

# Transregional Slave Networks of the Northern Arc, 700–900 C.E.

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This dissertation charts the movement of slaves from Western Europe, through Scandinavia, and into the frontiers of the Caliphate, a movement which took shape in the early 700s and flourished into the late 800s. The victims of this movement are well attested in texts from either end of their journey, and the movement of everyday things allows us to trace the itineraries they followed. Necklace beads—produced in the east, carried to the north, and worn in the west—serve as proxies for human traffic that traveled the same routes in opposite directions. Attention to this traffic overcomes four impasses—between regional particularism and interregional connectivity; between attention to exchange and focus on production; between privileging textual or material evidence; and between definitions of slavery that obscure practices of enslavement.

The introduction outlines problems of studying medieval slavery with regard to transregional approaches to the Middle Ages, the transition to serfdom, and the use of material evidence. Chapter One gathers narrative texts previously dealt with anecdotally to establish patterns for the Viking-Age slave trade, with eastward traffic thriving by the late 800s. Chapter Two confirms these patterns by graphically comparing viking violence to reports of captive taking in the annals and archival documents of Ireland, Francia, and Anglo-Saxon England. Chapter Three investigates how viking captive taking impacted Western societies and the creation of written records in Carolingian Europe. Chapter Four turns to the material record, using beads to trace the intensity and flow of human traffic that fed from early viking violence. Chapter Five establishes a corresponding demand for slaves in the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate through Arabic archival, legal, historical, and geographic texts. The conclusion places this research in the context of global history. By spanning periods, regions, and disciplines, this dissertation brings to focus people who crossed boundaries unwillingly, but whose movements contributed to epochal change.

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## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation sets out to accomplish two things. First, it advances a method, using everyday things to illuminate the lives of people rarely mentioned. Second, it advances a paradigm. The Early Middle Ages is often seen as a period of divergence—from Merovingian Gaul to Carolingian Europe, from Scandinavian Iron Age to North Atlantic Viking Age, and from Arab Conquests to Golden Age of Islam.<sup>1</sup> Such stories bear fruit from the perspectives of individual regions, but by adopting a more global framework, this dissertation highlights people whose stories tied regions together.<sup>2</sup>

I follow the movement of slaves from Western Europe, through Scandinavia, and into the frontiers of the Caliphate, a movement which took shape in the early 700s and flourished into the late 800s. The victims of this movement are well attested in texts from either end of their journey, and the movement of everyday things allows us to trace the itineraries they followed. Necklace beads—produced in the east,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes, and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Stefan Brink and Neil Price, eds., *The Viking World* (London: Routledge, 2008); Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). More broadly, modern nationalists often locate the genesis of their communities in the Early Middle Ages. Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> For recent archaeological approaches, see Mary C. Beaudry and Travis G. Parno, eds., *Archaeologies of Mobility and Movement*, vol. 35, Contributions to Global Historical Archaeology (New York: Springer New York, 2013); Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, eds., *Things in Motion: Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice*, School for Advanced Research Advanced Seminar Series (Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2015).

carried to the north, and worn in the west—serve as proxies for human traffic that traveled the same routes in opposite directions.<sup>3</sup> Attention to this traffic overcomes four impasses—between regional particularism and interregional connectivity; between attention to exchange and focus on production; between privileging textual or material evidence; and between definitions of slavery that obscure practices of enslavement. By spanning periods, regions, and disciplines, I bring to focus people who crossed boundaries unwillingly, but whose movements contributed to epochal change.

### **Transregional Approaches to Medieval History**

The problems of transregional history are not new to early medievalists.<sup>4</sup> They define the parameters of our studies. Perhaps most influentially, Henri Pirenne posited in 1922 that without Muhammad (d. 632), Charlemagne (r. 768–814) would have been inconceivable.<sup>5</sup> Pirenne argued that the underlying structures of the Roman world—the networks that bound the Mediterranean basin into a cultural

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<sup>3</sup> For discussion of the chronologies of early medieval bead production and exchange, see Matthew C. Delvaux, “Patterns of Scandinavian Bead Use between the Iron Age and the Viking Age, ca. 600–1000 C.E.,” *Beads: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers* 29 (2017): 3–30. For a similar examination of the cross traffic between beads and slaves in the early modern Atlantic, see Saul Guerrero, “Venetian Glass Beads and the Slave Trade from Liverpool, 1750–1800,” *Beads: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers* 22 (2010): 52–70.

<sup>4</sup> On Edward Gibbon’s recurring attention to the Islamic world, see Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). For a more recent and popular perspective—albeit one with few connections in the Early Middle Ages—see J. R. S. Phillips, *The Medieval Expansion of Europe*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Henri Pirenne, “Mahomet et Charlemagne,” *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire* 1, no. 1 (1922): 77–86, at 86: “Charlemagne, sans Mahomet, serait inconcevable.” Cf. Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Bruxelles: Nouvelle société et édition, 1937), 174: “Il est donc rigoureusement vrai de dire que, sans Mahomet, Charlemagne est inconcevable.” For translation of the latter work, see Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954).

unity—survived the Germanic invasions intact. The seventh-century rise of Islam, he asserted, drove this unity apart, forcing Western Europeans to build a new civilization of cities and commerce oriented to the north. Pirenne's thesis established transregional connections as an enduring problem for medievalists, as scholars have focused especially on the economic dimensions of his arguments.<sup>6</sup> The slave trade has attracted attention primarily in the context of these discussions.

In 1939, Sture Bolin assessed the Pirenne thesis in light of a correspondence between the value of eastern silver and the weight of Frankish coins, positing that Scandinavian coin hoards bore witness to Viking-Age merchants who connected the Frankish and Arab worlds together. Slaves, as Bolin noted, frequently appeared in written accounts of this trade.<sup>7</sup> Bolin's conclusions remained influential until the 1980s, when Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse brought the methods of New Archaeology to bear.<sup>8</sup> They identified archaeological evidence for an economic revival centered not on the rise of the Carolingian dynasty around 800 but rather on the rise of the Caliphate around 700. Based on coin evidence gathered by Klavs Randsborg, they argued that when eastern trade faltered, viking raids provided alternative sources for wealth.<sup>9</sup> Their arguments, however, implied that viking slave

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<sup>6</sup> For an important critique of Pirenne's legacy, see Bonnie Effros, "The Enduring Attraction of the Pirenne Thesis," *Speculum* 92, no. 1 (January 2017): 184–208.

<sup>7</sup> Bolin's arguments were based on a two-volume manuscript prepared between 1935 and 1938. He presented and published a summary of this work in Swedish in 1939, but World War II interrupted the project. Bolin subsequently published an English summary with intent to resume the project, but other responsibilities precluded the work. Sture Bolin, "Muhammed, Karl den store och Rurik," *Scandia. Tidskrift för historisk forskning* 12, no. 2 (1939): 181–222; Sture Bolin, "Mohammad, Charlemagne and Ruric," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 1, no. 1 (1953): 5–39.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe: Archaeology and the Pirenne Thesis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> Klavs Randsborg, "Les activités internationales des Vikings: raids ou commerce?," *Annales. Économies*,

raids intensified when Scandinavian trade routes languished. The slave trade, for a time, attracted little further attention.

Debates following the work of Hodges and Whitehouse were complemented by the rise of late antiquity as a field of study and the emergence of postprocessual archaeology as a new mode of research.<sup>10</sup> These developments tended to draw attention away from transregional connections in general and the slave trade in particular. In 2000, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell brought together important strands of this research in a study that demonstrated the dense fragmentation of the Mediterranean across 3000 years of its history.<sup>11</sup> Despite this fragmentation, Michael McCormick reappraised the evidence for transregional connections in the Early Middle Ages in a seminal monograph published in 2001 and an incisive article of 2002.<sup>12</sup> His work brought the slave trade into the limelight.

McCormick amplified the arguments of Hodges and Whitehouse,

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*sociétés, civilisations* 36, no. 5 (1981): 862–68.

<sup>10</sup> On the rise of late antiquity as a field of study, see Edward James, “The Rise and Function of the Concept ‘Late Antiquity,’” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 20–30. For a summary statement of many of the key perspectives of late-antique research, see Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000*, 3rd ed., The Making of Europe (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013). For an alternative perspective on this period, see Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For a summary of archaeological developments to and through the work of New Archaeology, see Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). This combined effort by a medievalist and a classicist set out to examine the long durée of the Mediterranean as earlier proposed by Fernand Braudel, and their work bears fruit for scholars of many periods.

<sup>12</sup> Michael McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Michael McCormick, “New Light on the ‘Dark Ages’: How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy,” *Past and Present* 177 (2002): 17–54.

demonstrating that after the post-Roman depression hit bottom around 700, at least five new routes developed to connect Western Europe to the Near East. These routes included three along the Mediterranean, one along the Danube, and a shadowy “Northern Arc” linking the Baltic Sea via Russian rivers to the Black and Caspian Seas.<sup>13</sup> Regarding this last route—which is the subject of the present study—McCormick noted: “The chronology and evolving scope of European communications with the Middle East via the Northern Arc demands closer scrutiny.”<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, McCormick found pervasive evidence for slave trafficking along this and other routes, and he posited that the export of slaves to the Muslim world fueled the European economic recovery. Jeffrey Fynn Paul explored one implication of this, suggesting that if high prices for slaves in the Caliphate drove European buyers from the market, then an Islamic demand for slaves effectively forced European landowners to transition from slavery to serfdom.<sup>15</sup>

McCormick’s work proved controversial,<sup>16</sup> and a robust alternative soon

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<sup>13</sup> On the Northern Arc, see McCormick, *Origins*, 562–65, 606–12, 733–89. For the most succinct summary of the five routes, see McCormick, “New Light,” 31–32.

<sup>14</sup> McCormick, “New Light,” 32 n. 35.

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, “Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era,” *Past and Present* 205 (November 2009): 3–40.

<sup>16</sup> In an early review, Julia M. H. Smith made cogent critique of McCormick’s theoretical underpinnings (emphasis on commerce), methodological approaches (use of aggregate statistics obscuring the ambiguity of the sources), and slippery word choice (e.g. moving from “probably” to “obviously”). Julia M. H. Smith, review of *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce A.D. 300–900*, by Michael McCormick, *Speculum* 78, no. 3 (July 2003): 956–59. Five more elaborate critiques may be found in Edward James, ed., “Origins of the European Economy: A Debate with Michael McCormick,” *Early Medieval Europe* 12, no. 3 (2003): 259–323. These articles emphasize notable omissions (Andreas Schwartz on Visigothic Spain; Florin Curta on East Central Europe; David Whitehouse on glass) and potential problems of analysis (Joachim Henning on slavery; Alan Stahl on numismatics). Perhaps the most developed critique with pertinence to the present dissertation remains Joachim Henning, “Strong Rulers – Weak Economy? Rome, the Carolingians and the Archaeology of Slavery in the First Millennium AD,” in *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early*



appeared in the work of Chris Wickham.<sup>17</sup> Whereas McCormick privileged textual evidence for exchange, Wickham featured material evidence for production. From Wickham's perspective, diversity prevailed among the regions of the post-Roman world, and the economic growth of the Middle Ages depended not on commerce but on agricultural surplus. The slave trade appears to have played little role in this accumulation, as Wickham framed his intent: "to show quite how unimportant slave-mode production actually was, empirically, in all the regions studied in this book."<sup>18</sup>

Since the early 2000s, work has continued in various directions, but the main divergences between McCormick and Wickham remain unresolved.<sup>19</sup> From a textual standpoint, the slave trade was a pervasive feature of transregional connections, although exchange along the Northern Arc poses particular uncertainties. From a material perspective, slave labor remains largely invisible, at least throughout the old Roman world at the heart of Wickham's study, raising doubts about the scale and significance of the medieval slave trade.<sup>20</sup> In this dissertation, I take up these problems

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*Medieval Studies*, ed. Jennifer R. Davis and Michael McCormick (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 33–53.

<sup>17</sup> Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Wickham, 263. Wickham identified the regions of his study as Denmark, Ireland, England and Wales, Gaul/Francia, Spain, Italy, North Africa, the Byzantine heartland of the Aegean and western Anatolia, Syria and Palestine, and Egypt. For an important critique of Wickham, see Jairus Banaji, "Aristocracies, Peasantries and the Framing of the Early Middle Ages," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 9, no. 1 (January 2009): 71–78.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the very different perspective of Julia M. H. Smith, *Europe After Rome: A New Cultural History 500–1000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> See, however, Michael Decker, *Tilling the Hateful Earth: Agricultural Production and Trade in the Late Antique East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

but adopt a framework more informed by studies of global consumption.<sup>21</sup> Viking violence generated captives, and I follow the strategies by which these people were commodified and consumed, transforming the societies through which they passed.

### The Slave Trade in Medieval Slave Studies

Efforts to trace the movement of slaves have been rare throughout the long pedigree of medieval slave studies, which have focused instead on the transition from ancient slavery to medieval serfdom.<sup>22</sup> The idea of such a transition informed the writings of Karl Marx, and it has preoccupied Marxist and non-Marxist scholars ever since.<sup>23</sup>

Many scholars, following a seminal article by Max Weber, have tended to associate this transition with the early medieval dissolution of Roman social structures.<sup>24</sup> Most

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<sup>21</sup> For select studies using consumption in ways that inform this project, see Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin, 1986); Douglas B. Holt, "How Consumers Consume: A Typology of Consumption Practices," *Journal of Consumer Research* 22 (1995): 1–16; Susan C. Andrews and James P. Fenton, "Archaeology and the Invisible Man: The Role of Slavery in the Production of Wealth and Social Class in the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky, 1820 to 1870," *World Archaeology* 33, no. 1 (June 2001): 115–36; Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Peter Fibiger Bang, *The Roman Bazaar: A Comparative Study of Trade and Markets in a Tributary Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Kristin Hoganson, "Buying into Empire: American Consumption at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 248–59.

<sup>22</sup> Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, 226–27. For alternative arguments highlighting the distinctiveness of early medieval economies, see Matthew Innes, "Economies and Societies in Early Medieval Western Europe," in *A Companion to the Medieval World*, ed. Carol Lansing and Edward D. English, Blackwell Companions to History (Malden: Blackwell, 2009), 9–35.

<sup>23</sup> M. I. Finley, "Was Greek Civilization Based on Slave Labour?," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 8, no. 2 (April 1959): 160: "Ever since [*The Communist Manifesto*], ancient slavery has been a battleground between Marxists and non-Marxists, a political issue rather than a historical phenomenon." For a succinct review of Marxist ideas about ancient slavery, see David Konstan, "Marxism and Roman Slavery," *Arethusa* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 145–69.

<sup>24</sup> Max Weber aligned the end of slavery with the end of the Roman wars of conquest. Max Weber, "Die sozialen Gründe des Untergangs der antiken Kultur," *Die Wahrheit. Halbmonatsschrift zur Vertiefung in die Fragen und Aufgaben des Menschenlebens* 6, no. 3, 1. Maiheft (no. 63) (May 1896):

influentially, Moses Finley characterized the Roman Empire as a slave society, identifying it as a society in which slaves comprised a significant portion of the population, played a significant part in production, and provided a significant source of income for the elite.<sup>25</sup> Kyle Harper has recently charted the end of this society in the fifth century in the west and the seventh century in the east.<sup>26</sup> With the end of ancient slavery a foregone conclusion, non-medievalists have given little attention to medieval slavery and the slave trade.<sup>27</sup>

Medievalists, however, confront sources that retained Roman terms for slaves—*servus*, *ancilla*, *mancipium*—despite upheavals which must have transformed actual servile status. In a seminal article published in 1947, Marc Bloch argued that the collapse of Roman authority in the west disrupted the supply of slaves and limited access to markets for selling the products of slave labor, compelling landowners eventually to establish serfdom as a less-intensive and more self-sustaining mode of production.<sup>28</sup> Bloch's views informed two important volumes by Charles Verlinden,

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57–77; Max Weber, “The Social Causes of the Decline of Ancient Civilization,” in *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*, trans. R. I. Frank, World History Series (London: Verso, 2013), 387–411. This relationship has been most fully explored by Keith Hopkins. Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, Sociological Studies in Roman History 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

<sup>25</sup> Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, ed. Brent D. Shaw, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1998), 147–50; Noel Lenski and Catherine M. Cameron, eds., *What Is a Slave Society? The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). It should be noted, however, that Hopkins studied under Finley, and that this was not a simple succession of ideas.

<sup>26</sup> Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> See, exceptionally, Per Hernæs and Tore Iversen, eds., *Slavery Across Time and Space: Studies in Slavery in Medieval Europe and Africa*, Trondheim Studies in History 38 (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2002). Ancient slavery nonetheless persists as the preferred comparanda for modern slave systems. Enrico Dal Lago and Constantina Katsari, eds., *Slave Systems: Ancient and Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Marc Bloch, “Comment et pourquoi finit l’esclavage antique,” *Annales. Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 2, no. 1 and 2 (June 1947): 30–44, 161–70; Marc Bloch, “How and Why Ancient Slavery

who framed slavery as an economic and social condition.<sup>29</sup> Verlinden discerned the collapse of servile classes into a single category—and thus the transition from slavery to serfdom—as early as 813.<sup>30</sup> Georges Duby and more recently Pierre Bonnassie resisted seeing the collapse of servile classes until a sudden and dramatic feudal revolution around the year 1000.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, most historians prefer to describe this transition in softer terms and follow Verlinden’s inference that unambiguous references to slavery generally ended during the ninth century.<sup>32</sup>

As Susan Mosher Stuard has noted, this focus on the status of agricultural laborers has obscured both the role of women and a slave trade that fulfilled domestic demands.<sup>33</sup> Further studies by John Gillingham have emphasized unabated practices

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Came to an End,” in *Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages*, trans. William R. Beer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 1–31. Thomas MacMaster, in an important new study, points to the seventh-century breakdown as the locus of change. Thomas J. MacMaster, “The Transformative Impact of the Slave Trade on the Roman World, 580–720” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Charles Verlinden, *L’Esclavage dans l’Europe médiéval 1. Péninsule ibérique. France* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1955); Charles Verlinden, *L’Esclavage dans l’Europe médiéval 2. Italie – Colonies italiennes du Levant – Levant latin – Empir byzantin* (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, 1977).

<sup>30</sup> See Verlinden’s comments on the Council of Chalons of 813. Verlinden, *L’Esclavage 1*, 728.

<sup>31</sup> Georges Duby, *La société aux XIe et XIIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise* (Paris: A. Colin, 1953); Pierre Bonnassie, “Survie et extinction du régime esclavagiste dans l’Occident du haut moyen âge (IVe–XIe s.),” *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 28, no. 112 (December 1985): 307–43; Pierre Bonnassie, “The Survival and Extinction of the Slave System in the Early Medieval West (Fourth to Eleventh Centuries),” in *From Slavery to Feudalism in South-Western Europe*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1–59. See further T. N. Bisson, “The ‘Feudal Revolution,’” *Past and Present*, no. 142 (February 1994): 6–42.

<sup>32</sup> Adriaan Verhulst, for example, has assessed a ninth-century convergence in the burdens of free and unfree tenant labor. Adriaan Verhulst, “The Decline of Slavery and the Economic Expansion of the Early Middle Ages,” *Past and Present*, no. 133 (November 1991): 195–203; Adriaan Verhulst, *The Carolingian Economy*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47–48, 56. For a recent and rigorous assessment of changes underway beginning in the ninth century, see Charles West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution: Political and Social Transformation between Marne and Moselle, c.800–c.1100*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Susan Mosher Stuard, “Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery,” *Past and Present* 149 (1995): 3–28. The more nefarious aspects of female slavery have been studied unflinchingly by Ruth

of enslaving women and children in early medieval warfare.<sup>34</sup> Despite these indications for early medieval human trafficking and enslavement, problems of servile status continue to dominate discussion.<sup>35</sup> In prominent articles, Hans-Werner Goetz has distinguished slaves legally and socially; Wendy Davies investigated slaves in legal, economic, and social terms; Jean-Pierre Devroey considered slaves along juridical, social, and economic axes; and Alice Rio has traced economic, legal, and social approaches to early medieval slavery.<sup>36</sup>

These important studies share a top-down perspective, based on documents that imposed legal, economic, and social conditions on slaves. In a recent monograph, Rio described such perspectives as well suited to the early medieval

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Mazo Karras, "Concubinage and Slavery in the Viking Age," *Scandinavian Studies* 62, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 141–62; Ruth Mazo Karras, "Desire, Descendants, and Dominance: Slavery, the Exchange of Women, and Masculine Power," in *The Work of Work: Servitude, Slavery, and Labor in Medieval England*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen and Douglas Moffat (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1994), 16–29.

<sup>34</sup> John Gillingham, "Christian Warriors and the Enslavement of Fellow Christians," in *Chevalerie et Christianisme Aux XIIe et XIIIe Siècles*, ed. Martin Aurell and Catalina Girbea (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011), 237–56; John Gillingham, "Women, Children and the Profits of War," in *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford*, ed. Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds, and Susan M. Johns (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2012), 61–74.

<sup>35</sup> Orlando Patterson, among others, has noted that Vikings dominated the medieval slave trade, although in the context of his work, this better reflects the scholarly consensus of the early 1980s than an exhaustive engagement with the primary sources. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 152–56. In contrast to medievalists' preoccupations with servile status, the status of slaves in Roman antiquity has gone relatively unquestioned, even as the notion of a slave society has provoked debate. The standard reference, largely unchanged since its first edition in 1994, remains Paul du Plessis, *Borkowski's Textbook on Roman Law*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 87–112. See further Sandra R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World*, Cambridge Introduction to Roman Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Hans-Werner Goetz, "Serfdom and the Beginnings of a 'Seigneurial System' in the Carolingian Period: A Survey of the Evidence," *Early Medieval Europe* 2, no. 1 (1993): 29–51; Wendy Davies, "On Servile Status in the Early Middle Ages," in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*, ed. M. L. Bush (London: Longman, 1996), 225–46; Jean-Pierre Devroey, "Men and Women in Early Medieval Serfdom: The Ninth-Century North Frankish Evidence," *Past and Present* 166 (2000): 3–30; Alice Rio, "Freedom and Unfreedom in Early Medieval Francia: The Evidence of the Legal Formulae," *Past and Present* 193 (2006): 7–40.

evidence, adopting an approach built from Joseph C. Miller's notion of strategies of enslavement.<sup>37</sup> In her words:

Rather than developing my own criteria for the identification of slavery as a discrete object of study, I will instead focus on the deployment of unfree status as a strategy: that is, how and why it was produced and reproduced, both for individuals and collectively. One advantage of approaching unfree status as the result of an act of labelling rather than as a static object is that it forces us to confront a variety of different possible motives for it, instead of privileging unifying factors for the purpose of formulating a definition.<sup>38</sup>

This approach works well when those responsible for imposing or enforcing slavery have left a documentary trail.<sup>39</sup> As Rio notes, however, the evidence for the early medieval slave trade generally describes traffic that crossed political, cultural, or religious borders.<sup>40</sup> Such traffic was unlikely to produce records that would survive among the predominantly ecclesiastical archives of northwest Europe, while the only written records to survive from the Islamic end of the Northern Arc are generally literary in form. No contemporary documents survive from the regions in between. This dissertation responds therefore not to a gap in the literature but rather an apparent dead end.

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<sup>37</sup> Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Alice Rio, *Slavery after Rome, 500–1000*, Oxford Studies in Medieval European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 10–11.

<sup>39</sup> Among medieval research, Rio's study on formularies provides an outstanding example of this approach. Rio, "Freedom and Unfreedom." The underlying methods of interpretations are plastic and may be adapted to diverse forms of documents and, as Keith Hopkins has demonstrated, literature as well. Keith Hopkins, "Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery," *Past and Present*, no. 138 (February 1993): 3–27.

<sup>40</sup> Rio believes that this is a skewed representation, based on what medieval writers were more likely to record, but this should not discount the possibility that descriptions of long-distance slave traffic represented reality as understood by early medieval authors writing in different times, places, and genres. Rio, *Slavery after Rome*, 21.

## New Approaches to the Medieval Slave Trade

New approaches, however, already point a way through these problems. An early statement of these approaches may be found in Mats Roslund's insightful study of pottery from the later Viking Age, which provided compelling evidence that the workaday pots of Scandinavian households were often made by slaves brought from elsewhere.<sup>41</sup> More recently, Janel Fontaine and Ben Raffield have called for comparative methodologies for studying medieval slavery, with emphasis on integrating the evidence of archaeology. Their approaches provide ways past the difficulties of medieval categories of servitude and focus instead on practices of enslavement and human trafficking. Such a focus, I argue, can illuminate the lives of slaves long neglected.<sup>42</sup>

Fontaine urges archaeologists to abandon efforts to identify indicators of slavery such as shackles and instead to investigate contexts that framed medieval slavery. She identifies the slave trade as a particular area of concern and argues: "the archaeology of early medieval slave-trading should be synonymous with the archaeology of early medieval trade."<sup>43</sup> The recently concluded *Dirhams for Slaves*

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<sup>41</sup> Mats Roslund, *Guests in the House: Cultural Transmission between Slavs and Scandinavians 900 to 1300 AD*, trans. Alan Crozier, *The Northern World* 33 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>42</sup> For exemplary archaeological studies of slavery and the slave trade in the preceding Roman period, see especially Jane Webster, "Archaeologies of Slavery and Servitude: Bringing 'New World' Perspectives to Roman Britain," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 161–79; Jane Webster, "Routes to Slavery in the Roman World: A Comparative Perspective on the Archaeology of Forced Migration," in *Roman Diasporas: Archaeological Approaches to Mobility and Diversity in the Roman Empire*, ed. Hella Eckardt, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 78 (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2010), 45–65; Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>43</sup> Janel M. Fontaine, "Early Medieval Slave-Trading in the Archaeological Record: Comparative

project, hosted at the University of Oxford, exemplifies such an effort. Initial publications by Marek Jankowiak reveal opportunities for combining numismatic evidence and Arabic sources to outline the slave trade of the ninth and tenth centuries in particular, and monographs in preparation are eagerly awaited.<sup>44</sup> The present dissertation pursues a similar course through the study of beads, permitting an earlier focus that reveals the emergence of this slave trade in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Ben Raffield has meanwhile advocated for the study of slave markets in terms drawn from the comparative work of Orlando Patterson.<sup>45</sup> Patterson famously defined slavery in social, psychological, and cultural terms as violent domination, natal alienation, and general dishonor.<sup>46</sup> His definition shifts attention from categorical problems to focus instead on material practice and lived experience. This shift has expanded opportunities for pursuing problems of slavery into the archaeological record.<sup>47</sup> Raffield thus calls for study of “how captive groups were acquired and transported, where and how they were sheltered, provisioned, or what

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Methodologies,” *Early Medieval Europe* 25, no. 4 (November 2017): 488.

<sup>44</sup> Marek Jankowiak, “Two Systems of Trade in the Western Slavic Lands in the 10th Century,” in *Economies, Monetisation and Society in the West Slavic Lands, 800–1200 AD*, ed. Mateusz Bogucki and Marian Rębkowski, *Wolińskie Spotkania Mediewistyczne* 2 (Szczecin: Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology Polish Academy of Sciences, 2013), 137–48; Marek Jankowiak, “What Does the Slave Trade in the Saqaliba Tell Us about Early Islamic Slavery?,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 1 (2017): 169–172.

<sup>45</sup> Ben Raffield, “The Slave Markets of the Viking World: Comparative Perspectives on an ‘Invisible Archaeology,’” *Slavery and Abolition*, 2019, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 1–13.

<sup>47</sup> Catherine M. Cameron, ed., *Invisible Citizens: Captives and Their Consequences*, *Foundations of Archaeological Inquiry* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008); Catherine M. Cameron, “Captives and Culture Change: Implications for Archaeology,” *Current Anthropology* 52, no. 2 (April 2011): 169–209; Catherine M. Cameron, *Captives: How Stolen People Changed the World*, *Borderlands and Transcultural Studies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016); John Bodel and Walter Scheidel, eds., *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017).



conditions they were forced to endure.”<sup>48</sup> Raffield’s work contributes to the ongoing *Viking Phenomenon* project, led by Neil Price at the University of Uppsala, which promises to refine understandings of viking-style violence in the Baltic prior to the Viking Age.<sup>49</sup>

The *Viking Phenomenon* project advances earlier work by which Neil Price established a “cognitive archaeology” of the Viking Age. Price used the material evidence of shamanistic practices to infer a mentality that informed viking violence, arguing that Viking-Age *seiðr* should be seen as a form of “battle magic.”<sup>50</sup> Captives and slaves were rarely mentioned in Price’s work, despite appearing in such key examples as a chieftain’s funeral witnessed by Ibn Faḍlān and the grave of a magic worker in a double burial excavated at Gerdrup in Denmark.<sup>51</sup> Raffield’s work indicates that the new project is already exploring the significance of captive taking and the slave trade not only for “vikings” in the narrow medieval sense of seaborne

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<sup>48</sup> Raffield, “Slave Markets of the Viking World,” 1–2.

<sup>49</sup> Neil Price, “Viking Phenomena: Current Archaeologies of the Early Medieval Scandinavians,” *The Archaeological Record* 18, no. 3 (May 2018): 10–14. This paper and others in the same issue outline the early stages of the project, as previously presented to the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Vancouver, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Neil S. Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2002). Republished with updated citations and an additional chapter on subsequent literature as Neil Price, *The Viking Way: Magic and Mind in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxbow, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Price does, however, conclude his second edition by clarifying that, in his estimate of the Vikings, the slavers and rapists described by Ibn Faḍlān should by no means impress a reasonable person as heroic individuals. Price, *Viking Way*, 2nd ed., 337 (Gerdrup), 343–344 (Ibn Faḍlān). On the double burial at Gerdrup, see Ole Thirup Kastholm, “Spydkvinden og den myrdede. Gerdrupgravnen 35 år efter,” in *ROMU 2015 – Årsskrift fra Roskilde Museum*, ed. Tom Christensen (Roskilde: ROMUs Forlag, 2016), 62–85; Leszek Gardęła, (*Magic*) *Staffs in the Viking Age*, *Studia Mediaevalia Septentrionalia* 27 (Vienna: Verlag Fassbaender, 2016), 82–84; Leszek Gardęła, *Bad Death in the Early Middle Ages: Atypical Burials from Poland in a Comparative Perspective*, *Collectio Archaeologica Ressoiviensis* 36 (Rzeszów: Fundacja Rzeszowskiego Ośrodka Archeologicznego, 2017), 180–88.

raiders but also for “Vikings” in the broader modern sense that embraces—somewhat misleadingly—the diverse Norse-speaking peoples of the Viking Age.<sup>52</sup>

This dissertation therefore moves in directions indicated by Fontaine and Raffield. I do so by using beads as a proxy for the slave trade of the eighth and ninth centuries, thus bringing together research on slavery that has previously focused on developments within particular regions. As suggested above, much of this research has focused especially on Carolingian Europe with occasional reference to Anglo-Saxon England and other peripheral regions.<sup>53</sup> Verlinden established the regular canon of sources cited for the Carolingian slave trade,<sup>54</sup> which Rio nonetheless characterized as a “blind spot” in slave studies.<sup>55</sup>

The transregional slave trade has likewise been a blind spot for scholars of the north. In her seminal study on Scandinavian slavery, Ruth Mazo Karras focused particularly on the medieval period following the Viking Age, noting for the Viking-Age slave trade: “The extent of this trade is very far from clear.”<sup>56</sup> In a

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<sup>52</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I consistently use the term “viking” to refer to seaborne raiders. I generally refer to associated communities as “Norse,” following current conventions among historians and linguists. The older term “Viking” is increasingly reserved for material culture, particularly among archaeologists and art historians. The putative group “Vikings” continues to appear in some scholarly and popular literature. I follow this usage only in exceptional cases to represent the work of other authors, including Neil Price. On the problematic history of these terms, see Fredrik Svanberg, *Decolonizing the Viking Age 1*, Acta Archaeologica Lundensia, Ser. in 8° 43 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> On slavery in the British Isles and Ireland, see especially Poul Holm, “The Slave Trade of Dublin, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries,” *Peritia* 5 (1986): 317–45; David A.E. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England: From the Reign of Alfred until the Twelfth Century*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995); David Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain and Ireland, 800–1200*, The Northern World 45 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

<sup>54</sup> Verlinden, *L'Esclavage* 1, 668–677 (Merovingian), 706–719 (Carolingian).

<sup>55</sup> Rio, *Slavery after Rome*, 19–21.

<sup>56</sup> Ruth Mazo Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, Yale Historical Publications 135 (New Haven: Yale, 1988), 46–50 (quote at 46).

landmark study on medieval Norway, Tore Iversen pioneered methods for studying medieval slavery in Norway but mentioned the slave trade only with reference to outdated assumptions.<sup>57</sup> In a more recent monograph, Stefan Brink likewise employed nuanced readings of texts, place names, and inscriptions to recover social aspects of Viking-Age slavery, but he devoted only a single paragraph to the slave trade.<sup>58</sup> Archaeologists have meanwhile progressed from Klavs Randsborg's grim assessment: "for prehistoric periods, the institution of slavery can only be studied in a rather unsatisfactory way."<sup>59</sup> Their work has uncovered evidence for slavery in both farmsteads and burial grounds, but here too the slave trade retains potential for further inquiry.<sup>60</sup>

Regarding slavery in the east, Youval Rotman has argued largely on the basis of Arabic sources that the slave trade circumvented the Byzantine Empire to avoid

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<sup>57</sup> Tore Iversen, *Trelldommen. Norsk slaveri i middelalderen*, Historisk institutt Universitetet i Bergen Skrifter 1 (Bergen: University of Bergen, 1997), 90: "The most important major trade routes for slaves seem to have gone from Slavic areas in Eastern Europe to Western Europe and southwards. ... Further east, Arabic texts describe slave traffic down the Dnieper and Volga Rivers to the Black and Caspian Seas, carried by the so-called Rūs—probably Swedish Vikings—in the 800s and 900s. We know little about the extent of this slave traffic, but it must have been far less than the aforementioned traffic further west." (My translation.)

<sup>58</sup> Stefan Brink, *Vikingarnas slavar. Den nordiska trældomen under yngre järnålder och äldsta medeltid* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2012), 87: "Instead of buying slaves, it seems that the Norse had been more likely to sell captives, especially in slave markets in Muslim areas, in Spain and in northern Africa, and in today's Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. This may be because slaves themselves were not the thing that they sought; it was precious metals and luxury goods that attracted them." (My translation.)

<sup>59</sup> Klavs Randsborg, "The Study of Slavery in Northern Europe: An Archaeological Approach," *Acta Archaeologica*, no. 55 (1984): 155.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Lindkvist and Janken Myrdal, eds., *Trälar. Ofria i agrarsamhället från vikingatid till medeltid*, Skrifter om skogs- och lantbrukshistoria 17 (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2003). On slave burials, see most convincingly, Elise Naumann et al., "Slaves as Burial Gifts in Viking Age Norway? Evidence from Stable Isotope and Ancient DNA Analyses," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 41 (2014): 533–40. See further Torun Zachrisson, "Trälar fanns – att synliggöra ofria 550–1200 e. Kr. i Sverige," in *Att befolka det förflutna. Fem artiklar om hur vi kan synliggöra människan och hennes handlingar i arkeologiskt material. Från Nordic Tag mötet 2011 på Linnéuniversitet, Kalmar*, ed. Anne Carlie (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2014), 72–91.

imperial duties.<sup>61</sup> His assessment contributes to a consensus that most slave traffic was directed toward the Caliphate, but as Craig Perry has noted: “in western scholarship on the premodern Islamic world, slavery and the slave trade have yet to be fully historicized.”<sup>62</sup> Matthew Gordon has shown with regard to Turkish slave soldiers that modern researchers often avoid the difficulties of early ‘Abbāsīd sources by treating the slaves of this period simply as prototypes for later paradigms found in better-attested periods.<sup>63</sup> Kathryn Hain has likewise pointed to the possibilities for historicizing the demand for slaves, particularly in the ninth century, seeing the demands of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate as part of a larger economic revival reaching as far as Tang China.<sup>64</sup> These studies point to a need for greater granularity in discussing the chronology of eastern slave demand as well as examination of its connections to the broader networks of the transregional slave trade.

### **Framing the Argument**

This dissertation therefore responds to numerous problems in historiography. It most directly addresses the conflicting views of McCormick and Wickham, illuminating

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<sup>61</sup> Youval Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 58–74.

<sup>62</sup> Craig Perry, “Historicizing Slavery in the Medieval Islamic World,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 1 (2017): 133–138, at 133. See also Perry’s own effort to do so for a somewhat later period in Craig A. Perry, “The Daily Life of Slaves and the Global Reach of Slavery in Medieval Egypt, 969–1250 CE” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, 2014).

<sup>63</sup> Matthew S. Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra (A.H. 200–275/815–889 C.E.)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 2, 6–8.

<sup>64</sup> Kathryn Ann Hain, “The Slave Trade of European Women to the Middle East and Asia from Antiquity to the Ninth Century” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 2016). I thank Kathryn for providing a copy of this important work.

the human traffic of the Northern Arc and revealing the effects of this movement through both textual and material evidence. It avoids the troublesome terminology of slavery by focusing instead on human trafficking, with the recognition that the victims of this trade arrived into diverse circumstances that make precise definitions of slavery difficult to apply. And it pursues the methods put forth by Fontaine and Raffield, using the movement of beads to outline the formation of northern trade networks that developed in part to move slaves from the viking west into the Islamic east.

Chapter One brings together seven texts commonly used to discuss the Northern Arc slave trade but never before examined as a single group. I argue that these texts indicate broad patterns regarding the florescence of the Viking-Age slave trade in the ninth century. This analysis begins with the sole surviving firsthand account of viking captivity, found in Adalhelm's *Miracles of Saint Opportuna*. It then progresses from west to east through the anonymous *Life of Saint Findan*, the anonymous *Laxdæla Saga*, the travel accounts of Ohthere and Wulfstan in Alfred's translation of Orosius's *History*, Rimbert's *Life of Saint Ansgar*, the anonymous *Life of Saint Rimbert*, and the *Letter of Ibn Faḍlān*. Despite the diversity of these texts in terms of perspective, purpose, and genre, they unanimously point to the emergence of an eastward-bound slave trade that appeared at the onset of the Viking Age and intensified across the ninth century.

Chapter Two provides a framework for interpreting these accounts by surveying reports of viking captive taking among archival collections and annalistic

texts. I begin with the letters of Alcuin to establish that captive taking was essential to early viking violence but underreported by contemporary authors. I then demonstrate region by region that the intensification of viking violence corresponded to increasing reports of viking captive taking. This study encompasses the backbone texts for Viking-Age narratives: the *Chronicle of Ireland*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and five Frankish annals—the *Royal Frankish Annals*, the *Annals of St-Bertin*, the *Annals of Fulda*, the *Annals of Xanten*, and the *Annals of St-Vaast*. I contextualize these sources with archival materials that include seventeen Anglo-Saxon charters and 208 contemporary Frankish documents referring to early viking violence.

Chapter Three further investigates western authors' reluctance to discuss viking captive taking and argues that the increased occurrence of viking violence in the mid-800s diminished this reluctance. Foregoing studies on the shifting terms of servitude in ninth-century Europe have rarely considered the impact of viking raiders who undermined images of Carolingian rulers as men who conquered and enslaved their enemies. These images flourished under Charlemagne, ebbed under Louis the Pious, and collapsed under Charles the Bald. I find evidence for this collapse primarily in literary texts, ranging from Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne* to Aimoin's *Miracles of Saint Germain*. These texts reveal a shift in slavery as a cultural and intellectual construct, providing a framework for interpreting narratives of viking captive taking but also indicating that viking slave raiding reframed Frankish attitudes toward servitude.

Chapter Four concentrates on the material aspects of the early medieval slave trade, identifying major changes in the directions and intensity of human traffic by reference to textual and archaeological records. This chapter most directly pursues the methods forwarded by Fontaine and Raffield, showing that, in the Early Middle Ages as in the later early modern period, an inflow of beads often corresponded to an outflow of human beings. For the early modern period, European beads help archaeologists identify undocumented sites such as shipwrecks with the Atlantic slave trade. For the early medieval period, beads were most commonly made from glass, which was produced almost entirely in the Caliphate, and the arrival of glass beads in Northern Europe reveals the development of connections with the Caliphate. This study is based in part on my own examination of 13,000 beads from collections in Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland. I argue that these artifacts provide a material trace that viking activity in the west responded to the intensification of eastern trade networks in Scandinavia.

Chapter Five examines a contingent demand for slaves that emerged along the northern frontiers of the Caliphate. I argue that political and cultural factors—including the end of the Arab Conquests in the 750s, the spread of Islam in the newly formed Caliphate, and the political fragmentation culminating in the Anarchy of Samarra during the 860s—helped entrench a ubiquity of slavery while spreading new practices of manumission. These parallel developments depended on the continuous import of slaves from abroad, and Arabic writers emphasized that many of these slaves came from traders to the north. I develop these connections

through four sets of sources—Arabic archival documents from Khurāsān and Egypt, the key legal text of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the monumental *History of the Prophets and Kings* by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, and the earliest works of Arabic geography.

These chapters thus move step by step from anecdotes to overarching patterns. Despite drawing from vastly different sources, the chapters of this dissertation develop contingent chronologies, revealing similarities across the various regions under study. Regardless of present-day debates on the significance of transregional connections, the slave trade of the Northern Arc left deep traces across the textual archives and material cultures of Western Europe, Northern Europe, and the Islamic East. The peoples of these regions bore regular witness to the enslavement and coerced movement of viking captives. By following the movement of these marginalized people from one region to the next, this dissertation shifts the center of our stories about the Early Middle Ages, displacing false narratives of geopolitical divergence too often invoked to justify conflicts today.

### **Conventions**

All translations are my own. Source-language text may be found in the footnotes. Where English translations are available, these are indicated in footnotes as well. Source titles have been rendered into English. I follow common conventions for names such as Charlemagne and Samarra. I have occasionally opted to leave key terms untranslated, though meanings should be clear from context. Arabic terms are generally transliterated according to the guidelines of the *International Journal of*



*Middle East Studies*, though I sometimes follow the conventions of published editions.

All dates are given in the Common Era.

## Chapter One

### NARRATIVE SOURCES OF THE NORTHERN ARC SLAVE TRADE

The slave trade of the Viking Age is generally known through a small selection of primary sources. These sources are often treated anecdotally, sometimes with apparent embarrassment for the problems they present.<sup>1</sup> Even substantial studies have tended to take a skeptical stance. For example, in the seminal study of *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, Ruth Mazo Karras dismissed the possible traces of Viking-Age slavery in Old Norse sagas, investigating these texts instead for how images of Viking-Age slavery were adapted into later moments of textual production.<sup>2</sup> In subsequent monographs on Viking-Age slavery, Tore Iversen and Stefan Brink have both opted to focus on slavery within Scandinavia with scant

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Judith Jesch cogently but cautiously offers a hypothetical description of how enslaved female captives might have helped make Old Norse a common language in parts of Viking-Age England, arguing that the example of Melkorka from *The Laxdæla Saga*—discussed below—suggests the occurrence of similar situations. Judith Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2015), 91.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Mazo Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, Yale Historical Publications 135 (New Haven: Yale, 1988), 164. Karras has been critiqued, most notably by Tore Iversen, for relying too heavily on legal texts, for asserting too strongly that laws need not reflect reality, and for assuming that slaves have economic importance only in plantation economies. Tore Iversen, *Trelldommen. Norsk slaveri i middelalderen*, Historisk institutt Universitetet i Bergen Skrifter 1 (Bergen: University of Bergen, 1997), 32–34. At least one early reviewer noted that Karras’s emphasis on plantation slavery neglected the significance of the slave trade, which is the particular focus of this chapter. Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, review of *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, by Ruth Mazo Karras, *American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (October 1990): 1175–76, at 1175. Nevertheless, as Karras’s title indicates, her text concerned the social impacts of slavery of medieval Scandinavia, which conventionally begins with the end of the Viking Age around the year 1100. Although texts about the Viking Age were significant sources of these impacts, their significance for understanding Viking-Age slavery was corollary to the main arguments of her work.

regard for the movement of slaves through Scandinavia.<sup>3</sup> More generally, Alice Rio devoted an early section of her recent monograph on medieval slavery to arguing that the capture and trade of slaves are “blind spots” in medieval written records.<sup>4</sup> As such, few scholars have treated the sources of the Viking Age slave trade as sufficient for sustained analysis.

In the pages that follow, I outline the narrative sources of the slave trade that passed to and through Viking-Age Scandinavia to demonstrate the strengths and opportunities they offer. I have arranged my discussion to follow the geographic arc of these sources from west to east rather than the chronological order of the events they describe (Table 1.1). In this way, these sources chart a consistent movement of slaves from the taking of captives in Western Europe, through Baltic ports of exchange, and into the frontiers of the Caliphate. The seven sources presented here, in order, are Adalhelm’s *Miracles of Saint Opportuna*, the anonymous *Life of Saint Findan*, the anonymous *Laxdæla Saga*, the travel accounts of Ohthere and Wulfstan incorporated into Alfred’s translation of Orosius’s *History*, Rimbert’s *Life of Saint Ansgar*, the anonymous *Life of Saint Rimbert*, and the *Letter of Ibn Faḍlān*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Iversen, however, offers a chapter on “Recruitment into Slavery” while Brink focuses a chapter around the question “Where did the slaves come from?” Iversen, *Trelldommen*, 82–112; Stefan Brink, *Vikingarnas slavar. Den nordiska trældomen under yngre järnålder och äldsta medeltid* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2012), 85–91.

<sup>4</sup> Alice Rio, *Slavery after Rome, 500–1000*, Oxford Studies in Medieval European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 19–21. Rio does, however, urge historians to consider turning toward different types of argument and more indirect evidence. This dissertation pursues both options.

<sup>5</sup> I have opted not to give a separate treatment of a brief but important passage in Adrevald of Fleury’s *Miracles of Saint Benedict*, written before 877 (datable since events of 877 and 878 are appended by a later author). In describing local events of 844, Adrevald makes brief mention of a viking camp holding captives on an island at St-Florent-le-Vieil along the Loire. This passage is translated and ably discussed by Poul Holm, “The Slave Trade of Dublin, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries,” *Peritia* 5 (1986): 317–45, at 325. I have also opted not to discuss the passing reference to Melkorka in the *Landnámabók*,

As Michael McCormick noted in his own study of medieval commerce: “It is essential to go beyond the anecdotes, however powerful they may appear, and to uncover the broader context of the isolated events we can discern.”<sup>6</sup> I argue that the sources of this chapter are not merely anecdotal but preserve key patterns of the Viking-Age slave trade. Nonetheless, McCormick’s challenge continues to resonate in Janel Fontaine’s recent call for greater attention to archaeological contexts in studies of medieval slavery.<sup>7</sup> I therefore conclude this chapter concludes with a survey of non-narrative and material evidence to provide an initial frame for these sources, which will expand outward with each succeeding chapter.

Text	Date Represented	Date Written	Earliest MS Date
Adalhelm’s <i>Miracles</i>	840s–880s	884–888	1300s
<i>Life of Saint Findan</i>	830s–840s	after 878x881	900s
<i>Laxdæla Saga</i>	mid-900s	1200s	1200s
Ohthere & Wulfstan	870s–890s	871–899	900s
<i>Life of Saint Ansgar</i>	830s–860s	865–888	900s
<i>Life of Saint Rimbart</i>	860s–880s	888–909	1100s
Ibn Faḍlān’s <i>Letter</i>	921–922	after 922	1200s

**Table 1.1. Narrative Sources of the Viking-Age Slave Trade**

### Narrative Sources: Adalhelm’s *Miracles of Saint Opportuna*

The first of these sources, Adalhelm’s *Miracles of Saint Opportuna*, is undoubtedly the least known.<sup>8</sup> The bishop Adalhelm of Séz composed his *Life and Miracles of Saint*

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whose life is related in much fuller detail in *The Laxdæla Saga*, as discussed below.

<sup>6</sup> Michael McCormick, “New Light on the ‘Dark Ages’: How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy,” *Past and Present* 177 (2002): 17–54, at 27.

<sup>7</sup> Janel M. Fontaine, “Early Medieval Slave-Trading in the Archaeological Record: Comparative Methodologies,” *Early Medieval Europe* 25, no. 4 (November 2017): 466–88, at 488.

<sup>8</sup> Adalhelm’s account is absent from such authoritative works as Charles Verlinden, *L’Esclavage dans l’Europe médiéval 1. Péninsule ibérique. France* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1955); Michael McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge:

*Opportuna* between 884 and 888 to commemorate an earlier abbess whose relics were in the possession of his bishopric.<sup>9</sup> The manuscript tradition of this source is obscure and unstudied,<sup>10</sup> and the text is known only through an edition published in the mid-1600s.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, as the sole first-hand account of an individual captured by viking slave raiders, Adalhelm's *Miracles of St. Opportuna* is one of the most significant surviving texts for Viking-Age researchers. With regard to the obscurity of this text as well as to its unique significance, this text deserves particular attention.

At the outset of his collection of miracles, Adalhelm described his escape from viking captivity, which he attributed to the intervention of his patron saint. His first-hand account, despite its brevity, survives alone from the untold thousands who

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Cambridge University Press, 2001); Rio, *Slavery after Rome*. The fullest treatment of Adalhelm and his text may be found in Julia M. H. Smith, "Pilgrimage and Spiritual Healing in the Ninth Century," in *Medieval Christianity in Practice*, ed. Miri Rubin, Princeton Readings in Religions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 222–29. For a rare discussion of Adalhelm's captivity, see Simon Coupland, "The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History," *History* 88, no. 290 (April 2003): 186–203, at 196–97. Coupland examined this text particularly for what it tells us about the *ludibria* purportedly suffered by viking captives. He ultimately interprets this term in context to mean mockery. In the passage that follows, I translate this term as "insults".

<sup>9</sup> On the date of the text, see Adalhelm of Sééz, *Liber miraculorum*, ed. Godfrey Henschen, Daniel Papebroch, and Jean Baptiste Carnandet, 2nd ed., *Acta Sanctorum*, Aprilis 3 (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1866), 68–71, at 71 n. (a). Note that the diocese of Sééz, with its episcopal seat in Séés, Normandy, should not be confused with the commune of Sééz or the River Sééz in southern France, nor the River Seez in the canton of St. Gallen, Switzerland. Modern authors alternate between these various spellings for Adalhelm, whose name is sometimes rendered Adelin or Adeleme in French texts. Lucien Musset assigns Adalhelm's episcopacy to the years 885–890, although this seems unsupported from the text itself. Lucien Musset, "Naissance de la Normandie," in *Documents de l'histoire de la Normandie*, ed. Michel de Bouïard (Toulouse: Privat, 1972), 59–98, at 70.

<sup>10</sup> I have identified a single fourteenth-century manuscript, now held by the Archives National as MS LL/583.

<sup>11</sup> The *Acta Sanctorum* edition is preferred. This edition replicates the earlier Adalhelm of Sééz, *La Vie et miracles de Ste Opportune, abbesse*, ed. Nicolas Gosset, 3rd ed. (Paris: Antoine Chrestien, 1659). The edition of Gosset closely matches the earlier edition of Surius first published in 1571, but with all abbreviations expanded (*BHL* 6339). Comparison with the manuscript shows some divergences of spelling and liberties with punctuation, but the edition otherwise follows the manuscript text closely for the passages discussed below.

suffered viking captivity and enslavement:

In the same year as my ordination, I was taken into the hands of the savage people of the Northmen. They bound me into captivity, as if a common slave, and they sold me across the regions of the sea. ... And so after many insults of the Northmen, who hit me with many cruel blows, after diverse raging seas and perilous storms, after great cold and exposure and dire famine, and the burdens moreover of a lengthy journey, when it pleased the goodness and the mercy of our Lord and Redeemer, who alone brings comfort to sinners, he permitted me to return to the land of my birth ... by the intercession of Blessed Opportuna.<sup>12</sup>

This passage offers a vivid glimpse into Adalhelm's recruitment into slavery during the late 800s. Adalhelm affirmed that his captors were Northmen, but he asserted that at least two groups were involved—slave raiders and maritime traders.<sup>13</sup> Adalhelm also expressed indignity at being taken as a “common slave” (*vile mancipium*), which belies his emphasis elsewhere in the text on viking butchery, burning, and plunder.<sup>14</sup> The details of his account sketch out a complex slave system, at least loosely organized into separate groups of dedicated slave raiders and long-distance slave traders. These groups rendered the experience of enslavement unexceptional, at least in Adalhelm's

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<sup>12</sup> Adalhelm of Sééz, *Liber miraculorum*, 68, c. 2: “In ipso anno ordinationis meae traditas sum manibus crudelissimae gentis Normannicae: qui me captivum ligantes, quasi vile mancipium, vendiderunt trans marinas regiones. Hoc igitur factum est exigentibus peccatis meis, ut scirem quia non debet superbire terra et cinis: et quia melius est non vovere, quam vota non reddere. Post multa itaque Normannorum ludibria, et quae mihi intulerunt creberrima verbera, post diversa maris fluctuantis et procellosi pericula, post nimii frigoris et nuditatis et dirae famis, necnon longioris itineris impedimenta, cum placuisset pietati et misericordiae Domini et Redemptoris nostri, quae peccatores solita est confortare, ut mihi concederet redire in terram nativitatis meae; scire convenit fraternitati vestrae, quantum mihi profuit intercessio B. Opportunae.”

<sup>13</sup> On the complex issues behind the creation of such a collective identity during the Viking Age, see Lesley Abrams, “Diaspora and Identity in the Viking Age,” *Early Medieval Europe* 20, no. 1 (2012): 17–38.

<sup>14</sup> Adalhelm of Sééz, *Liber miraculorum*, 70, c. 6: “Plebs Sagiensis Ecclesiae, exigentibus peccatis, a crudelissima gente Normannorum miserabiliter affligebatur. Ipsa enim ferocitas Paganorum assiduis deprædationibus et flammaram incendiis, virorum ac mulierum, pupillorum ac viduarum, infantium et senum jugulationibus cunctam regionem devastabat.”

environs of northern France.

Adalhelm elaborated on the circumstances his escape, giving further insight into the workings of the slave trade. This passage yields details regarding not only the direction of his travel but also his means of transport:

As we endeavored to cross over the river of the Somme at the town which is called Saint-Valery, those who were with me were anxious and oppressed by the violence of the approaching waters. In the river of the Somme they fell from their horses and with them—miserable me!—I fell, too. And when there seemed to be no hope for me of living, I began thus to cry out: Saint Opportuna and Blessed Calais, free your perishing servant! With their aid, as I had no experience swimming, by the assistance of blessed Opportuna, as it seemed to me, I arrived at the shore of the river.<sup>15</sup>

The direction of Adalhelm's journey took him from Seés along the Orne River in Normandy and “across the regions of the sea” (*trans marinas regiones*) into the vicinity Saint-Valery-sur-Somme in northern France. The straight-line distance between these points is 125 miles (200 kilometers), but given the above reference to raging seas and perilous storms, Adalhelm's journey probably took him first by boat down the Orne River to Caen along the coast, and then up the English Channel from there.<sup>16</sup>

Surprisingly, Adalhelm's captors found reason to mount him on horseback to cross the Somme River, indicating that he alternated between maritime and overland

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<sup>15</sup> Adalhelm of Sééz, 68–69, c. 2: “Super fluvium Somonæ, ad oppidum quod dicitur Valeria, cum voluissemus devenire violentia marinæ accessionis anticipati et oppressi qui mecum erant, in jam dictum fluvium Somonæ de equis ceciderunt, inter quos et ego miserulus cecidi. Cumque mihi jam nulla spes esset vivendi, taliter clamare cœpi: S. Opportuna et B. Karilefi, liberate pereuntem servum vestrum. Quorum adjutorio, cum non haberem peritiam natandi, ad ripam fluminis, adjutrice ipsa B. Opportuna, ut mihi visum est, deveni. Hujas itaque S. Opportunæ insigne miraculum dignum judico scribere primum.”

<sup>16</sup> In his interpretation of the text, Musset assumes that Adalhelm has been redeemed and was on his return journey. Musset, “Naissance de la Normandie,” 70 n. 47.

transport. The ability to outfit Adalhelm with a horse suggests that those who trafficked him were working with a relatively small number of slaves, either reselling them after each leg of the journey or contracting short-distance transport along the way. Although the specifics are unclear, either option would depend upon a complex and established system for moving captives out of Western Europe and toward the markets of the northern world.

### **Narrative Sources: *The Life of Saint Findan***

*The Life of Saint Findan* offers an alternative look at the Viking-Age slave trade, echoing many of the circumstances of Adalhelm's account while providing further details about the participants of the slave trade. This text was written shortly after Findan's death between 878 and 881 by an anonymous companion of the saint.<sup>17</sup>

Findan's biographer, by his own account, had heard Findan's life story directly from the saint.<sup>18</sup> The resultant text survives in a small number of manuscripts dating from

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<sup>17</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH SS, 15,1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1887), 502–6. Holder-Egger failed to find anyone with an appropriately Irish name among the sources for Pfäfers Abbey (= Favariensi monasterio), to whom he could attribute authorship, due to Findan's described sojourn there in c. 7. For an alternative edition and English translation, see Reidar Thorolf Christiansen, "The People of the North," *Lochlann: A Review of Celtic Studies* 2 (1962): 137–64, with translation available online at <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201041.html>. Heinz Löwe treats the translation of Blaise's relics, which he dates to the early months of 859, as a fixed point for the chronology of Findan's life. He calculates Findan's birth in 803/804, period among the Picts in 845/846–847/848, pilgrimage to Rome in 847/848–850, service in Germany to 850–854, entry into Rheinau in 854, seclusion in 859, and death in 881. Heinz Löwe, "Findan von Rheinau. Eine irische *Peregrinatio* im 9. Jahrhundert," *Studi medievali*, 3rd ser., 26 (1985): 53–100, at 74–75. Findan's date of death is recorded as November 15. See further Heinz Löwe, "Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der *Vita Findani*," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 42 (1986): 25–85.

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, 64, c. 7. On the one hand, this Irish-speaking author likely had first-hand knowledge of the slave systems that Findan encountered. On the other, his purpose was not to portray events with accuracy but rather to portray Findan as an exceptionally holy man (*sanctissimus vir*, at 506, c. 12).



as early as the 900s. Although the text itself may be unfinished or incomplete, *The Life of Saint Findan* offers the fullest surviving description of captivity among viking raiders. While Poul Holm might have stymied attention by asserting in an influential article, “The Vita [of Saint Findan] does *not* indicate a fully-fledged slave-trade in the hands of professional slave merchants,”<sup>19</sup> Alice Rio has recently reappraised *The Life of Saint Findan* as “one of the most detailed and gripping narratives of the early medieval slave trade.”<sup>20</sup> Janel Fontaine has accordingly found numerous points where details from this text intersect with other evidence for the medieval slave trade.<sup>21</sup> By engaging with *The Life of Saint Findan* more closely, a fuller image of the recruitment, routes, and experiences of Viking-Age slaves comes into view.

*The Life of Saint Findan* offers two episodes of enslavement for study, both occurring in the context of elite Leinster society during the 830s or 840s.<sup>22</sup> On the

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<sup>19</sup> Holm, “The Slave Trade of Dublin, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries,” 323. Thus Findan goes unnoted by McCormick, *Origins*.

<sup>20</sup> Rio, *Slavery after Rome*, 30–31. Regrettably, Rio opts not to analyze this text but instead uses *The Life of Saint Findan* as a foil to contrast against Patrick’s *Confession*.

<sup>21</sup> Janel Marie Fontaine, “Slave Trading in the British Isles and the Czech Lands, 7th–11th Centuries” (Ph.D. thesis, King’s College London, 2018), 64, 66, 116, 120–21, 129, 156, 161.

<sup>22</sup> The year preceding Findan’s seclusion as a recluse is given a hard date by reference to the translation of St. Blaise’s relics, which can be dated to the first year of Pope Nicholas I, or 858–859. Other dates internal to the text are less certain. The surviving manuscripts date Findan’s arrival to Rheinau in 800 or 900, specifying that this occurred in the 51st year of his age, but I follow Holder-Egger in assuming that this indication results from a scribal error—the false insertion of *aetatis vero suae*—for text that had accurately dated Findan’s arrival to Rheinau in 851 but given no age. By this point Findan had already spent four years traveling as or with a cleric in Germany, another two years residing with a bishop in the Orkneys, and an unspecified amount of time on pilgrimage in Rome. Together, these details place Findan’s captivity and escape no later than 845 and probably somewhat earlier. Heinz Löwe, however, rejects Holder-Egger’s interpretation and argues that the indication of Findan’s age is authentic, while both dates 800 and 900 must be rejected in light of the translation of Blaise’s relics. I am skeptical of Löwe’s calculation of Findan’s birth to 803/804, which conflicts with slave raiders’ preference for younger boys attested elsewhere. His other dates, however, are more plausible. Löwe calculates Findan’s period among the Picts in 845/846–847/848, pilgrimage to Rome in 847/848–850, service in Germany to 850–854, entry into Rheinau in 854, seclusion in 859, and death in 881. Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, 504, prol. (7) and n. 3; Löwe, “Findan von Rheinau. Eine irische *Peregrinatio* im

first occasion, the young Findan was recruited into slavery while trying to redeem his sister, who had been taken captive along with other women.<sup>23</sup> As Findan's

biographer related:

Soon along the way he was taken by pagans, thrown into chains, and led without delay to their ships which lay nearby along the shore. That day and the following night he remained bound in chains with neither food nor drink.<sup>24</sup>

While Adalhelm had encountered a slave system comprised of many interlocking parts, Findan here encountered Northmen supplied with ships and chains, equipped to conduct the business of both capture and transport. These Northmen, however, soon freed Findan, reasoning that they should also facilitate efforts to ransom captives. They were eager to exploit captives, whether by ransom or by sale, and they planned to remain in Ireland for at least as long as it took to make ransom a viable option for their own captives. Their activities might have contributed to the slave trade of the Viking Age, but this viking group treated participation in the slave trade as one of several opportunities rather than as a prevailing purpose.

Findan's second experience of enslavement gives further insight into this opportunistic attitude toward the slave trade. On this occasion, members of a rival clan entrapped Findan at a feast. As his biographer recorded:

Northmen came into the midst of the feast and seized him, just as they had agreed with his enemies, and they bound him in tight chains and

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9. Jahrhundert," 66–68, 74–75.

