

ETHNOPOIESIS IN EARLY NORMANDY

A Thesis
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Submitted to the Graduate School
at Appalachian State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

August 2018
Department of History

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Abstract

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This paper intends to explore the emergence of the Norman ethnicity during the first three generations of their settlement in Francia. Primarily through analysis of the *Gesta Normannorum* of Dudo of St. Quentin, the paper will track the deliberate measures that the early rulers of Normandy underwent in order to forge an intermediary ethnic identity which embodied both their Scandinavian heritage as well as embracing their Frankish present. By combining elements of both of these ethnic identities, the Normans created an ethnicity uniquely their own and were thus able to survive and thrive in their new homeland.

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INTRODUCTION

THE NORMAN ETHNOPOIIESES : CREATING A NEW IDENTITY

“...peoples (gentes, populi, nations) were normally thought of as social and political communities and the myths of common origin of a people served to increase or express its sense of solidarity.”¹

As the Franks were unable to put up any resistance to the pagans, and saw that the whole of Francia was verging on annihilation, they came to the king with one accord, and said to him: “Why will you not come to the aid of the kingdom which you are to ‘preside over and profit’ with scepter? Why not buy peace through conciliation, since we are unable to get it either through war, or by any sort of defensive precaution? The king’s honour and the king’s peace are brought low, and the insolence of the heathen is raised up. The land allotted to the Franks is considered no better than a desert, for its population is either dead through famine or the sword, or is perhaps in captivity.

Protect your kingdom: if not by arms, then by counsel.”²

- Dudo of St. Quentin, *History of the Normans*

From the far northern coasts islands of Scotland to the rivers of Russia, medieval Europe faced a daunting new threat from the eighth century onwards: the Vikings. The Viking Age, defined roughly as the period between 793 and 1066, was a diasporic movement of the Scandinavian peoples, causing an unprecedented intermixing between them and the peoples of continental Europe. The Vikings journeyed across north-western medieval Europe and beyond, forever changing the lands which they visited, including the Frankish kingdoms.³ The successor states to Charlemagne’s empire governed by the remnants of his

¹ Susan Reynolds, "Medieval ‘Origines Gentium’ and the community of the realm." *History* 68, no. 224 (1983), 375.

² Dudo of St. Quentin and Eric Christiansen, *History of the Normans*, trans. Eric Christiansen (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 1998), 46.

³For the context of this paper, Viking will be used to primarily delineate those Scandinavians who participated in the diaspora of the Viking Age (c. 793-1066) as raiders, traders, and settlers; essentially, Scandinavians outside of Scandinavia.

Carolingian dynasty, were kingdoms in decline. Bordered by hostile powers to the east and west and constantly riven by internecine conflict, the Carolingians were ill prepared to handle the advent of the Viking threat along their coasts and rivers. Unable to militarily defeat this new threat, the Carolingian kingdoms initiated a campaign of integration, bringing select Vikings into their power structure as allies and vassals. It is this process of political integration that is central to understanding the early Norman duchy.⁴

From the first raid on Lindisfarne in 793, more than a century before the foundation of Normandy, the Vikings were an influential force within the medieval world, completely altering the dynamics of the era. The dawn of the Viking Age and its raids is not as important for this study as the shift to permanent settlement. As this shift began, it coincided with and exacerbated a time of deep division and the decline of legitimate authority within the Frankish realms. In time, this weakness of authority within Francia led to the creation of Normandy. This weakness left the Franks, confronted with threats on every border, to adopt a policy of commendation.⁵ Rather than continually opposing these outsiders through military force, a tactic which often saw Frankish forces defeated, the ruling elite instead sought to bring members of these war bands into their network of power, utilizing them as tools in return for land.

Into this new melting pot of cultures, languages, and religions, Vikings found themselves needing to adapt to a variety of situations in order to survive and thrive. In England, the local politics were fractured and weak enough for the Viking newcomers not

⁴ Simon MacLean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Aldabert of Magdeburg* (New York: Manchester University Press 2009), 4-5.

⁵ Commendation is the formal term used to refer to the process by which Frankish rulers granted land or benefices to Viking leaders in return for their protection of the area granted

only to conquer a large swathe of the island as their own kingdom, but to maintain presence long enough to forever alter the local language and place names. In Ireland, however, while the Viking presence was incredibly influential on the local culture, they were rarely an overwhelming force, often interacting with the local kingdoms as equals or as the weaker party.

In Francia, there was no single polity with the power or influence to force them from the region completely. The fractious nature of Frankish politics, combined with a plethora of internal and external threats, left the Viking newcomers in a position to navigate the politics of the region and negotiate territorial gain rather than relying on conquest. Because they arrived solely to Francia as a threat, but as potential allies in the ongoing political struggles, the Frankish rulers were more willing to tolerate the Vikings. While in many cases, the Vikings brought into Francia by its rulers to serve as buffers from their fellows and as military auxiliaries were viewed by these rulers as temporary pawns and betrayed, they nevertheless served to establish precedent for their existence in the schema of Frankish life. By the time Rollo arrived with his warband in the late ninth century, the Frankish nobles were both willing to accept them, to a degree, as well as weak enough to need them.

To the modern eye, if a person looked like a Frank, talked like a Frank, and acted like a Frank then one must assume they were, indeed, a Frank. Removed from the situation by a millennia, it is easy to take this stance. However, for the people living at this time it was not so simple a delineation. To Frankish observers, those residing around Rouen were still Northmen and to those who followed Rollo and his descendants being too close to the Franks was viewed as weakness; from the outside they were not permitted to be Frankish and from within, being Frankish undermined their authority to lead. Necessity forced them to create a

new ethnic identity, one that allowed them to make use of the trappings and mechanisms of Frankish authority while binding together the Scandinavian elites and the local Frankish peasantry; there was necessity to become Norman.

Defining ethnicity is always tricky, more so when dealing with the early Middle Ages. In modern studies on ethnic identity, there are currently two prevailing schools of thought: the instrumentalist school and the primordial school. The instrumentalist school sees ethnicity as a subjective, conscious phenomenon. Nick Webber, in *The Evolution of Norman Identity, 911-1154*, discusses the two schools, writing that the instrumentalist school:

...advocated a reassessment of the very simplistic model of ethnic identity previously provided. The idea that ethnicity was an objective reality was no longer considered accurate, and the contributors saw ethnicity as more of a subjective phenomenon. This led them to emphasize the importance of ethnicity as something that was *claimed by those within a group, and attributed by those outside it*. The focus was therefore, not on the groups themselves but rather on the *boundaries between those groups, and the interactions around and across those boundaries*. The result of this research was the ‘instrumentalist’ school of thought, which considered ethnicity not as something inherited, but rather something taken on voluntarily – *it was a rational choice, and a situational construct*.⁶

In terms of the creation of an ethnic Norman identity, it is interesting that the instrumentalist school’s theory revolves around the idea of an ethnicity which is claimed from within coupled with attribution from outside sources. If Dudo is considered in light of this interpretation, his work can be seen as a Norman insider claiming their identity for them; outside observers such as Flodoard acknowledge the ethnic narrative as well, distinguishing the residents of Normandy as a distinct entity from what was previously there and from themselves. David Chappell, in his article “Ethnogenesis and Frontiers”, says,

⁶ Nick Webber, *The Evolution of Norman Identity, 911-1154* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2005), 3. Emphasis mine.

“‘Instrumentalists’ emphasize the invention of ethnic identity, often by self-interested elites, in which symbols and myths are carefully selected and promoted to build solidarity against rivals.”⁷ Thus, the principle that the Scandinavian elites in Normandy under Rollo and his family intentionally fostered a new, collective “Norman” mythology to promote a new ethnic identity, stands on solid ground.

As with most theories within academic fields, the instrumentalist school of thought is not without opposition. Contrasting the instrumentalist school is the primordialist school.

Regarding the primordialist school Webber continues:

From the primordialist perspective, ethnic identity is an almost subconscious phenomenon, and one which acts beyond the rationality of thought. Individuals can be inclined to act in a certain manner, based on their affiliation to a group identity / *ethnie*.⁸ Sometimes, such actions will go against the dictates of ‘material calculation’ because the individual’s freedom of action is constrained by the membership of the group.⁹

Chappell says that, “ ‘Primordialists’ tend to regard ethnic groups as bounded entities that have always existed, are biologically self-perpetuating, and possess a unique culture, language, religion, territory, and history.”¹⁰ While the later generations of Normans would certainly meet some of the primordialist school’s proposed points for an ethnic community, their model is less useful for discussing and understanding emergent ethnic identities. Webber concludes his brief analysis of these schools of thought by indicating that the instrumentalist school of thought tends to focus on

⁷ David Chappell, “Ethnogenesis and Frontiers”, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fall, 1993), 268.

⁸ Webber uses the French *ethnie* rather than ethnicity to distinguish from the connotations and other uses of the word by American sociologists. An *ethnie* “could be recognized through its unique racial, linguistic and cultural profile.” He latter dismisses the earlier definition, redefining *ethnie* “as a ‘community bound together by belief in common descent and actual common interests’, an extension of the *idiom of kinship*, a community that attaches import to its difference from others and reflects this in an ethnonym, or a group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language.” pgs. 2, 4.

⁹ Webber., 3

¹⁰ Chappell, 268.

studies of groups while the primordialists focus on individuals, so the reality of ethnic identity likely lies somewhere between the two. For the purposes of understanding the early Norman ethnic identity the instrumentalist viewpoint will provide a more useful lens.

Ethnicity is an inherently fluid concept, shifting in nature as dictated by internal or external pressures but they are nevertheless strict in the boundaries separating them from other ethnic groups. Chappell says that:

Whereas cultures are complex and relatively open, however, ethnicity stresses boundary formation, based on rather more simplistic criteria. Ethnic groups can change form - they may even use fictive kinship metaphors to recruit outsider spouses, adoptees, or clients as new members - but reified differences still produce an 'us versus them' constraint toward strangers. In a sense, ethnic groups need each other, because the very identity they espouse relies upon being *different*.¹¹

Turning to Webber, "...there is a general consensus that identities are prone to constant change (and are thus unstable), that ethnicity is not necessarily the only form of community in a society, and that ethnicity need not be the primary form of identity for an individual."¹²

The comment on communities is important in the context of the emerging Norman ethnic identity. Rollo and his descendants embarked on policies to purposefully infiltrate and integrate with the existing communities within Normandy to foster a new, more encompassing group identity. The newly minted Normans adopted Carolingian titles and political powers while allying themselves with the church, perhaps the most fundamental of medieval European communities. In the case of Norman ethnic identity in the late ninth and tenth centuries, its emergence is due to both forms of pressure. Internally the ambitions of

¹¹ Chappell, 268.

¹² Webber, 5.

Rollo and his line to create a continued dynastic and political entity on the frontiers of Carolingian power necessitated a Norman identity to unite the Scandinavian war-bands and settlers with the native Frankish populations while legitimizing their right to rule.

Externally, the pressures of existing on the boundary of Frankish power, facing threats from the Bretons to the west, Flemings to the east, and other Vikings from the north, imposed the creation of political ethnicity which could mimic the symbols of Carolingian power and religion and thereby ameliorate the inherent otherness of the Scandinavian origins of the Normans. By making themselves more like their Carolingian neighbors, the Normans negated some of their inherent “otherness” and made their position less threatening and therefore became less threatened themselves. It is only when actions of Norman leaders intimate ambitions beyond their borders that they once more become a threat treated with open hostility. What then, is the difference between ethnicity and political ethnicity? In his essay, “Frontier Identities: Carolingian Frontier and the *Gens Danorum*” Ildar Garipzanov, discusses the brief flourishing of the *gens Danorum* in the ninth century due to the military and political pressure exerted by the Carolingians. He says:

The example of the *gens Danorum* in the ninth century thus suggests that many early medieval *gentes* were characterized, first and foremost, by ‘political ethnicity’, which is to say that political factors, circumstances, and rationale played a dominant role – much greater than a coherent ethnic substrate – in the creation of such groups... The presence of a dominating political power threatening its neighbors, such as the Roman Empire or the Carolingian kingdom, should be counted among one of the major factors leading to the construction of such ‘political ethnicities’ and new identities. It was the threat of aggression that helped to overcome ethnic fluidity and facilitated the creation of new gentile identities in frontier regions of such empires... the *gens Danorum* of the ninth century was constructed in southern Jutland from people of different ethnicities in response to an approaching Carolingian expansion. The Danish ruling elite from adjacent islands was able to offer military expertise as well as military support from the Danes living to the northeast and, hence, it defined a unifying frontier identity... As soon as

the need for such an opposition ceased to exist, the gentile identity that was connected to it faded away.¹³

The ideas proposed about the emergence and swift dissolution of the *gens Danorum* in ninth century Jutland contains interesting parallels to the circumstances of Normandy in the ninth and tenth century. In Jutland, various Scandinavian ethnicities coalesced under pressure of the Carolingians into a united, “Danish” *gens* that was previously nonexistent. These newly unifying ethnic ties were expedient and necessary to forge bonds capable of interacting with the Carolingians on similar terms, both politically and militarily, and maintaining this unity so long as the threat remained. Expanding on a similar idea, Chappell says that:

“Expansive national enterprises normally generate clients, subjects, or enemies (including refugees) on their frontiers. They may stimulate new trade patterns, warfare, and population shifts, and may cause old groupings or fragments to redefine themselves in ways that are both innovative and replicative.¹⁴

This idea can apply as easily to the *gens Danorum* that Garipzanov postulates as it does to the Norman ethnic identity. Chappell states that the new groupings created by an expansive entity, in this case the Carolingians, are both “innovative and replicative.” These terms suite the Norman ethnic identity well, as it was a composite of early identities that formed new, unique traits.

