

REDBAD -

The movie and the true story.

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1 Introduction.

This year the film Redbad was released. It bears the superscript title: 754. That was an important year in European history, because then Saint Boniface, the reformer of Christianity in Germany, was murdered by the Frisians in Dokkum. But there are many people in the film who were dead and buried in 754, such as Pepin of Herstal, Charles Martel and Saint Willibrordus and other persons, such as Redbad and Aldigisl, whose identities are unclear: Redbad I or Redbad II, Aldigisl I or Aldigisl II.

In addition, the film is also announced as a story that played around 700. Some of the persons lived indeed in that year, but others were not born yet or they may never have existed.

The story of the film in fact mixes fragments of history under a King Redbad I (who ruled from 680 to 719) and about whom we know a lot, with that of a King Redbad II, who - if he has existed at all - would have ruled around 754, but about whom we know little with certainty.

All this is not problematic for a film based on sagas and legends - it is the artist's freedom to bring facts and fictions into a compelling and entertaining story. But it is good to have us warned by the historian Bolhuis van Zeeburgh who wrote in the 19th century: "To its great misfortune, Frisian history has fallen into the hands of ultras, those who have rejected the old sagas as utterly absurd fictions, and those who have accepted them as historical truths."

What really happened at the time of Redbad? Little is known about this part of Dutch history among the general public, and there is still a lot of uncertainty and difference of opinion among scholars about this. Therefore, this booklet has been made to map out facts, fictions, suspicions and speculations.

2. The story of the movie

According to the information provided, the story of the film is as follows. It is 700 AD. Northern Europe is divided into two worlds, above the rivers the Frisii (also known as 'the free people'), Saxons and Danes live. The Franks ruled south of the rivers. The Franks want to do what even the Romans have failed to realise: to conquer all of Europe. They used a new weapon to subdue the heathen: Christianity. They covet the most important trade center in Europe, Dorestad, where the Frisian King Aldigisl reigns. Redbad, son of King Aldigisl, doubts the pagan rituals of his people. He comes into conflict with his father when his girlfriend Fenne is assigned to be sacrificed to the gods. During the sacrificial ritual the Franks invade Dorestad. The Frisians lose Dorestad and flee to Wijnaldum. Redbad's uncle Eibert seizes power and accuses Redbad of the defeat and death of his brother. Tied up on a raft, Redbad is pushed up the sea to die. But Redbad knows how to survive the trip and washes up in Denmark. He is slowly admitted to the Vikings and learns the power of his

own culture. After he fights with them against their rivals, the Svear, he marries Freya, daughter of King Wiglek.

When he returns to Dorestad with his wife, he discovers that his sister Sinde was married to Charles Martel, son of the Frankish king Pippin of Herstal. During an annual fair, Redbad sees how priest Willibrord converts and humiliates his sister by force. Redbad swears to free her. He can not do this alone, but the army of his uncle Eibert and nephew Jurje, who are now in power, does not seem strong enough to defeat the Franks ...

The movie is a historical epic about the Christianization, the sagas and old legends of REDBAD.

3. With seven-league boots through the history.

Centuries before the birth of Christ the Frisians had settled on the edges of the North Sea. According to Pye¹ they left their first traces on the eastern bank of the Almere, which is currently called IJsselmeer. They moved off when also the other peoples of Northern Europe were getting on the move. They moved east to the shore of the Weser and west to the delta of the Rhine, Maas and Scheldt. The Frisians lived in the coastal strip, which had been for centuries a toy of the sea. The land was flooded with water every once in a while. It was not easy to build an existence there. Yet the Frisians did it, because it also had certain advantages to live there. The waters were rich in fish and the soil was fertile. And the Frisians had found a defense against all that flooding: they went to live on the highest places, on the knolls, and if the knolls were not yet high enough, they would raise them a bit more. Moreover the proximity of the open sea was also very favorable for

¹ M. Pye, *The Edge of the World*, London, 2014,, p. 41.

something else, for trade. The final advantage of living on the edge of the sea lay in the fact that the great nations of those centuries were rather put off to capture the Frisian land.

This was already the case at the time of the Roman Empire. Julius Caesar had captured the entire country of Gaul around 50 BC and annexed it to the Roman Empire. We do not know for sure how far north he has come - at least to the central Dutch river area. But anyway, everything north of the rivers he could not really bring under Roman authority. For a while, the Roman emperors have tried to do so and may have had the illusion that the North Sea was the northern border of their empire, but they stumbled upon resistance that was difficult to overcome. The Frisians, for example, opposed the tribute they had to pay. Then governor Ollenius 28 AD. tightened the thumbscrews by demanding that the skins of the cattle should have a value and a quality equal to those of aurochs. When the Frisians could not meet that requirement, Ollenius first took away their cattle and then their fields. Finally, they even had to sell their wives and children as slaves to raise the tribute! Then enough was enough for them. The Roman tax collectors were hanged and

the Frisians stood up against Ollenius' troops and defeated them.

Around 50 AD, the Roman emperors gave up the ambition of the North Sea as a border of the Roman Empire. The Rhine became the border that they fortified along its full length from the North Sea into the present-day Germany with army sites, watchtowers, etc: the *Limes*. But it was not an Iron Curtain. It was a pretty open border, where a lot of exchange of goods took place. And where the cultures were in contact with each other. Even though the Frisians were formally outside the Roman Empire with the designation of the Rhine to *Limes* and thus independent, the Romans still treated them as a kind of satellite country. In peacetime they had to pay the Romans a tribute and in war time to assist the Romans in military service. And so the Frisians also participated from time to time in the campaigns of the Romans, for example in Britain. Every now and then the Frisians wanted to shake off this yoke, but each time they had to bow their heads to the Romans. In addition they were often at war with other Germanic peoples.

When, in the middle of the third century, the Romans all of a sudden gave up the occupation of the Dutch river area, it lay open to indigenous and invading Germanic tribes. The Frisians used this opportunity to expand their territory to the South. Around 287 the Frisians were located at Helenium at the mouth of the Meuse and the Waal, approximately at the level of the current town Hellevoetsluis. Later, however, the Romans returned to this area and "the Frisians had to farm the fields of the Romans," as one of the praises of Emperor Constantine mentioned.

Frisia was not to be considered as a single united nation state. It rather was a loose connection of tribes who felt related to each other because they could understand each other and hold the same religion. Only in times of distress were they prepared to rally behind a king or leader, on whom they placed their trust on the basis of proven military and organisational qualities. According to Durliat² the Frisians did not know a royal dynasty unlike the Franks and the Goths. Dutch historians often saw this differently and thought they could

² J. Durliat, *De l'Antiquité au Moyen Age, L'Occident de 313 à 800*, Paris, 2014, p. 174/195.

compile an entire genealogical list of the Frisian kings.

