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RODULF AND UBBA.
IN SEARCH OF A FRISIAN–DANISH VIKING

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It is strange that, while students of other Germanic peoples have been obsessed with the identity and office of their leaders, Viking scholars have said very little of such things—a literal case of Hamlet without princes of Denmark!

(Patrick Wormald 1982, 144)

RODULF WAS A PROMINENT Frisian-based Danish Viking leader in the third quarter of the ninth century. When he was killed in 873 while trying to wrest lands for himself in northern Frisia it was reported by Archbishop Hincmar in the so-called *Annals of St Bertin* that he ‘had inflicted many evils on Charles’ realm’ (AB 873, 184). The East Frankish *Annals of Xanten* reported that he had ‘wasted’ many regions over the sea (*transmarinas regiones plurimas . . . vastavit*), as well as everywhere in the kingdom of the Franks, in ‘Gaul’ and in Frisia (AX 873, 32). Rodulf was the epitome of a much-travelled Viking.

This article attempts to reconstruct some of Rodulf’s life and deeds. It will be suggested that his activities were not limited to Frisia and Francia but probably also encompassed Ireland, where a Scandinavian leader called Rodlaibh (Rodulf) was active in the early 860s, and possibly even earlier. More tentatively, it will be proposed that Rodulf could well be the same man as one of the early leaders of the Danish Great Army in England, called Ubba ‘*dux* of the Frisians’. It could be objected that some of what follows is conjectural; it is, but it is reasoned conjecture based on much persuasive, though admittedly circumstantial, historical, geographical and linguistic evidence. To borrow J. R. R. Tolkien’s words in another Frisian context, this investigation starts ‘with the initial advantage that it is based on what is *there*, and on explaining it, not explaining it away, nor on dismissing words and names’ (1982, 37). No use is made of later sagas. If Rodlaibh in Ireland in, at least, 860–62 was not the Frisian Dane Rodulf and if Ubba ‘*dux* of the Frisians’ in England was not the man who was called *dux* Rodulf in Frankish sources, then who were they?

Rodulf’s Frisian background

Before looking at the evidence in detail it is important to highlight Rodulf’s Frisian–Danish background and his family links to former Danish kings.

We can reconstruct the involvement of Danes and Danish Vikings in Frisia in the ninth century from contemporary and reliable Frankish annals. These include the *Royal Frankish Annals* (*ARF*; Scholz 1972), the *Annals of St Bertin* (*AB*; Nelson 1991), the *East Frankish Annals of Fulda* (*AF*; Reuter 1992), the *Annals of Xanten* (*AX*) and the *Annals of Fontanelle* (*AFont*). Although these contemporary witnesses are not without the occasional bias, these biases do not affect the veracity of the historical facts discussed in this paper.¹

Rodulf was a member of the family of two former joint kings of Denmark: the brothers Harald (often called Harald Klak) and Hemming Hálfðansson (Coupland 1998, 101–03). Harald and his brothers Reginfrid and Hemming had been ousted from the Danish throne in 813 by the sons of the former king Godfrid (*ARF* 810–13, 133–37). They tried unsuccessfully to regain their position the following year, when Reginfrid was killed (*ARF* 814, 141). Harald went to the new Frankish emperor Louis the Pious to ask for help. Louis sent him to Saxony to ‘wait for the proper time when he would be able to give him the help which Heriold had requested’ (*ARF* 814, 141; Scholz 1972, 99). With Louis’s support Harald did eventually manage to reclaim a share of the Danish kingdom in 819 (*ARF* 815, 152). But after having been baptised in 826 in Mainz, with Louis standing as his godfather (*ARF* 826, 160–70; *AX* 826, 67; Faral 166–90), Harald was expelled from Denmark by the ‘sons of Godfrid’ the next year (*ARF* 827, 169–70), and after another attempt to return in 828 was finally forced to give up his pretensions to the Danish throne and retreated to his benefice of Rüstingen in northern Frisia, which had been granted to him by Louis ‘so that he would be able to find refuge there with his possessions if he ever were in danger’ (Scholz 1972, 119). His brother Hemming was at some point granted the Frisian benefice of Walcheren, where he was killed in 837 along with a Frankish count called Eggihard while trying to repulse a Viking attack, quite likely made by his own sons (*AB* 837, 28; Thegan, 256). Harald and Hemming were what Coupland aptly calls ‘poachers turned gamekeepers’ (1998).

The name of Rodulf, as he will be called throughout this article, is an early Frankish version of the Old Norse name Hróðólfr/Hróðúlfr. He was the son of Harald Klak’s nephew, also called Harald (Coupland 1998, 91). The younger Harald was probably the son of Harald Klak’s brother Hemming Hálfðansson. He was definitely a son of one of Harald Klak’s

¹ For a more detailed historical overview and analysis of this Danish involvement in Frisia than can be provided here see Coupland 1998, Helton 2011, Maund 1995, Bauduin 2009, Lebecq 2011, Vogel 1906, de Vries 1923, Blok 1978 and Braat 1954.

brothers, and in 841 Louis the Pious's son Lothar I granted him the same Frisian island benefice of Walcheren that Hemming had held before him (*AB* 841, 39; Nelson 1991, 51). The two other known brothers of Harald Klak, called Anulo and Reginfrid, had died in dynastic fights in Denmark in 812 and 814 respectively (*ARF* 812, 814, 136, 141).

It seems certain that the younger Harald and a brother called Rorik were involved in some of the raids on Frisia in the 830s, although it is unlikely that Lothar I incited these raids as part of his long struggle with his father Louis for his rightful inheritance of the Frankish empire, as has been claimed by a number of historians (e.g. Coupland 1998, 90–93; Henstra 2012, 35; Lund 1989, 47; Lund 2005, 31; Nelson 1991, 51 n. 9). The 841 grant of Walcheren to Harald was probably made either early in the year when Lothar was desperately trying to prevent Charles the Bald from crossing the Seine and joining forces with Louis the German, or more likely in the aftermath of the bloody battle of Fontenoy on 25 June 841 where Lothar was defeated by Louis and Charles and after which he was frantically looking for allies to support him (*AB* 841 39; Nelson 1991, 51).² Harald is named by the royal Frankish chronicler Nithard (a grandson of Charlemagne) as one of Lothar's army leaders on the Moselle in March 842 and Nithard also mentions that Lothar had called in the Northmen to help him (Lauer 1926, 114, 122; Scholz 1972, 164, 167); he died sometime in the course of the next few years (Coupland 1998, 92).

In 850 Rorik, who had been in exile for a few years in Saxony in Louis the German's realm following some supposed disloyalty to Lothar, collected a great fleet and army and together and with his cousin Godfrid, Harald Klak's son, raided and captured the important, though by now declining, Frisian *emporium* of Dorestad. Lothar I had no choice but to grant the town, which he had held before with his brother Harald in the time of Louis the Pious, to Rorik (*AF* 850, 39; *AB* 850, 59; *AX* 850, 17; Coupland 1998, 96). His cousin Godfrid got nothing and his part of the fleet continued to raid in Flanders, the Artois, Frisia, around the mouth of the Rhine and on the river Scheldt (*AB* 850, 851, 59, 63; *AF* 850, 39; *AFont* 850, 85), until in October 852 he sailed up the Seine. The next year the West Frankish king Charles the Bald was forced to pay him a tribute to leave (*AB* 852, 853, 65–66; *AF* s.a. 850=852, 39–40; *AFont* 852, 89). Another part of the large Danish–Frisian fleet of 850, under an unnamed leader, decided to head for England where they plundered London and Canterbury but were eventually repulsed in 851 by the West-Saxon king

² I explore these issues in more detail in Lewis, forthcoming.

Æthelwulf and his sons Æthelbald and Æthelstan (*AB* 850, 59; *ASC*, s.a. 851). Bloodied but not defeated, they then probably moved on to Ireland where they were called ‘dark heathens’ by the Irish (Woolf 2007, 72).

Following the death of the Danish king Horik I in 854 in a civil war with some family pretenders to the throne who had been forced into exile, when most of the royal family had been killed (*AB* 854, 70; *AF* 854), the cousins then attempted to grab the Danish throne for themselves the next year. When they failed they returned to Frisia (*AB* 855, 70–71; Coupland 1998, 96). Rorik made another attempt on the Danish throne in 857 and had more success, because the young Danish king Horik II had to grant him some Danish territory ‘between the Eider and the sea’ (*AF* 857, 47; Coupland 1998, 97),³ but at some point he lost these lands and was back in Frisia by 863 at the latest.

Given what we know of the activities and dates of Rodulf’s various relatives based in Frisia, it is probable that he was born sometime around 830, give or take five years. Given the location of his father Harald’s benefice on the Frisian island of Walcheren, which had previously belonged to Hemming Hálfðansson, it is quite possible that Rodulf was born on Walcheren itself or in one of the neighbouring counties.

By the early 860s most of coastal Frisia, which extended at the time from the southern limits of Danish Jutland to the borders of modern Belgium, was effectively ruled by Rodulf’s uncle Rorik until his death sometime after he visited Louis the German in Aachen in 873 (*AF* 873, 78; *AX* 873, 32), but before 882 when the Northman Godfrid (not to be confused with his probable relative Godfrid Haraldsson) was granted the Frisian benefice that Rorik had held before (*AF* 882, 99; Coupland 1998, 100). Rorik had been a very effective gamekeeper for the Franks. Coupland says: ‘During the twenty-three years in which Dorestad and its region are known to have been under his control, there were just two recorded Viking attacks’ (1998, 101). At various times Rorik had served four Frankish kings: Lothar I, Lothar II, Charles the Bald and Louis the German. Coupland gives a very positive account of Rorik (at least as viewed by the Franks). Vogel was less laudatory, supported perhaps, as we will see, by the accusation that Rorik had probably allowed some Northmen to raid through his territory in 863, as well as the fact that on his nephew Rodulf’s death in 873 Rorik was called *fel Christianitatis* ‘poison/gall of Christianity’ in the *Annals of Xanten* (*AX* 873, 32).

³ This was probably the coastal province between the Eider and the Elbe called Ditmarsh (see La Cour 1930, 243).

