

Charles The Fat and the Viking Great Army

The Military Explanation for the End of the Carolingian Empire (876-88).

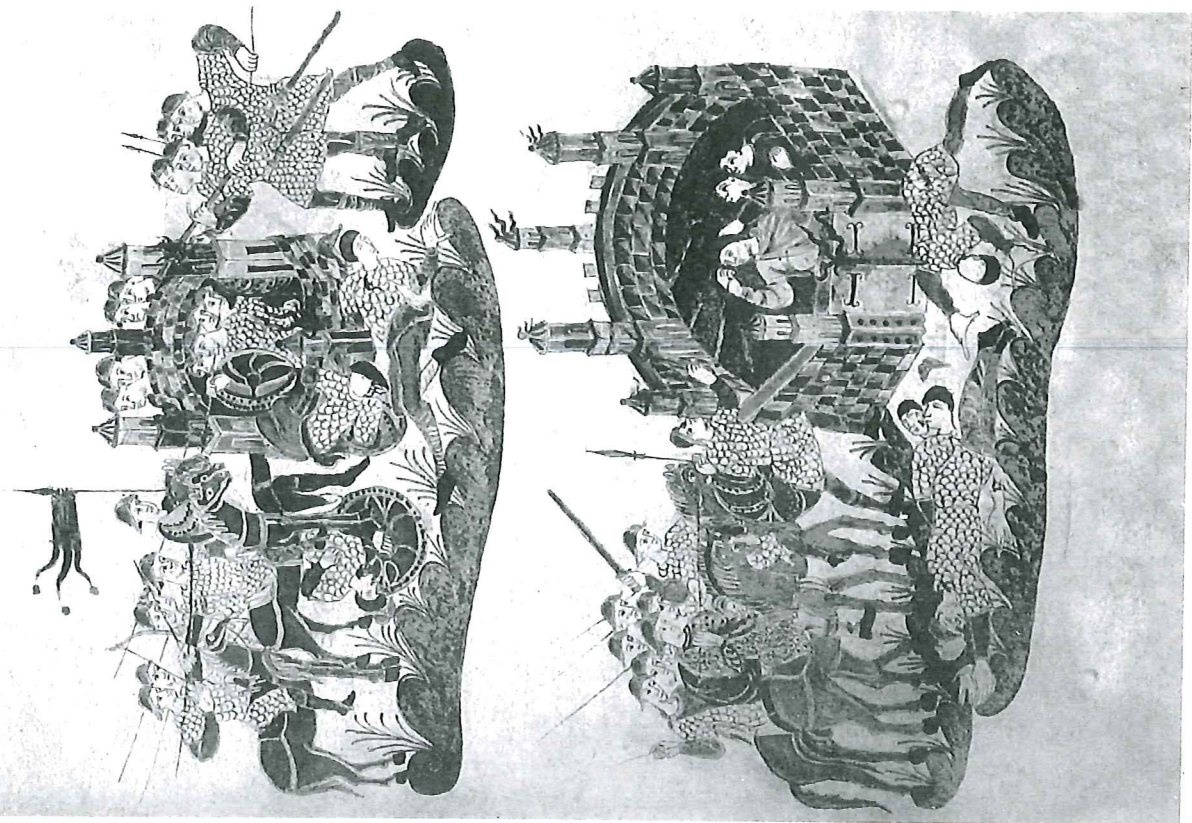
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The Return of the Great Army

In late July 885 a large Viking fleet gathered at the mouth of the River Seine and began to move upstream in the direction of Paris. After overcoming resistance at Rouen and Pontoise, in November the invaders stopped before the towers and bridges of Paris and, having been refused free passage by the inhabitants, dug in to lay siege to the town. Archbishop Fulk of Rheims, alarmed at the situation, sent an anxious letter across the Rhine to the king and emperor of the Franks Charles III (known today as 'the Fat') urging him to take action. The letter recalled the sterling job of defence which had been done by Charles's predecessors in the west Frankish kingdom (he himself had assumed control in this part of the empire only in May) and pointed out that the whole empire was in his custody. Furthermore, Fulk 'reminded him that the city of Paris, which defends the chief place and entrance to the lands of Neustria and Burgundy, was surrounded by a barbarian siege, and would quickly fall unless it was relieved by the mercy of God; if it was captured, it would be at the cost of the suffering of the whole kingdom'.¹

Fulk's gloomy analysis of the situation was in part motivated by self interest. Rheims knew what it was like to be at the sharp end of a Danish raid—in 882 the previous archbishop had been forced to flee with the relics and treasures of the church and had died on the run²—and access to the Marne via Paris would again bring the aggressors much too close for comfort. On the other hand his fears may have found favour with a wider audience; the Vikings, who had played a prominent role in Carolingian politics for the entire ninth century, at this point posed a greater threat to the wellbeing of the Frankish empire than ever before. After being tempted away from the mainland of Europe to concentrate on the British Isles in the mid-860s, they had returned to Francia in 879, partly driven by the defeat inflicted on them by Alfred of Wessex at the Battle of Edington in

Charles the Fat



Carolingian Soldiers

878, partly drawn by the internal political conflict which had flared up among the Franks over the succession to king Louis II the Stammerer.³ The Viking forces which came over from England in that year and stayed until 892 are known collectively as the Great Army (the term is contemporary), and four main factors distinguish the scale of their activities from those of previous decades.

In the first place, organisation. The Great Army was not a single fleet but an agglomeration of many smaller warbands with their own leaders, which could split apart or swarm together at will to form a bigger force. Such adaptability was backed up by good intelligence; as in the case of the disputes over Louis the Stammerer's succession in 879, they often coordinated their actions in response to political weaknesses in the societies under attack.⁴ This flexibility was bolstered further by the Danes' unquestioned superiority to the Franks in naval skills and expertise in a number of land tactics, notably siege warfare and lightning mounted raids.⁵ Secondly, numbers. Historians still argue heatedly about how many Vikings there were in a typical raiding band or army (suggestions have ranged from hundreds to tens of thousands), and the problem is difficult to resolve because of the habitual exaggeration of the contemporary sources. However, even the most conservative of estimates puts the Paris army of 885-6 at around 300 boats carrying 6-8,000 men, a figure which not only dwarfs the less organised raiding parties of the earlier ninth century, but which would also exceed the possible number of defenders on the nine hectares of the fortified Ile-de-la-Cité which, at that time, was what Paris basically amounted to as an urban centre.⁶ Thirdly range. The Great Army reached parts which other armies had not. Where previously the Loire and the deltas of the Channel coasts of France and the Low Countries had been the central theatres of raiding activity, now the lands of the east Frankish kingdom were threatened as well. Detachments of warriors set up camps and harried the river valleys of the north almost constantly between 879 and 885. For the first time, serious attacks were launched by the Danes up the Rhine and Moselle; Cologne, Trier, and other Carolingian political centres were hit and, most humiliating of all, the Vikings stabled their horses in Charlemagne's palace chapel at Aachen, the old centre of the empire.⁷ In 885, furthermore, there had been no major Viking presence on the Seine for 20 years. Fourthly and finally, intention. It is important to always keep in mind with regard to what follows that it was never the Northmen's objective to conquer the Carolingian empire politically. On the contrary, like the barbarians who had contributed to the collapse of Rome some 500 years previously, they wanted in. In addition to the

acquisition of loot and tribute from the bulging treasuries of the Carolingian church which had always been their principal target on the continent, from 879, emboldened by time and success, it seems that they were after land for settlement as well. In 911 they got it and the Vikings became the Normans.⁸

