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# Scandinavian Origins through Christian Eyes: A Comparative Study of the History of the Normans and the Russian Primary Chronicle

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**Scandinavian Origins through Christian Eyes:**  
**A Comparative study of the History of the Normans and**  
**the Russian Primary Chronicle**

By

Aron Miller

Accepted in Partial Completion  
Of the Requirements for the Department  
Master of Arts

Kathleen L. Kitto Dean of the Graduate School

Advisory Committee

Doctor Peter Diehl

Doctor Sean Murphy

Doctor Tristan Goldman

## **Master's Thesis**

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Aron Miller  
June 9, 2016

# **Scandinavian Origins through Christian Eyes:**

## **A Comparative study of the History of the Normans and the Russian Primary Chronicle**

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of  
Western Washington University

In partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

By Aron Miller  
June 6, 2016

## Abstract

The present study examines two historical texts; the *History of the Normans* by Dudo of St-Quentin and the *Russian Primary Chronicle* by the anonymous authors. Both sources have only recently been examined by historians, but have never been compared. These two sources created a historical narrative for the new Norman culture and Russian culture. Before these texts both of these cultures had been forming, but they had not been dedicated to pen and paper. The authors of these texts needed to justify the rule of the patron dynasties because they both originated from Scandinavian in the late ninth century and early tenth century. In addition to being foreign, the patriarchs of each dynasty were Norse pagan. The authors worked around these two problems by tying members of the dynasties to important Christian figures and using Christian redirect. Throughout this study I demonstrate that in addition to a shared Christian redirect, both authors used a shared Pan-Scandinavian oral tradition by comparing them to the Icelandic Sagas.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deep appreciation to my committee members, Dr. Diehl, Dr. Murphy and Dr. Goldman, for helping me through the last several years of my academic career and through the final months of the thesis writing experience. By their dedication alone I was able to finish this project. I would also like to credit Doctor Diehl and Doctor Goldman with helping me through the process of learning the Latin Language. There are few resources for a student to teach oneself Latin, but by the guidance of these two men I have come to have a rudimentary grasp of the language.

I would also like to thank my girlfriend Katie Marcel for being a constant support for me through the writing and research process. She has read every line of this text multiple times and has given me irreplaceable comments and criticisms throughout the last year.

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## Introduction

This paper will attempt to explore the memory and construction of two dynastic histories in the central middle ages. The first history will be the *History of the Normans* written by Dudo of St Quentin.<sup>1</sup> The second will be the *Russian Primary Chronicle* written by the anonymous authors.<sup>2</sup> The reasons that these two texts were chosen was because they both filled the following criteria: They were written only about 100 years apart; The HN was written in the beginning of the eleventh century while the RPC was written in the early twelfth century. And both histories begin roughly in the same time around the mid ninth century. Both the patriarchs of the dynasties were powerful Norse who settled the new land with their retinues and formed a new ruling class. Most importantly, both Rollo and Rurik originated from Scandinavia. This last piece of information is the most important because neither the Normans nor the Rus immediately severed their ties to Scandinavia and continued to be a place for Scandinavian travelers to stop, trade and rest.

Never before have these two texts been compared to one another, even though they have many similarities. One possible reason for this was that until recently, historians have widely regarded the information in the texts as fictitious. Both texts were the first histories that focused on either the Normans or the Rus. For this reason, the early parts of each history were based more off of local myths and folklore than they were based off of historical records. This was largely in part due to there being almost no local written records that the chroniclers could use. Both the early Normans and Ruriks were Norse pagans and had no written language to

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<sup>1</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. Trans. Eric Christiansen (Woodridge: The Boydell Press, 1998) The *History of the Normans* will be referred as HN.

<sup>2</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*. Trans. Samuel Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953) The *Russian Primary Chronicle* will be referred as RPC.



document their early exploits. Since there were no records, the chroniclers had to rely on local stories, often told from within the dynasties themselves or those associated with the dynasties. Because at least a century had passed from the first settlers to the time the histories were written the local myths and stories had had time to percolate and grow, thus influencing the final historical product.

### **Historiography of the *History of the Normans***

Since the HN was the first history of the Normans, it had many historical inconsistencies and only recently have historians taken an interest in the work. Eighteenth-century monks, who began to compile sources for the *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, rejected Dudo's work because of its inaccuracies.<sup>3</sup> It has only been in the last 50 years that English speaking historians have begun to take a closer look at the HN.

The first modern historian to take an in depth look at early Norman history was R.H.C. Davis in his book, *The Normans and their Myth*.<sup>4</sup> Davis was concerned with discussing the creation of a Norman myth or Norman identity. Not only did he look at early Normans, he also looked at the Normans of Italy and their eventual conquest of England in order to study how Norman conquests impacted the evolution of the Norman myth. Davis wanted to see if the Norman people were dominant by nature; he was concerned with this idea because the Normans had had an explosive military expansion in the eleventh century that was followed by cultural and ecclesiastical developments.

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<sup>3</sup> David Bates. *Normandy Before 1066* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1982), Xiii.

<sup>4</sup> R.H.C. Davis. *The Normans and Their Myth* (London: Thames and Hudson LTD, 1976)

David Bates then took up the torch of exploring the early Normans in his book, *Normandy Before 1066*.<sup>5</sup> Bates felt that with the advancement of historical analysis of the mid-twentieth century, that a comprehensive early history of the Normans was needed. Using contemporary records and archeological records, Bates pieced together the early history of Normandy, including the early settlement of Rollo and other Scandinavians. What Bates found was a history that was very different from the Norman sources. Rollo was not the leader of the Norman settlement, but was just one of many Scandinavian chieftains who settled in the region. Bates was also concerned with demonstrating that the contemporary Franks of the first Normans, saw them as an “other.” It was pointed out by Bates that Frankish nobles were willing to kill Norman nobles if they became too powerful. This might not seem like much of a discovery until he also demonstrated that Frankish nobles rarely killed other Frankish nobles, most were either blinded or imprisoned.

Once Bates had explored the historical truth of the early Normans, Searle was interested in discussing the creation of power within the Norman aristocracy in her book, *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power, 840-1066*.<sup>6</sup> She explored the concepts of Norman succession and the conflicts that surrounded weak and strong rulers in the duchy. Her main argument was showing how the Normans themselves competed with each other for power until the weak were extinguished from power and only the strong survived.

After Bates and Searle had covered many historical truths and discussed the events of the early Normans, Leah Shopkow entered the discussion with her book, *History and Community*:

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<sup>5</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*.

<sup>6</sup> Eleanor Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power, 840-1066* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988)

*Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*.<sup>7</sup> Shopkow turned away from the historical truth and instead focused on the literary styles of the Norman histories. This was the first major secondary source that discussed Dudo as a writer with much effort spent in explaining the influences that affected his history. However, Dudo was not the only author that Shopkow studied; all Norman authors were examined who wrote in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

With the historical background laid out and the major authors explored, Nick Webber continued the study of the unique Norman culture in his book, *The Evolution of Norman Identity: 911-1154*.<sup>8</sup> Webber was following in the footsteps of Davis as he explored all parts of Norman history in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. Webber went a step further and researched how contemporary sources viewed Normans and how that impacted the cultural identity of the Normans.

Since Davis published his book in 1976, the historical field had made great steps in the understanding of memory in the central middle ages. Benjamin Pohl felt that the progression in the historical field needed to be represented in Norman history. In his book, *Dudo of Saint-Quentin's Historia Normannorum: Tradition, Innovation and Memory*, Pohl focused on Dudo and on physical manuscripts in an attempt to find any information that had been missed by past historians.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Leah Shopkow. *History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1997)

<sup>8</sup> Nick Webber. *The Evolution of Norman Identity: 911-1154* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005)

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Pohl. *Dudo of Saint-Quentin's Historia Normannorum: Tradition, Innovation and Memory* (York: University of York Press, 2015)

## Historiography of the early Rus

Unlike the historiography of the early Normans, the historiography of the early Rus and the RPC has been contested between eastern and western scholars. The debate concerning early Rus history focused on whether the Rurik dynasty was of Scandinavian or Slavic descent. This debate became known as the Norman debate. Western historians argued that the Rurik dynasty was founded by Scandinavians and were labeled as “Normanists.” Eastern historians argued that the founding of the Rus dynasty was actually Slavic and were labeled the “Anti-Normanists.” The Normanist theory began in 1749 when Gerhard Friedrich Muller gave a lecture at the Imperial Academy of Science in St Peterburg. Muller announced that he thought that the Rus had been established by Northmen, or Normans. His lecture was never finished as the lecture hall exploded in discord at the idea. The concept was so repugnant to the Russians that the Empress Elizaveta Petrovna appointed a special committee to investigate whether Muller’s work was harmful to the Russian Empire.<sup>10</sup> The anti-Normanist historians continued to debate the origins of the early Rus even into the 1980’s. Boris Rybakov’s book, *Kievan Rus*, dismissed all connections to the Scandinavian world.<sup>11</sup>

Before the USSR collapsed the most influential post war historians concerning the Rus question was Alexander A. Vasiliev. Vasiliev wanted to explore early Rus history despite the raging Norman debate. He published several books and articles concerning the Rus attacks on Constantinople including the book, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860*, and the article,

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<sup>10</sup> Omeljan Pritsak. *The Origin of Rus: Old Scandinavian Sources other than the Sagas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> Boris Rybakov. *Kievan Rus*. Trans. Sergei Sossinsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989)

“The Second Russian Attack on Constantinople.”<sup>12</sup> Vasiliev used contemporary sources and what archeology sources he had at hand to try and explain these two attacks. While Valisiev was making important contributions to the field, he put too much emphasis on certain sources that were not historically reliable.

Nora Chadwick followed Vasiliev with her book, *The Beginnings of Russian History: An Enquiry into Sources*.<sup>13</sup> Chadwick’s book followed the content of the RPC and attempted to explain the historical background of the events of the RPC. She not only used early Slavonic church evidence, but compared contemporary Byzantine and Arab sources to try and discern the historical truth of the early Rus.

Omeljian Pritsak wanted to explore other contemporary sources to show the connection between the early Rus and Scandinavia. In his multi volume work, *The Origin of Rus,* Pritsak used any Scandinavian source to show the connection to the Rus, including the Sagas, law codes, rune stones, chronicles, archeology, and heroic poetry.<sup>14</sup> His massive work was pivotal in demonstrating how many similarities there were between the Scandinavian world and the early Rus.

Because of the lack of textual evidence, some historians chose to look at Vladimir the Great and those who ruled after him because when he converted to orthodox Christianity, there was a rise in Rus textual evidence. Janet Martin’s book, *Medieval Russia: 980-1584*, only looked

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander A. Vasiliev. *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860* (Cambridge: The Medieval Academy of America, 1946) Alexander A. Vasiliev. “The Second Russian Attack on Constantinople.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers: Number 6*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (1951). 161-225.

<sup>13</sup> Nora Chadwick. *The Beginnings of Russian History: An Enquiry into Sources* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946)

<sup>14</sup> Pritsak. *The Origin of Rus*.

at orthodox Russia.<sup>15</sup> While her work was not as influential as others, it was still important to the study Vladimir and his sons since her book sketched together an intricate and full history of medieval Orthodox Russia.

There had not been a complete analytical text that combined all of the previous authorship on the early Rus. Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard took it upon themselves to write a comprehensive history of the early Rus using any and every source they could find. Their book, *The Emergence of Rus 750-1200*, cut through the nationalist extremism of the last century and compiled an impressive historical work.<sup>16</sup> They succeeded in creating a must read for those interested in early Rus history.

Advancements in understanding early Rus sources have progressed significantly; however, this would have not happened without the archeological evidence to support the claims of the early sources. Thomas S. Noonan did not publish any one work that changed our historical understanding of the early Rus, instead he published his findings over a long career that gave historians much needed archeological evidence. Noonan was an archeologist who was interested in the numismatic evidence of Arabian dirhams that were scattered over Russia and the Baltic. Through his painstaking research, he created a numismatic map that showed the trade between east and west and helped provide to the historical field a concrete proof of a Scandinavian influence over the Rus.<sup>17</sup>

Most historians who were concerned with the early Rus did not focus on the RPC because of its historical inconsistencies. Alexander Rukavishnikov was one of the few historians

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<sup>15</sup> Janet Martin. *Medieval Russia: 980-1584* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

<sup>16</sup> Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus: 750-1200* (New York: Longman, 1996)

<sup>17</sup> Thomas S. Noonan. *The Islamic World, Russia and the Vikings: 750-900: the Numismatic Evidence* (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1998)

who began to look at the RPC as historical a primary source for the early Rus. His article, *The Bygone Years: The Russian Primary Chronicle as a Family Chronicle*, looked at the RPC as a vessel of cultural memory.<sup>18</sup> Like Shopkow and Pohl, Rukavishnikov wanted to explore what the RPC could tell us about Rus culture and memory. Unfortunately, there has not been nearly enough research done in the same style as Rukavishnikov. He has opened the door for historians of memory theory to continue his work on understanding the early Rus and their cultural construction.

### **The Purpose of this Work**

Rarely has any historian touched on the subject of how the authors of the HN and RPC, constructed the image of the foreign pagan ancestor. The patriarchs of each dynasty were of course made to look strong and noble, but how were their pagan practices explained to a central medieval readership? This question will be the main concern for this paper. In addition, concepts of a Scandinavian shared cultural memory will be discussed. Both of these concepts have been pursued through comparing the HN and RPC to contemporary sources, archeological evidence, and the continuing of ideas that have been established by other historians. There are many ideas and concepts that will be brought up throughout this thesis that surpass the scope of the main arguments but hopefully this paper will act as a guide for readers to pursue their own interests within Scandinavian historical world.

Other texts exist that have similar traits to the HN and RPC. The Sagas will be discussed in this paper, but only as a supplementary text and not as a central focus. The Sagas fit into the scope of this paper because they help to illustrate a shared pan-Scandinavian cultural memory

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<sup>18</sup> Alexander Rukivashnikov. "The Bygone Years: The Russian Primary Chronicle as a Family Chronicle." *Blackwell Publishing Ltd* (2003)

tradition and act as a link between the HN and RPC by using several shared storied and tradition.<sup>19</sup> The reason the Sagas will not be used in the same capacity as the HN and the RPC was because while they formed the link between the HN and RPC, the majorities of the Sagas were not written for a patron, nor were they written by a member of the church.<sup>20</sup> Most of the Sagas were written by anonymous authors that were likely laymen. For example, the *Heimskringla* was written by Snorre Sturlason, who was an Icelandic noble with connections to the Norwegian court.<sup>21</sup> Because the Sagas were not written by a member of either the Catholic Church or the Slavonic Church, they were not influenced by a new Christian narrative. That is not to say that the authors were not Christian, but they were not all members of the church and thus their prerogatives were different. The HN and the RPC struggled between maintaining a pan Scandinavian oral tradition that originated from pagan customs and a new Christian narrative. As Dudo and the anonymous authors of the RPC wrote their histories, they struggled with implanting these Scandinavian traditions while maintaining Christian moralities, such as protecting the church and Christian virtues. The Saga authors were influenced by their Christian beliefs but because they were not members of the church, were able to put more emphasis on the Scandinavian oral traditions.

The Sagas also were not written for a patron such as the HN and RPC. Since the HN and RPC were written for powerful noble families, the authors needed to elevate the status of the characters within the histories. These characters had to display agency through power but were often contained to a Christian narrative that dictated their moral decisions. The Sagas did not suffer from this objective. With the lack of a patron, the authors of the Sagas were free to tell

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<sup>19</sup> Pernille Hermann. "Concepts of Memory and Approaches to the past in Medieval Icelandic Literature." *Scandinavian Studies*, (Fall 2009), Vol. 81 Issue 3, 287-308.

<sup>20</sup> Snorre Sturlason may have been writing for the Norwegian King Hakon Hakonarson.

<sup>21</sup> Magnus Fjalldal. "Beware the Norwegian Kings: *Heimskringla* as Propaganda." *Scandinavian Studies*. (2013), Vol. 85, Issue 4, 455-468.



their own historical narratives. Again, this meant that the authors leaned towards the pan-Scandinavian oral traditions and further away from the new Christian narrative. Many of the Sagas blended local Icelandic myths and local traditions to create a pseudo historical text. These texts were written by Icelanders, for Icelanders. Because they were not written for dukes or kings, they were able to maintain a closer link to their cultural origins and did not need to bend and play with history to suite the political bias needed for a patron.

## **Chapter 1: Memory**

Chapter 1 will introduce and establish the current academic material concerning memory construction during the central middle ages. Medieval memory practice will be applied to both the HN and the RPC to show how they participated in the construction of memory. The construction of memory will show that both the HN and RPC were creating new cultures and a new historical truth. Dudo was putting to text the forming of the new Norman identity that had been constructed from Bretons, Franks, and Scandinavians. The RPC was following a similar pattern for the Rus from the Slavic, Finno-Ugrian, nomadic steppe tribes, and Scandinavian peoples. Because both dynasties originated from Scandinavian descent, both histories shared similarities with each other, but also the greater Scandinavian world. The Sagas, which were written later than both the HN and RPC, had many similarities and parallels with the HN and RPC because they shared similar Scandinavian oral and folk traditions.

## **Chapter 2: The Normans**

Chapter 2 will focus on Dudo and the first two books of the HN. Rollo, the patriarch of the Norman ducal dynasty, settled and converted to Christianity. The HN portrayed Rollo as the supreme ruler of Normandy and a noble convert. However, contemporary sources did not

support Dudo's claims about the power of Normandy and the actions of Rollo. How was Dudo portraying Rollo and explaining his pagan and foreign ancestry? How did Dudo use the *Aeneid* to construct a classical themed past that allowed and encouraged the pious pagan noble, Rollo, to come to Normandy and settle in Rouen? Was Dudo's interpretation of Rollo contrasted with the moral failings of the Franks through the presentation of the character of Hastings? These questions and the tools that Dudo employed to shape the Norman cultural identity, these will be examined.

### **Chapter 3: The Rus**

Chapter 3 will focus on the RPC and the Rurik dynasty. Unlike the Normans, the patriarch of the Rus did not convert to Christianity. Rurik and his descendants continue to practice their pagan ways until the regency of Olga. However, the Rus as a people did not convert entirely until the rule of Vladimir the Great. How did the authors of the RPC construct the image of the foreign pagan ruling class and explain their rise to power? What methods did the authors of the RPC use to assert the dominance of the Rurik dynasty and what was their overall goal in the creation of a history? These questions will be explored and answered in Chapter 3.

# Chapter 1

## The art of memory

“These are the narratives of bygone years regarding the origin of the land of the Rus’, the first princes of Kiev, and from what source the land of Rus’ had its beginnings.”<sup>22</sup>

“Seeing that you’ll be deemed to contain too meagre a main theme, No rhetorical order at all, or trace of refinement, O book, when I scrutinize you with my own little mind’s eye, Painful it seems to me, that you long to expose to the vulgar artful conceits badly thrown together by the plume in our own hand, asking to be derided, and booed, by a load-mouthed sharp-witted outcry.”<sup>23</sup>

The creation of memory was an incredibly important tool during the middle ages, especially so during the eleventh century.<sup>24</sup> After the turbulent and destructive years during the tenth century, a void had been created in the identity of certain dynasties and cultures. The Carolingian dynasty had waxed and waned to the point of complete destruction, planting seeds for future dynasties such as the Capetian Franks and the Ottonian Germans and Normans. New lords wanted to attach themselves to the image of the past empires. Connection to former early medieval dynasties, such as the Carolingians, was not a stopping point; many chroniclers tried to draw shaky connections between their patron and famous names, including Clovis, Charlemagne, Constantine and Trojan refugees.<sup>25</sup> The ability to connect a new dynasty to an old legendary character or dynasty displayed power; the creation of a new image was also a display of power.

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<sup>22</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*. 51.

<sup>23</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Patrick J. Geary. *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Mary J. Carruthers. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). 122-156.

<sup>25</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 16. According to Dudo, Denmark was founded by a Trojan refugee named Antenor.

By connecting a new dynasty with an old one, the authors displayed a strong sense of authority over the past, present and future.

