permission, Hilbod ordered not just his monks but also the relics of St. Filibert to be removed from the island and carried to safety at Déas.

1.3 First Translation of St. Filibert’s Relics

The events following the departure from Noirmoutier, as Ermentarius has preserved them, present the most detailed picture of any Viking-era relic

⁴⁰³ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 67: “Nec mora, sub unius horae curriculo, omnes sanctus perimit Filibertus, ac deinde monasterium revertitur atque in suo collocat tumulo.”

⁴⁰⁴ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 59: “...paxque Hludogvico imperante aliquantula arrideret...”

translation in Francia. St. Filibert's relics were brought on a litter (*scala*) to one of Noirmoutier's domains called Ampen, about three miles from the coast. Still optimistic but unsure, the monks carried St. Filibert inside his ornamental marble sarcophagus – suggestive of the wishful expectation on the part of the monks that they would not be going far. It could also be that by bringing the sarcophagus, the monks hoped to bring as many items associated with St. Filibert's cult as they could given the short distance, or that they wished to disturb their patron's bones as little as possible. Bringing the sarcophagus could also have been a way of guaranteeing the authenticity of the otherwise anonymous bones contained within. Whatever the case, their actions are a far cry from the hasty breaking open of tombs and grabbing of relics that characterized most forced relic translations that occurred in other provinces during the ninth century.

St. Filibert's bearers paused at Ampen for one day before continuing to Varinnus (today, Bois-de-Cene) and arriving at Palus (Paulx) on June 10. The next day, St. Filibert's relics arrived at Déas where they were greeted with a jubilant *adventus*, including so many revelers "of either sex that the population of them was uncountable."⁴⁰⁵ Abbot Hilbod lost no time enhancing the church there in order to make it worthy to receive the relics.⁴⁰⁶ The little *villa* at Déas was enlarged throughout the later 830s into the monastery of St.-Philibert-de-Grandlieu, about fifteen miles south of Nantes.

⁴⁰⁵ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 63 (book 2, ch. 1): "...atque hinc Deas monasterium cum sancto fuissemus, sicuti relatum est, pignore ingressi, tanta utriusque sexus adfuit populi multitudo, ut innumerabilis esse penitus censeretur..."

⁴⁰⁶ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 34-5 (book 1, ch. 28).

Their attention to the church at Déas, too, set an important precedent. The monks of Noirmoutier were evidently torn between their expectation of a quick return to their island and the humiliation of having to “rough it” with the relics of their holy patron. The obvious solution to this problem was to aggrandize the relics’ new home as quickly and as convincingly as possible. This probably had a number of positive effects, such as an increase in morale among the exiles, a demonstration of the newly-arrived cult’s wealth and importance to unfamiliar locals, and an outlet for the patronage of civil authorities who were eager to come to the aid of monasteries in danger.

Meanwhile back on the island of Noirmoutier, the Vikings took advantage of the vacuum of authority there to set up a camp of their own from which they began to stage attacks across the Bas-Poitou.⁴⁰⁷ They would remain in the area more or less permanently throughout the 840s.⁴⁰⁸ It is hard to imagine a more transparent conversion of Christian land to pagan: Viking usurpers literally moved in and took over the island that had been abandoned by its eponymous monastery, and there was nothing any Frank seemed to be able to do about it.

By summer, 846, Viking raiders “set fire to the island of Noirmoutier,” presumably burning St. Filibert’s empty monastery, before returning to Scandinavia.⁴⁰⁹ Ermentarius fails to mention it, but news of the burning must have been disheartening to the monks in exile at Déas, who were now sufficiently

⁴⁰⁷ According to the *Annales Bertiniani*, 29 [anno 843], Vikings attacked Nantes in 843 from an “insulam quondam” in “inferiores partes Aquitaniae,” probably Noirmoutier.

⁴⁰⁸ In 845, the Vikings audaciously left Noirmoutier for their unsuccessful attack against Galicia in Spain. They were back in the Basse-Loire within the year. *Annales Bertiniani*, 32 [anno 845]. Lot and Halphen, *Le règne de Charles le Chauve*, 1, 186.

⁴⁰⁹ *Annales Engolismenses*, MGH SS, 16, 486 [anno 846]: “Herus insula mense Julio a Normannis succenditur.”

concerned for their welfare to ask Charles the Bald's ally Count Vivien of Tours for another refuge further east for them to flee to. Vivien gave them a *villa* called Cunault (Conaldus) in Anjou.⁴¹⁰ The monks' concerns were validated when Viking raiders returned the next year and made straight for Déas. This drove the monks to Cunault, and just after they left in 847, Déas appears to have been destroyed.⁴¹¹

Surprisingly, the monks did not take the body of Filibert with them from Déas to Cunault at that time. Just as when they left the island of Noirmoutier for the mainland nine years earlier, they clung to the hope that they would not have to stay long at Cunault. Their nonchalance about St. Filibert's relics shows that the monks believed that the pagan invaders would be unlikely to make off with either Filibert's corpse or his stone sarcophagus. In spite of Ermentarius' worries "that evil men might enter into the sepulcher of St. Filibert, dig it up, and scatter him to the winds,"⁴¹² the other monks of Noirmoutier do not seem to have feared that the Vikings would desecrate his shrine.

Moreover, the monks' departure to Cunault meant that the monks themselves had left for Anjou in Neustria, but left their relics behind in Aquitaine. This rare example of monks willingly parting from their own relics is a symptom of Noirmoutier's caution at this early stage in the attacks, and perhaps, of their unwillingness once again to fully turn their backs on their old home. The monks

⁴¹⁰ Vivian had only just received this villa as a gift from Charles the Bald the prior August. A diploma of Charles the Bald records their possession of it. *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 1, 217-9 (no. 77).

⁴¹¹ *Annales Engolismense*, 486 [anno 847]: "Normanni III. kal. april. Dias monasterium incendunt."

⁴¹² *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 24. See transcription below, note 433.

had not yet adopted their new status as permanent exiles. Before long, this too would change, and St. Filibert's relics would join the monks in exile at Cunault, beyond Aquitaine's borders.

1.4 Second and Third Translations of St. Filibert's Relics (858-62)

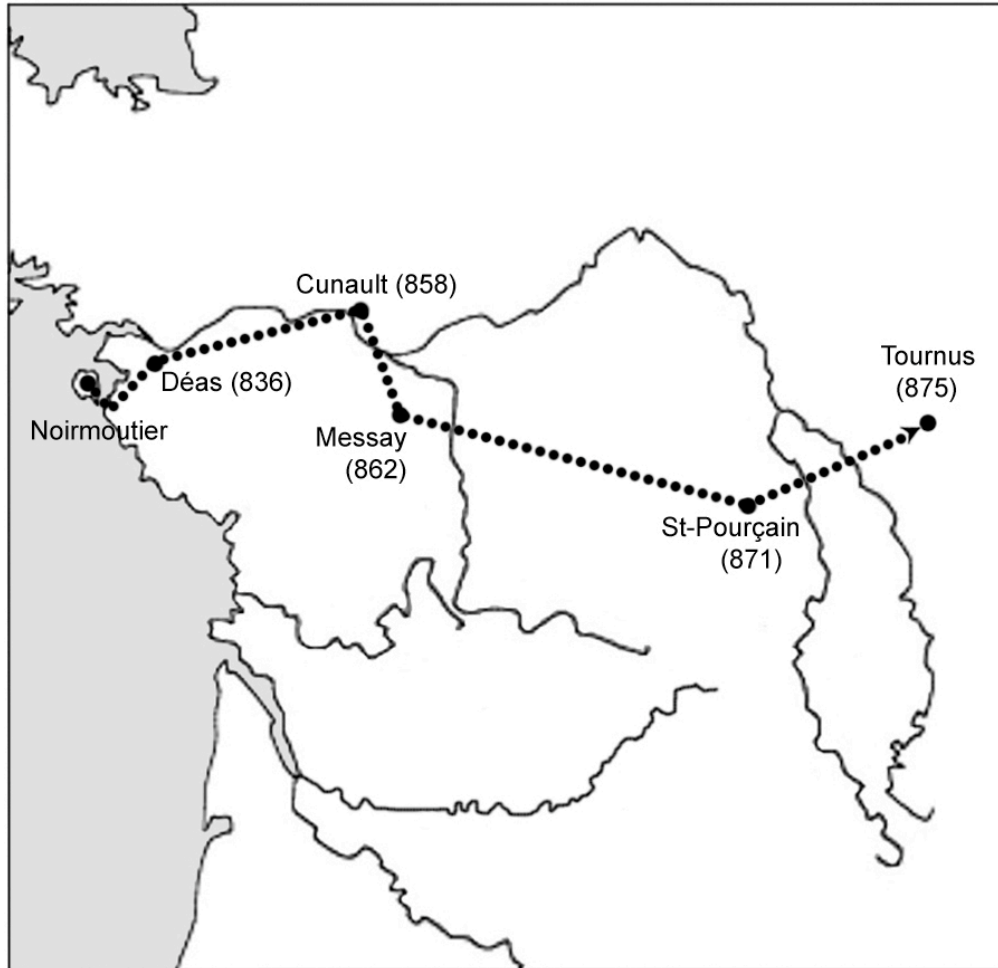
Despite efforts by Charles the Bald and his allies to pacify the Basse-Loire,⁴¹³ northern Aquitaine remained a hotbed of Viking activity. According to Ermentarius' account, the monks of Noirmoutier finally abandoned hope of returning to their first refuge at Déas (to say nothing of Noirmoutier itself) and exhumed St. Filibert's relics for reburial at Cunault in 858. There they rested for four years until spring, 862, when Viking mercenaries in the employ of Breton King Salomon attacked Neustria and threatened Cunault. As a result, the monks there decided it was necessary to relocate yet again. This time, they took the relics of St. Filibert with them as they fled.

The monks crossed the Loire and reentered Aquitaine, ultimately settling at a *villa* called Messay (Mesciacus) in Poitou. This *villa* had been given to the monks of Noirmoutier by Charles the Bald in 854, along with other royal domains in Poitou, the Thouarsais and the Herbauges as refuges in case the monks should have to move again.⁴¹⁴ On May 1, 862, St. Filibert's relics arrived in Messay without any of the pomp that had accompanied their earlier translation to Déas.

⁴¹³ Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, ch. 7.

⁴¹⁴ *Recueil des actes de Charles le Chauve*, 1, 478-80 (no. 180).

It was after this third relocation of St. Filibert's relics that Ermentarius began work on the section of his *Miracula S. Filiberti* describing the peregrinations of Filibert's relics to that point.⁴¹⁵ Ermentarius seems to have died not long after finishing the work, within a few years of the move to Messay.



Map 9: Translations of St. Filibert of Noirmoutier, 836-75.

⁴¹⁵ Poupardin, *Monuments de l'histoire*, xxxvi.

1.5 Movements of St. Filibert's Relics After Ermentarius' Death (870-5)

Although the *Miracula S. Filiberti* concluded with Ermentarius' death, the movements of St. Filibert's relics did not. St. Filibert's relics remained safe in Messay during attacks that struck elsewhere in Poitou in the late 860s, but by the early 870s, expanded Viking offensives forced the monks to consider yet another departure. When Ermentarius was alive, he insisted that he and his fellow monks dreamed of a quick return to their island of Noirmoutier. After Ermentarius' death, however, a new abbot-in-exile, Geilon, began to make plans for relocation even farther from their original home.

In 870, Geilon obtained possession of a *villa* called Goudet in Auvergne as a donation from Charles the Bald upon which he planned to build a new monastery in exile to house the relics.⁴¹⁶ The villa at Goudet does not seem to have been employed for this purpose, however. While they remained at Messay in 871, Charles the Bald awarded Abbot Geilon another abbey in the Auvergne called St.-Pourçain-sur-Sioule (Porcianus) "so that, as long as the Norman persecution persisted, they would not have to wander to and fro without a fixed residence in search of a suitable place of refuge."⁴¹⁷ Later sources claim that St.

⁴¹⁶ *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 2, 266-8 (no. 344): "...Filiberto ac monachis sibi famulatibus de regno Aquitanorum fugientibus a facie paganorum et nusquam residentiae ac quietis habentibus locum... pro remedio animae meae et suae tribueremus."

⁴¹⁷ *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 2, 285-7 (no. 353): "transferimus, ut quandiu persecutio Normandorum invaluerit, eandem abbatiam sancti Porciani jam dicti fratres [possideant] nec huc illucque vacillantes discurrant ad locum refugii congratulantes aptum."

Filibert's relics were brought to St.-Pourçain within a year and that the journey was marked by many impressive miracles.⁴¹⁸

The monks remained in the Auvergne for a few years, but nothing indicates that they intended to settle there definitively. Just the opposite, Charles the Bald presented Abbot Geilon and his monks with the monastery of St.-Valérien de Tournus in Burgundy, plus all its dependencies, in 875. Charles also confirmed all of his earlier gifts to them, and freed them from some other obligations to the crown.⁴¹⁹ This was a major regnal event for Charles, with a gold-sealed charter that emphasized the duty of the Christian emperor to provide for the *servi dei*, especially those "fleeing the ferocious assaults of the pagans."⁴²⁰ St. Filibert's relics arrived at their new monastery in Tournus near the Saône River on May 14, 875.⁴²¹

Tournus, at last, seemed like a secure refuge. Beyond the bounds of Aquitaine and as far from any coast as one could be in Francia, no Vikings had been seen there since the early 860s, and never before that. In Tournus, the long-wandering monks of Noirmoutier at last found a stable platform from which to administrate their patrimony, which thanks to the gifts they received from

⁴¹⁸ Falco, *Chronicon Trenorchiense*, published in R. Poupardin, *Monuments de l'histoire*, 85-86 (ch. 23). The Chronicle of Tournus was composed by an Aquitainian named Falco, who was probably a monk at Tournus. Little is known about the author, except that he dedicated his work to Abbot Peter of Tournus (r. 1066-1105), dating his composition to the late eleventh or very early twelfth century. Falco clearly had access to the writings of Ermentarius, and given the precision of his descriptions, he must also have been familiar with other texts describing the transfers of Filibert's body during the ninth and tenth century. Poupardin, *Monuments*, xlv.

⁴¹⁹ *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 2, 342-7 (no. 378).

⁴²⁰ "...paganorum truculentos impetus fugientes...." Tessier, "Diplome de Charles le Chauve pour saint Philibert de Tournus," *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 93 (1932), 197-207. See also F. Lifshitz, "Migration of Neustrian Relics," 192.

⁴²¹ Falco, *Chronicon Trenorchiense*, 86-7 (ch. 24).

concerned *committentes* during the invasions now stretched all the way back to the Atlantic.

1.6 Implications

The translation of St. Filibert, as preserved in the *Miracula S. Filiberti* and related documents, highlight a number of factors governing the movements of Aquitaine's holy bodies during the Viking attacks. The most conspicuous of these is the importance of local and imperial politics within the province, examined in Part Two below. Here as in Brittany and Neustria, the relative strength of the Carolingian dynasty helped determine the consequences of the attacks and the number of relic shrines that were affected. Part Three describes the subsequent emergence of localized, alternate sources of patronage within the province. The political circumstances governing these developments were especially complex in Aquitaine, on the one hand because of the province's distance from the centers of Carolingian power, and on the other because of the particularly virulent intra-Carolingian rivalries that ignited there. The politics of relic evacuation were of particular concern to Ermentarius, who aimed his strongest rhetorical criticisms at Aquitaine's lay political leaders as he attempted to cope with his monastery's eviction during the attacks.

