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Letter from the Journal Team

Susan Danielsson

Welcome everyone to the *Saber and Scroll Journal's* second issue of selected works in medieval history. In this issue, the journal continues to revisit its most popular works in medieval history. Dr. Robert G. Smith's article "The Hundred Years' War: A Different Contextual Overview" provides perspective on the events and circumstances leading to the Hundred Years' War. In Susanne Watts's article "From Raiders to Traders: The Viking-Arab Trade Exchange," she discusses the long-distance trade relations of the Vikings and Arab world. For those interested in Scottish history, see DeAnna Stevens's "William Wallace: The Man Behind the Legend," where she discusses the historical facts that created the myth. Christopher Sheline's article "The Lighter Side of Khan" looks passed old stereotypes and provides insight into the positive qualities and past achievements of Genghis Khan. For those interested in military history, see Patrick S. Baker's "The Frankish War-Machine of Charles Martel," where he discusses the military effectiveness of the Frankish leader. Mat Hudson's article "Aethelred and Cnut: Saxon England and the Vikings" details the significance of the conflict between Aethelred and Cnut on the future of England. Aida Dias, Daniel Rosko, and Anne Midgley provide book reviews on medieval books. I hope these articles help create an understanding and unique glimpse into the medieval world.

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The Hundred Years' War: A Different Contextual Overview

Dr. Robert G. Smith

The origin of most wars is invariably traceable in a linear sense to certain events or key personalities. World War One is easy—the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo gave the Austro-Hungarian Empire its *raison d'être* to deal with its Serbian Problem. World War Two is traceable through a series of events such as the Italian Invasion of Ethiopia, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937, and perhaps even Munich. In the late twentieth century, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait was the pretext for the First Gulf War. But the casual student of history would see no obvious historical markers to direct their attention to the immediate causes of the Hundred Years' War.

Here, the historian has to conduct a forensic examination of both the economics of feudal Europe and of states and principalities that no longer exist. In the early fourteenth century, Flanders was the industrial heart of Europe, based in large part upon its manufacture of cloth. To meet the demands for its products, the manufacturers of Flanders had to import English fleece. The English Crown in turn became dependent upon this source of foreign revenue. This set poorly with the French, for in the not too distant past the nobility of Flanders had been vassals to the French King. Much like Vladimir Putin's machinations in the Ukraine, the French worked to undermine the English position, supporting the landed nobility in their efforts to rein in the manufactures—those with no nobility whose economic engine was loosening the feudal ties the landed nobility depended upon for their economic well-being. A civil war caused by two different economic systems, manufacturing versus the feudal land system, soon engulfed Flanders. Here is the center of gravity for understanding the Hundred Years' War.¹ Although England's King Henry III relinquished his control of the French territories in 1259, there were still English settlers there. Dealing with them was a source of friction between France and England, giving England an excuse for intervention, much as the Tsar and Soviets used for the pretext of invasions to protect ethnic Russians elsewhere.

The Struggle for Control of France

Ironically, when the editors of the *Saber and Scroll Journal* commissioned an article on the Hundred Years' War, this author accepted the

project unenthusiastically. However, as research progressed, the outlines of pre-Westphalia Europe began to take shape, almost like the movement of tectonic plates reshaping the landmass and political structure of Europe. The aftermath of the Hundred Years' War served to consolidate the power of the French monarchy, which heretofore the claim of the English Crown had usurped from the Crown of France. This consolidation had second and third order effects that are easy to overlook. For France, it meant that it became a dominant continental land power. Moreover, the French began to establish an actual navy. For the English, with the loss of France, their eyes turned elsewhere. Without the loss of France, and the French consolidation, would the Age of Exploration have happened the way that it did? For with the loss of France, the English Crown needed to replace the loss of its French holdings and the associated revenue stream. Hence, by the late sixteenth century, following the defeat of the Spanish Armada, both England and France began eyeing the New World discovered by Spain to stake a claim. Perhaps this is the greatest impact of the Hundred Years' War, that with the establishment of France, the preconditions for the Age of Exploration wereset.

The Battlefield of the Hundred Years' War

“Pride goeth before the fall” could easily be the epithet for French tactical thinking at Agincourt. But the same epithet fits for Poitiers and Crecy, though by Agincourt the French should have learned from their previous defeats. As an aside, none of the Union Army officers from West Point that fought at the Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862 must have studied Poitiers. Had they done so, they would have blanched at assaulting such a steep hill against far greater lethality than that projected by the English longbow archers. Most battles were sieges, fought by certain and set rules of war. Raids were utilized to extract political concessions when the English would pillage the countryside, demonstrating to the population that the King of France was powerless to protect them from the depredations of the English.

Artillery was first and foremost the biggest technological advancement of the period. Town walls could no longer withstand the new power of artillery. In turn, this meant one could no longer defend passively and hope the enemy's siege would fail or sickness would ruin their army. By the Battle of Poitiers in 1356, the advent of plated armor lessened the power of the longbow. However, it made walking difficult and running impossible. When dismounted, a French heavy cavalry soldier would soon be exhausted. For when a heavy French cavalryman fell at Poitiers or Agincourt, he could not rise again without

assistance. By contrast, the English light infantryman had a steel cap and a breastplate that provided protection to his torso and enabled easy movement.²

In terms of command and control, a changing battlefield emerged. This change originated with dominance on the battlefield shifting from shock to missile power. It enabled England's King Edward III and the Black Prince, respectively at Crecy and Poitiers, to establish themselves on high ground and fight the battle as they saw it from that vantage. The change from shock to missile meant that battles became of longer duration and subject to greater control in terms of engaging and for purposes of disengagement.³

The most important advance of the period was Henry V's introduction of the Royal Navy. He realized that not having a standing fleet at the ready was an impediment to quick and decisive action. His establishment of a standing fleet gave the English greater maneuverability, as the English armies in France were always dependent upon sea power for supply and reinforcement.

Analysis of the Battle of Agincourt presents a different challenge. Numbers do not match up in various accounts of the battle. In *Cursed Kings*, Jonathan Sumption puts the odds at roughly two to one, which seems baffling.⁴ In *The Agincourt War*, Arthur Burne reaches a figure of six thousand English to twenty-five thousand French.⁵ The English figures are of course always subject to desertion, straggling, and wastage. Burne also notes that a French historian in recent years, Fenrindad Lot, as well as the German historian Hans Delbrück, reached the astounding conclusion the English outnumbered the French that day. One can at least charitably excuse the French historian save for the fact that he panders the same excuse for Crecy.⁶ Under the biography of Henry V, *The Harpers Encyclopedia of Military Biography* comes up with a figure of six thousand English to as many as thirty-five thousand French.⁷ The battle figures remind one of the Battle of Kursk, where the number of tanks has been massaged by both sides. What is hard to understand is why the French did not allow Henry to simply limp to the coast, dogging his retreat every step of the way. Sumption's opinion probably reflects the prevailing French sentiment that, "Politically it was probably unthinkable, after Henry V's capture of Harfleur and his ostentatious challenges, to let him escape with impunity."⁸

Joan of Arc is harder to assess in the military sense. Nevertheless, in the political and psychological sense, she revitalized the French fighting spirit, acting as a morale force multiplier. It is hard to understand how this peasant girl, albeit from prosperous peasants, was given such an opportunity except to consider that the fortunes of France were at their lowest nadir. Even with Henry V's death in 1422, the French forces were demoralized, and their leadership decimated to the point of conceding defeat to the invading English forces and their allies from

Burgundy. If the English took the city of Orleans, it seemed as if French resistance would simply crumble. The French loss at the Battle of the Herrings—where they failed to capture a English resupply train (of herring no less!)—meant the impending loss of Orleans was seemingly the last psychological straw. Instead, Joan led the French to victory at Orleans. More importantly, Joan of Arc changed the rules of the game. No longer was this to be the gentlemanly and leisurely style of warfare. If anything, Joan ushered in an early era of something akin to a predecessor to Total Warfare. In a sense, Machiavelli had been the theorist for what seems to us a period of unregulated warfare, whose influence now began to wane.⁹ Joan seemed to have fought with the Augustinian concept of a Just War, an alien concept. Here was now a war not just for some prince or king but a war for the general welfare of the French people, an ideal of all equal before God, and by inference a war on feudalism itself, where the ancient order produced the evil of man subjugating man. Joan changed the French Army's thought to one where it mattered how "it [felt] about the soil and about the people from which it springs."¹⁰ It is small wonder that once Joan had recovered the political and military situation, the French were perhaps not unhappy to abandon her to her fate, as her ideas were revolutionary and a threat to the existing order.

But the French were learning. Like the English, they began setting the foundation for a more professional army, for imitation is the highest form of flattery. There would be no more of the emotional charges like at Poitiers or Agincourt that decimated the French forces. The return of the Province of Maine to the French signalled that they had the measure of Henry VI, in whose veins they ascertained did not run the blood of The Black Prince or that of his father, Henry V. Nor when the French began preparations for the invasion of Normandy was anything done by Henry VI, for politics at the court of England were now taking precedence over the defense of the English dominions of France. A small army was hastily assembled and sent over under the command of Sir Thomas Kyriell in 1450. On the way to battle at Formigny, the city folk of Carentan engaged the English rearguard in waist deep water and the French assailed the English with an almost rudimentary form of partisan warfare.¹¹ Such a brazen action alone speaks volumes of the decline of English influence and the rise of perhaps a French consciousness. Kyriell seemingly had the battle won when another French column showed up, and in contrast to times past where the French showed unwillingness to give battle, charged. The English army died to nearly the last man. And, with the destruction of this English Army, Normandy was lost.

The Political Struggle

Of course, family ties and the lack of an heir often were cause for political turmoil. The quest for a male heir to secure the line was often an obsession for rulers. It is not surprising that this too was one of the underlying political reasons for the Hundred Years' War. Charles IV died heirless in 1328. England's Edward III asserted that the throne of France was his due to his birthright from his mother. Instead, the French nobility crowned Philip VI of Valois. Adding insult to injury, this French usurper attacked the British wine country of Aquitaine, a large province in southwestern France. By feudal law, Aquitaine was a fiefdom to the English Crown. With Philip's attack on Aquitaine and claiming it as rightfully his, war was inevitable. Edward, of course, responded militarily and thus began a long drought of French success on the battlefield through seemingly the rest of the fourteenth century.

If the French military, logistical, and economic structures and population were not already stressed enough by the early fifteenth century, the assassination of the Duke of Orleans led to civil war in France. Much as America's Civil War allowed Napoleon III to crown Maximilian as the Emperor of Mexico, the English—who were seriously threatened with the loss of their Brittany possession—now got a breathing spell. With the soon to be crowned Henry V, this breathing spell saw France soon courting disaster. Yet the English were slow to capitalize upon this opportunity. The always unsettled Scottish border, with the Scots supplied and egged on by France, the faux Richard II paraded about, and then a full blown rebellion in Wales were more than merely distracting to Henry IV, and upon his death Henry V.

The setting as well has many interesting current and near past history parallels. The use of the “assigned” companies who periodically pillaged the French countryside could be thought of as warring by proxies. The Cold War saw many conflicts waged by proxies to not only win control of land but to also sway the court of public opinion at home and in their own regional and global sphere. Both sides used the most important two social media of their day—public letters read as pronouncements in towns and the Catholic Church. The importance of the Catholic Church lay in the fact that the Pope could consecrate one side as the defender of the faith. In addition, at the parish level, the church from the pulpit could sway opinion by preaching for the cause of either the French or English.

Other competing elements affected the West for the next five hundred plus years. Although monarchs ruled both systems, like most of Europe, the two systems of monarchy and government were already heading in different directions.

By the end of the Hundred Years' War with the French victorious, France moved to a system of absolute monarchy. The English already had a different approach prior to the war with Magna Carta. However, Henry IV's regicide had different repercussions. For the French, it meant the English were in a sense barbarians with a usurper who committed regicide, a crime against God. However, Henry's act served notice that this was an acceptable way to replace the English monarch, and gave the French Crown reason to be nervous about an ambitious French knight. Repercussions of Henry IV's act of seizing the crown by the death of Richard II would help fuel the War of the Roses. Not only did Henry IV have to fear for his crown, but before Henry V's 1415 campaign, a cabal of English nobles under French pay plotted to assassinate Henry the V.

With the disastrous diplomatic decisions of Henry VI, the English Crown lost its remaining lands in 1451. The subsequent loss of a revenue stream to the crown and to the lords who had lost their estates in France, as well as rising unemployment among the professional military class, built resentment. It is easy to see the nexus that if one king could be replaced, then another could as well. In the present day, the horrible decision of Paul Bremer to disband the Iraqi Army in 2003 helped spin Iraq into civil war, much like England post-1451. However, never was the Hundred Years' War like the line from *Mrs. Miniver* "a war of the people."¹² This war was strictly power politics between the Crowns of France and England.

The Sins of Their Fathers - the long-term aspects of The Hundred Years' War

The Hundred Years' War ensured long-term enmity between France and England. The two kingdoms fought a series of proxy frontier wars in the American colonies until Colonel George Washington attacked a French scouting party in Western Pennsylvania, which ignited the French and Indian War in America, or the Seven Years' War in Europe. This war spanned the globe from Canada to Europe and India. Later, Britain often served as the driving force against Napoleon in the various anti-French coalitions. Even in the immediate period before World War One, these two powers nearly came to blows over the Fasho Crisis in 1898. In the mad scramble for colonies, a French expedition to Fashoda tried to seize control of the upper Nile, which would have rendered Britain's position in the Sudan meaningless. In the opening phases of World War One in France, the French were certain that after the initial defeat of the British Expeditionary Force in August 1914 at Mons, the British would make a two hundred plus mile retreat under their commander Field Marshall Sir John French

to the sea. Historically, from the Hundred Years' War onward, the British Army used the Royal Navy as an escape valve. The climax of the hatred sowed during the Hundred Years' War came with *Operation Catapult*, the Battle of *Mers-el-Kébir*. On 3 July 1940, the Royal Navy bombarded the French Fleet at its Algerian base of Mers El Kébir. This action by Prime Minister Winston Churchill against his former ally of less than a month before caused the death of the hundreds of French sailors and cemented the French view of Perfidious Albion. Even with the recent Brexit vote by the British, it is possible to see traces of this still simmering dislike of the British for continental entanglements.

Ultimately, it is difficult to conceive that the Hundred Years' War could have ended with any different result other than England's expulsion from France. Much like the Third Reich's gamble to conquer Europe, England—like the Third Reich—was simply over taxed in terms of its resources. It lacked the manpower to hold France, as the available manpower in England simply was not enough to conquer and hold the domain of France. Unlike the later British Empire, the English did not have a technological prowess that gave them a force multiplier. No, the sides were equal in the technology of arms. With the early death of Henry V, England lost its best and perhaps only opportunity to bend France to its knee. Henry died of dysentery a month before Charles VII died, meaning that Henry would have succeeded to the throne of both England and France, a consequence of the earlier Peace Treaty of Troyes. It would be interesting to speculate what could have happened had Henry not died and instead had twenty strong years as regent of both France and England. However, his death coupled with the rise of the Maid of Orleans—who in her short lifetime gave France a holy mission—brought forth a new France, a France for the French. Vercingetorix's dream of a united Gaul may have died at Alesia, but from Orleans arose a new France and its monarchy began to move out of the Feudal Period.