In Normandy, the Scandinavians under Rollo and his line faced a similar problem to the peoples of Jutland in the ninth century. Likely hailing from disparate parts of the larger Scandinavian world, Rollo and his followers were thrust (albeit

¹³ Ildar Garipzanov, “Frontier Identities: Carolingian Front and the *Gens Danorum*,” in Garipzanov, Ildar H., Patrick J. Geary, and Przemysław Urbańczyk. *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2008), pg 142.

¹⁴ Chappell, 271.

willing) into a position of authority of over an ethnic group with substantially different culture, language, and religion: the Franks of Neustria. Together, these Scandinavians and Franks faced hostile entities on all sides. Viewed in the lens of the instrumentalist school of thought, the Norman ethnic identity “was a rational choice, and a situational construct.”¹⁵ In order to face these threats while maintaining internal balance, the “political ethnicity” Norman was necessary to unite the Scandinavian elites and their Frankish subjects while becoming Frankish enough to be accepted into the Carolingian world. In other words, “They [became] Scandinavian enough to be separate but Frankish enough not to offend.”¹⁶

Of course, the very idea of a Norman ethnic identity, of *Normannitas*, is a highly debated subject. However, these debates tend to fixate on the Normans after their conquests in the later eleventh century, when Norman conquerors began to meld with their subjects in England, Sicily, and their other conquered areas.¹⁷ Those who contend against the idea of a *Normannitas*, such as David Bates in *Normandy Before 1066*, fixate on the theme in latter Norman histories of their destiny as conquerors; events of the tenth century are typically passed over in brief as, in the words of Bates himself, “The study of the Norman tenth century is an arduous and delicate task.”¹⁸ Yet while the idea of the “Norman Myth” has received much attention, much less has been spent on discussing the idea of a Norman ethnogenesis. Matters of ethnic identity are not always one sided, “Ethnic identity results from a process of labelling (identification). This may be self-labelling, but labelling by others

¹⁵ Webber, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁷ The two main works representing the sides of the debate are R. H. C. Davis’ *The Normans and their myth* which refutes the idea of a Norman identity as anything other than propaganda and Graham Loud’s rebuttal article, “The *Gens Normannorum* – myth or reality?”

¹⁸ David Bates, *Normandy Before 1066* (NY: Longman Group Limited, 1982), xii.

is also involved, since ethnic identity may be contested.”¹⁹ For there to be a Norman identity, more than the historiographical tradition and self-perception of the supposed *gens* must exist; there must, from the outside, be a degree of recognition that one group of people is distinct from another. In other words, for a Norman ethnic identity to exist, they must recognize such a distinction themselves and be viewed as separate by others.

It is apparent from the Frankish accounts of the Normans of Rouen that they regarded their neighbors as something different from themselves. Even as late as the 990s, Frankish chronicler Richer referred to both William Longsword and his son Richard as “dux pyratarum.”²⁰ This is obviously not a flattering title. In fact, throughout his *Histories* Richer refers to the Vikings throughout almost exclusively as “pirates;” when referring to William Longsword Richer calls him both “*Wilelmum principem Nortmannorum*” and later as “*Wilelumus piratarum dux*.”²¹ For at least one Carolingian, William was only a Northman and a pirate. This is at least some form of progress, as Richer’s scant mention of Rollo gives no form of title whatsoever.²² Richer is not only disparaging of the Norman leaders: throughout his work he refers to the followers of William as “Northmen” or “barbarians.”²³ For Richer, while the ruler of Neustria had at least some measure of legitimacy (at the very least meriting some form of title), his people were still viewed as no different (and certainly no better) than Vikings pirates.

¹⁹ Robert Bartlett. "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001), 40.

²⁰ Richer as quoted by van Houts, 14.

²¹ Richer and Justin Lake, *Histories. Volume I Volume I* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), 192-193 and 206- 207.

²² *Ibid.*, 81.

²³ Richer and Lake, 269.

In the Carolingian-Frankish context, both the titles of *princeps* and *dux* have important connotations. According to Helmut Reimitz in *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550-850*, “the *princeps* title had been applied to kings as well as members of their political elites.” By this definition *princeps* as a title included at least allusions to royal status or at the very least that a person with the title enjoyed a degree of royal favor; when used for William Longsword, it can be assumed that the writers were giving some legitimacy to his position. As for *dux*, Reimitz says that it was, “...basically a functional title. [The *dux*] was in charge of a specific territory, a governor of a region that could be described with an ethnic denominator.” By giving William both the titles of *princeps* and *dux*, Richer acknowledges William’s position as legitimate as well as nominally acknowledging his leadership over a specific ethnic group. The writings of Richer pose an interesting dichotomy: William is asserted both as an outsider but at the same time is referred to by Carolingian titles of legitimacy.

This is more interesting in that it seems early in his account Richer refers to hostile Scandinavians as “pirates,” while those behaving in a manner he determines as good are called “Northmen;” William is given both of these accolades despite that fact that Richer’s opinion of him is largely charitable. Also of note, when Richer first refers to Richard, William’s son and heir, he says only that he was, “Wiliam [Longsword’s] son by a Breton concubine...” and makes no mention of pirates nor Northmen.²⁴ Later references to Normandy during Richard’s rule use only the term “Northmen.”

²⁴ Richer, 241.

Three generations of settlement, conversion, and cultural assimilation were not enough in the eyes of the Franks to separate the Normans of Rouen from their Viking forebears. Along with Richer, another contemporary of William Longsword, the annalist Flodoard, continually and habitually referred to William as “princeps of the Northmen.”²⁵ These statements by Flodoard are the closest that any contemporary, non-Norman sources get to acknowledging the idea of a Norman ethnicity. Flodoard frequently uses the word *princeps* to refer to leaders amongst the Franks as well as William, indicating that he viewed it as a set term within an established Carolingian mechanism of authority. Yet, he does not present William as the leader of Neustria, the Carolingian term for the area of Normandy, but insists on reference to him only as a leader of Northmen. He acknowledges William’s place within a Carolingian style hierarchy, but does not recognize either William or his subjects as Franks; they are something different, something in between: they are Norman.

For the Norman perspective, Dudo’s *History of the Normans* does much to explain the sentiments with which the Normans of Rouen regarded Franks and the distinct feeling of being different that they must have experienced. Dudo’s language frequently elucidates the otherness that is the Norman identity, “William, duke of the Dacians...calls together the chiefs of the Normans...”²⁶ This is no duke of the Franks calling his vassals to council. No, this is a war leader gathering the chiefs of his warriors to gather in conference. Later, in an attempt to pacify growing discontent among his men, Dudo has William offering “armlets”

²⁵ Flodoard, and Bernard S. Bachrach, Steven Fanning, and Philippe Lauer, *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966* (Toronto [Ont.]: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 23, 31-33, 36-38.

²⁶ Dudo and Christiansen, 61.

and other valuable objects to those who were unsatisfied; the giving of arm rings and other fine booty among his men was a mark of any distinguished Viking warlord.²⁷

Dudo's work also displays the friction between the Scandinavian elites and those who were assimilating with the local culture. Any signs or attempts by William to become Frankish were seen as weakness of authority and reason to rebel. According to Dudo, Riulf, one of William's followers who rebelled early in William's reign, brought these grievances to his fellow Norsemen:

Our lord William, who was begotten on the noblest stock of the *Frankish* race, has procured *Frankish* friends for himself, and is deprived of our counsel and has been inaccessible to the violence of our grief. For he is trying to shut *us* out from the kingdom altogether...he wants to give the land which we own to his own kinsmen to be possessed by their heirs, and he will enrich them generously with the offices that are ours.²⁸

Through the words attributed to Riulf one can glean the tension between the first generation Scandinavians around Rouen and those who were steadily growing more Frankish. The Norse constituency feared losing their lands and benefits to Franks or Frankish nobles, of being made irrelevant and no longer heeded. They feared that William, in his attempts to become more like the Franks, would exclude them from the benefits of power. Later, Riulf further stated, "...he labours to unite against us the Frankish-born relations of his noble family and the chiefs who join him in conspiracy. Therefore let us take heed lest we be tricked and ground down by the Frankish peoples."²⁹ Again later, "say to William...that he is to depart...and go quickly to his Frankish kinsmen. For he is to be the inheritor of this land no longer, and we will be our lord no more, because he is *alien* to us..."³⁰ Clearly, amongst

²⁷ Dudo and Christiansen, 65.

²⁸ My emphasis, *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁰ Emphasis mine. Dudo and Christiansen, 66.

those who still believed themselves to be Norse, William and others had diverged enough to become alien and distinctly different. One who was not viewed as Scandinavian was not fit to rule in Normandy.

When faced with the rebellious Norsemen, William was indeed inclined to flee to his Frankish relatives for support. Upon hearing this, the Scandinavians among his loyal followers declared that they would escort him only to the edge of Frankish territory and depart, referring to their history of conflict against the Franks under Rollo and calling William “womanish” for his cowardly ways; if William behaved like a Frank, his remaining Scandinavian followers would abandon him. Incensed by these accusations, William rallies and leads men to battle, personally leading the charge and breaking the rebels.³¹ Though Dudo’s accounts of these events may not be completely factual, the underlying feeling of ethnic and cultural tensions amongst the early Normans rings true. William, stuck precariously between the first generation of Scandinavian settlers and those who had been raised in the west, strode on a blade’s edge in his need to balance the sides of his identity, being Scandinavian enough to retain the loyalty of his military base while embracing enough of the Frankish ways to negotiate their politics.

However, while William and others may have been moving toward an ethnic identity that was “alien” to those remaining Scandinavians, they still retained aspects of that identity as well. Twice, Dudo references William understanding and speaking the Danish (Old Norse)

³¹Ibid., 67-68; the Carolingians had long favored split inheritance amongst their sons, as can be seen by the fragmentation of the Carolingian kingdoms throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. However, by the late tenth century in order to conserve their dwindling power and influence, Carolingian kings began adapting primogeniture as their favored means of inheritance. Edward James, *Origins Of France* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pg. 185.

tongue well enough to understand it when heard and to converse fluently in it.³² When William speaks to his vassals of his desire to forgo his position as ruler and become a monk, he urges them, “to elect for yourselves as duke my son Richard...”³³ This statement reveals a crossroads between Scandinavian and Frankish concepts of leadership; the election of a leader ties closely to the Scandinavian sentiments while the passing of leadership to the son is a more Frankish concept.³⁴

Through Dudo and Flodoard, a clear picture emerges of a distinct ethnic group coming into existence around Rouen; one which the Franks felt as separate from themselves but also one which was struggling with its own tensions and strain between Scandinavian and Frankish identities. Through the experiences of William and in part Richard, as depicted by Dudo, one can grasp the struggle amongst the early Norman leaders to retain a balance between a core Scandinavian-ness which ensured the loyalty of their military base while at the same time adapting to Frankish ways to form alliance and navigate the political landscape of their neighbors.

Let us return then, the quote which opened this section, “...peoples (gentes, populi, nations) were normally thought of as social and political communities and the myths of common origin of a people served to increase or express its sense of solidarity.”³⁵ The Normans of Rouen were undoubtedly a social and political community bound, whether they liked it or not, to a common cause: survival and political sovereignty in the face of outside and predatory forces. Returning again to Dudo, William’s vassals express their concerns,

³² Dudo, 73-74.

³³ Dudo, 78.