Ermentarius and other commentators also shed more light on the way responses to the attacks changed with time. Part Four below considers the way different models of forced relic translation employed at Noirmoutier and

elsewhere matured during the course of the attacks. Part Five focuses on the geographical implications of relic evacuation in Aquitaine, with an emphasis on the fragmentation of Aquitaine's political, physical and spiritual landscape as it is reflected in the province's forced relic translation accounts.

1.7 Other Aquitanian Sources

While Ermentarius' *Miracula S. Filiberti* remains the foremost witness to Viking-era developments involving Aquitanian relic cults, other narrative and annalistic sources expand the already broad geographical and chronological horizons of Ermentarius' text, pushing beyond the bounds of the Loire and its tributaries and past Ermentarius' death in the 860s to demonstrate variations on St. Filibert's experience all over Aquitaine continuing well into the tenth century.

The hagiographical corpus dealing with Aquitanian saints is smaller than that in most other Frankish provinces. It appears that the attacks on monasteries and the flight of relics in Aquitaine failed to produce the flourish of hagiographical texts that aimed to explain and justify Viking-era anomie in Brittany and Neustria. It seems likely that the tradition of literary production in Aquitaine was insufficiently robust to withstand the confusion and dislocation of the eighth and ninth centuries without frequent lapses. The "Carolingian Renaissance" had not penetrated as deeply into Aquitaine as elsewhere in the empire,⁴²² and never

⁴²² R. Sullivan, "The Carolingian Age: Reflections on Its Place in the History of the Middle Ages," *Speculum*, 64 (1989), 267; J. Nelson, "On the Limits of the Carolingian Renaissance," in J. Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (1996), 49–67; Poulin, *L'idéal de sainteté dans l'Aquitaine Carolingienne*, 10-12.

generated any major “centers” of hagiographic production in Aquitaine as it did elsewhere in the empire. Rather, the production of ecclesiastical texts was thinly diffused throughout the province, with only Limoges and Poitiers standing out as noteworthy minor centers.⁴²³ Even small disruptions in monastic life across the province, therefore, had significant deleterious effects on the number and quality of surviving sources.

Beyond Ermentarius’ text and a handful of other hagiographic sources, the history of relic translation in the province is best preserved in annalistic sources, including the *Annales Engolismenses*⁴²⁴ and the *Annales Lemovicenses*,⁴²⁵ which commence in the early ninth century. Among later sources, the most dependable is Adémar of Chabannes’ *Chronicon Aquitanicum*. Adémar composed his three-volume chronicle of Aquitanian history in Limoges after the end of the Viking attacks in the province. Although his detailed descriptions of the Viking era have earned more respect from modern historians than those of Dudo of St. Quentin or other even later commentators,⁴²⁶ many of Adémar’s sources remain obscure. Given the shortage of alternatives, however, Adémar’s descriptions remain useful supplements for many aspects of the time of troubles in ninth and tenth century Aquitaine.⁴²⁷

⁴²³ Poulin, *L'idéal de sainteté dans l'Aquitaine Carolingienne*, 13.

⁴²⁴ MGH SS, 16, 485-487.

⁴²⁵ MGH SS, 2, 251.

⁴²⁶ C. de Lasteyrie, *L'abbaye de Saint-Martial de Limoges* (Paris, 1901), x.

⁴²⁷ For background on Adémar and the manuscript tradition surrounding the *Chronicon Aquitanicum* and other surviving texts, see R. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Adémar of Chabannes, 989-1034* (Cambridge, 1995), 3-23.

PART TWO: Carolingian Politics and Forced Relic Translations in Aquitaine

As in other provinces, the strength of the Carolingians and their ability to safeguard relic cults had a major impact on the ability of cults to maintain prosperity and stability during the attacks. Carolingian dynastic difficulties were especially acute in Aquitaine, where Charles the Bald faced a decades-long rebellion by his disaffected nephew, Pippin II of Aquitaine. Pippin II had been disinherited from the Aquitainian *regnum* after his father, Pippin I, predeceased Louis the Pious in 838. Louis instead assigned the *regnum* to Charles the Bald, and Aquitaine's nobility was split over which Carolingian heir to support as the province's legitimate ruler. From 838 into the mid-860s, a persistent civil war simmered in Aquitaine as each contender was able to draw on a pool of local aristocrats disaffected by the other side.⁴²⁸ These problems were further exacerbated by meddling from Charles' brothers, Louis the German and Lothar, throughout the 850s.

The bitter fight for control of Aquitaine was born of the importance of the province and its churches as a source of power for the Carolingian dynasty. Aquitaine's mines, mints, and manors provided crucial wealth for the crown, and its churches formed an essential pillar of support for Charles and his relatives. Aquitaine was also crucial because of its political significance: Charles' control over the *regnum* of Aquitaine represented his primary inheritance from his father and formed the main foundation of his political legitimacy. He worked to maintain

⁴²⁸ Pippin I's reign in Aquitaine was not without rebels and malcontents, but unrest quickly multiplied after his death. For a full account of this transition, see Auzias, *L'Aquitaine carolingienne*, 117-8.

vital personal alliances as insurance against loss of control there, and exercised his prerogative over major ecclesiastical appointments as a way of cementing his ties to Aquitaine's church leadership.⁴²⁹ Amid the disruption of the attacks, he lavished gifts of valuable patrimony to strengthen the gratitude of Aquitainian monasteries like Noirmoutier. All branches of the Carolingian family were deeply invested in Aquitaine,⁴³⁰ and their success or failure there was a matter of no small importance for the province's kings and relic cults alike.

2.1 Ermentarius' Criticism of Carolingian Failures

Ermentarius was acutely aware of the relationship between the Carolingian dynasty and the health of his province and monastery. Indeed, Ermentarius' *Miracula S. Filiberti* spends as much time complaining about infighting between competing Carolingian princes as it does about Viking depredation. His explanation for the monks' initial departure from Noirmoutier begins not with the arrival of the first Norse raiders, but with a description of the civil war between the quarrelsome sons of Louis the Pious. While he looks back on Emperor Louis with happy memory, Ermentarius blames Charles the Bald, Lothar, and Louis the German for the trouble that increasingly dogged Noirmoutier in the ninth century. Recounting the *discordia* that accompanied the division of the kingdom after Louis the Pious' death in 840, Ermentarius describes in dramatic present tense (and with scant sympathy for any side) the

⁴²⁹ Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 164-5.

⁴³⁰ Eastern Carolingians also recognized Aquitaine's tremendous value: it was Louis the German's first target when he attempted to seize the west from Charles in 858.

“enmity that grows first between the brothers, then between their magnates.

Younger brothers Louis and Charles rise up against their older brother Lothar and a horrible civil war erupts. Lothar cedes victory to his miserable junior siblings.”⁴³¹

Although none of the fighting between the brothers touched Noirmoutier directly, Ermentarius was clearly worried about the larger consequences of disunity among the empire’s rulers. For Ermentarius, the fighting was an abrogation of the divine plan (*fas*) for the Frankish people. Ermentarius seems to condemn all the imperial factions as well as the local aristocrats that supported them when he laments that “all sides carried on in sin.”⁴³² The infighting distracted the Carolingians and their Aquitainian magnates from their role as defenders of the church, diverted resources from the church’s mission, and most ominously, it “attracted foreign invaders” who preyed on vulnerable religious institutions. “The protectors of Aquitaine,” Ermentarius continues, “have dropped

⁴³¹ Ermetarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 60-1 (book 2, *praefatio*): “Porro successor regni Hludovici imperatoris Karolus extiterat, qui aula in regia nutriebatur, quando suprascripti ejus fratres suo quisque, Hlotarius videlicet et Hludowicus, Pipino ante patrem mortuo, potebatur regno... [F]it primo inter suprascriptores discordia fratres, tunc demum inter regni primores. Deinde insurgunt fratres juniores Hludovicus et Karolus in Hlotharium seniore[m] fratrem. Conglobantur orribilia bella veluti intestina, cedit victoria lugubris atque miserabilis junioribus fratribus; illorum discordia addit vires extraneis; relinquitur fas, pergitur per nefas, deseritur custodia litorum maris Oceani; cessant bella extrinsecus, crassantur intrinsecus; augescit numerus navium, crescit innumerabilis multitudo Nortmannorum; fiunt passim Christianorum strages, depredationes, vastationes, incensiones, sicuti quamdiu seculum stabit manifestis patebit indiciiis. Capiuntur quascumque adeunt civitates, nemine resistente; capitur Burdegalensium, Petrocorium, Sanctonum, Lemovicensium, Egolisma atque Tolosa civitas; Andecavensium, Turonensium perinde et Aurelianensium civitates pessumdantur. Transportantur sanctorum cineres quamplurium, fit poene illud quod per prophetam Dominus minatur: ab Aquilone pandetur malum super omnes habitatores terre.”

⁴³² This attitude was widespread among Carolingian churchmen. P. Godman *Poets and Emperors: Frankish Politics and Carolingian Poetry* (Oxford, 1987) traces this attitude in great detail, citing major church figures like Lupus of Ferrières, Ermold Nigellus, Paschasius Radbertus, and many others from all parts of Franica who saw the internecine conflict as a perversion of the Carolingians’ sanctified role as defenders of the church and architects of Christ’s kingdom on earth.

their guard on the ocean shores, they have ceased fighting external foes and march instead on internal enemies. The number of Viking ships is growing daily, the uncountable numbers of Northmen continue to increase... Everywhere Christians are massacred, robbed and destroyed. So common are the signs of this destruction that they will stand plainly until the end of time.”

Ermentarius’ fear was not confined to his own island monastery. The *Miracula S. Filiberti* catalogs the cities threatened by Vikings across Aquitaine: “they seize every city they come upon, with no one able to resist them: Bordeaux, Périgueux, Limoges, Angoulême, and Toulouse have all succumbed to destruction, to say nothing of the annihilation of Angers, Tours and Orléans.” Ermentarius notes that Aquitaine’s monasteries suffered as heavily as its cities, with “the relics of a great many saints carried off from their sepulchers.” Finally, he concludes his cheerless report by resignedly quoting scripture and, significantly, not from one of its cheerier parts: “That which was foretold by the prophet of God has come to pass: ‘From the north will break forth a great evil over all the inhabitants of the land.’”⁴³³

Ermentarius’ grim synopsis of Aquitaine’s ninth century woes underscores the close connections he saw between royal politics, the arrival of Viking raiders, and the dispersion of saints’ relics in the twenty-odd years of intermittent civil war after 840. His condemnation of the Carolingians is surprising in light of his quickness to give credit to Pippin I of Aquitaine and Charles the Bald when they provided emergency *refugii* to the monks during the attacks. Indeed, Ermentarius appears torn between gratitude and exasperation toward his Carolingian patrons

⁴³³ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 61, quoting Jeremiah 1:14

who had allowed Noirmoutier to become a target in the first place. He happily notes Pippin I's role in the construction of the *castrum* to protect Noirmoutier in 830, the one time the Carolingians took direct action of the kind Ermentarius hoped for, and he seems to have dedicated the *Miracula* to Charles' ally Hincmar of Reims with the express purpose of encouraging further favors from the royal court. In spite of these aspirations, however, Ermentarius clearly preferred the "peace" of imperial unity to the "persecution" that followed at the hands of Vikings who capitalized on the *horribilia bella intestina* (terrible civil war).⁴³⁴

As with other authors in other provinces, however, Ermentarius' most explicit criticism was reserved not for Carolingian princes but for Aquitaine's local defenders:

When [the Vikings], an excessively cruel people, began to descend on our island, they immediately devastated it... The landowning islanders chose rather to neglect the place by fleeing than to be buried daily in their own ruin... The throngs of Normans could in no way be deterred from our island, and we suffered never ending losses and tribulations. Conditions had become such that we feared that evil men might enter into the sepulcher of St. Filibert, dig it up, and scatter him to the winds – or rather throw him in the sea, as we had been told happened already to certain holy relics in Britain.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁴ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 60.

⁴³⁵ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti* (book 1), 24: "qui cum ad praefatae insulae portum saepius convolarent eamque, utpote gens admodum efferata, acerrime subinde devastarent, exemplum sui domini insulani secuti, elegerunt magis fugae subsidium quam quotidie proprium operiri exterminium, et hoc qualitate temporis exigente... crebris Nortmannorum accessibus praedicti insulani non modo deterreri, verum etiam suorum dampna perpeti ac nimiis tribulationibus affligi. Re enim vera hoc quam maxime pertimescentes erant, ne beati Filiberti sepulcrum perfidi homines effoderent et quae intus invenissent hac illaque dispergerent vel potius in mare proicerent, quemadmodum in partibus Britanniae de cuiusdam sancti viri cineribus noscuntur egisse..." Ermentarius' criticism was not solely reserved for Aquitanian aristocrats. Commenting on concurrent attacks along the Seine in Neustria, Ermentarius heaps scorn on local defenders there, too, who "all took flight - rare was the man who said, 'Stay, stay! Resist! Fight for your country, your liberty and your people!'" (*Miracula S. Filiberti* (book 2), 62: "omnes fugam arripiunt, rarus est qui dicat: 'State, state, resistite, pugnate pro patria, liberis et gente!'"

Here, Ermentarius echoes the rhetorical strategy deployed by Neustrian authors (see Chapter 3 above) of assigning blame to local magnates in hopes of securing still more patronage from the increasingly overwhelmed west Frankish imperial court. This strategy appears to have borne fruit for the monks of Noirmoutier, considering that Charles involved himself in every grant of land given to the monks of Noirmoutier after their initial escape to Déas.⁴³⁶

Ermentarius' emphasis on the interconnectedness between Carolingian imperial politics and the fate of relic cults during the attacks was not far from the mark. After the commencement of large-scale Viking attacks in Aquitaine in the early 840s, the frequency and severity of attacks correlate precisely with Charles the Bald's fluctuating political fortunes and the emergence, after his death, of the local *defensores* that rose up to assume patronage over the province's cults.

2.2 Rhythms of Attack and Control

In Aquitaine, as in Neustria and Brittany, Viking success was frequently a function of Carolingian failure. A brief look at Charles' career as ruler of Aquitaine shows how imperial weakness in Aquitaine corresponded with increasing Norse attacks on Aquitanian relic shrines.

Charles' continuing struggles with his brothers and with his recalcitrant nephew Pippin II of Aquitaine in the 840s were the prime destabilizing culprits.

⁴³⁶ The monks of Noirmoutier already possessed Déas, but Charles was instrumental in the donation of the villa of Cunault by his vassal Count Vivien, and gave them the important *villae* of Messay in 854, St.-Pourçain in 871, and Tournus in 875, not long before his death (see above, section 1.5).

From the perspective of Aquitainian hagiographers, the civil war between the Carolingians was a major distraction that left no side in a position to defend the province's cults. While Charles fought with Pippin II (and other family members), Viking attacks precipitated monastic evacuations in all of the province's river systems.

