

3. A Saxon in Paris

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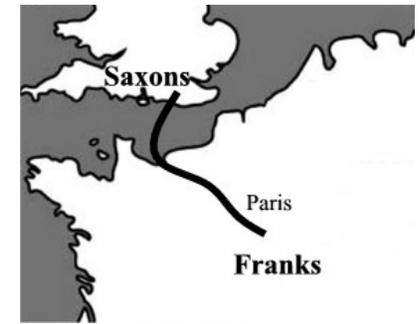
The old Roman roads had fallen into disrepair and were overgrown. Travel and trade were limited to coastal areas and rivers large enough to support a boat. Villages were relatively isolated so that most farming was for subsistence. The population was very dependent on the good fortunes of the weather and harvests varied greatly from year to year. Famines and disease were common, life was harsh, and life expectancy short.

Picture such a village. The sun is out and brightens the young green shoots of grain in the fields. A gentle wind pushes occasional wafts of warm air from the fields and cold air from the nearby forest. The air is filled with the smells of mold from the thatched roofs, smoke from fires in open stone-ringed hearths, manure, and rancid odors from unwashed bodies. You would not particularly notice them though. You were used to them. But there are also sweet hints of spring flowers which fill your senses with the promises of a new growing season, fresh food and honey. Apple trees and some berry bushes are in full bloom. The hives are swarming with worker bees that seem to get in each other's way as they fly in with nectar and out with fresh information about the best sources. Men go out to the forest and return with materials for repairs to their huts. Men and women work in small fields to plant carrots, cabbages, and other vegetables. Women nurse babies and toddlers¹. Young children play in between the huts, poking sticks in abundant mud puddles, chasing after insects, discovering what is edible or not, or playing house.

¹ Children were nursed for up to four years. This is still the case in primitive societies with the added benefit of reduced fertility and a low birth rate.

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She wakes up. A regular banging against the boards follows the movement of her world. It is dark. To the right of the bow a large, full moon sits above the water and spreads its silvery glitter over the waves toward her. A sour smell spreads under the tarp.



Balthild's journey

A few children are throwing up. Their stomachs being empty it is mostly clear liquid. She feels nauseous, too, but takes a few deep breaths of the fresh air above the tarp. She watches the two rows of men who are pulling the large oars in unison. The cargo is lined up on the center beam between the men who sing softly in the rhythm of the oars. One man stands in the stern. He is holding a large oar that he keeps steady in the water behind him. A few more men appear to be sleeping near the standing man. The sounds of breaking waves and rushing water come from behind her and she sinks back into sleep.

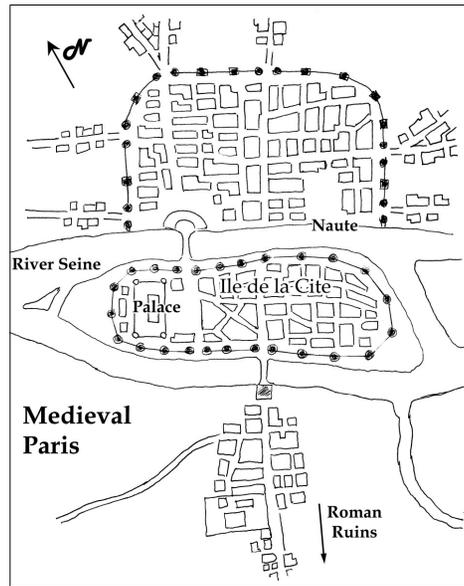
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Balthild and Landri did not get much time to put their convictions to the test. In 651 Paris was subjected to a severe famine. They put their money where their mouths were. Landri supposedly sold most of his earthly wealth, even robbed the monastery of St Denis of many of its relics², and hired the Nautae to go in search of

² There is something odd about this affair that needs contemplating. According to recorded history it was Clovis II who took valuable relics from the Abbey of St

provisions and bring them back. This they did and the citizens of Paris avoided complete starvation.

