

INTRODUCTION

This war, which had been drawn out over so many years, was concluded on the condition – proposed by the king, and accepted by the Saxons – that they, having cast aside demonic worship and abandoned the ceremonies of their fathers, were to receive the sacraments of Christian faith and religion, and then, having been united to the Franks, to become one people (*populus*) with them.¹

So wrote Einhard in his *Life of Charlemagne*.² The Saxon conquest had concluded in 804, following thirty-three years of intermittent conflict. It had already been memorialized and endowed with unique prominence in the Carolingian annalistic tradition, most notably in the *Royal Frankish Annals* and their revision. Even Einhard, writing with the benefit of hindsight, explicitly marked out the conquest of Saxony as the most important war which Charlemagne ever fought.³ The extraordinary attention paid to Saxony in those years of protracted campaigning did not last; rather, Saxony fell off the map after 804. The main-line Carolingian historiographical texts are silent about its subsequent history. Interest was piqued by the *Stellinga* revolt in the mid-ninth century, but then, equally swiftly, it fades away once more.⁴ Not until the rise of the Ottonians did interest in contemporary Saxon history resurface.

Widukind of Corvey, the great historical writer of the mid-tenth century, gives only the following:

¹ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SRG* 25 (Hanover: Hahn, 1911), c. 7, p. 10: 'Eaque conditione a rege proposita et ab illis suscepta tractum per tot annos bellum constat esse finitum, ut, abiecto daemonum cultu et relictis patriis caerimoniis, Christianae fidei atque religionis sacramenta susciperent et Francis adunati unus cum eis populus efficerentur.'

² For the dating of this work, see below, pp. 13–14.

³ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. Holder-Egger, c. 13, p. 15.

⁴ For a similar point, see H. Röcklein, *Reliquientranslationen nach Sachsen im 9. Jahrhundert: über Kommunikation, Mobilität und Öffentlichkeit im Frühmittelalter* (Beihefte der Francia 48) (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 2002), p. 24.

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Just as Charlemagne was the most powerful of kings, so too was he vigilant with no less wisdom. Certainly, because he was more prudent than all other mortals in his time, he decided that it was not right for a neighbouring, noble people to be held back in empty error; he strove in every way, that they might be led to the true path. He compelled them first by pleasant persuasions, then by the fury of wars, and eventually in the thirtieth year of his empire – indeed, he, formerly a king, was made an emperor – he prevailed in that which he had spent so many years to achieve: so that those who were formerly friends and allies of the Franks were made brothers as if one people (*gens*) in the Christian faith, just as we see them now.

The last of the Carolingians who ruled the Eastern Franks was Louis, of Arnulf, the nephew of Charles [the Fat], the great-grandfather of King Lothar ... As King Louis did not have a son, all the people of the Franks and Saxons sought to place the royal crown upon Otto.⁵

Without a single nod to the ninth century, Widukind thus jumped straight from Carolingian conquest to Ottonian ascendancy, leaving a gaping lacuna. Much historiography on the subject has done exactly the same: while there is abundant scholarship on the conquest of Saxony and on the Ottonians (and on their forebears, the Liudolfinger family), the intervening period is often overlooked.

It is difficult to see how a narrative as expedited as that of Widukind can be justified. There are ample signs that this intervening period was one of profound transformation. The Saxony we glimpse before the conquest period is an entirely different entity from that which crops up in Ottonian historiography. Pre-conquest Saxony appears to have lacked any unity as a region, either in terms of politics, religion, ethnicity or material culture; even its borders were ill-defined.⁶ Its inhabitants practised ‘paganism’, and, despite earlier missionary efforts, the institutional structures of Christianity, that is, churches, monasteries and bishoprics,

