

On the Dark Age Ancestry of the Wells Family

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Introduction

In 1066 AD a Norman knight named Ragemer, serving in the army of William the Conqueror under William's general Gilbert de Gant, took part in the Norman Conquest of England. Ragemer survived the campaign and as a reward for his service he was granted a fief in Lincolnshire consisting of the villages of Well, Claxby, and Withern. Known afterwards as "Ragemer of Well," this knight's descendants over the course of the following centuries blossomed into a very large American clan known as the Wells family. Not every person named Wells today is a descendant of Ragemer's, but his descendants served in the American Revolution and afterward spread across the American continent throughout the Midwest, the South, the Western United States, the Pacific coast, and the Inland Northwest [Wells (2016)].

The origins of Ragemer himself are unknown. He was born *c.* 1038 somewhere in northern Dark Age Europe, and a preponderance of evidence tells us that he was a descendant of Danish Vikings. Prior to the granting of his fief he was an utterly obscure soldier living at a time when the vast majority of Europeans were illiterate and kept no written records of their families. What knowledge we have of Ragemer is owed to records kept by literate churchmen of that age because he became a member of the gentry class in Norman England. Where he was born and how he came to be in the service of Gilbert de Gant, a Flemish adventurer who was a younger son of the ruler of Gant (present day Ghent in Belgium), is unknown. Due to the nonexistence of genealogical records from that era, it is not possible to identify specific individuals as Ragemer's forebears.

However, it is possible to deduce reasonable hypotheses about the Wells family's Dark Age origins. There are historical accounts that may be drawn upon and there are clues to his likely origins provided by Y-DNA data obtained from his known present day descendants. There are clues known about Ragemer himself that also point toward the likely place of origin of his people. Therefore, while no conclusions can be presently drawn that are certain beyond reasonable doubt, hypotheses about the family origins can at least provide a starting point for future genealogical research.

This monogram proposes such an hypothesis. I think this hypothesis is the one which currently offers the most likely explanation for the Dark Age origins of the Wells family compared to all competing ones. Alternative hypotheses cannot be ruled out beyond reasonable doubt given the evidence we have at present. But the proposition I present here enjoys a significantly greater scope of agreement with what *is* known about the history of this period and about Ragemer himself. The story itself makes for an interesting tale involving Dark Age society, kings and emperors, petty warlords, and the tumult of the Viking Age in northern continental Europe.

I present the evidence and reasoning supporting this hypothesis in the pages which follow. Before I dive into these details, allow me to present to you the specific hypothesis. It is the following: I propose that Ragemer was most likely descended from a small Viking tribe who lived in the southern Jutland peninsula at the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th centuries AD. The specific area in the Jutland peninsula is known today as Southern Schleswig. This was where the ancient trade center of Hedeby once stood. Hedeby was not far from the present day town of Schleswig. This region was part of Denmark until it was annexed by Prussia in the mid-19th century. Early in the 9th century Ragemer's ancestors became refugees following the defeat and exile of their local king, Harald Klak. About 400 of Harald's followers were forced to flee south with him and ask Emperor Louis I (son of Charlemagne and known as Louis the Pious) for protection from their enemies. Their plea was granted and they took refuge in Saxony and Frisia. Gradually over the next two centuries the descendants of Harald's people migrated westward along the North Sea coast through Frisia (now part of the Netherlands) until at last Ragemer's family came to Flanders in the service of Gilbert de Gant's family.

What DNA Evidence Does and Does Not Tell Us of Ragemer's Ancestry

One might assume the most convincing evidence of Ragemer's Dark Age ancestors would come from DNA data (particularly male chromosome Y-DNA data). Current advertisements for DNA tests offered

by various commercial DNA testing companies tend to promote this assumption. Unfortunately, this is not really the case. Genetic evidence does tell us a few things about the family's very remote origins but at this time it does not tell us enough to pin down the family's origins much more precisely than Europe's North Sea region. Genetic genealogy as a science is in its infancy and available data are still extremely limited. For this reason, DNA data must be augmented by more conventional historical, anthropological, and language data in order to more crisply locate a family's geographic point of origin. I first examine the genetic data we presently have to glean from it what we can and cannot learn from it. In later sections of this monogram I discuss the historical, anthropological, and language data contributions to the family origin hypothesis.

What can we learn from just the DNA data presently in hand? Y-DNA is composed of what are called SNPs ("snips"; the acronym stands for "single nucleotide polymorphisms"). These SNPs are classified into phylogenetic arrangements called haplogroups and haplotypes. The classification systems used by various organizations and companies do not always agree with each other and the system itself tends to undergo sometimes-major revisions every few years. For these reasons, DNA analysis results must currently be regarded as provisional at best. The more SNP data tested for, the more specific family origin information becomes for any given family's DNA. Because DNA tests that gather more SNP data are significantly more expensive than tests which gather less data, the number of test cases providing data capable of more specific origins information is quite limited.

With this caution in mind, what do we know about Ragemer's American descendants? The Wells family covered by this monogram are descendants of Henry Wells, who emigrated to the colonies from Bradfield, Berkshire, England in 1685 [Wells (2016)]. Of Henry's many descendants, we have extensive Y-DNA data on only two men who are known (through conventional genealogy methods) to be related to him through lineal paternal descent. One of them lives in Florida, the other in Idaho. These two men share an identical phylogenetic "trace" characterized by the following SNPs:

R1b1a2a1a1 U106/S21 Z18 Z17 Z372 ZP91 S5970 S7019 .

Less extensive Y-DNA data from a handful of other Wells men in the Midwest, South, and West are consistent with this. Figure 1 lays out the main phylogenetic tree containing R1b1a2a1a1 U106/S21. Figure 2 continues this tree for SNPs Z18 to S7019. From figure 1 we learn that the Wells family is of Proto-Germanic ethnicity. We see this at the lower right-hand corner of the tree.

The first important thing to note about this is that "Germanic" does *not* imply present day Germany. The word "Germanic" used in this tree refers to people whose *language* is classified as belonging to one of several modern languages that developed along a common branch of the tree of Indo-European languages. Countries and regions officially classified at "Germanic" countries are: (a) Alsace; (b) Benelux (part of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg); (c) England; (d) the Faroe Islands; (e) Flanders; (f) Frisia; (g) Germany; and (h) the Nordic countries of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland.

The second thing to note in figure 1 is that the Proto-Germanic branch is distinctly depicted as separate from another branch called the Proto-Italo-Celto-Germanic branch. What is the significance of having this second "Proto-Germanic" branch in the tree?

Figure 3 explains what this difference is. This other genetic line is associated with south-central Europe, whereas the U106/S21 branch is associated with the northern region of central Europe and Scandinavia. The two branches are thought to have diverged from each other *circa* 2300 BC. The map regions denoted by U106 in figure 3 therefore give us our first look at candidate regions of Europe from which the Wells family could be descended.

These regions include: north-central and northwest Germany; the Jutland peninsula; the North Sea coastline along part of the present day Netherlands; Norway; Sweden; and Denmark. This is still a large area to search for Ragemer's ancestors, but it is at least better localized than "northern Europe" as a whole.

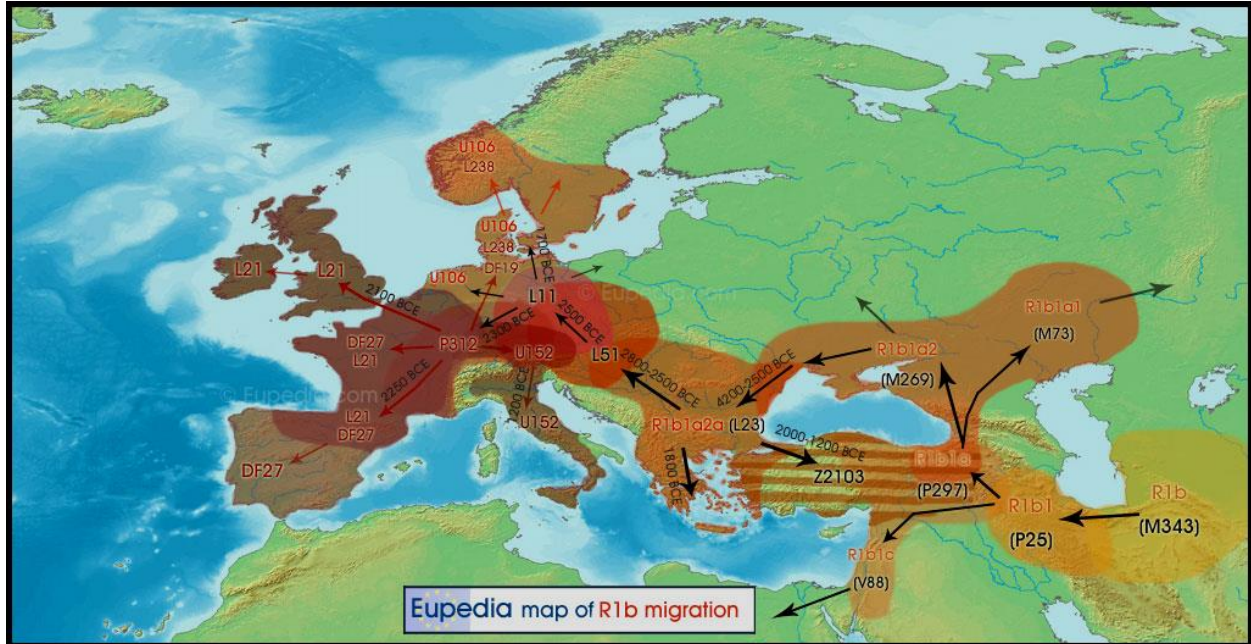


Figure 3: R1b migration map out of the Middle East into Europe in the 3rd millennium BC. The P312 haplogroup defines what is meant by the Proto-Italo-Celto-Germanic branch of figure 1. The annotations in the figure denote specific SNP mutations in the phylogenetic tree of figure 1. The Wells haplogroup is U106.