³⁴ Eleanor Searle, *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power, 840-1066* (Berkeley [u.a.]: Univ. of California Pr, 1988), 2, 244.

³⁵ Reynolds, "Medieval 'Origines Gentium' and the community of the realm.", 375.

“Who will defend us from the incursions of the menacing heathen, and from their pestilent savagery? Or who will protect us from the treachery of the Frankish nation?”³⁶ To maintain this nascent unity and to forge the solidarity necessary so survive and thrive, a Norman identity was created.

Through Rollo and to a lesser extent William, both the *Planctus* and the historiographical tradition established by Dudo’s *The History of the Normans* create and solidify a common creation myth for the Norman people, establishing a core from which a new identity would be created; Rollo, god’s chosen vessel for a destined people, the martyred William to lend holiness to the bloodline, and Richard to take their foundation and create a new nation. To be Norman was to make use of the Carolingian mechanisms of power, its religion, political structure, and means of war, while maintaining the militant warrior ethos of the Scandinavian past, arrogantly certain of one’s warrior prowess in the face of womanish Franks. One’s origins were not important; Norse, Frank, Breton, all could become Norman. All that truly mattered was adherence to the myth of Rollo, William, and Richard and to be a proud scion of independent and warlike men, strong in faith and in arms.

By examining the history of Viking and Frankish interactions as well as the seminal origin myth that Dudo crafted in his *Gesta Normanarrum*, this thesis intends to show how the peoples who would become the Normans deliberately crafted their culture and ethnic history in such a way as to become compatible with that of the Frankish people they found themselves living amongst. By crafting a Norman ethnicity, Rollo and his heirs, with the

³⁶ Dudo and Christiansen, 78.

collaboration of Dudo, created a new identity that was Frankish enough to survive without completely abandoning their Scandinavian past.

CHAPTER 1

ROLLO THE WAR-CHIEF: THE SCANDINAVIAN PAST OF NORMANDY

The origin of Normandy, the region of Francia situated between Brittany and Flanders, is tied inextricably to the diaspora of Scandinavian peoples during the Viking Age; without these settlers, raiders, and traders Normandy would not have existed (it would not even have its name). While the Scandinavian settlers who arrived in the later ninth century were fundamental to the creation of Normandy, the extent to which their influence carried through to later generations of Normandy is the most highly contested aspect of studies into the early Norman duchy. While the degree to which Scandinavian elements directly influenced Normandy is important, it is more important to the study of the Normans as an emergent ethnicity to understand how they and others perceived their Scandinavian heritage. To that end the texts which built the Norman identity, Dudo's *History of the Normans*, written c. 1015, and those that followed in his footsteps, are crucial to understanding how the Normans themselves perceived their Scandinavian past and how they projected it to their Frankish neighbors.

Dudo of St. Quentin was the first dedicated historian of the Normans and the major historical works which came after built from his *History of the Normans*. Before coming to the Norman court, Dudo served as a canon at the monastery of St. Quentin. Dudo himself was a Frank and educated in the classical stylings of the Carolingian schools. He first encountered Duke Richard while on an embassy from the count of Vermandois around 987.¹

¹ Emily Albu, *The Normans in their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Boydell Press: Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2001), 7.

It seems that Richard and Dudo became fast friends, with Dudo visiting often over the years, until Richard approached him with a request to write a history of his ancestors. Dudo, by his own account, initially refused before he eventually succumbed to the Duke's pleas.² Duke Richard's son Richard II as well as the previous duke's half-brother Raoul, convinced Dudo to continue with the work despite the death of his patron Richard. Dudo was clearly well regarded by the Norman court and felt the same towards them, doubtlessly shaping his work to be as pleasing as possible to his patrons.

Here, it is important to note that medieval historians did not value historical truth in the same manner of modern ones; truth to the medieval historian was not restricted to verifiable fact, but could instead reflect what was commonly believed.³ In crafting his history, Dudo was not necessarily attempting to record the factual origins of the Normans and their ruling dynasty but was instead crafting a narrative of belief, an origin story for the Norman people.

Dudo begins his account on the origins of the Normans by describing the geographic origins of the "*Daci* [who] call themselves *Danai*, or Danes..." which lies:

"[s]pread out within the huge space between the Danube and the edge of the Scythian Seas [where] dwell savage and barbarous peoples, which are said to have sprung forth in various different ways from the island of Scanza... For there lies the region of the great multitudes of Alania, the exceedingly fertile site of Dacia..."⁴

Already one can see why scholars have been quick to judge Dudo's work as valueless. At first glance, Dudo has apparently placed the origins of the Danes from Scandinavia (here

² Albu, 8.

³ Leah Shopkow, "*History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*," (The Catholic University of America Press: Washington, D.C., 1997), pg. 122.

⁴ Dudo and Christiansen, 15, 16.

called Scanza) but by way of Dacia, far to the south of their real origins. Yet, while verifiably wrong, these statements contain elements of the “truths” Dudo was crafting in this work.

What truth, then, was Dudo attempting to convey by placing the origins of the Danes by adding the Dacian element into the story? Dudo’s *History of the Normans* is not unique among medieval authors in seeking to craft origin stories for the various medieval ethnic groups. Most importantly to this text were the Frankish authors who had made their *origo* legends in the centuries prior to the arrivals of the Scandinavians in Western Europe.⁵ One of the central themes to the texts that make up the Frankish *origo* legends is the myth of Trojan descent. While the Frankish origins were being created in the eighth century the Frankish people were also in the process of creating and solidifying their empire in Europe; a necessary aspect of this new imperial enterprise was the need for Roman legitimacy. To the medieval European, Rome was the true source of both civilization and imperial legitimacy. To be an empire, the Franks found it necessary to be more than their “barbarian” origins.

Emily Albu notes:

Newcomers into the Roman world in late antiquity and the Middle Ages might dignify their ancestry by tracing their genealogy back to the Trojans, preferably to Aeneas. Such a mythic history could validate their claims to be the new Romans, sharing an imagined kinship with the old Romans.⁶

The writers of the Frankish *origo*, such as Fredegar and Aimon, incorporated the Trojans into their heroic past as a means of gaining the legitimacy of Rome. To be Frankish, therefore, was to be an inheritor of Rome through Trojan descent.

⁵ Graham Loud, “The *Gens Normannorum* – myth or reality?” in *Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1981*, 113.

⁶ Albu, 13.

It is because of this Frankish mythological connection to Troy that Dudo connects the origins of the Danes primarily with Dacia, not Scandinavia. From Dudo:

And so the *Daci* call themselves *Danai*, or Danes, and boast that they are descended from Atenor; who, when in former times the lands of Troy were laid waste, ‘slipped away in the middle of the Greeks’ and ‘penetrated’ the confines ‘of Illyria’ with his own men.⁷

Thus the Dacian origin of the Danes, according to Dudo, has its roots in a figure from the Trojan legends. The use of Atenor, a relatively minor and unheroic character in Homer and Virgil’s versions of the Trojan myth, initially seems odd. However, Fredgar, one of the more important writers of the Frankish *origo*, claimed Atenor as the ancestor of the Frankish people as did Aimon, as Frankish writer contemporary with Dudo.⁸ By claiming that the Danes descended from Atenor, Dudo gave the Normans ancestral ethnic ties to the Franks. While this connection was entirely fabricated, it nonetheless served as a means to make the Normans less alien to the Franks.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the composition of Dudo’s *History of the Normans* lies in the content of the first chapter of the work. While the subsequent three chapters of the *History* follow the line of the first Norman leaders (Rollo, William Longsword, and Richard I), the first chapter follows a Norseman who is explicitly not related to the ruling line: the war leader Hasting, a real historical figure whom Dudo appropriated for his narrative.

⁷ Dudo and Christiansen, 16.

⁸ Webber, 28.

While he is describing the supposed geographical and classical origins of the Danes, Dudo also describes the process by which the Danes leave their homeland:

[T]hese people burn with too much wanton lasciviousness, and with singular depravity debauch and mate with as many women as they please; and so, by mingling together in illicit couplings they generate innumerable children. When they have grown up, they clamour fiercely against their fathers and their grandfathers, or more frequently against each other, for share of property; and, as they are over-many, and the land they inhabit is not large enough to live in, there is a ...custom by which a multitude of youths is selected by lot and expelled into the realms of other nations, to win kingdoms for themselves by fighting...

And again:

For they are exiled by fathers, boldly to batter kings. They are sent away without wealth from their own people, that they may enrich themselves out of the plenty of foreigners. They are deprived of their own lands, that they may settle undisturbed on those of others...They are separated from their own nation, that they may rejoice in possessing others...Along the sea-shores they sail, to win themselves the despoiling of lands...⁹

The expelled and bloodthirsty youth of a barbarous land was thus unleashed by their fathers to conquer and enrich themselves on the greater world; with these tides of warlike men emerge two individuals of importance to Dudo's work: Rollo, who will serve as Dudo's foundation for the Norman people and dynasty, and Hasting, his antithesis. Dudo holds nothing back as he describes Hasting:

This was a man accursed: fierce, mightily' cruel, and 'savage',
 Pestilent, hostile, sombre, truculent, given to outrage,
 Pestilent and untrustworthy, insolent, fickle and lawless.
 Death-dealing, uncouth, fertile in ruses, warmonger-general,
 Traitor, fomenter of evil, and double-dyed dissimulator,
 Conscienceless, proudly puffed up; seducer, deceiver, and hot-head.
 Gallows-meat, lewd and unbridled one, quarrel maintainer,
 Adder of evil to pestilent evil, increaser of bad faith,
 Fit to be censured not in black ink, but in charcoal graffiti.
 And his was the heinous "ill-doing to make him the worst of them all",

⁹ Dudo and Christiansen, 15-16.

“Whereby the culprit contends against star-circled lofty Olympus”.¹⁰

Dudo clearly bears no sympathy nor love for Hasting. This lengthy repudiation of Hasting is intentional. Dudo needed to show that while this behavior was part of the Norman past, it was in no way celebrated by the Normans of the 11th century. To Dudo, Hasting was no mere man, but an incarnation of evil and sin, unfit even to be recorded in ink. Bursting forth from Scandinavia after recruiting an army of his own, Dudo records Hasting descending on the unprepared Frankish kingdom and that he “made use of [it] as his own.”¹¹ Not only did he make war against the kingdom, Hasting “...desecrated the priesthood and trampled down the holy places...persecute[ed] all men, as the lion the deer...”¹² Hasting and his ilk were a plague of Biblical proportions to the Frankish kingdom in Dudo’s eyes, ravaging the land, people, and church, and leaving a virtual desert in their wake.

Of course, a man as vile and warlike as Hasting would not be satisfied with only Francia under his dominion as he proposes to his fellow Danes, “If you do not object, let us go to Rome, and force it to submit to our dominion like Francia.”¹³ An attack on Rome by Hasting and his rapacious, pagan horde can be viewed on many levels. Firstly, as was mentioned above, the Franks held that Rome was the foundation of their civilization and in part of root of their very identity. Not only were Hasting and his kind depicted by Dudo as a threat to the Frankish homeland, his proposed attack on Rome can be viewed as an attack on the very core of the civilized world from a medieval viewpoint. To add to that Hastings supposed campaign against

¹⁰ Dudo and Christiansen, 16.

¹¹ Ibid., 17.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 18.

Rome can be viewed as an attack against the very heart of Christianity. Dudo thus presents Hasting, and by extension all of the Danes embarking on Viking raids, as an existential threat to the Frankish world, determined to subjugate their land and to strike at the base of Frankish civilization.

Fortunately, after a long journey southward, Hasting mistakes the city of Luna for Rome and sets his sights on conquering it. However, seeing that the city is heavily fortified and defended, Hasting sets out to conquer with duplicity that which he could not take by force. Sending a messenger to the city, Hasting claimed that he had not come to conquer and pillage, but rather was attempting to return home when storms blew them off track. Claiming to be ill, he expressed desire to be converted to Christianity and if he died to be buried in the city.¹⁴ Naturally, Hasting is deceiving the Christians of the town but his ploy was successful; Hasting “receive[ed] baptism, to the destruction of his own soul.”¹⁵ Shortly after his false baptism Hasting feigned death and a funeral was undertaken within the city; at an opportune moment Hasting sprung his trap and took the city. Afterwards, “Thinking that he had captured Rome, ‘the head of the world’, [Hasting] and his men rejoiced. He congratulates himself on holding sole command of the whole empire through the city which he believed to be Rome...Afterwards he discovered that this was not Rome and flew into a rage...”¹⁶ In his rage he further decimated the surrounding countryside and set sail back to Francia.

