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VIKINGS IN THE DORDOGNE

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PREFACE

The idea to this thesis came from a growing acquaintance with a specific region of France. I had visited the Dordogne on a number of occasions since the mid 1970s. By the mid 1990s my wife and I started to look around for a secondary home in the area. We now live in Périgord a few months every year.

One recurring theme when conversing with friends and others in the area, reinforced by visiting tourist sites and reading up on local history, was the horror of the Vikings that had ravaged Périgord in the distant past. The frequency and insistence of these horrors retold fascinated me. No such tales - that Vikings had been up the rivers of Dordogne as well - had ever reached my ears in Norway. I decided to study this theme some more. The result is this thesis.

There are many people that deserve my thanks for assisting and encouraging me, but I will single out three: My advisor Jon Vidar Sigurdsson deserves my thanks for being firm, patient and generous in guiding me through the norms of the history profession. Heartfelt thanks go to Jean Paul Rigal, of Ribérac in Périgord, for being a dear friend since 1969. If not for him, this thesis would not even have become a figment of my imagination. Last, but not least, I thank my wife Angie who during my work on this paper has shown me an extraordinary degree of kindness, patience and faith.

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VIKINGS IN THE DORDOGNE

1. INTRODUCTION

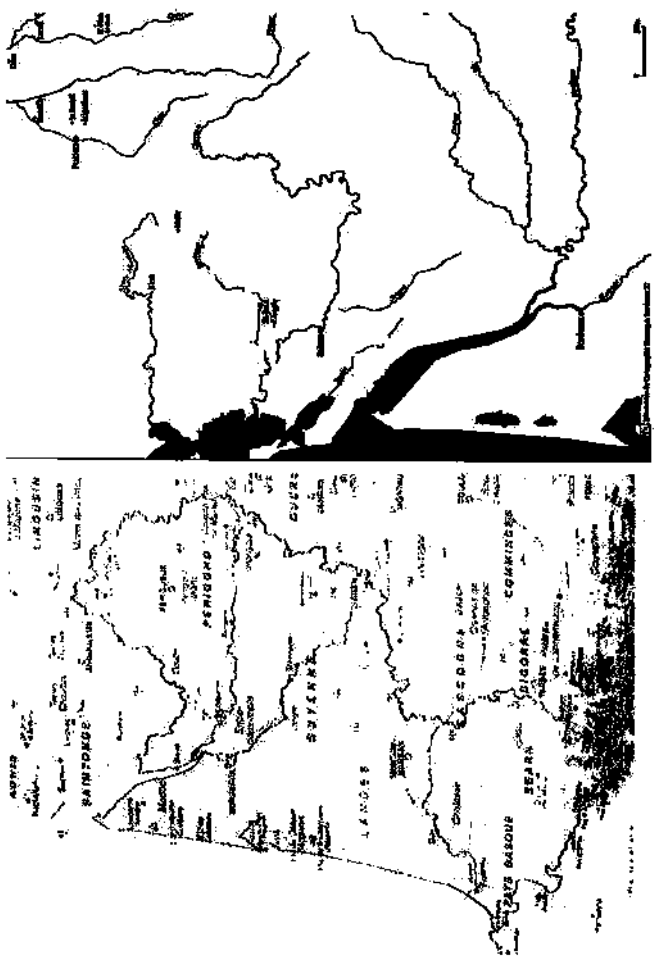
This thesis addresses 9th century Viking raids on the Dordogne river system in southwestern France. Viking activity is well-recorded in many parts of the Carolingian Empire. Professional interest in the Viking era has focused so heavily on other regions of the Carolingian Empire that raids on the Dordogne river system have been largely ignored. Not all 9th century Viking history in France should be treated as preambles to the creation of Normandy or the formation of France. A further investigation into a largely ignored part of Viking trading and raiding in southern France may actually yield new insight and a broader understanding why the Carolingian empire was so susceptible to disruption.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

When discussing Viking raids on the Dordogne, it is necessary to see this activity in a wider context. The Dordogne itself runs from the Massif Central mountains in central France to the Gironde estuary north of Bordeaux and the Bay of Biscay. Most of the navigable parts lie in the *départements* of Gironde and Dordogne. The river system is commercially, and in the 9th century also ecclesiastically, connected to the city of Bordeaux. In order to reconstruct a plausible history of Viking attacks on the Dordogne river system and the surrounding areas, it is necessary to look to Bordeaux, to neighboring river systems such as the Garonne and the Charente, and to the region of Aquitaine as a whole.

The beginning of the Viking era is often marked with the raid on the Lindisfarne monastery in 793 and the end by the gradual Christianization of Scandinavia during the 11th century. Viking raids in France started at the time of the Lindisfarne raid¹, but by the early 10th century, Vikings had either been repulsed from or assimilated into the nascent kingdom of France.

¹ *Epistola car. Aevi* #184. Alcuin reported in a letter dated 799 that the Aquitaine coast had been raided, and that some ships were wrecked and many Vikings killed.



Towards the end of the 9th century, Viking raids on the British Isles as well as on France took on a more organized, conquest character, led by kings or powerful chiefs in their homelands. A conquest type attack was not what the Viking raids on the Dordogne were about. These raids were more sporadic and autonomous, motivated by immediate material gains in the form of booty. Viking raiding initially took place along the coast: not until the 830s do we hear of raids up river systems. Focus is therefore on raids from c. 840 until c. 880, a time-span coinciding with the reign of the Carolingian king Charles the Bald and with the main annalistic record, the *Annals of St-Bertin*.

CONTENTS AND ORGANIZATION

The thesis is organized in five parts. In the next section I will review and discuss sources at some length, not just because they form the foundation of what one knows about Viking raids in the Dordogne, but also because sources or lack of them reveal the degree of *franco-centricity* during the Carolingian era relative to an area largely autonomous from Frankish dominance. I will review archaeological, contemporary and non-contemporary written sources, and elements of folklore, legend and tradition.

Dordogne, or Périgord as it is also known², is an area rich in pre-historical and historical material. Archeological Viking finds are rare in France. In Périgord they are non-existent. Contemporary sources are mainly annalistic records written for the Frankish elite in the north of France, and there are few direct references to matters this far south of the Loire. Non-contemporary sources are more regional with more references to Viking attacks but are generally more than a hundred years removed from events. Much local history and folklore about Viking activity in Périgord exist, but seem to rest on few and uncertain sources. Historiography up to World War II generally tended to be richer in recording and describing Viking raids, whilst recent writing is cautious and critical of its sources. From the point of view of methodology it is prudent to call into question the quality of contemporary and older literary sources. On the other hand, literary sources are, literally, the only sources we have. Except, perhaps, what we can draw from folklore. Not that folklore represents a harder, more reliable reality, but folklore can perhaps act as cultural signposts of a time long gone. Overall, what has been written and said about Viking activity in Périgord is in contrast with actual, extant source records. But the paucity of source material may have other causes than lack of event.

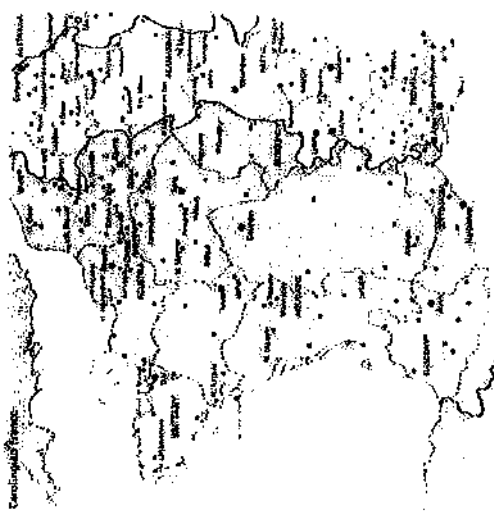
Parts three and four cover reasons why Vikings raided the Dordogne river system, both "pull" and "push" causal types. By pull causes I mean aspects of the area that made it attractive and feasible for Vikings to raid. There are causes for Viking raiding on the Dordogne to be found in geography, in climate and in demography. As Norway can be said to be a country intimately married to the sea, France is a country of rivers.³ Most of the administrative *départements*, which today constitute France, are named after rivers, such as the Dordogne. While the ship in Viking era Scandinavia constituted a natural and effective means of moving from one place to another, the counterpart in medieval France was river transport. Viking raids in Carolingian France can be said to be a natural synthesis of the two; the principle mode of Viking transportation applied to a French setting.

² Périgord is the name of the area before the French Revolution, which in a cultural context is still in use today, even though the *département* is called Dordogne. Generally, I use Dordogne to mean the river system, and Périgord to mean the area.
³ This is not meant to imply that all Vikings were Norwegian or that the Vikings that raided on the Dordogne were Norwegians; it is solely meant to illustrate a difference between 9th century peoples of France – river peoples, with those of Scandinavia – sea peoples. Whether Vikings were Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish is irrelevant in the context of this paper.

The presence of the Church in the area is an important pull cause for Viking attacks. There were plenty of targets in the Dordogne area. Some churches have origins back to the Merovingian era, or even before. Evangelization of the area took place in the 4th to 8th centuries. Many Benedictine monasteries were built during the Carolingian era in the 8th and 9th centuries

Other pull causes include cultural factors such as language and law, or rather that differences in culture make the area different from Frankish heartlands and therefore of less concern to annalists.

The political situation for the whole of Aquitaine will not only help explain the paucity of source material, but also why Vikings found it opportune to raid in the area. Since the Romans, southwestern France has been treated as a separate entity: Aquitaine, a region



which in Carolingian times covered the area south of the Loire, north of the Pyrenees and west of the Massif Central. Aquitaine as a geographical and political concept has changed several times over two millennia - today it constitutes the region of five *departements* in the southwest. Carolingian annals, however, tended to refer to a larger Aquitaine with centres of power such as Poitiers and Bourges, north of the Dordogne.

By push causes I mean aspects of Scandinavian life in the 9th century that provided the impetus for raiding on the Dordogne. I will look at trade and trade patterns in the Atlantic, the evolution of the Viking ship, the use of Viking ships for both trading and raiding, and the background and pattern of 9th century Viking raids in general. Viking raids on the Dordogne can be seen in a wide context of long-distance trading patterns, and of attempts to control the seaborne networks of trade and raid, and perhaps even in the context of dynastic claims and kingdom formations in Viking homelands.

Also, I present the idea that the Franks and Vikings shared a common mentality, which, despite the differences of religious faith and language, made the Viking presence in France understandable politically. I also cast some doubt as to the ethnic *purity* of Viking raids in Europe - Viking raiders could easily have contained elements of other ethnic groups including Franks, Aquitanians, Saxons, and Irish. It is only when one sees the wider context of the raids and their causes that one can reconstruct and understand the extent, and the contents, of Viking raiding on the Dordogne river system.

In the concluding part of this thesis, I present a reconstruction of Viking raids on the Dordogne river system and the surrounding areas, which links the source material to Viking raids in the context of 9th century European history. I make no claims on this being a *true* reconstruction, but I believe it is a plausible one.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The earliest historiography on the theme of this paper are Duchesne's *Historia Normannorum* from 1619 and Dupuy's *Etat de l'eglise du Périgord depuis Christianisme* from 1629. I have not used any of these two works directly, but they represent a watershed between secondary and primary source material; a dividing line coincident to the advent of printing.

Main attention is given to literature covering Viking activity in France during the reign of Charles the Bald (840-877), but also works addressing the geography and history of Aquitaine in general and Périgord in particular are used, as are works covering Vikings and Viking activity as they apply to the topic of this paper.

An important work covering the reign of Charles the Bald is Janet Nelson's *Charles the Bald*. It covers the main political aspects of the period, in which Vikings played a role, and refutes the popular view that Charles the Bald mismanaged and weakened the Carolingian Empire, claiming instead that he was able to hold together with relative strength and stability his kingdom and empire against rather high odds. Although Nelson's focus is more to the north, in Neustria and the Loire, the autonomous kingdom of Aquitaine is often brought into play. But her focus is often on dynastic feuding between Carolingian families in areas north of Périgord such as Poitiers, Bourges, Saintes, Angoulême and Limoges - or further south such as in Toulouse. Bordeaux and the surrounding countryside such as

Périgord get little attention, nor do areas dominated by the Gascons immediately south of Bordeaux. The reason is not just her focus: the lack of good source material makes the history of the southwestern parts of Aquitaine in the 9th century difficult to reconstruct.

Regional history is covered by Charles Higounet's *Bordeaux pendant le haut Moyen Âge*, his *Histoire de l'Aquitaine*, and Léonce Auzias's *L'Aquitaine carolingienne 778-987*. Auzias's work provides detailed studies into the ambiguous, often enigmatic, political situation in the Aquitaine region during the Carolingian period. While other writers such as Nelson and Coupland stress the cohesion and eventual success of the policies of Charles the Bald in controlling Aquitaine and eventually ousting the Vikings, Auzias's sympathies are more Aquitanian. His portrayal of Pippin II of Aquitaine is a tragic one, often citing the differences between Carolingian dynastic ambitions and regional autonomous sentiments. With a regional focus and Pippin as champion, Auzias covers a more detailed Aquitanian universe, but his use of certain sources have been questioned by modern historians. Higounet is more cautious, preferring to highlight the ambiguities and heterogeneities between Carolingian heartlands and Aquitaine, and those within Aquitaine itself. Higounet, considered by many the doyen of regional history of Aquitaine, is clearly frustrated by the lack of facts and extant source records about Bordeaux and the surrounding areas at the time of Viking attacks.