⁵ Widukind of Corvey, *Res Gestae Saxonicae*, eds. P. Hirsch and H. E. Lohmann, *MGH SRG* 60 (Hanover: Hahn, 1935), I:15–16, pp. 25–6: ‘Magnus vero Karolus cum esset regum fortissimus, non minori sapientia vigilabat. Enimvero considerabat, quia suis temporibus omni mortali prudentior erat, finitimam gentem nobilemque vano errore retineri non oportere; modis omnibus satagebat, quatinus ad veram viam duceretur. Et nunc blanda suasionem, nunc bellorum impetu ad id cogebat, tandemque tricesimo imperii sui anno obtinuit – imperator quippe ex rege creatus est –, quod multis temporibus elaborando non defecit: ob id qui olim socii et amici erant Francorum, iam fratres et quasi una gens ex Christiana fide, veluti modo videmus, facta est. Ultimus vero Karolorum apud orientales Francos imperantium Hluthowicus ex Arnulfo fratruel Karoli, huius Lotharii regis proavi, natus erat ... Regi autem Hluthowico non erat filius, omnisque populus Francorum atque Saxonum quarebat Oddoni diadema imponere regni.’ For this passage, see also M. Becher, *Rex, Dux und Gens: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des sächsischen Herzogtums im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Historische Studien 444) (Husum: Matthiesen, 1996), pp. 43–4.

⁶ For this, see above all M. Springer, ‘Location in space and time’ in Green and Siegmund, *Saxons*, pp. 11–36; M. Springer, *Die Sachsen* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2004), pp. 131–52.

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were entirely absent.⁷ There was little social stratification, and the entire region was economically underdeveloped.⁸ This is not the picture we see emerging from Ottonian Saxony, which functioned as a fully Christian polity and boasted a clearly defined elite and expanding economy, and whose dynasty would come to constitute the clearest successor to the Carolingians that tenth-century Europe could offer.⁹ These developments may have been set in motion by the conquest, but they were crucially built upon and consolidated in the succeeding period.

A long-term perspective, therefore, is instructive: it informs us that major political, cultural and socio-economic processes had occurred in ninth-century Saxony. At the same time, however, such a perspective must not be allowed to slip into teleology: foreknowledge of the end-point of these developments should not direct research into this intervening period. Ninth-century Saxony was not simply a preamble to Ottonian ascendancy. To approach Carolingian Saxony primarily as a precursor to the Ottonian state is to privilege the political above the religious, the emergence of a dynasty above a wide-scale religious reorientation. The Christianization of the region was arguably the greatest realignment of early medieval Saxon history, and has the signal benefit of surprisingly extensive documentation in the extant source material. Nevertheless, the Christianization of Saxony has yet to be studied *in toto*: while excellent recent studies have addressed parts of this process, whether thematically or in specific localities, a large-scale assessment of this important development has not been forthcoming. This book attempts to fill this lacuna through a systematic study of politics, society and Christianization in Carolingian Saxony.

In its progression from an undeveloped, pagan and hitherto disunified territory to a Christian region of the Carolingian polity, Saxony represents an important test case for the nature of Christianization and Christian reform in the early medieval world. In spite of a growing consensus on the decentralized and regionalized nature of early medieval governance, these processes continue to be approached as operating in a

⁷ On the difficulties in using 'paganism' to denote religious observance, see below, pp. 190–1.

⁸ See, for example, the comments of S. Epperlein, 'Sachsen im frühen Mittelalter: Diskussionsbeitrag zur Sozialstruktur Sachsens im 9. Jahrhundert und seiner politischen Stellung im frühen Mittelalter', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 7(1) (1966), 189–212; F. Siegmund, 'Social relations among the Old Saxons' in Green and Siegmund, *Saxons*, pp. 77–111; H. Steuer, 'The beginnings of urban economies among the Saxons' in Green and Siegmund, *Saxons*, pp. 159–92; R. Wenskus, 'Die ständische Entwicklung in Sachsen im Gefolge der fränkischen Eroberung' in *Angli e Sassoni al di qua e al di là del mare: 26 aprile-10 maggio 1984* (Settimane 32:2) (Spoleto: Il Centro, 1986), pp. 587–616.

⁹ For outline treatments of Ottonian Saxony, see especially K. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London: Arnold, 1979); K. Leyser, *Medieval Germany and Its Neighbours, 900–1250* (London: Hambledon, 1982).

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top-down manner. This is especially the case in Saxony, where the process of Christianization, which began with forced wartime conversions, has been viewed as a foreign, even colonial, imposition. According to this perspective, it was left to Carolingian kings and outside missionaries to convert a recalcitrant populace who assumed, at best, a lukewarm Christianity patterned by ‘pagan’ elements. Yet in contrast to previous views, this book argues that the brutality of the Saxon wars did not preclude acceptance of Christianity and Carolingian rule. With a fresh reading of a wide range of Latin and Old Saxon sources, it explores the manner in which Saxony was incorporated into the Carolingian political order and the Christian *ecclesia*. What implications did Carolingian rule have for the exercise of power within Saxony? To what and to whom can the development of a Christian landscape in Saxony be attributed? How did communities in Saxony make sense of their past and present? Carolingian Saxony provides a case study of social transformation. The nature of this transformation, and how successfully it was achieved, has important implications for how we view governance, the institutional church and Christian communities in the early Middle Ages.