The next point of interest in figures 1 and 2 is the SNP sub-branch Z18. This mutation is associated with ancient tribes living along the coasts of the North Sea. Z18 is thought to have emerged sometime during the Nordic Bronze Age from *circa* 1700 to 500 BC. This marker is specifically associated with "Germanic/Viking" people. It serves to focus our attention on the Jutland peninsula and Norway as the emerging more likely geographic locales in the search for Ragermer's pre-Wells ancestors, as well as to point us in the direction of a Viking ancestry for Ragermer. It does not rule out the stretch of coastal territory running from Jutland to modern day Belgium that was known during the Dark Ages as Frisia. In contrast to Denmark and Norway, Frisia is not associated with the Vikings and no permanent Viking settlements were ever established there. It was subjected to numerous Viking raids however. Z18 also does not rule out inhabitants of Old Saxony, who likewise were not traditional Vikings (figure 4).



Figure 4: Frisians, Old Saxony, Jutland, and neighboring regions in Dark Age northern Europe.

It should be noted at this point that the word "Viking" denotes an *occupation* rather than a *nationality*. To "go viking" means to engage in international trade, piracy, and forcibly taking other people's land away from them. The traditional Vikings of the Viking Age (795 to 1066 AD) did in fact come from Denmark (including the Jutland peninsula), Sweden, and Norway; but this does not make "Viking" synonymous with Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. In point of fact many Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians were never Vikings and some of their modern day descendants tend to feel insulted when foreigners call them the descendants of Vikings. Within Scandinavia, like in the rest of Europe, Vikings were largely seen in an unfavorable light by those who never "went viking" or who had unwelcome Viking visitors.

Studies of Norwegian genetics tend to imply Norway is less likely than Jutland as the point of origin for the Wells haplotype. Over 75% of the Norwegian population belong to haplogroups entirely different from R1b2a2a1a1 U106/S21 Z18 [Passarino *et al.* (2002)]. In addition, the Wells haplogroup (···S5970 S7019) is characterized by the absence of a SNP called U198. The Frisian modal haplotype is characterized by the presence of this SNP, which makes the Frisian population unlikely as the population of origin for the Wells pre-Ragemer ancestors. Consequently, the regions of higher likelihood for the origins of the pre-Wells ancestors are the Jutland peninsula and the coastal region of Old Saxony.

As you can see, the phrases "less likely" and "more likely" have now entered in to the DNA analysis. As a practical matter, this means the analysis has reached the limits of what DNA can tell us given the present state of our scientific knowledge. To proceed further we must turn to historical, anthropological, and linguistic evidence.

Linguistic Evidence

Languages provide clues to the ethnicity of people, especially as this is reflected in proper names and nicknames. In the case of historical figures, linguistic analysis must take into account the period in which the person lived because languages develop and evolve over time. Figure 5 depicts the language tree and timeline for the Indo-European family of languages.

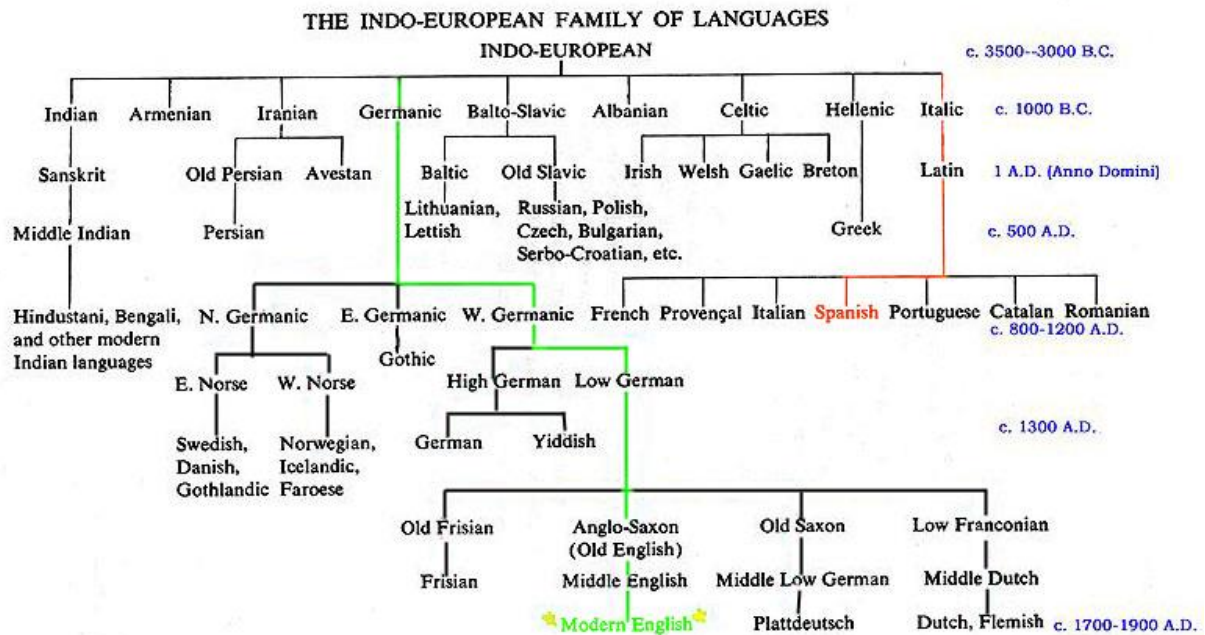


Figure 5: Tree of Indo-European Languages. The timeline for the appearances of these languages is given at the right hand side of the figure.

Ragemer is called by various names in different historical and genealogical sources. In *The Lindsey Survey* he is known as "Ragemer" [Waters (1882)]. In *The Domesday Book* he is called Rauemer [Williams (2003)]. In some family genealogies he is called "Rademer Anghard." The variations Ragemer, Rauemer, and Rademer share a common root, Raumr, in the Old Norse languages. Ragemer is a name associated with Danish Vikings. Rademer is a variation of this name found in the Swedish dialect of the East Norse language. These languages are all descendants of a common root, namely the North Germanic, as figure 5 illustrates. Ragemer's names therefore tend to point to a Scandinavian ethnicity and, more specifically, to either a Danish or Swedish tribal ethnicity.

Ragemer was born *c.* 1038 AD, which is during the time interval when North Germanic was evolving into the East Norse and West Norse languages. At this time in history, these languages still shared many common words and names, and speakers of one dialect typically had little trouble understanding speakers of other dialects of North Germanic. Furthermore, as my analysis elsewhere has shown [Wells (2016)], Ragemer named one of his sons "Ragemer," a fact that tends to point more directly at a Danish Viking ethnicity for Ragemer himself.

The name of Ragemer's wife provides an additional clue. A number of genealogists refer to her as either Meredith de Myrddin or as Meredith verch Myrddin ("daughter of Merlin"). However, both of these names are linguistic nonsense because they spring from a language that was not spoken or used in continental Europe in Ragemer's day. Furthermore, "Meredith" used as a proper name was masculine, not feminine, at that time. My earlier analysis of this name [Wells (2016)] concluded that these names are corruptions of a name originating from North Germanic; namely, Merete mere-Dena: Margaret of the sea-Danes. Who this name "sea-Danes" refers to is quite unclear given that the whole of Denmark was extensively involved in seafaring. A number of scholars associate this name with Danes living along the North Sea's eastern coastline – in other words, with Jutland.

The name "Anghard" some associate with Ragemer (and which is paired with the Rademer spelling) also presents a linguistic puzzle. First, Anghard is neither a surname nor a proper name in use in continental Europe in Ragemer's time. Surnames were not yet used in Dark Age Europe and so the only plausible interpretation of "Anghard" is that it is a nickname. In my previous analysis [Wells (2016)], the conclusion I drew is that "Anghard" is a corruption of "Angéhård" or "Tough Angé" – a nickname that seems very suitable for a Dark Age knight. The name Angé is a proper boy's name in Frisian.

As figure 5 shows, the Frisian language evolved in an entirely different branch of Germanic; namely from the West Germanic language. This adds another dimension in tracing Ragemer's ethnicity. Nicknames are generally not chosen by the individual for himself. Rather, they are invented by others and, especially in the Dark Ages, were rarely used in the presence of the person so nicknamed lest that person take offense. My guess is it probably wouldn't have been wise to risk offending a Dark Age knight who had earned the nickname "Tough Angé." Similarly, it probably would have been unwise to use the nicknames of the legendary Viking leader Ragnar (Ragnar Lothbrok = "Ragnar Hairy Breeches") or the historical Viking leader Ivar ("Ivar the Boneless") to their faces. But because a person tagged with a nickname is so tagged by other people who know him, if Ragemer was tagged with a Frisian nickname this implies those so tagging him were most likely Frisians. This in its turn implies that Ragemer must have lived among Frisians during the 11th century. This raises two important questions: (a) how did a knight who, by the other evidence, was of Danish – and especially of Danish Viking – ethnicity come to be living among the Frisians (who hated Vikings)?; and (b) how did he come to be in the service of a Flemish nobleman's son?

Anthropological Evidence

A good starting point for seeking answers to these questions is to explore something traditional views of Vikings, and Scandinavians in general, seem to present as a contradiction; namely, was there any such thing as a Viking or Danish *knight* at all? The popular view of Vikings is that they were infantry soldiers

fighting on foot behind a shield wall. It is certainly true that a Viking army, such as the primarily Danish Great Heathen Army that invaded Britain in 868 AD, did not feature heavy cavalry as an important part of its order of battle. Vikings were known to occasionally employ horses for mounted infantry, the soldiers dismounting and forming a shield wall during battle. Viking raiders, who came by ship, generally did not use horses at all (other than those they might steal during their raids in order to strike further inland). Horses get seasick and required a recovery period of around 14 hours before they could be used in a land battle. Because Viking raids were hit-and-run affairs that had to be conducted swiftly, this made horses impractical for seaborne raids.

Yet it is beyond reasonable doubt that Ragemer was a knight. William the Conqueror's army is estimated to have had somewhere between 1000 to 3000 heavy cavalrymen, constituting somewhere between 14% to 30% of his army. The fiefs of land he granted after the Conquest went only to his nobles, his bishops, and his knights. The Norman knights of the day were renowned throughout Europe as the most formidable fighting force of that time. This fact is the strongest argument in favor of Ragemer's home being in Normandy. However, in this case it becomes implausible that he would be in the service of the *Flemish* nobleman Gilbert de Gant. Flanders is not part of Normandy and Gilbert was part of the non-Norman contingent who flocked to William's banner seeking wealth and land in England after it was conquered.