If Fulk's concern therefore finds a context in developments in the scale and nature of Viking activity after 879, his assessment of the importance of Paris was also accurate. The town had never fallen and, as the archbishop pointed out, it safeguarded the entrances to the Marne, the Yonne, and, to some extent, the Oise, along which lay further important palaces and churches. Although Paris was not a governmental centre for the Carolingian dynasty to the same degree that it had been for the Merovingians or would be again for the Capetians, it was economically significant, focussing a healthy wine trade along the Seine. It was also a site of psychological importance to the Carolingians, the religious aura of whose kingship was fostered at Parisian monasteries such as St-Denis and St-Germain-des-Prés. When, in 845, a Viking chief had entered the town for the first time, one shocked commentator drew a direct parallel to Lamentations iv.12: 'None of the kings of the earth would believe, nor could any of the inhabitants of the world accept, that the enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem'.⁹

Fulk had gone further, though, and implied that the very existence of the empire could depend on Charles the Fat's saving Paris; and on the face of it he seemed to have been borne out by events. Towards the end of a siege which lasted almost an entire year, the emperor arrived at the head of a large army and made terms with the Vikings in November 886. Paris was to stand, but they were to be paid a tribute and allowed to pass up the Seine to spend the winter in Burgundy. Another year later, in November 887, Charles was deposed by rebels led by his (illegitimate) nephew Arnulf of Carinthia, an event of the highest significance, because at that point Charles was the only legitimate adult male Carolingian left, and remained heirless. His deposition (and death 6 weeks later) therefore brought about an end to the Carolingian monopoly on royal power which had endured since 751. The empire was divided (again), and for the first time in 137 years kings were legitimately crowned who were not members of the family of Charlemagne; in an important sense, this event marks the political death of the Carolingian empire.

In the view of a previous generation of historians, to transpose the famous expression of André Piganiol, the Vikings were its murderers. They saw the ninth-century invasions, like those of the fifth century, as an alien

element in European political culture and a key factor in robbing a militarily slothful Carolingian royal authority of the last vestiges of its legitimacy, to the extent that by November 887 the aristocracy had decided to go it alone; Fulk's prophecy had come true.¹⁰ This idea, it can be said, amounted to a military explanation for the end of the Carolingian empire. Current scholarship, on the other hand, explicitly claims to reject such an explanation, preferring to think of the Vikings as an integral part of ninth-century society, and late Carolingian 'decline' as a result of various other economic, political, and (still) nationalist pressures.¹¹ Despite this claim, however, it is extremely noticeable that the actual deposition of Charles the Fat is still almost always connected by historians to his supposed failure to deal adequately with the Great Army, especially at the siege of Paris in 885-6. What is even more striking is that, while a highly polarised debate continues to rage concerning the extent of the Viking political and social impact on the continent, even those historians on the side of playing down the significance of the invasions accept the causal connection between the Vikings and the deposition of Charles the Fat.¹² This connection amounts to a consensus which seems to stand clear of the debate. Given that it was only the lack of a legitimate heir which led to the rise of non-Carolingian kings in 887-8 this must be seen, despite claims to the contrary, as a *de facto* perpetuation of the military explanation for the end of the empire, albeit in a more subtle form, because when the rebels ended the reign of Charles in November 887, they also ended the hegemony of his line. The purpose of the present article is to argue against this dominant theme in the historiography and to suggest that its endurance is not the result of any great error on the part of historians, but of the fact that the sources surviving from the 880s have simply received less attention than those remaining from earlier periods.

Kings and Vikings

What, then, have historians said about the politics of war in the 880s? Modern accounts do not cast the Vikings as conquerors of the Carolingians, but focus rather on the later kings' failure to mount an adequate defence, a failure to fulfil one of the central duties of Christian kingship, to maintain peace through warfare. The inevitable decline of Carolingian kingship in the second half of the ninth century, and the consequent gap at the top in terms of defence, is a theory which was elaborated in the first half of the twentieth century by Jan Dhondt and Fernand Vercauteren, two Belgian historians whose work forms the basis for most subsequent histories of the subject.¹³ To briefly summarise the model: Charles the Bald (840-77)

successfully coordinated Frankish defence in the 860s, largely through a policy of fortified bridge-building on several major rivers, forcing the Vikings effectively to abandon their efforts and concentrate their energies north of the Channel. After his death, however, due to a rapid series of short reigns and succession crises, as various Carolingians fell to premature and often bizarre deaths out of windows and off horses, Frankish politics descended into incestuous in-fighting and began to spin out of control, to the extent that 'the defence of the realm did not exist' and the locals were 'now left to themselves by the feeble Carolingian monarchs'.¹⁴ As a consequence, the aristocracy began to draw on its own resources to build castles and organise defence in the 880s, culminating in the discarding of the now-useless Carolingians in 887 and the entrenchment of a new kind of social order characterised by locally concentrated power, a society described by Vercauteren as 'feudal'.¹⁵ Royal involvement in resistance to the Vikings was partially restored only in the wake of the Carolingian collapse by their immediate successors, notably King Arnulf in the east and King Odo in the west, whose historical reputations depend in large measure on their supposed military vigour.¹⁶

Interestingly, while Dhondt's contribution to this theory, which was based on the idea that the late Carolingians had become economically bankrupt, is now (rightly) debated and questioned, Vercauteren's accompanying elaboration of the devolution of military defence out of royal hands seems to stand.¹⁷ In reality, however, 'public' (royal) and 'private' (aristocratic) military activity had always coexisted in the Frankish polity, and the two should not be thought of as mutually exclusive; the Carolingian 'state', such as it was, was never founded on a Weberian domination of the means of legitimate force.¹⁸ Much depends, therefore, on how the historian answers the question of *when* 'private' began to supersede 'public' power, when aristocrats began to fight independently of and in place of the king. And even those who take issue with Dhondt's model of Carolingian decline still find the answer to this question, with Vercauteren, in the 880s.¹⁹ It will be contended below that this answer is in large part a result of the different nature and number of the sources for the 880s compared to the 860s.