Perhaps because of this event they realized that plugging holes or fighting fires was not a good way to deal with the plight of the poor. Something more permanent needed to be done. Some of the poverty was the direct result of political upheaval. The quickly shifting control of land caused many displacements of people that had found their livelihood there. Controlling the nobility was in any case in the interest of the palace. Balthild ruled with a stern but



just hand and with Erchinoald's help managed to keep the kingdom at peace with itself. Good diplomacy and the example she set in Neustria helped maintain good relations with the other Frankish kingdoms. But she needed more if she wanted to keep the peace and eventually see her son Clotaire on the throne. For that she had to stabilize the status quo

Denis to buy provisions for Paris' citizens, particularly the poor. Supposedly he did this at the direction of queen Balthild. Under that scenario you would think that it made little sense to wrest control of the monastery away from the bishop with the excuse of protecting it from him. We may never be able to assess these events since the records are so unreliable. In addition to the few official documents of the period there are reports that were written well after the deaths of all the players. Undoubtedly these writings were heavily influenced by the biases of the authors and their desire to be noted. I took the liberty of making Landri the responsible person.

and take away the main reason for upheaval: the uncertainty of land control. She started with the church lands.

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Marculf³ was already quite old when his Bishop inquired about him. He was humble, self-effacing even, but considered an authority on Roman and German (Frankish) law. Also important, he was of simple origin and not a Frank⁴ but rather a Gaul. Where Marculf came from is not entirely clear. Some originate him in Bourges, in central France; others think he came from Meaux, east of Paris. Smith explains further:

In this manner, in the course of time, did such cultivation as the age supplied make its way among monks of barbarian race. Some became practitioners of medicine ; some proficient in the art of copying manuscripts ; some devoted their time to the composition of the annals of their monastery; some, like Marculfus, composed forms for facilitating the simple legal business of their neighbourhood, according to Roman or barbarian practice. Marculfus himself was a Frank, or some kindred race. These accomplished persons must have been brought up from early youth in their monasteries; but a ruder class found also admission within their walls.

At a minimum Marculf was a scribe but, having been entrusted with such an important project this already aging man was either the librarian of the monastery or, most likely, a recognized legal scholar and the prime legal advisor to the bishop. The two volumes became known as the *Formularæ Marculfi* and represented a

³ Sometimes Latinized as Marculfus and sometimes referred to as Marculph or Marcoul.

⁴ His ethnicity is based on speculation. Some historians identify him as a Frank but I agree with William Smith's entry in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines*, 1882. Traditionally monks came from the lower classes which were primarily the original Gallic people. The ruling Franks were more interested in high office.

marriage of Roman and Frankish law. The collection was revolutionary for the Franks in that it addressed property rights not only for church and nobility but also for commoners. Although unknown in Germanic culture, the concept of property rights is as old as written language. It can be found in Sumerian, Persian, and Greek texts. Aristotle gives a strong defense for individual property rights in his *Politics*:

“that which is common to the greatest number has the least care bestowed upon it. Every one thinks chiefly of his own, hardly at all of the common interest; and only when he is himself concerned as an individual.” "If they do not share equally enjoyments and toils, those who labor much and get little will necessarily complain of those who labor little and receive or consume much. But indeed there is always a difficulty in men living together and having all human relations in common, but especially in their having common property."

However, J.W. Wessels⁵ observes:

Originally the Germans did not recognize individual ownership of the soil. The land belonged to the tribe and was parceled out by lot from time to time to the various families.

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The Frankish kingdoms of the dark ages were the only societies in Europe where Roman law still breathed. As they grew so did Roman concepts of law spread to take root especially in those areas where commerce and industry could develop: the cities along the Rhine and those in the maritime parts of the Netherlands.

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7. The First Statesman

Having Barneveld imprisoned, Maurice wasted no time. He trekked with his army through the provinces and deposed city governments, replacing them with his supporters. He dissolved the municipal militias and posted army units in the cities. These actions again lacked legality. The act of union clearly left the responsibility of order and justice to the cities and their provinces. But, said Maurice, “The quiet of the land requires it. It is necessary



to have unanimous resolutions in the States-General at The Hague. This cannot be accomplished without these preliminary changes. I believe that you had good intentions and have been faithful servants of the Fatherland. But this time it must be so.” The coup was complete and Barneveld had no allies left in the halls of power.