For local history I have relied primarily on Yan Laborie's section "Le Moyen Âge" in the most recent *Histoire du Périgord*, and Arlette Higounet-Nadal's *Histoire du Périgord*. Laborie is most cautious with his source material, or at least only allows a few snippets of Viking information into his account. Higounet-Nadal states that Vikings devastated or annihilated most of the older churches and monasteries in Périgord during the 9th century. Older historiography includes versions of *Histoire du Périgord* by Desalles in the late 19th century and Escande in the 1930s. These earlier versions include a much broader and more detailed account of Viking raiding up the Dordogne and her tributaries than the more modern ones.

On the subject of Vikings in France, a 19th century work is Johannes Steenstrup's *Normannerne*. Steenstrup is extensive in his listing of Viking raids in France including raids on several parts of Aquitaine, including Bordeaux and Périgueux. But his focus is not on this part of the Carolingian Empire, rather on the areas to the north such as the lands that

later became Normandy. Subsequent works include Walther Vogel's *Die Normannen und das fränkische Reich bis zur Gründung der Normandie 799-911*, Lucien Musset's *Les Invasions: Le second assaut contre l'Europe chrétienne*, J.M. Wallace-Hadrill's *The Vikings in Francia*, Ferdinand Lot's *La Loire, l'Aquitaine et la Seine de 862 à 866*, and Simon Coupland's doctorate thesis from 1987: *Charles the Bald and the defence of the West Frankish kingdom against the Viking invasions 840-877*. Of these, Vogel is rather detailed and includes southwestern Aquitaine, but as Higounet, he is frustrated by the lack of firm source material for Bordeaux and the areas around it. Both Musset and Lot focus more heavily on areas to the north, in the context of Carolingian politics. Coupland is detailed and does dwell more on Aquitaine and the extent of Viking attacks in our area of study and what it meant socially and politically. Wallace-Hadrill is more of an outsider looking in - and using a larger canvas rather than focusing on regional or local issues.

An exact picture of the presence of churches and monastic houses in Périgord at the time of Viking attacks is difficult to present. In this paper, I have collated the map in the most recent *Histoire du Périgord* over monastic houses and churches in the 14th century against a paper by Charles Higounet and an article by Jean-Claude Ignace in *Bulletin de Société Historique et Archeologique du Périgord (BSHAP)*. Together, they provide a fairly representative overview of Viking targets on the Dordogne river system in the 9th century.

It is now time to turn to the sources themselves. I believe Viking activity on the Dordogne is under-recorded, and a thorough review and analysis of the sources may offer some reasons why Viking activity here was more intense than we get the impression of. What was recorded of Viking activity in this area in the centuries contemporary to, and immediately following, the Viking raids? Can the sources alone reveal the extent of the attacks? Can the lack of source material tell us something as well?

2. SOURCES

I will consider four types of sources for Viking raids in Périgord: archaeology, contemporary written sources, non-contemporary written sources, and folklore/legend/tradition. In order to understand the paucity of source material and the reasons for it, sources are discussed at some length.

ARCHAEOLOGY

An archaeologist expressed to me strong doubts about any Viking presence in Périgord as there is no archaeological record of Viking raids in the area, whether it is ships, weapons, coins or artifacts. Instead he implied that literary sources were gross over-representations of the supposed events by churchmen in the following centuries in order to protect or enhance their own interests, such as that of hoarding precious metals, luxury items and relics.⁴

If history is to be based exclusively on non-literary sources such as archaeological records and that these alone shall be the basis for historical interpretation and analysis, then a lot of history will not only have to be re-written; it will be lost. In the case of Viking raids in France, we would have to throw out most of what we know today. Only one Viking ship-grave has ever been found in France. No coin hoards found in France can be said to be Viking hoards. Modern French is said to contain up to 300 words of Norse origin, almost all of them of a maritime nature, but that in itself does not prove Viking raids on France in the 9th century. There are place names in Normandy and northern Brittany which reveal settlement from Scandinavia from the 10th century onwards, but that does not prove Viking raids in the 9th.

The reason for lack of firm, material sources is to a large degree self-evident. The nature of Viking raids on the Dordogne was more a guerrilla type incursion than a planned conquest of land. Vikings came, took what they could, and left. The likelihood of material remains from these raids would therefore have to be from individuals who fell in battle, or who were caught and did not return. Clothing, leather or wooden material are unlikely to have

⁴ In January 2001 I spoke to the President of the Historical and Archaeological Research Association of Périgord (ADRHAP), Christian Chevillet, who was of this opinion. He reiterated this in November 2002.

survived more than a thousand years of deterioration. Viking iron material would be mainly in weapons and utensils. In the rich, arable soil of the Dordogne and in the river beds, any such material that could have survived would not only constitute the proverbial needle in the haystack, but be obscured by other material evidence before and after. Spearheads did not, as I understand it, have the label "Made in Denmark" on them. A Viking axe left behind on a riverbank could, if found, just as easily have been put to re-use by the finder, and subsequently lost again in a materially different context. Viking raiders were takers of material, not bringers.

CONTEMPORARY SOURCES⁵

The only sources that can be dated close to events, and which we are left with, are literary sources. For the topic of this paper, even they turn out to be meagre and to a certain degree suspect. Annals, chronicles, and saints' lives were written by people with an agenda, with personal interests and values. Facts were probably omitted or exaggerated, consciously or subconsciously, by these writers and in subsequent manuscript copies. The annalists were on the whole writing far away from Périgord – in terms of space, time, and mentality. There are, however, a few extant written sources that have other aims and functions: charters, capitularies, acts, legal sentences and correspondence, and they can supplement what is said in the annals and chronicles.

Most of the contemporary written sources can be found in the collection known as *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH)*. This series of collections of annals, charters, capitularies, correspondence, scriptures and law started in the early 19th century and covers almost all known written material in the post-Roman central European world, including that of France. Drawing ultimately from this database are translations and editions of various parts of these sources. A parallel collection is known in the romance world as the *Patrologia Latina (PL)*.

Early annals and chronicles

Although Gregory of Tours wrote a history of the Franks in the 6th century, the Frankish annalistic tradition started in the 8th century with Fredegar's history of the Merovingians -

⁵ By contemporary I generally mean sources originally written within the end of the 9th century.

a genre inspired by Bede. During Charlemagne's time such annals became chronicles for the royal household at Aachen and are known as the *Annales Regni Francorum (ARF)*. *ARF* covered the years from 741 to 830; written by chaplains in the emperor's entourage, and are "official" historical recordings. *ARF* record foreign and military exploits of the emperors Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, but are quiet about events unfavourable to the imperial reputation. The later years document Viking activities including attacks on the British Isles.

The Continuations of Fredegar - *Fredegarii Chronicon Liber Quartus cum Continuationibus (Fredegar)* - are Neustrian and Burgundian chronicles from the 5th to the end of the 8th century. The Continuations, at least the third and final section, were probably written in Burgundy for the count of Nibelung, a cousin of Pippin the Short, between 736 and 768.⁶ The third Continuation contains information about Pippin's military campaigns in Aquitaine.

Two biographies of Louis the Pious were written about the time of his death in 840. Astronomer's *Vita Hludovici Pii (Astronomer)* is an anonymous account written shortly after 840, by someone who knew astronomy. *Gesta Hludovici imperatoris (Thegan)* by Thegan, a Trier cleric, was written c. 837. These contemporary history-hagiographies immediately predate the key years for Viking activity in this thesis.

The main written sources for the period prior to the Viking raids on the Dordogne were thus written from the vantage point of the Frankish leadership, far removed from Aquitaine and Périgord. And when our area of study is treated, it is from the point of view of the conquering Carolingians.

The Annals of St-Bertin - *Annales Bertiniani* = *AB*

The Annals of St-Bertin exist thanks to an 11th century manuscript preserved at the monastery of St-Bertin in northern France. They are in a sense a continuation of *ARF*, but written outside the royal household. These are known as the *Annales Bertiniani (AB)*.⁷

By 836 *AB* was the work of the Spanish refugee monk Galindo who took the name Prudentius. Prudentius became bishop of Troyes in 843 but he continued the annals

⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 1960: xxv-xxvii, xlv.

⁷ Nelson 1991: 2-4.

independently. When Prudentius died in 861, the annals were taken over by archbishop Hincmar of Rheims until his death in 882, marking the end of *AB*.⁸ Hincmar was an important and influential bishop in Carolingian France, in both ecclesiastical and political contexts.

Until 840 *AB* was written at the imperial household of Louis the Pious, mostly at Frankfurt and Compeigne. From 843 the annals became more an account of the western parts of the Carolingian Empire, including Aquitaine. *AB* was never an official court-approved history and was at times critical of Charles the Bald. *AB* covers the main period of Viking raids in France and of raids on the Dordogne. *AB* appeared in print for the first time in 1641.⁹

Vikings and the Annals of St-Bertin

AB mentions Viking attacks and troubles more than 80 times between 830 and 882, divided chronologically and regionally as follows¹⁰:

	830 - 840	841 - 850	851 - 860	861 - 870	871 - 882	SUM	distribution
Frisia/Rhine	7	4	5	5	3	24	28%
Seine/north		3	6	5	3	17	20%
Brittany		3		4		7	8%
Loire	1	1	7	5	5	19	22%
Aquitaine		6	2	6		14	16%
Other areas	3	3	2			5	6%
TOTAL	8	20	22	25	11	86	
distribution	9%	23%	26%	29%	13%		

Close to half of the mentions of Vikings are from Carolingian heartlands north of the Loire, but Loire and Aquitaine are still frequently mentioned. The concentration of Viking mentions takes place in the three decades from 841 to 870. The earliest mentions from the 830s are about Viking attacks on the Frisian coast and an Dorestad. The single Loire entry is for the island of Noirmoutier.¹¹ The most frequent mentions for Aquitaine coincide with the main raids in this study – the late 840s and then in the 860s. After 868 there are no mentions of Vikings in Aquitaine.

⁸ Nelson 1991: 7-9.

⁹ Nelson 1991: 5, 17.

¹⁰ My count.

¹¹ Although Noirmoutier strictly speaking was part of Aquitaine, it seems geographically better to place it in the Loire category. Vikings were probably disinterested in the political niceties of whether Noirmoutier was part of Aquitaine, Neustria or Brittany.

Aquitaine and the Annals of St-Bertin

Below are the *AB* references to Aquitaine, with or without mention of Vikings:

	830 - 840	841 - 850	851 - 860	861 - 870	871 - 880
Poitou	1	1	2	5	1
Saintes/Angoulême		2		2	
Bordeaux		2	1	1	
Périgord		1			
Limousin/Bourges			1	2	1
Auvergne/Clermont				3	
Septimania/Toulouse	1	2		3	2
TOTAL Aquitaine	5	11	8	14	7

The references to Aquitaine follow the same pattern as the references to Vikings, with an increase in the decades from 841 and a drop after 870. But the mentions of Aquitaine or regions within are only half as frequent as the mention of Viking raids. On this data alone, it is possible to hypothesize that the annalists were more preoccupied with Viking attacks and how it affected the Frankish church and the Empire than with faraway Aquitaine and how churches and monasteries were affected there.

Nevertheless, these annals offer the most extensive records of Viking attacks in western France and in Aquitaine. The Annals of St-Bertin record milestones such as the sacking of Dorestad in 834, the plunder of Rouen in 841, the sack of Nantes in 843, the transgression up the Garonne in 844, the attacks on Paris and Saintes in 845, the attack on coastal Aquitaine and on Bordeaux in 847 and 848, the sacking and burning of Périgueux in 849, a new attack on Bordeaux in 855, the sacking of Poitiers in 857 and 863, the Mediterranean expedition of 859-862, the raid on Clermont in 864, and the Charente battle in 865.

AB specifically bring out the attacks on Bordeaux in early 848 and on Périgueux in 849, but does not mention any other incursions into Périgord, neither in conjunction with the raid on the Garonne in 844 or the wintering in the Saintonge in 845, nor any raids immediately before or after 849, or during the 850s for that matter. *AB* is also silent about the raid up the Garonne river system and the raids on Angoulême and Limoges in 863/864.

If for example the raid up the Garonne and her tributaries and the sacking of Angoulême in 863 are well recorded in regional accounts, it brings out the question of why Hincmar did not mention these raids in the *AB*. An archbishop and close ally of king Charles the Bald, who would have had connections with other Frankish bishops such as the archbishop of

Bordeaux and the bishops of Angoulême, Limoges and Périgueux, would surely have known about these attacks. Or did he? Could the omissions have something to do with the political situation in the area at the time – a situation that Hincmar found embarrassing to Frankish rule and to the Frankish church, or at least confusing? Trying to read Hincmar's mind-set almost 1200 years on is hopeless, but the absence in *AB* of certain raids in our area of study raises questions.