For the reign of Charles the Fat, this observation of a loss of royal control of defence is thought to be emblematic of a more general political stagnation and has been sharpened with further accusations. For instance, a common argument runs that Charles's acquisition of the west Frankish kingdom in 885, which reunited the entire empire of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious in one man's hands for the first time since 840, was an anachronism and doomed not to survive. Times had changed, parts of the

empire had grown apart; in the words of Carlrichard Brühl it was 'a mere intermezzo'.²⁰ Related to this is the idea that Charles, because he was a king of the east Carolingian line, was simply not interested in the problems of the west and the protection of Paris was, as far as he was concerned, of secondary importance. As a result, the westerners turned to the likes of Odo, then count of Paris, who organised defence and was raised to kingship in 888.²¹ In considering the evidence for the reign of Charles the Fat in the light of established theories about kings and Vikings, then, the main questions to be borne in mind must be: did the reign see a loss of royal control of military defence? Was it marked by a lack of royal interest in the military peril of the west? And did it represent a break with previous efforts to avert the Danish threat?

The Defence of the Realm

One very clear, but underrated, problem in studying later ninth-century military history is the nature of the contemporary sources. Much of what we know about the defensive measures taken in the period c.800-66 by Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, and Charles the Bald comes down to us through the medium of royal capitularies, the prescriptive legislative documents which record the decisions of general assemblies held by the king with his nobles. Unfortunately, no example of this type of text survives from the reign of any east Frankish king, including Charles the Fat, even though we know from stray references in the annals that they did issue them.²² This may partly be due to the absence of an east Frankish equivalent to the influential and prolix Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, whose hand is evident in much west Frankish capitulary production, and whose *Annals of St-Bertin* provide a wealth of information about the royal court of Charles the Bald which is lacking in the comparable east Frankish *Annals of Fulda* for the 880s.²³ We are therefore less informed about Charles the Fat's perception of and legislation about the Viking threat than we are about his predecessors'.

Even so, we know that the emperor did hold assemblies to discuss and coordinate military defence on a number of occasions. In May 882, for example, 'he came to Worms and took counsel with his men who came from all sides as to how he might drive the Northmen out of his kingdom'.²⁴ Further councils of war were recorded in November 882 and February 884.²⁵ What is especially interesting here is that the annalists, on these occasions, bothered to make particular reference to the defensive nature of these assemblies, since they habitually limited their comments about such occasions to little more than the date.

The timing of some of the campaigns organised at these councils is significant. In both 882, when he inherited the kingdom of his brother Louis the Younger, and in 885, when he assumed control in the west, Charles's very first act was to assemble and despatch armies against Viking bands at Asselt and Leuven respectively.²⁶ He had been selected as king of the west specifically to deal with the urgency of this military situation: the only other candidate, Charles the Bald's third grandson Charles, had been passed over because, at 5 years old, he was too young to fight a campaign. By sending these armies out as his first royal act, Charles the Fat clearly recognised this responsibility and showed that his rule was based on a determination to fight the Danes, in other words to do his job. The composition of these forces is also striking. In 882 the army sent to attack the Norse camp at Asselt in Lotharinga was made up of Franconians, Bavarians, Alemans, Thuringians, Saxons, Frisians, and Lombards (Italians).²⁷ It therefore included contingents from each of the regnal subdivisions of Charles's kingdom. The same thing was said of the army which he brought to the relief of Paris by the eyewitness Abbo of St-Germain-des-Prés.²⁸ Charles was therefore able to gather warriors from one part of his empire and get them to campaign against his enemies in another part.²⁹ This observation runs counter to the idea that the reunification of 885 was an anachronism which failed to overcome a dissolution of ties between its regions. It also shows that Charles could (and did) coordinate defensive campaigns in which all the aristocracies of the empire participated.³⁰

With regard to fortification programmes, some interesting comparisons can be made between the 880s and 860s. Firstly, fortified bridges. Simon Coupland has recently argued that there are grounds for significantly scaling down our view of the extent of the building programme of Charles the Bald, which was previously thought to have produced a sprawling network of fortified bridges which prevented Viking advance up the river systems of northern Europe.³¹ In the 880s, furthermore, we can show that kings *did* in fact continue to construct such defences; in 881 Charles's grandson Louis III (880-2) had a stronghold put up at Étrun to try to block the River Scheldt. This evidence is sometimes seen as indicative of the comparative weakness of the king, since Hincmar reported that 'it turned out to have been built more for the protection of pagans than for the help of Christians, for even King Louis could find nobody to whom he could entrust the fortress's defence'.³² However, Hincmar's acerbic comment is not to be taken seriously; in the same annal he described Louis's celebrated battle against the Vikings at Saucourt as a defeat where numerous other sources reported it as a famous victory. His bitter opinion

was that of a man who was being frozen out of what he thought was his rightful position at court by the young king. Louis's brother Carloman II (880-4) seems to have had something similar in mind in 884 when he conditionally granted the small abbey of St-Sulpicius to the bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne. The condition was that the building, which stood at the end of a bridge over the Marne, was to be held for the time being by a royal *vasallus*, to defend the kingdom 'from the infestation of the pagans'.³³

Secondly, land fortifications. Charles the Bald had constructed a limited number of urban reinforcements in the 860s, for example at Tours and St-Denis.³⁴ The significance of this policy seems to be enhanced by Charles's proclamation in the capitulary of Pîtres of 864, in the context of defence against the Vikings, that fortifications could only be built with royal approval and that unauthorised fortresses had to be dismantled.³⁵ As we saw, the historiography contrasts this with the 880s, when it is assumed that all fortification, of which the narrative sources provide abundant evidence, was the result of local aristocratic rather than royal initiative. However, this is not comparing like with like because the lack of capitularies for the later period could conceal a link with the king just like that provided by the edict of 864. The absence of this link does not mean that the court was necessarily uninvolved; in reality the bluntness of the narrative sources on which we are forced to fall back means that almost always it is not immediately obvious *whose* authority was sanctioning the putting up of castles and the rebuilding of city walls.

Furthermore, there are fragments of positive evidence that indeed show the importance of royal initiative in building programmes in the 880s. The monastery of St-Vaast in Arras, for example, was sacked in winter 880-1, forcing the monks to flee to Beauvais, and the main narrative source which tells us about its fortification 6 years later does so with no explicit reference to the king.³⁶ However, a charter of King Odo from 890 spells out for us that the work had been done explicitly on the authority of Charles the Fat after the monks had asked his permission 'for a stronghold to be built by them in their monastery to defend the place' against the Vikings.³⁷ Early in 887 Bishop Geilo of Langres came to the imperial court and told Charles how he had laboured long and hard, and alone, to rebuild the walls of the town to protect his church and people against 'the very great persecution and infestation of the pagans'. The significant point is that the bishop came to the emperor for approval of his work, and that he was granted extra help from royal resources to finance its continuation.³⁸ A further case illustrates the artificiality of attempting to draw a mutually exclusive contrast between royal and aristocratic defensive initiative in this period. Count Theoderic of Vermandois is recorded as having reinforced

the walls of the important Frankish monastery of St-Quentin, of which he was lay abbot, in the year 886.³⁹ However, as we shall see below, Theoderic was a man high in Charles the Fat's favour and was one of the leaders of royal defence against the Vikings throughout the 880s. His military activities against the Vikings were certainly carried out in conjunction with rather than in spite of royal authority. It therefore seems to be of limited worth to observe that our source make no specific reference to any involvement of the king in the rebuilding; monastic annals are not the places one would necessarily expect to find such references.