THE SAXONS AND SAXONY BEFORE CONQUEST

Before turning to Carolingian Saxony, however, it may be helpful to give a general overview of pre-conquest Saxon history, and likewise of the terms ‘Saxon’ and ‘Saxony’ themselves. Here, it is important to note that there is no evidence of any internal ‘Saxon’ coherence prior to the conquest, whether in terms of politics, ethnicity, religion, law or material culture. Borders were ill-defined, and contacts with neighbouring territories, and especially with Francia and Frisia, were extensive.¹⁰ In what follows, then, ‘Saxony’ and ‘Saxon’ will be employed, following contemporary Carolingian usage, as terms of convenience to refer to the region conquered by Charlemagne and to the inhabitants of that region respectively. The extent to which ‘Saxon’ as a term meaningfully represents the self-identification of those who lived in this region is, at least at the beginning of this period, questionable; therefore it is used here principally as a useful term of art.¹¹

¹⁰ For connections to Frisia, see below, pp. 42–4, 189; see also J. T. Palmer, ‘Beyond Frankish authority: Frisia and Saxony between the Anglo-Saxons and Carolingians’ in H. Sauer and J. Story (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent* (Essays in Anglo-Saxon Studies 3) (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011), pp. 139–62; I. N. Wood, ‘Beyond satraps and ostriches: political and social structures of the Saxons in the early Carolingian period’ in Green and Siegmund, *Saxons*, pp. 271–97, here p. 281.

¹¹ See here especially the helpful comments of Röckelein, *Reliquienttranslationen nach Sachsen*, pp. 19–23.

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As is often the case with ethnonyms, the term ‘Saxon’ was used to refer to a diverse range of peoples, including, but not limited to, the continental Saxons in Saxony, the (Anglo-)Saxons in Britain and other itinerant groups of Saxons, often pirates, in Gaul and Italy.¹² The term, then, was not specific to those who lived in Saxony; correspondingly, those who lived in the region of Saxony often appear to have had other, more local forms of identity. The most important of these, at least in the late eighth century, were the groups known as the Westphalians, Eastphalians and Angarians. These groups formed political units with leaders, had their own distinctive legal traditions and corresponded to geographic areas within ‘Saxony’. They do not, however, appear to have been stable configurations; Matthias Becher in particular has argued that these confederations first appear in late eighth-century sources, and may be the result of Frankish warfare.¹³ Nor were they the only groups in Saxony: further afield were the inhabitants of the Bardengau (the region around present-day Bardowick, near the eastern frontier) and the Nordliudi (literally, the ‘northern people’), among others.¹⁴ The term ‘Saxon’ comprehended all of these diverse peoples in Frankish sources; whether those labelled as Saxons prior to the conquest would have identified themselves as such remains far from certain.

If ‘the Saxons’ are elusive, so too is ‘Saxony’; descriptions of the region are few and far between. In terms of physical geography, Saxony encompassed a large section of modern-day northwestern Germany; it corresponded roughly to the German federal state of Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen), with significant portions of North Rhine-Westphalia (Nordrhein-Westfalen), Schleswig-Holstein and Saxony-Anhalt (Sachsen-Anhalt) thrown in (notably, it did not stretch to modern-day Saxony in northeastern Germany). It extended west almost as far as the Rhine and east beyond the Elbe; it was traversed internally by the Ems, the Weser, the Aller and the Lippe rivers, alongside smaller tributaries. In the south, the Teutoburg Forest and Harz Mountains served as a natural

¹² For this point, see especially Springer, ‘Location in space and time’, pp. 11–20; see also R. Flierman, *Saxon Identities, AD 150–900* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp. 32–6, 63–73; Springer, *Die Sachsen*, pp. 47–56, 100–11.