Connecting dynasties was participating in actively alternating memory. When enough chroniclers referenced or noted that a dynasty originated from a famous patriarch and a straight line of succession could be drawn to the current head of the household, myth became reality. This was not a phenomenon that occurred in the central middle ages, but had been happening ever since the conversion of Clovis and reached a creative peak surrounding Charlemagne. Myths about Charlemagne did not take long to begin circulation. Not long after the death of Charlemagne, Einhard wrote the *Vita Caroli Magni*. Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne* created an image of a golden age for the Franks. As the empire became embroiled in civil war under the reign of Louis the Pious, the memory of a golden age became more grandiose. Nithard was especially congratulatory of Charlemagne: "Not even the Roman might had been able to tame these peoples [Franks and other barbarians], but they dared do nothing in Charles's empire except what was in harmony with the public welfare."<sup>26</sup> Time only amplified Charlemagne's image and myth. Jerusalem became an important piece in his myth. Charlemagne was attributed with sending legates east to acquire important relics for religious houses, including relics of St Cyprian, a piece of the apostle Andrew, pieces of the one true cross and the holy shroud.<sup>27</sup>

Due to of the civil turbulence of the tenth century, medieval historians were met with large gaps in local history. Most of the men that were writing these histories likely wanted to write as complete a chronicle as possible, but it was an impossible task with the resources at

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<sup>26</sup> Nithard. *Nithards History*. Trans. B.W. Scholz with B. Rogers. Quoted in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*. Edited Paul Dutton (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), 334. Nithard was writing during the civil war that engulfed the empire at the death of Louis the Pious in 840. The civil war continued until 843 at the treaty of Verdun. The Empire was broken up amongst the living sons of Louis the Pious.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew Gabriele. *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 26-27.

hand. Driven by a need to explain the past, many medieval chroniclers bent the truth to fit their narrative. If the narrator wanted to present a moral idea, a historical myth could be used to fill the gap. One example was the character of Hasting. Hasting was a Dane who was used by Dudo to show the moral failings of the Franks. There was an actual Viking named Hasting, but very little was known of him other than his reputation as a ferocious Viking in England. If the narrator wanted to make a political statement, historical fact could be smudged to create a new truth. The RPC chronicled the Rurik dynasty and had a straight line of succession from Rurik to Vladimir Monomakh, who was the prince at the time the RPC was written. Alexander Rukavishnikov highlighted the chronological inconsistencies of the early Rurik dynasty and the problems that the RPC's chroniclers were faced with.<sup>28</sup>

Truth was not absolute. Chroniclers were not only creating history and myths, but also truth. Dudo wrote that, "its [the Chronicle] untruths may be removed, and whatever truth it contains may be corroborated by your authority."<sup>29</sup> Dudo believed that he was delivering the truth to Richard II. The notion that he had fabricated large sections of the chronicle had not crossed his mind, or he was at least not admitting to it. Both Dudo and the chroniclers of the RPC admitted that they had received information from members of the dynasties. Count Rolf and Archbishop Robert were credited by Dudo for providing information where there was none.<sup>30</sup> The RPC credits Yan, Son of Vyshata, with telling the chronicler, "Many stories which I have set down in this chronicle as I heard them from his lips."<sup>31</sup> For Dudo and the anonymous chroniclers, stories told from within the dynasty or by close affiliates of the dynasty, were as good as truth. In an age when historical documentation was a rare occurrence for matters in the

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<sup>28</sup> Rukivashnikov. *The Bygone Years*. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 11. "Verses to count Rolf, the narrator of this work"

<sup>31</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*. 203.

ninth and tenth centuries, family stories served as truth. What else could be used, if not stories from within the dynasty?

Dudo and the authors of the RPC were creating a truth not only from historical records but also from traditional myth and folklore. These myths were from the Scandinavian descendants of both the Normans and Rus, and from local cultures such as the Franks, Slavs and Christian influences. The authors of the HN and RPC were balancing a pan-Scandinavian shared cultural memory and a new Christian narrative, combined with local Frank and Slavic influences. Since both Dudo and the anonymous authors were members of either the Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church, Christian morality played a major part in structuring character development and growth. Dudo imposed Christian moralities onto the character of Rollo and he often acted as a Christian even before having an understanding of the religion. The authors of the RPC were not as heavy handed as Dudo, but this could have been because there were more pagan characters in the RPC than in the HN. The reign of Olga and Vladimir were filled with Christian moralities once they had converted, but other characters such as Igor and Svytoslav were staunch pagans.

### **Influences upon the Chronicle**

Bias will always be present in historical sources, but it is important to note what kind of bias each author had and how they imposed it upon their work. Both Dudo and the anonymous chroniclers of the RPC were hired or asked to write a history for the patron's dynasty. Meaning, the chronicler would have a positive bias imposed on the work. Unlike Frankish authors who were contemporaries with Rollo, Dudo painted the patriarch of the Normans in a nobler image,

than say, Flodoard.<sup>32</sup> Dudo was a Frank, and he was a Frank who was alive during the end of the tenth century, a time when Richard the Fearless had bound Normandy to his will.<sup>33</sup> The area of Normandy had come a long way since the days of Flodoard, and while the descendants of Rollo were not Franks, they had become associated with the larger political mechanics of western Francia.

While historians do know elements of Dudo's background, little is known of the authors of the RPC. They were most likely Slavs living in the neighborhoods of Kiev. They were not outsiders who were brought into the patron's land, but locals who identified culturally with their patrons. Sylvester, the writer of the Laurentian text, admitted that he had personal relations with the upper echelons of the Rus court.<sup>34</sup> This connection was important because it demonstrated coordination between secular and ecclesiastical authorities to elevate the status of the ruling house of the Rurik dynasty.

The patron of the history was the most important influence upon the chronicler. The history was for the benefit of their rule, their house and its right as a sovereign power. Demonstrating power was important, and having a history or many histories that focused on a dynasty displayed its influence. Dudo was approached by Richard the Fearless in 994 about compiling a history of his family. He did not live long enough to see the work completed as he

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<sup>32</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard: 919-966*. Trans. Steven Fanning and Bernard Bachrach (North York: University of Toronto Press, 2008) Flodoard, who was a Frank and was mainly concerned with the political doings and happenings of the royal court and other major political figures in western Francia. He called Rollo a northman. His tone treated Rollo as an outsider because he was not a Frank.

<sup>33</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard*. 37. Richard the Fearless was only several years old when his father William was killed. Little was known of Richard's mother. Flodoard named her Sprota and declared that Richard was, "born of a Breton concubine."

<sup>34</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*. 4. The Laurentian text, so called because it was copied between January 14 and March 20, 1377, by a monk named Lawrence. The Hypatian text was copied sometime in the middle fifteenth century at the monastery of Hypatian at Kostroma. These two texts are the oldest copies and the most complete. The Laurentian is the preferred copy of the RPC by historians because it was copied less than 200 years after the RPC was written and has passages that do not appear in any other versions of the text.

died in 996. His son, Richard II, wanted Dudo to continue his work. Less was known of the creation of the RPC. Since there is evidence of multiple copies and authors, it makes it drastically more difficult to pinpoint the reasons for the creation of the text. What is known was the text was completed sometime around 1110-1116 under the reign of Vladimir Monomakh. Both Richard II and Vladimir Monomakh were powerful rulers, but faced problems. Richard II was still a cultural outsider and needed more prestige to cement his position in Normandy and northern France.<sup>35</sup> Vladimir Monomakh had succeeded to the crown of Kiev under the complicated line of succession after a civil war with his cousin Oleg.<sup>36</sup> Vladimir Monomakh was a strong willed ruler who desired prestige to establish his rule. He took the name of his wife's father's house, Constantine IX Monomachos. By taking the surname of the Byzantine Emperor, Vladimir was connecting himself with the Byzantine Empire and all its power and splendor. Both Richard and Vladimir needed the prestige of a family history because it demonstrated the line of succession from the dynasties' patriarch, and the honor that was attributed to the dynasty.

Both the Normans and the Rus, at the time that the histories were written, were transitioning from a conglomerate of several different cultures, into a single new culture. Dudo and the anonymous authors were solidifying the new Norman and Rus cultures out of the many cultures that inhabited the land that made Normandy and the land that made Russia. The Normans were blending their Scandinavian, Breton, Gaul and Frankish backgrounds together to create a new Norman culture. The Rus were doing the same from their Scandinavian, Slavish, Finno-Ugrian, and step tribe backgrounds to create the Rus culture. To many authors, the

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<sup>35</sup> Richard II benefited from his father's work. Richard the Fearless had spent much of his reign dealing with internal affairs and strengthening his position within Normandy. Richard II was a notable power in northern Francia but was still not seen as a Frank, although he was not seen as a northman like his grandfather and great-grandfather.

<sup>36</sup> Simon Franklin. "Kievan Rus: 1015-1125." Edit. Maureen Perrie. *A Cambridge History of Russia: Volume 1*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 77.



Normans and Rus were still seen as dangerous Scandinavians.<sup>37</sup> When the first Scandinavian settlers moved into the new territory there was little difference from the people who lived in Scandinavia and those who lived in Normandy or the Rus territories. As the Norman Ducal dynasty and the Rurik dynasty survived and continued into the tenth and eleventh century, they developed into their own cultures that shared similarities with their parent Scandinavian cultures. They could no longer be called Scandinavians and instead had evolved into the Normans and the Rus. Dudo and the anonymous authors were documenting this evolution to pen and paper.

### **Oral Traditions**

One explanation for the remolding of history by chroniclers was that they were recording an oral tradition that had originated in historical fact, but after decades, had become local myth. As previously mentioned, Dudo and Sylvester, one of the writers of the RPC, admitted to the fact they were using the stories told by notable figures. These stories, influenced by the bias of the patron household or those close to it, helped mold a new history. The new history had historical truths, but also had been contaminated by local oral traditions. The reign of Richard the Fearless in HN was much fuller, not only because Richard was alive when Dudo began gathering information for the history, but also because Dudo had access to a greater amount of church documents, like charters, that he was able to draw from.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, the RPC was much more accurate concerning the lives of Vladimir the Great's sons and descendants leading up to Vladimir Monomakh.

In the early sections of both of these histories the chroniclers were combining the local oral traditions, and the pan-Scandinavian traditions with the bias of their patrons to help create

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<sup>37</sup> Flodoard and Richer always refer to the Normans as Norsemen. In the Annals of St-Bertin the Rus who were trying to get home were confused as Swedes and held against their will until their identity could be confirmed.

<sup>38</sup> Webber. *The Evolution of Norman Identity*. 23-24.

new identities. The Normans had formed a new Norman identity under the reign of Richard the Fearless. They combined north Atlantic Scandinavian culture with the more refined Frankish continental cultures. The Scandinavian presence was still felt in the upper echelons of Norman society but under the reign of Richard the Fearless this presence was slowly being absorbed by Frankish practices. Richard was brought up to speak both Danish and French, though the dominant language and cultural influences were French, not Scandinavian. A generation later, Richard's grandson Robert, found it difficult to find a teacher who could teach his son William, Norse, the language of his ancestors.<sup>39</sup> By the time Dudo was compiling information for his history, the cultural practices of Rollo and William were mostly forgotten. This gap in the historical understanding of the dynasties' patriarch left an opening for Dudo to establish a new culture that had blossomed from several different cultures; a new Norman identity was established. Dudo set the new Norman identity in motion when Rollo had a vision of his baptism,

... he saw about the base of it many thousands of birds of different kinds and various colors, but with red left wings, extending in such numbers and so far and so wide that he could not catch sight of where they ended, however hard they looked... And they carried of twigs and worked rapidly to build nests; and furthermore, they willingly yielded to his command.<sup>40</sup>

The multiple peoples represented by the birds demonstrated that the Normans were not from one people, but from many peoples. Their culture and thus their identity were also from many peoples and thus became a new cultural identity as Rollo brought these different peoples under his control.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans* 29-30.

<sup>41</sup> Fraser McNair. "The Politics of Being Norman in the Reign of Duke Richard the Fearless." *Early Medieval Europe*: Volume 23, Issue 3, (2015), 310.

The authors of the RPC were performing the same process of creating a new Rus identity. From the beginning of the RPC we are told that the people who inhabited the lands of Novgorod were represented by multiple cultures, “The Varangians from beyond the sea imposed tribute upon the Chuds, the Slavs, the Merians, the Ves, and the Krivichians.”<sup>42</sup> Under the reign of Vladimir, he spread his sons out to rule over the different and separate cities. Vladimir, who was arguably the most powerful leader of the Rus at that point, was not able to unite the vast territories under his direct control,

“he set Vysheslav in Novgorod, Izyaslav in Polotsk, Svyatopolk in Turov, and Yaroslav in Rostov. When Vysheslav, the oldest, died in Novgorod, he set Yaroslav over Novgorod, Boris over Rostov, Bleg over Murom, Svyatoslav over Dereva, Vsevolod over Vladimir and Mstislav over Tmutorakan.”<sup>43</sup>

Instead he had to rely on his sons as representatives of his authority to rule in his stead. The authors of the RPC needed to create a new sense of Rus identity that could be spread over the different cultural regions of the Kievan Rus kingdom. The Rus identity was spawned out of a combination of Scandinavian, Slavic, Finno-Ugrian, Byzantine, and nomadic steppe peoples. Slavic, by the time that the RPC was written, had emerged as the dominant ethnic culture around Kiev. This was important because Kiev was where the prince resided and governed. Princes, like Vladimir Monomakh, needed to demonstrate to the Rus people that they were a not just part of the Rus identity, but that they were the head of the dynasty. Their actions dictated what it meant to be a Rus. By having the RPC made, Vladimir Monomakh was creating a new Rus identity that he led, which was made from the oral tradition of the past. The molding of the oral past can be seen in the names used in the early section of the RPC. Repeatedly, Scandinavian names had been converted into their Slavic counterparts. Rulers like Olga, were actually named Helga. The

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<sup>42</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*. 59.

<sup>43</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*. 119.

difference between Scandinavian names and their Slavic counterparts will be discussed in further length in the third chapter.

### **Scandinavian Connection**

Both Dudo and the anonymous writers of the RPC were connected to a larger cultural pan-Scandinavian world. Despite their attempts to forge new political and cultural identities for their patrons, their patrons still shared connections with the north Atlantic. Warriors and traders moved fluidly from Iceland all the way to Constantinople and sometimes farther. After the death of Vladimir in the 1010's there was still heavy movement of Scandinavians who traveled through the eastern routes and performed raids on trading urban centers, "the city [Kiev] gains its strength from fugitive serfs who converge on this place from everywhere, but especially from areas overrun by fast moving Danes."<sup>44</sup> Vladimir had personal connections to Scandinavia. When Oleg killed his brother Yaropolk, Vladimir fled from Novgorod to Scandinavia in 977. Vladimir fled to Scandinavia where he acquired Varangian allies who secured Vladimir the throne of the Rus, when his brother Oleg was killed in 980. These Varangians continued onto Constantinople looking for more work and wealth.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, the Normans held an important position on the continent for Northern travelers. Richard II made a deal sometime around 981 with Svein Forkbeard to sell his loot and acted as a resting place for troops who were on their way to England from Denmark.<sup>46</sup> The Normans counts and dukes never married into Scandinavian families, but the daughter of Richard the Fearless, Emma, was married to

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<sup>44</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg. *The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*. Trans. David A. Warner (New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 384. This was for the year 1018.

<sup>45</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*. 90-92. "Vladimir returned to Novgorod with Varangian allies." Once Vladimir had won Kiev and the crown of the Rus, the Varangian's wanted tribute for their help and when Vladimir could not pay they went to Constantinople. Vladimir sent a message warning the Byzantines of the Varangian's approach and told them to not let the Varangian's congregate in the same location as they would create trouble.

<sup>46</sup> Francois Neveux. *A Brief History of the Normans: The Conquests that Changed the Face of Europe*. Trans. Howard Curtis (London: Constable & Robinson LTD, 2008.) 94.

Aethelred the Unready of England, thus creating the connection for the later invasion of England. Normans also participated in the battle of Clontarf in 1014 in Ireland where Brian Boru died.<sup>47</sup> The Normans remained connected to the Scandinavian north Atlantic from the founding of Normandy under Rollo, until around the 1020's.

The connection of the larger Scandinavian world was not merely earthly. With the transportation of Scandinavians and their wealth, so too were their cultural stories spread. Many Norse myths and traditions would become Sagas in the twelfth century.<sup>48</sup> Sagas were a unique literary invention of the Scandinavians. The Sagas were not influenced by classical literature, like many continental and English authors. They were a blend of myth and history, stories that had once originated in historical truth which had slowly changed into Saga myths. Most of the Sagas were about Iceland and Norway because most of the Sagas were written in Iceland. However, both Normandy and the Rus were mentioned in the Sagas.

As explored earlier, both Dudo and the anonymous author's writings were a blend of early heroic myth and historical truth. The style of both these works fit into the archetype of the Saga style; a style which combined heroic myth and truth to create a story of pseudo history. What is meant by pseudo history, is a history with mythical traits. Dudo and the anonymous authors were writing before the Sagas were dedicated to pen and paper, but that does not mean that there was not a Scandinavian story telling tradition that had spread over the North Atlantic and the Baltic. Dudo and the anonymous authors seemed to be following a new style; however it should be made clear that the HN and the RPC were not Sagas. It was more likely that the Saga

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<sup>47</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 7.

<sup>48</sup> H.R. Ellis Davidson. *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) Davidson gives a good overview of the Sagas, including the gods and various creatures including dwarves and giants.

theme had not yet been refined to a distinct style, which would happen in the twelfth century when they were dedicated to pen.

Normandy and members of the Norman dynasty appeared in two Sagas; the *Orkneyinga Saga* and the *Heimskringla*. Rollo was a minor character in both Sagas. He was a contemporary of Harald Fairhair, the Norwegian king who was attributed with uniting greater Norway in the late ninth century.<sup>49</sup> In both sagas, Rolf, or Hrolf was the son of Earl Ragnvald and was said to have conquered Normandy.

“Earl Ragnvald married Ragnhild, the daughter of Hrolf Nose, and it was their son Hrolf who conquered Normandy. This Hrolf was so big that no horse could carry him, which is why he was given the name Gongu-Hrolf. The earls of Rouen and the kings of England are descended from him.”<sup>50</sup>

The Earl Ragnvald was said to have campaigned with Harald Fairhair. The *Heimskringla* had a very similar account but added that he had been banished from Norway by Harald Fairhair for making a raid in the Vik of Norway after returning from the Baltic.

“He harried much in the eastern countries. One summer when he had come to the Vik from a Viking raid in the east he made a shore raid. King Harald was then in the Vik, and when he learned of this he became very wroth, for he had strongly forbidden robbery in the land.”<sup>51</sup>

The Sagas differ from Dudo on the origin of Rollo and why he came to Normandy. They were also written about 200 years after Dudo, so a Norman myth could have developed differently in Scandinavia after Dudo finished his history. The differences present a good example of the potential bias of an author. The Sagas were not written for the Norman dynasty, thus Rollo was

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<sup>49</sup> Snore Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. 76. According to Erling Monsen Harald Fairhair ruled from 860-930.

<sup>50</sup> *Orkneyinga Saga*. Trans. Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards. (New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1981) 26. The *Orkneyinga Saga* was written sometime around 1200 in Iceland.

<sup>51</sup> Snorre Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. Trans. A.H. Smith. Edit. Erling Monsen. (New York: Dover Publications, 1990), 59.

not made to be a noble pagan. Rollo's descendants were mentioned in the *Heimskringla* up until William the Conqueror, however, none had even a minor role to play.

The *Heimskringla* and the HN share one notable story. In the first book of the HN, Hasting was not able to get into the walls of the city of Luna in Italy. In order to get past the walls Hasting faked an illness and before he "died" he asked to be buried as a Christian. When his coffin was brought into the city's cathedral he jumped out with a bunch of weapons and with his body guard was able to take the city.<sup>52</sup> Snorre Sturlason used the same story in the life of Harald Hardrade. When Harald was sailing around the Mediterranean under the command of the Emperor of Constantinople he attacked a city, but could not get past its walls. He faked his own death and when the city opened the doors his men rushed into the gatehouse and were able to take the city.<sup>53</sup> Both of these episodes share similarities with the legendary Trojan Horse. The difference was that both Hasting and Harald feigned sickness and death to gain entrance into the city for a fake Christian burial. This demonstrates that there was a literary connection between Saga literature and Dudo. Dudo may have been drawing on a story that was popular in the north Atlantic or Snorre was familiar with Dudo's work. Either way it showed that there was a literary connection between Normandy and Iceland.

The Rus territories appeared in the Sagas several times. Olaf Trygvason went a Viking in the eastern lands including Russia.<sup>54</sup> St Olaf also travelled east as did St Olaf's half-brother Harald Hardrade.<sup>55</sup> Harald traveled to and through Russia multiple times. The first time being when he fled Norway after his half-brother Olaf was killed in battle. Harald became good friends with King Jarisleiv of the Rus and trusted him enough to store his growing wealth with the king.

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<sup>52</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 19-20.

<sup>53</sup> Snorre Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. 511-512.

<sup>54</sup> Snorre Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. 130-131.

<sup>55</sup> Snorre Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. 422.

Jarisleiv trusted and liked Harald so much that he married his daughter Elizabeth to him.<sup>56</sup> Harald and his marriage were never mentioned in the RPC. Maybe it was not an important enough event for the anonymous chroniclers to enter into the RPC. Why the Norwegian kings were never mentioned in the RPC are beyond the scope of this paper, what was important was that Snorre believed that Russia was important enough to include in his Saga's multiple times. The Russians were not portrayed as other eastern Baltic peoples.<sup>57</sup> The lands of the Rus were a place where powerful Scandinavians could find refuge from political turmoil and find powerful friends.

There were two striking similarities between the Sagas and the RPC. Both of the examples surrounded the series of revenge killings carried out by Olga against the Derevlans. After Igor, Olga's husband, was killed by the Derevlans, Olga killed their most notable men and eventually burned down their capitol city. The first example of a similarity was the Ynglinga Saga. In the Ynglinga Saga, Asa and Ivor take revenge on king Ingjald by getting him and his retainers drunk, locking them in a long hall and then setting it on fire, killing everyone inside.<sup>58</sup> In the RPC, Olga follows the same events. She gets the Derevlian nobles to enter a bath house and locks them in a hall and sets it ablaze, killing all those inside.<sup>59</sup> The second example of a connection between the Sagas and the RPC was the use of incendiary birds. In the *Heimskringla*, Harald Hardrade was captain of the Varangian Guard, besieging a city in Sicily. He did not have

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<sup>56</sup> Snorre Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. 514-515

<sup>57</sup> Heiki Valk. "The Vikings and the Eastern Baltic." Edit. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. *The Viking World* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 492. Snorre Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. The eastern Baltic was often referred to in the *Heimskringla* where Vikings could go raiding fairly easily.

<sup>58</sup> Snorre Sturlason *Ynglinga Saga*. *Heimskringla*. 31. "Then he and Asa decided on the well-known plan of making all their folk dead drunk and afterwards setting fire to the hall; the hall was burned and all who were in it together with King Ingjald."