Other contemporary annals

The Annals of Fulda - *Annales Fuldenses (AF)* - is a full-scale Carolingian annalistic record covering the East Frankish kingdom from 830 to 901. It is silent about Viking attacks on Aquitaine. Even the sacking of Nantes in 843 goes unmentioned. On the other hand, there are plenty of references to Viking attacks in the northern and eastern parts of the Carolingian Empire, at times with details such as names of Viking leaders involved. The monastery of Fulda lay well east of the Rhine. *AF* demonstrates the ethnocentricity and lack of a wider scope amongst the Frankish clergy.

The main annalistic record for the middle kingdom of Lotharingia is Regino of Prüm's *Chronicle - Regionis Abbatii Prümensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi (Prüm)*. These annals were written in the early 10th century for the years c.850 - 907 and continued at Trier until 967. Périgord or Périgueux is not mentioned. Aquitaine is only mentioned in reference to the wars in Aquitaine in the 760s, the struggles between Charles the Bald and Pippin II, and the affairs of king Odo in Aquitaine in the 890s. The Viking attack on Nantes in 843 is mentioned. In 867 Regino also mentions the activities of the Loire Vikings under *Hastingo*. The annals are missing for the years 819-828, 830-835, 843-846, 848-850, 852, 854, and 857, so more accounts about Vikings may have existed, but they demonstrate that raids on the Loire, the Seine and the Somme were deemed important, but not raids in Aquitaine.

The Annals of Fontenelle - *Gesta sanctorum patrum Fontanellensis Coenobium (Fontenelle)* - covering the years 649-850, were written at the abbey of Fontenelle (St-Wandrille) near Rouen on the lower Seine between 823 and 850. They tell of Saracen attacks on Bordeaux and Poitiers in 732, but there is, surprisingly, no mention of Vikings up to 835. Abbot Gervold of Fontenelle had an important role as procurator and administrator of commercial affairs along the Normandy coast, a role bestowed on him by Charlemagne, who

specifically forbade any Bretons or English to do commerce along the coasts of Gaul. There are several mentions of alms being given to other monasteries in Gaul, ranging as far away as the Loire and Burgundy, but none in Aquitaine south of St-Hilaire at Poitiers. Again, monastic and church life in southwestern regions seemed remote and of no concern to the monks at Fontenelle.¹²

The Annals of Xanten - *Annales Xantensis (AX)* cover the years c.790 to 873. Initially, they were copies of *ARF*, but were from c.834 written independently at Cologne, with a clear bias towards German affairs and the reign of Louis the German. There are many reports on Viking activities, but mostly about attacks up the Rhine and on Frisia and Dorsetad. An entry for 854 tells of Louis the German sending his son to negotiate the kingship of Aquitaine with the Aquitanians. In 868, Charles the Bald is referred to as the king of Gaul, Aquitaine and Gascony who had many troubles with the Vikings but never won any wars (*numquam in bello victor existens*). In 870, *AX* establishes an Irish connection to Vikings, referring to Vikings returning to raid France after having devastated Ireland, causing much human misery (*Paganis quoque tunc totam pene Hiberniam vastantes cum spoliis multis sunt reversi et per aquosa loca Franciae atque Galliae humano generi multas miseries intulerunt*).

From 873 *AX* continue as the Annals of St-Vaast - *Annales Vadastini (AV)* until 900. These are also full of references to Vikings; at least 25 times and covering almost every year, but again concentrated around the northern rivers of Seine, Meuse (Maas), Somme, Rhine, Schelde, Aisne and other tributaries. The words *dani* and *normanni* are used interchangeably. Aquitaine is only mentioned in conjunction with royal successions or assemblies, except in 889 when the annals say the Vikings continued to burn and plunder Burgundy, Neustria and parts of Aquitaine without meeting resistance, and in 893 when king Odo went to Aquitaine and met with Aquitanian nobles.

These full scale annals give more or less the same impression as to the overall magnitude of Viking raiding in the Carolingian Empire in the 9th century, but as they were all situated in other parts of the empire – Francia, Lotharingia and Germany – they naturally tended to focus on events in Carolingian heartlands, and not on events in southern Aquitaine.

¹² *Fontenelle*: 136-139, 179-183. Regarding Gervold and commerce it says something about trade between France and the British Isles, an activity Vikings could have been involved in.

Other accounts including miracles and saints' lives

Nithard's four books of histories - *Historiarum Libri IV (Nithard)* - is a participant history covering the years 814 to 843. Nithard, a bastard grandson of Charlemagne, was in the royal households of Louis the Pious and Charles the Bald. He participated at the battle of Fontenoy in 841 and in later peace efforts including the treaty of Verdun in 843. He was killed in battle in June 844, near Angoulême in Aquitaine, by the forces of Pippin II.¹³ Nithard's histories are unique for many episodes between the death of Louis the Pious in June 840 and the treaty of Verdun in 843. Both Nithard's own work and later commentary point to political affairs in Aquitaine that were problematic and to a presence of Vikings in the region.

The Miracles of Saint Germain - *De miraculis sancti Germani Parisiensis episcopi (St-Germain)* - were originally written by an anonymous monk between 849/850 and 858, and later continued and edited by Aimonius who led the school at Saint-Germain-des-Près in Paris. They contain illustrious accounts of the Vikings, starting with the sacking of the church in 845 and the removal of a huge oak beam taken back to Denmark by Ragnar (for use as a keel on a longship?). Ebroin, abbot of St-Germain, was also bishop of Poitiers in Aquitaine. During the Viking raid on Paris in 845, Ebroin was in Aquitaine where he had been sent by Charles the Bald to seek peace, i.e. to negotiate with Pippin II and his supporters. Gozlin became abbot of St-Germain after Ebroin, and also abbot of St-Denis in 877 and bishop of Paris in 883/884. In 858 he and his brother were taken prisoners by Vikings and only released against a hefty ransom. Usually, Benedictine monasteries contained 50 to 60 monks, but at St-Germain there were 122, and at St-Denis 150. There are no references to Viking raids in Aquitaine in these records.¹⁴

The Miracles of St. Benedict - *Miracula sancti Benedicti* and (sometimes) *Annales Floriacenses (AdF)* - were written initially by the monk Adrevald at Fleury near Orléans between 865 and 877, and continued/edited first by Adelerius and then by Aimon de Fleury

¹³ Scholz 1970: 23, and note 34; F.L. Ganshof, "Note critique sur la biographie de Nithard" in *Mélanges Paul Thomas, Bruges, 1930*. Ganshof claims Nithard died in a battle with Vikings in May 845.
¹⁴ *St-Germain*: 23 (note 33), 25, 41, 42 (note 78), 47 (note 94).

in the late 10th century. One key account by Adrevald is probably a basis for later medieval writing about Vikings in France:

*Ab ipso quipped (ut ita loquar) Oceani littore, orientum versus, Arvernorum usque clarissimam veteri tempestate Aquitaniae urbem, nulla libertatem retinere valuit regio, non oppidum aut vicus, non denique civitas, quae non strage feratim ceciderit paganorum. Testatur hoc Pictavis fecundissima quondam urbs Aquitaniae: hoc Santorum, hoc Engolisma, hoc Petrocorum, hoc Lemovica, hoc certe Arvernus, ierminus nuncusque barbarici gladii: ipsumque Avaricum, caput regni Aquitanici proclamant, nulla scilicet bellica obviant, manu hostili graviter sese concidisse incursum.*¹⁵

The above passage is rendered verbatim or near verbatim in the accounts of Vikings by Dudo and William of Jumièges. It is also likely that Ademar de Chabannes had access to these accounts. The passage speaks of terrible Viking attacks that had taken place in Aquitaine, listing a number of towns seriously affected. Although Périgieux is mentioned, there is not a word about Bordeaux, despite the rather extensive listing of towns and cities devastated by the Vikings. As Adrevald wrote from the Loire, this shows perhaps that Bordeaux and the surrounding areas were out of Carolingian control. Not listing Bordeaux, however, could simply have been an oversight on Adrevald's part, but then the monk's preoccupation with Bordeaux would have been less than e.g. Périgieux, which was listed. On the other hand, when these accounts were edited by Aimon at the end of the 10th century, why did he not add Bordeaux?

AdF also mentions the duel between counts Emenon of Périgieux and Landri of Saintes, and that the Poitou counts Rannulf and Robert were killed by Vikings: "Great men Robert and Rannulf, smartly armed and among the best, were killed by Vikings by sword".¹⁶

Aimon originally came from Aubeterre on the Drome, a tributary to the Dordogne. He wrote book III of *AdF*, and in chapters 7 and 16 he mentions Périgieux and Périgord. Aimon expresses interest in his homelands in his writing. Writers with no background in or knowledge of Aquitaine would not, and I think did not, include information about such a faraway land in their writing, which most annalist material demonstrate. Aimon was killed,

¹⁵ *AdF*: PL 124: Capitulum XXXIII (Col.0938 B et C). The translation (GND, Van Houts: 23) reads as follows: "From the ocean's shore as far east as Clermont, of old the most famous city of Aquitaine, no province could retain its freedom, no town, no village, not even a city could escape massacre by the raging fury of these heathens. To that Poitiers, the wealthiest town of Aquitaine, Saintes, Angoulême, Périgieux, Limoges, and of course Clermont, and Bourges the capital of the kingdom of Aquitaine, all bear witness."

travelling with his abbot, at La Réole on the Garonne in 1004, over quarrels regarding Cluniac reform.¹⁷ That he accompanied his abbot on the trip south indicates that it was seen as an advantage to bring along a person known in the area, and who spoke the local vernacular language.

Regional accounts

There are a few regional accounts of Viking activities in Aquitaine. The Annals of Angoulême - *Annales Engolismenses (AAng)* is a brief set of annals written in the 9th century at Angoulême, immediately north of the Dordogne river system. These accounts mention that Nantes was taken in 843 by *Wesfaldingr*¹⁸, that count Sigin was killed by Vikings when Saintes was sacked in 845¹⁹, that Bordeaux was taken and burned in 848²⁰, and in 863:

On October 4, count Turpio, our best and strongest soldier and defender, great man, lover of clerics, builder of churches and supporter of the poor, met with Vikings and killed Mauro and was killed by him and the whole region was taken by the Vikings and burned.²¹

Unfortunately, the years 842, 849, 854-859, 861-862, 865, 869 and 871-885 are absent from *AAng*. Hence, the raid in Périgord in 849 and the defeat of the Vikings in 865 do not appear.

The Translation of Ermentarius - *De translationibus et miraculis Sancti Philiberti Libri II (Ermentarius)* - written between 855 and 863, tells about the exodus of the monks at Noirmoutier in 836 as a result of Viking attacks, as well as corroborating *AAng*.

The Aquitaine Chronicles - *Chronicon Aquitanicum (Aquit)* - presumably written in the first half of the 10th century at Limoges, were based on *AAng* and charters from St-Cybard at Angoulême. However, Gillingham²² suspects portions of *Aquit* to be edited by Ademar de

¹⁸ *AidF: Annales Floriacenses: 254-355. "Rhotbertus quoque atque Rammulfus viri mirae potentias, armisque strenui, et inter primos ipsi priores, Northmannorum gladio necantur."*
¹⁷ Vidler 1965: 158, 183

¹⁹ *AAng 843: Nomen civitas a Wesfaldingis capitur.*

²⁰ *AAng 848: Sigotus comes a Normannis captus et occiditur. Sanctonas civitas concrematur et tesauri eius exportantur obtinui.*

²¹ *AAng 863: 4. Non. Oct. Turpio comis, miles fortissimos defensorque optimus, vir magnificus, amator clericorum, ecclesiarum edificator pauperumque recreator, cum Normannis congregatur, et occiso Mauro, ab illo occiditur, et tota illa regio a Normannis capitur et succenditur.*

²² Gillingham 1990: 51.

Chabannes at a later date. There is, however, an entry for 886 about the death of count Vulgrin of Périgord²³ which is not mentioned by Ademar.

The contrast of these regional annals to the Annals of St-Bertin is striking. These annalists are generally negative to Charles the Bald. An entry for 843 infers that Charles was making unjust claims on Aquitaine and "made difficulties for his nephew Pippin by frequent attacks, ...". Charles the Bald is referred to as "the tyrant of Gaul" in the entry for 875. The problem with them is that so many years are missing. But the power of the Viking attacks was well known: "They would take whichever cities they chose without any resistance; they took Bordeaux, Périgueux, Saintes, Limoges, Angoulême and even Toulouse; ..."²⁴. Here, Bordeaux is mentioned.