¹³ M. Becher, ‘*Non enim habent regem idem Antiqui Saxones . . .* Verfassung und Ethnogenese in Sachsen während des 8. Jahrhunderts’ in Hässler, Jarnut and Wemhoff, *Sachsen*, pp. 1–31; see also M. Becher, ‘Die Sachsen im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert: Verfassung und Ethnogenese’ in Stiegemann and Wemhoff, 799, vol. I: pp. 188–94, here pp. 190–2; Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, p. 98; Wood, ‘Beyond satraps and ostriches’, p. 276; see also J. T. Palmer, ‘Anskar’s imagined communities’ in H. Antonsson and I. H. Garipzanov (eds.), *Saints and Their Lives on the Periphery* (Cursor mundi 9) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 171–88, here pp. 173–4.

¹⁴ For these, and other peoples, see Becher, ‘Die Sachsen im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert’, p. 192; Wood, ‘Beyond satraps and ostriches’, p. 276.

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border; further north, the terrain flattened out, giving way to the Lüneburg Heath.

In the Carolingian world, governance was exercised over peoples, as opposed to territories; accordingly, references to ‘the Saxons’ outnumber those to ‘Saxony’ by no small margin. Even on the rare occasions when contemporaries described ‘Saxony’ as a physical territory, they did so through recourse to ethnography: take, for example, the following description from the mid-ninth century work known as the *Translation of Saint Alexander*, which delineates the borders of the Saxons as follows:

To the south they have the Franks and part of the Thuringians ... and the channel of the Unstrut River. To the north however they have the Northmen, the most ferocious peoples. To the east there are the Abodrites, and to the west the Frisians, from whom they have protected their borders without intermission, whether by treaty or ultimately by war.¹⁵

Likewise within Saxony, territory appears to have been defined by human geography: thus the Eastphalians, Westphalians and Angarians lived in Eastphalia, Westphalia and Engern respectively.¹⁶ To contemporary observers, Saxony was simply where the Saxons lived.

The Saxons and the Franks had a history of contact long before the Saxon wars of Charlemagne.¹⁷ In fact, in the absence of writing in pre-conquest Saxony, it is precisely through these contacts that early Saxon history can be best delineated. As early as the sixth century, there is evidence for a high degree of interaction between Franks and Saxons, as recorded in a variety of sources; Fredegar depicts the Saxons as a subject people, illustrated most poignantly by their annual tribute of 500 cows offered first to the Merovingian king Clothar I (d. 561) in circa 555–557, and then to his successors up until the reign of King Dagobert (d. 639).¹⁸

¹⁵ Rudolf and Meginhard, *Translatio sancti Alexandri*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS 2* (Hanover: Hahn, 1829), c. 1, p. 675: ‘A meridie quidem Francos habentes et partem Thuringorum ... et alveo fluminis Unstrotae dirimuntur. A septentrione vero Nordmannos, gentes ferocissimas. Ab ortu autem solis Obodritos, et ab occasu Frisos, a quibus sine intermissione vel foedere vel concertatione necessario finium suorum spacia tuebantur.’ Röckelein, *Reliquientranslationen nach Sachsen*, pp. 19–20; see also the excellent discussion of L. Leleu, ‘Les sources saxonnes et la spatialisation du pouvoir en Saxe, IXe–XIe siècles. Première résultats’, *Territorium* (2012), 1–39. See further C. Ehlers, *Die Integration Sachsens in das fränkische Reich (751–1024)* (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 231) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), pp. 43–4.

¹⁶ Cf. Springer, *Die Sachsen*, pp. 250–4.

¹⁷ For this, see especially Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, pp. 53–87.

¹⁸ Fredegar, *Chronicon*, ed. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with Its Continuations* (London: Nelson, 1960), IV:74, pp. 62–3; cf. *Fredegarii continuationes* in *Ibid.* c. 31, p. 101; Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, eds. B. Krush and W. Levison, *MGH SRM 1:1* (Hanover: Hahn, 1951), IV:14, pp. 145–7. See also Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, p. 77; Springer, *Die Sachsen*, pp. 97–9.