<sup>59</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*. 79-80. "When the Derevlans arrived, Olga commanded that a bath should be made ready, and invited them to appear before her after they had bathed. The bathhouse was then heated, and the Derevlans entered in to bathe. Olga's men closed up the bathhouse behind them, and she gave orders to set it on fire from the doors, so that the Derevlans were all burned to death."



the strength to break through the walls, nor did he have the time to starve the inhabitants out. Harald attached flaming wax to the birds feet and, “As soon as they were free the birds flew together straight back to the town to seek their young in the nests which they had under the house roofs; they were thatched with reeds or straw. Then the house thatches caught fire from the birds.”<sup>60</sup> The trick worked and the people fled the town into Harald’s forces. The RPC mirrored this event almost exactly. Olga could not get into the Derevlians’ city, so she tied flaming parchment to birds’ feet and let them go. The birds flew to their roosts under the roofs, causing fires to spread, allowing Olga to enter the city.<sup>61</sup> These events show that there was some tradition that connected Scandinavian literary traditions and Rus literary traditions.

All of these connections demonstrate that the Sagas, the HN and the RPC all drew upon the same cultural oral traditions. The HN and the RPC did not directly share stories with each other, but they each shared certain stories with the Sagas. The HN and RPC were texts that were written on opposite sides of the North Atlantic Scandinavian world by Christian authors. As mentioned earlier, the authors were incorporating a Christian narrative onto Scandinavian cultural traditions of the Normans and Rus. The act of incorporating a Christian narrative meant that the Scandinavian tradition was altered and twisted to fit the purpose of the work. The Sagas did not abide by the same Christian narrative and thus displayed stronger Scandinavian themes. Since there were stronger and more themes in the Sagas and since they were being written after both the HN and RPC, the Sagas could draw the Scandinavian traditions of both the Normans and the Rus and bind them together with the pan-Scandinavian tradition. That was why the HN

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<sup>60</sup> Snorre Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. 509

<sup>61</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*. 81. “Now Olga gave each soldier in her army a pigeon or a sparrow, and ordered them to attach by a thread to each pigeon and sparrow a piece of Sulphur bound with a small piece of cloth. When night fell, Olga bade her soldiers release the pigeons and the sparrows... Thus the dove-cotes, the coops, the porches, and the haymows were set on fire... The people fled from the city, and Olga ordered her soldiers to catch them.”

and RPC don't share specific stories with each other, but did share stories with the Sagas. Once the Norman and Rus identity had been created, the authors of the Sagas could draw the Scandinavian cultural elements out of the Norman and Rus cultures and put them into the larger Scandinavian literary and oral cultural tradition of the Sagas.

### **Creation of a noble myth**

When writing their histories, Dudo and the anonymous writers of the RPC were faced with a problem of explaining the pagan ancestors of powerful Christian rulers. Fortunately for both sources, creating a new truth helped explain away a pagan past. The easiest way to do this was to compare the pagan member of the family, like Rollo, to other famous pagans. Dudo used the fictitious character of Aeneas as a model for Rollo and many of Rollo's actions. The use of a classical figure helped Dudo in several ways. The first way was by attaching the story of Aeneas to his patron's house; in doing so he was elevating the stature of Rollo to that of a famous pagan. Critics of medieval writers often note that medieval authors rarely wrote with their own stories and relied heavily on classical authors for inspiration. It was true that many medieval authors directly quoted many classical works such as the works of Caesar, Sallust, Virgil and many more. One major cause for the usage of classical quotes was to display the knowledge of the writer. If a writer often used classical quotes, it showed that he was well educated and that his work was meant for an educated audience. The other reason that medieval authors quoted classical writers was the great respect they held for the classics. Even though most Roman classical authors were pagan, many writers during the middle ages revered their works. The *Aeneid* was a popular text and Virgil was a popular author, thus Dudo used the *Aeneid* to elevate his work.

Dudo used Aeneas specifically because he was seen as being pious or *pius*, even though he was pagan.<sup>62</sup> Many of Rollo's actions were firmly based off of the actions of Aeneas, including his flight from a home territory after the death of his family at the hand of a wicked king, the assistance of a charitable royal figure who lived across the sea, and the eventual settling of a land that was again separated by a sea. Many of the specifics of these events will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. What was important to note was that Dudo was explaining away Rollo's pagan origins by making him to be Christian in all but name. The actions he made were always gracious to friends and defensive to his enemies. When Dudo made Rollo into a pious pagan, he was thus helping the image of his patrons, Richard the Fearless and Richard II. The origins of a dynasty were incredibly important for a history, and Dudo needed to make his patrons origins more illustrious and noble. Dudo's Rollo was not a conquering Viking Dane, but a refugee, forced from his homeland. All he wanted was a place to settle and grow, not to plunder through violent means.

Another popular method for medieval historians was the use of conversion stories as a blueprint for the conversion of the patriarch of the dynasty. Dudo utilized this method when he used direct examples of the conversion of Constantine with Rollo. The specifics of these examples will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter. Conversion comparisons were more powerful than using pagan comparisons because while the pious pagan may have had many Christian qualities, they were still not Christian. Conversion stories took the best of both worlds, the good willed pagan and the god fearing Christian. The conversion of notable historical characters like Rollo, Clovis and Constantine were important because it showed that they had the

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<sup>62</sup> Charlton T. Lewis. *An Elementary Latin Dictionary*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1890.) 617. Pius did not just mean pious, it could also stand for; of character, dutiful, devout, conscientious and religious.

agency to shake off the pagan untruth and convert to Christianity.<sup>63</sup> Conversion stories were frequently mythicized. Often the person of interest was a pagan in a difficult position, whether it was from political strife, in the midst of a losing battle or they had a rare incurable illness. Sometimes these concepts were combined to capitalize on the magnificence of the conversion experience. When Rollo was converted, his conversion experience shared many similarities with the conversion of Constantine. According to the legend of St Sylvester Constantine was baptized on the top of a mountain; Rollo had a vision of his baptism taking place on the top of a mountain. Constantine was cured of his leprosy; Rollo's metaphorical leprosy was cleansed in the process of the baptism.<sup>64</sup> Dudo was not directly quoting the conversion of Constantine like the quotes he had taken from the *Aeneid*, but he was clearly referencing the text to demonstrate the divine grace of Rollo.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, the RPC followed this system of conversion story in explaining the conversion of Vladimir; Vladimir was in the midst of a difficult siege and said that if he won the siege he would convert. It also happened that he had been stricken with blindness. After his proclamation he won the siege and when he was baptized his sight returned to him. This conversion story mirrors two famous conversion stories. The first was the conversion of Constantine.<sup>66</sup>

Constantine was stricken with leprosy and after he converted he was cured of his illness.

Cleaning away the leprosy was often used as a metaphor to washing away the belief in paganism.

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<sup>63</sup> Gregory of Tours. *The History of the Franks*. Trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), 144. Gregory claimed that Clovis was, "like a new Constantine."

<sup>64</sup> Jacobus de Voragine. *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*. Trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 63-65.

<sup>65</sup> Benjamin Pohl. "Translatio Imperii Constantini ad Normannos." *Millennium Yearbook*: Vol. 9 Issue 1, November (2012) 331.

<sup>66</sup> Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*. Trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) It would seem that Dudo used the Golden Legend's version of the conversion of Constantine. Both Rollo and Constantine were converted on top of a mountain. The anonymous chroniclers used the conversion of Constantine but used Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*. Vladimir's conversion shared similarities with the battle for Melvian Bridge. The Golden Legend did not mention the battle for Melvian Bridge and Eusebius was accessible to the Rus because it was written in Greek and familiar to the Byzantines.

The other famous conversion story that Vladimir had similarities with was the conversion of Clovis. Clovis, king of the Franks, was in the midst of a losing battle when he claimed he would convert if he won through a miracle. The battle was won and Clovis converted himself and the Franks to Christianity.<sup>67</sup> The writers of the RPC would most likely have been more familiar with the conversion story of Constantine because of their proximity to the Byzantines rather than the Franks.

Dudo and the anonymous writers of the RPC shared a common goal of creating a noble past where there was none or very little known past. With the lack of literary resources, the authors had to rely on the stories of powerful notables and the cultural oral traditions that were spread across the Scandinavian influenced world. These authors were doing more than creating a memory; they were participating in the founding of a new cultural identity. The Normans were built out of the mixed ethnic races of the Franks, Bretons, and Scandinavians. The Rus identity was formed from Slav, Finno-Ugrians, nomadic steppe peoples, and Scandinavians. The new cultural identities helped create a sense of belonging not only for the ruling dynasties, but bound the dynasties to the people and the land that they inhabited together.

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<sup>67</sup> Gregory of Tours. *The History of the Franks*. 143-144. Eusebius. *Life of Constantine*. 81-85. This story shared similarities with Constantine as well. Constantine saw the symbol of the cross above the sun and constructed a large cross for his army. Bearing this cross he accomplished victory over Maxentius at the battle of Melvin Bridge.

## Chapter 2

### Dudo and the Normans

As the Viking raids continued into the tenth century, the attitude of the Norse seaborne pirates changed from plundering wealth and taking it back to their homeland to settling newly conquered territory. Since Northern France had vast coastlines, it was a perfect area for Vikings to settle as local lords. In the land that eventually became known as Normandy, many groups of Viking settlers began to lay claim to land. One of the most powerful men who changed from Viking to that of a landed lord was a man named Rollo. Rollo became the most powerful Norse lord in northern France. His seat of power was Rouen and through cunning and luck, he was recognized by Frankish kings as a potential ally and was officially given land through a series of land grants in the 910's and 920's. Once given land he converted to Christianity. His descendants were also Christians and became counts, dukes, and even kings.<sup>68</sup>

### Dudo the Author

Rollo's rise to power from a Viking chief to a Christian lord was unfortunately not chronicled well and historians know very little about him. In fact so little was known of Rollo that his homeland is still a mystery.<sup>69</sup> The first author to go into any detail about the life of Rollo was a man named Dudo of St-Quentin.<sup>70</sup> Dudo had been asked by Richard the Fearless to write a history of his father William and grandfather Rollo sometime around 994. Richard did not get to

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<sup>68</sup> Rosamund McKitterick. *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians: 751-987*. (New York: Longman, 1992), 228-240.

<sup>69</sup> Dudo says that Rollo was an independent chieftain in Denmark, but the Orkney Saga says that he was from Norway. It is impossible to know for sure. However, it does not matter very much since early tenth century Denmark and Norway were culturally very similar. Nick Webber. *The Evolution of Norman Identity*. 27.

<sup>70</sup> Richer of Saint-Remi. *Histories: Volume 1*. Edit. and Trans. by Justin Lake. (Cambridge: Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 2011) Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard*. Rollo was mentioned in the Frankish chronicles of Flodoard and Richer of Saint Remi. However, the Norse in Normandy were only mentioned in passing when they were taking part in wider Frankish politics. Neither author goes into any significant detail in the dealings of the Normans.

see the text as he died in 996. But, Dudo continued working under Richard's son, Richard II. It took Dudo around two decades to complete and was finished at the latest by 1020.<sup>71</sup> Dudo titled his great work *The History of the Normans*. The HN presented several problems for historians. While he was the only known chronicler of the early Normans, he was doing so almost 100 years later and his history reads more like an Icelandic Saga than a chronicle.<sup>72</sup> Eighteenth century monks, who began to compile sources for the *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, rejected Dudo's work because of its inaccuracies.<sup>73</sup> It has only been in the last 50 years that historians have begun to take a closer look at Dudo in an attempt to find out more about the life of Rollo, William and Richard. Much has been claimed by historians like, Nick Webber, Eleanor Searle, David, Bates, and Leah Shopkow, but little effort has been made by historians to understand how the descendants of Rollo wanted Rollo, a Viking pagan, to be seen. What tricks and tactics did Dudo use and how did he want the reader to see Rollo before and after his conversion?

Before Rollo can be discussed, Dudo and the society he lived in need to be explored. Dudo himself was not a Norman, but a Frankish clerk from St Quentin. His date of birth is unknown as is his family heritage. Because his early life was shrouded in mystery, it is unknown where he received his education. Webber credits Liège, but that can only be speculation.<sup>74</sup> Dudo's first known contact with the Ducal court was as an emissary of count Albert of Vermandois in 987, the purpose of the mission was to secure Albert's favor with the newly crowned Hugh Capet. His mission must have impressed Richard the Fearless of Normandy

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<sup>71</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. XIII

<sup>72</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. XVII. Dudo was writing at least 100 years before the first Sagas, but Dudo had a similar Saga style because he blended history and myth together to make a pseudo history. Contemporary Frankish chronicles did combine myth and history, often times drawing from classical examples such as the Trojan War and the *Aeneid*.

<sup>73</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. Xiii.

<sup>74</sup> Webber. *The Evolution of Norman Identity*. 13.

because in 994 he was commissioned to write a history of Richard's ancestors. He would become an important member of the Norman court and became the confessor to Richard's son, also named Richard, sometime in the 1010's. Dudo would eventually come to be the dean of St Quentin around 1015. Once the dean of St Quentin, he surely spent less time at the court of Richard II as he tended to his duties as dean. He was also given land at Leuze near the Thon River through a land grant.<sup>75</sup>

### **The Patrons**

Why Richard the Fearless wanted a history of his family is still disputed by historians today. Nick Webber thought that the ducal dynasty wanted to create a Norman Identity that was unique to northern France.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand Fraser McNair thought that Dudo was simply creating a literary monument, something to be compared to other medieval historical works.<sup>77</sup> Eleanor Searle thought that it was a victory song for Richard's family because they had gone through so much strife from fighting Franks, Bretons and other Normans.<sup>78</sup> Georges Duby and Constance Bouchard have discussed in great length that during the tenth and eleventh centuries noble families became more interested in tracing family lineage.<sup>79</sup> Richard I and Richard II could have been following the latest fad in Francia at the time.

What historians know for sure was that Richard the Fearless asked Dudo to write a history, only to die two years later in 996. His son and successor, Richard II, asked Dudo to continue writing. Richard II was not the only member of the ducal dynasty that wanted a written

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<sup>75</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. Eric Christiansen. ix-xi.

<sup>76</sup> Webber. *The Evolution of Norman Identity*. 35.

<sup>77</sup> McNair. *The Politics of being Norman in the reign of Duke Richard the Fearless*. 319.

<sup>78</sup> Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power*. 241.

<sup>79</sup> Georges Duby. *The Chivalrous Society*. Trans. Cynthia Postan. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 63. Constance Bouchard. *Those of my Blood: Constructing Noble Families in Medieval France*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 59-73.



history; Count Ralph of Ivry, paternal uncle to Richard II, was credited by Dudo and called “the Narrator of the work.”<sup>80</sup> Robert, Archbishop of Rouen was also credited by Dudo in helping with the work and was a brother of Richard II. These three men seem to be the most important benefactors of the work. Since Dudo was not a Norman, he had to rely on the ducal court to give him the necessary material to write and finish the work. Ralph of Ivry seemed to be the most enthusiastic in providing inspiration. This could have been because Ralph had helped Richard II succeed to the title of Duke after his father’s death.

The Dukes of Normandy were finally strong enough to call themselves dukes and wanted a history to be created to display their power.<sup>81</sup> Richard II began calling himself duke first in a charter for the abbey of Fècamp in 1006.<sup>82</sup> The titles of the rulers of Normandy were somewhat confusing. Rollo and William Longsword were no more than chieftains. When William Longsword began acting above his station in the wider politics of northern France, he was killed in 942.<sup>83</sup> Richard the Fearless assumed the title of count, or marquis, because he spent his long reign insuring his power within Normandy.<sup>84</sup> Once he had secured Normandy under his control he wielded significant power. Richard II’s reign was noted for its peacefulness, although, Richard II did experience some small border confrontations, most famously with Odo II of Blois-

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<sup>80</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 11.

<sup>81</sup> The Dukes of Normandy were not the only dynasty to come from humble origins. During the late 800’s and 900’s political upheaval in West Francia allowed for new noble families to rise in power. The Counts of Anjou originated from an unnamed forester. R. W. Southern. *The Making of the Middle Ages*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 79-83.

<sup>82</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 149.

<sup>83</sup> Flodoard called Rollo, William and Richard a *Princeps* of the Northmen. Richer of St Remi also referred to Rollo and William as Princeps. Both Flodoard and Richer distinguish men by their title such as duke, count or king. By calling the Norman Ducal family, *princeps*, both chronicles were making a statement that the Normans were not on the same level as Frankish nobles and were merely leaders.

<sup>84</sup> Richard expanded his power by binding the lords to him through marriage ties. If local lords refused he took their land and replaced them with a loyal lord. Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power*. 87-89. Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 28.

Chartres in 1013-14.<sup>85</sup> The few confrontations turned out victorious for Richard II, strengthening his power and giving him prestige amongst the French lords. With Normandy largely under control from the actions of his father, Richard II was able to concentrate on strengthening the power of Normandy. One way to do this was to assert a unique culture that was not French, but a combination of several different cultures that formed a unique Norman identity. The best way to assert a new Norman identity was through the written records of a family history. Richard II's efforts worked in showing the rest of France that the Normans were powerful and useful allies because Richard II's son, Richard III, was married to, Adèle, daughter of King Robert II, no small feat.<sup>86</sup>

### **The Land of Normandy**

Normandy in the early eleventh century had become a powerhouse in French politics and continued to grow in strength throughout the eleventh century. When one looks at Normandy only 100 years earlier it was a miracle how much the land had changed. Normandy in the late ninth century did not exist as a coherent political body. It was a backwater, left out of the major political events of the time. The vast coastlines and river estuaries were filled with swamps and marshes that left the land exposed to raiders. For example, a large Viking fleet entered the Seine and besieged Paris in 885.<sup>87</sup> The Vikings failed to capture the city but were allowed to raid further into the Frankish heartland. Frankish kings had a difficult time defending the important cities and monasteries that were upriver. In the early 860s, Charles the Bald tried to stop the raiders by building fortified bridges, but had mixed success.<sup>88</sup> The bridges needed constant

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<sup>85</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 65.

<sup>86</sup> Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power*. 129.

<sup>87</sup> Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. *The Bella Parisiacae Urbis*. Trans. Nirmal Dass. (Dudley: Peeters, 2007.)

<sup>88</sup> Janet Nelson. *Charles the Bald*. (New York: Longman, 1992), 206-207. Simon Coupland. "The Vikings on the Continent: Myth and History." In *The Journal of the Historical Association*: Volume 88, Issue 290 (2003), 1.

upkeep and men to defend them and as the greater political turmoil of the Frankish and Robertian kings enveloped the land, men and resources were repurposed leaving them more exposed to raiders.

Dudo claimed that in the late ninth century Normandy had become an, “almost empty desert.”<sup>89</sup> It is hard to imagine that Normandy had become an actual desert and Gallic and Frankish peasants probably still tilled the land and fished the rivers. What Dudo was referencing was the lack of political and spiritual power in Normandy. No powerful lords resided in the land, but there was evidence that there was a count at Rouen until 905 named Odilard. There is little to no more information on who Odilard was, or what happened to the count.<sup>90</sup> When Rollo landed in Rouen Dudo claimed that the land was “devoid of warriors and knights.”<sup>91</sup> This seemed to be an accurate representation of Normandy. Lack of local power most likely stemmed from the lack of a strong monarchical government in west Francia. With the death of Charles the Bald in 878 west Francia would see a line of quick successions of kings.<sup>92</sup> Charles the Fat was crowned king in 885 but suffered from strong Frankish rivals and after his failure to help Paris in 885-86 the Robertian line of kings was founded with the election of Count Odo of Paris to king.<sup>93</sup> Charles

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Historians are torn on whether the fortified bridges that Charles the Bald built were effective or not. Nelson provides evidence that they were useful in stopping Viking attacks on rivers. However, Coupland completely disagrees and even goes so far to say that the notion is “virtually unassailable by dint of frequent repetition.”

<sup>89</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 21.

<sup>90</sup> Eleanor Searle. “Frankish Rivalries and the Norse Warriors.” Edit. R. Allen Brown. *Anglo-Norman Studies VIII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1985*. Wolfeboro: Boydell & Brewer Ltd (1986), 198-201. Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 11.

<sup>91</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 36.

<sup>92</sup> Louis the Stammer became king when his father Charles the Bald died. Unfortunately he died two years later in 879 and his two sons, Louis III and Carloman also suffered from short reigns and were both dead by 885.

<sup>93</sup> Pierre Richè. *The Carolingians: A Family who Forged Europe*. Trans. Michael Idomir Allen. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 218-219. Charles the Fat failed to come to the aid of Paris. Instead of driving away the northmen he allowed them to pass Paris and winter in Burgundy. After 886, Charles the Fat retreated to his eastern holdings where he supposedly had more influence and control. This was false; after his health failed he abdicated the crown to his nephew Arnulf in 887 and died in 888.

the Fat abdicated the throne in 887, creating further chaos.<sup>94</sup> In 893 Charles the Simple came of age and was crowned, but King Odo was still alive. After a destructive civil war Odo agreed that Charles the Simple would succeed him when he died, which happened in the following year in 898.<sup>95</sup> Charles the Simple's reign was plagued by further political upheaval because the previous two decades had been so tumultuous. Kings of West Francia had lost significant lands and the power that came with them. Frankish counts and dukes had prospered from the lack of central authority and acquired the power to rival the king. After 944 Louis IV lacked the strength to enforce his supremacy over the Spanish marches and other southern territories including the Dukes of Gascony and Counts of Rouergue.<sup>96</sup>

Without the power of local lords, the church had suffered greatly. Rouen had once been an important enough bishopric that Charles Martel thought it was necessary to seize control of Rouen in 730.<sup>97</sup> Despite Rouen's important past, years of neglect from a strong central power had allowed the region of ecclesiastical authority in Normandy to fall into disrepair. There were records that there was still a bishop at Coutances and an archbishop at Rouen. However, there was no record for any bishop at Avranches from 862, Bayeux from 876, and Sees from 910.<sup>98</sup> Monasteries were also decimated. The monks of St-Wandrille, Jumièges, and St-Ouen took the relics and what they could from the monasteries and left for fear of being attacked by raiders.<sup>99</sup> The land that would become Normandy had been abandoned by the kings of West Francia and ravaged by raiders in the late ninth century. That began to change in the tenth century.