Conclusion

Much like the Third Reich, England won all the famed battles. It was like the heady days of 1941-1942 for the German *Heer* in Russia—crushing all in its path. Agincourt, Crecy, Poitiers . . . yet like the *Heer*, the English were vanquished. The world of the English in France fell. In its loss of World War One, Imperial Germany focused on the reason for its loss both externally and internally. Never beaten on the battlefield, Germany propagated the myth that it was defeated due to the stab in the back, wielded by leftists and Jews, who poisoned the German body politic with bacillus from abroad. The English, instead, did their version of the piece of American political theater “Who lost

China?” that poisoned American politics in the 1950’s—as if China was America’s to lose. However, France, or at least the parts of France that were for the English Crown to lose, was lost. Losing the territories was bad enough, but with the ill-conceived political decisions of Henry VI, the French witnessed English appeasement like that of Neville Chamberlain in a latter age. That show of weakness, and in French eyes lack of resolution, gave them a window of opportunity to reconquer Normandy and all the other English-held lands. From this arose the antecedents of the War of the Roses, the dynastic struggles Henry VI unleashed by his perceived lack of legitimacy and loss of the English holdings in France.

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Notes

1. Lynn Harry Nelson, “The Hundred Years’ War, 1336-1453,” *Lectures in Medieval History*, University of Kansas, accessed February 27, 2017, http://vlib.us/medieval/lectures/hundred_years_war.html.

2. Archer Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 165-171.

3. Martin V. Cevald, *Command in War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 51.

4. Jonathan Sumption, *Cursed Kings: The Hundred Years War IV* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), 451.

5. Arthur H. Burne, *The Agincourt War* (Hertfordshire, England: Wordsworth Editions, 1999), 90-91.

6. *Ibid.*, 91.

7. Trevor N. Dupuy, Curt Johnson, and David L. Bongard, *The Harpers Encyclopedia of Military Biography* (New York: Castle Books 1995), np.

8. Sumption, 452.

9. Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 72.

10. S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (New York: William Morrow, 1947), 158.

11. Burne, *The Agincourt War*, 315.

12. *Mrs. Miniver*, directed by William Wyler (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1942).

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Among his awards are the Bronze Star, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Medal and Combat Action Badge. He is a frequent contributor to Military Review, Armor Magazine, Saber & Scroll, various academic blogs, and writes on many military simulations. Among his hobbies are gardening, golden retrievers, and gaming. He is married to the lovely Katie A. Smith and has two sons who have both served in the Army, two Golden Retrievers, one Aussie Shepherd and ten rescue cats.

From Raiders to Traders: The Viking-Arab Trade Exchange

Susanne Watts

The Viking raids across Europe brought them into contact with other cultures, including Muslim Arabs. Although there are no known Viking settlements in the Arab lands, both cultures interacted with each other through their respective exploration of Europe. Contact between Vikings and Arabs occurred mainly in the area of what would become Russia. While there is scarce evidence that Arabs visited the homelands of the Vikings, or as they called them, the “people of the North,” artifacts found across Scandinavia, and especially in Sweden, point to an extensive long-distance trade exchange between the two very different cultures. It was the promise of access to much needed and coveted silver that set off the Viking exploration into Europe, and brought Viking raiders into contact with the Arabs. In their quest for silver, the Vikings discovered and accessed valuable trade routes to Constantinople that led to an extensive trade exchange with the Arab world. Seizing upon the opportunity to enrich themselves, the Vikings came into contact with Arabic wealth and treasures through their raids, and soon realized the potential of a peaceful trade exchange.

The Vikings came into contact with Muslim Arabs during their exploration of the Iberian Peninsula. One of the first contacts occurred with Muslim Spain in 844 when a Viking fleet of fifty-four ships sailed from their base in Brittany to Spain in order to raid the Caliphate’s treasures.¹ The raiding campaign was successful, as the Vikings conquered Lisbon and Seville, destroyed numerous other towns, and even threatened the capital of al-Andalus, Córdoba. However, the Muslims were able to drive back the Viking invaders and built “an effective coastal defence against new attacks.”² Having seen the riches of the Caliphate, the Vikings were determined to return, and embarked on a second raiding campaign in 859, this time with a much bigger fleet of sixty-two ships. Again, the raiding campaign itself was a success, as their ships were “so fully laden with plunder that they sat low in the water.”³ However, on the Vikings’ journey back to their home base in Brittany, the Muslim naval fleet attacked and destroyed the majority of the Vikings’ ships. With that, Viking exploration of and interaction with Muslim Spain ended. The two raids gave both cultures a first glimpse at each other’s military capabilities and characteristics. Prior to the Vikings’ invasion of the Caliphate, the Arabs had no interaction with the “people of the North.” To the Muslim Arabs, the Vikings appeared “as a

sudden, mysterious, military threat.”⁴ The Vikings for the first time were confronted with an enemy that was well organized on land as well as on the sea, where Vikings were used to supremacy.

Viking interaction with the people of Eastern Europe, particularly those in the area around the Volga River, was markedly different from their encounters in Muslim Spain. For one, the Vikings, called Varangians by the Slavs, would establish permanent settlements there, and would later be identified as the *Rus'*, giving the name to the land that would be eventually known as Russia. It was this contact that would set the stage for future trade exchange and extensive long-distance trading with the Arabic world, as well as the Viking-*Rus'* exploration into Byzantium. According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, at the same time the Vikings launched their second raiding campaign in Muslim Spain in 859, “Varangians from beyond the sea imposed tribute upon the Slavs.”⁵ However, while the Slavs successfully dispelled the Vikings, they were unable to establish a stable government, forcing them to “seek a prince who may rule over [them] and judge [them] according to the Law.”⁶ Thus, they looked to the Varangians to provide strong leadership and rule over them. However, even before they were invited back to establish law and order over the Slavs, Swedish Vikings had established a presence in the area, and established trading contacts with Arabic merchants across the Caspian Sea. The raiding campaign on Constantinople in 860 by these Swedish Vikings marked the beginning of not only a long-distance trade exchange but also an exchange of military service between the Byzantine Empire and Viking Scandinavia.⁷

The Vikings' demand for silver was one of the most important factors that influenced their commercial contacts into Russia and Constantinople. Constantinople at the time was one of the world's most important trading centers, and the Vikings realized the opportunities to amass personal wealth by not only engaging in trade with the empire but by also offering their military service to the Byzantine Emperors. Viking warriors were well respected, and their fighting spirit was legendary. It comes as no surprise then that “the emperors valued the Varangians above all for their loyalty and courage, their fighting qualities and ability to carry out commands efficiently and without questions.”⁸ Service in the Varangian Guard was prestigious as well as profitable. In addition to their regular salary, Varangian Guard soldiers received gifts at the coronation of a new emperor and they shared in the booty while on military campaign for the empire.⁹

Not only were the Varangians highly regarded in their military service to the Byzantine Emperor, they also received preferential treatment in their commercial trading activities with the empire. It was in Constantinople that the

Viking and Arab trade exchange flourished, as the city was regarded as a major trading center, bringing together exotic goods from the East and West. The Vikings brought much sought after furs, amber, and slaves to the Byzantines and thus the Arab market. In return, the Vikings received Arab silver coins, silk textiles, and jewelry. Clearly, it appears that the merchandise traded were luxury items intended for the wealthy of both Viking and Arab society.¹⁰ It is thus not surprising that this extensive and expensive trade relationship needed to be regulated and protected. The importance of ensuring safe delivery of the exotic northern merchandise is evident in several agreements, beginning in 907. These agreements not only established the commercial trading relationship between Byzantium and the Varangians, they also aimed to create a permanent peace between the two peoples. In essence, Byzantium awarded the Varangians privileged trading status by regulating the trade, providing insurance for their goods, and awarding generous privileges for the Varangian merchants. The *Kiev Chronicle* mentions several treaties regulating Byzantine-Varangian trade:

If they [Rus'] come as merchants they shall be fed for six months; bread, wine, meat, fish and fruit. Bath shall be prepared for them as often as they wish. When they return to Rus' again, they shall be equipped by our emperor with proviant, anchors, ropes and sails and everything needed.¹¹

These treaties highlight the importance of the evolving long-distance trade relationship between the Varangians, Viking Scandinavia, Byzantium, and the Arabs. Byzantine Constantinople acted as the main trading center in facilitating this international trade relationship.

One important figure of the Varangian trade connection was Harald Sigurdson, also known as Harald Hardrada, who served in the Varangian Guard from around 1030 to 1042.¹² This future King of Norway used his service in Byzantium to amass personal wealth that would allow him to return to his native land and claim the throne in 1046. His adventures are well documented in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, in which he devotes a Saga to the future king. During his service, Harald travelled across the Byzantine Empire, fighting campaigns in Africa, and the Middle East, as far as Palestine, and amassed a great amount of wealth.¹³ Sturluson reports, Harald "gathered great wealth in gold, jewels, and all sorts of precious things; and all the wealth he gathered there which he did not need for his expenses, he sent with trusty men of his own north to Novgorod to King Jarisleif's care and keeping."¹⁴ Harald's travels reveal a rich history of contact with cultures very different from his own. The wealth he was able to

accumulate was eventually transferred to his native land, and used in the Viking practice of gift giving to ensure loyalty and support in order to secure political power. One such exotic gift was “an ingot of gold the size of a man’s head,” which Harald presented to King Magnus upon his return to Norway.¹⁵ Harald exchanged not only exotic treasures from his foreign travels but also stories, thus helping Scandinavians to imagine the world and its diverse cultures beyond their known lands.

While Viking sources are rather scarce on their trading exchange and interaction with the Arabic world, Arabic writers have left a plethora of reports about their encounters with the “people of the North.” It is evident in the written Arabic sources that they observed the Vikings and their customs with great interest. These sources reveal an extensive interaction between the two cultures. For the educated Muslim of the tenth century, only four peoples existed that possessed a civilization of culture: Arabs, Persians, Indians, and the Byzantines, and while Europe was known as a geographical entity the Arabs did not view it as a cultural concept.¹⁶ The Muslim Arabs certainly acknowledged the existence of other peoples, however “the centre of the world was the lands of Islam, stretching from Spain across North Africa to the Middle East.”¹⁷ Several writers of the ninth and tenth century however give detailed descriptions of the northern region, its people as well as its flora and fauna. Al-Bīrūnī reports that the people living in the far northern region use wooden sleds and skis for travel through the snow-covered plains.¹⁸ Prior to the expansion of Islam into Europe there was also little interaction with other ethnic groups, and even after the establishment of the al-Andalus Caliphate the Muslim Arabs were not too interested in the northern lands. According to the Arab worldview, the “people of the North” did not concern themselves with science, thus they were of little interest to the Arabs who considered themselves intellectually as well as culturally superior.¹⁹ Overall, the Varangians had little to offer to the learned Muslim Arabs.

At the time of the Viking raids in Spain, Muslim Arabs had very little knowledge about the seafaring raiders. The Viking invasion of Spain in 844 marked one of the first contacts between the two cultures. Arabic writers recorded the Viking invasion, noting that the fire-worshipping ‘al-Majus (al-Rus) “took captives, slaughtered, burnt and plundered.”²⁰ This first interaction certainly helped to reinforce the Arabs’ perception of the uncivilized Vikings. While contact with the Vikings was limited to raids in Western Europe, Arabs had a greater opportunity in Eastern Europe to interact with the Vikings. Arabs did not seem to be interested in travelling to Scandinavia in order to conduct trade, although the Spanish Arab al-Tartuschi reported that the Danish trading center of Hedeby was poor and dirty.²¹ Due to the importance of the Byzantine

trade exchange Viking merchants were a common sight in Constantinople in the late ninth and tenth century, thus interacting with Arab merchants. The trade exchange benefitted both: Arabs desired Viking furs and weapons, and the Vikings were in need of silver in the form of Arabic coins and jewelry. However, Arabs also observed Vikings in their settlements. One of the better-known accounts is that of Ibn Fadlan, an Arab chronicler who was sent to the King of the Bulgars of the Middle Volga by the Caliph of Baghdad in 921.²² Ibn Fadlan's report is remarkable in that it is a first-hand account by an Arab observing the Viking *Rus'* in their everyday life. He admires their perfect physiques just like the Byzantine Emperors admired the physical strength of their Varangian Guards. What is of great value and helped reinforce the Arabs' view of the culturally inferior Vikings is Ibn Fadlan's detailed observations of the *Rus'* life. Ibn Fadlan calls them "the filthiest of Allah's creatures," and is appalled by their lack of hygiene.²³ He then describes in great detail various aspects of the *Rus'* customs, paying particular attention to their funeral and burial practices, which appear to be very foreign to the Arab chronicler. Overall, the account elucidates the differences between the two cultures. It must have been a culture shock for Ibn Fadlan to experience Viking *Rus'* life, however his report also provides invaluable information about the interaction between the two cultures outside the commercial trade exchange. Subsequent Arab reports on the Vikings corroborate Ibn Fadlan's observations, indicating a long lasting and extensive interaction between the two peoples.

What is missing in the Viking-Arab trade exchange discussion is evidence of written Viking sources describing the contact and interaction between the two peoples. There are no Viking accounts available similar to Ibn Fadlan's report on the *Rus'* that could provide insight to how the Vikings perceived the Arabs and their customs. There is however evidence of long-distance travel and trade on memorial stones or rune stones, with the majority of them occurring in Sweden. The inscriptions tell of travels to Greece to obtain precious metals, as well as travels to the Middle East, mentioning Jerusalem and the land of the Saracens.²⁴ Equally missing from the discussion are Viking artifacts in Arab lands, which would indicate a one-sided trade exchange. However, through Arab written sources it is clear that goods such as furs and weapons were highly sought after by the Arabs. A lack of archaeological evidence does not automatically preclude the existence of trade relations. There is, however a plethora of Arabic and Islamic artifacts in Scandinavia, especially in Sweden. This in turn supports the idea that Swedish Vikings traveled eastwards, established settlements in the Volga region of Russia, and engaged in an extensive trading network with the Arabs via Byzantium. This eastward

exploration was spurred by the Vikings' quest for silver. As Wladyslaw Duczko states, "For the Northmen the Islamic silver was the main object of exchange. It was in exchange of this metal that a variety of goods was delivered to the East."²⁵ In return, the Vikings acquired a rich selection of diverse goods from the East that they brought back to their respective settlements in Russia as well as Scandinavia.