Other related defensive measures can also be detected during the reign of Charles the Fat. Certain charters, administrative documents issued by the royal court, show that he was concerned to deal with the potential consequences of Viking raids in his empire. A significant grant of land was made to the monastery of Prüm in May 882 to compensate for the destruction caused by a Danish attack in January that year.⁴⁰ Gifts made to the abbeys of St-Martin, Tours and St-Médard, Soissons aimed to avert a repeat of Prüm's woes; they stipulated that the monks were to have standing imperial permission to build cells on the property they had been given, 'for the avoidance of the rage of violent persecution'.⁴¹ Interestingly, the implication of this provision is surely that, as with Charles the Bald at Pîtres, Charles the Fat was here assuming a right of authorisation over the construction of defensive buildings; he thought the monks needed his permission, and they had come all the way to Alemannia to get it. Charles is also known to have provided refuge for at least one west Frankish bishop, Landramnus of Nantes, who had fled with his canons from his see to Angers before a Danish attack.⁴² Another, Bishop Adalhelm of Sées, having returned from Viking captivity 'across the sea', was gratefully restored to his old job by Charles the Fat, perhaps having been ransomed by him first.⁴³ And at a lower stratum of affairs, the court reissued property charters which had been burned in Viking raids, and provided shelter for monks on the run with their relics.⁴⁴

Moving back up to the level of the defence of the realm, an instructive royal charter survives from 887 concerning the military obligations of the monastery of Korvey in Saxony. The document relates how in the time of the king's grandfather Louis the Pious the abbot and his men had been exempted from the duty of serving in the royal army. Charles, however, laid out that, although he wished to confirm this privilege for the future, at present he had to insist on its relaxation because of 'the necessity of the present danger'. Thirty *homines nobiles* were to accompany the abbot if he was required to go on missions for the king, while the rest of the nobles attached to the church were to join the army 'with their own followings'.⁴⁵

One thing this tells us is that even in May 887, when historians have considered Charles's power to be slithering out of his grasp, he was planning further campaigns. He sternly informed the abbot that 'we have of necessity to insist, with all the people divinely placed in our care, on the defence of the Christian church.' This increase of military obligations, which that last quote suggests was intended to be applied in a more general context than just for this one religious house, finds a direct parallel in the similar measures taken by the powerful Charlemagne and Louis the Pious in the first three decades of the century when the Carolingian empire came under serious external threat for the first time; measures which, again, we know about largely from the capitulary evidence.⁴⁶

Finally, Carolingian warfare was always surrounded by a religious aura. The king was seen as a representative of God on earth, and God's favour was considered essential for any Frankish victory; prayer and penitence had as much a role to play as swords and spears. A formula from the monastery of St-Gall in Alemannia preserves for us a royal command to be transmitted by bishops to local priests, requiring the organisation of litanies and fasts to protect the church 'from the plots of invisible enemies and the invasions of enemy peoples'.⁴⁷ This is a probable reference to the Vikings and the Slavs, and the text is associated with an assembly held by unnamed kings sometime in the late 870s or early 880s. Since our source for the promulgation is St-Gall, with which he had closer links than any other Carolingian ruler, it is safe to assume that Charles the Fat was one of those involved. The fact that the letter survives in a book of standard forms shows that it was meant to be widely copied and distributed.

So far, the evidence for the defence of the Carolingian empire under Charles the Fat can be read as showing a surprising (in view of the historiography) number of continuities with the measures taken by previous kings, and it demonstrates clearly that the emperor took a definite interest in the defence of the realm at all political levels. The fact that this evidence has to be excavated from traces in a variety of non-legislative sources is significant. It implies that the severing of the link which historians have seen in the 880s between royal initiative and Viking defence in the localities may be more apparent than real, and that the real gap in continuity is evidential, caused by the chance non-survival of capitularies which give a much more rounded image of the situation in the 860s and before. With this broad conclusion in mind, it is now possible to examine a specific case where royal intervention can be seen in action, in the defensive organisation of the Paris area around the year 885.



The Defence of the Oise Line

The River Oise runs into the Seine from the east a few miles downstream from Paris. Its hinterland, along with that of the Marne further south, comprised what was in the ninth century the fiscal epicentre of royal power. Along its banks lay a heavy concentration of royally controlled estates, palaces and churches, including Compiègne, Quierzy, and Verberie. The region had been harried throughout the early 880s by the Vikings, operating from bases on the Somme and other surrounding river systems, and access to the Oise certainly put Paris well within range.⁴⁸ Here as nowhere else the Vikings were face to face with the Carolingians and their supporters. Karl Ferdinand Werner has argued that an entry in the *Annals of St-Vaast* for the year 890 refers to the creation of a new defensive frontier along the Oise: 'King Odo, having assembled his army, camped on the river Oise to stop [the Vikings] devastating the kingdom at will'.⁴⁹ Werner's view was that from then until well into the tenth century, the *Oiselinie* as he calls it was Francia's main defence line, controlled by members of a powerful family known as the House of Vermandois or the Herbertines, initially the counts Herbert I and his brother Pippin. Their power was based on a solid block of counties and other offices forming a semi-circle in the region north and east of Paris, in which members of the family can be found exercising power at various points in the late ninth and tenth centuries.⁵⁰ The very modern-sounding term Oise Line must not be allowed to mislead; Werner perhaps coined it with tongue in cheek. A row of twentieth century style fortifications is not to be imagined, although there are examples of such from the early middle ages, but rather a territory forming a command under the control of selected leaders, focussed perhaps on a few key strongholds.

Often, moreover, Werner's work anachronistically implies the existence of a monolithic political identity held by members of the House of Vermandois and families like them, and as a result his evidence for the locations of their power-bases is gathered from different decades stretching well into the tenth century. There may be grounds, therefore, for doubting the presence of all these lands in their hands even as early as the 890s, and hence grounds for finding behind the supposed defensive innovation of Odo a degree of continuity with Carolingian arrangements in the area. For example, before Herbert I got his hands on it in the mid-890s, the county of Vermandois was held by a count Theoderic. This man, who is often still confused in the secondary literature with his namesake 'the Chamberlain', count of Autun at around the same time, has been convincingly identified by Werner as being at the centre of a group of

north Frankish aristocrats who had invited Charles the Fat into the west in 885; Theoderic himself delivered the message.⁵¹ As we saw above, he was also the lay abbot of St-Quentin, one of the most prominent monastic houses in the Seine-Meuse area, which had close connections to the royal house and was also one of the key later possessions of Herbert and his family. A charter of Carloman II for the abbey of Morienval was petitioned for by Theoderic as 'count and abbot'; the implication of this is that he was also abbot of Morienval and count of Valois, where the church lay.⁵² This was a man of considerable influence, who had been among the close advisers of Louis III and Carloman II.⁵³ Significantly for us, he had also been one of Louis's main field commanders against the Vikings.⁵⁴ And when, as we saw, Carloman had organised defence for the bridge at Châlons-sur-Marne, our text tells us that it was on the advice of this same Theoderic.