This contradiction is apparent rather than real. Charlemagne is usually credited with the reintroduction of cavalry in Europe in the 8th century following the European reinvention of the stirrup. However, archeological evidence tells us there were professional mounted warriors who fought together as a unit present in Sweden in c. 550-750 AD [Hjardar & Vike (2016)]. The Vikings did actively employ cavalry in combat in Saxony at the end of the 9th century [*ibid.*]. Viking raiders did not use cavalry, but it was a different story when they came with the intent to conquer and *settle* in new lands. Frankish military thinking was more influential in Denmark, where the land was flatter and more suitable for cavalry, than elsewhere in Scandinavia. A number of Danish petty kings developed mounted units within their royal guard, and these soldiers operated and fought in the same manner as the classic knights of the Middle Ages [*ibid.*], mimicking the more formidable Frankish cavalry.

The difference between raiding and settling does raise differences between different geographic locations in Europe. Figure 6 illustrates regions where Scandinavians established settlements. It also depicts regions where Viking raids were frequent in the 9th through 11th centuries. Outside of Scandinavia itself, the only permanent Viking settlements occurred in Britain, Normandy, and along the Baltic coast. There were no permanent Viking settlements established in Saxony or in Frisia. Indeed, present day Frisian as well as other historians of the Low Countries seem to express a notable amount of pride about "Viking invaders" being *expelled* from their countries by the end of the 9th century. I have more to say about this below when I discuss the historical evidence. Right now the point I wish to bring out is that there *were* "Viking" – i.e., Danish – groups who *did* for a time live in parts of Frisia and Flanders, and whose petty kings did for a time establish rule over these lands. When Frisian historians write about "expelling the Viking invaders," what actually happened was that these petty *kings* were slain, died, or driven out of Frisia. This is something quite different from the notion that *all* people of Danish origin were driven out. To understand this difference, we need to look in more detail at the anthropology of Scandinavian societies.

First of all, throughout Denmark, Sweden, and Norway the people and their local cultures were very similar, much more so than whatever local differences might be identified. They shared a common language (North Germanic); the division between the East Norse and West Norse languages did not become defined until around 1000 AD. They shared the same religion, law, social organization, art and general culture. There were internal divisions into tribes and regions who displayed more or less constant patterns of neighborly aggression, dynastic struggles, extra-territorial conquest, and folk migrations. By the nature of Scandinavian geography, kingdoms were more easily established in Denmark than Norway

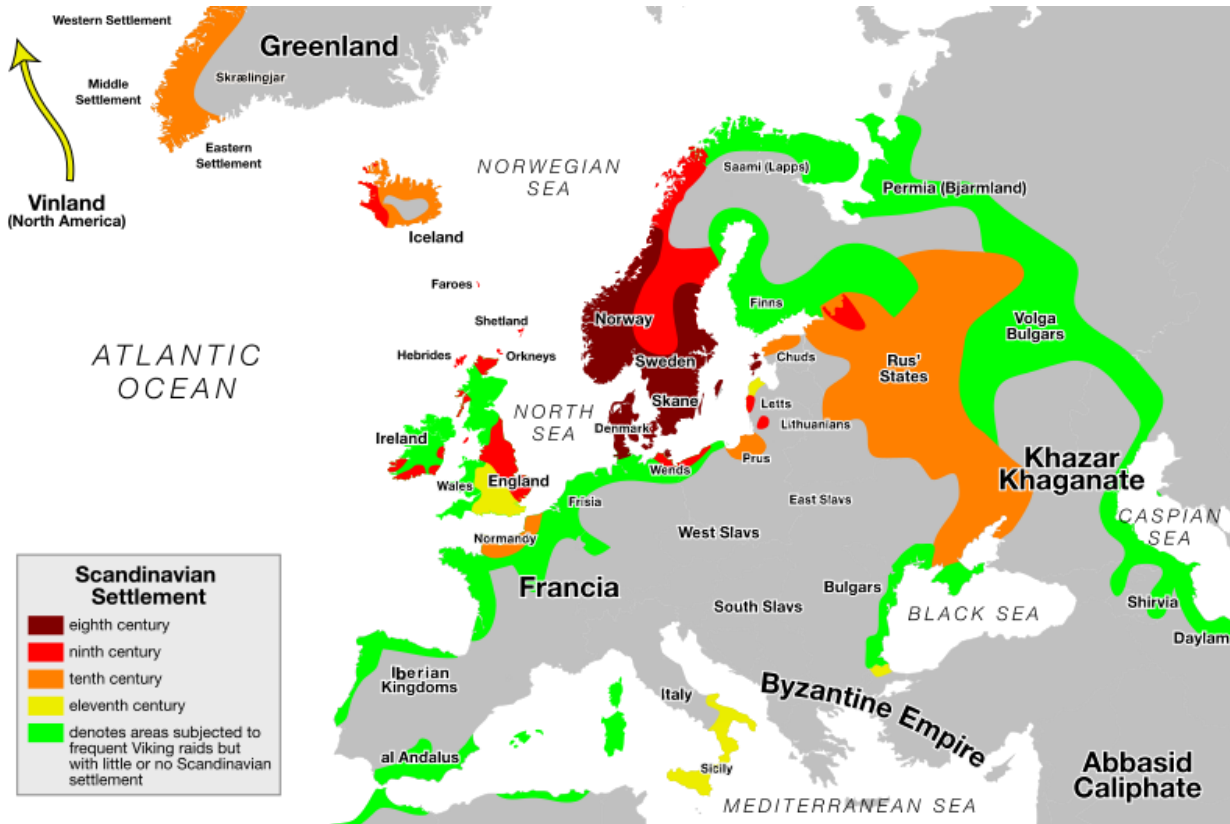


Figure 6: Scandinavian settlements and Viking raids in the 8th through 11th centuries.

or Sweden but in Denmark even a powerful king with command of the sea could only effect a rather loose reign [Jones (1968), pt. II, chap. 1].

Viking society, like Scandinavian society in general, was a class society divided into unfree people (thralls and slaves), free people, and their rulers. This conformed to the pattern found throughout Europe. Although powerful kings holding large territories under their rule occasionally came and went, the usual Scandinavian norm throughout the pre-Viking and Viking eras was the petty kingdom. Denmark particularly was a confused swirl of petty realms up to the time of Godfred, who ruled c. 804-810. It was Godfred who was the first Danish king to come up against Charlemagne; their adversarial relationship developed mainly over conflicts about who would control the lucrative east-west trade routes the Danes had controlled for two thousand years. Charlemagne said Godfred was "a crazy king."

The free people – peasants, peasant-proprietors, smallholders, and farmers – were the backbone of the society. This class ranged from impoverished peasants at one end of the scale to men of wealth and local authority at the other. All shared common legal and political rights, an established wergild ("man price"; a value placed on a person or piece of property), and owned land. They tilled the land and raised the livestock. They served on juries and voted on matters of public concern at the public assembly for laws and consultations on public matters called the *ting* (Þing). Among the public matters decided upon at a *ting* were the election or approval of a king and decisions to change religion. Free people attended religious and lay ceremonies, did woodworking and metalworking, wore weapons, manned ships, and served as soldiers in levies called by the local ruler [Jones (1968), pt. III, chap. 1]. Despite obvious differences, there are interesting similarities between these Scandinavian institutions and those of the old plebian class of the Roman Republic prior to Caesar.

In many places homesteads were grouped together to form villages. The *ting* was linked to a market-place; prominent Jutland marketplaces included Hedeby, Ribe, Arhus, Viborg, Aggersborg, and Lindholm

Høje. These communities' people and land wealth needed to be defended from outside aggression, and this need was the foundation for the ruling class and the creation of petty kingdoms. Most of these kings were petty kings; there were very few supreme monarchs. A king (or a chief, called a *jarl*) generally came from some wealthy family but his position as a king generally required gaining approval at the *ting* from the free people he ruled. He also had to carry their approval on all important decisions.

A king's power and prestige subsisted in his wealth and territory. He generally was the largest land-owner in his territory and most of the profit obtained from successful wars went into his personal chest. But the king was nothing without his corps of personal bodyguards, called his *hird*. A king's *hirdmen* were warriors who had knelt before him and set their right hands on his sword hilt, thereby pledging to him liege loyalty. In wartime the *hirdmen* were the core of his army and in peacetime they were the principal executants of his authority [*ibid.*]. "Liege" means "to render allegiance and service."

We see this military-civil administration structure reflected in the 10th and 11th centuries in Normandy as well as the English feudal system both before and after the Norman Conquest. For example, Ragemer served Gilbert de Gant and was called "Gilbert's man" in *The Domesday Book*. He would have been instantly recognized in Scandinavia as one of Gilbert's *hirdmen*. A *hirdman* served his liege lord in exchange for pay, food and mead, land, and rewards of swords, helmets, battle harnesses, arm rings, fine tunics of silk, cloaks of squirrel skin and sable, gold and silver, and women. From them the most was demanded, to them the most was given. They had an old saying: "Sweet is mead – Bitter when paid for!" [*ibid.*]. A Viking *hirdman* was similar in many ways to a samurai warrior in medieval Japan.

Historical Background I: Crazy King Godfred and the Jutland Civil War

As I said earlier, the chief mystery in tracing Ragemer's ancestors lies in understanding how he can be connected with a Danish Viking ancestry, what possible connection he might have had with Frisia and the Frisians, and how he could come to be in the service of the son of one of Flanders' noble families (Gilbert de Gant). What historical evidence we have presently in hand points to only two documentable possibilities. One is the Viking chieftain known as Godfrey the Sea-King, who invaded Flanders in 879 AD from England at the head of a contingent of the Great Heathen Army. The other possibility is an exiled Danish petty king named Harald Klak. I discuss Godfrey later and explain why he is unlikely to be connected with Ragemer's ancestors. In the next sections I discuss Harald Klak and why he seems to provide the necessary connection with Ragemer's ancestors. To properly understand Harald's story, we must begin with the aforementioned "crazy" King Godfred and the 9th century civil war in Jutland.