So, who were the opponents that had found their champion in the Prince? Barneveld had good reason to vie for peace while the country was still strong. After the death of Henry IV, France was in turmoil. The crown prince was very young and the court was under control of his mother’s catholic boyfriend. Although Barneveld managed to hold the court to the old treaty with Henry, who kept a contingent of French forces in the Netherlands, the alliance was fragile. Maurice had favored active support for a coup by protestant nobles in France, with which he was related by marriage. In England James I, a proud man of little intellect, who regarded himself the ultimate theologian and the savior of the “True Religion”, the Protestant

⁵ History of Roman-Dutch Law,

Church, succeeded the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth⁶. The truce allowed the Netherlands to look inwardly. Differing opinions on the finer points of divine philosophy expanded into life and death issues, and James was all too happy to provide his illuminating guidance in these matters⁷. Barneveld had always been a moderate and a mediator. While the war still raged, he was able to defuse various standoffs in the republic. He also managed to contain James and even feed the self-declared theologian some lines that contradicted some earlier utterances. The truce made James less beholden to the alliance and the growing resentment the King felt for the superior intellect of Barneveld began to show in his correspondence with the States. Maurice stayed out of the religious disputes, saying that he had no knowledge of such fine points. However, the increasing turmoil in the country went against the grain of his military character, and, in any case, weakened the already weak confederation. While Barneveld preached toleration, the Prince increasingly came under the influence of the more militant faction. Expecting it to bring back some order, Maurice supported a call for a national synod where a unifying theology could be settled upon. In accordance with the act of union, whose first article gave each province the sole right to deal with issues of religion, Barneveld favored provincial synods before a potentially divisive national synod would take place. King James, of course, supported Maurice. The difference in character of the two most powerful people in the republic could not be starker. Maurice favored order and discipline. Barneveld valued process and moderation. Against Maurice's decisiveness, the Advocate appeared plodding, and

⁶ James I translated, and interpreted, the bible into English. We know it today as the King James version.

⁷ In this book we will not examine the theology that proved so damaging. Already too much has been written and said about it and it would distract from the impact it had on the lives of ordinary people, their leaders, and their country.

against Barneveld's knowledge and intellect, the prince looked boorish.

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In their zeal to condemn the Advocate, some of his accusers actually indicted themselves. It was customary in those days to reward mediators for their efforts. The Dutch participants at the negotiations for a truce between Spain and its former dominion received money from Spain. Understanding the irregularity Barneveld suggested that they transfer these funds to the state. Others preferred to keep the money – ambassador Aerssens among them. During his testimony, he admitted to keeping the reward and, by extension and without proof, implicated the Advocate.

The victorious sect of the Protestant Church accused Barneveld of supporting Catholics and, by extension, Spain. After all, they argued, the war of independence had been waged to further the Protestant religion. The Advocate reminded them that this had never been the stated reason. The first proclamations about the war declared that freedom of conscience was the reason so that the citizens could support any of the Protestant doctors of divinity, and that even the Catholics enjoyed such protections⁸.

With regard to the West India Company, he opposed their formation because the partners were a ragtag of buccaneers whose main goal it was to prey on Spanish and Portuguese ships. Now that there was a truce this was no longer appropriate and a threat to the peace. Moreover, he detested the monopoly the company would obtain. It would be a danger to free trade that was so beneficial to all citizens.

⁸ Actually, over time, the freedoms of Catholics had been curtailed and they were not allowed to express their religion in public. Even Barneveld had supported the constraints that were put upon Catholics by banning the Jesuits who were regarded as agents of Spain and its allies.

The unlawful proceedings lasted for three frustrating months during which the Advocate appeared about 60 times before the commission. At times Barneveld struggled to control his impatience with and disdain for the tribunal’s members. At length the Advocate had explained the illegality of the court. He had reminded them of the States’ rights in religious, judicial, and military affairs. He had explained and refuted every accusation. Every one of his official actions had been by the explicit or implicit orders of the States of Holland and the States General. If he was guilty then surely these two bodies were guilty. If any of the commissioners had understood any of the many legal points it probably would not have mattered. They had made up their minds well before the proceedings got started.