The great majority of Arabic and Islamic artifacts found in Scandinavia were silver coins. Scandinavia was not a silver-producing region, thus devoid of natural occurrences of the precious metal. In Sweden alone, 80,000 dirhams have been found, with the great majority of them dating to the ninth and tenth century, indicating the intensity of the long-distance trade exchange during the *Rus'* first contact with Byzantium.²⁶ These silver coin hoards also show how important the precious metal was to Swedish society in particular. The chieftains were "in constant need of silver to maintain their societal position," which meant that "silver was very useful as an economical-political means and was a significant factor in the shaping of the emerging Swedish state."²⁷ Thus, the importance of the silver coin hoards cannot be underestimated. The coveted silver coins were used to ensure chieftains' political power and influence. Gift giving in general was an important practice in Viking society, as chieftains and men of high social standing used the custom to secure and expand their political position in exchange for loyalty and support.

The practice of gift giving was not limited to silver coins. As the Sagas report, exotic items from foreign lands were greatly desired and used to enhance a person's status or ensure allegiance for a leader. These exotic items are further proof of an extensive long-distance relationship with Byzantium. Snorri Sturluson mentions how "unusual splendour and foreign customs and fashions" were a regular sight at the Norwegian kings' court.²⁸ While Arabic and Islamic silver coins represent the majority of artifacts in Sweden that indicate an extensive trade relationship with the Arab world, other items point to the rich diversity of the trade exchange. Although silver was in high demand in Scandinavia, more personal Arabic objects have been found, including a bronze incense burner, an oil lamp, fine glassware, silk textiles, as well as intact pieces of oriental jewelry, such as a silver amethyst ring with the Arabic inscription *in the name of Allah*.²⁹

Evidence in written Arabic sources, Viking Sagas, as well as archeological artifacts in Scandinavia point to an extensive trade relationship between Vikings and Arabs. The Vikings' need for silver spurred their exploration eastward and established a far-reaching trade exchange that went beyond their quest for the precious metal. The Vikings' development from

raiders to traders can be traced in this long-distance trade relationship. In their quest for silver, the Vikings eventually reached the great trading center of Constantinople, bringing them in contact with diverse cultures. This, in turn, started a far-reaching trade exchange that impacted not only the lives of the Viking merchants but also brought the exotic world of Byzantium and Muslim Arabs to the “people of the North.”

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Notes

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3. Price, “The Vikings in Spain, North Africa and the Mediterranean,” 466.
4. Amira K. Bennison, “The Peoples of the North in the Eyes of the Muslims of Umayyad al - Andalus (711-1031),” *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 2 (Jul 2007): 171.
5. *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, trans. and ed. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), 6.
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7. S. H. Cross, “The Scandinavian Infiltration into Early Russia,” *Speculum* 21, no. 4 (Oct., 1946): 506.
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Susanne Watts is a native German, who moved to the United States in March 1994 to marry her then-soldier husband, Sean. As a child of the Cold War she lived through some of its hot periods. Growing up a mere ten miles from the former East-German border, her West-German hometown is located in the famous Fulda Gap, near OP Alpha. Susanne graduated from American Public University with a BA in History in November 2014 and is currently pursuing a MA History from the University of North Dakota. Her thesis focuses on the influence of anti-German World War I sentiments on Prohibition and German-American cultural traditions. Not surprisingly, her historical interests include Germany from 1871 to 1933, the US Gilded Age through the 1920s, the Great War, and the history of the Cold War—particularly as it pertains to her hometown area. Susanne and Sean currently share an abode with their Rubenesque feline, Rugby. The three make their home in Theodore Roosevelt’s adopted home state of North Dakota—the land of breathtaking open prairies, the legendary Badlands, and endless winters.

William Wallace: The Man Behind the Legend

DeAnna Stevens

“The Uprising”
Albannach

I wonder what you felt inside, as they dragged you through foreign streets
The townsfolk spat venom at you, as churchmen took their seats
And did you think of your Motherland, as you stood there centre stage
Or did you feel suppression, Dear Sir, like an animal in a cage?

I wonder what you felt inside, as they hung you by your throat
Through tear-welled eyes you looked out, as the crowd began to gloat.
And when they cut you down, so that your body slammed the ground
Did you pray to God for strength, Dear Sir, to fight another round?

I wonder what you felt inside, when you burned with ropes pulled tight
Did you see the glee upon their faces, as they watched you lose the fight?
And when every inch of your body cried out, with a burning, searing pain,
Did it ever cross your mind, Dear Sir, “was it all in vain”?

I wonder what you felt inside, when you met the butcher’s blade
Did you see their blank expressions, as they watched your lifeforce fade?
Or did your soul break free from the pain and the hurt, to a pine covered glen
And will you ever know, Dear Sir, what a hero you became?

Aye, will you ever know, Dear Sir, what a hero you became?

(shouted)

Don’t fear their cannons or their muskets!

Charge with me!

We fight for what we love, we fight for our country!

Scotsmen, charge, for Scotland!

Legends grow up in every country throughout the world. They sometimes create national heroes and provoke a sense of pride and patriotism. Though usually inaccurate and based on myth, every so often a legend is born out of historical events and based on real people. This is the case with the Scottish hero William Wallace. Wallace was a flesh and blood man who had no idea that he would one day become a national hero of Scotland and an international legend; however, in the right time and in the right circumstances, normal becomes exceptional and exceptional becomes legendary.

The first historical account of William Wallace is that of Henry the Minstrel, otherwise known as Blind Harry. Blind Harry wrote *The history of the life, adventures, and heroic actions of the celebrated Sir William Wallace* in the fifteenth century, approximately one hundred and fifty years after the execution of Wallace. Once thought of as a historically accurate rendition of Wallace's life, it is known to be filled with inaccuracies and romantic embellishments. However, Blind Harry's account is still referenced in biographies and comparisons between reality and legend.

Details of William Wallace's birth are lost. Blind Harry wrote that Wallace was born in Ellerslie to Malcolm Wallace and a daughter of Sir Ronald Crawford.¹ Some historians claim that Wallace was born around 1270 and was the second son of Sir Malcolm Wallace.² Others state that Wallace was born anywhere between the years 1260 and 1278 and that he was born either at Ellerslie, Elderslie, or Renfrewshire, that his father was Malcolm, Andrew, or William, and that his mother was Jean, Joan, Margaret, or an unnamed woman.³ Speculation also is rampant on the number and gender of Wallace's siblings, whether he was born into a minor or major noble family, or if he was a commoner with no claim to any noble heritage.⁴ Historian Fiona Watson states that the "lack of verifiable evidence, or even relatively certain supposition, for the life and deeds of the man is both a blessing and a curse."⁵ The blessing of no clear evidence means that the mystery and legendary status of Wallace will continue to increase. However, for historians who try to provide the reality behind the legend, the lack of evidence is a curse.

One of the foremost and well-known biographers of Wallace is Andrew Fisher. In studying the few writings by Wallace that still exist, Fisher believes that Wallace was the son of Alan Wallace, evidenced in a letter Wallace wrote after the Battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297. The inscription on the seal states "[Wilelm]vs Filius Alani Walais," which translates to "William, son of Alan Wallace."⁶ By his own seal, Wallace declares his father as Alan Wallace. Fisher has traced the lineage of Alan Wallace and has been able to reconstruct some background information on the family. Alan Wallace had sworn allegiance to King Edward I of England, as had so many other Scottish nobles in order to gain wealth and protection from the English crown. Fisher also found evidence that William Wallace had two brothers, Malcolm and John. William supported the Baliol family, whose

authority as rulers of Scotland was increasingly undermined by Edward I. Malcolm supported Robert the Bruce, a rival for the Scottish throne. John Wallace also supported Robert the Bruce, an action for which he paid in 1304 when he was executed for treason against the crown of England. Fisher also states that if Alan Wallace was the father of William, then William's birthplace would probably have been in Ayrshire rather than the commonly believed Elderslie.⁷

It is not clear what caused William Wallace to turn so violently against the English in May 1297. However, it is true that Wallace killed William Heselrig, sheriff of Lanark. Legend records that Wallace was avenging the murder of his beloved wife, Marion Braidfute, whom he had married in secret. Blind Harry's poetically written account follows:

Ev'n then she shakes at Heselrig's fierce hate,
And her soul shrinks, as previous to her fate.
Now fierce with rage the cruel foe draws near,
Oh! does not Heaven make innocence its care?
Where fled thy guardian angel in that hour,
And left his charge to the fell tyrant's power?
Shall his fierce steel be reddened with thy gore,
And streaming blood distain thy beauties o'er?
But now awoken'd with the dreadful sound,
The trembling matron threw her eyes around,
In vain, alas! were all the tears she shed,
When fierce he wave the faulchion o'er her head,
All ties of honour by the rogue abjur'd,
Relentless deep he plung'd the ruthless sword;
Swift o'er her limbs does creeping coldness rise,
And death's pale hand seal'd up her fainting eyes.

The description of Wallace's reaction by Blind Harry, is detailed and full of vengeance:

Then let those tears to war's rough toils give way,
And the fierce sword perform what words would say.
Hear me, brave Graham, companion of my arms,
Whose soul alike is fir'd with glory's charms.
To thee I swear, this sword I'll never sheath,

Till I revenge my dearest dearest's death.
Heavens! what new toils of death and war remain?
Rivers of floating blood, and hills of slain!
But steel'd with rage, to slaughter let us fly,
And for her sake there shall ten thousand die.

The murder of Marion Braidfute may have enraged Wallace enough to kill Heselrig. Or Heselrig may have instigated a murder or attack on someone else close to Wallace. Alternatively, Fisher states that evidence presented at Wallace's trial in 1305 indicates Heselrig was killed on the day he held court in Lanark. Fisher offers two possible explanations. The first is that Heselrig entered a judgment against Wallace and was murdered in retaliation. Of the second explanation, Fisher believes it to be most plausible. The murder of Heselrig may have been a crime of opportunity in which Wallace saw a way to strike a blow against a representative of the English crown while dispensing judgment on the Scottish people.⁸ Whatever his motives were, there is no question that Wallace murdered Heselrig. The act could not have occurred at a more opportune time to catapult Wallace to the forefront of the Scottish rebellion. His band of supporters grew enormously in response to the death of Heselrig. Wallace was seen as unafraid to act and willing to dispose of Englishmen, even if he aroused the anger of the powerful king of England, Edward I. When the English army advanced on Stirling Bridge in September 1297 in retaliation for the continuous Scottish rebellions and raids into England, William Wallace and the nobleman Andrew de Moray led the Scottish forces. When the English arrived, James Stewart, the High Steward of Scotland, and Malcolm, Earl of Lennox, a Scot whose forces had previously fought with the English, approached the Scots in an effort to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Wallace and Moray rejected the offerings of their fellow Scotsmen. The English forces, led by the Earl of Surrey, settled in for the night and prepared for battle.

The English must have confused the Scots the next morning. The bridge was barely wide enough for two mounted soldiers to ride abreast, forcing the vanguard to take a long time to cross. Then, once they had crossed, they were called back across the bridge because the Earl of Surrey was still in bed. The vanguard began crossing the bridge a second time after the Earl had risen only to be called back again upon the return of James Stewart and the Earl of Lennox. Upon learning that Wallace and

Moray had declined a peace settlement, the Earl of Surrey sent two Dominican Friars to the Scots' leaders in one last attempt to settle the matter without bloodshed. According to the account of Walter Hemingborough of Guisborough Priory, the friars returned with a message from Wallace: "Take back this reply, that we are not here to make peace but to do battle to defend ourselves and liberate our kingdom. Let them come on and we shall prove this in their very beards."⁹

The Scots, after seeing the two previous crossings, decided to take the offensive and attack the English at the most opportune time. The third time the English crossed Stirling Bridge, the Scots waited until the cavalry and infantry vanguard of 2,000 arrived.¹⁰ The movie *Braveheart* took liberties with this battle and showed the two armies advancing towards each other on a large meadow. Mel Gibson, as William Wallace, spoke with eloquence and roused the troops into an uproar. He ended his speech, declaring "they may take our lives but they will never take our freedom."¹¹ While no record of any such speech survives from the real battle, some sort of encouraging talk probably was given prior to the attack. In the real battle, horns would have blared, weapons pounded against shields, and war cries screamed as the Scots ran towards the English soldiers. Fearsome to the English already across the bridge, the sight was a death sentence. Pinned between the oncoming Scots and the river behind, and with troops still on the bridge, the English had no choice but to fight the advancing enemy. The Scots lowered their long spears, met the cavalry, and pushed the entire English force back into the river.¹² The English on the south side of the bridge, defeated by a commoner, a noble warrior, a savage outlaw, or a natural born leader, depending on the sources, retreated. Wallace had managed to overcome the advantage of the much larger, well organized English army.

The Battle of Stirling Bridge sparked the beginning of the legend of William Wallace. The debates about where he came from do not change the simple fact that Wallace defeated the overwhelming English with a smaller force. The tactics used at Stirling Bridge took intelligence, courage, and a steady heart to implement. Wallace proved that he had the necessary composition to lead men into battle. In reward, he was knighted and conferred with the title of Guardian of Scotland by March 29, 1298.¹³

In the absence of a king, a man of lower birth had risen to the highest power in Scotland at that time. In fighting to protect his

country, William Wallace was already beginning to take on legendary status before his death. In *Braveheart*, commoners talk of William Wallace and his achievements after the Battle of Stirling Bridge, bragging about how many men he had killed, the story changing from fifty men to one hundred men. The Scots found a sense of pride in being Scottish and rallied behind Wallace. The English, on the other hand, spread fear about Wallace in an effort to have him captured. Propaganda described Wallace as “an ogre of unspeakable depravity who skinned his prisoners alive, burned babies and forced the nuns to dance naked for him.”¹⁴

In a turn of events, the Battle of Falkirk brought about the defeat of William Wallace and the end of his major role in Scotland. In a pitched battle Wallace met the English, employing the same type of tactics used at Stirling Bridge. At first, it seemed as if the strategy and the ground itself would work in his favor. However, the English broke through the Scots’ line of spearmen. Wallace retreated to the North.¹⁵ No clear evidence exists that Scottish nobles betrayed Wallace that day, as has been suggested. However, legend indicates that John III Comyn, another rival for the Scottish throne, and his cavalry abandoned Wallace on the battlefield. Possibly, Comyn may have been chasing his own cavalry in order to turn them around and join the fight. Stories also report that Robert the Bruce took the field that day on the side of Edward I. Robert, though, was rumored to be fifty miles away in Ayr Castle.¹⁶ *Braveheart* drew on these stories of betrayals, giving them extended life in the theatrical portrayal of the Battle of Falkirk. In the movie, Wallace calls on the cavalry of the nobles to join the battle, but they turn and ride away, abandoning Wallace. Robert the Bruce protects Edward I from Wallace’s attack,¹⁷ but he also saved Wallace’s life before Edward’s men reached him as he lay injured.

