Frankish and Merovingian Origin Location(s)

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A Modern Review of Thidrekssaga: Merovingians by the Svava

When the Frankish king Clovis came to be baptized after his decision to convert to Christianity, Bishop Remigius said to him

Meekly bend thy neck, Sicamber ...,

as predicated by the ^{Gallo-Roman} historian Gregory of Tours, who gave on this occasion an example of his more or less comprehensive knowledge of Roman-Germanic history. Gregory's original phrase provides *book II,31* of his *Decem Libri Historiarum*:

*Mitis depone colla, Sigamber ...*

The Baptism of King Clovis.

A partial view to the altarpiece by the Master of Saint Gilles (abt 1500).

The Seal Ring of Childeric I, son of Meroveus and father of Clovis.

The Sicambri, a powerful tribe apparently migrating along the Danube and the Rhine, were arriving presumably in the eastern region of the Lower Rhine in the period of Tiberius Caesar Augustus. Gregory of Tours might have connected them with a 'migratory legend' somewhat related to that part of land which was known to the Romans as *Germania inferior* and *Belgica inferior*. Gregory writes in *book II,9* that

the Franks came from Pannonia and first settled on the bank of the Rhine; they then crossed the river, marched through 'Thongeria', and set over them long-haired kings chosen from the foremost and most noble family of their race in every village ‹'pagus'› or city ‹'civitas'› ...

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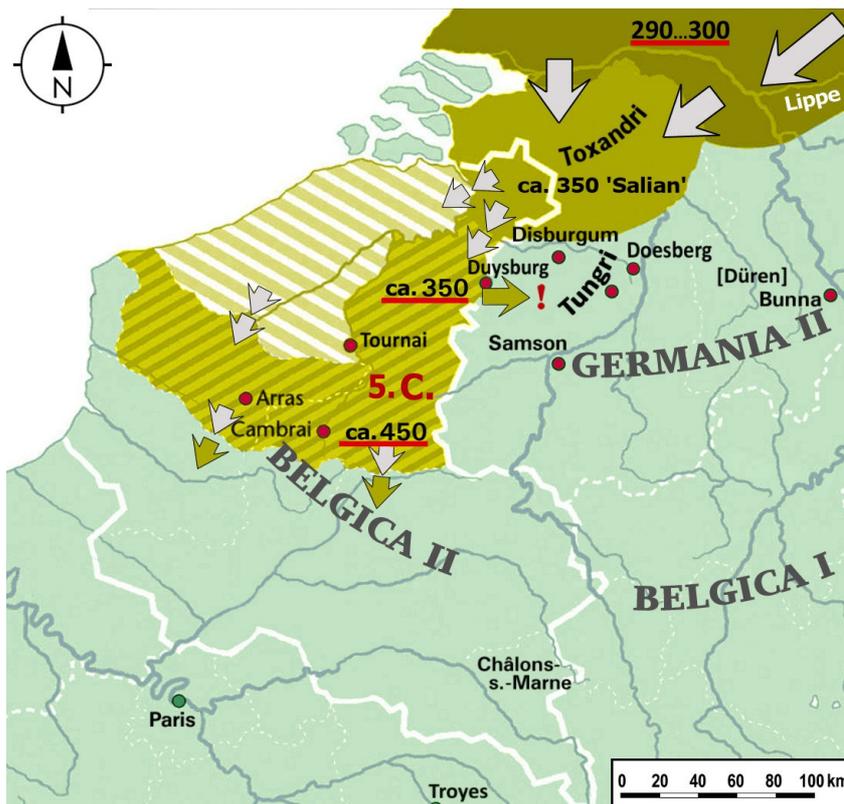
Migration of early Franks or 'Salian Franks'.

Pannonia or *Baunonia ?*

As quoted above, Gregory of Tours actually maintains that the Franks migrated from 'Pannonia' into their well known later domain, which then, since 4th century, was formed mainly on the left bank of the Rhine. However, Reinhard Wenskus does not exclude the possibility that Gregory could have misunderstood *Baunonia* or *Bannomanna* as Pannonia. Both name forms of this location provides Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis Historia*; cf. Wenskus, *Der 'hunnische' Siegfried. Fragen eines Historikers an den Germanisten.* In: Heiko Uecker (Ed.), *Studien zum Altgermanischen, RGA Ergänzungsband 11 (1994).* p. 688. Pliny writes in *book IV,xiii(94)*, cf. Bostock & Riley IV(,27),13:

> *Exeundum deinde est, ut extera Europae dicantur, transgressisque Ripaeos montes litus oceani septentrionalis in laeva, donec perveniatur Gadis, legendum. insulae complures sine nominibus eo situ traduntur, ex quibus ante Scythiam quae appellatur Baunonia unam abesse diei cursu, in quam veris tempore fluctibus electrum eiciatur, Timaeus prodidit; reliqua litora incerta signata fama.*

Transcript by Julius Sillig, cf.
https://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/title/BV008402647/ft/bsb10315371?page=430

[Transl.: Having left the Black Sea for telling about outer European parts; And after crossing the Riphean Mountains ‹ Belarusian Ridge? › we follow the Northern Ocean's shoreland on the left until we cross Cádiz. On this route many islands are said to be nameless. Among these, there is one located off Scythia ‹ that, according to contemporary ethnic and geographic estimation, extends at least to the Baltic Sea, i.e. Ptolemy's *OCEANUS SARMATICUS* › and called Baunonia, where in springtime amber is ejected into its floodwaters and which, as Timaeus said, can be reached in one day from the mainland. Telling about the remaining shoreland is uncertain.]

The obvious island *Baunonia/Bannomanna*, since Pytheas of Massalia considered with *Metuo(nis)*, has been scholarly regarded either in the North Sea area, west of Jutland, or

somewhere in the Baltic Sea, cf. *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, **RGA** 20, pgs 1-4. Pliny refers to Pytheas and *Metuo(nis)* in *XXXVII,xi(35–36)* with this description:

> *Pytheas Guionibus, Germaniae genti, accoli aestuarium oceani Metuonidis nomine spatio stadiorum sex milium; ab hoc diei navigatione abesse insulam Abalum; illo per ver fluctibus advehi ‹ scl. electrum › et esse concreti maris purgamentum: incolas pro ligno ad ignem uti eo proximisque Teutonis vendere. huic et Timaeus credidit, sed insulam Basiliam vocavit. Philemon negavit flammam ab electro reddi.*

> [Transl.: According to Pytheas, the Guiones ‹ 'Ingvaeones' presumably understood as 'inGva(e)ones' **?** ›, a Germanic race, inhabit the ocean's 'aestuary' ‹ surf zone › named Mentonomon ‹ Metuonis ›, whose size is six thousand stadia, and which can be reached in one day from the island Abalus, where in spring amber is washed up by the waves just as concrete ejection of the sea; further, the inhabitants light wood with it, and sell it to their neighbouring Teutones. Timaeus, too, believes in this, but called the island Basilia. Philemon negated the flammability of amber.]