Vikings attacked targets along the Loire, the Dordogne, and the Garonne repeatedly during the early years of Charles's struggle with his family members in the 840s.⁴³⁷ The annalist Prudentius described Vikings "pillaging in all directions with impunity"⁴³⁸ and affecting important cult sites throughout western Aquitaine. Among the most spectacular attacks were the siege of Bordeaux in 845, the first important, walled city taken by the Vikings in Francia, and the sack of Toulouse in 844, more than two hundred miles inland. Monastic evacuations during the period included the eviction of the monks of the monastery of Punat, near St.-Alvère, who were forced to relocate to Vabres in Aveyron in search of safety in 848,⁴³⁹ and the evacuation of the relics of St. Martial from his shrine in Limoges in 845.⁴⁴⁰ The monks of Noirmoutier also fled their first refuge at Déas for Cunault in 847.

As long as the intra-dynastic struggle continued, neither Charles nor Pippin II could make any kind of stand against the Vikings. The chronicler Adémar of Chabannes blamed the civil war between Pippin II and Charles for

⁴³⁷ These attacks have been described in detail by Auzias, *L'Aquitaine Carolingienne*, 194-6; C. Higounet, *Histoire de l'Aquitaine*, (Toulouse, 1971), 148-9; A. Lewis, *The Development of Southern French and Catalan Society, 718-1050*, (Austin, 1965), 100-101.

⁴³⁸ *Annales Bertiniani*, 32 [anno 844]: "Nordomanni per Garrondam Tolosam usque proficiscentes, praedas passim inpuneque perficiunt."

⁴³⁹ This occurred in 848. Noblet, "Les monastères francs et les invasions normandes," 298.

⁴⁴⁰ See below, section 3.2.

“turning Aquitaine’s defenders against themselves” instead of the Vikings.⁴⁴¹

Occasionally, however, Charles managed to win a reprieve in the civil war and focus his attention on Aquitaine’s Viking problem. Charles was unable to take advantage of the peace following the Treaty of Verdun in 843 because of more threatening Viking attacks in which required his attention in Neustria,⁴⁴² but he did find an opportunity during the relative peace of the year 848 to destroy a Viking fleet returning along the Dordogne in 848. Thanks to this offensive, St.-Martial of Limoges was able to reestablish itself and recall its exiled relics. In a familiar pattern, however, as soon as this had been achieved, renewed rebellions among Charles’ own family members forced him to abort the counterattack.⁴⁴³

In 851 Charles was again able to turn his full attention to Aquitaine. In that year, he captured Pippin II and witnessed the death of Breton king Nominoë. In 852 he made peace with his brother Lothar as well, and discovered a dependable ally in his newly-promoted magnate Robert the Strong, who proved to be an extremely energetic defender against the Vikings.⁴⁴⁴ This convergence of circumstances allowed Charles to re-exert his hegemony in Aquitaine and halt the departure of the province’s threatened relics. For a few years, no raids or evacuations were recorded in Aquitaine.

Unfortunately for the stability of the province, Aquitaine’s respite from Viking incursions was short-lived. This is directly attributable to renewed infighting within the Carolingian family, fomented by Aquitaine’s truculent

⁴⁴¹ Ademar, *Chronicon Aquitanicum*, 121: “His temporibus Normanni diffusi sunt per Aquitaniam, quia duces ejus inter se bellis deciderant, nec erat qui eis resisteret.”

⁴⁴² See Chapter 3, section 2.1 and 2.2

⁴⁴³ Auzias, *L’Aquitaine Carolingienne*, 196.

⁴⁴⁴ Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 172-3.

aristocracy. Charles saw carefully built alliances with his brothers implode again into violence as disgruntled nobles reignited the civil war by inviting Louis the German to take control of the province.⁴⁴⁵

According to the *Annales Bertiniani*, a Viking raiding party appeared on the Loire in June, 853, to exploit renewed political divisions among the Franks. They sacked the monastery at St.-Florent-le-Vieil.⁴⁴⁶ From there, attacks radiated into the surrounding countryside by both sea and land. More impressively, the Loire Vikings next launched a brazen overland attack by horseback against Poitiers, the largest and most populous city in Aquitaine.⁴⁴⁷ The attack failed to breach the city's Gallo-Roman walls, but it was an undeniable indication that even far from the usual riverine invasion routes, Charles was failing to protect the province's wealthiest targets.

During the remainder of the mid-850s and into the 860s, Aquitaine was a near-constant battleground between Carolingians. Louis the German attempted to overthrow Charles from there, and Pippin II escaped capture in 855 and renewed his war against Charles. By 858, Aquitaine swung wildly as various

⁴⁴⁵ These enemies included Louis the German and a newly-escaped Pippin II. For an in-depth discussion of Charles' various problems in the 850s, see Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 165-73, and A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou (778-993)* 1, (Paris, 1903) (reprint 2003), 22, note 2.

⁴⁴⁶ *Annales Bertiniani*, 47-8 [anno 853]: "Dani mense Iulio, relicta Sequana, Ligerim adeuntes, Namnetium [Nantes] urbem et monasterium sancti Florentii [St-Florent-le-Vieil] ac vicina loca populantur."

⁴⁴⁷ Adrevald of Fleury, *Miracula Sancti Benedicti*, MGH SS, 15, no. 1, 494 (ch. 33): "Irruptionibus namque creberrimis cuncta vastando circumeuntes [Nortmanni], primo pedites quidem, eo quod equitandi peritia deesset, deinde equis evecti more nostrorum, omnia pervaguntur...Ex qua inopinatos discursus agitantes, modo navibus, modo equis delati, totam circumcirca delevere provinciam. Et primo adventu urbem Namneticam [Nantes] incendio cremavere, dein Andegavensem [Angers] percurrentes regionem, ipsam quidem civitatem concremant, Pictavorem [Poitiers] vero castella atque vicos omnemque patriam a mari usque eandem Pictavem urbem populantur, vastant, caedibus replentibus omnia."

internal and external factions battled for control.⁴⁴⁸ Charles managed to survive these dangers, but Aquitaine became a hotbed of Viking activity in the meantime.

The experience of Noirmoutier during the 850s shows how Carolingian infighting allowed Viking raids to threaten Aquitanian religious institutions. The monks of Noirmoutier's exhumation of St. Filibert's relics for reburial at Cunault, for example, coincides with the near-total collapse of Charles the Bald's regime in 858 under attacks by Louis the German. St. Filibert's subsequent translation from Cunault to Messay in 862, likewise, corresponds with the rebellion of Charles the Bald's sons in Aquitaine that year.⁴⁴⁹ Beyond its effect on Noirmoutier, the latter revolt encouraged a massive, multi-pronged Viking offensive that affected relic shrines all along the Loire and Charente rivers. During these raids, the monastery of St.-Cybard and the town of Angoulême were sacked,⁴⁵⁰ and Poitiers was besieged for a second time. The Vikings again failed to capture Poitiers, but they did burn the monastery of St.-Hilary, located just outside the city's walls.⁴⁵¹ They also likely damaged other extramural monasteries of St.-Cyprian and St.-Croix.⁴⁵²

Viking attacks increased as the civil war between the various Aquitanian factions escalated in the 860s. By the start of 864, increasingly emboldened

⁴⁴⁸ For the complex internal politics of Aquitaine during this period and Charles role, see Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 173-202.

⁴⁴⁹ F. Lot, "La Loire, l'Aquitaine, et la Seine, 482; Auzias, *L'Aquitaine Carolingienne*, 243.

⁴⁵⁰ Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 202; Ademar, *Chronicon Aquitanicum*, 122: "Quo tempore gravissime Normanni Aquitaniam affligebant, et Helias Scotigena Engolismenses episcopus defunctus est, monasterium quoque beati Eparchii (St-Cybard) ab infestantibus paganis desolatum est, ita ut ibi nullus monachorum habitaret, et hac de re canonicalis habitus ibi reverteretur, qui nuper exierat."

⁴⁵¹ *Annales Bertiniani*, 66 [anno 863]: "Normanni Pictavis venerant, sub redemptione civitate servate, ecclesiam sancti Hilarii magni conferssoris incenderint."

⁴⁵² *Annales Engolismenses*, 486.

Vikings appeared as deep inside Aquitaine as they ever had before, pillaging abbeys as far east as in province as Clermont.⁴⁵³ Vikings returned to the lower Limousin, causing more refugees to flee to the mountains of the Massif Central.⁴⁵⁴ Nearly all of Aquitaine was overwhelmed, and even far eastern regions in the Auvergne or the Limousin were no longer safe from attack.

Carolingian forces also failed to prevent the second sack of the city of Bordeaux in 864. With the episcopal palace in flames and the city's most important citizens having fled, Bishop Frotarius of Bordeaux was also driven off as a fugitive to Poitiers. Such was the damage to his see that he despaired of ever being able to return. In commiseration, Pope John VIII granted Frotarius permission to abdicate his responsibilities to Bordeaux's ruined churches. Charles the Bald, in a belated effort to help the bishop, made him abbot of St.-Hilary instead.⁴⁵⁵ This left Bordeaux without episcopal leadership for the remainder of the ninth century.

During the last decade of Charles' reign, the Viking threat to Aquitanian religious institutions appears to tail off. This is probably an indication of the increasing stability of Charles' reign as he defeated (or outlived) his many rivals in the late 860s and 870s. But it could also conversely reflect the fact that much of Aquitaine had fallen nearly entirely out of the Carolingian sphere by the end of Charles' reign. The deterioration of centralized Carolingian authority in large parts of Aquitaine appears to have been total: not a single Carolingian diploma

⁴⁵³ *Annales Bertiniani*, 66 [anno 863].

⁴⁵⁴ From the *Translatio S. Faustae*, AASS, Jun. I, col. 1091-92. Auzias, *L'Aquitaine Carolingienne*, 244-5; F. Lot, "La Loire, l'Aquitaine, et la Seine," 486, note 2.

⁴⁵⁵ Lot, "La Loire, l'Aquitaine, et la Seine de 862 à 866," 499-500.

survives anywhere south of the Dordogne after 866.⁴⁵⁶ Those few Aquitainian institutions whose records do survive during this scantily documented period did indeed continue to evacuate in the face of continuing Viking attacks. St. Filibert's relics, for example, were evacuated to St.-Pourçain in 872 and again to Tournus in 875 because of continuing Viking activity in northern Aquitaine.⁴⁵⁷ Other Aquitainian monasteries further south may have been luckier, or they may have endured Viking exile outside the notice of surviving sources.

Whatever real or illusory "peace" existed in late ninth century Aquitaine came at great cost to Charles and his descendents since it was increasingly brokered by local and regional strongmen. Charles' relatives continued to claim power in Aquitaine, but their short and ineffective reigns sank any chance for a renewal of undisputed Carolingian hegemony there. By the tenth century, as will become clear below, Aquitaine's defense was increasingly delegated to local counts. It fell to these local defenders to create a new social and political order built on reconstructed relationships of mutual support and protection with Aquitaine's relic cults.

⁴⁵⁶ Higounet, *Histoire de l'Aquitaine*, 150-1.

⁴⁵⁷ St. Filibert's relics were probably joined in exile at nearly the same time by the other relics fleeing Poitou, notably those of Sts. Hilary and Radegund of Poitiers, which were believed by later writers to have been briefly translated to out of Aquitaine to Dijon. Evidence for this comes from the *Acta S. Prudentii martyris translationes et miracula*, AASS, Oct. III, col. 348-78, which states that the "corpus beatissimi Prudentii allatum Divioni [Dijon] propter firmissimam loci munitionem...sicut corpus egregii doctoris Hilarii et beatae Radegundis a Pictavibus, aliaque perplura sanctorum pignora ab aliis provinciis."

2.3 The Paradox of Carolingian Control during the Viking Era

The importance of Carolingian power to the province's stability underscores a major paradox of the Viking attacks in Aquitaine: they were thoroughly dominated by the rhythms of Carolingian control despite Aquitaine's relative isolation from the seats of Carolingian power.

As a province, Aquitaine remained caught in a middle ground. It was a peripheral territory compared to Neustria, among the first to ultimately fall away from Carolingian power. But it was not so peripheral that it strove for its own independent identity like Celtic-oriented Brittany. Far from advancing their own home-grown dynasty as the Bretons did, Aquitainian nobles and ecclesiastics come off as surprisingly patriotic defenders of Carolingian power. They never sought true independence and always rallied patriotically behind a *bona fide* member of the Carolingian family, be it Pippin II, Louis the German, Charles the Bald, or Charles' later descendents. Rather than rejecting Carolingian kingship, the insubordinate bishops and seigneurs of Aquitaine seemed to have wanted a Carolingian of their own to rule them close at hand. Charles the Bald was a good choice when he was not distracted by his many problems, but any Carolingian prince who showed strong leadership and managed to hold his own against the Vikings in Aquitaine was likely to win the support of at least most of the province's *potentes* most of the time. Strong, unified Carolingian leadership was certainly all that Ermentarius hoped for when he excoriated the sons of Louis the Pious for their infighting. This explains his willingness to both praise and damn

the Carolingians in the *Miracula S. Filiberti* – he desperately wanted them to put aside their self-destructive machinations and live up to their consecrated image, working together with Aquitaine’s saints to build God’s kingdom on earth.

PART THREE: Competition for Spiritual Capital in Aquitaine

Like in Brittany, Neustria, and Saxony, forced relic translations in Aquitaine are prominent indicators of geopolitical change. Accelerating signs of Carolingian failure and the increasingly precarious situation of Aquitaine’s relic cults encouraged the rise of local competing cult patrons eager to build relationships with the province’s unprotected saints. The travels and miracles recorded by Aquitanian annalists and hagiographers expose the breakdown and reconstruction of the mutually-supporting patronage networks that were as essential to political legitimacy in Aquitaine as they were in the rest of the empire.

3.1 Carolingian Attempts to Maintain Patronage Networks in Aquitaine

The patronage received by religious institutions from imperial and local aristocratic sources had always complemented each other to the benefit of Aquitaine’s churches and monasteries. Local patronage remained a crucial source of support for Aquitanian cults, but during periods of Carolingian strength, royal patronage remained the gold standard. Even when centralized Carolingian influence in Aquitaine began to wane in the mid- and late-ninth century, Charles

the Bald and other members of his dynasty continued their attempts to foster and maintain patronage relationships with important Aquitainian cult centers as a means of retaining their clout within the *regnum*.

During the early years of Viking trouble in Aquitaine, competition for the loyalty of the province's cults came primarily from within the Carolingian dynasty itself. In the midst of civil war and Viking attacks, Charles the Bald and Pippin II vied with each other to secure the loyalty of Aquitaine's churches and monasteries, distributing an impressive array of benefices to Aquitainian monasteries. As the Viking offensive of 845 played out in the western part of Aquitaine, Charles gave property from the royal fisc to the abbeys near the affected cities of Poitiers and Toulouse, in addition to generous gifts to other houses throughout the province in areas near to where Viking attacks had occurred.⁴⁵⁸ Not to be outdone, Pippin II likewise donated *villae* to monasteries in Haut-Poitou and Limoges, both of which regions were raided by Vikings at that time.⁴⁵⁹ Although the documents fail to mention Charles' or Pippin II's motives, the timing and location of these gifts suggest that both claimants to the Aquitainian throne hoped to convince important abbots and other church officials that they would be able to make good any losses sustained during the Viking attacks.