Like all other Germanic peoples, the Frisians were gentiles. Their main god was Stavo, which the Frisian town of Stavoren is named after. In that place stood also his temple. There are stories about how he intervened in volcanic eruptions and other natural phenomena in Friesland.

Then there was the god Baduhenn who lived in a sacred forest between the present towns of Franeker and Harlingen of that name and on Ameland there was a temple for the god Fosta. Furthermore, a votive tablet was found in Friesland for the goddess Hludana, protector of the fishery. The Frisians also had pagan priests, Druïds. In Leeuwarden there was a training college for pagan priests, led by a high-priest of the Druïds. Also bards were trained there.

Virtually nothing is known about the first footsteps of Christians in the Netherlands. Christianity was spread by the apostles from Jerusalem in the then Roman Empire from around 27 AD onwards, perhaps even in the Indies. Inevitably, in Dutch literature too, the legend had to be created that the Christian missionaries had already penetrated

Frisia at the early times: a certain Aegistus would have preached the Christian faith to the Frisians at the time of Emperor Nero (ca. 60 AD), but no proof of that has ever been found. The same applies to the story that in Frisia about 140 AD the Christian doctrine started to break through to some extent. However, because of the opposition of the high-priest of the Druïds, called Sinne, it was thwarted and did not find any progress. There are hardly any traces of a Christian presence in those centuries in the northern Low Countries, although some believe to have found in Friesland potsherds with Christian emblems dating back to that time.

It was only since the Roman Emperor Constantine had tolerated the Christian faith in 313 that it found proliferation in Western Europe. In the Netherlands Saint Servatius was the first great bishop (from Maastricht), around 385. That was in the Southern half of the Low Countries, where ever more Germanic tribes, especially Franks, were allowed to settle with the permission of the Roman Emperor.

During the Migration Period (5th century), German immigrants from northern Germany and Scandinavia arrived in the knolls area in the north

and in the coastal area in the west of the present-day Netherlands. They maintained close ties with the tribes in the areas where they came from, but they also established close ties with their new Germanic neighbors, the Frisians and the Franks. The area, which is mentioned as the land of the Frisians, was not exclusively occupied by Frisians. The Warnen were settled down in the region which is actually called Westland and in the turbulent times of the Migration Period more waves of foreigners have been drawn to these regions. Chauken came to live there and from about 420 the Angles and Saxons used the land of the Frisians as a transit house to Britain. They nestled in the middle of the Frisian population on knolls and founded their own settlements where the country lent itself more to dispersed habitation, such as in the area between the IJssel and the Elbe. Probably many of them have finally abandoned the transit to England and, left behind, have even printed a clearly recognizable stamp on Frisian culture. Since about 500, Sueven - from the now German region Holstein - came to live in the delta of the Scheldt, which has been very sparsely populated up until then. Thus the new population of the various regions in Frisia was anything but a

unity. And because it became a bit crowded in Friesland, the Frisians themselves went even further and they also populated large parts of the current North and South Holland and Zeeland. In the end, this led to a great mixture, from which a new type of Frisian originated, in contrast to what Van der Tuuk³ calls the "old Frisians", which in the 4th and 5th century have largely disappeared from view.

The Western part of the Roman Empire, which also included a large part of the Netherlands, collapsed in 476. The Migration Period was still in full swing and in the north of present-day France, in present-day Belgium, in the south of what is now the Netherlands and in the west of actual Germany, the Empire of the Franks emerged as the strongest new state. The Frankish leader Clovis accepted Christianity around 500 and since then the Christianisation of Belgium and the South of the Netherlands has been strongly supported by the Frankish leaders. At the same time, many neighboring peoples had to accept the supremacy of the Franks. The Frisians and the Saxons were also forced to do so. But for centuries they did not stop revolting against it.

³ L. Van der Tuuk, *Bonifatius in Dorestad*, Utrecht, 2016, p. 52; also Pye, *op. cit.* p. 41-42.

4. The new Friesland

In the course of the 6th century the coastal population in Frisia began to grow. An indication that it must have gone relatively well with Friesland though we should not overlook the fact that in all those centuries there were also very large floods in Friesland, which no additional elevation of the knolls could contain and therefore also a lot of misery tormented the Frisians. It also drove the Frisians further up the sea and they managed to get a good deal of maritime traffic across the North Sea. Because the road network that the Romans had built in Western Europe, had fallen into disrepair after the fall of the Roman Empire, the transport by water increased proportionally. That was good for the trade settlements Witta near Vlaardingen, Medenblik, Tiel, Deventer and Nijmegen.

Pye formulates it like this: In the course of the sixth century the Frisian nation became increasingly prosperous. The old trade connections between Scandinavia and Byzantium, in particular the river routes through present-day Russia, were cut by tribes, which had meanwhile entered Eastern

Europe. Goods that the Scandinavians needed came now from Frisia and via Frisian traders. The Frisians reopened trade routes that had fallen into disuse after the fall of Rome and added a number to them. Along the coast they laid slipways on which they could build their boats. They sold pottery, wine and slaves. The word Frisian began to mean: a merchant.⁴

A Frisian class of proprietors was emerging. This new Frisian upper layer of persons with overseas contacts gradually moved the center of Frisia – up to then, Stavoren, in the northern knolls area - to the western coastal area and the central river area of the present Netherlands. However, that center came to lie in the area, which since Clovis, about 500, had been subjected to the Frankish Empire as a kind of satellite state. An early seventh-century poet referred to the Frankish king Chilperik I (561-585) as "the terror of the far away Sueven and Frisians. They did not dare to fight anymore but they had themselves bridled."⁵

That, however, only concerned the Frisians in what we now call the Dutch provinces of Zuid-Holland and Zeeland - the other Frisians were more

⁴ Pye, *op. cit.*, p. 41-42.

⁵ P. Brusse/P. Henderikx, *Geschiedenis van Zeeland, Prehistorie-1550*, Zwolle 2012, p. 69.

independent. And even south of the Old Rhine, the Frankish influence was limited due to the difficult accessibility of the area. Due to the watery conditions, estates were more dispersed and more difficult to reach than in most parts of the Frankish Empire, where the centrally managed court system of large landowners had developed fully. In large parts of Frisia, the management of the estates was difficult, as a result of which even farmers in serfhood had considerable freedom in their own business operations. Moreover, the usual payments in kind from the remote farms encountered practical objections, as a result of which serfs usually met their obligations in hard cash. In this manner in Frisia, a money economy could unfold, which meant a boost for trade. And thus a fully functioning exchange of goods could arise.⁶

In the meantime, Christianity was on the rise in the Frankish Empire and even in the Northern Netherlands one must already have come into contact with Christianity. For example, in the Westland, where the Warnen lived, as there was in the first half of the 6th century the very Christian daughter of the East Frankish king Theodoric,

⁶ Van der Tuuk, *op. cit.*, (note 3), p. 44-45.