Another anti-Viking war leader was a certain Aletrannus, whom we find in 885 being entrusted with command of a fortification over the Oise at Pontoise, constructed just as Paris itself was being made ready to withstand assault.⁵⁵ Aletrannus, however, was unable to carry out his job successfully; Pontoise was surrounded, the occupants surrendered and hostages were exchanged. After this Aletrannus retreated 'with his men' to Beauvais.⁵⁶ Beauvais is also identified by Werner as one of the key *civitates* held north of Paris by the Herbertines and a crucial piece in the jigsaw of properties held by that family as part of their defence of the *Oiselinie*.⁵⁷ There is no direct evidence, however, to show that either Herbert I or his brother Pippin were counts at all before the very end of 889, and even then definitely not in Beauvais.⁵⁸ The high profile of Aletrannus in the defence of Pontoise and the fact that he retreated to Beauvais in defeat may instead suggest that he held this county in 885. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that in around 893 a count Aletrannus was threatened with excommunication by bishop Honorius of Beauvais after joining the rebellious supporters of Charles the Simple against Odo.⁵⁹ As well as being count of Beauvais, it seems likely on the evidence of a generous gift of Louis the Stammerer in the Laonnais that Aletrannus also held that county,⁶⁰ and it has been plausibly suggested that he was count of Vexin as well.⁶¹ Who was he?

Ferdinand Lot identified him with a count of Troyes, Aletrannus II, active from 868 onwards, who he thought was brought in by Charles the Fat in 885 as an experienced commander to help the defence of Paris.⁶² While the connection between a count of Beauvais/Laon and a count of Troyes is possible, it is unprovable, and the question of the family descent of this figure, which primarily interested Lot, will not be discussed here;

it is the context of the politics of the Paris area which is of more immediate significance. Our closest and best source for this is the poet Abbo of St-Germain-des-Prés. In the course of the siege of Paris, he tells us, a notable victory was won against the enemy, 3,000 of whom were killed by only 600 defenders: 'And renown had it that the triumphant men had as their leaders two united brothers, Theoderic and Aletramus'.⁶³ This, it seems certain, is a reference to none other than Theoderic of Vermandois, who we already know figured highly among the *procures* (chief men: this is Abbo's term) of Charles the Fat in this area. Theoderic's proprietary church, Morienval, passed into the hands of the family of King Odo after his death in the 890s.⁶⁴ It is surely no coincidence that the properties of Aletramus ended up in the hands of the same family, to which he may well have been related.⁶⁵ It is also interesting that if Aletramus was count of Vexin, he would have been the successor of Count Nibelung III; and the families of Nibelung and Theoderic of Vermandois were related.⁶⁶ All this strengthens the suspicion that the two figures we have been discussing were linked to each other by blood, and indeed were the very brothers mentioned by Abbo.

The fame of these two bellicose brothers did not only leave an impression on contemporaries. An eleventh-century book of miracles preserves a memory of their power in the region and describes them thus: 'The command of the Ardennes was held by Theoderic, whose brother Aletramus shared that command equally'.⁶⁷ This author, probably a monk of Stablo, is of course not to be relied on blindly for information about the ninth century. However, his description of the sharing of power by the brothers is useful because it elucidates the crucial report of Abbo, who strongly implies that the 600 soldiers commanded by the brothers were the same 600 imperial troops who had just been sent to Paris by Charles the Fat.⁶⁸ This shows not only the two counts' closeness to the king, but also suggests, along with our information about Aletramus's abortive attempt to defend Pontoise and about Theoderic leading the forces of Louis III into battle and advising Carloman II on military matters, that they were designated as commanders of imperial defence against the Vikings in the same way as the Herbertines would be later. Here is our link with the court. Abbo's account also shows that the brothers must have been outside the city walls when they arrived with the troops from Charles; perhaps Aletramus had come from Beauvais or Laon, Theoderic from Noyon (the urban centre of the county of Vermandois) or St-Quentin.

Here, then, already in the mid-880s, we have two brothers acting directly at the behest of the emperor as defenders of northern Francia, and from exactly that concentrated base around Paris which Werner identified as crucial to the Herbertine defence of the *Oiselinie* in the 890s

and beyond; Beauvais, Laon, Vermandois, St-Quentin, Vexin, Valois. These men were among those who had invited Charles to assume the west Frankish kingship in the first place so that he would help deal with the Viking threat. And from this brief summary of the evidence it should be clear that the people and strategy involved not only prefigured the reign of Odo, but also reached back into the court circles of Louis III and Carloman II. Both these kings were alert to the necessity of defending the Oise valley against raids, and several passages in the *Annals of St-Vaast* betray the fact that the river was seen as a definitive defensive boundary in the earlier 880s.⁶⁹ Louis III had also gone all the way to the wire against heavy ecclesiastical opposition to try to ensure he got the people he wanted in the vacant episcopal sees of Noyon and Beauvais; kings needed men they could trust in such strategic positions.⁷⁰ Charles the Fat used the resources he had at hand to coordinate the defence of the west while he himself was absent, and his organisation was both appropriate and traditional. Even when he was not there his authority was acknowledged; Abbot Gauzlin of St-Denis was reported by Abbo as defiantly telling the Viking leaders before Paris: 'This town was entrusted to us by the emperor Charles, whose empire spans almost the entire world'.⁷¹ Here we have a view from the trenches, from those in the thick of battle, and not from lofty prescriptive texts emanating from the court; but from both angles Charles appears interested, in charge and very Carolingian.

It has been said in recognition of the authority of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious that 'one of the measures of the power of a Frankish king was the extent to which he could leave others to do his fighting and war-leading for him'.⁷² As we saw, however, exactly the same yardstick has been used *against* these kings' successors in the 880s to suggest that royal power was now dwindling. Again, then, it is clear that comparisons between different periods of Carolingian rule have not been made on equal terms. In terms of delegating military leadership it can be stated that, in principle, what was good for Charles the Great was also good for Charles the Fat.

The End of the Empire

It has not been my argument that the last Carolingians' defence against the Great Army succeeded; on the contrary, the nature of the threat made a decisive victory unlikely. Again and again Charles the Fat and his predecessors were forced to conclude uneasy truces with the Vikings. When the latter left the mainland again in 892 it was not because of the defeat they suffered at the hands of King Arnulf at the battle of the Dyle, which allowed their logistical system to remain intact, but because famine

rendered their existence in Francia too uncomfortable.⁷³ Historians, however, tend to demand victory from their kings, and they do not get one from Charles the Fat. Did contemporaries harbour similar expectations?