William Wallace resigned as Guardian of Scotland after his defeat at Falkirk. As fast as he rose in prominence, he returned to outlaw status. Relentless, Edward I never forgot Wallace and the trouble he had caused. The English king engaged Scottish nobleman Sir John de Mentieth to carry out the arrest of Wallace. No evidence explains why Mentieth betrayed Wallace in spite of the fact that Mentieth had at one time been a close friend of Wallace’s.¹⁸ After his capture on August 23, 1305, William Wallace was transported to Westminster to stand trial for treason.

The trial was nothing more than a reading of William Wallace's crimes against the King of England. The judges accused him of killing English priests and nuns, stealing relics from churches, murder, treason, and numerous other charges. His only reply was that he had never sworn allegiance to Edward I. Sentenced to death, Wallace faced his accusers in silence.

The method of execution for a man like William Wallace guaranteed his place in history. Hanged, drawn, disemboweled, quartered and beheaded, Wallace's head was placed on London Bridge. The quarters of his body were publicly displayed, one each in Newcastle, Perth, Berwick, and, most likely, Aberdeen at Stirling. The display of Wallace's body parts was meant to stifle any further thought of rebellion. Nine years passed before Robert the Bruce led the Scots at Bannockburn in 1314 and won independence for Scotland.¹⁹

More than seven centuries after his execution, William Wallace is still an integral part of Scotland's history. No matter whose declarations are the loudest, the truth is that there is simply not enough evidence to provide a clear history of his life. However, Scotland, and the world know the most important fact about him. Wallace fought for Scotland's independence, not because he wanted to be a hero, but because he simply wanted his country to be free.

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The Lighter Side of Khan

Christopher Sheline

When reflecting on history's greatest kings, emperors, philosophers, and military leaders, few have reached the immense prestige and influence of Genghis Khan (r. 1206-1227). Through his wisdom, charisma, and military ingenuity, Khan built one of the largest empires the world has ever known. However, along the road to immortality, Mongol methodology took on varying forms including psychological and economic warfare. As a result, scholars from as early as the late medieval period into the modern day have depicted Khan as a barbarian, crude and harsh in his ways. Myths and legends arose from these stereotypes, often heavily diminishing or even completely ignoring the many humble and noble characteristics of Genghis Khan. Rather than a bloodthirsty barbarian, he was a cunning warrior, an efficient administrator, and a prudent lawgiver that sought to create a peaceful and unified world.

The Myths and Legends of the Great Khan

Myths surrounding Genghis Khan include dramatically exacerbated kill counts, to degrading religions and their ceremonial sites, and even terrorism. There are varying tales of his death that include dying in battle, in bed, or from falling from his horse. In some cases, misinterpreted information even goes back to the original biographers of Khan. Intended to serve a particular purpose to a given community, each myth or legend is typically the production of a biased, prejudiced, or simply misinformed author. Westerners, especially, accepted the stereotype of Khan as a barbaric plunderer who operated with the single aim of slaughtering and destroying other tribes and civilizations to feed his unquenchable desires, which is perhaps the biggest of all myths. The belief that Khan was a brutal barbarian most often grew from those whom the Mongols conquered. They wished to discredit Khan and told a tale that drastically contradicted reality. Hence, Khan became the crazed killer, or "saber wielding maniac" when the opposite was true.

One popular myth alleges that Genghis Khan killed over one million seven hundred thousand people in a single hour or thirty thousand people per minute.¹ This death count originated from the estimated population of a Persian city called Nishapur, which Khan sacked in retaliation for the death of his son-in-law at the hands of a Nishapuran. The sack lasted over ten days, far longer than one hour, and Khan was not even present. Furthermore, while a massacre did occur at Nishapur,

the death count remains questionable.² There is no reliable information to support the claim that this siege was any more severe than countless others throughout the thirteenth century.

Also unwarranted is a myth that suggests Khan was religiously prejudiced and disregarded other cultures' beliefs—particularly Christians and Muslims. An example of this myth occurred with an alleged eyewitness account of Khan reacting to a mosque in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, a common stop on the silk trading route. Genghis Khan approached the mosque inquiring as to whether it was the home of the Sultan; the mosque was the largest building in the city. However, when he discovered that it was, in fact, a house of worship, he turned away and said nothing.³ The religious belief of the Mongols, especially Khan, was that one God existed within the Eternal Blue Sky that stretched from horizon to horizon in all four directions. This was primarily a form of Shamanism. Clarifying this, Jack Weatherford, Professor of Anthropology at Macalester College and author of *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*, stated, “[The Mongols] believed that God presided over the whole earth, and could not be cooped up in a house like a prisoner, nor, as the city people claimed, could his words be captured and confined inside the covers of a book.”⁴ For this reason, Khan disregarded religious structures and texts. He entered said mosque with the sole purpose of collecting money and lecturing the Bukhara elite.

Despite the Mongols' beliefs, they enforced religious tolerance, and in no way discriminated against others. The Bukhara mosque demonstrated a common practice of the Mongols entering a city and beginning to plunder. This is why Khan sought the Sultan and did not respect the mosque. Furthermore, he did not destroy or prohibit the city from practicing what it chose. The society's elites provided the source of treasures that would sustain the Mongolian army, thus showing submission to Mongolian rule. This was Khan's intention, not religious degradation. However, despite Khan's religious flexibility, he disrespected many “houses of God” and unintentionally promoted the myth of religious degradation.

To believe that any one of these myths have merit is to assume that there was little to no formal governing authority, political administrations, codes of law, empathy, honorable principles or motives. If the Mongols were simply crude and godless barbarians, they could not be capable of any of these relatively sophisticated developments when in fact they had them all. This fact directly conflicts with how the Mongols were portrayed, at least through the mid-twentieth century.

Chinggis Qan: The Early Life

To understand why Khan was successful as a leader, and why he chose his

particular methods and goals, it is critical to understand his motivations and background. Genghis Khan took on many names throughout his life. His true name was Temuchin or Temujin, and he originally arose from Northeast Asia as a Mongol warlord.⁵ Allegedly, his most famous pseudonym, “Genghis Khan,” was a European mispronunciation of the more culturally accurate Chinggis Qan and Jenghiz Khan. A large portion of his success is the result of his prolonged hardship prior to his reign.

Temujin was born to the noble family of Yesugei and Ho’elun, head of the Khamag Mongol confederation.⁶ While still a young man, Temujin’s family betrothed him to a woman from another tribe named Borte. His father, Yesugei, fell ill and passed away after the Tartars, an enemy tribe, poisoned him.⁷ The Tartars were of similar ethnic origin and a neighboring tribe. Temujin also suffered through the kidnapping of his beloved Borte, which meant that his first-born was likely illegitimate. After receiving word of his father’s death, Temujin returned home and, after enduring further hardships as a slave until his daring escape, took a leadership position among the Mongols. He replaced his father as head of the Khamag at age thirteen. The aforementioned hardships provided him with one goal, to unify his people under one banner and eliminate the constant conflict between the many Mongol confederations. These facts are critically important when uncovering the reality of Chinggis Qan and the Mongols.

In 1206, the Mongols, along with Turkish tribesmen, gathered and prepared to embark on one of the most influential campaigns in world history. At this time, Temujin took the name of Chinggis Qan, Qan—or Khan—meaning king or ruler. Under his leadership, they poured out of Mongolia to conquer northern China and Korea.⁸ By 1216, the Mongols succeeded in their mission and moved into Persia and, “By the end of 1221, Genghis Khan had crushed the Islamic Khwarizmian Empire in Transoxiana and invaded the Ukrainian steppes.”⁹ This created the largest empire in recorded history.

Brutal Barbarian versus a Skilled Strategist and Leader

During the thirteenth century, Genghis Khan cemented his reputation as a military leader due in part to his understanding of Sun Tzu, a leading eastern military philosopher. Sun Tzu urged that the ultimate goal of offensive strategy is to unite “All-under-Heaven intact,” as a means to resolve conflicts.¹⁰ With this unity, there would be no occasion for war. The fact that Khan aimed for such a goal demonstrates his desire for peace and order, as well as his motivation to develop one sovereign leadership. Based on his early life experiences, Khan certainly had reasons to desire such a goal. To realize peace, unity, and order an individual must devote themselves to the people’s welfare—practice benevolence and righteousness.¹¹

Clearly, Genghis Khan agreed with Sun Tzu and the idea of mass unity. So much so, that Khan expanded on this principle by aiming to unite the entire world. It is relevant to point out that the goal of unity is peace and part of his “moral” philosophy. This speaks to the true character and leadership methods of the Great Khan.

One of the most important factors that encouraged Khan’s success was that he was humble. He valued the advice of everyone, from his officers to his living relatives—even his wives. His soldiers valued his humility because it made them feel appreciated and respected by their leader. Those two aspects are crucial in every leadership environment. Many of history’s greatest leaders, including Cyrus the Great, Alexander the Great, and perhaps even Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden shared this practice. Each of these men recognized the value of enduring their subordinates’ hardship and listening to their concerns. And although Khan was born of noble blood, he shared the hardships of battle with his men. Genghis Khan courageously led his men into battle, risking his life in each conflict. He utilized unusual tactics, weapons, diplomatic methods, and even various forms of technology to accomplish his goals. The Battle of Liegnitz in 1241 demonstrated this and influenced Mongolian tactics even after Khan died.

Fought in a wide-open plain near Legnickie Pole, in what is today southwestern Poland, the Battle of Liegnitz pitted Henry II the Pious, Duke of Silesia, against the Mongolian Empire. Henry’s army consisted of a combined European force of Poles, Moravians, and the famed Knights Templar sent by the Pope himself. They sought to stop the Mongolian invasion of Europe and uphold feudal nobility. This collection of soldiers, particularly Knights Templar, emphasizes the threat the Mongols posed to Europe as well as their military prowess.

One of Henry’s first moves was to send his cavalry brigades to attack the Mongol center, to which the Mongols responded by encircling the brigade and showering them with arrows.¹² Without having adequate support, the brigade quickly broke and fell back. Not learning from his original error, Henry decided to commit the main body of his cavalry again to the Mongol center. The Mongols responded by feigning a retreat, luring Henry, his contingent, and the Silesian cavalry into giving chase.¹³

A feigned retreat was a classic Mongol tactic, as it consistently deceived their enemy and the maneuver worked perfectly at Liegnitz. Richard A. Gabriel, Professor of War Studies at the Royal Military College of Canada and author of many biographies of history’s greatest military leaders including Scipio Africanus of Rome and Hannibal, states, “The feigned retreat was a proven Mongol tactic designed to separate the enemy cavalry from its infantry and disperse their tightly packed formations.”¹⁴ The Mongol light cavalry ambushed the Silesians with arrow

fire and used firepots to obscure the battlefield behind Henry. This tactic embodied another Sun Tzu philosophy regarding the importance of moving when it is advantageous and when it creates situations of dispersal.¹⁵ The Mongols took advantage of the mass confusion and sent their heavy cavalry to surround the knights and shoot them down at close range. At the same time, the light cavalry darted in and out of the smoke peppering the infantry with arrows.¹⁶ With the horses shot out from under them, the Knights Templar fell helpless to Mongol lances. Nearly the entire European army perished.

Again consistent with Sun Tzu, Khan leveraged a critical mode of communication both on and off the battlefield that became common throughout the Mongolian domain. The Mongols used flags and banners to relay signals, each producing an efficient and often immediate response. This blended the army into a harmonious entity, even during the height of battle.¹⁷ The Battle of Leignitz and the clever methods of communication demonstrate deceptive and ingenious methodology. This produced many one-sided Mongol victories and is precisely why the Europeans depicted the Mongols as brutal barbarians rather than the skilled warriors and efficient tacticians they were.

One of the most profound realities of Mongol strategy is found within the psychological component. Despite having moral intentions, Khan often sought to make others perceive him as a threat. He hoped that they would surrender without a fight, and avoid scenarios like Leignitz. For example, when Khan approached a city, he gave the people a choice to surrender or die.¹⁸ Unfortunately, cities did not always surrender, which forced his hand. When this happened, it strengthened Khan's resolve and reputation, and eventually encouraged others to willfully submit to Mongol rule.

Principles, Administration, Religion, and Law

Khan built the Mongolian Empire on a variety of moral guidelines. He did not hesitate to make decisions, praised those that were loyal to him, and never broke a promise.¹⁹ He took loyalty very seriously. If an enemy soldier betrayed their leader, they died as an example. Alternatively, if an enemy soldier was loyal to his commander even when defeated, he received commendation and praise.²⁰ These actions helped Khan in his quests, as he was able to preserve good soldiers and strengthen the depths of his army. Loyalty and ethnic unity proved to be greater bonds than the classic forced servitude, as well as the necessity to put the state and imperial interests first.²¹

The silks and spices of the Orient did not distract Khan, nor did any form of material wealth because he did not recognize or succumb to greed. Weatherford

quoted Khan as saying, “I hate luxury, and I exercise moderation.”²² He only took what he needed to sustain his people. To put this into proper perspective, the Mongol Empire spanned from Korea to the Persian Gulf. It is nothing short of astonishing that Khan was able to sustain these anti-materialistic principles over such a vast territory. An elaborate and well-organized administration made it possible such that, “The Mongol state, while hardly a democracy, did have elements of a collective leadership, with Khan as chief executive, that was also a meritocracy and multinational organization that did not impose religious orthodoxy.”²³

Religion was not something that Khan restricted whatsoever. Rather, the Mongol administration consisted of people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds: “Perhaps the most striking feature of this empire was the complete religious toleration, as Christians, Pagans, Mahommedans, and Buddhists all served as councilors to Chinggis Khan.”²⁴ Each religion claimed to be the one true religion, so Khan enforced absolute religious freedom while simultaneously refusing to make his own beliefs a national cult. All religious leaders were exempt from taxation and public services. Khan understood the benefits of unifying with these contrasting religious entities if for no other reason than to gain intelligence and loyalty from the groups. In fact, the Mongols always maintained an attitude of pragmatism and toleration, rarely disturbing their subjects’ practices and beliefs unless it violated the Mongol law code.²⁵ This religious flexibility encouraged others to join the Mongols.

Khan also established a Mongol law code called “*Jasaq*,” which focused on handling problems, creating unity, and preserving peace.²⁶ Known as “The Great *Jasaq*,” or *Yasa*, in both Mongolia and China, this work codified written law passed down through generations, governing the Mongolian empire under its unwavering rule.²⁷ Even after the Mongols began converting to various other religions, particularly to Islam in the fourteenth century, the *Yasa* remained alongside Muslim law (*Sharia*). The relationship can be understood as “The *Yasa* was authoritative in political and criminal matters as well as in determining court ceremonies and protocols, while the *Sharia* prevailed in dealing with cult, personal status, and contracts.”²⁸ It is unclear how well the *Yasa* worked alongside other sets of laws, such as the thirteenth century Timurid or Uzbek laws. Nevertheless, records indicate that Mongol India followed the *Yasa*, and that it influenced the Ottoman codex of secular law, the *qanun*.²⁹

Each nation or state recognized that the Mongols developed an efficient means of ruling an empire. As a result, various parts of the Mongol code still exist today. For example, the provincial division initiated in Yuan, China (c. 1279-1368) is still the basis for Chinese provinces, and the Mongolian imperial postal system still exists in China, Iran, and Muscovy.³⁰ The same goes for the Mongol method of using a decimal system for divisions of the army, as well as their system of military

households, methods of guarding the emperor, and the Yuan garrison system.