Theodechilde, married to the king of the Warnen, Hermesgiskel. Perhaps a church was built on the remains of the Roman castellum in Utrecht in the middle of the 6th century, from which Christianisation was already being done. Perhaps a beginning of Christianisation can also be traced back to Christian graves from the 6th and 7th centuries, which were found in Utrecht and along the Rhine.

As mentioned above, along the present northern Dutch coast, a considerable Frisian empire had already emerged, but there were also other tribes, such as the Warnen, and a local population under a local elite had remained as a mixed product of the many peoples who had previously taken up residence there, such as the Celts, the Batavians, the Gallo-Romans, the Saxons, Frankish tribes, etc.

Frisians were initially hardly present in the central river area, but in response to an increasing Frankish penetration, they also started to show up more often in this area.

Late in the 6th century, the Franks in the central river area of the Low Countries pressed increasingly forward, mainly because of the East

Frankish nobility. They confiscated domains from their opponents and added it to their possessions. Subsequently, these domains were colonized by farmers who also undertook reclamation work and military tasks. The expansionist politics of the Frankish nobility was certainly also felt north of the Rhine, where Franks were still numerous in parts of the current Dutch provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland and Utrecht. From this Frankish area located to the north of the Rhine, Christianity could also spread. Many a Christian could already be found at the Veluwe.

In addition to the Utrecht region, the Franks also occupied the Rhine estuary, such as the former Roman border forts along the Rhine, Roomburg, Duristate and possibly Leiden.

According to archaeological research, there must also have been a trading post from which lively contacts were maintained far into Germany and overseas until Constantinople. After all, the shortest route to the North Sea from Germany has always been via the Kromme Rijn and the Oude Rijn - at that time still the most important Rhine branch, which was best navigable - and which led to Oegstgeest / Katwijk on the North Sea.

At the junction of the Kromme Rijn and the Lek, on or near a Limes fort, called Levefanum, Dorestad arose in the 6th century. From Dorestad ships could sail along the Kromme Rijn to Utrecht and from there via Katwijk to the North Sea. But they could also continue from Utrecht along the Vecht, the Almere and the Vlie to the North Sea. The Vlie was at that time a long, wide and navigable passage between the west and the north of the Low Countries.

Initially, the area around Dorestad must have been a kind of neutral area in which both the Frankish and the Frisian rulers in the 6th century had little interest. As a result, it was precisely there that the merchants could freely exchange their goods, at the most watched by the local rulers.

Dorestad, for example, became increasingly important as a major depot, where the Frankish element also dominated. There were even Frankish mint masters settled from Maastricht, what they would not have done if they had not had protection there from a Frankish army unit.

Thus the river delta, with the Rhine as the main transport road, began to play an increasingly important role within the Frankish empire, also

because the route via the Alpine passes and the Rhine had become impassable because of the wars of the Franks with the Longobards.

With the growth and prosperity of distant trade the need of those in power to control trade increased and that explains why in the course of the 7th century the Franks tried to bring this river delta under their control. But the Frisians also got more and more interest in Dorestad and that at a given moment had to turn out on a Frisian-Frankish clash.

5. The Frisian-Frankish clashes begin

We have already seen that the Franks had copied from the Romans the habit of leaving their neighboring peoples independent, but treating them as a sort of a satellite country. A little bit like the way in which the Soviet Union dealt with the Eastern European countries not so long ago. Of course those neighboring peoples regularly tried to shake off those chains. And that is what the Frisians did once again in 628 when they sent envoys to the Frankish king for that purpose. That led to a considerable conflict and ended in a painful defeat of the Frisians. The Franks pushed further into the central river area and the Frankish King Dagobert founded a church, dedicated to St. Thomas, in the Wiltaburg Fortress (now Utrecht).

But after the death of King Dagobert in 639, the Frankish empires fell into an administrative crisis due to internal conflicts and the Frisians saw the opportunity to expand their power in the central river area. So in 840 the "Frankish" Dorestad fell into their hands and also Utrecht. The church in Utrecht was destroyed. The Frisians had now become overlords in the whole area between the

Oude / Kromme Rijn and the Lek / Merwede, which was in those days designated as: *Frisia-Citerior*. Zeeland also fell into Frisian hands. Partly because the Frankish rulers in the following years had enough to do with their own domestic squabbles, the Franks had to accept this loss and a time of peace and quiet dawned upon the two kingdoms.

As a matter of fact the central river area was a country occupied by Frisian rulers rather than colonized by the Frisians. The Frisians were regarded as strangers. They spoke a different language than the inhabitants of the delta.

Frisia was no longer characterised by fragmentation as in the preceding centuries. Elite networks had developed thanks to the many internal contacts as well as contacts with other peoples around the North Sea. Under this influence some communities changed from simple tribal relationships to a more layered society where local rulers of prominent clans began to boss the show. As a result, local rulers sometimes acquired meta-local power. This created power concentrations that could develop further in the course of the seventh century. The most powerful tribal chiefs managed to raise themselves up to

leaders called "princes." This accumulation of power mainly took place in the densely populated regions in the northern knolls area and around the estuaries of the Rhine and the Meuse. In the western coastal area a real aristocracy arose and suddenly the chronicles also referred to them as "kings" of the Frisians. After 640 they resided often in Utrecht and had their power base in the current provinces North and South Holland. These Frisian kings strove for hegemony in the river area as those who controlled the rivers had control of the trade between the rich core areas of Francia and the North Sea region. And indeed, they were powerful enough to gain, from the middle of the 7th century, a foothold in the central river area that was not considered to be original Frisian and where the Franks of old had already been present.

These "kings", who had unmistakable military power and were labeled as "rebellious vassals" by the Frankish chroniclers.

The first king who were called as such in the chronicles was Aldigisl I. We do not know much about him, but he is best known for being very open and tolerant towards the Christians. Maybe that was not so unimaginable in his time. After 600

the Germanic England was also gradually Christianized and that surely will not have escaped the Frisians, as there was a close connection between the Frisians and the English. People could understand each other's language and there were trade relations.

In the winter of 678-679, Aldigisl offered shelter to the English bishop Saint Wilfried in his castle in Utrecht. This prominent English clergyman (639-709) had come into conflict with the English king, who had divided his diocese York. Wilfried then left for Rome to seek the support of the Pope. Due to headwinds or because he was *persona non grata* in West Francia, he traveled via the land of the Frisians and spent the winter of 678-679 in Utrecht. He was received very warmly by the Frisian leader Aldigisl who also gave him all the space to preach Christianity, so many were won for Christianity. And Aldigisl even protected him from the West Franks, who were still angry about Wilfried's role in the king's issue there, 676. Their request for the extradition of Wilfried was turned down by Aldigisl. Maybe Aldigisl even gave permission for a new church in Utrecht to be built. After Wilfried's departure, another preacher, Kenochius, came to

Friesland, who was equally allowed by Aldigisl to preach.

