



Hostages in the Carolingian world (714–840)

ADAM J. KOSTO

The medieval hostage (obses) was a form of personal surety, a person deprived of liberty by a second person in order to guarantee an undertaking by a third person. Although they were used in private transactions, they normally appear in the early medieval sources in the context of relations between political entities. Close to seventy distinct hostage episodes are recorded in greater Francia and the Italian Peninsula in the period 714–840. Drawing on this evidence, as well as on the few surviving normative sources that refer to hostages, the present article develops a definition of hostages in the Carolingian period, examines the situations in which they were used, and argues that they must be seen as more than a simple means for securing agreements. In particular, grants of hostages might involve individuals beyond the trio of creditor-debtor-hostage, and they could transcend their immediate guaranteeing function to serve symbolic and political ends. The proper context for the study of hostages emerges as not legal but social and political relations.

Describing the perfidy of the Saxons during their long conflict with Charlemagne, Einhard includes in his list of deceitful behaviors the fact that they regularly handed over hostages:

It is almost impossible to say how many times they were beaten and pledged their obedience to the king. They promised [on those occasions] to follow his orders, to hand over the hostages (*obsides*) demanded without delay, and to welcome the representatives sent to them by the king. At different times, they were so broken and subdued that they even promised to give up their worship of demons and freely submit themselves to Christianity.¹

¹ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 7, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SRG* 25, p. 10, trans. P. Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard* (Peterborough, 1998), p. 20: 'Difficile dictu est, quoties superati ac supplices regi se dederunt, imperata facturos polliciti sunt, obsides qui imperabantur absque dilatione dederunt, legatos qui mittebantur susceperunt, aliquoties ita domiti et emolliti, ut etiam cultum daemonum dimittere et Christianae religioni se subdere velle promitterent'. Where a published translation is not noted, translations are my own.

Various annals record that the Saxons did this in 772, 775, 776, 779, and then each year from 794 to 798, thus potentially abandoning them in every year but the last.² This presents the historian with a puzzle: if the Saxons revolted year after year, why did Charlemagne continue to take the hostages? Martin Lintzel, faced with the problem of the repeated Saxon revolts, posited social divisions within Saxon society: a nobility (*edhilingui*) who supported the Franks, and a common people (*frilingi, lazzi*) who were the motor of the constant rebellions. The noble families who gave hostages thus did not violate their promises, while families from the other groups who gave hostages may not have participated in subsequent uprisings.³ This fails to explain why the nobles continued to give hostages, and there is, as Lintzel acknowledged, no evidence for his suggestion about the behaviour of lower-status families who may have granted hostages. A better argument may be that geographical rather than social divisions explain the pattern: hostages were taken from different, semi-independent political subdivisions of the Saxon people. Thus, for example, in 775 Charlemagne received hostages separately from the Eastphalians, the Angrarii and the Westphalians.⁴ In the following year, however, the Saxons 'abandoned all of their hostages'.⁵ The annals do not specify which of the Saxon groups from whom hostages had been taken in 775 violated their commitment – that the rebellion took place at Eresburg, in Westphalia, may be an indication – but they do suggest that an agreement was in fact violated: from the Carolingian perspective, at least, Charlemagne was not subduing a separate political unit. The geographical argument thus has its limits, as well, and the problem of the recurring hostages remains.

Hostages were not simply a feature of the Saxon campaigns. Carolingian rulers received hostages at various points from the Lombards, Bavarians, Alamannians, Aquitanians, Basques, Bretons, Danes, Frisians, Iberian Muslims, Norse and several Slavic groups. Others, such as the Lombard rulers and the papacy, also employed the institution. In these cases, too, violations of agreements are recorded. Following the description of the submission of Aistulf, king of the Lombards, to Pippin in

² E.g. *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.a.* 772, 775, 776, 779, 795, 797, 798, ed. F. Kurze, *MGH SRG* 6, pp. 34, 40–2, 44–8, 54, 96, 100, 104; *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.a.* 794, 795, ed. F. Kurze, *MGH SRG* 6, p. 97; *Annales Petaviani, s.a.* 796, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* I, p. 18. The revised royal annals are cited only where they provide additional information that supplements or differs from the royal annals. Other narrative sources are cited only when they supplement or differ from the two sets of royal annals.

³ M. Lintzel, 'Die Unterwerfung Sachsens durch Karl den Großen und der sächsische Adel', in Lintzel, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1961 [1934]), I, 95–127, at p. 122, n. 130.

⁴ *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, pp. 40–2. Cf. E.J. Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt, Dynastic Politics, and Aristocratic Factionalism in the Early Middle Ages: The Saxon *Stellinga* Reconsidered', *Speculum* 70 (1995), pp. 467–501, at p. 476, n. 47; Lintzel, 'Die Unterwerfung', pp. 106–7.

⁵ *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.* 776, p. 44: 'omnes obsides suos dulgtos'. Cf. *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.* 756, p. 14.

755, the revisor of the royal annals writes, ‘although in the previous year he had given hostages ... he did not keep any of his promises’.⁶ Waifar, duke of Aquitaine, acted in a similar fashion in 761: ‘although he had given hostages ... he advanced his army as far as Chalon’.⁷ The royal annals have Bavarians bring the charge against Duke Tassilo in 788 of violating his promises to Charlemagne after having given hostages.⁸ And in 828, Harald, king of Denmark, violated a temporary peace ‘confirmed by hostages’.⁹

Clearly, then, hostages did not always succeed as guarantees for agreements in the Carolingian world. Were these violations the exception or the norm? Were hostages an effective means of surety? It is difficult to say, for explicit evidence for the outcome of agreements secured by hostages is extremely rare. The problem is that the status of obligations that do not require the performance of a specific act by a specific time is only noted in the sources when such obligations are violated, and such indefinite obligations account for the majority of recorded Carolingian hostages. The annals do not normally note years, for example, in which the Saxons remained faithful; that is, the years in which they kept their agreements. Because it would be foolish to assume that an event that is not mentioned in the early medieval sources did not happen, we can only be certain of the outcome of such agreements when they failed. Furthermore, even if we were to assume that a promise that is not explicitly violated is in fact kept, it would remain impossible to know what the relationship is between the guarantee and the outcome: do the Saxons not revolt in a given year because they have granted hostages or for some reason entirely unrelated to hostages? Because of the nature of the sources, then, looking at hostages in the Carolingian period from the traditional standpoint of legal history, as simple guarantee mechanisms, is of limited value.¹⁰ Fortunately, the sources permit other approaches that allow an examination of the complexities of the Carolingian use of hostages.

⁶ *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.* 756, p. 15: ‘quamquam anno superiore obsides dedisset ... nihil de promissis opere complevit’.

⁷ *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.*, p. 19: ‘quamquam obsides dedisset ... usque ad Cabillonem civitatem fecit accedere’. Cf. *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 18: ‘minime cogitans de obsidibus vel de sacramentis suis’.

⁸ *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 80; cf. *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.*, p. 81. See M. Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft: Untersuchungen zum Herrscherethos Karls des Großen*, Vorträge und Forschungen, Sonderband 39 (Sigmaringen, 1993), pp. 64–71.

⁹ *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 175: ‘per obsides firmatam’.