<sup>23</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, 503, prol. (2): "Predicti ergo viri sororem gentiles qui Nordmanni vocantur, plurima Scottiae insulae, quae et Hibernia dicitur, loca vastantes, inter alias feminas adduxere captivam."

<sup>24</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, 503, prol. (2): "In eodem mox itinere a paganis tentus atque in vincula coniectus necnon et ad naves ipsorum, quae proximo in litore stabant, est sine mora perductus. Ipso vero die et nocte sequenti catenis ligatus, sine cibo potuque permansit."

carried him away. According to the custom of his Northman master, since he did not yet desire to return to his country, he sold him to another, and he soon to a third, and he to a fourth. This man, desiring to see his country again, gathered his companions and brought Findan and others with him into captivity.<sup>25</sup>

The groups involved in Findan's second captivity were more diverse than in his previous capture, illuminating some of the obscure connections seen in Adalhelm's sketchy account. Local collaborators relied on one group of Northmen to seize and sell Findan. A small group of intermediary traders bought and sold Findan within Ireland, while the Northman who finally carried Findan into captivity also carried others with him. Findan himself attested, or perhaps his biographer opined, that the opportunistic participation of these groups in the long-distance slave trade was considered a custom rather than a career.

*The Life of Saint Findan* points to Findan's intended destination as Norway or points beyond. His ship stopped in the Orkney Islands, where he effected an escape, and in the retelling, his biographer revealed further details about Findan's captivity.<sup>26</sup> Before arriving in the Orkneys, Findan's ship met an inbound viking fleet, and a party came aboard to exchange news. A fight broke out between the two crews, and Findan, "despite being bound in chains, rose up, desiring to bring aid to his master and his companions."<sup>27</sup> These actions earned Findan the goodwill of his captors and

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<sup>25</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, 503–4, prol. (3): "Nordmanni venientes et de medio convivarum ipsum rapientes, sicuti cum inimicis eius consiliati sunt, artissimis vinculis conligavere et secum pariter abduxere. Iuxta morem ergo suum dominus eius Nordmannus, quia necdum ad patriam suam redire cupiebat, alii illum vendidit, et mox ille tertio, atque ipse quarto. Qui, sociis collectis, patriam revisere desiderans, hunc secum cum aliis in captivitatem duxit."

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion on Norse presence in the Orkney Islands during the Viking Age, see Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome: The Fall and Rise, 400–1070*, Penguin History of Britain (London: Penguin, 2011), 232–40.

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, 504, prol. (4): "His ita litigantibus, Findanus in vinculis

aided in his eventual escape, for upon landing in the Orkneys, he was released to explore the island “with permission” (*licentia percepta*). His captors here relied upon Findan’s quick loyalty and his enforced dependency. They had landed him on a barren island, devoid of human inhabitation or sources of food.

Apparently ignorant of these circumstances, Findan hid in a shoreline cave, but when his captors abandoned their search and departed, Findan found himself living on grass and water. Findan’s biographer used these events to prove a point—nothing less than a miracle could help Findan escape the slave trade. Findan did achieve such an escape, crossing hazardous waters and setting out on a fittingly holy life. Following his escape, Findan met an Irish-speaking bishop, traveled on pilgrimage to Rome, entered a monastery at Rheinau, and finally secluded himself in a cell during the later stages of his life. Findan’s experience—like Adalhelm’s—was exceptional alongside the common and customary experiences of captives trafficked onward along the northern routes of the slave trade.

### **Narrative Sources: *The Laxdæla Saga***

*The Laxdæla Saga* provides another example of a slave recruited from the west, albeit one who never escaped captivity. Melkorka, an Irish captive who was trafficked further east but ultimately sold back westward, appears early in *The Laxdæla Saga* as the mother of a prominent character. The anonymous author of this saga took interest in Melkorka insofar as she played a role among the individuals who came to

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constitutus domino suo ac sociis sese erigens auxilium ferre volebat.”

inhabit the Laxá River Valley (Laxardal) of Western Iceland. The action of the saga occurred during the late Viking Age, while the earliest surviving manuscript dates to the 1200s, when the text was likely written.<sup>28</sup> In general, scholars tend to treat the Icelandic sagas as constructed memories, mirroring the times when they were written more than those they describe.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, I argue that Melkorka's captivity in *The Laxdæla Saga* conforms to patterns seen in other sources and offers an important complement to Adalhelm's *Miracles* and *The Life of Saint Findan* for exploring a woman's experience of the Viking-Age slave trade.

The circumstances of Melkorka's purchase yield important details on the systems of the Viking-Age slave trade. The saga first introduces Melkorka in the tent of a merchant identified as Gilli the Russian (*Gilli hinn gerski*).<sup>30</sup> Although Gilli called himself "the Russian" and wore a supposedly Russian hat (*gerskr hattr*), the name Gilli is Irish in origin.<sup>31</sup> Gilli had set up his booth in the Bränno Islands near modern-day

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<sup>28</sup> The earliest fragments date from the second half of the 1200s, but due to associated genealogies, Chris Callow suggests a *terminus post quem* of about 1200 to 1220. Chris Callow, "Reconstructing the Past in Medieval Iceland," *Early Medieval Europe* 14, no. 3 (August 2006): 297–324, at 309.

<sup>29</sup> The difficulties of using sagas to reconstruct Viking-Age history are succinctly discussed by Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora*, 63–68. For a fuller treatment of the sagas in general, see Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, *Laxdæla Saga*, Íslenzk Fornrit 5 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1934), 22–25, c. 12–13; Bergljot S. Kristjansdóttir, ed., *The Saga of the People of Laxardal and Bolli Bollason's Tale*, trans. Keneva Kunz (London: Penguin, 2008), 15–20, c. 12–13.

<sup>31</sup> Rolf Heller, "Laxdæla saga und Færeyinga saga," *Alvissmál* 8 (1998): 85–92, at 87. Ironically, the name Gilli is related to the name Gillikrist, or "Servant of Christ," which is attested intermittently as a name in the Irish annals and in the *Heimskringla* as a byname for Harald Gillikrist, the later Harald IV of Norway (r. 1130–1136). In Irish annals, the earliest attested form of Gilli belongs to a Gilla Coluim ua Canannáin, a king in northern Ireland whose death is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* under the year 977. This dating is nearly contemporaneous to the events of *The Laxdæla Saga* and reinforces the impression that the merchant Gilli originated in Ireland, perhaps in a kingdom rival to Melkorka's Leinster, discussed below.

Göteborg, Sweden, where King Hakon I of Norway (r. 934–961) was holding court. An Icelander named Hoskuld was in attendance and sought out Gilli for the opulence of his tent. The encounter is competitive, as Hoskuld demanded a female slave (*ambátt*) to test whether Gilli's wealth was a mere façade. Gilli then revealed twelve women from behind a curtain. Hoskuld asked the price of one he thought good looking, and Gilli demanded three times the regular rate. Hoskuld then offered to let Gilli weigh his purse, which Gilli conveniently assessed as weighing his full asking price.<sup>32</sup>

Gilli's Irish name and his possession of an Irish slave suggest dealings with the west, but his Russian by-name, his affinity for rich textiles, and his desire for gathering silver all suggest that he also brokered things from the East. Gilli personified the long-distance connections possible along northern routes, and during this trading season, his most valuable goods included a dozen enslaved women.

Before money changed hands, Gilli confessed that Hoskuld's chosen slave was mute. The silence and eventual speech of this slave provide further insights into the experiences of Viking-Age slaves. Gilli hinted at his own sinister efforts to make the captive speak and received Hoskuld's praise for his honesty.<sup>33</sup> Hoskuld gave Gilli the agreed amount of silver and slept with the slave that night. The next day, he dressed

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<sup>32</sup> Heiko Steuer has calculated this as 700 grams of silver, the equivalent of 235 dirhams or 580 German pennies. By comparison, the largest Viking-Age hoard, found at Spillings on Gotland, contained nearly 70 kilograms of silver. If we are to take the saga account at face value, the Spillings Hoard represented the purchase price of some 100 to 300 slaves. Heiko Steuer, "Principles of Trade and Exchange: Trade Goods and Merchants," in *Wulfstan's Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as Seen from Shipboard*, ed. Anton Englert and Athena Trakadas, Maritime Culture of the North 2 (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2009), 294–308, at 298–99.

<sup>33</sup> Gilli's expectation that he would be able to understand Melkorka is a further indication of his Irish origins.

her in fine attire and brought her before the royal assembly. Despite earning him compliments at court, the slave proved more problematic once Hoskuld returned to his farm and wife in Iceland. The slave bore Hoskuld a son, and when Hoskuld later discovered her speaking to him, he demanded the details of her life. According to the saga, she gave him a haughty reply:

If you want to know my name, then I am called Melkorka. ... My father is called Myrkjartan; he is king in Ireland. I was captured from there at fifteen years old.<sup>34</sup>

Although Myrkjartan is otherwise unattested, Melkorka's name associates her more specifically with the ruling family of Leinster, and insofar as Findan's father was the *miles* (soldier) of a *princeps* (leader, chieftain, prince?) of Leinster, Melkorka's claim to royal parentage is plausible.<sup>35</sup> So too, according to the saga, is the response of Hoskuld's wife, who responded to Melkorka's newly asserted identity by demanding that Hoskuld resettle the slave and her son further up the valley.

Melkorka turned her resettlement into an opportunity by raising a son who could profit from his Irish heritage. Although Melkorka never returned to Ireland, her son, Olaf Peacock, built his reputation on his mother's life story, gaining respect abroad in Ireland and at home in Western Iceland. Her story, however, also proved the value of Hoskuld's purchase. Melkorka fulfilled what Karras has noted as the three

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<sup>34</sup> Sveinsson, *Laxdæla Saga*, 27–28, c. 13: “Ef þú vill nafn mitt vita, þá heiti ek Melkorka ... Mýrkjartan heiter faðir minn; hann er konungr á Írlandi. Ek var þaðan hertekin fimmtán vetra gömul.”

<sup>35</sup> David E. Thornton, “The Genealogy of Gruffudd Ap Cynan,” in *Gruffudd Ap Cynan: A Collaborative Biography*, ed. K. L. Maund, Studies in Celtic History (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996), 79–108, at 98–99; Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, 503, prol. (3). Pace Karras, who cautions that the Irish princess's literary function might have trumped the author's desire for historical accuracy. Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 58.

ideal roles of a medieval concubine—desire, descendants, and dominance.<sup>36</sup> Hoskuld had used Melkorka at least for a time to satisfy his sexual desires, he secured through Melkorka a prominent descendant in the person of Olaf Peacock, and he exerted dominance not only over Melkorka’s body but also through her body, using her resettlement to establish a dependent household and extend his domains.

### **Narrative Sources: The Travelogues of Ohthere and Wulfstan**

Melkorka stands in many ways as an exceptional figure among the surviving sources of the Viking Age. The character of Gilli, however, may be compared with two other merchants known as Ohthere and Wulfstan. The travelogues of these two travelers are not typically considered in discussions on the Viking-Age slave trade. Nonetheless, their testimony illustrates the connections that tied the enslavement networks of the North Sea through the Baltic and into the slave societies of the East. These otherwise unknown travelers reported their journeys to the Wessex court of Alfred the Great, likely in the 890s, when their reports were copied seemingly verbatim into an ongoing Old English translation of a late-antique history by Paulus Orosius.<sup>37</sup> Scholars have plumbed these accounts primarily for the information they

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<sup>36</sup> Ruth Mazo Karras, “Desire, Descendants, and Dominance: Slavery, the Exchange of Women, and Masculine Power,” in *The Work of Work: Servitude, Slavery, and Labor in Medieval England*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen and Douglas Moffat (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1994), 16–29. Karras has discussed Melkorka only indirectly, preferring to focus on her son Olaf as affirmative evidence for the norms of inheritance indicated in Old Norse law codes. Ruth Mazo Karras, “Concubinage and Slavery in the Viking Age,” *Scandinavian Studies* 62, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 141–162, at 142, 152.

<sup>37</sup> Janet Bately places Ohthere’s report at any time between 871 and 899, and the completion of the translation text sometime after 889. Bately notes that the text implies but does not explicitly claim that Wulfstan reported his journey to Alfred. Verbal differences separate Ohthere’s account, Wulfstan’s account, and the remainder of the Old English text, suggesting that these are, in fact, independent accounts grafted into a single text. Paulus Orosius, *The Old English Orosius*, ed. Janet Bately, Early English Text Society Supplementary Series 6 (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), lxxi–lxxii,



preserve about the peoples and places of the north.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the travelogues of Ohthere and Wulfstan also expand on the image of the slave trade seen in Adalhelm's *Miracles of Saint Opportuna*, *The Life of Saint Findan*, and *The Laxdæla Saga*.

Ohthere presented himself as a chieftain from northern Norway, tempting modern archaeologists to link him with the wealthy site of Borg on Lofoten.<sup>39</sup> He described for Alfred a trip he took to the north, perhaps rounding Finnmark in Northern Norway and entering the White Sea of modern Russia. More importantly for present purposes, he also described a journey to the south, passing through a place he called *Sciringes healh*, which should likely be associated with the early Viking-Age trading town at Kaupang in the Oslo Fjord.<sup>40</sup> Ohthere's journey then continued onward to Hedeby, sheltered along the Baltic coast near Schleswig in modern Germany.

The Old English adaptation of Orosius's *Histories* then transitions to the

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lxxxvi–xciii; for translations and further commentary, see Janet Bately, “Text and Translation: The Three Parts of the Known World and the Geography of Europe North of the Danube According to Orosius’ *Historiae* and Its Old English Version,” in *Ohthere’s Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and Its Cultural Context*, ed. Janet Bately and Anton Englert, Maritime Culture of the North 1 (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2007), 40–58; Paulus Orosius, *The Old English History of the World: An Anglo-Saxon Rewriting of Orosius*, ed. Matthew R. Godden, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 44 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>38</sup> Janet Bately and Anton Englert, eds., *Ohthere’s Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and Its Cultural Context*, Maritime Culture of the North 1 (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2007); Anton Englert and Athena Trakadas, eds., *Wulfstan’s Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as Seen from Shipboard*, Maritime Culture of the North 2 (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2009).

<sup>39</sup> Gerd Stamsø Munch, Olav Sverre Johansen, and Else Roesdahl, eds., *Borg in Lofoten: A Chieftain’s Farm in North Norway* (Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 2003); Gerd Stamsø Munch, “Borg in Lofoten. A Chieftain’s Farm in North Norway,” in *Ohthere’s Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and Its Cultural Context*, ed. Janet Bately and Anton Englert, Maritime Culture of the North 1 (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2007), 100–105.

<sup>40</sup> Dagfinn Skre, “The *Sciringes Healh* of Ohthere’s Time,” in *Ohthere’s Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and Its Cultural Context*, ed. Janet Bately and Anton Englert, Maritime Culture of the North 1 (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2007), 150–56.

account of Wulfstan, a merchant who bore an Anglo-Saxon name.<sup>41</sup> Wulfstan reportedly plied the waters eastward from Hedeby, sailing to the port of Truso in modern Poland and then out into the Baltic. To *bæcbord* or port, he described the various lands of the Danish kingdom, followed by the kingdom of Bornholm, and then the regions belonging to the Svear or Swedes, as far as the Baltic island of Gotland. Along the opposite shore, he described passing the land of the Slavic Wends and then traveling up the Vistula River into a region called *Estland*, perhaps taking its name from a people known to classical geographers as the *Aesti*.<sup>42</sup>

A significant change then occurs in the text, as itinerary lapses into ethnography and grounded observation gives way to invention.<sup>43</sup> *Estland*, as it is described, appears to be the antithesis of Anglo-Saxon England. The *Ests* are portrayed as having inverted foodways, funerary rites, and property practices, as well as a marvelous ability to control coldness. Dwelling at the edge of the known world, these mare's-milk-drinking, body-cremating, inheritance-dissipating *Ests* must have seemed unfathomable to the ale-drinking, churchyard-burying, and charter-carrying elites of Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Judith Jesch, "Who Was Wulfstan?," in *Wulfstan's Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as Seen from Shipboard*, ed. Anton Englert and Athena Trakadas, Maritime Culture of the North 2 (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2009), 29–31.

<sup>42</sup> Janet Bately connects the Wends to the Abodrites and the *Ests* to the *Aestii* of Tacitus. Orosius, *The Old English Orosius*, 195 (Wends), 197 (Ests).

<sup>43</sup> Contra Sealy Gilles, who describes Wulfstan's remarkable narrative as representing a celebration of the *Ests*. I am likewise skeptical of the effort to equate these people with later Estonians. Sealy Gilles, "Territorial Interpolations in the Old English Orosius," in *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 81–96, at 88–90.

<sup>44</sup> Bately suggests that the reference to mare's milk might indicate a fermented drink such as the kumiss of the Mongols. Orosius, *The Old English Orosius*, 198.

Although these travelogues of Ohthere and Wulfstan transition from geographic and ethnographic itineraries into an appearance of literary confection, they nonetheless transmit potentially authentic details about the Viking-Age slave trade. Ohthere described routes that closely paralleled the movements of Melkorka and likely Findan as well, while his terminal point of Hedeby could also have served as a likely destination for Adalhelm. Wulfstan's account of the routes leading eastward from Hedeby offers more tantalizing details. Wulfstan described *Estland* as a region ruled by petty kings who based their power in fortified enclosures called *burhs*. As one of the foremost details of this land, Wulfstan attested that the while the kings and powerful men drank mare's milk, "the unwealthy and the slaves drink mead."<sup>45</sup> In context, this detail underscores the abundance of honey reported in *Estland*, but it also suggests an abundance of slaves. While Ohthere and Wulfstan report nothing on the movement of slaves, the general trajectory of their reports points to the extraction of resources from Northwest Europe and their movement east, where at least some measures of wealth—including slaves—seemed more abundant.

### **Narrative Sources: The *Lives* of Saint Ansgar and Saint Rimbert**

Ohthere and Wulfstan attested to the significant sites they used to define their routes, and they pointed to the abundance of slaves at eastern centers of population and trade. Two further sources—Rimbert's *Life of Saint Ansgar* and the anonymous *Life of*

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<sup>45</sup> Orosius, 17, c. I.i: "Se cyning 7 þa ricostan men drincað myran meolc, 7 þa unspedigan 7 þa þeowan drincað medo."

*Saint Rimbart*—affirm the movement of slaves toward those centers. Both texts date to the late 800s. Ansgar (d. 865) had established the archdiocese of Hamburg–Bremen at a time when Frankish power was tenuous along its frontiers, and his successor Rimbart (d. 888) composed *The Life of Saint Ansgar* to help justify the maintenance of his authority over this tenuous see.<sup>46</sup> An anonymous author subsequently composed *The Life of Saint Rimbart*, most likely during the tenure of Rimbart’s successor Adalgar (888–909).<sup>47</sup> Of these two biographies, *The Life of Saint Ansgar* has received the majority of attention as one of the richest sources on Viking–Age Scandinavia, while *The Life of Saint Rimbart* has languished for its appearance as a derivative text repeating many of the episodes from Ansgar’s life but with less substantial detail.<sup>48</sup> Notably, *The Life of Saint Ansgar* has attracted translation and inclusion in numerous Viking–Age anthologies, while *The Life of Saint Rimbart* remains unavailable in English and is rarely discussed.

Both texts nonetheless preserve details for researchers of the Viking–Age slave

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<sup>46</sup> Eric Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbart, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg–Bremen* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 11–12; Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe 400–1050* (London: Routledge, 2001), 123–37; James T. Palmer, “Rimbart’s *Vita Anskarii* and Scandinavian Mission in the Ninth Century,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55, no. 2 (April 2004): 235–56.

<sup>47</sup> Although no early manuscripts exist, the text is nevertheless considered to be an early composition. A list of regions in c. 1 includes most notably Greenland, which was first settled in 986. This list, however, is presumed to be a later interpolation. Georg Waitz, ed., *Vita Rimbarti*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 55 (Hanover: Hahn, 1884), 80–100, at 80–81, c. 1. Adam of Bremen, working from these same documents around 1070, included a synopsis of the life of Rimbart omitting this passage, which may suggest that it was interpolated into manuscripts later. Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, 3rd ed., MGH SS rer. Germ. 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1917); Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg–Bremen*, trans. Francis J. Tschan, 2nd ed., Records of Civilization (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). I thank Eric Knibbs for bringing these considerations to my attention.

<sup>48</sup> See, exceptionally, the four papers collected in Katholische Akademie Hamburg, ed., *Rimbart der Nachfolger Ansgars* (Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2000).

trade. Most notably, Søren Sindbæk catalogued the different routes indicated in *The Life of Saint Ansgar* and charted 35 episodes of travel in the text. These episodes indicate a major trunk leading from Dorestad in Frisia, passing through Hedeby and the Danish kingdom, and reaching out to Birka in Central Sweden.<sup>49</sup> This trunk joined the route traveled by Adalhelm in his *Miracles of Saint Opportuna* with the routes of Saint Findan and Melkorka, merging these into the larger eastward stream described by Ohthere and Wulfstan.

Along these routes, *The Life of Saint Ansgar* depicts a continuous movement of slaves heading toward the bustling market of Birka in modern Central Sweden. As Rimbert baldly stated: “There were many Christian captives among them.”<sup>50</sup> Ansgar purchased some of these slaves, and Rimbert took these events as an opportunity to play on contemporary notions of slavery and servitude:

He began also to acquire some boys from the peoples of the Danes and the Slavs; from captivity he redeemed a few whom he trained into the servitude of God. Some he kept with himself [working among the Danes], and some he placed in the monastery at Turnhout for their nourishment.<sup>51</sup>

Significantly, Rimbert himself was among the boys trained at Turnhout and might even have numbered among the captives bought by Ansgar,<sup>52</sup> making his play on

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<sup>49</sup> Søren Michael Sindbæk, “The Small World of the Vikings: Networks in Early Medieval Communication and Exchange,” *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 40, no. 1 (2007): 59–74.

<sup>50</sup> Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. 55 (Hanover: Hahn, 1884), 3–79, at 32, c. 11: “Multi etiam apud eos captivi habebantur christiani.” For a complete translation, see Rimbert, *Anskar, the Apostle of the North. 801–865: Translated from the Vita Anskarii by Bishop Rimbert, His Fellow Missionary and Successor*, trans. Charles H. Robinson, Lives of Early and Mediæval Missionaries (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1921).

<sup>51</sup> Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, 36–37, c. 15: “Coepit quoque ex gente Danorum atque Slavorum nonnullos emere pueros, aliquos etiam ex captivitate redimere, quos ad servitium Dei educaret. Quorum quosdam hic secum retinuit, quosdam vero ad cellam praedictam Turholt nutriendos posuit.”

<sup>52</sup> Rimbert, c. 36, 71: “Nonnullos pueros ex Nordmannis vel Slavis emptos in eadem cella causa

words all the more poignant. Similarly, at a later moment, Ansgar returned from Sweden with a young captive boy in his entourage, but in this case the boy's mother came to meet him. Rimbert heightened the emotion of their reunion by identifying the woman as a widow and describing her weeping, as Ansgar shed his own tears of sympathy. This combination of a widow's protected status, an emotional display, and Ansgar's own sympathy, motivated Ansgar to give the boy his liberty and allow him to depart.<sup>53</sup> Rimbert left unspoken whether the Christian servitude of Ansgar's other "redeemed" captives was in fact voluntary, but in an age of child oblation, such questions of free will likely went unasked.<sup>54</sup>

*The Life of Saint Rimbert* provides further insight into the Scandinavian slave markets of the Viking Age. In particular, Rimbert's biographer attributed to him a sign of sanctity in his redemption of a woman taken from a religious community in the west:

Rimbert came to the regions of the Danes where he had built a new Christian church in the place called Schleswig [= Hedeby]. There he saw a number of Christians fettered and drawn into captivity. Among these there was a nun who saw him from afar. She bent her knee and bowed her head, seemingly as much to venerate the man as to pray for her own redemption. So that he would recognize her as a Christian, she raised her voice and began to sing psalms.<sup>55</sup>

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discendi ad sacram militiam nutriendos posuerat." See discussion in Palmer, "Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* and Scandinavian Mission in the Ninth Century," 237.

<sup>53</sup> Rimbert, "*Vita Anskarii*," 69–70, c. 35: "Statimque ipsum viduae filium libertate donatum matri reddidit domumque gaudentes ire permisit." Insofar as Rimbert held up Ansgar as a model for his readers, he likely expected that this scene would excite their sympathies as well.

<sup>54</sup> In this regard, it should be noted that the Carolingian world had recently been rocked by the controversy of Gottschalk and Hrabanus Maurus, which touched on both the theology of predestination and the then-current practice of permanent oblation. Both of the major figures in this debate were themselves child oblates. Mayke de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 77–91.

<sup>55</sup> Waitz, *Vita Rimberti*, 95, c. 18: "Cum venisset quadam vice ad partes Danorum, ubi ecclesiam novellae christianitati constructam habebat in loco qui dicitur Sliaswich, vidit multitudinem

This woman's voice, alone among the women trafficked into the Baltic, survives among the written sources of the Viking Age. Her words go unrecorded—and Rimbert's biographer pointedly claimed that they were borrowed from a biblical text—but they were enough to secure her redemption.<sup>56</sup>

As with Rimbert's account of Ansgar returning a boy to his widowed mother, redemption hinged upon a woman claiming a protected status—here communicated by the nun's ability to sing in Latin—and exciting the sympathies of a churchman. This woman's captors demanded and received the horse that Rimbert was riding, presumably an equitable exchange of valuable and useful things. These examples of redemption follow tropes of an emerging Christian ethos defined by its obligations to the poor, to slaves, and to prisoners,<sup>57</sup> but they also show the limitations of this ethos. Ansgar and Rimbert encountered a booming slave trade moving people from west to east, but even saintly churchmen could redeem only a precious few.

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christianorum catenatam trahi captivam. Inter quas una sanctimonialis, ut eminus illum conspexit, cum genuflexione et crebra capitis inclinatione tam illum venerari quam eius misericordiam pro redemptione sua precari videbatur. Et ut eam intelligeret christianam fuisse, elevata altius voce coepit cantare psalmos.”

<sup>56</sup> The subsequent fate of this woman remains unknown. After redemption, the text notes, Rimbert permitted her to depart for wherever she wanted (*quo vellet abire permisit*). Unfortunately, this would seem to strand the redeemed slave in an unwelcoming country with little hope of return. Waitz, 96, c. 18.

<sup>57</sup> Arnold Angenendt, “Die Mission im frühen Mittelalter,” in *Bremen, 1200 Jahre Mission*, ed. Dieter Hägermann, Schriften der Wittheit zu Bremen (Bremen: Johann Heinrich Döll, 1989), 61–86, at 83–84; John Gillingham, “Christian Warriors and the Enslavement of Fellow Christians,” in *Chevalerie et Christianisme Aux XIIe et XIIIe Siècles*, ed. Martin Aurell and Catalina Girbea (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011), 237–56.

## Narrative Sources: The Letter of Ibn Faḍlān

The travelogues of Ohthere and Wulfstan attest to the movement of merchants through the northern world, and the lives of Ansgar and Rimbert indicate that slaves numbered among the goods carried east. A contentious Arabic text illuminates the receiving end of this movement. In 921, an ambassador named Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān departed Baghdad on an embassy to the people of the Bulghār along the Volga, purportedly to proselytize there and recruit the Turkic king into a client relationship with the ‘Abbāsid caliph. Ibn Faḍlān achieved his destination in 922 and subsequently wrote an account of his travels. His text survives in a single fragmentary manuscript from the 1200s,<sup>58</sup> as well as in a small number of quotations copied or translated into later texts.<sup>59</sup> Significantly, Ibn Faḍlān’s account confirms much of the picture already seen in the western narratives of the Viking–Age slave trade.

Ibn Faḍlān recorded traveling among a number of northern peoples linked through slave trafficking. The most important of these seem to have been the Khazars and the Turks along the Caliphate’s northern frontiers, followed by the poorly understood groups of the Ṣaqālibah (Slavs) and Bulghārs, as well as the Rūs beyond. Among modern scholars, the Rūs are typically understood to have been Scandinavians traders and settlers in the regions of modern-day Russia and Ukraine.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Reproduced in facsimile in Fuat Sezgin, ed., *Collection of Geographical Works: Reproduced from MS 5229 Riḍawīya Library, Mashhad*, Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic–Islamic Science. Series C, Facsimile Editions 43 (Frankfurt: Institute for the History of Arabic–Islamic Science, 1987). According to Sezgin, the manuscript dates to the seventh century A.H., which spanned from 1203 to 1301 C.E.

<sup>59</sup> Travis Zadeh, “Ibn Faḍlān,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 3 [= EI<sup>3</sup>]*, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007–); James E. Montgomery, “Arabic Sources on the Vikings,” in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 550–561, at 553–54.

<sup>60</sup> The ethnonym Rus’ transliterates the Old East Slavic Русь and may have influenced the introduction



Ibn Faḍlān gave special attention to the trafficking of female slaves (*jāriya*, pl. *jawāri*) with occasional references to slave boys (*ghulām*, pl. *ghilmān*) and eunuchs (*khādim*, pl. *khadam*).<sup>61</sup> English translations of *jāriya* often alternate between such renderings as slave-girl and concubine,<sup>62</sup> while the other Arabic terms carry a similar range of meanings from the general to the specific: *ghulām* may be used to indicate young slave boys as well as elite military servants, while *khādim* is a generic term for male slave frequently used euphemistically for eunuchs.<sup>63</sup> All three groups could be considered sexually available in contemporary societies,<sup>64</sup> and Ibn Faḍlān made clear that female slaves in particular were treated as sexual objects.<sup>65</sup>

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of the word al-Rūs into Arabic. Arabic documents from this period, including the *Letter* of Ibn Faḍlān alternate between this term and al-Rūsiyyah. I have chosen to follow the shorter and more familiar form. Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus: 750–1200*, Longman History of Russia (London: Longman, 1996); Władysław Duczko, *Viking Rus: Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, Northern World 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Peter B. Golden, “Rūs,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2 [= *EF*], ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005).

<sup>61</sup> For two prominent examples, see Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, in *Two Arabic Travel Books: Accounts of India and China*, ed. James E. Montgomery, Library of Arabic Literature (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 163–297, at 246–47, c. 80, 256–257, c. 92. Note that the term *khādim*, although sometimes used in a general sense for slaves, here applies specifically to eunuchs assigned to harems.

<sup>62</sup> R. Brunschvig, “‘Abd,” in *EF*; Marion H. Katz, “Concubinage, in Islamic Law,” in *EF*.

<sup>63</sup> D. Sourdel et al., “Ghulām,” in *EF*; A. J. Wensinck, “Khādim,” in *EF*; Jane Hathaway, “Eunuchs,” in *EF*.

<sup>64</sup> David Ayalon, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study in Power Relationships* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1999), 316–25; Khalil ‘Athamina, “How Did Islam Contribute to Change the Legal Status of Women: The Case of the *Jawāri*, or the *Female Slaves*,” *Al-Qanṭara* 28, no. 2 (December 2007): 383–408; Everett K. Rowson, “The Traffic in Boys: Slavery and Homoerotic Liaisons in Elite ‘Abbāsīd Society,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 11, no. 2 (2008): 193–204; Kristina Richardson, “Singing Slave Girls (*Qiyān*) of the ‘Abbasid Court in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,” in *Children in Slavery through the Ages*, ed. Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2009), 105–18. Kathryn Hain has investigated how members of these groups were also regularly transferred onward toward the markets of distant China. Kathryn Ann Hain, “The Slave Trade of European Women to the Middle East and Asia from Antiquity to the Ninth Century” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 2016). I am grateful for having had the opportunity to discuss this slave trade with her and for her sharing this unpublished work.

<sup>65</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, 242–43, c. 76.

Ibn Faḍlān portrayed female slaves as the primary trading good of the Rūs. Merchants coming for trade would pray to sell their female slaves whom they had brought from far-away homes.<sup>66</sup> Ibn Faḍlān conveyed wonder at the scale of this trade. The king of the Rūs was reported to keep 40 female slaves for his own pleasure and to have furnished each of his 400 retainers with two female slaves—one to provide food and drink, and one for intercourse.<sup>67</sup> Additional slaves traded by the merchants of the Rūs passed into the land of the Khazars, where the king demanded a tribute of one slave for every ten that a merchant possessed.<sup>68</sup> Ibn Faḍlān indicated the increased extravagance of this king by describing a harem of 60 female slaves managed by a eunuch.<sup>69</sup> He made these observations during a visit late in the summer, when merchants like Gilli might have traveled east with any slaves unsold during the summer assemblies of the north. Ibn Faḍlān’s descriptions, therefore, might represent the high season for the slave trade of the Rūs, in which captives taken in viking raids during the spring or previous fall reached the Islamic frontiers as summer days began to shorten.<sup>70</sup>

One slave attracted Ibn Faḍlān’s particular attention. During his visit among

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<sup>66</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, 242–43, c. 77.

<sup>67</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, 252–53, c. 89.

<sup>68</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, 238–39, c. 72.

<sup>69</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, 256–57, c. 92.

<sup>70</sup> On the infrastructure and seasonality of the Russian portions of this trade, see Roman K. Kovalev, “The Infrastructure of the Northern Part of the ‘Fur Road’ Between the Middle Volga and the East During the Middle Ages,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 11 (2001): 25–64; Søren M. Sindbæk, “Varægiske vinterruter. Slædetransport i Rusland og spørgsmålet om den tidlige vikingetids orientalske import i Nordeuropa,” *Forvånnen* 98, no. 3 (2003): 179–93; Christer Westerdahl, “Boats Apart. Building and Equipping an Iron-Age and Early-Medieval Ship in Northern Europe,” *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 37, no. 1 (2008): 17–31.

the Rūs, Ibn Faḍlān witnessed the funeral of a chieftain (*ra'īs*).<sup>71</sup> According to Ibn

Faḍlān:

When the man I mentioned died, they said to female slaves, “Who will die with him?” One of them said, “Me,” and they appointed for her two female slaves to watch over her.<sup>72</sup>

This woman endured several days of pampering, intoxication, and rape. She was also treated as an interlocutor with the dead man, receiving messages for her deceased master. At a prominent point in the ceremonies, she was raised three times above a doorway, muttering words each time. Ibn Faḍlān requested an explanation from his interpreter, and he transmitted these events as his interpreter had described them:

I asked the translator about what she had done. He said that the first time they lifted her she said: “Behold! I see my father and my mother.” And the second time she said: “Behold! All my family of the dead, seated.” And the third time she said: “Behold! I see my master (*mawlā*) sitting in Paradise, and the Garden of Paradise is good and green. With him are the men and the slave boys (*ar-rijāl w-al-ghilmān*), and— behold! he calls to me—go to him.”<sup>73</sup>

The woman then sacrificed a chicken before being ushered onto the dead man’s boat, where she was again raped and finally killed. She was then burned and buried with the man, whose distinctive silk cap fringed with sable might have paralleled the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, 248–49, c. 84, 250–51, c. 86. Thorir Jonsson Hraundal has posited that Ibn Faḍlān here described practices not present in Scandinavia but rather practices that Scandinavian emigrants had developed while living among Turkic peoples with comparable burial rites. Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, “The Rus in Arabic Sources: Cultural Contacts and Identity” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Bergen, 2013), 92–128, 186–87.

<sup>72</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, 246, c. 81: فلما مات ذلك الرجل الذي قدّمت ذكره قالوا لجواريه من يموت معه فقال: أحدهنّ أنا فوكلوا بها جاريتين تحفظانها Cf. Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North* (London: Penguin, 2012), 50.

<sup>73</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, 248, c. 84: فسألْتُ الترجمان عن فعلها فقال قالت في أوّل مرّة أصعدوها هوذا أرى أبي وأمي وقالت في الثانية هوذا جميع قرابتي الموتى قعودا وقالت الثالثة هوذا أرى مولاي قاعدا في الجنة والجنة حسنة خضراء ومعه الرجال والغلّمان وهوذا يدعونني فاذهبوا إليه Cf. Lunde and Stone, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, 52.

Russian hat worn by Gilli in *The Laxdæla Saga*.<sup>74</sup> Had Melkorka not been diverted to be the *ambátt* of Hoskuld in Iceland, she might have ended her life among the *jawāri* encountered by Ibn Faḍlān.

### **Narrative Sources: Patterns of the Viking-Age Slave Trade**

These texts belong to diverse genres with varying degrees of historicity, and each text poses particular problems of authorship and manuscript transmission.

Nonetheless, the narrative sources of the Viking-Age slave trade have the strength of offering independent and overlapping testimony. By considering these sources as parts of a single corpus, patterns emerge regarding the sources themselves, the movements they describe, examples of the recruitment and employment of slaves, and the agency some slaves were able to assert.

Regarding the sources themselves (Table 1.2), most of the surviving texts focus on events that occurred in the mid- to late 800s. The earliest of these sources—*The Life of Saint Findan* and Rimbert's *Life of Saint Ansgar*—indicate that the slave trade of the Viking-Age was already well established by mid-century. Sources were written with greatest frequency regarding events between the 860s and 880s, suggesting a peak in the northern slave trade. Only two sources report the slave trade continuing into the 900s, suggesting that—despite the scale of the slave trade witnessed by Ibn Faḍlān—the component of this slave trade drawn from the viking west was already in decline.

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<sup>74</sup> A silk cap fringed with sable. Ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, 246–49, c. 83.

Text	800	810	820	830	840	850	860	870	880	890	900	910	920	930	940	950	960	970	980	990	1000
<i>Life of Saint Findan</i>				•	••	•	••	••	••	•											
<i>Life of Saint Ansgar</i>				•	••	•	••	••	••	•											
<i>Adalhelm's Miracles</i>				•	••	•	••	••	••	•											
<i>Life of Saint Rimbart</i>				•	••	•	••	••	••	•											
<i>Ohthere &amp; Wulfstan</i>				•	••	•	••	••	••	•											
<i>Ibn Faḍlān's Letter</i>				•	••	•	••	••	••	•			•								
<i>Laxdæla Saga</i>				•	••	•	••	••	••	•			•	•	•	•	•	•			

**Table 1.2. Viking-Age Slave Traffic in Narrative Sources**

Throughout these sources, slaves moved continuously eastward. These routes were primarily maritime and riverine, making use of barren islands and fortified towns as waypoints and hubs. In the west, local networks of opportunistic slave raiders like Findan’s captors operated on a small scale, seizing and exporting slaves in small batches, and Melkorka’s experience suggests that this small-scale trade of perhaps a dozen slaves at a time continued eastward as well. Slave trafficking became more specialized further east, where Ibn Faḍlān described the slave trade as a prevailing commercial activity. In these regions, slaves were abundant enough to suggest that the viking world was but one of many sources funneling slaves into the northern frontiers of the Caliphate.

Overall, the sources of the Viking-Age slave trade demonstrate an emphasis on enslaving women and children, which conforms with broader patterns of medieval slavery.<sup>75</sup> Women were preferred as slaves in *The Life of Saint Findan*, *The Laxdæla Saga*, and the *Letter of Ibn Fadlan*. The latter two sources make open

<sup>75</sup> John Gillingham, “Women, Children and the Profits of War,” in *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford*, ed. Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds, and Susan M. Johns (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2012), 61–74.

admission that these women were being traded as sexual objects, although *The Laxdæla Saga* also describes Melkorka's domestic responsibilities, at least insofar as she was responsible for raising the child she bore for Hoskuld. Other sources indicate a preference for young men and boys. Both Adalhelm and Findan were likely young men at their times of capture, while Rimbert lauded Ansgar's virtuous efforts to purchase slave boys. These groups of slaves seem to have been marketable especially for domestic service, as seen in the case of Melkorka raising a household in *The Laxdæla Saga*, the boys Ansgar purchased for his support while on mission to Scandinavia, and the women and eunuchs described by Ibn Faḍlān. The singing slave girl redeemed by Rimbert also points to a demand for beautiful and talented slaves who could achieve high status as entertainers in the Islamic world.<sup>76</sup>

The agency of slaves can be discerned at multiple points. Although shackles appear in some western sources, they do not feature in Ibn Faḍlān's account. Fear of slave resistance or escape appears to have manifested itself instead in the use of geographic features such as islands to confine slaves in transit, while the captives' ignorance of their surroundings and their sense of isolation would have encouraged a sense of dependence on their captors. These narrative sources also attest several examples of slaves exerting individual agency against their captors. In the case of Adalhelm and Findan, as well as for Rimbert's redeemed captive, this involved prayers and efforts to escape. For Melkorka, it involved asserting her dignity, refusing

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<sup>76</sup> Matthew S. Gordon, "Preliminary Remarks on Slaves and Slave Labor in the Third/Ninth Century 'Abbāsīd Empire,'" in *Slaves and Households in the Near East*, ed. Laura Culbertson, Oriental Institute Seminars 7 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2011), 71–84; Hain, "The Slave Trade of European Women."

to speak to her captors until she had been discovered speaking to her son, and later teaching her son to bear himself not as the son of a slave but rather as the scion of kings. *The Life of Saint Ansgar* indicates that young slaves acquired by churchmen might excel in their studies and secure upward mobility, while the slave redeemed by Rimbert shows a nun profiting from her previously acquired knowledge. Even Ibn Faḍlān's imperious description preserves a trace of slave agency through the slave who volunteered to be buried with her master. During the funeral ritual, Ibn Faḍlān recorded her calling the dead man her *mawlā*, which might ambiguously mean patron or client, but in either case suggested that she was no longer seen as a mere object of possession.<sup>77</sup> Through her act of self-sacrifice, she escaped the horrors of her captivity and the unknown horrors that lay ahead, while for a short time she was accorded mastery over the boundaries between life and death.

Offsetting these patterns are the conditions described in texts from both before and after the Viking Age. The most famous writings on northern slavery prior to the Viking Age flowed from the pen of Patrick, who lived and wrote in the 400s.<sup>78</sup> In his *Confession*, Patrick described enslavement twice—once being taken from Britain and carried to Ireland, and once within Britain itself.<sup>79</sup> He also penned a

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<sup>77</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, 248, c. 84.

<sup>78</sup> The dating of Patrick's life remains uncertain, although scholars commonly assume a floruit after the withdrawal of the Roman state in 410 and ending before the conversion of Clovis traditionally dated to 496. David N. Dumville, *Saint Patrick, A.D. 493–1993* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993), 13–18; Roy Flechner, *Saint Patrick Retold: The Legend and History of Ireland's Patron Saint* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 33–36.

<sup>79</sup> Patrick, *Confessio*, in *Libri epistolarum Sancti Patricii episcopi*, ed. Ludwig Bieler, vol. 1, Royal Irish Academy Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources Ancillary Publications 4 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1993), 56–91, at 56–57, c. 1, 65–66, c. 16–17 (first captivity); 69–70, c. 21 (second captivity).

tantalizing *Letter*, lamenting the recent loss of Irish catechumens to slave raiders under a shadowy leader named Coroticus. Scholars long assumed that Coroticus was a British leader raiding slaves from Ireland, although David Dumville has argued for Irish origins instead.<sup>80</sup> In either case, the *Letter* attests that these slaves were being taken into captivity among the Picts, and Patrick bemoaned his inability to ransom these captives as did the Christians of Gaul, who could ransom their captives back from Franks and other pagans.<sup>81</sup> The *Letter* in particular shows that Patrick conceived of the slave trade as a collection of diverse regional phenomena rather than belonging to a single larger phenomenon like the routes of the Viking Age.

Small-scale slave traffic resumed after the Viking Age as well. In the *Life of Saint Wulfstan*, William of Malmesbury described a similar situation obtaining in England after the Norman Conquest of 1066. In a brief passage, William described Wulfstan confronting Bristol-based merchants who sold English slaves into Ireland. Although William employed emphatic language about the “wretched ranks of young men and women,” his complaints seem modest when compared to evidence for Viking-Age slavery.<sup>82</sup> William described the slave trade of England as constrained to

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<sup>80</sup> Dumville, *Saint Patrick, A.D. 493–1993*, 107–15. For a strong rejection of this thesis, see Flechner, *Saint Patrick Retold*.

<sup>81</sup> Patrick, *Epistola ad milites Corotici*, in *Libri epistolarum Sancti Patricii episcopi*, ed. Ludwig Bieler, vol. 1, Royal Irish Academy Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources Ancillary Publications 4 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1993), 92, c. 2, 97, c. 12 (Picts); 98, c. 14 (Franks): “Mittunt uiros sanctos idoneos ad Francos et ceteras gentes ... ad redimendos captiuos baptizatos.”

<sup>82</sup> William of Malmesbury, *The Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury, to Which Are Added the Extant Abridgments of This Work and The Miracles and Translation of St. Wulfstan*, ed. Reginald R. Darlington (London: Royal Historical Society, 1928), 43, II, c. 20: “Miserorum ordines, et utriusque sexus adolescentes.” The gendered violence of this passage—William describes the Bristol traders raping the slave girls and selling them pregnant—resonates with recurring themes throughout William’s work. Kirsten Fenton, regrettably, does not address this particular passage in her perceptive study of these issues and mentions slavery with regard only in passing. Kirsten A. Fenton, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the Works of William of Malmesbury*, Gender in the Middle Ages 4



a small group of merchants operating from a single base, and the demand for these slaves no longer drew captives in great distances across the north but rather on a single short leap across the Irish Sea. Indeed, Alice Rio has described Wulfstan's complaint as a belated death knell of the early medieval slave trade.<sup>83</sup>

### **Contexts: Non-Narrative Sources**

The narrative sources of the Viking-Age slave trade therefore yield a rich and coherent image of a human traffic linking slave raiders in the West through the slave traders of the Baltic to the slave markets of the Islamic East. While much of this textual evidence has languished in relative obscurity, researchers have developed an increasingly nuanced understanding of the material culture of slavery and of the slave trade along these routes. The eminent Danish archaeologist Klavs Randsborg once pessimistically asserted: "for prehistoric periods, the institution of slavery can only be studied in a rather unsatisfactory way."<sup>84</sup> Subsequent researchers have relished in this challenge to seek out the "invisible" slaves of the Viking Age.<sup>85</sup> Their work has

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(Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 93.

<sup>83</sup> Rio, *Slavery after Rome*, 33–34. David Pelteret, in contrast, has stressed continuities in this account with foregoing periods. David A.E. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England: From the Reign of Alfred until the Twelfth Century*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995), 77–78. I am more skeptical about William's claim that the practices described did, in fact, represent "ancient custom." William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, 43, II, c. 20: "Morem uetustissimum." Note also that, although Wulfstan here opposed the slave trade, he maintained properties that included 472 slaves. David Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain and Ireland, 800–1200*, The Northern World 45 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 30.

<sup>84</sup> Klavs Randsborg, "The Study of Slavery in Northern Europe: An Archaeological Approach," *Acta Archaeologica*, no. 55 (1984): 155–160, 155.

<sup>85</sup> Torun Zachrisson, "De osynliggjorda. Om trälrar i arkeologisk forskning," in *Trälrar. Ofria i agrarsamhället från vikingatid till medeltid*, ed. Thomas Lindkvist and Janken Myrdal, Skrifter om skogs- och lantbrukshistoria 17 (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2003), 88–102; Torun Zachrisson, "Trälrar fanns – att synliggöra ofria 550–1200 e. Kr. i Sverige," in *Att befolka det förflutna. Fem artiklar*

yielded non-narrative evidence that confirms the broad patterns found in the narrative accounts of the Viking-Age slave trade.

Studies to date have prioritized efforts to identify slaves in the landscape and in the material record. According to Peter Sawyer, the only Viking-Age runestone that mentions slavery is the Hørning runestone, which reads: “Tóki Smith raised the stone in memory of Þorgísl Guðmundr’s son, who gave him gold(?) and freedom.”<sup>86</sup> Stefan Brink has catalogued further examples where ambiguous inscriptions might also refer to slaves, suggesting the pervasive presence of slaves in Scandinavia as well as the ability of some slaves to forge relationships among the elite of the Viking Age.<sup>87</sup> The presence of slaves in Viking-Age Scandinavia also left traces in place names across the landscape. Perhaps the most famous example is Trelleborg, although it remains uncertain why several Danish ringforts should bear a name meaning “slave stronghold.”<sup>88</sup> Tore Iversen found numerous further place names linking Viking-Age

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*om hur vi kan synliggöra människan och hennes handlingar i arkeologiskt material. Från Nordic Tag mötet 2011 på Linnéuniversitet, Kalmar*, ed. Anne Carlie (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2014), 72–91.

<sup>86</sup> P. H. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe, A.D. 700–1100*, University Paperbacks (London: Methuen, 1982), 40; “Danske Runeindskrifter,” 2009, <http://runer.ku.dk/>. Transliteration: tuki : smiþr : riþ : stin : ift | þurkisl : kuþmutaR : sun : is : hanum | kaf : kul : uk : frialsi. In England, place names beginning with the element *Horning-* sometimes derive from Old English *hornung*, a term indicating that the land had been inherited by an illegitimate son (*hornungsumu*). The term sometimes indicated concubine parentage, and given the related Old Norse term *hornungr*, Tóki might have been a child recognized from a relationship with a concubine. Compare Margaret Clunies Ross, “Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Past and Present* 108 (1985): 3–34, at 16–18.

<sup>87</sup> Stefan Brink, “Slavery in the Viking Age,” in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 49–56, at 53–54; Brink, *Vikingarnas slavar*, 111–20. For further discussion of candidates from Sweden, see Joel Karlsson, “Ofria omnämnda på runstenar i det vikingatida Sverige” (Kandidatuppsats, Stockholm University, 2012).

<sup>88</sup> Gunnar Knudsen, “Navnet Trelleborg,” in *Trelleborg*, ed. Poul Nørlund, vol. 1, Nordiske Fortidsminder 4 (Copenhagen: National Museum, 1948), 189–214; Klavs Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark: The Formation of a State* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), 134; Anders Ödman, “The Trelleborg Constructors,” in *Small Things, Wide Horizons: Studies in Honour of Birgitta Hårdh*, ed. Lars Larsson et al. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015), 267–72.

slaves particularly to agriculture, such as Trælaker (=“slave field”) and Trælstad (=“slave farm”).<sup>89</sup> These studies point to linguistic markers of slavery used to separate persons of slave status from the rest of society. Alice Rio, following the work of Joseph C. Miller, has classified similar behavior as contributing to strategies of domination and enslavement.<sup>90</sup>

Alongside these linguistic traces of enslavement, material markers also exist. Shackles and collars, which evoke the harsh realities of enslavement in other times and places, have captured particular attention. The Inchmarnock hostage stone, a broken piece of slate likely inscribed by a monastic youth in the Firth of Clyde around the year 800, preserves the images of a shackled captive being led to a boat by a wild-haired warrior clad in mail.<sup>91</sup> Actual shackles excavated from across premodern Europe have been catalogued by Joachim Henning. He identified an early Viking-Age proliferation of shackling that occurred beyond the Frankish frontiers, at sites such as Scandinavian ringforts, Slavic hill forts, and artificial islands in Ireland known as crannogs.<sup>92</sup> Marek Jankowiak has expanded Henning’s ideas to suggest a

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<sup>89</sup> Iversen, *Trelldommen*, 82–85, 130–31, 136–41. For more recent discussion involving a broader linguistic and geographic scope, see Brink, *Vikingarnas slavar*, 183–90.

<sup>90</sup> Rio, *Slavery after Rome*, 10–16. Compare Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, 164: “The categorization of some people as slaves may tell us more about the labelers than about the labeled.”

<sup>91</sup> Christopher Lowe, “Image and Imagination: The Inchmarnock ‘Hostage Stone,’” in *West over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement before 1300*, *The Northern World* 31 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 53–67; Christopher Lowe, *Inchmarnock: An Early Historic Island Monastery and Its Archaeological Landscape* (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2008), 151–56.

<sup>92</sup> Joachim Henning, “Strong Rulers – Weak Economy? Rome, the Carolingians and the Archaeology of Slavery in the First Millennium AD,” in *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Jennifer R. Davis and Michael McCormick (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 33–53. See also Joachim Henning, “Gefangenenfesseln im slawischen Siedlungsraum und der europäische Sklavenhandel im 6. bis 12. Jahrhundert. Archäologisches zum Bedeutungswandel von „sklābos-sakālība-sclavus,” *Germania* 70 (1992): 403–26; Joachim Henning, “Slavery or Freedom? The

link between the slave trade and enclosed sites throughout Central and Eastern Europe, while Janel Fontaine has cautioned that many known sites of the slave trade—including medieval Dublin and Prague, as well as later African centers for the Atlantic slave trade—rarely yield shackles as evidence for the presence of slaves.<sup>93</sup> The hill forts perhaps used to corral slaves in the east have their counterpart in the souterrains reportedly used to escape slave raiders in the west.<sup>94</sup>

A slave diaspora has also been investigated through human remains. Isotopic evidence from burials in Iceland indicates that males of primarily Scandinavian origin immigrated together with many females raised in the areas of modern Ireland.<sup>95</sup> In light of textual evidence, such as *The Laxdæla Saga* and the *Landnámabók*, these women from Ireland are generally considered to have arrived as slaves.<sup>96</sup> In

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Causes of Early Medieval Europe's Economic Advancement," *Early Medieval Europe* 12, no. 3 (2003): 269–77. See also Hugh Thompson, "Iron Age and Roman Slave-Shackles," *Archaeological Journal* 150 (1993): 57–168.

<sup>93</sup> Fontaine, "Early Medieval Slave-Trading," 473–78.

<sup>94</sup> A. T. Lucas, "Souterrains: The Literary Evidence," *Béaloideas* 39–41 (1973): 165–91; Mark Clinton, *The Souterrains of Ireland* (Bray: Wordwell, 2001); Iestyn Jones, "Ulster's Early Medieval Houses," *Medieval Archaeology* 57, no. 1 (2013): 212–22.

<sup>95</sup> Agnar Helgason et al., "Estimating Scandinavian and Gaelic Ancestry in the Male Settlers of Iceland," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 67, no. 3 (September 2000): 697–717; Agnar Helgason et al., "Sequences From First Settlers Reveal Rapid Evolution in Icelandic MtDNA Pool," *PLoS Genetics* 5, no. 1 (January 2009): 1–10; Janet Montgomery et al., "Finding Vikings with Isotope Analysis: The View from Wet and Windy Islands," *Journal of the North Atlantic* 7 (2014): 54–70. Note that these findings diverge from earlier studies that used modern genetic surveys as a proxy for tracing the movements of medieval populations. S. Sunna Ebenesersdóttir et al., "Ancient Genomes from Iceland Reveal the Making of a Human Population," *Science* 360, no. 6392 (2018): 1028–32, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aar2625>.

<sup>96</sup> William Sayers, "Management of the Celtic Fact in Landnámabók," *Scandinavian Studies* 66, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 129–53; Jónas Kristjánsson, "Ireland and the Irish in Icelandic Tradition," in *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, ed. Howard B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, and Ragnall Ó Floinn (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 259–76. Note, however, that despite evidence for the rapid settlement of Iceland, strontium analyses indicate that immigration continued into the tenth century. Orri Vésteinsson and Hildur Gestsdóttir, "The Colonization of Iceland in Light of Isotope Analyses," *Journal of the North Atlantic* 7 (2014): 137–45.

Scandinavia, occasional finds of multiple burials have long been interpreted as evidence that some members of the community, presumably slaves, were sacrificed as grave goods for their masters.<sup>97</sup> Flakstad in Norway offers the only example to date where the sacrificed victims have been confirmed as both immigrants and social outsiders. DNA and isotopic data combine to demonstrate that migrants to this remote community risked being beheaded and buried with members of the community who ate a richer land-grown diet—including staples such as grain, ale, dairy, or meat—which must have been difficult to acquire on this far northern island.<sup>98</sup>

Finally, a small number of pioneering studies have explored slavery by interrogating the social traces left behind by slave populations. Mats Roslund, for example, has made a compelling argument that a tenth-century convergence of pottery styles around the Baltic marked a period when women who produced these workaday pots were being trafficked across the Baltic to perform domestic work in Sweden.<sup>99</sup> Svante Norr has argued that long houses in Scandinavia appear were built

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<sup>97</sup> Anton Seiler, “I guldsmedens tjänst. Spår av träldomen i gravmaterialet från östra Mellansverige under yngre järnålder,” in *Trälar. Ofria i agrarsamhället från vikingatid till medeltid*, ed. Thomas Lindkvist and Janken Myrdal, *Skrifter om skogs- och lantbrukshistoria* 17 (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2003), 77–87; Zachrisson, “De osynliggjorda. Om trälar i arkeologisk forskning”; Zachrisson, “Trälar fanns – att synliggöra ofria 550–1200 e. Kr. i Sverige.” However, even in cases like the double burial at Gerdrup in Denmark, where one of the grave occupants was apparently bound and killed in order to be buried with a woman armed with a spear, questions remain whether we should consider these individuals as slaves or whether they might have been something else entirely. Ole Thirup Kastholm, “Spydkvinden og den myrdede. Gerdrupgraven 35 år efter,” in *ROMU 2015 – Årsskrift fra Roskilde Museum*, ed. Tom Christensen (Roskilde: ROMUs Forlag, 2016), 62–85.

<sup>98</sup> Elise Naumann et al., “Slaves as Burial Gifts in Viking Age Norway? Evidence from Stable Isotope and Ancient DNA Analyses,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 41 (2014): 533–40.

<sup>99</sup> Mats Roslund, *Guests in the House: Cultural Transmission between Slavs and Scandinavians 900 to 1300 AD*, trans. Alan Crozier, *The Northern World* 33 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

to accommodate such slaves within the household.<sup>100</sup> An exceptional find of human bones in the burned remains of a pre-Roman byre suggests that some slaves slept at one end of the hall among the household's animals.<sup>101</sup> Others slaves might have slept around long houses in unheated and poorly provisioned outbuildings that functioned as slave quarters.<sup>102</sup> Slaves like Melkorka were also established in dependent households, which Dagfinn Skre has tentatively identified with farms that lack associated burials.<sup>103</sup> Regarding the larger patterns in the landscape, Mats Widgren and Janken Myrdal have individually examined agricultural work and resource extraction, particularly on small dependent farmsteads, as labor which relied on and may therefore be seen as a trace of slavery.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Svante Norr, "A Place for Proletarians? A Contextual Hypothesis on Social Space in Roman and Migration Period Long Houses," *Current Swedish Archaeology* 4 (1996): 157–64.

<sup>101</sup> Jens N. Nielsen, "The Burnt Remains of a House from the Pre-Roman Iron Age," in *Iron Age Houses in Flames: Testing House Reconstructions at Lejre*, ed. Marianne Rasmussen, trans. Anne Bloch Jørgensen and David Robinson, vol. 3, Studies in Technology and Culture (Lejre: Historical-Archaeological Experimental Centre, 2007), 16–31. Textual evidence suggests that household members continued to sleep among or above animals in the byre throughout the Viking Age. Lena Edblom, *Långhus i Gene. Teori och praktik i rekonstruktion*, Studia Archaeologica Universitatis Umensis 18 (Umeå: Umeå University, 2004), 140–41; cited in Anna Severine Beck et al., "Reconstruction – And Then What? Climatic Experiments in Reconstructed Iron Age Houses during Winter," in *Iron Age Houses in Flames: Testing House Reconstructions at Lejre*, ed. Marianne Rasmussen, trans. Anne Bloch Jørgensen and David Robinson, vol. 3, Studies in Technology and Culture (Lejre: Historical-Archaeological Experimental Centre, 2007), 134–73, at 168.

<sup>102</sup> Susanna Eklund, "Trälrar fanns de? Om de underlydande vid storgården i Sylta," in *Hem till Jarlabanke. Jord, makt och evigt liv i östra Mälardalen under järnålder och medeltid*, ed. Michael Olausson (Lund: Historiska Media, 2008), 217–34, at 230.

<sup>103</sup> Dagfinn Skre, "The Role of Slavery in Agrarian Production in Norway, 200–1100 AD," in *Slavery Across Time and Space: Studies in Slavery in Medieval Europe and Africa*, ed. Per Hernæs and Tore Iversen, Trondheim Studies in History 38 (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2002), 147–58, at 156.

<sup>104</sup> Mats Widgren, "Trälrar, landbor och hövdingar under järnåldern – vad säger fältmaterialet?," in *Trälrar. Ofria i agrarsamhället från vikingatid till medeltid*, ed. Thomas Lindkvist and Janken Myrdal, Skrifter om skogs- och lantbrukshistoria 17 (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2003), 118–24; Janken Myrdal, "Mjölka och mala, gräva och valla. Aspekter på trälars jordbruksarbete cirka år 1000–1300," in *Trälrar. Ofria i agrarsamhället från vikingatid till medeltid*, ed. Thomas Lindkvist and Janken Myrdal, Skrifter om skogs- och lantbrukshistoria 17 (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag,

## Conclusion

This chapter has established that a substantial written record survives from the Viking-Age slave trade. Although these sources seem scattered, their strength lies in providing independent but overlapping testimony to the florescence of an eastward-moving slave trade over the course of the early Viking Age. Contextual evidence drawn from place names, human remains, and material culture demonstrates that these sources are not merely anecdotal but rather exemplify patterns, witnessed as enslavement, migration, and exploitation in the material remains of the Viking Age. This study points particularly to the relative richness of Viking-Age narrative accounts, but it also points to their yawning silences on the dynamics of the Viking-Age slave trade, in the development of its intensity and flow. The following chapters will explore this intensity and flow through various types of evidence, both textual and material. Although these chapters will move further and further from the narrative sources of the Viking-Age slave trade, they will demonstrate that its ripples were felt further and further afield.

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2003), 125–32.

## Chapter Two

### CAPTIVES IN WESTERN ARCHIVES AND ANNALS

The previous chapter presented narrative evidence for the Viking-Age slave trade, which took captives from the west, trafficked them across the north, and sold them into the east. Despite this evidence, slaves remain peripheral to Viking-Age research. In an influential article on the slave trade of Dublin, Poul Holm characterized slave raiding as a marginal aspect of viking activity,<sup>1</sup> while the eminent slave scholar Joseph C. Miller has described Viking-Age slave raiding as the actions of marginal warlords exploiting still more marginal groups.<sup>2</sup> As a result of these and similar assessments, slaves feature rarely in studies of the Viking Age.<sup>3</sup> Recent surveys

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<sup>1</sup> Holm's argument on the political nature of slave raiding depended upon the assertion that slave raiding became prominent only after Norse raiders had installed themselves as kings. Poul Holm, "The Slave Trade of Dublin, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries," *Peritia* 5 (1986): 317–45, "marginal" at 318. Although not widely cited, important parallel arguments had been earlier made by Claus Krag, "Treller og trellehold," [*Norsk*] *Historisk tidsskrift* 61 (1982): 209–27.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph C. Miller, "The Historical Contexts of Slavery in Europe," in *Slavery Across Time and Space: Studies in Slavery in Medieval Europe and Africa*, ed. Per Hernæs and Tore Iversen, Trondheim Studies in History 38 (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2002), 1–57, at 34: "On the northern margins of the process of commercial integration, [Vikings] could participate in it only by violence directed against still more marginal agricultural populations."