Regarding the identification of *Abalus*, as said being in proximity to the Teutones, who temporarily settled in a southern or southwestern region of the Jutland Peninsula, some analysts think about Heligoland, whose area is said to have been enormously larger in the Middle Ages. However, remarkable findings of amber on this island, which some researcher likes to connect with the seat of an Eddaic hero *Helgi*, can not be denied.

The western part of Jutland according to the mathematician and cartographer Johannes Mejer, who had evaluated so-called 'Urbare', certifications of land ownership, for this geographic survey.

The sinking of enormous land areas of a group of islands off western Jutland was caused by the devastating Marcellus floods in the years 1219 and 1362, cf. Heligoland below left on the map.

The current land outlines were drawn by Dipl. Ing. Hans Peter Balfanz, Hamburg.

Baunonia has been estimated also west of Jutland. In its former area are said another 23 islands that were circumnavigated by the Romans, of which Bŭrcana, as Pliny further notes, is considered the best known. Could it have been the eponym for Borkum, which is possibly too far to the west?

Taking this context further, some elder and modern authors seem to agree with the spelling form *Basilia(m)* of Pytheas and Timaeus in the meaning of *Balcia(m)*, as Pliny quotes the latter toponym provided by Xenophon of Lampsakus, cf. Pliny *IV(95)*. However, as regards the identification of this large island with 'Baltia', Josef Svennung points out that inscriptional evidence of -ci- before a vowel for a replacement with -ti-

can be found in transmissions already since the 2nd century: e.g. *tercia* for *tertia*. Thus, regarding the Isle of '*a.balus*', its original root may have been *a*Bal*. Referring to some conjections already by Kaspar Zeuss (1837), Josef Svennung and Richard Hennig, this context may support an equation of this *potential* Baltia with the Scandinavian Peninsula – and why could not the Jutland Peninsula then be meant inclusively or instead?

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Zeuss, *Die Deutschen und die Nachbarstämme*, Munich 1837, Heidelberg 1925, cf. 1837 pgs 269–270.

Hennig, *Die Namen germanischer Meere und Inseln in der antiken Literatur.* In: *Zeitschrift für Ortsnamenforschung 12* (1936), pgs 3–20, cf. p. 11.

Svennung, *Scandinavia in Pliny and Ptolemy. Kritisch-exegetische Forschungen zu den ältesten nordischen Sprachdenkmälern (= Skrifter utgivna av Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskaps-Samfundet i Uppsala 45)*. Uppsala 1974; cf. p. 34f.

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PANNONIA near Illyricum or Illium ?

On the other hand, Pannonia on the Balkan Peninsular has been geographically connected with the Illyrians/*Illyrii* already by the descriptions of Hecataeus of Miletus (6th century BC), cf. also the Roman province *Illyricum* of 1st century.

The chronicle of the so-called *Fredegar* makes known the 'Trojan origin' of the Franks in his *books II,4–6,8,9* and *III,2*. According to *Fredegar's* accounts, which he recursively defends i.a. with the writings of Jerome of Stridon and Virgil (*III,2*), the people of 'Latium' under Aneas and those led by Friga were inferred from Troy. In *II,8* Fredegar calls Frigia/Friga, an eminent protagonist of the Franks, as brother of Aeneas, whom he introduces as *a rex Latinorum*. Furthermore (*II,4–5* and *III,2*), the pseudonymous authorship of this chronicle claims Priamus as the first king of the Trojan Franks, and moreover, that these people had to emigrate from Troy because of its cunning conquest by Odysseus. Then *Fredegar* proceeds to evocate that the division and the great wandering of these Trojans occurred during and after Friga's rulership: One part emigrated to Macedonia and formed it essentially thereafter, and the other, now under Francio, was guided to settle on the banks of the Danube and the Ocean ‹ cf. *III,2* – which one: the Atlantic, the North or Black Sea? ›. The reader of *III,2* is also told that the later Franks under Friga moved through Asian territory, and *II,6* provides also a further separation on the Danube, which brought forth the *Torci/Turqui*. *Fredegar* then continues that Francio's people came to a region near the Rhine, where they built an unfinished city according to the model of Troy.

Regarding in this context the *Colonia Ulpia **Traiana*** (CUT) at Xanten on the Lower Rhine, *Fredegar's* localization appears even as an unhistorical *northern* allocation. Ewig follows this interpretation:

<div style="margin-left:2em">

Mit der civitas ad instar Trogiae nominis *ist unzweifelhaft die Colonia Ulpia Traiana gemeint, die als Ruinenstätte seit dem späten 4. Jahrhundert das Bild eines* opus imperfectum *bot und als Troja in der um 500 von dem Goten Athanarid verfassten Beschreibung der Francia Rinensis verzeichnet ist.*

[Eugen Ewig, *Troja und die Franken.* In: *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter*, 62 (1998), pgs 1–16, see p. 7.]

[Transl.: The *civitas ad instar Trogiae nominis* undoubtedly refers to the Colonia Ulpia Traiana, which, as a ruined site since the late 4th century, presented the image of an *opus imperfectum* and is recorded as Troy in the description of Francia Rinensis written around 500 by the Goth Athanarid.]

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Edward James (*The Franks*, p. 235) agrees basically with this possible context and argues

without Athanarid's 'mythical assoziation':

> *It is just as likely that the myth was concocted by some erudite Frank, or Gallo-Roman, around the year 600* ‹ i.e. after Gregory's death › *, to give the Franks a dignified ancestry, and one that made them the equal of the Romans.*

The *Liber Historiae Francorum* (LHF) provides the 'Trojan history of the Franks' with only an approximate matching story (*c.1–3*). There are mainly these significant differences:

According to the *Liber*, Greek kings were warring against the tyrant Aeneas, who finally fled from *Illium* (*Ilium* = Troy) with his loyal people to Italy. However, the rest of the Trojan people was shipped by two leaders called Priamus and Antenor, and these 12,000 people came across the Black Sea via Tanais, (on) Don river, and the Maeotian marshes (Sea of Azov) to '*Pannonia* nearby', where they built a civitas *Sicambria* (*c.1*). After rendering successfully service for the Romans against Alans in the Maetion region, they received from 'Emperor Valentinian' the name *Francos* – the 'Wild People' in Attic language as already mentioned by Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae IX 2,10* and (e.g.) the Carolingian scholar Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmen in honorem Ludowici Pii* (*c.2*). The *Liber* then narrates that after ten years, when the Franks violently refused to pay the customary tax to the Empire, their leader Priamus was killed in fighting for their independence. As the *Liber's* authorship underlines this resolute military response of the Romans, Priamus Franks finally had to flee to the Rhine because of their superiority (*c.3*).