The *Yasa* was successful because it was relatively simple, and aimed to maintain peace in a large and diverse atmosphere. Genghis Khan suppressed the traditional causes of tribal feuding and refused to base the law on a divine relation from God.³¹ This made the *Yasa* vastly different from most law codes in history, especially during the Middle Ages. Essentially, the code came from the customs and traditions of herding tribes, which meant allowing smaller groups to follow their traditional law as long as it did not conflict with the overall code of *Yasa*. It was an ongoing body of legal work and did not delve into all aspects of life.³² Instead, it sought only to control the most troublesome aspects, such as the kidnapping of women, which clearly had some personal value to Khan considering his past with Borte. In fact, most of the law seemed to develop from the hardships the Mongols suffered in the past.

The law also forbade the abduction and enslavement of any Mongol. The Tayichiud captured and enslaved Khan, making him well aware of the anguish it could cause not only to himself but also to all other tribes of the steppes. The law made all children legitimate, regardless of who mothered the child (wife or concubine), forbade the selling of women into marriage, outlawed adultery, and made animal theft a capital offense.³³ In addition, Khan incorporated an empire-wide lost and found system, in which everyone must return what they found or suffer the penalty for theft—execution. The animal aspect of the law was an effort to protect the much valued and relied upon horses that the Mongols used to propel their empire forward. Each of these developments relate to Khan's troubled past.

The law code also influenced various parts of daily Mongolian life, including hunting seasons and kill regulations. There were even laws that provided essential public service workers—lawyers, doctors, teachers—with tax exemptions, and laws designed to prevent anyone from challenging the Khan's official authority. In a manner outside hereditary obligations, the *Yasa* made it law to elect the next Khan by a *khuriltai*, a political and military council consisting of both Mongol and Turkish Chiefs and Khans.³⁴ The law also enforced group responsibility. This made a family, entire military unit, or tribe subject to a penalty for one member's actions and promoted a just community rather than lawful individualism. The *Yasa* was so binding that not even the Khan could avoid its authority.

The Mongols were no more bloodthirsty than the societies they conquered; they were just more efficient at what they did.³⁵ Khan did not only focus on war and unity, but also how to maintain his empire once established. It is noteworthy to add that Alexander the Great's incredible accomplishments inevitably failed because he did not prepare his empire for longevity and stability after his death. To help prevent this, Kahn spent a lot of time establishing trading routes for his subjects and their

lands. The true ambitions and policies of the Great Khan appear in a letter he had written to the Sultan Muhammad, who desired control of his kingdom despite the Mongolian presence. According to Alā al-Dīn Atā Malik Juvaynī, a Persian historian that served at the Mongol court in West Asia, the letter stated,

Human wisdom so requires it; that the path of concord should be trodden by either side; that the duties of friendship should be observed; that we should bind ourselves to aid and assist one another in the event of untoward happenings. That we should keep open the paths of security frequented and deserted, so that merchants may ply to and fro in safety and without restraint.³⁶

When the Sultan refused to follow its instructions, Khan killed him to preserve the peace and uphold the laws of the land.

Conclusion

Since the Renaissance and the Mongol Empire, misinformation reduced Genghis Khan to the lowest level of human history.³⁷ From what a Mongolian looked like to their mental capacity came under intense scrutiny, often by Western and Christian enthusiasts such as Francis G. Crookshank. Crookshank was a British physician who wrote *The Mongol in Our Midst* in 1924. In this text, Crookshank associated various physical and mental ailments to Mongolian heritage, which he called “the Mongolian stigmata.” Unfortunately, this is why some people refer to children with Down Syndrome as “Mongoloids.” The idea was to encourage their expulsion from society as a means to combat the widespread influence of the former Mongolian Empire. Nevertheless, the Mongolians and collective Asians saw, and still see, the Great Khan as a hero.³⁸

Genghis Khan was a pioneer of his time because his skills and knowledge were far ahead of anyone else. Appreciating the guidance of Sun Tzu, Khan understood the importance of leadership, loyalty, flexibility, and virtue. Although he received much criticism for being brutal, his feigned brutality was just another well-played strategy to accomplish his goal of unity and peace. Khan taught the world that to be a great leader it is necessary to experience hardship—a Clausewitz philosophy—and that it is important to understand the pains of others. Leaders should present themselves as equals, be both a fighter and a lover, and never be interested in wealth. Most importantly, one should always keep in mind that a goal is more important than an individual is.

Centuries after his passing, Genghis Khan is still history’s greatest

conqueror. The quality of his leadership was the reason for his successes.³⁹ He focused on unity and preservation instead of destruction and attrition. Obviously, this is quite the opposite of the many myths and legends that still circulate today.

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The Frankish War-Machine of Charles Martel

Patrick S. Baker

In 715, Charles Martel had been passed over to inherit his father's position as Mayor of the Palace and Prince (leader) of the Franks in favor of his infant nephews and had also been imprisoned by his stepmother, Plectrude (Plectrudis).¹ However, some time in 716 Charles managed to escape.² By then Charles's Austrasian (Eastern Franks) Carolingian clan, whose homeland included what is now Northern France to the Somme and most of the Benelux countries, was facing a two front war. To the west were the rival Neustrian (New or Western) Franks, whose lands ran from the River Loire through the Seine Valley to the River Somme, under the leadership of their Mayor of the Palace, Ragamfred; to the north, allied with Ragamfred were the pagan Frisians.³ The two allies managed a coordinated assault on the Carolingians. Charles moved to stop the Frisian invasion, but was soundly defeated by the pagans: ". . . he suffered a great loss of followers, but, taking to flight, he escaped."⁴ This was the first battle Charles is said to have fought in and his only recorded defeat.

While Charles appeared to be down, he was certainly not out. The Frisians and Neustrians met at the Rhine River and marched on the city of Cologne, where they forced Plectrude to hand over the family treasure. While the Neustrians were returning west, Charles organized an ambush at Ambleve near Malmedy in present day Belgium and inflicted a serious defeat on them, recapturing at least some of the treasure.⁵

From the victory at Ambleve, Charles went on to defeat Ragamfred again the next year at Vinchy (or Vincy).⁶ He also settled affairs with his father's widow, including seizing from her the remainder of his father's treasure.⁷ Then in 718 Charles chased an army of Aquitainians, allied to Ragamfred, back over the River Loire.⁸ Later that same year he marched east of the River Weser and defeated the West Saxons.⁹

By 717 Charles was the acknowledged leader of all the Franks and hailed as Mayor of the Palace.¹⁰ The position of Mayor of the Palace was unique. Originally merely the administrator of the royal landed estates, the office began to accrue more and more responsibilities and thus power.¹¹ By the time Charles's father, Pippin, held the office, the Mayor was responsible for hearing cases in the law court and "the governance of the whole kingdom, the royal treasure, and command of all the army."¹²

Charles campaigned incessantly and widely, from 716 until his death in 741.¹³ In 718, 724, 725, 728, and 738 Charles fought against the West Saxons east of the Rhine.¹⁴ In 725 and 728, he campaigned along the Danube against the Bavarians.¹⁵ In 734, he fought the Frisians again; this effort included a naval invasion of the Frisian home islands in the North Sea.¹⁶ In 731, he raided Aquitaine twice.¹⁷ In 732, he defeated a major Al-Andalusian (Spanish) Muslim Moorish attack on Aquitaine at the Battle of Tours-Poitiers.¹⁸ In 736-737 Charles led his army south and took control of the Rhone River Valley all the way to Marseilles on the Mediterranean Sea and again defeated the Moors, this time at the Battle of the River Berre.¹⁹

Based on just this brief sketch of Frankish military activity during the reign of the Duke Charles, plainly the Franks had a war-machine that was a highly effective and mobile. It fought from the North Sea in the north to the Mediterranean Sea in the south and from Aquitaine in the west to Bavaria in the east. The Franks also fought and won against enemies as diverse as the pagan seafaring Frisians to the heavy cavalry of the Muslim Moors of Al-Andalus.

Antecedents

The Frankish military of the early eighth century was at least as much a product of the late Roman Empire as it was of the so-called barbarian war-bands that crossed the Rhine and settled in what is now France.²⁰ Originally invited into Roman Gaul as auxiliaries for the Roman Army, a contingent of Franks had fought against the Huns at the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains or Chalons in 451.²¹ Part of the continuity between the late Roman Imperial military traditions and the Frankish military of Charles Martel were the two available military handbooks. The most popular, if the number of surviving manuscripts is an indicator, was Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus' *De Re Militari* (Concerning Military Matters).²² Sextus Julius Frontinus' *Strategemata* (Strategies) was also available in some numbers, although fewer manuscripts of it survived.²³ Of course, how much or how little these handbooks were used by any given military leader is impossible to know. But logic dictates that a general such as Charles Martel, who was said to be "uncommonly well educated and effective in battle" and "the shrewdest of commanders," would have made use of all available military information.²⁴

Branches

The Frankish land military may be seen as having three broad, yet distinct, combat "branches" or "arms." These included: first, the infantry that moved and

fought on foot,²⁵ and second, the cavalry who moved on and at least sometimes fought from horseback.²⁶ Lastly, the “combat engineers” defined as soldiers that designed and supervised the building of defensive positions and the construction and operation of siege equipment, such as catapults and battering rams.²⁷ However, there seems to have been a great deal of crossover among these three “branches.” For example, horsemen frequently dismounted and fought on foot and regular infantry helped build and then operated the siege equipment under the supervision of the skilled engineers.²⁸

Infantry

For the Franks the decisive combat arm was the infantry. Infantry could fight on the tactical offense or defense and were used as assault troops when taking fortifications.²⁹ Of course, as stated previously, infantry could also have been dismounted horsemen. The percentage of fighting men that moved and fought exclusively on foot was about eighty percent of the total forces available.³⁰

The average Frankish infantryman was minimally equipped with a shield and spear.³¹ Perhaps he had an iron helmet, maybe body armor and perhaps a sword, if he could afford them, or had taken them as loot.³² The round shield, or *scutum rotundum*, favored by the Franks after 700 was slightly conical in shape and approximately 80 to 90 centimeters, or 31 to 35 inches, wide; about a centimeter thick made of wood joined to an onion-shaped central metal boss.³³ The spear was the primary infantry weapon.³⁴ It was between six and eight feet long with an iron head, held in one hand and used as a thrusting weapon.³⁵ The swords used were likely some variation of the *semispatha*, about 40 centimeters (15 inches) long, designed for stabbing, not cutting, or the longer *sax* or *scaramsax* swords, that were up to 85 centimeters (33 inches) long.³⁶ Selection of sword length, balance and weight were highly individual choices based on weapon availability, an individual’s strength and dexterity, and personal preferences. A spear and shield cost the same as two cows, or two *solidi*.³⁷ A sword without a scabbard was three *solidi* and one with a scabbard was seven *solidi*.³⁸

The helmets were conical in shape and most likely some variation of the spangenhelm; six bands of iron were joined to a headband and at the apex of the helmet with the intervening spaces filled with iron plates or horn.³⁹ A good helmet cost six *solidi*, enough for two good mares.⁴⁰ The average infantryman was unlikely to have much purchased body armor. A good piece of armor cost twelve *solidi*, or as much as twelve good cows, twice as much as a good helmet.⁴¹ The body armor that was available was likely similar to the Roman cuirass, or perhaps just a simple chainmail shirt.⁴²

As recommended by Vegetius, some infantry were selected to act as archers.⁴³ However, there seems to have been a chronic shortage of bowmen.⁴⁴ The Frankish-European self-bow had a range of about 75 meters (190 yards).⁴⁵ The bow's impact could be significant, through the technique of mass shooting. The "hail of arrows" would kill and injure a few enemies, but more importantly it could break up the enemy's formations and affect his morale.⁴⁶ Although no mention of archers is made in the accounts of the battles during the eighth century it is impossible to merely dismiss their presence.

The most important aspects of Frankish infantry were their high levels of courage and discipline. Maurice's *The Strategikon*, written about 600, clearly states: The Franks "are bold and undaunted in battle. They consider any timidity . . . a disgrace. They calmly despise death as they fight violently in hand-to-hand combat. . . ."⁴⁷ Even the Muslims remarked on their bravery; Musa, the conqueror of Spain, is reported to have said: "These Franks . . . are full of might: brave and impetuous. . . ."⁴⁸ Further *The Chronicle of 754* in an account of the Battle of Tours describes the Franks as ". . . immobile like a wall, holding together like a glacier . . ."⁴⁹ The high level of discipline needed to maintain a tight infantry formation in the face of repeated attacks by the Moors was remarkable. This obedience is even more noteworthy given that just a little more than a century before the 732 Battle of Tours, the Franks were described as "disobedient to their leaders" and thought to despise "good order."⁵⁰

Cavalry

The cavalry, or more properly, horsemen, were approximately twenty percent of the total of Frankish soldiers and were not heavily armored knights organized and equipped for mounted shock combat.⁵¹ Rather, they acted in other military and paramilitary roles. First, they fought against other horsemen; also they operated as scouts, and in an anti-scouting role, they conducted anti-bandit operations, acted as raiders, defended against raids and were also messengers.⁵² Traditional, Frankish horsemen were trained to dismount quickly and fight on foot when required.⁵³

Frankish horsemen were usually the armed followers of a great landed magnate or part of the royal bodyguard. For example Dodo, who was a *domesticus*, or court official, for Pippin, Charles's father, armed and equipped his followers with chain-mail coats, helmets, shields, lances, swords, bows and arrows.⁵⁴ This list of equipment indicates that the *satellites* were expected to fight from both horse-back and on foot. Of course, equipping any number of fighting men was a very expensive proposition, with the basic equipment listed above and a horse costing about forty

solidi, or enough to buy about forty cows or twenty oxen.⁵⁵ The *antrustiones*, equipped like the *satellites*, were the technically sworn armed followers of the kings, but actually loyal to the Mayors of the Palace, and were armed and supported directly from the royal *fisc*, or royal lands, controlled by the Mayors.⁵⁶ These two groups represented the primary sources of mounted warriors for the Franks during the war.