<sup>3</sup> James Barrett, for example, has described "monastic treasuries" as the target of the first viking raiders. James Barrett, "Rounding Up the Usual Suspects: Causation and the Viking Age Diaspora," in *The Global Origins and Development of Seafaring*, ed. Atholl Anderson, James H. Barrett, and Katherine V. Boyle (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2010), 289–302, at 293. The significant exceptions to this perspective are Michael McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Michael McCormick, "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy," *Past and Present* 177 (2002): 17–54. See, most recently, Ben Raffield, "The Slave Markets of the Viking World: Comparative Perspectives on an 'Invisible Archaeology,'" *Slavery and Abolition*, 2019, 1–24. Regarding a reluctance among British scholars to investigate medieval slavery, David Wyatt diagnosis an antipathy toward the subject that arose alongside the modern British abolition movement. David Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain and Ireland*,



segregate slaves into summary sections or more frequently deal with them only in passing.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, slaves play a central role in the making of the Viking Age. I argue that slave raiding was a definitive feature of early viking violence, and that reports of slave raiding aligned with periods of increased viking activity. This argument poses a technical challenge. Despite recent studies identifying slave raiding as a common feature of early medieval war,<sup>5</sup> no medieval source makes explicit connections between slave raiding and the broader contexts of viking phenomena.<sup>6</sup> I

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800–1200, *The Northern World* 45 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1–60.

<sup>4</sup> The best-known discussion of Viking-Age slavery for non-specialists remains Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, trans. Susan M. Margeson and Kirsten Williams, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1998), 53–55. In a more recent compendium, Stefan Brink’s article on slavery spans eight pages, and slaves appear intermittently as well, most notably in James Montgomery’s article on Arabic sources. Stefan Brink and Neil Price, eds., *The Viking World* (London: Routledge, 2008), 49–56 (Brink), 555–558 (Montgomery). Regarding subsequent work, slaves have achieved occasional mention but no sustained discussion. Marianne Hem Eriksen et al., eds., *Viking Worlds: Things, Spaces and Movement* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2014), 49, 91, 152, 154; James H. Barrett and Sarah Jane Gibbon, eds., *Maritime Societies of the Viking and Medieval World* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2015), 6, 66, 79, 81, 114, 255; Zanette T. Glørstad and Kjetil Loftsgarden, *Viking Age Transformations: Trade, Craft and Resources in Western Scandinavia, Culture, Environment and Adaptation in the North* (London: Routledge, 2017), 101.

<sup>5</sup> David Wyatt, “Slavery,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, ed. Clifford J. Rogers, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 274–75; John Gillingham, “Christian Warriors and the Enslavement of Fellow Christians,” in *Chevalerie et christianisme aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, ed. Martin Aurell and Catalina Girbea (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2011), 237–56; John Gillingham, “Women, Children and the Profits of War,” in *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford*, ed. Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds, and Susan M. Johns (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2012), 61–74.

<sup>6</sup> I borrow this term from Neil Price and his collaborators as used in their large ongoing research project of the same name. Price has recently defined the viking phenomenon in terms of social process, which adequately represents most of the changes typically associated with the Viking Age. This sense obviates the need to imagine “Vikings” as belonging to a culturally coherent group or having a shared identity, directing attention instead to the activities and behaviors that defined them as “vikings,” or sea raiders, in the eyes of their early medieval contemporaries. Neil Price, “Viking Phenomena: Current Archaeologies of the Early Medieval Scandinavians,” *The Archaeological Record* 18, no. 3 (May 2018): 10–14. This paper and others in the same issue outline the early stages of the project, as previously presented to the Society for American Archaeology. Neil Price et al., “Symposium: The Viking Phenomenon” (82nd Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Vancouver, 2017). For a study challenging the notion of a coherent “Viking” culture from the standpoint of Scandinavian archaeology, see Fredrik Svanberg, *Decolonizing the Viking Age 2: Death Rituals in South-East Scandinavia, AD 800–1000*, *Acta Archaeologica Lundensia*, Ser. in 4° 24

argue instead that links between slave raiding and early viking violence are embedded throughout the annals and archives of Western Europe. This argument depends on the accumulated evidence of Irish, Frankish, and Anglo-Saxon sources that document the rise of viking activity between the 780s and the early 900s.

My approach follows the work of Emer Purcell, who tallied entries from four Irish annals to chart the rise and fall of viking activity in the ninth century.<sup>7</sup> I broaden this survey to include sources not only for Ireland but also for England and Francia, while narrowing in on evidence for captive taking in particular. As a foundation for this study, I explore Alcuin's letters for attitudes that informed how and when viking captives were reported. I then examine each region separately, beginning with a reassessment of the annals of Ireland, followed by an exploration of the annals and archives of Francia, and concluding with discussion of the more oblique evidence for England. For each region, I examine the sources for quantitative evidence of viking raiding and qualitative evidence of captive taking. I then gather this evidence into a consolidated view of viking activity through the year 900. The close correspondence between reports of viking captive taking and overall trends in viking violence indicates that slave raiding was seen as a central feature of viking activity by those

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(Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2003). For a study exploring the extent to which vikings were seen as "other," see Janet L. Nelson, "England and the Continent in the Ninth Century: II, the Vikings and Others," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 13 (2003): 1–28.

<sup>7</sup> Emer Purcell, "Ninth-Century Viking Entries in the Irish Annals: 'No Forty Years' Rest'," in *The Viking Age: Ireland and the West: Papers from the Proceedings of the Fifteenth Viking Congress, Cork, 18–27 August 2005*, ed. John Sheehan and Donnchadh Ó Corráin (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 322–37. See also Colmán Etchingham, *Viking Raids on Irish Church Settlements in the Ninth Century*, Maynooth Monographs Series, Minor 1 (Maynooth: St Patrick's College Maynooth, 1996). Other efforts to chart viking violence have typically relied on archaeological evidence. See, for example, Klavs Randsborg, "Les activités internationales des Vikings: raids ou commerce?," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 36, no. 5 (1981): 862–68, at 863.

who first recorded it, and that scholars should offer viking captives similar attention today.

### Early Viking-Age Captives in the Letters of Alcuin

Although later sources commemorated viking raids as early as the 780s,<sup>8</sup> some of the earliest written traces flowed from the pen of Alcuin (d. 804). This scholarly expatriate dispatched a flurry of letters between 793 and 799, offering assurances to contacts in England then plagued by viking violence.<sup>9</sup> Alcuin's letters provide a window into the milieux that documented early viking raids, revealing what contemporary writers were likely to record and what they were willing to elide. His letters establish both the centrality of captive taking to early viking violence and a simultaneous reluctance to discuss it.

At least twelve letters survive documenting Alcuin's reactions to viking raids on England. The earliest of these was likely dispatched to Abbot Higbald and the Lindisfarne community in the immediate aftermath of the viking raid in 793. Alcuin began this letter by recalling the events that had provoked his attention:

The calamity of your tribulation saddens me much daily, since pagans  
have polluted the sanctuaries of God and poured the blood of saints

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<sup>8</sup> Clare Downham, "The Earliest Viking Activity in England?," *English Historical Review* 132, no. 554 (February 2017): 1–12. Other early evidence from Anglo-Saxon charters and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle will be discussed further below. On early reports of viking activity in Ireland, see Emer Purcell, "The First Generation in Ireland, 795–812: Viking Raids and Viking Bases?," in *The Vikings in Ireland and Beyond: Before and After the Battle of Clontarf*, ed. Howard B. Clarke and Ruth Johnson (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015), 41–54.

<sup>9</sup> Alcuin's letters are cited from the edition of Alcuin, *Epistolae*, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Epp. 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 1–481. A large selection is available in translation by Stephen Allott, *Alcuin of York, c. A.D. 732 to 804 – His Life and Letters* (York: William Sessions, 1974). The relevant letters are nos. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 101, 108, 124, 129, 130 (= Allott nos. 12, 48, 13, 29, 26, 27, 28, 41, 16, 160, 50, [None]).

around the altar, they have laid waste the house of our hope, and they have trampled the bodies of saints in the temple of God as if they were manure in the street.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the grimness of this image, Alcuin was less interested in the physical effects of the raid than in its psychological impacts. He abruptly transitioned: “What courage is there for the churches of Britain if holy Cuthbert with so many saints did not defend his own?”<sup>11</sup>

This question continued to consume him, as he confessed in 797 in a letter to an unnamed archbishop, likely Æthelheard of Canterbury (792–805): “I fear the pagans on account of our sins. ... This chastisement is also an admonition that we might fear God and better adhere to his precepts.”<sup>12</sup> Alcuin’s interpretation of these events as an admonition from God empowered churchmen who might otherwise have seemed defenseless in the face of viking raids. He advised them not to take up arms but to promote monastic discipline and moral rectitude as appropriate tools for response.<sup>13</sup> The significance of viking raids, from this perspective, was not to be found in what had happened but rather in why it had happened, which Alcuin

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<sup>10</sup> Alcuin, *Epistolae*, 57, no. 20 [= Allott no. 26]: “Sed versa vice vestrae tribulationis calamitas licet absentem multum me cotidie contristat, quando pagani contaminaverunt sanctuaria Dei et fuderunt sanguinem sanctorum in circuitu altaris, vastaverunt domum spei nostre, calcaverunt corpora sanctorum in templo Dei quasi sterquilinum in platea.”

<sup>11</sup> Alcuin, 57, no. 20 [= Allott no. 26]: “Quae est fiducia aeclesiis Britanniae, si sanctus Cudberhtus cum tanto sanctorum numero suam non defendit?”

<sup>12</sup> Alcuin, 193, no. 130 [not translated by Allott]: “Timeo paganos propter peccata nostra, qui antecedentibus non temptaverunt temporibus mare nostrum navigare et maritima patrie nostre devastare. Castigatio quaedam est vel ammonitio, ut timeamus Deum illiusque melius inhaeamus praeceptis.”

<sup>13</sup> Alcuin, 54, no. 19 [= Allott no. 29]: “Cogitate quem habeatis defensorem contra paganos, qui apparuerunt circa terminos maritimae habitationis. Nolite in armis spem ponere, sed in Deo, qui numquam deserit sperantes in se.”

interpreted as a corrective for both ecclesiastical and secular practices.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, Alcuin's initial letter to Abbot Highbald did acknowledge the anguish that survivors felt at having captives taken from their midst. Alcuin closed his letter by assuring the Lindisfarne community that he would raise their concerns to Charlemagne as soon as his campaigning season was over:

When our lord king Charles, having subdued his enemies through the mercy of God, has returned home, we—God willing—will arrange for ourselves to come to him. And then if we can do anything, either about the boys who have been abducted by the pagans into captivity, or about other things which we can offer to your sanctity for your necessities, we will take diligent care to procure a result.<sup>15</sup>

Based on this passage, Janet Nelson has argued that Alcuin believed Charlemagne had contacts with the raiders responsible for the Lindisfarne attack, or at least with individuals who could sway them.<sup>16</sup> Either alternative would suggest that the elites of Francia and England already possessed a general understanding of Norse involvement in the slave trade.<sup>17</sup> Yet no further account survives of Alcuin's conversation with Charlemagne. The boys of Lindisfarne had likely already been trafficked beyond the

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<sup>14</sup> The guilts Alcuin adduced in his letters range from foxhunting to fornication. Alcuin, 55, nos. 19 (coursing hares) [= Allott no. 29], 43-44 (nuns and greed) [= Allott no. 12].

<sup>15</sup> Alcuin, 58, no. 20 [= Allott no. 26]: "Cum domnus noster rex Karolus, hostibus per Dei misericordiam subditis, domum revertetur, nos Deo iuvante ad eum venire disponimus. Et si quid tunc vel de pueris, qui in captivitatem a paganis abducti sunt, vel de aliis quibusque necessitatibus vestris vestre sanctitati proficere possumus, diligenter ad affectum perducere curabimus."

<sup>16</sup> Janet L. Nelson, "Britain, Ireland, and Europe, c.750–c.900," in *A Companion to the Early Middle Ages: Britain and Ireland, c.500–c.1100*, ed. Pauline Stafford, Blackwell Companions to British History (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 231–47, at 234.

<sup>17</sup> If *The Life of Saint Findan* is to be trusted, Irish elites also understood the viking export of slaves as a "customary" activity. Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH SS, 15,1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1887), 502–6, at 503–4, prol. (3): "Iuxta morem ergo suum dominus eius Nordmannus ... hunc secum cum aliis in captivitatem duxit." This account describes events in the 840s and was written in the 880s by an Irish companion of the saint. For further discussion, see Chapter One.

reach of this well-connected churchman and his powerful patron.

Perhaps recognizing the futility of redemption efforts, Alcuin surfaced the issue of captives just this once among his twelve surviving letters dealing with viking raids in England. Further handwringing would only embarrass the powers that be. Instead, Alcuin crafted these confidence-shattering moments into opportunities for potentates and churchmen to legitimize their roles as the spiritual leaders of their communities. Captives fit poorly into such a scheme. Their loss was lamentable but not at all surprising given the broader contours of medieval warfare.<sup>18</sup> Alcuin's anxieties arose not from the forms of violence practiced by vikings but rather from their targets—church communities and the established centers of spiritual and temporal power. As Alcuin saw it, viking attacks on these institutions merited documentation insofar as they served as a catalyst for spiritual renewal. If these letters are considered representative of Alcuin's wider milieu, then the taking of captives was a central but underreported feature of viking violence.

### **Viking Activity in Irish Annals**

England might have endured the first viking raids, but early reports survive primarily from Ireland. These sources describe some of the earliest viking activities, Holm's influential view of these sources demands reconsideration, and Purcell's previous

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<sup>18</sup> David Wyatt has described slave raiding as “fundamental” to institutions of power in Britain and Ireland throughout this period. Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors*, 52–53. John Gillingham sees this as an aspect of warfare that continued to be accepted throughout Western Europe into the 1100s. Gillingham, “Christian Warriors and the Enslavement of Fellow Christians”; Gillingham, “Women, Children and the Profits of War.” On captive taking as an aspect of Carolingian warfare, see Chapter Three.

study provides one path forward. In her study, Purcell focused especially on the *Annals of Ulster (AU)*, the *Annals of Inisfallen (AI)*, the *Chronicum Scotorum (CS)*, and the *Annals of the Four Masters (AFM)*.<sup>19</sup> She chose these texts for encompassing the diversity of traditions preserved in later Ireland. For present purposes, the common traditions behind these texts provide a basis for exploring perspectives close to the events themselves.

This common stock preserves traces of a text that no longer survives, the so-called *Chronicle of Ireland (CI)*.<sup>20</sup> Although no manuscripts survive for the *Chronicle of Ireland*, its text has been reconstructed from daughter texts and subsequently investigated for details regarding its composition and dissemination (Figure 2.1).<sup>21</sup> The *Chronicle of Ireland* originated at Iona off the western coast of Scotland sometime after the Irish missionary Columba established a monastery there in the mid-500s. In 740, the working manuscript was brought to a church in Brega north of what is now Dublin. Successive hands continued the manuscript as a contemporary record

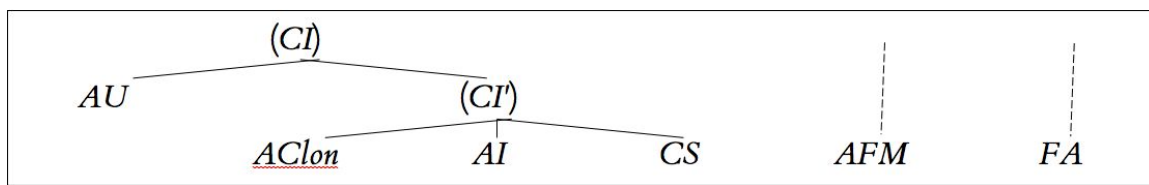
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<sup>19</sup> Purcell, “Ninth-Century Viking Entries,” 322.

<sup>20</sup> Kathleen Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972); A. P. Smyth, “The Earliest Irish Annals: Their First Contemporary Entries, and the Earliest Centres of Recording,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 72 (1972): 1–48; Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *The Medieval Irish Annals*, Medieval Irish History Series 3 (Dublin: Dublin Historical Association, 1975); Kathryn Grabowski and David Dumville, *Chronicles and Annals of Mediaeval Ireland and Wales: The Clonmacnoise-Group Texts*, Studies in Celtic History 4 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1984); Daniel Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals: Their Genesis, Evolution, and History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008); Nicholas Evans, *The Present and the Past in Medieval Irish Chronicles* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010); Roy Flechner, “The Chronicle of Ireland: Then and Now,” *Early Medieval Europe* 21, no. 4 (November 2013): 422–54.

<sup>21</sup> T. M. Charles-Edwards, trans., *The Chronicle of Ireland 1: Introduction, Text [= CI]*, Translated Texts for Historians 44 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006). The daughter texts of the *Chronicle of Ireland* survive in a diverse mix of Latin, Irish, and early modern English. Charles-Edwards opted to reconcile these into an accessible English edition rather than proposing what would necessarily have been a highly tendentious reconstruction of the original source language.

through the year 911, perhaps then being gathered with a few similar accounts. At that date, two daughter texts began to circulate. One was continued at Armagh and is preserved in two copies as the *Annals of Ulster*. The other gave birth to a diverse group of annals best represented by the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* (*AClon*), but also branching into such texts as the *Annals of Inisfallen* and the *Chronicum Scotorum*. Other annals, most notably the *Annals of the Four Masters*—a problematic text compiled in the 1600s from now-lost originals—and the aptly named *Fragmentary Annals* (*FA*), provide limited sources of independent testimony on the early Viking Age.



**Figure 2.1. Simplified Relationships of the Major Irish Annals**

Purcell enumerated evidence from her annals and bucketed it into five-year groups to tabulate changing attention to viking affairs.<sup>22</sup> I similarly began by counting viking entries in the *Chronicle of Ireland*—often short and sometimes obscure reports but occasionally more elaborate accounts—taking special note of instances of captive taking (Table 2.1). Among the 1,047 chronicle entries between the first notice of viking activity in 794 and the end of the chronicle in 911, I identified 167 reports of viking activity. Captives appear in 27 of these reports, while a further 82 entries describe viking raids in terms commonly associated with captive taking, and 20 entries describe situations in which captive taking was possible but not

<sup>22</sup> Compare also Etchingam, *Viking Raids on Irish Church Settlements*.



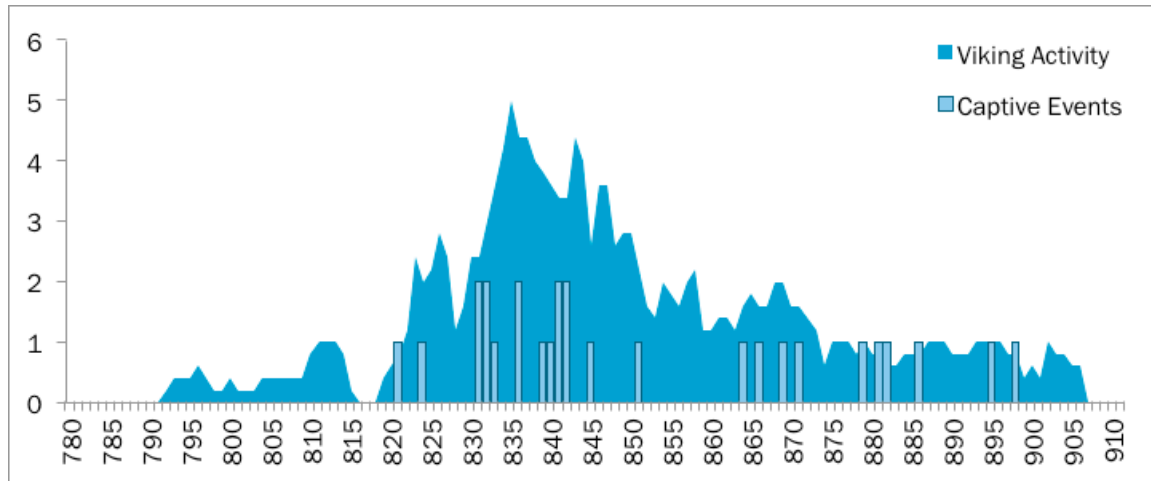
necessarily likely. Only 38 of the viking entries describe situations such as losses in battle which I deemed unlikely opportunities for captive taking.

Category	Total Count	Percent of All Viking Entries	Percent of All Period Entries
Explicit references <i>groups taken captive, hostage, or prisoner, 16</i> <i>individuals taken captive or prisoner, 11</i>	27	16.2	2.6
Likely references <i>harry, plunder, sack, etc. ...</i> <i>- a people, group, or region, 63</i> <i>- a named individual victim, 19</i>	82	49.1	7.8
Possible references <i>battles won, 14</i> <i>battles without a specified victor, 2</i> <i>viking movements and locations, 4</i>	20	12.0	1.9
Unlikely references <i>battles lost, 33</i> <i>leaders killed, 3</i> <i>viking infighting, 2</i>	38	22.8	3.6
Total	167	100.0	15.9

**Table 2.1. Viking captives in the *Chronicle of Ireland*, 794–911**

The annalists who wrote the *Chronicle of Ireland* complained about viking raids that might have produced captives almost every year, and every four or five years they expressly mentioned the capture of a particular group or individual. These frequent reports cast viking slave raiding as a significant recurring activity throughout the *Chronicle of Ireland*. If Irish annalists, like Alcuin before them, recorded captive taking less than one tenth of the time, then the *Chronicle of Ireland* preserves just surface traces of much deeper slave raiding activity (Chart 2.1). Note that in this and subsequent charts, overall viking activity has been smoothed by using a five-year rolling average to highlight trends that transcend year-to-year variations,

while notices of captive taking are presented as a simple count of events in each given year, regardless of the numbers of captives taken, which are rarely specified and must always be treated with caution.



**Chart 2.1. Viking Activity in the *Chronicle of Ireland***

Captives appear at key moments in the *Chronicle of Ireland*. Although no reference to captive taking occurs during the first phase of viking activity between 794 and 813, the entries for these years are terse—typically summary notices of burnings or slaughters. These terms nonetheless might gloss instances of captive taking.<sup>23</sup> *The Life of Saint Findan*, for example, describes an attack in which the saint took refuge indoors, and it describes a raiding party using fire to burn the inhabitants out. The men who came out fighting were killed, but the *Life* makes no mention about the fates of any others, while describing participation in the slave trade as a common custom for viking raiders.<sup>24</sup> These details combine to suggest that

<sup>23</sup> David Dumville has suggested that viking raiders forced Irish chroniclers to grapple with recording unprecedented events, leading to a shift toward the use of Irish, with begins in earnest around 810. D. N. Dumville, “Latin and Irish in the Annals of Ulster, A.D. 431–1050,” in *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick, and D. N. Dumville (Cambridge, 1982), 320–41, at 327–28, 336–37.

<sup>24</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, 503–4, prol. (2–3). For translation, see Reidar Thorolf

Viking-Age readers of the *Chronicle of Ireland* would have understood these early reports as implicit records of moments when viking raiders might have gathered captives.

More explicitly, the annalists of Ireland described captive taking as initiating the first major intensifications of viking violence in the 820s. For the year 821, the *Chronicle* records: “The plundering of Étar [Beinn Étair, Co. Dublin] by *gennti* [pagans]; from there they carried off a great number of women.”<sup>25</sup> In a subsequent raid of 824, vikings raided the monastery of Skellig Michael off the southwest coast of Ireland, and the superior there died in captivity.<sup>26</sup> This Étgál of Scelec was the first of at least eleven prominent churchmen seized by vikings, and less auspiciously, the first of at least four to die among vikings.<sup>27</sup> As *The Life of Saint Findan* indicates, even captives who might reasonably have hoped for redemption were sometimes held in conditions of hunger and thirst, and Adalhelm’s account of captivity in northern Francia indicates physical abuses as well.<sup>28</sup>

Slave raiding appears even more prominently during the peak period of

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Christiansen, “The People of the North,” *Lochlann: A Review of Celtic Studies* 2 (1962): 137–64. For further examination of this text, see Chapter One. For further arguments regarding the burning of churches and the taking of viking captives, see Simon Coupland, “Holy Ground? The Plundering and Burning of Churches by Vikings and Franks in the Ninth Century,” *Viator* 45, no. 1 (2014): 73–97.

<sup>25</sup> Charles-Edwards, *CI*, 279, s.a. 821.3.

<sup>26</sup> Charles-Edwards, 282, s.a. 824.10.

<sup>27</sup> Gwendolyn Sheldon, “The Conversion of the Vikings in Ireland from a Comparative Perspective” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 2011), 159.

<sup>28</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, 503–4, prol. (2–3); Adalhelm of Séez, “*Liber miraculorum*,” ed. Godfrey Henschen, Daniel Papebroch, and Jean Baptiste Carnandet, 2nd ed., *Acta Sanctorum*, Aprilis 3 (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1866), 68–71, at 68, c. 2. For further instances of viking raiders harming individuals, see Simon Coupland, “The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History,” *History* 88, no. 290 (April 2003): 190–91.

viking raiding that followed from 831 to 845. In an independent entry not taken from the *Chronicle of Ireland*, the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* began this period a year earlier in 830:

As many women as they could Lay hands on, noble or ignoble, young or ould, married or unmarried, whatsoever birth or adge they were of, were by them abused most beastly, and filthily, and such of them as they liked best, were by them sent over seas into their one countryes there to be kept by them to use their unlawfull lusts.<sup>29</sup>

The *Chronicle of Ireland* likewise indicates captive taking among the inaugural events of this period. In the first of two such entries dated to 831, the *Chronicle of Ireland* reports that the king of the Conailli was seized with his brother and taken to the ships.<sup>30</sup> As Findan likewise reported for his own captivity, vikings were liable to traffic even elite captives for sale outside of Ireland rather than holding them there for ransom.<sup>31</sup> Similar phrases indicating that captives were taken to ships occur two further times in the *Chronicle of Ireland*—once in 833 and again in 845—indicating that throughout this peak period, the taking of captives for export was a regular feature of viking activity.<sup>32</sup>

Slave raiding and viking activity subsequently appear to decline in Ireland. During the peak period between 831 and 845, a third of all entries described viking

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<sup>29</sup> Denis Murphy, *The Annals of Clonmacnoise, Being Annals of Ireland from the Earliest Period to A.D. 1408, Translated into English, A.D. 1627 by Conell Mageoghagan* (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1896), 134, s.a. 830 (*recte* 832). Irregularities in spelling and capitalization reflect the irregularities of the early modern translation of a now-lost Irish original.

<sup>30</sup> Charles-Edwards, *CI*, 288, s.a. 831.6.

<sup>31</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, 503, prol. (2).

<sup>32</sup> Charles-Edwards, *CI*, 291, s.a. 833.11 (Congalach son of Echaid, of Loch mBricrenn, captured and killed at the ships), 302, s.a. 845.1 (Forindán, abbot of Armagh, together with his household, taken to the ships).

violence. Between 846 and the end of the *Chronicle* in 911, reports fall by half.<sup>33</sup> Despite this appearance of decline, incidents of captive taking continued, and the threshold for receiving this attention had increased. In 806, an annalist had remarked on 68 individuals killed in a viking raid, but in 869, it took the death or capture of a thousand people to merit notice.<sup>34</sup> In two further entries where numbers appear, 280 people were taken from Kildare in 886, and 710 from Armagh in 895.<sup>35</sup> Regardless of the accuracy of these numbers, they indicate that later annalists only noted raids of exceptional size, belying the apparent decline of viking violence. Even as these annalists grew increasingly terse about viking activity, slave raiding appears to have continued as business as usual, with some raids reaching new magnitudes of scale.

### **Viking Activity in Frankish Annals**

Frankish annals provide a more complex record of viking captive taking. Five particular annals have dominated historical discussions for combining into a continuous and apparently comprehensive account of Frankish affairs during this period. Each of these annals offers largely independent witness for a particular set of years, and each has been associated with a particular place and process of composition

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<sup>33</sup> For 831–845, 60 of 187 entries describe viking violence (32.1%), while for 846–911, 78 of 546 entries describe viking violence (14.2%). Colmán Etchingham described the annals as recording perhaps a 90% reduction in raids on church settlements, although Gwendolyn Sheldon has revised this to a less dramatic but nonetheless significant 60%. Etchingham, *Viking Raids on Irish Church Settlements*, 15–16; Sheldon, “The Conversion of the Vikings in Ireland from a Comparative Perspective,” 129. Efforts to associate this apparent decline with Harald Fairhair’s consolidation of power in Norway have stumbled against the uncertain chronology and historicity of these events. P. H. Sawyer, “Harald Fairhair and the British Isles,” in *Les Vikings et leur civilisation. Problèmes actuels*, ed. Régis Boyer, Bibliothèque arctique et antarctique 5 (Paris: Mouton, 1976), 105–9.

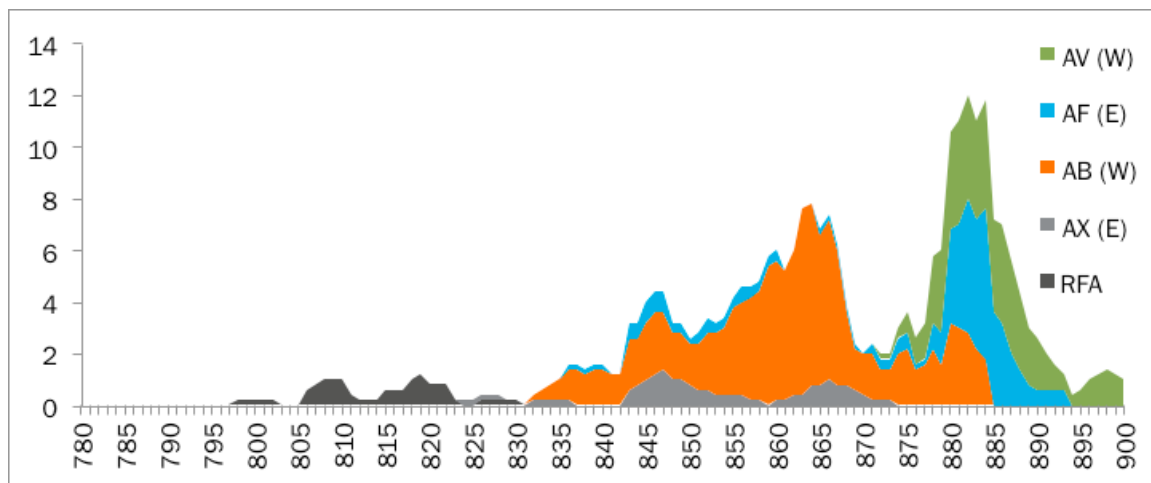
<sup>34</sup> Charles-Edwards, *CI*, 267, s.a. 806.8 (Iona), 321, a. 869.7 (Armagh).

<sup>35</sup> Charles-Edwards, 334, s.a. 886.5, (Kildare), 340, a. 895.6 (Armagh).

(Table 2.2; Chart 2.2).<sup>36</sup>

Common Title	Abbr.	Coverage	Focus	Simplified Authorship
<i>Royal Frankish Annals</i>	<i>RFA</i>	741–829	–	Frankish royal chapel
<i>Annals of St-Bertin</i>	<i>AB</i>	830–882	west	830–861 Prudentius of Troyes 861–882 Hincmar of Rheims
<i>Annals of Fulda</i>	<i>AF</i>	830–901	east	830–864 Fulda 864–887 Mainz 882–901 Bavaria
<i>Annals of Xanten</i>	<i>AX</i>	790–873	east	832–852 Lorsch 852–873 Cologne
<i>Annals of St-Vaast</i>	<i>AV</i>	873–900	west	St-Vaast monastery, Arras

**Table 2.2. The Major Frankish Annals**



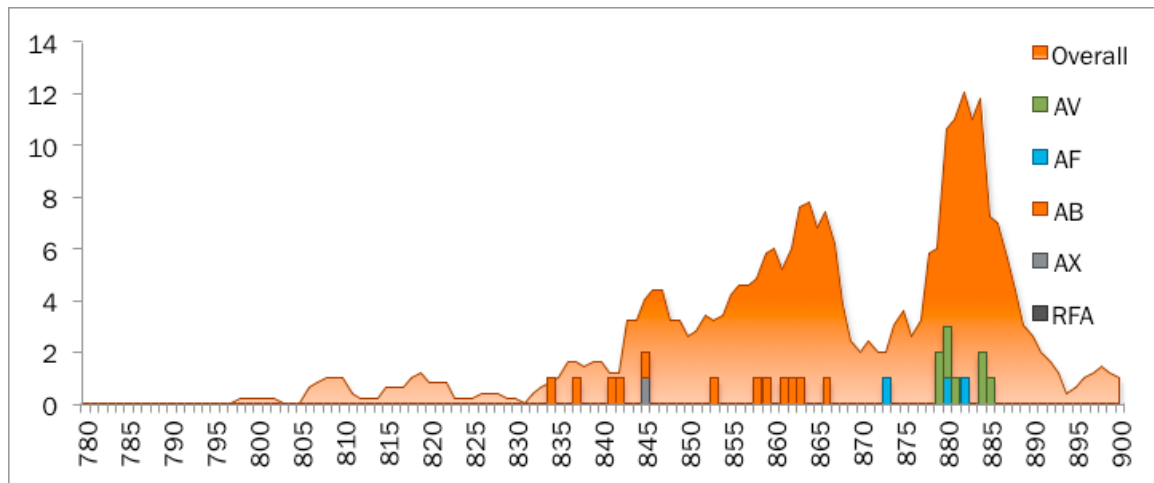
**Chart 2.2. Viking Activity in the Major Frankish Annals**

I counted 283 instances of viking violence in the major Frankish annals, including 25 explicit references to viking captive taking (Chart 2.3).<sup>37</sup> Some of these

<sup>36</sup> In general, see Louis Halphen, *Études critiques sur l'Histoire de Charlemagne* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1921); Reginald Lane Poole, *Chronicles and Annals: A Brief Outline of Their Origin and Growth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926); Wilhelm Wattenbach, Wilhelm Levison, and Heinz Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter. Vorzeit und Karolinger*, 6 vols. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1952); Hartmut Hoffmann, *Untersuchungen zur karolingischen Annalistik*, *Bonner historische Forschungen* 10 (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1958); Michael McCormick, *Les annales du haut moyen âge*, *Typologie des sources du haut moyen âge occidental* 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975).

<sup>37</sup> For each year, I tallied discrete reports of viking activity within the major annals, again making note of references to viking captive taking. Although this method necessarily involved a subjective element, I endeavored to procure results comparable to those derived from the *Chronicle of Ireland*. To do so, I

captives appear because they were ransomed, released, or killed, but most disappear immediately from sight, suggesting a rapid transit beyond the Frankish borders and into the networks of Baltic exchange.<sup>38</sup> References to captives are unbalanced among the Frankish annals and cluster during periods of increased viking violence.



**Chart 2.3. Captive Taking in the Major Frankish Annals**

No reports of viking captives are preserved in the *Royal Frankish Annals*.<sup>39</sup> This is the earliest of the five texts. Although its writers were well connected as semi-official court reporters, they documented few viking raids on Francia. Instead, their discussions of viking violence focused on the victimhood of Frankish allies, such as the Obodrites and Saxons, justifying Frankish interventions among these

counted each report of a raid or each phase of a larger campaign as a single viking event. Compare 26 instances of captive taking counted by Niels Skyum-Nielsen, “Træl,” in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid*, ed. Johannes Brøndsted and Lis Rubin Jacobsen (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1975), cols. 19–21, at col. 19.

<sup>38</sup> On these routes as described by Adalhelm of Sééz and in *The Life of Saint Ansgar*, see discussion in Chapter One, with reference to Adalhelm of Sééz, *Liber miraculorum*, 68, c. 2; Søren Michael Sindbæk, “The Small World of the Vikings: Networks in Early Medieval Communication and Exchange,” *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 40, no. 1 (2007): 59–74.

<sup>39</sup> Georg H. Pertz and Friedrich Kurze, eds., *Annales Regni Francorum [= RFA]*, MGH SS Rer. Germ. 6 (Hanover: Hahn, 1895); Bernhard Walter Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard’s Histories* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970).

neighboring peoples. Such circumstances were unlikely to produce reports of captive taking. Charlemagne had earlier failed to redeem the Lindisfarne captives, so focusing on viking captives must have seemed a dead end. Focusing on defensive deterrents, however, allowed Charlemagne to transform his neighbor's misfortunes into opportunities for Frankish land grabs.

Even if the Franks were not yet themselves victims of viking violence, Daniel Mellano has argued that the merchants of Francia were already supplying Scandinavians with slaves, presaging the viking slave raiding that would soon develop in their midst.<sup>40</sup> These Frankish captives appear among the major annals first in the *Annals of St-Bertin*, as authored by Prudentius of Troyes (d. 861) and continued by Hincmar of Rheims (d. 882) during the mid-800s.<sup>41</sup> The earliest notice involves raiders who assaulted Dorestad in 834:

A fleet of Danes coming into Frisia, some part from them laid it waste. And coming from there through Utrecht to the emporium which is called Dorestad, they plundered everything. Some men they killed, some they led off as captives, and the surrounding region they burned with fire.<sup>42</sup>

This and other entries help establish the types of violence that annalists like Prudentius and Hincmar associated with slave raiding. For example, the entry for 837

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel Mellano, "Before They Were Vikings: Scandinavia and the Franks up to the Death of Louis the Pious" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2014), 9–14.

<sup>41</sup> G. Waitz, ed., *Annales Bertiniani* [= *AB*], MGH SS rer. Germ. 5 (Hanover: Hahn, 1883); Janet L. Nelson, trans., *The Annals of St-Bertin*, Manchester Medieval Sources Online, Ninth-Century Histories 1 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

<sup>42</sup> Waitz, *AB*, 9, s.a. 834: "Interim etiam classis de Danis veniens in Frisiam, aliquam partem ex illa devastavit. Et inde per Vetus-Treiectum ad emporium quod vocatur Dorestadus venientes, Omnia diripuerunt. Homines autem quosdam occiderunt, quosdam captivos abduxerunt partemque eius igni cremaverunt."



describes a viking raid on Walcheren: “They killed many people and they plundered even more.”<sup>43</sup> In this way, the *Annals of St-Bertin* affirms that many activities stereotypically associated with viking violence—plundering, laying waste, burning, and slaughter—were also opportunities for gathering captives.

Despite covering a similar period, the more laconic authors of the *Annals of Xanten* rarely mentioned captives, in part due to the lower levels of viking activity apparent in the eastern Frankish realms.<sup>44</sup> The single explicit mention of viking captives appears in an uncharacteristically elaborate account, paralleling the 845 entry in the *Annals of St-Bertin*. According to the *Annals of St-Bertin*, a group of raiders along the Seine were struck by a plague, which so disturbed the Danish king Horic that he sent messengers expressing a willingness to restore the captives and treasures that had been plundered.<sup>45</sup> Prudentius stopped here, without resolving the fate of these captives, while the *Annals of Xanten* followed the vikings’ fortunes further:

Taking counsel they cast lots, from which of their gods they ought to obtain salvation, but the saving lots did not fall. However, at the urging of a certain Christian captive, that they place a lot before the god of the Christians. This they did, and their saving lot likewise fell. Then their king by the name Rorik [= Horic] together with the whole people of the gentiles for 14 days abstained from meat and mead, and the plague stopped, and all the Christian captives that they had, they directed to their proper country.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Waitz, 13, s.a. 837: “Multos trucidaverunt, plures depraedati sunt.” For further examples, see also s.a. 842 and 862.

<sup>44</sup> Bernhard von Simson, ed., *Annales Xantenses* [= AX], MGH SS rer. Germ. 12 (Hanover: Hahn, 1909), 1–39; Heinz Löwe, “Studien zu den Annales Xantenses,” *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 8 (1951): 59–99.

<sup>45</sup> Waitz, AB, 33, s.a. 845: “Ad Hludowicum regem Germanorum legatos pacis gratia destinat, captivitatem absolvere thesaurosque paratus pro viribus restituere.”

<sup>46</sup> von Simson, AX, 14–15, s.a. 845: “Consilio enim inito miserunt sortes, a quo deorum suorum salutem consequi debuissent; sed sortes salubriter non ceciderunt. Suadente autem eos quodam captivo Christiano, ut coram deo Christianorum sortem ponerent, quod et fecerunt, et salubriter sors eorum cecidit. Tunc rex eorum nomine Rorik una cum omni populo gentilium XIII dies a carne et medone

This annalist, despite a general reluctance to discuss captives elsewhere, could nonetheless imagine captives playing a decisive role during the course of a viking raid.

A later author of the *Annals of Xanten* was more ambiguous about captives when describing a raid that he himself had witnessed. For the year 863, he recorded:

During a great flooding of the waters, the pagans—already often mentioned laying waste the churches and everywhere through the channel of the Rhine river—came to Xanten and laid waste that most famous place. And what for all those who hear and see was cause for much grieving, they burned with fire the church of Saint Victor which had been built with amazing work, and they seized all that they found inside or outside the sanctuary. Yet the clergy and all the common people mostly [or barely?] escaped.<sup>47</sup>

The language here suggests captive taking—the vikings came to seize all they found—but it focuses instead on the confusion and horror that accompanied the viking attack. The annalist had survived a near escape and yet proved uninterested in giving an accurate account of those who had not, making captives all the more difficult to discern today.

An author of the *Annals of St-Vaast* similarly witnessed a viking raid but

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abstinuit, et cessavit plaga, et omnes Christianos captivos, quos habebant, ad patriam propriam dirigunt.”

<sup>47</sup> von Simson, 20, s.a. 864: “Nimia inundatione aquarum pagani sepe iam dicti aecclesiam undique vastantes per alveum Reni fluminis ad Sanctos usque pervenerunt et locum opinatissimum vastaverunt. Atque, quod omnibus audientibus et videntibus nimium dolendum est, aecclesiam sancti Victoris mirifico opere constructam incenderunt igni, omnia quae intus aut foris sanctuarii reperierunt rapuerunt. Clerus tamen et omne vulgus pene aufugit.” The date given in the *Annals of Xanten* is presumed to be in error for 863 based on parallel events in the *Annals of St-Bertin*. Sabine Walther, “The Vikings in the Rhinelands According to Latin Sources,” in *Vikings on the Rhine: Recent Research on Early Medieval Relations between the Rhinelands and Scandinavia*, ed. Rudolf Simek and Ulrike Engel, *Studia Mediaevalia Septentrionalia* 11 (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2004), 165–77, at 172–73.

proved more willing to discuss viking captives.<sup>48</sup> For the year 881, he recorded:

The Northmen in an infinite multitude entered our monastery ... and all the towns around it. Having killed everyone whom they could find, with fire they burned all the land they passed through until they came to the Somme, having captured a plunder of unnumbered people, livestock, and beasts.<sup>49</sup>

This passage parallels the Xanten account by putting central focus on devastation and burning, while marginalizing the appearance of viking captives, who receive mention almost as a reluctant afterthought alongside horses and cattle. Nonetheless, the Mainz author of the *Annals of Fulda* described captive taking as a primary concern for viking raiders.<sup>50</sup> He imagined a typical viking raid in a speech he ascribed to a viking leader of 873: “He swore in his pride that after he had killed all the men, the women and children together with everything of substance would be led into captivity.” This same annalist reported the fulfillment of such an intent in 882: “The Northmen sent ships back to their country, loaded with treasure and captives two hundred in number.” The *Annals of Fulda* thus aligns with the *Annals of St-Vaast* in reporting the captives taken for export well into the late 800s and through the peak of viking activity in Francia.

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<sup>48</sup> Bernhard von Simson, ed., *Annales Vedastini* [= *AV*], MGH SS rer. Germ. 12 (Hanover: Hahn, 1909), 40–82.

<sup>49</sup> von Simson, 49, s.a. 881: “Nortmanni vero cum infinita multitudine monasterium nostrum ingressi ... et omnes villas in circuitu ... interfectis omnibus quos invenire poterant, igne cremaverunt omnemque terram usque Sumnam pervagati sunt, capta praeda infinita hominum, pecudum et iumentorum.”

<sup>50</sup> Georg H. Pertz and Friedrich Kurze, eds., *Annales Fuldenses* [= *AF*], MGH SS rer. Germ. 7 (Hanover: Hahn, 1891); Timothy Reuter, trans., *The Annals of Fulda*, Ninth-Century Histories 2 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

## Viking Activity in Frankish Archives

Sufficient archival sources survive from Francia to present an alternative view of captive taking. One of the most useful references for identifying these archival traces is the *Diplomatarium Danicum* (DD). The editors of this collection gathered 500 documents—letters, charters, capitularies, and similar texts—“which have interest seen from a Danish point of view” and which span the years 789 to 1052.<sup>51</sup> I identified 208 of these documents referring specifically to instances of viking violence before the year 900, including eleven mentions of viking captives. These documents permit an exploration of viking activities as they were recorded in their immediate aftermaths, as well as an investigation of how slave raiding figured into these activities (Chart 2.4).<sup>52</sup>

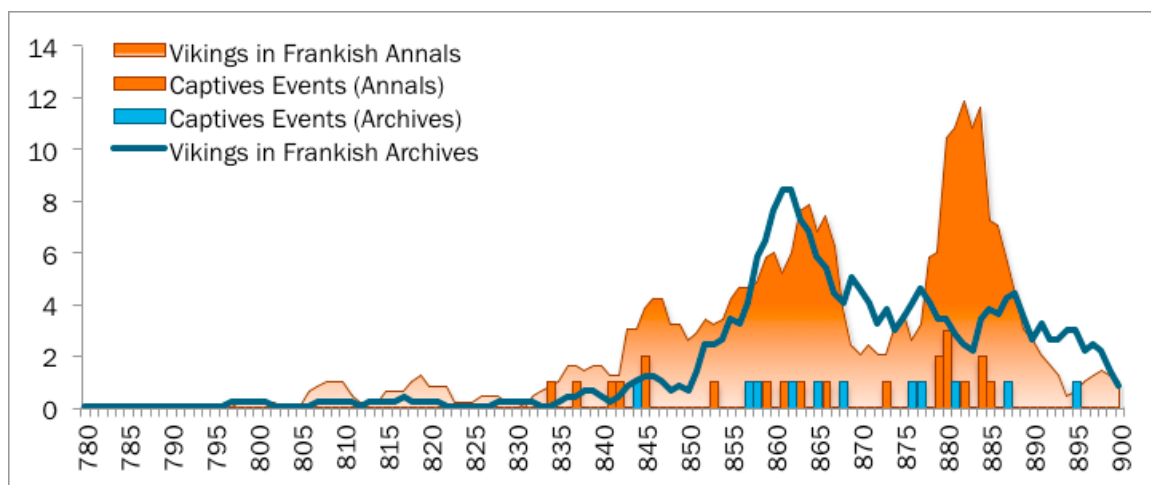


Chart 2.4. Captive Taking in Frankish Annals and Archives

<sup>51</sup> The first volume of this series, published in 1975, covers the years 789 to 1052 and comprises a register of 500 documents—laws, letters, charters, church decrees, and similar sources—“which have interest seen from a Danish viewpoint.” These criteria are loosely defined and broadly applied. T. A. Christensen and Herluf Nielsen, eds., *Diplomatarium Danicum*, vol. 1.1: Regester 789–1052 (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1975), viii: “der har interesse set fra et dansk synspunkt.”

<sup>52</sup> Over 80% of these documents may be dated to a particular year, while I have associated other documents of less certain date with either the earliest year in their suggested ranges—typically a short span of only two or three years—or a circa year, if given.

Records from the earliest period of viking activity in Francia are scant but suggestive. In 789, Alcuin had written a letter to an unnamed abbot in Saxony seeking his assessment about whether the Danes might convert to Christianity.<sup>53</sup> Alcuin's attitudes toward Danes soured after the Lindisfarne raid in 793, and in a letter of 799, he referenced viking raiding along the coasts of Aquitaine as well:

Pagan ships, as you have heard, have done much evil through those islands of the ocean in the regions of Aquitaine. But some of these have perished, and there have been killed some hundred and five men from those pirates. Their great assault is a chastisement unknown since ancient times to the Christian people, perhaps since the servants of God do not keep to the devotions which they used to offer.<sup>54</sup>

This letter of 799 is the earliest evidence of a raid on Frankish lands.<sup>55</sup> As in his letters to England, Alcuin was circumspect regarding victims of the raid, focusing instead on interpreting the raid as an admonition toward spiritual renewal.

Subsequent documents similarly point to a greater scale of early viking activity than recorded in the Frankish annals. In 809, Charlemagne promulgated days of fasting and prayer for various reasons, including "pagan peoples encamped around

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<sup>53</sup> *DD* 1 = Alcuin, *Epistolae*, 31, no. 6 [= Allott no. 55]: "Mandate mihi per litteras ... si spes ulla sit de Danorum conversione; et si Wilti vel Vionudi, quos nuper adquisivit rex, fidem Christi accipiant; et quid illis in partibus agatur; et quid de Hunorum hoste dominus rex acturus sit." Although various Frankish annals for 789 record a campaign across the Elbe against the Wiltzes and Wends, Alcuin's mention of the Danes may be unique.

<sup>54</sup> *DD* 15 = Alcuin, 309, no. 184 [= Allott no. 65]: "Paganae vero naves, ut audistis, multa mala fecerunt per insulas oceani partibus Aquitaniae. Pars tamen ex illis periit; et occisi sunt in litore quasi centum quinque viri ex illis praedatoribus. Castigatio est magna horum eruptio, antiquis ignota temporibus populo christiano; quia forte vota non servant famuli Dei, quae vovere solent."

<sup>55</sup> The *Royal Frankish Annals* records that in the year 800: "Charlemagne traveled about the shore of the Gallic ocean, and on that sea, since it had then been infested by pirates, he set up a fleet and established guards." Pertz and Kurze, *RFA*, 110, s.a. 800.: "Litus oceani Gallici perlustravit, in ipso mari, quod tunc piratis infestum erat, classem instituit, praesidia disposuit." This is the earliest description of a viking attack in the Frankish annals. See also Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni*, 6th ed., MGH SS rer. Germ. 25 (Hanover: Hahn, 1911), 20–21, c. 17.

our borders in continual war.”<sup>56</sup> Frankish coastlines likewise remained subject to viking raids, as indicated by two charters of St-Philibert of Noirmoutier, then residing on an island at the mouth of the Loire.<sup>57</sup> The first of these provided for an inland refuge, while the second authorized the right to set up defenses, assigning the men of Noirmoutier—“whether free or slave”—a duty to defend the monastery in lieu of other public burdens.<sup>58</sup>

This provision proved insufficient. As Ermentarius of St-Philibert later recalled, vikings traveled up the Loire and sacked Nantes in 843: “The bishop and clergy together with a great multitude of the people they slaughtered on the edge of the sword. Those who remained, they delivered into captivity.”<sup>59</sup> The following year, while this attack was still fresh in the minds of Frankish bishops, a synod at Verneuil

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<sup>56</sup> *DD* 16 = Alfred Boretius, ed., “Karoli ad Ghaerbaldum episcopum epistola,” *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1883), 245: “Paganorum gentium circa marcas nostras sedentia bella continua.”

<sup>57</sup> *DD* 20, *DD* 24 = Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 104 (Jacques-Paul Migne, 1851), cols. 189-190, no. 84 (Pro monasterio Deensi, 819), cols. 1183-1186, no. 151 (Pro Herensi S. Philiberti monasterio, 830).

<sup>58</sup> *DD* 24 = Migne, vol. 104, col. 1185: “Sed ut idem opus patratum utile foret, et ab incursionibus inimicorum tutum consistere valeret, petierunt obnixè ut concederetur illis a nostra serenitate, ut homines ejusdem monasterii, sive liberi sive servi, ad eum perpetualiter tuendum specialiter deputarentur, et ab aliis publicis obsequiis per nostram largitatem immunes consisterent.” St-Philibert’s had itself been a large slaveholder. Léon Maître, “Cunauld, son prieuré et ses archives,” *Bibliothèque de l’école des chartes* 59 (1898): 239-42; Christian Harding, “Community, Cult and Politics: The History of the Monks of St Filibert in the Ninth Century” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 2010), 117. Stephen Lewis has argued that the presence of slaves on Noirmoutier might have attracted vikings seeking to gather captives. Stephen M. Lewis, “Salt and the Earliest Scandinavian Raids in France: Was There a Connection?,” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 12 (2016): 103-36, at 122-24.

<sup>59</sup> Ermentarius, *De translationibus et miraculis sancti Filiberti*, ed. René Poupardin, *Monuments de l’histoire des Abbayes de Saint-Philibert (Noirmoutier, Grandlieu, Tournus)* 1 (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1905), 60, incipit to book II: “Episcopum clerumque cum maxima populi multitudine in ore gladii trucidant; quod vero restat, captivitati dedunt [cf. Luke 21:24].” Book II was written in 863. For a partial translation, see David Herlihy, *The History of Feudalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970). Compare Waitz, *AB*, 29, s.a. 843. See further Daniel C. DeSelm, “Unwilling Pilgrimage: Vikings, Relics, and the Politics of Exile during the Carolingian Era (c. 830-940)” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009).

censored Charles the Bald for appropriating funds that had been earmarked for the redemption of captives.<sup>60</sup> Overall, these early reports, sporadic though they were, hint at broader patterns of viking activity in which captive taking was fairly common and even a matter of national debate, albeit one rarely mentioned in texts.

Beginning in 850, archival references to viking activity jump from one per decade to almost five per year. Documents from this period present an empire divided among Charlemagne's inheritors—men who were sometimes competing, sometimes collaborating, but always scrambling to confront viking raiders. Charles the Bald took particular interest in stemming the tide. He dispatched *missi* to assess damage done,<sup>61</sup> he confirmed the properties and privileges of those who had been harmed by viking attack,<sup>62</sup> and he forged a defensive alliance with his brother Lothar.<sup>63</sup> These measures proved ineffective. Churchmen complained of how viking raiders obstructed their travels,<sup>64</sup> they bemoaned an inability to protect their wealth,<sup>65</sup> and one even presumed to counsel his king on the effective conduct of war.<sup>66</sup>

Against this backdrop of fragmented and faltering rule, the displacement of people began to trouble rulers more than their loss of wealth. Kings might scrounge

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<sup>60</sup> *DD* 34 (844). Council of Verneuil.

<sup>61</sup> *DD* 49 (853). Charles the Bald at a synod at Soissons.

<sup>62</sup> *DD* 48 (853). Charles the Bald to Saint-Wandrille. *DD* 56 (854). Charles the Bald to St-Martins.

<sup>63</sup> *DD* 50 (853). Assembly of Lothar I and Charles the Bald.

<sup>64</sup> *DD* 46 (851). Lupus abbot of Ferrières to abbot Louis of St-Denis.

<sup>65</sup> *DD* 55 (854). Lupus abbot of Ferrières to Hilduin arch-chaplain of Charles the Bald and abbot of St-Martin in Tours. Cf. *DD* 56 (854). Charles the Bald to St-Martins. The Franks seem to have been as great a threat to church coffers as viking raiders: *DD* 67 (858). Synod in Quierzy.

<sup>66</sup> *DD* 57 (855). Hrabanus Maurus archbishop of Mainz to Lothar II, presenting a text of his own *Tractatus de anima* with unsolicited selections appended from *De re militari* by Vegetius.

to replace plundered resources,<sup>67</sup> but missing persons proved a more enduring problem. Recurring references to refugees betray that human beings were common targets for viking raiders, as many potential victims opted to abandon their lands rather than risk being killed or carried away. Early efforts to accommodate displaced persons failed, and for the community of St-Martins in Utrecht, at least, a charter granting the community an inland refuge came too late for the individuals already lost.<sup>68</sup> By 857, Frankish rulers had turned to legislating against refugees, describing them as a menace and a source of crime.<sup>69</sup> In the Edict of Pîtres of 864, Charles the Bald took particular issue with refugee landowners:

Certain slippery men from those counties which have been laid waste by the Northmen and in which they had property and slaves and homes, since now they have no slaves and homes there, freely do evil.<sup>70</sup>

As with charters documenting viking raids around Noirmoutier, the Edict of Pîtres suggests that viking raiders targeted areas where slaves were already densely settled, and the refugee problem of Carolingian France was one trace of their slave taking.

Following the peak period of 850 to 871, documentary references to viking raiders fell from five to three per year, with a further decline just before the year 900. In part, this was because secular lords had abandoned discussion of viking captives.

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<sup>67</sup> *DD* 60 (856). Erispoé of the Bretons to Actard of Nantes.

<sup>68</sup> *DD* 66 (858). Lothar II to Utrecht.

<sup>69</sup> *DD* 62 (857). General assembly in Quierzy.

<sup>70</sup> *DD* 122 = Alfred Boretius and Victor Krause, eds., “Edictum Pistense,” *MGH Capit.* 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1897), 313, c. 6: “Quidam leves homines de istis comitatibus, qui devastati sunt a Nortmannis, in quibus res et mancipia et domos habuerunt, quia nunc ibi mancipia et domos non habent, quasi licenter malum faciunt.” See further Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald, The Medieval World* (London: Longman, 1992), 207–9; Brian E. Hill, “Charles the Bald’s ‘Edict of Pîtres’ (864): A Translation and Commentary” (M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 2013).



Following a capitulary reference in 862,<sup>71</sup> no further indication survives that any secular rulers involved themselves in ransoming viking captives. Perhaps as with the unfortunate boys of Lindisfarne, viking captives were being trafficked too quickly beyond Frankish networks of redemption.<sup>72</sup>

Conversations about captives instead shifted into the church, although few such conversations were recorded. Most notably, Hincmar of Rheims penned a letter to Louis the Stammer in 877, complaining that ransoming captives had drained his church of funds: “Redemption and tribute have not only wiped out poor men but also emptied the coffers of the church.”<sup>73</sup> Four years later, Hincmar raised the issue again at the Council of Fismes, adopting the same language of redemption and tribute.<sup>74</sup> Despite these indications that viking captive taking remained an ongoing problem, Hincmar had long since abandoned recording captives in his entries to the *Annals of St-Bertin*. Captives had appeared earlier among the retrospective entries

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<sup>71</sup> *DD* 100 = Alfred Boretius and Victor Krause, eds., “Capitula Pistensia,” *MGH Capit.* 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1897), 305, c. 1: “Nobiles nostri et de episcopali ordine et de aliis ordinibus interierunt, et capti cum maximo detrimento et regni et ecclesiae sunt aut redempti aut interempti.” Based on stylistic considerations, Hincmar of Rheims is thought to have been involved in the drafting of this capitulary.

<sup>72</sup> On a larger scale, if modern economic principles moved viking raiders, the high price commanded by slaves on the international market might have precluded viking efforts to sort and hold individuals in the hope of securing similar wealth as ransom. Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, “Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era,” *Past and Present* 205 (November 2009): 3–40.

<sup>73</sup> *DD* 181 = Hincmar of Rheims, “Ad Ludovicum Balbum regem,” ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 125 (Jacques-Paul Migne, 1852), col. 988A: “Sed redemptio et tributum, et non solum pauperes homines, sed et Ecclesias quondam divites jam evacuates habent.” On Hincmar’s relationship with Louis the Stammerer, see Rachel Stone and Charles West, eds., *Hincmar of Rheims: Life and Work* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

<sup>74</sup> *DD* 198 (Council of Fismes) = Hincmar of Rheims, “Capitula in synodo apud S. Macram,” ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 125 (Jacques-Paul Migne, 1852), col. 1086A, c. 8: “Sed redemptio et tributum non solum pauperes homines, sed et ecclesias quondam divites jam evacuatatas habent.”

written to span the period between Prudentius's death in 861 and Hincmar's assumption of the work in 866, but similar entries are lacking among the contemporaneous entries Hincmar kept until his death in 882.<sup>75</sup> Ransoming captives remained a problem for Hincmar and the Frankish church more widely, but they somehow became unmentionable or unnoteworthy when Hincmar adopted the perspective of a historian.

Rumors of viking slave raiding nonetheless framed Frankish relations abroad. In 876, Pope John VIII dispatched a letter noting how the population of Bordeaux had been slaughtered or taken captive,<sup>76</sup> and in 887, Pope Steven V authorized the continuing service of a churchman who had lost a finger while held captive among viking raiders.<sup>77</sup> In a fitting conclusion to this period, Frankish churchmen made a final fleeting reference to captives at the Council of Tribur in 895. The German bishops had gathered to promulgate forty days of penance in cases where "Christians taken captive by barbarians have been killed together with the dead pagans, since they were not distinguished in an act of war."<sup>78</sup> The situation envisioned by this council encapsulated the plight of captives among the later documents of the

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<sup>75</sup> Waitz, *AB*, 54, s.a. 861, 57, a. 862, 61, a. 863, 81, a. 866. Note that the passage from 861 is typically attributed to Prudentius, while all later entries were written by Hincmar. The entry for 866 uses the term *mancipium*, recalling the earlier references to raiding at Noirmoutier which may have targeted slaves.

<sup>76</sup> *DD* 179 (876).

<sup>77</sup> *DD* 226 (887).

<sup>78</sup> *DD* 249 (895) = Alfred Boretius and Victor Krause, eds., "Concilium Triburiense," *MGH Capit.* 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1897), 233, c. 34: "Quare una cum interfectis paganis perempti fuerunt christiani captivi a barbaris, quia in inpetu belli nequeunt distingui. Idcirco iustum decernentes statuisum cum interfectoibus misericordius agendum, ita ut XL diebus poenitentiae indulgentius transactis penes episcopum sit auctoritas et potestas, ut perpendat culpam, agat indulgentiam."

Frankish archives. They were persons ignored by their rulers, beyond the reach of redemption, and wholly unremarkable if not for the unusual circumstances of their deaths.

### **Viking Activity in Anglo-Saxon Archives**

Annals and archives provide fruitful lines of inquiry for slave raiding in Irish and Frankish contexts, but the Anglo-Saxon evidence is more oblique. Only a handful of Anglo-Saxon charters reference viking activity, while the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* provides a narrow retrospective limelighting the career of Alfred the Great (r. 871–899).<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, these sources outline the activities of raiders who took captives from England throughout the early Viking Age. The writings of Asser (d. c. 909), who was a close companion of Alfred, reveal that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* omitted instances of captive taking, while Alfred's treaty with Guthrum potentially implicates Alfred as a beneficiary of these raids. Recourse to Irish and Frankish chronicles meanwhile indicates that viking groups from England were noted as slave raiders when they appeared abroad. Together, these lines of evidence indicate that despite the general silences of Anglo-Saxon sources, captive taking was a common feature of viking activity in England.