¹⁰ See generally: J. Gilissen, ‘Esquisse d’une histoire comparée des sûretés personnelles: Essai de synthèse général’, in *Les sûretés personnelles*, 3 vols., Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin pour l’histoire comparative des institutions 28–30 (Brussels, 1969–74), I, 5–127, at pp. 50–61, 123–4; W. Ogris, ‘Die persönliche Sicherheiten in den westeuropäischen Rechten des Mittelalters’, in *Les sûretés personnelles*, II, 7–26, at pp. 14–17. The most important earlier works are: O.F. von Gierke, *Schuld und Haftung im älteren deutschen Recht: Insbesondere die Form der Schuld- und Haftungsgeschäfte*, Untersuchungen zur deutschen Staats- und Rechtsgeschichte 100 (Breslau, 1910); A. Lutteroth, *Der Geisel im Rechtsleben: Ein Beitrag zur allgemeinen Rechtsgeschichte und*

Close to seventy distinct hostage episodes are recorded in the narrative sources for greater Francia and the Italian Peninsula in the period 714–840.¹¹ These sources are not unproblematic. Recent scholarship appears to undermine the trustworthiness on matters of fact of the narrative sources for the Carolingian period. The various annals are increasingly understood as interpretative rather than merely descriptive works, and as tied to ideological aims and concrete political circumstances, both of the Carolingian royal house and of individual authors and compilers.¹² Furthermore, in pursuit of these ideological and political aims, authors relied not only on interpretation and emphasis, but deception and falsehood.¹³ The implications of this line of research for the value of narrative sources for the study of institutions rather than events and policies has not been worked out. I do not intend to do so here, but will simply offer the proposition (debatable, to be sure) that despite our new understanding of the narrative sources, they nevertheless provide reliable evidence for an institution such as hostageship. At a certain level, the reception of interpretations or outright deceptions in these sources would depend on the verisimilitude of the descriptions given. The repeated treachery of the Saxons fits well into the pattern identified in the royal annals of ‘constant reiteration and triumphal narrative’ in the service of forging a Frankish identity, but whether or not the Saxons actually did grant and betray hostages on every one of these occasions, if conquered groups never granted or betrayed hostages, the reiteration would fail to have its desired effect. The same is true for

dem geltenden Volkerrecht, Abhandlungen aus dem Staats- und Verwaltungsrecht, mit Einschluss des Kolonialrechts und des Volkerrechts 36 (Breslau, 1922); F. Beyerle, ‘Der Ursprung der Bürgerschaft: Ein Deutungsversuch vom germanischen Rechte her’, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*, Germanistische Abteilung, 47 (1927), pp. 567–645, esp. pp. 571–4. The only work to take a more expansive view of the subject is R. Stacey, *The Road to Judgment: From Custom to Court in Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Philadelphia, 1994), esp. pp. 55–81.

¹¹ In addition to cases cited elsewhere in the notes, see: *Chronicon Moissiacense*, s.aa. 715, [737], ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1, pp. 290.46, 292.25; *Annales Bertiniani*, s.aa. 838, 839, ed. F. Grat, J. Vielliard, and S. Clémencet, [Société de l’histoire de France, Série antérieure à 1789, 470] (Paris, 1964), pp. 25–6, 35. The cutoff date is not entirely arbitrary; after this period hostages taken by the Northmen from the Carolingians predominate in the sources. Further research is necessary to discover whether this coincides with changes in the institution of hostageship. In any case, the shift in the position of the Franks from ‘importers’ to ‘exporters’ of hostages suggests the necessity of an approach different from the one followed in this article.

¹² M. Innes and R. McKitterick, ‘The Writing of History’, in McKitterick (ed.), *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 193–220; R. McKitterick, ‘Political Ideology in Carolingian Historiography’, in Y. Hen and M. Innes (eds.), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 162–74; and works cited in notes 13–16 and 43, below.

¹³ Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft*, pp. 21–77; R. Collins, ‘Deception and Misrepresentation in Early Eighth Century Frankish Historiography: Two Case Studies’, in J. Jarnut, U. Nonn, and M. Richter (eds.), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, Beihefte der Francia 37 (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 227–47; R. McKitterick, ‘The Illusion of Power in the Carolingian Annals’, *EHR* 115 (2000), pp. 1–20.

the success of accounts of peacemaking through hostages in contributing to the construction of an image of royal authority.¹⁴ It is noteworthy that grants of hostages are one of the few elements that emerge relatively unscathed from Matthias Becher's critique of the accounts given by the royal annals of the dealings between Charlemagne and Tassilo in 781 and 787.¹⁵

A related methodological problem arises when turning to these sources, almost all of which were produced by the Franks, for information about their neighbours. With our new understanding of the nature of the narrative sources and a healthy dose of imagination, the voices of the vanquished may be recovered from between the lines of the pro-Carolingian annals,¹⁶ but in the end we must fall back on the Frankish view of the world, if only to contradict it. Bavarians, Bretons and Basques may have viewed the institution of hostageship differently from each other and from the Franks. Alternatively, this cross-cultural institution may have relied precisely on a common understanding of how it worked. For the purposes of this article, which attempts simply to raise questions about the institution of hostageship in the Carolingian period, a generalized approach is sufficient; the suggestions made here remain to be tested in specific regional contexts.

Drawing on the evidence of the narrative sources, as well as on the few surviving normative sources that refer to hostages, the present essay develops a definition of hostages, examines the situations in which they were used, and argues that they must be seen as more than a simple means for securing agreements. In particular, grants of hostages might involve individuals beyond the trio of creditor-debtor-hostage, and they could transcend their immediate guaranteeing function to serve symbolic and political ends. This essay thus emphasizes the contextual study of a particular legal institution, an approach that embeds the institution in a socio-political framework.

Definitions

The modern understanding of the hostage draws on only a narrow part of this complex institution. As enshrined, for example, in the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, this understanding

¹⁴ R. McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of the Royal Frankish Annals', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 7 (1997), pp. 101–29, at p. 128; P.J.E. Kershaw, *Rex pacificus: Studies in Royal Peacemaking and the Image of the Peace-Making King in the Early Medieval West*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1998), ch. 4.

¹⁵ Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft*, pp. 58, 62–3.

¹⁶ E.g. S. Airlie, 'Narratives of Triumph and Rituals of Submission: Charlemagne's Mastering of Bavaria', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 9 (1999), pp. 93–119; Y. Hen, 'The Annals of Metz and the Merovingian Past', in Hen and Innes (eds.), *The Uses of the Past*, pp. 175–90.

focuses on the use of force – the ‘taking’ of the hostage – and on involuntary compulsion as a goal:

Any person who seizes or detains and threatens to kill, to injure or to continue to detain another person (hereinafter referred to as the ‘hostage’) in order to compel a third party, namely, a State, an international intergovernmental organization, a natural or juridical person, or a group of persons, to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for release of the hostage commits the offence of taking of hostages (‘hostage-taking’) within the meaning of this Convention.¹⁷

As the preamble of this document makes clear, the context for this definition is ‘international terrorism’. A definition developed from the medieval sources focuses instead on the contractual role of the hostage: a hostage (*obses*¹⁸) is a form of surety, a person deprived of liberty by a second person in order to guarantee an undertaking by a third person.¹⁹ The hostage is thus distinct on the one hand from the captive (*captivus*), who is deprived of liberty, but is not a surety, and on the other from the guarantor (*fideiussor*, *warantus*), who is a surety, but is not deprived of liberty.²⁰

Debates over the origin of personal surety in hostageship and the classification of various forms of surety in the early medieval period (often exercises in applying anachronistic legal concepts) need not be examined in depth here, except on one point. Historians of law generally distinguish between hostages in ‘international’ and ‘private’ law, arguing that over the course of the early medieval period hostages ceased to be used in private transactions.²¹ Important evidence for this is the apparent restriction of the term *obses* to hostages used in ‘international’ relations, while vernacular terms or circumlocutions are employed in ‘private law’

¹⁷ UN Doc. A/RES/34/146, 17 Dec. 1979, 1§1.

¹⁸ Occasionally *hospites*: Fredegar, *Chronica*, cont., c. 19, ed. and trans. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* (London, 1960), p. 93; *Codex Carolinus*, nos. 16, 17, ed. W. Gundlach, *MGH Epp.* 3, pp. 513.36 (*ospites*), 517.19; *Annales S. Amandi*, s.aa. 776, 798, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1, pp. 12, 14; *Annales Mosellani*, s.a. 780, ed. J.M. Lappenberg, *MGH SS* 16, p. 497.8–9 (‘in hospitale’). See C. du Fresne, sieur du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, ed. L. Favre, 10 vols. (Niort, 1883–7; repr. Graz, 1954), s.v. *hospes* (IV, p. 237).

¹⁹ Other definitions are possible. Cf. Lutteroth, *Der Geisel*, p. 25; Gilissen, ‘Esquisse’, p. 52.