A civitas called Sicambria was not found in the regions of Pannonia and the Danube (Ister), but Tacitus annotates a *cohors Sugambra* that repulsed rebelling Thracians (dated AD 26), cf. *Annals IV,47*. The only Sicambrians or Sugambrians we reliably know of have been historically localized mainly in the eastern Westphalian Lowland and, temporarily, on the Lower Rhine. Since Gregory connects Clovis' regional descent with the same region, the Franks under his predecessor(s) may have previously settled east of the Lower Rhine. But he nowhere tells the Trojan legend in his *Decem Libri Historiarum*.

This very dubious Trojan legend goes back further in time. Already in the 5th century the Gallo-Roman bishop, poet and politician Sidonius Apollinaris spread the story that the people of Auvergne (Clermont) were said to be of the same blood as the Trojans. He wrote in his letter to Bishop Graecus, dated to 474 or 475, on the martial Visigothic annexation (*Epistolae VII,7,2*):

> *Facta est servitus nostra pretium securitatis alienae; Arvernorum, pro dolor, servitus, qui si prisca replicarentur, audebant se quondam fratres Latio dicere et sanguine ab Iliaco populus computare.*

> [*MGH Auct. ant. 8* (1887), p. 110.]

> [Transl.: Made is our servitude, the price for the safeness of others. The mental pain of the servitude of the Avernians, so elder venerable telling, is that they once dared to call themselves Brothers of Latium, ‹ preceding geoethnic term for Rome › and to reckon themselves to the blood of Illium's people.]

Sidonius had certainly read *De Bello Civili* written by the 1st century Roman poet Lucanus ('Lucan'), who left this passage on the wars between Julius Caesar and Pompey in *book I*:

Arvernique ausi Latio se fingere fratres sanguine ab Iliaco populi

[Transl.: and Avernians pretending to be Latium's brothers, as if they were a people of Trojan blood.]

In the 4th century, the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus may have quoted the idea of Trojan origin of the Gauls, see his *Res gestae XV,ix,4–5*:

> *c.5: Aiunt quidam paucos post excidium Troiae fugitantes Graecos ubique dispersos loca haec occupasse tunc vacua.*

> *c.4: Drasidae memorant re vera fuisse populi partem indigenam, sed alios quoque ab insulis extimis confluxisse et tractibus trans rhenanis, crebritate bellorum et adluvione fervidi maris sedibus suis expulsos.*

> [Transcription: *Ammiani Marcellini Rervm gestarvm libri qvi svpersvnt.* In: Wolfgang Seyfarth (Ed.), *Bibliotheca scriptorvm Graecorvm et Romanorvm Tevbneriana.* (Leipzig 1978).]

> [Transl.: c. 5: Some even claim that after the destruction of Troy, a few, fleeing from the Greeks, scattered everywhere and took possession of these uninhabited regions. ‹ as these were mentioned previously: ›

> c. 4: The Druids remember that some of the people were really indigenous, but that other inhabitants flocked from the islands on the coast and from the areas beyond the Rhine, having been expelled from their former abodes by frequent wars and sometimes by inroads of the stormy sea.]

However, still to be annotated are the records of the Roman writer Tacitus as a likely or potential receptive source. As he provides in his *Germania, c. 3*, ‹ the Trojan hero › Odysseus is said to have built *Asciburgium* and an altar there on the banks of the Rhine. (*Asciburgium* is the Latin name of the Roman castra at Moers-Asberg on the Lower Rhine.)

The historical point of establishing the Trojan descent of the Franks has been thematized with Ammianus. With him in mind, Ian N. Wood predicates:

> *It is likely that the Franks, like the Burgundians,* ‹ ! › *received the epithet 'Trojan' within the context of imperial diplomacy.* { Wood, 'Ethnicity and the ethnogenesis of the Burgundians' (1990) pp. 57–8. } *This would not have been the only occasion on which the notion of brotherhood was used to imply a special relationship with Rome; the people of Autun, for instance, regarded themselves as being brothers of the Romans* { Panegyrici Latini, V 2, 4 } *as did the men of the Auvergne. Subsequently what had been no more than a name implying a certain diplomatic affiliation between the Franks and Valentinian must have been interpreted as providing a genuine indication of the origins of the Franks. The idea will have been elaborated through contact with what was still known of the Trojan legend.*

> [Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751* (1994) pgs 34–35. Footnotes in curly braces. (Contextual remark: An attempt by Valentinian I to capture the Alemanni king Macrian with the help of the Burgundians failed in 370. He was first deposed by the emperor and was finally granted an alliance treaty in 371. He remained an ally of the Romans until his death in 380, which was brought about by the '*rex Francorum*' Mallobaudes.)]

Wood follows Edward James insofar as

> *in fact there is no reason to believe that the Franks were involved in any long-distance migration: archaeology and history suggest that they originated in the lands immediately to the east of the Rhine.*
> [Op. cit. (1994) p. 35, cf. James, op. cit. pgs 35–38.]

According to reliable historical sources, the most important development of the Franks, by which we mean especially their tremendous rise by its history of power politics, undoubtedly began in this area. This rather late view finds support – of course, disregarding *Fredegar* and the *Liber* in this very case – in the earliest *extant* mention of

the *Franks*. In 291 they first appear as *Franci* in a panegyric to the emperors Diocletian and Maximian. About 70 years later, Aurelius Victor notes in his *Liber de Caesaribus* that the peoples of the Franks (= *Francorum gentes*) had already ravaged Gaul by the end of the 250s.

Concluding further about the literary-historical impact of the Troyan legend, the authors of *Fredegar* and the *Liber*, possibly even Sidonius at hand of e.g. Lucan, may have equated the *Illyrii* with the people of *Ilium/Illium*, the second Latin name of Troy, for creating a precious story about the progenitors of the Franks. According to prevailing scholarly opinion, it is obvious that *Fredegar* and the writer(s)/editor(s) of the *Liber* tried to impute an ancient tribal origin with royal tradition to the Franks, which had to be at peers with the highly respected civilizations of the Romans and the Greeks.

Gregory of Tours vs Trojan-Carolingian ancestry ?