Alongside the letters of Alcuin, Anglo-Saxon charters provide some of the earliest records of viking activity in England (Table 2.3; see also Chart 2.5).

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<sup>79</sup> For an alternative history of Viking-Age England written “from the margins,” see Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome: The Fall and Rise, 400–1070*, Penguin History of Britain (London: Penguin, 2011), 219–40.

According to the Electronic Sawyer, the most complete catalog of Anglo-Saxon charters, 326 such documents are dated to the period between 780 and 900.<sup>80</sup> Of these, seventeen reference viking activities, including at least one hint of viking captive taking.

Sawyer	Date	Remarks
134	792	Offa of Mercia to the churches of Kent <i>grant requires support of campaigns, fortifications against seafaring pagans</i>
160	804	Coenwulf of Mercia and Cuthred of Kent to Abbess Selethryth <i>grant to the Lyminge community of a refuge in Canterbury</i>
168	811	Coenwulf of Mercia to Archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury <i>grant requires support of bridgework against pagans</i>
1264	811	Archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury to Christ Church <i>grant requires support of campaigns, fortifications, bridgework against pagans</i>
177	814	Coenwulf of Mercia to Archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury <i>grant requires support of campaigns, fortifications against pagans</i>
186	822	Ceolwulf of Mercia and Kent to Archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury <i>grant requires support of campaigns against pagan hosts</i>
189	*833	Wiglaf of Mercia to Abbot Siward of Crowland <i>* forged: grant dated to a time of Danish harassment</i>
294	*844	Æthelwulf of Wessex to the church at Sherborne <i>* forged: grant dated to a time of pagan plundering</i>
294b	*844	Æthelwulf of Wessex to the Church <i>* forged: grant dated to a time of pagan plundering</i>
200	*851	Berhtwulf of Mercia to Abbot Siward of Crowland <i>* forged: grant dated to a time of pagan violence</i>
206	855	Burgred of Mercia to Bishop Alhhun of Worcester <i>grant dated to when pagans were in Worcester</i>

<sup>80</sup> British Academy-Royal Historical Society Joint Committee on Anglo-Saxon Charters, "The Electronic Sawyer: Online Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Charters," 2018, <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/about/index.html>. This resource supersedes P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1968). Charters are cited using Sawyer numbers (S). Numbers ending in a letter were not included in the original print edition but have been subsequently added to the database.

213	*868	Burgred of Mercia to Crowland Abbey <i>* forged: grant dated to a time of the wicked pagans</i>
1204a	c. 870	Ealdorman Alfred and wife Wærburg to Christ Church, Canterbury <i>donates holy books purchased with gold from the heathen army</i>
1278	872	Bishop Wærferth of Worcester to the minister Eanwulf <i>leases land to help fund tribute due to the viking army then in London</i>
354	878x899	Alfred of Wessex to Bishop Denewulf of Winchester <i>releases obligations for tribute due to pagans in exchange for land</i>
222	*883x911	Æthelred of Mercia to the minister Cuthwulf <i>* dubious: purports to replace a grant carried away by pagans</i>
1444	900x908	Bishop Denewulf of Winchester to Edward of Wessex <i>returns in good order lands formerly destitute and laid waste by heathen folk</i>

**Table 2.3. Viking Activity in Anglo-Saxon Charters**

The earliest archival evidence for viking raiding in England derives from 792, the year before the Lindisfarne attack. At a church council at Clovesho, King Offa of Mercia (r. 757–796) confirmed the privileges of the churches of Kent in southern England, permitting these churches exceptions from common military burdens but still requiring their support for “campaigning in Kent against seafaring pagans with roving fleets.”<sup>81</sup> As Clare Downham notes, this phrasing may indicate that Offa used early viking attacks—or perhaps only the threat of such attacks—to impose military burdens already common in Mercia on new client landholders in Kent.<sup>82</sup> Similar motives might have informed similar burdens in charters issued by Offa’s successors, Coenwulf (r. 796–821) and Coelwulf (r. 821–823), which the Archbishop of

<sup>81</sup> S134: “Expeditione intra Cantiam contra paganos marinos cum classis migrantibus uel in australes Saxones si necessitas cogit ac pontis constructionem et arcis munitionem contra paganos iterumque intra fines Cantwariorum.”

<sup>82</sup> Downham, “The Earliest Viking Activity in England?”

Canterbury passed down in similar form to subsidiary landholders.<sup>83</sup> By 822, Coelwulf affirmed the successful extension of these burdens, which in light of “pagan hosts” had now become customary, “according to the rite of that people.”<sup>84</sup>

Four subsequent charters, referencing viking activity and dated between 833 and 851, offer more tenuous evidence. Modern scholars have found reason to doubt the authenticity of these documents.<sup>85</sup> Two charters of Winchester use the term *barbarus*, which is found elsewhere in the Sawyer catalog only in charters dated to 949 and 1001, providing a possible date range for these forgeries.<sup>86</sup> The other two charters, both attributed to Crowland, are thought to date from after the Norman Conquest of 1066.<sup>87</sup> It seems that churchmen in the later Viking Age or immediately thereafter recognized the mid-800s as a gap in their archives, which they could plausibly attribute to viking disturbance.

In 855, authentic but intermittent references to viking activity resume. At least three of these documents indicate that vikings targeted movable wealth in England. In one grant issued around 870, an ealdorman named Alfred returned a book recovered from a heathen army to the church.<sup>88</sup> A second grant purported to date from between 883 and 911 indicates that the original document had been

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<sup>83</sup> S160, S168, S177, S1264.

<sup>84</sup> S186: “Contra paganos ostes ... secundum ritum gentes illius.”

<sup>85</sup> S189, S200, S294, S294a.

<sup>86</sup> S294, S294a, compare S552, S899.

<sup>87</sup> S189, S200. See also Crowland charter S213 (868).

<sup>88</sup> S1204a. For other documents attested by *dux* Alfred, see S336 (863), S337 (867), S1202 (870x899), and his will S1508 (871x888). This last is translated in Whitelock, no. 97, 537–39. The book in question, an eighth-century Gospel book, still survives as Stockholm Codex Aureus in the National Library of Sweden, MS A. 135.

carried off by pagans.<sup>89</sup> Finally, around the year 900, the Bishop Denewulf of Winchester granted Alfred's successor Edward lands which, as Denewulf ruefully noted, had been given to him destitute and laid waste by pagans, but which he now returned inhabited and in good order.<sup>90</sup> This last charter echoes Frankish complaints of depopulation, and it offers the most direct evidence of viking captive taking among surviving Anglo-Saxon charters.

### **Viking Activity in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle***

These charters help round out the more narrowly focused chronology found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ASC). This much-studied set of texts derives from a parent text first compiled in the Wessex court of Alfred the Great, likely around 892.<sup>91</sup> As with the more diverse Irish annals, scholars have explored relationships among surviving texts, but for present purposes, the common stock best preserved in Manuscript A commands primary attention (Chart 2.5).<sup>92</sup> Other manuscripts preserve minor variations in reports of early viking activity—most notably through the

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<sup>89</sup> S222: "Supradictæ terræ libellum a paganis arreptum esse."

<sup>90</sup> S1444. This included seven servile men: "seofæn þeopæ mæn." Alfred Smyth has interpreted this as implying that viking raiders had abducted seven residents of the estate, whom Denewulf had replaced. Alfred P. Smyth, "The Effect of Scandinavian Raiders on the English and Irish Churches: A Preliminary Reassessment," in *Britain and Ireland, 900–1300: Insular Responses to Medieval European Change*, ed. Brendan Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 13–14.

<sup>91</sup> See, in general, Simon Keynes, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). As Dumville has pointed out, the use of the vernacular for the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* might indicate that its authors perceived no precedent for viking raids in the Latin materials then on hand. Dumville, "Latin and Irish in the Annals of Ulster, A.D. 431–1050," 333–34.

<sup>92</sup> Janet M. Bately, ed., *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, 3 MS A (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986). For a full translation, see M. J. Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London: J. M. Dent, 1996).

so-called Northern Recension at the root of Manuscripts D, E, and F<sup>93</sup>—but none represents a complete overhaul of the original text for the early Viking Age.<sup>94</sup>

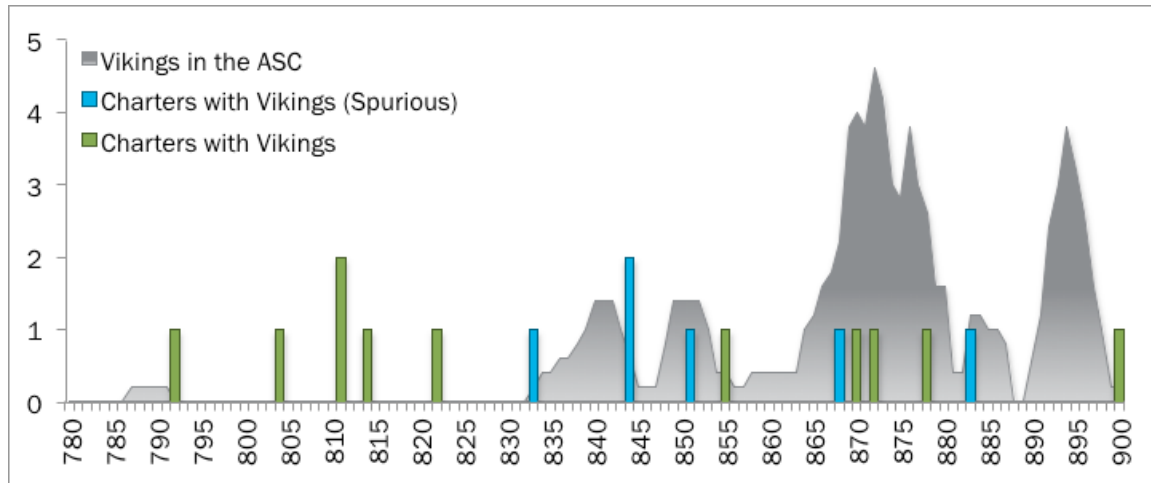


Chart 2.5. Viking Activity in Anglo-Saxon Sources

For the first author of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, writing from the court of Alfred the Great, the Viking Age had a specific beginning, which he located in 789:

In this year, King Beorhtric [of Wessex] took Offa’s daughter Eadburh [as wife], and in his days for the first time there came 3 ships, and then the reeve rode there and he wanted to bring them to the king’s town, since he did not know what they were, and they slaughtered him. Those were the first ships of Danish men that sought the land of the English people.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>93</sup> General consensus has long pointed toward the composition of the Northern Recension at York in the eleventh century, made with the use of earlier materials, but Thomas Bredehoft has recently argued that the Northern Recension was created at a date closer to the dissemination of the common stock, just after the turn of the tenth century. Thomas A. Bredehoft, *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 67–91.

<sup>94</sup> The Northern Recension presents substantial additions and expansions through 806. These most significant of these will be discussed below with reference to Manuscript E. Subsequent entries show only a few minor changes to the common stock. Susan Irvine, ed., *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, 7 MS E (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), xxxix–xl. The analysis below focuses on the coherent narrative and single perspective of Manuscript A, with additional reference to Manuscript E, which preserves changes made to suit a more northern perspective. Manuscript A survives from at least the 1000s, and the first hand continued the *Chronicle* through 892, which serves as a terminus post quem for the compilation. Manuscript E survives as a later copy from the 1100s, although the changes to the common stock may be dated as early as the early 900s.

<sup>95</sup> Bately, *ASC, MS A*, 39, s.a. 787: “Her nom [erasure of 7–8 letters] Beorhtric cyning Offan dohtor Eadburge. 7 on his dagum cuomon ærest .iii. scipu, 7 þa se gerefa þærto rad 7 hie wolde drifan to þæs cyninges tune þy he nyste hwæt hie wæron, 7 hiene mon ofslog. Ðæt wæron þa ærestan scipu deniscra



This entry located the beginning of viking activity both within the chronology of the Wessex kings and within the geography of Wessex domains. The chronicler offered no hint of the well-attested Lindisfarne raid of 793, and despite Alcuin's letters written throughout the 790s and charter references to viking activity during the early 800s, the next attack to merit notice had occurred in 835.<sup>96</sup> The murder of Beorhtric's reeve stood alone, and for the later Wessex chronicler Æthelweard, who translated the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* into Latin, this epochal report of the viking arrival merited the beginning of a new book.<sup>97</sup>

For the scribe who revised the common stock into a Northern Recension—perhaps in the early 900s but no later than the 1000s<sup>98</sup>—viking activity was more properly associated with the north.<sup>99</sup> Although this scribe retained the entry of 787, he asserted that the “Danish men” of his exemplar text were in fact “Northmen from Hordaland,” that is, vikings who had originated in Norway and implicitly passed the

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monna þe Angelcynnes lond gesohton.” The year for this entry is presumed to be in error for 789.

<sup>96</sup> I find no compelling reason to assume that the chronicler would have known of the Lindisfarne raid. For one brief but compelling look at Viking-Age local history through charters, see S. E. Kelly, ed., *Charters of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury and Minster-in-Thanet*, Anglo-Saxon Charters 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), xvii. MS A records the raid of 835 under the entry for 832.

<sup>97</sup> Regarding Æthelweard's *Chronicon*, Book I concerns events from Creation through the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Book II concerns events beginning with the arrival of Augustine of Canterbury in 596 and the subsequent conversion of the Anglo-Saxons. Æthelweard marked the beginning of Book III by elaborating the story of the reeve and splitting it from the notice of Beorhtric's marriage. Beorhtric's marriage confusingly occurs both as the final entry of Book II, s.a. 786, and as an initial entry in Book III, s.a. 787. Æthelweard's account of the reeve Beaduheard stands independently from both entries as an intervening introduction for Book III. Æthelweard, *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. A. Campbell (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 23–27.

<sup>98</sup> Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, 67–91.

<sup>99</sup> David Griffiths in particular has argued that this northern focus—as reaffirmed by later texts emphasizing Norway—conflicts with earlier evidence. David Griffiths, “Rethinking the Early Viking Age in the West,” *Antiquity* 93, no. 368 (2019): 468–77.

coasts of Northumbria before encountering Beorhtric's ill-fated reeve.<sup>100</sup> The northern scribe also appended a fanciful notice of the subsequent attack on Lindisfarne in 793:

In this year there were terrible portents that came upon Northumbria and miserably frightened the people. There were immense flashes of lightening, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. Immediately after these signs there followed a great hunger, and a little after that in this same year on January 8 [*recte* June 8], raiding of heathen men miserably destroyed God's church on Lindisfarne through plundering and slaughter.<sup>101</sup>

The scribe's vague description of plundering hinted at the captured boys mentioned in Alcuin's letter, but more to his own purposes, the fantastic portents overshadowed the reeve's unfortunate death and instead established the Lindisfarne raid as the iconic beginning of the Viking Age in England.

Beginning with the 830s and 840s, the Wessex chronicler renewed attention on viking activities, presenting Wessex as a land besieged. Three ships had purportedly initiated viking activity in England in the first attack, but raiding armies of 33 and 35 ships now appeared.<sup>102</sup> The chronicler remained vague about viking activities, reporting only on battles and slaughters. He reported another threshold crossed in 851, when one viking group remained through the winter and another arrived in a fleet of 350 ships, representing another ten-fold increase of viking

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<sup>100</sup> Irvine, *ASC, MS E*, 41, s.a. 787: "Norðmanna of Hereðalande."

<sup>101</sup> Irvine, 42, s.a. 793: "Her wæron reðe forebecna cumene ofer Norðanhymbra land 7 þet folc earmlice bregdon: þet wæron ormete ligræscas, 7 wæron geseowene fyrene dracan on þam lyfte fleogende. Ðam tacnum sona fyligde mycel hunger, 7 litel æfter þam þæs ilcan geares on .vi. idus Ianuarii earmlice heðenra manna hergung adiligode Godes cyrican in Lindisfarenae þurh reaflac 7 mansleht."

<sup>102</sup> Bately, *ASC, MS A*, 42, s.a. 833 for 836 (35 ship-loads), 43, a. 837 for 840 (33 ship-loads).

numbers.<sup>103</sup> Despite the pervasive raiding these numbers implied, the chronicler continued to commemorate only sporadic viking events.

In 865, the chronicler's reports of viking activity changed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Entries became continuous, and the chronicler typically marked the beginning of each entry by describing the movements or activities of a viking group described simply as "the army" (*se here*).<sup>104</sup> The entry for 871 stands out for its exceptional length and for its numerous references to viking activities, taking into account the reigns both of Æthelred (r. 865–871) who died that year and of Alfred his brother who succeeded him (r. 871–899). This intensification of viking activity set the stage for 878, which the chronicler marked as a difficult year for Wessex—Alfred was driven into the swamps, and despite a desperate victory at Edington, he was maneuvered into legitimizing viking rule in East Anglia.<sup>105</sup>

The chronicler used Edington as a turning point and began to record what

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<sup>103</sup> Bately, 44, s.a. 851: "7 heþne men ærest ofer winter sæton. 7 þy ilcan geare cuom feorðe healf hund scipa on Temese muþan." Bately notes that this whole entry may stand over an erasure. For a similar discussion of the numbers attested by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, see P. H. Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, 2nd ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), 124–26. Nicholas Brooks nonetheless argues that viking armies likely numbered in the thousands. N. P. Brooks, "England in the Ninth Century: The Crucible of Defeat," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 29 (1979): 2–11; Ryan Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars: Sources and Interpretations of Anglo-Saxon Warfare in the Viking Age*, Warfare in History (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 41–42.

<sup>104</sup> On the diverse composition suggested by this term and associated archaeology, see Richard Abels, "Alfred the Great, the *Micel Hæden Here* and the Viking Threat," in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter, Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 265–79; Ben Raffield, "Bands of Brothers: A Re-Appraisal of the Viking Great Army and Its Implications for the Scandinavian Colonization of England," *Early Medieval Europe* 24, no. 3 (2016): 308–37.

<sup>105</sup> The baptism of Guthrum, while often portrayed as the moment of Alfred's resurgence, effectively ceded any claim Alfred might have had to assume responsibility for churches in Danish-occupied territory, and for the first time, it set up a Danish king who could claim plausible rights of inheritance from a self-proclaimed king of the Anglo-Saxons. But as Ryan Lavelle points out regarding the treaty of Alfred and Guthrum, these legitimizing actions simultaneously legitimized Alfred's rule over formerly Mercian territory. Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars*, 326–27.

seemed like happier years for Wessex.<sup>106</sup> He reported that vikings who had previously been active in England now moved to Francia, as Alfred seized the offensive against those who remained. At the height of these offensives in 885, Alfred repelled a group of vikings who had recently returned from Francia, and he sent his own raiding-ship army (*sciphere*) to engage vikings off the coast of East Anglia.<sup>107</sup> The following year, Alfred occupied London, which the Wessex chronicler celebrated as the moment when “all the English people turned to him, except what was forced into captivity by Danish men.”<sup>108</sup> Given the general lack of details regarding viking activity throughout the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, it seems all the more significant that the chronicler settled on “captivity” as the metaphorical alternative to Wessex rule.

Despite the confidence of the 880s, the situation soon deteriorated. For the entry of 892, a new scribe took over and adopted a new narrative mode, as the length and detail of the entries increased for a brief period marked by renewed conflict with vikings.<sup>109</sup> These later entries likely represent a continuation appended to the *Chronicle* as first commissioned at the court of Alfred the Great, initially written by a

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<sup>106</sup> Keynes and Lapidge likewise saw Edington as a watershed in Alfred’s career, ushering in a period of reconstruction and reform. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (London: Penguin, 1983), 23–41. Alfred Smyth has made the daring argument, based on coinage, that Alfred was essentially a Danish sub-king throughout the 870s. Alfred P. Smyth, *King Alfred the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 48–50; Nelson, “England and the Continent,” 23–24.

<sup>107</sup> Bately, *ASC, MS A*, 52–53, s.a. 885.

<sup>108</sup> Bately, 53, s.a. 886: “7 him all Angelcyn to cirde þæt buton deniscra monna hæftniede was.”

<sup>109</sup> For the 892 entry, see Cecily Clark, “The Narrative Mode of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* before the Conquest,” in *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 215–24; Bately, *ASC, MS A*, xxi–xxiii (Hand 1), xxv–xxiv (Hands 2a–2f). Keynes and Lapidge likewise see a shift in 892, with which they inaugurate a phase they describe as “a kingdom defended.” Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 41–44.

chronicler still in close proximity to the court.<sup>110</sup> Although these later entries provide scant evidence for viking captive taking, they indicate that individuals associated with Alfred were no strangers to the practice. Alfred purportedly seized women and children from a defeated viking group at Benfleet in 893,<sup>111</sup> his nephew Æthelwold was defamed for abducting a nun during his failed bid for the Wessex throne in 899,<sup>112</sup> and his daughter Æthelflæd seized thirty-four women, including the wife of a king, in a raid on Wales in 916.<sup>113</sup> These later entries hint that practices of captive taking had been sufficiently common under Alfred to have merited little comment from his court chronicler, who instead focused on viking slaughters across southern England.

### Contextualizing Anglo-Saxon Sources

Despite the general silence of the Anglo-Saxon charters and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* regarding captives taken by early viking raiders, converging lines of evidence indicate that the vikings described in these sources engaged in frequent

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<sup>110</sup> Clark traces this hand through the entry for 924, while noting stylistic variations that may indicate uneven composition. Clark, “The Narrative Mode of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* before the Conquest,” 224 n. 3.

<sup>111</sup> Batley, *ASC, MS A*, 58–59, s.a. 894 (*recte* 893).

<sup>112</sup> Note that due to the addition of an *i* by a later scribal hand, this entry now appears under 901 in some printed editions. The nun might have been a willing companion to Æthelwold, but as David Wyatt has noted, the accusation of abduction was significant to the author of this entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It both justified the broad coalition that rode against Æthelwold and placed the pretender to the Wessex throne on a continuum with the viking allies he sought. Batley, 61–62, s.a. 900 (*recte* 899). Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors*, 114–15.

<sup>113</sup> Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe, ed., *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, 5 MS C (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 76, s.a. 916. Wyatt argues that Æthelflæd seized these women in part to perform the role of a masculine warrior, due to the incapacitation of her husband due to illness. Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors*, 189–90.

slave raiding. Among Anglo-Saxon writers, viking slave raiding might have drawn little attention due to long traditions of slaving within England. Bede, for example, described a Northumbrian captive carried to London where he was sold to a Frisian merchant, and he noted that at least some Anglo-Saxon slaves were trafficked all the way to Roman markets.<sup>114</sup> Drawing on sources from the same period, Thomas MacMaster has estimated that 700,000 slaves lived south of the Humber during the 600s.<sup>115</sup> For the end of the Viking Age, David Pelteret and David Wyatt have made estimates that point to some 600,000 slaves living in Anglo-Saxon England, making up roughly 30% of the total population.<sup>116</sup> Although these numbers are conjectural, they point to a general consensus on the vast scale of slaveholding in Anglo-Saxon England.

Such an abundance of slaves might have contributed to a complacency to

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<sup>114</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 132–35, II, c. 1 (Gregory the Great encounters Anglo-Saxons in the Roman slave market, before 595), 400–405, IV, c. 22 (Northumbrian captive Imma sold by a Mercian gesith to a Frisian in London, c. 679). See further discussion in Chapter Four.

<sup>115</sup> MacMaster extrapolates evidence from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* regarding Wilfrid's estates together with evidence from the Tribal Hidage. Thomas J. MacMaster, "The Transformative Impact of the Slave Trade on the Roman World, 580–720" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015), 49–50.

<sup>116</sup> Ultimately, these interpretations rest upon the earlier survey of the *Domesday Book* by H. C. Hardy, who tallied 28,235 slaves among a rural population of 268,984 (10.5%). H. C. Hardy, *Domesday England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 337. For an important early discussion of this evidence, see H. B. Clarke, "Domesday Slavery (Adjusted for Slaves)," *Midland History* 1, no. 4 (1972): 37–46. These numbers may be interpreted and extrapolated in various ways. My calculation derives from Wyatt's suggestion that up to 30% of the population was enslaved, combined with Pelteret's estimate for a total population of roughly two million. David A.E. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England: From the Reign of Alfred until the Twelfth Century*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995), 36 n. 182; Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors*, 30n.134, 33–36. John S. Moore proposed a population of slaves consisting of 240,000 heads of households, which likewise conforms to the estimate given above. John S. Moore, "Domesday Slavery," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 11 (1989): 191–220. See more recently Alice Rio, *Slavery after Rome, 500–1000*, Oxford Studies in Medieval European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 171.

slave raiding among Anglo-Saxons. Nonetheless, the Welsh cleric Asser noted vikings taking captives in his *Life of Alfred*.<sup>117</sup> According to details within his *Life of Alfred*, Asser arrived at Alfred's court in 885 and completed his work in 893.<sup>118</sup> Echoing the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 886, which asserted that the English people either turned to Alfred or suffered Danish captivity, Asser similarly proclaimed:

To that king all the Angles and Saxons who previously had been dispersed everywhere or were in captivity with the pagans now turned voluntarily and submitted themselves to his lordship.<sup>119</sup>

For Asser, at least, the chronicler's reference to Danish captivity was no mere metaphor, and a diaspora of refugees went hand-in-hand with practices of viking captive taking.

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<sup>117</sup> Despite taking substantial borrowings from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, this text diverges widely in terms of models and likely audience. James Campbell, "Asser's *Life of Alfred*," in *The Inheritance of Historiography, 350–900*, ed. Christopher Holdsworth and T. P. Wiseman, Exeter Studies in History (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1986), 115–35; Anton Scharer, "The Writing of History at King Alfred's Court," *Early Medieval Europe* 5, no. 2 (1996): 177–206; Tomás Mario Kalmar, "Asser's *Imitatio* of Einhard: Clichés, Echoes, and Allusions," *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies* 7 (2014): 65–91. Smyth has most rigorously attacked the text as a pastiche of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* together with "hagiographical accretions, ... folk-tales, rhetorical inventions, and bland generalities." Smyth, *King Alfred the Great*, 367. While admitting such models, Abels concludes: "The details Asser provides are not derived from Continental sources, and there is no real reason to doubt that they substantially represent the truth as Asser knew it." Richard Abels, *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Routledge, 1998), 12–13.

<sup>118</sup> The authenticity of Asser's authorship has been intermittently challenged. For a summary of early debates on the authenticity of this text, see Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 50–51. Grounds for challenging Asser's authorship have been most systematically presented by Smyth, *King Alfred the Great*, 149–367. Smyth's views, however, have not received wide support. For a brief summary of points in defense of Asser's authorship, see Abels, *Alfred the Great*, 10–14, 318–26. See further Richard Abels, "Alfred and His Biographers: Images and Imagination," in *Writing Medieval Biography, 750–1250: Essays in Honour of Professor Frank Barlow*, ed. David Bates, Julia Crick, and Sarah Hamilton (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 61–75.

<sup>119</sup> Asser, *Asser's Life of King Alfred, Together with the Annals of Saint Neots Erroneously Ascribed to Asser*, ed. William Henry Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), 69, c. 83: "Ad quem regem omnes Angli et Saxones, qui prius ubique dispersi fuerant aut cum paganis sub captivitate erant, voluntarie converterunt, et suo dominio se subdiderunt."

More bitterly, Asser faulted Alfred's subjects who had neglected or delayed to discharge the common burdens of supporting campaigns, fortifications, and bridgeworks. Asser shamed them with memories of victims killed, captured, or displaced by viking raids:

What help is their detestable penance, since it can bring no succor to their slaughtered loved ones nor redeem their captives from hateful captivity, nor too might it aid those who have meanwhile fled, since they no longer possess the things necessary to sustain life?<sup>120</sup>

The generality of these comments does not point to specific instances of captive taking but rather suggests that viking captive taking was commonplace. As with the Wessex chronicler, so too for Alcuin, viking slave raiding did not seem particularly noteworthy.<sup>121</sup>

Alcuin, in fact, hinted benignly that Alfred was complicit in viking captive taking and might have benefited from slaves that viking raiders could provide. In 885, Alfred seized captives at Rochester from vikings who had previously gathered them in raids on Francia:

And then the pagans, having abandoned their defenses and having left all the horses they had brought with them from Francia, as well as the greater part of the captives scattered about their defenses, at the sudden coming of the king they fled quickly to their ships, and the Saxons immediately plundered the captives and horses abandoned by the pagans.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Asser, 79, c. 91: "Quid detestabilis iuvat poenitentia, quando nec occisis suis propinquis succurrere valent, nec captivos suos a captivitate exosa redimere, nec etiam interdum sibimet, qui evaserint, adiuvere valent, quoniam propriam unde sustentent vitam non habent."

<sup>121</sup> In Asser's most explicit instance of captive taking, he indicates that in 885 (the year of his arrival to Alfred's court) captives were seized—but not apparently liberated—by Alfred at Rochester from an army that had previously been in Francia. Asser, 50, c. 66. Compare Bately, *ASC, MS A*, 52–53, s.a. 885, which only indicates that the defeated vikings were deprived of their horses.

<sup>122</sup> Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, 50, c. 66: "Et tunc pagani, relicta arce sua, et omnibus equis, quos de Francia secum adduxerant, derelictis, maxima parte necnon captivorum suorum in arce dimissa, adveniente subito rege, ad naves suas confestim confugiunt, et Saxones statim derelictos a paganis



Other captives seized or purchased from vikings might have helped Alfred staff monasteries depopulated by viking raids.<sup>123</sup> Asser described some children of obscure birth receiving their educations alongside Alfred's son Æthelweard,<sup>124</sup> and he implicated at least two Frankish slaves—potentially two of those whom had been recovered at Rochester in 885—in an assassination attempt on a prominent churchman.<sup>125</sup>

These hints of a slave trade between Alfred's Wessex and the viking armies of England find resonance in a treaty concluded during the 880s between Alfred and the viking leader Guthrum. The fourth provision of this five-chapter treaty reads in full: "Every man should know his warrantor for men and for horses and for cattle."<sup>126</sup> This succinct mandate required all purchasers of people to retain a certifying witness, implying that a lively black-market in slaves moved human traffic between Alfred's Wessex and Danish-occupied East Anglia. It also suggests that both rulers anticipated adjudicating complaints about stolen people entering their lands. The treaty left

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captivos et equos diripiunt." The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* describes a similar event in 885, but it mentions only horses and omits any reference to Frankish captives.

<sup>123</sup> Asser, 80–81, cc. 93–94. As Keynes and Lapidge point out, some of these monastic acquisitions might have numbered among the persons "sold across the sea" (*ultra mare venditis*) in the *Annals of St-Vaast* entry for 882. Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 272 n. 232; Smyth, *King Alfred the Great*, 261.

<sup>124</sup> Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, 58, c. 75 ("multis ignobilis").

<sup>125</sup> Asser, 82, c. 96 ("duos eisdem gentis Gallicae servulos"). These "Gallic" slaves were associated with churchmen from Francia, but there is no indication whether the slaves were brought over by the churchmen or acquired for them from Frankish captives brought into England. Notably, Asser described this assassination attempt occurring after Alfred had seized Frankish captives from the vikings at Rochester.

<sup>126</sup> F. L. Attenborough, ed., "The Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum," in *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 98–101, at 100, c. 4: "7 ðæt ælc man wite his getyman be mannum 7 be horsum 7 be oxum."

ominously unspecified the punishment for persons caught trafficking stolen people, but this allowed the rulers to turn a blind eye, for example, when traders supplied Frankish slaves to Alfred's monasteries.

Outside of Britain, the *Chronicle of Ireland* provides additional accounts of viking activities in England and indicates that viking groups there were seizing captives for export as well. Nineteen entries from the *Chronicle of Ireland* dealt with viking events in Scotland, England, Wales, or unspecified locations in Britain.<sup>127</sup>

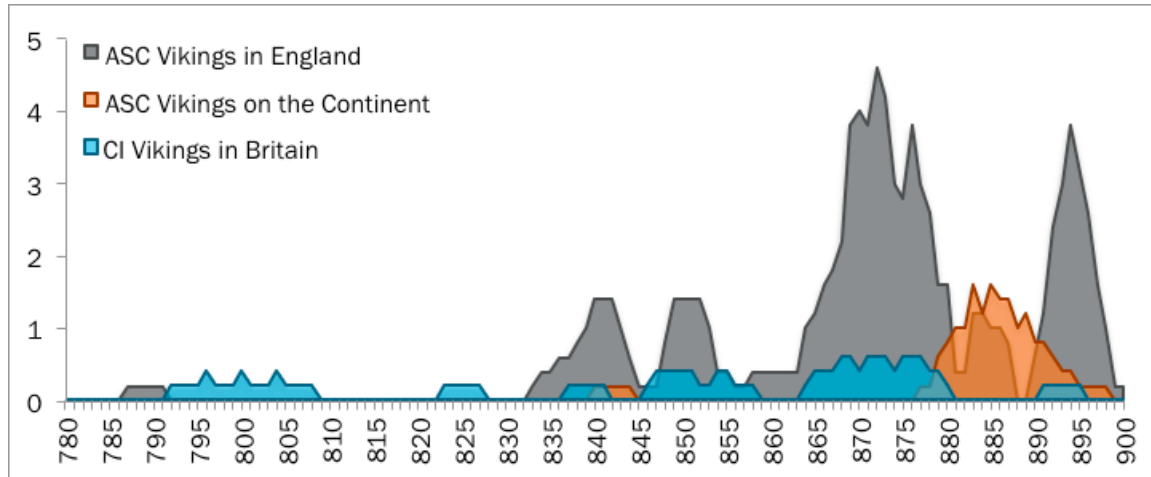
These overlaps are sufficient to demonstrate that the same viking groups operated on both sides of the Irish Sea, signaling that the practices of captive taking documented in Ireland likely occurred in England as well. In 871, raiders based in Ireland were even said to have taken “a very great plunder of men, of English and Britons (and Picts).”<sup>128</sup>

Further evidence arises from comparisons with the Frankish annals, which indicate that viking groups active in England were primed for captive taking when they arrived elsewhere. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* traces several instances when viking groups traveled between England and Francia (Chart 2.6). In each case, Frankish annalists who were sometimes reluctant to document captive taking nonetheless noted captive taking as a salient activity among these groups.

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<sup>127</sup> Scotland (11), England (2), Wales (2), Britain (4).

<sup>128</sup> Charles-Edwards, *CI*, 322, s.a. 871.2. Some scholars have seen this entry as evidence for the importation of slaves into Ireland, but there is a lack of collateral evidence that the Hiberno-Norse had established a slave society requiring imports from abroad. In contrast, a near contemporary, the anonymous author who wrote *The Life of Saint Findan* about ten years later, noted that the customary viking choice was to export captives toward Scandinavia at the earliest opportunity, if not necessarily immediately. Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, 503–4, prol. (3).



**Chart 2.6. Viking Activity in Britain in Insular Annals**

The first such intersection occurred in 842. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reported slaughters in London, Quentovic, and Rochester, suggesting that a single group of vikings was responsible for this series of raids tacking back and forth across the Channel.<sup>129</sup> Prudentius of Troyes likewise recorded this incident in the *Annals of St-Bertin*, making reference to captives:

A fleet of Northmen made a surprise attack at dawn on Quentovic, plundered, laid waste, capturing or massacring inhabitants of both sexes, left nothing except buildings they were paid to spare.<sup>130</sup>

Again, for the year 879, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recorded that one group of vikings departed from Fulham near London for Ghent in Flanders.<sup>131</sup> A chronicler in Mainz recorded their subsequent activities in the *Annals of Fulda*:

The Northmen sent ships laden with treasure and captives 200 in number back to their country. They themselves remained on watch in the same place, awaiting another opportune time for plundering.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Bately, *ASC, MS A*, 43, s.a. 839 (*recte* 842).

<sup>130</sup> Waitz, *AB*, 28, s.a. 842: “Ea tempestate Nordmannorum classis in emporio quod Quantovicus dicitur repentino sub lucem adventu depraedationibus, captivitate et nece sexus utriusque hominum adeo debachati sunt, ut nihil in eo praeter aedificia pretio redempta relinquerent.”

<sup>131</sup> Bately, *ASC, MS A*, 51, s.a. 880 (*recte* 879).

<sup>132</sup> Pertz and Kurze, *AF*, 99, s.a. 882: “Nordmanni vero de thesauris et numero captivorum CC naves

The chronicler of St-Vaast provided a more elaborate account:

The Northmen did not cease to lay waste the church and to kill and capture the Christian people. ... But the Northmen, in their desire for burning and plundering and in thirsting for human blood to the ruin and destruction of the kingdom, in the month of November established for themselves quarters at the monastery of Ghent and in the month of December the body of Saint Vaast was carried to Vaux on the Somme into the villa itself.<sup>133</sup>

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* continued to trace the movements of this group, which the *Annals of St-Vaast* reported taking captives again in both 880 and 881. These reports indicate that, although Anglo-Saxon sources provide little internal evidence for captives, outside sources agree that the vikings documented by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* were in fact slave raiders, habitually seizing captives for export.<sup>134</sup>

## Conclusion

Although authors writing throughout the early Viking Age were often reluctant to discuss viking captives, they nonetheless recorded repeated and unambiguous references to captive taking as a key aspect of viking activity. A consolidated view of this period provides an almost continuous record of viking captive taking, with peaks in slave raiding corresponding to the overall peaks of viking violence (Chart 2.7).

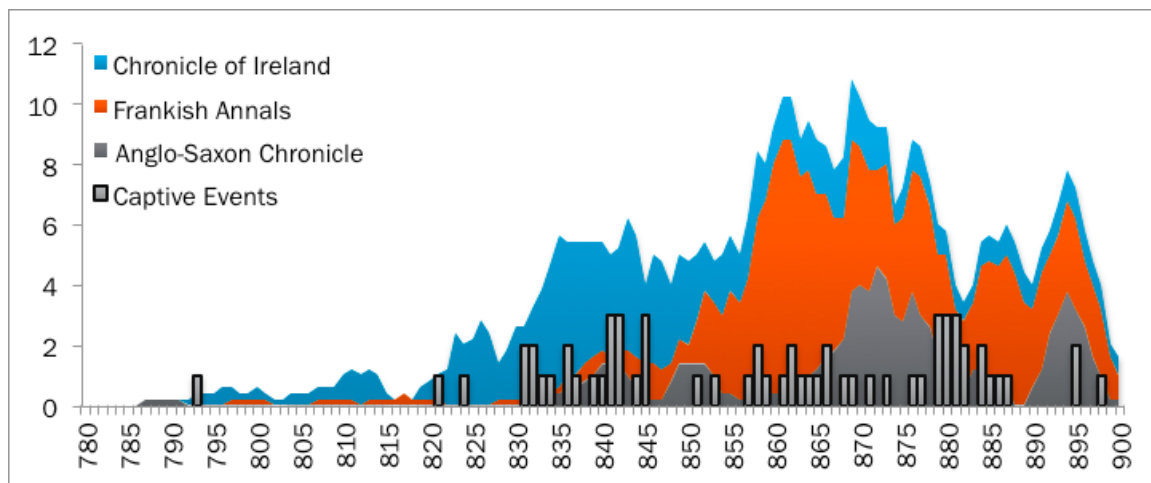
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onustas miserunt in patriam; ipsi in loco tuto se continent, iterum tempus oportunitatis praedandi opperientes.”

<sup>133</sup> von Simson, *AV*, 45–46, s.a. 879: “Nortmanni vero non cessant devastari aecclesiam populumque Christianum interfici captivarique. ... Sed Nortmanni incendiis et devastationibus inhiantes sanguinemque humanum sitientes ad interitum et perditionem regni mense Novembrio in Gandao monasterio sedem sibi ad hiemandum statuunt et mense Decembrio corpus sancti Vedasti Vallis supra Sumnam in villa sua defertur.”

<sup>134</sup> Lavelle, in contrast, made excellent use of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* but with scant reference to other contemporary chronicles from Ireland and Francia. As a result, slave raiding is entirely absent from his study of Anglo-Saxon warfare during the Viking-Age. Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars*.

After a period of diffuse but continuous raiding, early viking activity increased in regions one after another, beginning in Ireland in the 820s, followed by England in the 830s, and finally joined by Francia in the 850s. In each region, the beginning of pervasive raiding created a brief spurt of reports in captive taking, and seen from a wider perspective, the 830s mark the beginning of a high and sustained rate of viking activity. The overall peak of viking activity and reports of captive taking spanned the 860s and 870s. After the late 870s, reports of viking activity grew more diverse and irregular, suggesting that structural changes were underway.<sup>135</sup>



**Chart 2.7. Viking Activity and Captive Taking in Western Europe**

Reports of captive taking, when taken in isolation, appear marginal against the broader outlines of this activity. Nonetheless, by bringing these reports together,

<sup>135</sup> Various scholars have divided the Viking Age into diverse periods. For an influential definition of a “Second Viking Age” dating to the late 900s, see P. H. Sawyer, “The Two Viking Ages of Britain: A Discussion,” *Medieval Scandinavia* 2 (1969): 163–76, with discussion and response at 176–207. For a more recent effort to model phases of viking activity, see Christian Cooijmans, “Of Monarchs and Hydrarchs: A Conceptual Development Model for Viking Activity across the Frankish Realm (c. 750–940 CE)” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2018). For further on the transformations at stake, see James Barrett, “What Caused the Viking Age?,” *Antiquity* 82, no. 317 (2008): 671–85; Steven P. Ashby, “What Really Caused the Viking Age? The Social Context of Raiding and Exploration,” *Archaeological Dialogues* 22, no. 1 (2015): 89–106; James H. Barrett, “Maritime Societies and the Transformation of the Viking Age and Medieval World,” in *Maritime Societies of the Viking and Medieval World*, ed. James H. Barrett and Sarah Jane Gibbon (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2015), 1–13.

it appears that slave raiding occurred along the leading edges of viking activity and was a predictor for years of increased violence. The *Chronicle of Ireland* indicates that slave raiding was an integral aspect of the expansion of viking violence in the 820s, various sources confirm that the vikings who began to plague England in the 840s were habitual slave raiders, and Frankish annals and archives agree that captive taking was a common feature of the viking activity that intensified in France in the 850s. The raiding parties that proliferated throughout the 860s and 870s operated simultaneously across three documented slaving zones, while declining reports from Ireland belie the fact that Irish annalists had heightened their standard for remarking upon only the most exceptional slave raids during this period.

The explicit reports of viking captives plotted above preserve only a trace of much more pervasive slave raiding. Alcuin recorded captive taking in only one of his twelve letters documenting the viking raids in England. Hincmar showed similar reticence. He generally declined to document captives in his entries to the *Annals of St-Bertin*, despite treating their loss as an enduring problem that merited the attention of both church and king. Irish and Frankish annalists agreed that captive taking was a common activity among the viking raiders who operated in England, yet Asser and the author of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* both declined to document any particular instances of viking captive taking.

Perhaps the most significant indicator that captive taking was underreported arises from the firsthand accounts of the Frankish annals. The Cologne annalist who documented the raid on Xanten and more explicitly the annalist of St-Vaast both

pointed to captives taken from their communities, but these authors chose to focus instead on the devastation caused to their landscapes. Other annalists working from similar testimony sharpened this attention on burning and devastation, neglecting the more difficult task of accounting for human victims of viking raids. The resulting accounts marginalized captives, but this does little to obscure the overall impression found pervasively throughout early annals and archives that slave raiding was in fact a central feature of viking violence.

## Chapter Three

### THE CAROLINGIAN CRISIS: CAPTIVES IN FRANKISH TEXTS

Chapter Two advanced evidence that viking slave raiding was underreported. Alcuin described captives taken from Lindisfarne as meriting Charlemagne's attention in 793,<sup>1</sup> but he mentioned them only this once in twelve surviving letters about vikings in England.<sup>2</sup> Frankish annalists recorded vikings taking captives throughout the 800s,<sup>3</sup> but viking captives ceased to be mentioned in the documents of the Frankish courts after 862.<sup>4</sup> Hincmar of Rheims described ransom as a regular drain on church funds in a letter of 877,<sup>5</sup> and he repeated these complaints at a church council of 881.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alcuin, *Epistolae*, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Epp. 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 56–58, no. 20. For translation, see Stephen Allott, *Alcuin of York, c. A.D. 732 to 804 – His Life and Letters* (York: William Sessions, 1974), 36–38, no. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Dümmler (MGH Epp. 4) nos. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 101, 108, 124, 129, 130 (= Allott nos. 12, 48, 13, 29, 26, 27, 28, 41, 16, 160, 50, [None]).

<sup>3</sup> I count thirteen references from the *Annals of St-Bertin*, spanning the years 834 to 866; one from the *Annals of Xanten* for the year 845; four from the *Annals of Fulda* between 873 and 882; and eight from the *Annals of St-Vaast* between 879 and 885. G. Waitz, ed., *Annales Bertiniani* [= AB], MGH SS rer. Germ. 5 (Hanover: Hahn, 1883); for translation, see Janet L. Nelson, trans., *The Annals of St-Bertin*, Manchester Medieval Sources Online, Ninth-Century Histories 1 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Bernhard von Simson, ed., *Annales Xantenses* [= AX], MGH SS rer. Germ. 12 (Hanover: Hahn, 1909), 1–39; Georg H. Pertz and Friedrich Kurze, eds., *Annales Fuldenses*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 7 (Hanover: Hahn, 1891); for translation, see Timothy Reuter, trans., *The Annals of Fulda*, Ninth-Century Histories 2 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Bernhard von Simson, ed., *Annales Vedastini*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 12 (Hanover: Hahn, 1909), 40–82. No published translations exist for the *Annals of Xanten* or the *Annals of St-Vaast*.

<sup>4</sup> For this last reference, see Alfred Boretius and Victor Krause, eds., “Capitula Pistensia,” MGH Capit. 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1897), 302–10, at 305, c. 1: “Nobiles nostri et de episcopali ordine et de aliis ordinibus interierunt, et capti cum maximo detrimento et regni et ecclesiae sunt aut redempti aut interempti.” Based on stylistic clues, Hincmar of Rheims is the assumed author of this capitulary.

<sup>5</sup> Hincmar of Rheims, “Ad Ludovicum Balbum regem,” ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 125 (Jacques-Paul Migne, 1852), cols. 983–990, at col. 988A: “Sed redemptio et tributum, et non solum pauperes homines, sed et Ecclesias quondam divites jam evacuates habent.” On Hincmar's relationship



Nonetheless, he recorded no captives taken in his entries to the *Annals of St-Bertin* between 866 and 882. The frequent silences of these writers stemmed not merely from discomfort or embarrassment at the unknown fates of viking captives. In this chapter, I argue that they signaled a crisis in Carolingian rule.

Insofar as Alice Rio has argued that slave raiding could serve as a tool for political humiliation and domination, the ability or inability to defend against slave raiding could test the political legitimacy of early medieval rulers.<sup>7</sup> Charlemagne's rule (768–814) was deeply entangled with the lives captives and slaves, and over the course of his career, successful slave raiding helped define his image as an effective ruler.<sup>8</sup> With the arrival of viking raiders, however, Frankish monarchs found their positions changed from predators to prey. This shift precipitated a crisis of legitimacy that informed the rule of Louis the Pious (r. 813–840). But even as later Carolingian monarchs such as Charles the Bald (r. 840–877) could no longer point to captive taking as a sign of effective rule, Frankish churchmen began to write about the northward flow of slaves to assert their own spiritual forms of authority. At this

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with Louis the Stammerer, see Rachel Stone and Charles West, eds., *Hincmar of Rheims: Life and Work* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Hincmar of Rheims, "Capitula in synodo apud S. Macram," ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 125 (Jacques-Paul Migne, 1852), cols. 1069–1086, at col. 1086A, c. 8: "Sed redemptio et tributum non solum pauperes homines, sed et ecclesias quondam divites jam evacuas habent." On the redemption of churches as a means to prevent the capture of those who had sought sanctuary within, see Simon Coupland, "Holy Ground? The Plundering and Burning of Churches by Vikings and Franks in the Ninth Century," *Viator* 45, no. 1 (2014): 73–97, at 91–93.

<sup>7</sup> Alice Rio, *Slavery after Rome, 500–1000*, Oxford Studies in Medieval European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 21; David Wyatt, "The Significance of Slavery: Alternative Approaches to Anglo-Saxon Slavery," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 23 (2000): 327–47.

<sup>8</sup> As Timothy Reuter aptly observed: "for most of Europe in the eighth and ninth century it was the Franks who were the Vikings." Timothy Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 35 (1985): 75–94, at 91.

belated point, traces of the viking captives began to reappear in texts.

Methodologically, this study inverts approaches that are more typically used to investigate how categories of servitude have been constructed and implemented.<sup>9</sup> Thus Charles Verlinden's seminal volumes on medieval slavery gathered juridical and economic documents ultimately representing the perspectives of slave owners rather than the slaves themselves.<sup>10</sup> Regarding the Viking Age, Ruth Mazo Karras acknowledged that surviving texts tend to represent the attitudes of elites who used slavery as an economic and social category to construct dependency.<sup>11</sup> These and other efforts have led to a focus on what Joseph C. Miller called strategies of enslavement, or the ways in which people in the past have used categories of slavery to exploit others around them.<sup>12</sup> Rio in particular identified Miller's approach as well suited to early medieval evidence.<sup>13</sup> This chapter, in contrast, explores how faltering control over slave raiding reshaped images of captives and slaves in texts, providing another trace of viking captives taken from Frankish shores.

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<sup>9</sup> The historiography of medieval slave studies has been widely reviewed from numerous angles, but most medieval slave research has focused on examining how texts established the social and legal status of slaves. Most succinctly, see Alice Rio, "Freedom and Unfreedom in Early Medieval Francia: The Evidence of the Legal Formulae," *Past and Present* 193 (2006): 7–40, at 8–12.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiéval 1. Péninsule ibérique. France* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1955), 14–15; Charles Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiéval 2. Italie – Colonies italiennes du Levant – Levant latin – Empir byzantin* (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> Ruth Mazo Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*, Yale Historical Publications 135 (New Haven: Yale, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Rio, *Slavery after Rome*, 10–14.

## Charlemagne and the Spread of Carolingian Slavery

Charlemagne assumed sole rulership of the Frankish kingdom upon the death of his brother Carloman in 771. His reign witnessed a surge in documentary and literary production in what has become known as the Carolingian Renaissance.<sup>14</sup> Texts produced during this period implicate Charlemagne in seizing captives and supporting the institutions of slavery, but they also show changing attitudes toward these practices. As Charlemagne's rule progressed, authors began to document instances of captive taking and the use of slaves more frequently, culminating shortly after their monarch's death in Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*. While texts that documented Charlemagne's conflicts reflect a real increase in captive taking, they also provide traces for how Charlemagne's involvement with slavery came to be a legitimating feature of his rule.

Charlemagne established his reputation as a warrior king the year after his ascent to sole rulership of the Frankish kingdom. The earliest record of Charlemagne's campaigning survives in the *Annals Petaviani*, a text which appears to have been written as a contemporary record of events close to the Frankish court.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Giles Brown has helpfully defined the Carolingian Renaissance as a revival of learning and a movement to reform church institutions and Christian behavior. Giles Brown, "Introduction: The Carolingian Renaissance," in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1–51, at 1. Janet Nelson has pointed to modern editions as one measure of increased textual production. For example, capitularies from the preceding Merovingian period cover only 25 pages in the standard edition, while Carolingian capitularies occupy over 700 pages. Janet L. Nelson, "Literacy in Carolingian Government," in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 258–296, at 261. The space dedicated to Carolingian capitularies reflects not only increased textual production but also expanded manuscript histories and more elaborate contextual information available from other texts.

<sup>15</sup> The two surviving manuscripts of the *Annales Petaviani* cover events reaching back to the year 708, with one manuscript also listing an event for 697 (*recte* 687). Entries beginning with 772 are thought to be contemporary, continuing through 799. Jennifer Davis has argued that, although most of the

For 772, the annalist recorded: “The lord king Charles went out into Saxony, and he conquered Eresburg, and he came to a place which is called Irminsul, and he set fire to these places.”<sup>16</sup>

This sparse record of a raid on holy places survives as the earliest reported activity for a king who lived to see the first viking raids on Frankish churches, and it was reported in terms used later to describe instances of viking captive taking.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequent reports of Charlemagne’s early campaigns likewise focused on the religious aspects of these raids.<sup>18</sup> For example, the *Annals Petaviani* happily recorded how Charlemagne in 775 slaughtered “many thousands of pagans,”<sup>19</sup> while a poem composed in 777 celebrated Charlemagne’s efforts to conquer and convert the Saxons “with flashing sword.”<sup>20</sup> These efforts set the course for the Carolingian kingdom to

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so-called Minor Annals represent independent viewpoints on events, the unusual survival of the *Annals Petaviani* in manuscripts shared with royal capitularies suggests an origin closely associated with the Carolingian court. Jennifer R. Davis, *Charlemagne’s Practice of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 183–85.

<sup>16</sup> Georg Heinrich Pertz, ed., *Annales Petaviani* [= AP], MGH SS 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 3–18, at 16, s.a. 772: “Domnus rex Karolus perrexit in Saxoniam, et conquisivit Erisburgo [= Marsberg, NRW], et pervenit ad locum qui dicitur Ermensul, et succendit ea loca.”

<sup>17</sup> For example, as the *Annals of St-Bertin* describe the well-attested attack of 845, in which some captives were hung in sight of the Frankish army and others were reportedly later released at Horic’s command, the viking raiders plundered, laid waste, and burned with fire (“diripiunt, vastant atque incendiis concremant”). The only indication that these raiders also took captives occurs in Horic’s later command to release them. Waitz, *AB*, 33, s.a. 845.

<sup>18</sup> For comments on the so-called York Annals, which have preserved a more skeptical view of Charlemagne’s early campaigns, see Joanna Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750–870* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 93–133.

<sup>19</sup> Pertz, *AP*, 16, s.a. 775: “Domnus rex Karolus perrexit in Saxoniam, et conquisivit Sigeburgum, et interfecta multa milia paganorum, victor remeavit in Franciam.”

<sup>20</sup> Ernst Dümmler, ed., *De conversione Saxonum carmen*, MGH Poetae 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881), 380–81, at 381, l. 46: “Sibimet gladio vibrante subegit” (here echoing the *Aeneid*). The tenor of the poem belies ignorance of events from 778 onwards, suggesting composition and performance before the court over the winter of 777. For a new edition with reference to an additional manuscript, see Karl Hauck, *Karolingische Taufpfalzen im Spiegel hofnaher Dichtung. Überlegungen zur Ausmalung von Pfalzkirchen, Pfalzen und Reichsklöstern*, Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Jg. 1985, Nr. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1985). For

grow into a Christian empire,<sup>21</sup> but they also went hand-in-hand with the spread of Carolingian slavery.

In 780, Charlemagne began to establish churches in Saxony, for the first time installing an enduring Frankish presence there.<sup>22</sup> For the author of the *Annals of Lorsch*, writing in 785, this moment represented a turning point:

The lord king Charles went out again into Saxony with the army, and he continued to the great river Elbe; and all the Saxons surrendered themselves to him, and he received hostages from all, both nobles and dependents; and he divided that country among the bishops and priests and also the abbots, so that they might baptize in it and preach.<sup>23</sup>

This entry, without referencing slavery directly, nonetheless presented Charlemagne as a Christian king whose legitimacy was bound to his abilities to possess and distribute land—here placed under the jurisdiction of the church—as well as people—who here secured a place in the historical record by virtue of their status as hostages.

The extension of the Frankish church into Saxony also extended Carolingian institutions of slavery there. The *First Saxon Capitulary*, which Charlemagne issued after 780,<sup>24</sup> proclaimed:

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further commentary, see Mary Garrison, “The Emergence of Carolingian Latin Literature and the Court of Charlemagne,” in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 111–39.

<sup>21</sup> Owen M. Phelan, *The Formation of Christian Europe: The Carolingians, Baptism, and the Imperium Christianum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Pertz, *AP*, 16, s.a. 780: “Eodem quoque tempore aedificaveruntque ecclesias.”

<sup>23</sup> Georg Heinrich Pertz, ed., *Annales Laureshamenses [= AL]*, MGH SS 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 19–39, at 31, s.a. 780: “Domnus rex Carlus perrexit iterum in Saxonia cum exercitu, et pervenit usque ad fluvium magnum Heilba; et Saxones omnes tradiderunt se illi, et omnium accepit obsides, tam ingenuos quam et lidos; divisitque ipsam patriam inter episcopos et presbyteros seu et abbates, ut in ea baptizarent et praedicarent.”

<sup>24</sup> Current consensus points to 782 or 794/5 as the most likely dates. See Ingrid Rembold, *Conquest and Christianization: Saxony and the Carolingian World, 772–888*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series 108 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 24–25.

To each church let the inhabitants around it furnish a residence and two *mansa* of land, and for each one hundred and twenty persons, noble and freeborn and also dependents, they are to give one *servus* and one *ancilla* to that same church.<sup>25</sup>

While scholars remain uncertain whether the programs promulgated by this capitulary were implemented, it nonetheless reveals that Charlemagne accepted an idea of kingship that involved intervention in the distribution of slaves on behalf of his clients and administrators. Furthermore, it indicates that Charlemagne accepted the enslavement of at least two out of every 120 persons as a baseline necessary to support the Saxon church.

Documents surrounding the reign of Charlemagne indicate that such a church would be poor indeed by Frankish standards. An opponent of Alcuin, for example, accused the cleric of possessing no fewer than twenty thousand slaves (*servi*), presumably distributed across the four monasteries in his care. Alcuin cleared himself of this charge, not by confronting the scale of this accusation, but rather by denying personal procurement of slaves or the corruption of his soul:

The aforesaid father reproached even me for a multitude of riches and of slaves up to the number of twenty thousand, giving no regard to the spirit in which one possesses worldly things. One person possesses worldly things, and another is possessed by them. One person has riches but does not possess them, and another possesses riches but has nothing. I have never acquired a person to serve me, desiring instead to

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<sup>25</sup> Alfred Boretius, ed., “Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae,” MGH Leges Capit. 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1883), 68–70, at 69, c. 15: “Ad unamquamque ecclesiam curte et duos mansos terrae pagenses ad ecclesiam recurrentes condonant, et inter centum viginti homines, nobiles et ingenuis similiter et litos, servum et ancillam eidem ecclesiae tribuant.” Despite surviving in a single ninth-century manuscript, the *Capitulatio* appears in four separate editions in the MGH series: (1) ed. Pertz, MGH Leges LL 1, 1835, (2) ed. Boretius, following Pertz with expanded apparatus, MGH Leges LL 5, 1889, (3) ed. Boretius, with novel divergences from Pertz, MGH Leges Capit. 1, 1883, and (4) ed. von Schwerin, MGH Leges Fontes iuris 4, 1918. I follow here the Boretius edition of 1883, which is the edition most frequently cited. On the manuscript, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 289, see, in brief, Yitzhak Hen, “Charlemagne’s Jihad,” *Viator* 37 (2006): 33–51, at 37 n. 29.

serve with devoted love every servant of Christ my God.<sup>26</sup>

Alcuin's accuser perhaps exaggerated the scale of Alcuin's slave holding, but a further point of comparison survives from around 823. In an inventory of the properties of St-Germain-des-Prés, of which 20 quires survive, about 5% of the 2,788 households listed were headed by slaves, indicating that this single monastery held at least several hundred slaves among its possessions.<sup>27</sup>

As the Saxon Wars progressed, surviving records indicate increased occurrences of captive taking, with at least some captives dispensed for the needs of the church. In some cases, these captives were identified as hostages (*obsides*), suggesting that they were retained for their political value. Adam Kosto has identified such records of hostages taken from the Saxons for 772, 775, 776, 779, and then every year from 794 to 798.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, the forced delivery of hostages could differ little

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<sup>26</sup> Alcuin's accuser was the Bishop Elipandus of Toledo. His response dates from June in the year 800. Alcuin, *Epistolae*, 332, no. 200: "Inproperans et mihi praefatus pater divitiarum multitudinem, servorum usque ad viginti milia numerositatem; ignorans, quo animo quis habeat saeculum. Aliud est habere saeculum, aliud est haberi a saeculo. Est qui habet divitias, et non habet; est qui non habet, et habet. Hominem vero numquam ad meum comparavi servitium, sed magis devota caritate omnibus Christi dei mei famulis servire desiderans." For partial translation, see Allott, *Alcuin of York*, 117–18, no. 111. For commentary, see Ross Samson, "The End of Early Medieval Slavery," in *The Work of Work: Servitude, Slavery, and Labor in Medieval England*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen and Douglas Moffat (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1994), 95–124, at 110.

<sup>27</sup> Of at least 24 original quires of the Polyptych of Irminon, 20 now survive. As Benjamin Guérard has noted, the numbers given for Alcuin's properties suggest either a much larger population or a much greater proportion of the enslaved. I find Guérard's suggestion that Alcuin's accuser counted *coloni* and *lidi* as *servi* unconvincing. Simple exaggeration seems a more likely explanation. If so, the numbers from St-Germain suggest this was a single order of magnitude or less. Benjamin Guérard, *Polyptyque de l'abbé Irminon de Saint-Germain-des-Prés, ou dénombrement des manses, des serfs et des revenus de l'abbaye de Saint-Germain-des-Prés sous le règne de Charlemagne*, vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1844), 1:359 (Alcuin), 891–897 (summary tables).

<sup>28</sup> Kosto has argued that Charlemagne received these hostages as tokens of submission—in the context of Saxony, linked specifically to baptism and conversion—rather than as instruments of surety. Adam J. Kosto, "Hostages in the Carolingian World (714–840)," *Early Medieval Europe* 11, no. 2 (2002): 123–47; Adam J. Kosto, *Hostages in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 53–54, 66–68, 70–71, 223–24. For further discussion of the list of hostages gathered to Mainz around 805, see Janet L. Nelson, "Charlemagne and Empire," in *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions*

from the violent seizure of captives. For example, the *Annals of Lorsch* recorded for 797:

And then once again all the Saxons came to him from every frontier and every corner where they lived, and he took either hostages or however much he wanted from them.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, captives and hostages often received the same treatment. As an author of Corvey recalled in 836, Charlemagne had redistributed “hostages and captives” from the Saxon Wars to his monasteries and churches.<sup>30</sup> An author of Paderborn similarly recorded that the first bishop of his diocese began his career as a Saxon hostage under Charlemagne, sent as a boy to serve the church in Würzburg but later receiving a tonsure and an education.<sup>31</sup>

More frequently, people taken from Saxony were simply referred to as captives (*captivi*) and achieved less distinguished ends. The annalist of Lorsch reported

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in *Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Jennifer R. Davis and Michael McCormick (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 223–34.