More examples of continuing Carolingian patronage come as the attacks peaked in the 850s and 860s. Charles' royal *acta* contain frequent references to privileges, *loca refugii*, and gifts granted to monasteries like Noirmoutier even

⁴⁵⁸ Lewis, *Development*, 143.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

during the depths of his civil war in the mid-850s. When he could, Charles also sponsored direct military intervention in Aquitaine to push Viking raiders away from monastic and episcopal targets. His counteroffensive along the Loire in 856, for example, allowed Charles to reassert Carolingian authority over the region, and particularly around Nantes, where Bishop Actard set about reestablishing the Carolingian-sponsored church in the region.

By the later 860s, as we have seen, evidence for Carolingian involvement in cult patronage in southern and central Aquitaine rapidly diminishes. Charles' donations to Noirmoutier in the late 860s and 870s, show that he had not lost interest in Aquitanian cults. On the contrary, Charles' gifts of patrimony in Anjou and Burgundy can perhaps be seen as an attempt to maintain his relationship with the cult of St. Filibert by allowing the saint's relics to be physically removed into territory where Charles' control was stronger. These activities, along with sporadic donations and confirmations offered by his descendents into the early tenth century to Noirmouter and other nearby houses,⁴⁶⁰ demonstrate the continuing desire of Carolingians to remain useful to religious institutions at the farthest fringes of their shrinking kingdom.

⁴⁶⁰ In 882, King Carloman presented land to the Beaulieu in central Aquitaine, for example (M. Deloche, *Cartulaire de Beaulieu*, (Paris, 1859), no. 8, 20-2. Lewis, *Development*, 144. The appendix to Poupardin's *Monuments de l'histoire* also cites a series of late ninth and early tenth century charters indicating the continuing Carolingian interest in Noirmoutier until the end of the dynasty.

3.2 St. Martial of Limoges and the Rise of New Aquitainian Patrons

Still, there was no shortage of rival aristocrats interested in assuming a protective role over Aquitaine's cults. The realignment of local cult patronage links that occurred in Aquitaine during the Viking attacks often occurred naturally, as local *defensores* filled the deepening Carolingian vacuum by strengthening local defenses and granting resources to cults fleeing from other regions. Often, however, the redistribution of relic patronage was a contentious affair that had to be negotiated between local lay nobles, dislocated monks, and regional ecclesiastical officials.

The evacuation of the relics of St. Martial from his shrine in Limoges in 845⁴⁶¹ provides a vivid example of the rivalry that could surround forced relic translations in Aquitaine. The shrine of St.-Martial was the most important in Limoges, with significant links to the Carolingian royal family.⁴⁶² In part because of the civil war between their Carolingian patrons, however, the monks there began to fear that they were exposed to imminent Viking attack. They collected St. Martial's relics and abandoned Limoges for the safety of the nearby foothills of the Massif Central. Like Noirmoutier, the monks of St.-Martial had hopes of a quick return to Limoges once the danger had passed, but also like the monks of Noirmoutier, their plans were frustrated. In St. Martial's case, however, it was not Vikings who prevented their return but ambitious local nobles.

⁴⁶¹ The attack is recorded in Ademar's *Chronicon Aquitanicum*, 121: "Normanni diffusi sunt per Aquitaniam ... et cremata sunt ab eis ... Lemovicas."

⁴⁶² Lasteyrie chronicles these imprecisely documented links, *L'abbaye de Saint-Martial*, 42-4.

According to a sermon by Adémar of Chabannes, the relics of St. Martial were detained on their way home at the monastery of Solignac, just to the south of Limoges. Local seigneurs refused to allow them to complete their journey, and the relics remained in Solignac for two full years before a council of Aquitainian bishops in 847 finally brokered their return to Limoges.⁴⁶³ Although the monks of St.-Marital ultimately made it back to Limoges with their relics, this episode demonstrates how relic evacuations could quickly and unpredictably develop into relic thefts by opportunistic aristocrats hoping to seize powerful cults for themselves.

Relics like St. Martial's were particularly vulnerable to this kind of usurpation in transit, which explains why other houses like Noirmoutier stuck so closely to *villae* they already owned as they fled. In cases where none of Noirmoutier's *villae* were appropriate, the monks there took great care to secure proper places of refuge from the relevant civil authorities before they left and to ensure the king's awareness of and investment in every stage of their journey. Without this kind of explicit royal or episcopal support, which was available to only some Aquitainian monasteries, displaced relics could easily fall prey to opportunistic would-be *committentes* along their route.

In St.-Martial's case, the danger of Viking chaos derived not just from pagan destruction but also from the potential it created for local Christian

⁴⁶³ Adémar of Chabannes, Sermon (BN ms. lat. 2469, fol. 69), reprinted in Lasteyrie, *L'abbaye de Saint-Martial*, 49-50: "Transeuntibus enim...[reliquiis] per ipsum locum qui Solomniacus dicebatur... nullatenus ultra limpsanum illud [corpus sancti Marcialis] movere de loco potuerunt... Tandem aggregatis Aquitaniae episcopis et in dicto jejunio triduo quatinus causam divina pietas revelaret, cur ad proprium non se sineret reportari patronus, sepulchrum, revelatum est ... nec patronum de ipso loco velle prius ad pristium referri sepulchrum, quam ... [canonici] et vitam et mores mutarent et habitum."

communities to disrupt the existing order of monastic institutions for their own gain. In most cases, the willingness of local seigneurs to engage with displaced cults provided a mutually beneficial alternative to other failed patronage relationships. St. Martial's stint as a hostage at Solignac shows the extent to which local aristocrats were willing to go to build such relationships, but also demonstrates one potential down side of the loosening of patronage links during the Viking attacks.

3.3 Rival Dynasties

After the premature deaths of Charles the Bald's descendents in the 880s, towns and monasteries threatened by Viking attacks in Aquitaine lacked a Carolingian ruler to appeal to. Defense of Aquitanian cult sites fell rather to King Odo, who advanced into the province to push back Viking bands near Périgueux and Angoulême.⁴⁶⁴ By the time of Charles the Simple (r. 898-922), who never visited Aquitaine during his entire reign, the briefly resurgent Carolingians could make little claim as defenders or patrons of Aquitaine in a meaningful sense. Royal lands of the type that could be granted out as *loca refugii* increasingly fell into local aristocratic hands.⁴⁶⁵ The control over the flow of patronage that had allowed Charles the Bald to remain master of the Aquitanian church evaporated, and Aquitanian churchmen eschewed *Königsnähe* for the ablest *committens* near at hand, inserting themselves and their relics into new networks of

⁴⁶⁴ Higounet, *Histoire de l'Aquitaine*, 150-1.

⁴⁶⁵ Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 259.

patronage and support that were more localized than Carolingian networks that preceded them.

As local defenders gained strength, they worked to convince cults of the benefits of their patronage. The cult of St. Maxentius was subject to such an effort in the tenth century. As discussed in Chapter 2 above, St. Maxentius' relics had been taken from Aquitaine to the relative safety of Brittany during the Viking attacks of mid-ninth century, where they became a prime indication of Breton King Salomon's prowess as a rising *committens*. More than fifty years later, in order to coax the relics to return to their original home, Counts Aimieri of Thouars and Ebalus of Poitou advertised their own status as powerful *committentes* to the exiled monks. In c. 917, Count Aimeri sent word to St. Maxentius' shrine in Brittany offering generous gifts of land and rents (in addition to protection from Viking attacks, which were by then much worse in Brittany than in Poitou) if the relics would return.⁴⁶⁶

In this case, too, however, the monks bearing St. Maxentius' relics found themselves at the center of a struggle for control between rival aristocratic factions, each attempting to cajole the monks into resettling within their own territories. Although local aristocrats in Burgundy doted on them richly in hopes that they would divert from Poitou, the keepers of St. Maxentius were wooed by Aimeri, Ebalus, and the clergy of the church of St.-Peter in Poitiers.⁴⁶⁷ The resultant agreement ensured that the relics, along with their relevant liturgical

⁴⁶⁶ See Chapter 2, section 3.3; G. DePoerck. "Les reliques de SS. Maixent et Léger," *Revue Bénédictine*, 72 (1962), 62-65.

⁴⁶⁷ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon*, A. de Courson (ed.) (1863), 229-30;

texts, would be protected in Poitou and enjoy the patronage of both Aimeri and Ebalus.

As the tenth century continued, charters and other narrative sources describing the rise of new patrons like Aimeri, Ebalus, and Odo of Paris almost completely dry up. Still, it seems clear that as Carolingian hegemony evaporated in Aquitaine, local networks began increasingly to predominate. Murky but vital family connections complicate the picture, as cathedrals and monasteries tended to be both supported and increasingly headed by the members of important Aquitanian clans.⁴⁶⁸ To be sure, many of these seigneurs simply annexed nearby religious institutions rather than patronizing them in the usual sense,⁴⁶⁹ but Aquitanian monasteries also depended on the cooperation of local *boni homines* to fend off Viking predation and reassemble patrimony lost during the attacks.⁴⁷⁰ From these aspiring clans came men like Gerald of Aurillac, Bernard II Hairypaws (d. 885), and his son Count William I of Auvergne (d. 918).

While Bernard Hairypaws became a primary architect of the post-Carolingian duchy of Aquitaine in the late ninth century,⁴⁷¹ William I expanded upon the efforts of Gerald of Aurillac to found Cluny just across the Burgundian

⁴⁶⁸ Lewis, *Development*, ch. 11, discusses this at length.

⁴⁶⁹ Charters mandating the return of church lands mention usurpations by former *vassi dominici* of church lands in Limoges in 851, Angoulême in 868, Velesius in 870, Orbaciaco in the 880s, to name just a few. For a detailed list, see Lewis, *Development*, 147. *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve*, 2, 201-3 (no. 319), contains an example of Charles' attempt to protect the monks of Tours in exile at Léré in 869: "Hugo abba nosterque propinquus innotuit celsitudini nostrae qualiter quaedam praefatae ecclesiae sibi commissae villae, id est in pago Biturcensi Leradus et in Arvenico Marciacus, saepissime...invaderentur ac tamquam sub hostili militia mansiones ibidem acciperentur et nimia crudelitate, se absente, depraedarentur. Unde, quia praefati coenobii...consuescunt, petiit...quatinus ab eisdem villis...talia infanda removeremus.... Praecipimus ut nemo fidelium totius regni nostri in praefatis villis mansionem more hostili aut aliqua qualibet occasione accipere praesumat nec aliquam depredationem aut vim inferat."

⁴⁷⁰ Lewis, *Development*, 150.

⁴⁷¹ Auzias, *L'Aquitaine carolingienne*, 306.

border in 910.⁴⁷² It was from Cluny that a new wave of monastic reforms radiated across Aquitaine during the tenth century, reforms which both echoed and superceded the Carolingians' Benedictine reform program and completed the succession of Aquitaine's increasingly empowered noble families as the province's most important monastic patrons. The Cluniac reform movement cemented the political legitimization of Aquitaine's nobility that had begun in earnest with their patronage of exiled relics in during the Viking attacks.

PART FOUR: Changing Responses to the Attacks

In addition to illuminating the province's rapidly shifting geopolitics, Aquitaine's forced relic translation accounts also provide a variety of perspectives on the evolution of practical and literary responses to the Viking attacks by contemporary monks and clerics. The following sections examine these responses as they changed during the course of the attacks. The first section returns to the monks of Noirmoutier as a metric to compare the decisions monks made during the early period of Viking activity to the more refined process of relic evacuation during the high point of the attacks. A second section compares the response to Vikings with monastic responses to the outwardly similar Muslim raids that affected Aquitaine during the eighth century. A third part describes the toughening of legal and institutional responses from within the Frankish church to the worsening effects of the attacks.

⁴⁷² For continuing efforts by William and his descendents to acquire control over and promote Aquitaine's relic cults, see E. Bózoky, *La politique des reliques de Constantin à Saint-Louis* (Paris, 2006), 184-7.

4.1 Changing Responses at Noirmoutier

In the years after their departure from Noirmoutier, Ermentarius and his brothers had to feel their way through a dangerous and difficult time with little inkling of what was to come and few models of how to respond to the Viking attacks. By the time they arrived in Tournus forty years later, the surviving community had become well-practiced at forced relic translation. Their approach to the translations changed considerably in the meantime, mirroring the broader shift from the halting, unsure process of relic translation at the earliest onset of Viking attacks to the increasingly standardized exercise of forced relic translation during the attacks' height in the 860s and afterward.

Taken as a whole, Noirmoutier's decades-long flight from its original home looks much like any other. The monks there engaged in activities common to relic evacuations in other provinces. They tried, for example, to remain as close as possible to their initial home, and to confine themselves to *villae* that they already possessed. When that was impossible, they adopted the common strategy of turning to their existing patrons for appropriate *loca refugii*.

But in other ways, St. Filibert's translation looks very different from the conventional model. These deviations from forced relic translation norms stemmed from Noirmoutier's misfortune of being one of the earliest continental relic evacuations of the Viking era. The Noirmoutier monks' departure was virtually unprecedented in Francia, and they struggled to find an existing tradition upon which they could base an appropriate response. Yet within a few decades,

as the phenomenon became more widespread and the permanence of the Viking threat became obvious to the monks of Noirmoutier, the translations of St. Filibert came to look more like the classic evacuations of the mid-ninth century that were occurring everywhere throughout western Francia.

Perhaps the most notable aberration in Noirmoutier's story was the monks' failure to remove the body of their saint as they fled, an act almost without parallel in the history of west Frankish monastic evacuations. Noirmoutier's policy of abandoning their relics *in situ* speaks to the community's clear expectations of a quick return to regularity. As the permanence of the Viking threat became manifest, however, the monks were soon compelled to remove St. Filibert from his original grave. When Viking raids caught up with them again on the mainland, however, they once again left behind the body of St. Filibert at Déas while the monks took shelter at Cunault. This second abandonment may have been a simple reprise of the approach they had adopted earlier. Ermentarius does not comment on the reason for the relics' abandonment at Déas, but he does voice his own concern that "evil men might dig up St. Filibert's tomb" and profane the relics if they were left unguarded. By the time the community was forced to move for the third time in 862, Ermentarius, who may himself have been abbot at that point, notes that the relics of St. Filibert were carried into exile at Messay at the same time the monks fled there. After twenty years of dislocation, this change in policy brought the monks of Noirmoutier into line with what nearly every other Frankish cult was doing, and

demonstrates the maturation of attitudes toward relic evacuation at one of the earliest affected monasteries in the empire.

Similarly, St. Filibert's earliest translations were also marked by elaborate *adventus* ceremonies. Ermentarius describes an exuberant ceremonial parade to mark the relics' arrival at their first refuge in Déas in 836. By including the event, which was the occasion for numerous miracles, Ermentarius was able to emphasize that St. Filibert's miraculous potency had also moved to the new location. *Adventus* ceremonies were a common hagiographic *topos*, but in this case its inclusion also shows that the monks of Noirmoutier were attempting to adhere to the protocols of non-forced relic translation which demanded these kinds of communal rituals. After Déas, the *Miracula S. Filiberti* contains no mention of any other such ceremonies, indicating that in this regard too, haste and panic compelled the monks of Noirmoutier to settle for the less ostentatious kind of translation common in other affected provinces.