²⁰ J.F. Niermeyer, *Mediae latinitatis lexicon minus* (Leiden, 1976; repr. 1993), s.vv. *fideiussor* 1, 2; *warantus*, 1; *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch bis zum ausgehenden 13. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1959–), s.v. *captivus* (although note I.A.1.b).

²¹ Ogris, ‘Die persönlichen Sicherheiten’, p. 143; Gierke, *Schuld und Haftung*, p. 52; Lutteroth, *Der Geisel*, pp. 48–9; cf. Gilissen, ‘Esquisse’, p. 124. It is seen as surviving only in a distinct form in Germany in the later Middle Ages, the *Einlager*. A similar distinction and notion of chronology holds in Celtic law: D.A. Binchy, ‘Celtic Suretyship: A Fossilized Indo-European Institution?’ *Irish Jurist*, ns, 7 (1972), pp. 360–72, at p. 370.

situations.²² This seems to hold true in Roman law and in classical Latin usage generally.²³ For example, a novel of Justinian that prohibits using free individuals as what are clearly ‘private law’ hostages avoids the term *obses*: ‘Because we have learned ... that creditors presume to hold the sons of their debtors in pledge (*pignus*), or as slave labor (*servile ministerium*), or under lease (*conductio*), we prohibit this practice in all of its manifestations’.²⁴ The Carolingian evidence is less certain.

The best evidence for the use of *obses* to refer to foreign hostages is the repeated use of the term in the annals, but this does not show that *obses* was *not* used for ‘private law’ hostages. The fact that the annals do not have occasion to describe ‘private law’ transactions means that they are not a useful source for demonstrating the limits of the semantic range of the term.²⁵ The debate must focus, rather, on the interpretation of passages outside the annals, principally in legal and administrative sources. The term *obses* appears only once in the law codes of the Germanic kingdoms: the Frisian law establishes a ninefold composition payment for the killing of a hostage.²⁶ This recalls a passage of the *Digest* in which such an action was defined as treasonable – clearly a ‘public’ context, if not precisely ‘international’.²⁷ An article of the *Divisio regnorum* of 806 (repeated word-for-word in the *Divisio regni* of 831) that regulates the return of *obsides* to their *patria* seems also to refer to ‘foreign’ hostages; this is true whether *patria* here indicates an area outside Francia, one within one of the Frankish subkingdoms (*regna*), or one of the subkingdoms itself.²⁸ The two other occurrences of the term in the capitularies are ambiguous: a passage in the *Capitulare de villis* prohibiting judges on royal estates from commending hostages, and a

²² Lutteroth, *Der Geisel*, pp. 40–1, and p. 196, n. 2.

²³ *Thesaurus linguae latinae* (Leipzig, 1900–), s.v. *obses*; P.G.W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1982), s.v. *uas*.

²⁴ Nov. 134.7, ed. R. Schoell and W. Kroll, 6th edn, *Corpus iuris civilis* 3 (Berlin, 1954), pp. 682–3: ‘Quia vero et huiusmodi iniquitatem in diversis locis nostrae reipublicae cognovimus admitti, quia creditores filios debitorum praesumunt retinere aut in pignus aut in servile ministerium aut conditionem, hoc modis omnibus prohibemus’.

²⁵ As Lutteroth himself notes (*Der Geisel*, p. 39).

²⁶ *Lex Frisionum*, XX.1, ed. K.A. Eckhardt and A. Eckhardt, *MGH Fontes* 12, p. 64.6. See H. Siems, *Studien zur Lex Frisionum*, Abhandlungen zur rechtswissenschaftlichen Grundlagenforschung 42 (Ebelsbach, 1980), pp. 321–2.

²⁷ D 48.4.1. See J.D. Cloud, ‘The Text of Digest XLVIII, 4: Ad Legem Iuliam Maiestatis’, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*, Romanistische Abteilung, 80 (1963), pp. 206–32, at pp. 212–13. Another mention of *obsides* in the *Digest*, D 28.1.11, is ambiguous: ‘Obsides testari non possunt, nisi eis permittitur’. See also D 49.14.31–32.

²⁸ *Capitularia regum francorum*, ed. A. Boretius and V. Krause, 2 vols. *MGH Capit.* 1–2, no. 45, c. 13, I, 129.12–17: ‘De obsidibus autem qui propter credentias dati sunt et a nobis per diversa loca ad custodiendum destinati sunt volumus, ut ille rex in cuius regno sunt absque voluntate fratris sui de cuius regno sublatis sunt in patriam eos redire non permittat, sed potius in futurum in suscipiendis obsidibus alter alteri mutuum ferat auxilium, si frater fratrem hoc facere rationabiliter postulaverit’ (cf. no. 194, c. 9, II, 22.43–23.4). On the semantic range of the term *patria* in the Carolingian sources, see Thomas Eichenberger, *Patria: Studien zur Bedeutung des Wortes im Mittelalter (6.–12. Jahrhundert)*, *Nationes* 9 (Sigmariningen, 1991), pp. 89–127.

heading from the *Capitulare missorum italicum* that suggests that hostages in Italy were escaping custody.²⁹

The evidence that circumlocutions and vernacular terms refer to 'private law' hostages is even weaker. Two proof-texts from the Lombard law are particularly problematic. Philologists, as opposed to most historians of law, read *gisil* in *Edictus Rothari* 224 as a part of a weapon, while interpreting *gisel* in chapter 172 of that code as 'hostage' rather than 'witness' or 'guarantor' requires highly speculative arguments.³⁰ Furthermore, in the corpus of Anglo-Saxon laws, *g̃isel* appears not in codes *per se*, but in treaties (i.e. 'international law' documents).³¹ Capitulary texts adduced as evidence of 'private law' hostages refer in each case not to a third party serving as a pledge for another's debt, but rather to the pledging of one's own liberty as a guarantee for an undertaking (*Selbstvergeiselung*; *Selbstverknechtung*).³² Thus the most that can be said with certainty on the basis of this limited evidence is that the term *obses* seems to be limited to third-party hostages. This is confirmed by the annals. The Saxons who underwent mass baptism at the council of Paderborn in 777 are said to have 'in accordance with their law and custom, with their own hands delivered their freedom and property to king Charles as a pledge (*pignus*), so that, should they again change their faith, they should lose their property and fall into permanent servitude'.³³ Thus the theory of the limitation of the term *obses* to 'international law' hostages remains unproven. It is true, however, that the Carolingian sources only provide clear evidence for the use of third-party hostages to secure agreements involving rulers or other 'public' entities, such as towns or tribes.³⁴

²⁹ *Capitularia*, no. 32, c. 12, I, 84.11; no. 99, c. 10, I, 207.3. See A. Boscolo, *Il 'Capitulare de villis'* (Milan, 1981), pp. 20–1. The phrase 'vadium et obsidem' in *Die Urkunden Pippins, Karlmanns und Karls des Grossen*, ed. E. Mühlbacher, *MGH DD Karol.* 1, no. 63b, p. 93.5, dates from the twelfth century.

³⁰ *Edictus Rothari*, cc. 172, 224, ed. F. Bluhme, *MGH LL 4*, pp. 40.7, 54.18. See T. J. Rivers, 'Symbola, manumissio et libertas Langobardorum: An Interpretation of gaida and gisil in Edictus Rothari 224 and Its Relationship to the Concept of Freedom', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germanistische Abteilung*, 95 (1978), pp. 57–78, and works cited there.

³¹ *Alfred and Gunthram*, c. 5, ed. F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols. (Halle, 1903–16), I, 128 ('gyslas'); *Dunsate*, cc. 9, 9.1, ed. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze*, I, 378, 379 ('gislas'); cf. II, 431 (Glossar, s.v. *Geiseln*, 2, 3). Both of these postdate the period of interest here – the former is from c. 886, the latter probably from the reign of Aethelstan (925–39) or later.

³² *Capitularia*, no. 39, c. 8, I, 114.14–17; no. 41, c. 3, I, 117.27–9; no. 74, c. [1], I, 166.17–20. Cited by Lutteroth, *Der Geisel*, p. 41; Gierke, *Schuld und Haftung*, p. 52, n. 6.