Combat Engineers

The Franks were able to effectively conducted sieges directed against fortified cities. Charles unsuccessfully besieged Angers in 718.⁵⁷ He successfully besieged Avignon twice, once in 737 and again in 738, he also unsuccessfully besieged Narbonne in 737.⁵⁸ During the course of the sieges, the Franks either brought with them or built on the spot various types of throwing machines of different sizes and battering rams.⁵⁹ They also built earthworks that surrounded the cities which featured emplacements and camps at regular “intervals.”⁶⁰ All of this kind of work, the building of siege equipment and artillery as well as the construction of breastworks and the sighting of artillery were highly specialized skills with no civilian equivalent.⁶¹ While the actual labor was done by ordinary soldiers, a small number of expert artisans, or “combat engineers,” had to plan and supervise the various building projects.⁶²

Navy

The Franks were capable of organizing and deploying large naval forces on northern rivers and on the North Sea.⁶³ However, despite controlling Marseilles from at least 736 onward, they never seemed to develop the same capacity on the Mediterranean, or at least could not deploy enough ships to close off Narbonne from seaborne resupply as they besieged it.⁶⁴ The Frankish naval forces were probably commandeered merchant or transport vessels, and possibly a special obligation rested on men that worked on the water, or on shipowners, to provide naval forces when called to service.⁶⁵ While the Franks did not totally ignore naval operations, and in fact paid close attention to riverine operations, the development of seagoing naval power was not a high priority.⁶⁶

Mobilizing and Resourcing

Regardless of the type of service rendered, the obligation to either campaign in person or provide resources to supply others on campaign was a function of

landholding or annual income. Local defense was the responsibility of all able-bodied men, but going on offensive military operations, or *expeditiones*, was related to wealth.⁶⁷ A freeman with sufficient income measured by *mansi* (income producing land areas worked by peasants) would have technically been required to serve in the selected levy and go on offensive operations.⁶⁸ Often a group men who were too poor to go on campaign themselves would come together to support one man going.⁶⁹ The wealthier the man was, the greater his obligation to equip himself and to go on campaign. For example in Charlemagne's time, a landowner with twelve *mansi* would have campaigned on horseback and worn body-armor.⁷⁰ In some cases a son would go on *expeditio* in place of his father, but be supported by his father's holdings.⁷¹

Of course, the great landholding magnates, regardless if they were clerics or laymen, would arm and lead some number of fighting men based on their landholdings.⁷² The great magnates' personal military followings variously called *pueri*, *socii*, *sodales* and *satellites*, all words meaning armed retainers, followers, or supporters were one of the main sources for mounted Frankish military manpower.⁷³

The other source of mounted Frankish military power at this time was the royal or mayoral military household, the *trustis*.⁷⁴ Individual members of the *trustis* were called *antrustione*.⁷⁵ Originally recruited and organized with the job of protecting the kings, the bodyguard's responsibility was shifted to performing the same functions for the Mayors of the Palace as they became the *defacto* rulers of *Francia*.⁷⁶ Although it is impossible to determine the exact size of this force, it is clear that the late Merovingian kings and the Mayors imposed significant taxes; between forty and fifty percent on Church lands.⁷⁷ These taxes were specifically to support a group of professional soldiers, whose primary loyalty was to the realm's leader.⁷⁸

Furthermore, Charles also used *precaria*, a sort of lease of Church land, to reward and support his military followers.⁷⁹ This appears to be a regular way of supporting soldiers by giving them tenancy of Church land that the Church still owned.⁸⁰ On the death of the tenant, the land would revert to the Church for disposition.⁸¹ But if the realm still needed the land to support a soldier, another *precaria* would be issued and recorded.⁸²

Men not reporting for duty remained a serious and long lasting issue. Merovingian kings fined men for not complying with summons to military service.⁸³ A heavy fine, the *heribannus*, would be levied on a freeman for not reporting or for not sending a substitute to fight.⁸⁴ The fine was assessed on the offending freeman's personal assets and could be as high as 60 *solidi* and was paid in either coin or various goods.⁸⁵ Arming a man with sword and scabbard, spear and helmet cost only 21 *solidi*.⁸⁶ Economically, it made much more sense to buy the weapons and report,

or support a substitute, than to pay the *heribannus*.

Also of note were the resources obtained by capturing enemy equipment, looting and raiding. A poorly armed or armored Frankish soldier could easily equip himself with captured enemy gear by taking it from a dead enemy, or from prisoners of war, or by obtaining a helmet or some piece of body armor through a formal division of loot.⁸⁷ Raiding and looting of an enemy provided two benefits. It weakened the enemy by depriving them of resources and also provided resources to the attacker to support his army. Seemingly, the Franks engaged in these kinds of “smash and grab” raids as part of regular military operations. For example, Charles Martel raided Aquitaine twice in 732 with no apparent attempt to seize territory but seemingly with the goal of taking “rich booty” to punish the Duke of Aquitaine.⁸⁸ A defeated enemy’s camp was also an important source of riches and captured equipment.⁸⁹ However, while the spoils of war could and did provide valuable resources to the Franks, it was not a primary motivation for fighting.⁹⁰

Tactics

Around 600 Maurice described how the Franks fought in a dense formation with an even front.⁹¹ The entry for the year 612 from the *Chronicle of Fredegar* describes an infantry formation so closely packed that the dead could not fall.⁹² This statement is no doubt hyperbole, but does point out that the Franks traditionally fought in a tight infantry formation. In battle the Franks would deploy in a formation very like the one described in Vegetius, with the warriors standing nearly shoulder to shoulder, leaving just enough room to hold a shield and a spear and to stab without interfering with the next soldier in the line.⁹³ This formation would have been several ranks deep, depending on its total length and the total number of Frankish soldiers fighting.

This traditional infantry line was tactically flexible, used both defensively, such as the Battle of Tours and offensively, as at the Battle of the River Berre. As mentioned above, at Tours the Franks stood “immobile like a wall, holding together like a glacier” fighting almost completely on the defensive.⁹⁴ At the River Berre, the Franks stopped another Moorish army then drove the survivors into the sea.⁹⁵ In this battle, it is likely the Frankish infantry line moved forward slowly, step by step, just as they would do at later battle, again maintaining “unit cohesion” and good order.⁹⁶

In siege operations the Franks used multiple points of attack when directly assaulting an enemy fortification. For example, at Avignon in 737 they used a combination of “battering rams and rope ladders” to assault the city.⁹⁷ The battering rams were heavy logs with iron heads attached that were hung from a frame so it could be swung back and forth to smash the gates or walls.⁹⁸ This arrangement was

mounted on wheels and over the whole device was a protective cover of “woven branches, and planks” or layers of leather, wool and sand to ward off stones and incendiary devices.⁹⁹ The rope ladders were likely just knotted ropes with grappling hooks of some kind. The nature of rope ladders makes their use in the attack on Avignon most likely a commando-type or sneak attack.¹⁰⁰ Further, the use of rope ladders indicates that the defending force was relatively small. The attack scenario was probably something like this: The battering rams were wheeled into position against the city’s gates under the covering fire of archers, while the defenders rushed to fend off this attack, other Franks using rope ladders climbed over the now undefended parts of the wall.

Summary

The small landowners as infantry, the mounted *satellites* and the *antrustiones* and the very small number of highly skilled craftsmen that acted as “combat engineers” were the primary sources of Frankish military power throughout the eighth century. Charles’s army was highly mobile, campaigning throughout what is now France, Germany and the Low Countries. The army was also highly effective, winning all but one major set piece battle and failing to capture Angers in 718 and Narbonne in 737. Despite all of this efficiency, there should be no confusion between the army of Charles Martel and the Roman legions, or between Charles’s army and the army of his grandson, Charlemagne. Besides the *antrustiones* and *satellites*, Charles’s soldiers were decidedly part-time, being called out for campaigns and then demobilized to return to civilian life.¹⁰¹ However, it is likely that the same men served year after year on *expeditio*, making them if not professional, then highly experienced.¹⁰² The Frankish armies of Charles Martel played an important role in the development of Europe in the early middle ages. The reverberations of their iron discipline and raw courage carry through to even today’s military forces.

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Notes

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Aethelred and Cnut: Saxon England and the Vikings

Mat Hudson

Never has a single occurrence changed history. While it is tempting to point to the Norman Conquest of 1066 as the event that caused the fall of the Anglo-Saxons, the change had begun decades before by other events from both within and without England. The rise of the Saxons meant the waning of the Roman British and their relocation into what is now Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany. The Saxons were able to survive numerous Viking raids and internal strife before the end began its journey. In the midst of Viking invasions, both invading Vikings and neighboring Saxons alike absorbed the numerous Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. This struggle for solidified power brought a political unity to the island and laid the foundation for what would become England. While many factors played a role in the eventual fall of the Saxons, one of the pivotal pieces in the evolution of Anglo-Saxon England was the conflict between Aethelred II (978-1016), called the Unready, and Cnut (1016-1035), the son of Aethelred's Viking rival. The failure of Aethelred to repel the Vikings provided an atmosphere in which an emboldened Cnut was able to successfully conquer and consolidate Anglo-Saxon England as well as much of Scandinavia. Cnut strengthened the central authority of the crown and increased the stability of the kingdom while opening a door for the rise of earls to play a larger part in England. In the process of Cnut's conquest, Anglo-Saxon relations with Normandy grew and planted the seeds of future conquest.

A discovery of how Cnut's reign in the aftermath of Aethelred changed the course of Anglo-Saxon England must begin with a glimpse into a previous time. A view of the evolution of England from the time before the invasion at Lindisfarne in 793 and into the centuries of turmoil that followed set the stage for the culmination of unity under Cnut. This stabilization in the face of waves from both Viking raiders and settlers occurred under Saxon kings such as Alfred (871-899) and Aethelstan (924-939). After a period of relative peace, renewed invasions from the north threatened Saxon stability. What would play out between the new invaders and the Saxon kings would set the stage for the penultimate reign of the Saxons. The necessity of foreign allies in the face of Viking incursions would also factor into how Saxon England would meet its fate.

Before the Viking raid of the monastery at Lindisfarne, conflict, both with the Britons as well as each other, characterized Anglo-Saxon history in England. The Saxons had established multiple kingdoms in England after the fall of Roman Britain

early in the fifth century. These kingdoms could be large in territory or as small as a shire is today. The political dynamic of these kingdoms often resulted in the most powerful of the kings becoming an overlord of the others. The Saxons were a mixture of Germanic people from the continent who had enjoyed relations with the Romans and settled along the coast of the North Sea. The British regarded them as barbarians, yet in great Roman tradition had brought many of their warriors in to assist the British against invaders.¹ Originally a pagan people, they slowly converted to Christianity over the following centuries. The small Saxon kingdoms coexisted amongst themselves and their British, Pict, and Scottish neighbors.

Detailed knowledge of the Saxons is limited prior to the Viking raids. Most has come down through the ages via Church fathers and archaeology. The last of the leading kings was Offa of Mercia (757-796). A contemporary and often seen as an equal to Charlemagne (769-814), Offa represented a step towards political unity within the stability of his long reign, an anomaly for its time.² Offa reformed the church, led building projects, and continued the struggle against the Britons, who the Saxons began calling the Welsh. An irony of the name Welsh stemmed from it being the Saxon word for foreigner. Another testament to the greatness of Offa was that by the end of his reign the neighboring kingdoms had all but ceased to exist.³ Saxon England had become a relatively stable region by the end of the eighth century.

The consolidation of Saxon England did not begin with the influence of Offa. The seventh century saw aggression and conflict, which set kings in opposition and saw alliances that brought more unity to England than had been previously enjoyed. That unity however was not intended to have England under one true king. Rather, the kings were choosing sides in efforts to dominate the island and defend against other cultures. The Venerable Bede listed seven kings as being preeminent over their contemporaries. The first four kings of the list were Aelle of Sussex (477-514), Ceawlin of Wessex (560-591), Aethelberht of Kent (560-616), and Raedwald of East Anglia (599-624). Bede's reasons for choosing these kings are unknown. Whatever the reason, there currently exists no proof that their influence extended north of the Humber River.⁴ The overlap of rule spoke more to the dynamic of dominance and less to cooperation. As one region waned in prominence, the next could obtain influence.

The remaining three kings in Bede's list dominated the bulk of the seventh century and were all from Northumbria—Edwin (616-633), Oswald (634-642), and Osui (642-670). Battle and resistance from unlikely alliances defined all three. The southern Christian kingdoms, including the Welsh, allied with the pagan Penda of Mercia (632-655) to combat the rise of Northumbria and the northern kings. A factor in this unification became the idea of a common enemy. Alliances and victories brought the prominence of one region over another, while the ambitious kings sought

dominion over their peers. Without a familial bond or legacy amongst the kingdoms, it remained that a king under the sway of one powerful crown could assume the mantle of overlord through the death of the leading king. A united England was in its infancy and would experience the growing pains of sibling rivalry before the coming of the ultimate common enemy in the form of the Vikings.

Of great importance to medieval right of rule was the notion of legacy and familial claims. While those on the throne easily ignored facts in favor of the factors supporting their causes, the written word had yet to establish itself as preeminent. The Anglo-Norman chronicler Gaimar presented the idea that the Danes had come to England before the Saxons. Cnut would come to embrace this idea as Danish prior sovereignty validated his right to rule England.⁵ In addition, Gaimar utilized the alleged sovereignty of a King Dan in 787.⁶ The claim, of course, was only effective when backed by a position of strength. However, in 793 the nature of Saxon England would be forever altered regardless of hereditary claims. This homogenized Saxon stability.

Amidst “immense sheets of light rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery, dragons flying across the firmament” the Vikings raided the holy island of Lindisfarne.⁷ The Anglo-Saxon world turned upside down as the wealth of the churches was now under attack not by kings but by marauders. Despite the advancements in political unity, the Saxon kingdoms were not prepared for this type of invasion. Claims of jurisdictional dominion before the end of the eleventh century were not forthcoming.⁸ The raiding of the British Isles evolved into Viking settlements. It would be under this strain that the Saxon adaptation would begin towards true political unity and set the stage for one England.

The whole region felt the wrath of the Viking invasions. Ireland and the smaller islands surrounding the primary two bore witness to raids and settlers. Viking lords established themselves in makeshift kingdoms. In England, by the late ninth century, the whole of the island save Wessex lived under Viking rule. Viking lands from Dublin to York presented a cohesive opportunity. A strong Viking king could have united a territory in such a way that it would have been impossible for the Saxons to resist. Yet, the early Viking kingdoms of the British Isles were not true monarchies, their kings not military visionaries, and the attractions of assimilation proved greater.⁹ The Saxons were not the only culture who lacked strong central authority of any lasting kind. In fact, it was quite indicative of the period throughout Europe.