Chronicon Moissiacense (Moissac) covering Aquitaine up to 840, was written at the Benedictine monastery at Moissac on the Tam (a tributary to the Garonne), but was moved to Metz about 840 and is known as *Gesta Episcoporum Metensium (Metz)*. Had they continued at Moissac, more detailed accounts of Viking raids on the Garonne in 844 and again in 863 might have been recorded, as well as of other raids. The shifting of annalistic recording from southern Aquitaine to areas further north is symptomatic - it shows the failure of Frankish recordings in the south. *Moissac* refers to a Viking raid on Bouin in 820. The first attack on Bouin on the Aquitanian coast in 799 must have had some impact on local politics, because in 802 an Aquitanian capitulary laid down a tariff of fines for inhabitants of coastal areas (including slaves) who did not respond to the call for defence against raiders.²⁵

The *Translatio Sancti Vincentii (St-Vinc)* by Aimoin of St-Germain-des-Près, about a martyr and relic moved to the monastery of Castres, written c.870, contains information about the fear of the Vikings - "propter timorem paganorum normannorum"²⁶, and the raid up the Garonne river system in 864: "Normannis autem (qui ad Tolosam venerant) accedentibus, monachi sanctium revehunt corpus, eo in loco ubi prius fuerat, officis venerandum

²³ *Aquit 886: Vulgrinnus Petrogricus comes oblit.*

²⁴ *Ermentarius: MGH SS XV, 302: "Capientur quascumque adeunt civitates, nemine resistente; capitur Burdegalenium, Petrocorum, Santorum, Lemovicensium, Egolesima atque Tolosa civitas: ..."*

²⁵ Haywood 1991: 119, quoting *MGH Capitularia in missorum specialia ILL2, #34.*

²⁶ *St-Vinc caput XI. Castres is not far east of Toulouse.*

reponunt.²⁷ The information was given Aimon by the monk Audaldus, who may have had first hand experience with Viking raids.

Moving in to our area of study, the story of a translation of a monastery from Pamnat on the Dordogne to Vabres further south-east in 863 is found under various headings such as *Historia abbatae Vabrensis Translatio Sanctae Faustae, Epistolae Agri Vabrensis abbatum, De origine Mon. Vabrensis (Vabres)*. The *translatio* was due to the Viking menace: "*Nam nullo ferentie barbarorum vesentiam, erat non modica tribulatio, quia per omnes pene pagos iuxta Gallicum Oceanum dispersae sunt Ecclesiae, urbesque depopulatae, atque monasteria abiecta.*"

The abbot of Pamnat was Adalgasius, but the story was not written down until some time between 908 and 940. However, a royal charter by Charles the Bald and a charter by count Raymond of Toulouse confirm the *translatio*:

*Erat igitur, eo tempore, monasterium in provincia Galliae in Petracorio pago, nomine Palmatus, in quo jugiter deicolae Christo formulabantur, nihil habentes proprium praeter quod norma sancti Benedicti cedebat. Alia namque plurima erant monasteria in eadem provincia oppido ditiora, quae jam fata ingente peste, famis periculo multi monachorum sancti Benedicti normam negligere caeperunt, et contra illius ritum, proprium nisi sunt habere, quos ille devitantes, nefas et illicitum censebant. ...*²⁸

Vabres also relates the Viking raids of 863-865:

*Siquidem paganorum barbaries, quos usitato sermone Danos seu Normannos appellam, a suis sedibus cum innumerabili exevantes navali gestamine, ad Sanctonicam sive Burdegalem urbem sunt advecti. Indeque passim discurrerunt provincis, urbes depopulando, monasteria ecclesias necnon et cuncta hominum aedes igne cremantes, non parvas hominum strages occidendo dederunt.*²⁹

Acts, charters, capitularies and letters

There are a number of letters, capitularies and charters relevant to this study, such as the correspondence of Hincmar of Rheims and Lupus of Ferrières. In Hincmar's 80 surviving letters (*Hincmar*) little mention is made of Viking attacks nor does he mention Dordogne or Périguetx.³⁰ Hincmar's letters date from 845 to 868 and are contemporary to Viking attacks

²⁷ *St-Vinc caput XII*.

²⁸ Charles the Bald's charter is dated 14th August in the 24th year of his reign, that of Raymond of Toulouse 9th November in the 23rd year of Charles' reign - i.e. 863/864.

²⁹ *Vabres*, in *Hist. de France*, t. VII, p. 344.

³⁰ See *Hincmar*. Also Riché 1969: 711.

on the Dordogne. An early letter (#13) refers to his church's holding in Auvergne, Limousin and Poitou, another (#105) to the Breton menace. There are two letters to archbishop Frotharius of Bordeaux from 861 (#146 and 148) - one dealing with the choice of abbedess for Poitiers, the other regarding the successor of Prudentius at Troyes. His preoccupation with Vikings seems to be slim: One letter (#170) mentions that Pippin II of Aquitaine had joined forces with Vikings in 864.³¹ A further letter from the same year (#171) touches on how to build defences against the Vikings on the Seine.

Lupus' letters (*Lupus*) only mention Aquitaine eight times, of which Angoulême twice, Limoges and Périguetx once each, and Vikings only in conjunction with the Viking incursion between Saintes and Bordeaux in 845 where count Siguin was killed. Lupus became abbot of the monastery of Ferrières (100 kilometres south of Paris) in 840, and was captured by Pippin II's army at the battle near Angoulême in 844, fighting on the side of Charles the Bald. One letter from 845 refers to the death of count Siguin of Bordeaux at the hands of Vikings, and somewhat cynically remarks that the split between Pippin II of Aquitaine and Charles the Bald made these Viking attacks possible. The dissention was ongoing, because in the same letter he refers to rumours that those who previously had deserted Pippin II were about to reconcile with him again.³²

The previously mentioned letter by Alcuin to archbishop Arno of Salzburg³³ about Viking ships causing much harm to the islands of Aquitaine presumably meant not only Noirmoitier, but Yeu, Ré and Oleron at the mouth of the Charente.

A letter from Pope John VIII from the 870s (also referred to in *Flodoard*), refers to the necessity of abandoning Bordeaux as a metropolitan see because it was "rendered uninhabitable by the incessant incursion of the Vikings".³⁴

Of the 66 extant acts or charters of kings Pippin I and Pippin II of Aquitaine³⁵, 48 are by king Pippin I and 18 by his son Pippin II. It is assumed that many acts and charters by both

³¹ *Hincmar*, letter #170: "*Ei quia Pippinus se paganis sociavit, quo societate multa mala in Christianitate profectia sunt...*" ("And therefore Pippin joined with the pagans thus causing much evil to Christianity")
³² *Lupus* #44.

³³ *Epist. car. Aevi II*, #184, p. 309: "*Paganos vero naves, ut audites, multa mala fecerunt per insulas Oceani paribus Aquitaniae*. I have also referred to this letter in the introduction.

³⁴ *PL 176* ed. Migne, no. XXXVI col. 690 and LXXIV col. 718.

³⁵ *Pippin* = Levillain 1926. Five of Pippin II's charters are deemed false.

kings are lost. In 836, Pippin I granted permission for the monks of St-Philibert to move from Noirmoutier due to the Viking menace.

Where these charters were signed gives an indication where the two kings spent their time. Although they were kings of Aquitaine and the Aquitanians, they were still Carolingian Franks, with ethnic roots further north and east. In fact, between 751 and 877, Carolingian rulers only issued three diplomas (that are extant) in the Périgord area: Pippin I at Castillon-sur-Dordogne in 818, repeated by Charles the Bald in 842, and Pippin I's Christmas day 837 diploma at Palacolo, probably Palissous on the Dronne.³⁶ No charters or acts from Gascony survive. Pippin II had no ties to the palaces of Louis the Pious nor to Carolingian heartlands – he seems usually to have stayed at monasteries and villas in northern and eastern Aquitaine.³⁷ No acts of either Pippin I or Pippin II stem from metropolitan Bordeaux or from the bishoprics of Périgueux, Albi, Eauze or Auch. This would indicate that the reunification at the imperial ordination of Louis the Pious in 817 to make Pippin I king of Aquitaine was a nominal and not a real unification.³⁸ Charles the Bald issued diplomas for Aquitaine, but none for territories south of the Dordogne after 866.³⁹

The capitularies and acts of Charles the Bald - *Capitularia regum Franciae Occidentalis (Karoli II)* -, and *Recueil des Actes de Charles II le Chauve, roi de France* (edited by G. Tessier in 3 vols. Paris 1943-55 containing 354 royal charters from 838 to 877), have been analysed in detail by others. Of these, the 864 Edict of Pictes has at least two direct references to Viking threats and devastations.⁴⁰

Carolingian Church Council records from this period have recently been edited in two parts.⁴¹ The Church Councils during the reign of Charles the Bald indicate that affairs in our area of study held little interest to the Frankish leadership. Synods were held mainly in Frankish heartlands – although 13 of them were held in Rome. One synod was held in Toulouse following Charles the Bald's siege in 844. Bordeaux is only mentioned in conjunction with listing the bishops present at the synods – and Périgueux perhaps only

³⁶ Martindale 1990: 135-138.

³⁷ Levillain 1926: clxvi-olxvii.

³⁸ Levillain: clxii, clxix. The *Oratio Imperii* is referred to elsewhere.

³⁹ Higoumet 1971: 150.

⁴⁰ *Pictes. Advantatio domini Karoli apud Pistes #2*, and clauses 6 and 31. ⁴¹ *Concilia III* and *Concilia IV*.

once. Pippin II is only mentioned at the Council at Soissons in 853 (when he was tonsured there after having been captured by Gascons), and at the Council at Pîtres in 864 in connection with his trial. Pagans, usually meaning Vikings, are referred to more often – but not until 858 (the siege of the island Oselles on the Seine held by Vikings). In 861 the Mainz Council criticizes the lack of Frankish resistance against Vikings: "*Arme genere non audeant vel sumere nisi contra paganos et, ubicumque ire mauerint, nullo vehiculo deducantur, sed pedesstri more proficisci studeant.*", criticism repeated verbatim at Worms in 868.

Discussion on contemporary sources

"Information about the raids (in Aquitaine) is sparse, primarily because most of the longer annals were written in the north of the Empire."⁴²

Main Carolingian annals, acts and charters as well as Church councils illustrate a Frankish Carolingian world naturally preoccupied with itself as regards troubles caused by Viking activity. The recording of Viking activity is extensive and at times detailed for areas around the Rhine, the Seine and the Loire rivers. These are areas where the Carolingian aristocracy – lay and ecclesiastical – were most entrenched, where their land holdings were most extensive, and where the brunt of Carolingian politics took place in the years contemporary to Viking attacks.

Main annals, charters and council records are absent, unaware or unfocused on the part of southern Aquitaine that this study comprises. The impression one is left with is one of relative socio-political influence: the closer one gets to Carolingian heartlands and places of annalistic activity, the more extensive the record. The further south from the Loire one moves, the less the Carolingian influence and the thinner the record. Viking raids are recorded only once for Périgueux, and references to Bordeaux and the Garonne river raids are at best sketchy. The killing of the count of Bordeaux near Saintes in 845 is probably mentioned because Saintes the same year became a Charles the Bald holding. Relying on Carolingian main annals alone leaves one with the impression that Viking raiding on the Dordogne hardly took place at all, and then only as a chance result of Viking bands passing through the Gironde area.

⁴² Coupland 1995: 190.

The picture is not as thin when examining the few regional and local records that exist. The St-Philibert, Angoulême and St-Benedict of Fleury records all point to more extensive Viking activities in Aquitaine – not only listing many more places attacked but also indicating widespread devastation. Two *translatios* in southern Aquitaine, one from Périgord, also attest to Viking presence. If we link the main Carolingian records to the regional ones, we can believe that Viking forces were present in our area of study more or less continuously, or at least were frequently present, from 844 until 865. A major drawback, however, is that so many years in the regional annals are missing.

Thus we are left with the following specific source records of Viking raids in our area of study from contemporary sources:

- The siege and sacking of Bordeaux in 848.⁴³
- The counterattack of Charles the Bald at Fronsac on the Dordogne, capturing and sinking 9 Viking ships in 848.⁴⁴
- The sacking and burning of Périgieux in 849: "Northmen sacked and burned the city of Périgieux in Aquitaine, and returned unscathed to their ships."⁴⁵
- The attack on Bordeaux and surrounding countryside in 855: "The Northmen attacked Bordeaux, a civitas in Aquitaine, and moved about all over the countryside at will."⁴⁶
- The translation of monks from Paunat on the Dordogne in 862 and attacks on Bordeaux and Saintes in 863-865 with much disturbance to populations and destruction of churches.⁴⁷
- The sacking of Angoulême on 4th October 863 where count Turpio and the Viking leader Mauro were killed, "and the whole region was taken by the Vikings and burned."⁴⁸

In addition, AB refers to raids up the Garonne to Toulouse in 844, a raid on Poitiers and many other places in Aquitaine in 857, 863 and 865, and a raid on Clermont in 865. *St-Vinc*

⁴³ AB 847, *AAng* 848, *Fontenelle* 848, 851.

⁴⁴ AB 848, *Fontenelle* 848.

⁴⁵ AB 849: "Nordmanni Petrocoriam Aquitaniae civitatem populantes incendunt atque inque ad naves remeant."

⁴⁶ AB 855: "Nordmanni Burdegalem Aquitanias civitatem invadunt et hac illaque pro libitu pervagantur."

⁴⁷ *Yabres* – although strictly speaking the source may be more non-contemporary (10th century).

⁴⁸ *AAng* 863, *Aquit* 863.

tells of raiding the Garonne to Toulouse in 864. *Ermentarius* records the sacking of many cities including Bordeaux and Périgieux.