According to Dudo, the king of the Franks planned to ally himself with Hasting and bring a modicum of peace to his realm, his land already having

¹⁴ Dudo and Christiansen, 18.

¹⁵ Ibid., 18-19.

¹⁶ Ibid., 20.

devastated by the Northmen and unable to resist them further. After a heavy bribe, Hasting agreed to peace and allied himself with the Frankish king.¹⁷ To ameliorate the fact that a Christian kingdom was overcome and subjugated by a group of pagans, Dudo offers that what they had suffered was, "...on account of their accumulated misdeeds. For the Frankish nation was crushed because it was overflowing with foul indecencies and [Hasting] was the punisher."¹⁸ Naturally, Dudo does not end on such a grim note but instead hints that salvation is at hand, for Rollo was soon to arrive.

So runs Dudo's prelude to the arrival of the Norman founder. The revelation of Hasting and his misdeeds was a deliberate maneuver in order to showcase the misdeeds of the Northmen prior to the arrival of Rollo. Dudo was an educated man and no doubt was familiar with the many Frankish accounts of the Vikings and their deprivations. This was certainly one of the more difficult aspects of the Norman past that Dudo wrestled with as he crafted his *origo* for the Normans. Their ancestry was one of paganism and violence, often directed against the people they now lived among. Not only that, but there was the fear of the falseness of the conversion of any Northmen as exemplified by Hasting's false conversion. Hasting was violent, deceitful, and pagan –everything that the Franks feared about the Northman. It is also worth noting that those Norman historians who followed in Dudo's footsteps, such as William of Jumiéges and Wace, felt that the Hasting story was necessary to the narrative and included it, in part, in their works.¹⁹ In order to reconcile this past with

¹⁷Dudo and Christiansen, 21-22.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Guilelmus, Ordericus, Robertus, and Elisabeth M. C. VanHouts, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumiéges, Oderic Vitalis, and Robert of Rorgini* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 11-27 and Wace and Glyn S. Burgess, *The History of the Norman People: Wace's Roman de Rou* (Boydell Press: 2004), 14.

the Normans, Dudo found it necessary to showcase the problems of their past in the person of Hasting as a foil of the change that was to come; Hasting is shown as the antithesis of Rollo.

The Viking aspects of their ancestry haunted the nascent eleventh century Normans, creating a threat to their continued existence and leading to the death of one of their leaders. The Franks feared that the Normans of Rouen would return to their pagan ways. It is nearly impossible to tell if such fear was rooted in religious conviction or whether it was simple a means to justify murder. However, the results were much the same regardless of motivation. This was not a far-fetched concern; for example Flodoard, a notable Frankish historian who wrote in the tenth century, describes events shortly after the death of William Longsword, “Hugh [the Great], duke of the Franks, fought frequently against the Northmen who had come as pagans or *had returned to paganism*...King Louis set out again for Rouen and killed the Northman Turmoldus, who had *returned* to idolatry and to heathen rites.”²⁰

The *Bella parisiacae urbis*, an account of the Viking attack on the city of Paris written by Abbo, a Frankish monk present for the siege in the ninth century, conveys much of the feelings of hostility that the Franks felt towards their Scandinavian aggressors. Abbo says:

All infants, boys and girls, youths, and even those hoary with age
 The father and the sons and even mothers – they killed them all.
 They slaughtered the husband before the very eyes of his wife;
 Before the eye of the husband, the wife fell prey to carnage.
 The children perished right before the eyes of their parents.
 The bondsman was set free, while the freeman was made a bondsman;
 The slave was made the master, and the master became the slave...
 Then did the land of the Franks know grief, for the masters and
 servants

²⁰ Emphasis mine. Flodoard, Bernard S. Bachrach, and Fanning, 38.

Were gone; and gone the joy of heroes; only tears remained...
 The Danes ransacked and despoiled, massacred, and burned and
 ravaged;
 They were an evil cohort, a deadly phalanx, a grim horde...²¹

For Abbo, the Vikings brought not only destruction and violence, but they also turned the natural order of the world on its head, destroying both lives and social systems. Throughout the text the Vikings are prominently shown as an alien Other, antithetical the Frankish people and their religion. They desecrate everything in their path, not even sparing the holy places of the Frankish clergy.

Flodoard's account of the tenth century is filled with accounts of Viking activities that were contemporary with the Normans of Rouen. For 921 he recounts, "For five months Count Robert [of Paris] besieged the Northmen who were operating on the river Loire. After he received hostages from them, he conceded Brittany to the Northmen, which they had devastated, along with the pagus of Nantes." For 923 there is an especially telling detail in Flodoard's account of Northmen activity, "The Northmen raided Aquitaine and Auvergne...Meanwhile Ragenold, the *princeps* of the Northmen who were engaged on the Rive Loire...raided Francia, joined by many from Rouen."²² Not only were there still active groups of Vikings operating throughout Francia, the Scandinavians of Rouen were known to join in their raids. It is also worthy of note that nowhere in his accounts does Flodoard use the term "Normans." When referencing the Rollonids and their followers of Rouen, Flodoard uses the same term as raiders fresh from the longship – Northmen.

²¹Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and Nirmal Dass, "Viking Attacks on Paris: *The Bella parisiacae urbis of Aboo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (Peeters: Dudley, MA. 2007), 39.

²² The fact that Ragenold, a leader of itinerant raiders is referred to in exactly the same manner as William Longsword, that is *princeps* of the Northman, is telling of how Flodoard regarded the Normans of Rouen. Ibid., 5, 8-9

To the outside Frankish observer, there was nothing to distinguish the Normans of Rouen from their raiding Scandinavian kin; they even occasionally joined with those raiders on their incursions, further blurring any distinctions. To the Franks, the Normans of Rouen appeared as fair-weather Christians, eager to slip back into pagan ways and always eager to join their fellows in raids. This fostered tense and distrustful relationships, in which the Normans were viewed as a barely tame threat, one which at any time could revert to its pagan ways and raid down the river ways. To alleviate the fears of the Viking past and present, it would become necessary not only for the Normans of Rouen to inflate their Christian present, but to also distance themselves from their Viking heritage and to appear distinct from the raiders which still plagued the land.

Dudo's account of Hasting and references in contemporary texts to the early Normans, demonstrate that the Franks were uncomfortable and hostile towards the Scandinavian elements of their new neighbors. These were the men who had raided mercilessly along the coastlines and river ways, striking across the land and leaving chaos and destruction in their wake. Dudo set up Hasting as a strawman for the Vikings of Frankish communal memory. He was the bloodthirsty and deceitful pagan whom Dudo could use as a focus for the antagonistic feelings of the Franks and allow him to show Rollo (and by extension his descendants) as fundamentally better than their Viking past. Where Hasting served as the villain for the early part of the narrative, Rollo is the hero, offering both a classical form in the style of the Greeks and a salvific narrative to match Christian themes.

Dudo begins Rollo's section by once more relating Dacia's problem with overpopulation, which results in the periodic expulsion of the youth; once more the population has grown such that another group must be exiled. This time, however, is

different from before, for Rollo is among those to be exiled. Dudo describes Rollo's father saying:

Never had he bowed the nape of his neck to any king, nor had he done service or entrusted his own hands into the hands of any man by way of commendation...For he was most potent of all the Easterners for his outstanding courage, and he excelled them all with his high-piled accumulation of all the virtues.²³

When the time for the exile of the youths came, those so marked called upon Rollo (as well as his brother Gurim) asking to be lead in battle against the Dacian king so that they would not be forced from their homes. Naturally, Rollo promises to keep them "safe from royal threats..."²⁴ Already Dudo is setting Rollo apart from his countrymen. He is descended from a leader who bowed to no king, gifted with strength and virtues. When strife comes upon the kingdom of Dacia, Rollo is sought for his leadership. Here is a man clearly destined for greatness. Dudo also gives precedent for the Normans tendency to balk against higher authority by having both Rollo and his father depicted in opposition to royal authority.

Rollo and his followers swiftly fell into conflict with the king, leading to years of warfare. The king, in a treacherous move, makes a peace agreement with Rollo before leading his own forces in a nighttime invasion of Rollo's land. In the ensuing battles Rollo's brother is slain and Rollo is forced to flee Dacia heavily wounded. While Rollo's actions in Dacia are perceived as just, he has a greater destiny to attend. While sleeping restlessly after his flight from Dacia, Rollo receives the first of a number of prophetic dreams, in which a voice commands Rollo to go to England.

²³ Dudo and Christiansen, 26.

²⁴ Ibid.

Upon awaking, Rollo tells his dream to a Christian; the Christian man interprets that dream to mean that one day Rollo will receive the purification of baptism and achieve everlasting glory if he journeys to England.²⁵ Now one can see Dudo's plan for Rollo's myth; this was a righteous pagan who would be guided by God to both salvation and a destined rule. The Norman rule has an impeccable Christian foundation, free from its pagan past and legitimate in its rule.

Without hesitation Rollo set sail and invaded England, but after numerous battles with the natives he was beset by doubt: should he return home, go to Francia, or conquer England for himself? It is in the moment of crises that Dudo gifts Rollo with his ultimate prophetic dream:

...he seemed to behold himself placed on a mountain, far higher than the highest, in a Frankish dwelling. And on the summit of this mountain he saw a spring of sweet-smelling water flowing, and himself washing in it, and by it made whole from the contagion of leprosy and the itch, with which he was infected; and finally, while he was still staying on top of that mountain, he saw about the base of it many thousands of birds of different kinds and various colors, but with red left wings...And they went one after the other in harmonious incoming flights and sought the spring of the mountain, and washed themselves, swimming together...and when they had all been anointed by this miraculous dipping, they all are together in a suitable place, without being separated into genera of species, and without any disagreement or dispute, as if they were friends sharing food. And they carried off twigs and worked rapidly to build nests; and furthermore, they willingly yielded to his command...²⁶

Once again Rollo seeks help in interpreting his dream, calling together all of his chiefs in council, yet they are unable to help. However, among the nearby prisoners was a Christian whom Dudo was divinely inspired and who offered to interpret the

²⁵ Dudo and Christiansen, 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 30

dream for Rollo. According to his interpretation, the mountain in the dream is the church of Francia and the spring is the water of baptism; Rollo will be cleansed of his sins, represented as leprosy and illness, through baptism. Because of this numerous warriors from across the world, represented by the red-winged birds of different species, will follow him and together in peace they will form a new realm.

This dream and its interpretation is the core of Dudo's myth for Rollo, serving as the foundation for the Norman enterprise. If the Norman line was founded by an unrepentant pagan, then it would be without legitimacy, greatly weakening the authority of rulers and alienating it in the eyes of its neighbors. For an *origo* legend, that is not good enough. Dudo has been tasked with creating a noble and proud myth for this new people, one which could serve as the foundation for their very identity and one which very much required a strong Christian basis. Rollo needed to transcend his Viking past, so Dudo gave him a God given mandate to form Normandy and become Christian. Dudo also cleverly inserts the variety of ethnic groups in Normandy into Rollo's holy mandate, ensuring that diversity was seen as fundamentally Norman and one of their strengths.

There are additional symbolic meanings within the content of the dream. Webber remarks that aside from the obvious Christian motifs of the dream, the usage of birds is an important symbol:

The birds signify empire. In this case a unity of many races and cultures in one grouping, and a recognition of the 'polyethnic' nature of the *gens Normannorum*. Unusual as this seems in the context of medieval Europe, in which most peoples emphasized a unifying collective origin, this is not an inexplicable phenomenon when the Norman situation is considered. When Dudo was writing, the settlement around Rouen was still comparatively recent. As a newly formed people, the Normans could not look back centuries

for their origins; the new *gens* did not have a semi-mythical past in which to couch an *origo gentis* story to rival that of their neighbors. Consequently the Normans were alive to the realities of their situation and, more importantly were accepting of these realities. Dudo's Normans were a race of mixed descent because they could not conceivably be otherwise.²⁷

Rollo's dream served to combat two of the main weaknesses Dudo faced in crafting a Norman ethnicity: its pagan past and its diverse makeup. Rather than letting either of these remain outside of his mythology, Dudo incorporates them as part of God's divine plan for the Norman people.