³³ *Annales Mettenses priores, s.a.*, ed. B. von Simson, *MGH SRG 10*, p. 66.6–9, trans. P. D. King, *Charlemagne: Translated Sources* (Lambrigg, 1978), p. 151: 'secundum legem et consuetudinem eorum ingenuitatem et possessionem eorum regi Carolo per manus in pignus tradiderunt, ut, si amplius mutassent fidem eorum, in servitium sempiternum perdita hereditate incidissent'.

³⁴ The most promising sources for the investigation of hostages in early medieval private law come from the Celtic lands: see Stacey, *The Road to Judgment*, esp. pp. 82–112; W. Davies, 'Suretyship in the *Cartulaire de Redon*', in T. M. Charles-Edwards, M. E. Owen, and D. B. Walters (eds.), *Lawyers and Laymen: Studies in the History of Law Presented to Professor Dafydd Jenkins on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, Gwyl Ddewi 1986 (Cardiff, 1986), pp. 72–91, esp. p. 90, n. 38.

A more crucial distinction to be examined is the one between the hostage and the captive. This distinction is faithfully maintained by the sources.³⁵ Whereas captives are taken, hostages are *in principle* given; for hostages to function as a guarantee for an agreement, they must be recognized as such by both parties. Accordingly, the most common verbs used to designate the transfer of hostages are *dare*, *accipere* and *recipere*. Of course hostages may be ‘given’ under duress, but when annalists do hint at this fact, they do so not by employing terms that suggest violence, but rather by indicating that the grantors were ordered or compelled to make the grant, or that the number or identity of the hostages was determined by the other party.³⁶ The imbalance in the power relationship is clear, but the legal principle behind the guarantee is strictly maintained: the granting party always performs the action.

Episodes that refer to both hostages and captives confirm this distinction. In 755, the pope asked Pippin for the return of both hostages and captives (*obsides et captivos*). In 760, Waifar handed over two of his men to Pippin as hostages (*obsides*); in 768, on Pippin’s last campaign, the king seized Waifar’s mother, sister and nieces as captives (‘captam matrem Waifarii et sororem eius et neptas eius’).³⁷ Episodes in which annalists choose not to describe individuals as hostages are equally indicative. The capture of royal ambassadors by the Saxons in 798 is related as follows: ‘the Nordliudi living beyond the Elbe, having risen in rebellion, seized the royal legates who were there with them to do justice’. Similarly, the subjects of the mass deportations from Saxony in 804 are not described as hostages: ‘But in the summer [the emperor] led an army into Saxony and transported all the Saxons who dwelt beyond the Elbe and in Wihmodia, together with their wives and children, to Francia’.³⁸ Although Arichis, brother of the historian Paul the Deacon, has been referred to as a hostage, he was most certainly a captive, seized for supporting a Lombard revolt against Frankish rule in 776.³⁹ Paul

³⁵ With a few exceptions, e.g. Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon*, s.a. 743, ed. F. Kurze, *MGH SRG* 50, p. 41 (cf. *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a., p. 4), and below, nn. 42, 48.

³⁶ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a.a. 776, 818, 824, 826, pp. 46–8, 148, 165, 171; *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, s.a.a. 760, 775, 776, 781, 789, 795, pp. 19, 43, 47, 59, 87, 97; *Annales Mettenses priores*, s.a.a. 775, 776, pp. 64–5, 65.23–4; Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, cc. 8, 13, pp. 6, 10; *Annales Laurissenses minores*, s.a. 784, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* I, p. 118.23; *Chronicon Moissiacense*, s.a. 806, p. 308.14.

³⁷ *Codex Carolinus*, no. 7, p. 493.9 (a. 755); *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a.a. 760, 768, pp. 18, 26.

³⁸ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 798, p. 102, trans. King, *Charlemagne*, p. 91: ‘Nordliudi trans Albim sedentes seditione commota legatos regios, qui tunc ad iustitias faciendas apud eos conversabantur, comprehendunt’ (cf. *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, s.a. 798, p. 103). *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 804, p. 118, trans. King, *Charlemagne*, p. 95: ‘Aestate autem in Saxoniam ducto exercitu omnes, qui trans Albiam et in Wihmuodi habitabant, Saxones cum mulieribus et infantibus transtulit in Franciam’.

³⁹ G. Brown, ‘The Carolingian Renaissance’, in McKitterick (ed.), *Carolingian Culture*, pp. 1–51, at p. 29.

recognizes the distinction in referring to his brother in the poem *Verba famuli tui* as such: 'For so long my brother has been a captive (*captivus*) in your land', and later in his closing plea, 'Return the captive (*captivus*) to his homeland'.⁴⁰ Similarly, in the early 770s the bishop of Ravenna wrote to Pope Hadrian to inform him that his legate could not travel to Constantinople via Venice because the Lombard king was holding the son of the doge (presumably John, who was taken while leading the Venetian troops defending Istria a few years earlier). His situation was exerting pressure on another party, as if he were a hostage, but this other party was not the 'grantor', Venice, but a fourth party, the papacy. The bishop refers to the son as captive (*captum*) rather than as an *obses*.⁴¹

The situation of some individuals is ambiguous. Other Italian figures at the Carolingian court, such as Fardulf, or the grammarians Peter and Paulinus, came to Francia after Charlemagne's conquest of the Lombard kingdom in 774. Were they hostages? Perhaps. One scholar refers gingerly to such characters as 'hostages in fact, if not in name', and a late-ninth-century source describes them as *obsides*.⁴² But if they were hostages, then for whom, and to secure what undertaking or behaviour? The general obedience of the Lombards? Such an interpretation assumes general opposition on the part of the Lombards to the Carolingian takeover, but opposition may not have been that widespread. If they were not hostages for the Lombards as a whole, then their presence at the Carolingian court may have been intended to put pressure on certain individuals in Lombardy. To support this argument, we would need to know more about the family connections of the 'hostages'. Paulinus, for example, may have arrived at the court in 776 after the rebellion in his native region of Friuli, the same rebellion that led to the capture of the brother of Paul the Deacon; if he were a hostage, it might have been to influence the behaviour of a relative involved in the revolt. Unfortunately, nothing is known about Paulinus before his arrival at court, other than

⁴⁰ Paul the Deacon, *Carmina*, no. 10, lines 7–8, 25, ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Poet.* 1, pp. 47–8, trans. P. Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance* (Norman, OK, 1985), p. 83: 'Captivus vestris extunc germanus in oris / Est meus'; 'Captivum patriae redde et civilibus arvis'. Paul addresses the etymology of *obses* in his epitome of the lexicon of Festus: Sextus Pompeius Festus, *De verborum significatu quae supersunt cum Pauli epitome*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Leipzig, 1913; repr. Stuttgart 1978), p. 187. I owe this reference to Paul Kershaw.

⁴¹ *Liber pontificalis*, c. 301 [97.15], ed. L. Duchesne, 3 vols., Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 2nd ser., 3 (Paris, 1886–1957), I, 491.3. See R. Cessi, *Venezia ducale*, vol. I: *Duco e populo* (Venice, 1963), pp. 119–20.

⁴² D. Bullough, 'Aula renovata: The Carolingian Court before the Aachen Palace', in *idem*, *Carolingian Renewal: Sources and Heritage* (Manchester, 1991 [1985]), pp. 123–60, at p. 131; Andrew of Bergamo, *Historia*, c. 5, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH SRL*, p. 224.34–5. Bullough also refers to the Lombards taken back to Francia in 787 as hostages: *The Age of Charlemagne*, 2nd edn (New York, 1980), p. 59; cf. *Annales Nazariani, s.a.*, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1, p. 43; Airlie, 'Narratives of Triumph', p. 108, n. 59.

his native region.⁴³ The fact that Paulinus later held high ecclesiastical office in Lombardy, as bishop of Aquileia, does not prove that he was not a hostage; in fact, it fits in well with a pattern to which I will return below. Nevertheless, at present we know too little about the lives of Charlemagne's Italian guests to decide the issue.