Two points can be made here. First, there is a general point concerning the payment of tribute as part of a peace treaty, a point which has been made by others but is still worth stressing again. F.D. Logan writes that 'to consider tribute a defensive weapon is like considering a ransom payment to be a life insurance premium', and hence a sign of incapacity.⁷⁴ Such judgements (which are common) betray an excessive readiness on the part of many historians to reproduce uncritically the tone of hysterical outrage in the reports of many of the contemporary narrative sources, which tend to depict Viking raids in exaggerated and highly stylised terms. These sources were written inevitably by churchmen, and inevitably it was churches, the bullion stores of the early medieval world, which footed most of the bill for any pay-off. Of course ecclesiastics like archbishop Hincmar wanted kings like Louis III to get out and fight battles rather than come to terms because, as he angrily said himself, 'tribute has already been taken away not only from poor men, but also from the former riches of the church'.⁷⁵ The poor men were one thing, he implied, but the taxing of the church was going just too far. It was not necessarily a matter of principle; churches suffered not only at the hands of Vikings, but could be equally damaged by the passage of royal armies when kings did, as requested, get out on campaign, an accusation which was laid at the door of both Charles the Bald (by Hincmar himself) and Charles the Fat.⁷⁶ Away from the indignant bluster of this vocal literate elite, evidence based on quality of coinage has shown that tribute was usually an eminently affordable and economic option for kings to take, as Charles the Fat did in 882 and 886, and the Vikings usually stuck to their word.⁷⁷ Tribute was not, therefore, necessarily a sign of royal weakness.

Second, there is a more specific point. It is often said that Charles disappointed contemporaries by his striking of deals, especially at Paris; 'to the Franks it looked the act of a coward'.⁷⁸ That was not, however, how it looked to the monk Abbo who lived through the siege and offers us an account full of unparalleled detail and personal opinion. He does not reproach Charles for his late arrival on the scene, on the contrary he reported the joy of the Parisian populace at his appearance.⁷⁹ Nor did he consider reprehensible the king's decision to allow the enemy to overwinter in Burgundy; indeed he felt the Burgundians were thus fairly repaid for their failure to come to the aid of Paris.⁸⁰ Regino of Prüm, another contemporary with no reason to love the Vikings, gave Charles a similar degree of rational motive for the concession, saying that it was made

'because the inhabitants of those regions [ie. Burgundy] did not want to obey him'.⁸¹ Just across the water in Wessex, the royal biographer Asser felt the Vikings had been thwarted in having to leave the city undamaged.⁸² It is certainly misleading, then, to say that deals such as those concluded by Charles at Asselt and Paris were 'to everyone's keen disappointment'.⁸³

The dominant view among historians of royal impotence and lack of interest in the face of military threat during the 880s thus seems to have been heavily overstated; contemporaries often judged their kings less harshly than historians armed with a millenium of hindsight. This is not to say that Charles the Fat was in any way a better commander than his predecessors, just that he did try to be a commander in their mould. The point is that royal authority was still working, or at the very least still making a decent effort to work, and through standard Carolingian channels. Continuity is by no means a surprising conclusion; the surprise is that it is so seldom accepted. This is for the most part simply a result of the greater study which has been devoted to the sources from the earlier, happier days of the Carolingian empire (attack is more exciting than defence), and of the desire of historians to find the crucible of 'feudalism' in some supposed cataclysmic crisis at the empire's end.⁸⁴

As for the deposition of Charles the Fat, the idea that it was connected directly to military failure must be seriously questioned. The course of events is murky, but what is clear is that it was an east Frankish affair, probably motivated in the first instance by Arnulf's frustration at exclusion from co-rule. As we have seen, the idea of the emperor's lack of interest in the west and the west's consequent disillusionment with him has been exaggerated to say the very least. The Parisians had nothing to do with the coup, and in fact the west Frankish kingdom did not recognise its outcome; Charles's men there stayed loyal and Odo did not ascend the throne until Charles was dead and beyond making a comeback.⁸⁵ That it was one of his own supporters who was able to fill the void caused by his death testifies more to the strength of his reign than to its weakness. Those who consider Odo to have been acting as king in all but name before 888⁸⁶ find no support from the likes of Abbo, even though he was writing for the new king after the death of the old.⁸⁷

By implication, therefore, if we are looking for a turning point at which to place the appearance of a new kind of socio-political order founded on a privatisation of political and military power ('feudalism'), the best bet must be not the death of Charles the Bald, but that of Charles the Fat. It was this event which altered the language of politics, creating a situation where kings from different families competed for legitimacy in a way which was necessarily unlike the period of Carolingian hegemony. Now the great dual

houses (like that of Vermandois) who would dominate Europe in the tenth century could consolidate their power bases, play rulers off against each other and effectively try to stand outside the demands of royal service. These bases, built up in service to the Carolingians, remained solid when the monopoly on royal authority was shattered by Arnulf's coup and the 'kinglets' began picking up the pieces. The long tenth century with its new balance of power between centre and locality began not in 877, but in 888.⁸⁸

The following abbreviations will be used throughout: MGH = Monumenta Germaniae Historica; Cap. = Capitularia; SS = Scriptores; SRG = Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum; D(D)CHH = Diplomata Regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum vol. II (Karoli III diplomata). AB = *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, ed. F. Grat, J. Viellard, S. Clémencet, L. Levillain (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1964); Nelson = J. L. Nelson trans., *The Annals of St-Bertin. Ninth-Century Histories, Volume I* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991). AV = *Annales Vedastini*, ed. B. Simson, MGH SRG. AF = *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SRG; AFC = AF (Mainz continuation); BC = AF (Bavarian continuation); Reuter = T. Reuter trans., *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth-Century Histories, Volume II* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1992).

NB: Although the premise of this article is that there is a historiographical consensus to be argued against, no attempt has been made at bibliographical completeness. The secondary works cited are intended generally only as a range of representative examples.

¹ Flodoard, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, edd. I. Heller and G. Waitz, MGH SS 13, IV.5, p. 563.

² AB s.a. 882, p. 250 (Nelson, p. 226).

³ AV s.a. 879, p. 44.

⁴ See C. Gillmor, 'War on the Rivers: Viking Numbers and Mobility on the Seine and Loire, 841-886', *Viator*, vol. 19 (1988), pp. 82-83; N. Lund, 'Allies of God or Man? The Viking Expansion in a European Perspective', *Viator*, vol. 20 (1989), pp. 52-55.

⁵ Gillmor, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-106; K. Leyser, 'Early Medieval Warfare', in *idem*, *Communication and Power in Medieval Europe. The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries* (London and Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 47-49.

⁶ C. Brühl, *Palatium und Civitas. Studien zur Profanographie spätantiker Civitates vom 3. bis 13. Jahrhundert* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1975), Vol. 1, p. 11, n. 54; Gillmor, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-90.

⁷ AF s.a. 881, 882, pp. 96-97 (Reuter, pp. 90-91); Regino, *Chronicon*, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SRG, s.a. 881, 882, pp. 117-118.