The details of Godfred's life, like those of the other Danish kings of this period, are murky because the history of this period that comes down to us is primarily from Frankish sources. In 772 Charlemagne had launched his campaign against the Saxons and this is what brought the Danes of southern Jutland to the attention of Frankish chroniclers. In 777 the Saxon chieftain, Widukind, was forced to flee north into Jutland and seek the protection of a local Danish king named Sigfred. The Danes were keeping an eye on the bloody events going on immediately to the south in Saxony and it is not unreasonable to suppose that they regarded Charlemagne as a major threat to themselves. In 782 Sigfred sent an emissary to Charlemagne, and in 798 Charlemagne sent one to Sigfred. We know little about these diplomatic exchanges but whatever they entailed, an uneasy peace between the Danes and the Franks was the outcome. Sometime around 800 Sigfred died. We know almost nothing about the succession which followed but we do know that by 804 Godfred had succeeded him as king.

We do not know the extent of Godfred's kingdom but it almost certainly contained southern Jutland north of the Eider River and included the important market town of Hedeby. Godfred naturally saw the Franks as a major threat, and in 804 he made a demonstration of naval and land forces on the frontier between his kingdom and Saxony. This was an audacious move because Godfred's kingdom was a pip-squeak power compared to Charlemagne's empire. However, Charlemagne had other problems elsewhere in his vast territories and so Godfred's demonstration resulted in nothing more than negotiations which

kept the peace for a time.

This peace did not last for long. As part of his campaign to conquer Saxony, Charlemagne had made an alliance with a confederation of western Slavs named the Abodrites, and in 804 he rewarded them with part of the Saxons' land north of the Elbe known today as Holstein. Godfred's reaction was to invade the Abodrites. He ravaged their land, forced them to sue for peace, carried their chieftain back with him in captivity, exacted tribute from them, and destroyed their commercial center at Reric. He also brought other Slavic communities in the western section of the south Baltic coast under his tribute. He began construction of an earthworks defensive system called the Danevirke south of Hedeby. All this was a direct challenge to Charlemagne's power. The pipsqueak Danish mouse had roared at the Frankish lion. It's little wonder Charlemagne called Godfred a crazy king.

The Franks had previously conquered Frisia, and their alliance with the Abodrites had brought them to the point of almost controlling the trade route between the Baltic and western Europe. Godfred's offensive reversed this gain and brought him into open confrontation with Charlemagne. Whether accidentally (which seems more likely) or intentionally, Godfred's attack was well timed. Charlemagne was busy at this time with wars in Spain and Italy, negotiations with Constantinople and Baghdad, problems of succession at home, and a multitude of other matters more pressing than Godfred. He did send his son Charles the Younger on an expedition to punish the Danes, but the younger Charles seems to have had second thoughts about engaging the ferocious Danes and instead contented himself with easier targets along the south Baltic coast. This left matters at an impasse until the year 810.

In that year Godfred launched a sudden campaign of Viking raids that scoured the Frisian coast, defeated the small local forces, and exacted a tribute of 100 pounds of silver from the Frisians. He also spoke of conquering all of Germany, making Saxony and Frisia provinces of his kingdom, and even of capturing Charlemagne's palace at Aix-la-Chapelle. Perhaps Charlemagne's opinion of him wasn't all that inaccurate. In any case, some members of his inner circle apparently thought so because in 810 Godfred was assassinated by one of his guards – allegedly, according to some sources, one of his own sons.

He was succeeded by his nephew, Hemming, who immediately negotiated a peace treaty with Charlemagne that confirmed the kingdom's southern frontier as the Eider River. Hemming died a year later, which touched off a civil war of succession in Denmark. We cannot be very certain about the details of this civil war, which apparently took place from 812 to 814 AD. Initially the victor was Harald Klak. It is not clear how extensive the territory won by Harald was, but it clearly included the region of Southern Schleswig that contained Hedeby and bordered with Saxony in the south. [Hjardar & Vike (2016), pg. 304]. Harald asked Charlemagne for an envoy to discuss peace between their realms. The ambassadors met in 813 at the frontiers and concluded a peace treaty.

Historical Background II: Harald Klak

Harald's reign did not last long. In that same year, two sons of Godfred – who had been living in exile in Sweden – returned to Denmark with an army and defeated Harald in battle in 814. He and his followers were forced to flee south, seeking refuge with the Abodrites and Franks. Horik, son of Godfred, became king. Harald was granted asylum in Saxony by Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, who succeeded his father after Charlemagne died in 814 [Hjardar & Vike (2016), pp. 300-301].

As an old Arab saying goes, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Harald wanted his kingdom back and to get it he became Louis' ally. Louis wanted tranquility with the Danes and might have had in mind the idea of eventually being able to make Denmark a province of the Frankish empire. He supported invasion attempts by Harald in 817 and again in 819. These were unsuccessful but enough pressure was being applied by Harald's Frankish support to motivate Horik to seek some kind of accommodation with the Franks. This was achieved in 821 when he negotiated a deal with Louis to make Harald a co-king. It was an uneasy arrangement. By 823 tensions were rising between Harald and Horik, and Louis was asked

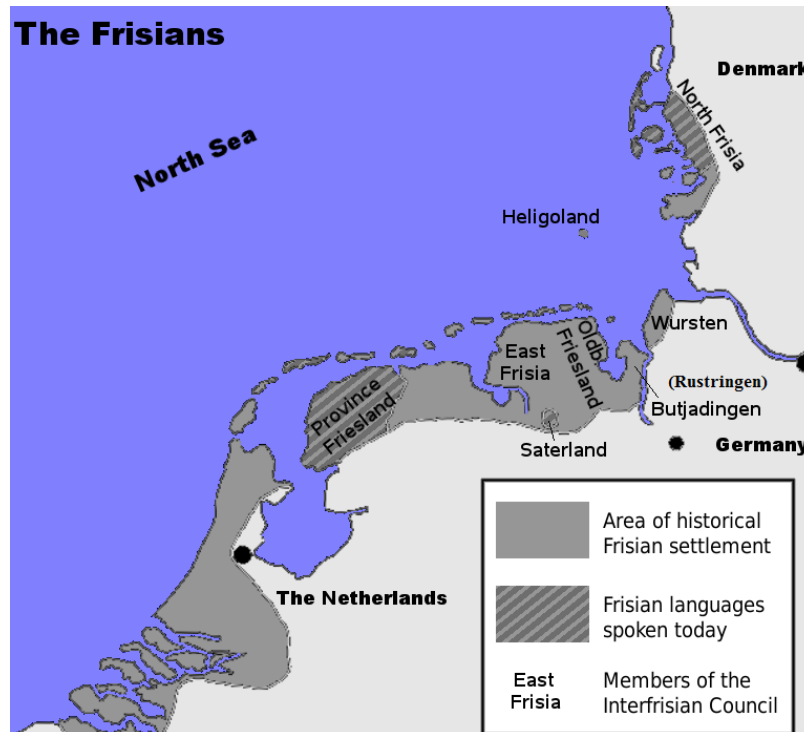


Figure 7: Location of what remains today of Rüstringen on the Frisian coast. Rüstringen flooded in the 14th century and all that remains of it today is the peninsula of Butjadingen.

to mediate between them.

This averted an immediate outbreak of another civil war but all was still not well in Denmark. In 826 Emperor Louis held an episcopal synod at Ingelheim attended by Harald and 400 of his followers, both men and women. Many of these followers would have been members of Harald's *hird* because whenever a Danish king traveled his *hird* went with him. It seems both Louis and Harald were conscious of the tenuous state of affairs in Harald's kingdom because Harald and his followers accepted baptism here and Louis gave Harald the county of Rüstringen on the Frisian coast "so that he would be able to find refuge there with his possessions if he were ever in danger" (figure 7). In return, Harald pledged to defend the Frisian coast against Viking raids. This would have been an empty promise if Harald did not settle at least some of his *hirdmen* in Rüstringen, and so we can conclude with high likelihood that he established a settlement of Danish professional warriors there at this time. This was the first time the Franks granted land to Vikings. The Franks had no navy of their own capable of fending off Vikings, so this arrangement with Harald can be seen as a pragmatic move to counter a Viking threat.

The precaution was justified. In 827 the enmity between Harald and Horik erupted in open warfare and Harald was forced to retreat to his new territory in Rüstringen. He never lived in Denmark again, although he also never gave up trying to regain his lost kingdom in Jutland. He continued to carry out unsuccessful raids and a border war with Horik that lasted until at least 829. Some say this is how he earned the nickname "Klak." This stymied Louis' attempts to negotiate peace settlements with Horik and probably taxed his patience with Harald. Nonetheless, an alliance did continue. One bit of evidence of this is that Harald's brother, Hemming, was killed defending Frisia at Walcheren from Vikings in 837 (figure 8).

Louis had much bigger problems to deal with than the relatively minor one of helping Harald get his kingdom back. The biggest of these were his own sons. Following Frankish tradition, Louis arranged for his four sons to be made kings of parts of his empire: Lothar as emperor and king of middle Francia, Louis the German as king of East Francia, Charles the Bald as king of West Francia, and Pippin as king

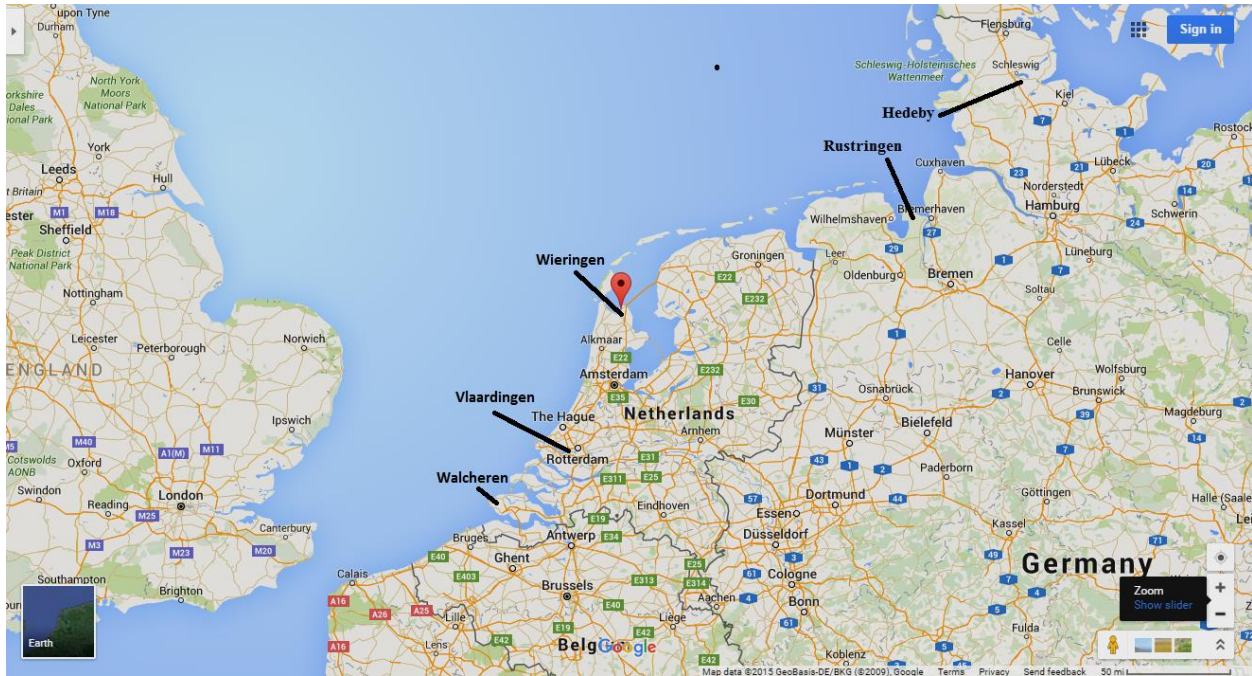


Figure 8: Walcheren, Wieringen, Rüstingen, and other areas of interest.