But unlike his uncle Rorik, Rodulf was never trusted by the Frankish kings. It is likely, Coupland suggests, that he was at some time granted some kind of benefice, ‘perhaps one inherited from his father Harald on the latter’s death in the 840s’ (1998, 102). He rightly adds that this is speculation, but that ‘the very few facts at our disposal suggest that Rodulf had some sort of territorial power in Lothar’s kingdom’. Whatever the case, Rodulf was, at least in the Franks’ eyes, the black sheep of the family, ‘the unacceptable face of the Danish presence on Carolingian soil’ (Coupland 1998, 101). As will be shown below, it seems that despite his efforts to receive proper recognition in Frisia from the Franks, and a position like his relatives Rorik, the two Haralds and Hemming, Rodulf never did manage to turn from poacher to gamekeeper; he was and remained an unrepentant Viking.

Rodulf in contemporary Frankish sources

Explicit mention of Rodulf occurs in just three years in contemporary and reliable Frankish sources: in 864, twice in 872 and on his death in northern Frisia in 873. In 864 he is mentioned in the Middle Kingdom ruled by Lothar II, later called Lotharingia. The *Annals of St Bertin*, written at this time by Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, say (*AB* Waitz, s.a. 864, 67; Nelson 1991, 112):

Hlotharius, Hlotharii filius, de omni regno suo quattuor denarius ex omni manso colligens, summam denariorum cum multa pensione farina atque pecorum necnon vini ac siceræ Rodulfo Normanno, Herioldi filio, ac suis locarii nomine tribuit.

Lothar, son of Lothar, raised 4 *denarii* from every manse in his whole kingdom, and handed over the sum in cash, plus a large quantity of flour and livestock and also wine and cider, to the Northman Rodulf, son of Harald, and his men, all this being termed a payment for service.

The payment was called a *locarium*,

a term which was consistently used by Carolingian authors to refer to payments for mercenary service, as distinct from tribute payments, which were denoted by the word *tributum* . . . ; this suggests that Rodulf was in some sense entitled to the payment (Coupland 1998, 101–02).

The Frankish kings frequently used the Northmen as mercenaries in their family fights. A *locarium* was often paid in advance for services to be rendered, perhaps more often than for services that had already been carried out. To give just one of many examples, Nelson notes:

When Salomon and Robert fought each other on the Loire in 862 Salomon ‘hired twelve (Danish) ships by a legal hire-contract (*locario iure*)’, while

Robert 'paid 6,000 lb and exchanged hostages' to secure the services of other Northmen who had recently arrived in the area (1992, 204).

The question thus arises: did Lothar pay Rodulf for services he had already undertaken or was this a payment in advance? Nelson and de Vries, among others, suggest that it was Rodulf who had made a raid up the Rhine from Frisia to Cologne the year before (863), as reported in the *Annals of St Bertin* (AB 863, 95–96; Nelson 1991, 104) and the *Annals of Xanten* (AX s.a. 864, 22–23) (Nelson 1991, 112 n. 5; de Vries 1923, 192–93). This might well be true, because after the raid Archbishop Hincmar wrote to Hungarius, the bishop of Utrecht, saying he suspected that Rorik had encouraged the raid up the Rhine on Lothar's kingdom, and if this turned out to be the case the bishop was to impose a suitable penance on Rorik. He also wrote to Rorik himself warning him 'to give neither counsel nor assistance to the pagans against the Christians' (Flodoard 1881, 529, 541). In addition, in the *Annals of St Bertin* Hincmar wrote that these 'Danes' had 'followed Roric's advice and withdrew by the same way they had come', i.e. back through Frisia (AB 863, 95–96). Hincmar's suspicions regarding Rorik's complicity seem reasonable, particularly as Rorik controlled most of Frisia and it would be hard to imagine that a Danish fleet had passed and withdrawn underneath Rorik's nose without at least his tacit agreement. Clearly, though, this was an attack on Lothar II's realm and so the payment for mercenary services made by Lothar to Rodulf in 864 cannot have been made to pay for a previous attack on his own lands; in any case it was Lothar who had fought these Danes on the Rhine. An argument against Rodulf's involvement in this raid might be that the Danes first attacked Dorestad (which Rorik usually controlled) before proceeding up the Rhine to Xanten and an island in the Rhine near Neuss; but as de Vries persuasively argues, this can probably be explained by the fraught relationship between the 'gamekeeper' Rorik and his Viking nephew Rodulf (de Vries 1923, 194–95, 391–92). The *Annals of Xanten* also tell us that a part of the army then reached Cologne but lost one hundred men and had to retreat, and that one of the Viking leaders called Calbi was killed (AX s.a. 864, 21). It is highly probable therefore that in 864 Lothar was paying Rodulf for future mercenary services.

After 864 there is a gap of seven to eight years in the Frankish records when Rodulf is never mentioned. Then in 872 he is mentioned twice as accompanying his uncle Rorik to meet the West Frankish king Charles the Bald, first in January at Moustier-sur-Sambre in the province of Namur and again in October at Maastricht (AB 872, 184, 188; Nelson 1991, 177, 180). The annals tell us that Charles came expressly to meet Rorik and

Rodulf on both occasions, and Nelson suggests that these meetings were to ‘forestall the alliance of these warlords with Carloman’, Charles’s son, who had recently rebelled against his father (Nelson 1991, 177 n. 2; Nelson 1988, 113). This finds support in Hincmar’s comment about the October meeting, that Charles

gave a gracious reception to Roric who had proved loyal to him, but Rodulf he dismissed empty-handed, because he had been plotting acts of treachery and pitching his demands too high. Charles prepared his faithful men for defence against Rodulf’s treacherous attacks (Nelson 1991, 180).⁴

Two matters are of importance here. First, Charles suspected that Rodulf had been plotting treachery, possibly with Carloman, and he expected future ‘treacherous attacks’. Second, Rodulf had pitched ‘his demands too high’, which clearly suggests either too high a *locarium* or, more likely in this instance, extravagant demands for an extensive Frankish-granted benefice, probably in Frisia. That Rodulf wanted a large territory of his own in Frisia is clear, because in the next year, just as Charles the Bald had suspected, Rodulf tried to grab a territory in Oostergo in northern Frisia, and was killed in the attempt. This is reported by the *Annals of St Bertin*, the *Annals of Fulda* and the *Annals of Xanten*. In the *Annals of St Bertin*, Hincmar wrote that Rodulf ‘who had inflicted many evils on Charles’s realm, was slain in the realm of Louis [the German] with 500 and more of his accomplices’ (AB 873, 193; Nelson 1991, 184). The East Frankish *Annals of Fulda* report what happened in greater detail (AF 873, 80; Reuter 1992, 72). To summarise: in June 873 Rodulf (called Hruodolfus, Ruodolfus or Hruodulfus according to the manuscript), ‘a certain Northman of royal stock, who had often raided Charles’s kingdom with pillage and arson’ arrived with a fleet in Oostergo in northern Frisia, which was now in Louis the German’s realm, demanding that the inhabitants pay him tribute. When the Frisians refused, claiming their adherence to Louis, Rodulf ‘invaded their lands’ and made ‘war against them’. A long description of the subsequent battle follows in which Rodulf was killed with ‘eight hundred men’. After his death Rodulf’s Danes ‘took refuge in a certain building’ surrounded by the Frisians, but were eventually allowed to leave ‘unwounded for their ships’ after they had given hostages, returned all the treasure plundered (when the hostages were released) and made an oath never to return to King Louis’s kingdom. They then ‘departed with great

⁴ For the Frankish geopolitical context and interpretations of these Frisian/Danish meetings with Charles the Bald see Bauduin 2009, 179–87 and de Vries 1923, 200–05.

shame and loss, and without their *dux*, to their own country'. The *Annals of Xanten* tell a similar story, but add the facts that Rodulf (Ruodoldus) was a nephew of Rorik and that he had previously 'wasted' many regions over the sea (*transmarinas regiones plurimas . . . vastavit*), as well as everywhere in the kingdom of the Franks, in 'Gaul' and in Frisia (AX 873, 33). This annal also tells us that *Quamvis baptizatus esset, caninam vitam digne morte finivit* 'Even though he had been baptised he ended his dog's life with a fitting death' (Coupland 1998, 101).

It is important to note that Rodulf is called not only a Northman 'of royal stock' by the *Annals of Fulda*, which of course he was, being a member of Hemming Hálfðansson's and Harold Klak's family, but also a *dux* by the *Annals of Xanten*, while Rorik is called a *rex*. Even more interesting and relevant is what these contemporary Frankish annalists tell us about what Rodulf had done before his death. He had 'often' made attacks on Charles the Bald's West Frankish kingdom, as well as in other parts of Gaul (possibly in Aquitaine), and had devastated almost all Frisia (*pene totam Frisiam*) (AX 873, 33). This statement cannot refer to his unsuccessful 873 attack on Oostergo when he was killed. Yet we also hear that he had raided many 'regions over the sea', which given the context here can only mean Britain and/or Ireland. Coupland says this report 'presumably' means 'in the British Isles', which include Ireland (1998, 102). Steenstrup (1876, 125), de Vries (1923, 179–81) and Vogel (1906, 196) long ago suggested Rodulf's presence in Ireland. It is these probable earlier activities that should now be explored.