The case of William of Septimania, Dhuoda's son, is a little clearer. In the succession struggle after the death of Louis the Pious in 840, William's father, Bernard, initially supported Pippin II, before joining Charles the Bald at the last minute. He sent his fourteen-year-old son, William, to Charles at this time; though his precise purpose is not clear, it was certainly some sort of display of loyalty; many historians describe him as a hostage, although he is never referred to in this way in a contemporary source.⁴⁴ If he was a hostage, however, he was a failed hostage. His father betrayed the emperor and was executed in 844, but nothing happened at that time to William himself. He eventually went over to Pippin's side and was himself captured and executed in 849.⁴⁵ This later history, as well as precedent ties of tenure and fidelity, suggest that he was not a simple hostage for his father's behaviour. Nevertheless, the noble son as court hostage has a long history – Theodoric the Ostrogoth is perhaps the most famous early medieval example – and the case of William at least participates in this tradition.⁴⁶

Situations

While the sources thus identify hostages in a clear manner, few basic details emerge about the institution; it is not possible to develop a composite of the typical Carolingian hostage transaction, despite the volume of evidence. In all but a few cases records refer simply to *obsides* rather than a single *obses*,⁴⁷ occasionally specifying a particular number of

⁴³ R. McKitterick, 'Paul the Deacon and the Franks', *EME* 8 (1999), pp. 319–39, esp. p. 321; C.G. Mor, 'S. Paolino e Carlo Magno', in G. Fornas[ari] (ed.), *Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio su Paolino d'Aquileia nel XII centenario dell'episcopato*, Pubblicazioni della Deputazione di storia patria per il Friuli 18 (Udine, 1988), pp. 17–34.

⁴⁴ Nithard, *Historia*, III.2, ed. P. Lauer, *Les classiques de l'histoire de France au moyen âge* 7 (Paris, 1926), pp. 82–4, where the language is of commendation, not surety. Cf., for example: S.F. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900* (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 99; C.W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1991), p. 96.

⁴⁵ Dhuoda, *Manuel pour mon fils*, ed. P. Riché, 2nd edn, *Sources chrétiennes* 225bis (Paris, 1991), pp. 18–21.

⁴⁶ Jordanes, *Getica*, cc. 271, 281 [52, 55], ed. T. Mommsen, *MGH AA* 5.1, pp. 128, 130; W. Ensslin, *Theodorich der Grosse*, 2nd edn (Munich, 1959), pp. 13–33. For the Roman world, see J. Allen, 'Hostage-taking and Cultural Diplomacy in the Roman Empire', Ph.D. thesis, Yale University (1999). For Iceland and the Celtic world, see below, n. 71. See also *Waltharius*, lines 89–115, 598–600, etc., ed. K. Strecker, *MGH Poet.* 6.1, pp. 28–9, 48, etc.

⁴⁷ Exceptions: *Annales Mettenses priores*, s.a. 725, p. 26.15–16 (son of Ragamfred); *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 809 (son of Thrasco), 826 (son of Tunglo), pp. 128, 171.

anonymous individuals (twelve, fifteen, forty), or suggesting a large number (*multitudo, quamplures*).⁴⁸ When the hostages are identified by name, relationship, or rank, there are normally at most three, although a list survives with thirty-seven names (discussed below). If a single grantor is involved, the hostages are normally sons or other close relatives.⁴⁹ When hostages are taken from a class of individuals, it is occasionally specified that it is their sons who are to be taken: three 'sons of Lombard judges (*iudices*)' in Charlemagne's proposal to Desiderius in 773; 'hostages from the noblest children' of the Neapolitans in 780.⁵⁰ In the case of Waifar, the hostages Adalgar and Either are identified as 'two from among the nobles'.⁵¹ In 786 and 815, hostages are granted by the *populus*, which may indicate non-nobles; this is explicit in the case of the Saxons in 780: 'both non-noble freemen (*ingenuos*) and dependent serfs (*lidos*)'.⁵² The selection of sons and close relatives is presumably based on the expectation that their detention will exert pressure on a grantor – a reasonable belief, if not one that is always confirmed in practice. The selection of nobles as hostages similarly relies on ties of lordship. This logic is never stated in the sources. In one case involving the Saxons, though, a different reason for the identity of the hostages is made very clear: the hostages handed over in 798 included those identified by the

⁴⁸ Twelve: *Annales regni Francorum, s.aa.* 772, 781, 787, pp. 34, 58, 74; *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.* 786, p. 75. Fifteen: *Codex Carolinus*, no. 64, p. 591.32. Forty: *Annales regni Francorum, s.aa.* 755, 815, pp. 12, 142. *Quamplures*: Fredegar, *Chronica*, cont., c. 19, p. 93. *Multitudo*: *Annales Petaviani, s.aa.* 779, 798, pp. 16, 18. For 786, the royal annals and their revision disagree as to whether Grimoald was the twelfth or the thirteenth hostage. Some of the annals for 795 suggest vast numbers: 7070 (*Annales Alamannici continuatio Murbacensis, s.a.*, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1, p. 47; *Annales Sangallenses maiores, s.a.*, ed. I. von Arx, *MGH SS* 1, p. 75), 'quantum nunquam in diebus suis, aut in diebus patris sui, aut in diebus regum Francorum inde aliquando tulerunt' (*Chronicon Moissiacense, s.a.*, p. 302.15–16; cf. *Annales Laureshamenses, s.a.*, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1, p. 36), or in a later source 'terciam partem ... generis masculini' (*Annales Xantenses, s.a.*, ed. B. von Simson, *MGH SRG* 12, p. 2.4). These passages are more likely to refer to the victims of Charlemagne's deportations than to hostages.

⁴⁹ *Chronicon Moissiacense, s.aa.* 778 (brother and son of Abu Taher; also *Annales Mosellani, s.a.*, p. 496.37–8), 805 (two sons of Semela), pp. 296.14–15, 308.1; *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.* 787, pp. 74, 78 (Grimold, son of Arichis; Theodo, son of Tassilo); *Codex Carolinus*, no. 83, p. 617.34–5 (Romuald, son of Arichis); Erchempert, *Historia Langobardorum Beneventanorum*, c. 10, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH SRL*, p. 238.21–2 (mother and sons of Andrew, duke of Naples); and above, n. 47. Ermold Nigellus, *In honorem Hludowici christianissimi caesaris augusti elegiacum carmen*, c. 4, lines 2510–11, ed. E. Faral, *Les classiques de l'histoire de France au moyen âge* 14 (Paris, 1932), p. 190, refers to the son and *nepos* of Harald, king of Denmark, serving at the court of Louis the Pious; they may have been hostages, as well. See L.A. Muratori, *Rerum italicarum scriptores ab anno aerae christianae quingentesimo ad millesimum quingentesimum ...*, 25 vols. in 28 (Milan, 1723–51), II.2, column 75, n. 66.

⁵⁰ *Liber pontificalis*, c. 310 [97.30], I, 495.10 (a. 773): 'tres obsides Langobardorum iudicum filios'. *Codex Carolinus*, no. 64, p. 591.32 (a. 780): 'obsides ex nobilissimis eorum filiiis'. See also below, nn. 89, 92.

⁵¹ *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.* 760, p. 19: 'duos de primoribus gentis'. See L. Oelsner, *Jahrbücher des fränkischen Reiches unter König Pippin* (Leipzig, 1871; repr. Berlin, 1975), p. 343, n. 4.

⁵² *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.* 786, p. 75; *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.* 815, p. 142. *Annales Laureshamenses, s.a.* 780, p. 31: 'tam ingenuos quam et lidos' (also *Chronicon Moissiacense, s.a.* 780, p. 296.32; *Annales Mosellani, s.a.* 780, p. 497.9).