The regional and local records that do exist, however, are meagre. The descriptions in *Ermentarius*, *AAng* and *AdF* (and *Yabres* if we allow it contemporary status) are less specific and are at times lamentations, not eye-witness recording. Most striking is the lack of record about Bordeaux, which should have figured prominently in the contemporary writings of Viking activities. Why are voices from an important city and port so quiet – is it because the metropolitan see was not functioning? Because Bordeaux was exclusively under Gascon control? Because Vikings controlled it? Franks did not control Bordeaux, that seems clear. This enigma has a bearing on the Dordogne river system and on Périgord not only because of its geographical and economic proximity, but also because the Périgieux bishopric fell under the archbishopric of Bordeaux.

The lack of record for the area in general and for Périgord in particular not only suggests lack of Carolingian record-keeping, but also that a lot of recording must have been lost in the subsequent years and centuries. The question then arises of why records were lost from these years (if they actually were), whether oral sources played a greater role, or that the political situation was such that sources dried up or were destroyed. Events in the following centuries may also have contributed to their destruction.

But it is also tempting to induce from all the other cases of Viking activity in 9th century France – where the record is extensive, to the particular case of the Dordogne river system. To do so, more than just contemporary sources will have to be studied. One avenue is oral history, legend and folklore, which, combined with older sources, could have made literal impressions already from the 10th and 11th centuries, in non-contemporary sources.

NON-CONTEMPORARY SOURCES⁴⁹

Spatial and temporal distance from events inevitably serve as a telescope field the wrong way, and bring to the table the authors' current interests and concerns, whatever they may

⁴⁹ By non-contemporary, I mean accounts in manuscript form that originated in the centuries following the Viking attacks, generally from the 10th to the 13th century.

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be. Non-contemporary sources hold the seeds of interpretative history. Strictly speaking, even contemporary annals such as *AB* are questionable. They were written far away and with a disinterested or ignorant view of the Dordogne river system.⁵⁰ Also, the *AB* we know today is based on a manuscript copy from the 11th century.

There are sources that describe Viking activities in France more than a hundred years after the events but which presumably had access to older sources, as those discussed above and possibly also other non-extant ones, as well as oral sources. The inclusion of such non-contemporary writings as primary source material can be discussed. Sources written up to 200 years after the event inevitably fail the Rankian axiom of describing how it really was. Historians of the 21st century will admit that to methodologically get to the ontological truth is impossible.⁵¹ Such a reflection can equally be applied to 11th century historians when writing about 9th century events. If modern historians don't think they can get to the "real facts" then how could the old ones, even if they thought so? One such old historian is Ademar de Chabannes, and his writing has a bearing on this thesis.

Ademar de Chabannes

The richest rendition of Vikings in Aquitaine is found in the writings of Ademar de Chabannes, and until the later part of the 20th century, historians ultimately used him as a reliable source.

Ademar de Chabannes was of minor Limousin nobility, raised at the St-Cybard monastery in Angoulême. Between 1003 and 1007 he received formal education at the monastery of St-Martial in Limoges. He spent most of his adult life at St-Cybard as a writer and copyist of manuscripts (*grammaticus*), and wrote the history of St-Martial and its abbots c.1025, and the Chronicle - *Ademari Chabannensis chronicon (AdC)* - in three versions between 1025 and 1028.⁵²

Ademar's reputation as a historian has taken a dive. In 1028 he left St-Cybard for the St-Martial monastery at Limoges to devote himself to the apostolization of Saint Martial as one

⁵⁰ Nelson 1992: 101, states that Frankish chroniclers tended to "regard Aquitaine as a far-away country of which they knew little."

⁵¹ This paper is not about methodology per se, but is conscious of it. See Jenkins 1991: 13-19, 65-67. Truth to Jenkins is just a linguistic sign, and history is merely a discourse about the past.

⁵² Chabannon 1897: Preface VI-X; Landes 1995: 9-11.

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of the original 64 (minor) apostles. At Limoges, he forged certain documents and championed the case at a synod in 1029, but was defeated by a visiting cleric, Benedict of Chinusa. The St-Martial monastery suffered a major embarrassment and Ademar returned in humiliation to St-Cybard. That the apostolization of St. Martial only a few years later became politically acceptable to the Church is beside the point. To modern historians, Ademar's manipulation of facts and documents stained his reputation.

Although 20th century historians such as Levillain and Auzias accepted his material, modern researchers hold Ademar as unreliable - preferring the *Annals of Angoulême*, *Astronomer* and the correspondence of Lupus of Ferrières.⁵³ Gillingham claims he is totally unreliable: "No historian should trust anything (Ademar) says, ..., unless confirmed by (other) surviving contemporary sources."⁵⁴

The problem with only relying on the *AdAng*, *Astronomer* or *Lupus* as local or regional sources is that their extant records are patchy for the years of Viking attacks in the area. So how can Ademar be used as a primary source? His record of events 150 years earlier are not necessarily across-the-board misrepresentations. Some of his writings may be neutral and factual, or at least expressed without conscious value judgments or ulterior motives. To condemn him to eternal damnation as Gillingham seems to do is in my opinion going too far. We are bound to run into this kind of problem regardless of how "reliable" the author is, once time and place is sufficiently removed from event. It is more a question of degree. What did copyists of older manuscripts actually leave out or introduce, between the original writing and the extant version?

Landes takes exception to the positivistic criticism of Gillingham, at least where Ademar's historical writings are concerned. Landes believes that for Ademar to make the St-Martial material acceptable, he had to be considered realistic and dependable in his other, historical, writings. To understand Ademar's deceptions, one has to understand the contexts surrounding the cult of Saint Martial at Ademar's time. Millenarian sentiments were rife, and in the region there was a rapid growth in the cult of other saints and of relic-adulation. Ademar did not invent the Saint Martial story; it originated with from the foundation of the St-

⁵³ Gillingham 1990: 51.

⁵⁴ Gillingham 1990: 49. There is no mention of Ademar at all in Nelson's 1991 annotation to *AB*.

Martial monastery in 848 and grew through legends passed on orally. A *Vita* of Saint Martial was written in the mid-10th century and revised early in the new millennium.⁵⁵

So, Ademar merely dressed up the St-Martial tradition in a form which he thought would give credit to the monastery of St-Martial. Many bishops' histories strived to establish pseudo-lineages from Christ via the apostles to the bishops, as a way of legitimizing the dynasty of the bishopric and its holdings.⁵⁶ That Ademar and his family at St-Martial Limoges were trying to do the same was therefore not unusual and not out of context.

There is no record that Ademar was preoccupied with the legend and cult of Saint Martial before 1028. By then he had completed the *Chronicon* and was enjoying a high reputation as a writer and historian with both the count of Angoulême and the duke of Aquitaine. The three versions differ mostly in events contemporary or near-contemporary to Ademar, not in 9th century material. Furthermore, his historical work was based on his own initiative and not 'made to order'.⁵⁷

The *Chronicle* is in three parts. The first two parts are basically copies of older Frankish annals and run to the death of Pippin the Short. A few sections are his original ones. The third part is relevant to our study, covering the years 814 to 1028. Up to the year 829, the contents is basically copied from *Astronomer*, but from chapter 16 the *chronicle* is Ademar's own work.

It is believed that Ademar started his *Chronicle* after older sources were made available to him at St-Cybard, many of which probably came from Aimon of Fleury and his school. At St-Cybard, *AdAng* would have been available to him and at Limoges *Aquit* and possibly *Limo*. Landes also believes *St-Genulfi, AdF*, the annals of *Ste-Colombe, St-Maixent* and *Les petites chroniques du moines de Saint-Cybard d'Angoulême* were available and written into his *Chronicle*, including information on Viking invasions.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Landes 1995: 6, 22, 50-58.

⁵⁶ See 1978: 439-441, 445-446, citing the *Gestas* of Metz, Naples, Ravenna, Le Mans, Auxerre and Verdun all pulling Carolingian kings into the genealogy of the Episcopal lines, thereby linking Jesus Christ's disciples to Carolingian kings and to the bishop.

⁵⁷ Landes 1995: 129, 131-133, 139, 143, 172-173. These versions are known as *Alpha, Beta*, and *Gamma*, of which *Beta* was the "official" version used by Chavaillon. Landes calls the *Chronicon 'Historia'*, but in Landes & Pon 1999 the work is known as *Ademari Cabannensis Chronicon*.

⁵⁸ Landes 1995: 131-133; Landes & Pon 1999: Introduction. The *Miracula sancti Genulfi* is believed to have been written at Cahors early in the 11th century, however, MGH SS XVII 1888 believes they were written at

Landes thinks Ademar also relied on oral sources which were held as reliable in their day. He finds Ademar more circumstantial and interpretative the closer he gets to his own time, but that "Ademar's work on the period for which he had only sparse written sources (830-870) stays relatively close to that material."⁵⁹

Although Bisson⁶⁰ rejects Ademar as a historian, he is convinced that annals and records did exist in the southwest between the Moissac annals and the chronicles of the Albigensian crusades in the 13th century, and that traces of such records can be found in Basque and other records from further south. Gascon records are apparently all lost.

Gillingham drags the *Chronicon Aquitanicum (Aquit)* into the same dustbin as Ademar's *Chronicle*, as he believes it was edited and thus tainted by Ademar. Where *Aquit* does not coincide absolutely with the older *AdAng*, they are untrustworthy: "Instead we must accept only those details where it is highly likely that he had a reliable source in front of him." And: "Ademar is such an ingeniously unreliable historian that the onus of proof rests fair and square on the shoulders of those who wish to believe anything he says."⁶¹

Landes disagrees: "Ademar's attitude towards his contemporaries was exactly the opposite from the alienation that eventually drove him into historical fiction"⁶². His history had to confirm with other written sources and with accepted oral history in order to meet with approval. Ademar did not write historical fiction prior to 1028, rather he wrote "precise, archivally rooted historical work of major proportions."⁶³

If we are sure Ademar actually had no other sources, then I might agree with Gillingham. But it is likely that he had. Extant sources from the area are rare, in part because annalists connected with the Carolingian and Capetian courts were all far removed from this part of

Bourges after 1050. The 'little chronicles' are published in *Bulletin de Société Archéologique et Historique du Charolais (BSAHC)* in 1881. See also Chavaillon's version: Preface XII-XV and *MGH Scriptores, vols. II and IV*; Chavaillon held Ademar's later chapters to be unique sources for the history of Aquitaine.

⁵⁹ Landes 1995: 133-135.

⁶⁰ Bisson 1990: 281-286. "There can be no doubt that commemorative annals - that is, records of single events - were recorded independently in the South." Manuscripts for Gascony are lost. At the metropolitan see of Auch, there are calendrical notations for the years up to 864, then a gap until 1066.

⁶¹ Gillingham 1990: 49.

⁶² Landes 1995: 135.

⁶³ Landes 1995: 126-127.

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Aquitaine. To condemn a writer for the absence of other corroborating sources, an absence not attributable to Ademar, is going too far. The mind-set of an 11th century historian is not necessarily the same as that of a modern one: historical perspective, source critique and interpretative writing are modern aspects of history.⁶⁴

Ademar has more to say on Vikings and the affairs of Périgord and the immediate surroundings. The siege and destruction of Angoulême in 863 conforms with *AAng*:

*Quo tempore gravissime Normanni Aquitaniam affligebant, et Helias Scottigena, Engolismensis episcopus, defunctus est, monasterium quoque Beati Eparchii ab infestantibus paganis desolatam est.... Turpio,.... non post multos dies cum Normannis congressus, occidens eorum regem, nomine Maurum, ab eo ipse occiditur; ...*⁶⁵

Following the death of the brothers counts Turpio and Emenon, Charles the Bald nominated Vulgrin count of both Angoulême and Périgoux, and Oliba bishop of Angoulême:

...et Emeno ... cum Landrico, in castra Runiconia reducitur scutius et octava die moritur Et Carolus,.... Vulgrinum propinquum suum, fratrem Aldoini, abbatis ex monasterio Sancti Dionisi, direxit, et prefecit eum Engolisme et Petragorice, et Olibam statuit in episcopatu Engolismensi.⁶⁶

The minor chronicles of Angoulême says that Vulgrin had frequent struggles with Vikings and for that reason had fortifications built at Marcillac and Matha in Charente: "*Vulgrinus autem multis prelis laboraverat frequenter cum Normannis, et hac de causa aedificaverat castrum Mariliacum, et Mastiacum, ut esset munimen contra paganos.*"⁶⁷

In 887, according to Ademar, Vikings suffered a heavy loss at the hand of king Rudolf of Burgundy at Estresse further inland from Limoges:

...Rodulfus, rex Burgundie, cum hoste fortissimo Lemovicinum appulsi, et congregati sunt contra eum innumerabiles Normannorum, et commisso prelio in loco qui dicitur Ad-Destrictos, usque ad interuentionem devastati sunt pagani, et extrade fugientes, non ultra fiduciam presumpserunt ventendi in Aquitaniam, Rodolfus,...., cum magno triumpho regressus est.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ See Burke 1969: Chapter I.