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When the Pippinids (or early Carolingians) enter the scene in the late seventh century, they appear to have been in the process of reducing the Saxons to a similar tributary position. In 688 the *Earlier Annals of Metz* report how Pippin of Herstal, ‘having worn down the Suaves and Bavarians and Saxons by frequent attacks and numerous battles, henceforth made them subject them to his power’.¹⁹ A later entry in the annals, comprising a ‘career retrospective’ of sorts, celebrates Pippin’s renewed subjugation of previously subject peoples including, but by no means limited to, the Saxons.²⁰

At around the same time, in the closing years of the seventh century, two Anglo-Saxon missionaries, the two Ewalds (known as ‘the Black’ and ‘the White’ respectively, on account of their hair colour), ventured into Saxony; the account of their martyrdom is recorded by their near-contemporary and fellow countryman, Bede. As Bede wrote in his *Ecclesiastical History* (completed in 731), when the two missionaries arrived in Saxony,

they entered the lodging of a certain steward, and asked him to direct them to the satrap who was over him, for they had an embassy and a useful message to announce to him. For the Old Saxons did not have a king, but rather many satraps were placed above their people, who, in the event of war, cast lots equitably. In wartime they all follow and obey the leader to whom the lot falls; once the war is completed, they all become satraps of equal power again. Accordingly the steward received them and promised to direct them to the satrap who was over him, as they had asked, but he delayed them for several days.²¹

From here, the story took a downward turn. The ‘barbarians’ feared lest the missionaries succeed in their object, and so accordingly they took matters into their own hands: they killed the missionaries before they had an opportunity to speak to the satrap, an action which ultimately brought down the satrap’s vengeance upon themselves.²² The missionaries’ tragic

¹⁹ *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. B. Simpson, *MGH SRG* 10 (Hanover: Hahn, 1905), 688, p. 4: ‘Hinc Suavos et Baiowarios et Saxones crebris irruptionibus frequentibusque preliis contritos sue ditioni subiugavit.’

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 691, p. 12; cf. Springer, *Die Sachsen*, pp. 166–7.

²¹ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1896), vol. I, V:10, pp. 299–300: ‘intrauerunt hospitium cuiusdam uilici, petieruntque ab eo, ut transmitterentur ad satrapam, qui super eum erat, eo quod haberent aliquid legationis et causae utilis, quod deberent ad illum perferre. Non enim habent regem idem Antiqui Saxones, sed satrapas plurimos suae genti praepositos, qui ingruente belli articulo mittunt aequaliter sortes, et, quemcumque sors ostenderit, hunc tempore belli ducem omnes sequuntur, huic obtemperant; peracto autem bello, rursum aequalis potentiae omnes fiunt satrapae. Suscepit ergo eos uilicus, et promittens se mittere eos ad satrapam, qui super se erat, ut petebant, aliquot diebus secum retinuit’. See also below, pp. 135–7.

²² Cf. I. N. Wood, ‘Pagans and holy men, 600–800’ in P. N. Chatháin and M. Richter (eds.), *Irland und die Christenheit* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), pp. 347–61, here p. 352.

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fates aside, this episode gives us our first, and only contemporary, glimpse into internal conditions in pre-conquest Saxony. Admittedly, Bede's choice of vocabulary for Saxon leaders, 'satraps', was plucked from descriptions of the Philistines in the Book of Samuel, which may be seen in itself as an implicit moral judgement of the Saxons.²³ All the same, his account captures the political disunity that would be a feature of Saxon affairs well into the eighth century, as well as the potential for effective coordination between different Saxon groups.²⁴ It acts moreover as a welcome intermission from the main body of evidence for pre-conquest Saxony, namely the annalistic sources, which, in addition to focusing overwhelmingly on Frankish-Saxon military relations, are non-contemporary and hence tinged with the retrospective glow of Carolingian ascendancy.

The Saxons next entered the stage in 715, when, presumably in response to the death of Pippin of Herstal in the previous year, they seized the opportunity to raid the lands of the Chatauian Franks.²⁵ In 718, Charles Martel, having emerged against the odds as Pippin's successor, responded in kind: the *Earlier Annals of Metz* recount how 'he devastated Saxony with a great blow, and came as far as the Weser River, and having subjugated the entire region, he returned home a victor'.²⁶ Further campaigns under Charles' leadership followed in 720, 724, 728, 729 and 738.²⁷ Many of these endeavours are only recorded in terse entries, such as 'Charles in Saxony', but more detail is given in a couple

²³ I Samuel 5:11, 6:16; see also Becher, 'Die Sachsen im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert', p. 189; Becher, 'Non enim habent regem', pp. 9–11; Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, pp. 94–7; Wood, 'Beyond satraps and ostriches', pp. 272–3.