<sup>29</sup> Pertz, *AL*, 37, s.a. 797: “Et tunc denuo venerunt ad eum omnes Saxoni de universis finibus et angulis ubi habitabant, et tulit inde aut obsides aut de ipsis quantum ipse voluit.” In the account of the *Royal Frankish Annals*, Charlemagne “received the whole Saxon people into submission through hostages.” Georg H. Pertz and Friedrich Kurze, eds., *Annales Regni Francorum [= RFA]*, MGH SS Rer. Germ. 6 (Hanover: Hahn, 1895), 100, s.a. 797: “Tota Saxonum gente in deditionem per obsides accepta.”

<sup>30</sup> Philippus Jaffé, ed., *Translatio Sancti Viti*, in *Monumenta Corbeiensia*, Bibliotheca Rerum Germanicarum 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1864), 1–26, at 6–7: “Obsides et captivos tempore conflictionis adduxerat, per monasteria Francorum distribuit, ad legem quoque sanctam atque monasticam disciplinam institui praecepit.”

<sup>31</sup> Anonymous of Paderborn, *Translatio Sancti Liborii*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 4 (Hanover: Hahn, 1841), 149–157, at 151, c. 5: “Erat tunc temporis in clero Wirziburgensi vir magnae humilitatis atque modestiae, Hathumarus nomine, de gente nostra, hoc est Saxonica, oriundus; qui cum adhuc puer esset, belli tempore Karolo imperatori obses datus, illic servari iussus est. Ubi postea tonsoratus, ac studiis litterarum traditus, in virum perfectum moribus et eruditione profecit. Hic ex praecepto principis primus est Patherbrunnensis aecclisiae ordinatus episcopus.” The *Translatio* commemorates events of 836 but is addressed to Biso, who held the see of Paderborn between 887 and 909. The author also had knowledge of the Saxon Poet’s *Life of Charlemagne*, written after Arnulf assumed kingship over East Francia ca. 888, but he had not yet received news of a victory over the Northmen at the Dyle River in November 891. For further comments on these texts of Corvey and Paderborn, see Kosto, “Hostages in the Carolingian World,” 145; Kosto, *Hostages in the Middle Ages*, 68.



Charlemagne taking numerous such captives in 796:

He went about through the land of the Saxons, where there were rebels, burning and laying it waste, whence he also led captives, men and women and children, and booty beyond measure.<sup>32</sup>

In 799, the Lorsch annalist indicated an intensification of these forced displacements by describing how Charlemagne took Saxons, resettled them, and redistributed their lands:

And the lord king took from there a multitude of Saxons with women and children, and he distributed them through diverse lands within his borders, and he divided their land among his faithful, that is bishops, priests, counts, and his other vassals.<sup>33</sup>

The *Annals Petaviani* described the events of 799 by flatly proclaiming that whomever Charlemagne deemed unfaithful, he subjected to slavery.<sup>34</sup>

Following Charlemagne's death in 814, Einhard forged these actions into an emblematic victory for Charlemagne's rule. Einhard had joined the royal court in the 790s, at the height of the Saxon Wars.<sup>35</sup> Sometime between 817 and the early 820s, he wrote his groundbreaking *Life of Charlemagne* as the first major biography of a

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<sup>32</sup> Pertz, *AL*, 37, s.a. 796: "Et ipso anno ipse rex Carolus demoratus est in Saxonia cum duobus filiis suis, id est Carolo et Clodoveo, circuivit terram Saxanorum, ubi rebelles fuerunt, incendendo et vastando eam, et captivos inde ducebat, viros et mulieres et parvulos, et praeda innumberabilem multitudinem." By comparison, the *Annales Petaviani* reports only hostages taken this year, and only from the region of Dreingau in Saxony, while the *Royal Frankish Annals* makes no note of captives whatsoever.

<sup>33</sup> Pertz, 38, s.a. 799: "Et domnus rex inde tullit multitudinem Saxanorum cum milieribus et infantibus, et collocavit eos per diversas terras in finibus suis, et ipsam terram eorum divisit inter fideles suos, id est episcopos, presbyteros, comites et alios vassos suos."

<sup>34</sup> Pertz, *AP*, 17, s.a. 799: "Mittens Karolum filium suum trans fluvium Wiseram, ut quotquot hisdem partibus de infidelibus suis invenissent, suae servituti subiugaret."

<sup>35</sup> Lewis Thorpe, ed., *Two Lives of Charlemagne* (London: Penguin, 1969), 16. Einhard also entered Charlemagne's court at about the same time as the composition of the first installment of the *Royal Frankish Annals*, c. 790. Rosamond McKitterick, "The Illusion of Royal Power in the Carolingian Annals," *English Historical Review* 115 (2000): 1–20, at 8.

medieval ruler.<sup>36</sup> Einhard devoted extended attention to the Saxon Wars to highlight Charlemagne's martial prowess, and captive taking featured as both a cause for and a resolution of these conflicts.

According to Einhard, both Franks and Saxons had engaged in a series of minor slave raids that Charlemagne eventually escalated into open war:

The Saxons had judged it no dishonor to violate and transgress the laws of God and man. As such, they were able to disturb the peace daily since our borders and theirs are contiguous and flat nearly everywhere, except for a few places where great forests or mountain ranges divide the fields with a definite boundary. Murder and abduction and arson continued ceaselessly on both sides. These things so aggravated the Franks that they judged it fitting not to continue in turn but rather to take up an open war against them.<sup>37</sup>

As Charlemagne “avenged the Saxon perfidy and weighed a fitting punishment upon them,”<sup>38</sup> Einhard projected a parallel conclusion to his account:

When all those accustomed to resistance had been overthrown and reduced into his power, he transported ten thousand men taken up

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<sup>36</sup> Matthew Innes and Rosamond McKitterick, “The Writing of History,” in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 193–220, at 203–8. For a date of 821x823 corresponding with the birth of Charles the Bald, see Karl Heinrich Krüger, “Neue Beobachtungen Zur Datierung von Einhards Karlsvita,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 32 (1998): 124–45. McKitterick has persisted in advocating an early date. Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 12–13. However, in another well-presented discussion, Mayke de Jong has preferred 821x823. Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814–840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 67–69. Matthias Tischler's proposal that Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne* is a critique of Louis the Pious dated to 829/30 has been largely rejected. Matthias M. Tischler, *Einhards Vita Karoli: Studien zur Entstehung, Überlieferung und Rezeption* (Hanover: Hahn, 2002), 152–87. See further Julia M. H. Smith, review of *Einhards Vita Karoli: Studien zur Entstehung, Überlieferung und Rezeption*, by Matthias M. Tischler, *Speculum* 79 (2004): 846–48.

<sup>37</sup> Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. Louis Halphen, 3rd ed., *Les classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1947), 22, c. 7: “Neque divina neque humana jura vel polluere vel transgredi inhonestum arbitrabantur. Suberant et causae, quae cotidie pacem conturbare poterant, termini videlicet nostri et illorum poene ubique in plano contigui, praeter pauca loca in quibus vel silvae majores vel montium juga interjecta utrorumque agros certo limite disterminant, in quibus caedes et rapinae et incendia vicissim fieri non cessabant. Quibus adeo Franci sunt irritati ut non jam vicissitudinem reddere, sed apertum contra eos bellum suscipere dignum judicarent.”

<sup>38</sup> Einhard, 24, c. 7: “Perfidiam ulcisceretur et dignam ab eis poenam exigeret.”

from among those who live on either shore of the Elbe, and he distributed them, with their wives and their children, here and there throughout Gaul and Germany in diverse allotments.<sup>39</sup>

Instances of captive taking, according to Einhard, bookended Charlemagne's longest and most paradigmatic war.

Einhard's description of ten thousand Saxon captives, like other key passages in his *Life of Charlemagne*, echoes passages from Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars*.<sup>40</sup> Augustus had similarly driven a Germanic tribe across the Elbe and taken hostages; when treaties were broken, he sold them into slavery.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, Einhard's passage is more than a literary borrowing. His report of ten thousand captive families aligned with the vast numbers of victims seen in other Carolingian texts.<sup>42</sup> The *Lesser Annals of Lorsch*, for example, reported that Charlemagne deported a third of the people of Saxony in 794.<sup>43</sup> By wedding Suetonian models to accounts of slaving found in the Frankish annals,<sup>44</sup> Einhard crafted a new vision of Carolingian rulership

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<sup>39</sup> Einhard, 24, c. 7: "Dum, omnibus qui resistere solebant profligatis et in suam potestatem redactis, decem milia hominum ex his qui utrasque ripas Albis fluminis incolebant cum uxoribus et parvulis sublatis transtulit et huc atque illuc per Galliam et Germaniam multimoda divisione distribuit."

<sup>40</sup> On Suetonius as a source for Einhard, see the seminal study of Siegmund Hellmann, "Einhard's literarische Stellung," *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 27 (1932): 40–110; reprinted in Siegmund Hellmann, "Einhard's literarische Stellung," in *Ausgewählte Abhandlungen zur Historiographie und Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961), 159–230. Matthew Innes has further demonstrated that Einhard's readers would have recognized his classical debts. Matthew Innes, "The Classical Tradition in the Carolingian Renaissance: Ninth-Century Encounters with Suetonius," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 3, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 265–82.

<sup>41</sup> Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum libri VIII*, ed. Maximilian Ihm, C. Suetoni tranquilli opera 1 (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1907), 60–62, II.21.

<sup>42</sup> Rembold, *Conquest and Christianization*, 51–53.

<sup>43</sup> Georg Heinrich Pertz, ed., *Annales Laurissenses minores*, MGH SS 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 112–23, at 119, Codex Fuldensis c. 26 (s.a. 794): "Karlus in Saxoniam pergens Saxones obtinuit, et tertium de eis hominem in Francia educens conlocavit."

<sup>44</sup> The most proximal account is likely from the *Royal Frankish Annals*: "In the summer, having led an army into Saxony, those who lived across the Elbe and in Wigmodi—the Saxons with their women and children—he transported into Francia, and he gave the countryside across the Elbe to the

that hinged on the taking of captives.

Together, these sources portray Charlemagne as a ruler whose prosperity rested on taking large numbers of captives and holding large numbers of slaves. The institutions of the church, deeply implicated in Carolingian slave holding, served as instruments of Charlemagne's rule in Saxony and elsewhere. Charlemagne helped supply slaves to the church, and the Saxon Wars provided opportunities not only to enslave conquered captives but also to extend Carolingian modes of slavery and rulership into new lands. Einhard, by underlining these activities as parts of the emblematic victory of Charlemagne's rule, provided a model with which Charlemagne's successors—or at least their biographers—would need to contend. As viking violence increased, however, this model became an unattainable goal.

### **Louis the Pious and the Crisis of Slaves**

The heyday of viking raiding on Francia was yet to come, but early reports of raiding began to surface by 799.<sup>45</sup> Charlemagne's offensive wars ended around the same time,<sup>46</sup> and by 809, the emperor enlisted the support of fasting and prayer to help combat "the pagan peoples encamped around our borders in continual war."<sup>47</sup>

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Abodrites." Pertz and Kurze, *RFA*, 118, s.a. 804: "Aestate autem in Saxoniam ducto exercitu omnes, qui trans Albiam et in Wihmuodi habitabant, Saxones cum mulieribus et infantibus transtulit in Franciam et pagos Transalbianos Abodritis dedit." For further examples, see Rembold, *Conquest and Christianization*, 54–60.

<sup>45</sup> Alcuin, *Epistolae*, 309, no. 184 [= Allott no. 65].

<sup>46</sup> Timothy Reuter, "The End of Carolingian Military Expansion," in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 391–405.

<sup>47</sup> Alfred Boretius, ed., "Karoli ad Ghaerbaldum episcopum epistola," *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1883), 244–46, at 245: "Paganorum gentium circa marcas nostras sedentia bella continua."

Nonetheless, while Charlemagne still lived, those around him continued to curate an image of the conqueror undefiled, and Einhard endeavored to carry this image into Charlemagne's afterlife. Anxieties about slavery, however, began to attach themselves to Charlemagne's memory almost immediately after his death in 814, and they would dog Charlemagne's son and successor Louis the Pious throughout his life.

According to Einhard, Charlemagne's slaves had proliferated in such numbers that his will divided equal parts of his wealth between his children and his slaves.<sup>48</sup> Many of these slaves undoubtedly worked on royal estates, but some were attached to the royal household as well. Einhard described one displaced Saxon, a woman named Gersvinda, as Charlemagne's concubine and the mother of his daughter Adaltrude.<sup>49</sup> Other concubines also populated Charlemagne's household, and Frankish texts indicate that female captives were available for sexual access in lesser households as well.<sup>50</sup> Janet Nelson has noted that Charlemagne's interment in a sarcophagus

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<sup>48</sup> Charlemagne set aside two-thirds of his wealth for the church. From the remaining third, he allotted one quarter to his children, one quarter to the church, one quarter to the poor, and one quarter to his slaves. Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, 96–98, c. 33.

<sup>49</sup> Einhard, 56, c. 18: "Post cujus [Fastrada's] mortem quattuor habuit concubinas, Madelgardam scilicet, quae peperit ei filiam nomine Ruothildem, Gersuindam Saxonici generis, de qua ei filia nomine Adaltrud nata est, et Reginam, quae ei Drogonem et Hugum genuit, et Adallindem, ex qua Theodericum procreavit." Gersvinda was one of at least five concubines that Charlemagne kept, in addition to his series of four wives; his first relationship with Himiltrude is variously described. Although it seems unlikely, Einhard's similar description of Alcuin as a Saxon opens the possibility that Gersvinda was from Britain rather than Saxony. Einhard, 74, c. 25: "Alcoinum cognomento Albinum, item diaconem, de Britannia Saxonici generis hominem." Frankish authors, unlike their Anglo-Saxon contemporaries, did not distinguish the Saxons of the Continent from those of England. Story, *Carolingian Connections*, 94.

<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the best known example is Balthild (d. c. 680). Anonymous, *Vita Sanctae Balthildis*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS Rer. Merov. 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1888), 475–508. For translation, see Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg, and E. Gordon Whatley, eds., "Balthild, Queen of Neustria," in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 264–78. See further Janet L. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: The Careers of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History," in *Medieval Women: Dedicated and Presented to Professor Rosalind M. T. Hill on the Occasion of Her Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 31–77.

featuring the Rape of Proserpina might have evoked the many abductions of women that checkered Charlemagne's career.<sup>51</sup>

Once the emperor's tomb was sealed, Charlemagne's critics began to voice outright condemnation for his indulgences in slaves. A monk of Reichenau named Wetti died in late 824, leaving behind stories of a miraculous vision he experienced on his deathbed. By early 825, the aging monk Heito, who had recently retired from his duties as Abbot of Reichenau and Bishop of Basel, composed a prose account of Wetti's vision, and by 826, the aspiring litterateur Walahfrid, then also a monk of Reichenau, revised Heito's account into verse.<sup>52</sup>

Among those whom Wetti encountered in his vision, he saw Charlemagne with an unspecified animal gnawing at parts which indicated his was a punishment for lust.<sup>53</sup> The aging abbot Heito used this scene to sharpen his critique of churchmen who had pursued their own lusts among the concubines of Charlemagne's court.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Janet L. Nelson, "Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regiment?," in *The Frankish World, 750–950* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 223–42, at 223–25.

<sup>52</sup> See, in general, Richard Matthew Pollard, "Charlemagne's Posthumous Reputation and the Visio Wettini, 825–1851," in *Charlemagne: les temps, les espaces, les hommes: Construction et déconstruction d'un règne*, ed. Rolf Grosse and Michel Sot, Haut Moyen Âge 34 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 529–49. On the sins critiqued by Heito and partially suppressed by Walahfrid, see Albrecht Diem, "Teaching Sodomy in a Carolingian Monastery: A Study of Walahfrid Strabo's and Heito's *Visio Wettini*," *German History* 34, no. 3 (September 2016): 385–401.

<sup>53</sup> Heito, *Visio Wettini*, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poetae 2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1884), 267–75, at 271, c. 11; for translation, see Heito, "Wetti's Vision," in *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*, ed. Eileen Gardiner, Medieval and Renaissance Texts (New York: Italica Press, 1989), 65–80; Walahfrid Strabo, *Visio Wettini*, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poetae 2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1884), 301–33, at 318–19, ll. 446–74; for partial translation (ll. 446–465), see Walahfrid Strabo, "Visio Wettini: Charlemagne in Hell," in *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, trans. Peter Godman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 214–15.

<sup>54</sup> According to Heito: "They did not watch for winning souls; abounding in luxuries, they hastened to prostitutes; and so it happens, that they could be intercessors neither for themselves nor for others." Heito, *Visio Wettini*, 270, c. 7: "Animabus lucrandis non invigilant, deliciis affluentes in scorta prouunt; et ita evenit, ut nec sibi nec aliis intercessores esse possint."

The young poet Walahfrid, in contrast, developed the scene into a broader critique of power that resonated among reforming factions then at court.<sup>55</sup> In both cases, Charlemagne's collection of concubines had contributed to an environment of sexual license that demanded reform.

Charlemagne's successor Louis the Pious came of age amid warnings that the unjust collection of slaves could injure both king and kingdom, and these warnings had preceded the blackening of his father's memory. While still a young subking in Aquitaine, Louis had been coached by the prolific bishop Smaragdus. For Louis's benefit, Smaragdus produced a remarkable document known as the *Royal Way*, a seminal text for the mirror of princes genre that flourished during the later Middle Ages.<sup>56</sup> Smaragdus prepared this work for the ascendant ruler during Charlemagne's last years, between 811 and 814.<sup>57</sup> He counseled love for God and neighbor, and he extolled a series of ancillary virtues. As he neared his end, Smaragdus penned a chapter, *May it be forbidden that there be captives*, offering Louis a rare piece of juridical guidance. He advised his king: "Forbid it, most clement king, lest there be captives in your kingdom. Be the most faithful son of the Father, crying to him daily with the rest of your brethren: *Our father, who art in heaven.*"<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Peter Godman, *Poets and Emperors: Frankish Politics and Carolingian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 130–35; Jong, *Penitential State*, 137–41.

<sup>56</sup> Otto Eberhardt, *Via Regia: Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds von St. Mihiel und seine literarische Gattung*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 28 (Munich: Fink, 1977). Most recently, see Rutger Kramer, *Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire: Ideals and Expectations during the Reign of Louis the Pious (813–828)*, Early Medieval North Atlantic (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

<sup>57</sup> Matthew D. Ponesse, "Standing Distant from the Fathers: Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel and the Reception of Early Medieval Learning," *Traditio* 67 (2012): 71–99, at 74.

<sup>58</sup> Smaragdus of St-Mihiel, *Via regia*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 102 (Paris, 1851), cols. 931–70, at col. 967B, c. 30: "Prohibe ergo, clementissime rex, ne in regno tuo captivitas fiat. Esto fidelissimus

Charles Verlinden minimized the significance of this appeal, seeing it as part of a long-term ecclesiastical movement to end the enslavement of Christian captives.<sup>59</sup> Michael McCormick and Alice Rio dismissed Smaragdus's efforts more narrowly as a bid to stop the sale of Christian captives to pagans.<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, Smaragdus himself boldly proclaimed:

Among other saving precepts and right works, for the sake of his great charity, each one should dismiss his slaves [*servi*] free, considering that nature has not subjugated these to them, but sin [*culpa*]; indeed we are created equal in condition, but some by sin [*culpa*] are subjugated to others. ... Therefore, do honor, most just and pious king, to your God above all. ... Whether in the slaves [*servi*] subjugated to you or in the wealth permitted you, by making them free and by going to give alms, do not cease to obey his precepts. ... Remember that he who indulges his brother with mercy will himself receive mercy from God.<sup>61</sup>

This appeal would have had little place just a few years earlier as Charlemagne enslaved and slaughtered Saxons to further his Christian image. The ascendant Louis the Pious, in contrast, would endeavor to heed Smaragdus's advice to focus not on enslaving others but rather on the good ordering of himself and of his kingdom, perhaps hoping as well to avoid the censure his father had received.

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illius Patris filius ad quem quotidie clamas cum cæteris fratribus: *Pater noster, qui es in cælis.*"

<sup>59</sup> Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiéval* 1, 705: "On le trouve chez Smaragde, abbé de Saint Mihiel, dont la *Via Regia* invite le roi à prohiber l'esclavage : « Prohibe ergo, clementissime rex, ne in regno tuo captivitas fiat ! » Le mot dont il se sert mérite d'être souligné : *captivitas* et non pas *servitudo* ou *servitium.*"

<sup>60</sup> Michael McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 750–51; Rio, *Slavery after Rome*, 28 n. 36, 227.

<sup>61</sup> Smaragdus of St-Mihiel, *Via regia*, col. 968A–C, c. 30: "Et inter alia præcepta salutaria, et opera recta, propter nimiam illius charitatem unusquisque liberos debet dimittere servos, considerans quia non illi eos natura subegit, sed culpa; conditione enim æqualiter creati sumus, sed aliis alii culpa subacti. ... Honorifica ergo, justissime ac piissime rex, pro omnibus Deum tuum ... sive in servis tibi subactis, sive in divitiis tibi concessis, ex illis liberos faciendo, et ex istis eleemosynas tribuendo, præceptis illius obedire non cesses. ... Memento quia a Domino misericordiam accipiet, qui fratri misericorditer indulserit."



Louis's efforts to rule, however, were undercut by dissent at home and disasters from abroad. In 833, Louis was deposed in favor of his sons through a church synod, and in 834, he regained his embattled throne. Meanwhile, viking raiders began to make serious inroads on Francia's North Sea coast.<sup>62</sup> In 834, the *Annals of St-Bertin* reported the earliest description of viking captives among the annals of the Frankish court: "They plundered everything. Some people they killed, some they abducted as captives, and they consumed the region with fire."<sup>63</sup> Louis made unsuccessful arrangements for defense in 835, and in 836, a Danish king claimed to have captured and killed the perpetrators of a recent raid, demanding payment for his troubles. The entry for 837 despaired:

Now the emperor, taking counsel in a general assembly, held a public inquiry with those magnates to whom he had relegated guardianship. Discussion revealed that they were not able to resist their enemies partly due to the impossibility of the task, and partly due to their own disobedience.<sup>64</sup>

Louis had been raised with an imperative against slave raiding, his father's memory had been tarnished by connections to slavery, and he was now finding his subjects victimized by slave raiders.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Note, however, that the archaeological record suggests that Dorestad maintained an enviable measure of its prosperity throughout this period. Simon Coupland, "Boom and Bust at Ninth-Century Dorestad," in *Dorestad in an International Framework: New Research on Centres of Trade and Coinage in Carolingian Times*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 95–103, at 102.

<sup>63</sup> Waitz, *AB*, 9, s.a. 834: "Omnia diripuerunt. Homines autem quosdam occiderunt, quosdam captivos abduxerunt partemque eius igni cremaverunt." On authorship of the *Annals of St-Bertin* in the palace chapel through the 830s, see Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin*, 6–7.

<sup>64</sup> Waitz, *AB*, 14, s.a. 837: "Imperator vero, generali conventu habito, publice cum his quaestionem habuit, quos principes ad eandem custodiam delegaverat. Qua discussione patuit, partim impossibilitate, partim quorundam inoboedientia eos inimicis non potuisse resistere."

<sup>65</sup> For an extended discussion of primary source reports on viking violence in ninth-century Francia, see Lesley Anne Morden, "How Much Material Damage Did the Northmen Actually Do to

Amid these years of crisis, an auxiliary bishop of Trier named Thegan undertook a biography of Louis in 836 or 837, and Louis's relationship to slavery became a defining feature of his work.<sup>66</sup> Thegan avoided any direct discussion of the recent slave raids on Francia, emphasizing instead the need to maintain institutions of slavery within Francia itself. According to Thegan, one of Louis's first responsibilities was to prevent slippage between slavery and freedom. Upon assuming sole rule, Louis dispatched *missi* throughout Francia to administer justice:

When they went out, they found an innumerable multitude of the oppressed, either from the appropriation of their patrimonies or from the plundering of their freedom. Unjust ministers, counts, and officeholders were enforcing these things through evil devices. The aforementioned prince ordered destroyed all such acts, which had been impiously done by the hands of wicked ministers in the days of his father. He returned patrimonies to the oppressed, absolved those unjustly reduced to servitude, and ordered charters made for all, and by his own hand he confirmed these with his signature. Doing these things took a long time indeed!<sup>67</sup>

With this passage, Thegan—like Smaragdus before him—established the first priority of a good king to be policing the social order, and he described one of the most nefarious act a king could permit to be the plundering of freedom or letting his

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Ninth-Century Europe?" (Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2007), 78–174.

<sup>66</sup> In addition to the troubles mentioned above, as the *Annals of St-Bertin* recorded a viking raid on Walcheren in 837, which might also have preceded the completion of Thegan's work: "They slaughtered many and took away more." Waitz, *AB*, 13, s.a. 837: "Multos trucidaverunt, plures depraedati sunt."

<sup>67</sup> Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. 64 (Hanover: Hahn, 1995), 167–277, at 194, c.13: "Qui egressi invenerunt innumeram multitudinem oppressorum aut ablatione patrimonii, aut expoliatione libertatis, quod iniqui ministri, comites et locopositi per malum ingenium exercebant. Hęc omnia supradictus princeps destruere iussit acta, quę impie in diebus patris sui per iniquorum ministrorum manus facta fuerant. Patrimonia oppressis reddidit, iniustę ad servitium inclinatorum absolvit, et omnibus praecepta facere iussit et manu propria cum subscriptione confirmavit. Fecit enim hoc diu temporis." For translation, see Thegan, "The Deeds of Emperor Louis," in *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: The Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer*, trans. Thomas F. X. Noble (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 187–218.

subjects be unjustly reduced to servitude.<sup>68</sup>

Thegan likewise feared that the upward mobility of slaves could overturn the social order.<sup>69</sup> This became a prevailing concern in his work, culminating in an extended diatribe against Ebbo, the Archbishop of Rheims, who had sanctioned Louis's deposition in favor of his sons in 833.<sup>70</sup> Later Carolingian authors, pondering the documents of this messy time, would claim that Louis and Ebbo had been "milk brothers" of the same wet nurse.<sup>71</sup> Regardless of their precise relationship, Thegan portrayed it as one of a ruler overindulging a favored slave.

He opened his diatribe by juxtaposing Ebbo's high office with his low birth, casting Ebbo as "the bishop of Rheims, who originally came from a race of slaves."<sup>72</sup> Thegan admonished his readers that Holy Scripture proclaimed: "Feed and rod and burden for the ass, bread and discipline and work for the slave" (Sirach 33:25).<sup>73</sup> He then censured Ebbo for escaping a more suitable office: "Your fathers were shepherds of goats, not counselors of princes."<sup>74</sup> Thegan concluded his complaint: "Those who

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<sup>68</sup> Ironically, Hincmar later worked to ensure that those subjected to slavery would remain so. Josiane Barbier, "The Praetor Does Concern Himself with Trifles": Hincmar, the Polptych of St-Remi and the Slaves of Courtilsols," in *Hincmar of Rheims: Life and Work*, ed. Rachel Stone and Charles West (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 211–27.

<sup>69</sup> Jong, *Penitential State*, 76–79.

<sup>70</sup> See comments by Tremp in his introduction to Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, 15; Courtney M. Booker, *Past Convictions: The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 30–33.

<sup>71</sup> Flodoard of Rheims, *Die Geschichte der Reimser Kirche*, ed. Martina Stratmann, MGH SS 36 (Hanover: Hahn, 1998), 175, c. 19: "Ebo ... Ludowici collactaneus." See commentary in Bart Selten, "The Good, the Bad or the Unworthy? Accusations, Defense and Representation in the Case of Ebbo of Reims, 835–882" (M.A. thesis, University of Utrecht, 2010), 12–13.

<sup>72</sup> Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, 232, c. 44: "Ebo, Remensis episcopus, qui erat ex originalium servorum stirpe."

<sup>73</sup> Thegan, 234, c. 44: "Cibaria et virga et honus asino, panis et disciplina et opus servo."

<sup>74</sup> Thegan, 236, c. 44: "Patres tui erant pastores caprarum, non consilarii principum."

afflicted Louis had been the legal slaves of him and his fathers.”<sup>75</sup>

Thegan’s assertions were unambiguous but perhaps overstated. In the tumultuous year between Louis’s death in 840 and the battle that decided royal succession in 841, an anonymous courtier known to modern scholars as the Astronomer wrote his own *Life of Louis the Pious*, providing an alternative perspective.<sup>76</sup> The Astronomer offered no parallel to Thegan’s condemnation of Ebbo and instead portrayed him as a scapegoat.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps to deflect some of Thegan’s criticisms, he noted that Louis had promulgated protocols for elevating such slaves into church service:

Whoever would be admitted from servile condition to the ministry of the altar on account of his knowledge and upright behavior, first he is to be manumitted by his proper lords, whether private or ecclesiastical, and then finally be placed upon the steps of the altar.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Thegan, 238, c. 44: “Qui istum vero maxime adfligebant, legales servi eius fuerunt ac patrum suorum.”

<sup>76</sup> Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. 64 (Hanover: Hahn, 1995), 279–555.

<sup>77</sup> The Astronomer diminished attention on the moment of Louis’s deposition and minimized in particular the role of Ebbo, who appears more as a scapegoat than an instigator of events. Ebbo’s family status goes without mention. Of Ebbo, the Astronomer lamely claimed: “He declared some sort of confession against himself.” Astronomer, “*Vita Hludowici imperatoris*,” 480–90, c. 49–51 (deposition); 500–502, 54 (Ebbo): “In se quandam confessionem praedicavit” (p. 502). For translation, see Astronomer, “The Life of Emperor Louis,” in *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: The Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer*, trans. Thomas F. X. Noble (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 219–302.

<sup>78</sup> Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, 376–78, c. 28: “Quicumque ex servili conditione conciliante scientia et morum probitate ad ministerium adsciscerentur altaris, primum manumittantur a propriis dominis, vel privatis vel ecclesiasticis, et tunc demum gradibus indantur altaris.”; This was no mere literary invention. A formulary survives from the reign of Louis the Pious as a template for the Archbishop of Sens to manumit and ordain slaves who belonged to his church. Karl Zeumer, ed., *Formulae Senonenses recentiores*, MGH Form. 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1886), 211–20, at 215–16, c. 9. This formulary has precedents among Merovingian church councils, but was met with skepticism by Rabanus Maurus and Jonas of Orleans. Verlinden, *L’Esclavage dans l’Europe médiéval* 1, 680 (Council of Orleans in 511), 683–684 (Council of Orleans in 549), 704–705 (Rabanus Maurus and Jonas), 721–722 (Formulary of Sens).

Nonetheless, the Astronomer did not envision an end to slavery. He hailed a provision of Louis the Pious that echoed the *First Saxon Capitulary* but applied now to Francia:

Wanting also that each church should obtain its own costs, lest through need of this kind the worship of the divine should be neglected, he inserted into the aforementioned edict that to each church one *mansus* should be given with legitimate compensation and a male and a female slave.<sup>79</sup>

Louis might have provided some select slaves with avenues toward freedom, but there was no question that a Frankish ruler's duties included maintaining slavery within his realm.

The Astronomer's silences about Ebbo suggest that not everyone was comfortable with Thegan's strong words about Louis and his management of slaves. Nonetheless, these twin biographies indicate that Einhard's model of rulership had been lost. While texts written for Charlemagne had celebrated Frankish captive taking, similar opportunities now seldom appeared. The Christian conqueror had been replaced by a penitential king.<sup>80</sup> Louis had undertaken no major conquests to replenish slave systems propagated during the Saxon Wars. Instead, he had facilitated efforts to elevate some slaves to higher status. In light of these circumstances, members of the Frankish elite expressed anxieties about sustaining systems of slavery that had flourished since at least the Saxon Wars. Viking raiders contributed to the

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<sup>79</sup> Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, 378–79, c. 28. Although the Astronomer might not in fact have had a particular edict in mind, Tremp points to an apt point of comparison in an imperial capitulary of 818 or 819. Alfred Boretius, ed., "Capitulare ecclesiasticum," MGH Capit. 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1883), 277, c. 10.

<sup>80</sup> Keeping in mind, however, that this shift presented its own opportunities. Booker, *Past Convictions*; Jong, *Penitential State*.

problem of a slave drain from Francia, but Frankish writers' more immediate concern was whether or not their rulers retained the ability to maintain slavery as a cornerstone for social order.

### **Charles the Bald and Saintly Redeemers**

Frankish perspectives on slavery changed dramatically with a viking raid on the Seine in 845. Following the civil war of 841, Charles the Bald and Louis the German had divided the empire that had been passed on whole to Lothar, the eldest son of Louis the Pious. Following this shakeup of royal authority, Charles's loyal churchman Prudentius carried the working copy of the *Annals of St-Bertin* with him as he departed the royal chapel for a new assignment as bishop of Troyes. This move inaugurated a less official tone and reduced the scope of the *Annals* to the western kingdom of Charles the Bald.<sup>81</sup>

From this vantage point, Prudentius transcribed a brief report of a viking expedition up the Seine in the spring of 845:

A very hard winter. In the month of March, one hundred and twenty ships of the Northmen came up to Paris, laying everything waste on either side with no one resisting them. Charles would have endeavored to oppose them, but he did not anticipate that his men could in any way prevail, and having produced a tribute of seven thousand pounds for them, he restrained them from going further and persuaded them to go back.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin*, 7–9.

<sup>82</sup> Waitz, *AB*, 32, s.a. 845: “Hiems asperrima. Nordomannorum naves centum viginti mense Martio per Sequanam hinc et abinde cuncta vastantes, Loticiam [= Lutetia] Parisiorum, nullo penitus obsistente, pervadunt. Quibus cum Karolus occurrere moliretur, sed praevalere suos nullatenus posse prospiceret, quibusdam pactionibus, et munere septem milium librarum eis exhibitio, a progrediendo compescuit ac redire persuasit.” Prudentius later in the entry resumed attention on these Northmen, describing raids along the Seine and the Frankish coasts as they departed.

The details are sparse and Prudentius showed none of the hostility in this account that would mark his later reports of Charles. Nonetheless, this brief account gives a first notice for a substantial raid on the Frankish heartlands, as well as the earliest record of Frankish tribute paid to viking raiders. It would also prove to be a watershed moment in Frankish attitudes toward rulers and captives.<sup>83</sup>

These attitudes first began to surface in a much more elaborate account of events in the *Translation of Saint Germain*, which recorded the flight of the monks of St-Germain-des-Prés from the viking invaders of 845. The anonymous author offered a scorching critique of Charles the Bald, describing his impotence in the face of viking raiders and using the plight of captives to indicate where true power lay. He primed readers to think of his references to captivity as a means of critique by describing the arrival of the Northmen as a divine punishment that recalled the captivities of Israel in Babylon and Egypt.<sup>84</sup> This apocalyptic tone recalled Alcuin's early letter to the monastery of Wearmouth–Jarrow following the Lindisfarne raid of 793: “On us it has been fulfilled as formerly it was preached through the prophets: ‘From the north have evils been kindled, and a terrible glory will come from the north.’”<sup>85</sup> It also resonated with the contemporary Council of Meaux and Paris held

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<sup>83</sup> On ecclesiastical resentment of such settlements, see Simon 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* 42 (1991): 535–54, at 547–53.

<sup>84</sup> Anonymous of St-Germain, *Translatio Sancti Germani Parisiensis*, ed. Carolus De Smedt, Gulielmus van Hooff, and Josephus De Backer, *Analecta Bollandiana* 2 (1883): 69–98, at 71, c. 2: “Cognovimus etiam Israeliticum populum propter peccata sua crebrius afflictum atque in Babyloniam vel Ægyptum, longissimas a suis finibus regiones, ductum, in manusque inimicorum suorum sæpius traditum, sed tamen a pio ac clementissimo Deo ad ipsum in tribulatione clamantem non omnimodis derelictum.”

<sup>85</sup> Alcuin, *Epistolae*, 55, no. 19: “In nobis impletum est, quod olim per prophetam praedictum est: ‘Ab aquilone inardescunt mala et a Domino formidolosa laudatio veniet.’” For translation, see Allott, *Alcuin*

in 845, which similarly borrowed language from the prophecy of Jerimiah.<sup>86</sup>

Captivity featured as the first cruelty of these people of the north. Once the viking raiders reached at Rouen, the anonymous author reported:

The aforesaid Northmen lingered long in that *civitas*, supposing the Christian people to be slow and sluggish to war. They left from their ships and dispersed far and wide. With no one resisting them, they began to take captives and slaughter people of either sex, to lay waste monasteries, churches, and estates which they could reach, to plunder and to burn, to pillage the herds, and with every cruelty to ravage the people formerly of God and exercise their wantonness on them for the enormity of their sins.<sup>87</sup>

After marshaling an army to deter the viking expedition, Charles positioned his forces around the viking camp, and captives again proved his impotence:

And when the uncounted host stood on either side as if for fighting, those cruel and impious Northmen, blasphemers of God, to the disgrace and shame of the king and his nobles as well as of all the Christians there present, hung one hundred and 11 captives before their eyes.<sup>88</sup>

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*of York*, 40, no. 29. Alcuin here conflated passages from Jer 1:14 and Job 37:22.

<sup>86</sup> Wilfried Hartmann, ed., “Meaux–Paris. Juni 845 und Februar 846,” MGH Conc. 3 (Hanover: Hahn, 1984), 61–132, at 82: “Inde vero, quia, sicut necesse fuerat, divinis iussionibus non est secuta obediencia, dedit dominus *ab aquilone*, unde iuxta prophetam *pandetur malum*, dignos meritis nostris apostolos, crudeles scilicet et inmanissimos christianitatis persecutores Nortmannos.” See further Coupland, “The Rod of God’s Wrath,” 537–38. On apocalyptic traditions setting the scene for bleak assessments of viking violence, see James Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 176–83. For a parallel study of the repurposing of religious imagery to address the needs of the present, see Beatrice E. Kitzinger, *The Cross, the Gospels, and the Work of Art in the Carolingian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>87</sup> Anonymous of St–Germain, *Translatio Sancti Germani Parisiensis*, 72, c. 4: “Prædicti etiam Normanni diu in eadem civitate morantes, christianum populum ad bellandum pigrum atque inertem fore putantes, e propriis navibus exierunt, et longe lateque diffusi, nemine resistente, cœperunt utriusque sexus populum captivare ac trucidare, monasteria devastare, ecclesias seu villas quas attingere poterant, depopulari sive concremare, pecora deprædari, et cum omni crudelitate in populo quondam Dei debacchari, suamque in eum ob enormitatem peccatorum exercere libidinem.” The word order of the last phrase neatly encloses Frankish sin with the punishments of the vikings.

<sup>88</sup> Anonymous of St–Germain, 78, c. 12: “Cumque hinc inde quasi ad pugnandum infinitus staret exercitus, ipsi impiissimi ac crudelissimi Normanni, blasphematores Dei, ad opprobrium et derisionem regis principumque ejus seu omnium christianorum illic adstantium, centum et xi captivos coram eorum oculis suspenderunt.”



Charles withdrew, and as the *Annals of St-Bertin* note, ultimately purchased peace by means of a substantial payment.

The anonymous author of St-Germain, however, adduced a different chain of events. The vikings arrived at St-Germain-des-Prés, but the patron saint defended his own. By his merits and intervention, the vikings were overcome by dysentery and soon departed.<sup>89</sup> Returning home, the leader reported these things to the king of the Danes, saying: “In the land of the Christians, the dead had more power than the living.”<sup>90</sup> King Horic reacted decisively:

The aforesaid king, fearing that he too might perish in the same way as the other rank dead, commanded that all who had survived be beheaded, and that their heads be taken to the Christian people. And so it was, with God fighting the sinner on behalf of his people and blessed Germain struggling manfully against them. . . . Moreover, the aforesaid king of the Northmen commanded that all captives who were of the Christian name ought to be sought from throughout his kingdom, and that they be returned with reverence and honor from whence they were in captivity to their own homeland without any opposition.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Anonymous of St-Germain, 84, c. 19: “Quorum corda ab illo die et deinceps ita sunt meritis et intercessione domni Germani valido pervasa timore, et ita dysenteria vel variis morborum afflicti generibus, ut quidam eorum quotidie morerentur, nullusque ex tanta populi multitudine infinitoque exercitu sese putaret evadere posse.”

<sup>90</sup> Anonymous of St-Germain, 92, c. 30: “Referebatque ei dicens quod in christianorum terra qua fuerat, majorem haberent mortui virtutem quam viventes, nullumque ex tanta populi multitudine sibi resistentem invenisset, præter unum senem, Germanum nomine, cujus corpus e suo fecerat effodi sepulcro, quo per trecentos eoque amplius jacuerat annos.” Janet Nelson has sought to identify this leader named Ragnar with Charles’s one-time client of the same name. Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald, The Medieval World* (London: Longman, 1992), 151–53. Simon Coupland has disputed this identification. Simon Coupland, “From Poachers to Gamekeepers: Scandinavian Warlords and Carolingian Kings,” *Early Medieval Europe* 7, no. 1 (March 1998): 85–114, at 107–8.

<sup>91</sup> Anonymous of St-Germain, *Translatio Sancti Germani Parisiensis*, 93, c. 31: “Timens autem præfatus rex Normannorum ne et ipse quemadmodum et alii morte pessima interiret, jussit omnes qui residui erant, decollari, eorumque capita christiano populo tradi. Sicque factum est, Deo pro populo suo licet peccatore pugnante, beatoque Germano erga eos viriliter decertante, ut ex tanta populi multitudine qui christianorum fines intraverant, nullus remaneret præter quatuor qui fuga lapsi sunt, quos nec postea mortis exitium credimus evasisse. Præfatus autem rex Normannorum jussit cunctos captivos qui christianitatis vocabulo censebantur, in regno suo perquiri, eosque cum reverentia et honore in suam unde captivati fuerant patriam absque alicujus contradictione reverti.”

In short, Germain had accomplished what Charles had not. The vikings had come to seize captives and had hung captives in the sight of Charles's army. Germain, however, had protected his devotees from capture, chased their attackers away with dysentery, brought about the execution of those who survived, and secured the release of captured Christians.

Despite this purported success, the situation continued to deteriorate through the 850s. As shown in Chapter Two, this was a time when viking raiders began to leave deep marks in Frankish annals and archives.<sup>92</sup> The community of St-Filibert near the mouth of the Loire experienced particular disruption. Already in 836 they had abandoned their exposed island site of Noirmoutier for an inland site at Déas (now Saint-Philbert-de-Grand-Lieu). In 858 the community moved further up to Cunault, and this was followed by yet another move to Messais in 862. These moves formed the subject matter for the *Translations and Miracles of Saint-Filibert* written by the monk Ermentarius. He wrote his first book about the movement to Déas sometime before 840, and around 862 he appended a second book about subsequent events.<sup>93</sup> Like the anonymous of Saint-Germain, Ermentarius was hostile to Charles the Bald, and he used incidents involving captives to communicate his censure.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Regarding annals and other narrative sources, see further Morden, "How Much Material Damage," 78–174.

<sup>93</sup> Although these movements pushed the community toward the center of Frankish affairs, Ermentarius cited viking incursions as the proximal motivation. Christian Harding, "Community, Cult and Politics: The History of the Monks of St Filibert in the Ninth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 2010). See further Daniel C. DeSelm, "Unwilling Pilgrimage: Vikings, Relics, and the Politics of Exile during the Carolingian Era (c. 830-940)" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009), 218–90, which argues the cult of Filibert grew to supplant the declining authority of Carolingian monarchs.

<sup>94</sup> Contra Harding, "Community, Cult and Politics," 61–66, arguing that Ermentarius sought to secure Charles as a patron for the Filibert community. Writing around 862 and referring back to Charles's

As Ermentarius began his second book, he recalled the viking invasions that had occurred in intervening years, beginning with an attack on Nantes in 843:

Sixty-seven ships of the Northmen unexpectedly advanced up the course of the Loire and captured the city of Nantes. They slaughtered the bishop, clergy, and a great multitude of people on the edge of the sword. Whoever was left, they delivered into captivity.<sup>95</sup>

Ermentarius was unambiguous in assigning blame for this calamity. Regarding Charles the Bald and his brothers, Ermentarius claimed: “Their strife gave strength to the foreigners; righteousness was abandoned, and it was followed by sin.”<sup>96</sup>

Ultimately, in this view, Frankish subjects were left to their own devices and to the providence of God.<sup>97</sup> Again, the stakes were apocalyptic, as Ermentarius cited in full the oft-quoted prophecy of Jeremiah: “From the north an evil shall reach out over all the inhabitants of the land.”<sup>98</sup>

A later miracle proved the point. When a member of the community of

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victory at Fontenoy in 841, Ermentarius wrote ruefully: “The victory fell grievously and pitiably on the younger brothers.” Ermentarius, *De translationibus et miraculis sancti Filiberti*, ed. René Poupardin, *Monuments de l’histoire des Abbayes de Saint-Philibert (Noirmoutier, Grandlieu, Tournus) 1* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1905), 60, II, preface: “Cedit victoria lugubris atque miserabilis junioribus fratribus.” For a partial translation of this work, see David Herlihy, *The History of Feudalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970), 8–13.

<sup>95</sup> Ermentarius, *De translationibus*, 59–60, II, preface: “Nortmannorum naves sexaginta septem repentino Ligeris ingrediuntur alveum cursu, Namnetum capiunt civitatem, episcopum clerumque cum maxima populi multitudine in ore gladii trucidant; quod vero restat, captivitati dedunt.”

<sup>96</sup> Ermentarius, 60, II, preface: “Illorum discordia addit vires extraneis; relinquitur fas, pergitur per nefas.”

<sup>97</sup> Already in 840, Ermentarius recorded that Pepin of Aquitaine (r. 817–838) had advised the community of St-Filibert that he could do nothing to defend them and recommend that they begin their long-suffering search for an adequate refuge. Ermentarius, 25, I, preface.

<sup>98</sup> Ermentarius, 61, II, preface: “*Ab Aquilone pandetur malum super omnes habitatores terræ*” (Jer 1:14). For further citations in Carolingian literature about vikings, see Coupland, “The Rod of God’s Wrath,” 538 n. 10. Notably, Jeremiah had recently served as a model for the thunderous tone adopted by Paschasius Radbertus in comments which suggested similar critique of Charles the Bald. Mayke de Jong, *Epitaph for an Era: Politics and Rhetoric in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

St-Filibert visited another monastery, a monk there informed him of a vision he had in which vikings attacked St-Filibert, but the community's patron intervened:

Then Saint Filibert, rose from his own grave, just as it seemed to me, clothed in white garments, bearing in his right hand a golden sword unsheathed. ... Saint Filibert destroyed them all, and then he returned to the monastery and lay back in his tomb. ... And so it came to pass.<sup>99</sup>

While perhaps more picturesque than the dysentery inflicted by Germain, the vision of Filibert communicated similar themes. The taking of captives represented a failure of Frankish kings. Frankish subjects were reduced to seeking refuge or hoping for the providential protection of God.

Two later works of the 860s show other hagiographers disputing these terms of critique. Heiric of Auxerre wrote a new book on the *Miracles of Saint Germain*, perhaps fearing that the anonymous work of St-Germain-des-Prés had polarized the cult in undesirable directions. Heiric excised all critique of Charles and marginalized the role of viking raiders.<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile, a monk of St-Geneviève recalled events of the same period in his own book of miracles, presenting the community's flight from vikings without overt political commentary.<sup>101</sup> The author avoided reference to the

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<sup>99</sup> Ermentarius, *De translationibus*, 67, II, c. 11: "Tunc sanctus Filibertus, de proprio consurgen tumulo, sicut mihi videbatur, vestibis indutus candidissimis, aureum ferens dextra evaginatum manu mucronem ... omnes sanctus perimit Filibertus, ac deinde monasterium revertitur atque in suo se collacat tumulo. ... Quod ita contigit evenisse." Christian Harding argues throughout his dissertation that viking violence should not be seen as the definitive feature of Ermentarius's work, and this in fact is one of the few passages within the main text which reference viking activity. Harding, "Community, Cult and Politics." This particular passage was not translated by David Herlihy and remains little discussed.

<sup>100</sup> This work might also have had a theological purpose in avoiding the anonymous author's reference to predestination, which was associated with the doctrines of the then-disgraced monk Gottschalk. The Anonymous of St-Germain had written: "But since he [Horic] was not from the flock of Christ nor predestined to life, therefore what he sought, he did not merit to obtain." Anonymous of St-Germain, *Translatio Sancti Germani Parisiensis*, 92, c. 30: "Sed quoniam non erat ex ovibus Christi neque prædestinatus ad vitam, idcirco quod petebat, obtinere non meruit."

<sup>101</sup> Northmen had motivated the translations of Geneviève's relics, but the author offered no

problematic events of vikings capturing or slaughtering their victims, speaking in more general terms of burning, tyranny, persecution, and laying waste.<sup>102</sup> Finally, he resolved the viking crisis with the return of the saint's relics in 862, suggesting that stability likewise returned. For these writers hoping to retain the good graces of their rulers, silence proved an acceptable option.

In 869, an author more hostile to Charles the Bald revived the use of captivity as a critique of Frankish kingship. The Bishop Hildegard of Meaux, in writing his *Life of Saint Faro*, faulted Charles for opening the country to raiders in 845, for failing to protect Louis of St-Denis from capture in 858, and for abandoning Meaux to raiders in 862. Janet Nelson has even concluded from Hildegard's bitter tone that Charles might have colluded in the viking attack on Meaux.<sup>103</sup> As Hildegard turned to these events, he pulled no punches:

Up to this point happy miracles have run on in breathless haste, but the most recent will bring at last sighs of great sorrow. Let me briefly relate how our present times have been troubled, how the sweet earth and its sowers have been reduced to the desolation of pagans, a kingdom once glorious to ruin, and the virtue and power of its princes to weakness. The things we relate are witnessed by rivers still warm from recent slaughter, by seas swollen and overflowing with bloated bodies of countless Christians, and most especially by the river Seine, whose many islands pale with the bones of uncounted captives. The tenth year after the passing of Louis the emperor of good memory [*recte* 845], in the kingdom of his son Charles, the remaining traces of former glory and peace had turned into discord, and because of this,

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commentary on the Frankish defense, and the author gives no indication of how the viking threats were resolved prior to returning the relics to the monastery. Anonymous of St-Geneviève, *Miracula S. Genovefæ post mortem*, ed. Jean Bolland, Godfrey Henschen, and Jean Baptiste Carnandet, 2nd ed., Acta Sanctorum, Januarii 3 (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1863), 147–151.

<sup>102</sup> Anonymous of St-Geneviève, 149, c. 10 (flagraret incendio; Normannorum tyrannidem), 149, c. 12 (persecutione), 150, c. 32, (populantibus).

<sup>103</sup> Nelson has further suggested that Hildegard sympathized with Charles's rebellious son, Louis the Stammerer. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 203–7.

the rivers of that kingdom, its seas transgressed, began to groan under the long keels of the Northmen.<sup>104</sup>

Both captives and Charles featured prominently in this beginning. Hildegard sharpened this link in two subsequent chapters, describing Charles's unfortunate cousin Louis of St-Denis as "a more distinguished and powerful prince"—undoubtedly a comparison to malign Charles himself—but Louis nonetheless proved "powerless to prevent [his own] capture."<sup>105</sup> For Hildegard, the cost of Carolingian impotence was inestimable, although more recent scholars have reckoned the expense at 688 pounds of gold and 3250 pounds of silver.<sup>106</sup>

After belaboring Charles's weaknesses for one more chapter, Hildegard finally turned to the attack on his own diocese of Meaux in 862. In these concluding chapters, the figure of Charles subsided, and even the viking raiders were allowed to recede, overshadowed by the fires that they started. As Simon Coupland has noted, churchmen faced the unenviable decision to ransom churches before they burned or to ransom survivors after they had been captured attempting to flee from their

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<sup>104</sup> Hildegard of Meaux, *Vita Faronis episcopi Meldensis*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS rer. Merov. 5 (Hanover: Hahn, 1910), 171–206, at 199–200, c. 122: "Hactenus laeta a corde spiranti cucurrerunt miracula, sed hoc novissimum cum fine dabit cum dolore maxima suspiria. Expediam enimvero summatim, quantum nunc tempora nostra sint maestifica paganorumque desolatione terra dulcis cultoribus suis maestifica, regna quoque quae olim gloriosa nunc ingloria principumque virtus ac potentia quam infirma. Haec vero quae dicimus testantur adhuc recenti caede tepentia flumina, quae purulentis cadaveribus innumerabilium christianorum inundant tumentia maria, et illud maxima flumen, cuius nomen Sequana; albet enim huius insulae multae ossibus captivorum innumerabilium. Postquam autem transitus bonae memoriae Hludovici imperatoris decimum duxit annum, Karoli filii eius regni pars vestigia prioris gloriae et pacis mutavit in discordiam. Et ob hoc gemere coeperunt flumina illius regni intrantia maria sub Northmannorum maxima carina."

<sup>105</sup> Hildegard of Meaux, 200–201, c. 124: "Clarior autem atque potentior princeps insignis de nomine Hludovicus ... impotens fuit ab eorum captivatione se observare."

<sup>106</sup> Ferdinand Lot, "La grande invasion normande de 856–862," *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 69 (1908): 5–62, at 19–20, 20–21 n. 2.

burning sanctuaries.<sup>107</sup> Hildegard made the viking fire into Faro's climactic antagonist, attributing the survival of the monastery to the intercession of the saint: "How glorious you are, O Lord, in your saints, you who have preserved this place from fire by the merits of your confessor Faro!"<sup>108</sup> Again, a Carolingian king had failed to protect his subjects, leading to censure with an emphasis on captives and recourse to spiritual authority.

Finally, after years of critiques in which captives were used to undermine Charles's image while less hostile authors adopted an aversion to this problematic subject, Aimoin of St-Germain struck a cautious balance around 875.<sup>109</sup> He undertook a new recension of the *Miracles of Saint Germain* at the behest of Gauzlin, who had been captured alongside Louis of St-Denis in 858 but had been redeemed and installed as abbot of St-Germain by 871.<sup>110</sup> Gauzlin likely hoped that Aimoin's work would supplant the hostility to Charles the Bald evident in the work of his anonymous predecessor, and it is possible that Gauzlin's appointment was meant to secure the loyalty of this important monastery.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Coupland, "Holy Ground?," 91–92.

<sup>108</sup> Hildegard of Meaux, *Vita Faronis*, 203, c. 131: "O quam gloriosus es, Domine, in sanctis tuis, qui meritis confessoris tui Faronis hunc locam incendio tibi servasti!"

<sup>109</sup> For a further discussion of the date of this text, see Ann Christys, "St-Germain Des-Prés, St Vincent and the Martyrs of Cordoba," *Early Medieval Europe* 7, no. 2 (1998): 199–216, at 215.

<sup>110</sup> Gauzlin was also taken captive by the forces of Louis the Younger at Andernach in 876. Waitz, *AB*, 115, s.a. 871 (MS A), 133, s.a. 876. Aimoin claimed to be working from two earlier texts, though only one has survived.

<sup>111</sup> Recent scholarship has offered few investigations of Aimoin and his work. Regarding Aimoin's favorable image of Charles, see Christys, "St-Germain Des-Prés, St Vincent and the Martyrs of Cordoba," 215. See further Wilhelm Wattenbach, Wilhelm Levison, and Heinz Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter. Vorzeit und Karolinger* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1952), 5:579–580; Adelheid Krahn, "Zeitgeschichtliche Aussagen in den *Miracula Sancti Germani* des Aimoin von Saint-Germain-der-Prés," in *Festschrift für Eduard Hlawitschka zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Karl Rudolf Schnith and Roland Pauler, *Münchener historische Studien, Abteilung Mittelalterliche Geschichte* 5

Aimon leaned heavily on his anonymous predecessor, beginning his account with the events of 845:

Going out from their ships, having spread far and wide, they began to slaughter a multitude of either sex, to seize captives, to burn to waste estates, monasteries, and churches, and to exercise their great wantonness, ravaging the people of God with every cruelty.<sup>112</sup>

Aimoin had simplified the anonymous account, dropping the notice that raiders had done these things without resistance. These revisions sped readers onward toward a new passage, in which Charles the Bald similarly rushed to the scene:

Then the glorious prince King Charles, since he had been able to do nothing due to their sudden approach, summoned some part of his army and came first to the monastery of St-Denis, so that supported by his prayers, they might securely advance against the enemies of God and his faithful.<sup>113</sup>

While casting Charles in a better light, this passage nonetheless continued to locate power with the church rather than with the monarch. Ultimately, this meant that Charles did not have power over captives, although he rightly became a supplicant to holy patrons who were the true wielders of holy power.

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(Munich: Kallmünz, 1993), 111–31; Carroll Gillmor, “Aimoin’s *Miracula Sancti Germani* and the Viking Raids on Saint Denis and Saint-Germain-Des-Prés,” in *The Normans and Their Adversaries at War: Essays in Memory of C. Warren Hollister*, ed. Richard P. Abels and Bernard S. Bachrach (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), 103–28.

<sup>112</sup> Aimoin of St-Germain, *De miraculis sancti Germani libri duo*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 126 (Jacques-Paul Migne, 1852), cols. 1027–1050, at col. 1029C, I, c. 1: “Exeuntes, a navibus, longe et lateque diffusi, coeperunt utriusque sexus multitudinem trucidare, captivare, villas, monasteria, ecclesiasque depopulando cremare, totamque suæ libidinis immensitatem cum omni crudelitate in populum Dei debachando exercere.” Compare Anonymous of St-Germain, *Translatio Sancti Germani Parisiensis*, 72, c. 4: “E propriis navibus exierunt, et longe lateque diffusi, nemine resistente, coeperunt utriusque sexus populum captivare ac trucidare, monasteria devastare, ecclesias seu villas quas attingere poterant, depopulari sive concremare, pecora deprædari, et cum omni crudelitate in populo quondam Dei debacchari, suamque in eum ob enormitatem peccatorum exercere libidinem.”

<sup>113</sup> Aimoin of St-Germain, *De miraculis sancti Germani*, col. 1029C, I, c. 1: “Tunc gloriosus princeps rex Carolus, quia propter subitaneum eorum ascensum ex toto non poterat, convocata aliqua sui exercitus parte, venit primum ad monasterium Macharii Dionysii, ut ejus orationibus fultus, securius contra Dei suosque pergeret inimicos.”



Aimoin preserved other scenes of captives that had seemed so prominent in his anonymous source, but he worked to diminish their significance. He deflated the spectacle of 111 captives hung before Charles's army by treating the event offhandedly:

They hung eleven captives, more or less, and many others they ran through in houses and woods, and they killed some slaughtering them in wretched pursuit through farm and field.<sup>114</sup>

Nonetheless, he could not avoid recounting the story of divine dysentery compelling the Danish king to behead the survivors of the expedition and return all Christian captives.<sup>115</sup> On the one hand, Aimoin wanted to present Charles in a more favorable light, which meant he needed to diminish the theatrics involving captives as reported in the anonymous text. On the other, these scenes seem to have captured his audience's imagination, so with some careful editing, Aimoin recast them to advance the virtues of his patron saint without undermining the authority of his patron ruler.<sup>116</sup>

## Conclusion

Frankish references to slavery can therefore be divided into three major phases for the early Viking Age. Einhard represents a culmination of early traditions in which

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<sup>114</sup> Aimoin of St-Germain, col. 1030, I, c. 1: "Plus minus indecim captivos subdibus suspenderunt, multosque alios per domos et arbores confixerunt, atque nonnullos per villas camposque miserabili insecutione trucidantes peremerunt."

<sup>115</sup> Aimoin of St-Germain, col. 1036, I, c. 13.

<sup>116</sup> In Book II, Aimoin generally preferred to focus on apolitical miracles such as healings, giving only minimal information about the 858 viking attack that compelled another movement of Germain's relics. For example, he glossed over the capture of Gauzlin in 858. Aimoin of St-Germain, cols. 1044–1045, II, c. 10.

images of captives surrounded Charlemagne to demonstrate his prowess. Captives generally disappeared from discussion under Louis the Pious, although concerns about slavery took their place in discourse about the power of kings. Under Charles the Bald, images of captives proved an effective means for churchmen to critique the king and advance their own forms of spiritual authority.

The reluctance to discuss viking captives prior to the reign of Charles the Bald helps contextualize the Frankish sources presented in previous chapters. Among the earliest of these, the firsthand account of a viking raid in 863 found in the *Annals of Xanten* shows lingering discomfort in discussing captives and adopts ambiguity. The anonymous *Translation of Saint Germain* and Ermentarius's *Translations and Miracles of Saint-Filibert* had helped establish viking captive taking as a licit topic, but given the critical use of captives in these texts, the annalist remained cautious in offering the vague statement that the clergy and common people “mostly” escaped.<sup>117</sup>

At a similar moment, Rimbert's *Life of Saint Ansgar* advanced the image of a saint redeeming captives in Baltic markets, but Rimbert wisely avoided describing the source of these captives.<sup>118</sup> Like his near contemporaries, Heiric of Auxerre in his *Miracles of Saint Germain* and the anonymous author of the *Miracles of Saint Geneviève*, Rimbert endeavored to use images of captives as a way to underscore

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<sup>117</sup> von Simson, *AX*, 20, s.a. 864: “Clerus tamen et omne vulgus pene aufugit.”