of Aquitaine. This created a serious crisis, beginning in 829, which saw Louis deposed by his sons in 833 and restored by negotiations in 835. When Louis died in 840 this marked the beginning of the breakup of Charlemagne's empire. Chaos swept the old empire until 843, when the Treaty of Verdun established a peace between Louis, Lothar, and Charles and established East, Middle, and West Francia as, for all practical purposes, independent countries with Lothar as a figurehead emperor [Barraclough (1976)].

While all this was going on, Harald's obsession with regaining his lost kingdom got little sympathy from Louis the Pious. He covertly sided with Lothar against Louis, sending his Vikings to raid Walcheren and Dorestad in Frisia in 837. According to Frankish sources, he was killed by Franks *c.* 852 in the northern regions along the Danish marches for suspected disloyalty, but we are not certain this is how he met his end. What we do know is that Harald had a successor in Frisia, the famous Rorik the Viking.

The Hirdmen of Harald Klak

Historians and chroniclers habitually focus on kings, warlords, realms and countries. It is true enough that historians at least do pay some attention to people of less lofty status in trying to explain cultural and anthropological backgrounds. Chroniclers – and these are the writers and storytellers who make up our principal sources of information and misinformation about the Dark Ages – usually do not. But in terms of the goal of this monogram, these less lofty people are precisely the subjects of this study.

It can accurately be said that Harald Klak's flight of exile to Rüstingen had an important if overlooked consequence: It planted, for the first time, a small group of professional Viking warriors residing in non-Scandinavian central Europe. Dark Age kings were nothing without their *hirdmen* and here we have *at least* two and perhaps three or more generations of them living in Frisia in the days of Harald and Rorik.

Few *hirdmen* were wealthy and the majority of them were little different from the people their lords ruled over except for their uniquely peculiar occupation as warriors. Some might own small plots of land and many would intermarry with local people. And some would eventually "disappear" into the local culture within a few generations by assimilation. Over the past two decades scholarly research has been raising more and more evidence – mostly from Britain, Normandy, and the Baltic coastline – that the

Danes were quite skilled at blending into the indigenous population. Genetic and archeological evidence turned up in recent years leaves no reasonable doubt that descendants of Viking invaders assimilated into the populations of Scotland and England. In Normandy there is, of course, no doubt at all that Viking descendants assimilated into the population.

Whether such an assimilation took place in Frisia is an open question. However, the native Frisians and the Danish people of southern Jutland were in many ways kindred people. Their languages barely differed in the 9th century; the non-Christian Frisians (who constituted the majority of the Frisian people at the time despite Charlemagne's efforts) and the Danes shared the same gods and the same religious traditions; and where Frisian sources tell of "expelling the Viking invaders," these chronicles speak only of getting rid of highly visible Viking *rulers*. They say nothing about any pogrom clearing out the rest of the Danish immigrants.

One compelling piece of evidence that assimilated Viking descendants remained living in Frisia long after Harald and Rorik were gone was discovered and reported in a July 2007 Reuters press release (http://www.zuiderent.ch/DNA.htm#_Toc186524612). Reuters reported that a DNA match had been found between the Zuiderent family of Vlaardingen – a small family with fewer than 100 members worldwide – and the remains of a 1000 year old corpse discovered in the village of Maasland near the town of Vlaardingen in the Netherlands. The skeleton is dated to sometime between 1000 – 1050 AD. An injury to the skeleton's skull suggests this man might have fought in the Battle of Vlaardingen in 1018 AD. For reasons I will explain in a moment, I will call this individual "the Vlaardingen Knight."

Comparison of the Zuiderent Y-DNA with the Wells Y-DNA shows that they match down to SNP S5970 but mismatch at S7019. Therefore this Zuiderent ancestor is not a Wells ancestor, but the DNA does tell us they share an earlier common ancestor. Insofar as the Wells DNA and other clues discussed earlier point us toward the Jutland peninsula, it is a reasonable hypothesis the Zuiderent ancestor is likewise descended from ancestors in the same region if he was in fact a knight. The reason for thinking that he was is found in the genealogy of the Zuiderent family. One of his known descendants has told me, "we see the family back around 1200 under the name Van Oestgeest, being knights of the Earl of Holland. Later on we find them around 1400 as farmers and judges having special privileges because of the nobility of their ancestors" [private communication]. This implies that although the Frisians overcame their Viking rulers in the late 9th century, settlers who were descendants of Vikings were assimilated into the population, remained in Frisia, and became Frisians.

Frisia is often mentioned by academic historians but disappointingly little about Frisian history from Frisian rather than Frankish sources is presented in their work. This is quite understandable; conventional records of the types used in the standard scholarly practices of historians are quite scarce for Frisia in the Dark Ages. Consequently, more detailed reports of Frisian history are often unobtainable except from findings eked out by genealogist/amateur historian scholars. The Zuiderent quotation just given is one example of this. The thesis that Viking descendants remained in Frisia, and Flanders as well, is accepted by amateur historian Paul Budde [Budde (2017a); (2017b)]. Budde tells us,

There is an interesting Viking legacy. By the 10th century raiding had largely ended and the Vikings had become settlers and, as we have seen above, they controlled or at least partly controlled significant parts along the northwestern European coast from Normandy, Flanders, Zeeland all the way to the Frisian Islands.

There was little Frankish control left and this made the descendants of the Vikings important local rulers. This is at a time when elsewhere in the remnants of the Frankish Empire local rulers started to emerge. Flanders and Zeeland for example were partly under the control of these Viking decedents. Holland basically was like Normandy, rather independent, and the fact that the foundation of the first abbey in Holland took place from Ghent indicates special relationships between these two regions which, because of their combined Viking occupation for close to a century, could have been closer than what has been generally considered.

However, this soon ended with the counts of Flanders taking control over the region. Holland carved out its own territory towards the north and as such carried the Viking legacy forwards into what would become the Netherlands. [Budde (2017b)]

Budde also tells us,

Now well established in the Low Countries and Northern France, the Vikings also started to use horses for their raiding campaigns. They occupied Ghent in 879 and Courtrai (Kortrijk) the following year. Further north Deventer and Zutphen fell victim to the raiders, but that might date from later 880- 890. It is around this time that it was also mentioned that Rollo (the later Duke of Normandy) traveled through Walcheren. [*ibid.*]

This quotation is significant because it establishes an approximate timeframe for when continental Vikings began to incorporate cavalry into their tactics. It is likely that at first this practice was merely that of mounted infantry who would dismount to fight. However, we know that in at least one case – namely, Normandy – the practice did develop into the full blown heavy cavalry of traditional knights. It is implausible that this military technology would not have quickly been adopted in Flanders and Frisia.

One can call these Viking descendants who assimilated into the local population "the invisible Vikings." It is a facet of Harald Klak's *hirdmen* which is important to keep in mind as we continue with the story of Rorik the Viking.

Historical Background III: Rorik the Viking

The Frisians never particularly liked being subjugated and ruled by the Franks, much less by Vikings, and never regarded Harald Klak, Rorik, and Rorik's brother Harald as anything but Viking invaders. As I said earlier, the term Viking refers to an occupation rather than a nationality. It can be argued that Harald was a Viking in the technical sense of the word but that he was covert about it lest he incur the wrath of his patrons, Louis the Pious and Louis' son Lothar. On the other hand, calling Rorik a Viking is entirely accurate. It is not known for sure if Rorik and his brother were the sons or the nephews of Harald Klak, but we know they *were* his blood relatives and most historians think they most likely were his nephews.

One of the services the "Franks' Vikings" could provide to Louis the Pious was a more formidable fleet, one capable of navigating rivers, to counter Viking raiders. Budde writes,

To protect his northern coast of Frisia and Saxony, Charlemagne used Ghent [in Flanders] as one of his fleet bases for the counter attacks. He visited his fleet in Ghent in 811. He also built fortifications in the 'Danish March' near Hamburg and used an expelled Viking prince [Harald Klak] to assist him in protecting the Frisian coast line. Towards the end of the reign of Charlemagne most of his military efforts were aimed at stopping the Viking raids. Tellingly the last of his many campaigns was in 810 and was against the Vikings. [Budde (2017b)]

Pitched sea battles were uncharacteristic of the Viking Age, and this implies that a fleet at Ghent in Flanders was not placed there to intercept Viking raiders out in the North Sea. Instead, this fleet was more likely to be used for fast transport to bring warriors to wherever raiders had come ashore. In 811 AD Harald Klak had not yet been driven out of Jutland, and so the initial fleet Charlemagne established in Ghent would have to have been manned by his own continental forces. History tells us that when Viking raids first began, Frisian conscripts were released from duties elsewhere in the empire and refocused on defending the Frisian coast. Consequently, this fleet was most likely manned by Frisians. History does not tell us if or when any of Harald's people might have been deployed to Ghent to augment this force. It seems very unlikely that any "first generation" warriors from Harald's *hird* would have been used for this given Harald's preoccupation with retaking his lost kingdom in Jutland. The situation is much less clear, however, when Rorik and the younger Harald stepped onto the historical stage.