All this changed when Aldigisl died in 680 and his son (650-719) became King Redbad I.

This Redbad, like his father, had a strong power base in present-day Holland and Utrecht, but it is uncertain whether he really ruled in Frisia east of the Vlie. He extended his rule to Nijmegen and, for whatever reasons, must have gained growing resentment towards Christian preaching. He put an end to this preaching and would have threatened with death all converts that Wilfried had made. Yet in 686 he was apparently still tolerant enough to allow the English monk Wigbert (Withberth) to preach in his country. However, unlike Saint Wilfried, Wigbert was by no means received with open arms, but was thwarted in his missionary plans. After two years Wigbert had to return to England with nothing achieved. Redbad I apparently, unlike his father, could only see Christianity as a danger to Frisian freedom and independence. Christianity was propagated by the Franks and they exactly were just their biggest attackers.

All this will certainly have come to the attention of Pepin of Herstal, who had rose to power from the internal struggle in the Frankish kingdom. He must have regarded the Frisians as nasty neighbours who should change their tune.

6. The Franco-Frisian struggle under Redbad I

And so, in 689, it came to a campaign of the Franks against the Frisians. That campaign was probably also prompted by the East Frankish trade interests in free navigation and in the control of Dorestad. In a stiff encounter between the Frisians and the Franks at Dorestad, the Frisians suffered a painful defeat and so a considerable part of the Frisian area south of the Kromme / Oude Rijn, Frisia Citerior, fell into the hands of the Franks, including Dorestad and also Zeeland. Presumably Utrecht remained in Frisian hands. Redbad also had to pay an annual tribute to the Franks and allow missionary work in the Frisian countries.

Pepin of Herstal wanted to consolidate immediately his new successes. He took possession of the newly won territory by donating estates to loyal nobles, both Frankish and Frisian, in order to form a reliable ruler class. Van der Tuuk speaks of 'royalty-free' faithful of the Frankish authority with a special status as a farmer on fiscal land. They were called *homines Franci* and apparently charged with the defense of this border area. The

presence of this occupation garrison, meant to keep a local population under control and emphasized the special status of this region. In Dorestad the Franks took over the role of the Frisians. They boosted the trading center by promoting trade in many ways. The residents found safety there, which encouraged the permanent establishment of merchants. Many were even under special protection of the king.

Pepin of Herstal also felt that it was important that the newly-won land, Frisia Citerior, would be energetically christianised. But who should do that? Given the successes of the Irish and the English (Saint Wilfried), Pepin certainly thought of Irish and English monks. After all, Frankish priests could hardly bring the subjected Frisians to Christianity. This was also evident from the experience of the (former) Abbot of Fontinelle, Ansbert of Rouen, who had unsuccessfully tried to found an abbey in Frisia Citerior. There was certainly also the language problem. When St. Eloy and St. Amandus about 640 had made initial attempts to cristianise beyond the Frankish / Frisian border, they noticed the difficulty of not being able to speak the language of the Frisians. The more closely related English and Irish monks

would have less trouble with that. Nevertheless, according to Van.der Tuuk⁷ also English / Irish missionaries, despite the language relationship, must experience that it was difficult to christianise in Frisia, because missionaries were simply connected to the Franks, their opponents. But that is a too simple reasoning, because the river area was not purely Frisian. The Frisians had also been an occupying power there. The real reason why missionaries could not get started earlier was that the Frisians were militarily in charge and the missionaries would have no support from the Frankish army. From 689, the Frisians in this area of Frisia Citerior were no longer in power and the Franks were in charge, so now missionary work should be possible. Did Pepin also invite the missionaries or did they come spontaneously? Be that as it may, they came in 690: a group of English monks under the direction of Saint Willibrordus. Of their names, except for those of Saint Willibrordus, only those of Swigbert and of Laurentius Vergilius can be given with reasonable certainty.

⁷ L. van der Tuuk, *De Franken in België en Nederland*, Utrecht, 2016, p.125

Still other names like blonde Ewald and black Ewald, Adalbert, Plechelmus and Werenfried are often mentioned as companions of Saint Willibrordus, but that could have happened to let them share in the glory of Saint Willibrordus. It is possible that several of them arrived in the Netherlands only years later.

According to some, the group would have gone to Utrecht immediately after arrival, because the Frisian leader Redbad was still in the area and Saint Willibrordus and his fellows wanted to show him that they had nothing to do with the Franks. They wanted to try to win Redbad for the faith directly. But Redbad was too much embittered against the Franks to be able to receive other Christians kindly, so the missionaries had to go to the area that was already in the hands of the Franks. According to others it was because Saint Willibrordus and his fellows realized that Frisia Citerior was far from safe in the hands of the Franks, that the group decided to travel swiftly to Antwerp. In Antwerp they could build on the work of St. Amandus, the missionary who had Christianized more than anyone else in Belgium. They also tried immediately to contact the Frankish leader Pepin of Herstal. Pepin was happy with their

arrival, gave them a monastery near Roermond and then sent them to the part of Frisia Citerior, which was controlled by the Franks, to preach there. He offered them the support of the Frankish authorities, so that no one would assault the preachers; he also promised many benefits to those who would accept the faith. Presumably all this was recorded in writing, so that Saint Willibrordus could legitimize himself in his work with such a document. "With the help of God's grace they could thus convert many Frisians from their superstitions to faith in Christ in a short time," says the great historian of that time, the English monk Beda.

They started their first mission tours from Antwerp. Saint Willibrordus probably to Zeeland, Swidbert would have mainly brought the faith to the southern part of the Frisia Citerior, namely in Teisterbant, that is the region of Tiel, Zaltbommel and Heusden and the adjacent part of the actual provinces of Noord-Brabant and Zuid- Holland. At a certain moment Pepin of Herstal urged Saint Willibrordus to travel to Rome to receive there the mission of the Pope. Saint Willibrordus indeed went to Rome (spring 691) to get the mission of the Pope among the Frisians. He got that, albeit not an

official consecration to the office of bishop. After his return to the Low Countries, Saint Willibrordus settled in Antwerp. He must have been quite successful in building faith cells in the region around Antwerp.

Around 695, King Redbad would once again have undertaken various raids in the part of Frisia Citerior annexed by the Franks, which caused much damage to the inhabitants there. Thereupon Pepin decided on a new campaign against Redbad, in which he defeated the Frisian king at Dorestad. Redbad realized that the Franks had now become too powerful, took his losses and concluded peace with the Franks in 695. In doing so he renounced of all areas south of the Oude Rijn, Frisia Citerior, this time including Utrecht. Redbad I established his residence in Velsen and continued to rule throughout the Frisian area north of the Oude Rijn. The Vecht region also remained in Frisian hands.