<sup>118</sup> The return of a son redeemed in Sweden (at Birka?) to a widow suggests that at least one captive in this text originated from Frankish territory. Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. 55 (Hanover: Hahn, 1884), 3–79, at 69–70, c. 35. For translation, see Rimbert, *Anskar, the Apostle of the North. 801–865: Translated from the Vita Anskarii by Bishop Rimbert, His Fellow Missionary and Successor*, trans. Charles H. Robinson, Lives of Early and Mediæval Missionaries (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1921).

religious authority without directly critiquing Carolingian kings. The author of the *Life of Saint Findan*, who had an Irish background but was cloistered in a Frankish monastery, similarly wrote in this milieu, finding that attitudes had softened toward descriptions of captivity, particularly captivity in far away places like among the Orkneys and in the Irish Sea.<sup>119</sup>

During the later years of the ninth century, churchmen writing in the wake of Aimoin's *Miracles of Saint Germain* finally had a model that used images of captives alongside undisputed loyalty to a Frankish monarch. These authors wrote more freely of the movement of captives from Francia into Scandinavian markets. The *Annals of St-Vaast* recorded an eyewitness account of captives being taken from the Frankish heartlands in 881.<sup>120</sup> Adalhelm described his own capture and forced movement from Francia toward Scandinavian shores in the later 880s.<sup>121</sup> And soon thereafter, Rimbert's biographer described the saint's encounter with a Latin-singing nun in the booming slave market of Hedeby.<sup>122</sup>

These eventual descriptions of the slave trade were made possible by a long-standing debate on whether it was licit to discuss captives. It is little wonder that no captives appear among texts like the *Royal Frankish Annals*, which remained closely connected to Charlemagne's court and his curated image as a perpetrator and

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<sup>119</sup> Anonymous of Rheinau, *Vita Findani*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH SS, 15,1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1887), 502–6, at 503–4, prol. (2–6). For translation, see Reidar Thorolf Christiansen, “The People of the North,” *Lochlann: A Review of Celtic Studies* 2 (1962): 137–64.

<sup>120</sup> von Simson, “AV,” 49, s.a. 881.

<sup>121</sup> Adalhelm of Séez, *Liber miraculorum*, ed. Godfrey Henschen, Daniel Papebroch, and Jean Baptiste Carnandet, 2nd ed., Acta Sanctorum, Aprilis 3 (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1866), 68–71, at 68–69, c. 2.

<sup>122</sup> Georg Waitz, ed., *Vita Rimberti*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 55 (Hanover: Hahn, 1884), 80–100, at 95, c. 18.

not as a victim of slave raids. Through the disruptions under Louis the Pious, the first significant signals of captive taking began to appear in texts like the *Annals of St-Bertin*. And under Charles the Bald, the raid of 845 marked a watershed when authors began reflecting the importance of slaves who were by this point an inescapable part of their realities. Overall, these accounts suggest that the proliferation of reports about captive taking in the later 800s represent not only an increase in captive taking but also an increased acknowledgement of behavior that had marked viking activity from its onset.

## Chapter Four

### TRAFFIC THROUGH THE NORTH: MATERIAL AND TEXTUAL TRACES

In previous chapters, I have explored the rise of Viking-Age slave raiding, noting that captive taking featured among the earliest raids of the 790s, intensified throughout the early 800s, and reached a peak of activity in the 860s and 870s.

Western sources provide robust traces of these developments. Captives like Findan, Adalhelm, and Melkorka were carried outward on routes to Scandinavia, while missionary churchmen like Ansgar and Rimbert reported Christian captives passing through the Baltic ports of Birka and Hedeby. This chapter explores the patterns that framed these sources by bringing written accounts of the slave trade together with archaeological evidence for evolving trade.

Items like plundered metalwork traveled alongside viking captives and have been found at various places in Scandinavia.<sup>1</sup> Norse artifacts meanwhile traveled with viking raiders to the places where they were active in the west.<sup>2</sup> Some of this

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding Insular metalwork found in Norway and its relationship to viking raiding, see Hanna Lovise Aannestad, “Transformasjoner. Omforming og bruk av importerte gjenstander i vikingtid” (Ph.D. avhandling, University of Oslo, 2015), 40–43. Regarding coins and silver during this period, see Heiko Steuer, “Principles of Trade and Exchange: Trade Goods and Merchants,” in *Wulfstan’s Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as Seen from Shipboard*, ed. Anton Englert and Athena Trakadas, Maritime Culture of the North 2 (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2009), 294–308; James Graham-Campbell, “Silver Economies’ and the Ninth-Century Background,” in *Silver Economies, Monetisation and Society in Scandinavia, AD 800–1100*, ed. James Graham-Campbell, Søren M. Sindbæk, and Gareth Williams (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011), 29–39.

<sup>2</sup> For substantial general surveys, see James Graham-Campbell and Colleen E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 54–205; D. M. Hadley, *The Vikings in England: Settlement, Society and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 237–71; Stephen H. Harrison and Ragnall Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves and Grave-Goods in*

evidence links viking groups to likely places of origin in Scandinavia.<sup>3</sup> Some of it points further afield. Common Norse artifacts like glass beads and silver coins ultimately derived from the distant Caliphate,<sup>4</sup> suggesting that viking raiders and their captives connected into routes that passed far beyond the Baltic.<sup>5</sup> Beads are especially valuable traces of this trade, since they appeared earlier and in much larger numbers than the coins that followed later.<sup>6</sup>

For researchers familiar with the Atlantic slave trade, connections between beads and slavery yield few surprises. Beads were one of the most profitable trade goods shipped to human traffickers in Africa, and business records from Liverpool show that slave traders' purchases of beads followed overarching trends in the slave trade.<sup>7</sup> Archaeologists have meanwhile recovered large numbers of beads from

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*Ireland*, Medieval Dublin Excavations 1962–81, ser. B, vol. 11 (Dublin: National Museum of Ireland, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> For one compelling example, see the use artifacts of soapstone and schist to link immigrant communities in Scotland and the Faroes with likely origins in Norway. Steffen Stummann Hansen, "The Early Settlement of the Faroe Islands: The Creation of Cultural Identity," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic*, ed. James H. Barrett, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 33–71, at 46–47.

<sup>4</sup> For a rapid survey of the silver evidence, see Christoph Kilger, "Kaupang from Afar: Aspects of the Interpretation of Dirham Finds in Northern and Eastern Europe between the Late 8th and Early 10th Centuries," in *Means of Exchange: Dealing with Silver in the Viking Age*, ed. Dagfinn Skre, Kaupang Excavation Project Publication Series 2, Norske Oldfunn 23 (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2008), 199–252. On glass in general, see David Whitehouse, "‘Things That Travelled’: The Surprising Case of Raw Glass," *Early Medieval Europe* 12, no. 3 (2003): 301–5.

<sup>5</sup> On the theoretical underpinnings of this approach, see especially Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Søren M. Sindbæk, "Broken Links and Black Boxes: Material Affiliations and Contextual Network Synthesis in the Viking World," in *Network Analysis in Archaeology: New Approaches to Regional Interaction*, ed. Carl Knappett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 71–94.

<sup>6</sup> In brief, see Johan Callmer, "The Influx of Oriental Beads into Europe during the 8th Century A.D.," in *Glass Beads: Cultural History, Technology, Experiment and Analogy*, ed. Marianne Rasmussen, Ulla Lund Hansen, and Ulf Näsman, Studies in Technology and Culture 2 (Lejre: Historical-Archaeological Experimental Centre, 1995), 49–54.

<sup>7</sup> Saul Guerrero, "Venetian Glass Beads and the Slave Trade from Liverpool, 1750–1800," *Beads:*

African slaving forts, as at Bunce Island in Sierra Leone,<sup>8</sup> as well as from the communities of the slave diaspora, such as the ones found with liberated slaves buried on St. Helena.<sup>9</sup> Beads also help link undocumented sites with the slave trade, including otherwise unidentifiable shipwrecks.<sup>10</sup> The Viking Age witnessed similar relationships between beads and enslaved humans. In both cases, a vast and complex economy traded ornamental baubles for cheap labor gleaned from afar, as the networks that carried beads in likewise carried humans out.<sup>11</sup>

As Kyle Harper has argued for the late Roman period, we can study the development of the slave trade by linking together patterns of production and consumption.<sup>12</sup> I begin this chapter by demonstrating how such links evolved with an inflow of beads and an outflow of slaves in centuries prior to the Viking Age. This

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*Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers* 22 (2010): 52–70.

<sup>8</sup> Karlis Karklins, “Eighteenth-Century Glass Beads from the English Slaving Fort at Bunce Island, Sierra Leone,” *Beads: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers* 19 (2007): 17–31; Christopher R. DeCorse, “Archaeological Fieldwork at Bunce Island: A Slave Trading *Entrepôt* in Sierra Leone,” *Nyame Akuma* 82 (December 2014): 12–22.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew F. Pearson et al., eds., *Infernal Traffic: Excavation of a Liberated African Graveyard in Rupert’s Valley, St. Helena*, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 169 (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2011), 108–16.

<sup>10</sup> Remarkably few shipwrecks have been associated with the vast Atlantic traffic in slaves. Beads, however, have helped establish connections for several of these wrecks. Mendel Peterson, “Reach for the New World,” *National Geographic* 152, no. 6 (December 1977): 724–67; Karlis Karklins, “Beads from the Mid 18th-Century Manilla Wreck, Bermuda,” *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 20, no. 1 (February 1991): 33–42; David D. Moore and Corey Malcom, “Seventeenth-Century Vehicle of the Middle Passage: Archaeological and Historical Investigations on the Henrietta Marie Shipwreck Site,” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 12 (2008): 29–30.

<sup>11</sup> Whitehouse, “‘Things That Travelled’: The Surprising Case of Raw Glass.” See, for example, the nine-ton slabs of glass produced in ninth-century Israel. Ian C. Freestone and Yael Gorin-Rosen, “The Great Glass Slab at Bet She’arim: An Early Islamic Glassmaking Experiment?,” *Journal of Glass Studies* 41 (1999): 105–16.

<sup>12</sup> Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 21: “If we are able to link slavery with patterns of production and consumption, urbanism and rural settlement, then archaeology can furnish new insights into the processes which contributed to the end of ancient slavery.”

connection prevailed most visibly in Western Europe, where records from Merovingian Francia and Anglo-Saxon England indicate that slaves moved south along the same routes that moved beads north. These connections began to shift around 700. The arrival of eastern beads in Northern Europe occurred at the same time that viking slave raiders began to take captives from the west. As viking raiders began to leave their imprint on the west, they left beads as well, signaling strengthening connections with the distant east. Altogether, this evidence indicates that viking slave raiding was entangled with a rising demand for eastern goods in Scandinavia, and that beads of the Viking Age—just like those of the Merovingian period before it and the Atlantic period that followed—provide proxies for the human traffic traded in exchange for exotic goods.

### **Beads and Slaves in Merovingian Europe**

Following the collapse of Roman authority in the west, migrations paired with social transformations to establish new material cultures across much of Europe. Men adapted traditional symbols of Roman authority to accommodate new emblems of Germanic dress—trousers, belted tunics, and cloaks fastened with a brooch.<sup>13</sup> They

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<sup>13</sup> In general, see Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 104, 110. For Scandinavia: Lars Jørgensen and Anne Nørgård Jørgensen, *Nørre Sandegård Vest: A Cemetery from the 6th–8th Centuries on Bornholm*, Nordiske Fortidsminder, Ser. B, Vol. 14 (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab, 1997), 60–85; Thor Ewing, *Viking Clothing* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), 71–117; Ulla Mannering, *Iconic Costumes: Scandinavian Late Iron Age Costume Iconography*, Ancient Textiles Series 25 (Oxford: Oxbow, 2017), 161–62, 177. For Francia: Frank Siegmund, “Kleidung und Bewaffnung der Männer im östlichen Frankenreich,” in *Die Franken: Wegbereiter Europas: vor 1500 Jahren, König Chlodwig und seine Erben*, ed. Alfred Wieczorek et al., vol. 2: Handbuch (Mainz: von Zabern, 1996), 691–706; Patrick Périn and Michel Kazanski, “Männerkleidung und Bewaffnung im Wandel der Zeit,” in *Die Franken: Wegbereiter Europas: vor 1500 Jahren, König Chlodwig und seine Erben*, ed. Alfred Wieczorek et al., vol. 2: Handbuch (Mainz: von Zabern, 1996), 707–11. For England: Penelope Walton Rogers, *Cloth and*



increasingly wore swords as badges of power, sometimes ornamented with a large amulet or “sword bead” of glass.<sup>14</sup> Women meanwhile began to wear a new type of type of sleeveless tube dress similar to the Greek peplos, using brooches to pin straps over one or both shoulders. They wore this woolen dress over a sleeved linen shift, and sometimes they covered up with a cloak. Wealthy women complemented their brooches with strings of beads, or in cases where one brooch was worn, they sometimes dangled beads as a swag or wove them into a mat.<sup>15</sup> These styles of dress—most notably the male use of trousers and the female use of extravagant jewelry—marked a distinct divergence from earlier fashions, which continued unchanged among the communities of the Mediterranean.<sup>16</sup>

The beads worn by women north of the Alps indicate that, despite the political breakdown of the west, economic links still connected the peoples of Western Europe with the economic centers of the Eastern Mediterranean. Most early medieval beads were made from glass. Glass throughout this period was primarily

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*Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England, AD 450–700*, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 145 (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2007), 199–216; Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), 104–27, 166–201.

<sup>14</sup> Audrey L. Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, British Archaeological Reports British Series 96 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1981), 195–200.

<sup>15</sup> For Scandinavia: Jørgensen and Nørgård Jørgensen, *Nørre Sandegård Vest*, 55–59; Ewing, *Viking Clothing*, 21–42, 59–67; Mannering, *Iconic Costumes*, 161–62, 177. For Francia: Gudula Zeller, “Tracht der Frauen,” in *Die Franken: Wegbereiter Europas: vor 1500 Jahren, König Chlodwig und seine Erben*, ed. Alfred Wiczorek et al., vol. 2: Handbuch (Mainz: von Zabern, 1996), 672–80; Françoise Vallet, “Weibliche Mode im Westteil des merowingischen Königreiches,” in *Die Franken: Wegbereiter Europas: vor 1500 Jahren, König Chlodwig und seine Erben*, ed. Alfred Wiczorek et al., vol. 2: Handbuch (Mainz: von Zabern, 1996), 684–85. For England: Walton Rogers, *Cloth and Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England, AD 450–700*, 144–98; Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, 35–103, 128–65.

<sup>16</sup> Zeller, “Tracht der Frauen,” 672–80; Vallet, “Weibliche Mode im Westteil des merowingischen Königreiches,” 684–85; Ewing, *Viking Clothing*, 21–24; Walton Rogers, *Cloth and Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England, AD 450–700*, 201.

made along a narrow stretch of the Mediterranean. Production was limited by a reliance on high-silica sands from preferred sources ranging from Fustat in Egypt to al-Raqqa in Syria, as well as by a need for natron traditionally obtained from Wadi El Natrun near the Nile in Lower Egypt.<sup>17</sup>

Elite women north of the Alps occasionally mixed beads of glass with beads of other materials that were likewise sourced from the Near East or otherwise passed through its environs—faience from Egypt, cowry shells from the Red Sea, carnelian from Iran, rock crystal from India, amethyst from Egypt or India. Sometimes they opted for beads made locally, most commonly from amber and more rarely from other materials like bone, fossil, and jet.<sup>18</sup> Where beads are found, they typically represent traces of long-distance exchange that connected the peoples who wore beads with the peoples who made them.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See, in general, Julian Henderson, *Ancient Glass: An Interdisciplinary Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Johan Callmer, *Trade Beads and Bead Trade in Scandinavia, ca. 800–1000 A.D.*, Acta Archaeologica Lundensia, series in 4° 11 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1977); Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*; Barbara Sasse and Claudia Theune, “Perlen als Leittypen der Merowingerzeit,” *Germania* 74 (1996): 187–231; Birte Brugmann, *Glass Beads from Early Anglo-Saxon Graves: A Study on the Provenance and Chronology of Glass Beads from Early Anglo-Saxon Graves, Based on Visual Examination* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2004); Mags Mannion, *Glass Beads from Early Medieval Ireland: Classification, Dating, Social Performance* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015); Matthias Friedrich, *Archäologische Chronologie und historische Interpretation. Die Merowingerzeit in Süddeutschland*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 96 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 92–95.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew C. Delvaux, “Patterns of Scandinavian Bead Use between the Iron Age and the Viking Age, ca. 600–1000 C.E.,” *Beads: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers* 29 (2017): 3–30. See further Johan Callmer, “Beads as a Criterion of Shifting Trade and Exchange Connections,” *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 7 (1991): 25–38; Callmer, “The Influx of Oriental Beads into Europe during the 8th Century A.D.”; Johan Callmer, “Beads and Bead Production in Scandinavia and the Baltic Region c. AD 600–1100: A General Outline,” in *Perlen. Archäologie, Techniken, Analysen. Akten des Internationalen Perlensymposiums in Mannheim vom 11. bis 14. November 1994*, ed. Uta von Freeden and Alfred Wiczorek, *Kolloquien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte* 1 (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1997), 197–202; Whitehouse, “‘Things That Travelled’: The Surprising Case of Raw Glass.”

This exchange provided continued but attenuated access to the goods of the east, and it also helped draw slaves and captives from the west. Slaves are in many ways more difficult to trace than the things they were traded for. Even at the height of Roman slavery, the vast networks of the slave trade left few traces of the people who were trafficked to till the villas of Britain or tend the vineyards of the east.<sup>20</sup> For the early medieval west, this evidence is scant.<sup>21</sup>

The northernmost accounts of the early medieval slave trade derive from Bede.<sup>22</sup> In the 730s, he wrote an account of how, in 679, a Northumbrian retainer named Imma lied about his identity after being captured on the battlefield. His Mercian captor soon discovered that he had been a companion of the defeated Northumbrian king who should have fallen alongside him on the field of battle, but

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<sup>20</sup> For current and innovative approaches, see Keith Hopkins, “Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery,” *Past and Present*, no. 138 (February 1993): 3–27; Jane Webster, “Archaeologies of Slavery and Servitude: Bringing ‘New World’ Perspectives to Roman Britain,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 161–79; Jane Webster, “Routes to Slavery in the Roman World: A Comparative Perspective on the Archaeology of Forced Migration,” in *Roman Diasporas: Archaeological Approaches to Mobility and Diversity in the Roman Empire*, ed. Hella Eckardt, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 78 (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2010), 45–65; Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425*; Nico Roymans and Marenne Zandstra, “Indications for Rural Slavery in the Northern Provinces,” in *Villa Landscapes in the Roman North: Economy, Culture and Lifestyles*, ed. Nico Roymans and Ton Derks, *Amsterdam Archaeological Studies* 17 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 161–77; Michele George, ed., *Roman Slavery and Roman Material Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Charles Verlinden, *L’Esclavage dans l’Europe médiéval 1. Péninsule ibérique. France* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1955); Thomas J. MacMaster, “The Transformative Impact of the Slave Trade on the Roman World, 580–720” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> The earlier experiences of Patrick provide more ambiguous evidence from the declining years of the Western Roman Empire. On the one hand, Patrick began his career as a captive taken from Christian Britain to pagan Ireland. On the other, he complained of Christian slave raiders then operating in Ireland. This warband drew Patrick’s ire by capturing a group of recently baptized converts, apparently selling them among the Pictish peoples of northern Britain. Patrick, however, treated this as aberrant behavior, suggesting that the offending troop might have intended to seize unconverted Irish pagans for sale among Christian communities further south. Patrick, *St Patrick: His Writings and Muirchu’s Life*, ed. A. B. E. Hood, *Arthurian Period Sources* 9 (London: Philmore, 1978); David N. Dumville, *Saint Patrick, A.D. 493–1993* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993), 107–27.

having promised the captive that no harm would befall him, he instead sold Imma to a Frisian trader in London. As Bede piously recalled, Imma was saved by his brother's prayers, but the story nonetheless sheds light on the trajectory of captives taken from Anglo-Saxon England. Imma began his career as a Northumbrian retainer, was taken captive by a Mercian, and was subsequently sold south to a trader in London, presumably with the intent to traffic him to Frisia and then up the Rhine.<sup>23</sup>

Further clues regard the circulation of slaves on the Continent. The most illuminating evidence derives from saints' *lives*. While attesting to the virtues of their subjects, these texts occasionally enumerate slaves whom the saints redeemed. In the case of Germain of Paris in the mid-500s, this included Spaniards, Irish, Bretons, Basques, Saxons, and Burgundians.<sup>24</sup> Regarding Eligius of Noyon, probably in reference to his time in Marseille in the early 600s, his biographer recalled:

Whenever he understood that slaves were for sale, hurrying with great mercy and haste, he freed the captive with treasure soon given. Sometimes he redeemed as many as twenty or thirty or even fifty captives at a time; sometimes he likewise redeemed a whole flock of up to a hundred souls as they disembarked a ship in both sexes and coming from diverse peoples, namely Romans, Gauls, and Britons as well as Moors, and especially the Saxons who at that time were as abundant as sheep, being expelled from their own land and diversely scattered.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 400–405, IV, c. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita Germani Episcopi Parisiaci*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS rer. Merov. 7 (Hanover: Hahn, 1920), 337–428, at 415, c. 72: “Unde sunt contiguae gentes in testimonium, Hispanus, Scottus, Britto, Wasco, Saxo, Burgundio, cum ad nomen beati concurrerent, undique liberandi iugo servitii.”

<sup>25</sup> Eligius's biographer does not specify the place, but Marseilles is most likely based on information about Eligius preserved in other sources. Dado of Rouen, *Vita Eligii Episcopi Noviomagensis*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS rer. Merov. 4 (Hanover: Hahn, 1902), 634–761, at 677, c. 10: “Sane ubicumque venundandum intellexisset mancipium, magna cum misericordia et festinatione occurrens, mox dato praetio liberabat captivum; interdum etiam usque ad viginti et triginta seu et quinquaginta numero simul a captivitate redimebat; nonnumquam vero amen integrum et usque ad centum animas, cum

Others slaves were less fortunate. An Anglo-Saxon captive by the name of Balthild (d. 680) was bought for the chamber of the Frankish majordomo Erchinoald, and although she escaped his unwanted attentions, her subsequent pairing with Clovis II (r. 639–657) needed no consent.<sup>26</sup> Together, these texts describe the peoples of the British Isles and Ireland, whether Anglo-Saxons, Britons, or Irish, in transit across Francia, gathered with slaves from other Frankish frontiers, and carried onward toward the Mediterranean.

Despite occasional efforts to redeem captives in transit, at least some northern slaves made their way to Mediterranean shores. In the early 700s, an anonymous monk of Whitby in England recorded how the future pope Gregory the Great encountered Anglo-Saxons slaves in a Roman slave market shortly before 590. In a series of puns playing on false cognates between Latin and Old English, Gregory established his resolve to send missionaries to England: “He asked from which people they came ... And when they answered, ‘They are called Angles, those from whom

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navem egrederentur, utriusque sexus, ex diversis gentibus venientes, pariter liberabat, Romanorum scilicet, Gallorum atque Brittanorum necnon et Maurorum, sed praecipuae ex genere Saxonorum, qui abunde eo tempore veluti greges a sedibus propriis evulsi in diversu distrahebantur.” For translation, see Dado of Rouen, “Life of St. Eligius of Noyon,” in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas Head, trans. Jo Ann McNamara (New York: Routledge, 2001), 137–67. For further discussion on the location, see MacMaster, “The Transformative Impact of the Slave Trade on the Roman World, 580–720,” 144.

<sup>26</sup> Anonymous, *Vita Sanctae Balthildis*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS Rer. Merov. 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1888), 475–508. For translation, see Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg, and E. Gordon Whatley, eds., “Balthild, Queen of Neustria,” in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 264–78. In their introduction to the text, these authors note a hostile tone toward Clovis II. For further discussion, see Janet L. Nelson, “Queens as Jezebels: The Careers of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History,” in *Medieval Women: Dedicated and Presented to Professor Rosalind M. T. Hill on the Occasion of Her Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 31–77.

we come,' he said, 'Angels of God!'"<sup>27</sup>

Gregory's own letters provide less fanciful details. After being elevated to the office of pope, Gregory followed through his resolve to send missionaries to England, first by dispatching a churchman in 595 to redeem Anglo-Saxon slaves from the markets of Marseille for monastic training.<sup>28</sup> In further letters written in the 590s, Gregory referenced slave markets further south in Naples and Sicily.<sup>29</sup> Gregory does not identify the buyers for these slaves, but as the Islamic conquests swept through North Africa and the Levant in the 600s, Frankish churchmen discovered a sudden need to prohibit the sale of Christians to pagans.<sup>30</sup> Their concerns indicate that Christian slaves were still being sold to buyers in the Near East.

The bead evidence nonetheless discourages us from imagining a major pipeline drawing slaves from Northern Europe to the markets of the Mediterranean. Beads moved northward by no single route and thinned in numbers and selection as they reached the north. An especially sumptuous burial from Suffolk helps make the case. In the mid-500s, a woman was buried there at Boss Hall in Grave 94, and the beads buried with her exemplify the breakdown of Mediterranean connections.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Anonymous of Whitby, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1968), 90, c. 9: "Cuius gentis fuissent, inquisivit. ... Cumque responderent, 'Anguli dicuntur, illi de quibus sumus,' ille dixit, 'Angeli Dei.'"

<sup>28</sup> Gregory the Great, *Gregorii I papae Registrum epistolarum. Libri I–VII*, ed. Ludwig Hartmann, MGH Epp. 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1891), 388–89, VI, c. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Gregory the Great, 194–95, III, c. 37, 389–90, VI, c. 10. See discussion in MacMaster, "The Transformative Impact of the Slave Trade on the Roman World, 580–720," 143.

<sup>30</sup> Thus Charles Verlinden interpreted the Councils of Clichy (626/7), Orleans (627x630), and Chalon-sur-Saône (639x654). Verlinden, *L'Esclavage 1*, 676–67. In response, pious or pragmatic slave traders must have preferred trafficking pagans from the far reaches of Britain or Saxony over selling their Christian neighbors to Muslims.

<sup>31</sup> The beads of this burial match Brugmann's phase A2 (480–580), but the excavators interpret it as belonging to a group of burials more narrowly dated to the early or middle of the 6th century, or c.

Women of previous generations had been buried with beads of drawn glass, cut into tubes or segmented in the large workshops of the Near East.<sup>32</sup> The woman of Boss Hall 94 was buried with a similar Constricted Cylinder type of bead that first appeared in England after 480.<sup>33</sup> Few women of the early Anglo-Saxon period were buried with more than four such beads, but the woman at Boss Hall wore a lavish display of 22. These were augmented with three Constricted Segmented beads, also imported, and five beads of wound glass of uncertain origin.<sup>34</sup> Despite these efforts to showcase connections with the Near East, however, the majority of beads buried with Boss Hall 94 were more local. These consisted of 101 beads of amber, difficult to provenance precisely, but linking Boss Hall 94 with amber-working communities in the North Sea or southern Baltic.<sup>35</sup>

The woman of Boss Hall 94 was buried at a time when long-distance exchange with the Mediterranean remained possible but tenuous. A small subset of glass beads showing traces of manufacture in India, for example, reached northern

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500–575. Christopher Scull, *Early Medieval (Late 5th–Early 8th Centuries AD) Cemeteries at Boss Hall and Buttermarket, Ipswich, Suffolk*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 27 (Leeds: Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2009), 113–14.

<sup>32</sup> Drawn beads common before 450 in England included Roman Cane beads and Roman Short Cylinder beads. Brugmann, *Glass Beads from Early Anglo-Saxon Graves: A Study on the Provenance and Chronology of Glass Beads from Early Anglo-Saxon Graves, Based on Visual Examination*, 29–30, 70. Molds for making segmented beads have been excavated from a contemporary early-medieval site at Kom el Dikka in Alexandria. Torben Sode, “Glass Bead Making Technology,” in *Ribe Excavations 1970–76*, ed. Mogens Bencard, Aino Kann Rasmussen, and Helge Brinch Madsen, vol. 5 (Aarhus: Jutland Archaeological Society, 2004), 83–102, at 97–98.

<sup>33</sup> Brugmann assigns these beads to her Phase A2 dating from 480 to 580. Brugmann, *Glass Beads from Early Anglo-Saxon Graves*, 44–57.

<sup>34</sup> Scull, *Early Medieval Cemeteries at Boss Hall and Buttermarket*, 96–97.

<sup>35</sup> Scull, 97–98; Margaret Guido, *The Glass Beads of Anglo-Saxon England c.AD 400–700: A Preliminary Visual Classification of the More Definitive and Diagnostic Types*, ed. Martin Welch, Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London 58 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), 2.

France but failed to appear in communities across the Channel.<sup>36</sup> Amethyst beads from the east show a similar rarification, with large numbers appearing across the Continent, about 150 reaching Kent, and a similar number moving into the rest of Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>37</sup> Facing reduced access to new beads of glass, the women of Anglo-Saxon England increasingly turned to wearing beads made from recycled glass,<sup>38</sup> or like the woman of Boss Hall 94, to curating beads made from more locally-sourced materials.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The beads in question may be compared to Brugmann's Roman Short Cylinder beads, which however fell out of use about 450. Constantin Pion and Bernard Gratuze, "Indo-Pacific Glass Beads from the Indian Subcontinent in Early Merovingian Graves (5th–6th Century AD)," *Archaeological Research in Asia* 6 (2016): 51–64. Compare Thomas Calligaro et al., "Contribution à l'étude des grenats mérovingiens (Basilique de Saint-Denis et autres collections du musée d'Archéologie nationale, diverses collections publiques et objets de fouilles récentes). Nouvelles analyses gemmologiques et géochimiques effectuées au Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France," *Antiquités nationales* 38 (2008): 111–44.

<sup>37</sup> Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, 75–77. Similar distributions were identified by Helen Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England, c.600–c.850*, British Archaeological Reports British Series 261 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1997), 40–41. Meaney suggests an origin in Egypt or India, but in either case, these beads likely reached Northern Europe through Byzantine intermediaries. John Ljungkvist, "Continental Imports to Scandinavia: Patterns and Changes between AD 400 and 800," in *Foreigners in Early Medieval Europe: Thirteen International Studies on Early Medieval Mobility*, ed. Dieter Quast, Monographien Des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums 78 (Mainz: Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2009), 27–49, at 42. For a brief survey of the position of amethyst beads in the wider chronologies of Continental beads, see Sasse and Theune, "Perlen als Leittypen der Merowingerzeit." On Kent as mediating—and sometimes intercepting—trade between Britain and the Continent, see J. W. Huggett, "Imported Grave Goods and the Early Anglo-Saxon Economy," *Medieval Archaeology* 32, no. 1 (January 1988): 63–96.

<sup>38</sup> Traditions of glass recycling in England dated from at least the 200s. Caroline Jackson and Harriet Foster, "The Last Roman Glass in Britain: Recycling at the Periphery of the Empire," in *Neighbours and Successors of Rome: Traditions of Glass Production and Use in Europe and the Middle East in the Later 1st Millennium AD*, ed. Daniel Keller, Jennifer Price, and Caroline Jackson (Oxford: Oxbow, 2014), 6–14. Recycled glass is more likely to accrue inclusions which opacify the glass, and most of Brugmann's Anglo-Saxon bead types are in fact opaque. Brugmann notes that efforts to make translucent beads continued through only about 550. Brugmann, *Glass Beads from Early Anglo-Saxon Graves*, 24. By the seventh century, even large furnaces for glassworking as at Glastonbury were used for glass recycling and too delicate for primary glass production. Hugh Willmott and Kate Welham, "Late Seventh-Century Glassmaking at Glastonbury Abbey," *Journal of Glass Studies* 55 (2013): 71–83.

<sup>39</sup> In Brugmann's study of Anglo-Saxon England, focused on the period before 700, amber beads comprised 56% of all beads placed in burials. These were particularly concentrated in her correspondence group A2, dating 480–580. Brugmann, *Glass Beads from Early Anglo-Saxon Graves*, 5, 47.



These examples reinforce the general pattern seen in the textual sources. Imma's Mercian captor had good reason to expect encountering a trader who could sell Imma out of England, and the Frisian he met in London seemed ready to do so were it not for Imma's saintly brother's intervention. Nonetheless, Imma's captor, and perhaps the Frisian trader as well, engaged in the slave trade only at opportunity and on a small scale. The account of Eligius of Noyon likewise indicates that the slave trade was irregular business, even in the Mediterranean port of Marseilles, where captives tended to pass a few at a time and only exceptionally numbered in the hundreds. And while Gregory the Great could expect to encounter Anglo-Saxon slaves who reached the Mediterranean, their appearance was sufficiently infrequent that he could plausibly be ignorant of who they were. The bead evidence gives no reason to challenge these views. Slaves who entered the networks of long-distance exchange were likely to be funneled toward the robust Mediterranean economies that produced these beads, but beads also indicate that long-distance exchange languished throughout the post-Roman west, and the slave trade along with it.

### **Baltic Beads and the Early Viking Age**

This situation changed dramatically at the onset of the Viking Age. Beads help show this change, both by their disappearance from the west and their arrival from the east. Beginning in the 600s, evidence for fashions in the west grows scarce as elites stopped burying their dead with costly grave goods and began burying them in

simple shrouds.<sup>40</sup> The Frankish Queen Balthild, who began her career as an Anglo-Saxon captive, died in 680, offering insight into this transition. She had retired to a cloister, and her fellow nuns subsequently curated a linen dress as a relic of their sainted patroness and queen. Although Balthild was not buried with beads like earlier Frankish queens, her chemise was embroidered with a collar representing a Mediterranean-style necklace, ornamented with images of religious pendants.

Balthild's chemise helps show how by the late 600s beads were being replaced by Christian pendants among the living and more austere practices of burial among the dead.<sup>41</sup> A burial in Grave 93 at Boss Hall, dated to around 690, shows similar changes across the Channel.<sup>42</sup> Like Balthild, the woman of Boss Hall 93 did not wear a necklace in death. A necklace was instead interred alongside her in an oaken box together with brooches and coins. The necklace resembled the collar embroidered on Balthild's in that it consisted mostly of pendants rather than beads.<sup>43</sup> Both in the style of her necklace and in the rites of her burial, the woman of Boss Hall 93 aligned more closely with her saintly contemporary Balthild than with her richly adorned

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<sup>40</sup> Bonnie Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 205–12; John Hines and Alex Bayliss, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6th and 7th Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 33 (London: Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2013), 464–73, 548–54.

<sup>41</sup> Bonnie Effros, "Symbolic Expressions of Sanctity: Gertrude of Nivelles in the Context of Merovingian Mortuary Custom," *Viator* 27 (1996): 1–10, at 2; Barbara Yorke, "'The Weight of Necklaces': Some Insights into the Wearing of Women's Jewellery from Middle Saxon Written Sources," in *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welch*, ed. Stuart Brookes, Sue Harrington, and Andrew Reynolds, British Archaeological Reports British Series 527 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2011), 106–11, at 107.

<sup>42</sup> The excavators rely on the inclusion of a B1 sceatt of c. 690–700 for this date. They note that without this coin, the burial might otherwise have been dated several decades earlier. Scull, *Early Medieval Cemeteries at Boss Hall and Buttermarket*, 114.

<sup>43</sup> Scull, 16–18, 29, 43–44.

predecessor of Boss Hall 94.

Over the course of the 600s, therefore, beads and accompanied burials became scarce in Western Europe.<sup>44</sup> This does not in itself signal an end to long-distance exchange. In fact, new trading networks were taking shape between Britain and Francia, although the lack of beads suggests more limited connections with the south.<sup>45</sup> Beads are especially rare among Anglo-Saxon emporia sites. The earliest such sites included Ipswich, London, and Hamwic (Southampton). Women like the one buried at Boss Hall 93 wore necklaces through around 700,<sup>46</sup> but the traders and craftspeople of nearby Ipswich left only 27 beads for archaeologists to find during major excavations spanning 1974 to 1990.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, small numbers have been found in London, where archaeologists have registered only eight beads from the

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<sup>44</sup> Radiocarbon dating suggests the accompanied burials in England might have been abandoned as early as 680, although some factors in this analysis remain open to debate. Hines and Bayliss, *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods*, 460, 464–73, 548–54; Catherine Hills, review of *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6th and 7th Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework*, by John Hines and Alex Bayliss, *Antiquaries Journal* 94 (2014): 370–72; Sam Lucy, review of *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6th and 7th Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework*, by John Hines and Alex Bayliss, *Antiquity* 88, no. 340 (June 2014): 677–79; Nancy L. Wicker, review of *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6th and 7th Centuries AD: A Chronological Framework*, by John Hines and Alex Bayliss, *American Journal of Archaeology* 120 (2016), <http://www.ajaonline.org/node/2570>.

<sup>45</sup> Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 681–88; Christopher Loveluck, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages, c. AD 600–1150: A Comparative Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 178–212.

<sup>46</sup> Catherine Mortimer, “Assessment of Potential for Technological Research of Silver, Copper–Alloy and Glass Artefacts from Boss Hall and St Stephen’s Lane (Buttermarket) Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries, Ipswich, Suffolk,” Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report, 4/94 (London: English Heritage, 1994).

<sup>47</sup> Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, “Ipswich 1974–1990 Excavation Archive [Data-Set]” (York: Archaeological Data Service, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.5284/1034376>. Nine beads (eight glass and one amber) derive from early Anglo-Saxon burials at Buttermarket/St. Stephen’s Lane. Three beads (two glass and one amber) derive from early Anglo-Saxon contexts at Bridge Street, c. 600–700. Two beads (glass) derive from late Anglo-Saxon contexts, c. 850–950, and four beads (glass) derive from medieval contexts, c. 1100–1450. I found no dating information for the remaining eight glass beads.

period of the early emporium.<sup>48</sup> At Hamwic, large excavations have likewise produced only twenty beads could be dated to the 700s.<sup>49</sup> A similar situation obtained south of the Channel. At Quentovic, a small but unspecified number of beads were recovered during excavations in the 1980s.<sup>50</sup> From the now offshore site of Walcheren at Domburg, some beads have been intermittently reported but never collected during periods of extreme low water.<sup>51</sup> And from Dorestad, a total of 177

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<sup>48</sup> Gordon Malcolm and David Bowsher, *Middle Saxon London: Excavations at the Royal Opera House 1989–99*, Museum of London Archaeology Service Monograph 15 (London: Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2003), 27, 100–1, 166, 250 (catalog). Ultimately, five beads from the Royal Opera House site may be attributed to the Middle Saxon period, with the addition of three beads, one each from sites N, P, and R. Matthew Stiff, “The Glass,” in *Lundenwic: Excavations in Middle Saxon London, 1987–2000*, ed. Robert Cowie and Lyn Blackmore, Museum of London Archaeology 63 (London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2012), 256–263, at 258–59, 263 (catalog).

<sup>49</sup> John Hunter, “The Glass,” in *Excavations at Melbourne Street, Southampton, 1971–76*, ed. Philip Holdsworth, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 33 (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1980), 59–71, at 60, 68 (one bead), 71; Alan D. Morton, *Excavations at Hamwic Volume 1: Excavations 1946–83, Excluding Six Dials and Melbourne Street*, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 84 (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1992), 51, 152 (five beads in modern feature), 174 (four beads with a child burial); Phil Andrews, *Excavations at Hamwic: Volume 2: Excavations at Six Dials*, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 109, Southampton Archaeology Monographs 7 (York: Council for British Archaeology, 1997), 216–17 (“A small number of beads”); John R. Hunter and Michael P. Heyworth, *The Hamwic Glass*, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 116 (York: Council for British Archaeology, 1998), 26–27 (illustration of 29 beads presumably deriving primarily from Six Dials), 59.

<sup>50</sup> Note that this site is referred to as Vismarest-sur-Canche by Chris Loveluck; elsewhere it is referred to as La Calotterie. Margaret Worthington, “Quentovic,” in *Medieval Archaeology: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Pam J. Crabtree (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 273–76, at 275 (one amethyst bead and some clay beads). Margaret Worthington Hill, “Quentovic,” in *Towns and Topography: Essays in Memory of David H. Hill*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Susan D. Thompson (Oxford: Oxbow, 2014), 11–18, at 15 (two amber beads and one glass bead in the Necropolis), 16 (a crucible and reticella rod from glassworking)[this is the best succinct survey]. See further David Hill et al., “Quentovic Defined,” *Antiquity* 66, no. 253 (1992): 965–69, at 57 (no beads recovered as of 1988); Stéphane Lebecq, Bruno Béthouart, and Laurent Verslype, eds., *Quentovic : Environnement, Archéologie, Histoire*, Éditions du Conseil scientifique de l’université Lille 3 (Lille: University of Lille, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Marie G. A. de Man, “Que Sait-on de La Plage de Dombourg?,” *Tijdschrift van Het Nederlandsch Genootschap Voor Munt- En Penningkunde* 7 (1899): 5–61, 85–116, 153–73, at 24–25 (copper ring attached to beads recovered on 3 September 1817 by the Royal Zeeland Scientific Society), 38–45 (beads purportedly found near the necks and hips of skeletons in 1866 by an M. Frederiks; on the final page of this section, the author does not include beads among the artifacts he recovered from the beach in 1880).

beads have been recovered from extensive excavations covering 57 hectares.<sup>52</sup>

While these western emporia thrived, their lack of beads suggests that they did not sustain the southward movement of slaves seen in earlier generations. By implication, captives taken in Frankish warfare would be less likely to be sold along routes leading to the Mediterranean. The Carolingian sources explored in Chapter Three reveal such a change did occur as a shift toward acquiring rather than selling slaves. Most emphatically, Einhard described Charlemagne taking ten thousand Saxon families and redistributing them across Francia, while further sources also point to the Charlemagne's household, royal estates, and the Frankish churches as beneficiaries of Charlemagne's captive taking.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> A total of 147 beads from the 55 hectares of the riverbank settlement including the Hoogstraat excavation areas. Clasina Isings, "Glass Finds from Dorestad, Hoogstraat I," in *Excavations at Dorestad 1: The Harbour: Hoogstraat I*, ed. Willem Albertus van Es and Willem Johannes Hendrik Verwers, Nederlandse Oudheden 9 (Amersfoort: Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek, 1980), 225–37, at 225, 233–35 (seventeen beads); Clasina Isings, "Glass," in *Excavations at Dorestad 3: Hoogstraat II–IV*, ed. Willem Albertus van Es and Willem Johannes Hendrik Verwers, Nederlandse Oudheden 16 (Amersfoort: Rijksdienst voor Archeologie, Cultuurlandschap en Monumenten, 2009), 259–79, at 264–265 (six beads); Clasina Isings, "Glass," in *Excavations at Dorestad 4: The Settlement on the River Bank Area*, ed. Willem Albertus van Es and Willem Johannes Hendrik Verwers, Nederlandse Oudheden 18 (Amersfoort: Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, 2015), 422–45, at 425–427 (c. 124 beads). These figures do not include early excavations, which cannot be quantified reliably. For a summary of excavations, see Willem Albertus van Es and Willem Johannes Hendrik Verwers, "De Voorgeschiedenis van Wijk Bij Duurstede," in *Wijk Bij Duurstede: 700 Jaar Stad: Ruimtelijke Structuur En Bouwgeschiedenis*, ed. M. A. van der Eerden-Vonk, J. Hauer, and G. W. J. van Omme, Nederlandse Oudheden 18 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000), 25–40; Annemarieke Willemsen, "Welcome to Dorestad," in *Dorestad in an International Framework: New Research on Centres of Trade and Coinage in Carolingian Times*, ed. Annemarieke Willemsen and Hanneke Kik (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 7–16. Images of beads from early excavations appear in this volume on pp. 19 (L.J.F. Janssen 1842) and 24 (De Roever and Dozy 1890); two beads from the recent Veilingterrein excavations on p. 29; and one bead photographed on p. 40 (no. 82; a segmented metal-foil bead). A total of 30 beads have been excavated from the 1.7 hectares of the Veilingterrein (Auction Site) site. Juked Dijkstra, ed., *Het domein van de boer en de ambachtsman. Een opgraving op het terrein van de voormalige veiling te Wijk bij Duurstede: een deel van Dorestad en de villa Wijk archeologisch onderzocht*, ADC-Monografie 12 (Amersfoort: ADC ArcheoProjecten, 2012), 318–28, <https://doi.org/10.17026/dans-x8d-qmae>.

<sup>53</sup> Einhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. Louis Halphen, 3rd ed., Les classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Âge (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1947), 24, c. 7. For translation, see Lewis Thorpe, ed., *Two Lives of Charlemagne* (London: Penguin, 1969).

Bead imports and slave exports had largely disappeared in the west, but during the early 700s, new connections between slaves and beads began to appear in the north.<sup>54</sup> Ribe in Denmark appears to have been the furthest terminus of these connections. Beginning around 705, itinerant craftsmen began to appear regularly at this North Sea site, and beadmakers were prominent among them. For raw materials, they imported broken glass shards and recycled mosaic pieces, and they were soon producing distinctive beads on a grand scale. In a small area of eighty square meters, archaeologists recovered 486 beads that were lost or abandoned within the first twenty years of occupation alone.<sup>55</sup> Similar activities were occurring around the Baltic, with local bead production taking off at Reric (Gross Strömkendorf) in northern Germany,<sup>56</sup> Truso (Janów Pomorski) in Poland,<sup>57</sup> Åhus in southern Sweden,<sup>58</sup> Paviken on Gotland,<sup>59</sup> and Helgö in Central Sweden.<sup>60</sup> Given the lack of

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<sup>54</sup> For the earlier history of beads in Scandinavia, see Delvaux, “Patterns of Scandinavian Bead Use.”

<sup>55</sup> Site Phase B, dated from 705 to 725. Claus Feveile and Stig Jensen, “ASR 9 Posthuset,” in *Det Äldste Ribe. Udgravninger på nordsiden af Ribe Å 1984–2000*, ed. Claus Feveile, Ribe studier, 1.2 (Aarhus: Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab, 2006), 131. For a general introduction to the site, see Claus Feveile, “Ribe on the North Side of the River, 8th–12th Century – Overview and Interpretation,” in *Det äldste Ribe. Udgravninger på nordsiden af Ribe Å 1984–2000*, ed. Claus Feveile, Ribe studier, 1.1 (Aarhus: Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab, 2006), 65–91.

<sup>56</sup> Alexander Pöche, *Perlen, Trichtergläser, Tesserae. Spuren des Glashandels und Glashandwerks auf dem frühgeschichtlichen Handelsplatz von Groß Strömkendorf, Landkreis Nordwestmecklenburg*, Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Mecklenburg-Vorpommerns 44, Forschungen zu Groß Strömkendorf 2 (Schwerin: Archäologisches Landesmuseum Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Maria Dekówna and Tomasz Purowski, “Znaleziska związane ze szklarstwem oraz okazy z kwarcu ze stanowiska Janów Pomorski 1 / Glass and quartz finds from Janów Pomorski site 1,” in *Janów Pomorski stan. 1. Wyniki ratowniczych badań archeologicznych w latach 2007–2008 / Janów Pomorski Site 1. Archaeological Rescue Excavations in 2007–2008*, ed. Mateusz Bogucki and Beata Jurkiewicz, 1:3 Analysis (Elbląg: Museum of Archaeology and History in Elbląg, 2012), 66–260. See, in general, Marek F. Jagodziński, “The Settlement of Truso,” in *Wulfstan’s Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as Seen from Shipboard*, ed. Anton Englert and Athena Trakadas, Maritime Culture of the North 2 (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2009), 182–97.

<sup>58</sup> Johan Callmer and Julian Henderson, “Glassworking at Åhus, S. Sweden (Eighth Century AD),” *Laborativ Arkeologi* 5 (1991): 143–54; Tyra Ericson-Borggren, “Arkeologisk undersökning m.m. 1989–91. Åhus 42:84 m.fl., Åhus sn, Fornlämning 35. Skåne. Rapport 1993:12” (Kristianstad:

beads among western emporia, Baltic and Scandinavian traders must have looked elsewhere to foster long-distance exchange. At least initially, these merchants connected south to the Danube via the old Amber Trail, giving Scandinavian and Baltic communities incipient access to the glass-producing economies of the Eastern Mediterranean that lay beyond.<sup>61</sup>

Historical and archaeological evidence indicate that slaving helped catalyze this exchange. The first such report is embedded in one of the most curious texts of the Middle Ages—*The Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*.<sup>62</sup> This text purports to be the synopsis of a classical Greek geography book translated into Latin by Jerome, the late-antique priest known best for preparing the Latin Vulgate. The author of this work, however, had a poor command of Latin and referenced events and texts that mark his text as dating from after 727. He may have been from Francia or northern Italy, showing particular interest in contemporary events in the eastern Mediterranean, but he also revealed hints of wide travels including visits to Britain and Ireland. During these travels, the author formed a particularly severe opinion of the peoples who dwelt along Baltic, whom he called Saxons.<sup>63</sup> Of these peoples, he

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Kristianstads läns museum, 1993).

<sup>59</sup> Per Lundström, *De kommo vida ... Vikingars hamn vid Paviken på Gotland* (Uddevalla: Risberg, 1981).

<sup>60</sup> Agneta Lundström, "Survey of the Glass from Helgö," in *Glass – Iron – Clay*, ed. Agneta Lundström and Helen Clarke, Excavations at Helgö 7 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1981), 1–38.

<sup>61</sup> Florin Curta, "The Amber Trail in Early Medieval Eastern Europe," in *Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Felice Lifshitz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 61–79; Callmer, "Beads as a Criterion of Shifting Trade and Exchange Connections."

<sup>62</sup> Michael W. Herren, ed., *The Cosmography of Aethicus Ister: Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

<sup>63</sup> On the apocalyptic resonances of these passages, which presaged rhetoric later applied to Norse raiders as well, see James Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 124–25, 176–83.

wrote: “A restless race, preying on other peoples; if a group of captives should fall into their hands, either never or hardly ever is anyone able to escape.”<sup>64</sup>

This account is paralleled by a remarkable archaeological find from Salme in Estonia.<sup>65</sup> Two ships were hastily buried in the early 700s with 41 bodies on board. These men appear to have been members of a raiding party—although one publication has optimistically described the group as a well-armed diplomatic mission.<sup>66</sup> These men traveled with all the implements of war, but to no avail. Their bodies had been pierced by arrows and hacked to pieces. Survivors laid the deceased in the boats with care, placing severed limbs and heads next to the mutilated bodies of the dead. Analysis of these remains indicates that the group came from central Sweden. Despite many unknowns about these men, they nonetheless confirm the testimony of the *Cosmography* that the peoples of the Baltic were restless and ready to prey on their neighbors. Furthermore, a handful of beads found on one of the boats suggests that a desire for eastern goods figured among the reasons these men had

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<sup>64</sup> Herren, *The Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*, 30–31, §31: “Gens inquieta, praedones aliarum gentium; si captiuorum caterua in eorum manibus incucurrerit, aut numquam aut uix reuertere quis ualet.” Regarding the historicity of this assertion, see also Ian Wood and George Indruszewski, “An 8th-Century Written Source on Ships and Navigation: *The Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*,” in *Wulfstan’s Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as Seen from Shipboard*, ed. Anton Englert and Athena Trakadas, *Maritime Culture of the North 2* (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2009), 220–34.

<sup>65</sup> Marge Kõnsa et al., “Rescue Excavations of a Vendel Era Boat-Grave in Salme, Saaremaa,” *Archaeological Fieldwork in Estonia 2008* (2009): 53–64; Jüri Peets, Raili Allmäe, and Liina Maldre, “Archaeological Investigations of Pre-Viking Age Burial Boat in Salme Village at Saaremaa,” *Archaeological Fieldwork in Estonia 2010* (2010): 29–48; Raili Allmäe, Liina Maldre, and Teresa Tomek, “The Salme I Ship Burial: An Osteological View of a Unique Burial in Northern Europe,” *Interdisciplinaria Archaeologica: Natural Sciences in Archaeology 2* (2011): 109–24; Jüri Peets et al., “Research Results of the Salme Ship Burials in 2011–2012,” *Archaeological Fieldwork in Estonia 2012* (2012): 1–18; T. Douglas Price et al., “Isotopic Provenancing of the Salme Ship Burials in Pre-Viking Age Estonia,” *Antiquity* 90 (2016): 1022–37.

<sup>66</sup> Price et al., “Isotopic Provenancing of the Salme Ship Burials in Pre-Viking Age Estonia,” 1033–34.



traveled across the Baltic.<sup>67</sup>

The exchange networks linking Scandinavia to the east intensified at the very moment that slave raiders began to prey upon the west. Beginning in the 780s, Ribe and the Baltic emporia received their first shipments of eastern-made beads, including segmented beads, green drawn beads, mosaic eye beads, and drawn cut beads (Table 4.1, Figure 4.1).<sup>68</sup> There is good reason to believe that the arrival of eastern beads was linked to the expansion of the western slave trade.

Phase	Date	Beads	Ribe Beads	Wasp Beads	Metal-Foil Segmented	Blue Segmented	Green Tubes	Drawn Cut
B	705-725	••••	•					
C	725-760	••	•••					
D	760-780							
E	780-790	•••••		•••••••	•			
F	790-800	••••		•	••••	•	••••	
G	800-820	•			••	•	•	•
H/I	820-850	•						••
		• = 5 losses/yr	local beads		• = 1 loss/yr		<i>imports</i>	

**Table 4.1. Ribe Posthuset Bead Deposition** (after Feveile and Jensen 2006)

<sup>67</sup> Peets, Allmäe, and Maldre, “Archaeological Investigations of Pre-Viking Age Burial Boat in Salme Village at Saaremaa,” 38.

<sup>68</sup> This last group appears frequently but has no common name. I prefer the term slumped, which references a final reheating process to soften sharp edges left by cutting. In literature beyond Scandinavia, the generic term microbead also occurs. See further Maibritt Jönsson and Pete Hunner, “Gold-Foil Beads,” in *Glass Beads: Cultural History, Technology, Experiment and Analogy*, ed. Marianne Rasmussen, Ulla Lund Hansen, and Ulf Näsman, Studies in Technology and Culture 2 (Lejre: Historical-Archaeological Experimental Centre, 1995), 113–16; Sode, “Glass Bead Making Technology,” 95–99; Torben Sode, Claus Feveile, and Ulrich Schnell, “An Investigation on Segmented, Metal-foiled Glass Beads and Blown, Mirrored Glass Beads from Ribe, Denmark,” in *Zwischen Fjorden und Steppe. Festschrift für Johan Callmer zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Claudia Theune et al. (Rahden: Marie Leidorf, 2010), 319–28.



**Figure 4.1. Bead Group from Ribe, c. 790–800 (SVJM ASR 9 x105), featuring segmented beads in silver foil (top left) and gold foil (bottom left and center), segmented beads in blue (top center right), and a green tube bead (bottom right)**

At Lousgård on Bornholm, a large number of these new beads were included in the particularly rich Grave 47. The woman of Lousgård 47 was committed to the ground with 49 such beads and other flashy jewelry, including an impressive brooch featuring two horseheads laid out in garnets. Most spectacular of all, however, was her company—a horse on one side and a young human on the other.<sup>69</sup> These inclusions set the woman of Lousgård 47 apart as a person with access to riches from the east as well as to sources of disposable human and animal bodies. At a time when raiding reports were taking on fever pitch in the west, these links show early viking raids connected into a deep and far-reaching exchange network.

A new influx of bead imports coincided with each of the major thresholds of

<sup>69</sup> Emil Vedel, “Bornholmske Undersøgelser med særligt Hensyn til den senere Jernalder,” *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1890, 1–104, at 99–100; Henriette Lyngstrøm, “Lousgaard – éthundrede år efter J. A. Jørgensen og E. Vedel,” *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1989, 115–69.

western slave raiding identified in previous chapters (Table 4.2). By 845, the scales had tipped such that Scandinavian women began to be buried more with imported beads than with locally made products. The dominant beads of this trade were small beads that had been drawn from tubes of glass, cut into thin sections, and then reheated so that the edges softened or slumped into a loaf shape. These beads appear to have traveled like currency, as suggested by a purse dropped into the harbor of Hedeby containing almost 600 drawn beads and a handful of silver coins dating from shortly after 822.<sup>70</sup> Similar beads also proliferated at Kaupang and were carried far up the Norwegian coast.<sup>71</sup>

Period	Date	Wound	Segmented	Drawn Cut	Rock Crystal /Carnelian	Other / Unknown
I	790-820	85%	2%	0%	0%	13%
II	820-845	37%	43%	1%	2%	17%
III	845-860	12%	10%	71%	1%	6%
IV	860-885	39%	2%	7%	39%	13%
VII	885-915	71%	5%	4%	0%	20%
VIII	915-950	52%	2%	0%	26%	20%
VI	950-960	4%	10%	78%	2%	6%
IX	960-980	12%	52%	1%	21%	14%
XII	980-1000	64%	6%	0%	10%	20%
Overall		35%	15%	26%	11%	9%

**Table 4.2. Callmer's Viking-Age Bead Periods** (after Callmer 1977)

Imported beads subsequently dominated necklaces throughout Scandinavia,

<sup>70</sup> Peter Steppuhn, *Die Glasfunde von Haithabu*, Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu 32 (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1998), 103-4; Sven Kalmring, *Der Hafen von Haithabu*, Die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu 14 (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 2010), 418-19; Søren M. Sindbæk, "Møntskatten fra Hedeby's havn til revision," *Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad* 1 (February 2012): 4-8; Matthew C. Delvaux, "Colors of the Viking Age: A Cluster Analysis of Glass Beads from Hedeby," *Journal of Glass Studies* 60 (2018): 5-6.

<sup>71</sup> Gry Wiker, "Monochrome Blue Kaupang-beads – Local Manufacture or Import?," in *Innere Strukturen von Siedlungen und Gräberfeldern als Spiegel gesellschaftlicher Wirklichkeit? Akten des 57. Internationalen Sachsensymposiums vom 26. bis 30. August 2006 in Münster*, ed. Christoph Grünewald and Torsten Capelle (Münster: Aschendorff, 2007), 137-43.

and these shifts corresponded to a general shift in trading places. Helgö was superseded by Birka in Central Sweden, Åhus in southern Sweden faded as new settlements flourished across the Baltic at Wolin and Truso in Poland, Reric was superseded by Hedeby in northern Germany, and a new community took shape at Kaupang in Vestfold, Norway. While early Scandinavian and Baltic emporia had been sites of bead production, these new emporia were dominated by beads imported from the east.<sup>72</sup> In the opposite direction, as seen in the sources of Chapter One, these same sites fed from the slave trade of the west. During the mid- to late 800s, Ansgar and Rimbert reported on the slave markets of Birka and Hedeby, while Wulfstan in the late 800s described slave-rich communities along the southern Baltic, which at that point would have included Wolin and Truso.<sup>73</sup>

These shifts among the trading centers of Northern Europe corresponded to shifts along the trade routes themselves, although the continuities of this trade have long been questioned. Following the work of Klavs Randsborg in the early 1980s,<sup>74</sup> and popularized by Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse in *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe*,<sup>75</sup> the absence of Arabic coins minted in the

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<sup>72</sup> Steppuhn, *Die Glasfunde von Haithabu*; Wiker, “Monochrome Blue Kaupang-beads – Local Manufacture or Import?”; Björn Ambrosiani, *Excavations in the Black Earth 1990-1995. Stratigraphy Vol. 1. Part One: The Site and the Shore. Part Two: Bronze Caster’s Workshop*, Birka Studies 9 (Stockholm: Birka Project, 2013).

<sup>73</sup> Hauke Jöns, “Ports and Emporia of the Southern Coast: From Hedeby to Usedom and Wolin,” in *Wulfstan’s Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as Seen from Shipboard*, ed. Anton Englert and Athena Trakadas, *Maritime Culture of the North 2* (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2009), 160–81.

<sup>74</sup> Klavs Randsborg, “Les activités internationales des Vikings: raids ou commerce?,” *Annales. Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 36, no. 5 (1981): 862–68, at 863–64.

<sup>75</sup> Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe: Archaeology and the Pirenne Thesis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 160–68.

860s from graves at Birka has often been interpreted as evidence that a breakdown in eastern trade stimulated the dramatic expansion of viking activity at the same time. Beads, however, tell a different story.

Between 860 and 885, imported glass beads declined to less than 10% of buried necklaces, but these missing beads of glass were supplanted by new beads of rock crystal and carnelian.<sup>76</sup> The nearest carnelian deposits then in use were in Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and western India.<sup>77</sup> Rock crystal beads were produced using the same techniques as the carnelian beads and must have similarly passed through the same markets of the Middle East. The routes that took these beads to Scandinavia can be traced from similar finds across the Caucasus and the Iranian plateau.<sup>78</sup> Their appearance in harbor constructions at both Birka and Hedeby indicate that their arrival in bulk in the 860s inaugurated a period of both intensifying trade and expanding infrastructure.<sup>79</sup> This evidence from beads supports

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<sup>76</sup> Statistics derived from Callmer, *Trade Beads and Bead Trade in Scandinavia*.

<sup>77</sup> Daniel A. Hepp, "Die Bergkristall- und Karneolperlen von Haithabu und Schleswig: Ein Beitrag zu Handel und Handwerk im südlichen Ostseeraum," in *Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu*, ed. Christian Radtke, vol. 36, *Das archäologische Fundmaterial 8* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 2007), 13–181, at 21–22, 90–91. Initial steps have been made to characterize the compositional signatures of these sites, although further work is needed. Timothy Insoll et al., "Towards an Understanding of the Carnelian Bead Trade from Western India to Sub-Saharan Africa: The Application of UV-LA-ICP-MS to Carnelian from Gujarat, India, and West Africa," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 31 (2004): 1161–73.

<sup>78</sup> Callmer, "Beads as a Criterion of Shifting Trade and Exchange Connections," 33.

<sup>79</sup> In the Birka harbor, rock crystal and carnelian beads were most concentrated in strata surrounding constructions that occurred in the late 800s or early 900s. Björn Ambrosiani et al., *Birka. Svarta jordens hamnområde. Arkeologisk undersökning 1970–1971*, Riksantikvarieämbetet rapport C1 1973 (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 1973), 71–83. For the constructions surrounding the rock crystal and carnelian bead deposits in Hedeby harbor, Kalmring has preferred dates around 885, similarly suggesting that the beads arrived shortly before harbor expansion began. Kalmring, *Der Hafen von Haithabu*, 664; Sven Kalmring, "The Harbour of Hedeby," in *Viking Settlements and Viking Society: Papers from the Proceedings of the Sixteenth Viking Congress, Reykjavik and Reykholt, 16–23 August 2009*, ed. Svavar Sigmundsson (Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2011), 245–59.

Christoph Kilger's thesis that the more ambiguous silver evidence should be seen as an indicator of continuing exchange throughout the 860s, with its origins shifting away from the declining Iraq-centered 'Abbāsīd Caliphate to the emerging Iran-centered Samanid emirate.<sup>80</sup>

This intensification of exchange with the east corresponded to a parallel intensification of slave raiding in the west, as seen in the sources discussed in Chapter Two. By the time that rock crystal and carnelian beads fell from favor among the Scandinavian elite at the end of the 800s, the traders of the Samanid emirate had already secured an alternative means to continue this exchange. From the silver mines of the Hindu Kush, they churned out untold tons of silver—at a scale estimated to have reached at 25 times the total world production in 1500.<sup>81</sup> This silver, minted into dirhams and stamped with the Islamic statement of faith, soon flooded north. The great silver fever of the late Viking Age had begun.<sup>82</sup> Slaves continued to move along routes earlier established by beads but were now governed by new regimes of value that privileged silver above all else.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Kilger, "Kaupang from Afar," 228–35. Recent analysis from Hedeby, however, suggests that later Samanid coins minted after 892 might have reached the Baltic only in the early 900s. Stephen Merkel et al., "Isotopic Analysis of Silver Hoards from Hedeby and Some Nearby Hoards. Preliminary Results," in *Viking Worlds: Things, Spaces and Movement*, ed. Marianne Hem Eriksen et al. (Oxford: Oxbow, 2014), 195–212.