Ermentarius' description of St. Filibert's Viking-era travels is also unique in the number of discrete translations that the relics underwent during the course of the invasions. No other cult moved as far or as many times as the monks of Noirmoutier. Although St. Filibert's pattern of movements was rare in itself, it too indicated more widespread changes in the kinds of responses made by Aquitanian cults affected by Viking attacks. St. Filibert's total of five exhumations in 836, 858, 862, c. 872, and 875 was highly unusual, but resulted from the same intensifying spiral of attacks and emigration that gradually consumed nearly all of Aquitaine as the ninth century progressed. Coastal

monasteries like Noirmoutier suffered first during the earliest attacks and were the first to evacuate, but by the 860s, even relics as far inland as Berry and the Auvergne (where St. Filibert had also come to seek refuge) had to be evacuated. In this, the plight of Noirmoutier reflects the rising tide of attacks that engulfed first Aquitaine's low-lying coastal areas, but eventually washed far enough eastward to affect all but the most isolated eastern Aquitanian monasteries.

It is hard to say how much the monks of Noirmoutier were influenced by the analogous practices of other cults, but news of other relic evacuations occurring at the same time in nearby regions could not have escaped them. Their string of refuges along the Loire put them in the middle of a heavily used evacuation route and they could not have been oblivious to the Viking attacks all around them. For Ermentarius' part, the popularity of his *Miracula* of St. Filibert (it survives in many manuscript copies distributed across West Francia⁴⁷³) may well have saved other monks and clerics the trouble of discovering for themselves that the early tentative moves of Noirmoutier were insufficient to cope with the threat that the Vikings represented.

4.2 Precedents During the Era of Muslim Attacks

A second kind of change that was well illustrated in Aquitaine is the way the Viking attacks differed from earlier kinds of violence that threatened the province's relic shrines. Although Aquitaine had been wracked by invasion and infighting between various regional powers almost continually from late

⁴⁷³ Poupardin, *Monuments*, lii.

antiquity,⁴⁷⁴ the century of Viking attacks from c. 830-c.930 prompted new and different responses from affected cults, both real and rhetorical. The contrast between the Viking attacks and earlier threats is especially sharp when compared to the arrival of Muslim attackers just a century earlier. Given the unequalled success of the Muslim military juggernaut up to the eighth century, the advance of Muslim raiders across the Pyrennees must have been at least as credible a threat to the province's Christian institutions as the arrival of isolated bands of Vikings in the ninth century. Yet neither the Saracens nor the continual political struggles between the Carolingians cast as much doubt on prevailing ideologies of both spiritual and temporal power as the Vikings did, and no conflict before or after challenged Aquitaine's saintly protectors so directly.

Surprisingly, Muslim attacks in Aquitaine do not appear to have instigated a single relic translation there during the eighth century. This is at odds with the rush of translations that accompanied the subsequent Viking terror. This difference can be explained in part with reference to physical geography, since the water-borne Vikings were better suited to make use of Aquitaine's rivers while Muslim raiders reached fewer areas traveling overland. The most important difference, however, was that in the eighth century, Carolingian political and military strength were on the increase in Aquitaine, while by the ninth and tenth century, Carolingian hegemony in the region had begun to fall into eclipse.

⁴⁷⁴ M. Rouche's *L'Aquitaine des Wisigoths aux Arabes (418-781). Essai sur le phénomène régional* (1971) describes attacks by Vandals, Visigoths, and other barbarian groups, as well as the Carolingians' own ruinous takeover of the province in the eighth century. Garaud, "Les incursions des Normands en Poitou," 241-67, traces the precedents for Viking attacks back to Saxon raids in the third/fourth century, a time from which many coin hoards survive (p. 242). Wallace-Hadrill, "The Vikings in Francia," 222-6, outlines the threat from Gascons to the south in antiquity as well. Auzias, *L'Aquitaine Carolingienne* is the classic authority on the Carolingian takeover of Aquitaine in the eighth century.

Muslim raiders from Spain made forays over the Pyrenees into southern Gaul as early as the seventh century.⁴⁷⁵ Ermentarius briefly mentions that Muslim forces had reached as far as Noirmoutier by the mid eighth century. Ermentarius' account shows how alarming the eighth century Saracen menace was, with Muslim invaders "estimated to arrive in such numbers that they could be mistaken for forming a solid wall of men." But Ermentarius also points out the limited nature of the threat. According to his testimony, Muslims never appear to have actually landed on Noirmoutier and the relics of St. Filibert remained safely enshrined in their monastery throughout. In fact, looking back from the much more dangerous Viking era, Ermentarius ridicules the Saracens as dupes whose attacks were turned away not by any miracle but because they "mistook a huge flock of birds settled on the beach...to be none other than a huge army of warriors, and this so scared them that they retreated as they had come."⁴⁷⁶ Considered within the context of the relative ease with which early Muslim attacks on Toulouse and Poitiers were turned back by Charles Martel and his allies in the 720s and 730s,⁴⁷⁷ Aquitaine's troubles with Saracens could not compare with the vastly larger geographical and chronological scope of the Viking attacks which followed.

⁴⁷⁵ Poulin, *L'idéal de sainteté*, 9-10.

⁴⁷⁶ Ermentarius, *Miracula S. Filiberti*, 66 (book 2, ch. 10): "Narratur insuper quod navis Sarracenorum, cujus tanta aestimabatur magnitudo, ut murus poene ab intuentibus putaretur, ad Oiam [Yeu] venerit insulam; quae cum in ea quicquid voluisset, explesset, voluit devenire ad nostre insulae portum, et cum jam medium esset iter emensum, tanta avium multitudo in nostro consedit litore, quanta nunquam, ut fertur, alicubi visa fuit aliquando; quas Sarraceni intuentes, nihil aliud quam innumerabilem crediderunt esse bellatorum exercitum; talique territi visione retrorsum abeuntes, non ause sunt nostram adire insulam."

⁴⁷⁷ Rouche, *L'Aquitaine*, ch 4., esp. p. 114.

That said, eighth century Muslim attacks undoubtedly had a greater effect on certain other Aquitainian monastic sites than they did at Noirmoutier.⁴⁷⁸ The *Vita Eucharii*, composed between 745 and 750 at Orléans describes the deleterious effects of raids by the *nefanda Ishmahelitarum gens* across Aquitaine.⁴⁷⁹ Other eighth century Aquitainian hagiographical texts commemorate the exploits of abbots Theofrid and Pardulf, both of whom evacuated their monasteries and remained to fight the Muslims single-handedly.⁴⁸⁰ Although the *Vita Pardulfi* suggests that Saracen raiders aimed their violence specifically at Christian *loca sancta*,⁴⁸¹ no relics can be shown to have moved. In this respect, these eighth century evacuations seem to echo the earliest evacuations of Noirmoutier, when departing monks also left relics behind. Through persistence, however, Viking raiders eventually did force St. Filibert to leave his tomb. The Muslim attacks, on the other hand, lacked the scope and longevity to elicit the kind of panic and large-scale relic translations that the Vikings inspired. The Muslims, in spite of their impressive absorption of much of

⁴⁷⁸ The ninth century *Chronicon* of Ado of Vienne, MGH SS, 2, 319, describes “sarraceni per totam Aquitaniam vastantes, et late alias provincias igne ferroque superantes Burgundiam durissima satis infestatione depraedantur, pene omnia flammis exurentes, monasteria quoque ac loca sacra foedantes, innumerum populum abigunt atque in Hispania transponunt.” One of the continuators of the chronicle of Pseudo-Fredegar, MGH SRM, 2, 175, likewise describes their attack on Poitiers: “Ecclesiis igne concrematis, populis consumtis, usque Pectavis [Poitiers] profecti sunt; basilica sancti Hilarii igne concremata.”

⁴⁷⁹ *Vita Eucharii Episcopi Aurelianensis*, MGH SRM, 7, 49.

⁴⁸⁰ *Vita S. Theofredi Abbatis Calmeliacensis et Martyris*, AASS, Oct. VIII, col. 531; *Vita Pardulfi Abbatis Waractensis*, MGH SRM, 7, 33-34, composed in 743.

⁴⁸¹ *Vita Pardulfi*, 33 (ch. 15): “Alio namque tempore, cum Ismahelitarum gens Pectavensem [Poitiers] urbem fuissent ingressi, et precelsus maior domus Carolus cum Francorum cuneo ad debellandum eos venisset et, devicto proelio hostem presternens, spolia capiens, captives revocavit, sic quam plures ex eadem gente Ismahelitarum fugam arripuerunt et, per quae loqua revertebantur, quemcumque hominem christianum inveniebant, trucidabant et, ubicumque monasteria aut loca sancta obviassent, igne concremare nitebantur.”

the Mediterranean and Near East, were unable to substantially alter the Christian landscape of Aquitaine by forcing its cults into hiding.

Aquitaine's Saracen raids provide a useful foil for its experience with Viking attacks a century later. Muslim raiders may have enjoyed the imposing force of a powerful, established Islamic state behind them, but the ability of ascendant Carolingian leaders like Charles Martel to roll back the Saracens on the battlefield and enrich Aquitainian church institutions demonstrates the crucial importance of strong political leadership in the maintenance of religious order during times of crisis. Secure under Carolingian patronage for the remainder of the eighth and early ninth century, Aquitainian monasteries flowered during the time of Carolingian-inspired Benedictine reforms, and repaid Carolingian kings with loyalty within the province.

4.3 Episcopal Responses

During the early decades of the Viking attacks in Aquitaine and other provinces, forced relic translations remained a relatively uncommon and localized phenomenon best dealt with by the abbots and bishops most directly affected. By the 850s and 860s, however, the evacuation of monks and relics had become so widespread that the situation required a more formalized institutional response from the Frankish church. A number of regional synods and councils were convened during the mid-ninth century to address social and economic problems stemming from the dislocation of so many monks, clerics and relics in Aquitaine

and elsewhere. Among the numerous councils that addressed these problems, the two councils of Servais (853) and Pîtres (862) demonstrate how the various institutional remedies for these problems escalated in conjunction with the size of the crisis.

The council of primarily Neustrian bishops that met at Servais in late 853, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 (section 2.3), attempted to rectify the upheaval that had occurred along Aquitaine's northern Loire border during the 840s and 850s. The *acta* of Servais seem to suggest that the dislocation of relic cults in the area was even more substantial than surviving sources indicate, but they also articulate only minimal measures to protect cults that had fled but hoped to return home quickly. The council attempted to ease the return of those who had fled with their relics from the Viking attacks by forbidding local lay aristocrats from forcing returning monks to pay any impositions for their restoration.⁴⁸²

Nine years later, however, the council of Pîtres called for more drastic measures as concerns grew over the soaring number of forced relic translations. More famous for its regulation of Carolingian coinage, the council of Pîtres was also preoccupied with new developments in Viking-devastated territories throughout western Francia. It effected a much more systematic response to the social and economic disorder caused by the attacks.

At Pîtres, the first order of business was to establish the true scope of the problem, which had moved beyond its earlier isolation to affect a majority of west

⁴⁸² *Capitulare Missorum Silvacense* (November, 853), MGH LL Capit, 2, 273 (ch. 9). See Chapter 3, section 2.3 for a transcription.

Frankish dioceses. Lay authorities were made to register the names of those who fled the Viking attacks, plus the number and status of any non-free *coloni* attached to their demesnes. This information was to help with the orderly reestablishment of abandoned institutions, and to halt the seizure or redistribution of patrimony during the attacks.

More important to the topic here, the council of Pîtres also included provisions for the compulsory repatriation of relics and other monastic assets, unless the exiles could show that they had initially departed during the reign of Louis the Pious. Bishops and royal envoys were to encourage – without the use of force or fines – those who had fled during more recent attacks to return home as quickly as possible.⁴⁸³ This was a rather more drastic attempt to force a return to the normal distribution of spiritual capital as a way of ameliorating widespread displacement, albeit with a statute of limitations legitimizing refugees who had established lasting homes in exile. It emphasizes the dangerous potential that the redistribution of relics could have for those, like Charles the Bald and other elites associated with the Carolingians, who were invested in the pre-Viking status quo.⁴⁸⁴ It may also have given bishops license to force the

⁴⁸³ *Edictum Pistense*, MGH LL Capit, 2, 323-4 (ch. 31): “De adventitiis istius terrae, quae a Normannis devastata est, constituimus, ut, sicut in capitulari avi nostri Karoli imperatoris habetur, unusquisque comes de suo comitatu et nomina eorum et qui sunt eorum seniores describi faciant et ipos advenas, qui a tempore avi nostri atque a tempore domini et patris nostri in illorum comitatibus commanent, secundum consuetudinem, quae illorum temporibus fuit, eos ibi manere permittant. Illos vero, qui persecutione Normannorum nuper de istis partibus in illas partes confugerunt, episcoporum missi cum missis rei publicae taliter de illis partibus in istas partes venire faciant, ut non opprimantur nec aliquis census vel quaecumque exactio ab illis exigatur; et habeant licentiam, quae in illis partibus suo servitio promeruerunt vel quocumque iusto ingenio adepti sunt, commendandi.”

⁴⁸⁴ *Edictum Pistense*, 310.

return of relics that had been seized by local would-be patrons across the empire, like those of St. Martial at Solignac.

It is unclear if the new regulations were enforced, but they are indicative of the growing consequences of increased monastic dislocation during the decade since the council of Servais. In broader terms, the Edict of Pîtres suggests that the *depopulatio* and *destitutio* that is so often derided as a defining *topos* of the Viking-era *translatio* genre was a genuine detriment to the regional social fabric of Aquitaine and other provinces. This becomes even more clear in the edict's references to the collapse in local law and order throughout the western empire. In addition to Viking attacks, the edict makes reference to other sorts of rampant theft and brigandage, certainly to include the unauthorized seizure of monastic wealth (including relics, as we shall see below) by increasingly unsupervised local strongmen. The council recognized that the cost of the chaos had significantly increased in just a few decades, and ordered special measures to try and rebuild the pre-Viking social and economic order and its characteristic spatial distribution of spiritual capital.

PART FIVE: Aquitaine's Fractured Geography

The choices made by Aquitaine's fleeing monks and clerics were also determined in large measure by the province's distinctive physical, political, and spiritual geography. This geography was heavily fissured. Aquitaine was cut through first by its plentiful rivers, ready avenues of attack that guided and

channeled Viking raiders to some of the province's most vulnerable targets. Rivers and other aspects of physical geography interacted with political geography and the strengths and weaknesses of local and imperial political control to create a topography of safety and danger that also helped steer the movements of Aquitaine's dislocated cults. Overlaid on top of this shifting mosaic was the province's spiritual geography, itself in a state of flux as a result of the disruption of religious institutions during the Viking attacks.