Saxon nobility as the most treacherous individuals ('quos perfidissimos primores Saxonum consignabant'), and thus those most likely to rebel in the future.⁵³ Here hostages serve not only a guarantee function, but also a 'preventive detention' function. Perhaps the only generalization that this evidence supports is a preference for the use of sons as hostages.⁵⁴

The sources regularly conceal basic facts about hostages such as numbers and identity, but on the other hand they invariably record the situations in which the hostages were given. Here more may be said. As noted above, hostages for finite obligations are infrequently recorded. This is surprising, given how common these situations are in later periods. Three types of situations in particular stand out. The first is the hostage for conditional suspension of a siege in expectation of surrender. This may have taken place during the siege of Naples by Sico of Benevento in the early ninth century, although the sources are contradictory.⁵⁵ The second is the hostage for the conditional release of a prisoner; Louis the Pious extracted hostages for the release of Ceadrag, duke of the Obodrites, and the Sorbian noble Tunglo in 826.⁵⁶ The third – better attested – is the hostage for safe passage.⁵⁷ In a letter of 775 to Charlemagne, Pope Hadrian relates that Hildebrand, duke of Spoleto, proposed presenting himself before the pope if the pope sent hostages, 'on account of his doubts'; the pope was ready to do so, but the plan fell through when the pope's emissary discovered that the duke was continuing to plot against Rome.⁵⁸ In the case of the appearance of Tassilo, duke of Bavaria, before Charlemagne in 781, hostages were in fact used to guarantee the duke's safe passage. Tassilo eventually granted twelve hostages to Charlemagne in connection with his subjection, but he refused to travel to Worms without a grant *from* Charlemagne of hostages 'who would make it unnecessary for him to doubt his safety'. Here the grant of hostages for safe passage was effective, as Tassilo returned home from Worms unharmed.⁵⁹ Accounts of the hostages

⁵³ *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 104.

⁵⁴ This contradicts Tactius (Ger. 8, 20), who highlights the use of daughters and nephews. The only female hostage attested in the period under consideration here is the mother of Andrew, duke of Naples (below, n. 55), the only possible nephew, the *nepos* of Harald, king of Denmark (above, n. 49).

⁵⁵ Erchempert, *Historia*, c. 10, p. 238.21–5. Cf. *Chronicon Salernitanum*, c. 57, ed. Ulla Westerbergh, *Studia Latina Stockholmensia* 3 (Stockholm, 1956), pp. 57–8; *Storia di Napoli*, 11 vols. in 14 (Naples, 1967–78), II.1, pp. 54–6. See for the later period Maurice H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1965; repr. Aldershot, 1993), pp. 130–1.

⁵⁶ *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 171.

⁵⁷ In later periods, safe-conduct was also ensured by a ruler's promise and recorded in specialized documents. See R.I. Burns and P.E. Chevedden, *Negotiating Cultures: Bilingual Surrender Treaties in Muslim-Crusader Spain*, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 22 (Leiden, 1999), pp. 169–71, and works cited there.

⁵⁸ *Codex Carolinus*, no. 57, p. 582.14–22 (quotation at p. 582.18): 'pro sua dubitatione'.

⁵⁹ *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.*, p. 59: 'sub quibus de sua salute dubitare nulla sit necessitas'. Cf. *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 58; *Annales Mettenses priores, s.a.*, p. 69.15–18. See Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft*, pp. 51–8.

granted by Charlemagne to the Saxon leaders Widukind and Abbio in 785 for their appearance at Attigny are slightly more informative. Charlemagne offered a promise (*sponsio*) that the Saxons would not be harmed, but they also requested hostages for their safety (*salus*). Charlemagne agreed to this and sent the hostages to them, escorted by the *missus* Amalwin. When the Saxons made the trip to Attigny they, oddly, brought these hostages along with them, apparently undercutting the usefulness of the hostages as guarantees.⁶⁰ Finally, in 787, the Gascon Adalaric appeared at an Aquitanian assembly only after the grant of hostages.⁶¹ It is noteworthy that all three of these grants for safe passage were successful. The use of hostages to secure limited, short-term commitments such as these is less subject to the pressure of changed circumstances than an open-ended grant and thus perhaps more likely to succeed. On the other hand, the four recorded cases of grants of hostages to guarantee another type of finite promise – to return land – show exactly the opposite: in two cases, the proposals did not come to fruition; in two others, the agreements were violated.⁶² Whether or not the temporary nature of these agreements made them more likely to succeed, their temporary nature is probably what prevents them from appearing more frequently in narrative accounts. It is likely that hostages for safe conduct, appearance and surrender were more common in the Carolingian period than these isolated notices would suggest.

The vast majority of hostage episodes recorded in the Carolingian sources were open-ended rather than finite: grants after defeat or subjection to guarantee the positive obligation of continued fidelity. In most cases, this is only implicit: the annals state that hostages are granted after a conquest implying submission, that is, after the Franks subjugate, defeat, conquer, overcome or make tributaries of their enemies.⁶³ Grants of hostages are often, however, coupled with unspecified oaths, likely oaths of fidelity.⁶⁴ In a few cases, what is merely suggested elsewhere is made clear. Hostages are described as given: ‘not to rebel again’

⁶⁰ *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.*, p. 71.

⁶¹ Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, c. 5, ed. E. Tremp, *MGH SRG* 64, pp. 296.15–298.2. See P. Wolff, ‘L’Aquitaine et ses marges’, in W. Braunsfels (ed.), *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, 5 vols. (Dusseldorf, 1965–8), I, 269–306, at p. 277.

⁶² 1) *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.* 755, p. 13; cf. *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 12. 2) *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.* 760, p. 18; see Oelsner, *Jahrbücher*, pp. 341–3. 3) *Liber pontificalis*, c. 310 [97.30], I, 495 (a. 773); see below, at n. 80. 4) *Codex Carolinus*, no. 64, pp. 591–2; see below, at n. 81.

⁶³ E.g. *Annales Mettenses priores, s.a.* 734, 738, pp. 27.28, 30.8; Fredegar, *Chronica*, cont., c. 25, p. 98; *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.* 779, p. 54. Cf. *Annales Laureshamenses, s.a.* 788, p. 34.

⁶⁴ *Sacramenta: Annales regni Francorum, s.a.* 755, 761, 775, 779, 781, 788, 789, pp. 12, 18, 40–2, 54, 58, 80, 86; *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.* 786, 795, pp. 75, 97; *Annales Mettenses priores, s.a.* 744, 753, 755, pp. 36.1–2, 44.8–9, 49.3–4; Fredegar, *Chronica*, cont., cc. 32, 38, 51, pp. 102, 108, 119; *Chronicon Moissiacense, s.a.* 756, p. 294.14. Cf. *promittere/promissum* (Fredegar, *Chronica*, cont., c. 25, p. 98; *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.* 755, p. 13; *Chronicon Moissiacense, s.a.* 806, 812, pp. 308.13–14, 309.24–5); *polliceri* (Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 10,

(Bavarians, 747); ‘never again to rebel against Pippin and the Frankish nobility’ (Lombards, 756); ‘to remain loyal to the king and to his sons, Charles and Carloman’ (Basques 768); or ‘that they might always be faithful to King Charles and to the Franks’ (Angrarii, 775).⁶⁵ Noteworthy in this respect is the statement of the royal annals that in 797 Charlemagne accepted the surrender (*deditio*) of the Saxons ‘through hostages’ (*per obsides*).⁶⁶

This pattern offers a possible answer to the puzzle of the repeated Saxon hostages presented at the beginning of this article. The Saxon hostages here may be serving more than simply their core function as guarantees; the hostages may be markers of submission. I would not argue that the granting of hostages was *constitutive* of submission, but rather that they possessed a symbolic value. Roman history offers precedents. The inclusion of captives in triumphal processions is well known,⁶⁷ but hostages also appeared in that setting.⁶⁸ In the Parthian treaty of 36 CE, Artabanus II handed over his son Darius as a hostage; imperial officials competed to be the first to deliver the news to the emperor, the grant of hostages was interpreted by contemporary writers as a humiliation, and Parthian hostages were treated as objects of display.⁶⁹ In Ireland, the possession of hostages was an index of royal status.⁷⁰ The related institution of fosterage was clearly tied to submission and clientage in Icelandic and Welsh societies; in the former, it was common for an individual of *lower* status to foster the child of his superior.⁷¹ More

p. 13; *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 837, p. 22); *iusiurare* (*Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, s.a. 794, p. 97). For a non-Frankish case, see *Liber pontificalis*, c. 186 [91.22], I, 407 (a. 728). Lintzel, ‘Die Unterwerfung’, pp. 99–100, addresses the content of such oaths in the Saxon case. It is noteworthy that descriptions of hostage episodes involving the Saxons after 794 do not refer to oaths – further evidence for the changed nature of the third stage of the Saxon campaigns.