After the peace with the Frisians of 695, Pepin sent Saint Willibrordus to Rome again to acquire the appointment and title of bishop. On the 21st of November 695 the Pope consecrated him to (arch)

bishop of the Frisians and granted him all proxies to organize his territory hierarchically.

After returning from Rome, Saint Willibrordus reported back to Pepin of Herstal. He gave Saint Willibrordus the fortress Wiltaburg (Gallic), in Latin called Trajectum (= Utrecht), an abandoned Roman fort, to be converted into a mission post and as a support for his mission among the Frisians.

Little is known about the regime of King Redbad. It seems that he had great qualities, but abused the threat of war to which his country often was exposed. He, for example, accused some of his subjects of treason in order to forfeit and confiscate their possessions. In 708 he ordered the imprisonment of Wurssing, an important judge who lived in Wiersum and belonged to the Frisian elite. Wurssing managed to flee in time and presumably he could settle in Liège. Later on, Redbad would have emphatically asked Wurssing to return, which Wurssing refused. Historians assume that after 710 Redbad became more tolerant of Christianity, also towards the missionaries. In 713 a disease would have manifested at Redbad (to which he would succumb 6 years later), which might have

been another reason that he later turned somewhat more mildly against the Franks and Christianity. Part of the peace treaty of 695 was that King Redbad had to tolerate the free preaching of the Christian faith in his country.

We know little about the missionary activities in Redbad's Frisia, with the exception of the stories surrounding missionary Saint Wolfram. The credibility of this is often doubted, but they are too good to leave them completely unmentioned. Saint Wolfram even seemed to be able to convert Redbad, but at the very last moment the Frisian king renounced of the baptism. This incident is often depicted at its dramatic climax. Redbad was already standing with one leg in the font when at the last minute he came up with this question: "You say that if I am not baptized, I will inevitably go to hell; where then are all of my ancestors?" Saint Wolfram replied with his best conviction: " I must fear in hell, your majesty " "Then", said the prince of the Frisians, as he began to dress again, "I do not want to be separated from my ancestors and so I will renounce of your baptism."

Also part of the peace treaty of 695 has been the promise of a marriage between Redbad's daughter

Theudesinde and Grimoald, the eldest son of Pepin of Herstal. Van der Tuuk⁸ situates this marriage between 711 and 714 and interprets it as a gesture from Redbad to strive for an honorable peace with the Franks and to increase his prestige. We do not know what has become of the marriage between Theodesinde and Grimoald, but we know that in 714 Grimoald was murdered by a Frisian while after a visit to his father he was praying in the new basilica of Saint Lambertus in Liège. And that angry tongues claimed that Theodesinde had a hand in that.

At the end of that same year, Pepin of Herstal also passed away, and because his son Grimoald had just died and there was no obvious relative as his successor. So in the Frankish Empire the power game started all over again. And several neighboring countries tried to free themselves from the Frankish supremacy. King Redbad too saw the chance to creep away from the Frankish yoke. In 715/716, he took back the area lost in 690/695, Frisia Citerior, and especially the strategic river delta!

⁸ Van der Tuuk op. cit. (note 8), p. 129

It is unclear what Redbad did in those years with the Christians in Frisia Citerior. From some reports one might conclude that the limited tolerance of Christianity went for nothing. In Utrecht, Redbad had the churches of Saint Thomas and Saint Salvator set on fire. In Dorestad too the churches would also have been destroyed and the pagan worship restored. The missionaries, including Saint Willibrordus, were expelled. Saint Willibrordus retreated to Echternach. There are, however, also historians who doubt the accuracy of these messages. Trouillez⁹ believes that it seems more like Redbad did not unleash a Christian persecution and spared the two churches in Utrecht. He would have had no benefit from alienating the already rather large group of Christians in that area. And was Saint Willibrordus really expelled or did he flee himself take according to the tried-and-tested Irish model to abandon everything if it won't work anymore? Or was he simply already in Echternach during Redbad's declaration of independence and did he just stay there? And it is also remarkable that an English monk, Wilfreth (later called Saint Boniface), was able to work in the Frisia of Redbad for a number

⁹ P Trouillez, *De Franken en het Christendom*, Antwerpen, 2016, p. 113.

of months in 716 (albeit unsuccessfully). In short, it is difficult to gain certainty about the politics of Redbad towards the Christians in this period.

On the foreign political front, Redbad associated himself with rebellious West Frankish nobles to defeat the supporters of the late Pepin of Herstal. The West Franks marched through the Belgian Coal Forest, destroying the entire region up to the Meuse with fire and sword. King Redbad sailed up the Rhine with a fleet and disembarked near Cologne. The East Franks were defeated at Cologne by the joined forces of the West Franks and the Frisians. They subsequently sacked Cologne and took the State treasury. But when the West Franks triumphantly retreated, they were attacked by the new "coming man" of the Franks, Charles Martel, the natural son of Pepin of Herstal, who snatched away their war booty. In addition he chased King Redbad's army, but he failed to destroy it. So the Frisians returned home with a rich loot and this is seen as the highlight of Frisia's power!

Charles Martel consolidated his position as the new leader of the Frankish Empire. According to some writers, he left Redbad alone for a while,

because he was too busy with problems elsewhere in his realm. But according to other writers, Charles Martel had already defeated Redbad in 718. According to one writer he would have brought Frisia into Frankish hands up to the Almere. According to another source he would have cleared Friesland again, after Redbad signed a peace treaty, in which he promised to accept Christianity and allow Christian preachers. And in that context, Saint Wolfram would have come up with the history already told above. Anyhow, King Redbad I could not rest on the laurels of his Cologne victory for a long time as the illness that he had been suffering from for a long time got worse. Some say that Redbad has invited Saint Willibrordus, who would have hesitated, yet has come and remonstrated with Redbad on the chances of a future in hell. Others attribute this story to Saint Wolfram.

It is certain that Redbad I died in the late summer or early autumn of 719. This greatest king of Frisia, who did suffer quite a defeat but was never completely vanquished, finally lost the unequal battle against his illness (as we now say in mourning messages). At that time, not everyone

felt sorry for that. Clergymen did not hide their joy over the death of King Redbad.

Charles Martel immediately seized the opportunity and invaded Frisia. Due to the disappearance of their chieftain, the resistance of the Frisians was broken and Charles with his Frankish army could easily penetrate Frisia up to the Vlie and incorporate this entire area permanently into the Frankish Empire. So not only Frisia Citerior - the area below the Kromme and Oude Rijn, which Redbad had taken in 715 - but all areas from Cadzand to Tessel. Only the rest of Frisia, east of the Vlie - the current provinces of Friesland and Groningen - remained formally independent.