5.1 The "Land of Waters"

The first notable feature of Aquitaine's geography is its imposing size and diversity. This can make it a cumbersome geographical unit to analyze. The *ultimi Aquitaniae fines* (furthest boundaries of Aquitaine) – typically delimited at the north and east by the Loire and at the south by the Garonne – contain a number of smaller units that could profitably be considered as provinces in their own right. Poitou, Berry, the Limousin, and the Auvergne, to name only the most important, each experienced the ninth century period of Viking attacks differently. Yet the value of breaking Aquitaine (or the other provinces of northwestern Francia) down into ever smaller constituent "microecologies" is small. This is true first because of the limited source material that can be drawn upon to describe any one of Aquitaine's constituent parts, and second because a narrower perspective would fail to encapsulate the large-scale provincial,

regional, and inter-regional movement of relics that took place throughout the entire region.

A second important geographical factor during the Viking attacks in Aquitaine were the province's plentiful rivers. Rivers have always been critical to the identity of what the Romans named the "land of waters," and they played a particularly noteworthy role in funneling Viking attacks through the province. Aquitaine's riparian highways, as well as its ocean shore on the Bay of Biscayne, defined the province's shape and served as ready avenues for both regional exchange and foreign invasion. It seems likely that when Viking raiders arrived on Aquitaine's Atlantic coast, they looked inland and saw the province as a series of interlocking watersheds through which they could navigate in search of slaves and plunder. The attackers did not confine themselves to the bounds of any particular political district but instead probed up and down Aquitaine's river basins in search of soft targets.

One implication of the Vikings' predilection for water routes was that waters divided the province's defenses against them. As was typical of preindustrial waterways in Europe, the flowing waters of Aquitaine were simultaneously a means of transport, a source of energy and other resources, and the most convenient delimitation of political authority and jurisdiction. Since the same rivers upon which the Vikings traveled also made up the internal boundaries marking off various counties and dioceses within the *regnum*, Viking raiders frequently found themselves skirting the edges of the jurisdictions of local *defensores*. This meant that invaders pushed from the banks of one area were

often able to find shelter in another just up or down the river where defenses were weaker. This was certainly the case along the Loire in the mid-ninth century, when Viking bands set up semi-permanent bases at various points from which they were able to harass all of northern Aquitaine.⁴⁸⁵

Such a distinctly hydrological conception of Aquitainian geography may have suited the Vikings. But it conflicts with the conception of Aquitainian geography proffered by the province's own monks, clerics, and aristocrats. When it came to choosing a place of exile for themselves and their relics during the attacks, Aquitainians were cognizant of the threat rivers could represent, but the general pattern of their departure suggests that they were less concerned about avoiding watery places or transportation axes than they were about seeking out territories under the control of strong, stable civil authorities. Physical geography, including river courses and ocean coasts, played an important role in determining the precise routes and refuges of dislocated monks, but the exiled monks and clerics themselves thought more in terms of political and spiritual geography. Most translations during the Viking attacks in Aquitaine (including that of St. Filibert) simply move upriver from one location to another that today appears no less exposed to Viking attack. The fact that fleeing monks did not take their relics away from dangerous water routes may suggest that their own transportation options limited them to the same routes the Vikings used. More likely, however, it demonstrates that river banks in general were not thought to be dangerous places to establish a shrine; the dangers of hydrology

⁴⁸⁵ Some already mentioned examples include the Viking base on Noirmoutier in the 840s, and the camp near the monastery of St.-Florent-le-Vieil from which they launched their first overland raid on Poitiers in 853.

surfaced only on those segments of river that were unprotected by strong local military authority. Aquitaine's watery environment thus produced both hazards and opportunities, requiring both monks and Vikings to adapt their strategies during the period of attacks.

5.2 Islands of Safety

Another theme related to Aquitaine's geography is the appearance of safe regions where relic cults could remain untouched from Viking attacks. Like similar pockets in central Brittany and the future Normandy, these "islands of safety" shifted over time in response to developments in local and imperial politics and defense.

During the early stages of Viking attacks in Aquitaine in the 840s and 850s, only the coastal and western riparian areas of Aquitaine were directly threatened by invaders. Because of Aquitaine's size, large parts of the province passed these years mostly unscathed. This put Aquitaine in the position of being both a point of departure for relics fleeing out of its affected regions, as well as a haven for monks and relics fleeing to its eastern interior. The Limousin, for example, remained generally immune to Viking raids during this period.⁴⁸⁶ The Auvergne was likewise protected by the long distances attackers would have had to travel upriver in hostile country to reach targets there.

⁴⁸⁶ The major exception to the Limousin's safety was the sack of Limoges in 845. Although Vikings only reached the region once during their first thirty years of forays in Aquitaine, the attack was sufficient to temporarily dislodge the relics of St. Martial from the city.

Indeed the Auvergne region was one of the most common choices of safe harbor for fleeing monks and their relics from all over western Francia.⁴⁸⁷ The relics of Aquitainian saints Filibert, Maxentius, and Viventius⁴⁸⁸ all ended up there, but as we saw in Chapter 3, so did many Neustrian relics like those of St. Launomarus from Blois, St. Taurinus of Évreux from what was to become Normandy, St. Martin of Tours and St. Martin of Vertou.⁴⁸⁹ Some southern and eastern Aquitainian monasteries continued to function and even grow after the early Viking raids of the 840s, including cult centers at Tulle and Beaulieu in the lower Limousin,⁴⁹⁰ Aurillac in Auvergne, and Vabres in the Albigeois.⁴⁹¹

By the 860s, however, Carolingian civil wars encouraged a drastic increase in Viking attacks. Many formerly sheltered regions became targets of raids as the Vikings turned their attention to previously unexploited waterways. In 863, Vikings ascended the Charente River for the first time.⁴⁹² Vikings on the Loire also launched a series of raids overland, affecting previously safe landlocked parts of Poitou. By 864, only the most mountainous and isolated

⁴⁸⁷ A. d'Haenens, "Les invasions normandes dans l'empire franc," 278; Musset, "Les Translations de reliques en Normandie," 97-108

⁴⁸⁸ St. Viventius' relics were translated from his monastery near Sables-d'Olonne on the Atlantic coast to Clermont in Auvergne in 868. *Vita Sancti Viventii* (BHL 8725), AASS, Jan. XIII (ch. 8), composed in the early to mid tenth century: "...exigentibus peccatorum cumulis, egressa Septemtrionali plaga a Normannoru gens, gladio et igne consumpsit inferiorem Galliarum partem ad mare usque, sicuti Ungrorum superiorem usque Germaniam. Anno quoque [868]..., regnante Carolo Iuniore, supra modum grassatae sunt undique praedictorum infestationes paganorum, deficientibus tam Regum quam ceterorum nostrorum Principum ad repugnandum viribus...Tunc innumerabilia sanctorum Confessorum ac Martyrum corpora a propriis mausoleis per fidelium manus sublata, et ad alias confugii gratia delata provincias. Eo namque in tempore... Viventius in Pictavense territorio...honorifico quiescebat cultu...aliorumque Sanctorum pignoribus ad Arvernensem detulerunt." See Vogel, *Die Normannen*, 227-8.

⁴⁸⁹ See Chapter 3, sections 2.1 and 3.1.

⁴⁹⁰ The cartulary of Beaulieu, Deloche, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Beaulieu*, nos. IV, 13-5, and VII, 20-2, show Carolingian kings continuing to offer occasional patronage.

⁴⁹¹ For detailed references to cartularies and royal diploma indicating the continued prosperity of these regions during the mid-ninth century, see Lewis, *Development*, 141, note 19.

⁴⁹² Ademar, *Chronicon Aquitanicum*, 122.

parts of the province were out of their reach. Vikings besieged Clermont, deep inside the formerly secure Auvergne on Aquitaine's far eastern border, where they burned the abbey of St.-Allyre.⁴⁹³ On their way there, the raiders sacked Périgueux and probably Limoges again.⁴⁹⁴ Many refugees fled these cities for the Haut-Limousin, specifically to the mountains around Turenne, where the Vikings could not easily follow.⁴⁹⁵ Nearly all of Aquitaine was overrun, and even former safe havens in the Auvergne, the Limousin, and the rest of eastern Aquitaine were no longer protected by their isolation.

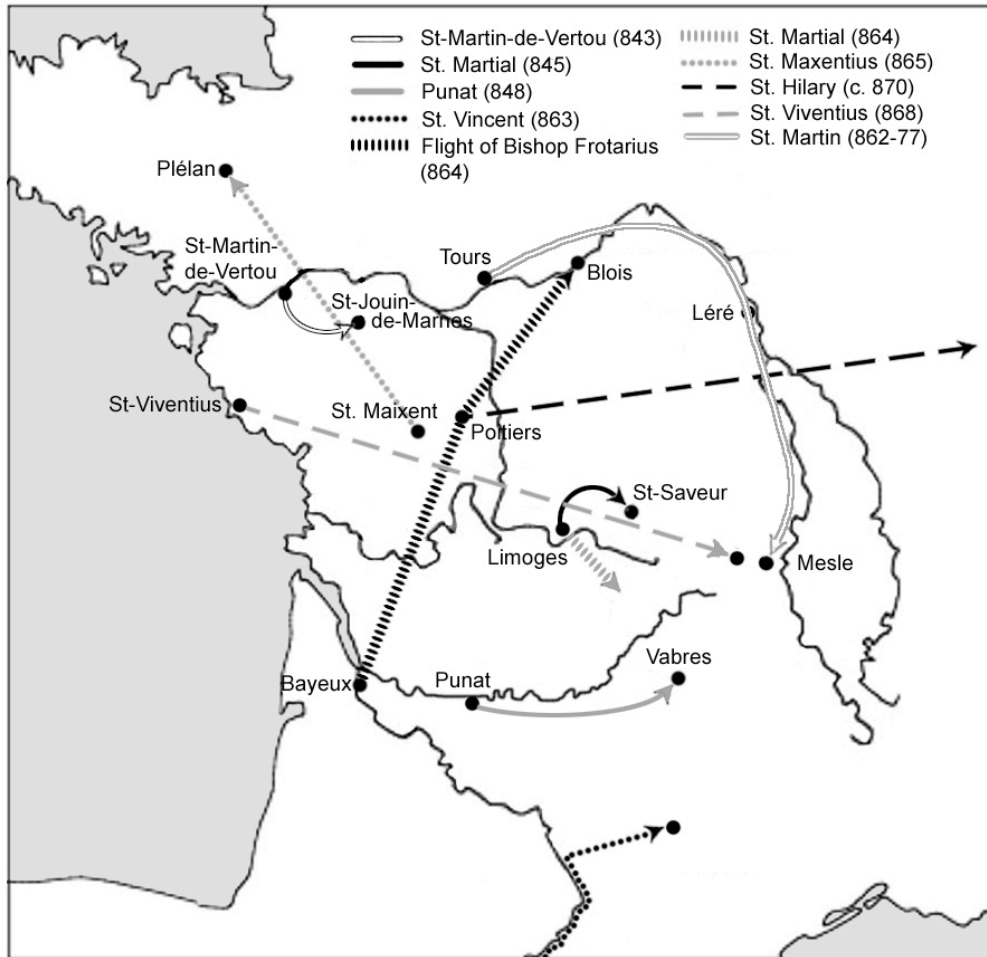
Southern parts of Aquitaine were also affected by Viking offensives on the Garonne which reached as far as Toulouse in 864. The southern monastery of Castres, which had survived the previous decades without fear of attack, felt threatened enough to transport their relics of St. Vincent "to a distant and secure place....because of fear of the Normans."⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Lot, "La Loire, l'Aquitaine et la Seine," 483-5; Noblet, "Les monastères francs et les invasions normandes," 300.

⁴⁹⁴ It could be during this period that St. Martial was translated out of Limoges for a second time. It is only certain that Martial's second refugee translation occurred between 859 and 898, though most historians have chosen to place it during the attacks of 888. Lasteyrie, *L'abbaye de Saint-Martial*, 56-7.

⁴⁹⁵ Auzias, *L'Aquitaine carolingienne*, 244-5; Lot, "La Loire, l'Aquitaine et la Seine," 486-7.

⁴⁹⁶ Aimoin, *Translatio Beati Vincentii in Monasterium Castrense*, PL 126, col. 1022 (book 2, ch. 11): "Alius caecam habens filiam a nativitate, eam medendi fretus fiducia, ad sancti Vincentii divulgata passim patrocina adducere statuit, et ad monasterium usque veniens, ubi comperit ipsum sacrum corpus, propter timorem paganorum Nortmannorum, ad remotiorem et tutiorem locum transportatum fuisse, crebrius ingemiscens dicebat: Miserere Christe, miserere, o beatissime Vincenti: miserere mihi misero, miserere huic filiae meae."



Map 10: Forced Relic Translation in Aquitaine, c. 843-77.

The attacks of the early 860s demonstrate just how ephemeral security could be in Aquitaine: there was no place in the province where religious institutions could be sure of protection. It was out of fear of expanding attacks that the cult of St. Filibert departed from the province entirely to find more permanent shelter in Burgundy, hundreds of miles from their home. Similarly, the relics of St. Maxentius were evacuated from Aquitaine to Brittany in the 860s because even rural places that were far from major rivers (like their monastery) had become targets of predation. The return of St. Maxentius' relics in 924

shows that it took the improvement of localized defense in the tenth century to bring many of these islands of safety back to the surface from under the wave of late ninth century Viking invasions.

5.3 Sts. Hilary and Maxentius

The precariousness of local security in Aquitaine and the critical role played by local defenders in creating safe zones is apparent in the divergent responses of two cults located close to one another in Poitou during the high-water mark of the Viking attacks in the 860s.

The relics of both St. Hilary and St. Maxentius had managed to remain in place in Poitou throughout the early decades of Viking attack. When Vikings descended on the region in 868, however, each cult was forced to grapple with the decision of whether to stay or evacuate. The keepers of St. Hilary decided to remain in the city of Poitiers, where they helped the city's local defenders repulse a Viking attempt to seize the city with the miraculous assistance of St. Hilary himself.⁴⁹⁷ This victory prevented the relics of St. Hilary from having to be evacuated from Poitou. At the same time, monks guarding the relics of St. Maxentius decided on the opposite course. St. Maxentius' relics were evacuated

⁴⁹⁷ According to the *Annales Bertiniani*, 97 [anno 868]: "Pictavenses autem vota facientes Deo et sancto Hilario, tertio eosdem Nortmannos qui residebant in Legeri fuere agressi, quorum plures occiderunt, ceteros vero in fugam miserunt, et de omni proeda, excepta volutnaria oblatione, decimam sancto Hilario contulerunt." Vogel, *Die Normannen*, 229, note 1; Poulin, *L'Idéal de Sainteté*, 150.

from their rural monastery thirty miles southwest of Poitiers and taken out of the province to Pléland-le-Grand in Brittany.⁴⁹⁸

The difference between St. Hilary's stand and St. Maxentius' retreat is striking. A number of factors lay behind the two houses' contradictory responses. The first was St.-Maxentius' previous links with affiliated monasteries in central Brittany, which was then free of Vikings thanks to the early efforts of King Salomon (see Chapter 2 above). This provided the monks of St.-Maxentius with a convenient place of escape in a foreign province that was unquestionably (for the moment) safer than Poitou. St.-Hilary's options would probably have been more limited. St.-Hilary might have leveraged its well-established ties with the Carolingian monarchy to secure sanctuary in Neustria or elsewhere like Noirmoutier had done, but its options for exile within the region probably looked no more compelling than their own city's fortifications.⁴⁹⁹

A second reason for the differing responses seems to be that the protection afforded by local lords was apparently not local enough. Poitou had its own local defenders in the 860s, notably counts Ramnulf I and Bougrin of Angoulême, whom Adémar of Chabannes showers with plaudits for their decisive defeat of the Vikings below the walls of Poitiers.⁵⁰⁰ Yet despite such victories, no count could reliably police every corner of his territory all of the time. Nor would they be able to until local and regional Aquitanian lords consolidated their

⁴⁹⁸ See Chapter 2, section 2.4; de Poerck, "Les reliques de SS. Maixent et Léger," 61-5.