Following the prophetic dream, Dudo recounted first Rollo's escapades in England before he followed his destiny and crossed the English Channel, raiding into Frisia before he eventually moved into Francia.²⁸ This section adds little to the overall message of the chapter, serving only to reinforce Rollo as a noble man and to show his actions increasingly reflecting overt Christian values. Counseling once more with his chiefs, who were divinely inspired by God, Rollo decided to stay in Francia and acquire lands there. Most noteworthy is that after Rollo decided to remain in Francia, Dudo used the term Norman for the first time; before this point they were only called Dacians or merely Rollo's followers.²⁹ This is a focal point of the narrative. Rollo has chosen to remain and fulfill his destiny in Francia, allowing himself and his followers to cross the liminal space from Dacians/Danes and to become Norman. Though this process obviously fully unfolds further along in the *History*, in Dudo's eyes the most important step now occurred. Rollo embraced God's plan and the Norman destiny will be fulfilled, it only remains for time to pass and history to unfold.

²⁷ Webber, 25.

²⁸ Dudo and Christiansen, 33-35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

From here Dudo recounts Rollo's activities in Francia. Little here is of particular note. At the beginning the Franks attempted, with Hasting's help, to coerce Rollo and his men into serving the Frankish king as vassals; the Normans declined saying, "We will never bow the neck to any man, no will we bind ourselves to serve any man whatever, nor will we accept land-grants from anyone. That grant of land will best suit us which we win for ourselves, with weapons and the sweat of battle."³⁰ Following this meeting, the Franks attacked the Normans, which allowed Rollo to feel vindicated in his attacks on the Franks despite being the invader. This continued until Rollo besieged the city of Chartres. When a relieving army attacked Rollo here, he was initially successful until a mass of the city's residents, led by their clergy bearing crosses, attacked him from the rear.³¹ Interestingly, while Dudo pays little heed to the defeat at Chartres, this battle is credited as being the impetus for the agreement between Rollo and the Franks from which the land grant that became Normandy stems.³²

Such an ignominious beginning did not suit Dudo, however. For him, it was Rollo's continual success at battling the Franks and pillaging their lands that lead to the beginning of Normandy. Dudo depicted the desperate Frankish nobles, unable to combat Rollo, begging the king to make peace with Rollo by giving him land and a marriage to the king's own daughter.³³ After he received messengers from the Franks relaying those promises, Rollo's chieftains reminded him of his prophetic dreams and urged him to accept the deal. At an agreed upon time Rollo and the king met, with

³⁰ Dudo and Christiansen, 37.

³¹ Ibid., 43.

³² Searle, 42-43.

³³ Dudo, 46.

their assembled armies, at the place called St. Clair on the Epte River. After the details of the agreement were settled, "... [Rollo] put his hands between the hands of the king, which neither his father, nor his grandfather, nor his great-grandfather had done for any man. And so the king gave his daughter, Gisla by name, to be the wife of that same duke, and gave the specified territory..."³⁴ As though to assuage the reader's disdain for Rollo's submission to the Frankish king, Dudo followed that passage with another:

Rollo was unwilling to kiss the king's foot, and the bishops said: He who accepts a gift such as this ought to go as far as kissing the king's foot. And he replied: I will never bow my knees at the knees of any man, and no man's foot will I kiss. And so, urged on by the prayers of the Franks, he ordered one of the warriors to kiss the king's foot. And the man immediately grasped the king's foot and raised it to his mouth and planted a kiss on it while he remained standing, and the king flat on his back. So there rose a great laugh, and a great outcry among the people.³⁵

While Rollo was submitting to the king, this scene shows the almost overwhelming contempt and power that he held over the Franks, at least as far as Dudo wished to convey. With the superiority of the Normans cemented, Rollo was then baptized into the Christian faith, finally completing the mandate of his prophetic dreams.

The scene of the Treaty of St. Clair-sur-Epte in Dudo's narrative of Rollo's life is the culmination of the story. After successfully raging across "Dacia," England, and Francia, Rollo proved himself to be infinitely virtuous and mighty in force of arms. He followed the divine mandate issued to him through prophetic dreams, subdued for himself a realm in the lands of Francia, with followers from across Europe under his dominion. He became Christian, cleansing himself and his

³⁴Dudo, 49.

³⁵ Ibid.

descendants of his pagan past and paved the way for the Normans who would come after him to be separated from that shameful aspect of their heritage. Rollo and his lineage were granted rule over the lands of Normandy in perpetuity and he married a Frankish princess, further legitimizing his right to rule. Through the first two books of his *History of the Normans*, Dudo successfully carved the foundation of the Norman *origo* story. The tale of Rollo serves to show the dangers of the Norman past, while foiling the deeds of Rollo allowing the Normans to overcome, in part, the problems of their Scandinavian past.

CHAPTER 2:

WILLIAM LONGSWORD: THE NECESSITY OF BECOMING NORMAN

This man, born in an overseas city to a father
 remaining in the error of the pagans,
 but to a mother dedicated to the nourishing faith,
 was washed by the sacred water.
 All weep for innocent, slain William.
 ...He, taught the unity of the Trinity
 by Martin, the trinity of the Unity,
 three are one and one is three,
 he founded a monastery...
 All weep for innocent, slain William.¹

- *The Planctus of William Longsword*, vs. 2, vs. 5

Rollo succeeded in carving out a foothold for his Viking followers with at least some political recognition amongst the Frankish magnates. However, it fell to his son and successor, William Longsword, to solidify both the dynasty's claim to rulership over the "Normans" and their place amongst the Franks. This was no simple task. The Western Frankish kingdom was rife with internecine conflicts as powerful nobles carved out territories of their own, striving against neighbors and the king for power. Not only were the newcomers unwelcome guests at the table, they were also foreigners and heathens, making them ideal targets for expansion by their neighbors. William Longsword's reign (927-943) became a struggle for identity, regarded as neither fully Frankish nor Christian by his Frankish neighbors. In the face of this, a new ethnic identity gradually came into being through means both conscious and unconscious: Norman. To be Norman during the early ninth and the tenth century was to live in a liminal space, struggling to navigate between

¹ *The Planctus of William Longsword*, trans. Helmerichs, Richard. 2002.
<http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/documents/planctus/planctus/index.html>

Frankish and Scandinavian, between pagan and Christian. The success in solidifying this new identity was key to the foundation of Normandy as a principle actor in the politics of Western Francia and the continued existence of the Normans. Unlike every other Scandinavian settlement in Francia, Normandy was the only one to survive the first generation.

The unfortunate truth when dealing with the early Norman duchy is the lack of contemporary primary material dealing specifically with the Normans themselves. There is, however, one source very useful source which is believed by some scholars to have been written within a year of William Longsword's death: the *Planctus of William Longsword*.² The *planctus* was a genre of medieval poetry mainly during the Carolingian period. These were poems of mourning, typically commissioned by a female family member after the death of male relative. The *planctus* served to glorify the deceased, praising the departed's virtues and cementing their legacy. Elisabeth van Houts speculates that the *planctus* written for William Longsword was likely commissioned by his sister Gerloc and written in 943.³ Given that this poem was likely commissioned by a family member to praise William's life and virtues, details regarding him within it are heavily biased to show him in a positive light. While the poem is unabashedly flattering to the deceased William, it contains tantalizing details regarding the Normans place in Francia. The content of the poem relates a few minor details of William's early life, the circumstances of his education in Christian traditions, and his assassination by his rival Arnulf of Flanders.⁴ While the poem is brief, it has much to yield regarding the circumstances of the second generation Normans and the fears that, at the

² Elisabeth van Houts, "The *Planctus* on the Death of William Longsword (943) as a source for tenth-century culture in Normandy and Aquitaine," pg. 1

³ Ibid.

⁴ William Longsword and the count of Flanders, Arnulf, had sparred politically and militarily for years on their mutual border, as both men were party to opposing factions of Carolingian nobles.

very least, William's relatives faced. The *planctus*' proximity to William's life and its contents make it an invaluable source.

Dudo of St. Quentin's tenth century *History of the Normans* is more difficult to assess. From Dudo's work sprouts egregious and aggrandizing lies for the benefits of his patrons, influential prose, and the start of the historiographic tradition of medieval Normandy. It is both blessing and curse. Dudo was part of the clerical community centered on the abbey of St. Quentin and was likely born in the 960s.⁵ Dudo likely received his academic education around Reims, but this is not certain; regardless, it can be said safely that he was highly educated before writing his history. Dudo first encountered the Norman duke on a diplomatic mission in 987 and after that point frequented the court in Rouen. In 996 the dying Richard I asked Dudo to write a history of the Normans, a task his son Richard II convinced him to begin; Dudo also served as Richard's chaplain and chancellor. This series of events clearly demonstrates that Dudo's *History of the Normans* was commissioned with an agenda: Dudo was commissioned by the ducal family to legitimize their ancestor's (and therefore, their own) rule of Normandy. Thus, Dudo's history is a work of unashamed propaganda, with a clear intent.

The work consists of roughly four parts, with the fourth (concerning Richard I) composing the majority of the work. The first, second, and fourth sections of the *History* are of much less import to this chapter than is the third, which concerns the life of William Longsword. Comparisons to other contemporary histories, along with other analysis, show large parts of Dudo's work to be entirely false or completely misguided. However, while the

⁵ Dudo and Christiansen, ix.

work is questionable for use as direct historic fact, it nonetheless maintains value as a literary source of the Normans. Some scholars, such as Eleanor Searle and Elisabeth van Houts, argue that Dudo's *History* represents something in the tradition of the Norse sagas or other medieval works which sought to establish a legendary history in order to legitimize a people.⁶ Dudo told the stories the Normans wanted to hear of themselves, for themselves; through Dudo we can glimpse what it was to be Norman in a world dominated by Franks.

Following the history established by Dudo of St. Quentin, a number of other histories using his work as a model followed: the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, a revised and extended version of Dudo's history written by William of Jumièges written in the 1050s, another revision by Orderic Vitalis in the early 1100s, and a final iteration by Robert of Torgini in the 1130s.⁷ While these subsequent works do little to further ground that Dudo already covered in his work, they do provide some small revisions to Dudo's content while extending the history beyond the point where Dudo left off (the reign of Richard I). These works are most useful in that they can give some insight into how later generations of Normans viewed the original history of their people and what was considered important by them.

In the 1160s-70s, King Henry II commissioned a work of history regarding the history of his dynasty and ancestors, Wace's *Roman de Rou*.⁸ Though his commission was eventually dropped, leaving his history incomplete, Wace's attempts at writing a factual history of the Norman past makes this a valuable source. For his information regarding the early Normans, Wace seems to draw primarily on Dudo and William of Jumièges for his

⁶ van Houts, "The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*: a history without end" and Searle, 61 – 67.

⁷ William, Orderic, Robert, and E.M.C. van Houts, *The Gesta Normannorum ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1992), xix – xxi.

⁸ Rou here meaning Rollo.

facts though he does seem to have other sources to draw upon.⁹ Unlike the sources his work is derived from, Wace is regarded as reliable when it comes to factual information and it therefore more useful as a primary source of events, even if he is more removed in time from the events of his history.¹⁰

While the sources mentioned in the above are either of Norman origin or were commissioned by a member of relative of the ducal family, there is at least one non-Norman source that covers the tenth century events in Western Francia well: *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims*. The eponymous author of the *Annals*, Flodoard, was likely born near Reims and received his education at the cathedral there, becoming a priest of the cathedral and serving the archbishop as historian; he began recording the *Annals* around 919.¹¹ Thus the yearly rendition of events within the *Annals* fits neatly within the timeline of the formation of Normandy. Flodoard's guiding principle within the *Annals* seems to be a one of recording events in light of causation, possibly with the intent of showing God's plans within the course of events; his style leads to other unique perspectives as well, particularly regarding non-Christians.¹² The political connections of Reims granted the author of the *Annals* fairly in-depth information regarding the events of north-western Francia so that for events in this area he is fairly reliable. *The Annals of Flodoard* serve well as a balance to Norman biased sources by providing clear and relatively unbiased accounts of the politics and events of Francia during the time of William Longsword.

⁹ Wace, Glyn S. Burgess, and Elisabeth van Houts, *The History of the Norman people: Wace's Roman de Rou* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press: 2004), xxx

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxi

¹¹ Flodoard et al., viii

¹² *Ibid.*, xi-xii

To understand the importance of creating and growing the idea of a Norman ethnicity for the early rulers of Rouen and its territories, one must understand the origins of William and the circumstances in which he lived.