Figure 9: The partitioning of Charlemagne's empire into West Francia (France), Lotharingia (Lorraine; yellow), and East Francia (green) under the sons of Louis the Pious after the Treaty of Verdun in 843.

The attempt by Louis the Pious to establish inheritances for his sons plunged the empire into turmoil and chaos. The revolt by his sons in 833-835 resulted in the partitioning of the empire into the three major kingdoms depicted by the map in figure 9 by the year 843 AD. Louis' son Charles the Bald took West Francia, his son Louis the German took East Francia, and his son Lothar took Middle Francia, which came to be called Lotharingia ("Lorraine"). It was during this time of turmoil that Rorik and his brother Harald saw and took an opportunity to play Louis' sons off against each other. Budde writes,

[In] 833 Lothar, who was promised to become Emperor of what would become Lotharingia, revolted against his father, Louis the Pious, because his half-brother Charles the Bald received a significantly larger share of the lands in what would become West Francia. During the period of turmoil Lothar invited the exiled Danish (Jutland) Viking warlord Harald to create havoc in the Frankish Empire. Between 834 and 839 he, together with his brother Rorik, plundered the coast and rivers of Frisia. Louis the Pious did nothing to stop this . . . After father and son reconciled the raids stopped but in exchange for their services Harald and Rorik received Dorestad in fief; this basically was the river lands, starting from the coastal areas of Zeeland, all the way along the Scheldt to

Antwerp and from there to Leuven . . . In exchange their main obligation was to protect the northern region of Lotharingia and stop other Vikings from raiding.

Rorik operated from Wieringen while Harald ruled from the island of Walcheren in Zeeland; together they ruled Dorestad. After the death of Harald (around 844), Rorik became the sole ruler of the region and with the assistance of his nephew Godfry (Gottrik/Godofrid) Haraldson . . . he reneged on the earlier feudal arrangements with the Emperor. There was very little the Emperor could do as the Carolingian Empire had by now weakened considerably. From now on the Vikings ruled Frisia as independent kings. [Budde (2017b)]

In the main, Budde's account here is consistent with those of academic historians. However, things weren't quite so rosy and serene for Rorik and his brother as Budde's account might seem to imply. The Treaty of Verdun made Lothar the new emperor – at least in name; his brothers did little more than pay lip service to this. After Louis the Pious died in 840 Lothar felt himself to be more secure after the Treaty of Verdun, had no further reason to use "his" Vikings to harry and harass his brothers, and he turned on them. Harald the younger and Rorik both "fell into disgrace" and were arrested in about 844. The charges were dubious and the two brothers no doubt felt betrayed by Lothar. It is thought that Harald the younger died in prison, but Rorik escaped and allied himself with Louis the German. By 850 AD he had gathered about himself a private army of Viking warriors and fell upon Lothar's Frisia with a vengeance. He captured much of the Frisian coast and retook the inland town of Utrecht (figure 9) and the trading town of Dorestad to its southeast.

There wasn't much Lothar could do about any of this. Rather than lose a part of his kingdom to one of his brother's Viking allies, he chose to make peace with Rorik and "received him into his allegiance and granted him Dorestad and other counties" on the condition that Rorik "would faithfully handle the taxes and other matters . . . and would resist the piratical attacks of the Danes." The agreement in effect made Rorik a vassal king and ruler of Frisia while "officially" keeping Frisia within Lothar's kingdom.

History does not record who Rorik's *hirdmen* were. It is quite likely that at least some of them were sons or grandsons of Harald Klak's original *hird*. It is also known that Rorik briefly returned to Jutland where he gathered additional warriors and ships for his assault on Frisia. While there his cousin, Godfrid Haraldsson (the son of Harald Klak), also joined his forces. Therefore it is likely these additional warriors also belonged to Harald's original tribe. In 855 Lothar died and was succeeded by his son, Lothar II. In 857, apparently with the younger Lothar's blessings, Rorik sailed back to Jutland with a sizable force of warriors and succeeded in wresting back at least some of Harald Klak's old lands. Some historians have speculated that this might have included Hedeby itself.

However, during his absence his territory in Frisia was attacked and raided by other Vikings in 863. Lothar II was forced to confront them with his own army. Apparently the attack on his lands in Frisia also brought Rorik back from Jutland, and these new Viking raiders withdrew after a time. The incident quite naturally raised questions about Rorik's loyalty in the mind of Lothar II but Rorik seems to have held on to his fief nonetheless. In 867 the Frisians revolted and succeeded in driving Rorik out of at least part of Frisia. But it is known that he was still in Frisia and wielding power in 870. In 869 Lothar II died and Lotharingia was claimed by both Louis the German and Charles the Bald. In 870 these two reached an agreement to divide Lotharingia among them with the Treaty of Meerssen. Charles the Bald held a negotiation with Rorik, the result of which was that Rorik pledged his allegiance to Charles. In 873 he likewise swore allegiance to Louis the German, which seems like a fine bit of tactful covering of his bases with the two most powerful and sometimes-mutually-hostile monarchs in Europe.

Historical Background IV: Godfrey the Sea-King

Rorik died sometime between 873 and 882. The exact date is unknown. He wasn't the only one of the old players to leave the scene around this time. Louis the German died in 876 and was succeeded first by his second son, Louis the Younger, who died in 882, and then by his youngest son, Charles the Fat. As

you might appreciate, the political situation in East Francia was in somewhat of a turmoil from the death of old Louis until 882.

Charles the Bald, king of West Francia, died in 877 and was briefly succeeded by his son, Louis the Stammerer, who in turn died in 879. Following his death West Francia was divided between his sons, one of whom (Carloman II) received Burgundy and Aquitaine, the other of whom (Louis III) received northern France (Neustria). In August of 882 Louis III hit his head on the lintel of a door while mounting his horse in amorous pursuit of a girl. He fractured his skull, died, and Carloman II succeeded as overall king of West Francia. Hearing stories like this, one doesn't have to wonder very much why Charlemagne's empire fell apart under such sad sack descendants. The political situation on the continent was ripe for another Viking to appear on the scene and in 879 AD one did: Godfrey the Sea-King.

Not much is known about Godfrey prior to his appearance at the head of a Viking army in Flanders in 879. He is often confused with Godfrid Haraldsson, the son of Harald Klak, which is why I spell his name 'Godfrey' in this monogram. Godfrey was part of what the English called The Great Heathen Army, a force of Vikings estimated to number somewhere between 500 to 1000 warriors, which invaded England in 865 and conquered most of the country. This army was mainly comprised of Danish Vikings although some Norwegians and others were almost certainly in its ranks. It was led by three chieftains: Ivar the Boneless, Ubbe, and Halfdan. A fourth chieftain, Guthrum, led an invasion of Wessex in 878. His defeat by the English King Alfred the Great led to pacification and the establishment of the Danelaw (Danish-ruled England). There were, however, professional raiders and landless men among the Vikings after this settlement, and these were the men Godfrey led in his invasion of Ghent in Flanders.

Godfrey led a powerful force into the semi-chaotic power vacuum described above. By 882 he had successfully negotiated a deal to become the vassal of Charles the Fat in which he essentially took the place left vacant by the death of Rorik. As part of this arrangement he was given the title Duke of Frisia and, by arrangement, married into the East Frankish royal family. For his side of the bargain, Godfrey promised to defend Frisia against other Vikings – essentially the same deal Rorik had made before him. However, Godfrey did little to uphold his part of the bargain and, indeed, led some of these raids himself. He also began laying claim in his wife's name to the inheritance of Lothar II.

Not surprisingly, the Franks began to think inviting Godfrey into Frisia had been a big mistake. They consequently didn't take long to do something to correct it. In 885 Godfrey was invited to a meeting to discuss his claim of inheritance. At that meeting he was murdered by Gerulf II, a Frisian count. His lands were later turned over to Gerulf, which rather clearly indicates complicity in the murder on the part of the Frankish kings.

Historical Background V: The Frisians "Drive Out the Viking Invaders"

The murder of Godfrey still left the problem of having Godfrey's *hird* running around loose in Frisia. After Godfrey's murder command of his army fell to his lieutenant, a Viking named Sigurd. History goes dark on us as to exactly what happened next. What we do know is that by around November of 885 this army had left Frisia. Frisian historians are adamant in claiming that "the Viking invaders were driven out of Frisia" by Frisians and we know of nothing that disputes this claim. On the other hand, we also have no mention of any great battles fought after Godfrey's murder. We do know that in August of 889 Gerulf II was rewarded for his role "in defeating the Vikings" by Arnulf of Carinthia, who had been declared king of East Francia in 887 by Pope Formosus. Gerulf's reward consisted of full ownership of a number of lands and properties in Frisia.

But it could also be Sigurd's Vikings might not have been all that eager to remain in Frisia. Sigurd had made an alliance with other Viking chieftains who were camped at the mouth of the Seine – including one young chieftain history calls Rollo, the future Duke of Normandy. In November 885 a huge Viking fleet arrived at Paris and Sigurd met with Paris' Bishop Joscelin to demand that the town allow the fleet to

pass. He was refused and the next day attacked Paris. The siege lasted for over a year. The Vikings never returned to Frisia, eventually preferring to establish themselves in Normandy [Hjardar & Vike (2016)].

Whether one prefers to think Godfrey's/Sigurd's *hird* was "driven out" of Frisia or departed for more lucrative pickings in West Francia, the end result is the same: the Vikings who invaded in 879 were gone. In all, they spent only six very visible years in Frisia and there is no practical chance any of them had time to assimilate into the native population. This is why I conclude that Ragemer's ancestors could not have descended from this group.

The situation is different for the descendants of Harald Klak's and Rorik's *hirdmen*. They and their progeny had been living in Frisia for as much as half a century at the time of Rorik's death. This is ample time for them to assimilate into the local population even if – as is likely given the nature of Danish culture – they kept up their occupation as warriors during all that time. By the time Rorik died, many of these descendants would have been as much "Frisians" as "Danes." The differences between the two cultures were so slight as to make them practically indistinguishable.

What became of them after Rorik's death? We have no record of any spontaneous mass exodus of Danes nor is there any mention of any sort of pogrom mounted against them. At the same time, the death of Rorik would have left the warrior members of his *hird* unemployed. Let us ask: if a man loses his job, for whatever reason, what does he do? The answer seems obvious: he goes and finds another job. In the case of a *hirdman* this means finding another lord to serve.