Gregory of Tours, who might not necessarily mean that Pannonia as the prominent part of today's Hungary, could have suspected all this; cf. Wenskus (op. cit.), but see Wood (op. cit. p. 35) remembering Gregory's devotional relation to St Martin of Tours coming from there. Though writing definitely before *Fredegar* and the *Liber's* author(s), Gregory most likely 'reviewed and rejected' foreseeingly the sources and highly questionable elaborations of these authors and their later editors on the Frankish Troy myth. At least Gregory refrained from equating the people of Troy with the Illyrians, whose territory came later under the Roman Illyricum, which partly overlapped Pannonia or was adjacent to its region.

With additions known as *Continuationes* to *Fredegar's* original transmission of about AD 650, efforts can be observed among the (Pre-)Carolingians around Charles Martel's (half-)brother Childebrand to corroborate the Trojan reference by questionably appearing sources of evidence. See, for example, the *Historia Dare[ge]tis Frigii de Origine Francorum*, a compilation completed around 770 to present the origin of the Franks from Dares' novel *Daretis Phrygii de excidio Trojae historia* (likely of the 5[th] century). This work is by no means the only one with which Carolingian historians imputed knowledge of the Trojan origin to Frankish history. In the *Historia vel gesta Francorum* (apparently completed under Childebrand's son Nibelung), which was presented almost simultaneously with the *de origine Francorum* attributed to Dares, further compilations were cited in terms of content which had been written as excerpts under the titles *Scarpsum de Cronica Hieronimi* and *Scarpsum de Cronica Gregorii episcopi Toronaci* in order to affirm the Trojan origin of the Franks with further sources. Bede, too, was used for this purpose: Moreover, the Carolingian author of the *Chronicon universale usque ad annum 741* contextualizes the Trojan origin of the Franks at hand of Bede's chronology in *De temporum ratione*, cf. c.66. The latest Carolingian ethnology of Trojan descent received further support from Paulus Diaconus, who was temporarily active in the scriptorium of Charlemagne. In his *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium*, Paul did not shy away from declaring Ansegisel's name, who was the father of Pippin II, as the ancestral memory of the Trojan Anchises/Anschisus, as he could already be taken from Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Further, the 8th-century author Aethicus 'Ister', whose epithet may be attributed to the Danube and/or Istria, knows of details by Frankish historiography as provided especially by the *Liber*. Following to certain extent also the *Historia Daretis Frigii de Origine Francorum*, he forwards the Trojan Frigia/Frigio as the father of Franco and Vasso in his rather bizarre *Cosmographia*.

Localizing *Meroveus*

Regarding the Frankish ancestry of the first half of 5th century, a Germanic chief called *Meroveus*, the suggested grandfather of Clovis I, appears recorded for rendering heroic service to the Romans about 417. At that time, possibly as a merited high-ranked mercenary, this *Meroveus* (Merovech) appears rewarded with the leadership of parts of the *Germania inferior* and *Belgica inferior*, nowadays pertaining to Dutch, Belgian and German territory. He could have ruled even Sicambrian and/or adjacent regions east of the Lower Rhine, albeit we do not know where he came from. We may also question whether his father was the leader of those Franks who moved eastward to and possibly across the Rhine in the second half of the 4th century. Furthermore, we know that a few generations earlier a *Mero*gaisus is said to have commanded Bructerians, temporarily located on the eastern bank of the Lower Rhine along the Lippe river, who were defeated and subjugated by Constantine the Great in 306. This may give rise to the etymologically- ethnically- geographically based conjecture that *Mero*vech could also have had a rulership in this area in the first half of 5th century. We may also annotate that Flavius *Mero*baudes, a native Frank († 383 or 388), was acting under Emperor Valentinian II as *magister militum*, acting in 377 as *consul* for the Western Empire.

With regard to geoethnic identifications, Karl Müllenhoff (*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, 6,* p. 433) follows Heinrich Leo (*Lehrbuch der Universalgeschichte 2, 28*) who connects Merovingian location with the Dutch watercourse *Merwe* (Merwede). Franz Joseph Mone (*Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der teuschen Heldensage*, 1836, p. 47) recounts some authors who have already combined likewise. Emil Rückert (*Oberon von Mons und die Pipine von Nivella*, 1836, p. 39) argues accordingly:

Das herrschende Geschlecht der Franken wohnte an der Merwe oder Merowe, d. h. der unterhalb Löwenstein mit der Maas vereinigten Waal und hiervon empfing es den Namen Merowinger, Morowinger, welchen auch ein König aus diesem Hause, Meroväus oder Moroväus, Merwig, trug. Der Mervengau ist jenes Maurungania ad Albim (wohl Vahalim), welches der Geograph von Ravenna als früheren Aufenthalt der prima linea Francorum angibt.

[Transl.: The ruling Frankish dynasty was dwelling on the Merwe or Merowe ‹ today the Dutch Merwede ›, where the Meuse meets the Waal below Lionstone Castle ‹ the *Lovensteyn* or *Loevestein* ›; and the Merovings or Morovingians received their name from that former watercourse, and also one of their kings, Meroveus, Moroveus, or Mervig, was named likewise. This district called 'Mervengau' is that 'Maurungania ad Albim' ‹ obviously the 'Vahalim' - cf. *Vahal, Waal* › which the Geographer ‹'*Cosmographer'* › of Ravenna notes as the early location of the 'prima linea Francorum'.]

Eugen Ewig regards the earliest region of the Salian Franks originated in the region of the Overyssel. This river is crossing the former *Sal-land* which may stand for the former central part of the Frankish *Salia*, as roughly marked today by the Dutch towns Deventer, Kampen and the German Nordhorn. Likely with Batavian people, they afterwards migrated to *Toxandria* which encompassed the current Dutch province of North Brabant and, finally in the first half of the 5th century, the region mainly west of the woodland called *Silva Carbonaria*.

According to estimations mainly based on archaeological explorations of Frisian and Low Saxon lands, the Salian Franks were settling previously, until c. 365/370, between Mid and North German lands up to the middle course of Weser river; cf. for instance Eugen Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, p. 9. Following further archaeological and historical estimation, Saxon tribes had forced them to move south- and southwestward in the second half of the 4th century. Thereafter, after the beginning of the 5th century, the Franks withdrew to regions mainly on the left side of the Lower Rhine.

The Cosmographer of Ravenna describes the geography of the *Francia Rinensis* between c. 480 and 490. He reckons the *Germania inferior*, almost the whole *Belgica superior* (presumably without Verdun) and a northern part of the *Germania superior* to the 'Rhenish Franks', cf. **RGA** 9 (1995) p. 369.

Lovensteyn of 1630, painted by C.J.Visscher.