Unfortunately, as is true with much regarding the early Normans, sources regarding William Longsword's birth and early life are sparse. From the *Planctus of William Longsword* there is one stanza regarding William's childhood: "This man, born in an overseas city to a father / remaining in the error of the pagans, / but to a mother dedicated to the nourishing faith, / was washed by the sacred water. / All weep for innocent, slain William..." The words are informative, but brief to say the least.¹³ From these few lines can be gleaned a few important facts regarding William. Firstly, he was born in an overseas city during Rollo's career as an unconverted Viking raider, but his mother, unnamed here, was Christian, and William was baptized into the faith himself. One wonders, based on the wording of this stanza, if the author intended to imply that Rollo was a pagan at the time of William's birth or if he never fully converted; while not directly related to the topic at hand, it speaks volumes on the Frankish tendency to doubt conversions amongst the Vikings if the latter is true. These verses, the very first lines of the *Planctus*, also display the author's preoccupation with the Christian virtues of William. He stresses that William's mother was a Christian and that William received baptism; the final refrain also begins the process of establishing William in the role of a martyr. From these verses William appears as a poignant and symbolic figure of the second generation "Normans," a bridge between first generation

¹³ <http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/documents/planctus/planctus/PWL1.html>

Scandinavian fathers and local Christian women, already straddling boundaries of ethnicity and religion at birth.

Dudo, naturally, has much (comparably) to say on the subject of William's early years. "...William...was born of noble stock with a Dacian¹⁴ father (Rollo, that is), and a Frankish mother, namely Popa, and 'he began his life' in Rouen."¹⁵ Already Dudo has muddied the issue of William's origins. Here William's mother is given a name: Popa. Wace's *Roman de Rou*, agrees with Dudo's claim, unsurprising given that Wace likely used Dudo as a source for his history.¹⁶ There are now two competing claims to William's birth: either overseas to an unnamed mother or to a Frankish woman named Popa at Rouen.

If the *Planctus* is to be believed, William was born to a Christian woman and before Rollo settled in Normandy and possibly converted. D.C. Douglas, in his 1942 article "Rollo of Normandy" argues for Norwegian origins of Rollo, believing that William was likely the son of a Irish mother from one of the northern islands; Elisabeth van Houts concurs with this assessment.¹⁷ However, Dudo's work adamantly claims Popa of Bayeux, daughter of Berengar, as William's mother.¹⁸

Why did Dudo create a Christian mother for William? According to Dudo, Popa was abducted by Rollo during his assault on Bayeux. Dudo claims he took her as his wife

¹⁴ Dudo makes frequent use of the term Dacian in relation to the Normans, particularly in regard to their background and language. By Dacian Dudo likely means Danish (or at the very least Norse) and used the term Dacian as part of his aping earlier styles and as a means of tying the Normans into the epic Roman past, an easy path to legitimacy.

¹⁵ Dudo and Christiansen, 57.

¹⁶ Wace, Glyn S. Burgess, and Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, *The History of the Norman people*, 23.

¹⁷ Douglas, D. C. "Rollo of Normandy." *The English Historical Review* 57, no. 228 (1942), 422 and van Houts, "The *Planctus* of William Longsword," 9.

¹⁸ William of Jumièges also adds in his account that Popa was William's sister Gerloc's mother as well, though Dudo makes no mention of Gerloc until later in the text. It is hard to say then whether Gerloc was William's full sister, for it is also alluded to in other sources that Rollo had fathered other daughters abroad. William, Orderic, Robert, and E.M.C. van Houts, *The Gesta Normannorum ducum*, 59.

(Rollo's supposed marriage to Gilsa, a Carolingian princess, occurred after this), but William of Jumièges says, "[Rollo] bound her to himself in the Danish custom." William's interpretation sounds more like the taking of a concubine or a pagan marriage rather than a proper Christian wife, which makes sense in that Dudo was seeking to legitimize the Norman dynasty and a bastard in the family would not do. Dudo's legitimizing task may also explain the entire Popa story. She may very well not have existed at all. Dudo had taken the task of writing legend and William Longsword's birth to a nameless foreigner was not worthy. Instead, it is likely that Dudo created a fictitious mother for William, giving her both noble and Frankish birth as well as making her Christian. Since Rollo was descended from royalty, a noble wife and mother of his heir solidified the legitimacy of the dynasty. Creating a mother character from a local Frankish family also aided in Norman claims to certain territories.

Interestingly, Eleanor Searle argues that the relationship between William and his Norse followers his Frankish mother may have been a liability, "Longsword's mother is pictured by Dudo as noble and Frankish, but with the implication that she was of captive status. Longsword, as we have seen, is shown by Dudo having overcome the disadvantage of having Frankish kin and friends."¹⁹ Even through the circumstances of his birth, the tensions of William's life become evident. From one angle, the Norman dynasty longing for legitimacy can be seen: Dudo fabricates a noble mother, who brings up the circumstances of his birth while attempting to bridge the gap between Viking and Frank. Yet the possibility that he was of Frankish blood weakened William's authority over the Scandinavian war

¹⁹ Here Searle refers to the rebellion of one of the Norse warleaders, one Riulf, upon William's ascension as leader of the Vikings of Rouen. One of the reasons for rebellion is William's closeness to Frankish nobility. Searle, *Predatory Kinship*, 94.

bands; those with ties to the Franks could exercise only tenuous claims to rule before it is necessary to cement those claims through strength of arms. Dudo later attributes this a factor in a rebellion amongst the Scandinavians against William, which will be discussed in greater detail later.

Thus William was born, even if the exact details are cloudy, into the world of the Vikings of Rouen. What then, of his education and childhood? Once more, one must turn to the *Planctus* and to Dudo for any glimpse of detail. In the *History of the Normans* Dudo says that William was handed over to “a very affluent count called Botho” for a fitting education.²⁰ Dudo goes on to extol how William learned and exemplified a virtuous lifestyle and in all ways became the embodiment of a kind, gentle, and wise Christian ruler. Clearly, Dudo was eager to acclaim the virtues of his employer’s ancestry. The *Planctus* is rather cryptic in regards to William Longsword’s education, saying only: “He, taught the unity of the Trinity / by Martin, the trinity of the Unity, / three are one and one is three, / he founded a monastery...”²¹ This final phrase dates this segment of William’s education to some point during his reign, when he re-founded the monastery of Jumièges and demonstrated his Christian education.

In both the *History of the Normans* and the *Planctus* there is an almost overemphasis on William’s Christian qualities and his pure and virtuous lifestyle. Of note is the preoccupation, especially within the *Planctus*, with the Trinity. There is an undeniable tension and desire to prove William’s Christian-ness running through both text. There are a

²⁰ Botho appears as a tutor for William as well as his son Richard. Later on he also seems to be an advisor or companion of William. However, none of the sources aside from Dudo give him any official title and Dudo never seems to specify what he was count of. Likely, this was simply an honorific Dudo gave Botho to elevate his status as tutor and advisor to the Rollonids. Dudo and Christiansen, *History of the Normans*, 57.

²¹ <http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/documents/planctus/planctus/index.html>

few explanations for this. Firstly the Trinity is a complex theological entity, one which believers and those well versed in Christian theology can struggle to explain adequately. How then must it look to a newly converted population such as the Scandinavians in Normandy? Secondly, there was definite strain within Normandy between the native Frankish clergy and the newly converted (or often, unconverted) Scandinavian settlers. Elisabeth van Houts strongly argues the importance of both in her analysis of the *Planctus*.²²

In her article, “The Planctus on the death of William Longsword (943) as a source for tenth-century culture in Normandy and Aquitaine,” van Houts cites evidence from the early period of Rollo’s reign that the Frankish clergy were struggling with the fact that many of the converted Scandinavians reneged on their Christianity and returned to their pagan ways.²³ The infidelity of the Scandinavians, particularly of their nobility, was a continuing concern during William’s lifetime. The tenth century *Annals of Flodoard* record that shortly after William’s death a number of prominent Normans reverted to paganism, even forcing the child duke Richard to join them.²⁴

Aside from being wayward believers, what about slipping back into pagan ways caused so much tension between Franks and Scandinavians? To explain this, one must only look back to the prior century, when Viking raids into the Frankish territories had occurred more frequently and with greater vigor. The histories of the Franks are filled with accounts of Viking leaders making agreements with the Franks and sealing these agreements with conversion; these earlier Vikings frequently rescinded their Christianity and broke their word. However, it was also not unprecedented for the Franks to break their side of the

²² <http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/documents/planctus/planctus/index.html>.

²³ van Houts, 12.

²⁴ Flodoard et al., 38.

agreements when it suited them.²⁵ Thus both the Franks and the Normans had valid concerns hinging on the reliability and recognition of conversion and the stakes were high.

In fact, William's death is eerily reminiscent of the murder of an earlier Scandinavian leader named Godfrid; the shock of this event was great enough that someone, likely William's sister Gerloc, commissioned a *planctus* to commemorate his life.²⁶ So, what then was the purpose behind the *Planctus of William Longsword*? The *Planctus* was clearly a response to the manner of William's assassination. To fully understand this import, it is necessary to review the account of the assassination in the *Planctus*:

There was a certain wealthy man, full of trickery...Arnulf the Fleming, with whom [William] associated himself by a sworn oath, that fortunate one to the miserable one...//

A meeting was set up for a Saturday, with no hostage given...//

For gathering together on the following day, as if friends (merely by behavior and not in heart) they indicated that they would speak, concealing their animosity...//

With the sun setting in the west, the innocent one rowing back across, [gibberish, but the sense seems to be "messengers called him back."]...//

"A secret of [our] master is concealed from you until now, which will be beneficial to himself and to you." Considering it on this side [of the river], dreading the one he was going to meet, ordering it, he hurried [back across the river]...//

They met him as he was disembarking from the alder ship, hiding [weapons?] in their cowls; one of them [hit?] his head with a sword [gibberish] ...//

Seeing this, two avengers murdered and plundered the unarmed one; in such a manner they sent his body to the earth, his spirit to heaven, him to Christ...//²⁷

William Longsword and Arnulf had long been rivals, clashing with each other in regards to territorial ambitions as William had assisted one of Arnulf's former, rebellious vassals, claiming his territory in the process. William's network of marriage alliances to Arnulf's

²⁵ Simon Coupland, "From poachers to gamekeepers: Scandinavian Warlords and Carolingian kings", 85-114

²⁶ van Houts, 13-16

²⁷ <http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/documents/planctus/planctus/index.html>

political enemies put pressure not only on Arnulf's holdings, but threatened King Louis IV as well. Together they colluded to alleviate the threat posed by the Normans.²⁸ Under the pretense of negotiation William was lured to the border and murdered on Arnulf's orders.

However, William's death resulted from more than just his rivalry with Arnulf. William made the same fatal error that had killed previous Viking settlers in Francia: he was too eager to expand his territorial claims beyond the borders and backwaters granted to him. To illustrate how little interactions between the Franks and Scandinavians had changed, it is necessary to view the events of the life of the Viking leader named Godfrid. Godfrid arrived in Francia in 879 as part of the Great Heathen Army, a large gathering of Scandinavian war bands from England, while Francia was experiencing a period of severe political upheaval.²⁹ King Charles the Fat came to an agreement with the Viking leaders after a period of fighting. Godfrid was given a Frankish wife by the Frankish king and land in which to settle while the other leaders were bribed to leave. Godfrid's new wife was Gisela, a bastard daughter of the Carolingian King Lothar II, which gave Godfrid closer ties to inner circle of Carolingian rulers than any prior Viking leader. Godfrid's relationship with the Franks was mixed, with many mistrusting the converted Viking and blaming him for Viking incursions into Francia.³⁰ In 885 Godfrid assumed a much more active role in Carolingian politics and conspired with his brother-in-law to gain lands deeper within Frankish territory. When the Franks became aware of the conspiracy, he was lured to an island in the Rhine and murdered.³¹

²⁸ van Houts, 2.

²⁹ Coupland, 108

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 110

³¹ *Ibid.*, 111

The parallels between these events are plain to see. Godfrid was a converted Christian, but Christian nonetheless; however, when he overstepped the bounds that were acceptable for a foreigner and behaved as a Frank (politically speaking) his conversion no longer mattered. Godfrid committed a grave sin in the eyes of the Frankish nobility by playing t their political games and acting as an equal. A foreigner, one whose status as a Christian was tenuous in the face of political expediency, could not be allowed to expand into the Frankish heartlands, already overcrowded with Frankish ambitions. Thus, Godfrid's actions reverted him to a heathen in the eyes of his Frankish enemies and there were no rules for how a heathen must be treated. To solidify this judgement, while Godfrid was murdered his Frankish wife was kept away and his Frankish co-conspirator was blinded and banished but allowed to live; only the heathen could be killed in cold blood.³²

In the words of Eleanor Searle, "Carolingians blinded Carolingians. They murdered Norsemen."³³ It is a simple but telling logic: in their power struggles, Carolingian Franks rarely killed their own, but outsiders could be subjected to death.³⁴ That said, given the circumstances of William Longsword's murder, it is safe to say that in the eyes of many of his Frankish contemporaries, he was not one of them. In their eyes he was a man of questionable Christian status and undeniable foreign blood. In Flodoard's *Annals*, William is almost always referred to as "princeps of the Northmen."³⁵ He is treated to a Carolingian title by the chroniclers but is still just a leader of the Norsemen. His territorial ambitions were tolerated by the Franks so long as they remained at the Frankish peripheries, but once they

³² Coupland, 111.