⁴⁹⁹ This option, of course, was not open to Noirmoutier. First, Noirmoutier already found itself in exile in the 860s, and had little to lose by continuing on to another place with which they had little connection. Not so for St.-Hilary, which undoubtedly hoped to maintain control over its Poitevin patrimony by remaining in place. It could also hope for some additional protection behind Poitiers' sometimes-successful walls.

⁵⁰⁰ Ademar, *Chronicon Aquitanicum*, 139-40.

power at the end of the ninth century. This meant that in even “safe” regions of Aquitaine, monasteries continued to be exposed to targeted surprise Viking raids, and continued to be faced with the difficult decision of whether or not to seek surer safety elsewhere.

In St. Hilary’s and St. Maxentius’ cases, the decision may also have hinged on the each monastery’s urban or rural setting. Located so close to Poitiers’ imposing fortifications, St.-Hilary enjoyed the freedom to remain at home even as the rising tide of Norse raids reduced the size of the local “island” of safety to the circumference of the city’s walls. This would not have been the case for St. Maxentius’ undefended rural shrine.

As it was, the efforts of local Poitevin defenders like Ramnulf I bore sufficient fruit in the ensuing years that the Haut-Poitou enjoyed a near cessation of Viking attacks until the mid-870s. This peace brought hope for the reestablishment of abandoned monasteries and the re-importation of lost relics to the Haut-Poitou, such as the fragments of the true cross and other precious ornaments which monks from Charroux brought back to their home monastery.⁵⁰¹ The guardians of St. Maxentius, however, opted to remain in Brittany for many more years until local lords Aimeri and Ebalus of Poitou sought their repatriation in the 910s.⁵⁰²

Finally, while the Haut-Poitou slowly stood down from high alert, down river neighboring Bas-Poitou enjoyed no such comfort. Bas-Poitou’s problems

⁵⁰¹ They had removed them for safety behind the walls of Angoulême. Ademar, *Chronicon Aquitanicum*, 125: “Unde factum est, ut monachi sancti Carrofi [Charroux] pretiosum lignum crucis ad custodiendum Engolismae deferrent cum diversis ornamentis ecclesiae.”

⁵⁰² See Chapter 2, section 3.3.

only worsened in the early tenth century during the Scandinavian Interregnum in Brittany, when Viking raiders were able to use the Breton peninsula as an easy base from which to continually harass the region around the Loire's mouth. The differing experiences of the Bas- and Haut-Poitou, and even within the Haut-Poitou itself, show that localized defense in Aquitaine was a complex proposition. It provided some of the protection that Carolingian kings were increasingly unable to provide, but it had strict limits as the power of local commanders waxed and waned in the face of continuing attacks. In response, relics like those of Sts. Filibert, Hilary, and Maxentius appeared to flow into and out of the same regions at the same times, particularly during the upheavals of the last third of the ninth century.

5.4 The De-Christianization of Aquitaine

Aquitaine's Christian geography is just as confused. The limited source base of the later ninth and tenth centuries precludes the possibility of "mapping" the distribution of religious institutions during the Viking attacks in any detail, but occasional evidence indicates contemporary attitudes toward the implications of monastic evacuation on Aquitaine's spiritual geography. Louis the Pious' anxiety over leaving the the island of Noirmoutier *sine divino officio* after he allowed Ermentarius and his fellow monks to evacuate is one example. After the monks withdrew from the island, Vikings established a semi-permanent camp there and used it as a base to attack other nearby towns and monasteries in the 840s. In

the span of a few years, the island of Noirmoutier was transformed from an important regional pilgrimage center into a pagan wilderness with no discernible functioning Christian institutions. In the interim, the monks of Noirmoutier had cemented this change by removing the body of St. Filibert from the island as well, confirming the areas abandonment by both its churchmen and its saints.

On a larger scale, a similar overturning of Christian status appears to have affected the entire province. Aquitaine's status as a Christian territory, like Brittany and Normandy's, is a delicate issue in the absence of a clear rubric for the determination of "Christian" status across the province's heterogeneous sub-regions. Yet as in Brittany and Normandy, certain contemporary individuals felt that many of the characteristics that defined a Christian land with Christian leadership had become harder to discern in Aquitaine during the century of the Viking attacks.

The diminution of Aquitaine's Christian status appears to have taken a more serious turn in the minds of some commentators than similar processes of de-Christianization did in other provinces. While parts of Aquitaine lapsed into a Breton-style pagan anarchy, the rest of Aquitaine appeared – to some, at least – to be on the verge of a more troubling transition to a *bona fide* pagan principality within Francia's borders: a "southern Normandy" of a more dangerous type, since it appeared without the overtures of conversion that Rollo would make in 911.

The broader problem of Aquitaine's Christian status concerned Ermentarius, who fretted not just over St. Filibert's evacuation, but over the "great many relics...carried off from their sepulchers" leaving large areas denuded of

the holy bodies that underpinned Christian practice there. The state of the church in Aquitaine even worried Charles the Bald, who wrote to Pope Nicholas I to commiserate over the Vikings' success in Aquitaine, making reference both to what he saw as "a great persecution of pagans" (*magna paganorum persecutio*) and also to "an infestation of bad Christians" (*malorum Christianorum infestatio*), suggesting that even those Christians who remained in Aquitaine were of insufficient devotion.⁵⁰³ The success of non-Christian forces was rapidly leading to a collapse of church organization even at the highest levels.

The failure of Christian control over the province was even more conspicuous from a distance. In Rome, Pope John VIII lamented that "almost the entire province... has suffered from the persecution of the pagans, and...there no longer even remain any faithful whose house still stands."⁵⁰⁴ In another letter explaining why the exiled Bishop Frotarius of Bordeaux would be made the new head of the church of Bourges, John VIII grieved that not only the city of Bordeaux "but even the whole province...through a multitude of disasters but chiefly because of the destruction of the Viking invasions, has largely been led by the sword into bondage."⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ Charles the Bald, *Epistola V* (PL 124, col. 874): "Et quia in eodem regno [Aquitaine] magna paganorum persecutio grassabatur, quos misericors Dominus per filium nostrum et fideles saepe prostravit, et ea occasione non minor malorum Christianorum infestatio latius effervebat, sicut hic nostrorum apicum gerulus viva voce vobis indicare potest; ipsa urgente necessitate ipsius regni excitati episcopi, ne majora mala supercrescerent, et praesentia sedarentur, et quoniam illius regionis sedes illa principatum obtinet, ut ejus prudentia et vigore, auctoritate etiam sedis freti, facilius mala exorta pespercerent, temporis consulentes ejus ordinationem maturaverint."

⁵⁰⁴ Pope John VIII, *Epistolae et decreta*, no. 36: *Ad Biturcensis*, PL, vol. 126, col. 690B: "...didicimus pene totam provinciam... pertinentem, sicut ab his qui causam illam noverunt, iidem nostri legati discere potuerunt, ita esse paganorum persecutionibus desolatam, ut... etiam habitatio fidelium inde subtracta consistat."

⁵⁰⁵ Pope John VIII, *Epistolae et decreta*, no. 13: *Ad Episcopos Provinciae Biturcensis*, PL, vol. 126, col. 689 (dated 876): "Quia Burdigalensem urbem, sed et totam pene provinciam quorundam vestrum litteris, sed et Leonis apostolicae sedis apocrisiarii... expressa relatione

Andreas of Bergamo, writing his continuation of the *Historia Langobardorum* in Italy in the 870s, also has doubts about whether Aquitaine's Christian leaders could still claim control of the territory:

As many brave men were beaten down by the struggle with the wicked and thoughtless enemy as had before been able to scatter thousands of opposing pagans through unity and good counsel. From that time up to the present, the Aquitainian nobility, whose lands the Normans still possess even today, were destroyed, leaving no one with the strength to resist them.⁵⁰⁶

Even though the Vikings' forays into Aquitaine had been relatively brief in duration, they occurred with sufficient frequency and significance that in the eyes of outsiders like Andreas of Bergamo and John VIII, Aquitaine appeared to have been not just attacked but conquered by non-Christian invaders.

These commentators and others wrote with more than a bit of hyperbole, but all agree that from where they stood Aquitaine looked less and less like a secure Christian territory, and more and more like loose coalition of a few Christian magnates putting up a good fight against a determined pagan insurgency in an area where church organization was weak and church buildings were vulnerable targets for rapine. This sounds much more like a description of early Carolingian Saxony during the time of St. Boniface than it does of a long-Christianized mainline province of the Empire.

didicimus diversis cladibus, sed praecipue incursibus Nortmannorum deletam, et in solitudinem partim gladiis partimque captivitate deductam.”

⁵⁰⁶ Andreas of Bergamo, *Historia*, MGH SRL, 226 (ch. 7): “Tantique ibi viri fortes per contentiones malas et improvidentia debellati sunt, quanti potuissent per bonam concordiam et salubre consilium multa milia sternere contradictorum paganorum; unde usque hodie sic discipata est nobilitas Aquitanorum, quae etiam Nortemanni eorum possedant terrae, nec est qui eorum fortia resistat.”

By far the most sensational collaboration with the Vikings, however, was that of Charles' own nephew, Pippin II. Weak compared to Charles, he had been forced to ally himself with Viking raiders during his rebellion in Aquitaine. From the outset, this offensive differed from others in the civil war between the Carolingians over Aquitaine. The *Annales Bertiniani* and the *Translatio S. Faustae* confirm that the Vikings fighting alongside Pippin II in 864 focused their activities on the destruction of church institutions, also noting attacks at Bordeaux and Saintes where they "burned monasteries, churches, houses and massacred the inhabitants."⁵⁰⁷ After Pippin II's defeat by forces loyal to Charles the Bald, he was subject to an elaborate show trial in which Hincmar of Reims went so far as to label Pippin as an apostate who had abandoned Christianity and gone over wholeheartedly to the pagan side.⁵⁰⁸

Modern scholars disagree about exactly what Hincmar meant when he insisted that Pippin II not only fought with Vikings, but that "he observes their rite" (*ritum eorum servat*).⁵⁰⁹ The shrillness of the allegations leveled by Pippin II's

⁵⁰⁷ *Annales Bertiniani*, 67 [anno 864]: "Pippinus, Pippini filius, ex monacho laicus et apostata factus, se Normannis conjungit et ritum eorum servat."; *Translatio S. Faustae*, (col. 1091-1092), ch. 1: "Tempore quo post Domini nostri Iesu Christi Incarnatione 864 annus impletus est, obtinente regnum Francorum Carolo Rege filio Ludouici magni Imperatoris, Danis Aquitaniam vastantibus, grassata ingens persecutio in Ecclesia Christi in regionibus Aquitaniae, seu Gasconiae. Siquidem paganorum barbaries, quos vsitato sermone Danos, seu Normannos, appellant, a suis sedibus cum innumerabili exeuntes nauali gestamine ad Sanctonicam siue Burdegalensem vrbes sunt aduecti. Indequē passim in præfatis discurrentes prouinciis, vrbes depopulando, monasteria, ecclesias, necnon et cunctas hominum aedes igne cremantes, non paruas hominum strages occidendo dederunt."

⁵⁰⁸ Hincmar of Reims, *Epistolae*, no. 170, *De poenitentia Pippinis regis*, MGH Epp, 8, no. 1, 164-65.

⁵⁰⁹ Wallace-Hadrill, "The Vikings in Francia," 227-8; J. Calmette, *Diplomatie carolingienne (843-877)* (Paris, 1901), 117; idem, "La siège de Toulouse par les Normands en 884," *Annales du Midi*, 29-30 (1917-8), 159-60; L. Levillain, "La translation des reliques de saint Austremonie à Mozac et le diplôme de Pépin II d'Aquitaine (863)," *Le Moyen Âge*, 17 (1904), 313; Lot, "La Loire, l'Aquitaine, et la Seine," 489-92; Auzias, *L'Aquitaine carolingienne*, 245-9; Coupland, "Rod of God's Wrath," 546. Pippin II may have received the backing of the Caliph of Cordoba himself,

prosecutors, however, suggest the depth of their fear that the alliance between Pippin II and the Vikings represented a new and serious danger to Christian order in Aquitaine. Pippin II's revolt, whether or not it was viable, represented a real alternative to the standard structure of Carolingian power in Aquitaine. The rebellious Carolingian prince demonstrated that there was an alternate path to political power – one that sided with the pagans and no longer depended on the Christian church or its relics for legitimization. Nor was this the only time that important Aquitainian nobles had threatened to jump ship for the other side: the *Annales Fuldenses* describe the unconcealed threat by certain nobles to “seek out the aid of pagans to the peril of the church” if the Carolingians could not settle their problems.⁵¹⁰ To members of the existing coalition of church, relics and Carolingian royals, this was an ominous competing reality and one that had to be dealt with definitively if Aquitaine was not to fall irreparably out of Christian control.

Aquitaine's tenebrous Christian condition becomes more doubtful still in light of the glaring paucity of new Aquitainian saint cults created during the Viking attacks. Aquitaine's saints were never marked by a tradition of violent death or martyrdom in defense of their province,⁵¹¹ whereas there had always been plenty of new ones to be celebrated during the Merovingian era. Not so during the Carolingian period, an odd fact considering that opportunities for martyrdom at

eager to foment trouble for his northern neighbor. See C. Sanchez-Albornoz, “El tercer rey de España,” in *Cuadernos de historia de España*, vols. 49-50, 5-49.

⁵¹⁰ *Annales Fuldenses*, 368 [anno 853]: “Aquitānorum legati Hludowicum regem [Louis the German] crebris supplicationibus sollicitant, ut aut ipse super eos regnum susciperet, aut filium suum mitteret, qui eos a Karoli regis tyrannide liberaret, ne forte ab extraneis et inimicis fidei cum periculo christianitatis quaerere cogereantur auxilia, quae ab orthodoxis et legitimis dominis invenire nequirent.”

⁵¹¹ Confessors and apostolic saints were much more popular. Poulin, *L'Idéal de Sainteté*, 60.

the hands of violent pagans were as good in the ninth century as they had been there any time since the persecutions of late antiquity.