That makes Gerulf a *very* interesting person. His main power base was in Kennemerland (figure 10), and his fiefs granted in 889 included Teisterbant (which is a shire of Vlaardingen), Tiel (roughly 20 miles southeast of Utrecht), Aalburg (roughly 30 miles south of Utrecht), Asch (also southeast of Utrecht), and forest land situated somewhere between Bennebroek (a few miles south of Kennemerland) and mouth of the Old Rhine (a branch of the Rhine delta in the province of Utrecht).

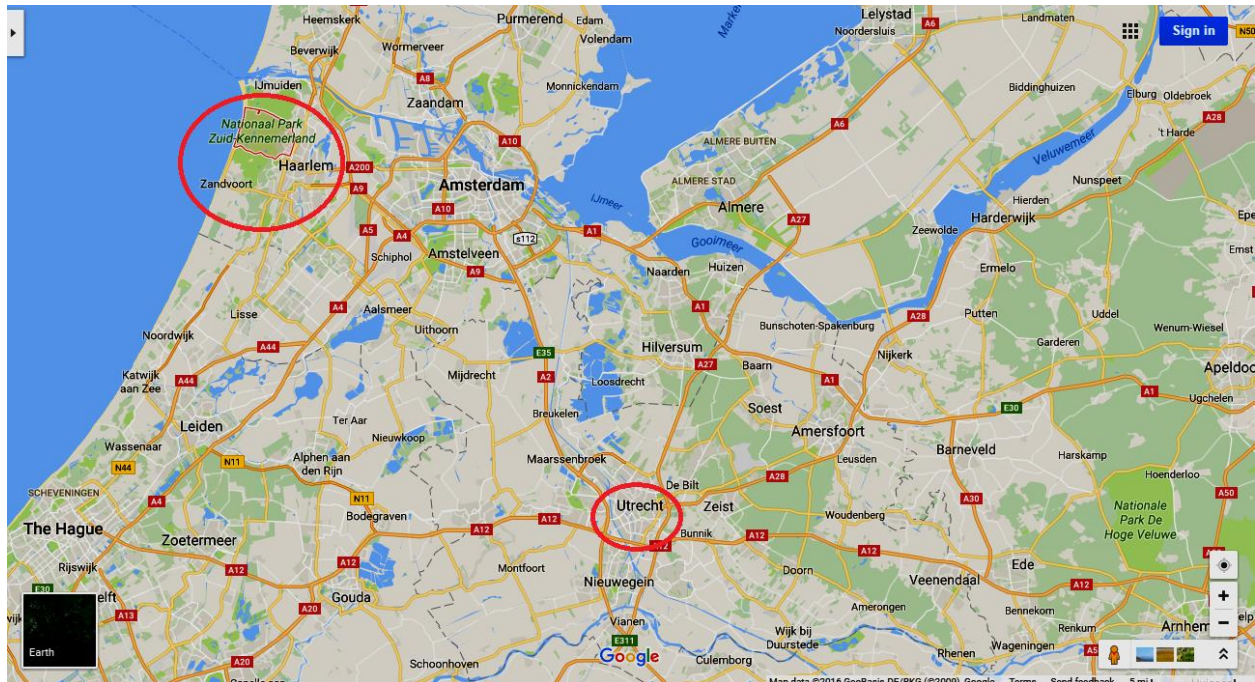


Figure 10: Kennemerland, Utrecht, and surrounding areas. Kennemerland was the main power base of Gerulf II. His land fiefs granted after the death of Godfrey the Sea-King included areas south and southeast of Kennemerland. Teisterbant, which was part of this fief, is a shire of Vlaardingen and is southwest of Amsterdam and a few miles southeast of The Hague.

To put this another way, Gerulf's expanded lands expanded right into the heart of what had been Rorik's old territory. But this is precisely where one would expect to find members of Rorik's old *hird*. The situation gets even more interesting when we consider Gerulf's descendants. *One of these is none other than Gilbert de Gant himself* (<http://fabpedigree.com/s050/f197560.htm>). Indeed, Gilbert's pedigree shows both a paternal (through Gerulf) as well as a maternal line of descent from a succession of counts in Frisia and Flanders. Gilbert's pedigree is thought to run as follows:

Gilbert de Gant b.c. 1040 d.c. 1095

Rudolph (Raoul I) d' Alost de Gant b.c. 1022 d. aft. 1058

Adalbert (Count) de Gant b.c. 1004 d.c. 1032

Arnulf I Count of West Friesland & Holland b.c. 961 d. 993

Arnulf is the person in whom the maternal and paternal possible connections merge:

Maternal side:

Hildegarde Countess of Flanders d. 990

Arnolph I de Flanders b.c. 890 d. 964

Baldwin II 'the Bald' Count of Flanders b.c. 864 d. 918

Baldwin I Count of Flanders b.c. 837 d. 879

Paternal side:

Dietrich (Dirk) II (Count) of West Friesland b.c. 928 d. 988

Dietrich (Dirk) I (Count) of West Friesland b.c. 899 d.c. 940

Gerulf III (Count) of Friesland b.? d.c. 933

Gerulf II of Kennemerland b.c. 850, d.c. 895/896.

Rorik's unemployed former *hirdmen* would have been valuable human resources for the private armies of Dark Age noblemen. From the 9th to the 15th centuries, one of the requirements to *be* a nobleman was to have such an army and to be able to muster it at the beck and call of the king to whom the nobleman's loyalty was pledged. Without such an army a king would have little reason to make a man a nobleman or grant land to him. Even Dark Age church bishops had their own private armies.

Dark Age armies were numerically small by modern (and even by Roman) standards and the majority of soldiers in them were commoners more or less conscripted by their landlords. But the core of these armies always consisted of the elite professional warriors sworn to serve the landlord-noble. Professional proficiency with weapons and martial art skills in the age before firearms required extensive training and discipline, starting in boyhood, to acquire. Such training and discipline was more extensive and intensive *per capita* in Scandinavian cultures than anywhere else in Europe. Hjarðar & Víke tell us,

Life as a warrior required physical fitness and good weaponry skills. These were developed from childhood onwards, irrespective of social rank. Training began at the age of five or six years, and by the age of 10 a boy was expected to be able to take part in athletic competitions alongside adults. By the age of 12 he was expected to be a fully developed athlete. Children and young people played sports to harden the body and prepare themselves for the challenges of adult life, while adults took part in sports for fun and to maintain their fitness and martial skills. . . . The sports field gave young men the opportunity to meet and show off their skills to each other, and also gave chieftains and men of substance a place to recruit crews for their ships and warriors for their retinues. It was important to get men who could distinguish themselves in battle. Sports such as running, throwing, weight lifting, ball games, wrestling, archery and games of armed combat took place on the sports fields. [The epic poem] *Rígstula* goes on to say that men trained with defensive weapons (shields), shooting weapons (bows and arrows), throwing weapons (javelins), distance weapons (spears) and close combat weapons such as sword and axe. [Hjarðar & Víke (2016), pp. 58-64]

They tell us the Vikings even made snowball fights a martial preparation and training sport as a way to teach boys how to besiege and capture towns and fortifications.

All of this would have made Rorik's *hirdmen*, who lost their employer when Rorik died, very attractive

to Gerulf as a ready pool of elite troops to support his position as a count and who were already at hand in his new territories. Their situation would have been analogous to the Japanese medieval *ronin* – samurai warriors who had lost their masters and had to either find a new master or be forced to become bandits. The *hirdmen* would, therefore, be naturally inclined and economically motivated to offer their fealty to the new landlord. They needed each other.

Historical Background VI: Dirk III, the Vlaardingen Knight, and the Battle of Vlaardingen

The existence of the Vlaardingen Knight, who I discussed earlier, provides further circumstantial evidence favoring the proposition that Danish descendants of Viking *hirdmen* assimilated into the Frisian population and continued to live in Frisia as Frisians. Circumstances also suggest that he was associated with descendants of Gerulf who came to be known as the Counts of Holland. I briefly mentioned earlier the possibility of his involvement in the Battle of Vlaardingen. Let me now fill in some additional details about this battle and its connection with one of Gerulf's descendants.

In the technical sense of the word, after Rorik's and Godfrey's deaths the descendants of Rorik's Viking *hirdmen* were no longer "Vikings." They no longer went on raids or engaged in piracy. They no longer forcibly took other people's land away from them and had to be contented with whatever land, rewards, and other benefits they received from their liege lords. There were no pronounced ethnic differences between them and the other inhabitants of Frisia that anyone could have discerned, and there certainly was no knowledge of DNA or genetics during the Dark Ages. Living in Frisia, they would have been called "Frisians" by anyone who met them. In every practical sense, by then they *were* Frisians. But, as I mentioned earlier, the Frisian modal haplotype is characterized by the presence of a SNP called U198. In the case of the descendants of the Vlaardingen Knight, this SNP is absent in their DNA. The Knight was a Frisian but his ancestors were immigrants.