The castle was (re-?)built between 1357 and 1368 by Lord Diederick van Horne who was (nick-)named Loef (Lion). In 1385, Albrecht van Beieren took over possession of the castle and appointed his trustee Brunstijn van Herwijnen as the castle's keeper.
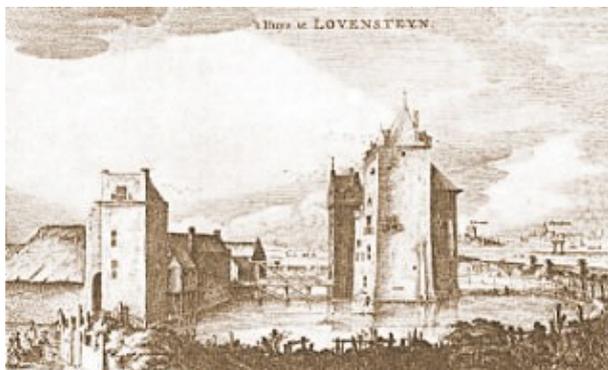
This colourized old photo of Loevestein Castle was made on the eastern bank of the Waal, approximately 2 miles (3 km) from the Merwede's mouth.

Fredegar's **Merovingian parable based on northern background (?)**

It seems obvious that already in and after the 3ʳᵈ century AD the Franks settled Frisian coastland extending from the banks of the North Sea to the Channel. Regarding this spatio-temporal situation, Ian N. Wood combines the *demonic origin* for the Merovingians – its lineage gendered by a *bistea Quinotaurus* (*Fredegar's book III,9*, see below under **Merovingian etymology and (re)placements**) – with a suggestive association of them with the sea:

> *This association can, in fact, be paralleled by references to Frankish maritime and piratical raids against the Channel coasts and on the lower Rhine in third-, fourth-, and fifth-century sources.[29] It is also apparent in the poems of Sidonius Apollinaris, who sees the Franks as providing the touchstone for swimming skills.[30] In large measure, before the fifth century, the Franks appear as a maritime people, collaborating with, and often scarcely differentiated from the Saxons.[31]*

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> *29 Ian N. Wood, The Channel from the 4th to the 7th Cs AD, in*: Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons, *ed. by Seán McGrail (1990), pp. 93–97.*
> *30 Sidonius Apollinaris,* Epistulae et carminae, *ed. by André Loyen, 3 vols (Paris, 1960–70), carm. VII.236.*
> *31 Wood, 'The Channel from the 4th to the 7th Centuries', pp. 94, 96.*

> > [Wood, *Defining the Franks: Frankisch origins in early medieval historiography.* In: *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble (2006), pgs 91–98, cf. p. 93.]

Not contradictory to this abstracted focus on the genesis and localization of the Merovingians, we can encounter an obvious early 'Nordic representative' of them: turning to the heroic lays of the Edda and the *Vǫlsunga saga,* their writers know of a king called *Hjalprek*. Some analysts suggested him as Chilperic I, but he could have been confused with Childeric I, father of Clovis I (likely the Old Norse *Hlǫðvér* mentioned in the *Wǫlundarkviða* and *Guðrúnarkviða* II), which may indicate an early tradition conveyed already in the time of that Chilperic I. In the Guðrúnarkviða II (*in ǫnnur)*, 25, Gudrun's mother offers (a part of) *Hlǫðvér's sali* = Clovis' kingdom to the brave one who avenges the death of her son-in-law *Sigurð*. Clovis' alleged father Childeric is said to have sailed as far as the Mediterranean, to have had also martial Anglo-Saxon activities and, if representing *Hjalprek*, also a realm in Denmark or rather on the Jutland Peninsular. Further, a Saxon chief *Cheldric* appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Since the Thidrekssaga may point to an analogous or similar dynastical-geographical milieu that already show the *Sinfiǫtlalok* and *Sigurðarkviða Fafnisbana ǫnnur, w*e may also recognize the figures called *Nidung* and *Ortvangis*, and regions to be determined as the *Hesbaye* (not 'Hispania') in *Salerni* (geostrategically the Salian province *Belgica II*) and *Þióð/Thiodi/T*(h)y on Jutland.

Regarding the latter region, the lands around the Limfjord on the ancient 'Amber Route', of considerable strategic importance for maritime Frisians, Franks and Saxons, seems worth the effort to scrutinize there the presence of the *first Meroveus*. There are at least two locations of interest whose former spelling and tradition seem to indicate themselves as name spending godfather: The isle of **Mors** with known word forms of 'Morø...' and, close to the east, Cap **Salling.**

Further to mention is *Samsø* (Samsey) north of Funen, where the *Lokasenna,24* from the Poetic Edda already narrates a meeting of Loki with Odin. The naming of *Samsø*, a venue given by the historiographer Saxo Grammaticus and Old Norse sagas, is said to be based on 'Sams ey' ('Sam's Isle') and may appear as personalized as the name *Samson* in the Merovingian genealogy. Appearing rather as a Salian-Frankish than Italian hero of the Thidrekssaga, *Samson* as the nickname or second name of Childerich – or the Old Norse *Hjalprek* – has been critically questioned in the bandwidth between saga and historiography:

Rolf Badenhausen, *Zur Historizität der Thidrekssaga: Teil I: Frühmerowingische Herrscher und „Samson".* In: *Der Berner 80* (2020), pgs 24–38;
Idem, *Gallo-Roman Warlords: ›Samson‹ – Childerich – Odoaker.* In: *Der Berner 87* (2021), pgs 29–53.

An excerpt from the Ortelius Map of Jutland by M. Jordano.

We may wonder if Freculf could connect the tip of Jutland with a Scandinavian environment. Otherwise, these locations could have been the temporary seat of the migrating Merovingian eponym of the Franks.

With respect to *Fredegar's* parable of Merovingian genesis, possibly typified by means of rather a native Nordic chief *Meroveus* with (e.g.) ‹ impressing horns on his furry alien helmet ›, we may wonder about Emil Rückert's successive order of Merovingian onomastics and question furthermore: Was there already any recurrently related Nordic homeland of the invading 'Salian' or Merovingian founder, the name spending godfather of that dynasty which the Dutch *Merwede* and its contemporarily surrounding region *Salland* or, more common, *Salia* seem to remember?

Reinhard Wenskus remarks that Bishop Freculf of Lisieux, formerly a pupil at the scriptorium of Charlemagne's Aachen residence, claims Scandinavian origin of the Franks despite of his knowledge of the Trojan legend, cf. *J. P. Migne, Patrologiae cursus completus, Seria I, latina*, *CVI*, col. 967:

Francos ... de Scanza insula ... exordium habuisse; de qua Gothi et ceterae nationes Theotiscae exierunt, quod et idioma lingua eorum testantur.