²⁴ Springer, *Die Sachsen*, pp. 131–4.

²⁵ *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. Simpson, 715, p. 21; *Annales Petaviani*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 715, p. 7; *Annales Tiliani*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 715, p. 6; *Annales sancti Amandi*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 715, p. 6.

²⁶ *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. Simpson, 718, p. 26: 'vastavit Saxoniam plaga magna et pervenit usque ad Viseram fluvium. Omnique illa regione subacta ad propria victor revertitur'. See also *Annales Alamannici*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 718, p. 24; *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 718, p. 24; *Annales Mosellani*, ed. J. M. Lappenberg, *MGH SS* 16 (Hanover: Hahn, 1859), 718, p. 494; *Annales Nazariani*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 718, p. 25; *Annales Petaviani*, ed. Pertz, 718, p. 7; *Annales sancti Amandi*, ed. Pertz, 718, p. 6; *Annales Sangallenses maiores*, ed. I. ab Arx, *MGH SS* 1 (Hanover, 1826), 718, p. 73; *Annales Tiliani*, ed. Pertz, 718, p. 6.

²⁷ *Annales Alamannici*, ed. Pertz, 720, 738, pp. 24, 26; *Annales Laubacenses*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 720, p. 7; *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. Pertz, 720, 738, pp. 24, 26; *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. Simpson, 738, p. 30; *Annales Mosellani*, ed. Lappenberg, 720, 738, pp. 494–5; *Annales Nazariani*, ed. Pertz, 720, 738, pp. 25, 27; *Annales Petaviani*, ed. Pertz, 720, 728, 729, 738, pp. 7, 9; *Annales sancti Amandi*, ed. Pertz, 720, p. 6; *Annales Sangallenses maiores*, ed. ab Arx, 720, 738, pp. 73–4; *Annales Tiliani*, ed. Pertz, 720, 729, pp. 6, 8; *Fredegarii continuationes*, ed. Wallace-Hadrill, cc. 11, 19, pp. 90, 93. A further campaign in 736 campaign is attested in the

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of sources. Take, for instance, the description of Charles' 724 campaign in the *Continuations of Fredegar*, which report how 'in that time the Saxons rebelled, and prince Charles attacked and vanquished them and returned home a victor'.²⁸ Later, in 738, the annalist provided even more detail:

The most pagan Saxons who live beyond the Rhine River rebelled again, and the vigorous man Charles, together with the Frankish host, crossed the Rhine at the place where it meets the Lippe River with a clear purpose. He laid waste the greater part of that region with very terrible slaughter, ordered that most savage people to be tributary, and accepted many hostages from them; thus, with the Lord's favour, he returned home a victor.²⁹

The characterization of 'rebellion' in these reports is telling: from the vantage point of Fredegar's Continuator, writing between 768 and 786, the Saxons were perceived to have had an enduring political relationship with, and a subordinate position to, their Frankish neighbours.³⁰ The religious language ('most pagan', 'with the Lord's favour') in this report is also worthy of note, although it may be more indicative of priorities in the period in which it was written than of those in the period it purportedly describes.

Charles Martel died in 741. He was succeeded in his role as mayor of the palace by his sons, Pippin and Carloman, whose early rule was marked by the same separatist tendencies which Charles had himself confronted. Once again, the Saxons took advantage of the power vacuum following Charles' death. They rebelled in concert with Theudobald of Alemannia and other peoples in 741; in 743, Saxons are further attested fighting the Franks under the leadership of Duke Odilo of Bavaria.³¹ In both cases, loose alliances between Saxons and other anti-Pippinid factions should be envisaged. Later in 743, and possibly as a result of Saxon participation in earlier revolts, Carloman undertook his first campaign against the Saxons; he negotiated the surrender of the

Earlier *Annals of Metz*, but this section of the text appears to be dependent upon the *Continuations of Fredegar* for 738 and is thus likely misdated. See also Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, p. 84.

²⁸ *Fredegarii continuationes*, ed. Wallace-Hadrill, c. 11, p. 90: 'Per idem tempus rebellantibus Saxonis eis Carlus princeps ueniens praeoccupavit ac debellauit uictorque reuertetur.'