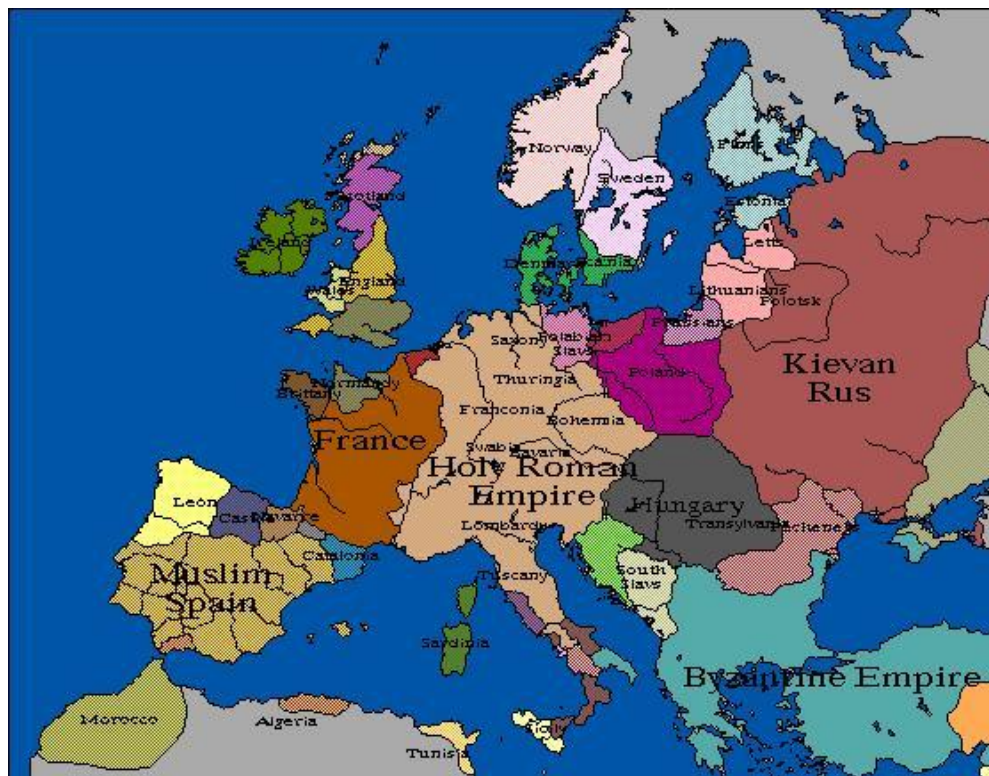


Figure 11: Europe by 1066 AD.

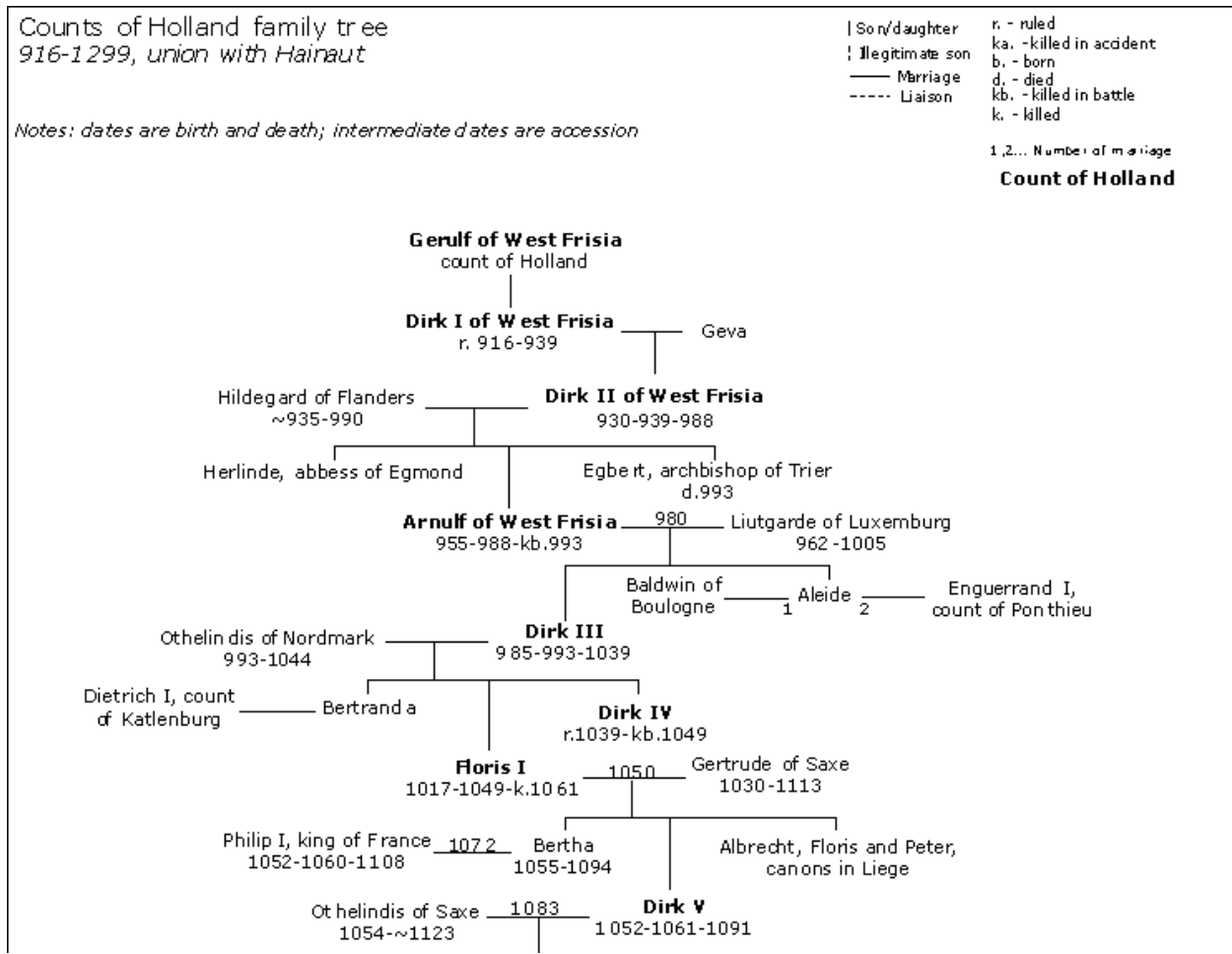


Figure 12: Noble descendants of Gerulf II to 1091 AD.

These "invisible Vikings" of Frisia lived during a time of interregnum and upheaval in Europe itself. Following the death of Lothar II in 867 his kingdom of Middle Francia (Lotharingia) was divided up by the kings of East and West Francia. At the time when Godfrey the Sea-King was murdered and his army was driven out, Frisia officially belonged to East Francia. But the breakup of Charlemagne's empire continued with both East and West Francia disintegrating into smaller ephemeral kingdoms in the 10th century. In the south and east this breakup was halted when Otto the Great was crowned emperor by Pope John XII in 962. Otto's empire later came to be known as the Holy Roman Empire. In West Francia the political situation remained unstable, eventually leading to the transformation of West Francia into France (figure 11). In Frisia and Flanders the "counts of Frisia/Holland" ruled in the emperor's name (figure 12).

During all this turmoil Frisia was regarded by the kings as a minor backwater and the counts of Frisia were more or less free to do as they pleased as long as they did not become an irritant to their nominal king or emperor. Stronger military organization in Frisia and Flanders put a stop to Viking raids, although not to occasional revolts or uprisings by the Frisians themselves. In 993 there was a revolt against Count Arnulf. Arnulf had been born in Flanders and the native Frisians regarded him as another foreign ruler. In 993 they killed him at the Battle of Winkel and his county passed to his son, Dirk III. Dirk was a child in 993 and so the county was administered until 1005 AD by his mother, who acted as regent.

Dirk III provides an example of how tenuous the grip of the German emperor was. He also provides an example of how unfriendly the local rivalries were between himself and the powerful bishops who ruled Utrecht, Trier, and Cologne. The bishops wanted Dirk's territory for themselves and he wanted theirs.



Figure 13: Vlaardingen, Utrecht, and Tiel.

To counter their threats Dirk built a castle at Vlaardingen and based his army there (figure 13). In order to pay for it, he and his Frisians began charging illegal tolls on merchant ships traveling to Tiel and Utrecht. It was an action that directly defied the emperor. The bishop and the merchants of Utrecht and Tiel protested and Emperor Henry II responded by rescinding Dirk's title. He gave Dirk's county to Bishop Adalbold of Utrecht and sent an army against Dirk. It was another case of a pipsqueak local ruler challenging a mighty emperor. The two armies clashed near Vlaardingen in 1018.

To the empire's shock, Dirk inflicted a crushing defeat on the imperial army [Nieuwenhuijsen (2011)]. In the aftermath Dirk was permitted to keep his lands and to continue levying tolls. He later even managed to expand his lands at the expense of the Bishop of Utrecht. It seems obvious that Dirk's forces consisted of more than some simple militia put together from local Frisian peasants. It points to the presence of well trained professional warriors within its ranks.

One thing should not be overlooked in all this: Despite the fact that Dirk's army at Vlaardingen is said to have been comprised of Frisians, he and the other "Counts of Holland" had by then become associated with Flanders and Ghent. This can only imply that the powerbase for Gerulf's descendants had by then shifted further to the west. This shift would have taken their *hirdmen* to the west with it.

Concluding Remarks

The hypothesis I present in this monogram on the origins of Ragemer's ancestors is not certain beyond

a reasonable doubt. It is a speculation, but a speculation around which a number of empirical factors coalesce. Genetic evidence serves to broadly outline a suggested geographical region. Language clues implicate a Frisian connection between Ragemer and his forebears. There is an historical basis that provides a plausible and factual ground for the possibility that these ancestors were members of one specific group; namely, the south Jutland tribe of Harald Klak. Finally, a direct genealogical link between Ragemer's liege lord (Gilbert de Gant) and Gerulf II provides an economic and geographical link between descendants of Harald's *hirdmen* and Gilbert himself. Taking all these clues together, the conclusion drawn by this study is that the Dark Age place of origin of the Wells family is the region known today as Southern Schleswig and pictured in figure 14.



Figure 14: The original homeland of Ragemer's ancestors according to the hypothesis presented in this monogram.

Numerous other speculations concerning Wells Dark Age ancestry can be brought up which are not-impossible in the sense that they are not *disproven* by facts we presently possess. I have examined several such hypotheses in conducting my research on the question. None of these, however, exhibit the virtue of having the number of independent diverse factors all converging toward one conclusion exhibited by the hypothesis I present in this monogram. This feature of convergence is what makes this south Jutland hypothesis the one which has a higher likelihood of being true than all the others.

At the state of our present knowledge, and given the absence of written documentation about the vast majority of people in Dark Age Europe, I think it is unlikely that a different or better hypothesis might be discovered at some later time. It is possible that future analyses of population genetics might bring out additional evidence either favoring or refuting the hypothesis presented here. However, until such time as additional empirical evidence is brought to light, future genealogical research can only be guided according to a principle set down by Isaac Newton in Book III of his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*; namely,

In experimental philosophy we are to look upon propositions inferred by general induction from phenomena as accurately or very nearly true, notwithstanding any contrary hypothesis that might be imagined, till such time as other phenomena occur by which they may either be made more accurate or liable to exceptions.

This principle of Newton's is one of the fundamental methodological principles of all scientific research.

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