The confederation of kingdoms that collectively made up Saxon England had begun to fall. English wealth and resources remained steady, but new leaders emerged. The Saxons and Scandinavians had begun to assimilate culture and place names, practice and polity, and laws and customs in the Viking-held lands. The lone

Saxon kingdom of Wessex would fight to defend Saxon liberties and attempt to regain lands lost to the invaders. Saxon life had become so ingrained in England that they dismissed the notion they themselves were the invaders a mere few centuries before. The multi-kingdom Anglo-Saxon system had progressed into a single throne by the end of the tenth century. There were drawbacks. For instance, circumstances occurred in the eleventh century when the candidate options for king become narrow and the choice of individuals was not promising. During this time, the threat from Viking conquest was great. To survive, the Saxons would have to unify and reinvent themselves.¹⁰

King Alfred, known to history as Alfred the Great, and his immediate successors would stem the advance of the Vikings and renew Saxon advances in England. Alfred reformed battle tactics, added a true Saxon navy, and turned the tide of the Viking conquest. The 878 Peace of Wedmore saw Alfred recognize the Danish occupation of non-Wessex England. The legitimacy of the Viking settlements now in place, the Danelaw, those areas controlled by the Vikings, further solidified the administration of a large section of the island. Despite Alfred's advances, the Vikings were now in England to stay and became assimilated with the Saxon population. Unlike the Saxon conquests centuries before that pushed the Britons west into Wales, the Viking conquest failed to contain the Saxons in Wessex.

The largest gain in political solidarity occurred under Aethelstan during the decades after Alfred. His successes unintentionally laid the foundation for the ease of conquest by Cnut. Aethelstan became the first English monarch by declaration and to large extent conquest. More than solidifying rule over the English, he also reclaimed the Danish lands to the northeast. Historians considered him the first to have hegemony over the whole island of Britain.¹¹ With political control now established over the entirety of Britain, a usurper or conqueror could easily supplant the ruling authority by force and have the administrative mechanisms in place for ready control.

The benefits of hegemony were substantial. During this time of relative internal peace, the Saxons enjoyed law and church reform as well as building projects. Newfound unity while bringing stability also increased the opportunity for rapid and total conquest. Missing from the Saxon kingdom that existed centuries prior were the buffer states that create the piecemeal confederation of kingdoms. A unified Saxon kingdom was what Aethelred inherited, albeit accompanied by the significant internal strife that typically associated itself with Saxon successions. Saxon England by the end of the tenth century had become a realm of all or nothing.

The Viking contributions to England and the nature of their influence and intent evolved over the centuries of contact. Vikings brought more than the rapine and slaughter described in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. England increased both its

trade and trading partners and this included Viking networks. The fortified town or *burh* also arrived on the islands. This positively increased the infrastructure of Saxon life.¹² The Scandinavians lived alongside the Saxons in England for such an extended period that the familiarity would become an advantage for the next wave of Viking invaders. The nature of this wave of invasions witnessed much change from the January raid on Lindisfarne in 793. A key difference between the early and late Viking Ages were that kings led the later raids. Men who failed to be recognized as rulers in their homelands led the early age raiders. In addition, by the end of the tenth century, the riches of Russia were no longer available to plunder.¹³ This led the Scandinavians to sail westward to reclaim the lands lost to the Saxons.

The Viking raids resumed in 997 during the reign of Aethelred II, called the Unready. They were milder than those previous but deadly and effective nonetheless. Danish king Svein (986-1014), called Forkbeard, and father of Cnut made efforts not to antagonize potential allies by senseless pillage.¹⁴ The Vikings had already established settlements on the island and had no need to establish further expansion. These raiders sought to gain riches, while Svein Forkbeard contemplated adding England to his domain. Unlike previous Viking rulers seeking to carve a piece of England for themselves and their people, Svein assessed the whole of England as available to conquer.

Historians have portrayed Aethelred as a poor ruler unready for his mantle of kingship or poorly advised in his enterprises. Yet, there are those, such as P.H. Sawyer and Ryan Lavelle, who claim this assessment as unfair. Sawyer contends Aethelred is unfairly blamed and compared unjustly to Alfred. Ryan Lavelle has argued that Aethelred was not entirely to blame for the success of the renewed Viking incursions. Blame may be steered towards the poor defenses that plagued the ealdormen, or nobles, and the succession turmoil surrounding Aethelred and his ascension to the throne. It should be argued that the poor defensive effort derived more from the style of defenses employed rather than circumstance. The tenuous situation between king and country was a series of compromises between the aims and wishes of the king and his nobles.¹⁵ Furthermore, Lavelle acknowledged that Scandinavian sources were often complimentary towards Aethelred and viewed him as a worthy and noble ruler. Much of the vilification stemmed from the Anglo-Norman culture following the eleventh century Norman Conquest of England. Yet, the fact remained that under his reign, the Danish kings conquered England in 1013. Shortly after his death, England became part of Cnut's vast North Sea Empire.

Since the nature of the Viking raids of the end of the tenth century was more piratical than strategic, England realized a return to the original days of the Viking threat, only this time, potential Viking allies surrounded the Saxons. Another concern that threatened Saxon security was the lack of direct heirs to the throne at

the time of the raids. This ensured internal conflict and a power struggle became inevitable. Aethelred solved the issue of succession by fathering ten children in slightly over twelve years. His choice of wife would play heavily into the future of England. He married Emma of Normandy. Peaceful succession of kingship had not been the norm either in Saxon England nor anywhere else in Europe during the medieval period. Despite a resolution in providing heirs, the ambitions of Svein and his son Cnut would run counter to the initial pillage style of raiding in England.

After the millennium, England became a steady battleground between Saxon and Dane. Svein raided at will leaving devastation in his wake. The cohesion that had grown in England from previous reigns now faded into the mist of war. Because he learned that the Danes planned to deprive him of his life, in 1002 Aethelred ordered all Danes in England put to death.¹⁶ Therefore, it was the Danes that were killed in England on Saint Brice's Day. Historian Susan Reynolds argued that the Saint Brice's Day Massacre of 1002 targeted not those of Danish descent but rather those visiting aliens or recent immigrants.¹⁷ If that were the case, it would make sense that the earlier Scandinavian settlers had become so entrenched in England that they were considered more English than Dane.

The situation in England deteriorated after the massacre. One way to view his action would be that it showed a decisive, confident, and active ruler rather than a skulking king fearful of treachery that historians have often made him out to be.¹⁸ Yet, action so decisive in the face of an enemy that had not been defeated and a kingdom near defenseless to their attacks was a gamble that would lead to dire consequences. Svein continued his raids as ealdormen—the magistrates and commanders of shire forces—feared facing the Vikings in combat.¹⁹ Aethelred and his ealdormen were at a loss to fend off the raids and protect the shires. By 1010, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle stated that no shire would stand by another.²⁰ The administration remained intact in England. It was not the political structure, but the ineptitude of the leaders that caused the Viking successes.

That ineptness was due to the massive changes in leadership occurring during the age. There were great changes in the ranks of the thegns, or king's retainers, under Aethelred and Cnut. Among these were the rise of Godwin and Leofwine. The narratives record lengthy purges between 1010 and 1017 that rivaled the carnage of the Norman Conquest.²¹ While a change at the top of the political pyramid often brought some change, the increase of turnover within the ranks of those who handled the day to day operations of the kingdom changed not only the leadership on the islands, but the families which now controlled local administration.

Aethelred lost his kingdom to Svein in 1013. The Saxon royal house fled to the safety of Normandy for the year that Svein ruled England. The legitimate heirs to England would spend a significant portion of life in the Norman court. Upon Svein's

death in 1014, the people recalled Aethelred and rebuked Cnut. Cnut did not simply sail home to sulk. Instead, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle mentioned Cnut sailing to Sandwich before cutting the hands, ears, and noses from the hostages his father had collected.²² The return of Aethelred was under the condition that he ruled the people better than his first reign. Cnut continued his struggle against Aethelred until the death of the king in 1016. Lavelle called it a testament to effective rule under Aethelred that the English political machinery remained in operation and continued into the following reigns.²³ It would be more accurate to heap that praise on those who preceded Aethelred than the king himself. While history likely viewed him unfairly, the stability of Saxon England's administration had become a staple of daily life.

While Cnut failed to immediately assume the throne in Denmark, he became king in England in 1016. However, he was not the only king. Edmund II (1016)—called Edmund Ironsides—also became the English king. Cnut married Emma of Normandy, widow of Aethelred, seeking to take advantage of the political union. Discussion opened between the two kings to determine the best method to settle the matter of their claims. The tradition of resolving conflict through single combat had become entrenched in England by the eleventh century. Cnut and Edmund were to meet to decide the matter in this manner but opted to divide the island instead.²⁴ Edmund, however, was unable to survive the year, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle spoke of his burial in Glastonbury next to his grandfather.

Cnut became sole ruler of England by 1017, the year of his marriage to Emma. Although he kept his previous common law wife, Aelfgifu, he sent her to Scandinavia. He divided England into four parts—Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia, and Northumbria. Cnut repaired churches destroyed by the Vikings, built new churches, and became patron to monasteries. His being moved to tears by a ballad while his boat neared Ely displayed a more gentle side of Cnut. The view of the church and the singing of the monks prompted him to savor the moment.²⁵

Upon his brother's death, Cnut claimed the Danish throne and became king of England, Denmark, Norway, and parts of Sweden. In Scandinavia, he earned the title, "Cnut the Great." His English rule was one of purges and change. Cnut's changes did not place the Danes in the seats of aristocracy. Rather, the Englishmen who survived the purges and battles assumed leadership roles.²⁶ This could have been in part due to the non-English holdings of Cnut and the desire to have stability throughout his empire. Historian Katherin Mack also highlighted that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle described five ealdormen killed in battle or by deceit before 1016, but Cnut surpassed that number in just four years.²⁷ With Cnut's death in 1035, a return to the Saxon line was less than a decade away. His Viking heirs proved inadequate to stem the return of the Saxons.

Cnut's sons became kings of England if only for a few years. The question of which son should follow Cnut remained a topic of debate. Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), son of Aethelred followed Harold I (1035-1040), called Harefoot, and Harthacnut (1040-1042). During the reign of Cnut and his sons, Godwin, Earl of Wessex, grew in power. His strength would cast an ominous shadow over the kingdom until his death, and his sons would be the last leaders of a Saxon England. With the death of the Viking kings, England looked inward for rule. The story of Aelfgifu and her alleged adultery illustrated the further break between England and Scandinavia following the death of Cnut and his sons. The Norwegian rejection of her and her son Swen broke any blood claim to the English throne by the Norwegians.²⁸ Her story could be the one woven into the Bayeux Tapestry referencing an illegitimate pretender and his line's claim to the throne. It would be the rise of the Godwin and the relationship of Emma to Normandy that would chart England's course.

In the strong English tradition, sons who all saw themselves as rightful heirs contested the succession following the death of Cnut. Cnut's sons divided his empire, with Harthacnut taking Denmark and Harold reigning in England. Norman poet and chronicler Wace described Aethelred's sons Alfred and Edward as believing their claim to the English throne the strongest. They assembled a fleet and invasion force and set sail from Normandy with Norman backing. The English defended Harold from the invaders either due to a fear of Harold or liking him the best according to Wace.²⁹ Either way, Edward realized that the loss of life necessary to gain his inheritance would be too great and ended his quest. A strong precedent had now been set and would be reflected upon by future Normans. The conflict between the duchy and the islands had begun.

The nature of England's progression of central authority into a strong kingship in the Saxon years is noteworthy. Chris Wickham wrote of the paradox existent in England; it was a European country, which enjoyed the most complete aristocratic dominance, based on property rights while at the same time being a land in which the king maintained near total control over political structures. He attributed this peculiarity to the combination of the oligarchical compact that allowed Wessex to rise to dominance in the 910s and the crystallization of property rights that occurred in the ninth and tenth centuries.³⁰ This paradox led to Godwin and his sons merging the two at the death of Saxon England. While not a cause for the fall of the Saxons, it made for an easier transition of a strong monarch to supplant existing nobility with his own men while resting assured of their ability to maintain property based on tradition and the servitude of the populace.

A strong central authority, in conjunction with a political structure that supported the aristocracy's control over the wealth and resources of England, made

for a very attractive realm. In addition, Cnut had established a strong military structure that would provide significant stability to England. He created a standing military force called the *housecarls* and maintained a strong navy as well. To pay for this internal security, Cnut levied a heavy tax known as the *heregeld*.³¹ The *housecarls* would survive to fight at Hastings and die alongside the last Saxon king. Because the tradition of a standing army and the taxes to pay for it were already established, the transition to Norman rule was straightforward. The Normans would increase their dominance over the island through castle building and military might. While Cnut increased the infrastructure in England, the stronger aristocracy that began in the wake of the purges and as with the death of most great kings, created an environment wherein his successors struggled to live up to his lineage.

The success enjoyed by Cnut provided him the moniker “the Great” in Scandinavia. However, despite his attachment and success in England, the English did not bestow the title upon him. His empire came about by the subjugation of five kingdoms, Denmark, England, Norway, Scotland, and Wales. He even boasted that by the favor of Christ he had taken the land of the Angles and called himself emperor.³² Not many in the post-Roman world had dared call themselves emperor, but those that did, had their greatness remembered. Perhaps the fact that Alfred remains the only monarch called “the Great” by the English speaks to the nature of what it was to be considered English. The link between Aethelred, Cnut, and the eventual Norman rulers was Emma of Normandy. During the ascension of Svein, Emma and her two sons by Aethelred, Edward and Alfred, fled to Normandy for safety. The impact of Edward living in Normandy cannot be understated. Being half Norman, the complexion of England would change drastically under his rule. Emma’s children, both by Cnut and Aethelred, would guide England during the last days of the Saxons.

The atmosphere of England at the death of Cnut was one of positioning and struggle. William of Malmesbury argued that the English desired the sons of Aethelred. Earl Godwin, being the greatest stickler for justice, professed himself the defender of the fatherless and having Emma and the royal treasures in his possession, held out against his opponents for some time.³³ No matter the real reasoning behind Godwin’s support, the root of his goals was to secure his position as the leading nobleman within England. The rise of the earls defined the remaining decades of the Saxon era. It was the actions of the earls that created the kings and provided them with both security and headache.

The consequence of the purges and violence during Cnut’s reign revealed the changes within the political structure of England. Cnut divided the island in order to better rule it. This gave the earls power they had not enjoyed before. The king remained the seat of power, but the aristocrats grew in influence. The subsequent

reign of Edward included the incipient political disintegration of the kingdom in the face of the advancing territorial power of the great earls.³⁴ This situation seemed destined to devolve the kingdom, as Edward remained childless. However, the political hierarchy longed for a powerful figure to unify the realm. The heirs of Cnut and Aethelred were not as strong as the nobles that surrounded them. The eleventh century became a time of great political upheaval in northwestern Europe.