³³ Searle, 22.

³⁴ That is to say members of the Carolingian dynasty rarely killed their competitors so long as they were directly of the dynasty. Such competitors were maimed, exiled, or imprisoned, but rarely outright killed.

³⁵ Flodoard et al., 23, 31-33, 36-38.

turned inward towards the center he became a threat that could no longer be tolerated. On the margins, William served to buffer the Frankish realms from Breton and Viking raids. His presence also served to curb and check the ambitions of his neighbors. Any moves beyond this threatened the status quo and made William a threat to the established system.

Ethnic identity was important to the inner power struggles of the fragmented Carolingian states and so too was Christian status. When William was murdered, in a manner fitting of a heathen and not a Christian lord, it outraged his allies, who saw a second generation Christian who had entered a good-faith negotiation with the descendent of an established, Christian dynasty. In their eyes, Arnulf had acted more the un-Christian than had William.³⁶ While his allies could afford to be shocked and outraged, it fell to his family to deal with the actual ramifications. To William's sister Gerloc, who had taken the Frankish name Adela upon her marriage to William of Poitou and the other Normans, William's ignoble death must have brooked an existential crisis. A core part of their new identity, their Christianity, could be denied in such a way that murder was an acceptable means of negotiation.

The second generation Normans were attempting to meld with Frankish society. Gerloc/Adela herself is a good example, marrying a Frankish ruler and taking a Frankish name. It now became paramount to convince the wider Frankish world of the validity of their faith in the Christian religion. Thus, a year after William's death, the *Planctus* was written. This poem has one obvious goal: to affirm William as a virtuous Christian ruler while setting him up as a martyr figure for the new dynasty. As van Houts puts it, "[Gerloc] too had much

³⁶ van Houts, 13.

to lose if the Frankish elite still regarded her and her brother as untrustworthy Vikings, so a campaign to bolster the reputation of Rollo's descendants as good Christians was commenced."³⁷ The end of the *Planctus* further hammers in this point, "Hail Richard, Rouennais count, prince and father of the county, hail; may Christ concede the days of life to you, so that you may be with him without end. Amen."³⁸ The author of the *Planctus*, as well as its patron, were determined that the new child ruler of the Normans, Richard I, be seen as Christian and thus somewhat protected from the avarice and violence of their Frankish neighbors.

The *Planctus* is a concerted and intentional effort to shore up the Christian reputation of the Normans of Rouen by establishing William Longsword as a martyr-like figure for the new dynasty, a good Christian murdered while attempting to undergo peaceful negotiations rather than continuing a violent conflict. Not only that, the *Planctus* describes William in his earlier life as a ruler attentive to theological issues as well as a man committed to furthering the church, as displayed by re-establishing the monastery at Jumièges. The *Planctus* also emphasizes that William longed for the pure life of a monk.³⁹ While details such as that are likely fabrications, they highlight apprehensions the Normans felt toward their perceived piety and faith. Dudo is far more blatant in his attempts to elevate William's status as a Christian:

Thus, the "precious" marquess William, the "most glorious witness" for Christ, "was hallowed by a happy martyrdom". "And in this manner" he gained "the heavenly kingdom which he had long" desired, and "lives in Christ and wears the blessed crown."/. . . Our lord William vowed that after

³⁷ van Houts., 14

³⁸ <http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/documents/planctus/planctus/index.html>

³⁹ Ibid.

this lamentable meeting he would leave this transitory world, and become a monk at Jumièges...⁴⁰

Through the *Planctus* and Dudo's *History of the Normans*, William becomes the quintessential figure of the medieval Christian faith: the martyr. By becoming a virtuous martyr, William's death serves to legitimize his descendants, while also serving to alleviate tensions amongst his contemporary peers and kin that their Christian identity may be called into question and leave them vulnerable to betrayal and attack. The interpretation and representation of William Longsword as a martyr solidifies one important aspect of the growing Norman identity; to be Norman was to be Christian.

Ultimately, William Longsword served as the transitional point between the Scandinavian past as represented by his father Rollo and the Norman future that his son Richard created. For Dudo and his audience, the main failing of William was becoming too much the Frank. When the Scandinavian Riulf rebelled against him for being like the Franks and William almost fled to his Frankish relative rather than facing them in combat. Additionally, unlike Rollo, who had become a Frankish vassal only after successfully defeating them in combat numerous times and at the consensus of those he led, William submitted to Frankish rule to further his political ends, "One time he made King Louis / a lord to him, one who would reign /in order that with him he would / surpass his enemy / and rule in the way of kings."⁴¹ A true Norman could accept the rule of another, but only after proving their own strength. However, while William Longsword can be ultimately viewed as a failure in becoming Norman, he was nevertheless fundamental in paving the way those who came after him. Dudo clearly structured his tale of William to make a martyr of him.

⁴⁰ Dudo and Christiansen, 84.

⁴¹ <http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/documents/planctus/planctus/index.html>

Although Rollo had converted to Christianity this alone was not enough to cleanse the taint of pagan belief from the Norman past. Descent from a martyr, however, was a much stronger case. Aside from serving to legitimize the Normans through his martyrdom, William failed to fully establish the Normans as a normalized presence in Frankish politics and his failure threatened the entire Norman experiment with destruction. When William died, Normandy fell into chaos, nearly collapsing. Rollo was too Scandinavian and William too Frankish; it would take Richard to find the balance between and truly become Norman.

CHAPTER 3

RICHARD THE FEARLESS: THE FIRST TRUE NORMAN

For Norman founding myth, Richard the Fearless represents the culmination of both Dudo's narrative and the fruition of the Norman identity. Through Richard's life story, Dudo crafted the perfect Norman ruler, one who embraced the virtues of Rollo and William Longsword while eschewing their mistakes. Dudo by no means did this unintentionally nor without bias. He knew Richard personally as his patron and the instigator of the entire work. It was in Dudo's interest to portray Richard in the most flattering light possible, but it also served the narrative. Richard was the Norman leader during Dudo's lifetime; for him, no other single individual could incorporate the essence of the Norman ethnic identity. Richard was the culmination of three generations' struggle for identity and it was Dudo's obligation, as a myth-maker and servant, to show that.

In the vein, it is also interesting to note another passage of Dudo, wherein he relays William's plans for Richard's education. According to Dudo, William tells his follower:

As the city of Rouen much prefers the use of Roman rather than Dacian eloquence, and Bayeux uses the Dacian more often than the Roman tongue, so I wish that he be taken to Bayeux as quickly as possible; and I wish that he be brought up there, and educated with great care under your tutelage, Botho, and should have the benefit of the Dacian talkativeness, and learn it thoroughly by heart, so that in the future he should be able to express himself more fluently to the Dacian-born.¹

With his usual sprinkling of classicism, Dudo portrays William as anxious that his son grow up in Bayeux rather than Rouen, so that he would speak Norse more natively than the Frankish tongue. Dudo's reference to "Dacian talkativeness" may also have referred to the

¹ Dudo and Christiansen, 97.

Norse love of debate, meaning that Richard not only learned the Norse tongue while in Bayeux but also its style of leadership and its cultural nuances.

William, given that the birth of Richard roughly coincided with Dudo's recollection of rebellion among his Scandinavian followers, likely harbored apprehension that his son might experience the same trials of leadership that he had – a warleader of Scandinavians who was seen as too Frankish. To ensure this would not happen to Richard, William chose to send him to be raised among his Scandinavian kin. Eleanor Serle contends that this was also a political move to better bind together William, the titular leader over all the Scandinavians in Neustria, and the leader of Bayeux.² Richard's education in Bayeux served twofold then: it ensured a Norse upbringing and was a sign of trust towards other important Scandinavian leaders. By allowing Richard to be brought up in the more Scandinavian Bayeux rather than the Frankish Rouen, William secured his ties to the military elite of his realm. Equally by recognizing, at least nominally, the authority of the boy Richard as William's heir and leader of the Normans, the other chieftains in Neustria acknowledged, "... that their interest lay in coordination of defense long before they achieved it..."³ This ties back with Garaspanov's idea of political ethnicity; the pressure of bordering the Carolingian kingdoms forced a unity between the Scandinavians and their Frankish subjects. The Normans were well aware of the precarious nature of their settlement and the necessity of unity, displaying an unconscious awareness of a political ethnicity binding them.

With William's assassination must have seemed to the nascent Normans that their greatest fears were coming true. As Searle comments on the beginning of Richard's reign

² Searle, 75.

³ Ibid., 78.

according to Dudo, "... [the] perfidious Franks very nearly overwhelmed the Norse who had been so trusting as to have dealt with them."⁴ King Louis, taking advantage of the vacuum in the wake of William's murder, made haste to Rouen where he seized both the city and the young Norman leader. Richer portrays this an act of kingly benevolence saying:

Those who supported the king, however, sent envoys to summon him and gave him a fitting welcome at Rouen. While he was there, he was informed that the pirate king Sithric had entered the Seine with a large fleet... Their intention was to take over the whole area without a grant from the king, to convert the son of Duke William to the worship of idols, and to bring back pagan rites.⁵

Richer continues the themes present throughout his work: loyalty to the king and suspicion of the Normans. Naturally, in his eyes, the chieftains who had followed William, an ally of the king, had called for him in their need, regardless of the fact that it was the king who needed them more. Not only that, but with the death of William the untrustworthy Norsemen had regressed to pagan ways and forced the boy Richard to worship idols; it was King Louis' duty as a good king and Christian to come to the aid of his subjects and cleanse the area of pagans. After this is accomplished, the king leaves.

Dudo, naturally, portrays a far different scene in his telling of events⁶:

However, king [Louis] had the beautiful boy Richard come to him and, weeping with deceptive and contrived emotion, he received him and kissed him and detained him, and made him dine with him, and go to bed there. And on the following day, when the highly honoured boy's guardian wanted to take him to another house, to give him a bath and look after him, the king stopped him, and kept him with him. Nor on the second day or the third day would the king allow the indignant forester to do the like, but hardened his heart and forbade him. And when the guardian realized that the most gentle

⁴ Searle, 81.

⁵ Richer, 243.

⁶ Flodoard, our more neutral viewpoint on these events, recalls a scene more reminiscent of Richer's account, though far more impartial and not filled with praise for King Louis. Flodoard et al., 37-38.

boy was being held captive, he made no further attempt to take him anywhere.⁷

Dudo continues to describe that at this news the people of the city, and more importantly the chief men of the city, rioted and besieged the king within his residence. This was followed by negotiations in which the king, deceptively according Dudo, bargained for his freedom and continued guardianship over Richard in exchange for confirming his rights over the lands held by William. The young Norman leader was taken to Laon, both as ward and hostage.

The Normans of Neustria were cast adrift, with their chosen leader now unable to lead as he was captive to the Frankish king, who cast increasingly envious eyes over the Norman lands. During this time the Frankish factions, both those of Hugh and of Louis, took advantage of the lack of central leadership amongst the Normans and moved into Normandy to seize parts of that territory for their own benefit, casting aside their direct hostility towards one another in favor of expanding their power bases into the vacuum of Norman authority. Louis naturally, was eager to reclaim whatever pieces of royal power and territory that could be had. So what was King Louis' purpose in his attempt to seize power in Rouen? Quite simply, with the death of William Longsword he had lost an important ally in his struggle against Duke Hugh; unable to muster greater internal Frankish support for his fight, he took the tactics of Charles the Simple and sought to leverage the Northmen of Neustria. The Normans, now even more the political outsiders with the death of William, were to be tools to prop up the growing collapse of Carolingian authority. Hugh, too, could

⁷ Flodoard, 101.

claim some legitimacy in seizing parts of Normandy, as he bore the title of marquis of Neustria. More practically, he could not allow Louis a free hand in the area and moved there as part of their rivalry.

Richer and Flodoard record the Norsemen fighting against and for both Hugh and Louis.⁸ The Norsemen of Neustria were subsumed by their Frankish neighbors during the mid-tenth century, with only those situated in the west towards Brittany continuing active expansion through warfare; Flodoard comments that amongst these western Norsemen were those who "... had recently come from across the sea."⁹ So while the plight in Neustria was dire, it did not dissuade further groups of Scandinavian raiders to see opportunity for settlement there. It was one of the newcomers, in fact, who struck a blow of revenge for the Normans against King Louis and possibly saved the Scandinavian enterprise in Normandy.