⁶⁵ Fredegar, *Chronica*, cont., cc. 32, 38, 51, pp. 102, 108, 119; ‘ut ne ulterius rebelles existant’ (a. 747); ‘ut amplius nunquam contra rege Pippino uel proceris Francorum rebellis [et] contumax esse non debeat’ (a. 756); ‘ut semper fideles partibus regis hac filiis suis Carlo et Carlomanno omni tempore esse debeant’ (a. 768). *Annales Mettenses priores*, s.a. 775, p. 63.12–13; ‘ut semper regi Carolo et Francis fideles essent’. Cf. *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, s.a. 760; *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 781, p. 58; *Formulae imperiales*, no. 53, ed. K. Zeumer, *MGH Form. sectio 5*, p. 325.40 (a. 767); *Chronicon Moissiacense*, s.a. 805, p. 308.1.

⁶⁶ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a., p. 100.

⁶⁷ W. Ehlers, ‘Triumphus I’, in G. Wissowa et al. (eds.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1893–), VII.A.1, 493–511, at p. 503. On the inclusion of captives in Carolingian victory ritual, see M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 376.

⁶⁸ Ehlers, ‘Triumphus’, p. 503, citing Livy 34.52.9, Plut. Pomp. 45.5, and App. Mithr. 117. See Lutteroth, *Der Geisel*, p. 188.

⁶⁹ Allen, ‘Hostage-taking’, pp. 171–2.

⁷⁰ T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford, 1993), p. 341.

⁷¹ W.I. Miller, *Blood-taking and Peacemaking. Feud, Law and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago, 1990), pp. 122–4, 171–3. Miller writes (p. 172), ‘no evidence in the sagas indicates that such children were perceived as hostages’. For Wales: L.B. Smith, ‘Fosterage, Adoption and God-Parenthood: Ritual and Fictive Kinship in Medieval Wales’, *Welsh History Review* 16 (1992), pp. 1–35, esp. p. 13; Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 78–82.

broadly, recent research has underlined the importance of political symbolism in the Carolingian world. An exchange of hostages might be a marker of equality; a unilateral grant indicated submission.⁷²

Hostages in context

The possibility that Charlemagne's Saxon hostages were not simply guarantee mechanisms encourages a consideration of other possible functions for this institution. As seen, a composite picture of hostageship fails to emerge from the sources: the descriptive patterns of the annals limit our understanding to narrow aspects of hostage episodes. There are a few cases, however, in which it is possible to learn more about individual transactions involving hostages, often with the benefit of sources beyond the annals. The principal contribution of such sources is to show how a grant of hostages involved individuals other than the trio of creditor-debtor-hostage that is the object of a purely legal analysis of the institution.

The role of hostages in the diplomacy between the Franks, Lombards and the papacy in the second half of the eighth century illustrates how the grant of hostages affected outside parties, who might take an active interest in what, in theory, is a guarantee mechanism for a bilateral agreement.⁷³ As part of the 'First Peace of Pavia' agreed between Pippin, Aistulf and Stephen II in the late summer of 755, the Lombard king granted to Pippin forty hostages. The various accounts differ as to the function of the hostages: the revised royal annals, echoing in substance the royal annals, say that they were received 'for returning the rights (*iustitia*) of the holy church of Rome', while the continuator of Fredegar claims it was 'never to withdraw from Frankish overlordship, and never again to enter with troops within the territories of the Holy See or the Empire'.⁷⁴ In either case, hostages are granted to Pippin by Aistulf at least in part to protect papal interests. When Aistulf refused to fulfill his obligations, Stephen wrote twice to Pippin in late 755 to encourage him to enforce the terms of the Pavia treaty. In a curious line in the second

⁷² G. Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1992), esp. pp. 16, 59, 110, 155; for a slightly later period, G. Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt, 1997), esp. pp. 229–81.

⁷³ On these complicated interactions, see: O. Bertolini, 'Carlomagno e Benevento', in Braunfels (ed.), *Karl der Grosse*, I, 609–71; T.F.X. Noble, *The Republic of St Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680–825* (Philadelphia, 1984); P. Classen, *Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz: Die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums*, ed. H. Fuhrmann and C. Märtl, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters 9 (Sigmaringen, 1985).

⁷⁴ *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.*, p. 13: 'pro reddenda sanctae Romanae ecclesiae iustitia' (cf. *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 12). Fredegar, *Chronica*, cont., c. 37, p. 106: 'ut numquam a Francorum dictione se abstraheret et ulterius ad sedem apostolicam Romanam et rem publicam hostiliter numquam accederet'.

letter, the pope requests: ‘quickly and without delay return those things that you promised to Saint Peter through your grant (*donatio*): the towns and the other places and all the hostages and captives (*obsides et captivos*), and everything contained in that grant (*donatio*)’.⁷⁵ The *donatio* in question is most likely the Pavia treaty,⁷⁶ but the identity of the hostages is a puzzle. Various interpretations have been proposed: the forty hostages taken by Pippin from Aistulf; Roman hostages in the hands of the Lombards; or hostages taken from the cities promised in the Pavia treaty to guarantee their transfer.⁷⁷ Whatever the precise explanation, once again the hostages are out of the hands of the party whose rights are in question. Similarly, in 756 Pippin’s emissary Fulrad took hostages from the cities of the Pentapolis as guarantees of their subjection not to Pippin, but to Rome. Pippin did take further hostages from Aistulf in that year for his own purposes;⁷⁸ these, combined with the forty taken in the previous year, were the subject of two letters of Paul to Pippin in 758. In the first, the pope reported to Pippin that Desiderius proposed returning to papal hands the city of Imola, on the condition that Pippin return Desiderius’ hostages and establish a peace between the Franks and Lombards. In the second, Paul revoked his request in the first, apparently written under duress, and encouraged Pippin to hold on to the hostages.⁷⁹ Here it was the pope involving himself in a hostage transaction between Pippin and Desiderius.

This pattern continues under Charlemagne. During the final campaign against Desiderius in 773, according to the *Liber pontificalis*, Charlemagne offered to accept three sons of Lombard judges as a guarantee that the Lombard king would return the long-disputed cities to papal control; Desiderius refused this offer, and Pavia fell soon thereafter.⁸⁰ In 780, Pope Hadrian requested fifteen hostages from the Neapolitans as part of a deal to return to them the town of Terracino; he then wrote to Charlemagne that he had no intention of returning the hostages without the king’s approval, for he planned to take them ‘in [the king’s] service’.⁸¹ In 787, Charlemagne marched into Italy and at the

⁷⁵ *Codex Carolinus*, no. 7, p. 493.8–10: ‘velociter et sine ullo impedimento, quod beato Petro promissistis per donationem vestram, civitates et loca atque omnes obsides et captivos beato Petro reddite vel omnia, quae ipsa donatio continet’. Cf. no. 6, pp. 489–90.

⁷⁶ Noble, *The Republic of St Peter*, p. 91.

⁷⁷ W. Martens, *Die römische Frage unter Pippin und Karl dem Grossen* (Stuttgart, 1881), pp. 54–6; H. von Sybel, ‘Die Schenkungen der Karolinger an die Päpste’, in H. von Sybel, *Kleine historische Schriften*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1880), III, 65–115, at p. 79; K. Lamprecht, *Die römische Frage von König Pippin bis auf Kaiser Ludwig den Frommen in ihren urkundlichen Kernpunkten erläutert* (Leipzig, 1889), p. 79, n. 3. The first seems highly unlikely. The last does not convincingly account for the captives.

⁷⁸ *Liber pontificalis*, c. 253 [94.47], I, 454.3–6; Fredegar, *Chronica*, cont., c. 38, p. 108.

⁷⁹ *Codex Carolinus*, nos. 16, 17, pp. 513.35–514.1, 517.18–19.