⁶⁵ *AdC III, 19.*

⁶⁶ *AdC III, 19.*

⁶⁷ Landes & Pon 1999: footnote p.139 on *AdC III, 19.*

⁶⁸ *AdC III, 20.* Landes & Pon 1999: notes to *AdC III, 20*, thinks that the battle took place somewhere north of Clermont in 893, and that duke William the Pious of Aquitaine used Vikings as mercenary soldiers against king Rudolph of Burgundy. Alternatively, the adversary could have been king Odo of Francia. See also *AF* 887, 893.

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According to another source⁶⁹, king Odo of France (888-898) had a Viking chief baptised at St-Martial, Limoges. This, strangely enough, is not mentioned by Ademar. Aubrun puts the last Viking campaign in Aquitaine to 930, when king Rudolf of Burgundy (923-36) routed them at Estresse, near Beaulieu further up the Dordogne (in the Corrèze). Aubrun here cites Ademar de Chabannes *Chronicon III, 20* as source - where the event is covered but for the year 887. The battle that took place may have been that of 893 between Odo and William of Aquitaine, in which William may have used Viking mercenary forces. This battle, however, is supposed to have taken place at Ad-Destrictos - north, not west, of Clermont. Lukman⁷⁰ implies that the Viking leader involved could have been Sigfrid who had been given lands in the north by Charles the Fat. This battle led to the death of Sigfrid, and possibly later mythic creations in Icelandic sagas.

Early in the 10th century, Vikings were still active in the Poitou region, which led to a relic of the Cross moved from the monastery at Charroux to St-Cybard for safe-keeping.⁷¹

Around the year 1000 viscountess Emma of Limoges was captured for ransom by Vikings whilst at the monastery of St-Michel-en-l'Herm, and abducted across the sea for three years (to Ireland? England? Scandinavia?) and only released thanks to the intercession and pressure from duke Richard of Normandy.⁷²

And finally, in 1018 and contemporary to Ademar, a large force of Vikings from Denmark and Ireland attacked a number of ports on the Aquitanian coast, taking prisoners for ransom and only leaving after much silver had been paid.⁷³ The specification of Danish and Irish

⁶⁹ Aubrun 1981: 157.

⁷⁰ Lukman 1976: 31, 36.

⁷¹ *AdC III, 21-23*: Quo tempore Gumbaldo pontificatum agente, repetentes Normanni crebras irruptiones, per Picavorum terminos exercebant.

⁷² *AdC III, 44*: ... vicecomitissa Lemovicina Emma ... obijt ad Sanctum Michaellem Heremum, et nocti ibi a Normannis captivata, per tres annos exil trans mare est retenta. ... infamia auri et argenti pondera pro redemptione ejus data sunt, ... et alia copiosa ornamenta, quae omnia Normanni auferentes, ... mulierem non reddiderunt, donec ... Richardus, comes Rotomagensis, eam ingeniose per legatos ultramarinos adquiseret et viro suo Widoem liberam redderet.

⁷³ *AdC III, 52-53*: Eo tempore infinita multitudo Normannorum ex Danimarcha et Fresca regione cum classe innumera appulerunt portum Aquitanicum. Et sicut parentes egerant, conati sunt omnem Aquitaniam deserere et captivare. ... Cum eo die ab urisque naturae, sequenti nocte, plenitudine maris irritante, cum capis concite posenti navibus insilissent, et auxilia pelagi liberantur, nec amplius spes illos inquietarunt. Dux autem pro capis infinita potera argenti misit, et utinamque pensans argento redempti hominem. Landes & Pon 1999: 305-306, note 3 says the Vikings used as their entry-point either St-Michel-en-l'Herm in the Vendée, or Treilbourg-Taillebouurg on the mouth of the Charente where a castle had been constructed in 1007 (after the attack?), and that the date of this last attack was more likely between 1003 and 1013. Could Treilbourg already had been a centre for Viking slave trading (treif = slave)? According to Garsand: 260, note 5,

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Vikings is noteworthy: Denmark by this time was a clearly identifiable power – precisely at the time when Svein Tjugeskjegg and Knut den Mechtige were involved in conquering large parts of England. The mention of Vikings from Ireland indicates a known origin of other groups of Vikings than those from Denmark, and possibly well known also as a point of origin for Viking attacks in general. I think the identification is made to identify two main groups – of different origins, making it comprehensible to the reader.

Book versions of *AdC* first appeared in the 16th and 17th centuries, and then again in the 19th. Subsequent historians will all have used one or several of these versions. Earlier versions of the *Histoire du Périgord* are typically based on 17th century books on the topic of Viking raids, thus linking ultimately to Ademar as source. His reliability is therefore crucial, and no doubt this is why the most recent renditions of the History of Périgord are much more sparse with details about Vikings.

Other non-contemporary works:

Flodoard's annals and church history of Rheims - *Annales* and *Historia ecclesiae Remensis (Flodoard)* - were written in the mid 10th century. The church history is largely a tribute to archbishop Hincmar of Rheims. In 923 it is recorded that *normanni* raided Aquitaine and Auvergne and that 12,000 of them died in battle. This may have been Vikings from the Loire under Regnvald fighting on the side the duke of Aquitaine against kings Hugh the Great and Rudolf of Burgundy on the upper Loire⁷⁴, or a timing mistake – instead referring to the battle with king Odo in 893.

The Annals of Limoges - *Annales Lemovicenses (Limo)*, written at the earliest in the 10th and 11th centuries, and probably based extensively on *Ang. Aquit. AdF and AdC*, does not mention Vikings until the raids on Paris and St-Germain in 886/887, but has a entry in 889 about Vikings repeatedly raiding Auxerre and burning the suburbs.⁷⁵ It seems, however, that abbot Bernard of Solignac (near Limoges, on the border to Périgord), at a council of

the Viking attack was lead by people loyal to king Svein of Denmark. But a local "Chronique de Saintongaise" dated 13th century, refers to a skirmish between Saracens and Charlemagne at this location, which Gérard 2000: 54 thinks has caused confusion in the annals.

⁷⁴ Flodoard 923-925. See also discussion on *AdC* for 887/893.

⁷⁵ *Limo*, 889: *Northmanni iterato Autissiodorum repetentes, suburbana eius incendierunt.*

Soissons in 865, requested confirmation of his *biens*, i.e. title to his estates, as Vikings had burned his archives in 864.⁷⁶ The monks of Solignac had fled further south to Brive.

A source which Landes thinks may have been used by Ademar de Chabannes is the *Miracula sancti Genulfi (St-Genulfi)*, written at Cahors (?) some years before Ademar. This account contains material from the years following the death of Louis the Pious, including Viking raids.⁷⁷ Judging from *MGH*, however, these miracles were written at St. Genulfi Bituricensi (Bourges) some time shortly after 1050, and were based heavily on *AdF* and *AdC*. Landes thus contests the dating and placing of these sources and also which influenced the other. Perhaps both contain elements of oral history in addition to *AdF*.

The writer of *St-Genulfi* knew about the Viking devastations near Saintes in 845:

In these days barbarians made many incursions into Gaul causing fires and persecutions by heathens, and it is said that many places in Saintonge were left empty and destitute for a long time.⁷⁸

Not only that, the writer also had knowledge of the Vikings' international activity: "As the barbaric Northmen, who had made many inhabitants across the northern seas of Britain suffer, came in great numbers in boats and taxed the Gauls to the limit"⁷⁹, and that discords between local and regional leaders, illoyalty to the Frankish king and even civil wars all had contributed to weakening the resistance against the Vikings:

"So much hidden evil made the Frankish king weak and foreigners weakened Gaul. Hence, those that in the beginning had risen and then poured out, started to depopulate western Gaul and all of Neustria and Aquitaine. And they were not only bothered by the Northmen for a long time, for belligerent leaders had raided and routed many places with their warriors. And these leaders fought between themselves for a long time for many reasons and sometimes they fell, thus they left the whole country open to the attackers."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ *Limo*; Aubrun 1981: 132, 156-157.

⁷⁷ Landes 1995: 133.

⁷⁸ *St-Genulfi* 1209. "Succidentibus vero temporibus extierunt intra Gallias incursions plurimae barbarorum necnon et persecutions infidelium, quibus multae, ut supradictum est, desolatae sunt antiquae sanctorum memoriae ac penitus per multa tempora destitue."

⁷⁹ *St-Genulfi* 1210. "Siquidem barbaries effera Northmannorum, quae interiora oceanis Britannici plagae septentrionalis incolere videbatur, navali manu innumera de suis electa, ingeniti predaagi Galliae victim occupat ibidem."

⁸⁰ *St-Genulfi* 1210. "Sic itaque clandestine malo Francorum vacillante regno, ab externis etiam Gallia nationibus affliguntur. Igitur ab ipsis incipiens oris ac dehinc cuncta pervadendo sese diffundens, occidentalis Gallias et maxime Neustriam et Aquitaniam depopulari coepit. Id ipsum vero multo dies superioribus annis adgressi fuerant Northmanni, sed eis belligeri viri duces locorum saepius obstiterant et eorum frequentes impetus saepe inavertia manu pepelierunt. At ipsis etiam duabus inter se diuturno bello dissidentibus, ac vario rerum eventis nunc istis, nunc illis decidentibus, ita telus nudata suis defensoribus perfacile patuit externis pervisoribus."

Here then, is a source, either independent or dependent on Ademar, writing not only about widespread devastations by the Vikings but also singling out the local and regional disputes in Carolingian politics as the most important cause of the success of these raids, not only in Francia and Neustria but also in Aquitaine. If these accounts originated in Cahors, immediately south of Périgord, the Aquitaine content is interesting as a regional source. If the accounts stem from Bourges at a slightly later date, we should remember that the metropolitan see of Bourdeaux was taken over by that of Bourges, and archbishop Frotharius of Bourdeaux became the archbishop of Bourges in 876. Records from Bourges can therefore have contained earlier records from Bourdeaux and surrounding areas.

The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* (*GND*) by William of Jumièges was written c.1070 as homage to the first dukes of Normandy (and dedicated to William the Conqueror). Most of the relevant material is, however, based on (the monk) *Dudo* from early in the 11th century, and on *AdF*. There are often verbatim quotes from *AdF*, including the account of the attacks on cities in western France and in Aquitaine. This history glorifies the Norman dukes' Viking past and the legendary Ragnar Lodbrok and his sons. It is rich on Viking exploits in France by Björn Jernside and Hasting. Here, it is Björn that, from his base on the Loire, raided Aquitaine as far as Poitiers and Angoulême in 863 and Limoges, Clermont and Bourges in 864-865. Hasting became a vassal of Charles the Bald in 862 when he was given the castle of Chartres. That the *GND* has a heroic function is one thing: the raids on Aquitaine cities are included. But again, Bourdeaux is missing.⁸¹

In *GND* the blame for Viking successes was given to the internal problems of the Carolingian Empire: "Having thus robbed the country of all military defence by their frequent battles, they left it without protection, prey to invasion by barbarians or any other enemy."⁸² And just as in *AdF*: "What can I say about the harsh afflictions of the people of Aquitaine, a people who once nourished wars themselves and then chose not to fight, who once destroyed the best sons of their own soil and then fell prey to foreign peoples?"⁸³

⁸¹ *GND*, book I, chapters 5-10.

⁸² *GND Book I, ch. I.*

⁸³ *GND Book I, ch. 7(8).*

From the 12th century there is *La Chronique de Saint-Maixent* (*St-Maixent*). The writer, possibly the abbot, relied to a large extent on *AdF* and *AdC*, but also on some cited local annals and saints' lives from the 9th century. The focus is on matters in the Poitou region in northern Aquitaine. The chronicler puts the blame for Viking devastations on intrigues and passivity among the nobility charged with keeping security.⁸⁴

The St-Maixent chronicler uses to some extent *AdF* verbatim, such as *GND* does, but adds some additional comments, such as Vikings having to cross the countryside because they did not know how to use horses⁸⁵, or a Poitou version of the Aquitanian lament: "The Poitou area was completely overrun by Vikings, destroying many monasteries, massacring nobles, taking women as captives, raping virgins and afflicting all sorts of torture."⁸⁶ But famine and fundamental political mistakes are also blamed for the situation:

*Rege jam dicto Carolo regnante, fames admodum gravis universas occupavit Gallias. Clades etiam ex insectatione paganorum non modica totam oceanum incoentem littora attrivit gentem. Sed ut tertium, graves inmisit sunt bestie, que famem clademque effligentes barbaricam hianit ore exciperent.*⁸⁷

Regarding the events at Saintes in 845, the St-Maixent chronicles uses parts of older annals. It appears here that Siguin II was count of both Bourdeaux and Saintes, and that Saintes was looted for very precious treasures. These older annals may again have used *AdC*, so this does not prove that Siguin held both counties in 845. The chronicler of St-Maixent often had an eye on events further south, with many references to events in Angoulême, no doubt basing himself on *AdC*, again referring to the damage Vikings caused in Aquitaine at the time when the bishop of Angoulême died and the monastery of St-Cybard was destroyed by invading pagans. As with *AdC*, but unlike *AdF*, Bourdeaux is mentioned, perhaps indicating a greater interest in the fate of Bourdeaux, using *AdC* rather than *AdF* as source.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *St-Maixent: Verdon* intro. viii-six. The local sources are *Life of saint Convoion*, who died when abbot of Redon in 866, *Visions of Wethini*, probably by W. Strabo, and annals from St-Aubin (Vendôme), Renaud and St-Florent (Saumur).