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11:30 pm, May 12

The grief that the letter had brought to the family at the Voorhout, just a stone’s throw from the court and prison, was paralyzing. A large group that included her sons and daughters, their children, and all the personnel, down to the humblest servant of the house, were in attendance of Barneveld’s wife. They all revered and loved the austere statesman who was to them the simple and benignant father, master, or husband. Over the last three months, they had solicited the help of learned counsel who had prepared elaborate and argumentative petitions. In name of the family, three of these had been submitted to the judges. There had been no response. The family did not know the simple reasons that they were difficult to answer and that the accused should have no counsel. However, at last the family decided to try one more time and write a letter to the Prince as well as the judges to this effect: “The afflicted wife and children of M. van Barneveld humbly show that having heard the sorrowful tidings of his coming execution, they humbly beg that it

may be granted them to see and speak to him for the last time.” It appears that, if the reasoning in Barneveld’s letter for his innocence at all occurred to them, they did not act on it.

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10. The Dutch Invasion



William III

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In July 1673 Hans was ordering battle plans and reporting on the strengths and positions of armies. He became Colonel the following year and started to take care of logistic aspects of military campaigns. His aides issued his daily marching orders. A document from 1676 shows Hans actively engaged in

military planning such as the supply of troops and weaponry and the various tactical options regarding a major attack.

The young man’s connections and lightning fast ascent did not go unnoticed and sometimes earned him the envy of fellow officers. After Hans had attempted to find favor for a cousin, his commanding officer summoned him and told him, “A chamberlain should restrict his activities to fetching the slippers of the Prince!”

William fell seriously ill with smallpox in 1675. At the time doctors believed that the company of a healthy body would encourage the drawing out and breathing of the pox and thus the healing of the afflicted one. William’s doctors suggested that Hans would be most

suitable⁹. Hans agreed to the task. Hans cared for William 16 days and nights. He administered food and drink as much as the Prince was able to take in. He helped his friend with bodily functions and kept him clean. And he shared the bed whenever he was not up and about. William later said, “I don’t know if he slept or not while I was ill since during those sixteen days and nights I never had to call him. He was always there¹⁰.” When William was well enough Hans was exhausted and ill. He requested to be allowed to go home to his parents where his bout with smallpox took its course. In his memoirs English envoy Temple related the remarkable episode.

“I cannot here forbear to give Monsieur Bentinck the character due to him, of the best servant I have ever known in Prince’s or private family. He tended his master, during the whole course of his disease, both night and day; nothing he took was given him, nor he ever removed in his bed, by any other hand; and the Prince told me, that whether he slept or not he could not tell, but, in sixteen days and nights, he never called once that he was not answered by Monsieur Bentinck, as if he had been awake.

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When news of the landing reached James, he marched his army into the Salisbury plain but then appeared to think better of it. On December 17 he sent his commissioners to Hungerford to meet with William and his offer to convene a “free” parliament. This meant that he would not manipulate charters in order to effect a “loyal” parliament. William invited the commissioners into a room together with a delegation of William’s English supporters. After the door closed William was the only outsider present. Whether he intended to be a mere arbiter or sought to drive home his English credentials history does not tell. In any case, William ignored the

proposals by the commissioners and presented a list of demands that were entirely in line with the interests of his English supporters, a free parliament. The demands in hand the commissioners left. In the night of 22-23 December Hans received a letter from the commissioners with rather unexpected news. During the last few days James had judged the situation highly unfavorable. He would face a hostile parliament, his resources and thus his troops were limited and, perhaps, not as loyal as required, and he would have lost his freedom of action entirely. The King decided to leave the country and fight another day. Before Dutch troops could get there, English forces arrested James and took him to Rochester. The Lords, assembled at Guildhall, had temporarily taken over the administration. In their indecision they had James escorted back to London where he was allowed to settle in St’ James’s palace. William was livid. The action had in effect nullified James’s departure from the country. Post haste he dispatched his men to move James to Ham House, ostensibly for his safety. But, would he want to try and flee again? As Hans was preparing to put pressure on James to do so, the King asked to be allowed to go back to Rochester. The request was granted and once there, and under “a blind eye” of the Dutch guards, boarded a ship for France.

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⁹ Winkler Prins Geillustreerde Encyclopaedie, Winkler Prins, Elsevier, 1906.

¹⁰ Riskante relaties, D.J.Noordam, Verloren, 1995.