<sup>81</sup> Sture Bolin, "Mohammad, Charlemagne and Ruric," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 1, no. 1 (1953): 5–39, at 21 (estimating the caliph's annual silver income around 800).

<sup>82</sup> Władysław Duczko, *Viking Rus: Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe*, Northern World 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 63 ("silver fever").

<sup>83</sup> Surprisingly, the shift to silver ultimately precipitated recourse to more local sources of the precious metal, subverting the silver flow and likely the slave trade as well. Stephen William Merkel, "Silver and the Silver Economy at Hedeby" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ruhr-University Bochum, 2015).

## Beads, the Norse Diaspora, and Slave Raiders Abroad

The connections between beads and slaves grow even stronger when we direct our attention west. Traces associated with viking raids typically consist of burn layers, earthwork fortifications, and occasional human remains showing signs of violent death.<sup>84</sup> The people who participated in these raids left further traces in the settlements, cemeteries, and hoards of Western Europe.<sup>85</sup> Before the silver began to flow in the 860s, viking raiders were already carrying eastern goods along their routes into the British Isles and Francia.<sup>86</sup> The beads that appear among these finds indicate that viking violence was not without direction. The slave raiders of the Viking Age linked into the routes of eastern exchange, as had the Frankish and

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<sup>84</sup> Neil S. Price, *The Vikings in Brittany* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1989), 94/412–101/419; Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, “Repton and the Vikings,” *Antiquity* 66 (1992): 36–51; Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, “Repton and the ‘Great Heathen Army’, 873–4,” in *Vikings and the Danelaw: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress*, ed. James Graham-Campbell et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 45–96; Martin Carver, *Portmahomack: Monastery of the Picts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Simon Coupland, “Holy Ground? The Plundering and Burning of Churches by Vikings and Franks in the Ninth Century,” *Viator* 45, no. 1 (2014): 73–97, at 91; Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards, “The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army, AD 872–3, Torksey, Lincolnshire,” *Antiquaries Journal* 96 (2016): 23–67.

<sup>85</sup> For general surveys, see Price, *The Vikings in Brittany*, 94/412–101/419; Graham-Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*; Annemarieke Willemsen, “Scattered across the Waterside: Viking Finds from the Netherlands,” in *Vikings on the Rhine: Recent Research on Early Medieval Relations between the Rhineland and Scandinavia*, ed. Rudolf Simek and Ulrike Engel, *Studia Mediaevalia Septentrionalia* 11 (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2004), 65–82; Hadley, *The Vikings in England: Settlement, Society and Culture*; Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves and Grave-Goods in Ireland*; John Sheehan, “Viking-Age Artefacts from Irish Caves,” in *Underground Archaeology: Studies on Human Bones and Artefacts from Ireland’s Caves*, ed. Marion Dowd (Oxford: Oxbow, 2016), 159–77.

<sup>86</sup> On the arrival of Islamic coins into Western Europe, see Michael McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 343–84; Rory Naismith, “Islamic Coins from Early Medieval England,” *Numismatic Chronicle* 165 (2005): 193–222; Kilger, “Kaupang from Afar”; Caitlin R. Green, “The Distribution of Islamic Dirhams in Anglo-Saxon England,” *The Personal Website and Blog of Dr Caitlin Green* (blog), December 16, 2014, <https://www.caitlingreen.org/2014/12/distribution-of-islamic-dirhams-in-england.html>; Old Currency Exchange, “O’Brien Coin Guide: An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Coins Found in Ireland,” *The Old Currency Exchange* (blog), June 6, 2015, <https://oldcurrencyexchange.com/2015/06/06/o-brien-coin-guide-an-introduction-to-the-islamic-coins-found-in-medieval-ireland/>.

Anglo-Saxon slaving communities in earlier years.

One of the clearest signs of these connections is also among the earliest. Artifacts recovered from a Viking-Age cemetery in Dublin included a necklace of 28 beads belonging to a grave group known as Islandbridge 1866B. All but two of these beads were segmented beads from the east.<sup>87</sup> These beads began to appear in Scandinavia at the same moment that Scandinavian raiders appeared in the west, and they remained common in elite burials through about the year 845. Their appearance together with Islandbridge 1866B must date from almost immediately after viking raiders established an enduring Norse presence at Dublin in 841.<sup>88</sup>

The beads of Islandbridge 1866B point to at least three groups of connections. First, they linked the early Dublin community into networks that moved stolen goods to be turned into dress ornaments for elites in Scandinavia. Two similar necklaces were found in the Hjørundfjorden parish of Møre og Romsdal in Western Norway—one at Standal Indre with jewelry refashioned from an Irish mount, and another at Bjørke with an Anglo-Saxon mount likewise reworked.<sup>89</sup> Second, these beads link Islandbridge to a set of four burials with similar necklaces at Birka in

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<sup>87</sup> Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves and Grave-Goods in Ireland*, 143 ill. 76, 459–60.

<sup>88</sup> Whereas these early Viking-Age assemblages of segmented beads are primarily blue or metal-foiled, the assemblage at Cnip in Scotland, often invoked for comparison, includes yellow segmented beads. R. D. E. Welander, Colleen Batey, and T. G. Cowie, “A Viking Burial from Kneep, Uig, Isle of Lewis,” *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 117 (1987): 149–74, at 163–65. See further burials reported in A. J. Dunwell et al., “A Viking Age Cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis,” *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 125 (1995): 719–52. Callmer catalogued similar beads (Callmer types E030 and E031) only in tenth-century contexts, and he assigned similar assemblages to the period 960 to 980, reinforcing and refining the tenth-century date suggested by the brooches.

<sup>89</sup> Callmer, *Trade Beads and Bead Trade in Scandinavia*, no. 64 (UM B8624, Standal Indre, Ørsta, Møre og Romsdal, with Irish mount), no. 65 (UM B8256, Bjørke, Ørsta, Møre og Romsdal, with Anglo-Saxon mount).



Sweden, one of which also included an Irish bronze vessel.<sup>90</sup> These links indicate that the woman of Islandbridge 1866B participated in networks that moved the plunder of viking raids to the Baltic locus of Scandinavian trade with the east. As Rimbert described it in his *Life of Saint Ansgar*, human traffic helped bridge these links. Finally, the Islandbridge beads linked the community of Dublin to the woman of Lousgård 47, who was buried along the routes linking Ireland with the Baltic (Map 4.1, Figure 4.2).<sup>91</sup> The abundant wealth of that grave, including a human sacrifice, provides a strong indicator that the woman of Islandbridge was bound into networks that moved not only beads from the east but also bodies from the west.



**Map 4.1. Callmer Type II Assemblages, c. 820–845** (Map data ©2019 Google)  
**Figure 4.2. Lousgård 47 Assemblage, c. 820–845**

The artifacts of Islandbridge 1866B, moreover, are not unique. An even more lavish and perhaps contemporaneous necklace of segmented beads was deposited in a

<sup>90</sup> Callmer nos. 231 (Bj. 462), 243 (Bj. 552), 274 (Bj. 854, with Irish bronze vessel), 300 (Bj. 1158).

<sup>91</sup> Callmer no. 105. Lyngstrøm, “Lousgaard – éthundrede år efter.” This assemblage is elsewhere seriated into a period dated from 775 to 800. Jørgensen and Nørgård Jørgensen, *Nørre Sandegård Vest*. The Lousgård 47 assemblage is, at any rate, presumed to date from the early Viking Age, which has produced relatively few artifacts on Bornholm rendering seriation less reliable for this period of transition. On the diverse chronologies developed for beads of this period, see Delvaux, “Patterns of Scandinavian Bead Use.” I here follow Callmer’s dating, which seems most reliable given the post-841 date for the Islandbridge 1866B assemblage.

cave at Glencurran in County Clare; and on the opposite side of southern Ireland, a smaller batch of segmented beads was deposited at Dunmore Cave in County Kilkenny.<sup>92</sup> At Fishamble Street in Dublin, excavators recovered 25 segmented beads thought to derive from a hoard.<sup>93</sup> At other Irish settlements, fourteen such beads appeared among Viking-Age debris at Knowth,<sup>94</sup> and a pair of unstratified segmented beads at Lagore might also derive from this period.<sup>95</sup>

A rare style of eastern blue segmented bead with white stripes provides a more refined look at the routes that connected Ireland to the networks of eastern exchange during the mid-800s (Map 4.2, Figure 4.3). Callmer listed only one such bead in his catalog of 298 Viking-Age assemblages. His example came from a necklace buried in Birka Grave 526, dated between 845 and 860.<sup>96</sup> In my own surveys, I identified six similar beads among collections excavated from Kaupang in Norway.<sup>97</sup> Further west, single examples have been found at Old Scatness in the Shetland Islands, and at

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<sup>92</sup> Sheehan, “Viking-Age Artefacts from Irish Caves.”

<sup>93</sup> NMI reg. no. E172:11268. Harrison and Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves and Grave-Goods in Ireland*, 144; Patrick F. Wallace, *Viking Dublin: The Wood Quay Excavations* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2016), 291, 295.

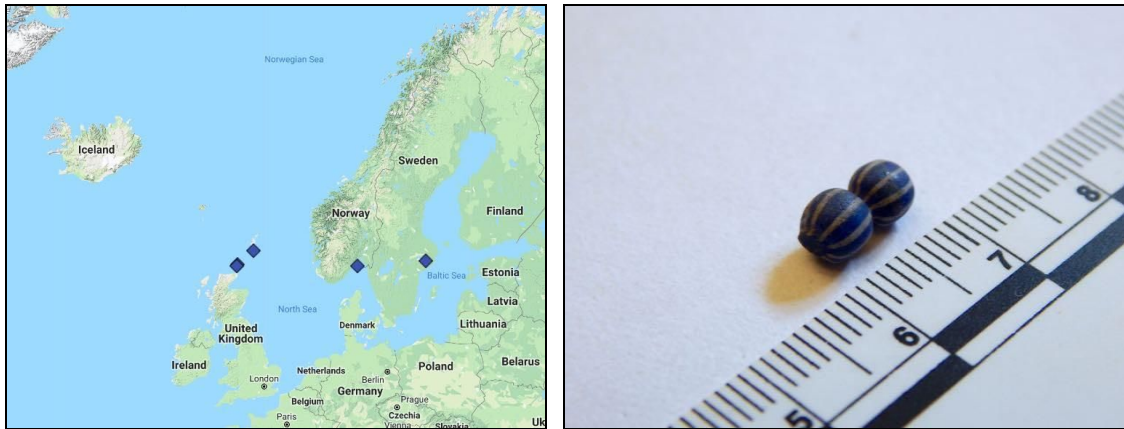
<sup>94</sup> Thirteen gold-foil segmented beads and one blue segmented bead. George Eogan, *Excavations at Knowth 5: The Archaeology of Knowth in the First and Second Millennia AD*, Royal Irish Academy Monographs in Archaeology (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2012), 244–56.

<sup>95</sup> One gold-foil segment bead and one blue segmented bead. Mannion, *Glass Beads from Early Medieval Ireland: Classification, Dating, Social Performance*, 59. See further Hugh Hencken, “An Irish Royal Residence of the 7th to 10th Centuries A.D.,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 53 (1950): 1–247.

<sup>96</sup> Callmer, *Trade Beads and Bead Trade in Scandinavia*, no. 239 (Bj. 526). The beads in question are Callmer type E064. The similar type E063, distinguished by having a collared shape, appeared once each in nos. 84 (NTNU T16078, Føling søndre, Steinkjer, Nord-Trøndelag, NO) and 204 (GLM 8311:6, Björke, Hille, Gävleborg, SE), both dated between 820 and 845. In my survey of the beads from Kaupang, I identified one Callmer type E063 (KHM C52517:1735).

<sup>97</sup> KHM C52517:1377, 2324; C52519:9969, 11277, 12907, 21684.

Westness in the Orkney Islands.<sup>98</sup> A final example was found among a larger assemblage of beads at the Knowe of Moan on Orkney.<sup>99</sup> The movement of these beads toward the viking frontiers—in contrast with the more diffuse patterns seen with amethyst and other bead imports during the Merovingian period—followed a single trunk linking the raiders of the viking west to the markets of the east.



**Map 4.2. Callmer Type E064 Bead Finds, mid-800s** (Map data ©2019 Google)  
**Figure 4.3. Callmer Type E064 Bead from Kaupang** (KHM C52517/1377)

Despite the emergence of such a trunk, the overall northern exchange networks remained diffuse. In burials after 845, drawn cut beads—sometimes also called microbeads or slumped beads—replaced the segmented beads of the previous generation (Map 4.3, Figure 4.4).<sup>100</sup> These beads proliferated among the young

<sup>98</sup> The Old Scatness bead is here classified according to the description of Megan Hickey, who compared it to the Westness bead, which she observed on exhibit. Megan Kathleen Hickey, “Perler fra vikingtiden (Beads of the Viking-Age). A Study of the Social and Economic Patterns in the Appearance of Beads from Viking-Age Sites in Britain” (M.A. thesis, University of York, 2014), 79, 105, 158.

<sup>99</sup> GLAHM:B.1914.524/1. J. W. Cursiter, “Notice of the Bronze Weapons of Orkney and Shetland, and of an Iron Age Deposit Found in a Cist at Moan, Harray,” *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 21 (1887): 339–46, at 345.

<sup>100</sup> In Ribe, these beads generally began to appear after 800, with five examples located with earlier contexts. However, only 158 of the 2430 beads in the Ribe Posthuset excavations (6.5%) were drawn cut beads, and their arrival in northern markets seems generally to date later in the 800s and closer in line with the burial evidence. Feveile and Jensen, “ASR 9 Posthuset,” 149.

trading towns of Scandinavia and the Baltic. In excavations at Birka, Bjorn Ambrosiani indicated that drawn cut beads generally dated from after 820 and accounted for 28% of all beads deposited before 860.<sup>101</sup> In my own survey of 1500 beads from Hedeby, I classified 53% of my sample as drawn cut beads.<sup>102</sup> For Kaupang, Gry Wiker calculated that drawn cut beads comprise 48% of the 4000 beads recovered from the site, which flourished in the mid-800s.<sup>103</sup>



**Map 4.3. Callmer Type III Assemblages, c. 845–860** (Map data ©2019 Google)  
**Figure 4.4. Drawn Cut Beads from Hedeby Harbor** (SHLM 1979-4.4862), characteristic of Callmer Type III assemblages

Chemical analysis of select beads from Kaupang reveals that at least some of these beads were made from glass produced in Syria. Furthermore, while glass beads

<sup>101</sup> Ambrosiani described these as cylindrical beads. Finds from so-called locked contexts indicate that the circulation of segmented beads declined after 820, as the circulation of cylindrical or drawn cut beads was increasing. Ambrosiani, *Excavations in the Black Earth 1990-1995. Stratigraphy Vol. 1*, 58–59, 227–28. Compare also the more loosely dated harbor beads, which nonetheless also point to a florescence in the mid- to late 800s. Ambrosiani et al., *Birka. Svarta jordens hamnområde. Arkeologisk undersökning 1970–1971*, 71–83.

<sup>102</sup> More fully, I identified 831 drawn cut beads from among the 1547 beads exhibited from various settlement contexts, excluding any burials. This included 587 drawn cut beads deposited as a single group in the harbor purse, as well as 51 wound beads from an exhibit on glassworking. From the more randomly selected glass bead exhibit (“Glassperlenherstellung”), I counted 244 drawn cut beads from among 906 beads of glass (27%).

<sup>103</sup> Wiker, “Monochrome Blue Kaupang-beads – Local Manufacture or Import?” In my own survey of 3424 beads from Kaupang, I identified 1700 such beads, or 49.6% of all beads examined.

throughout preceding periods had been produced using natron as a fluxing agent in the glass, some of these new beads were produced using plant ash instead. At Kaupang, all such beads derived from early ninth-century contexts.<sup>104</sup> This places Kaupang, the westernmost hub of the Northern Arc, right in step with developments in the Near East, where plant ash had begun to replace natron in the late 700s. The earliest known examples of cobalt blue glass fluxed with plant ash dated to the 800s in the Near East, almost simultaneous to the arrival of beads with similar chemical compositions in Kaupang.<sup>105</sup>

In the British Isles, few drawn beads have been identified as such, although at least 32 were included among the assemblage found at the Knowe of Moan, which also included a blue segmented bead with white stripes of the type described above.<sup>106</sup>

The Knowe of Moan beads belonged to a total assemblage of 64 beads and a

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<sup>104</sup> Bjarne Gaut, “Vessel Glass and Evidence of Glassworking,” in *Things from the Town: Artefacts and Inhabitants in Viking-Age Kaupang*, ed. Dagfinn Skre, Kaupang Excavation Project Publication Series 3, Norske Oldfunn 24 (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011), 169–279, at 265, 267, 270. The beads were identified using the designations KAU 50, 91, 92, 93, and 94.

<sup>105</sup> Plant ash became the dominant fluxing agent during the 800s, although recent studies have identified a limited number of examples of plant-ash glass dating from before 800. David Whitehouse, “The Transition from Natron to Plant Ash in the Levant,” *Journal of Glass Studies* 44 (2002): 193–96; Ian C. Freestone, “Glass Production in Late Antiquity and the Early Islamic Period: A Geochemical Perspective,” in *Geomaterials in Cultural Heritage*, ed. Marino Maggetti and Bruno Messiga, Geological Society Special Publication 257 (London: Geological Society, 2006), 201–16; Matt Phelps et al., “Natron Glass Production and Supply in the Late Antique and Early Medieval Near East: The Effect of the Byzantine-Islamic Transition,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 75 (2016): 57–71; Matt Phelps, “Glass Supply and Trade in Early Islamic Ramla: An Investigation of the Plant Ash Glass,” in *Things That Travelled: Mediterranean Glass in the First Millennium CE*, ed. Daniela Rosenow et al. (London: University College London, 2018), 236–82.

<sup>106</sup> Cursiter describes 34 beads corresponding to the type of blue drawn beads, although two are in fact a deep garnet red. Cursiter, “Notice of the Bronze Weapons of Orkney and Shetland, and of an Iron Age Deposit Found in a Cist at Moan, Harray,” 345. I thank Caroline Paterson for bringing these exceptional beads to my attention. Their uniqueness among Scandinavian assemblages may be another indicator of direct links with eastern suppliers. Potential comparanda may be found among the Hagbartholmen assemblage from Steigen in northern Norway. Gerd Stamsø Munch, “Hagbartholmen i Steigen – en «Gravholme» fra jernalder med en spesiell kvinnegrav fra vikingtid,” *Årbok for Steigen* 20 (1995): 55–62. I thank Roger Jørgensen for providing images of these beads for reference.

cross-shaped brooch, buried together in a small cist measuring only 18 inches on each side—presumably a repository for cremated bone.<sup>107</sup> While the drawn and segmented beads point to connections with the east, two beads—a herringbone bead and an irregular bead decorated with twisted stringers in Irish fashion—point to connections with Ireland,<sup>108</sup> which also stands as a likely origin for the cross-shaped metalwork. The metalwork and beads both suggest that the Knowe of Moan assemblage was buried at the same time as similar Scandinavian burials dated between 845 and 860.<sup>109</sup> This corresponds to the period when Findan reported being captured in Ireland and being trafficked through the Orkney Islands en route to Scandinavia. The Knowe of Moan beads trace this same route from the opposite direction, pointing again to the potential for Baltic emporia to serve slave traders like Gilli the Russian as waypoints along their travels toward more distant markets.

Connections between eastern beads and viking slave raiding strengthened together with the arrival of a new beads of rock crystal and carnelian sourced from India and traded through the Middle East. In Scandinavia, a subset of necklaces consisting almost entirely of these beads appears among the cemeteries around Birka and Hedeby in graves dated between 860 and 885 (Map 4.4, Figure 4.5). These beads

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<sup>107</sup> Graham–Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, 59 According to Graham–Campbell and Batey, the assemblage consisted of 55 glass beads, eight amber beads, and one carnelian bead. I have not otherwise been able to confirm the inclusion of a carnelian bead.

<sup>108</sup> GLAHM:B.1914.524/3 (twisted stringer decoration; compare Mannion Class 5 tripartite beads; compare Callmer group Bj, types B400–404, B446–448), GLAHM:B.1914.524/5 (Mannion Class 10 herringbone bead; Callmer type K001). I thank Caroline Paterson for discussing this collection with me and for pointing me toward further resources.

<sup>109</sup> The cross-shaped brooch, meanwhile, might suggest either that the woman who wore these beads also wore plundered metalwork from Christians further south, or that she was herself a Christian—a fitting reminder to the evidence of Chapter Three that contemporary Christians were not adverse to involvement with the slave trade, so long as they could control it.

point to the same trunk across Scandinavia first seen with blue segmented beads with white stripes. The shift from glass to quartz, however, indicates that the source of this trade had moved from the glass workshops of the Mediterranean shores to the Iranian plateau and the sources of carnelian and rock crystal that lay beyond.<sup>110</sup>



**Map 4.4. Callmer Type V.A Assemblages, c. 860–885** (Map data ©2019 Google)  
**Figure 4.5. Hedeby Kammergrab III Assemblage, c. 860–885**

Rock crystal and carnelian beads are found only exceptionally in the British Isles.<sup>111</sup> The most securely dated such bead is a carnelian bead from the viking camp at Repton occupied over the winter of 873/4.<sup>112</sup> A parallel bead has been found in

<sup>110</sup> Hepp, “Die Bergkristall- und Karneolperlen von Haithabu und Schleswig,” 22.

<sup>111</sup> Although the Knowe of Moan assemblage has sometimes been described as including a carnelian bead, I have been unable to identify such bead in any available images. Graham-Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, 59. Hickey has identified one carnelian bead from the Brough of Birsay, and two carnelian and two rock crystal beads from Saffron Walden. Hickey, “Perler fra vikingtiden,” 72, 85–86; A further carnelian bead has recently been reported from an exploratory trench at North House on Papa Stour in the Shetland Islands. Harvey Lilley, “Vikings Unearthed,” *Nova* (Public Broadcasting Service, 2016), <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/vikings-unearthed>.

<sup>112</sup> Catrine Jarman, Twitter Post, May 8, 2018, 4:23 p.m., <https://twitter.com/CatJarman>. Callmer type T007. Jarman describes this bead as being located in the charnel house, although it was unreported in earlier publications. The appearance of a carnelian bead in this context is a compelling reason to prefer Callmer’s hypothetical dates for the proliferation of these beads between 860 and 885 rather than his later revised dates of 875 and 905. Additionally, two wound glass beads of likely Scandinavian manufacture were also found along with a silver Thor’s hammer pendant in Repton Grave 511. Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, “Repton and the Vikings,” 5, 8; Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, “Repton and the ‘Great Heathen Army’, 873–4”; Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome: The Fall and Rise, 400–1070*, Penguin History of Britain (London: Penguin, 2011), 226–32; Catrine L. Jarman et al., “The Viking Great Army in England: New Dates from the Repton Charnel,” *Antiquity* 92, no. 361 (February 2018):

rock crystal from surface surveys of Torksey, which was occupied the preceding year as a camp over the winter of 872/3.<sup>113</sup> These beads match similar ones found in assemblages such as Hedeby Kammergrab III and Birka Grave 507, both of which also included objects of likely plunder from the west.<sup>114</sup> They demonstrate even more closely than the Knowe of Moan beads a direct link between places of viking slave raiding and the routes of eastern exchange. As discussed in Chapter Two, although the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recorded no captive taking whatsoever, Asser indicated that slave raiding was a common practice, while Irish and Frankish sources indicate that the vikings who harried England were also known for taking captives abroad.

Beads had shown similar connections during the Merovingian period, and the evidence for continuing connections in the Viking Age, albeit along a different arc, is substantial. The links between Islandbridge 1866B and Lousgård 47; between the Knowe of Moan beads and the routes attested in the *Life of Saint Findan* and the *Laxdæla Saga*; and between the viking camps of Repton and Torksey and the Baltic graves of Hedeby and Birka, all point to the creation of networks that moved beads from east to west and people from west to east. The Repton and Torksey beads are,

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183–99.

<sup>113</sup> Database ID: 848, Survey Number Survey\_92. Callmer Type S009. Julian D. Richards and Dawn Hadley, *Archaeological Evaluation of the Anglo-Saxon and Viking Site at Torksey, Lincolnshire* [Data-Set] (York: Archaeological Data Service, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.5284/1018222>. Publications list six early medieval beads without further description. Hadley and Richards, “The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army, AD 872–3, Torksey, Lincolnshire,” 39.

<sup>114</sup> Callmer, *Trade Beads and Bead Trade in Scandinavia*, nos. 217 (Hedeby K III), 233 (Bj. 507). A small collection of rock crystal and carnelian beads buried in a grave at Saffron Walden might likewise date from the late-ninth century, although the inclusion of Terslev-style pendants makes a tenth-century date more likely. H. Ecroyd Smith, “An Ancient Cemetery at Saffron Walden,” *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* 2 (1884): 311–34; Jane F. Kershaw, *Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England*, Medieval History and Archaeology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 148–49, 158.



however, among the last compelling examples of this exchange, as the communities of the Baltic rapidly transitioned to a silver economy during the later 800s.<sup>115</sup>

Nonetheless, they culminate a long period of association, during which viking slave raiding correlated with the importation of eastern beads via Scandinavia and the Baltic.

## Conclusion

The beads of Northern Europe therefore reflect on a grand scale the patterns of the slave trade seen in written sources. The slave trade through Western Europe broke down during the Merovingian period, paralleled by a decline in the bead trade and the overall markers of long-distance exchange during the 600s.<sup>116</sup> Meanwhile, a new slave trade arose further east. During the early 700s, at the same time that the communities of the north began to look eastward for beads, rumors of raiders like those of Saalme reached the west through the cryptic text of the *Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*. Eastern exchange became increasingly direct over the later 700s, with imported beads first arriving at Ribe around 790 within years of the earliest surviving reports of viking slave raiding at Lindisfarne. Eastern beads thereafter proliferated in Scandinavia, indicating that the intensity of viking raiding correlated to the intensity

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<sup>115</sup> Recent counts identify 124 dirhams as being recovered from Torksey. Hadley and Richards, "The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army, AD 872–3, Torksey, Lincolnshire," 39. Coin finds from the area of Repton have not yet received similar analysis.

<sup>116</sup> McCormick, *Origins*; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*. As seen in Chapter Three, the slave trade languished further due to ecclesiastical efforts to prohibit sales of Christians to Muslims at the same time that eastern economies increasingly fell under Muslim governance and the peripheral peoples of northern Europe received increasing attention from Christian missionaries. These parallel processes diminished the availability of potential victims for slave raiders while also limiting the potential markets for slave traders.

of eastern contacts. Furthermore, beads show the formation of a direct trunk linking the raiders of the west to the traders of the east. These connections appear most direct by the 870s, which western sources depict as the height of the viking slave trade. The question then remaining is whether the eastern demand for slaves paralleled rising opportunities for slave supply seen both in western texts and in northern archaeology.

## Chapter Five

### SLAVE DEMAND IN THE EAST IN EARLY ARABIC TEXTS

In Chapter Four, I demonstrated that the viking taking of captives corresponded to rising trade between the viking north and the Islamic east. This exchange escalated in step with viking violence, as eastern beads reached Scandinavia in the 790s, arrived in fresh batches throughout the 800s, and traveled in direct paths linking Central Asia to the raiding armies of the 870s. This exchange made viking captives accessible to the merchants of the east, but as Matthew Gordon asked of previous work by Michael McCormick: “[H]ow well are we able to map conditions in the Islamic urban world that, if the argument holds, raised the demand for slave (and free) labor to new levels?”<sup>1</sup> This chapter shifts focus to Arabic sources that show a rising demand for slaves along the northern frontiers of the Caliphate.

Seminal studies have posited that Islam itself shaped societies that have depended on slavery,<sup>2</sup> while scholars have more recently argued for a need to

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew S. Gordon, “Preliminary Remarks on Slaves and Slave Labor in the Third/Ninth Century ‘Abbāsīd Empire,” in *Slaves and Households in the Near East*, ed. Laura Culbertson, Oriental Institute Seminars 7 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2011), 71–84, at 77.

<sup>2</sup> In an important revisionist work, Patricia Crone argued that the Muslim elite “walked out” on the political functions of the state, handing these responsibilities over to slave soldiers and a slave bureaucracy, which Crone diagnosed as a “moral gap.” Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 80 (“moral gap”), 87–88 (“walk out”). Although Crone’s work has much to commend it, these problematic implications are laid bare by Mahmood Ibrahim, review of *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*, by Patricia Crone, *The Muslim World* 73 (1983): 287–90. David Pipes largely followed the work of Crone and “identifies a fundamental pattern of public life in Islamdom: withdrawal by Muslim subjects from the governments and armies which ruled them; the subsequent sections show who took their place, connect this pattern to military slavery, and demonstrate how military slaves served Muslim rulers

historicize Islamic slavery, examining the diverse and changing forms of servitude that emerged at various times and places.<sup>3</sup> The study of slavery following the ‘Abbāsīd takeover of 750 poses particular problems. The Arab conquests had ended, the future of Islam was in the balance, and civil war imperiled the state.<sup>4</sup> These factors helped shape a demand for slaves that intensified across the Islamic north over the course of the early Viking Age.

I trace this rising demand along four lines of inquiry. First, I examine archival sources to demonstrate the embeddedness of slavery in ‘Abbāsīd society. A few exceptional texts survive from the northern province of Khurāsān, and I contextualize these with reference to the richer archives of early Islamic Egypt. Second, I argue that the legal concerns of the great northern jurist Muḥammad al-Bukhārī (d. 870) indicate that the conditions of Egypt applied to the early Islamic world in general and to Khurāsān in the 860s in particular. Third, I explore how these conditions developed within the historical framework proposed by eminent ‘Abbāsīd scholar—Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923). Slaves—and especially slaves from the north—feature as central players in his *History of the Prophets and Kings*. Finally, I trace emerging attention to northern slave traders among early Arabic geographers,

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better than their alternates.” Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 62.

<sup>3</sup> Craig Perry, “Historicizing Slavery in the Medieval Islamic World,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 1 (2017): 133–38.

<sup>4</sup> Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2004); Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007); Robert G. Hoyland, *In God’s Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

including al-Ya‘qūbī (d. 897), Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. 912), Ibn Rustah (fl. 903–913), and Ibn Faḍlān (fl. 921/2).

### Documentary Sources for Northern Demand

Early Arabic documents preserve a rich and dynamic language for slavery (Table 5.1).

The terms used were in transition between the classical language of the Qur’ān and the more formalized categories of the later Mamlūk and Ottoman periods. The generic term ‘*abd*’ (“slave”) had been repurposed to describe faithful Muslims as servants of God.<sup>5</sup> Documents typically relied on more allusive vocabulary—frequently *ghulām* (“boy”) for male slaves and *jāriyah* (“girl”) for females.<sup>6</sup> Less ambiguous terms such as *raqīq* and *waṣīf* also occur, often referring specifically to men, while *khādim* seems to have been reserved for females and eunuchs.<sup>7</sup> The term *mamlūk* was initially rare but began to proliferate in tandem with the rise of slave soldiers in the 800s.<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam*, 195–98; R. Brunschvig, “‘Abd,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2 [= *EP*], ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005); Peter B. Golden, “The Terminology of Slavery and Servitude in Medieval Turkic,” in *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel*, ed. Devin DeWeese (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 2001), 27–56, at 43–44.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew S. Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra (A.H. 200–275/815–889 C.E.)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 1; D. Sourdel et al., “*Ghulām*,” in *EP*; Marion H. Katz, “Concubinage, in Islamic Law,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 3 [= *EP*], ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007–); Ch. Pellat, “*Ḳayna*,” in *EP*; Khalil ‘Athamina, “How Did Islam Contribute to Change the Legal Status of Women: The Case of the *Jawārī*, or the *Female Slaves*,” *Al-Qanṭara* 28, no. 2 (December 2007): 383–408; Kristina Richardson, “Singing Slave Girls (*Qiyān*) of the ‘Abbasid Court in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,” in *Children in Slavery through the Ages*, ed. Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2009), 105–18; Kathryn Ann Hain, “The Slave Trade of European Women to the Middle East and Asia from Antiquity to the Ninth Century” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 2016); Kecia Ali, “Concubinage and Consent,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 1 (2017): 148–152.

<sup>7</sup> Ch. Pellat, A. K. S. Lambton, and Cengiz Orhonlu, “*Khāṣī*,” in *EP*; A. J. Wensinck, “*Khādim*,” in *EP*; David Ayalon, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study in Power Relationships* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1999), 5–8; Jane Hathaway, “Eunuchs,” in *EP*.

<sup>8</sup> D. Ayalon, “Mamlūk,” in *EP*.

generic term *mawlā*, or client—associated with a legally-binding concept of *wala'*, or clientage—also became common, even as its usage narrowed to describe specifically freedman clients.<sup>9</sup> Some slaves were identified by their origins or by pet-name sobriquets.<sup>10</sup> Literary evidence indicates that some slaves also used their status as a name, such as the Turkish commander Waṣīf (d. 867).<sup>11</sup>

Arabic	Plural	Frequent Meanings
<i>'abd</i>	<i>'abīd</i>	(black) slave, servant, worshipper
<i>ghulām</i>	<i>ghilmān</i>	boy, male slave, slave soldier
<i>raqīq</i>	<i>ariqqā', riqāq</i>	male slave
<i>waṣīf</i>	<i>wuṣafā'</i>	male slave
<i>mamlūk</i>	<i>mamalīk</i>	(white) male slave, slave soldier
<i>jāriyah</i>	<i>juwārī</i>	girl, female slave
<i>khādim</i>	<i>khadam</i>	(female) slave, eunuch (later pl. <i>khuddām</i> )
<i>mawlā</i>	<i>mawālī</i>	convert, client, freed slave

**Table 5.1. Common Terms for Slaves in Early Arabic Documents**

Some of the earliest documents to describe slavery along the northern frontiers have been preserved as part of a private archive of an individual known as Mīr ibn Bēk.<sup>12</sup> This collection of 32 documents, in conjunction with a somewhat

<sup>9</sup> Monique Bernards and John Nawas, eds., *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts 61 (Leiden: Brill, 2005). See also Elizabeth Urban, “The Foundations of Islamic Society as Expressed by the Qur’anic Term *mawlā*,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2013): 23–45.

<sup>10</sup> The premier examples being Turks and the Zanj. Alexandre Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century*, trans. Léon King (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1999); Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*. Alternatively, some slaves were explicitly designated as *muwallad*, or having been born in slavery. Matthew S. Gordon, “Abbasid Courtesans and the Question of Social Mobility,” in *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History*, ed. Matthew S. Gordon and Kathryn A. Hain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 27–51, at 34–35. Regarding the names of slaves, Arabic texts of this period typically give only a sobriquet (*laqab*) without any genealogy. Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan* (London: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions, 2007), 156.

<sup>11</sup> Gordon, “Preliminary Remarks on Slaves and Slave Labor,” 75, 79. The fragmentary and abbreviated nature of surviving documents limits opportunities for discerning similar usages of slave terms as proper names.

<sup>12</sup> Khan, *Arabic Documents* [2007]; Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan*, Einstein Lectures in Islamic Studies 3 (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014).

earlier archive of Bactrian-language documents, indicate that Mīr ibn Bēk and his family were active in Bāmiyān (northwest of modern Kabul) in the loosely defined region of Khurāsān between 755 and 777.<sup>13</sup> The documents of this archive consist primarily of tax receipts, recording annual renders of about 10 dirhams, and certificates for a dowry of 500 dirhams. Four additional documents record the emancipation of slaves. Two are acts of unconditional emancipation, and two witness a contract fulfilled by a slave to purchase his freedom.<sup>14</sup>

The earliest emancipation document dates from 755. It announces the liberation of Zeran, the *umm walad* of a certain *mawlā* Saʿīd (thought to be a brother of Mīr ibn Bēk) along with her children. Saʿīd is in turn described as a *mawlā* or freedman client of the emancipator, Ġālib ibn Nāfiʿ. These relationships suggest that Saʿīd had previously been enslaved by Ġālib ibn Nāfiʿ, but at some point had received his freedom. Zeran meanwhile had obtained her status as *umm walad* by mothering children for Saʿīd. It is unclear whether their relationship began while Saʿīd was still enslaved or after he had obtained his freedom. In either case, by freeing Zeran and her children, Ġālib ibn Nāfiʿ relinquished his responsibilities as slave owner while ensuring that the entire family remained legally bound as his clients. Ġālib affirmed

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<sup>13</sup> For the earlier collection, see Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan I: Legal and Economic Documents*, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum. Part II, Inscriptions of the Seleucid and Parthian Periods and of Eastern Iran and Central Asia. Volume VI, Bactrian, 1; Studies in the Khalili Collection, 3, 1 (Oxford: Nour Foundation, 2000); Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan II: Letters and Buddhist Texts*, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum. Part II, Inscriptions of the Seleucid and Parthian Periods and of Eastern Iran and Central Asia. Volume VI, Bactrian, 2; Studies in the Khalili Collection, 3, 2 (London: Nour Foundation, 2007). The dates given here represent the Arabic collection only.

<sup>14</sup> For a fuller discussion of manumission in Egyptian documents, see Craig A. Perry, “The Daily Life of Slaves and the Global Reach of Slavery in Medieval Egypt, 969–1250 CE” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, 2014), 188–210.

that he had effected this emancipation as an act of piety, but he made his continuing claim explicit: “He has freed them for the sake [of God]. One has no right over them but the right of patronage (*walā*).”<sup>15</sup>

The second act of unconditional emancipation likewise freed a female slave and her children, although the relationships here remain obscure. The act was written in 777, almost a generation later, but the formula remained the same, but now specifying the possessing patron:

I have freed them for the sake of God. One has no right over them but the right of patronage (*walā*), and patronage is due to al-Ḥārīth ibn Malik and to his descendants after his death.<sup>16</sup>

This consistency shows that in Khurāsān, along the northern fringe of the Islamic world, men interested in gaining prestige could surround themselves with freedman clients, stimulating a cyclic process of acquiring and liberating slaves.<sup>17</sup>

The remaining two documents relate to an individual named Qiyā, whose name suggests origins among the Kayı tribe of Oghuz Turks between the Aral and Caspian Seas.<sup>18</sup> In late 763, Qiyā signed a contract to purchase his freedom, citing an initial payment of 30 dirhams and agreeing to pay a further five installments of 20 dirhams each. The contract came with the provision that if Qiyā failed to produce these payments within a year, he would remain in slavery and lose any claim to

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<sup>15</sup> Khan, *Arabic Documents* [2007], 152, no. 29: عتقهم لوجه ليس لاحد عليهم سبيل الا سبيل الولا

<sup>16</sup> Khan, 155, no. 30: اعتقهم لوجه الله ليس لاحد عليهم سبيل الا سبيل الولا وللحرث بن ملك وعقبه من بعده ولاهم

<sup>17</sup> Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1989), 44.

<sup>18</sup> Khan, *Arabic Documents* [2007], 160. See further on the Oghuz peoples Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), 205–11.



payments already made. In 765, Qiyā—now described as a weaver—received a certificate affirming that he had paid off his contract with 116 “white” dirhams, indicating that these coins had a higher silver content than the 130 dirhams anticipated in his contract. Although Qiyā’s contract did not explicitly state that he would enter into a client relationship with his emancipator, one of the witnesses to the final payment was identified as a *mawlā*, indicating an assumption that Qiyā would enter a similar relationship himself.

These documents from Khurāsān point to an embeddedness of slavery along the northern frontiers of the Caliphate during the late 700s. Male slaves might be craftsmen and might purchase their freedom through the work of their hands, while female slaves might secure freedom through the children they bore for men who enslaved them. Slave owners meanwhile stood to gain through emancipation, which could translate into piety, prestige, followers, and potential profits.

These documents also fit patterns attested by early Arabic archival sources more broadly.<sup>19</sup> As of 2019, the Arabic Papyrology Database has compiled information for over 4000 documents dating from the period between the ‘Abbāsīd takeover in 750 and the year 1000. Almost all of these documents originate from Egypt.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, they show a similar embeddedness of slavery and the spread of

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<sup>19</sup> For a variety of methods of inquiry, see Maaïke van Berkel, Léon Buskens, and Petra M. Sijpesteijn, *Legal Documents as Sources for the History of Muslim Societies: Studies in Honour of Rudolph Peters*, Studies in Islamic Law and Society 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> As of 2019, over 12,000 texts have been compiled into the Arabic Papyrology Database, dating from as early as 642 and originating from across the Islamicate, including Spain, Ethiopia, and China. Representation remains uneven, but the database shows particular strengths for Egypt (700–1100 C.E.), Spain (1100–1500 C.E.), and Syria–Palestine (1300–1400 C.E.). International Society for Arabic Papyrology, “Arabic Papyrology Database [APD],” 2018, <http://www.naher-osten.lmu.de/apd>. Note that the APD does not include documents from the Cairo Geniza. These generally date later than the

ideals promoting emancipation. Furthermore, the Egyptian documents show that the cyclic process of acquiring and liberating slaves promoted an uptick in slave prices and a search for slaves from abroad.

Studies both past and present have tended to focus on exceptional slaves such as women who commanded the attention of caliphs,<sup>21</sup> or Turkish slave soldiers who directed the course of the Caliphate.<sup>22</sup> Archival documents indicate that humble slaves like Qiyā were also common (Table 5.2). These common slaves might tend crops and livestock, assist artisans, or run errands. On occasion, slaves were entrusted with making high-value transactions on behalf of their masters. Slave owners meanwhile attended to the daily needs of their slaves, such as the purchase of appropriate footwear and the provision of staples like cucumbers and bread.

Document	Type	Date	Remarks
P.Ryl.Arab. I VI 15	Labor	632–949	Slave-girl sent to thresh wheat, get shoes
P.Jahn 17	Labor	771–830	Letter concerning a slave tending sheep
P.Cair.Arab. 214	Labor	801–830	List of various tradesmen, including slaves
P.Marchands III 32	Labor	801–900	Letter suggesting tailor and son are slaves
P.Cair.Arab. 312	Labor	870–930	Slave harvesting wheat
P.Cair.Arab. 291	Labor	901–1100	Slave entrusted with clearing date palms
P.Ryl.Arab. I VI 18	Errands	642–950	Slave sent to procure opium for sender
P.MuslimState 29	Errands	730–750	Slave sent to buy coat, get loaned money
P.HanafiTwoPaper Documents 3	Errands	761–762	Slaves sells owner’s mule for ten dinars
P.ShahinScheltbrief	Errands	771–800	Slave sent to pick up two bushels of dates
CPR XVI 25	Errands	801–900	Slave sent to pick up aloe-extract

period under investigation here, and they are more fully considered by Perry, “The Daily Life of Slaves.”

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Ibn al-Sāʿī, *Consorts of the Caliphs: Women and the Court of Baghdad*, ed. Shawkat M. Toorawa, Library of Arabic Literature (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Matthew S. Gordon and Kathryn A. Hain, eds., *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam*; Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*.

P.Berl.Arab. II 41	Errands	801–900	Slave sent on errand with 6 dinars
P.Ryl.Arab. I VI 1	Home Life	632–949	Letter requesting a slave girl be sent
P.JoySorrow 3	Home Life	701–800	Notification that two of a man’s slaves have given birth, one to a boy and one to a girl
P.Khalili I 35	Home Life	801–900	Notification of letter sent from a slave girl
P.Marchands II 31	Home Life	801–900	Slave-girls patronize against master’s wish
P.Khalili I 17	Home Life	801–900	Letter addressed to a eunuch
P.Marchands II 9	Support	801–900	A slave given a dinar upon his marriage
P.World p. 163	Support	801–900	Water jugs bought for slave-girl
P.Cair.Arab. 332	Support	801–900	Slave-girl given 2 ⅔ dirhams for necessities
P.Cair.Arab. 333	Support	801–900	Reply confirming payment to slave-girl
P.Sijpesteijn TakingCare	Support	801–900	Slave-girl given meat, two cucumbers, legume seeds, and a loaf of bread
P.Marchands III 41	Support	801–900	Boots bought for two slave girls, one ten years and the other seven years old
P.World p. 144 b	Support	819	A slave-girl provided with medicine

**Table 5.2. Select References to Slaves in Early Arabic Documents from Egypt**

Despite this day-to-day reliance on slaves, emancipation remained common (Table 5.3). Qiyā’s self-purchase survives as a documentary oddity among more frequently attested acts of unconditional emancipation. The Khurāsān acts of unconditional emancipation are similarly unique for specifying that their recipients had received the status of *umm walad*. In Egypt, emancipations were more likely to be witnessed and recorded at a slave owner’s deathbed in return for faithful service. Slaves could be freed in other circumstances as well, as suggested by a fragmentary document that seems to preserve a general formula used for unconditional emancipations, and by the unconditional emancipation of a slave girl by her female owner.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> One remarkable document from 1003 witnesses the emancipation of a slave girl by her female owner named Iṣṭurheu. The freed slave was identified as “Ṣafra, as her name is in Arabic, and in Coptic Daghāsha, daughter of Aryana, the female slave of Iṣṭurheu.” This unique description suggests that Daghāsha was a member of the Christian community of Egypt, although it is uncertain whether her mother, Aryana, had been born a Coptic Christian or been imported from a Christian community

Document	Region	Date	Remarks
P.JoySorrow 17	Egypt	701–800	Letter notifying a woman that her father died, having emancipated ( <i>'a'taqa</i> ) a man who had cared for him prior to his death
P.Khurasan 29	Khurāsān	755	An act of unconditional emancipation for Zeran, <i>umm walad</i> of the emancipator's freedman ( <i>mawlā</i> ), and for her children
P.Khurasan 31	Khurāsān	763	Contract obliging Qiyā to pay 30 dirhams up front and five installments of 20 within a year or to remain in slavery ( <i>fī-r-riqqi</i> )
P.Khurasan 32	Khurāsān	765	Certificate that Qiyā the weaver fulfilled his contract with 116 “white” dirhams
P.Khurasan 30	Khurāsān	777	An act of unconditional emancipation for the slave ( <i>khādim</i> ) Nufāḥ and her children
Chrest.Khoury II 34	Egypt	801–1000	A formula (?) for drafting an act of unconditional emancipation
P.Ryl.Arab. I XV 66b	Egypt	824–912	An act of unconditional emancipation ( <i>dabbara</i> ) for a black female (Amira) granted after her master's death
P.GrohmannBerlin 7	Nubia	916	An act issued by a goldsmith freedman ( <i>mawlā</i> ) to a thirty year-old black slave ( <i>mamlūk</i> ) named Mubārak, freeing him ( <i>'a'taqtu-ka</i> ) upon his master's death
P.RichardsWritten Documents 24	Egypt	950–1050	Unpublished fragment tentatively identified as a manumission document
P.Cair.Arab. 37	Egypt	1003	An act of unconditional emancipation for the slave girl ( <i>jāriyah</i> ) Ṣafra, or Dağāsha in Coptic, making her master of herself ( <i>malakat nafsa-hā</i> )

**Table 5.3. Acts of Emancipation in Early Arabic Documents**

These documents indicate that Islamic ideals of emancipation spread alongside a continuing ubiquity of slaves. Other documents highlight how this ubiquity was maintained through the acquisition of new slaves. Qiyā's name suggests a Turkish origin, and slave traders drew their traffic from other directions as well. The

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elsewhere. The formula suggests that Aryana no longer survived, although she had been publicly known as a slave of Iṣṭurheu. P.Cair.Arab. 37.

workings of this trade survive in a unique letter from a merchant of Alexandria, who wrote about a partner in Tripoli in 834:

And as for Ibn Ḥassān, more than one letter has come to me from him with assurances. He has sold the goods which went out with him except a few things, as God has arranged it for him. And he mentioned that he has taken a commission from Abū Wahb and that he will soon send it to me with slaves. I ask that God preserve him and grant his favor to us and to him.<sup>24</sup>

Travelling other routes, at least one Slavic slave girl reached Egypt during the 800s, joining other slaves diversely classified as white (or yellow), black (or red), Berber, and Byzantine. Descriptions of these slaves became more elaborate over the course of the 800s, suggesting an increasing diversity of slaves. By 875, some slaves began to merit the distinction of having been born at home (*muwallad*), indicating that imported slaves had so flooded Egyptian markets that locally-born slaves had become rare.

Further documents indicate that the demand for slaves remained high despite these continuous imports. Qiyā's self-purchase for 116 dirhams equated to roughly 330 grams of silver, or about 6 dinars (22.6 grams of gold).<sup>25</sup> Documents from Egypt

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<sup>24</sup> P.RagibGolenischeff. Yūsuf Rāḡib, "Lettre d'un marchand d'Alexandrie de la collection Golenischeff à Moscou," *Annales islamologiques* 48, no. 2 (2014): n.p. [online], ll. 19–23: *واما بن حسان فقد اتاني منه غير كتاب بالسلامة وقد باع متاعه الذي خرج به الا اليسير وصنع الله له فيه وقد ذكر انه تكارى لابي وهب وانه باعته الى برقيق عاجلا اسئل الله ان يسلمه وان يصنع لنا وله*

<sup>25</sup> Bolin gives 2.83 grams as the average weight of a dirham from the late 700s. His graph places the exchange rate of gold to silver as roughly 14.5:1 in 775. Two of his key figures are the stated exchange rates of 10 dirhams for a dinar around 650, and 22 dirhams for a dinar around 800. Assuming an even rate of increase between these dates, the exchange rate around 775 would have been 20 dirhams for one dinar. Sture Bolin, "Mohammad, Charlemagne and Ruric," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 1, no. 1 (1953): 5–39, at 15–16. McCormick, by comparison, assumed unchanging rates of exchange for a broad window between the late 600s and the early 900s. According to these rates, Qiyā's purchase price would have amounted to 345 grams of silver, or 34.5 grams of gold or 8.1 dinars. Michael McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 756–57.

tend to show higher prices (Table 5.4). One group of three slaves sold for a meager 10 ½ dinars, but another group of three was purchased for 49 dinars. Prices for individuals ranged from 12 ½ dinars to 30 dinars. Together, these documents record the sale of fifteen individuals for a total of 217 ½ dinars, or about 14 ½ dinars per person. These figures suggest that Qiyā was allowed to purchase his freedom at a rate of less than half his market value.

Document	Description	Place	Price	Date
P.JoySorrow 34	Black female slave ( <i>khādīm sawdā a</i> )	Egypt	18	701–800
P.Cair.Arab. 295	Slave girl ( <i>jāriyah</i> )	Idfū	—	801–900
CPR XVI 19	Slavic slave girl ( <i>khādīm saqlabīyah</i> )	al-Fuṣṭāṭ	—	801–900
P.RagibEdfou 1	Slave girl ( <i>jāriyah</i> )	Idfū	—	867–933
P.Vente 1	Slave girl ( <i>jāriyah</i> )	Egypt	12 ½	871
P.Khalili I 18	Slave girl ( <i>jāriyah</i> )	Egypt	—	878–938
P.Vente 2	White slave girl born at home ( <i>jāriyah ṣufrā a muwalladah</i> )	Egypt	30	875
P.Vente 3	White Berber slave girl ( <i>jāriyah ṣufrā a barbariyya</i> )	Egypt	14	893
P.Vente 4	Black slave girl, her daughter, and her (?grand)son ( <i>jāriyah sawdā a wa-binta-hā wa-ibna-hā</i> )	Egypt	10 ½	895
P.Vente 5	Black Q[ū]māṭiyyah slave girl ( <i>jāriyah sawdā a q[ū]māṭiyyah</i> )	Egypt	14	896
P.Vind.Arab. I 17	Two slaves ( <i>ra'sayn</i> = two heads)	Egypt	—	901–1100
P.Vente 6	Black slave girl ( <i>jāriyah sawdā u</i> )	Egypt	16 ½	923
P.Vente 7	Nubian slave girl ( <i>jāriyah nūbiyyah</i> )	Egypt	15	966
P.Vente 8	Black Garamant slave girl ( <i>jāriyah qaramiyyah sawdā a</i> )	Egypt	25	977
Chrest.Khoury I 53	Nubian black slave girl ( <i>waṣīfah sawdā a nūbiyyah</i> )	al-Fayyūm	13	983
P Vente 11	Black Nubian and Christian slave girl ( <i>jāriyah sawdā a wa-ğinsu-hā nūbiyyah naṣṭāniyyah</i> ), a younger daughter born at home ( <i>ibnata-hā al-muwalladah aṣ-ṣuğrā</i> ), and her child son ( <i>ibna aṣ-ṣabiyya aṭ-ṭifla</i> )	Egypt	49	994

**Table 5.4. Archival References to the Purchase of Slaves in Egypt before 1000**

Higher values were recorded in a daybook kept by a slave trader in Fustat around the year 1000.<sup>26</sup> Two long papyri survive from this document, with folds indicating that they were stored together in a merchant's sleeve to record his daily transactions. Its owner documented slaves sold to the regional elite, including the Qadi of Tripoli, and he conducted many of his transactions through agents or on behalf of others. Records survive in whole or in part for sixteen of his sales, written as a short description of the transaction, followed by a price in dinars (Table 5.5).<sup>27</sup>

Date	Description	Seller	Purchaser	Price
unspecified	slave boy ( <i>ghulām</i> )	—	—	—
Monday, 12 Shawwāl	Byzantine boy ( <i>ṣabī rūmī</i> )	—	Ibn 'Alwa	—
Monday, 12 Shawwāl	girl ( <i>jāriyah</i> )	—	Daughter of al-Ghabbān	100
Tuesday, 13 Shawwāl	girl	Suwār al-Qarṣawī	Ma'arīḍī, friend of ...	27
Sunday, 18 Shawwāl	girl	Ramaḍān	Raḥāb	57 ½
Sunday, 18 Shawwāl	girl, not a virgin	Manṣūr, agent ( <i>wakīl</i> ) of Abū Ishāq	Ibn Ḥaydara, Qadi of Tripoli	110
Monday, 19 Shawwāl	girl	Ibn Bukrān	—	40
Tuesday, 20 Shawwāl	boy born in slavery ( <i>ṣabī muwallad</i> )	Abū al-Ṣbn	... with ...	12 ½

<sup>26</sup> Donald Richards has proposed that this document dates from the very end of the 900s or to the early 1000s. Donald S. Richards, "Fragments of a Slave Dealer's Day-book from Fuṣṭāṭ," in *Documents de l'Islam médiéval: nouvelles perspectives de recherche. Actes de la table ronde (Paris, 1988)*, ed. Yūsuf Rāḡib, *Textes arabes et études islamiques* 29 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1991), 89–96.

<sup>27</sup> These practices of recording accord well with the later *ḥisbah* manuals for market overseers. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Naṣr al-Shayzarī, *The Book of the Islamic Market Inspector: Nihāyat al-Rutba fī Ṭalab al-Ḥisba (The Utmost Authority in the Pursuit of Ḥisba)*, trans. R. P. Buckley, *Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement* 9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102–3. See also Hannah Barker, "Purchasing a Slave in Fourteenth-Century Cairo: Ibn al-Akfānī's *Book of Observation and Inspection in the Examination of Slaves*," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 19 (2016): 1–23.

Tuesday, 20 Shawwāl	boy	Agent ( <i>wakīl</i> ) of Ḥamdān	Ḥāghib of Abū ʿl-Qār	—
Wednesday, 21 Shawwāl	girl	Farah	—	—
unspecified	—	—	Ṣārim al-Dawla	—
same	girl cook	—	Zāḥiq al-Sharif	—
same	girl	—	—	—
Wednesday	—	—	—	—
Wednesday	boy	Ibn Ramaḍān	—	—
Thursday	—	—	—	—

**Table 5.5. Transactions Recorded in the Fustat Daybook**

These documents permit revision to McCormick’s earlier work on slave prices. McCormick relied on a small number of prices previously compiled by Eliyahu Ashtor from Arabic literary sources.<sup>28</sup> Comparison with a more diverse European dataset led McCormick to infer a strong profit motive that drove Europeans to sell slaves to buyers in the Caliphate.<sup>29</sup> Jeffrey Fynn-Paul adopted this same data to argue that the higher prices in the Caliphate diverted slaves from European markets, eventually forcing Europeans to abandon slavery in favor of serfdom.<sup>30</sup> Consideration of archival sources helps refine the interregional differences posited by McCormick (Chart 5.1).<sup>31</sup> Prices in the Caliphate were in fact higher than in Western Europe, particularly at the outset of the Viking Age. This evidence

<sup>28</sup> Eliyahu Ashtor, *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l’Orient médiéval*, École pratique des hautes études, VIe section, Centre de recherches historiques, Monnaie, prix, conjoncture 8 (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1969), 58–59, 89. Note that not all prices given by Ashtor were included in McCormick’s analysis. I have opted to follow McCormick’s judgment in these omissions.

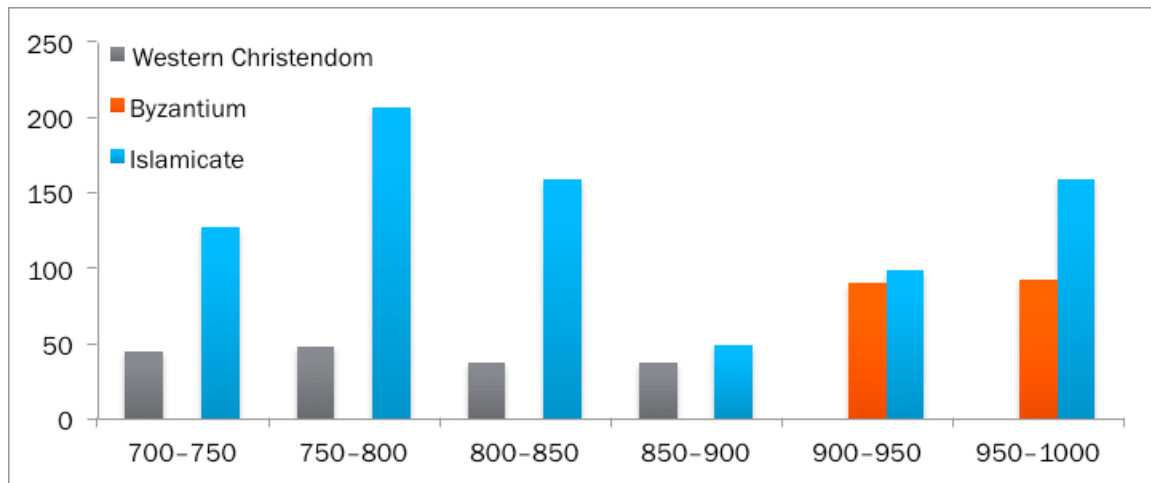
<sup>29</sup> McCormick, *Origins*, 754–59; Michael McCormick, “New Light on the ‘Dark Ages’: How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy,” *Past and Present* 177 (2002): 17–54, at 43–44, 53.

<sup>30</sup> Jeffrey Fynn-Paul, “Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era,” *Past and Present* 205 (November 2009): 3–40, at 10 n. 14.

<sup>31</sup> See also comments of Richards, “Fragments of a Slave Dealer’s Day-book from Fuṣṭāṭ,” 91–92; Perry, “The Daily Life of Slaves,” 8–9.



confirms that throughout this period vast wealth could be acquired by opening a corridor to move slaves from Western Europe into the heartlands of the Caliphate.



**Chart 5.1. Average Prices for Slaves in Grams of Gold**

The prices recorded in the Egyptian documents suggest that the Islamic world had the economic backing to draw slaves from impoverished regions far away. Even the relatively low price of 116 dirhams paid by Qiyā—perhaps a bargain price offered to a loyal servant—translated into a treasure by the standards of northern Europe, where the largest contemporary hoard consisted of a mere 31 dirhams.<sup>32</sup> The spike in Islamicate prices around 800 suggests that, at the outset of the Viking Age, the slave demand of the Caliphate had its greatest potential to forge new routes to northern regions where slaves could be obtained cheaply. Documentary evidence indicates

<sup>32</sup> Christoph Kilger identified nine hoards from Northern and Eastern Europe dating from the period between 770 and 790. This included a large hoard of 187 dirhams at Gandza in the Caucasus, but hoards further north remained small, including 31 dirhams at Staraja Ladoga and a group of 4–7 dirhams at Ribe. The earliest northern hoard to exceed Qiyā’s purchase price was found at Mokajmy-Sójki in Poland, consisting of 124 dirhams with a *terminus post quem* of 817–818. Christoph Kilger, “Kaupang from Afar: Aspects of the Interpretation of Dirham Finds in Northern and Eastern Europe between the Late 8th and Early 10th Centuries,” in *Means of Exchange: Dealing with Silver in the Viking Age*, ed. Dagfinn Skre, Kaupang Excavation Project Publication Series 2, Norske Oldfunn 23 (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2008), 199–252, at 211.

that demand for slave imports was sustained or even intensified across this period, while the fall in slave prices during the 800s suggests that increases in supply grew to match these rises in demand.

### Slavery in Northern Law

Documentary evidence for the cyclic acquisition and emancipation of slaves derives primarily from Egypt. The legal concerns of the celebrated Islamic jurist Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d.256/870) indicate that similar conditions prevailed throughout the Caliphate, particularly along the northern frontiers at the time of his work in the 860s in Khurāsān. Eight years before his death, al-Bukhārī began to train students in what would become one of his most famous works, *Al-Jāmi' al-musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ al-mukhtaṣar*, or the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.<sup>33</sup> Al-Bukhārī reportedly gathered some 600,000 ḥadīth, or stories about the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions which provided legal precedents for Islamic jurists. He selected 2,602 of the most reliable traditions, sorting them with some repetition into 97 books organized around problems he thought jurists would likely confront. The *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* remains respected today as a canonical collection of early Islamic legal traditions.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Numerous editions are available, although none has attained recognition as the preferred edition for scholarly citation. For present purposes, I rely on the most accessible parallel translation, which is also freely available online. Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *The Translation of the Meanings of Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: Arabic-English*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, 9 vols. (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997), <https://sunnah.com/>. For the most recent critical edition, see Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000). Citations below follow the book and chapter organization of the Khan edition.