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<sup>94</sup> Jean Dunbabin. *France in the Making: 843-1180*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 14-15.

<sup>95</sup> Dunbabin. *France in the Making*. 30.

<sup>96</sup> Dunbabin. *France in the Making*. 112.

<sup>97</sup> Riche. *The Carolingians*. 36.

<sup>98</sup> Felice Lifshitz. *The Norman Conquest of Pious Nuestria: Historiographic Discourse and Saintly Relics, 684-1090*. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1995), 113-121.

<sup>99</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 11.

The beginning of the tenth century marked a turning point for what would become Normandy. The Viking raiders that had come to attack and raid began to settle along the coastal shores and rivers. This was around the time that Rollo and his men settled in Rouen, but there was evidence that it was happening on a much wider scale. Without local written records historians have had to turn to name evidence and archeological records to see where Norse settlement took place. Concentrations of towns that share Norse influenced names are focused around the Cotentin peninsula and the coastline of Fècamp and the Seine River. Many of these places that share Norse names had a combination of a Norse name, for example *Toki*, was combined with the French word for village, *ville*. These made Tocqueville, or Toki's village. Other place names include *tot*, the Norse word for town. Archeological evidence coincides with the name evidence. Two brooches were found at a grave in Pîtres. Another grave was found at Rèville on the Cotentin Peninsula with several small Norse items. Other items include a small amount of swords and axes, showing that there was indeed settlement of a warrior class.<sup>100</sup> What the name evidence and archeological evidence don't support was Dudo's claim that Rollo was the commander of a large united settlement of Normandy. Rather, it was independent Norse chieftains settling in small territories who came on their own accord. Rollo and his descendants however became the most powerful of these chieftains, much to the credit of Rouen.

The city of Rouen was the only important city of the area because of its location on the Seine River. Its importance was proven by the fact that it was the only major urban center to last through the turbulent ninth century. When Rouen was settled by Rollo it was still an archbishopric, however, the city must have suffered greatly from past raids and general lack of upkeep. Dudo described that, "its great buildings thrown down, and the stones of its temples torn

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<sup>100</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 19-20. Dating of archeological findings is often difficult but many of the samples can be dated between the end of the ninth century and end of the tenth century.

out, churches ‘shaken from the foundations,’ walls broken down everywhere and a small and weaponless garrison.”<sup>101</sup> Once under the control of the Normans the Seine resumed its role as a trading center. The Seine’s width helped protect the city and made it a center for trade. The Norman’s connections to other Vikings and the insular area made it a trading center of the English Channel. Loot pillaged from the British Isles was taken to Rouen and sold.<sup>102</sup>

To insure that the ducal dynasty of Normandy appeared strong in both the secular and the ecclesiastical sphere, Dudo had to insure that the beginning of the dynasty was not only physically strong, but spiritually strong. Rollo’s pagan origins threatened the Christian values of the Ducal family. What methods could Dudo use to make Richard II, Ralph of Ivry and Archbishop Robert of Rouen appear to come from a civilized past? Dudo turned to a method that many medieval historians and chroniclers had already done. He tied the origins of Rollo to Troy and used the *Aeneid* as an outline for the actions of Rollo.<sup>103</sup> In the beginning of the text Dudo told of a Trojan named Antenor who escaped the fall of Troy and fled to a land named Dacia.<sup>104</sup> Other methods employed by Dudo were more subtle. For example, many of Rollo’s exploits were references to Aeneas; he fled across a body of water after his homeland was taken by a

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<sup>101</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 35.

<sup>102</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 9 and 37. Archeological evidence supports Rouen’s importance as a trade center for the insular area. The Fecamp treasure hoard contained coins from a large number of mints. Norman coins have been found in England, Norway, Poland, Russia and Denmark. There is evidence from a single coin that William Longsword was the first to mint his own currency. Richard and Richard II had political ties to the kings of Denmark, Norway and England, which only helped facilitate trade.

<sup>103</sup> *Liber Historiae Francorum*. Trans. Bernard Bachrach. (Lawrence: Coronado Press, 1973), 23. The Anonymous writer of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* traced the origins of the Franks back to two Trojan refugees named Priam and Antenor who escaped and fled. They founded the city of Sicambria where the Franks eventually grew in size to migrate west. Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Trans. Lewis Thorpe. (New York: Penguin Books, 1966) 54-75. Geoffrey of Monmouth traced the kings of Britain back to the Trojan Brutus. Brutus had fled Troy with Aeneas and eventually left Italy where he traveled around Europe until settling on the island of Albion.

<sup>104</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 16. Dudo claimed that, “The Danes... boast that they are descended from Antenor; who, when in former times the lands of Troy were laid waste, ‘slipped away through the middle of Greece.” During the Middle Ages Dacia was thought to mean Denmark instead of the classical Dacia, north of Macedonia.

greedy king. Other times Dudo used direct quotes from the *Aeneid*.<sup>105</sup> By entwining the story of Aeneas and the life of Rollo, Dudo was tying the success of the Norman Dukes to that of Rome. In addition to promoting prestige to the Ducal Dynasty, Dudo was also fixing Rollo's pagan past by equating him with Aeneas. Throughout the *Aeneid*, Aeneas was called *pius* or pious. Aeneas was a pious pagan, and by having Rollo mirroring his life, Rollo was thus portrayed as a pious pagan. Throughout Rollo's life, he acted as a Christian until he finally became a Christian through the baptism of Franco the archbishop of Rouen.

### **The Counter Example of Hastings**

The first book of the *History of the Normans* was not about the Normans, but about another Dane named Hasting. There was a historical Viking named Hasting, however, Dudo took many liberties with the writing of his life. Hasting or Haesting, was a Viking character that appeared frequently in records in the second half of the ninth century. He appeared on the Loire from 866 to 882, on the Somme 890 to 892, and in England 892 to 893, and was sometimes blamed for the attack on Luna with the famous son of Ragnar Lothbrok, Bjorn Ironsides. Neither Flodoard nor Richer mention Hasting in their histories, but he was mentioned in the *Annals of Saint-Vaast* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*.<sup>106</sup> Leah Shopkow believed that Dudo used the story of the attack on Luna as another reference to the *Aeneid*.<sup>107</sup> Hasting could not enter the city because of its strong walls. He had his men plead with the city to let him enter because he had died and his last wish was to have a Christian burial. Unbeknownst to the citizens of Luna, Hasting was alive and armed in the coffin that was taken to the cathedral. Once inside the

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<sup>105</sup> Eric Christiansen discusses the amount of references in his introduction of his translation. Xix.

<sup>106</sup> *The Annals of Saint-Vaast* s.a. 882. Trans. P.E. Dutton. *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*. New York: Broadview Press, (1996), 477. Louis III was going to meet with Hasting when he was on the Loire but fell from his horse and died before the meeting could take place. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Trans. Michael Swanton. New York: Routledge, 1998. 84.

<sup>107</sup> Shopkow. *History and Community*. 150. Shopkow saw the attack on Luna as a reference to the Trojan horse.

cathedral he jumped out and killed the bishop and was able to open the city gates allowing his men to sack the city. This story has many similarities to the Greeks and the Trojan Horse. Dudo wanted Hasting to appear as a villain in the text and continued to make him as wicked as possible. Among Hasting's qualities, Dudo declared that he, "Desecrated the priesthood, and trampled down holy places. By word and deed, he insulted the king of the Franks lingering miserably among his own cities... He scorns the Franks."<sup>108</sup> Dudo's lists of churches that Hasting attacked included all the churches in Vermondois, the monastery of Denis, the church of Mèdard and Eligius, the church of the Holy Virgin Ste. Geneviève, and many other unnamed churches.<sup>109</sup> Hasting was also responsible for the death of Bishop Immo of Noyon.<sup>110</sup>

In the HN Hasting was given land at Chartres by the King of West Francia, but he was not forced to be baptized. Every other historical example of pagans given land resulted with the pagans being converted. By stating that Hasting had not been converted, Dudo was showing that the Franks did not have the ability to force baptism on Hastings. He was not given the land by local lords; so much as he had conquered the land without consequences. To make the Franks look even more unqualified they asked Hasting for help when attacking Rollo. Not only did they ask Hasting to accompany them on campaign against Rollo, but they acted either as idiots or incapable warriors. After meeting with Rollo Count Ragnold practically begged Hasting to lead the entire army, saying, "what seems best to you? Shall we give battle?... tell us what are we to

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<sup>108</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 17. Dudo does not name the King of the Franks. He merely gives the title.

<sup>109</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. Eric Christiansen covers the alleged attacks on the named churches on page 184. Many were indeed attacked by raiders but Hasting was not the named culprit. Vermandois saw a series of raids in 859-60 and 881-83. The Abbey of St Denis was attacked in 857, and 865. St Medard was burned down in 882. St Eloi was raided in 859. St Genevieve was attacked in 857.

<sup>110</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 184. Bishop Immo was captured by Norse raiders and killed sometime in 860.



do?”<sup>111</sup> After Hasting gave his advice of waiting to attack another Frank named Roland called Hasting a coward.<sup>112</sup> Roland then charged forward against Rollo’s forces that had a fortified position. Rollo’s forces had set a trap for the charging Franks and when Hasting and Count Ragnold saw that Roland was killed and defeated, they both fled the field.

Dudo blamed the Franks for these Norse raids. He stated that Francia had at one time been a mighty empire that ruled by just means, but had since fallen to “idleness” and had attacked the, “mandates of the lord who thunders above the stars.”<sup>113</sup> Dudo was not entirely wrong. The Franks had gone from the most powerful empire in Europe to a bunch of squabbling fractured kingdoms. Civil strife led to massive damages to church property and a general state of decay after the Carolingian renaissance. When Dudo was writing the HN west Francia was beginning to stabilize, Viking raids had almost completely stopped, there was a new royal family, and many church diocese were beginning to be rebuilt and expanded.

Hasting was used as an example to demonstrate what a bad pagan looked like and to contrast with Rollo. Hasting was greedy, untrustworthy, cowardly, and was still a pagan. The reader was supposed to see that Hasting was an untrustworthy pagan, but also that the Franks were not any better. Through lawlessness and disregard for the lord, the Franks had invited the Norse, who had freely ravaged the land and people. A new group of Danes would come to

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<sup>111</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 37. Count Ragnold was a representation of what the Franks had become. He was weak, sought advice from a pagan and a coward.

<sup>112</sup> Roland shows several similarities to the famous Roland from the *Song of Roland*. First off he had the same name and was the standard bearer for the army. He was also killed by non-Christians in battle while showing extreme bravery.

<sup>113</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 21. Dudo was not alone in his opinion of how far the Franks had fallen from grace. Abbo of St Germain voiced a similar opinion, “O France, tell me, I pray you, what became of your strength and might?” Abbo of St Germain. *Viking Attacks on Paris*. 97.

Francia and with their help the Franks would, “rise to the height of Olympus.”<sup>114</sup> The new group of Danes was of course Rollo and his warriors, who would later become the Normans.

### **The Myth of Rollo**

Rollo was portrayed as a strong warrior that won many battles, sometimes against superior odds. To inflate Rollo’s military prowess, Dudo attributed many Viking raids, that happened in the late ninth century, to Rollo. Dudo claimed that Rollo made his way to the Seine in the year 876. There was a large fleet of Norse ships that landed in the Seine in 876, but it was most likely not Rollo, because according to Eric Christensen, the leader of the ships was unknown.<sup>115</sup> Dudo used the information given in the *Annals of St Vaast* to map the early career of Rollo. Many of the raids of northern Francia in the 880’s were led by unnamed Vikings, including the attack on Paris in 885. In Dudo’s history he attributes these raids to the leadership of Rollo and his eventual settlement in Normandy. Historians do not know who led these raids in the 880’s or even if they were the same group of Vikings. Little was known of Rollo’s early career in Francia. Richer of St Remi reported that Rollo attacked Neustria and was eventually defeated by Duke Robert of Paris.<sup>116</sup> Dudo may have confused the locations since Richer noted Rollo swearing vassalage to Charles after this episode. Flodoard gave no early account of Rollo; the first time he was mentioned by name was in the year 925 when he tried to secure the castle at Eu against Count Arnulf of Flanders.<sup>117</sup>

Since there was very little known of Rollo, even in the early eleventh century, it was easy for Dudo to sculpt history to his whim. Rollo was made to be not only a strong leader but a

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<sup>114</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 21.

<sup>115</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 190.

<sup>116</sup> Richer of St Remi. *Histories: Volume 1*. 81-85.

<sup>117</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard*. 14.

patient and peaceful leader. In every engagement, Rollo was not the aggressor. After he was attacked he often went on the offensive, but he did not raid or attack until he himself was attacked. The text began with Rollo and his brother being attacked in Denmark by the King of the Danes until Rollo was forced to flee. He landed on English soil and was attacked by the English before getting a chance to do anything else. When he arrived in Walcheren he was attacked.<sup>118</sup> The same thing happened later under the leadership of Count Ragnold and Hasting when Rollo entered Frankish territory.<sup>119</sup> Once attacked Rollo often went on a warpath and raided and destroyed the attacker's lands to ensure they could not trouble him later. After Count Ragnold lost the first battle he raised a second army and attacked Rollo again and was again defeated. Ragnold's second defeat cost him his life. Rollo, not wanting to be attacked a further time chased the fleeing army to Paris and besieged it.<sup>120</sup> By never making Rollo the aggressor, he filled the role of refugee more than that of a Viking. He had been forced from his homeland and was looking for allies and land to settle upon.

According to the HN, King Athelstan of England became Rollo's greatest ally in his quest for a new land. He had met with Athelstan after he had defended himself on the shores of England against the local lords who mistook Rollo for a Viking raider. Rollo and his men stayed in England for the winter, and while there, he and King Athelstan made a truce that if they gave each other supplies they would help each other in times of war. Athelstan treated Rollo as a

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<sup>118</sup> Rollo mercilessly attacked the Walcherens and Frisians after the locals launched a surprise attack on Rollo. He raided their lands and took prisoners who were eventually given back once a peace was secured. Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 33.

<sup>119</sup> Count Ragnold in Dudo's text was created from the historical Duke Ragnold of Le Mans who died leading Frankish forces against a group of Northmen on the Seine in 885. *Annals of Saint-Vaast*. 480.

<sup>120</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. Dudo thinks that the Vikings who killed Duke Ragnold and eventually attacked and sieged Paris were led by Rollo. As mentioned earlier the leader of the Vikings was unknown to the St Vaast annals and the monk Abbo who wrote an eye witness account of the siege. The Vikings failed to take Paris because of the actions of Count Odo who defended the city until Charles the Fat arrived with a large army. However, Charles bribed the Vikings and allowed to pass Paris to raid Burgundy. Odo's defense of the city was the reason that he was eventually elected king of the Franks when Charles the Fat died in 888.

Christian lord, even though he was still unbaptized. When Rollo was in need of supplies and men after landing in Frisia, Athelstan sent him twelve boats of warriors and twelve more boats of food and provisions. In return, Rollo honored his side of the alliance to Athelstan. Before Rollo could take Paris, he was told that Athelstan needed help in his kingdom. Rollo rushed to England to help his friend and ally. After helping Athelstan crush his opposition, he offered Rollo half of his kingdom. Rollo, acted as the humble pious pagan and refused this great kindness. There were no English sources that mention any episode like this and it should not be interpreted as fact.

The character of Athelstan was a curious one that has perplexed historians. Historians are confused because there was no record of a contemporary king of England named Athelstan. The king of England in late ninth century to early tenth century was Edward the Elder. Edward's son was Aethelstan of England, but his reign did not begin until 924 and ended in 939. Historians like R.H.C. Davies have made the claim that Dudo's Athelstan was actually the Viking chieftain Guthrum who had changed his name to Athelstan upon being converted.<sup>121</sup> Guthrum-Athelstan was the king of East Anglia after 878 when he was defeated by Alfred the Great of Wessex. Guthrum would seem like a likely candidate since Rollo and the character Athelstan acted so friendly towards each other. Both were Danes and could potentially support one another politically. Guthrum died sometime around 890, too early for Rollo to have arrived in England and the Seine. Eric Christiansen thought that Athelstan could have been a misnamed Alfred of Wessex.<sup>122</sup> Since all of Rollo's actions in England were fictitious, it is impossible to decisively pinpoint the real identity of Athelstan. Christiansen thinks that instead of Athelstan being a historical figure, he was actually based off of Dido, the princess of Carthage in the *Aeneid*. The two figures have similarities; they were both royal figures that helped the hero of the story in

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<sup>121</sup> Davis. *The Normans and their Myth*. 62.

<sup>122</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. Eric Christiansen. 189

their quest for a new homeland. They both resided in a kingdom across a sea from where the hero originated and were separated by another sea to where the hero eventually settled. While Dido and Aeneas shared a romantic relationship, Rollo and Athelstan did not because Athelstan was a man. Christiansen makes note that the language that Rollo's emissaries used was exactly the same as with Aeneas's emissaries to Dido.<sup>123</sup> Athelstan was an important character for the story of Rollo. He provided men and resources for Rollo in his quest for a new home.

With the backing of Athelstan, Rollo was a victorious leader. Once Rollo fled from Denmark he only suffered one defeat, but Dudo spun the story to make Rollo the victor. In actuality Rollo was defeated by the forces of King Charles the Simple, but according to Dudo, he had fought so well that Charles feared him and wanted him as an ally. Rollo was then approached by Charles through ambassadors and the two men eventually agreed upon the land grant of 911 known as the treaty of St Clair-sur-Epte. Even though Rollo was defeated, he still won in the end because he was awarded the lands that would become Normandy.<sup>124</sup> To help elevate Rollo's fighting prowess Dudo chose to leave out the struggles of the 920's because they made Rollo look weak. He does not mention Rollo's major loss in 925 when he tried to secure the castle at Eu.<sup>125</sup> Rollo was the patriarch of the ducal dynasty and needed to be shown as the victorious, honorable, pious pagan. Every defeat mentioned chipped away at the image of Rollo as the victorious settler. The fruit of Rollo's victories was the land grant of 911 from the treaty of St Clair-sur-Epte from King Charles the Simple. In Dudo's telling of this important event Rollo was made a Duke of Normandy, he was given all of the lands of Normandy and even Brittany, and he was given the daughter of Charles the simple, Gisla, in marriage to cement the

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<sup>123</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. Eric Christiansen. 189

<sup>124</sup> The land grant of 911 will be discussed in greater detail on page 19.

<sup>125</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard*. 14.

alliance.<sup>126</sup> Like many others aspects of the text, Dudo embellished the land grant of 911 in a number of ways.<sup>127</sup> The first and most important inaccuracy was the reason for the land grant. It was true that Rollo was defeated by Charles's forces, but the actions surrounding the event were very different according to Frankish chronicles.

## **Western Francia and the Political Problems of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries**

Dudo did not illustrate the tension between Carolingian leaders as Flodoard and Richer were able. With the treaty of Verdun in 843, Charlemagne's empire was broken into three kingdoms, west Francia, Lotharingia, and east Francia. Over the next several generations, these kingdoms would wax and wane in power as the Carolingian descendants fought bitterly. No Viking ever offered a larger threat to power than the other Carolingian lords. Combined with the Vikings' ability to attack wherever they pleased, it was much easier to raise a quick tax from the local area and bribe the raiders to leave, attack other Vikings, or attack other Frankish territories. Lothar II bought himself a number of Viking war bands to help protect his realm from his uncles.<sup>128</sup> Charles the Bald raised a local tax to bribe the Vikings that were besieging Paris in 845.<sup>129</sup> Through constant infighting, the Frankish kings became weaker, as local lords became more autonomous and powerful. Charles the Simple had just been elected King of the Lorraine, and was the second to last Carolingian king. However, there was a lot of competition for the

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<sup>126</sup> It was here that Dudo included the farcified encounter between Rollo and Charles. Rollo refused to bow to Charles and kiss his foot because of his pride. He instead ordered one of his men to do it as a proxy. When the appointed man went to kiss the king's foot he grabbed his leg and lifted his foot to his mouth instead of kneeling. This action forced Charles to fall on his back. The encounter was written off as Norse ignorance. Charles forgave Rollo and his follower. This short episode was made up by Dudo because he wanted to elevate the image of Rollo while diminishing the power of Charles. Rollo appeared to be in control of the situation and was shown to have more pride than even a Frankish king.

<sup>127</sup> David Douglas. "Rollo of Normandy." *The English Historical Review*: Volume 57, Nom. 228, (1948), 427-429. Douglas points out that Dudo was the only author to write about the treaty of 911 at St. Clair-sur-Epte. However, by checking Charles the Simple's movements in 910-912, he did move along a path that could have led him to meet with Rollo at St. Clair-sur-Epte in the fall of 911.

<sup>128</sup> Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power*. 20.

<sup>129</sup> Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power*. 23.

crown from pretenders, including Conrad of the east Franks.<sup>130</sup> In addition to external forces, Charles was forced to deal with powerful internal forces that resented a powerful ruler, i.e. Count Arnulf and Hugh the Great.

Charles the Simple may appear weak for giving land to Rollo, but the practice of awarding lands to powerful pagans was a long practiced method of dealing with pesky Vikings. The son of Charlemagne, Louis the Pious gave land to Harald Klak in 820's because he wanted the Danes busy fighting each other instead of raiding south. In 841-42, Lothar gave land off the island of Walchern to Viking raiders.<sup>131</sup> Another land grant was given to Godefrid, also under the reign of Lothar. Godefrid was known to go on raids into both Lothar's land and Charles the Bald's land. Kings hoped that by presenting a weaker territory that was open to attack, the Vikings would leave their own lands alone. Vikings who had settled on the Loire turned to Brittany instead of South to Aquitaine for easier plunder.<sup>132</sup> Even in England Vikings were given land. In 878 Alfred recognized Guthrum's rule over East Anglia, the same Guthrum who changed his name to Athelstan. When a king gave land to a pagan through a land grant he was gaining a vassal. The new vassal was to defend the land against raiders and outsiders. Land that was in marcher territory was usually given to Vikings since it was difficult to defend and out of the way. The recipient of the land grant not only became the secular vassal, but the spiritual vassal as well. All pagans who were given land by Christian authorities had to convert to Christianity, there was no exception. Alfred became the godfather of Guthrum when he converted, effectively giving spiritual responsibility to Alfred. Charles was following in the

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<sup>130</sup> Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power*. 46.