Dudo's interpretation of events is likely an exaggeration of fact, yet that does not mean that his telling is not truthful in other ways. It is important here to highlight that Dudo was originally commissioned for his work by Richard himself and following the death of his patron was encouraged by other members of the ducal household to finish the work. Thus, for the last part of the *History of the Normans*, Dudo had access to both contemporary works (such as Flodoard) and eye witnesses. So while his myth making may stray from the facts of the matter, he likely struck on the communal memory of the episode. The Normans remembered a harrowing time in which a good and favored leader was killed, while the lands promised to them

⁸ Richer, 257-279 and Flodoard et al., 41-44.

⁹ Searle, 84 and Flodoard et al., 40.

threatened to fall into the hands of “perfidious” Franks. The recounting of the early years of Richard’s reign are a retelling of shared trauma, a time in which the collective Otherness of the Normans was confirmed and the danger of remaining Scandinavian was reinforced. Thus, one can see that the reign of Richard was the final transition from an emerging political ethnicity into an established one.

In many ways, one can view the beginning of Richard’s rule as penance for the weaknesses of his father. With William’s death, Frankish alliances crumbled and the Normans were left in disarray. With the Norman ruler dead and his heir a child, former allies and enemies alike cast greedy eyes on the Norman realm. Never had the Normans been in such a precarious position. Both Dudo and Flodoard make it clear that invasion swiftly followed William’s death; however, each reports different causes. Dudo’s version of events is succinctly summed up by Searle, “. . .perfidious Franks very nearly overwhelmed the Norse who had been so trusting as to have dealt with them.”¹⁰ Flodoard simply recalls the events of the invasion, not deigning to discuss motivations.¹¹ While Dudo’s explanation likely does not convey historical fact, it certainly contains medieval truth. William Longsword had been too trusting with his Frankish dealings and relied too much on them to retain his balance of power. With his death the Normans would have to pay for his folly.

Soon after the death of William, King Louis arrived in Rouen. The populace, believing he would punish Arnulf of Flanders for murdering William, welcomed him with open arms.¹² The king, however, had no such plans. Rather he quickly found Richard and took the boy into his custody within the city. When the populace realized the king would not

¹⁰ Searle, 79.

¹¹ Flodoard 40-41.

¹² Dudo and Christiansen, 100.

return Richard to his home, they gathered to attack the king. The cowardly Louis, fearing for his life, sent for a nearby Norman war leader named Bernard to come to his aid. Bernard refused to help directly, instead offering to take the boy and negotiate for the king's safety. Bernard claimed that the king took the boy to see him "educated in king-craft and courtly eloquence."¹³ The citizens then allowed Louis to slink back to his residence in the city. Now warned that the populace of Rouen was hostile to him, Louis sought Bernard's council, wishing to avoid further violence. Bernard relayed that the Normans in Rouen wanted nothing more than for Louis to confirm Richard as heir to William's lands and titles and to be a good and faithful lord; according to Dudo, Louis deceitfully agreed.¹⁴ This segment of Dudo's myth clearly serves to show that the Normans of Rouen, the largest and richest of the groups in Normandy, clearly wished for a stable lineage and valued Richard as their rightful ruler. Also, while deceitfully intended, Louis' confirmation further legitimized Richard as the heir to William's legacy. The Normans desired rule by Richard and the Frankish king had shown his true colors. Dudo clearly established that to be successful, the Normans must rely on their kin above all others as would be reinforced throughout Richard's early life.

With the approval of several of William's old confidants who, "were deceived by the false speeches of the dissembling king, and they entrusted Richard (the boy they had hoped and longed for) to Louis for his education."¹⁵ Before this scene, Dudo described at length how before his death William had ensured that Richard was educated by those in Normandy who followed Scandinavian ways so that Richard, "should have the benefit of the Dacian talkativeness, and learn it thoroughly by heart, so that in the future he should be able to

¹³ Dudo and Christiansen, 101.

¹⁴ Ibid., 102.

¹⁵ Ibid, 102.

express himself more fluently to the Dacian born.”¹⁶ Thus, between the education that William had ordained for him and his wardship under King Louis, Richard was firmly educated in both Scandinavian and Frankish ways. Richard was able to navigate the Frankish world far more easily than William could, who was an outsider who had been raised for part of his life abroad. And yet, unlike William, Richard would be able to act and speak as a Scandinavian when needed, without being forced to by circumstance.

With Richard a captive and the other Norman leadership still in chaos, Dudo was free to show the true nature of the Franks: treachery. This was especially true in the case of King Louis himself. As Dudo laments in an aside of verse, “[Louis, O Louis] / Were you but truly / Keeping the oaths that / You solemnly took... / Why break a promise for an inhuman, / Dishonest pretext, / Undone by presents / And cunning policy...”¹⁷ For while the people of Rouen assumed Louis would punish Arnulf of Flanders and take vengeance for William, the opposite was true. Through lies and bribery, Arnulf negotiated his way into the council of King Louis.¹⁸ Arnulf, not satisfied with the murder of William, advised the king to, “Hold the son Richard in perpetuity, and hold the proceeds of the realm forever. Crush the inhabitants of that land with the hard yoke of the law and of servitude, and compel them to serve and obey you.”¹⁹ According to Dudo, King Louis, advised by the murderer of the Norman martyr, plotted not only to exploit and abuse the loyalty of the Normans, but to subject that proud people to a deplorable state of servitude; that is the collective memory that Dudo so strongly emphasized in this portion of his legend.

¹⁶ Dudo and Christiansen, 97.

¹⁷ Ibid., 105.

¹⁸ Ibid., 104-105.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Richard, through the cunning of loyal Scandinavian followers, was rescued from the clutches of the Frankish king. Meanwhile, the leaders of the Normans in Rouen plotted with Duke Hugh, Louis' most serious political rival, to strike at the king. Feigning loyalty, the Normans beckoned Louis to return to Rouen. While there, the king's actions continued to undermine any loyalties the Normans may have felt toward him. According to Dudo, "Now, one day a certain young knight of the Frankish nation asked the king to grant him an opulent sufficiency consisting of the entire property of Bernard the Dane, even including a most lovely-looking wife..."²⁰ Although it seems Louis did not grant this request and left Normandy once more, it solidified the Norman revolt against him. So the Normans of Rouen sent messengers back to Denmark pleading for those there to come to the assistance of their kinsman; a new army of Norsemen comes to Francia to assist the noble Richard.²¹

With the arrival of an army of heathens the Normans, plotting with those very forces, called Louis back to Normandy to protect them. Louis, in another snub against the Normans, insisted on including Herluin in his retinue, the very man who had instigated the trouble between William and Arnulf. Louis was drawn into a parlay with the Viking army with the Normans present. Eventually, due to the presence of Herluin at this meeting, a fight broke out between the Normans and the Franks. Together with their Viking kin, the Normans prevailed over the Franks. His countrymen dead, Louis attempted to flee from the meeting and preserve his own life. He ultimately failed and became a captive of the Normans.²² Having revenged themselves upon Herluin and humiliated Louis, the Normans gave the captive king over to Duke Hugh, founder of the Capetian dynasty and Louis' chief political rival, so that he would

²⁰ Dudo and Christiansen, 114.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 118.

become their ally, for Hugh also promised to confirm Richard's rights to Normandy. Having overcome the perfidious king and his lackeys, the Normans proved that they could triumph over the Franks so long as they maintained strong connections with their Scandinavian roots, for it was through the arrival of their cultural kinsmen that they ultimately triumphed. Dudo confirmed here that the Scandinavian side of the Norman identity, while sometimes a source of weakness, could prove to be a great strength as well when utilized correctly.

In a ceremony on the Epte River, with the captive Louis in tow, Duke Hugh swore on holy relics to protect Richard and guarantee his lordship over the lands that were promised to Rollo. This act was followed by the Normans, along with Bretons whom William had subdued, upholding Richard as their leader and conducting him to Rouen, where he was welcomed home by the people and the clergy. It is here, though yet a boy, that Richard truly fulfilled the prophetic dream supposedly sent long ago to Rollo in England. With Normans, Bretons, and Vikings fresh from Dacia all swearing loyalty to and following Richard, he had fulfilled the prophecy that many diverse warriors would follow him and together forge a home in Normandy. As Nick Webber states:

As a Norman, Richard provided a perfect archetype for identity. As well as being perfectly at home with his own people, he was the ideal synthesis of both Scandinavian and Frankish culture. He could play the Frankish political game and did with various successes against both the Frankish monarchs and magnates, as a *comes Francie*; he also managed to secure a marriage to the daughter of the powerful Capetian *dux Francorum*, Hugh the Great, which gave the dynasty a tie to the future Frankish kings. In addition, Richard could rely on Scandinavian aid, showing that he was also adept at dealing with Scandinavians in a manner that was not merely acceptable: the Dacians were 'delighted by these embassies.'

With his rule secured, Richard would spend his life solidifying his legacy, uniting and protecting Normandy through strength of arms and skilled speech. Richard took the strengths

of both Viking and Franks, providing a synthesis strong enough to thrive safely in a hostile world, by becoming Norman.

CONCLUSION

Ethnicity is a fluid concept and one which can, when necessary, shift to better fit new and emerging circumstances. For Rollo and his descendants, it became necessary to move from the Scandinavian ethnicity to one which better suited the Frankish world. Yet, for the rulers of Normandy, fully embracing the Frankish ethnic identity posed dangers of its own. Thus, it was necessary to find a middle ground, an ethnic identity which preserved enough of their Scandinavian past to retain the loyalty of their followers while becoming Frankish enough to no longer be inherently threatening to the Frankish polities which surrounded the fragile territory they controlled.

Through Dudo of St. Quentin, Richard I embarked on a deliberate effort to craft a distinct and new ethnic identity: Norman. Dudo's work, the *History of the Normans*, serves as the foundation of the Norman identity. Dudo takes the Scandinavian origins of the Normans and manipulates the narrative in such a way that it is both familiar and safe to the Franks. Dudo writes first of Hasting, a man explicitly unrelated to Richard's ancestors, and establishes Hasting as everything that was wrong with the Norman past, as everything that they are not. The brief segment vilifying Hasting is immediately contrasted by the appearance of Rollo, who for Dudo's narrative represents everything that is admirable with the Norman's Scandinavian past. Within Rollo's story Dudo deliberately conflated the possible Danish origins of Rollo with the region of Dacia, allowing the Normans to have a place within the realm of the Classical world. The legends of Troy featured heavily in Frankish origin legends and so by attaching the Normans with the Dacians, Dudo connected them into a familiar and equal framework, making what was once "Other" more familiar.

Dudo continues to imagine Rollo as a righteous and noble Scandinavian, distancing the Normans from the problems of their Scandinavian past.

Following Rollo, Dudo's origin story next tackled the problem that was the pagan nature of the Scandinavian ethnic identity through his telling of William Longsword. Dudo told of William's life through the lens of a martyr but also uses this as a morality tale for the Normans on the danger of being too much a Frankish nobleman. William embraced his Frankish neighbors in a manner unbecoming a Scandinavian war leader, leading to a rebellion amongst those within Normandy who held to the Scandinavian identity. It is only when confronted by loyal Scandinavians about his Frankish ways that William is able to channel his Scandinavian attributes and vanquish the rebels. Dudo's tale of William ends when William is drawn into a parley with deceitful rivals and, in an episode mirroring the fate of an earlier Scandinavian in Francia, is assassinated. Throughout the episode William displayed Christian virtues in opposition to his enemies. For Dudo's narrative, William became a martyr, washing away the problem of the pagan Scandinavian and establish a solid religious foundation for subsequent generations.

Dudo's narrative ends with his patron Richard I, the man who commissioned his work and the narratives ultimate conclusion. Where Rollo was too Scandinavian despite his virtues and William was too much the Frank, Richard was able to embody both of those identities in such a way as to make a new identity, to be Norman. During Richard's childhood Dudo showed him receiving education from the Scandinavians of William Longsword's retinue, where he learns both their language and their culture, and later he spends time as the ward of the Frankish king himself. Through both of these educations Richard learns the virtues and

both ethnic identities and is able to display attributes of both in combination, becoming the first true Norman.

Through Dudo's narrative we can understand the deliberate measure which Richard I undertook in order to cement the idea that the Norman identity was not necessarily something one was born into, but something which any number of other identities could become simply by following the ideals of Norman-ness as outlined by Rollo, William Longsword, and Richard the Fearless.

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