The RGA (see appendix below) recounts that Feculf's contemporary Ermoldus Nigellus, a son of Louis the Pious, notes in the vita of his father a *fama* (heroic lore, popular tradition) that situates the origin of the Franks to the neighbourhood of the Danes.

After all, it seems superfluous to underline that both Carolingian scholars have deliberately ignored the southern Pannonian migration of the Franks provided by *Fredegar*, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and – if actually referring to the southern Pannonia – Gregory of Tours.

A subtle figural-personified reference to Frigio's Franks migrating rather via Frisian islands may have been left by the first continuator of the *Fredegar's* chronicle in ch. 17, where these people appear paraphrased with forms such as *maritimam Frigionum/Frigione..., Insulas Frigionum..., exercitum Frigionum...*; cf. MGH SS rer. Merov. 2 (1888), p. 176.

Merovingian etymology and (re)placements

A further onomastic approach, which basically does not contradict these northern localizations of apparently experienced Merovingian seafarers, might come from the students and translators of the Old English Beowulf, cf. its lines 2920–2921:

> ... ús wæs á syððan
> *merewíoingas* milts ungyfeðe.

Karl Simrock equated the term on the left with the 'Merovingas' (Ger. 'Merowinge(r)', cf. *Beowulf*, 1859, p. 147). Francis B. Gummere correspondingly translated this very passage

> *And ever since the **Merovings'** favor has failed us wholly...*,

whereas other reputable philologists (e.g. Levin Ludwig Schücking, Martin Lehnert, Gisbert Haefs) have emended the term in question to the compound

> *mere-wícingas* = sea-pirates.

Fredegar provides this parable of the Merovingian genesis (*book III*,9), as already quoted in the author's article *Merovingians by the Svava*:

Fertur, super litore maris aestatis tempore Chlodeo cum uxore resedens, meridiae uxor ad mare labandum vadens,* bistea Neptuni Quinotauri similis eam adpetisset. Cumque in continuo aut a bistea aut a viro fuisset concepta, peperit filium nomen Meroveum, per co regis Francorum post vocantur Merohingii.

[It is said that in the summertime Chlodio sat with his wife on the shore of the churning sea, and at noon she went to ‹ take a bath in › the Labadian Sea* where a beast of Neptune, which resembled a Quinotaur, took possession of her. Whether he may have been begotten by the beast or by the man, in any case, she bore a son named Meroveus, and after him the kings of the Franks were later called Merovingians.

―――――――――――――
* *Fredegar* most likely means *Labadus* or Lebedus (Lebedos), one of *the twelve cities of the Ionian League located on the Aegean Sea as the*

> *urbs Ioniæ in Asia minori, maritima in parte Australi Isthmi peninsulæ Ioniæ; quæ etiam **Labadus** dicta est...*

as explained by the author of the Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti..., Jacobi Usserii Annales, Genevæ MDCCXXII, Index Geographicus 'L'.

Image by www.figuren-shop.de with added details by the author.

Does this 'Greek version' allow to re-transfer this location, just c. 135 mi. (c. 218 km) south of the archaeological Troy, to a shore of Chlodio's domain somewhere on the North Sea? And we further may ask for a compromise to all translators mentioned above: Is there generally reason enough to contradict the derivative-based identification *mere-wícingas* → Merovings?

According to all this, we can only assume with this abstract that Chlodio's Franks could have come from the south to the northern Rhine, while his successor Merovech possibly had his roots rather in the north. Thus, it seems obvious that *Fredegar* did not arbitrarily decide for the drastically depicted interference of Merovech into the ancestral lineage of Chlodio's Franks. Considering at least contemporary tradition, understanding and conviction, this may actually correspond with a massive intervention into the ethnic identity of the *gens Francorum*: If Chlodio's wife had been impregnated by a barbarian individual, the male Trojan lineage would have been lost. *Fredegar* looks upon this highly probable disruption as an authoritative offence against the *prima linea Francorum*, and he showed reason enough to vent his frustration about this with a splendid theatrical performance. Because he hardly wanted to see the Trojan lineage broken, he transferred the stage of his drama, in which Chlodio seems to appear in the rôle of a 'vice-father', to that impressing coastal scenery which had to be not far away from Troy.

Gregory's vague statement on Merovech's racial inclusion, ascribing him to *Chlodio's stock 'as asserted'* : ***De huius stirpe quidam Merovechum regem fuisse adserunt*** (op. cit. *II,9*), has been much thematized. With regard to *Fredegar's* parable, however, we can obviously conclude no more than an unclear consanguinity between Merovech and Chlodio. However, we can also ask urgently: would Fredegar have written his play at all if Childeric had been fathered by Chlodio?

Appendix

The **RGA** vol. 22 (2003) pgs 189–191, see translation below, states on the 'Origo gentis' of the Franks:

§ 4. Franken. a. Herkunft des Volkes, Tradition des Volksnamens, Kg.smythos. Einige für die Genese des frk. Kgt.s und der frk. gens *wesentliche Qu.zeugnisse enthalten implizite Herkunftstraditionen. Gewisse Elemente in der Tradition scheinen auf ö. und n. Züge bei merow. Kgt. (→ Merowinger) und Volksbildung hinzudeuten. Bisweilen begegnet eine Identifizierung des merow. Geschlechts mit den bei → Ptolemaeus (48, II, 11,11) erwähnten Marvingi. Diese sind zu den bei dem → Geographen von Ravenna (I, 11) genannten Maurungani (→ Mauringa/Maurungani) gestellt worden, die dort einerseits zu Elbe und Franken in Bezug gesetzt sind, andererseits Grenznachbarn der beiden Pannonien (IV, 19) sein können (81, 26–28. 72; 171, 527). Einige Namen lassen später (58, I, 9; 5, 31; 7, 2502. 2914. 2912) Angehörige des Kg.sgeschlechts (→ Chlodwig , → Theuderich I.) bzw. die Franken schlechthin als Hugonen und damit in Verbindung mit den → Chauken erscheinen (171, 527 f.; 170, 190. 196). Hatte schon Claudian ([XXI, 222. 226]; X, 279) die Sugambrer mit dem Rhein bzw. der Elbe zusammengebracht, so führt Ermoldus Nigellus (Vita Ludwigs des Frommen IV, 13–18) eine* fama *an, nach der die Franken aus der Nachbarschaft der → Dänen stammten, und kennt Frechulf von Lisieux neben der Herleitung der Franken aus Troja ihre Herkunft aus Skand. (PL 106, 967C/D). – Im Fall der Sigambrer/Sugambrer ist zu beachten, daß die zeitlich frühesten Belege (Claudian XXIV, 18; XXVI, 419; XV, 373; XVIII, 383; Apoll. Sidon., Ep. IV, 1,4; VIII, 9,5, 28; Carm. VII, 42. 114; XIII, 31; XXIII, 246) sich auf die Franken insgesamt, die späteren, → Venantius Fortunatus (Carm. VI, 2,97) und → Gregor von Tours (21, I, 31), sich mit Charibert und Chlodwig auf Angehörige der merow. Dynastie beziehen. Offenbar werden hier Interdependenzen zw. frk. Volk und Kgt. faßbar, die über die faktische Dimension hinausführen.*