Rodlaibh in Ireland

A Viking leader called Rodlaibh, which is an Irish form of the Old Norse name Hróðólfr/Hróðúlfr (Rodulf), is reported in the *Annals of the Four Masters* (AFM) and the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* (FAI) as being active in and around Waterford and on the Rivers Barrow and Nore from 860 to 862, and perhaps even as early as 855. As previously mentioned, Steenstrup, de Vries and Vogel identified this Rodlaibh with the Frisian Dane Rodulf, as more recently have Kelly and Maas (1995, 30–32; 1999, 132–37). We should start with what is most definite. For 862 the *Annals of the Four Masters* report: 'The base of Rauðulfr [*longphuirt Rothlaibh*] was torn apart by Cennétig son of Gáethíne, lord of Laigis, on the fifth of the Ides of September; and Conall Ultach and Luirgnen were killed, and other multitudes along with them' (AFM s.a. 860.11=862; Downham 2010, App. 1). The *Annals of the Four Masters* is an early modern compilation which includes 'some ninth-century parts from the so-called "Chronicle

of Ireland” (Rowe 2012, 44; see also Cunningham 2010). Given that the information found in this annal is very specific, it can probably be relied on for the identity of the Viking leader involved. The *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* are a ‘mid-eleventh century compilation of earlier monastic annals, expanded with entire narratives’ (Rowe 2012, 57).⁵ They report under the same year, 862: ‘Cerball son of Dúnläng and Cennétig son of Gáethíne (i.e. the son of Cerball’s sister) defeated Rodolb’s fleet [*longus Rodlaibh*], which had come from *Lochlann* shortly before that; and Conall Ultach was killed there, and Luirgnén, and many others’ (*FAI*, §308, 862). Clearly the core of this annal drew on the same source as the *Four Masters*; the addition of Cerball the king of Osraige (Ossory) to the winning side is perhaps to be expected, as this part of the annals is very much concerned with Cerball’s family (see Radner 1978; Downham 2005 and 2013), but there is no reason at all why the compiler should have invented Rodlaibh/Rodulf’s name.

These two rather short annalistic reports suggest that Rodlaibh’s ship-base and at least part of his fleet was destroyed on 9 September 862, either by Cerball the king of Osraige in league with Cennétig the king of Loígis or by Cennétig alone. The location of this protected ship-base (*longphort*) was most probably Dunrally on the bank of the River Barrow at Vicarstown, Co. Laois (Kelly and Maas, 1995), but the Viking base at Woodstown, Co. Waterford is possible; both *longphuir* were probably Rodlaibh’s bases. Dunrally lies eighty kilometres upriver from the sea and the name is probably an Anglicisation of *Dún Rothlaibh*, the Fort of Rodulf (Kelly and Maas 1995, 30). Even before the discovery of the base at Woodstown in 2003, Kelly and Maas had suggested that such a base must exist to protect the Vikings’ rear in the Waterford harbour area (Kelly and Mass 1999). Yet although of interest for Irish history, whether it was the *longphort* at Dunrally or the one at Woodstown that was destroyed when Rodlaibh fled is of no great consequence for present purposes.

Something of the earlier history of Rodlaibh in Ireland can be reconstructed. It is likely that it was his fleet which raided up the River Nore towards Kilkenny in 860, a fleet which, according to both the *AFM* and the *FAI*, was defeated by Cerball at *Achad mic Erclaigh*, identified as ‘Agha, alias St John’s, near the city of Kilkenny’ (*AFM*, 858.6=860; *FAI*, §277, 860; Kelly and Maas 1999, 133). In an event that can probably be dated to 861 (but possibly as early as 856/7) Rodulf

⁵ A mid-eleventh-century compilation of the early annals and chronicles that make up the *FAI* was proposed by their latest editor Joan Radner (1976), but this is far from certain.

(‘Roduilbh’) is named again. His forces were apparently defeated by Cerball at Slievemargy, close to the River Barrow in Co. Laois, three miles from Carlow town, near the important monastery of Killeshin. Earlier on the same river raid they had plundered the monastery of Lethglenn, only six miles downstream of Killeshin, where it is said they had taken hostages and killed a great number of the community (*FAI*, §281, 861). There is one final undated and very saga-like entry in the *FAI* (§249) referring to Rodulf (‘Rodolbh’), when his ‘armies’ came ‘to plunder Osraige’ but were defeated by Cerball at Áth Muiceda, which is unidentified but was probably on the River Nore towards Kilkenny. Whatever its worth (which can be debated), as Kelly has kindly pointed out to me, this entry is conventionally dated to around 855, given what comes before and after it; if this date is correct it would imply that Rodlaibh had been either permanently or intermittently in Ireland for seven years.

But what are we to make of events after the destruction of Rodlaibh’s ship-base on 9th September 862? Kelly and Maas, who confidently identify Rodlaibh with the Frisian Dane Rodulf, conclude (1999, 136):

His Irish career ends with the destruction of his important base on the River Barrow [i.e. at Dunrally] in September, 862—four months before the career of the continental Rodulf appears to have begun with the raid up the Rhine in January 863. The coincidence of the names and timing of these activities may suggest that we are dealing with one and the same person.

However long Rodlaibh was in Ireland, I follow Steenstrup, de Vries, Vogel and Kelly and Maas in viewing him as most probably identical with the Frisian Dane Rodulf. This can never be proved beyond any reasonable doubt, but the names are identical, the dates in Ireland and back in Frisia fit exactly, and we know from the *Annals of Xanten* that the Frisian-based Rodulf raided ‘many regions over the sea’ as well as on the continent.

There is perhaps one Irish fly in this Frisian ointment, and that is the reference in *FAI* §308 to Rodulf’s Northmen having recently come from *Lochlann*. The word *Lochlann* is usually taken to refer to somewhere in present-day southern Norway, but is only used from the eleventh century when clearly referring to the kingdom of Norway at that time (for example see Etchingham 2007 for a discussion of the possible location of *Lochlann*), which certainly implies a late date of compilation. If the mention of *Lochlann* has any worth at all here, which is doubtful, it would tell against an identification of Rodlaibh with the Frisian Dane Rodulf; but it needs to be stressed that the whole issue of the location of *Lochlann*

(and indeed of the earlier term *Laithlinn*) remains highly contested and, as yet, unresolved.

Vikings on the Seine 865 to 866

Whether, as Nelson, de Vries, Kelly and Maas and others have suggested, Rodulf was responsible for the raid up the Rhine towards Cologne in early 863, he was definitely paid a large mercenary fee (*locarium*) by Lothar II in 864. It has already been suggested that this could have been for future services. Certainly Lothar had not paid for a raid on his own territory and in the time immediately prior to 864 there is no other Viking raid that could be put down to Rodulf acting at Lothar's behest. Various contemporary Frankish annals tell us that Rodulf had 'often' attacked Charles the Bald's West-Frankish kingdom. We do not know the precise significance of 'often', but it was clearly more than once. I will not speculate about Rodulf's possible involvement in various earlier attacks on West Francia (see de Vries 1923, 182–92 for some interesting conjectures on this); we should note, however, that a raid by Northmen up the River Seine in Charles's kingdom in 865–66 was the last such attack on his northern realm for a decade. As will be seen, what is extremely interesting about this particular raid is that Hincmar of Rheims in the *Annals of St Bertin* explicitly links it with Frisia (*AB* 866, Nelson 1991, 131–32).

Northmen with fifty ships arrived on the Seine in the summer of 865 (*AB* 865). Charles tried without much success to defend his lands against them, but while *en route* to Quierzy he received the news that on 18 October the

Northmen had got into the monastery of St-Denis, where they stayed for about twenty days, carrying off booty from the monastery to their ships each day, and after much plundering without encountering resistance from anyone at all, they returned to their camp not far from the monastery. [Thereafter] the Northmen who had sacked St-Denis became ill with various ailments. Some went mad, some were covered in sores, some discharged their guts with a watery flow through their arses: and so they died. After dispatching troops to keep guard against those Northmen, Charles returned to Senlis to celebrate Christmas. (Nelson 1991, 128–29)

Having recovered somewhat over the winter,

Northmen sailed up the Seine to the fort at Melun. Charles's squadrons advanced on both banks of the Seine, and the Northmen disembarked to attack what looked like the larger and stronger squadron, commanded by Robert and Odo. The Northmen put them to flight even without a battle, and returned to their own people, their ships loaded with booty. (Nelson 1991, 129)

Charles then had to agree to pay them off, 'at the price of 4,000 lbs of silver, according to their scales'. While the Northmen waited,

Charles collected the amount he had agreed to pay those Northmen, both in silver and in wine. Furthermore, any slaves who had been carried off by the Northmen and escaped from them after the agreement was made were either handed back or ransomed at a price set by the Northmen; and if any one of the Northmen was killed, whatever price the Northmen demanded for him was paid . . . In June the Northmen moved from the island near the monastery of St-Denis and sailed down the Seine until they reached a place suitable for making repairs to their ships and for building new ones, and there they awaited the payment of the sum due to them. Charles marched to the place called Pîtres with workmen and carts to complete the fortifications, so that the Northmen might never again be able to get up the Seine beyond that point. In July the Northmen reached the sea. One group of them returned for a while to the Ijssel district [in Frisia] and enjoyed everything they wanted, except that they did not manage to make an open alliance with Lothar. (Nelson 1991, 130–31)

The Ijssel district to which the Northmen returned could be one of two places in Frisia: either the area around the river called the *Hollandse Ijssel*, which enters the sea quite near Walcheren, or, further north, the area around the *Gelderse Ijssel* which discharges into the Ijsselmeer, previously known as the *Zuiderzee* (see van den Bergh 1949, 39–43, 85–88, 122–23, 136). We cannot be sure which area of Frisia the Seine Northmen returned to in 866, but the fact that only the area south of the *Gelderse Ijssel* was in Lothar's realm (the northern part belonging to Louis the German), while the whole area along and around the *Hollandse Ijssel* was a part of Lothar's kingdom, and the fact that the *Hollandse Ijssel* is quite near both Walcheren and Dorestad, the centres of power of these Frisian Danes, maybe suggests the *Hollandse Ijssel* as more likely (see Vogel 1906, 217 n. 2 and de Vries 1923, 198–201). In addition the returning Northmen had failed to get recognition from Lothar, which might also support the view that they had returned to the *Hollandse Ijssel*.