7. After the defeat of 719

In the newly incorporated area Charles Martel gave all of Redbad's confiscated grounds to his faithful, like his father had done in 690. Yet for the entire population this turn of tide may not have been a change for the worse. The Frankish authority maintained the freedoms in business management and a thriving economy brought prosperity to the population. The native elite benefited from this prosperity that could thus develop enough power to successfully withstand the counts that represented the Frankish authority. After the final incorporation of Frisia Citerior in the Frankish Empire in 719, Dorestad was able to function fully as a center for the exchange of goods. The Frankish monarchs began to control trade and Dorestad was no longer on the border of two political spheres, but was now fully within the Frankish Empire. With that, the grip of the Frisian elite on the trade disappeared. From then on, local landowners were the masters together with Frankish noblemen. Nevertheless the intermediary function of Dorestad between the trade spheres of

the Meuse-Rhine area and the North Sea region was continued unabatedly. And Frisian merchants continued to play an important role as they always had done. Due to legislation and the concentration of trade in trade centers, especially in Dorestad, trade experienced golden times in the eighth century.

Charles Martel also restored bishop Willibrordus at his headquarters in Utrecht and encouraged the further Christianisation of this part of the Low Countries. After the death of King Redbad and the subsequent annexation of West Frisia by Charles Martel in 719, Saint Willibrordus had quickly returned to Utrecht, partly because he was already on speaking terms with Charles Martel. Charles definitely have Saint Willibrordus Utrecht as the basis and starting point of his missionary activities. Saint Willibrordus could undertake the reconstruction there. To the extent necessary, he rebuilt the church of St. Thomas, dating back to the time of King Dagobert, and now placed it under the protection of Saint Martin, the Sint Maartenskerk. It became his bishop's church and is the predecessor of the current Dom Church. In addition, Saint Willibrordus (re) built the Saint Salvator, the monastery church that belonged to

the mission school. Furthermore, there were the house for the bishop and a shelter for other priests. There was also a cemetery. For the people of that time, all this must have been a great complex. For us it would be much less so. The Sint-Maartenskerk, for example, was a simple hall church of less than 20 by 7 meters with a square choir. It was of stone and that was exceptionally. Now that Frisia between the Old Rhine and the Vlie had become a Frankish duchy Saint Willibrord and the other missionaries, protected by the Frankish government, could really begin their missionary work there - preaching the Gospel, destroying the pagan shrines and replacing them with Christian sanctuaries. From Utrecht Saint Willibrordus preached faith here and there and converted many. He also built many churches and chapels as well as a number of monasteries in these regions.

During this period Saint Willibrordus received support from the aforementioned English monk Boniface, who in 719 had come to Frisia again. Operating from Saint Willibrordus' bases in Antwerp and Utrecht, Saint Boniface was active in Woerden, the Vechtstreek and especially Velsen. From this last place, he won souls in the present North Holland, where paganism had resisted most,

because until that time it had remained outside the Frankish Empire. Here he destroyed many pagan cult sites and founded many Christian churches.

Saint Willibrordus wanted to appoint Boniface as an assistant with the dignity of co-bishop, perhaps even as his successor, but Boniface rejected this. We can only speculate about the real reason for this. The fact is that Boniface left the Low Countries in 722. He may have been replaced by one of the members of a new group of Irish and English missionaries that had come to the Low Countries in 719.

Saint Willibrordus and his fellow missionaries did not limit their conversion activities to Utrecht, but extended them to Dorestad and all the area around the mouths of Meuse, Rhine and Scheldt and further north, Oegstgeest, Kennemerland. Velzen, Heiloo, Petten and Medenblik. Also In the rest of the current province of Noord-Holland, on Wieringen and Tessel, ecclesiastical centers emerged on domains that had come into the possession of Echternach or Utrecht. That were royal estates, undoubtedly mainly consisting of domains of Redbad and his supporters, which Charles Martel had confiscated, for instance the

oldest churches in Vlaardingen and Velzen, dating from the years 720-726. In Heilo they still point to the Willibrordus-well, which was connected to the oldest church there. These early Medieval churches were mostly made of wood and these wooden structures did not differ greatly from the farms of that time.

In 723 the diocese of Utrecht was enriched with the Roman fortresses, Utrecht and Vechten and with all accessories (such as tithes and crown properties) both inside and outside the walls of Utrecht. Saint Willibrordus also obtained in donation many estates in present-day Utrecht, Noord-Holland and the region of Nijmegen, Kleef and Emmerich. And in those years he also received a few solid donations from private individuals, such as the church of Antwerp, which was once founded by St. Amandus. As a result of all this, the Church in the Northern Netherlands became richer, but also more worldly.

8. The amputated Friesland

In 719 the Frisians the east of Vlie were allowed to continue as a relatively independent state with its own laws and administrators, but as a satellite state of Francia. This meant that they would not fight against the Frankish Empire, that they had to supply fighters to the Franks to help them against their enemies, that they had to pay an annual tribute to the Franks. It also meant that Christian preachers had to be admitted, but they did not seem to have gone there anyway. For the time being the Frankish influence remained minimal in this area.

The Frisian king once again took up residence in Stavoren, but who was that Frisian king by then? The sources are contradictory. In some, Aldigisl II the Younger is mentioned as the new Frisian king, in others Poppo or Bubo, his brother. Also in this area the population did not suffer, as trade and shipping were on the increase. The city of Stavoren was considerably enlarged, embellished and strengthened. Here, as for centuries, the important temple was still dedicated to the pagan

god Stavo. Many Frisians still went there to worship him and consult the priests, which also contributed much to the liveliness in Stavoren. Besides Stavoren there was urbanization in Dokkum, Ezonstad on the Lauwers and further away, in Groningen.

Agriculture did increase as well, but remained low in this part of the Netherlands because the country still had no dikes there. A single flooding could devour hundreds of fields and devastate all processing of many years. Until the end of the 8th century, the Frisians developed no other defense than raising the knolls again and again. Agriculture was also hampered by the fact that decent tools were not available or only in poor condition. Craft was not important because too often the men went to the war field or in the sea trade. Moreover, there were very large forests in this Friesland, which could only serve for forestry.