Herkunft von der See und Verbindung mit den Sugambrern gehören in den Zusammenhang der Herkunft des Volkes. Außer in den vorgestellten Reflektierungen ist das Thema mit verschiedenen faktischen und mythischen Komponenten in einer Wanderungssage ausgeführt, die bei Gregor (21, II, 9) zuerst, dann bei → Fredegar und im → Liber historiae Francorum in charakteristischen Ausgestaltungen in der Trojasage, faßbar ist. Assoziationen, die auf eine Verbindung der Sigambrer mit der frk. Ethnogenese verweisen, begegnen zuerst bei dem Byzantiner Johannes Lydus (um 560). Er berichtet, die Sigambroi *würden von den Gall. an Rhein und Rhône nach einem* hegemon Phraggoi *genannt (De mag. III, 56; I, 50). Zur gleichen Zeit erfolgen die Sigamber-Apostrophierungen merow. Herrscher. Möglicherweise handelt es sich um die Übertragung gentiler, auf die Franken insgesamt bezogener Elemente. Indem Venantius Fortunatus den Kg. als* progenitus de clare gente Sigamber *apostrophiert und Gregor den Sigambrerbezug bei Chlodwigs Taufe in vergleichbarem Kontext verwertet sein läßt, werden die für das Kgt. wichtigen ideologischen Komponenten deutlich (62, 14 f. 27).* Gens Sigambrorum *begegnet häufig in der frk. Historiographie des 7. Jh.s, bes. in bezug zum hohen Adel. Später erscheint Sigambria als wichtige Station der frk. Wanderung im Trojazyklus, im Liber hist. Franc. in Pann., bei Aethicus Ister in Germania lokalisiert.*

Isidor von Sevilla (26, IX, 2,101) führt zwei geläufige, alternative Erklärungen des Namens ‚Franken' an: die Benennung a quodam duce eorum *und die nach* feritas morum. *Ein versifizierter kosmographischer Traktat, wohl spätes 7. Jh., präzisiert Isidor mit dem Namen* Franco *(MGH Poet. Lat. 4, 2, 554).*

Gregor nennt in einer als breit gestreut gekennzeichneten Version (21, II, 9: Tradunt ... multi*) als Stadien der Wanderung Pann. – Rhein – Thoringa. Im Blick auf eine mögliche Verbindung der Franken mit der See und einer Herkunft des Traditionskerns der → Salier von der Nordsee ist gefragt worden, ob Gregor*

nicht das bei → Plinius (44, IV,94) begegnende Nordsee-Küstengebiet Baunonia (→ Burcana) in Pann. umbenannt habe (189, 4). Mit Blick auf die Hugen/Hugonen-Tradition ist als Erklärung vorgeschlagen worden, Gregor könne die mit Pann. assoziierten → Hunnen zu Hugen mißverstanden haben (160). Diese Erklärungen können für die Real-gesch. kein überzeugendes Resultat liefern. Doch steht die Bedeutung von Pann. für die Herkunftssage außer Frage. Im Liber hist. Franc. (32, c. 1) ist Pann. wichtige Station der Franken, lange bewohnter Siedlungsraum und neues Ausgangsland (62, 24 f. 12 f. 27–30). Sein Stellenwert als ‚Erinnerungsort' der Franken wird dadurch unterstrichen, daß das Kgt. neben der monopolisierten Sigambrertradition auch das Pann.-motiv für sich reklamiert. Ein Brief Kg. Theudeberts I. kann wohl in diesem Sinn interpretiert werden (Epp. Austr. 20: MGH EE 3, 132 f.; 62, 27 f.).

Z.T. weiter zurückreichende Zeugnisse (Avitus von Vienne, Remigius von Reims, Aurelianus von Arles) überliefern mit felicitas *und* stimma sidereum *der stirps genuine Momente des merow. Kg.smythos. Zu nautischer Praxis und Tradition der Franken wie auch zu ihrem Kg.smythos gehört die Herleitung der Merowinger von einer* bistea Neptuni Quinotauri similis. *Fredegar (17, III, 9) referiert die von Gregor (21, II, 9. 10) anscheinend unterdrückte Version mit christl. motivierter Abwehr und macht in Kontamination mit dem mythischen Ahnen Mero irrigerweise die hist. Figur → Merowechs zum → Heros eponymos der Dynastie. Die archaische Verknüpfung von Götter- und Kg.sreihen scheint hier wider, vielleicht vermittelt durch eines jener aus → Tacitus (53, c. 2) erschlossenen* carmina antiqua *(112, 31). In weitreichender Deutung ist die Stelle in ein Syndrom mythol. und hist. Bezüge (Neptun; Minotaurus) gefügt worden (170, 182–204. 240; Korrekturen, doch übersteigerte Gegenkonstruktion: 134).*

Als für die frk. Ethnogenese und die Herkunftssage relevante Momente, die unabhängig vom Trojamotiv erscheinen, sind zu nennen: Sigambrer, Wanderung, Pann., Rhein, Namensherleitung von einem → dux (Franco) oder von feritas morum. *(Zu hypothetische Verknüpfung: 153, 169–173). Man könnte erwägen, ob nicht die Reminizenz an eine unter Ks. → Tiberius an der unteren Donau stationierte* cohors Sugambra *(Tac. ann. IV,47) die Verknüpfung Sigambrer – Franken – Pann. vermittelt hat (...).*