This lack of new cults may derive from the general Carolingian reticence across Francia to recognize exemplary holiness in their own contemporaries,⁵¹² but it also betrays an ideological crisis directly related to Aquitaine's problematic Christian status. Saints in Aquitaine as elsewhere reflected the prevailing moral ideas of their times through their lives or through stories about their lives, and implicitly populated specific chapters in the history of Christian salvation in the eyes of their adherents. This is in part why antique Roman relics were so popular north of the Alps in the early middle ages: they represented the heroic tradition of the early church triumphing against all odds with the help of divine power. The wildly popular apostolic cults of the early middle ages also testify to the importance of service in the expansion of Christianity and the conversion of new lands to the Christian faith. Similarly, those few new saints that were widely recognized during the Carolingian period also came from the vanguard of Christian expansion. St. Boniface famously died Bible in hand, bringing Christianity to the unworthy Saxons. Likewise, Anskar, the Frankish "apostle to the north," achieved apostolic status for bringing the Scriptures to the very Scandinavians who were causing such trouble for monasteries back in Francia. Martyrs of this type were not unheard of during the eighth century Muslim attacks on Aquitaine; Sts. Pardulph and Theofrid both earned their sainthood by

⁵¹² "The Carolingian era forms an interlude in the history of sainthood, for no charismatic ascetics, healers, prophets or visionaries made their mark on a church whose bishops were implacably hostile to any such forms of expression." J. Smith, "The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe c. 780-920," *Past and Present*, 146 (February 1995), 3.

remaining behind to defend their monasteries during the Saracen offensive of 732, and both became subjects of surviving hagiographical *memoriae*.⁵¹³

Yet during the troubled period of the Viking attacks, no cults developed around new saints emerged in Aquitaine. First, this is due to the fact that authentic martyrs are surprisingly rare in Viking-era Aquitaine, unless one counts Bishop Gunhard of Nantes (murdered in 843) as an Aquitanian. Most monks and clerics generally managed to escape the attacks or were taken alive and kidnapped as slaves or sold for ransom. Yet even in the absence of strong evidence, it seems inconceivable that the same Vikings who killed monks and clerics in Neustria and Austrasia would have refrained entirely from killing anyone in Aquitaine.

It is more likely that there were in fact at least a few Aquitanian martyrs, but that their deaths simply failed to provide compelling copy for enduring *vitae*. Unlike the early church, eighth century Saxony, or other times and places of Christian expansion or consolidation, Aquitaine in the ninth century was a territory that was falling away from the Christian core of western Europe. It was not a place where glory could be achieved in service of salvation, since the church there was in recession and boatloads of non-Christians invaded the territory at an increasing pace. There was no glory to be had in martyrdom in ninth century Aquitaine, only panic and, at least as terrifying, oblivion.⁵¹⁴ As a

⁵¹³ See above, section 3.4.

⁵¹⁴ An interesting parallel can be found in Muslim Spain, which had fallen even further from Europe's Christian "core" during the ninth century. Genuine martyrs were also rare in Spain, except for the the so-called "martyrs of Córdoba," a group of Christian monks who forced Muslim judges to execute them by repeatedly and publicly insulting Islam. As A. Christys has shown, however, even this self-conscious effort to "create" a martyr cult in Spain was a failure. The cult gained no traction in Spain and only became important when some of the relics were translated to

result, there was no redeeming narrative of eventual triumph that Viking-era hagiographers could build their texts around. The “phantoms of remembrance” that drove medieval hagiographic production, in other words, were chased off by forgetfulness. As with the earliest martyrs of the primitive church, it would take a significant passage of time before the miseries of the ninth and tenth centuries could be recontextualized within the broader history of salvation by later hagiographers.⁵¹⁵ Without the support of enthusiastic texts, any cults that may have grown up around Aquitainian Viking-martyrs quickly withered.

Glory finally came only decades later with the aristocratic Aquitainian saints of the early tenth century like St. Gerald of Aurillac or William I of Aquitaine (called “the Pious”), who built on their forebears’ legacy of localized defense and patronage to become the entrepreneurs of a resurgent Christian order in Aquitaine in the tenth century. Under local patrons like these, Aquitaine’s abbeys were rebuilt, its sees were reoccupied, its relics were returned to their proper places of veneration, and its Christian status and spiritual landscape gradually restored. It is precisely in such contexts that the memory of any Aquitainian “martyrs” would have been most useful, making their absence yet another indication of their weakness as potential cult symbols.

Neustria. In Neustria, they became an inspiration for Franks battling persecution from the Vikings, who saw Spanish Christians as fellow sufferers of modern-day persecution by non-Christian invaders. A. Christys, “St-Germain-des-Prés, St. Vincent and the Martyrs of Cordoba,” *Early Medieval Europe*, 7 (1998), 199-216.

⁵¹⁵ Letaldus of Micy’s early eleventh century hagiographical texts, for example, often describe the difficult aftereffects of Viking incursions into the province. Among these works, the most notable is his *Vita et miracula S. Martini Vertavensis* (BHL 5667/5668), AASS, Oct. X, col. 805-10) and *Delatio corporis S. Juniani Mariacensis ad synodum Karrofensem* (BHL 5465), PL, 137, col. 823-26.

CONCLUSION: St. Filibert in the Tenth Century

As for St. Filibert, the rise of a new class of localized Aquitanian *committentes* came too little too late to guarantee the cult's safety within the province. Just as the monks of Noirmoutier were forced to feel their own way through the early days of the Viking crisis, they also took the less common approach by never returning to their island near the mouth of the Loire. They remained instead at Tournus in Burgundy, where they once again built the relics of St. Filibert into the centerpiece of a thriving pilgrimage site.

The eleventh century *Chronicon Trenorchiense* records that the safety of Tournus was not complete, however. In 935, Magyars struck Burgundy and damaged the monastery, followed immediately afterwards by a devastating famine.⁵¹⁶ The monks may have considered another retreat, but not back into Aquitaine. Vikings operating from Brittany were still active in their original home in northwest Aquitaine, but more importantly, they had found a permanent prosperity in Burgundy and built lasting new patronage relationships with local lay patrons, notably the local counts of Châlon, with whom they went on to have a long history. They placed enough confidence in these protectors to stay in place and weather the threat of future Magyar attacks in Tournus.

⁵¹⁶ Falco, *Chronicon Trenorchiense*, 162 (ch. 37): "Hujus temporibus, effera gens, Ungri, Franciam, Burgundiam simul et Aquitaniam ferro et igne vehementer depopulati sunt. Inter que Trenorchium cum monasterio multaue suppellectili incendio concremaverunt. Secuta quoque est non post multum tempus rerum subita sterelitas victualium, que Burgundiam pocius importuna macie constrictavit." The Magyar strike could have just as easily occurred during a subsequent attack in 937. See Poupardin, *Monuments*, 97, note 3, and P. Lauer, *Le règne de Louis IV d'Outre-Mer* (Paris, 1900), 69.

Typically, however, their relationship with these local lay aristocrats was not always smooth. When the Count of Châlon intervened in an abbatial election in 945, the monks moved St. Filibert's relics one final time. They took the relics to their earlier place of exile at St.-Pourçain-sur-Sioule back in Aquitaine, proving once again the long-term value of the network of *villae* collected by displaced monks in exile.⁵¹⁷ A regional assembly of bishops convinced the count to give up his intervention in the monastery's affairs, and in 949, St. Filibert's relics made a triumphant re-entry into Tournus where they steadfastly remained, secure in their new surroundings but leaving Aquitaine perpetually one saint poorer.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁷ Falco, *Chronicon Trenorchiense*, 156-161 (ch. 30-36).

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 161 (ch. 36).

Epilogue

Relics Return

By the middle of the Viking era, the kingdom of West Francia was a changed place, different in many ways from the high point of Carolingian dominance a hundred years before. Remarkably, tenth century West Francia resembled nothing so much as that of western Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries. Both were plagued by non-Christian invaders.⁵¹⁹ Both were scenes of widespread political change, with hegemonic powers giving way to a patchwork of lesser principalities. Consequently, both were also times of challenge for the Christian church. In the tenth century, as in the fifth, Christian monks and clerics – who had spent the intervening centuries accustoming themselves to the warm glow of imperial wealth and patronage – again found themselves occupying lowly hermitages scattered throughout the unforgiving wilderness, facing an uncertain and dangerous future. Even the saints themselves were once more traveling the roads and rivers of Francia, working miracles, battling pagans, and leaving a trail of new monastic foundations in their wake. In this sense, the Viking attacks seemed to have actually revitalized Francia's saints in a way that no other crisis

⁵¹⁹ Although ironically, it was the Franks themselves who were the invaders in the fifth century.

had in the interim, returning them to sprightliness after an extended interlude of immobility.

The efforts of lay rulers to channel the movements of these saints and their acolytes during the Viking era mirrors similar efforts by late antique aristocrats to control the often unpredictable activities of these same saints when they were alive. Indeed, by the ninth century, control over holy bodies, living or dead, had already been a major preoccupation of lay rulers for centuries. Even at the height of their dominance in the opening decades of the 800s, Carolingian elites had depended upon the movement of relics to further their political goals in places like the Empire's eastern frontier.

The Viking era, however, represented a new and unique moment in the history and politics of relic translation. During the Viking attacks, the mobility of holy bodies – formerly an advantage to the empire – became a potential liability. Relic cults in Brittany, Neustria, and Aquitaine began to detach themselves from long-settled arrangements and to move on their own as the patronage environment deteriorated. Amid the empire's increasingly obvious failure to provide the patronage and protection Francia's relic cults required in the reciprocal compact that connected them with their Carolingian patrons, monks and clerics felt authorized to leverage their "spiritual capital" into more fruitful patronage relationships as they navigated the increasingly localized mosaic of lay authority. The resulting relic translations marked out the limits of Carolingian decline as clearly as they had marked out the kingdom's earlier expansion, recapitulating the fundamental interdependence between relic cults and lay

politics. Each side derived great advantage from the success of the other, and later, each followed the other into confusion and decline as the devastation of Viking attacks increased.

Francia's holy bodies were, however, able to weather these changes in a way that their Carolingian allies could not. Dynasties came and went, but saints continued to function as repositories of power and symbols of contemporary yearnings for congruity between the divine order in heaven and the political order on earth. In this, medieval relics existed outside of time, both alive and dead, presiding in person over social developments that took generations to unfold. The same cults that were instrumental in the maintenance of Carolingian control over Neustria later became the foundation for the growing legitimacy of independent princes in Normandy, Flanders, and even the Île-de-France itself on the cusp of the high middle ages.

By the time the Carolingian dynasty began its final decline during the mid-tenth century, the forced relic translation phenomenon had mostly ended. With a few exceptions, Francia's dislocated cults had been repatriated or found new homes elsewhere. Invariably, these cults were changed by their time in exile. Modern sociologists and political scientists have noted that the process of return after a period of exile is just as fraught with emotional consequence as leaving.⁵²⁰ Like leaving, the return of West Francia's exiled relic cults also brought a transformation of identity as they attempted to reintegrate themselves into ruptured social and economic networks. Returning refugees, especially those

⁵²⁰ A. Steffansson, "Homecomings to the Future: From Diasporic Mythographies to Social Projects of Return," in *Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return*, F. Markowitz and A. Steffansson (eds.), (Lanham, MD, 2004), 6-9.

gone for long periods, also often came back bearing unexpected baggage. This was certainly the case during the restoration of Brittany's exiled cults during the tenth century, many of which returned to Brittany as agents of their new Frankish patrons who were interested in the peninsula's religious and political subjugation. Many cults came home fatally weakened by the destabilizing effects of their departures, but others returned to positions of increased strength. Some institutions, were able to force local *committentes* to bid for their loyalty in the increasingly competitive, fragmented post-Carolingian patronage environment. Others seem to have increased their wealth thanks to pious donations by patrons sympathetic to their plight. All of these monastic and clerical refugees returned home with newly acquired properties and new links to long-distance networks connecting them to fellow exiles strewn throughout the region.

Through all these changes, however, the dynamic importance of saints' relics remained immutable. Relics did not simply return to their tombs after the attacks, but continued to fulfill critical functions during the post-Carolingian period of political transition. After all, there was much work for them to do, including the re-Christianization of the territory they had left behind and the stabilization of new, localized political regimes to rule it. Relics also played a prime economic role after their return, as religious communities depended upon the power and appeal of their holy bodies to attract pious donations and help them regain the patrimony they had controlled before evacuation. For all of these reasons, as the foregoing analysis of forced relic translation shows, local and regional authorities

in the early middle ages sought to carefully manage the return home of exiled populations to their own best advantage.

The “feudal anarchy” that developed during the period of Viking-driven relic evacuation became the foundation upon which the new political order of the high middle ages would be painstakingly constructed. The recognition of the social and political importance of relics during such times of political turmoil seems to have been one of the most important and lasting legacies of the Viking invasions.

The profile of relics only continued to grow in the centuries that followed. The Viking era relic translation phenomenon, for example, presaged the subsequent importance of relics during the Peace of God movement during the later tenth and eleventh centuries. The Peace of God movement brought relics like those of St. Martial, which had remained entombed in Limoges for more than a century since their Viking-era evacuation in the 880s, out from their crypts to specially-convened Peace assemblies in hopes of forcing a reduction in the private aristocratic wars that proved devastating to church property and poor Christians. In 1028, significantly, St. Martial’s relics were transported to an assembly at Charroux, near Poitiers in Aquitaine, where, along with other relics brought to the assembly from throughout the region, they were massed into a grand exhibition of holy bodies. This collection of relics was meant to impress local warring aristocrats of the dangers of violently offending the saints to whom they and the whole community owed their spiritual wellbeing. Lay aristocrats who bothered to attend these councils were often sufficiently awed by the relics’

presence to agree to exempt women, children, the poor, the clergy, and their property from aristocratic feuds.⁵²¹ The value that lay aristocrats placed in their relations with the relics on display at councils like Charroux clearly recalled the earlier interest that Aquitanian aristocrats had in winning control of the relics of St. Martial during their Viking-induced travels a hundred and fifty years earlier.

Although the Peace of God's record at muzzling aristocratic violence is mixed, the movement reveals how monks and clerics had refined their use of "spiritual capital" to wrest increasing political concessions from lay elites. During the Viking attacks, the custodians of relic cults hoped merely to survive; by the eleventh century, a new generation of monks was using the power of their relics, tested in the fire of the Norse raids, to actively control the activities of their patrons. By literally piling up their spiritual capital in ostentatious displays, churchmen at places like St.-Martial, Cluny, Bec, and other religious institutions reminded the entire cult community of the lesson learned by the Carolingians during the Viking era: that that friendship of saints could easily be lost to those who failed to pay attention to the needs of their cults.

The history of the transition from the early to the high middle ages, from the Viking era through the Peace of God and beyond, can certainly be told without reference to relic translation. But the inclusion of *translationes* and other forced relic translation accounts furnishes an important alternative perspective on the shifting ideological underpinnings of political legitimacy during this period of momentous transition. These accounts add new texture to the complex political geography of the ninth and tenth centuries. Their descriptions of the

⁵²¹ Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History*, 198-200.

peregrinations of holy bodies during the Viking era trace the bending arcs of power and geography across the early middle ages as accurately as the advances and retreats of armies. Francia's saints helped create this change by virtue of their potent allure, a prize coveted by emperors and upstarts alike, dominant even in retreat and triumphant, eventually, in return.

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