No name is given for the leader of this lucrative (though costly) raid up the Seine, but clearly 'one group of them' had 'returned' to Frisia in July 866, where Lothar II had not been willing to 'make an open alliance' with whoever was the leader of this group, and so after 'a while' it clearly moved on elsewhere. The suspicion must arise that the Viking leader concerned was Rodulf. He had demanded and got a mercenary fee from Lothar in 864, possibly in advance as I have suggested, and it is possible that after raiding the territory of Lothar's uncle Charles in 865–66, perhaps as part of Lothar's continuing struggle with Charles, Rodulf had returned to Frisia expecting an 'open' grant of territory in Frisia, but Lothar had

been unwilling to comply. Nelson, the editor and translator of the *Annals of St Bertin*, writes: ‘Apparently these Northmen wanted to be granted land in Frisia, as previous groups had been’. She then refers to the 841 grant of Walcheren to the younger Harald (Rodulf’s father) and the grant of Dorestad to Rodulf’s uncle Rorik in 850 (Nelson 1991, 866, 132 n. 12). The fact that one of the Viking leaders on the Seine in 866 returned to Frisia in July, where he ‘wanted to be granted land’ by Lothar, would suggest previous dealings between this Northman and Lothar. In her biography of Charles the Bald, Nelson also rightly points out that the Northmen’s raid up the Seine in 865–66 was the last such raid on Charles’s northern heartland for another ten years (1992, 213), probably because Charles’s defensive measures were making such raids increasingly difficult and costly for the Northmen (see Coupland 2004).

Following this particular raid in 865–66, Nelson says: ‘Some Vikings went back to Frisia, while most of them seem to have turned their attention to England’ (1992, 213), and adds that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (e.g. ASC A, s.a. 866) says that ‘a great army came to the land of the English’ (1992, 213 n. 128). Similarly, Smyth maintains that some of these Seine Vikings ‘undoubtedly headed for Eastern England to join the full-scale invading force bent on the conquest of that land’ (1995, 19). Abels, Sawyer and McLeod have suggested the same (1998, 114; 1971, 101 and 1998, 92; 2014, 132). De Vries also clearly identified part of this Frisian Seine fleet as coming to England and being a part of the early Great Army, and suggested that Ubba was its leader (1923, 198–201, 393). I believe that all these historians were right in suggesting that at least one part of the Danish army and fleet leaving the Seine in the summer 866 subsequently became a part of the early Great Army in England—whether this was the part that did ‘go back’ to Frisia or the part that did not, or both.

Ubba ‘dux of the Frisians’ in England

Finally we can turn our attention to England. Was the Frisian Dane Rodulf also the *dux* of the Frisians called Ubba in Anglo-Saxon sources?

According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* the Danish Great Army arrived in East Anglia in late autumn 865—the year at this time in the *Chronicle* started in September (see Beaven 1918). Asser called it a ‘great fleet of pagans’ (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 238 n. 44). They over-wintered there and ‘made peace’ with the East Angles, who gave them horses (ASC A, 866). Probably in about October 866 they ‘went over the mouth of the Humber to York city in Northumbria’ (ASC A, s.a. 867) where according to Symeon of Durham’s early twelfth-century compilation the *Historia*

Dunelmensis ecclesie (HCD), they entered York on the 1st November 866 (Rollason 1998; *Symeon of Durham*, xv–xcv, xlii–xliv; Stevenson 1858, 654). All the mentions of the Great Army going ‘over the mouth of the Humber’, and in the version of the late tenth-century Anglo-Saxon chronicler Æthelweard being ‘transported across the River Humber’ (CA 1962, IV:2, §35), coupled with the fact that these Danes would scarcely have risked leaving their valuable longships behind in East Anglia, suggest, as Smyth put it, that it is ‘likely that the greater part of the host sailed north to the Humber in the all-important longships’ (1995, 21). It might well be that another part of the army made its way overland using the horses they had extorted from the East Angles, because the twelfth-century *Historia regum* says they ‘marched’ to York (Stevenson 1855, 488). After reaching and occupying York in early November it seems that over the next few months the Danes plundered throughout Northumbria as far as the Tyne and then returned to York (Stevenson 1855, 654). The only source which mentions the name of a Danish leader in 865–66 is Æthelweard’s Latin *Chronicon* (CA, IV: 2, §35; Rowe 2012, 53):

Enimvero Eðered successit in regnum post obitum fratris sui Æðelbyrhti. In eodem anno aduectæ sunt classes tyranni Iguares ab aquilone in terram Anglorum, hiemaueruntque inter Orientales Anglos . . . Scilicet post annum ipse exercitus, relicta orientali parte, transfretatusque est fluuium Humbre in Nordhymbriorum prouinciam ad Euoracam urbem.

Æthelred succeeded to the kingdom after the death of his brother Æthelbyrht. In the same year, the fleets of the tyrant Inwær [‘Iguares’] arrived in the land of the English from the north, and they wintered among the East Angles . . . After a year, that army, leaving the eastern area, was transported across the River Humber into the province of the Northumbrians, and to the city of York.

Frank Stenton believed that this Iguare (Inwær) was the original leader of the Great Army (1971, 246 n. 2):

The form Igwares proves that the statement comes from an Old English source, and there is no reason to doubt that Æthelweard derived it from the very early manuscript of the *Chronicle* which was the basis of his work.

I can see no reason to disagree. The fact is that there is as yet no mention of the Danish ‘king’ Healfdene, who probably arrived somewhat later, or indeed of Ubba. Turning to Ubba, in the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto*, compiled in the tenth or eleventh century in Chester-le-Street or Durham but based on earlier sources (Craster 1954; *HSC*), we read (*HSC*, c. 10, 50 and 51):

Nam Ubba dux Fresciorum cum magno Danorum exercitu in regnum eius uenit, et in sanctos die palmarum apud Eboracum ciuitatem applicuit.

For Ubba duke of the Frisians, with a great army of Danes, came into the kingdom and on Palm Sunday approached the city of York.

Johnson-South, the latest English editor and translator of the *HSC*, has argued persuasively that this mention of Ubba is likely to be historically reliable (*HSC*, 4–8). Three things are of great interest. First, Ubba ‘came into the kingdom’ of Northumbria probably a little before 23 March 867 (Palm Sunday), when he ‘approached the city of York’ (*HCD* gives the date as 21 March, see Arnold 1882, i 55). The *HSC* then goes on to tell the story of how the Northumbrian kings Ælle and Osberht had tried to recapture York but were defeated and both killed by the ‘enemy’, though Ubba is not mentioned again by name. This may mean that Ubba only arrived in Northumbria in the spring of 867, and thus it is quite possible that he had come to join the earlier Danish warlord Iguuar/Inwær who had probably first taken York in the previous November. Of course we cannot preclude the possibility that Ubba had been with Inwær since November, but nowhere in the sources is there any support for this. Second, Ubba is said to be leading an army of Danes. That these forces in Northumbria in 867 are called Danes is no great surprise—whenever an ethnic name is given to any part or all of the Great Army they are always called Danes, or occasionally Danes and Frisians. But the identification of Ubba as a leader of Danes is important. Third, Ubba is called *dux* of the Frisians. As Rowe rightly says, this ‘need not mean that Ubba was a Frisian himself; control of Frisia was often in Danish hands at this time’ (2012, 62). Bremmer, the Dutch historian of the Frisians in Anglo-Saxon England, maintains (1981, 78):

Ubba *dux Fresonum* . . . cannot have been a Frisian himself, and it seems doubtful for the men whose leader he was. It might be possible, though, that his men were not Frisian proper, but had made a name for themselves in Frisia . . . Now Ubba might have come to England by way of Frisia.

As discussed earlier, leaders such as Harald Klak, Hemming Hálfansson, Rorik, Godfrid Haraldsson, the younger Harald and, of course, Rodulf himself were all ethnic Danes based in Frisia. So there can be little doubt that Ubba was ethnically a Danish leader who had been operating in Frisia and is now found wreaking havoc in Northumbria—leading an army of ‘Danes’. This is not the only place where we find Ubba of the Great Army called a *dux* of the Frisians. In the *HSC* we read (c. 14, 52, 53):

Igitur exercitus ille quem Ubba dux Fresonum et Healfdene rex Denorum in Anglicam terram adduxit in tres partes diuisus est; una Eboracam ciuitatem reedificauit, terram in circuiitu coluit, et ibi remansit. Alia uero quae terram Merciorum occupauit, et tertia quae terram Australium Saxonum inuasit, per tres annos multa mala egerunt omnesque regii generis interfecerunt, praetor

solum Elfredum patrem Eadwardi regis, qui his tribus annis in Glestigiensia palude latuit in magna penuria.

The army which Ubba duke of the Frisians and Healfdene king of the Danes had led into England divided into three parts; one rebuilt the city of York, cultivated the surrounding land and stayed there. The second, however, which occupied the land of the Mercians, and the third, which invaded the land of the South Saxons, committed many crimes over the next three years and slew all those of royal stock excepting only Alfred, the father of King Edward, who for three years hid in Glastonbury marsh in great want.

Here we find a retrospective notice that *dux* Ubba and *rex* Healfdene ‘had led [the army] into England’ plus a notice that the Great Army (at Repton in 874) ‘divided into three parts’. The *Chronicle* names one of the leaders at Repton as Healfdene, who ‘went with some of the raiding-army into Northumbria’, and others as ‘Guthrum, and Oscytel and Anund’ who ‘went from Repton to Cambridge’, mirroring the *HSC*’s ‘invaded the land of the South Saxons’ (*ASC* A, 874). The *Chronicle* mentions the army splitting into two, not three. If there were three, who it was that led the third part ‘which occupied the land of the Mercians’ is not known.

Lastly, probably taking information from the *HSC*, or using the same early sources that lay behind it, the early twelfth-century *Annales Lindisfarnenses et Dunelmenses* also say that Ubba, the duke of the Frisians (*Ubba duce Fresonum*) ‘not long after Palm Sunday’ slaughtered ‘almost the entire Northumbrian nation with its kings’ (Rollason 1998, xlvi; Levison 1961, s.a. 868, 484). These Northumbrian-composed annals also report that in 855, when we know from the *Chronicle* that a Danish force was on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent (*ASC* A, 855), ‘an army of pagans, namely of Danes and Frisians, led by dukes [*ducibus*] Halfdene, Ubba and Inguar, landed on the island of Sheppey’ (Levison 1961, s.a. 855, 484). As Rowe suggests, this could well be a conflation of sources and a confusion of dates (2012, 80–81), but if not it would be a matter of immense interest—one, unfortunately, that I will not be able to explore here.