[Transl.: § 4. F r a n k s. a. O r i g i n o f t h e p e o p l e, t r a d i t i o n o f t h e p e o p l e ' s n a m e, k i n g s h i p ' s m y t h. Some of the essential sources about the genesis of the Frankish kingship and the *gens* contain implicit traditions of origin. Certain elements in the tradition seem to indicate eastern and northern features of the Merovingian kingship (→ Merowinger) *[Merovings/ Merovingians]* and the ethnic formation into a national identity. See → Ptolemaeus *[Ptolemy]* (48, II, 11,11) for an occasional identification of the Merovingian *gens* with the Marvingi. They have been collocated with the Maurungani (→ Mauringa/ Maurungani) provided by the Cosmographer of Ravenna, who reckons and situates them to the Franks on Elbe river on the one hand (IV, 19). On the other, the former could have been bordering neighbours of the two Pannonias (81, 26–28, 72; 171, 527). Some names appear later (58, I, 9; 5, 31; 7, 2502. 2914. 2912) as descendants of the royal ancestry (→ Clodwig *[Clovis]*, → Theuderich I. *[Theuderic I]*), or the Franks as Hugonen *('Hugas')* per se, and in so far in connection with the → Chauken *[Chauci]* (171, 527f., 170, 190. 196). Since Claudian had already situated the Sicambrians on the Rhine or the Elbe ([XXI, 222. 226]; X, 279), Ermoldus Nigellus (Vita of Louis the Pious IV, 13–18) introduced a *fama* claiming that the Franks originally came from the neighbourhood of the → Dänen *[Danes]*, and Freculf of Lisieux knows of their origin from Scandinavia besides their derivation from Troy (PL 106, 967C/D). – As regards the Sicambrians/Sugambrians, it should be noted that the attested sources (Claudian XXIV, 18; XXVI, 419; XV, 373; XVIII, 383; Apoll. Sidon., Ep. IV, 1,4; VIII, 9,5, 28; Carm. VII, 42. 114; XIII, 31; XXIII, 246) refer to the Franks as a whole, while the later accounts by → Venantius Fortunatus (Carm. VI, 2,97) and → Gregor von Tours *[Gregory of Tours]* (21, I, 31) refer to the Merovingian dynasty with Charibert and Clovis. Interdependencies between the

Frankish people and kingship, which go beyond the factual dimension, now appear evident.

The origin from the sea and the connection with the Sigambrians belong to the context of ethnic origin. Except in the above-mentioned reflections, the subject matter is carried out with various factual and mythical components in a migration legend which is cognizable at first at Gregory (21, II, 9), then at → Fredegar and the → Liber historiae Francorum in characteristic configurations of the Trojan legend. The earliest associations which point to a connection between the Sigambrians and Frankish ethnogenesis can be found at the Byzantine scribe John Lydus (c. 560). He reports that the people of Gaul on the Rhine and Rhône had named the *Sigambroi* after a *hegemon Phraggoi* (De mag. III, 56; I, 50). At the same time the Merovingian rulers received the Sigambrian apostrophies. This could be the transfer of gentile elements being related to the Franks as a whole. Since Venantius Fortunatus apostrophizes the king as a *progenitus de clare gente Sigamber* and Gregory has left the use of the Sigambrian reference in a comparable context at the baptism of Clovis, the important ideological components for kingship become clear (62, 14f. 27). *Gens Sigambrorum* meets frequently the Frankish historiography of 7th century, esp. regarding high nobility. Sigambria appears later as an important stage of Frankish migration in the Trojan cycle, as being located in Pannonia in the Liber historiae Francorum, in Germania by Aethicus Ister.

Isidore of Seville (26, IX, 2,101) offers two common and alternative explanations onto the naming of the 'Franks': the designations *a quodam duce eorum* and *feritas morum*. A versified cosmographic treatise, probably of late 7th century, specifies Isidore's version with the name *Franco* (MGH Poet. Lat. 4, 2, 554).

In a broadly characterized version Gregory recounts the stages of migration with Pannonia – Rhine – Thoringa (21, II, 9: *Tradunt ... multi*). In view of a possible connection of the Franks with the sea and an origin of the traditional core of the → Salier *[Salians]* from the North Sea, it has been queried whether Gregory had renamed the North Sea coastal area Baunonia (→ Burcana; see → Plinius [44, IV,94]) as Pannonia (189, 4). With regard to the Hugen/Hugonen tradition, there is proposed explanation that Gregory could have misunderstood the Huns, associated with Pannonia, as Hugen (160). Although this kind of explanation can not provide a convincing solution for real history, the significance of Pannonia for the origin is beyond question. In the Liber historiae Francorum (32, c. 1) Pannonia is an important stage of the Franks, a long inhabited settlement area and a new starting country (62, 24f. 12f. 27–30). Its importance as a 'place of remembrance' of the Franks is underlined by the fact that the kingship, besides the monopolized Sigambrian tradition, also claims the Pannonian motive for itself. A letter of Theudebert I may be interpreted in this sense (Epp. Aust. 20: MGH EE 3, 132f.; 62, 27f.).

Some testimonies, partially far-reaching (cf. Avitus of Vienne, Remigius of Reims, Aurelianus of Arles) provide with *felicitas* and *stimma sidereum* of the *stirps* genuine moments of the Merovingian kingship's myth. The derivation of the Merovingians from a *bistea Neptuni Quinotauri similes* belongs to the nautical practice and tradition of the Franks as well as to their kingship's myth. Fredegar (17, III, 9) refers to the version seemingly suppressed by Gregory (21, II, 9. 10) with a Christian motivated defense and, in contamination with the mythical ancestor Mero, he erroneously makes the historical figure of → Merowech *[Merovech]* the → Heros eponymos of the dynasty. Here appears the archaic link between the series of gods and kings, perhaps imparted from one of the *carmina antiqua* (112, 31) receptively encountered at → Tacitus (53, c.2). In a broad interpretation, this site of tradition was embedded into a syndrome of mythological and historical references (Neptune; Minotaurus) (170, 182–204. 240; corrections but exceeding counterconstruction: 134).

The relevant characteristic moments – which are not depending on the Trojan Legend – of the ethnogenesis of the Franks and their origin appear as: Sicambrians, migration, Pannonia, Rhine, name deriving from a → dux (Franco) or *feritas morum*. (For hypothetical connection: 153, 169–173). One might

contemplate whether the reminiscence of the *cohors Sugambra* (Tac. Ann. IV,47), stationed under emperor → Tiberius on the Lower Danube, could have imparted the chain Sicambrians – Franks – Pannonia(ns). (...)]

Sources

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(21) Gregor von Tours, Decem Libri Historiarum, hrsg. von B. Krusch, W. Levinson, MGH SS rer. Mer. 1, 1, [2]1951, Nachdr. 1992; oder hrsg. von R. Buchner, Ausgewählte Qu. zur dt. Gesch. des MAs 2 und 3, 1959.

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(112) K. Hauck, Carmina antiqua. Abstammungsglaube und Stammesbewußtsein, Zeitschr. für bayer. Landesgesch. 27, 1964, 1–33.

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(170) R. Wenskus, Relig. abâtardie. Materialien zum Synkretismus in der vorchristl. polit. Theol. der Franken, in: Iconologia sacra (Festschr. K. Hauck), 1994, 179–248.

(171) Wenskus, Stammesbildung.

(189) E. Zöllner, Gesch. der Franken bis zur Mitte des 6. Jh.s, 1970.