Cnut had been able to utilize his power base and alliances with the aristocracy of the Danelaw to his advantage. Coupled with the selection of favorable ealdormen and the loss of life by Saxon aristocracy in battle, Cnut was able to overcome many of the disadvantages that traditionally faced kings of Wessex.³⁵ The destruction of the traditional power families and the rise of the new nobility, such as the family of Godwin, played a role in Cnut's ability to administer the kingdom. Consider the division made in ancient Rome to better rule the empire and how it increased the speed and efficiency of administration. Cnut's empire was also vast and divided by a large sea. The restructuring allowed the crown's presence to be felt in more than one region at a time. However, like the division of the Roman Empire, those selected to administer the new earldoms pressed their advantages and sought more control and freedoms. The line between lord and vassal thinned with the solidification of the earls.

Heavy taxes raised to provide security had been a hallmark of Cnut's reign. The population accepted these only as long as peace endured. Harthacnut had no such luxury. In order to provide for his fleet, he immediately alienated his new subjects with a hefty tax. He also burned Worcester in response to protests of taxation.³⁶ The stability that his father had enjoyed slipped his grasp. The English rejoiced as he collapsed after a drinking binge at a wedding and died. The earls and administrators of the realm were now in a position of strength. The matter of succession allowed them to play puppeteers once again.

The rise of powerful earls did not create a weakened monarchy. The monarchy remained in full control. However, the influence of men like Godwin of Wessex became greater as time progressed. The system created opportunity for the new earls to place family members in positions of power. These families had previously exercised little power. The ascension of Edward the Confessor brought an additional problem to the throne. In addition to his connection to the Normans, as he himself was half Norman, Edward also had more interest in spiritual matters. Taking as his wife Edith, the daughter of Godwin, Edward refused to create an heir. Moreover, Godwin and his sons would utilize their closeness to the throne to increase their sphere of influence, which Edward resented. He exiled Godwin and his family. Even during his exile, Godwin's strength grew to the level where he was able to return to his earldom with little repercussion.

England had become a melting pot of cultures. The Vikings and Saxons, barbarians of the post-Roman world, had obtained full control of the islands. Although England served one king and followed one banner, the tradition of local leadership survived in the offices of the earls. A new England rose in the wake of Aethelred and Cnut. A stronger monarchial position provided the ability to control government beyond the bounds of ethnicity. The new aristocracy tested the limits of its own power. The subsequent outcome of Danish conquest and the collapse of the regional kingdoms of Saxon England increased the position of those who survived.³⁷

Saxon England slowly consolidated from a confederation of smaller kingdoms into a single political unit. While there existed kings who held preeminence over their neighbors, the kingdoms remained separate. The coming of the Vikings altered the political dynamic. While the early raids targeted the spoils of war, the later waves of Viking invasions found settlements and new kings in old kingdoms. The struggle against the Viking invader brought most of the Saxon kingdoms to their knees, but the resurgence of Wessex not only saved Saxon England, it reclaimed the island for the Saxons. The actions of Aethelred and Cnut led Saxon England into the final phase of the Anglo-Saxons. The unification under Cnut brought with it a change in aristocracy and a rise in the power of the earls. A stronger connection to Normandy through marriage and alliance began the shift to the continent and away from Scandinavia. The Battle of Hastings ended Saxon England, but the conflict between Aethelred and Cnut initiated the decline.

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Johan Huizinga. *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*. Translated by Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Book Review

Anne Midgley

Johan Huizinga's cultural history classic *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen: Studie over levens- en gedachtenvormen der veertiende en vijftiende eeuw in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden* can be puzzling for English-speaking readers. Originally written in Dutch, the book itself has had a long history, having been continuously published since 1921, written in sixteen languages, and available in over 300 editions. Initially, *Herfsttij* received a mixed reception, but has since been regarded as a masterpiece of literature as well as a significant historical work.

Huizinga, seen by many as the greatest Dutch historian of the twentieth century, wrote during the period considered to be the age of classic cultural history. In many ways similar to his predecessor, Jacob Burckhardt, Huizinga sought to recover the soul of the time period he studied; in Huizinga's case, the late Middle Ages. Huizinga argued that the culture of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in France and the Netherlands was not the beginning of the Renaissance, but rather, that it represented the overly ripened fruits of the Middle Ages.¹ He defines much that has been attributed to the Renaissance to in fact be characteristic of the medieval period. Huizinga's examples include an analysis of the work of Jan van Eyck, concluding that van Eyck's art, while often regarded as "announcing the arrival of the Renaissance, should rather be regarded as the complete unfolding of the medieval spirit."²

Huizinga's prose immerses the reader in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of northern Europe. He draws upon the works of the chroniclers of the age, most frequently Jean Froissart, Olivier de la Marche, Georges Chastellain, and Enguerrand de Monstrelet, as well as the theologians, Denis the Carthusian and Jean De Gerson, the poet, Eustache Deschamps, and artists, primarily van Eyck. He paints a world vastly different than that of the early twentieth century with his opening "When the world was half a thousand years younger all events had much sharper outlines . . . all things in life had about them something glitteringly and cruelly public."³ Huizinga is at his strongest as he builds sights, sounds, smells, color, and emotion into the portrait he paints of the age. The reader is swept away.

While the Payton and Mammitzsch translation seeks to bring *Herfsttij* closer to English readers, it misses an opportunity to provide modern readers with a

better appreciation of the period through the use of color plates to portray the art works described in the text. The choice to rely on black and white plates is especially disappointing when one compares color to black and white representations of Jan van Eyck's *Annunciation*. The colors glow and shimmer in a color rendition of the painting; small details abound that are not apparent in black and white. Given Huizinga's desire that his readers experience as much as possible the life of the period, it is unfortunate that the new edition did not offer at least a few color plates of the many art works described in the text.⁴

Regardless of its faults, *Autumn* has aged extremely well; unlike many other ninety year old books, much of it remains fresh and powerful. *Autumn* is a true classic and its author, Johan Huizinga, continues long after his death to wield a strong influence, particularly for cultural historians.

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Charles Freeman. *Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

Book Review

Aida Dias

Relics played a vitally influential role in the unfolding of events which made up the European Middle Ages. From changing ways of living to establishing major travel routes, they were the instruments of power with which the Church and state leaders gained and maintained control over the masses. Relics of saints and martyrs including whole skeletons, fragments of bone, clothing, personal objects, blood, milk, and objects associated with Jesus Christ—like the True Cross, the Holy Lance, shrouds, stones from the sepulcher and many others—were the currency of the Church, drawing those hoping for salvation of the soul or healing of the earthly body to the opulent shrines which spread all over Europe. In *Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe*, Charles Freeman, an expert on the ancient world and the history of Christianity, takes the reader on a journey through a time overcast by the shadow of sin and punishment, where relics provided a spiritual relief, and where the Church's power grew to the point of making the Reformation all but inevitable.

In the early days of Christianity, martyrdom came to be an almost desirable way to die for some, since it brought the mortal flesh closer to immortal spirit much quicker than asceticism. Cult-like worship of martyrs' relics often began immediately after their deaths, with reports of numerous miracles happening after contact with body parts, blood, or clothing. Freeman credits Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the fourth century, with essentially beginning the exchange of martyr relics through Europe, creating a network of shrines and Church power, although the practice had pagan origins in hero worship. Constantine had begun the practice of building shrines to honor places from Christ's life; now shrines were being built to house the relics of saints and draw people to them—the more generous the visitors, the more lavish the shrines became. *Holy Bones, Holy Dust* tells a tale of power exchanging hands as the relics themselves were exchanged. For many centuries, the Church held the power, and its associated wealth, but there were many instances of city leaders and men like Charlemagne, Louis IX, and Philip II collecting vast numbers of relics for personal prestige and, in many cases, threatening the authority of the Church. Up to the thirteenth century any bishop could name a new saint; after that, the papacy attempted to take control by requiring that each saint's life and miracles be recorded and investigated, so that they would not lose power to leaders

outside the Vatican. Freeman presents evidence showing this was partly unsuccessful since many saint cults came and went long before the papacy had a chance to even investigate them.

Holy Bones, Holy Dust is unique in that it is the only English language, full-length account of the history of relics and their influence in the shaping of the Church. Freeman gathers information from early hagiographies, official papal documents, and a wealth of other sources, many of which mentioned relics only in passing, failing to note the crucial role they played. He provides an unapologetic account of the corruption and pagan-origin practices of the medieval Church, but Catholics need not be offended for no judgment is offered—except perhaps by the repeated use of the word *cult* to refer to saint-and relic-worship, given its negative connotations. Freeman acknowledges the difficulties of entering “the realms of faith” (p. 22) where there are thousands of accounts of illnesses being instantly cured, of the bodies of saints being whole and exuding sweet scents centuries after death, and even of many resurrections taking place in connection with a saint’s relics. He acknowledges the phenomenon of the placebo effect based on faith, but he does not dwell on the improbability of miracles.

Freeman attributes great importance, and perhaps blame, to the doctrines of Augustine of Hippo who, at a time when the Scriptures themselves were not available to the masses in the vernacular, spread the idea of original sin, and cast the world on an eternal search for salvation. Relics were introduced for this purpose; they not only allowed for saints to perform miracles, they were the instruments through which sinners could ask the saints to intercede with God in their favor so that they might be saved. At times when there were great wars and natural disasters, and particularly after the Black Death, this worked against the Church, since people believed that God had given up on them for their sinfulness. Augustine himself was at first critical of the relic exchanges and skeptical of the reported miracles, but eventually he went on to advocate the recording and publishing of all miracles.

Cities like Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Paris, and Compostela in Spain, which accumulated vast collections of relics in sumptuous shrines, drew huge crowds of pilgrims seeking to reduce time spent in purgatory. The crowds were so large that the Church began selling indulgences without requiring the actual pilgrimages. The Church, particularly in Rome, became so wealthy that the number of its critics grew every day. Another element which eventually led to the Reformation was the ever-widening division between clergy and layman. Freeman argues that the consecration of the host—itsself a relic in numerous blood cults—was a main factor in the division which eventually led to the exposure of many false relics and a new tragic iconoclasm in many parts of Europe after the Reformation.

Holy Bones, Holy Dust’s engaging narrative with vivid stories and examples

is complemented by beautiful images of bejeweled reliquaries—many of the portable kind, which could be paraded to help convert pagans—and shrines, as well as maps showing the popular routes of mass pilgrimages. Its only fault might be found in the first few chapters where, in order to make a point, Freeman jumps several centuries back and forth, leaving the unwary reader with a distorted idea of the actual sequence of events, but it later settles into a more chronological storyline.

Overall, the book succeeds in its goal of describing how medieval life and preoccupation with the afterlife allowed for the veneration of saints, with their individual personalities and talents, to flourish. Further, it demonstrates the roles played both by the individual relics and by the cults in the rise of power of the Church—and subsequently in the Reformation. And it does so masterfully, leaving one wanting the continuation of the history of relics beyond the Middle Ages.

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Desmond Seward. *The Warrior King and the Invasion of France: Henry V, Agincourt, and the Campaign that Shaped Medieval England*. New York: Pegasus Books, 2014.

Book Review

Daniel Rosko

A person's perception of King Henry V (1387-1422 CE) can vary greatly, based upon his or her regional origins. The English hail Henry V as a hero, and revere him as one of the great monarchs of England. The French, on the other hand, view Henry V as an invader who led a ferocious army that committed unspeakable acts against the people of France. In his book, *The Warrior King and the Invasion of France*, author Desmond Seward detailed how the House of Lancaster usurped the crown of England and described the second Lancaster king, Henry V, as a brilliant and successful military leader. Henry V believed that God supported his cause and that he, Henry, earned the right to rule Normandy through his military victories. Seward also highlighted the dual nature of this deeply religious king, who brought senseless slaughter to French soldiers as well as innocent French citizens during his campaigns and subsequent occupation of France.

Seward used sources that offer accurate, contemporary insight into Henry V, including eyewitness accounts and documents from people who lived during Henry V's lifetime, reign, and his creation of the Anglo-Franco dual monarchy. He used primary sources from the accounts of people such as Bishop Thomas Basin, Jean de Montreuil, Georges Chastellain, Adam of Usk, and Robert Blondel. These sources give great insight into Henry V as a soldier and leader, both from the period when he, as a young English prince, fought against the Welsh, and later, when as king of England, he campaigned against the French in Normandy. The authors of the sources mentioned above either were either confidants to the king, or had witnessed the destruction caused by Henry V and the English army. Along with his contemporary sources, the author also used a blend of secondary sources. These sources illustrate the biases between the British view of Henry V and the French view of the warrior king, and include resources from English historians such as E.F. Jacob and K. B. McFarlane. Though the secondary sources seem to emphasize the British perspective a bit more, Seward's historical sources used to explain the different stages of Henry V's life are, for the most part, reliable and accurate.

One of the book's great strengths is how the author used historical sources to emphasize his key points. For example, one of the author's major points described how Henry V's family came to the crown as, "Gaunt had commissioned a forged

chronicle containing a fable which purported to establish his son's right to the throne" (p. 8). Gaunt—John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster—was the father of Henry IV and grandfather of Henry V. Gaunt used the aforementioned chronicle to prove the legitimacy of the Lancaster claim to the throne of England, yet, if the validity of the chronicle is in question, so then is the Lancaster claim to the throne. The use of sources such as this helped strengthen the author's message to the reader. Material from Robert Blondel provided another example. When talking about Henry V's treatment of the French, Blondel stated, "There are those who have been killed by the sword, those who have fled the soil of their fathers, those who have despaired and died, ground down by the sheer weight of tyranny" (p.162). Henry V tried to portray himself as the rightful ruler of Normandy, which is in fact a false presumption, especially if a person were to rely solely on English contemporary sources. Throughout the book, the author chronologically provided accounts that emphasize how Henry V and the English army subjected the French populous to execution, unjust punishment, and forcible removal from their homes.

Historians, including Gerald Harriss and Christopher Allmand, have written countless books about Henry V, including portrayals of his life, his reign as king of England, his creation of a dual monarchy between England and France, and his military campaigns into Normandy. Desmond's book provided a detailed, chronological description of how the House of Lancaster usurped the crown of England, and put Henry V on track to become king of England, and mass an army to attack the French. Along with his focus on Henry V, the author detailed many of the king's inner circle, who were the only people that the king could trust. For a person that may not be of English heritage or may not have a strong understanding of this period of history, this book is definitely worth reading. It seems astonishing that a king who was so deeply spiritual, would not just allow, but sanction the execution of innocent men, women, and children. The reviewer recommends that others read this book because the author, Desmond Seward, removed much of the romanticism that surrounds Henry V to this day; romanticism that is due in part to perceptions created by William Shakespeare's play, *Henry V*. The author addresses a general bias of English historians who have tried to minimize the cruelty of what happened to the French during the invasion. For a person who may know little to nothing about English history, French history, or medieval warfare, this is a very good book to read. Even for a reader looking for a different perspective on King Henry V, this book would be a great choice, especially due to the sources of information that the author used in researching this book. For someone who may know a great deal about the English invasion of Normandy, this book may completely change the reader's perspective of Henry V, the House of Lancaster, and the English invasion of France.

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