The earliest source mentioning Ubba is the French cleric Abbo of Fleury’s *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, written between 985 and 988 when Abbo was at Ramsey abbey in Huntingdonshire (see Hervey 1907). Here he is called both Ubba and Hubba and is linked with Inguar. Abbo wrote that the Danes’ two *duces* were Hinguar and Hubba, who were both of equal depravity, although he suggests Hinguar was the senior, and that it was the two of them who killed King Edmund in East Anglia in November 869 (Hervey 1907, 19, 21). Abbo says he got his information from Archbishop Dunstan while at Ramsey and that Dunstan had heard it as a

young man from the old armour-bearer of King Edmund when he told the story to King Æthelstan (Rowe 2012, 52–53; Cavill 2005). Abbo’s story tells how, to use Whitelock’s words, ‘Hinguar and Hubba first came to Northumbria, which they overran. Leaving Hubba there, Hinguar came from the north to the east with a fleet’ (Whitelock 1969, 219). Whether Ubba was with Hinguar when he killed Edmund is not clear; most other sources giving a name mention just Inguar as the culprit. What is interesting here is Abbo’s statement that Hinguar had left Ubba (presumably in charge) in Northumbria when he sailed east ‘with a great fleet’ to East Anglia: ‘Having raked together their booty, Inguar left on the spot Hubba, his associate in cruelty’ (Hervey 1907, 20).

After the defeat of the Northumbrians in late March 867, the Danes installed a client-king called Egbert (*HCD*, Stevenson 1855, 652; Coxe 1841, 295) and left for Nottingham in Mercia later the same year (*ASC A*, 868=867), before returning to York for a year: ‘Here the raiding-army went back to York city and stayed there one year’ (*ASC A*, 869=868). The army left York again for East Anglia in 869 and over-wintered at Thetford (*ASC A*, s.a. 870). According to the *Historia Dunelmensis ecclesie* (*Symeon of Durham*, II.6, 98 and 99):

Inde altero anno diuertens, duce omnium crudelissimo Inguar Orientales Anglos inuadit, sanctissimumque regem Eadmundum diueris penis laceratum cum suo pontifice Hunberto peremit.

It [the Viking army] left in the following year and, under its most cruel of all leaders Inguar, it invaded the East Angles, and killed the most holy King Edmund, on whom had been inflicted various tortures, and with him his bishop Hunberht.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says the Danish army ‘rode across Mercia’ to reach Thetford in 869 (*ASC A*, s.a. 870), whereas Abbo says Inguar sailed to East Anglia. They could of course have done both. But if Inguar did leave Ubba in York in 869 it is unlikely that he was with Inguar when he killed King Edmund in East Anglia in November of that year.

Also originating in Ramsey abbey is Byrhtferth’s *Life of St Oswald*, written around the year 1000 (Lapidge 2009). Byrhtferth was a former pupil of Abbo of Fleury (Rowe 2012, 56). Oswald had founded the abbey and his *Life* says that his own grandfather had come to England with the ship-army and that it had been led by ‘Huba and Hinuar’ (Lapidge 2009, 17).⁶ Wormald commented that ‘this looks like oral tradition of

⁶ Actually the *Life* refers to the father of Oswald’s uncle Archbishop Oda of Canterbury.

a pretty high order' (1992, 143), although others seriously question Byrhtferth's general reliability (see Smyth 1995). All other mentions of Ubba in England are derived from the sources already mentioned, and they will not be discussed here as they provide no more information; however, one suggestion that Ubba died in 878 in Devon will be considered below.

To summarise what we know about Ubba '*dux* of the Frisians' in England: He probably arrived in England in early 867 and took part in the defeat of the Northumbrians at York around the 21st or 23rd of March. Just conceivably he had already been with Inguar in York in November 866, although there is no evidence for this. In either case, if Ubba was one of the Viking leaders on the Seine in 866 (here suggested to be identical with the Frisian Dane Rodulf) there was ample time for him to get from the Seine or even from Frisia (having spent some time there) to York before March 867 or even by November 866. Ubba was probably with the Great Army at Nottingham in 867–68—for what it is worth, the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman Geoffrey Gaimar says he was (2009, 157)—before returning to York late in 868. He also seems to have still been in England in 869, either having been left behind by Inguar in York or possibly even being present and jointly responsible for the killing of King Edmund in November 869. And then—he is gone! There is not a single mention of Ubba in England after this date. It is telling that Ubba is absent from the long list of Danish kings and jarls given by the *Chronicle* as participating in the many battles the Danes had with the Mercians and West Saxons in 871, when we hear of the Danish 'king' Healfdene for the first time in the *Chronicle*. Inguar had disappeared by then too. Æthelweard says he died 'in the same year' as he killed King Edmund (*CA*, IV: 2, §36), that is, in late 869 or 870, although a popular theory would equate him with the Viking king Ímar of Dublin and have him returning to Ireland in 870, after which he died in 873 (Dumville 2005; Downham 2007, 64–67; Smyth 1977, 224–39; Woolf 2007, 71–73).

Scaldingi

It has thus far been suggested that Ubba, a *dux* of the Frisians, was probably a Danish chieftain who had been active in Frisia before his arrival in England leading an army of 'Danes'. Additional, though not critical, support for the view that at least some of the early Danish leaders of the Great Army came from Frisia is the name *Scaldingi*, which might mean people of the *Scald*, i.e. the region of the River Scheldt in Frisia (in present day Dutch Zeeland and Belgium). It is the name given three times in the

Historia de sancto Cuthberto when referring to the leaders of the Great Army. The equation of *Scaldingi* with Danes from the river and estuary of the Scheldt, where Walcheren is situated, was supported by Lappenberg (1834, 212), Pertz (*AL*, 506), Storm (1878, 81), Steenstrup (1878, 178, 283) and Lieberman (1925, 95). Steenstrup wrote: ‘It has been shown . . . that the Vikings in England came from Frisland, and about this time a name for Vikings in England was *Scaldingi*, supposed, perhaps rightly, to denote warriors from the Scheldt (*Scaldis*) (1878, 178)’. Later noting an entry in the *Annals of Lindisfarne* for 911 referring to the Northman Rollo (also probably Old Norse Hrǫðólfr/Hrǫðúlfr) taking possession of Normandy, ‘*Scaldi* Rollo duce possident Normanniam’ (*AL*, 506), Steenstrup stated: ‘*Scaldingi* is the name of the Danish-English Vikings of the Scheldt (1878, 283).’ More recently Woolf has suggested the same (2007, 72):

The term *Scaldingi*, used in several places in the *Historia* as the descriptor for what the *Chronicle* calls *mycel here*, ‘the Great Army’, seems to mean ‘people from the River Scheldt’. This river is called *Scald* in Old English and Old East Flemish, and *Scaldis* in Latin, and may indicate that, within Frisia, Ubba came specifically from the island of Walcheren which lies in the mouth of the Scheldt. Walcheren was occupied by Danes for much of the ninth century, following the Frankish King Lothar’s grant of the island to the exiled Danish Prince Harold in 841. Lothar’s intention was that Harold would act as a poacher come gamekeeper and defend the coast against other Scandinavian raiders.

Except for Woolf’s understandable confusion of ‘Prince’ Harald Klak with his nephew the younger Harald (a prevalent though probably mistaken view, see for example Vogel 1906 and Maund 1995) this is all correct. Yet earlier Woolf writes that ‘Ímar was probably a Dane and possibly originated from the Danish colony on the island of Walcheren in the mouth of the River Scheldt’ (2004, 95). So Woolf’s argument that the ‘Dane’ Ímar (i.e. Inguar) came from Walcheren (2004) is replaced by his suggestion that it was Ubba who came from there (2007). I concur with the latter view, or at least agree that Ubba came from Frisia. Woolf regards ‘Ímar’, the Scandinavian ‘king’ who arrived in Ireland in 857 (at the latest) (*AU* 857), as being identical with Inguar, the early leader of the Great Army in England (Woolf 2007, 71–73; also Downham 2007, 1, 64–67). There is in fact not the slightest evidence that ‘Irish’ Ímar or even ‘English’ Inguar (whether or not they were the same person) came from Walcheren or even from Frisia in general. Downham’s and Woolf’s ideas on the ultimate origins of Ímar/Inguar differ. Before Ireland, Downham says ‘it is perhaps wiser to accept that we do not know what these [origins] really were’ (2007, 16). Woolf probably rightly links

the dark heathens' arrival in Ireland in 851 (*AU* 851.3) with the activities of the Danish fleet in Frisia and England in 850–51 discussed earlier (2007, 71–72), but then, like others, he erroneously links these 851 'dark heathens' both with the Dublin Scandinavian king Ímar and the Danish Great Army in England in the late 860s (Woolf 2007, 71–73; Downham 2007, 64–67; Smyth 1977. See Etchingham 2013 and forthcoming for the arguments against this view).

There are three references in the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto* to the *Scaldingi*: in chapters 7, 11 and 12 (*HSC* 2002, 49, 50, 51, 53). Chapter 11 simply refers to the time before the *Scaldingi* arrived in England. Chapter 7 says that (long) after the death of the seventh-century Northumbrian king Ecgfrith 'Scaldingi came and crushed York and devastated the land'. Certainly Ubba, the *dux* of the Frisians, was heavily involved in these events, and *Scaldingi* as a locational identifier would make complete sense for him and his army, but Inguar is heavily implicated in these early events in Northumbria too, even though the Northumbrian *HSC* never once mentions Inguar (unlike Ubba and Healfdene) in Northumbria, nor anywhere else for that matter, which might make us question the real importance and length of his involvement there even though Æthelweard's testimony suggests it was he who initially took York in late 866. There is no evidence that Inguar was from the River Scheldt or even from Frisia, and this may account for Woolf's substitution of Ubba for the Dane 'Ímar'. Chapter 12 of the *HSC*, having yet again touched on the defeat and death of the Northumbrian kings Ælle and Osberht in early 867, says that 'the *Scaldingi* slew nearly all the English in the southern and the northern parts [of England]'. This report of the 'slaying' of the southern and northern English after 867 can only refer to the various campaigns of the undoubtedly Danish Great Army in general, and thus it is not necessarily specifically connected with Ubba the *dux* of the Frisians or any other specifically Frisian Dane.