²⁹ *Ibid.*, c. 19, p. 93: 'Itemque rebellantibus Saxonis paganissimis qui ultra Renum fluuium consistunt, strenuus uir Carlus hoste commoto Francorum in loco ubi Lippia fluuius Renum amnen ingreditur sagace intentione transmeauit, maxima ex parte regione illa dirissima cede uastauit, gentemque illam seuissimam ex parte tributaria esse praecepit atque quam plures hospitibus ab eis accepit; sicque opitulante Domino uictor remeauit ad propria.'

³⁰ For this dating, see R. McKitterick, 'The illusion of royal power in Carolingian annals', *The English Historical Review*, 115(460) (2000), 1–20, here 5–7.

³¹ *Annales Guelferbytani*, ed. G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1826), 741, p. 27; *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. Simpson, 743, p. 33; see also Springer, *Die Sachsen*, pp. 169–70.

Introduction

Syburg, an important fortification, along with that of its leader, the so-called ‘duke’ of the Saxons, Theodoric.³² It was to be the first in a long series of campaigns: over the next fifteen years, no fewer than ten campaigns were recorded, first under Carloman’s own leadership and then, after his withdrawal into a monastery in 747, under that of his brother Pippin.

Near-annual campaigning in Saxony was thus a feature of Frankish politics long before ‘the’ Saxon wars of Charlemagne. Indeed, despite differences in the evidential base (the Saxon wars of Charlemagne are far better recorded), there appear to have been a number of similarities between the two periods of campaigning: notably, the stress laid upon Christian conversion; the literary depiction of Saxon rebellion and perfidy; the attention paid to prominent fortresses; the taking of hostages and/or captives; and the role played by alliances (in addition to the 741 and 743 episodes, the Saxons participated in the rebellion of the Pippinid Gripho in 747–748).³³ The first of these, namely, the interest in Christian conversion, is particularly noteworthy, as this marked the start of a significant trend. Saxons are recorded receiving Christian sacraments (namely baptism) upon submission to Frankish forces in 744, 747, 748 and 753; on the last of these occasions, the *Earlier Annals of Metz* report, Saxons further swore oaths to Pippin (now king of the Franks) ‘that any priests who wished to go into Saxony to preach the name of the Lord and to baptize them had license to do so’.³⁴ The connection between political submission and Christian conversion had been established, even if the conversions themselves appear to have

³² *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. Simpson, 743, p. 35; *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SRG 6 (Hanover: Hahn, 1895), 743, p. 5; *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SRG 6 (Hanover: Hahn, 1895), 743, p. 4; *Annales Tiliani*, ed. Pertz, 743, p. 219; see also *Annales Alamannici*, ed. Pertz, 743, p. 26; *Annales Guelferbytani*, ed. Pertz, 743, p. 27; *Annales Nazariani*, ed. Pertz, 743, p. 27. Carloman may have led an earlier campaign against the Saxons, though this is uncertain: cf. *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. Pertz, 742, p. 26.

³³ For the vocabulary of ‘rebellion’ and ‘perfidy’, the stress laid upon Christian religion and the taking of hostages and/or captives, see *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. Simpson, 744, 748, 753, pp. 36, 40–1, 44; *Fredegarii continuationes*, ed. Wallace-Hadrill, cc. 27, 31, 35, pp. 99, 101, 103. For Saxon involvement in the rebellion of Gripho, see *Annales Alamannici*, ed. Pertz, 748, p. 26; *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SRG 7 (Hanover: Hahn, 1891), 748, p. 5; *Annales Guelferbytani*, ed. Pertz, 748, p. 27; *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. Pertz, 748, p. 26; *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. Simpson, 748, pp. 40–1; *Annales Mosellani*, ed. Lappenberg, 748, p. 495; *Annales Nazariani*, ed. Pertz, 748, p. 27; *Annales Petaviani*, ed. Pertz, 748, p. 11; *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, ed. Kurze, 747, 748, p. 7; *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, 747, 748, p. 6; *Annales Tiliani*, ed. Pertz, 747, p. 219.

³⁴ *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. Simpson, 748, 753, pp. 41, 44: ‘ut quicumque de sacerdotibus in Saxoniam ire voluisset ad predicandum nomen Domini et ad baptizandum eos licentiam habuisset’; *Fredegarii continuationes*, ed. Wallace-Hadrill, cc. 27, 31, 35, pp. 99, 101, 103.