<sup>131</sup> Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power*. 17.

<sup>132</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard*. 21

footsteps of many powerful kings. He was not showing that he was weak, but was instead showing his resourcefulness in dealing with a problem.

A significant misunderstanding of Dudo's retelling of the meeting between Rollo and Charles was that there was no contemporary evidence that Rollo married Charles's daughter Gisla. Eric Christiansen points out that the only known Christian woman named Gisla to marry a Norse was the daughter of King Lothar II who married Godefrid in 882.<sup>133</sup> Rollo already had a wife, or at least a concubine, Popa, who was the mother of William Longsword.<sup>134</sup> It was common for powerful chieftains to have concubines and wives so it was possible that Rollo had more than one wife, but without any contemporary sources to prove that Charles had a daughter named Gisla, historians must doubt the marriage.

The biggest question that has come from the land grant of 911 was how much land was awarded to Rollo. Dudo claimed that Rollo was given, "that land from the stream of the Epte as far as the Sea."<sup>135</sup> If this was true that would mean Rollo was given all the land of Normandy and Brittany, a significant amount of space. However, historians do know that there were two other land grants given later; one to Rollo and another to his son. The second land grant in 924, was made by King Raoul of west Francia, who agreed to give Rollo Bayeux and Maine, representing the area of central Normandy.<sup>136</sup> The third land grant was in 933, when Rollo's son William

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<sup>133</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 195.

<sup>134</sup> Popa was a woman who Rollo captured from his raids in Bayeux. Dudo claimed that she was a princess from Prince Berenger. Flodoard claimed that Popa was a captive from Brittany, but said nothing more. What historians know is that she was a captive from one of Rollo's raids, but other than that there was little evidence to support who her parents were and where she came from. Eric Christiansen attempted to provide some light on the matter but he admits that without more evidence it was a lost cause to track her origins. Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. Eric Christiansen. 192.

<sup>135</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 49.

<sup>136</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims*. 9. Flodoard described the event as follows, "After numerous embassies passed back and forth, the northmen promised to make peace with Count Heribert, Archbishop Seulfus and the other Franks who were encamped with them against the northmen. This was on the condition that the more



Longsword was given the lands of the Bretons, which probably included the lands of Avranchin and Cotentin.<sup>137</sup> By looking at the later grants, it would seem that Rollo was not given all of Normandy and Brittany, but rather an area around Rouen, and the banks of the Seine roughly from the Epte to the Risle and up to the coast.<sup>138</sup> The Frankish sources were unfortunately quiet about the events of 911. Flodoard did not think it important enough to mention and does not include Rollo by name until the year 925 when he tried to secure the castle at Eu against Count Arnulf of Flanders.<sup>139</sup> Historians know that Rouen and the Seine estuary were given to Rollo because Flodoard wrote of Rollo and he said that he was the leader of Rouen.<sup>140</sup> Archeological evidence does not provide much help because while it shows the settlement of all Norse in Normandy it cannot provide specific answers in regards to Rollo. Unfortunately, with the evidence at hand, historians must be satisfied with the knowledge that Rollo was awarded the area of Rouen and the Seine River in 911.

### **Rollo and the Divine**

The ducal dynasties origin from foreign Danish pagans was Dudo's most important problem when writing the history. If Dudo was going to increase the prestige of the ducal family he needed to make all of its members willing and eager participants in Christianity. As mentioned earlier, Dudo's method for dealing with this task was making Rollo a pious pagan. He made Rollo's life a religious quest that began in the pagan lands of Denmark and ended with Rollo's being granted land and his conversion into the proper faith. Throughout this quest Dudo

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spacious land beyond the Seine, which they had requested, would be given to them." Rollo was not mentioned by name.

<sup>137</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 9. Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims*. 23. "William, the princeps of the northmen, committed himself to the king, who then gave William the land of the Bretons that was located along the sea coast."

<sup>138</sup> Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power*. 71.

<sup>139</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims*. 14.

<sup>140</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims*. 14

made it apparent that Rollo was following a divine path or structure that had been influenced through Gods will. Multiple poems were included that praised Rollo including his love of God and the Church, his pacification and conversion of the Danes, and famous speeches that were rich with Christian virtues. Dudo continued to tell the reader how his pen will act as a converter for the ‘harmonic beat’ of the Vikings chieftains’ divine mission to settle northern Francia.

It was common knowledge throughout northern Francia that Rollo was a Norse pagan.<sup>141</sup> Flodoard only called Rollo a Norseman; he never called him a count, let alone a duke. Since any educated Frank knew of Richard II’s foreign past, Dudo constantly reminded the reader that the patriarch of the Ducal Dynasty was noble and pious, even when he was a pagan. During Rollo’s raids on his enemies in Burgundy he refused to attack the monastery of St-Benoit.<sup>142</sup> Respecting and protecting church land was not an attribute that the Norse were known for, and so by showing that Rollo did not pray on defenseless monasteries, Dudo was demonstrating Rollo’s pious nature. In addition to not attacking church land, Rollo swore Christian oaths and upheld them even with his enemies. After Rollo captured Duke Rainer, Rainer’s wife sent envoys to Rollo to exchange prisoners.<sup>143</sup> Rollo had her swear an oath according to the Christian faith that she would let her hostages go first. Dudo did not elaborate in the manner of the oath. Christian oaths were sworn on the either relics, the gospels or by invoking a saint or God himself. When she complied, Rollo released Rainer and gave him gifts to help ensure they would have peace and an alliance in the future. The prisoner exchange was yet another method that Dudo used to show that the Rollo was Christian in all but name. Swearing a Christian oath and exchanging

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<sup>141</sup> Fanning and Bachrach. *The Annals of Flodoard*. XXII. Flodoard never calls the northmen pagans, but used the term northmen to donate that they were not Franks or Christians because they attack both secular and ecclesiastical centers.

<sup>142</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 42.

<sup>143</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. Christiansen. 189. The historical Rainer was the grandson of Lothar I. He was Count of Hainault and would have a descendent also named Rainer Longneck who was a contemporary of Dudo.

captured men was common practice for Christians.<sup>144</sup> The Christian oaths would have no meaning for a pagan, but since Rollo was not much of a pagan, more of a Christian in waiting, he participated in the practice.

Discussed earlier, Dudo introduced the character of Hasting to show the reader an example of a wicked pagan. Hasting had attacked churches, destroyed cities through deceit, and shook Francia with his constant attacks. Dudo also introduced Christian characters that failed to uphold Christian values as well. At the beginning of the text Dudo chastised Francia for disregarding their noble heritage by fighting amongst themselves and not protecting church land. Out of fear of Rollo's military prowess, Count Rainer attacked multiple times until he no longer had the power to attack. Rollo on the other hand was never the aggressor; he tried not to attack church land and accepted Christian oaths. Rollo acted more Christian than many Christian figures later in the history, notably Count Arnulf and Count Theobald, because he did not manipulate others, and he honored oaths.

Dudo's reasoning for Rollo's pious attitude was his noble nature, but more importantly because he claimed to receive visions from God. These visions were established immediately from the beginning of book 2. Once Rollo was expelled from Denmark he experienced his first divine dream, "Rollo, rise up with speed and make haste to sail across the sea and go to the English. There you will return to your own country as a savior, and will there enjoy perpetual peace, free from harm."<sup>145</sup> When Rollo woke he sought out a Christian living on the Island of

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<sup>144</sup> Swearing oaths was important for both Christians and Pagans. The *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* illustrated that the Norse were as willing as the Christians to swear oaths. The major difference was that the Danish Vikings were swearing oaths on their arm bands and not on the relics of saints, like the Anglo-Saxons.

<sup>145</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 28.

Scanza who deciphered the vision.<sup>146</sup> The wise Christian replied, “In due course, you will be purified by holy baptism, and you will become a most worthy Christian: and one day you will reach the Angles, that is the angels, through wandering the uncertain world; and with them you will enjoy the everlasting peace of glory.”<sup>147</sup> The interpretation of the vision sets up Rollo’s journey across the North Sea to England, where he will eventually be baptized. The wise Christian man that Dudo placed in the story strengthened Rollo’s pious nature. He did not seek out a pagan wise man, but a Christian wise man that was living in Scandinavia. Rollo was already familiar enough with Christians to know his vision came from God and not a pagan god. Again, Rollo was acting in a Christian fashion.

Rollo’s second vision was after his victory over the lords of England when he first landed. After the victory he contemplated what he should do, and became sad. Then he received another vision,

“Rollo, what do you fear, that you waver in terror and trembling? ... Through the unfolding of fate, with war’s many perils behind you, After surviving ‘the watery surge’ of the turbulent high seas, You by right, as eternally Christian, will worthily enter a Hall higher than Frankia’s, a patrician abounding in merit, And you will receive a well-earned crown as a proper reward which you will deserve to wear in the Godhead of Goodness supreme...” [H]e 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 contagion of leprosy and the itch, with which he was infected.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> There is no island of Scanza. Dudo could have been confusing the peninsula of Scandinavia, because the southern tip of Sweden was called Skane. Ancient geographers believed Scandinavia to be an island and not a peninsula.

<sup>147</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 28. The reference that the Angels were like angles appeared in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of England* (Book 2, ch. 1). Shopkow takes this reference as proof that Dudo was familiar with Bede and influenced by his writings. Shopkow. *History and Community*. 38.

<sup>148</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 29.

Rollo's vision was stating that he would be baptized and that the "leprosy," or his pagan beliefs, will be washed away. Again, Rollo cannot decipher his dreams and turns to his chiefs and English prisoners. One of the Christian prisoners interprets the dream. Rollo was overjoyed, and not only let the Christian captives go, but gave them gifts.

Rollo's most important vision was the one that he received after he had won a victory over the local lords on the English coast. This vision included the normal rhetoric that was in the other visions throughout the text including the ones about baptism and the washing away of leprosy but included something different,

"He seemed to behold himself placed on a mountain, far higher than the highest, in the 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 while from the contagion of leprosy and the itch, with which he was infected... he saw about the base of it many thousands of birds of different kinds and various colors, but with red left wings, extending in such numbers and so far and so wide that he could not catch sight of where they ended, however hard they looked... And they carried of twigs and worked rapidly to build nests; and furthermore, they willingly yielded to his command."<sup>149</sup>

The mountain that Rollo was on was heaven and the spring that he washed in was his baptism. Both of these concepts were common in eleventh century Christendom as seen by the conversion stories of Clovis and Constantine. Pohl proposed and explored the idea that Leah Shopkow began, that Dudo based Rollo's life off on Constantine. Rollo's vision had many similarities with the legendary baptism of Constantine. The image of leprosy was maybe the most famous but Constantine was also baptized on a mountain top.

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<sup>149</sup> Dudo. *History of the Normans*. 29-30. Pohl. *Translatio Imperii Constantini ad Normannos*. 323. The image of the mountain and heaven was a common theme in the early middle ages and can be seen in, St Peters Apocalypse, St Patrick's Purgatory, Thurkill's vision. *Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante*. Edit. Eileen Gardiner. (New York: Italica Press, 1989)

In the legend of Saint Silvester, Constantine had been inflicted with leprosy after persecuting the Christians. As he was about to bathe in the blood of the innocents he decided that it would be a bad idea and received a vision from Saints Peter and Paul, “because you shrank from the shedding innocent blood, the Lord Jesus Christ has sent us to tell you how to regain your health. Summon Silvester the Bishop, who is hiding on Mount Sirapte.”<sup>150</sup> Constantine then sought out Silvester who baptized him in a pool atop Mount Sirapte and he, “emerged from the pool clean of his leprosy and make it know that he had seen Christ.”<sup>151</sup> The similarities between the vision of Rollo and the Silvester legend were remarkable because Dudo was portraying Rollo in the same image as Constantine. This was not the first time this was done. Gregory of Tours wrote the conversion process of Clovis, first Christian of the Franks. Clovis had gained leprosy and after a divine victory against Alamanni. After his victory he was baptized, his leprosy was washed away and he was, “[l]ike a new Constantine.”<sup>152</sup> Dudo was making Rollo in the image of two of the most important Christian secular figures in western Christian history.

Dudo created a new concept in the new line. The birds of different colors and origins represented the many different people that came to form the unique Norman identity. These peoples included; Norse, Franks, Bretons and Saxons. The red left wings were shields, denoting they were of the warrior class and the carrying of sticks represented Normans rebuilding the church under the leadership of the Ducal Dynasty. Dudo was demonstrating that the Ducal Dynasty was not only anointed by God through the visions, but was to be a unique culture that worked together to build the church and culture. This vision was a representation of the reign of

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<sup>150</sup> Jacobus de Voragine. *The Golden Legend*. 64.

<sup>151</sup> Jacobus de Voragine. *The Golden Legend*. 65.

<sup>152</sup> Gregory of Tours. *History of the Franks*. 144.

Richard I and II, both men asserted their dominance over different peoples in order to bring about organized leadership within Normandy.

Dudo wanted to show the reader that Rollo was making progress to becoming Christian. Rollo acted piously by respecting church land, he had visions from god, and he also even prayed to god in times of extreme danger. Rollo set sail for Francia, but got caught in a storm. Instead of praying to pagan gods, he prayed to God for divine help, showing that he believed in Christ. As a sign that God was listening, the storm dissipated long enough for Rollo to complete the journey. This episode also showed that while Rollo had the ability to defeat his enemies, the only thing that could defeat him was God. Without Gods help, Rollo would not have crossed the channel and him and his crew would have died. Rollo had almost become a Christian; his only remaining step was to be baptized.

Late into the second book Rollo was converted by Bishop Franco.<sup>153</sup> His baptism was performed on him and all of his men, “Kind Duke! Dutiful leader, patrician revered always!... Do what you now have promised, and accept the bounty of baptism.”<sup>154</sup> Then afterwards, Franco told Rollo of the patron saint, St Denis, and the history of the church. Dudo then claimed that Rollo then gave land to seven churches, representing the seven days that the newly baptized wore white garments.<sup>155</sup> Since there were very few records of Rollo, it is impossible for historians to know how enthusiastic Rollo was with his new religion. Few charters remain from Rollo’s reign, but by looking at charters from William and Richard the Fearless, it seemed that the church was

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<sup>153</sup> Eric Christiansen. *History of the Normans*. 191. There was a historical Archbishop Franco who reigned sometime between Archbishop Witto and Archbishop Gunhard in the 920’s and 930’s. Christiansen believed that Witto baptized Rollo because he has dealings with the Northmen around the time that Rollo would have settled Rouen.

<sup>154</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 50.

<sup>155</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 51. The churches included in the list were, St Mary at Rouen, St Mary at Bayeux, St Mary at Evreux, Church of Archangel Michael, Church of St Peter and St Ouen, Church of St Peter and St Aicard of Jumieges, and St Denis.

slow to recover. This could have been because Normandy was controlled by many different chieftains and the church dioceses were fractured under multiple rulers. It could have been that Rollo did not have the resources to help the church or simply did not care.<sup>156</sup> Rouen was the only diocese left in the area and was in poor state. The monasteries of St-Wandrille, Jumièges, and St-Ouen had been abandoned; the monks had left and taken the relics with them. Under the reign of Rollo the relics of St Ouen did return to Rouen. Records were sparse, but it seemed Rollo was open to the idea of rebuilding the church, albeit slowly. Monasteries slowly were founded or restored under the watch of Rollo's descendants and it was the work of the monasteries that helped convert the heavily Scandinavian areas of Normandy.<sup>157</sup> It was under the reign of Richard the Fearless and his son Richard II that the Norman Church was able to rebuild and eventually flourish.<sup>158</sup> This was in part because the Norman family began taking positions in the church. Richard II's brother Robert would become Archbishop of Rouen in 989 until 1037.<sup>159</sup>

Another reason to suspect Dudo's accounts of Rollo giving land to the church in 911 was because Rollo did not have much land himself to give. By the time of his death, the additions of land were gained through the constant fighting in the 920's with other chieftains and neighbors. These chieftains and their men were a major factor in the health of the church. The Vikings who had settled around Normandy converted to Christianity within a generation or so. Even though they identified themselves as Christians, this does not mean that they were good Christians. In

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<sup>156</sup> Webber. *The Evolution of Norman Identity*. 46. Roughly a contemporary of Dudo, Adhemar of Chabannes, wrote a small story that upon Rollo's death bed, he sacrificed human captives to pagan gods and also gave a large amount of gold to the church. Since Adhemar was writing 100 years after Rollo's death his account should not be trusted. It does show that some Franks still thought the Normans came from wicked pagans who attempted to please multiple religions to increase their chance of receiving a fortuitous afterlife.

<sup>157</sup> Richard Fletcher. *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity*. (New York: Henry and Holt Company, 1997), 389-390. The monastery at Fecamp was located in a region that had seen heavy Scandinavian colonization. But by 990 it had at least 12 churches and continued to grow in the next century.

<sup>158</sup> Douglas. *William the Conqueror*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964. 105-110

<sup>159</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 11-12, 30.



914, the archbishop of Rouen, Guy, was sent a history handbook on the conversions of pagans from Pope John X.<sup>160</sup> It was unrealistic to assume that new converts knew how to be Christian; local traditions and feast days would need to be learned along with other practices and it was the job of the local church to guide new converts.<sup>161</sup> With the lack of the church authority in the area, it was a tall task for the Archbishop to facilitate all of the needs of the new converts in addition to his daily tasks.

To continue Rollo's image as a great ruler, Dudo included two stories featuring Rollo as a lawmaker. The first was a story about a peasant couple who tried to trick Rollo into paying for a plow after they reported it stolen. When Rollo found out that the peasants lied about the theft he had them publicly hung as an example. The second story involved two Frankish knights from Charles the Simple's court who visited Gisle. The knights did not go to see Rollo because they thought that he was an unworthy lord who was unable to consummate his marriage with Gisle. Rollo went into a rage and had the two knights publicly executed.<sup>162</sup> The second story may have been yet another method that Dudo used to show that the Normans and Franks were different. The knights were Frankish and thought little of Rollo and meant to belittle him not fearing his rebuke. Both of these stories show that Rollo was a harsh but fair ruler. He would not tolerate crime of any sort, nor insult to himself or his right to rule. Both of these stories are just that, stories. However, by making Rollo a lawful ruler, the Norman line seemed more prestigious to contemporaries in the 1020's.

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<sup>160</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 11-12. The hand book consisted of, "23 texts ranging from the conversion of St Paul, the emperor Constantine, and the Frankish king, Clovis, to advice given by popes Gregory the Great and Leo I, St Augustine, and St Ambrose."

<sup>161</sup> Lifshitz. *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*. 121.

<sup>162</sup> Dudo of St Quentin. *History of the Normans*. 53.

In old age the elderly Viking did not have the spirit to rule and gave control to his son, William Longsword, up to five years before he died. Contemporary sources show that Rollo died between 928 and 933. Flodoard stated that after Charles the Simple was released by Heribert in 927, soon after William swore fealty to Charles the Simple, “Charles and Heribert, sought a meeting with the Northmen at the *castellum* of Eu, and there Rollo’s son committed himself to Charles and affirmed his friendship with Heribert.”<sup>163</sup> The last mention of Rollo was in 928. After 928, William was the leader of the Normans and threw himself into the tumultuous politics of the 930’s. Dudo offered very little information for the late 910’s and 920’s. We know from Flodoard that this was a time of heavy fighting and complicated Frankish power structures. In 923 Charles the Simple was captured by Count Heribert after King Raoul was elected by the Franks.<sup>164</sup> Charles would spend most of the rest of his life in captivity. Charles capture put Rollo into a precarious position since his liege was out of power. King Raoul invaded the Norse territory and the local Norse eventually agreed to a peace with Count Heribert.<sup>165</sup> The constant shifting of the power dynamics resulted in continuous fighting as Rollo and William worked to remain in control of Rouen.

Dudo’s history of the Normans was ultimately a representation of the state of the Normandy when he was writing in the 1010’s and 1020’s. The purpose and tone of the history was to validate the rule of Richard II, especially in Brittany.<sup>166</sup> The constant favor of the Church throughout Dudo’s history also represented Richard II’s treatment of the Church. William of Jumièges wrote very highly of Richard II’s donations and treatment of the Norman Church.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard*. 17.

<sup>164</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard*. 8.

<sup>165</sup> Flodoard. *The Annals of Flodoard*. 9.

<sup>166</sup> For a proper understanding of Norman and Breton politics throughout the early Norman Dukes, see Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*.

<sup>167</sup> Bates. *Normandy Before 1066*. 65

These reasons only add to why Dudo's history cannot be relied upon for historical purposes. It is very difficult to tease out the truth from myth. However, his work is important for understanding how Christians came to terms with a pagan past. By making Rollo Christian all but in name before his conversion, Dudo was validating his right to rule. He attributed the Viking raids and successes in the late 880's and 890's with Rollo but ignored his struggles in the 920's to inflate the combat prowess of the early Normans. Even the title he gave Rollo, Duke, was an inflation to build support for Richard II and his heirs.