An alternative suggestion for the meaning of *Scaldingi* was proposed by historians of the Anglo-Saxons, Arnold (1882, 1, 200, 202), Plummer (1889, ii, 65), Stevenson (1904, 218, n. 1) and Collingwood (1908, 124), followed later by Binns (1963, 49–50; 1965, 184) and Frank (1997, 127). This theory is that *Scaldingi* is a remembrance by the compiler of the *HSC*, or more likely one of his sources, of the Frisian/Danish origins of the first Anglo-Saxons, as epitomised by the Old English poems *Beowulf* and *Widsið*, which they assumed to be well known in England at the time when the *HSC* was compiled (cf. Anderson 1999). Legendary events and peoples referred to in these poems were located in Frisia and Danish Jutland

in the fifth and sixth centuries, and two of the most significant people were called Healfdene and Hroþulf (Hróðólfr/Hróðúlfr, or Hrólfkraki in Norse sources), who were related but of different generations, and both of whom were members of the Danish royal ‘clan’ of the *Scyldingas/Skjöldungar*, with a legendary founder called *Scyld*. W. H. Stevenson wrote: ‘[*Scaldingi*] is . . . probably a somewhat corrupted form of *Skjöldungar*, the *Scyldingas* of *Beowulf*, the name of the royal race of the Danes, and, by extension, of the Danes themselves’ (1904, 218 n. 1). The linguistic and historical arguments for *Scaldingi* meaning *Scyldingas/Skjöldungar* (when any are given at all) are obscure and debatable, but it may not be a coincidence that English sources call the Danish leader of the Great Army Healfdene, with an identical spelling to that found in *Beowulf*, and that another leader was called Ubba ‘*dux* of the Frisians’, a name which, as I will argue below, may well correspond to the name Hroþulf (i.e. Rodulf) mentioned in both *Beowulf* and *Widsið*.

The view that *Scaldingi* does not mean ‘people from the River Scheldt’ precisely, but refers rather to Danes/Frisians in general, is quite persuasive. However, the indisputable fact that Ubba, one of the leaders of the early Great Army, was called a *dux* of the Frisians strongly implies that he at least had come with his fleet from Frisia.⁷

Was Ubba Rodulf?

We now need to ask whether Ubba was the same person as Rodulf, the important, not to say notorious, Frisian-based Danish Viking warlord who was also called a *dux* by the Frankish *Annals of Fulda* on his death in northern Frisia in 873. Rodulf is totally absent from Frankish records in the years 865–71. Could he have been in England for some of this time? I refer back to the belief of Nelson, de Vries and Smyth that at least part of the Danish army and fleet on the Seine in 855–66 then went to England to join the Great Army. I suggest that Ubba the *dux* of the Frisians was quite possibly either a leader of those 866 Seine Northmen who had not gone back to Frisia in July 866 or, perhaps more logically, he was the leader of those who went back to Frisia and, not being granted land by Lothar II, shortly thereafter went elsewhere looking for better rewards. Besides the undoubted chronological fit and the Frisian connection, the evidence that will be presented for this tentative identification is the equivalence of the names Ubba and Rodulf, and the names of important Frisian and

⁷ For more on the Great Army’s Frisian connections see for example McLeod 2014, 109–73.

Danish leaders given in other Northern/Scandinavian sources; after which Ubba/Rodulf's death will be discussed.

The names Rodulf and Ubba

The Frisian Dane Rodulf is referred to in the Frankish annals as Hruodolfus, Ruodolfus, Hruodulfus and Ruodoldus. These are without any doubt early Frankish Latin renditions of the Old Norse name Hróðólfr/Hróðúlfr. The name is a dithematic or compound one, composed of *Hróðr* and *Úlfr*, and means 'famed wolf'. Exactly the same name is found with the same meaning in Old German (Hruodolf) and Old English (Hrōðwulf, Hrōðulf). For example, a German (Frankish) monk in the Rhenish monastery of Fulda signed his name Hruodolf between A.D. 780 and A.D. 796 (Dronke 1850, nr. 137, 77–78), and the name Hrōðulf occurs several times in *Beowulf* and *Widsið*. It is perhaps also of interest that Rollo, the Northman 'founder' of Normandy, was called Hrólfr in later Norse sagas such as *Orkneyinga Saga* (Finnbogi Guðmundsson 1965, 7) and *Heimskringla* (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941, 123–24), and this was also probably a diminutive form of Hróðólfr/Hróðúlfr (see de Vries 1923, 179, 218, 389, 398; Steenstrup 1876, 125). Indeed, predating these sagas the twelfth-century Latin *Historia Norvegiae* actually called Rollo 'Rodulfus' three times (Storm 1880, 90–92).⁸

Such compound names, both in the past and today, are often shortened. Alfred or Wilfred can be called Fred, Alf or Wilf, Siegfried can be called Sigg and Thorulf can be called Ulf. Rudolf can yield Rudi, Rude and variants. Shortened versions of the same original name produce Rolph, Rolf and Ralph. The use of Ulf/Úlfr as a diminutive for Hróðólfr/Hróðúlfr or Rodulf/Rudolf is explicitly mentioned in connection with an early eleventh-century Norman-born missionary who was called both Hróðólfr and Úlfr. He was one of the 'English bishops' of the Norwegian king and saint Óláfr Haraldsson. Sometime after Óláfr's baptism in Rouen in 1015, Hróðólfr went with Óláfr to Norway (Hudson 2007, 463–64). After Óláfr's death he spent nineteen years in Iceland before being granted the abbacy of Abingdon in England in 1051 by his 'relative' Edward the Confessor (ASC E, s.a. 1048=1051; A, s.a. 1050=1051), and died there the next year (Jón Jóhannesson 1974, 141). In *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* he is

⁸ Devra Kunin always translates 'Rodulfus' in the *Historia Norvegiae* as Hrólfr (2001, 9), perhaps because on one occasion the *Historia* says *Rodulfus—a sociis Gongurolfr cognominatus* (Storm, 90), and later in *Heimskringla* he is called Gøngu-Hrólfr (*Heimskringla* 70–71).

called Hrǫðólfr (Jakob Benediktsson 1968, 18, 65; Grønlie 2006, 10, n. 77), in Adam of Bremen’s Latin both Rudolfo and Rodolf (Adam of Bremen, Waitz 1876, c. 55 and c. 62) and in the Old English of the C and E recensions of the *Chronicle* Roðulfe (Conner 1996, s.a. 1050=1051; Whitelock 1954, s.a. 1048=1051). The Icelandic *Hungrvaka*, probably composed around 1200 or somewhat thereafter, refers to him as *Rúðólfr biskup, er sumir kalla Úlfr hétí, ok væri kynjaðr af Ruðu ór Englandi* (Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2002, 11), ‘Bishop Rúðólfr, whom some say was called Úlfr and was descended from people who hailed from Rouen in England’ (Basset 2013, 50).

So Úlfr is an historically attested diminutive form of Hrǫðólfr/Hrǫðúlfr (Rodulf). But what are we to make of the Ubba of the English sources, who was called Ubbe by the Anglo-Norman Geoffrey Gaimar (2009, 156)? There is no doubt that these are Anglo-Saxon Latin and Norman-French renditions of the common Old Norse name Ubbi, which is generally rendered Ubbe in old and modern Danish. Ubbi is found on at least two Swedish runes stones (Rafn 1854, 56–57; Brate and Wessén 1924, 223). In his *Gesta Danorum* Saxo Grammaticus (c. 1150–1220), probably a canon of Lund, uses the form *Ubbo dux Fresciorum*, while the thirteenth-century *Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum* mentions *Ubbi friski* ‘the Frisian’ (McTurk 1991, 106). It might well also be that Hebbi, the name of one of the Danish king Hemming I’s important jarls or sub-kings who met with Charlemagne’s nobles at Heiligen on the River Eider in 811 (Scholz 1972, 811, 93; de Vries 1923b, 271), is also a Frankish-Latin rendition of Ubbi. It could be added that Ubba, as the name usually appears in Anglo-Saxon sources, is a typical Anglo-Saxon hypocorism, with a short vowel followed by a double consonant and an ending in ‘a’. So the question is: can people called Hrǫðólfr/Úlfr also be called Ubbi/Ubba? They can and they were.

The consensus among scholars of early Scandinavian personal names is that Ubbi (and its usual runic form Ubi) is a hypocorism or pet name derived from Úlfr. An alternative is that it derives from the Old Norse adjectives *úfr* (‘unfriendly/hostile’) and *ubben*, which has the meaning ‘fierce, stern, rough, severe, harsh’. Janzén said that Ubbi derives from Úlfr and that it can also derive from dithematic names such as *Ulfgestr*, *Ulfheðinn* (a type of wolfish *berserker*) or from names ending in *úlfr*, such as Hrǫðólfr/Hrǫðúlfr. Hornby (1947, 208), supported by Peterson (2002, 214), points out that the name Ulf can change to Ubbi. Brate and Wessén add that the name Ubbi was mostly found in the East Norse area (1924, 223). Following von Friesen (1897, 20), Hornby adds that Ubbi might also derive from the Norse adjective *ubben* (‘*barsk, bitter*’) ‘fierce, stern’.

Hornby (1947, 208) drew attention to a son of the eleventh-century Danish king Sven Estridsen (c. 1020–74) called Úlfr, referred to in *Knýtlinga Saga* as *Úlfr, er Ubbi var kallaðr* (Bjarni Guðnason 1982, 135) ‘Ulf who was called Ubbi’. This is clear evidence that a member of the Danish royal family called Úlfr was also called Ubbi (Ubba). It does not much matter whether Ubbi here is a hypocorism for Úlfr or a byname meaning ‘stern, fierce’. Of course this Úlfr’s grandfather was Jarl Úlfr Þorgilsson, who was well known in England in the early eleventh century; he served with King Knútr and married Knútr’s sister Estrid, and his sister Gytha married Earl Godwin, the father of the last Anglo-Saxon king, Harold.

Was Rodulf a baptismal name?