⁸⁵ *St-Maixent* 46-47.

⁸⁶ *St-Maixent* 49-51. *Piget referre cenobiorum nobilissimorum, tam virorum quam feminarum Deo devote servientium, excidia, stragesque non ignobilium plebium, captivitates matronarum, virginum bulbrina, ac cuncta que victores inferred valent tormentorum genera.*

⁸⁷ *St-Maixent* 51.

⁸⁸ *St-Maixent* 56-59. *Alio anno, Siguinus, comes Burdegaliensis et Sanctonicensis, a Normannis captus et occisus est, et Sanctonas a Normannis igne concremata est, thesauris ejus optimis exportatis. And. Hero insula et monasterium Deax, Burdegala, Sanctonicus, Engolisma, Lemonicus, Parisius, Turonis, Belvagus, Noviomagus, Avrelentis, Pictavis, et innumera monasteria et castella destructa post mortem Ludovici imperatoris.*

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Viking troubles affecting Poitiers in the 850s and 860s are recorded, including the massacre of 855 in which 1000 fled from the city (and in which Pippin II had a hand?), the renewed attack and burning of the St-Hilaire church in 863, and the raid by Loire Vikings in 865 – at the time when the monastery of St-Maur was being rebuilt.⁸⁹ No light is shed on why Vulgrin was nominated count for Angoulême, Saintes, Périgeanx and Agen but not for Poitiers.

St-Maixent, probably using AdC, tells of Rudolf of Burgundy descending on Limousin with a large army to battle Vikings at *Ad-Destrictios* (Estresse), chasing them away.⁹⁰

Some local church capitularies exist but are probably non-contemporary to events. The Capitulary of Saint-Jean d'Angely mentions a wide-scale demographic disruption caused by Viking attacks in Aquitaine, but it is more likely any lasting effect such as this would hit the coastal regions and not inland.⁹¹

Both the *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo and the Snorri Sturlasson's *Heimskringla*, paying tribute to the glorious past of the Danish and Norwegian kings and leaders, are 13th century works. They yield of course a large amount of Viking material, but specific references to the topic of this paper are lacking. Also, many Icelandic sagas allude to affairs back to the start of the Viking era. The reliability as historical sources of these 13th century works are strongly refuted. However, they may provide an impression of those days, a feeling for the times, which could be closer to what we today understand.⁹²

Discussion on non-contemporary sources

From non-contemporary sources we get more of a regionalized picture. Large scale Carolingian annals no longer existed in 10th or 11th century France. Autonomous regional dukes and counts had superseded the Carolingian Empire. That does not necessarily make the reliability of historical source material any better, but it does focus more on the region in

⁸⁹ *St-Maixent 60-63. Normanni a militario prope Pictavim interfecti sunt.*

⁹⁰ *St-Maixent 74-75 and notes 3&6. Quo tempore Rodulfus, rex Burgundie, cum fortissimo hoste Lemovicium cepit, et congregati sunt contra eum innumerabiles hostes Normannorum; et commisso prelio in loco qui dicitur Ad-Destrictios, usque ad interitum devastati sunt pagani, et extimè fugientes non ultra fiduciam presumpserunt veniendi in Aquitaniam. That Loire Vikings may have been involved runs counter to the claim by Lukman referred to elsewhere that the Viking leader was Sigfrid from Chausee Brunshout further north.*

⁹¹ Garaud 1937: 261, note 3: "Cum olim Aquitaniae dissipata essent ab atrocibus barbaris caecata coenobia..." See also 263-266.

⁹² See for example Bagge 2002: 173-212.

question, and yields a lot more material and comment about events involving Vikings in the 9th century. As there is no annalistic tradition kept in southern Aquitaine between those of Moissac and the records of the Albigensian crusade in the 13th century, nor any extant Gascon records, there is very little to chose from apart from the school of Fleury, Ademar de Chabannes and the accounts from Cahors/Bourges and Poitou. Bordeaux is missing as the origin of any source.

Despite the heavy criticism loaded on Ademar de Chabannes as a historian, it seems to me that his Chronicle on the whole is consistent with the earlier annals, with *AdF* and with other regional accounts. Of course, these sources have to some degree been feeding on each other, and claiming Ademar right by way of conforming to the others would be a circular argument. The picture one gets, however, is one of widespread and significant Viking raiding in the area, by induction on the whole Dordogne river system, and not just a one-time raid on Périgeanx.

From the annals and history of the abbots of Limoges, we get a repeat of the story about the *translatio* of the monks from Paumat, plus the information that the Vikings burned the monastery of Solignac in 864. This would tie in with *Ang* and *AdC* about Vikings ravaging the whole area after the 863 sacking of Angoulême. *AdC*, *Limo*, *Fabres*, as well as *Floard*, mention large scale battles involving Vikings in the late 9th or early 10th century further inland in Auvergne or Auxerre. *St-Genulfi* confirms the events in the Saintonge in 845 and states that Vikings were a permanent threat in the area, and that the causes of Viking success and perhaps domination in certain areas of Aquitaine to some degree were caused internal Frankish disputes. *St-Maixent*, written last of these regional non-contemporary sources and focusing on Poitou, confirms the earlier sources.

SOURCES AND MODERN HISTORIANS

Historians in the 19th and early 20th century portray a more detailed picture of Viking activity in Périgord. Laborie in the latest *Histoire du Périgord* is far more cautious. It seems that older historians have relied on and taken at face value Dupuy's *Estat de l'Eglise du Périgord* from 1629 and Duchesne's *Historia Normannorum* from 1619, which relied on sources such as *AdC*. As Ademar's reputation is stained, this has as a consequence that much detail regarding Viking activity in the area is abandoned in the more recent works.

As early as 1876, Steenstrup was aware of the difficulty in treating older chronicles: They "ere kun faa og smaa, hvornimod der er bevaret en mængde legende- og romanaktige Fortællinger fra en noget senere tid." ... "de enten ere oppdigtede eller kun bestaa i ualmalede og misforstaaede Gjenfortællinger af ældre Kilder."⁸³

Local 19th and 20th century historiography refers to extensive Viking presence. In Dessalles' 1883 edition of *Histoire du Périgord*⁸⁴, Vikings were on Ile de Ré outside the Charente estuary as early as 830. Attacks in the region took place in 844, 845, 846, 847 (Bordeaux) and 848, 860, 862, 863, 888-895, 915-917. Dessalles thinks Périgieux was attacked in 848 the first time, that Nontron (in northern Périgord, between Angoulême and Limoges) was sacked in 863 – the same year as Angoulême, and that Vikings went up the rivers again in 860 or 862, sacking Paumat, Calviac and St-Cyprien on the Dordogne and Terrasson and St-Amand on the Vézère. Calviac had been sacked the first time in 848 – the latest raid made the monks flee and move to join another order at Sariat further inland. For the 915-917 raids on Dordogne and Périgieux he refers to Justel's *Preuve de l'histoire de la maison de Turenne*, who must in turn have used *AdC* as source. The title alludes to the exodus of clerics from the Gironde, Charente and Dordogne to a safer haven further inland at Turenne in the Limousin.

According to Maubourget⁸⁵, citing older historians such as Labbé and Justel, Vikings went up the Dordogne river system in 848 after they had taken Bordeaux, sacking the monastery at Brantôme on the Dronne, the churches Saint-Front and St-Etienne at Périgieux on the Isle. In 857 there were new attacks on Paumat and St-Cyprien on the Dordogne, and Terrasson and St-Amand-de-Coly on the Vézère. A further attack towards the end of the 9th century was to have devastated Périgieux, and that the area was ravaged even in the 10th century.

In Escande's account⁸⁶ raids on Aquitaine took place in 841, 844, 849, 857, 860, 864, 888, 915, 917 and 918. Périgieux was attacked 841, 849, 853 and 865. In 849, Vikings came up the Isle and Dronne rivers, ravaged Monipon and Mussidan, destroyed the abbeys of

⁸³ Steenstrup 1876/1972: 242.

⁸⁴ Dessalles, Léon 1883: *Histoire du Périgord, tome I, Périgieux*, pp.128-138.

⁸⁵ Maubourget 1926: 29.

Sourzac, St-Astier and Brantôme, and sieged Périgieux. This took place after they had taken Bordeaux and split into many bands following the rivers and river-valleys far inland. They hid by day on small river islands or in the forests and came out at night on surprise attacks. Escande's version is interesting. He connects the raids of 849 with the sacking of Bordeaux, and he claims the main force split into many bands, each of them using surprise and night raids as tactics as they moved up the rivers. This seems plausible. Manoeuvring on the Dronne as far as Brantôme would have been both cumbersome and time-consuming with a large fleet, and the element of surprise would have been lost. Escandé's dating of the raids generally concurs with that of Dessalles, which suggests they used the same sources.

Charët has Viking attacks on Périgord starting in 844, presumably in conjunction with the raid up the Garonne, and again in 854 after a renewed attack on Bordeaux, leaving churches, monasteries and towns in flame. He puts the Paumat exodus down to 862 at the latest, and is exasperated over the dryness and paucity of the official Frankish records.⁸⁷

Higounet-Nadal in 1983 is more cautious about details of places and dates of Viking raids, but she does say that the Dordogne river system was penetrated during the last half of the 9th century, following the sack of Bordeaux in 848, and that the old monastic houses of the region were more or less annihilated by the Vikings.⁸⁸

Laborie is most cautious. He notes the *AB* 847 and 848 siege and sacking of Bordeaux and the sinking of nine Vikings ships on the lower Dordogne as well as the 849 sacking of Périgieux. Furthermore, he holds it as probable that Vikings came back to the Dordogne river system in 863-865.⁸⁹

LEGEND, POPULAR (HI)STORIES AND TRADITION

What is the link, if any, between existing legend and folklore about Viking activity and the sources? Are the popular stories found in almost every village based on actual events, or are they inventions from a later date?

⁸⁶ Escande 1934/1979: 59-63.

⁸⁷ Charët: 184-187. Regarding the monks who wrote the annals, they "ne sont pas des hommes de nos régions".

⁸⁸ Higounet-Nadal 1983: 59-61.

⁸⁹ Laborie 2000: 119.

In Périgord today there exists a consciousness of Viking attacks on the rivers in ancient times, overshadowed perhaps in part by the rich pre-historical and Gallo-Roman evidence that preceded the Vikings, and by the rich historical records of subsequent times; the region's active involvement in the Hundred Years War and the Wars of Religion, not to mention the French Revolution.

In tourist guide-books and in tour guides' standard renditions at historical sites, on church walls, one is told about Viking attacks on Bergerac, on the abbey church at St-Astier, on the Benedictine monastery at Brantôme, at Terrasson and Mussidan, at the troglodytic village of Roque-St.Christophe and at the monastery at Sarlat. When one inquires into the sources for this information, one is referred to "the archives" – a somewhat vague reference to the *départemental* archives in Périgueux, or perhaps the regional archives in Bordeaux, or at least the national archives in Paris. Unfortunately, these archives reveal little more than what is covered in the sources discussed above, with the manuscripts and early print versions of 16th and 17th century historiography and ecclesiastical records.

Is this popularization then all make-believe, the steady accumulation of rumour and fantasy into fact? Is it ecclesiastical fabrication designed originally to portray suffering among the weak and meek, in order to increase the amount of alms from the public and perhaps to obtain protection from other attacks? Archaeologists may think so, given the total lack of material evidence of Vikings on the Dordogne river system.

But written sources on specific Viking activity are in other areas so numerous and detailed in their accounts, that to deny them is unlikely. That the huge oak beam from the church of St-Germain-de-Prés in Paris, reportedly taken by Vikings, cannot be found, does not refute the likelihood that Vikings were raiding on the Seine at that time.

Vikings could have left many physical traces, but the physical evidence was movable and bio-degradable. They were more likely to take movables with them: coins, silver and gold artifacts, precious stones, horses, wine, and humans. Perhaps archaeologists should map what was lacking in a parish, a church, or at a monastery site. There were a number of

religious houses in Périgord at the time of the Viking attacks, and many of them did not survive these attacks.¹⁰⁰

Why should the clergy have fabricated all these stories? Surely the Church, if and when in need of sympathy and alms, would have easily come up with countless other good reasons for their request for support. Despite Church reforms and the intellectual stimuli of the Carolingian Renaissance, Frankish and Aquitanian elites were certainly not peaceful, nor were they overtly mindful of ecclesiastical needs. Feudal lords often bullied the church.

Although Viking raids by contemporary sources may have been exaggerated, in the eyes of the clergy they were devastating events. They could be used to demonstrate the wrath of God, the barbarism of the pagans, or the punishment of lax religious practices of the clergy itself, of aristocrats, or of peasants. Ecclesiastical chroniclers were easily lead to exaggerate about such events both for dramatic and pedagogic purposes, just as they did when they reported thousands of deaths at the battle of Fontenoy.¹⁰¹ Morris claims such exaggerations were used politically, as Alcuin did in his letters to Aethelbred after the Viking attack on Lindisfarne.¹⁰²

One reason the Church may have been overly inventive in creating stories of Viking devastations (rather than Frankish) is that the attackers were pagans, to be despised and persecuted, if not on earth, then at least in spirit. The same motives can be said to be behind the annalists' claim that Jews betrayed Bordeaux and left the town open to Viking attack in 848. But this kind of thinking necessitates the reality of Viking attacks, just as it necessitates the presence of Jews in Bordeaux. If there is any invention, it would be one of inflation and of ineffectiveness, not of event. If the siege and fall of Bordeaux in 848 is a historical event, the use of Jews as scapegoats does not remove the event from history. All the other Viking attacks in France and Aquitaine increase the likelihood of Viking attacks on the Dordogne.