It seems that the Frisians on the east side of the Vlie initially had resigned to the amputation of Frisia west of the Vlie and to the status of satellite state, which had been imposed to them. But when east and south of Friesland the Saxons became increasingly rebellious against the Franks, many

Frisians joined a great Saxon revolt in 734. However, Charles Martel crushed this revolt and then rushed to the Netherlands where he equipped a fleet and sailed over safe inland waters to Friesland. He defeated the Frisian captain Poppo in his own water-rich area in the battle of Boorne, where this Poppo also lost his life. The temple of Fosta on Ameland was destroyed and the Frisians were pushed back to the Lauwers. Charles Martel could now theoretically incorporate Friesland between the Vlie and the Lauwers into the Frankish Empire, but he was not as quickly as in 719 in taking factual possession of the freshly conquered Frisian countries. Poppo probably also did not have such a dominant position as Redbad I in his days; presumably this area had a much looser political structure than the area west of the Vlie. The various nobles were probably all their own masters. Friesland was still very fragmented as it was not secured by dykes and many parts were constantly prey of flooding and difficult accessible. It was therefore not a suitable situation for the Franks to take matters into their own hands, Charles Martel confined himself to a military victory and tolerated Alfbad, the son of Poppo, to remain lord of the area east of the Vlie. This Alfbad,

however, was indebted to Charles Martel and he had to give guarantees for the spread of the Christian faith in his area. Alfbad submitted to it, accepted the dignity of count offered to him, and sealed the peace through a marriage with a daughter of Charles Martel. The Franks also initially left the Frisian laws and administrative organization virtually untouched. In addition, the Frisians were allowed to retain the hereditary right to their paternal goods. Although viscounts were appointed as representatives of the king, they exercised only a limited rule. Moreover, the viscounts had no jurisdiction over the freemen in Frisia. All this kept the Frankish influence in Friesland, east of the Vlie at a minimum. Once again the sources contradict each other regarding the names of the ruling kings. According to Steenstra¹⁰ Aldigisl II remained king until 737 and would have been succeeded by his son Gundebold, who would have ruled from 737 to 749 and then was succeeded by his son, Redbad II. Wagenaar¹¹ says that Gundebold already died in 743 and was succeeded in that year by Redbad II. But not only the years are uncertain. There are

¹⁰ H.W. Steenstra, *Algemeene Geschiedenis van Friesland*, Minnertsga, 1845, p. 138.

¹¹ J. Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche Historie*, Amsterdam, 1790-1796, p. 402-403..

historians who do not believe that there has been an Aldigisl II. The information about him and Gundebold is unreliable.

They would have preceded the Frisians in moderation and this part of Friesland experienced a reasonably peaceful and prosperous time. They would also have been kind to the missionary work of the Christians, but there are no indications that preaching in the amputated Friesland has been a great matter in those years. We are informed that in 743 the Frisians once again fought on the side of the Saxons against the Franks, but also that they in 747 chose the side of the Franks against the revolting Saxons.

9. Boniface

It was precisely during this period that a powerful spiritual leader was active in Western Europe. His name was already mentioned a few times: Saint Boniface. Wilfreth, Winfrid, Winfried or Winfreth (675-754), as he was originally called, was born 675 from noble parents in the south of Wessex. He had become a monk and a priest and head of the leading convent school there. He had written a Latin grammar, was ascetic, wanted to go on mission and Germania attracted him. In 716 he sailed the North Sea to Dorestad with a cargo ship. According to Van der Tuuk¹² it is unlikely that Wilfreth would have made the trip to Dorestad if he had known in advance that the pagan Frisians were in charge of it again. But it is also possible that he had hoped that with his own Old English or Anglo-Saxon ancestry he would count on more benevolence among the pagan Frisians than the Frankish missionaries. Apparently that was not the case. There was a renewed revival of paganism under King Redbod I in Frisia. Wilfreth preached to

¹² Van der Tuuk, op. cit., (note 3), p. 41.

deaf ears and had to return to England. He was asked to become abbot there, but he abandoned it and went to Rome in 718 to receive a mission from the Pope. The Pope gave him the order to preach among the Gentiles in Germania and to uphold the Christian precepts. He asked Wilfreth to change his name to Boniface.

Boniface made his vow to the Pope in the formula, which was customary with the Roman bishops: faithfulness and submission to the Pope. In that perspective Germania was christianised, very different from Francia, where the bishops were elected rather bottom-up and / or under strong influence of the leadership of the country. In 719 Saint Boniface began his mission in Bavaria and Thuringia, two regions that already belonged to the circle of satellite states around the Frankish Empire, so that Saint Boniface could operate there with the blessing of the authorities. There was a great need for mission, because the people still had a lot of pagan habits and there were many abuses under the Christian clergy. His first contacts in Thuringia with the local clergy, however, were apparently so disappointing to Saint Boniface that he returned to the part of Frisia, which had just been incorporated into the Frankish

Empire in 719. As we have seen, Saint Boniface has worked there for three years on the conversion of the new territories incorporated by the Franks. Then he was called back to Rome, where the Pope charged him with the leadership of the conversion work east of the Rhine. He named Saint Boniface to "Bishop of Germania" - a kind of mission bishop for all that part of Germania, for which no territorial bishop seats had been established. Pope Gregory II asked Charles Martel, who, around 720, had come to the fore as the strong man in the Frankish Empire, to support the missionary activities of Saint Boniface in Germania. That protection was, of course, necessary in the first place because also for Saint Boniface the conversion work consisted in the destruction of pagan cult places, which met with much resistance. Most notorious was his destruction of the Donar oak at Greismar.

Saint Boniface himself acknowledged this in his letters to the Pope: "Without the protection of the Frankish monarchs, I can neither rule the church people nor the priests and the clergy, nor defend the monks and the nuns."

In the following 30 years Saint Boniface has worked mainly in Hessen and Thuringia. There and

elsewhere in Francia he founded several monasteries which became the bearers of the culture change and the suppliers of bishops, who were the main-stays of the ecclesiastical structure.

Saint Boniface fought with great zeal against the very low level at which Christianity stood in Germania and Francia at that time. He was well aware of the abuses in the Frankish Church and in a letter from 742 to the Pope, he outlined them in unabashed language: "Religion is trampled on. No church councils have been held for 80 years, there are no more archbishops, and nowhere are the provisions of ecclesiastical law still honored or restored. Most of the bishop's seats are in the hands of greedy people and are exploited by adulterous and unworthy clerics for worldly purposes. And those who are called deacons from their adolescence swell in fornication and adultery and receive four, five or more concubines in their beds. And bishops are often drunks, hunters or soldiers. " Saint Boniface must certainly have also seen how Charles Martel was in the process of infecting and secularizing the Frankish Church, also by the bad example of his own court life. When Charles had once kindly received him at his court in Trier, Saint Boniface had been deeply

shocked by the vulgarity and licentiousness that prevailed there.

After the death of Charles Martel, his successors committed themselves to a reform of the spiritual life in Francia. Between 741 and 743 they convened various councils to reform the Frankish Church.

The energy of Saint Boniface, his missionary passion and his great organizational talents paid off. The Popes were enthusiastic. In 732 Saint Boniface received the title of Archbishop of Germania. In 742 he was even named "Archbishop of the East". He also received the title of "Ambassador of Saint Peter, *missu Sancti Petri*". But for the reforms Saint Boniface made, he did not receive everybody's approval. The Frankish bishops who owed their appointment to Charles Martel were undoubtedly less charmed by his drive to reform. They saw his intervention as an impermissible interference of Rome in the Frankish church. That is why they turned against him and tried to sideline him. Saint Boniface had his mind set on the distinguished bishop's seat of Cologne, which he especially thought necessary for the mission among the Frisians and Saxons. But his

opponents did not allow him. He had to settle for the bishop's seat of Mainz. But the Pope encouraged Saint Boniface to remain and supported him by appointing Mainz as the main church of the Northwest part of Germania. As a result, Saint Boniface remained a very powerful figure. Was he so powerful that he even played a role in the palace revolution of 751, where the Merovingian king was deposed and Pepin III became King? Was it perhaps Saint Boniface who had anointed Pepin as King? Nothing is known with certainty about this crucial event.