In his discussion of Rodulf, Bauduin makes the highly debatable statement that the name ‘Rodulfus’ is not originally Scandinavian and thus that it was probably a baptismal name (2009, 180–87, 363 n. 5). He says that Rodulf’s father, the younger Harald, was baptised at Mainz in 826 along with his relatives and that Louis the Pious’s son Lothar I was his godfather. This is quite possible, as Lothar stood as godfather to Harald Klak’s son Godfrid, although the nephew (*nepos*) of Harald Klak said by the early ninth-century Frank Ermold the Black to have remained behind for a time with his cousin Godfrid at Louis’s court (Faral, 188) is not named and could equally have been the younger Harald’s brother Rorik. Rorik was generally deemed a good Christian by the Franks, unlike his brother the younger Harald, who when he was granted Walcheren by Lothar in 841 was called a ‘demon-worshipper’ by Prudentius of Troyes (*AB* 841; Coupland 1998, 93 n. 48).

Bauduin mentions that Louis the Pious’s second wife and Charles the Bald’s mother, Judith, had a brother called ‘Rodolphe’ and that he had a son and nephew of the same name, and suggests that perhaps ‘Rodulfus’ was baptised when still very young, either in 826 or during a later ‘stay’ of his father the younger Harald at the Frankish court. ‘Rodulfus’ thus might have had a Welf godfather, since Judith’s father was ‘Duke’ Welf of Bavaria, the first of the ‘Welfs’. This speculation is problematic. We do not know the precise dates of birth of the younger Harald or of Rodulf. It is most likely that the younger Harald, if he had been baptised at Mainz, was still a young man in 826, even an adolescent, and Rodulf may not yet have been born. After 830 Louis the Pious was engaged in bitter struggles with his son Lothar I for hegemony in the Frankish empire, and from about 834 it seems that the younger Harald was engaged in raiding activities in Frisia.

If Rodulf was baptised at Lothar’s court or elsewhere in the 830s, it would make no sense for him to have received the baptismal name ‘Rodulfus’ after one of the family of Lothar’s stepmother Judith. Lothar was fighting against Louis the Pious precisely to try to prevent Judith’s young son Charles being given what Lothar regarded as his own rightful inheritance. Judith was his enemy. In addition, there is no need to conjure up a Bavarian Welf background for the name Rodulf. As we have seen, Rodulf and its variant spellings was a name going back a long way in the Germanic world, including Denmark and Frisia. Whatever its historical worth, the material of *Beowulf* and *Widsið* was very old and based mostly in Danish Jutland and in Frisia. But to clinch the argument regarding the age of the name Rodulf in Scandinavia, it can be pointed out that the sixth-century Jordanes in his *Getica*, discussing various early Scandinavian tribes, says that one of their kings was called ‘Roduulf’.⁹ Rodulf was certainly baptised at some point, as the *Annals of Xanten* tell us (AX 873, 33). Many of his relatives were baptised too: Harald Klak, Hemming Hálfansson, Rorik and Godfrid, and maybe his father the younger Harald. Yet none of these people used any baptismal name. Why should Rodulf be the exception? Finally, Hróðólfr/Hróðúlfr is a perfectly fitting name in this Danish ‘royal’ family. As in most parts of the Germanic world there was a clear alliterative naming pattern. Witness for instance the names in Alfred the Great’s family: Æthelwulf, Æthelstan, Æthelred, Æthelbald, Æthelberht and so on. In Hróðólfr’s immediate family we find Hálfðan, Hemming, two Haralds and Hrørek (Rorik).

Names of Danish leaders in Northern sources

Writing in about 1072–76 about the third quarter of the ninth century, Adam, the director of the cathedral school of Bremen, said in his *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* that the names of the Danish kings during the life of Saint Rimbart are not given in his, now lost, saint’s life (*Gesta*) (Adam of Bremen, 36–37). But he says that according to the ‘History of the Franks’ Sigefrid ruled with his brother Hálfðan, and adds the names of ‘other kings over the Danes and Northmen, who at this time harassed Gaul with piratical activity’: ‘Of these tyrants the most important were Horic, Orwig, Gotafrid, Rudolf, and Ingvar.’ The contemporary *Annals of Fulda* mention all these people except Ingvar,

⁹ Jordanes, ch 3, pp. 23–24. For an interesting discussion of who this early Rodulf was in the context of the Danes see Polzer 2008, 50–57.

and Rowe has suggested that Adam's otherwise unknown 'History of the Franks' might be these East Frankish Fulda annals (2012, 70). Sigefrid ('Sigifridi') was the joint king of Denmark in 873 with a brother called Hálfðan ('Halbdeni') (*AF* 873). Rudolf is obviously our man. Rowe suggests that Gotafrid was the Danish leader active in the 880s mentioned many times in Frankish sources (2012, 70), but he could as well be Rorik's cousin Godfrid Haraldsson (the two Godfrids were very probably related). If, as is most likely, this Horic is the earlier Danish king Horik II who took the throne in 854, then Orwig could be Rorik, while Ingvar is another story completely—he is never mentioned in any contemporary Frankish source.

Even more suggestive than Adam of Bremen's names are those given in the very slightly later Danish *Chronicon Roskildense*, probably composed around 1137–38 by a canon of Roskilde Cathedral (Gelting 2016, 13). A part of the *Chronicon* reads (Gertz c. 3, 16–17):

Ex tempore collectis [suis] rex crudelissimus Normannorum Ywar, filius Lothpardi, quem ferunt ossibus caruisse, cuius fratres Ingvar et Vbbi et Byorn et Vlf aquilonis gentibus.

In this time, Ywar, son of Lothpardus, the cruellest king of the Northmen, who was said to lack bones, whose brothers Ingvar and Ubbi and Byorn and Ulf ruled the northern people.

The Danish clerical scribe took many of the names he gives from Adam of Bremen, but it has been argued by the *Chronicon's* editor Gertz (1917, 14) that he also got additional information from an English cleric 'of whom there were many in Denmark at this time' (Rowe 2012, 89). Gelting has also shown that the cleric certainly heavily used Henry of Huntingdon's brand new *Historia Anglorum*, which talks of the *duces* 'Hinguar' and 'Ubba' together in England (Arnold 1879, 143). Gelting says: 'We may assume that Henry of Huntingdon was the source of the Chronicle of Roskilde for part of its description of the Viking raids of the ninth century' (2016, 9). We are not concerned with 'Ivar the Boneless' here, except to say that Janzén believed that the Danish cleric might not have realised that Ywar and Ingvar were variant forms of the same name (1947, 81; followed by McTurk 1991, 106, Rowe 2012, 90 and Gelting 2016, 10). The writer of the *Chronicon* also drew directly on Abbo of Fleury's *Life of St Edmund* for his description of Edmund's martyrdom (Gelting 2016, 9). Most important for our purposes is that the *Chronicon* names one of these ninth-century Danish leaders as 'Ulf', which not only clearly refers to the Rodulf found in Adam of Bremen's list but is also an extremely clear indication that at least in Denmark the Viking

chieftain Rodulf, as attested in Frankish sources, was sometimes referred to by the diminutive Ulf. The separate name Ubbi almost certainly also comes from Henry of Huntingdon. It can thus be cogently argued that as with Ywar/Inguar, the Danish cleric did not recognise Ubbi and Ulf as being the same person. Of course if Ulf and Ubbi/Ubba really were separate people then the tentative identification being made here would collapse, and we would be back at square one with no idea who Ubba ‘dux of the Frisians’ was.

Did Rodulf return to Ireland?

Before turning to Rodulf/Ubba’s death, we need to ask if there is any other mention of him in the sources. It has been shown that Ulf/Úlfr is a plausible and documented form of Rodulf. In the Insular world there is just one mention of an ‘Ulf’ in the ninth century. This is found under the year 870 in the laconic and highly reliable *Annals of Ulster* (AU 870.7):¹⁰

Mael Sechnaill m. Neill, leth-ri Deisceirt Bregh, interfectus est dolose o Ulf Dubgall.

Mael Sechnaill son of Niall, one of the two kings of southern Brega, was treacherously killed by Ulf the dark foreigner.

The *Annals of Ulster* are the ‘best preserved redaction of the so-called “Chronicle of Ireland”’ (Rowe 2012, 36). During this period they were probably being composed by an annalist in Brega, precisely where this fight happened (Charles-Edwards 2006, 9–24).

So a Viking called Ulf is in Brega, north of Dublin, immediately after Ubba disappears from England in late 869 and before Rodulf appears on the continent with Rorik at the beginning of 872. Of course, as Etchingham (forthcoming) says, this Ulf might well be ‘simply an Irish-based Viking’, although perhaps ‘other than a “regular” Irish gall or “foreigner”’, and perhaps we can infer nothing more. Yet Ulf is called a ‘dark foreigner’ (*dubgall*). In my view it has been well established that dark foreigners/heathens (*dubgaill/dubgenti*) are terms designating Vikings of primarily Danish origin and are used after an initial period in Ireland for such Scandinavians active in Britain or occasionally intruding into Ireland (see Etchingham 2013). Ulf might indeed have been such an intruder. The Viking kings of Dublin, such as Ímar and Amlaíb, were never called dark

¹⁰ The same is reported by the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* (AClon, s.a. 868=870, 143) and the *Chronicum Scotorum* (CScot, 870).

foreigners or dark heathens, as the immediately preceding entry in these annals illustrates. It describes their joint attack on Dumbarton, calling them simply ‘two kings of the Northmen’ (*AU* 870.6). We will probably never know who this Ulf was, but it is certainly not ruled out that he was the Frisian Dane Rodulf who had already been in Ireland in the late 850s and early 860s.

Rodulf/Ubba’s death

Rodulf died in Oostergo in northern Frisia in 873 while on a raid to extract tribute and land from the Frisians. Given what we know happened when Rodulf met Charles the Bald for the second time in 872, it is highly unlikely that he was teleguided by Charles against his brother Louis the German as Lebecq has suggested (2011, 160). He was much vilified by the Frankish annalists for being a bad Christian and for his many harmful attacks in Francia, Frisia and on ‘many regions over the sea’. Yet there is a suggestion that Ubba died in Devon in 878. If he did die in that year then obviously he was not the Frisian Dane Rodulf.