¹⁰⁰ Higoumet-Nadal 1983: 58-59. Lot and Halphen 1909: 190, note 2.

¹⁰¹ Lot and Halphen 1909: 28-36.

¹⁰² Morris 1998: 75. See also *Monum. Acausiana* 4: 28. "Nec ejusmodi navigum fieri posse putabatur" and #127: "Paganae vero naves ut audisitis multa mala fecerunt per insulas oceanii partibus Aquitaniae, pars hamen ex illis perit, et occisi sunt in litore centum quinque viri ex illis praedicatoribus."

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In the late 10th century, Aquitaine, autonomous from the French crown, was an unruly place. New castellan feudal lords commanded absolute authority on the local level, often in opposition to bishops, abbots and counts. The Church's response to this violence was to call peace assemblies and mobilize popular support by parading relics through the countryside and at important ecclesiastical sites, to create a wave of new saints and their lives, erect new reliquary focal points and promote widespread pilgrimage to them, and to invent new extravagant liturgical processions. Millenarian fervour went hand in hand with campaigns against heresy and against Jews. If we hold on to Landes' claim that Ademar was basically historically sound prior to 1028 and that he would have relied also on oral sources, then both Ademar and the Rogation litany, which survived to the 20th century, can be better understood.¹⁰³

Liturgie

Up to World War I, the clergy at Trémolat on the Dordogne river chanted: "Lord, free us from the plague and the Normans" during the Rogation processions.¹⁰⁴ The same litany, save the plague, was used by Benedictine monks in Anglo-Saxon England from the time of the Viking attacks. International communication between religious houses in the 9th century were probably good; it is therefore conceivable that the same wording was introduced in Benedictine liturgy all over western Europe at the same time. The Rogation Days litany had roots back to the early Church of the Roman Empire, when litanies were enacted as a spiritual response to natural and military crises. Pope Zachary, in a letter to Boniface in 745, urged the staging of litanies, especially for the annual Rogation Days to strengthen the Church and its flock against barbarian attacks — a practice that gathered momentum in 9th century France.¹⁰⁵

In his *Chronicon*, Ademar de Chabannes says that the monastery of St-Cybard was given the property of Trémolat by Charlemagne after the surrender of Hunaud in 778. There was, then, a tie between St-Cybard of Angoulême and the Dordogne river in the 9th century. In light of the millenarian sentiments and church reforms at the time of Ademar, one can

¹⁰³ Landes 1995: 26-46.

¹⁰⁴ Told to me by the Président of Société Historique et Archéologique du Périgord, Pierre Pannarède: "Ils des Processions des Rogations, dans les prières, on disait: *de la peste et des Normands, délivre-nous, seigneur*." The rogation story at Trémolat is found in Fénelon 1966: 99: "*à force Normannorum, libera nos, Domine!*" from when Fénelon was a choir boy at Trémolat. This litany, according to a friend of mine who went to a Jesuit school in Paris during World War II, was still in use there at that time.

¹⁰⁵ McCormick 1984: 20-22.

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imagine that this specific Rogation chant was an actual creation from the time of the Vikings, an adaptation of an international liturgy to a local setting.

Therefore, both liturgical practice and millenarian sentiment may have contributed to hold certain events alive in a different, non-historical form. That we lack material or written sources to corroborate these events does not eliminate them. Their historical accuracy may be doubtful as to when and where a Viking attack took place in Périgord and how much of an event it really was, but a litany established and used in the area for a thousand years is likely to have a root in a reality.

Tradition

Burke¹⁰⁶ stresses the differences between a modern historian and one of the Middle Ages such as Ademar de Chabannes. Ademar's history would be more preoccupied with a sense of the spiritual (allegorical, moral or anagogical) than the literary, and his sense of time — being one who had relinquished time (*relinquere saeculum*) — would not have been accurate. Nor would he have been overly concerned with a modern critique of his sources as long as they were authoritative. A historian lacking sense of perspective, relying on spiritual and timeless evidence and unconcerned with interpretation is not a forger, but more a naïve annalist. When disruptions occurred at Ademar's time, they were likely to be explained with millenarian sentiment, just as Vikings 150 years before were explained as foreign, pagan and demonic.

Tradition and folklore that are kept alive even today can be based on reality. Perhaps not on irrefutable fact, because hard, irrefutable fact was not what medieval historians nor the Church were looking for, but an underlying texture of reality based on software, on oral and written accounts kept alive in various forms and contexts over the centuries. Kept alive despite so many other events that otherwise could have pushed this reality out of tradition and folklore, and despite the lack of a physical and scientific record.

The apostolization of Saint Martial acknowledged by the Church not many years after Ademar's death, was based on fabrication and not on fact. Hobsbawm¹⁰⁷ would call this an *invention of tradition*: "actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those

¹⁰⁶ Burke 1969: 1-20.

¹⁰⁷ Hobsbawm 1983: 1-2, 7.

emerging in ... a matter of a few years ... and establishing themselves with great rapidity", in a fictitious or spiritual continuity. There are two ténets here: one is the claim that Ademar prior to 1028 was historically sound, whilst post 1028 he was not. This would rule out an *invention of tradition* in the case of the Vikings, but not for the Saint Martial hoax. The other issue is the speed at which tradition, invented or not, can be seen to establish itself in a historical continuity – with the possibility of a long life. This would hold true for both the Saint Martial hoax and the Viking raids. It is possible to understand the transition from event to history to tradition and folklore.

Folklore

The amount of local folklore about Vikings presents a far richer picture than the one isolated attack on Périgueux as recorded in *AB*. The discrepancy begs an explanation, not an archaeological rejection, but a common sense approach synthesizing folklore and history. It leads to a more general question: How much of our history is unrecorded and therefore non-existent or unknown, and how much of it can be reconstructed and made plausible, likely and known by use of folklore, tradition, and legend?

One popular tale about Vikings in Périgord, "Les puits de Sainte-Radegonde", runs as follows:

In the year 892 A.D., terror reigns over Calviac. The Vikings sailed up the river Dordogne and after having satisfied their usual fury of pillaging and arson, they attack the monastery. The nuns, scared to death, escape through an underground passage which links the crypt heading out into the thick forest, enabling them to reach Sarlat and the unassailable shelter its abbey represents. Crying, they failed to convince their prioress to follow them but nothing will weaken her determination ... One last prayer, one last glance and they go away to get both security and safety. Yet, the abbess Genevieve de Commarque, invincible, will not flee. On the contrary, she makes sure the treasure of the convent - which consists of the bells given by Clovis during his reign - is thrown into an unfathomable gulf the legend calls "the well of Sainte-Radegonde", and then throws herself into it to escape the Vikings. Traveller, when you stop here, on the so-called Gréolo plateau, at the time of the vesperal angelus, listen! Where the monastery used to stand, one can sometimes hear, chiming from the bottom of the gulf, the sound of distant bells ...¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ From unknown author of "Les Richesses du Sarladais", in *Secondat* 1970: 31. The French text: "En l'an 892, la terreur règne à Calviac; les Normands ont remonté la Dordogne et, après avoir satisfait leur communiaire fureur de pillage et d'incendie, ils attaquent le monastère. Les femmes, épouvantées, s'enfuient par un souterrain qui, débouchant dans la crypte, va rejoindre l'épaisse forêt, leur permettant de gagner, à travers bois, Sarlat et l'inespugnable refuge de son abbaye. Pleurant, elles en vain suppléent leur prioress de les suivre; rien ne peut faiblir son indéfectible résolution... Une dernière prière, un dernier regard, elles s'éloignent vers la sécurité, vers le salut. Mais l'abbesse Genevieve de Commarque ne fuira pas, irrédoutable, elle fait jeter les trésors du couvent, les cloches que pendant son règne donna Clovis, dans un gouffre insondable, que la

The monastery at Calviac, situated on the Dordogne, was moved away from the river to Sarlat as a consequence of earlier Viking attacks in the 9th century. But there are no contemporary or non-contemporary records of Viking attacks in Périgord in 892. However, 892 is a year when Vikings were active on the Seine again, so the story may have found its way from the north of France to the south and adapted to a more local setting. There could also be a confusion of two separate historical events into one tale. An alternative answer to the dating is simply that the legend has the wrong year – quite feasible given the lack of annalistic record, and quite feasible if the tale was given life in the early 11th century. But we cannot rule out the accuracy of the year in question – so little is preserved as written sources from these years anyway. It could be tied to the events 893 when William of Aquitaine used Viking auxiliary forces against Odo of France.

SUMMARY ON SOURCES

All the sources, contemporary or not, yield a large amount of accounts of Viking activity in the 9th century, and several describe in detail raids on major rivers and monasteries and churches, but mainly concentrated on the rivers Rhine, Seine, and Loire, and much less on the rivers of Charente, Garonne and Dordogne in south west Aquitaine. In contemporary and regional sources we do, however, get some more details, but still very little compared to records from river systems further north.¹⁰⁹ There are non-Frankish sources documenting Viking activity further south¹¹⁰ and on the British Isles.¹¹¹ The picture formed from all these primary sources portray an extensive map of Western Europe dotted with events involving Vikings.

What is it we "really know" about Viking raids on the Dordogne, based on the sources that exist?

légende appelle "le puits de Sainte-Radegonde" et, pour échapper aux Normands, s'y précipite aussi. Voyageur, qui l'arrête ici, sur le plateau dit de Gréolo, à l'heure de l'angelus vesperal, écoute: là ou s'éleva le monastère, on entend quelquefois, instant au fond de l'abîme, le son de cloches lointaines..."¹⁰⁹ One can speculate what more *Adng* could have revealed had the years 842, 849, 854-859, 861-862, 865, 869, 871-885 been extant.

¹¹⁰ Melvinger 1955 has an extensive list of source material on Vikings according to Arab sources, as does Helqvisten 1995 in his Master's Thesis.

¹¹¹ For example Irish annals and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles.

- Viking raids were carried out all over the Carolingian Empire and Western Europe in the 9th century.
- Raids up river systems were quite common from about 840.
- A large fleet of Viking ships sailed up the Garonne in 844 which thereafter went to the Iberian peninsula as far as Seville.
- Vikings were engaged in a battle somewhere near Saintes in 845, killing a count and wintering at the mouth of the Charente.
- Vikings attacked, sieged, and took Bordeaux in early 848.
- Nine Viking ships were engaged and sunk by king Charles the Bald at Fronsac on the lower Dordogne in March 848.
- Vikings raided Périgueux on the Isle in 849
- The monastery at Paumat on the Dordogne was moved further south after 862 due to the Viking menace.
- A fleet of Viking ships went up the Garonne again in 863/864, probably in collaboration with Pippin II.
- Another band of Vikings raided and sacked Angoulême in 863, and continued to raid overland in the area, including burning the monastery at Solignac in 864.

When compared to other accepted source evidence throughout the Carolingian empire and elsewhere, this review seems reasonable. But we have to take into account the general tone of lamentation brought on by contemporary and non-contemporary sources about the general plight of Aquitaine at the mercy of Viking attacks.

The question for the Dordogne river system is therefore how much Viking activity actually went on and how much the area was affected, compared to the paucity of source evidence. The sources themselves cannot give us a clear picture of how widespread the menace was and how deeply it really affected Périgord. The addition of legend and folklore about specific Viking incidents in Périgord can add to the picture, or at least be posited for discussion. We can question the degree of Viking activity, or the numbers involved, or the intensity and consequences of raiding. We can question the geographic and temporal extent of the raids and which cities, towns and monasteries were actually devastated. But we cannot, I think, question that Viking raiding was going on to such an extent as to make an

impression on annalists, church councils and even royal assemblies, and that Viking raiding was a starting point for historical writings, liturgical practices and folklore.

A minimalist historical conclusion that maybe Vikings were on the Dordogne river system in the 9th century, maybe not, is to accept the likelihood that Viking attacks took place on a wide scale on all river systems on the British Isles and in France, but not on the Dordogne river system. To explain this, one would have to demonstrate that the Dordogne held no targets of interest to Viking raiders, that targets were unknown to Viking raiders, that the Dordogne and her tributaries were not accessible, or that the military defence of the area against Viking attacks was so strong that the churches and monasteries were protected from attacks. Alternatively, the only way of putting the Dordogne on an equal footing would be to reject also a large amount of historical accounts about all the other river systems. The next two sections of this paper will therefore look at reasons for Viking attacks – reasons caused by conditions and events locally and regionally and reasons due to the nature of Viking activity at the time in question. Uncovering the causes behind them can make the extent of Viking attacks on the Dordogne river system, as folklore and earlier historiography depict it, more plausible.

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