⁸ See in general S. Coupland, 'The Vikings in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England to 911', in R. McKitterick ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History Vol. II, c. 700-c. 900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 190-201; J. L. Nelson 'The Frankish Empire', in P. Sawyer ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 19-47.

⁹ Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Lamentationes Ieremiae*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 120, col. 1220; for the context see S. Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath or the People of God's Wrath? The Carolingian Theology of the Viking Invasions', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 42 (1991), pp. 535-554.

¹⁰ W. Schlesinger, 'Die Auflösung des Karlsreiches', in W. Braunfels ed., *Karl der Grosse*.

Lebenswerk und Nachleben (Dusseldorf: L. Schwann, 1965), vol. 1, pp. 820-826, 842-843 is a classic statement.

¹¹ See C. P. Wormald, *Viking Studies: Whence and Whither?*, in R. T. Farrell ed., *The Vikings* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1982), p. 140.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 140 taking the view of the Vikings as highly disruptive; on the side of circumspection, Coupland, 'The Vikings in Francia', p. 201; Nelson, 'The Frankish Empire', p. 35.

¹³ J. Dhondt, *Études sur la naissance des principautés territoriales en France (IXe-Xe siècles)* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1948); F. Vercauteren, 'Comment s'est-on défendu, au IXe siècle dans l'Empire Franc contre les invasions normandes', *XXXe Congrès de la Fédération Archéologique et Historique de Belgique, Bruxelles, 28 Juillet-2 Août 1935* (1936), pp. 117-132; followed by, eg., A. d'Haenens, *Les invasions normandes, une catastrophe?* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), pp. 64-65.

¹⁴ F. D. Logan, *The Vikings in History* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p. 124.

¹⁵ I use this word cautiously, and throughout it is meant in Vercauteren's sense of the localisation and privatisation of military power. For a broad brush summary of this traditional view of the evolution of medieval 'feudal' warfare see B. S. Bachrach 'Medieval Military History' in M. Bentley ed. *Companion to History* (London and New York: Routledge) 1997 pp. 203-206.

¹⁶ Arnulf: J. Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte. Die Ursprünge Deutschlands bis 1024* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1994), p. 424; Odo: Logan, *op. cit.*, p. 132; R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London and New York: Longman, 1983), p. 236.

¹⁷ For critiques of Dhondt see J. Martindale, 'The Kingdom of Aquitaine and the Dissolution of the Carolingian Fisc', *Francia*, vol. 11 (1985), pp. 131-191; J. L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London and New York: Longman, 1992), pp. 54-55, 233; for the context of the theory from the perspective of social history, see D. Barthelemy, 'Debate: The "Feudal Revolution" I', *Past and Present*, vol. 152 (1996), pp. 196-205.

¹⁸ For an excellent discussion of these concepts see S. Reynolds 'The Historiography of the Medieval State' in Bentley *op. cit.*, pp. 124-125.

¹⁹ See S. Coupland and J. L. Nelson, 'The Vikings on the Continent', *History Today*, vol. 38 (Dec. 1988), pp. 15-17.

²⁰ C. Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium Regis. Studien zu den wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des Königtums im Frankenreich und in der fränkischen Nachfolgestaaten Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien vom 6. bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 35-36; Brühl is here discussing continuities in German history, but his point is a reference to the supposed anachronism of the unified empire; cf. McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 262, a 'temporary cobbling together'.

²¹ L. Musset, *Les invasions. Le second assaut contre l'Europe chrétienne (VIIe-XIe siècles)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), p. 161; R. Schieffer, *Die Karolinger* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne: Kohlhammer, 1992), p. 184.

²² AF s.a. 852, pp. 42-43 (Reuter, pp. 33-34); AFC s.a. 882, p. 99 (Reuter, p. 93); for informative commentary on the former see T. Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800-1056* (London and New York: Longman, 1991), pp. 84-89.

²³ Of the two continuations of the AF, one (Mainz) suffers in this respect from overt hostility to Charles the Fat, while the other (Bavarian) was written by an author from outside the court. On Hincmar and capitularies, J. L. Nelson, 'Legislation and Consensus in the Reign of Charles the Bald', in *idem*, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London and Ronceverte: Hambledon Press, 1986), pp. 91-116.

²⁴ AFC s.a. 882, p. 98 (Reuter, pp. 91-92).

²⁵ BC s.a. 882, p. 109 (Reuter, p. 106); AFC s.a. 884, p. 101 (Reuter, p. 96). According to AFC Charles issued capitularies at the former; the implication is that they concerned matters of defence.

²⁶ AFC s.a. 882, p. 98 (Reuter, p. 92); AV s.a. 885, p. 56.

²⁷ AFC s.a. 882, p. 98 (Reuter, p. 92); BC s.a. 882, p. 107 (Reuter, p. 104); Regino, *Chronicon*, s.a. 882, p. 119.

²⁸ Abbo, *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*, H. Waquet ed. and French trans., *Abbon. Le siège de Paris par les Normands* (Paris: Les classiques de l'histoire de France au moyen âge, 1942), p. 90.

²⁹ Cf. the Bavarians' campaign against the rebel Wido in Italy in BC s.a. 884, p. 110 (Reuter, p. 108).