It is, however, indisputable that Saint Boniface soon retired from his seat in Mainz. But why? He must have noticed that his authority in Francia was on the wane. This would have prompted him to stop at the top of the Frankish church and to devote his last years (he was around 75 years old) to his childhood love: the mission of Frisia! In the spring of 753, after a thorough preparation, he sailed down the Rhine.

He arrived in Utrecht, where no new bishop had been appointed since the death of Saint Willibrordus in 739. According to Van der Tuuk, the diocese of Utrecht had petered out after the death

of Saint Willibrordus. The Utrecht mission monastery would also have been abandoned for a long time. In fact, the church was ruled there by a former pupil of Boniface, Gregory, who would have welcomed Saint Boniface there.

After having looked around, Saint Boniface focused his eyes on the more distant parts of Frisia, the current province of Friesland. But, as we have seen, it lacked a proper pro-Frankish government. That's why Saint Boniface opted for a special strategy: a short but grandly set up baptism and confirmation ceremony that was aimed at impressing a large number of people and inducing them to baptism or confirmation. In 754, on the eve of Pentecost, Saint Boniface went with a large company to Dokkum. There were about 50 people, preachers, associated logistic personnel and perhaps a number of armed servants who were responsible for their safety.

But even before that ceremony could begin, the camp of Saint Boniface was attacked by a group of men with shiny weapons, shields and spears. Was it an ordinary troop of robbers who thought that gold and silver were to be found in Saint Boniface's camp, or was it a deliberate, organized action by

Frisians, who disapproved the Christianization of their country? Legend has it that Saint Boniface still tried to repel a sword strike on his head with a Bible, but the defense was useless. Saint Boniface was killed with 52 companions at Dokkum on June 5, 754 at the dawn of the day.

10. Redbad II

Much has been written about the causes of this murder, and it certainly has been suggested that the king of Friesland would have been behind it. That would have been Redbad II. Redbad II was about 20 years old, when he in 749 or 743 succeeded his deceased father Gundebold. At that moment he had already spent 12 years at the court of the King of Denmark and built up a great hatred against Christianity. Having come to power in Friesland, he had the Fosta temple at Ameland restored and did everything he could to counteract Christianity.

If all this is true, you can also imagine that Redbad II fled from the country after the massacre of Dokkum, first to Germany and then to Denmark. And that he has asked the help of the Danes (Vikings) there. But for all that, there is no proof.

It is also conceivable that this Redbad then settled in the Danish country for a while, perhaps having married a Danish princess, founded a family and further identified himself with the Viking life. But there are no historical indications for that either. Actually, this Redbad II is mentioned relatively little

in Dutch history. Bolhuis van Zeeburgh describes him as a "fable". One would say: historians devote a PhD-thesis to it!

We know for sure that the Frankish King Pepin in 754 immediately sent in a punitive expedition to Friesland in connection with the murder of Saint Boniface which caused the much blood to flow. After this punitive expedition, Pepin also ensured a more permanent presence in Friesland of his soldiers under the leadership of the prefect Abba. But he also limited himself to consolidating the newly developed dominant position in Oostergo and Westergo. Probably under great Frankish presence, a Memorial Church could be established in Dokkum and a missionary community could be concentrated there. Earlier refugees from Friesland did not return, many preachers no longer ventured to Friesland and the few Christians there kept in the shade.

It is also claimed that Redbad II would have returned to Frisia. He would have reassumed the kingship back there and shaken up the anti-Frankish feelings. The death of King Pepin in 769 would then have prompted him to attack Utrecht once again. Diocese-governor Gregorius asked the

new Frankish kings for protection, but they did not listen because they were too busy on other fronts. In 771, Redbad II would have taken part in the revolt of the Saxons and he did the same in their revolt of 774. When that revolt also ended in defeat, the Frankish King Charles (the later Charlemagne) decided to definitively incorporate Friesland between the Vlie and the Eems into the Frankish Empire. A Frankish governor was appointed. The Frisians were allowed to keep their own laws - Charles had them recorded - but the liberties of the Frisian nobles were drastically shortened.

Then Friesland could be further christianised; in 777 a church was founded in the present town of Harlingen. Redbad II may have fled a second time; it is possible that in Denmark he encouraged the Vikings to make the raids, which they held in Friesland in the following years. Finally, Redbad II will have died, but where and under what circumstances is unknown (in 793?).

In 783 was the bitter climax of the uprisings of the Saxons who followed their famous leader Widukind. Part of the Frisians joined the rebellion of the Saxons. The whole of Groningen and

Friesland were dragged into this conflict. As far as the Vlie, the churches were demolished and the clergy were chased away. On top of that Friesland was also the scene of raids by the Vikings. Due to the submission of Widukind and his baptism, 785, this struggle ended for the time being.

In 792 there was a new revolt of the Saxons, in which many Frisians participated. King Charles had antagonized them by depriving the free farmers of the Frisians of their heritage because of their share in the Saxon uprisings. This revolt was also bloody precipitated by King Charles. It was the disastrous final chord of all the Frisian resistance. The Saxons did not scruple to kill Frisians, the Vikings again raided the Frisian lands and flooding forced the Frisians to raise the knolls once again.

11. Looking back

The battle between the Frisians and the Franks lasted about 160 years (630-790), twice as long as the 80-year war with Spain, 8 centuries later. Initially it was an ordinary neighbor's quarrel between two Germanic brooders. Eventually it developed into a showdown between a Frankish Empire striving for hegemony and a neighbor, Frisia, attached to its independence. In this unequal struggle, the Frisians could only prevail in periods that it was a mess in the Frankish Empire (640-690). After that, they have risen again at short moments of chaos in the Frankish Empire, but they always had to pay for it with a defeat according to the same pattern: to lose a piece of land and to conclude a new treaty for the remaining part as a satellite state of the Franks: 690 / 695 loss of Frisia Citerior; 719: loss of all Frisia west of the Vlie (N. Holland, Z. Holland and Zeeland), 734 loss of Friesland between Vlie and Lauwers; 774: end of all Friesland as a nation.

The story of the film Redbad plays in that last episode since 690. The Frisians could only produce short spells of resistance. Often they have

done so in connection with the resistance of the neighboring people of the Saxons against the Franks. The story of the film Redbad gives the idea that the Frisians have made a final attempt to resist with support from the peoples in Scandinavia, the Vikings. However, there are hardly any historical indications for this.

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