## Chapter 3

### The Anonymous Chronicles and the Rus

The origins of medieval Russia are steeped in myth and folklore like many other areas that the Scandinavians came to invade and settle. Like most of the areas that Vikings settled, there was no one to chronicle the events and how they took place. With the settlement of Russia, historians have had to rely on archeology and the RPC. The RPC was written by Eastern Orthodox monks in the early twelfth century. Modern historians originally thought that the text was written by a monk named Nestor at the historic Crypt Monastery in Kiev and was called *Nestor's Chronicle*. However, there is evidence that Nestor was only one of several monks who wrote down the chronicle, so it has since been changed to *The Russian Primary Chronicle* to reflect this discovery.<sup>168</sup> Multiple copies of the RPC have been discovered; the two most important texts were the Laurentian and Hypatian.<sup>169</sup> Early medieval Russian history has been a difficult subject for Russian historians because the RPC was written several hundred years after the settlement and establishment of the Rus.

#### RPC and its Patron

Historians have also asked the question as to why the RPC was written when it was. Alexander Rukavishnikov discussed in length the connection between Sylvester, one of the writers of the RPC, and Vladimir Monomakh, the reigning monarch at the time when the

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<sup>168</sup> RPC. 4. The RPC was completed sometime around 1110-1116. The monk Nestor was attributed with the creation of the chronicle in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, but historians have come to question Nestor's part. In the Laurentian copy of the text, Sylvester who was the prior of St Michael's, wrote that he compiled the text in 1116. Without further evidence it is impossible to know who the original author was, if there was one.

<sup>169</sup> RPC. 4. The Laurentian text, so called because it was copied between January 14 and March 20, 1377, by a monk named Lawrence. The exact location of where the Laurentian text was copied is unknown but it was copied early 1377 for Prince Dmitriy Kinstantinovich of Suzdal. The Hypatian text was copied sometime in the middle fifteenth century at the monastery of Hypatian at Kostroma. These two texts are the oldest copies and the most complete. The Laurentian is the preferred copy of the RPC by historians because it was copied less than 200 years after the RPC was written and has passages that do not appear in any other versions of the text.

chronicle was finished.<sup>170</sup> Vladimir Monomakh reigned from 1113-1125 and had marriage ties to some of the most powerful families in Europe including the Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI and the last Anglo-Saxon king Harold.<sup>171</sup> He and his sons controlled the majority of the Rus lands including the important trade route along the Dnieper that connected the Baltic and Constantinople. Like Dudo of St Quentin and the Norman dynasty, Sylvester was showing the strong line of the Rurikid dynasty. Vladimir, using the RPC, could trace his family lineage all the way back to Rurik, the founder of the Kievan Rus.<sup>172</sup> As many western historians have demonstrated, the eleventh and twelfth centuries were a time when nobles became increasingly interested in documenting their genealogy.<sup>173</sup> Rukavishnikov argued that Vladimir Monomakh was presenting a genealogy to document the history of his family. The audience for the RPC would have most likely been; other members of the Rurikid dynasty, the Slavonic Church, and rival princes. The RPC was used as a tool to show that Vladimir Monomakh was not only a powerful ruler, but that he had come from the most powerful Russian family in all of the Rus territories.

### **Brief Historiography**

The historiography of the RPC over the last 300 years has been marred with political turmoil and nationalist propaganda regarding the connection between the Kievan Rus and Scandinavia. Eastern and western historians have fought bitterly over the Scandinavian importance of the Rus. The so called Normanist theory began in 1749 when Gerhard Friedrich

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<sup>170</sup> Rukavishnikov. *The Bygone Years*. 58.

<sup>171</sup> Rukavishnikov. *The Bygone Years*. 59.

<sup>172</sup> Rukavishnikov. *The Bygone Years*. 70.

<sup>173</sup> There have been many historians who have published on the importance of genealogies in western Europe during the tenth through twelfth centuries. Several notable historians include; Duby. *The Chivalrous Society*. Constance Bouchard. "Consanguinity and Noble Marriages in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries." *Speculum* 56, (1981) 268-87. Southern. *The Making of the Middle Ages*. 74-117.

Muller gave a speech and announced that he thought that the Rus had been established by Northmen, or Normans.<sup>174</sup> The Normanist and Anti-Normanists continued to debate with one another into the twentieth century.<sup>175</sup> Russian patriotism and nationalism led to a refusal of the Scandinavian part in the history of early Russia, while western historians argued that there was irrefutable proof of Scandinavian settlement. It has only been since the collapse of the USSR that eastern and western historians have begun to collaborate on exploring Rus origins together. Where modern scholarship has been lacking, archeology has helped fill in missing pieces of the puzzle. There is still much to be done, but thanks to historians like Thomas S. Noonan and his painstakingly hard work of tracking the numismatic evidence of treasure hoards, historians have begun to piece together a picture.<sup>176</sup>

## The Sources

Contemporary primary sources have been useful, mostly by Ibn Fadlan and other Muslim explorers.<sup>177</sup> But these sources do not shed light on Rus government and political life.<sup>178</sup> Greek sources offer a little more information since they were on the receiving end of several large scale raids and attacks, but more so because of the trade routes that led up the Dnieper and into the

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<sup>174</sup> Pritsak. *The Origin of Rus*. 3. Muller was not able to finish his speech as the crowd became angry. Muller eventually changed his topic of interests because he became the target of a special committee sanctioned by the empress to see if he was an enemy of the state.

<sup>175</sup> Rybakov. *Kievan Rus*. 14, 45. An example of the anti-Normanist debate and its vitality even in the 1980s was Boris Rybakov. In his book *Kievan Rus*, Rybakov ignored the Normanist evidence because he argued that Norse ships could be shot at from the coast line and the Dnieper cataracts stopped any river travel. Rybakov and other Anti-normanists believed that there was already a powerful state in Kiev and he even compared the Kievan Rus to the Carolingian and Byzantine Empires. The Normanists argument has slowly become the formal stance by historians. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin set the bar with their book *The Emergence of Rus*. The evidence for the Scandinavian impact upon the early Rus has become too strong to argue against.

<sup>176</sup> Thomas S. Noonan. *The Islamic World, Russia and the Vikings: 750-900: the Numismatic Evidence*.

<sup>177</sup> Ibn Fadlan. *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travelers in the Far North*. Trans. Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone. (New York: Penguin Books, 2012) Other Muslim sources include Abu Hamid, Ibn Khurradadhibih, Ibn al-Faqih, Ibn Rusta, Mas'udi, Miskawayh, Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, and Marwazi.

<sup>178</sup> Ibn Fadlan. *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness*. 49-55. Ibn Fadlan gave the most intricate account of the Volga Rus. He witnessed the burial of a powerful chieftain, including the sacrifice of a slave girl and the burning of a longship.

Baltic.<sup>179</sup> Slaves, fur, amber and ivory were major imports to Constantinople, and the Scandinavians became so common that the emperors eventually formed the Varangian Guard.<sup>180</sup> The Varangian Guard was made up of Viking, Slavic and eventually English adventurers who fought for the emperor. None of the Greek sources offer any significant insight into the Rus world, but they can be used to cross check certain large events between the Rus and Byzantines, like the conversion of Vladimir. Catholic authors such as Luidprand of Cremona did give some information on Igor and his attack on Constantinople, but not on the political structure or any other Rus rulers other than Igor. The last types of sources that help historians identify a Scandinavian presence in Rus territory were Rune stones.

While Scandinavians did have a form of written language through the use of runes, there were no large volumes ever created.<sup>181</sup> The most practical application of runes was on large stones or small objects such as sticks, combs and even swords. Rune stones can be found in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Isle of Man and Faroe Islands. The majority of rune stones have been found in Sweden, especially on the island of Gotland. Stones were usually dedicated to a deceased family member and sometimes gave a short synopsis of where they died and what they

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<sup>179</sup> Photius. *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*. Trans. Cyril Mango. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958) Constantine Porphyrogenetos. *The Book of Ceremonies*. Trans. Ann Moffat and Maxeme Tall. (Virginia: Australian National University Press, 2012) Constantine Porphyrogenitus's *De Administrando Imperio*. Trans. Romilly Heald James Jenkins. (London: Athlon Press, 1962) Greek sources include Leo the deacon, Constantine Porphyrogenitus's *De Administrando Imperio* and *The Book of Ceremonies* and the Patriarch of Constantinople Photius. Greek sources spend very little time discussing their Northern neighbors. The Rus were a small threat on the larger scale of the eastern Mediterranean. The Byzantines were preoccupied with stopping the advance of Muslim powers across the Mediterranean.

<sup>180</sup> Warren Treadgold. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 518. The Varangian Guard was established by Basil II in 988. The creation of the Varangian guard followed the alliance between Basil II and Vladimir the Great. Vladimir was converted to East Orthodox Christianity and received the sister of Basil II, Anna, in marriage. The Varangian Guard was significant in Basil's subjugation Bardas Phocas and his forces. Luidprand of Cremona. *The Complete Works*. Trans. Paolo Squatriti. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 256. Luidprand of Cremona mentioned that there were two Russian ships in the Byzantine fleet upon his return to Italy in 972. These were likely Varangian mercenaries that were in service to the Emperor before the founding of the Varangian guard.

<sup>181</sup> R.I. Page. *Runes*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) The runic language was called Futhark runes, named after the first six letters in the alphabet. Scandinavian Futhark runes can be put in two categories; young Futhark and old Futhark. Most Rune stones use young Futhark runes, while old Futhark is used on small items.

were doing. A number of rune stones in Sweden not only mention raiding and trading expeditions to the east, but some also mention the eastern way, i.e. the trade route to Constantinople, the city of Novgorod, Kiev and Old Ladoga. There have been no rune stones found in Russia or the eastern Baltic, however, there have been runic inscriptions found on sticks.<sup>182</sup> Runic inscriptions upon items and stones prove that there was trade between Scandinavia and Constantinople, which was never in doubt, what the runes don't tell historians was of a Scandinavian political center in Russia.<sup>183</sup>

### **The Beginning of the Rurik Dynasty**

While the RPC falls short of giving historians an objective history of the early Russians, it has largely been ignored for other values; how Christian writers saw their Scandinavian pagan past and how they came to terms with it. There were six rulers before Vladimir took the throne and only one of them had been Christian. What methods and stories did Nestor, Sylvester and the other chroniclers use to portray the Scandinavians transition into Russian princes?

The RPC attributes the arrival of Varangians to the year 852 because that was when they were first mentioned in the Greek texts.<sup>184</sup> The Vikings who were mentioned in the Greek texts

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<sup>182</sup> Pritsak. *The Origin of Rus*: 316. Around the area of old Ladoga a stick was found with runes dating to the first half of the ninth century. Ibn Fadlan mentioned in his text that after the dead Viking chieftain was burned, a stick with runes was placed upon the burial mound. Scandinavians in the eastern Baltic and Russia may have used rune sticks instead of stones because stones were expensive. If rune sticks were used than one could hope that there are more out there to be discovered.

<sup>183</sup> For a more complete understanding of the significance of runes and specifically the stones that mention the eastern lands, see Pritsak. *The Origin of Rus*.

<sup>184</sup> *RPC*. 30. Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor note that the writers of the RPC made a dating mistake. Michael III began his reign in 842, not 852. RPC seemed to be using the writings of Nicephorus I and Georgius Hamartolus. As for the Rus raid, Warren Treadgold explored the first contact between Byzantines and the Rus. His research points to a raid made by the Rus in northern Anatolia sometime around 818. Treadgold. *A History of Byzantine State and Society*. 433. The Vikings are called Varangians and should be thought of as Scandinavians from Sweden and Gotland. Warren Treadgold. "Three Byzantine Provinces and the First Contacts with the Rus." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*: Volume 12, (1988) Using the *Life of Saint George Amastris* Treadgold found that there was a Rus raid on northern Anatolia sometime around 820. According to the Saints life the Rus were already known in the area, showing that they had at least been traders but possibly raiding in the area.



could have been operating within Slavic territories for some time before they traveled south and began interacting with the Byzantines.<sup>185</sup> However, there is no way to know exactly when the Vikings began exploring the eastern Baltic and beyond. According to the RPC in the year 859, the Vikings imposed a tribute on several local Slavic tribes but in 860 were forced to leave. Once the Vikings were gone the Slavic tribes began fighting amongst each other and it was decided that the order that came with the occupation of the Vikings was worth the tribute. The Chuds, Slavs, Krivichians, and Ves approached a group of Vikings that the RPC specifically noted as being “Varangian Russes,” and, “then said to the people of Rus, ‘Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us.’ Thus they selected three brothers, with their kinsfolk, who took with them all the Russes and migrated.”<sup>186</sup> There has been much controversy over the meaning of Rus between historians.<sup>187</sup> It is widely agreed that Rus meant only the ruling class and eventually came to describe Slavs as the ruling Scandinavians assimilated into the local Slavic culture.<sup>188</sup> The leading theory of the origins of the word Rus was that it was derived from Finnish appellation of raiders and colonists from Sweden.<sup>189</sup> It is safe to say that Rus meant raiders from Sweden and Gotland and the word was spread by Finnish and Slavic communication and trade.

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<sup>185</sup> Franklin and Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus*. 7. There is evidence that Byzantines were trading fur and amber that originated from Sweden and the Baltic in the sixth and seventh century. There was not any evidence that the Swedes were making the trek themselves, just that good originating from Sweden were finding their way into Byzantine markets. Jordanes. *Romana et Getica*, III.21. Edit. Theodor Mommsen. (Berolini, 1882. MGH Auctores Antiquissimi.)

<sup>186</sup> RPC. 59.

<sup>187</sup> Mas’udi. *Ibn Fadlan and the land of Darkness*. 143. Mas’udi thought that the Majus (Danes) and the Rus were the same people who carried out an attack on Andalus. Mas’udi was demonstrating that the Rus and Danes were a similar enough people who conducted large naval expeditions in a Scandinavian Viking style.

<sup>188</sup> Ibrahim ibn Ya’qub. *Ibn Fadlan and the land of Darkness*. 164. Ya’qub makes a difference between Rus and Slavs. “The city of Prague is built from stone and lime. The Rus and Saqaliba go there from Cracow.”

<sup>189</sup> RPC. 49.

The RPC named three Rus' who responded to the Slavic pleas: Rurik, who settled in Novgorod, and his brothers, Sineus at Beloozero, and Truvor in Izborsk.<sup>190</sup> The story of the Slavs who asked the Rus to rule over them by invitation was obviously an embellishment of the truth.<sup>191</sup> It is much more likely that as Swedish Vikings settled in the Baltic, they moved farther east and eventually took over these three areas.<sup>192</sup> The Chroniclers needed a story that made the original Slavic inhabitants look stronger by giving them the agency of fighting off the Vikings, only to ask them to return. It should be noted that at this time all of the tribes that would eventually be settled by the Rus were also pagan.<sup>193</sup> Archeological evidence supports the settlement of the Vikings in these areas. The most prominent settlement was at Lake Ladoga and has been a treasure trove for archeologists.<sup>194</sup> Many of the burial sites can be dated to the mid

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<sup>190</sup> Franklin and Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus*. 39. Archeological finds such as Norse swords and brooches along with other jewelry and artifacts support the settlement and expansion of the three areas that Rurik and his brothers supposedly settled. The RPC could have been following an oral tradition of the settlement of Scandinavian traders along the northern Dnieper and Volga.

<sup>191</sup> Florin Curta. *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500-700*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109. The RPC tale of inviting foreigners into power mirrors an earlier tale from another Slavic group. In the seventh century, the Frankish Chronicler Fredegar, told of the Wends who asked a Frankish merchant named Samo to rule over them. Samo ruled for around 35 years and was able to maintain Wendish independence against Franks and Avars. It is possible that the story of Samo helped inspire the chroniclers of the RPC or that there was a Slavic oral tradition for foreign rulers ruling over a Slavic people and assisting them in matters of state.

<sup>192</sup> Franklin and Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus*. 9. Archeology has shown that there was Scandinavian colonization happening in the east Baltic. Artifacts have been found in southern Finland, Grobin and the Kurland coast and show trade connection from the sixth to eighth centuries. Valk. *The Vikings and the Eastern Baltic*. 488. Coin hoards appear in Latvia and Estonia mid ninth century and the end sometime in the late eleventh century.

<sup>193</sup> Franklin and Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus*. 4-5, 46. P.M. Barford. *The Early Slavs: Culture and Society in Early Medieval Eastern Europe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001) 102. Evidence shows that the inhabitants of the area around Novgorod in the north was not actually inhabited by Slavs but by Finno-Ugrians. Evidence shows that the Slavs slowly migrated north through the tenth and eleventh century and by 1100 were probably still a minority. Since the RPC was written by a Slav for a Slavic monarch, it was the prerogative of the chroniclers to paint the northern tribes as Slavic and not Finno-Ugrian.

<sup>194</sup> Thomas S. Noonan. "Scandinavians in European Russia." In *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, ed. Peter Sawyer. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 143. Franklin and Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus*. 14-17, 56. Along with artifacts that have been found in Staraja Ladoga, there has been evidence of massive fires sometime in the mid 800's. The fires could have been from a natural disaster but evidence of fire damage spanned large areas of the settlement that demonstrates evidence of a raid. The raiders would have likely have been other Scandinavians who were attacking the settlement because of its trade proximity as a trading town to the south east. Fjodor Androshchuk. "The Vikings in the East." In *The Viking World*. ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 520. Evidence of Scandinavian men and women living around Lake Ladoga since the 600s. There have two types of building remains discovered in the Lake Ladoga area that can be dated to around the year 800. The first building type was a large building with a central fire pit. This style was similar to Scandinavian designs.

ninth century and would seem to show that there was indeed Scandinavian activity in the area.<sup>195</sup> However, there was another piece of textual evidence to support that the Vikings had been operating in the area and were even calling themselves *Rhos*.

*The Annals of St Bertin* give an account of several Vikings came to Louis the Pious along with an embassy from Constantinople in 839. When it became known that there were two Scandinavians in the company of Greeks, Louis had the two men detained because he thought they might be spies for the Swedes who had been a constant threat. Louis eventually released the two men so that they could return to Sweden.<sup>196</sup> This small episode was extremely important because it gave several key pieces of information. First, the Scandinavians described themselves as *Rhos* and also claimed that they were from the area of Sweden. Second, the two men were a part of an embassy sent from Constantinople, meaning that not only had Vikings explored the rivers leading inland, but they had established themselves in Constantinople. The RPC's claim that the Varangians arrived in 852 was wrong. Historians such as Franklin, Shepard, Noonan and Treadgold have demonstrated through a combination of archeological evidence and Byzantines

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The other building type was smaller structure with a fire pit in the corner. This building style has been seen in many Slavic areas. The two building types demonstrate Scandinavians and Slavs living together.

<sup>195</sup> Franklin and Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus*. 122. Burial evidence around the north and mid Dnieper shows similarities with burial graves in the trading town of Birka in Sweden. Evidence of men with arm rings, weapons, weights and measures and animals such as horses demonstrate a warrior class. The graves themselves had the body or bodies placed in a wooden structure, such as a boat, and burned. Earth was then moved on top of the ashes to create a mound.

<sup>196</sup> *The Annals of St Bertin*. Trans. Janet Nelson. (New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 44. "he also sent with the envoys some men who said they – meaning their while people - were called Russians and had been sent to him by their king whose name was the Khagan for the sake of friendship, so they claimed. Theophilus requested in his letter that the emperor in his goodness might grant them safe conducts to travel through his empire and any help or practical assistance they needed to return home, for the route by which they had reached Constantinople had taken them through primitive tribes that were very fierce and savage and Theophilus did not wish them to return that way in case some disaster befell them. When the emperor investigated more closely the reason for their coming here, he discovered that they belonged to the people of the Swedes. He suspected that they had really been sent as spies to this kingdom of ours rather than as seekers of our friendship, so he decided to keep them with him until he could find out for certain whether or not they had come in good faith." Vasiliev. *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860*. 10. Vasiliev speculates that the reason the king of the Rus was called the Khagan was that the Rus had driven the Khazars out of Kiev and had taken the title of Khagan for purposes of prestige.

sources that Scandinavian goods had been making their way to eastern markets and that a people known as the Rus had been conducting raids around the Black Sea.

The RPC gives constant reminders that Rurik and his descendants were of Scandinavian origin and parts of the Rus culture continued to have Scandinavian elements.<sup>197</sup> The most constant reminder was that Varangians were mentioned frequently and aided some of the Rus rulers. Askold and Dir with, ‘many Varangians,’ settled farther down the Dnieper at the same time that Rurik and his brother were settling around Novgorod.<sup>198</sup> Askold and Dir were eventually killed by the successor of Rurik, Oleg, who conquered Askold and Dir’s lands with the aid of Varangians.<sup>199</sup> In 904 Oleg used Varangian allies to attack Greek settlements and his heir Igor also called in Varangian allies to attack the Greeks in 944.<sup>200</sup> There so many Varangians in Rus lands under the reign of Igor that when Igor agreed to the 911 treaty with the Byzantines, Christian Varangians were said to take oaths in the church of St Elias.<sup>201</sup> This was the first time Christians were mentioned in the chronicle other than the Byzantines. It would seem that the chroniclers were setting precedence for the eventual conversion of the Rus under Vladimir by mentioning that the Varangians were Christians instead of any other Slavic tribe. By making the Varangians Christians, the chroniclers were painting the foreign subjugator in a positive light. They had brought order under the leadership of Rurik and now they were slowly bringing the word of God into the lives of the locals and had even built a parish church. The

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<sup>197</sup> Ibn Rusta. *Ibn Fadlan and the Lands of Darkness*. 124-127. Ibn Rusta noted that the Rus and the Slavs were a different people. They had different religions and funeral practice, they looked and dressed differently, they conducted themselves in warfare differently, and they live in different places. Constantine VII. *De Administrando Imperio*. 61. Constantine notes the difference between Slavonic and Rus names for areas of the Dnieper cataracts. The *De Administrando Imperio* was written between 948 and 952, showing that even after over hundred years of Scandinavian activity in the Rus area, there was a linguistic difference between the Rus and other Slavic peoples.