In early 878 a Danish fleet and army, that had been in South Wales during the previous winter, arrived in Devon, but was defeated by the West Saxons. In an entry in different manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under 877/878 we read (*ASC* A, s.a. 878):

And that same winter [877/78] a brother of Inwær and Healfdene [*Inwæres broðor 7 Healfdenes*] was in Wessex in Devonshire with 23 ships, and he was killed there and 800 men with him and 40 men of his war-band.

As Patrick Wormald pointed out, *Inwæres broðor 7 Healfdenes* is ‘certainly a strange phrase’ (1982, 143; de Vries 1923b, 272). In the *Life of King Alfred* Asser, who when he is in any way reliable got his information from the *Chronicle* (see Smyth 1995), added that they had come from *Demetia* (i.e. Dyfed in South Wales) and that it was ‘the king’s thegns’ who won the victory, and he names the place of the battle as *Cynuit* (probably Countisbury in Devon) (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 83–84). Unlike the extant versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the tenth-century chronicler Æthelweard, who was the ealdorman of western Wessex as well as a direct descendant of King Alfred’s older brother King Æthelred, and ‘who certainly used a lost text of the *Chronicle*’ (Wormald 1982, 143), stated in his Latin version of the *Chronicle* that the Danish leader who died in Devon was ‘Healfdene, the brother of the tyrant Inwær’ (*Healfdene Inguwares tyranni frater*) and that it was the Danes who eventually won (*CA*, IV: 3, §§42–43). In an early

part of the *Historia regum*, which was compiled by Symeon of Durham in about 1104–15 but whose first sections were possibly written by Byrhtferth of Ramsey in around 1000 (Lapidge 1982), we read that it was ‘*Inguar et Healfdene*’ together who arrived in Devon in 878 and were slain there, with no mention of any brother at all (Arnold s.a. 877, 83). Finally, Henry of Huntingdon, who usually took his information from the Peterborough (E) manuscript of the *Chronicle*,¹¹ interestingly says it was a brother of King Halfdan (*frater regis Haldane*) who arrived with twenty-three ships and was killed (Arnold 1879, 147).

The arrival of this Danish force in south-west England at precisely this time is understandable. In 877 Guthrum’s Danes were very much in the ascendant and King Alfred had had to hide away in the marshes on the island of Athelney. The situation of the West Saxons looked precarious. Most historians would accept that the Danes of the supposed ‘brother of Inwær and Healfdene’ had come to support their former ‘brother in arms’ Guthrum, or at least had come because they wanted to share in the spoils after King Alfred’s West Saxons were finally beaten—an expectation confounded by Alfred’s surprising victory over Guthrum’s Danes at the Battle of Edington in May 878.¹²

The unnamed ‘brother of Inwær and Healfdene’ referred to in the *Chronicle* was identified by the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman Geoffrey Gaimar in his *Estoire des Engleis* as ‘Ubbe, a most evil specimen’ (2009, 173). Downham suggests that Geoffrey ‘may have jumped to this conclusion from reading about Ubba’s association with Ívarr in the legends of St Edmund’s martyrdom’ (2007, 68 n. 25). This could very well be true. Referring to the event of 877/8, Rowe points out that ‘Diverging from all other sources that describe this event, Gaimar gives the credit for the killing to King Alfred rather than his thegns’ (2012, 88). But what is perhaps most astonishing, unbelievable even, is that even the West-Saxon chronicler of the earliest extant recension of the *Chronicle* knew the names of two ‘brothers’ without knowing that of the main Danish protagonist, the putative third brother. It is certainly true that the West-Saxon chroniclers were only really interested in and informed about the Danish armies when they impinged directly on the interests of Wessex,

¹¹ As he does here (though the *Chronicle* does not name the Danish chieftain involved), since he mentions the capture of the Raven banner, which is referred to in the E version of the *Chronicle* but not in the A version.

¹² See Blair 1939 for a discussion of ‘brother’ sometimes meaning ‘brother in arms’.

and particularly when they could present King Alfred in a good light. Concerning matters further north, they were usually vague in the extreme, and often completely silent. But the Danish army in Devon in 878 was clearly a direct threat to the West Saxons in their own territory and, at least according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the West Saxons defeated them and killed their leader. Why the chroniclers did not know this leader's name but knew the names of his two (by now supposedly dead) brothers is a mystery (de Vries 1923b, 272).¹³ If the West-Saxon chroniclers did not know his name, which beggars belief, then how did Geoffrey Gaimar? Ian Short, Gaimar's most recent English editor, suggests local tradition (Gaimar, 156), while Rowe says that Gaimar had access to a lost northern recension of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and that 'it is tempting to guess that the re-introduction of Ubbe at this point in the *Estoire des Engleis* is due to the fact that this is where Ubbe is introduced for the first time in that source' (2012, 88). This guess is not very persuasive, particularly as there is nowhere even the slightest hint that Ubba was in England after the end of 869, and surely any lost northern recension of the *Chronicle* would have mentioned Ubba before his death, given his grisly reputation in the North.

Consequently, it must be admitted that we will probably never know the name of the Danish chieftain who fell in Devon in 878, although there is something suspicious here. Those who wish to accept Geoffrey Gaimar's words as historically true will obviously find the identification of Ubba with Rodulf out of the question; but it should be remembered that when he was not simply translating the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Asser's *Life of King Alfred* Gaimar was a romancer or an historical novelist rather than an historian. He did after all introduce into his *Estoire* a Lincolnshire-derived legend of a Danish king Haveloc (later a model for Shakespeare's Hamlet), placing this story in King Arthur's time, and he even included references to Haveloc in his account of ninth-century events derived from the *Chronicle* and Asser.¹⁴ For example, when describing the battle of Ashdown in 871 both the *Chronicle* and Asser include a list of the Danish leaders, one of whom was a 'Jarl Sidroc the Young' (*ASC* A

¹³ Regarding the absence of a name for the fallen chieftain in the *ASC*, Smyth said that 'incidental information in early medieval annals may be all the more reliable because of its peripheral relationship to the prejudices of a compiler' (1995, 58), which fails to answer the question.

¹⁴ For the Haveloc legend of Geoffrey Gaimar see Bell 1925, Kleinman 2003 and Burgess and Brook 2015.

871, Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 80); Gaimar elaborates: *le giovane Sydroc ki fu parent rei Haveloc* ‘the young Sydroc who was a relation of King Haveloc’ (Gaimar, 162, 164).¹⁵

A tentative reconstruction of Rodulf’s life

Rather than provide a summary I will attempt a brief tentative reconstruction of Rodulf’s life on the assumption that he was one and the same man as Rodlaibh in Ireland and Ubba ‘*dux* of the Frisians’ in England.

Rodulf was probably born to his father the younger Harald sometime in the years around 830, possibly on or near his putative grandfather Hemming’s Frisian benefice of Walcheren. His father died sometime in the 840s. Rodulf probably started his Viking career in the 850s, first raiding along the coast of Charles the Bald’s West Frankish kingdom, maybe even venturing south to Aquitaine as well. Perhaps as early as 855, but certainly by 860, he had moved his activities to Ireland, where he built ship-bases and raided around the rivers Barrow and Nore. He attacked various monasteries and fought with the local kings of Ossory and Laois. But in September 862 these Irish regional kings (or at least one of them) finally managed to destroy one of his ship-bases and some of his fleet—probably the base at Dunrally on the River Barrow—and Rodulf had to leave.

He returned to Frisia where he traversed his uncle’s lands and raided up the River Rhine towards Cologne in early 863. He was told to withdraw by his uncle Rorik (who was the Franks’ main ‘gamekeeper’ Northman in Frisia), which he did. But Rodulf still wanted to be granted a decent benefice in Frisia by the Frankish kings, as many of his relatives had been before. Then in 864 Lothar II employed Rodulf and his fleet as mercenaries in his fight with his younger half-brother Charles the Bald, as Lothar’s father had employed Rodulf’s father in his fights with his own family. In the summer of 865 a Viking fleet entered the River Seine. At least some of this fleet had come from Frisia and it is quite likely that Rodulf was one of the leaders of the fleet. Eventually they managed to extort a huge tribute from Charles the Bald and left in July 866. One part of this force,

¹⁵ Kleinman is surely right when he concludes: ‘Gaimar is likely to have drawn his character names as he felt appropriate from historical sources at his disposal, but . . . the names were generally related not by historical events but by their close proximity in those sources or by their resemblance to a few well-remembered patterns that occurred in East Anglian or Scandinavian traditions’ (2003, 260).

possibly Rodulf's, went back to Frisia, but Lothar II refused to grant him any benefice there 'openly', and thus he and his men soon moved on elsewhere. Then Rodulf's 'Frisian' Danes went to England, arriving at York in March 867, being called the 'Danish' army of 'Ubba *dux* of the Frisians' in English sources. At York, probably joining forces with Inguar who had arrived in England earlier, he defeated the Northumbrians and killed their kings.

It seems that thereafter Ubba/Rodulf stayed in England for about three years. He was probably with the Great Army at Nottingham in 868 and either remained behind in York when the Danish army moved from there in 869 or accompanied Inguar to East Anglia, where together they killed the East Anglian king Edmund. In late 869 or early 870, but certainly before the many battles with the English in 871, Ubba/Rodulf disappeared from England. There is a chance that he might have visited Ireland in 870 before next reappearing in Frisia in early 872, in which year he twice went to meet Charles the Bald with his uncle Rorik. But Charles did not trust Rodulf and refused his excessive demands for land. A few months later, in June 873, Rodulf tried to grab himself a territory in Oostergo in northern Frisia in Louis the German's realm but was killed in the attempt.

Conclusion

On his death Rodulf was much vilified by the Franks for his numerous attacks on Charles the Bald's territory and in Frisia, as well as for his devastation of 'many regions over the sea'. So who were Rodlaibh in Ireland and Ubba, the *dux* of the Frisians, in England, if they were not the Frisian Dane Rodulf? The tentative identification made here will not convince everyone, maybe not even the majority. The evidence is circumstantial, although ample, reasoned and, to my mind, compelling. It would certainly not stand up in an English criminal court of law where the standard of proof is 'beyond any reasonable doubt'. In a civil court, however, where the standard of proof is 'on the balance of evidence', it just might.

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