- ³⁰ On the role of the aristocracy see T. Reuter, 'Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 35 (1985), pp. 75-94.
- ³¹ S. Coupland, 'The Fortified Bridges of Charles the Bald', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 17 (1991), pp. 1-12.
- ³² AB s.a. 881, p. 245 (Nelson, p. 222); cf. AV s.a. 881, p. 51, which makes no such criticism.
- ³³ R.H. Bautier ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis II le Bègue, Louis III et Carloman II, Rois de France (877-884)* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1976), no. 76.
- ³⁴ Coupland, 'The Vikings in Francia', p. 198.
- ³⁵ *Edictum Pistense*, A. Boretius and V. Krause, MGH Capit. II, no. 273, supplementary c.1.
- ³⁶ *Sermo de Relatione S. Vedastini*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS 15, p. 402.
- ³⁷ R.H. Bautier ed., *Recueil des actes d'Eudes, Roi de France (888-898)* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1967), no. 20.
- ³⁸ MGH DCIII no. 152.
- ³⁹ *Sermo in Tumultu SS. Quintini, Victorici, Cassiani*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS 15, pp. 271-272. This *Sermo* contains fragments of a lost set of annals from St-Quentin; see W. Wattenbach, W. Levison, H. Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter: Vorzeit und Karolinger*, vol. 5 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1973), pp. 544-545.
- ⁴⁰ MGH DCIII no. 58; on the wasting of Prüm see Regino, *Chronicon*, s.a. 882, p. 118.
- ⁴¹ MGH DDCIII nos. 160 & 163. Cf. Bautier, *Recueil... Louis II le Bègue et Carloman II*, nos. 14 & 87.
- ⁴² R. Merlet ed., *La Chronique de Nantes* (Paris: Collection de textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire 19, 1896), c.21, pp. 66-68; for the identification of the king as Charles the Fat see W. Vogel, *Die Normannen und das fränkische Reich bis zur Gründung der Normandie (799-911)* (Scientia: Aalen, reprint 1973), p. 250, n.1.
- ⁴³ *Miracula S. Opportunae*, in *Acta Sanctorum, Aprilis III* (Antwerp: Michael Cnobarrum, 1675), cc. 2 and 6, pp. 68-69. The ransom is possibly implied by Adalhelm's reference to Charles, 'by whose favours I am whatever I am'.
- ⁴⁴ MGH DDCIII nos. 139 and 64 respectively. Cf. Bautier, *Recueil... Carloman II*, no. 71.
- ⁴⁵ MGH DCIII no. 158.
- ⁴⁶ See 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: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 391-405.
- ⁴⁷ *Collectio Sangallensis*, ed. K. Zeumer, MGH Formulae no. 31; for context see M. McCormick, 'The Liturgy of War in the Early Middle Ages: Crisis, Litanies and the Carolingian Monarchy', *Viator*, vol. 15 (1984), pp. 1-23; Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath', pp. 549-550.
- ⁴⁸ For narrative of these raids see Vogel, *op.cit.*, pp. 281-320.
- ⁴⁹ AV s.a. 890, p. 68; K.F. Werner, 'Untersuchungen zur Frühzeit des fränkischen Fürstentums, 9. bis 10. Jahrhundert, V-VI, Die Welt als Geschichte', vol. 20 (1960), pp. 97-98 with n.40.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-106.
- ⁵¹ AV s.a. 884, p. 56; Werner, 'Untersuchungen V-VI', esp. p. 102 with n.59 for Theoderic; also *idem*, 'Gauzin von Saint-Denis und die westfränkische Reichsteilung von Amiens (März 880). Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte von Odos Königtum', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, vol. 35 (1979), p. 446, n.150a.
- ⁵² Bautier, *Recueil... Carloman II*, no. 90; P. Grierson, 'L'Origine des comtes d'Amiens, Valois et Vexin', *Le Moyen Age*, 3rd ser., vol. X (1939), pp. 89-91.
- ⁵³ See Werner, 'Gauzin', pp. 441-455.
- ⁵⁴ AB s.a. 882, p. 246 (Nelson, p. 223).
- ⁵⁵ AV s.a. 885, p. 57.
- ⁵⁶ AV s.a. 885, p. 58.
- ⁵⁷ Werner, 'Untersuchungen V-VI', p. 98.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93. The evidence is Bautier, *Recueil... Eudes*, no. 16, although even here their status as counts is only implied (the word used is *proceres*).
- ⁵⁹ Flodoard, *Historia*, IV.6, p. 571. This identification also made by E. Favre, *Eudes. Comte de Paris et Roi de France (882-898)* (Paris: Honor Champion, 1893), p. 19; Grierson, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-8; unwarranted doubts expressed by F. Lot, 'Notes historiques sur Aye d'Avignon',

Romania, vol. 33 (1904), p. 151. None of these authors, nor Werner, follow through the implications of the evidence fully.

⁶⁰ Bautier, *Recueil... Louis II le Bègue*, no. 28.

⁶¹ Lot, 'Notes historiques', p. 151; Grierson, *op.cit.*, p. 87. Then assumption is based on his control of Pontoise, the county's centre. Grierson seems to eliminate this possibility simply because he thinks Beauvais is a better candidate; he is right, but there is no de facto difficulty in the assumption that Aletrannus could have held both.

⁶² Lot, 'Notes historiques', pp. 149-53; *idem*, 'Aleran, comte de Troyes' and 'Aleran II fut-il comte de Troyes?', in *Recueil des travaux historiques de Ferdinand Lot* (Geneva: Librairie Abbo, Bella, p. 90).

⁶³ P. Lauer ed., *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple, Roi de France (893-923)* (Imprimerie Nationale: Paris 1949), No. 105. This charter issued for Odo's brother Robert in January 920 is also noteworthy for its list of extensive properties pertaining to Mortienval since Theoderic's days.

⁶⁴ Lot, 'Notes historiques', p. 153 and n.2.

⁶⁵ Werner, 'Untersuchungen V-VI', pp. 101-106 for the family link.

⁶⁶ *Miraculum S. Huberti Post Mortem*, in *Acta Sanctorum, Novembris I* (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1887), p. 826.

⁶⁷ Abbo, *Bella*, pp. 88-90.

⁶⁸ AV s.a. 881, p. 50; 881, p. 51; 882, p. 53; 883, p. 54; cf. 899, p. 81.

⁶⁹ See Bautier, *Recueil... Louis III*, nos. 44-47 for the key texts. The politico-military aspect of these two disputes is usually overlooked in the historiography, which tends to discuss them purely in the context of canon law; see eg. J. Devise, *Hinomar, Archevêque de Reims 845-882* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1976), vol. 2, pp. 984-989.

⁷⁰ Abbo, *Bella*, p. 18.

⁷¹ Reuter, 'End of Military Expansion', p. 402.

⁷² AV s.a. 892, p. 72; Leyser, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

⁷³ Logan, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

⁷⁴ Hincmar, *Capitula in Synodo Apud S. Macram*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* vol. 125 (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1879), col. 1086.

⁷⁵ AB s.a. 866 pp. 132-133 (Nelson, p. 136); *Iohannis VIII Epistolae*, ed. E. Caspar, MGH Epistolae VII, no. 43.

⁷⁶ Coupland, 'The Vikings in Francia', p. 198.

⁷⁷ Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 225; P. Fouracre, 'The Context of the OHG *Ludwigslied*', *Medium Aevum*, vol. 54 (1985), p. 93.

⁷⁸ Abbo, *Bella*, p. 80.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-92.

⁸⁰ Regino, *Chronicon*, s.a. 887, p. 127.

⁸¹ W.H. Stevenson ed., *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), c.84, p. 71.

⁸² L. Halphen, *Charlemagne and the Carolingian Empire*, trans. G. de Nie (Amsterdam, New York, Oxford: North-Holland, 1977), p. 325.

⁸³ See Reynolds, *op.cit.*, *passim*, for important remarks on the overwhelming tendency to teleology in histories of the medieval state.

⁸⁴ This is clear from several of the chronicles and from the dating practices of Odo's chancery.

⁸⁵ The most extreme restatement of this view is O. Guillot, 'Les étapes de l'accession d'Eudes au pouvoir royal', in *Media in Francia. Recueil de mélanges offert à Karl Ferdinand Werner* (Maulévrier: Hérault-Éditions, 1989), pp. 199-223.

⁸⁶ See as examples the references given above: at these and other points in his work Abbo consistently displays a consciousness of a strict hierarchy of command with Charles at the top and Odo below him, and he is much more scathing about Odo's kingship than he is about Charles's. Inexplicably, Abbo is still often cited as a source for the west's disillusionment with Charles.

⁸⁷ I gratefully acknowledge the advice and encouragement of Prof. Janet Nelson.