<sup>198</sup> RPC. 60. Askold and Dir remained in the city, and after gathering together many Varangians, they established their dominion over the country of the Polyanians at the same time that Rurik was ruling over Novgorod.”

<sup>199</sup> RPC. 60-61. “Oleg set forth, taking with him many warriors from among the Varangians...”

<sup>200</sup> RPC. 72. “After collecting many warriors among the Varangians...”

<sup>201</sup> RPC. 77. “while the Christian Russes took oath in the church of St Elias... This was in fact, a parish church, since many of the Varangians were Christians.”

church showed that these Varangians were not just traders or adventurers moving through Kiev, but had settled in the area and brought their religious beliefs with them.

The most notable use of Varangians was by Vladimir. When his brother Yaropolk killed their brother Oleg by accident in 977, Vladimir fled Rus to the land of the Varangians. He then hired a large host of them and returned to kill his brother and take the Rus throne. The Varangians that accompanied Vladimir then continued to Constantinople looking for more work. The use of Varangians by the Rus rulers was constant because the Varangians and Rus shared cultural ties. Scandinavian adventures and traders had to travel through Rus territory to get to Constantinople so they would have had a constant presence in the area.<sup>202</sup> Whenever the Rus needed extra men for large scale military activity, they would not only call on the local tribes but seek the aid of their Viking kin. In the case of Vladimir, Scandinavia even offered a place of refuge from his brother and supplied men who were willing to fight with him. Vladimir's connections to the west continued because the future king of Norway, St Olaf, sought refuge in Rus when he fled Norway.<sup>203</sup>

### **Dialectology of the Early Rus**

Another way that the Scandinavian element was shown by the chroniclers was through the use of names. While many names had a slight Slavic form to them, like Igor, they were similar to more traditional Scandinavian names, and it should be questioned what form of the name was actually used. With the example of Igor, the Norse equivalent was Inghari; Ruirik was

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<sup>202</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg. *The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*. 384. Even after the death of Vladimir the eastern trade routes were heavily used by Scandinavians. In 1018 the chronicles mentioned that in Kiev, "the city gains its strength from fugitive serfs who converge on this place from everywhere, but especially from areas overrun by fast moving Danes."

<sup>203</sup> Snorre Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. 302, 514-515. Harald Hardrada passed through Novgorod on his way to Constantinople. He created an agreement with King Jarisleiv that Harald would send and store all of his wealth that he won in the east at Novgorod. When Harald returned from the Varangian guard he stopped in Novgorod and claimed his wealth and married Jarisleivs daughter, Elizabeth, before returning to claim the throne of Norway.

also a Slavic version of a Norse name, HrorikR.<sup>204</sup> Until Svyatoslav, all of the Rus rulers had Norse names, including the wife of Igor and mother of Svyatoslav, Olga, or Helga. The reason for the Slavic form of these names was because after several hundred years of recounting the local history, the names had slowly changed to become Slavic by the time the chroniclers began their work. Other contemporary figures had Norse names. In 912 when Oleg swore oaths to the Emperor Leo and Alexander, there were fifteen men who also swore oaths with Oleg, all of whom had Scandinavian names.<sup>205</sup> Jonathan Shepard speculated that one of the reasons that Norse names dwindled in Rus records was the defeat of Svyatoslav. Svyatoslav had been paid by The Byzantine Emperor Nikephoros to attack the Bulgarians in 969.<sup>206</sup> Svyatoslav was a little too good at defeating the Bulgarians and the Emperor John Tzimisce, fearing a new Rus strength in the north, decided to campaign against Svyatoslav in 971. After months of fierce fighting, Svyatoslav was finally defeated and retreated north where he was killed by Pechenegs.<sup>207</sup> Shepard thought that with the loss of so many of Svyatoslav's men and Svyatoslav himself, that there was a power vacuum left by the Norse warrior elite. More traveling Varangians could take the new positions but it was likely that the vacuum was filled by a new Slavic warrior class.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Jonathan Shepard. *The Origins of the Rus*. Edited Maureen Perrie. *The Cambridge History of Russia*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 49. Franklin and Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus*. 116. Oleg was the Slavic form of Helgi. Chadwick. *The Beginnings of Russian History*. 19. Rurik's brothers names were Sineus and Truvor, the Slavic forms of Signjotr and Thorvarthr.

<sup>205</sup> *RPC*. 65. "Karl, Ingjald, Farulf, Vermond, Hrollaf, Gunnar, Harold, Karni, Frithleif, Hroarr, Angantyr, Throand, Leithulf, Fast, and Steinvith, are sent by Oleg."

<sup>206</sup> Leo the Deacon. *History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine military Expansion in the Tenth Century*. Trans. Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan. (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), 128.

<sup>207</sup> Leo the Deacon. *History of Leo the Deacon*. 198-200. Leo says that when Svyatoslav finally called for a peace treaty he only had "twenty-two thousand in number, who out of the sixty thousand men in the Rus army, had escaped death." Leo's numbers were probably exaggerated but the point comes across that Svyatoslav suffered a massive defeat. Treadgold. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. 508-509.

<sup>208</sup> Jonathan Shepard. "The Viking Rus and Byzantium." Edit. Stefan Brink and Neil Price. *The Viking World*. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 509.

Unlike the Rus who inhabited the area, places don't seem to be named in a Norse fashion.<sup>209</sup> This could mean that the Scandinavian did not establish new urban areas and only took Slavic towns. Or, Scandinavian names of towns changed over time until they no longer resembled the original Norse, somewhat like the names of Rurik and Igor. This seems less likely since naming conventions in other areas settled by Norse keep their Norse qualities, like those around York and East Anglia. The most likely answer for the lack of Norse place names was that the Scandinavians who settled in the area were not numerous enough to create new towns. Instead they capitalized on the pre-existing urban centers like Novgorod and Kiev.<sup>210</sup>

### **Paganism in the RPC**

Other than political events the RPC focus was that of religion. The RPC differs from other sources because it not only goes into the details of Christian lives and practices, but of pagan practices as well. Both the indigenous Slavic population and the Scandinavian settlers were pagan. The practice of paganism was not mentioned until Oleg, the successor of Rurik. After Oleg had attacked Constantinople, using several inventive techniques, Oleg and the Emperors Leo and Alexander agreed to a peace treaty.<sup>211</sup> Oleg and his men swore "pagan oaths" to uphold the treaty, but the RPC went a step further and described the gods of the Rus and that, "According to the religion of the Russes, the latter swore by their weapons and by their god

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<sup>209</sup> Franklin and Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus*. 49. Urban centers like Staraiia Ladoga, Gorosishche, Kiev and others already existed before Norse traders began settling. Archeological evidence shows agrarian societies that were self-sufficient sprinkled along the Dnieper and Volga.

<sup>210</sup> Chadwick. *The Beginnings of Russian History*. 12-13, 18. Scandinavians very rarely settled in virgin territory. They often lacked the numbers to create self-sufficient settlements. Instead they often took over the position of ruling class as seen in the Danegeld region of England and the Duchy of Normandy in France. Kiev's origin was shrouded in mystery. Supposedly it was founded by three Polian brothers we came to the hill and built the city, naming it after the eldest brother Kiy.

<sup>211</sup> *RPC*. 64. Oleg, in his attempts of taking Constantinople, supposedly put wheels on his ships and sailed out of the forests into the Greek battle lines. While humorous, this episode was surely a myth.

Perun, as well as by Volos, the god of cattle, and thus confirmed the treaty.”<sup>212</sup> There was no other information on these gods and this passage showed that the Scandinavians had begun to mix their gods with the local gods. It is interesting that the RPC mentioned only pagan Slavic gods and not Norse gods when it had already acknowledged other impacts that the Scandinavian ruling class had. Archeological evidence showed that idols, common in Scandinavia, were still common into the mid and late tenth century.<sup>213</sup> The RPC most likely only mentioned the Slavic pagan gods because Slavic priest would be more familiar with local pagan gods instead of foreign pagan gods. When Oleg returned to Kiev, the people called Oleg, “‘the Sage,’ for they were but pagans, and therefore ignorant.”<sup>214</sup> The chroniclers’ treatment of the pagan practices was interesting because the chroniclers were obviously trying to present the pagan ancestors as strong and powerful men who could mount attacks on Constantinople, but acknowledged their heathenism and only scolded them a little. The chroniclers could have easily not included either of these instances and ignored the pagan practices, but they chose to include them.

In 911, Oleg sent his fifteen chieftains to Emperor Leo to confirm the previously sworn treaty and add more clauses to the treaty to allow trading. While the envoys were in the city of Constantinople, the Emperor showed the pagan chieftains all of the wealth and splendors of the church, including,

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<sup>212</sup> *RPC*. 65.

<sup>213</sup> Shepard. *The Viking Rus and Byzantium*. 503. A number of Thor hammer pendants and idols have been discovered across Russia. In Chernigov a notable was buried in a massive burial mound and had a figurine of Thor. In Gnezdovo a pendants of Valkyries were found. The Wealthier classes of the Rus seemed to hold the practice of wearing pendants in a similar fashion to the Scandinavian mainland.

<sup>214</sup> *RPC*. 65.



“the beauties of the churches, the golden palace, and the riches contained therein... together with the relics of our Lord’s Passion: the crown, the nails, and the purple robe, as well as the bones of the saints. They also instructed the Russes in their faith, and expounded to them the true belief.”<sup>215</sup>

The Emperor was trying to convert his neighbors, who had demonstrated that they could either be deadly enemies or powerful allies. Christian rulers had tried this tactic in Western Europe with mixed results. While the chiefs did not convert, episodes like this were pivotal in displaying the power of monotheistic religions.

The Rus rulers were stubborn in their pagan views. There was, however, evidence that Christianity was making an impact on the Rus. As mentioned before, When Igor swore oaths with the Greek Emperor over trading terms in 945, there were Christian Varangians. The significance of this episode was that the Varangians swore their oaths in the church of St Elias in Kiev. Christianity, in the forty years since Oleg’s oaths had made an impact on the Rus. There was enough of a need for worship that a parish church had been constructed, which meant there was also a parish priest. However, even with a growing Christian population, Igor was still very much a pagan. “In the morning, Igor summoned the envoys, and went to a hill on which there was a statue of Perun. The Russes laid down their weapons, their shields, and their gold ornaments, and Igor’ and his people took oath.”<sup>216</sup> The Christians in Kiev must still have been a minority because Igor went to the statue of Perun to swear the oaths and not St Elias.

Igor was a staunch pagan until his death at the hands of the Derevlans.<sup>217</sup> When he died later in 945, his son was too young to succeed him and Igor’s widow, Olga, became the ruler of

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<sup>215</sup> *RPC*. 69.

<sup>216</sup> *RPC*. 77.

<sup>217</sup> *RPC*. 78. Igor was killed by the Derevlans because he was trying to exact tribute from the tribe through military campaign. Igor, supposedly wanted to return to Derevlans to get more tribute after his first attack and it was when he returned that he was killed. The *RPC* is not forthcoming with information about the Derevlans other than that they

the Rus until her son, Svyatoslav, came of age. There is evidence that Olga was of Scandinavian origin, but not of noble birth.<sup>218</sup> Despite her humble background, Olga proved to be a more than competent ruler. The Derevlians wanted Olga to marry their ruler, and she responded first by burying the Derevlian envoys alive.<sup>219</sup> She then asked that the noblest men of the Derevlians should come to Kiev to hear her response to their marriage proposal. She had these men burned alive, locked in a bath house.<sup>220</sup> She then went to visit Igor's tomb, where, after she had a mound built in place of his tomb, tricked the Derevlians into getting drunk at Igor's funeral feast and then had them butchered.<sup>221</sup> Her final act of vengeance was to besiege the main city of the Derevlians and burned it down using sparrows.<sup>222</sup> Olga had shown that she would use force when needed and was an able ruler because years of peace and prosperity followed after the destruction of the Derevlians. With the lack of sources concerning the revenge of Olga, it is impossible to know if these vengeance acts were accurate or not. The vengeance of Olga does however, make Olga appear powerful. If Olga had not been so active in seeking the rebuke of the

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came from the town of Derevla. The town did not seem to thrive after their encounters with Olga because they were not mentioned again.

<sup>218</sup> Franklin and Shepard. *The Emergence of the Rus*. 112. Byzantine sources, including *De Ceremoniis*, refer to Olga by her Scandinavian name Helga. *RPC*. 235. Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor do not reveal her background of non-noble birth. The *RPC* said only, "A wife, Olga by name, was brought to him from Pskov." *RPC*. 64.

<sup>219</sup> *RPC*. 79. "This they were borne into the court of Olga, and when the men had brought the Derevlians in, they dropped them into the trench along with the boat. Olga bent over and inquired whether they found the honor to their taste. They answered that it was worse than the death of Igor'. She then commanded that they should be buried alive, and they were thus buried."

<sup>220</sup> *RPC*. 79-80. "When the Derevlians arrived, Olga commanded that a bath should be made ready, and invited them to appear before her after they had bathed. The bathhouse was then heated, and the Derevlians entered in to bathe. Olga's men closed up the bathhouse behind them, and she gave orders to set it on fire from the doors, so that the Derevlians were all burned to death."

<sup>221</sup> *RPC*. 80. "The Derevlians inquired of Olga where the retinue was which they had sent to meet her. She replied that they were following with her husband's bodyguard. When the Derevlians were drunk, she bade her followers fall upon them, and went about herself egging on her retinue to the massacre of the Derevlians. So they cut down five thousand of them."

<sup>222</sup> *RPC*. 81. "Now Olga gave each soldier in her army a pigeon or a sparrow, and ordered them to attach by a thread to each pigeon and sparrow a piece of Sulphur bound with a small piece of cloth. When night fell, Olga bade her soldiers release the pigeons and the sparrows... Thus the dove-cotes, the coops, the porches, and the haymows were set on fire... The people fled from the city, and Olga ordered her soldiers to catch them." The burning of the city with the use of Sparrows who had flaming pieces of cloth tied to their feet was used in another story. Snorre Sturlason. *Heimskringla*. 509. In the *Heimskringla*, Harold Hardrada burned down a city in Sicily using the same technique. There might be some literary connection between the Icelandic Sagas and the *RPC*, but there is no definitive proof.

Derevlians, the Rus could have possibly lost their hegemony to the Derevlians. The RPC wanted all of the Rus rulers to be strong and able to spread their influence.

### **The Transition from Paganism to Christianity**

With peace in Kiev, Olga was free to pursue diplomatic negotiations with the Byzantines. In 948 Olga personally went to Constantinople and met with Emperor Constantine, where she was exposed to the wonders of Christianity and accepted baptism. Contemporary sources were contradictory of where and when she was converted.<sup>223</sup> One of the sources was written by Constantine himself, *De Ceremoniis*. He did mention a baptism and in fact notes that Olga, or Helga in his account, had a chaplain named Gregory, hinting that she had already been baptized somewhere else or that the priest was instructing her as a catechumen.<sup>224</sup> Another Greek source, Cedrenus, said that she did receive baptism in Constantinople. Cedrenus was a contemporary of Alexius I Comnenus (reign 1081-1118), so he was not witness to Olga's trip to Constantinople.<sup>225</sup> The contemporary Ottonian Chronicler Adalbert wrote that when Helen (Olga) requested a mission from Otto, she had been baptized in Constantinople by Romanus.<sup>226</sup> Regardless of when and where Olga was converted, she had indeed converted and was the first Rus ruler to have done so. During her reign, she attempted multiple times to convert the Rus and

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<sup>223</sup> Because of the contradiction of contemporary sources, historians have debated 946, 955, or 957 for her date of conversion. Michael Featherstone. "Olga's Visit to Constantinople in *De Ceremoniis*." *Review of Byzantine Studies*: Volume 61, Issue 1, (2003) Andrzej Poppe. "Once again concerning the Baptism of Olga, Archontissa of Rus." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*: Volume 46, (1992) Featherstone argues for 957 while Poppe in his paper, *Once again concerning the Baptism of Olga, Archontissa of Rus*, argued for 955.

<sup>224</sup> Constantine VII. *De Ceremoniis*. 597. "Another banquet was held in the Chrysotriklinos and all the emissaries of the archons of Rhosia and also the men who were relatives of the archontissa and the merchants dined, and her nephew received 30 miliaresia, her eight male relatives 20 miliaresia each, the 20 emissaries 12 miliaresia each, the 43 merchants 12 miliaresia each, the priest Gregory 8 miliaresia."

<sup>225</sup> *RPC*. 239-240.

<sup>226</sup> Adalbert of Magdeburg. *History and Politics in late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicles of Regino of Prum and Adalbert of Madgeburg*. Trans. Simon MacLean. (New York: Manchester University Press, 2009) 260. "legates of Helen, queen of the Rus, who had been baptized in Constantinople under the Constantinopolitan emperor Romanus, came to the king and asked (falsely, as became clear later) that a bishop and priests be appointed to that people."

her son, but was met with pagan stubbornness.<sup>227</sup> She tried to convince her son, Svyatoslav to convert, but he refused because he feared to be mocked. The Rus were still firmly pagan, though,

“when any man wished to be baptized, he was not hindered, but only mocked. For to the infidels, the Christians faith is foolishness. They do not comprehend it, because they walk in darkness and do not see the glory of God.”<sup>228</sup>

The chroniclers rebuke the act of paganism, but still discussed it within their work. Paganism could have been left out of the RPC, but was written for a specific purpose. Before that purpose can be completely explained, the life of Vladimir needs to be explored.

As mentioned before, Vladimir fled Kiev when his brother Yaropolk killed their other brother Oleg. Vladimir returned with a large group of Varangians and defeated Yaropolk, who was murdered in Kiev.<sup>229</sup> The first thing that Vladimir did as ruler of Kiev in 980, was to,

“set up idols on the hills outside the castle with the hall: one of Perun, made of wood with a head of silver and a mustache of gold, and others of Khors, Dazh’bog, Stribog, Simar’gl, and Mokosh. The people sacrificed to them, calling them gods, and brought their sons and their daughters to sacrifice them to these

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<sup>227</sup> Donald Logan. *The Vikings in History*. (New York: Routledge, 1992), 194. *RPC*. 239. Shepard. *The Origins of the Rus*. 60. In Olga’s attempts to convert the Rus she wrote to the German Emperor Otto I to send a missionary. Otto sent Adalbert of Trier as the first Bishop of Kiev. Adalbert’s mission was short lived and he fled back to Trier for fear of the barbaric Rus, he mentioned that several of the people who had accompanied him had been killed. Adalbert of Magdeburg. *The Chronicles of Adalbert of Magdeburg*. 263. “In that same year Adalbert, who had been ordained as bishop of the Rus, returned, realizing that he could not accomplish any of the things that he had been sent to do and that he was tiring himself out in vain; some of his men were killed on the way home, and he himself only just escaped with great effort. When he came to the king he was received with love and embraced and supported like a brother with all good things and comforts by Archbishop William, beloved of God, to make up for the very troublesome pilgrimage that he had engineered for him. A letter was sent to the emperor on his behalf, and he was ordered to await the emperor’s return in the palace.” It is curious that Adalbert did not elaborate on this mission since he was the chronicler and experience the court of Rus first hand. Thietmar of Mersburg. *The Chronicle of Thietmar of Mersburg*. 108. Thietmar mentioned Adalbert’s failed mission only in passing. “he chose the monk Adalbert of Trier who had been previously ordained the bishop for the Russia but expelled by the heathen.”

<sup>228</sup> *RPC*. 83.

<sup>229</sup> *RPC*. 91. The RPC does not specify where Vladimir fled, only that he fled ‘Abroad.’ However, Cross and Sherbowitz-Webber note that Vladimir had strong connections to the Scandinavian world. He most certainly fled outside of the borders of Kiev since he was ruling out of Novgorod in northern Rus territory.

devils. They desecrated the earth with their offerings, and the land of Rus and this hill were defiled with blood.”<sup>230</sup>

Three years later, in 983, the pagans were looking for human sacrifices again. This time they wanted to sacrifice the son of a Varangian who had settled in Kiev from Greece. He was Christian and refused to hand over his son and a pagan mob killed both the father and son.<sup>231</sup>

Human sacrifice appeared in other Christian sources. Thietmar of Mersburg and Adam of Bremen both talked of the Blot that took place in Uppsala, where there was allegedly human sacrifice. No human remains have been discovered in Uppsala and there has been no evidence of human sacrifice in Kiev. These sources, including the RPC, were trying to make paganism seem worse than it really was by attributing human sacrifice to it. Sacrifice was an important part of Slavic and Norse pagan rituals, but animals like cows, birds, dogs, horses, and bears were sacrificed, as far as archeological evidence has been able to show, humans were not sacrificed to idols in sacred areas. Human sacrifice did appear in burial rituals. Ibn Fadlan gave an eyewitness account of a slave girl who was sacrificed when her chieftain master died and was buried. The slave girl had consented to the sacrifice because it was thought of as being a great honor and would serve her master in the afterlife. Ibn Fadlan was also on the Volga in 921, about 60 years before Vladimir came to power.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> RPC. 93-94. Vladimir appointed his uncle Dobrynya to rule over Novgorod. Dobrynya set up an, “idol beside the river Volkhov, and the people of Novgorod offered sacrifice to it as if to God himself.”

<sup>231</sup> RPC. 95-96.