<sup>34</sup> I have opted to use the singular form *ḥadīth* also as a plural noun, following the custom sometimes used for audiences unfamiliar with Arabic plurals. The actual Arabic plural is *aḥādīth*. With repetitions, the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* consists of 7,275 full hadith and 1,341 abbreviated corroborating references. The authorship and redaction of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* have recently been a subject of debate. The text as we have it seems to have stabilized by the mid-tenth century, when it began to take on its canonical role.

Al-Bukhārī's strategies of compilation—how he organized and guided the interpretation of these traditions—reflect the concerns of his moment.<sup>35</sup> A concern for slavery pervades his work. Over 300 ḥadīth record the Prophet interacting with slaves or adjudicating decisions over them. Of the 97 books of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 74 include ḥadīth that address slavery, 26 include chapters devoted to issues of slavery, and two deal exclusively with slaves in terms of emancipations and emancipation contracts. The lack of books treating conditions of servitude, however, indicates that al-Bukhārī did not anticipate slaves asserting legal rights before Islamic jurists. Islamic proscriptions against enslaving Muslims seem to have been in force. Since the conquests had ended over a century before and conversions were well under way, the only reliable source of fresh slaves would have been foreign markets.<sup>36</sup>

With the ḥadīth al-Bukhārī collected, he prepared fellow jurists to confront a diverse population of foreign slaves. He included ḥadīth in which foreign slaves are variously described as red, black, Coptic, Ishmaelite, and pagan.<sup>37</sup> At least eighty

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Christopher Melchert, "Bukārī and Early Hadith Criticism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121, no. 1 (2001): 7–19; Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon*, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 99–206; Christopher Melchert, "Al-Bukhārī," in *EF*; Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadīth: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, Foundations of Islam (London: Oneworld Publications, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> An approach to extracting meaning from a ḥadīth based on the chapter headings introduced by al-Bukhārī was practiced by medieval commentators such as Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalani (1372–1449). See the edition of his commentary in, Mohammad Fadel, "Ibn Hajar's Hady al-Sārī: A Medieval Interpretation of the Structure of al-Bukhārī's Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Introduction and Translation," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 54, no. 3 (1995): 161–97, at p. 185; regarding strategies of compilation, see Fred M. Donner, "Uthmān and the Rāshidūn Caliphs in Ibn 'Asākir's *Ta'rikh Madīnat Dimashq*: A Study in Strategies of Compilation," in *Ibn 'Asākir and Early Islamic History*, ed. James E. Lindsay, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 20 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2001), 44–61; Heather Keaney, "Confronting the Caliph: 'Uthmān b. 'Affān in Three 'Abbasid Chronicles," *Studia Islamica* 106 (2011): 25–48.

<sup>36</sup> Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam*; Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*; Hoyland, *In God's Path*.

<sup>37</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 83.28, 84.14 (red); 64.117, 68.31, 78.226, and others (black); 84.9

ḥadīth record information about work done by slaves. Slaves are found acting in the roles of butcher, carpenter, cook, cupper (a type of physician), digger (perhaps for irrigation), entertainer, estate manager, fortuneteller, *hafiz* (one who has memorized the Qur'ān), imam, messenger, *muezzin* (one who calls Muslims to prayer), prostitute, shepherd, soldier, stable hand, tailor, valet, and wet-nurse.<sup>38</sup> Al-Bukhārī provided jurists with precedents for dealing with slaves who engaged in work that was illicit according to the precepts of Islam, as well as with slaves who worked not for their masters but for their own benefit.<sup>39</sup>

Al-Bukhārī also preserved over ninety ḥadīth offering precedents for emancipation. Issues at stake included pious encouragement for manumitting slaves and dictates mandating that freed slaves should remain the clients (*mawālī*) of the ones who freed them.<sup>40</sup> Ten ḥadīth on manumission concern issues of emancipation and marriage, recalling the acts of unconditional emancipation granted to at least two slave mothers of Khurāsān.<sup>41</sup> In addition to these ninety ḥadīth, al-Bukhārī recorded ten ḥadīth in which the Prophet established precedents for revoking promised emancipation when the owner became destitute or incompetent.<sup>42</sup> These ḥadīth

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(Coptic); 49.27, 64.392 (Ishmaelite); 68.35 (pagan).

<sup>38</sup> al-Bukhārī, 34.34 (butcher), 8.97 (carpenter), 49.40 (cook), 77.178 (cupper), 56.50 (digger), 13.36 (entertainer), 67.122 (estate manager), 63.68 (fortuneteller), 62.106 (hafiz), 10.87 (imam), 65.432 (messenger), (muezzin), 68.93 (prostitute), 72.27 (shepherd), 83.84 (soldier), 63.132 (stable hand), 70.61 (tailor), 46.29 (valet), and 52.23 (wet-nurse).

<sup>39</sup> al-Bukhārī, 63.68 (illicit fortunetelling), 68.93 (illicit prostitution), 77.178 (illicit cupping), 42.27 (property of a slave), 47.20 (slave working toward manumission).

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, al-Bukhārī, 49.31, 50.1.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, al-Bukhārī, 67.24. See further Kecia Ali, *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, al-Bukhārī, *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, 34.93, 89.8, 93.48.

helped provide the framework for slaves like Qiyā to secure emancipation contracts, but they also provided slave owners with acceptable means for revoking them.

Al-Bukhārī's attention to these issues indicate that, although only four emancipation documents survive from early Islamic Khurāsān, emancipation prevailed as a prominent concern among northern jurists in the 860s. Nonetheless, al-Bukhārī's selection of ḥadīth anticipated a ubiquity of slaves, indicating that emancipation went hand-in-hand with the acquisition of new slaves. And although al-Bukhārī drew these ḥadīth from traditions of the period of the Arab conquests, he ensured that his students received precedents that reflected the diverse slave populations of his own day. The issues at stake in al-Bukhārī's selected ḥadīth—the emancipation of some slaves and the acquisition of others from abroad—parallel the conditions seen in early Arabic documents.

### Slaves in al-Ṭabarī's *History*

The *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* indicates that the rising demand for slaves in the documents of Egypt had parallels in the north. A broader framework for exploring this demand is available from the *History of the Prophets and Kings* by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923).<sup>43</sup> This monumental history chronicles events from the act of Creation to the year 915. It survives in multiple manuscripts, and in modern editions, it spans fifteen volumes in Arabic and 40 in English.<sup>44</sup> Al-Ṭabarī's *History* was popular among

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<sup>43</sup> On the development of Arabic historiography, see Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); for a concise introduction to these sources, see Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 346–84.

<sup>44</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk = Annales quos scripsit Abu*

medieval audiences and remains respected today as one of the most significant contemporary accounts of early ‘Abbāsīd rule.<sup>45</sup> The *History* is particularly rich in details of the north, where al-Ṭabarī was raised among the landowning elite of the Caspian shore.<sup>46</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī’s *History* is a political critique, framed as an effort to document how God rewarded or punished prophets, kings, and caliphs, based on their piety.<sup>47</sup> He compiled this work in part from written and spoken histories, and he took up his own authorial voice increasingly after the ‘Abbāsīd takeover in 750.<sup>48</sup> For these years,

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*Djafar Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, 15 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1901); Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-Ṭabarī: Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 10 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1969); Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Ehsan Yar-Shater, 40 vols., SUNY series in Near Eastern Studies; Bibliotheca Persica (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985). The Leiden edition referenced most major manuscripts and remains the most accessible and commonly cited edition. The Cairo edition added reference to the Topkapı Sarayı (also Topkapısarayı or Istanbul) manuscripts, which are considered the most reliable. The English translation relied on the Leiden edition and included the Leiden page numbers in the margins. Translators were encouraged to note alternative readings from the Cairo editions or particular manuscripts. Citations below refer to the English edition. The Leiden and English editions may be found at <http://lisdemo.libguides.com/c.php?g=812693&p=5799150>.

<sup>45</sup> Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 358–67; C. E. Bosworth, “Al-Ṭabarī,” in *EP*; Tarif Khalidī, “Al-Ṭabarī: An Introduction,” in *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, ed. Hugh Kennedy, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 15 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008), 1–9. Al-Ṭabarī’s work could be contrasted with that of al-Ya‘qūbī, who attested to the broad outlines of al-Ṭabarī’s *History* but without following his emphasis on slavery. Nonetheless, at several points in his *Book of the Adaptation of Men*, al-Ya‘qūbī faulted ‘Abbāsīd caliphs for their behavior regarding slaves. Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya‘qūb Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Ya‘qūbī, *The Works of Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Ya‘qūbī: An English Translation*, ed. Matthew S. Gordon et al., 3 vols., Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Although al-Ṭabarī wrote his history while based in the ‘Abbāsīd capital of Baghdad, he nonetheless retained a deep interest in events along the northern frontiers, with special emphasis on Khurāsān. A. Asa Eger, *The Islamic–Byzantine Frontier: Interaction and Exchange among Muslim and Christian Communities* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015); Alison Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam: Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>47</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 164–69; Claude Gilliot, “Al-Ṭabarī and the ‘History of Salvation,’” in *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, ed. Hugh Kennedy, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 15 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008), 131–40.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Ṭabarī made use of his own narrative voice—indicated by the formula “Abū Ja‘far said ...”—particularly after the death of the caliph al-Saffāḥ in 754. For important events, he continued to present alternative accounts often preserving multiple different viewpoints. See discussion in Khalidī,

he sharpened his narrative into a deepening critique of successive ‘Abbāsīd rulers.<sup>49</sup> Al-Ṭabarī allowed slaves to rise to the surface in this narrative, with Turkish slave soldiers ultimately overthrowing a series of weak caliphs during the Anarchy of Samarra in the 860s. Al-Ṭabarī offered these slaves prominence because they suited his literary goals, but his efforts also confirm two significant trends suggested by other sources. First, a large number of slaves were purchased from the north despite leaving few documentary traces. Second, the demand for northern slaves increased by stages following the ‘Abbāsīd takeover of 750 (Table 5.6).

Caliph	Reign	Remarks
Al-Saffāḥ	749–754	beginning of ‘Abbāsīd rule
Al-Manṣūr	754–775	concubines include a Kurd and a Greek
Al-Mahdī	775–785	concubines proliferate in household
Al-Hādī	785–786	concubine mother attempts a coup for al-Rashīd
Al-Rashīd	786–809	eunuchs come to prominence in caliphal court
Al-Amīn	809–813	eunuchs marshaled into two troops of soldiers concubine foresees death
Al-Ma’mūn	813–833	Turkish slave soldiers organized by al-Mu’taṣim
Al-Mu’taṣim	833–842	Turkish slave soldiers replace free Arab troops, settled in a new capital at Samarra in 836 <i>al-Ṭabarī born in 839</i>
Al-Wāthiq	842–847	Turkish slave soldier Ashnās receives a crown Turkish slave soldier Ashnās crowned again

*Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 73–81; Khalil Athamina, “The Historical Work of Al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī: The Author’s Attitude towards the Sources,” in *Al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Kennedy, 141–55. Scholars have tended to treat al-Ṭabarī as a careful and balanced critic of his evidence, but recent studies have emphasized his agency as a scholar to weigh the evidence of the past, conceptualize nuanced narratives, select and organize appropriate sources, and then signal their merits to guide interpretation. Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Hugh Kennedy, “The Sources of Al-Ṭabarī’s History of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate,” in *Al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Kennedy, 175–85; Matthew S. Gordon, “The Samarran Turkish Community in the *Ta’rīkh* of al-Ṭabarī,” in *Al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Kennedy, 237–62.

<sup>49</sup> For a study of how al-Ṭabarī used dreams to cast al-Hādī, al-Rashīd, and al-Amīr in tragic roles, see Johan Weststeijn, “Dreams of ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs: Suspense and Tragedy in al-Ṭabarī’s *History of Prophets and Kings*,” *Oriens* 38 (2010): 17–34.

Al-Mutawakkil	847–861	Turkish slave soldiers murder caliph “Anarchy of Samarra”
Al-Muntaṣir	861	Turkish slave soldiers possibly murdered
Al-Mustaʿīn	862–866	Turkish slave soldiers execute coup
Al-Muʿtazz	866–869	Turkish slave soldiers execute coup Zanj slaves revolt around Basra
Al-Muhtadī	869–870	Turkish slave soldiers execute coup
Al-Muʿtamid	870–892	“Anarchy of Samarra” ends Zanj slaves suppressed
Al-Muʿtaḍid	892–902	capital returned to Baghdad in 892, slaves recede
Al-Muktafī	902–908	
Al-Muqtadir	908–932	<i>surviving text ends abruptly in 915</i> <i>al-Ṭabarī dies in 923</i>

**Table 5.6. Slavery in al-Ṭabarī’s Accounts of the Early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs**

For the Umayyad period, al-Ṭabarī portrayed slaves intermittently, establishing them as actors with a potential to undermine political order. The most prominent instance occurred in the rebellion of Mukhtār ibn Abī ‘Ubayd (d. 687). Mukhtār led an insurrection promising to elevate the status of post-conquest converts—here identified as *mawālī* without necessarily indicating that these people were also emancipated slaves. By advocating for these *mawālī*, Mukhtār alienated the Arabic elite or *ashrāf* who had participated in the conquest. The *ashrāf* sought to undermine Mukhtār in part by rhetorically conflating his *mawālī* supporters with slaves, and it is possible that the revolt enjoyed the support of actual slaves or freed slaves as well.<sup>50</sup> After Mukhtār’s death, al-Ṭabarī again allowed slavery to recede into the background of his narrative. He hinted that he considered this to be the appropriate state of affairs, given his choice to include rumors and critical poetry about Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab (d. 720/1), a villainous governor of Khurāsān who

<sup>50</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 21, pp. 85–92, 117; compare Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 93–96.



lavished more wealth on his favorite slave girl than on a thousand of his soldiers.<sup>51</sup>

Beginning with the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, al-Ṭabarī pointed up the roles of slaves more frequently. These slaves appear first in domestic roles, either as personal servants or concubines.<sup>52</sup> Thus as al-Ṭabarī listed the members of the family of al-Manṣūr (r. 754–775), he included a number of concubines, identifying one as a Kurd and another as a Greek.<sup>53</sup> From this point on, al-Ṭabarī made punctilious note of concubines belonging to royal households. In a poem he attributed to al-Mahdī, the caliph asked his slave girl: “But is it enough for you that you own me / while all the people are my slaves?”<sup>54</sup> Al-Ṭabarī further indicated that many subsequent caliphs were born to concubine mothers.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps most poignantly, he reported an encounter between the short-lived caliph al-Hādī (r. 785–786) and his mother al-Khayzurān, a concubine implicated in plotting a coup for her other son Hārūn al-Rashīd. After al-Hādī’s retributive attempt to poison his mother failed, he asked her: “When did a caliph having a mother ever prosper?”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 24, p. 37.

<sup>52</sup> al-Ṭabarī, vol. 28, pp. 99–100; vol. 29, pp. 24, 60, 129, 186, 243–44, 263; slave girls also appear prominently as entertainers Gordon, “Preliminary Remarks on Slaves and Slave Labor”; compare also the role of slave boys Everett K. Rowson, “The Traffic in Boys: Slavery and Homoerotic Liaisons in Elite ‘Abbāsīd Society,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 11, no. 2 (2008): 193–204. On the role of ghilmān under al-Mahdī, see Ayalon, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans*, 24–25.

<sup>53</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 29, p. 149.

<sup>54</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 3:1, p. 543, l. 13: وَأَنَّ النَّاسَ كُلَّهُمْ عِبْدِي وَأَمَّا يَكْفِيكَ أَنَّكَ تَمْلِكِينِي; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 29, p. 263.

<sup>55</sup> See four early ‘Abbāsīd slave girls studied from near-contemporary sources by Fuad Matthew Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad: The Qiyān in the Early Abbasid Era* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); al-Ṭabarī’s work may also be compared to a thirteenth-century compilation of consort biographies. See Ibn al-Sā’ī, *Consorts of the Caliphs: Women and the Court of Baghdad*.

<sup>56</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 3:1, p. 570, ll. 19 – 571, 1: متى افلح خليفة له ام; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 30, p. 44; compare discussion of al-Khayzurān by Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 51–67.

Al-Ṭabarī also gave eunuch slaves increasing attention beginning with the career of al-Hādī. Four such slave flicker into view during his brief rule.<sup>57</sup> Under al-Hādī's celebrated successor, Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809), eunuchs achieved enduring prominence.<sup>58</sup> Al-Rashīd secured his position in part through the machinations of the Barmakid family, who had forged the bureaucratic staff into a political force.<sup>59</sup> When al-Rashīd effected his own coup against Barmakid influence, he made eunuchs key players in the new bureaucracy. Eunuchs appear throughout al-Rashīd's career from the fall of the Barmakids to the caliph's own deathbed.<sup>60</sup>

Al-Rashīd's indulgences received mixed reviews from al-Ṭabarī,<sup>61</sup> while al-Rashīd's successor al-Amīn (r. 809–813) inspired open censure. Al-Ṭabarī used both eunuchs and concubines to underscore the troubles of the latter's rule. He preserved a derogatory poem, in which al-Amīn was hailed as a “husband for the eunuchs,”<sup>62</sup> and al-Ṭabarī recorded three separate versions of an anecdote in which a slave girl named Ḍaʿf (“Weakness”) presaged the caliph's death.<sup>63</sup> Al-Ṭabarī also noted how al-Amīn pioneered the use of military units composed of slaves. He procured eunuchs to comprise two troops: al-Jarādiyyah, recruited from Ṣaqālibah

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<sup>57</sup> Ayalon, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans*, 77–78.

<sup>58</sup> Ayalon, 4, 80–95; for an insightful study of eunuchs in the later court of al-Muqtadir (908–932), see Nadia Maria El-Cheikh, “Servants at the Gate: Eunuchs at the Court of al-Muqtadir,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, no. 2 (2005): 234–52.

<sup>59</sup> Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 138.

<sup>60</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 30, pp. 246, 293, 303.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Weststeijn, “Dreams of ‘Abbasid Caliphs,” 27–29.

<sup>62</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 3:2, p. 951, l. 3a: لَقَدْ أَبْغَيْتُنَّ لِلْخَصِيَّانِ نِعْمًا; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 31, p. 225. Compare discussion of a parallel account by Masʿūdī by Ayalon, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans*, 129–30.

<sup>63</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 31, pp. 179–81, 232–33.

(≈ Slavs) and perhaps named after a pale locust (*jarād*) or falcon (*ṣaqr al-jarād*), and al-Ghurābiyyah, recruited from Abyssinians (≈ Ethiopians) and named after the dark raven (*ghurāb*).<sup>64</sup>

Although some modern scholars have eagerly associated the Ṣaqālibah with Slavic groups attested elsewhere, al-Ṭabarī's own use of the term should inspire caution.<sup>65</sup> For al-Ṭabarī, the peoples of the north could be variously classified, but he regularly described them as descendants of Japheth.<sup>66</sup> In one characteristic passage, al-Ṭabarī asserted: "Japheth begat the Turks, the Ṣaqālibah, and Gog and Magog, and not in one of them is there any good."<sup>67</sup> This genealogy conflated the historical Turks and Ṣaqālibah, who could then be found in the slave markets of the Caliphate, with the apocalyptic peoples of Gog and Magog, whose coming would presage the end of the world. Al-Ṭabarī's imprecise or indifferent use of labels for the northern peoples who supplied numerous slaves to the Caliphate parallels similar imprecision in early modern accounts of African peoples. In the end, what likely mattered most was the reputation of the slave markets and not the origins of the slaves themselves.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Al-Ṭabarī described these units as *farḍ*, signifying that they were paid separately from the regular muster roles and emphasizing their unique status. Ṭabarī also included a lengthy poem lamenting the destruction of Baghdad during al-Amīn's reign, listing the al-Jarādiyyah and al-Ghurābiyyah slave soldiers as the most impressive of his troops. al-Ṭabarī, vol. 31, pp. 142, 225.

<sup>65</sup> Additionally, it should be noted that the peoples of the north were dynamic, and Arabic authors sometimes synchronize details of various times, confusing the image of the peoples they present. Peter B. Golden, "Rūs," in *EF*.

<sup>66</sup> For various and sometimes conflicting genealogies, see al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 2, pp. 11, 14–15, 16–17, 20–21.

<sup>67</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 1:1, p. 223, ll. 5–6: *من وولد يافث الترك والصفالية وياجوج وماجوج وليس في واحد من هؤلاء خير*; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 2, p. 21.

<sup>68</sup> S. Max Edelson, "The Characters of Commodities: The Reputations of South Carolina Rice and Indigo in the Atlantic World," in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 344–60, at 356 n. 11. On European perceptions of African groups and the

Regardless of the particular origins of these slaves, however, their units seem to have disbanded upon al-Amīn's death. A more enduring experiment began under his successor's rule. While al-Ma'mūn (r. 813–833) exercised the office of caliph, his younger brother al-Mu'taṣim campaigned on his behalf. Al-Ṭabarī reported that in 817/8 al-Mu'taṣim mustered a troop of Turkish slave soldiers to put down a rebellion.<sup>69</sup> By the time the Caliphate passed to al-Mu'taṣim (r. 833–842), these slave soldiers comprised a small but disciplined force of 3,000–4,000 troops.<sup>70</sup> Al-Mu'taṣim established his slave soldiers as a professional standing army, discarding the inherited military rolls for mustering an Arab militia from the descendants of the original conquest armies. This created friction between the armed Turkish slaves and the disenfranchised Arab elite, compelling al-Mu'taṣim to remove his government and military from Baghdad to a new capital at Samarra in 836. Al-Mu'taṣim took the

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construction of African nations among enslaved populations, see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*, 2nd ed., Studies in Comparative World History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Regional differences, real and perceived, both drove consumers' demands for or aversions to slaves associated with particular regions and suppliers' willingness to trade in slaves from particular ports. David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). The perceived threat of slave revolt associated with particular regions provides one of the most compelling examples of this impact. Stephen D. Behrendt, David Eltis, and David Richardson, "The Costs of Coercion: African Agency in the Pre-Modern Atlantic World," *Economic History Review* 54, no. 3 (August 2001): 454–76. On the creation of communities through the slave trade itself, see Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007); Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>69</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 31, pp. 67–68; Matthew Gordon, in his perceptive study of 'Abbāsīd slave soldiers, notes that by 814/5 al-Mu'taṣim had already acquired at least one slave who was later a leader of this group, and although scholars commonly refer to these troops as Turkish slave soldiers, al-Mu'taṣim recruited them initially from the slaves available in Baghdad. Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*, 15–46; on the early recruitment of Ītākḥ, see al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 34, p. 81. Note, however, that Ītākḥ was reportedly a Khazar, not a Turk, and that he was recruited from a kitchen. In its immediate context, his purchase offers no direct evidence on the establishment of a unit of slave soldiers.

<sup>70</sup> Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 156.

additional step of preventing his slave soldiers from integrating with the surrounding communities by supplying them with female slaves of their own.<sup>71</sup>

By the end of al-Mu‘taṣim’s career, the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs had completely surrounded themselves with slaves, drawing their families, their bureaucracies, and even their armies from foreign markets. Al-Ṭabarī painted a grim picture of the troubles that followed.<sup>72</sup> Factionalism arose among the Turkish troops—estimated at numbering some 20,000 souls by the 860s—leading to the Anarchy of Samarra.<sup>73</sup> Four different rulers took the title of caliph in the space of nine years, and at least three of them were killed in an assassination or coup. In the end, it seems, infighting eliminated most of the rival Turkish factions, and the survivors succumbed to exhaustion. A degree of stability returned after 870, but the Turkish slave soldiers remained too embedded in the ‘Abbāsīd state for subsequent caliphs to remove them.<sup>74</sup>

In the depths of the Anarchy of Samarra, al-Ṭabarī introduced yet another group of troublesome slaves—the Zanj.<sup>75</sup> The Zanj took their name from black

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<sup>71</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 33, pp. 25–28; Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*, 5, 47–74, with al-Ya‘qūbī’s account of slave wives quoted on p. 58; Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 156–64.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Ṭabarī does little to hide his disdain for the Turks in particular. Gordon, “The Samarran Turkish Community.”

<sup>73</sup> Some estimates place the number of Turkish soldiers at over 100,000, but I here follow Gordon more reasonable estimate. Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*, 72–73. On the Anarchy of Samarra, see Michael Bonner, “The Waning of Empire, 861–945,” in *The Formation of the Islamic World Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F. Robinson, *The New Cambridge History of Islam 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 305–59.

<sup>74</sup> Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 171–75.

<sup>75</sup> Again, al-Ṭabarī does little to hide his disdain for this group of slaves. Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century*, 145–46, 149–50.

African slaves who were first brought to cultivate the agricultural areas of lower Iraq. By the time of al-Ṭabarī, the term could be applied to a diverse group of agricultural workers including both Byzantine slaves and indigenous non-slave groups.<sup>76</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī represented the Zanj, like the Turks, as outsiders, but whereas the Turks were given power from above by decadent caliphs, the Zanj seized power from below. Al-Ṭabarī accorded particular significance to the Zanj rebellion of 870 as the nadir of ‘Abbāsīd piety and power, and he used the defeat of the Zanj in 883 to signal a return toward right-guided leadership under al-Mu‘tamīd (r. 870–892).<sup>77</sup> Al-Ṭabarī concluded his narrative by describing how the most recent caliphs had sought their wives among the Arab elite, led their armies into war, and exercised effective control over their populations. In al-Ṭabarī’s eyes, these actions redeemed the early ‘Abbāsīd reliance on concubines, eunuchs, and slave soldiers.

Al-Ṭabarī therefore created a pointed narrative in which slaves surface at key points in early ‘Abbāsīd history. Concubines were prominent almost from the beginning of ‘Abbāsīd rule in the 750s, and eunuchs began to appear with greater frequency following the rule of al-Hādī in the late 780s. Slaves were first marshaled into troops during the early 800s, and slave soldiers assumed duties as a standing army

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<sup>76</sup> Popovic, 14–16, 20; Eger, *The Islamic–Byzantine Frontier*, 301–4.

<sup>77</sup> Al-Ṭabarī commemorated the end of the Zanj rebellion with summary comments and the inclusion of a poem. See also al-Ṭabarī’s comments following the end of an abortive Zanj rebellion of 886. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 37, pp. 139–43, 152. By comparison, al-Ya‘qūbī marginalized the revolt by mentioning only the leader of the Zanj twice in passing. al-Ya‘qūbī, *The Works of Ibn Wāḍih al-Ya‘qūbī: An English Translation*, 3:1286, 1288. After the defeat of the Zanj, al-Ṭabarī presents a short series of the most recent caliphs whose careers appear relatively untouched by the chaos of slave rebellions. Notably, al-Ṭabarī also suppresses the appearance of concubines and eunuchs during this period. His choice to exclude slaves and the chaos they produce pointed to a caliphate in renewal, with caliphal piety reflected in right rule and stable social order.

under al-Mu‘taṣim in the 830s. The increasing power of these Turkish slave soldiers began to topple caliphs in the 860s, and the revolt of the Zanj in 869 revealed that slaves threatened to topple the Caliphate itself. This narrative reflects the same rising demand for slaves seen in both the documentary evidence and the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Furthermore, al-Ṭabarī gave particular attention to large groups of slaves acquired from the northern frontiers of the Caliphate, including the Slavic and Abyssinian slaves who flourished under al-Amīn but most especially the Turkish slave soldiers who followed. Other slaves likely recruited from the north are suggested but not mentioned, such as the brick layers who built Samarra in the 830s or the laborers who fed the new city during the long revolt of the Zanj from 870 until 883.

### **Early Arabic Geographers and the Slave Trade**

This period also witnessed a growing literary interest in the peoples of the north, and early Arabic writers crafted a vision of northern markets as reliable sources for slaves. Initially, the peoples who supplied these slaves received marginal attention, shaped by authors’ desires to depict the Islamic heartlands as the center of the world. Successive writers nonetheless accumulated details, linking northern slave traders with viking slave raiders as early as the 840s, and culminating in detailed accounts of northern slave trade by the early 900s.

Early Arabic geographic knowledge was shaped by efforts to understand the world created out of the Islamic conquests.<sup>78</sup> One such effort has been preserved in

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<sup>78</sup> On the sources used to construct this knowledge, see André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu’au milieu du 11e siècle. I. Géographie et géographie humaine dans la littérature arabe des*

the words of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ (d. 683), whose father had conquered Egypt. According to the later geographer Ibn al-Faqīh writing around 902, al-‘Āṣ thought of the world as a bird, with its head in China, its right wing in India, its left wing leading north through al-Khazar to the peoples of Gog and Magog, its chest in the Islamic heartlands of Mecca, the Ḥijāz, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, and its tail extending into Africa and the Maghreb.<sup>79</sup>

This description bears many features in common with later geographic texts. The political and religious centers of the Caliphate continued to stand as the conceptual center of the world, and the surrounding peripheries were similarly described along routes radiating out from that center. Focus shifts easily between peoples, regions, and cities, and the wonders of the world inhabit the edges. To the north, beyond the Jewish kingdom of al-Khazar, al-‘Āṣ located the legendary peoples of Gog and Magog. According to the Qur’ān, these peoples dwelt on a highland between two mountains, confined by an ancient wall built by Alexander the Great (Dhū ’l-Qarnayn) until they break forth on the Day of Resurrection. For early ‘Abbāsīd geographers, these peoples invariably inhabit the north, dwelling along the routes that would lead into the viking west. Descriptions of northern slave traders thus frequently fell at the juncture between descriptive geographies and the ornate

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*origines à 1050*, Civilisations et Sociétés 7 (Paris: Mouton, 1967), 7–33.

<sup>79</sup> Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Hamadhānī Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1885), 3–4. For translation and discussion, see Zayde Antrim, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 96. On Ibn al-Faqīh and his text, which survives in an abridgement attested in four manuscripts, of which three de Goeje consulted three, see H. Massé, “Ibn Al-Faqīh,” in *EP*.



*adab* literature that could include such fantastic wonders as Gog and Magog.<sup>80</sup>

These features appear in the earliest geography to survive nearly complete, *The Book of Routes and Realms* by Abu l-Qāsim ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Khurradādhbih (d. 912).<sup>81</sup> Three extant manuscripts preserve the text as it appeared shortly after 885, as well a later abridgement.<sup>82</sup> Most of the surviving text details itineraries throughout the Caliphate, offering brief descriptions of cities and regions, and cataloguing typical tax renders.<sup>83</sup> These details bear the stamp of an author who had served as master of post and information for Jabal in modern Iran and perhaps occupied the same office for the caliph in either Baghdad or Samarra.<sup>84</sup> A lengthy section follows on the wonders of the ancient world—including a report from a

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<sup>80</sup> Miquel, *La géographie humaine I*, 35–68; Travis Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam: Geography, Translation, and the ‘Abbāsīd Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2011).

<sup>81</sup> Abu l-Qāsim ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1889); M. Hadj-Sadok, “Ibn Khurradādhbih,” in *EP*. This work might have been inspired by his tenure as master of post and information for Jabal in modern Iran and, as some have inferred, later for the caliph from either Baghdad or Samarra. Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam*, 17.

<sup>82</sup> James Montgomery argues most forcefully for the case that the shorter version was completed under al-Wāthiq (842–847) and that the longer was completed in or after 885. James E. Montgomery, “Serendipity, Resistance, and Multivalency: Ibn Khurradādhbih and his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*,” in *On Fiction and Adab in Medieval Arabic Literature*, ed. Philip F. Kennedy, *Studies in Arabic Language and Literature* 6 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 177–230, at 198–202. Pinto accepts 846 and 885 as the most likely recension dates. Karen C. Pinto, *Medieval Islamic Maps: An Exploration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 303 n. 32. See, however, the compelling arguments for rejecting this thesis in Antrim, *Routes and Realms*.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn Khurradādhbih revealed particular depth of knowledge regarding northern and western routes, which he connects in multiple directions. In contrast, alternative long-distance routes received only a quick sketch (the repetitious Sind–India–China route, which was presumably overseas) or no mention at all (particularly routes reaching East and trans-Saharan Africa). Ranabir Chakravarti, ed., *Trade in Early India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Anne Haour, “The Early Medieval Slave Trade of the Central Sahel: Archaeological and Historical Considerations,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 168 (2011): 61–78; Jane Lusaka, Joelle Seligson, and Nancy Eickel, eds., *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds* (Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2011); Hyunhee Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 20–91.

<sup>84</sup> Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam*, 17.

traveler who purportedly visited the wall confining Gog and Magog.<sup>85</sup>

Ibn Khurradādhbih marked the junction between these two sections by summarizing the total number of posts in the Caliphate and describing two merchant groups whose travel tied the Caliphate into the wider world. Ibn Khurradādhbih first described Jewish Radhāniyya merchants, whom he qualified as speakers of Arabic, Farsi, Greek, Frankish, and Ṣaqāliba (≈ Slavic). From Francia in the west they sailed the Mediterranean to the Caliphate and thence travel eastward to China, selling “They bring from the west eunuchs, slave girls, slave boys, embellished silk, marten hides, sable pelts, and swords.”<sup>86</sup> Second, he described a group whom he called the Rūs:

They are a people of the Slavs. They import marten pelts, black fox skins, and swords from the furthest reaches of the Slavs to the Roman Sea. They give a tenth to the ruler of Rome. They also travel on the river Don of the Slavs, and having passed by the city Khamlīj [= Itil?] of the Khazars and again giving a tenth to the ruler, they come to the Caspian Sea. They go out to a coast which they please. The expanse of this sea is five hundred farsakhs [= parasangs]. Sometimes they carry their goods from Jurjān on camels to Baghdad, and Slav eunuchs translate for them. They claim that they are Christians and they pay the poll tax.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Namely al-Wāthiq’s interpreter Sallām. The editor de Goeje described a short intervening section between the descriptive portion of Ibn Khurradādhbih’s text and the wonders and marvels as a likely interpolation. This section, describing the sections of the globe, nonetheless serves a similar function to the merchant section in placing the Caliphate at the center of the world. Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*. On the descriptions of Gog and Magog, see especially André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu’au milieu du 11e siècle. II. Géographie arabe et représentation du monde : la terre et l’étranger*, Civilisations et Sociétés 37 (Paris: Mouton, 1975); Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam*.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 153, ll. 11–13: يجلبون من المغرب الخدم والجوارى والغلمان؛ والديباج وجلود الخنز والفراء والسمور والسيوف Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North* (London: Penguin, 2012), 111.

<sup>87</sup> Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 154, ll. 10–16: وهم جنس من الصقالبة فانهم يحملون جلود الخنز وجلود الثعالب السود والسيوف من اقصى صقلية الى البحر الرومى فيعشرهم صاحب الروم، وان ساروا في تنيس نهر الصقالبة مروا بـخـمـليـج مدينة الخزر فيعشرهم صاحب ثم يصيرون الى بحر جرجان فيخرجون في اى سواحله احبوا وقطر هذا البحر خمس مائة فرسخ يوربما حملوا تجارتهم من جرجان على الابل الى بغداد ويترجم عنهم الخدم الصقالبة ويدعون انهم نصارى فيؤدون الجزية Lunde and

Ibn Khurradādhbih then returned to the Radhāniyya, adding two overland routes, one along the south shore of the Mediterranean, and one north of Byzantium through the lands of the Ṣaqāliba and then across the Oxus River to China. Ibn Khurradādhbih then outlined one final route of the Radhāniyya:

Sometimes they set out behind Byzantium in the country of the Slavs, again to the city Khamlīj [= Itil?] of the Khazars, again on the Caspian Sea, again to Balkh and what lies beyond the [Oxus] river, again to the yurts of the Toghuzghuz, again to China.<sup>88</sup>

This final route, like the river routes of the Rūs, connected the northern frontiers of the Caliphate to regions where viking slave raiders were based.

These accounts of the Rūs and Radhāniyya accomplished three things. First, by describing the routes of these far-traveling merchant, Ibn Khurradādhbih extended the geographic scope of his itineraries while retaining focus on routes and resources. Second, by describing the Rūs and Radhāniyya intersecting in the Islamic heartlands—both groups purportedly traveled to Baghdad—he located the center of the mercantile world in the administrative center of the Caliphate.<sup>89</sup> Third, the fantastic distances he attributed to these merchants helped form a bridge between his matter-of-fact descriptions of routes within the Caliphate and the more fabulous descriptions of ancient wonders that follow.

There is an artistry to this passage which should discourage efforts to extract

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Stone, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, 112.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 155, ll. 4–6: *وربما اخذوا خلف رومية في بلد الصقالبة ثم الى*؛ Lunde and Stone, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, 112.

<sup>89</sup> Baghdad had been the 'Abbāsid capital before 836 and resumed that status in 893. Ibn Khurradādhbih wrote his *Book on Routes and Realms* after 885 but before his death in 912.

particular details about either the Rūs or the Radhāniyya. The Radhāniyya were described as speakers of Slavic and passing through Central Asia, while the Rūs were described as a Slavic people that followed parallel routes.<sup>90</sup> The wares traded by the Rūs meanwhile appear not to be an independent account but rather to be an abbreviated list of the goods attributed to the Radhāniyya. Despite these caveats, Ibn Khurradādhbih nonetheless established that these people belonged to a class of merchants who traveled long distances and might engage in the slave trade.

Ibn Khurradādhbih's work was closely followed by that of Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Ya'qūbī (d. 897/8).<sup>91</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī had lived in Khurāsān and Armenia but was based in Cairo by 891/2, when he published his *Book of Lands*. Although al-Ya'qūbī's work offers little information on northern routes, he wrote a telling description of a viking raid on Seville in 844. Al-Ya'qūbī reported: "The Majūs who are also called al-Rūs entered this river of Cordoba in the hijra year 299 [= 844 C.E.], and they captured, plundered, burned, and killed."<sup>92</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī appears to have developed distinct ideas about who the Rūs were—most likely during his time living in Khurāsān—and he connected them to Norse raiders on Seville based on their reported actions. Significantly, the first action he attributed to these raiders relates specifically to the

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<sup>90</sup> On this awkward passage, including the possibility that Rūs traders were displacing earlier Radhāniyya merchants, see Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, "The Rus in Arabic Sources: Cultural Contacts and Identity" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Bergen, 2013), 64–68.

<sup>91</sup> Antrim, *Routes and Realms*.

<sup>92</sup> Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, 2nd ed., *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1892), 354, l. 13: وهو نهر قرطبة دخلها المجوس الذين: ويقال لهم الروس سنة تسع وعشرين ومائتين فسبوا ونهبوا وحرقوا وقتلوا al-Ya'qūbī, *The Works of Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Ya'qūbī: An English Translation*, 1:192.

capture of people.<sup>93</sup> Although al-Ya‘qūbī offered no further information on the Rūs, this brief passage reveals that he thought of the Rūs first and foremost as raiders who trafficked in western captives.

Arabic traditions of geography took a major turn with Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar ibn Rustah (fl. 903), whose work has been described as an encyclopedic geography.<sup>94</sup> Few details survive about Ibn Rustah, save that he was a native of Isfahan in Iran and that he wrote his *Treatise on Precious Objects* shortly after making a pilgrimage to Mecca in 903.<sup>95</sup> His text generally followed the model of Ibn Khurradādhbih, beginning with systems of cosmography and geography, describing the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and following these with the wonders of the world and aspects of natural geography. To these he appended an extensive ethnographic compendium, beginning with Constantinople and then moving northward through the Khazars, Bulgars, Slavs, and Rūs, among others. Ibn Rustah concluded with various itineraries and geographic miscellanea.<sup>96</sup>

Ibn Rustah’s description of the peoples of the north generally follows a northward itinerary passing among the Khazars, Bartas, and Balkh, taking a short detour west among the Magyars, and then resuming the northward course through the Ṣaqaḗliba and the Rūs. For each of these peoples, Ibn Rustah offered brief

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<sup>93</sup> Lane offers no instances of this term being used for the seizure of portable wealth. Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon: Derived from the Best and the Most Copious Eastern Sources* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863), 1:1303, s.v. سبي

<sup>94</sup> Miquel, *La géographie humaine I*.

<sup>95</sup> Abū ‘Alī Aḥmed ibn ‘Umar Ibn Rustah, *Kitāb al-a‘lāq al-naḥḥa*. Pt. 7, ed. M. J. de Goeje, 2nd ed., *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1892).

<sup>96</sup> S. Maqbul Ahmad, “Ibn Rusta,” in *EF*; James E. Montgomery, “Arabic Sources on the Vikings,” in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London: Routledge, 2008), 550–61.

information typically including political organization, religious ritual, and economic activities. Slaves feature most prominently among the more northern peoples. When Ibn Rustah finally reached the Rūs, he noted:

They raid the Slavs, traveling by ship until they get to them. They capture them and depart with them to Khazarān [= Itil] and Bulgar, and there they sell them. They have no fields. They consume only what they take from the land of the Slavs.<sup>97</sup>

This account raises particular problems alongside Ibn Khurradādhbih's earlier account, which classified the Rūs as one of the Ṣaqāliba peoples. Ibn Rustah's alternative descriptions raise several possibilities. Perhaps the Rūs merchants passed among the Slavs but never belonged to them, perhaps geographic or ethnographic boundaries were shifting, or perhaps Ibn Rustah simply assumed the Rūs attacked the Ṣaqāliba since he knew of no peoples more distant.

In any case, Ibn Rustah affirmed al-Ya'qūbī's testimony that the Rūs were a people who raided their neighbors far and wide, and he offered further information that, although the Rūs took slaves, they ultimately wanted to trade them for the minted money of the Caliphate: "Their business is trade ... and they sell to their buyers to get a bullion price in coins."<sup>98</sup>

These texts would have prepared Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān (fl. 922) to meet slave traders hungry for silver during his journey on an embassy to the Bulghārs in

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<sup>97</sup> Ibn Rustah, *Kitāb al-a'lāq al-naḥīsa*. Pt. 7, 145, ll. 14–16: وهم يغزون الصقالبة يركبون السفن حتى يخرجوا اليهم ويسيواهم ويخرجوهم الى خزران وبلكار يبيعونهم منهو وليس لهم مزارع انما يأكلون مما يحتملونه من ارض الصقالبة; Lunde and Stone, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, 126.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn Rustah, *Kitāb al-a'lāq al-naḥīsa*. Pt. 7, 145, ll. 19–21: انما جرفتهم التجارة ... فيبيعونه من مبتاعيهم ويأخذون بالانمان الصامت من المال فيثونونه في احقابهم; Lunde and Stone, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, 126. The final translated phrase is awkward—literally “the unmixed value in money”—which in its historical context seems to mean an effort to acquire the purest silver available, regardless of its minting.

921–922.<sup>99</sup> Ibn Faḍlān’s contentious account of these travels—preserved in a single fragmentary manuscript from the 1200s,<sup>100</sup> as well as in a small number of quotations copied or translated into later texts<sup>101</sup>—has already been discussed in Chapter One. There, I argued that his account confirmed many patterns of the Viking-Age slave trade also seen in western sources. Ibn Faḍlān conveyed wonder at the scale of this trade, and he offered particular attention to a slave girl sacrificed at a chieftain’s funeral.

Ibn Faḍlān also expressed keen interest in the merchants who trafficked these slaves. He reported on their arrival near Itil, the Khazar capital near where the Volga empties into the Caspian Sea:

At the time their ships arrive at the docks [= Itil], everyone disembarks with bread, meat, onions, milk, and wine, and they all come to a tall upright post. On it is a face resembling a human face. Around it are small images and behind those images there are posts that have been put up in the ground. They go to the large image and they worship it. Then they say to it: “Oh lord, I have come from a far country and I have so many head of slave girls and so many pelts of sable”—until he has recalled everything he has on hand for his trade—and I have come to you with this gift.” Then he leaves what is with him in front of the post: “I want you to bless me with a merchant with dinars and many dirhams and he will buy from me as I want and not dispute what I say.” Then he leaves.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibn Faḍlān’s *Risala* is a hybrid of genres, mixing the mundane itineraries of Ibn Khurrādādhbih with the fanciful embellishments of *adab*.

<sup>100</sup> Reproduced in facsimile in Fuat Sezgin, ed., *Collection of Geographical Works: Reproduced from MS 5229 Riḍawīya Library, Mashhad*, Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science. Series C, Facsimile Editions 43 (Frankfurt: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 1987). According to Sezgin, the manuscript dates to the seventh century A.H., which spanned from 1203 to 1301 C.E.

<sup>101</sup> Travis Zadeh, “Ibn Faḍlān,” in *EF<sup>3</sup>*; Montgomery, “Arabic Sources on the Vikings,” 553–54.

<sup>102</sup> Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, in *Two Arabic Travel Books: Accounts of India and China*, ed. James E. Montgomery, Library of Arabic Literature (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 163–297, at 242, ll. 15 – 244, 2, c. 77: وساعة توافي سفنهم إلى هذا المرسى قد خرج كل واحد منهم ومعه خبز ولحم وبصل ولبن ونبيذ حتى يوافي خشبة طويلة منصوبة لها وجه يشبه وجه الإنسان وحولها صور صغار وخلف تلك الصور خشب طوال قد نصبت في الأرض فيوافي إلى الصورة الكبيرة ويسجد لها ثم يقول لها يا رب قد جئت من بلد بعيد ومعى من الجوارى كذا وكذا رأساً ومن السمور

In this passage, Ibn Faḍlān established the primary activity of the Rūs as trading slaves from far away for Islamic coin.

In subsequent passages, Ibn Faḍlān portrayed the Rūs showing shocking behavior toward these slaves, including rape and sacrifice. He likewise documented their lust for silver, describing how some slave traders amassed tens of thousands of dirhams. Given that contemporary prices for slaves averaged 23 dinars or about 460 dirhams,<sup>103</sup> their ability to amass such wealth despite showing such gross indifference toward their slaves helps indicate the vast scale of this exchange.

Ibn Faḍlān also indicated that other exports of the Caliphate helped draw slaves southward. He noted of the Rūs:

The most desirable ornaments they have are green ceramic beads they keep in their boats. They will pay dearly for them, one dirham for a single bead. They thread them into necklaces for their wives.<sup>104</sup>

No Viking-Age beads directly match Ibn Faḍlān's description, and the lack of such beads in the archaeological record suggests that Ibn Faḍlān wrote in error regarding dark opaque or semi-translucent beads of glass. Numerous archaeological finds

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كذا وكذا جلدًا حتّى يذكر جميع ما قدم معه من تجارته وجنك بهذه الهدية ثم يترك الذي معه بين يدي الخشبية فأريد أن ترزقني تاجرا معه دنانير ودرهم كثيرة فيشتري مني كما أريد ولا يخالفني في ما أقول ثم ينصرف Lunde and Stone, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, 47–48.

<sup>103</sup> Ashtor cites an account in the *Kitāb 'ajāyib al-Hind* by Buzurg ibn Shahriyār (d. 1009), in which a ship captain in 922 expected to sell a Zanj king in Oman for 30 dinars and seven of the king's companions for a total of 160 dinars. Ashtor, *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l'Orient médiéval*, 58–59; To this might be added P.Vente 6, documenting the sale of a black slave girl (*jāriyah sawdā'u*) for 16 ½ dinars in Egypt in 923. Yūsuf Rāḡib, *Actes de vente d'esclaves et d'animaux d'Égypte médiévale*, 2 vols., Cahier des Annales islamologiques 23, 28 (Cairo: Institute français d'archéologie orientale, 2002). Bolin cites an exchange rate from the contemporary rule of al-Muqtadir (r. 908–932) at twenty dirhams to the dinar. Bolin, "Mohammad, Charlemagne and Ruric," 17.

<sup>104</sup> Ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, 240, ll. 19–20, c. 75: وأجلّ الحلي عندهو الخرز الأخضر من الخزف الذي يكون: على السفن يبايعون فيه ويشترون الخرزة بدرهم وينظّمونه عقودا لنسائهم.; Lunde and Stone, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, 46.



suggest that green glass beads did in fact enjoy popularity during the years of Ibn Faḍlān's travels among the Rūs.<sup>105</sup> The high value that the Rūs traders placed on these beads parallels similar relationships between beads and slaves seen for early modern Atlantic slave trade.<sup>106</sup> This parallel provides further evidence that the relationships explored in the previous chapter indicate a thriving slave trade that bridged the viking west and the Islamic east.

Ibn Faḍlān's *Letter* provides the fullest account of the Rūs as slave traders. Ibn Khurradādhbih had earlier identified the Rūs as iconic northern traders and placed them among a class of long-distance traders who sometimes trafficked in slaves. Al-Ya'qūbī, writing in the 890s, knew of the Rūs from his own experiences living along the northern frontiers in Khurāsān. He identified this people with viking raiders active in Spain in the 840s, based in part on the report that they trafficked in western captives. In the early 900s, Ibn Rustah elaborated on how the Rūs took captives from their neighbors, trafficking them toward the Caliphate in exchange for Islamic silver. Ibn Faḍlān, elaborated these accounts, describing an abundance of slaves and an insatiable demand for eastern goods including silver and beads.

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<sup>105</sup> Johan Callmer's catalog indicates that woud beads of varying shades of green have been found in their highest numbers for his Bead Periods III through VIII (hypothetical dates 845–950, revised dates 845–955). Near matches with more than 15 finds from Callmer Bead Periods IV through VIII (hypothetical 860–950, revised 875–955) include Callmer types A260, A291, A341, A342, A345, A360, B531, B545, B610, B616, and E060. These beads belong to a total of 51 different assemblages with a total of 4,129 beads, and the 809 beads of near-matching types represent 20% of the total beads from these periods. Johan Callmer, *Trade Beads and Bead Trade in Scandinavia, ca. 800–1000 A.D.*, Acta Archaeologica Lundensia, series in 4° 11 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1977).

<sup>106</sup> The most explicit demonstration of these connections can be seen in the ledgers of Liverpool merchants who traded Venetian glass beads for African slaves. Saul Guerrero, "Venetian Glass Beads and the Slave Trade from Liverpool, 1750–1800," *Beads: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers* 22 (2010): 52–70. For further examples, see Chapter Four.

## Conclusion

Arabic sources thus documented a flourishing slave trade that took shape over the years of early ‘Abbāsīd rule. This trade helped offset practices of manumission that spread in the aftermath of the Arab conquests. The earliest traces of these practices survive among the documents of Khurāsān, but the documents of Egypt and the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* indicate that similar manumission practices thrived across the Caliphate alongside the Islamicization and Arabization of society.<sup>107</sup>

Despite the rise in manumission, early Arabic documents indicate a ubiquity of slavery inherited from pre-Islamic times.<sup>108</sup> The *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* indicates that early ‘Abbāsīd scholars found adequate reflection for this ubiquity in traditions about the earliest Islamic communities. Jennifer Glancy’s work indicates how deeply slavery had been embedded in the Christian communities of Late Antiquity.<sup>109</sup> Michael Decker’s study of Near Eastern agriculture suggests continuities among dependent agricultural laborers across the transition into early Islamic rule.<sup>110</sup> And Youval Rotman’s work shows that Byzantine slavery continued to thrive throughout this same period as well.<sup>111</sup> Islamicization thus promoted manumission among societies with entrenched traditions of slavery sustained across the transition to Islamic rule.

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<sup>107</sup> On the Qur’ānic roots of this emancipation contracts and the lack of precedents for Arabic formulae among the Bactrian archives, see Khan, *Arabic Documents* [2007], 61–65.

<sup>108</sup> Contra Crone, *Slaves on Horses*; Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam*.

<sup>109</sup> Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>110</sup> Michael Decker, *Tilling the Hateful Earth: Agricultural Production and Trade in the Late Antique East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Compare also the comments of Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 31.

<sup>111</sup> Youval Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

The slave trade sustained this ubiquity of slavery despite the spread of Islamic practices of emancipation, and if al-Ṭabarī is to be believed, it flourished such that imported slave populations soon threatened to topple the political order of the Caliphate. Eastern documents indicate that the sources for these slaves must have been diverse, but al-Ṭabarī focused attention especially on slave populations drawn from the north. Early Arabic geographers gave similar focus to the slave trade of the north, and they made explicit connections to the viking raiders of the west. Ibn Khurradādhbih described routes bridging the viking west with the slave markets of the north, al-Ya‘qūbī saw viking raiders and Rūs slave traders as one and the same, and Ibn Rustah and Ibn Faḍlān both testified that the Rūs desired to sell their captives in exchange for goods gleaned from the Caliphate—both beads and coins. Archaeological finds of these items trace routes leading directly back to the viking armies of the distant west. As shown in the previous chapter, these artifacts trace a direct arc back to the viking armies of the west.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation ends with the *Letter* of Ibn Faḍlān. It might have begun this way. Following the example of Marc Bloch, I might have pursued my study by uncovering the raw materials and processes of development that informed Ibn Faḍlān's writing.<sup>1</sup> Why did he choose to report on the northern slave trade? How did his interests reflect the demands of the Caliphate? How were these demands met? Pursuing such questions, the Northern Arc might be traced from east to west, beginning with the Caliphate, passing through the emporia of the north, and reaching the viking camps of the west. Indeed, portraying viking violence as a function of the booming Islamic world might redress ethnocentric imbalances embedded in medieval historiography.<sup>2</sup>

I determined such a course to be untenable. On the one hand, placing the demand for slaves at the center of my dissertation would risk rendering viking raiders as hapless functionaries of the Islamic world, with troubling implications about the

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Bloch, *French Rural History: An Essay on Its Basic Characteristics*, trans. Janet Sondheimer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), xxv: "In short, our definition [of 'French rural society'] is determined by the end-product rather than the raw material or the actual process of development: an admissible convention, perhaps, so long as we recognise it for what it is." Of course, Bloch was considering a much longer span of history than the period surveyed by this dissertation. Nonetheless, working backward from the *Letter* of Ibn Faḍlān to Alcuin's response to the raid on Lindisfarne, for example, would require extreme caution and likely inhibit the conclusions made possible by approaching these sources in the opposite direction.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Fredrik Svanberg, *Decolonizing the Viking Age 1*, Acta Archaeologica Lundensia, Ser. in 8° 43 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2003).

extension of forced labor as a corollary to economic growth. On the other hand, by organizing this dissertation to follow the west-to-east movement of slaves, I foreground traces of slave agency and slave voices: Adalhelm's narrative of captivity, the secondhand account preserved in *The Life of Saint Findan*, and the speech of slave girls reported in *The Laxdæla Saga*, *The Life of Saint Rimbart*, and the *Letter* of Ibn Faḍlān. Ultimately, this is a dissertation about people.

For the later Atlantic slave trade, opportunities exist for tracing captives into communities that consumed their labor in the Americas.<sup>3</sup> The slaves of the early Islamic world created communities as well.<sup>4</sup> But whereas the slaves of the Atlantic world are well recorded in the archives of Europe and elsewhere, the slaves of the Northern Arc generated few documents; most are presented in Chapter Five. As shown in Chapter Four, slave traders nonetheless left substantial traces of their movements. They carried beads that now outline the connections of a transregional community, linking captives and captors, slaves and slaveholders, and ranging from the fringes of Europe to the heartlands of the caliphate.

In this sense, the Northern Arc was not so much a route as a region created by the slave trade as it developed in the 700s and flourished through the late 800s.

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<sup>3</sup> From a methodological standpoint, see especially Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (December 2009): 1231–49.

<sup>4</sup> Most notably, Matthew Gordon has highlighted a unique report of a pagan funeral ritual conducted by the Turkish slave soldiers of Samarra, while the caliph's decision to supply these soldiers with slave wives of unspecified origins contributed to the creation of a large and powerful community of creole slaves at the heart of the caliphate and its politics. Matthew S. Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra (A.H. 200–275/815–889 C.E.)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 4–5.

Whereas the regions bridged by this trade are definable by their traits—Carolingian rule, Viking-Age material culture, the presence of Islamic elites—the Northern Arc was a space constituted through the interactions of people who participated in premodern processes of globalization.<sup>5</sup> As with the spaces of modern globalization, the Northern Arc was characterized by processes of acculturation and adaptation. Women such as the one of Islandbridge 1866B in Dublin wore beads from the Islamic world as emblems of their Norse identities, while those trafficked eastward became the *raison d'être* for slave traders such as Gilli the Russian, and—at least in the eyes of Ibn Faḍlān—key players in Rūs rituals for separating the living and the dead.<sup>6</sup>

Retrospectively, at least, the Northern Arc also becomes a space that invites comparisons.<sup>7</sup> At the same time that the Viking-Age slave trade flourished, writers on both sides of this route used images of slavery to critique people in positions of power, whether describing the captives whom Charles the Bald failed to protect or the slave soldiers whom al-Ṭabarī portrayed undermining 'Abbāsīd authority. Similarly, as the scribes of Alfred's court collected stories of merchants moving

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<sup>5</sup> In other contexts, this has been termed a “process geography,” as defined by Arjun Appadurai, “Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination,” *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 1–19, at 6–8. See, for example, C. Patterson Giersch, “Across Zomia with Merchants, Monks, and Musk: Process Geographies, Trade Networks, and the Inner-East–Southeast Asian Borderlands,” *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010): 215–39.

<sup>6</sup> On reconstructing the lives of such women and others rarely mentioned in texts, see especially Robin Fleming, “Writing Biography at the Edge of History,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (June 2009): 606–14.

<sup>7</sup> On the methods of comparative history, see especially Marc Bloch, “A Contribution Towards a Comparative History of European Societies,” in *Land and Work in Medieval Europe*, trans. J. E. Anderson (London: Routledge, 1967), 44–81; Alette Olin Hill and Boyd H. Hill Jr., “Marc Bloch and Comparative History,” *American Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (October 1980): 828–46; Prasanna Parthasarathi, “Comparison in Global History,” in *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. Maxine Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 69–82.

eastward into lands of flourishing slavery, the geographers of the Arabic world honed their attention on northern traders trafficking in slaves from the west. Other parallels abound, and while some might be dismissed as coincidence, this dissertation demonstrates that the transregional slave trade informed both milieux.<sup>8</sup>

In the middle ground, the slave trade also reshaped northern societies. The experiences of Findan and Melkorka suggest that slave traders used barren islands to corral their stock, shaping the routes of Norse maritime communities as they spread across the Atlantic. Likewise, Ohthere, Wulfstan, Ansgar, and Rimbert visited slave markets bounded by walls, suggesting the development of northern emporia responded to similar considerations along routes leading into Central Asia. Efforts to prevent resistance or escape provide traces of slave agency, nowhere more apparent than in Ibn Faḍlān's description of a slave girl entrusted with transmitting messages to the dead. Neil Price has argued that the rituals of her rape and sacrifice demonstrate a Viking mindset linking violence to religion.<sup>9</sup> This dissertation helps demonstrate the inverse of this mindset, as captives generated by viking violence simultaneously generated fear of resistance—dictating routes, settlement infrastructure, and rituals in which slaves were asked to perform in roles as willing victims.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Thus a recent study identifies important comparisons but offers few connections. D. G. Tor, ed., *The Abbasid and Carolingian Empires: Comparative Studies in Civilizational Formation*, Islamic History and Civilization 150 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Neil Price, *The Viking Way: Magic and Mind in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxbow, 2019), 125–26, 169, 182, 328–29, 344. In the new chapter that concludes this second edition, Price emphasizes his cautious use of the term religion by regularly adding quotes around the word.

<sup>10</sup> Violence was a common feature of early medieval life; the threat of violence—and its consequences—must have been similarly pervasive. Guy Halsall, ed., *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998); Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450–900* (London: Routledge, 2003).

While the Northern Arc conditioned parallels across the regions it touched, it also depended on asymmetries between these regions. The ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, as Ibn Khurrādādhbih described it, benefited from its centrality along Afro–Eurasian trade routes and access to silver mines in the Hindu Kush. The resultant wealth propelled a demand for slaves that reached far beyond the frontiers of the Islamic world. In the well–documented slaving grounds of Western Europe, this demand stimulated violent competition, coerced migration, labor exploitation, and social stratification. Similar problems demand attention today and have contributed to the rise of global labor history.<sup>11</sup>

In the modern world, globalizing processes similar to those of the Northern Arc have aligned with the spread of capitalism.<sup>12</sup> While capitalism might offer a poor parallel for medieval economics, later forms of capitalism were nonetheless predicated on processes of merchant association and wealth accumulation already at work in the Caliphate and seen in such examples as the Alexandria letter of Chapter Four.<sup>13</sup> These processes moreover had interregional effects often associated with modern capitalism.

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<sup>11</sup> On global labor history, see especially Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World. Essays Toward a Global Labor History*, Studies in Global Social History (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Leo Lucassen, “Working Together: New Directions in Global Labour History,” *Journal of Global History* 11 (2016): 66–87; Andreas Eckert, “Area Studies and the Development of Global Labor History,” in *The Lifework of a Labor Historian: Essays in Honor of Marcel van Der Linden*, ed. Ulbe Bosma and Karin Hofmeester, Studies in Global Social History 35 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 156–73.

<sup>12</sup> Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> On frameworks for investigating non–capitalist economies, see especially Peter Fibiger Bang, *The Roman Bazaar: A Comparative Study of Trade and Markets in a Tributary Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). On the ‘Abbāsīd contribution to the later rise of capitalism, see Jairus Banaji, “Islam, the Mediterranean and the Rise of Capitalism,” *Historical Materialism* 15 (2007): 47–74.



When seen in relation to the ‘Abbāsīd world, the viking violence charted in Chapter Two might be compared to more recent examples of exploitation through informal colonialism or paracolonial geographies of consumption.<sup>14</sup> In these ways, attention to the Northern Arc opens medieval history to the methodologies of modern history while reflecting back on the modern world as well. As Marc Bloch noted: “the comparative method, rightly conceived, should involve specially lively interest in the perception of differences ... to bring out the ‘originality’ of the different societies.”<sup>15</sup>

In these ways, this dissertation overcomes the four impasses noted in the introduction. Attention to the movements of slaves reveals parallel developments across regions as well as interregional asymmetries that propagated difference; it demonstrates pervasive social change caused by the consumption of slave traffic without a need for resolving the relative impacts of exchange or production; it accommodates both material and textual evidence in ways formerly prevented by narrow definitions of slavery; and it brings to light practices of enslavement that passed through regions exhibiting diverse forms of servitude. By adopting a more global framework, this dissertation allows us to redraw the problems of the medieval world and achieve focus on individuals whose movements once tied this world together.

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<sup>14</sup> On geographies of consumption as a window into practices of informal imperialism, see Kristin Hoganson, “Buying into Empire: American Consumption at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 251–55. For a survey discussion of modern forms of imperialism and colonialism, see Heather Streets-Salter and Trevor R. Getz, *Empires and Colonies in the Modern World: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Bloch, “Towards a Comparative History,” 58.

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