<sup>232</sup> Ibn Fadlan. *Land of Darkness*. 50-54. Evidence of burial sacrifices appears frequently in Norse archeology. “Viking Ships to Valhalla.” *The Science News Letter Vol. 10*, No 288. 41. Ship burials like the Oseberg in Norway clearly demonstrate multiple human bodies along with animal bodies being put into burial ships to accompany their masters. Human Burial sacrifice can be traced back two thousand years into Bronze Age Denmark. A number of almost perfectly preserved bog bodies have been found in addition to many other sacrificial items such as Bronze Age axes. Karen Lange. “Tales from the bog: hanged with a leather cord and cast into a Danish bog 2,300 years ago, Tollund Man was probably a sacrifice. Like other bodies found preserved in Europe's peat bogs, he poses haunting questions. How was he chosen? Who closed his eyes after death? And what god demanded his life?” *National Geographic*: Volume 212.3, Sept (2007)

Vladimir was keen to use religion to his benefit in Kiev. By putting up idols, Vladimir was trying to use paganism to bind the different people under his command. Paganism had its limits since it was not an organized religion, like its monotheistic alternatives; it was difficult for the prince to control its place in society. The easy answer was to adopt and convert to one of the monotheistic religions. Unlike Vladimir's western cousins, he had four choices; Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism, Judaism and Islam. In the RPC Vladimir was approached by missionaries for all four religions. He disregarded Islam because, "'Drinking,' said he, 'is the joy of the Russes. We cannot exist without that pleasure.'<sup>233</sup> Vladimir refused Judaism, saying, "How can you hope to teach others while you yourselves are cast out and scattered abroad by the hand of God."<sup>234</sup> That left Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity. To find out more, he sent envoys to Constantinople, Germany and to Bulgaria. When the envoys returned, they spoke of the splendor of the Greek religion. They also reminded Vladimir that his grandmother, Olga, who was known for being extremely wise, had converted to their religion.<sup>235</sup>

Vladimir did not convert immediately, but a year later would have an experience much like Clovis of the Franks. Vladimir was besieging the Greek city of Kherson and could not penetrate the walls of the city.<sup>236</sup> He received a message from one of the Greeks of a way to cut

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<sup>233</sup> RPC. 97.

<sup>234</sup> RPC. 97

<sup>235</sup> RPC. 111.

<sup>236</sup> The historical siege of Kherson was undertaken by the Rus, however the order of events before and after happened much differently. What historians know for certain was that Basil II was facing a large rebellion from one of his generals, Bardas Phocas. Basil II had been fighting against the Bulgarians and his forces were depleted. Basil turned to the Rus, who were known as formidable warriors. The exact order of events is still unclear to historians. Leo the Deacon. *The History of Leo the Deacon*. Leo did not think it was important enough to mention the Rus and whatever help they provided, nor did he mention the marriage of Anna to Vladimir. Andrzej Poppe. "How the Conversion of the Rus was understood in the eleventh century." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*: Volume 11, (1987) Poppe covered a number of Greek sources and the alarming lack of information concerning the conversion of the Rus. He speculated that with the danger the rebellion represented to the Emperor, that the Rus were a minor concern and did not deserve mention. Treadgold. *History of the Byzantine State and Society*. 518. Treadgold argued that after Vladimir was given Anna and converted he gave 6,000 men to Basil II and attacked Kherson, which was given back to Basil after it was looted. The troops given to Basil II became the Varangian guard and played a pivotal role in

the water source for the city. Just like Clovis, Vladimir turned skywards and vowed that if he won he would be baptized.<sup>237</sup> Sure enough, the city fell and Vladimir entered victorious. In his victory he opened relations with the Emperor about marrying his sister. Emperor Basil sent envoys to Vladimir saying that he would not give his sister, Anna, to a pagan. Vladimir told the envoys that he was willing to convert to the Greek faith. Basil rejoiced and sent his reluctant sister Anna to Kherson. The chroniclers wanted to drive home the concept of miraculous conversion and added the story of how Vladimir had lost his sight. The Bishop of Kherson baptized Vladimir in the church of St Basil, and lo and behold, his eyesight returned.<sup>238</sup>

The Bishop of Kherson, together with the Princess's priests, after announcing the tidings, baptized Vladimir, and as the Bishop laid his upon him, he straightway received his sight. Upon experiencing this miraculous cure, Vladimir glorified God, saying, 'I have now perceived the one true God.' When his followers beheld this miracle, many of them were also baptized.<sup>239</sup>

He then had his army baptized and married Anna. By converting, Vladimir had cemented an alliance with the Byzantines, who were the strongest force in the area.<sup>240</sup>

Like Rollo, Vladimir's conversion story shared many similarities with Eusebius's version of Constantine the Great. In-fact it is likely that the authors of the RPC were more familiar with the legend of Constantine than of Clovis because of their proximity to the east instead of the

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putting down the rebellion. Shepard. *The Viking Rus and Byzantium*. 508. Shepard admitted that the RPC cannot be trusted and the Byzantine sources were not clear on the order of events. He speculated that Vladimir did not convert until after the rebellion had been put down and once he was converted he married Anna.

<sup>237</sup> Gregory of Tours. *History of the Franks*. 143-144. As mentioned before, Clovis was in a battle against the Alamanni and was losing. He praised God and promised his conversion if he won. Clovis then routed the Alamanni and was baptized, "ready to wash away the sores of his old leprosy and be cleansed." The washing away of the leprosy was of course a double meaning. Not only was he washing away the physical leprosy, but also the leprosy of his pagan religion.

<sup>238</sup> Vladimir took Basil as his Christian name.

<sup>239</sup> RPC. 113.

<sup>240</sup> Marriage into the Byzantine royal family was a very difficult task, especially for a pagan ruler. It stands as a testament to the dire situation that Basil II was in that Vladimir was even considered as a suitable groom for a Byzantine Princess.

west. As discussed in the previous chapter, Constantine was afflicted with leprosy and had a divine vision from Saints Peter and Paul. He found Silvester atop mount Sirapte and was baptized in a pool where he, ‘emerged from the pool clean of leprosy and made it known that he had seen Christ.’<sup>241</sup> The authors of the RPC were creating a connection between Constantine and Vladimir, which was fitting since Vladimir was not only receiving his baptism, but he was also being married into the Imperial family.

Vladimir had also found a way to control his people. By making them convert to Christianity, they had to follow unified practices. There would be no eclectic pantheons of Slavic and Norse gods that could spur the Rus into acts of depravity, like human sacrifice. When Vladimir returned to Kiev, he ordered that the idols that he had constructed be torn down and beaten with sticks to punish the daemons within; then the idols were burned or destroyed.<sup>242</sup> Vladimir then ordered the people of Kiev to the Dnieper where, “they all went into the water: some stood up to their necks, others to their breasts, and the younger near the bank, some of them holding children in their arms, while the adults waded farther out. The priests stood by and offered prayer.”<sup>243</sup> Once this was done he constructed the Church of St Basil on the hill where the idols stood. Vladimir worked to spread Christianity to all of the people under his control and built many, “churches and to assign priests throughout the cities, and to invite the people to accept baptism in all the cities of towns.”<sup>244</sup> He had artisans come from Greece to help construct

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<sup>241</sup> Jacobus de Voragine. *The Golden Legend*. 64-65.

<sup>242</sup> The chroniclers make constant references that the old pagan gods were not gods, but the devil and demons who had led men astray. By beating the idols, they were beating the demons that inhabited them. By associating the pagan gods with the devil, the chroniclers were removing the agency of the Rus. Instead of making the wrong choice in worshipping false gods, they had been tricked by the devil into worshipping idols.

<sup>243</sup> *RPC*. 117.

<sup>244</sup> *RPC*. 117. To make Vladimir’s conversion more sincere, the RPC tells of how he stopped his adulterous relations with his concubines. Vladimir did have many children, including twelve sons. Historians are unsure if any were born out of wedlock after his marriage with Anna.



churches of stone, a building material that was not used often by the Rus because of its difficulty.<sup>245</sup>

The conversion story of Vladimir in the RPC was a lengthy tale within the reign of the first Christian king. Contemporary sources are sparse and there has been some debate surrounding the conversion of Vladimir. Leo the Deacon disliked the alliance between Basil II and Vladimir, stating that it was dangerous to the Empire. He did not even mention the conversion of the Rus, perhaps he did not trust that their conversion was sincere.<sup>246</sup> The Byzantine sources were silent about the conversion. Byzantine chroniclers were far more concerned with the civil war than the conversion of Vladimir and the Rus. The eleventh century chronicler Michael Psellos did not mention the conversion and mirrored Leo the Deacon's attitude that the Rus were a dangerous ally.<sup>247</sup> What historians know was that Emperor Basil II was desperate for allies as he was facing an uprising in Asia Minor.<sup>248</sup> The Rus had proven to be imposing warriors, and having them at his side would greatly help suppress the uprising. The chronology of when Vladimir took the town of Kherson was also hazy. It is unknown if Kherson was taken before or after marriage discussion with Basil had begun. Jonathan Shepard proposed that Vladimir may have taken the town when Basil did not hand over Anna, and once the town was taken, then sent Anna to stop Vladimir from further attacking Greek cities.<sup>249</sup> What historians have agreed upon was that Vladimir converted in 988 and did send troops to help the Byzantines attack the rebels.

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<sup>245</sup> RPC. 119. "With the intention of building a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin, he sent and imported artisans from Greece. After he had begun to build, and the structure was completed, he adorned it with images, and entrusted it to Anastasius."

<sup>246</sup> Leo the Deacon. *The History of Leo the Deacon*. 215-216.

<sup>247</sup> Poppe. *How the Conversion of the Rus was Understood in the Eleventh Century*. 287.

<sup>248</sup> Treadgold. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. 518. Dimitri Obolensky. *Byzantium and the Slavs*. (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994) 61-62.

<sup>249</sup> Shepard. *The Origins of the Rus*. 66.

The chroniclers of the RPC spoke in such depth of the pagan gods that the Rus worshipped for several reasons. The first was to show the reader that the pagan deities were dangerous if worshipped. They led men and women to do despicable things including sacrificing children. Vladimir's character improved after his conversion; according to the RPC he stopped his adulterous relationships and honored his oaths with the Byzantines. The second reason the chroniclers go into such depth was that paganism was still active in Eastern Europe at the time that the chronicle was written. The chroniclers wanted to educate the reader in how to identify pagan gods by naming as many as they could and giving accounts of their practices including sacrificing, the worship of idols, and the swearing of oaths in the name of the gods. The chronicle continued to call the gods devils and demons because they were believed to be tricking the ignorant people of the Rus. With this method the chroniclers were not questioning the reign of the Rus princes because they merely had been tricked, but they eventually found the truth and converted. Since the purpose of the chroniclers was to justify and record the deeds of the Rus kings, the chroniclers had to make the descendants of Rurik appear strong, even while being pagan.

### **The Rus and their Neighbors**

Another method that the chroniclers used to make the Rus appear strong were their relations with their neighbors. The Rus princes needed to conquer their neighbors and take tribute from them in order to ensure the safety of Kiev and other Rus cities. The biggest threat was the nomadic tribes who resided in the east. Tribes like the Kazars and the Pechenegs were the largest and most dangerous. In 965 Svyatoslav attacked the Kazars and after taking their

city, Bela Vezha, the Kazar kingdom collapsed.<sup>250</sup> Attacking the nomads and other small kingdoms of the east was dangerous. Both Igor and Svyatoslav died while trying to get tribute from neighbors. Byzantine Emperors understood the political dynamic of the Rus and their neighbors. Constantine VII wrote the *De Administrando Imperio*, a hand book on how to rule and govern the Byzantine Empire. Constantine noted that it was very important to maintain friendly relations with the Pechenegs because if the Rus were at war with the Pechenegs they cannot,

“come at this imperial city of the Romans, either for war or for trade, unless they are at peace with the Pechenegs, because when the Russians come with their ships to barrages of the river and cannot pass through unless they lift their ships off the river and carry them past by portaging them on their shoulders, then the men of this nation of the Pechenegs set upon them.”<sup>251</sup>

Constantine advised to remain friendly with the Pechenegs so that if the Rus became aggressive, the Pechenegs could be bribed to attack the vulnerable Rus and thus thwart any chances of invasion.

The largest and most powerful neighbor was of course the Byzantine Empire to the south. The Rus mounted several large scale invasions into Byzantine territories, but were never able to take the capitol of Constantinople. Oleg, Igor, Svyatoslov, and Vladimir all attacked Greek cities; Oleg and Igor’s attacks were against Constantinople. The first attack by Oleg has been questioned by historians because of the lack of contemporary sources. If the attack did not happen then the chroniclers wanted the Rus to appear stronger than the Byzantines. Regardless of whether an attack actually took place or not, Oleg and the Greeks established trading laws in 911. In the RPC, Igor was said to attack Constantinople twice, the first time we know actually

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<sup>250</sup> RPC. 84.

<sup>251</sup> Constantine VII. *De Administrando Imperio*. 51.

took place because we have contemporary Greek sources and Catholic sources that mention the attack.<sup>252</sup> Igor attacked sometime around 935-941, while the Emperor and his forces were south attacking the Arabs.<sup>253</sup> He was defeated by old ships that were outfitted with Greek fire. The second attack, in 944, has been questioned by historians because there are no contemporary sources, and the RPC made Igor the victor. Again, the Byzantines and the Rus concluded terms of trade after the first attack by Igor. The chroniclers wanted the Rus to appear equals against the powerful Byzantine Empire. When trade agreements were created, the RPC would have us believe it was because the Rus were the victors. The only concrete attack was Igor's attack around 940, and while he caused damage to the area around Constantinople, he was eventually defeated.

The purpose of the RPC was to solidify the rule of the Rus dynasty in the beginning of the twelfth century. The chroniclers did this by making the Rus the victors in major engagements against their enemies and by including the conversion stories of Olga and Vladimir. What historians have not done with the RPC is look at what literary methods Nestor and the other chroniclers used to justify the Rus reign; especially since the princes descended from Scandinavians and five of the seven rulers were pagans. Unlike Dudo's *History of the Normans*, the Russian chroniclers embraced the Scandinavian origins. The princes repeatedly turn to their Varangian allies to attack neighbors or settle disputes. The chroniclers also discussed paganism,

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<sup>252</sup> Luidprand of Cremona. *The Complete Works*. 180. "Thus placed in the midst of the Russians, they cast fire all around. As soon as the Russians observed this, they caste themselves quickly from their ships into the sea, and chose to be submerged by the waves rather than burned by the fire. Others, however burdened by breastplates and helmets, sought out the bottom of the sea, never to be seen again, while several, swimming between the waves of the sea, were burned, and on that day no one escaped who did not free himself by swimming to the shore." Logan. *The Vikings in History*. 189. Patriarch Photius. *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*. 82-110. "Why has this thick, sudden hail-storm of barbarians burst forth, not one that hews down the stalks of wheat and beats down the ears of corn or lashes the vine-twigs..."

<sup>253</sup> Treadgold. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. 483. Emperor Romanus was facing rising Arab aggression across the eastern frontier. The fire ships were able to ward off the Russians until the General Curcuas and his forces arrived. With the new forces the Russians suffered a serious defeat and were forced back up the Dnieper, having only conducted some minor raids against the empire.

and even identified specific gods and practices. While there was always a negative tone to the pagan practice, the fact that it was included in the chronicle instead of ignored is important because it shows that the Christians monks had accepted that the ancestors were pagan and foreign.

## Conclusion

Power can be displayed in many different ways; it can be shown through martial prowess, it can be shown through position, it can be shown through wealth, it can be shown through influence, and it can be shown through the manipulation of memory. This paper has focused on the latter of these ways to display power. Through looking at the HN and RPC I have attempted to identify the different methods that central middle age chroniclers used to trace the lineage of two powerful dynasties. Both of these dynasties were unique in that they originated from Scandinavian pagans. Dudo and the authors of the RPC used different techniques to justify how a foreign pagan family was able to come to power and eventually rule over a Christian people and Christian dukedom or kingdom. However, both sources had similarities, demonstrating that they shared an oral and cultural link to the Germanic Scandinavian world.

By comparing these two different sources side by side, similarities between the two texts have been shown. First, both Dudo and the anonymous chroniclers used famous historical figures to elevate the prestige of the patron. Dudo used the conversion of Constantine according to St Sylvester, Clovis and legends of Troy and Charlemagne. By making connections between the Norman ducal dynasty and these well-known legends, Dudo was displaying not only his own education, but was elevating the rule of Rollo to the same heroic standard as these mighty figures. His purpose was to show that Rollo and his descendants were powerful and important, and because it was the first history of the dynasty, it would hopefully set a standard for future histories. Dudo, arguably succeeded in setting a standard that other Norman historians and chroniclers used and built upon.<sup>254</sup> The anonymous chroniclers of the RPC also used famous figures as a template for the dynasty including Constantine, from the writings of Eusebius, and

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<sup>254</sup> Shopkow. *Community and History*. 96-117.

possibly Clovis.<sup>255</sup> Dudo and the anonymous chroniclers were not revolutionizing how to write chronicles by comparing their patrons to famous examples of the Christian world. However, it is still important to note which famous characters they were using and how they were using them.

The second major similarity of these two texts was their oral traditions. Since both dynasties originated from Scandinavian settlers, they shared a common oral ancestry. This common oral ancestry did not disappear quickly because both dynasties continued to have connections to Scandinavia through trade and political ties. As discussed in chapter 1, both the geographical areas of Normandy and Russia appeared in the Sagas. In addition, the HN and RPC share many literary similarities with certain sagas. The story of the incendiary birds of Olga and Harald Hardrada show the Scandinavian oral tradition was still strong in Russia when the RPC was being compiled. The HN and the *Saga of Harald Hardrada* also shared a story. Both Hasting and Harald used the feigned tactic of faking death to gain entrance into a walled city. Rollo was mentioned several times in the *Heimskringla*, Dudo noted that Rollo came from a powerful family that was forced to leave because of the actions of the local king. In the *Heimskringla*, Rollo's father was banished by Harald Fairhair. The difference between these two tales was the location; Dudo's Rollo was from Denmark while the Rollo in the *Heimskringla* was from Norway. The other difference was Dudo made Rollo into the victim while in the *Heimskringla*, Rollo's father, Ragnvald, was banished for committing piracy in the king's territory.

Unfortunately, there are no strong examples of oral connections between the HN and RPC. It does not seem there were any stories that both sources used. Instead they each

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<sup>255</sup> Vladimir's conversion story was similar to Clovis, however, because of geographical proximity the similarities may have been a coincidence instead of purposeful. Without knowing more about the anonymous authors of the RPC, historians can only speculate on their education and knowledge of western European myths and legends including Clovis and Charlemagne.

individually shared stories with the Sagas. This does not discredit the idea of a shared Pan-Scandinavian oral tradition. Merely the two cultures were using traditions shared over the entire Scandinavian population instead of which each other. Both Normandy and Russia continued to participate in a collective tradition that developed across the Scandinavian influenced Atlantic and Baltic.

This topic has significant room for growth into a doctoral dissertation. The pursuit of a Scandinavian oral tradition could easily encompass many other sources. The first, but probably the largest series of the sources would be the Sagas. The Icelandic Sagas have been studied extensively by historians in the last several generations. The Sagas have not only been studied by academics but also by amateur historians and those who have been interested in Norse culture. This was due to the Sagas easy to read prose style that made them approachable but also had the depth to maintain the attention of academics. Unlike so many other medieval sources, the Sagas were not heavily influenced by Greco-Roman classics. They relied on northern Germanic cultural and oral traditions that can be traced back to pre-Christian origins. As pointed out in the last 60 years, the Sagas have been heavily influenced by Christian virtues, but many of the secular Sagas, like the *Heimskringla*, retain a northern Germanic tradition.<sup>256</sup> By incorporating the Sagas into the comparison of the HN and RPC, more connections could be drawn to show the vast cultural network from Iceland and the British isles all the way to Russia.

The second source that could help to expand this discussion would be Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*. Saxo Grammaticus was a Danish clerk in the late twelfth century who was commissioned by Bishop Absalon to write a history of Denmark and a history of the Danish church. Saxo was very learned in classical and contemporary texts and even

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<sup>256</sup> Davidson. *Gods and the Myths of Northern Europe*. 9-17, 23-24.



admitted to being influenced by Dudo and his writing style.<sup>257</sup> The *Gesta Danorum* began with the mythological beginnings of Denmark and ended with the history of the church. English speaking historians have not used the text extensively for several important reasons. First, Saxo was greatly influenced by the classics and would often directly quote Roman works. Again, this was normal for medieval authors, but it is important to note. Second, Saxo confused many passages which makes the text difficult to follow or tease out any truth.<sup>258</sup> Third, Saxo's work has only recently been translated in its entirety. The first nine books of the text have been translated many times but it was only in 2015 that the second half of the text was translated by Peter Fisher. Fourth, Saxo's writing style is difficult to read at times. This may seem like a shallow or pedantic reason to exclude a text, but, there is a reason that the Sagas have been studied so extensively while the *Gesta Danorum* has been left behind. Most of the Sagas were written in a prose format. This helped the reader easily traverse the text and makes it much easier for a new reader to become invested in the style. For these reasons Saxo has been excluded from popular Norse/Germanic history and has remained a text to which some academics have invested their time.

The tool of memory and its construction by medieval authors such as Dudo of St Quentin and the anonymous authors of the RPC have begun to be unraveled. Authors like Patrick Geary, Leah Shopkow and Matthew Gabriele have opened the door for the application of memory theory to help better understand early medieval sources. These early medieval sources, such as the HN and RPC, have often been discarded by earlier historians as fictitious and inadequate for understanding certain time periods. As historians pursue more abstract methods, such as memory

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<sup>257</sup> Saxo Grammaticus. *Gesta Danorum*. Trans. Peter Fisher. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008) 14. "Dudo however, who wrote a history of France, believes that the Danes sprang from the Danaans and were named after them."

<sup>258</sup> Davidson. *Gods and the Myths of Northern Europe*. 46. "His stories (Saxo) are badly told in complex, pompous Latin, and are frequently muddled, repetitive, and spoiled by moralizing. They have none of the charm of Snorri's work, but they contain material of much interest and value."

theory, lost information can be gleaned through a process of elimination. Every piece of information that was included in these early sources were included and copied for a reason. The purpose of this paper was to help expand and push forward the collective understanding of interpreting central medieval authors and their interpretations of the past.

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