⁸⁰ *Liber pontificalis*, c. 310 [97.30], I, 495.10–11.

⁸¹ *Codex Carolinus*, no. 64, p. 591.32–8 (quotation at p. 591.36): ‘pro vestro servitio’. See Bertolini, ‘Carlomagno e Benevento’, pp. 621–2.

instigation of Pope Hadrian invaded Benevento. To forestall the invasion, the duke of Benevento sent a party headed by his two sons, Grimoald and Romuald, to Charlemagne and offered them as hostages. Charlemagne kept only the younger son, Grimoald, along with twelve others; he sent Romuald back.⁸² Soon thereafter, the duke of Benevento died, and Charlemagne made a deal with Grimoald to put him in power. At this point the episode starts appearing in correspondence between Charlemagne and the Papacy. In a series of letters from 787 and 788, Hadrian begs Charlemagne not to send Grimoald back to Benevento, but rather to invade it himself.⁸³ Even though Hadrian was not a party to the original agreement, he was extremely interested in its guarantee mechanism. In each of these cases, hostages were not simply guarantees for agreements between two parties; they were pawns in a complex, multilateral political game.

A second approach to developing a broader context for hostage episodes is to trace the fate of the individuals involved. This is rarely possible because, as noted, hostages are not normally named in the sources. Unnamed sons granted by rulers may be the ones who later succeed their fathers, but this is impossible to confirm. The only hostages actually named in the annals are Grimoald, who was returned, and Waifar's hostages Adalgar and Either, who are never mentioned again.⁸⁴ Still, hostages do leave occasional traces outside the annals that provide more information. The most important of these is an original diploma from 808, a confirmation of lands granted by the emperor. At some point after the final conquest of the Lombard kingdom, Pippin, king of Italy, asked his father to allow the hostages he had taken ('pro credentiis aliquos Langobardos foras patriam in Francia ductos habuimus') to return to their homeland and to restore to them their properties, which had been confiscated. One of these hostages, originally from Reggio, requested the confirmation from Charlemagne in advance of his return.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, the name of the petitioner was replaced (even on the dorsal notation!) by a genealogically ambitious fifteenth-century family, and his identity is lost. We also do not know when this hostage was taken, for no other contemporary source describes Lombards taken from Italy by Charlemagne as hostages.⁸⁶ Still, the document shows the fate of the lands of hostages, as well as the fact that they remained hostages for many years, in this case perhaps as many as

⁸² *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 787, p. 74; Bertolini, 'Carlomagno e Benevento', pp. 633–6.

⁸³ *Codex Carolinus*, nos. 80, 83, 84, pp. 611–14, 616–20. In 788, the emperor Constantine VI sought Romuald as a hostage; *Codex Carolinus*, no. 83, p. 617.31–5.

⁸⁴ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 760, 787, pp. 18, 74.

⁸⁵ *Die Urkunden Pippins*, no. 208, p. 279.15–20. That these are hostages and not captives is demonstrated by the phrase 'pro credentiis', which echoes *Capitularia*, no. 45, c. 13, I, 129.12.

⁸⁶ Above, n. 42.

thirty-five years. One of the twelve Beneventan hostages granted to Charlemagne along with Grimoald in 787 may have stayed north of the Alps for an equally long time. In 817 we find Trasarius, abbot of St-Wandrille, being allowed to return to his native land – Benevento – with the emperor's permission.⁸⁷ It is by no means certain that Trasarius required permission to return because he was a hostage (though the diploma of 808 shows that such permission was required); imperial control over the abbey is as likely an explanation. If he was a hostage, he was not necessarily a holdover from 787; he may have been transferred in the Frankish-Beneventan treaty of 814, though no hostages are mentioned in connection with it.⁸⁸

The most detailed account of the later history of a hostage relates not to Italy, but to Aquitaine. In 823, a man named Lambert from the castle of Turenne in the Périgord presented himself before the court of Louis the Pious and related the following tale. During the time of Pippin ('our grandfather'), hostages were requested from and given by the inhabitants of that region, in order to maintain peace. Among these hostages was Lambert himself, granted by his father, Aganus, and by the count, Ermenric. In the ninth century, Aganus was a name associated with the family of the viscounts of Turenne, so it is possible that Aganus was the castellan, and that the count was ordered to produce hostages for each of the castles under his control. We can be fairly certain that Aganus was a member of the local nobility. At some time shortly thereafter, the hostages were released from wherever they were being held, but Lambert himself was reduced to servitude by a new count (probably Immo) and his patrimony was seized. Lambert requested that he be freed and that his patrimony be restored; the emperor granted his request.⁸⁹ This case is most interesting, perhaps, because of the amount of time involved. Lambert would have become a hostage at the time of Pippin's conquest of Aquitaine, at the latest in 768. He was petitioning to the emperor no earlier than 823, a gap of at least fifty-five years. Add to this that Lambert must have been beyond infancy to have been worthwhile as a hostage, and we are dealing with an individual who was living with the consequences of his father's actions well into his sixties. That is not to say that he remained a hostage well into his sixties. Confiscation of property and servile status by one's lord were not incidents of

⁸⁷ *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium*, XIII.2.17–21, ed. P. Pradié, *Les classiques de l'histoire de France au moyen âge* 40 (Paris, 1999), p. 152 (ed. S. Loewenfeld, *MGH SRG* 28, c. 17, p. 50). A Beneventan monk was present at St-Wandrille in the 740s (VIII.1.44–5, p. 98 [ed. Loewenfeld, c. 12, p. 35]).

⁸⁸ *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 141; B. Simson, *Jahrbücher des fränkischen Reichs unter Ludwig dem Frommen*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1874–6; repr. Berlin, 1969), I, 28.

⁸⁹ *Formulae imperiales*, no. 53, pp. 325–6 (quotation at p. 325.39): 'avi nostri'. See J. Bousard, 'Les origines de la vicomté de Turenne', in P. Gallais and Y.-J. Riou (eds.), *Mélanges offerts à René Crozet ...*, 2 vols. (Poitiers, 1966), I, 101–9, at p. 104.

hostageship, but the condition of hostageship might subject someone to such treatment.⁹⁰ Lambert did not become a slave, nor were his lands confiscated, when he became a hostage; this only occurred when he returned. Still, the fact that Lambert prefaced his complaint with a description of hostageship implies that there is a direct connection between the hostageship and the servitude. We may speculate that at Pippin's death, or at the time of the foundation of the kingdom of Aquitaine in 778, the hostages were not simply set free, but they were returned to the then count of the Périgord, the successor of the individual who had provided the hostages in the first place. The count freed most of them, but took advantage of having Lambert under his control to reduce him to servitude, for some unknown reason. If so, then the release of hostages was mediated through the count, perhaps with some appropriate symbol or ceremony of transfer of control. Mediated transfer of hostages is also attested in 781, when Tassilo of Bavaria granted twelve hostages to Charlemagne: the hostages are described as received 'from the hand of' Bishop Sinbert of Augsburg.⁹¹ The case of Lambert thus raises questions about the mechanics and rituals of hostageship, and again the involvement of individuals beyond the narrow trio of debtor-creditor-hostage.

The ideas that hostages might serve functions other than guaranteeing, that they might involve parties other than the debtor-creditor-hostage trio, and that an exploration of the fate of a hostage might shed light on the original agreement come together in a consideration of the curious document known by the perhaps misleading title given to it in its most recent printed edition: *Indiculus obsidum Saxonum Moguntiam deducendorum*.⁹² The surviving text is apparently fragmentary. It begins with the rubric: 'Let Bishop Hatto and Count Hitto receive these from

⁹⁰ Though see Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum X*, III.15, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *MGH SRM* 1.1, 2nd edn, p. 112.11–18, and the comment of W. Goffart, 'From Roman Taxation to Mediaeval Seigneurie: Three Notes (Part I)', *Speculum* 47 (1972), pp. 165–87, at p. 187, n. 106.

⁹¹ *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, p. 58: 'de manu'. See above, at n. 59.

⁹² *Capitularia*, no. 115, I, 233–4. Previous editions and titles or descriptions include: M. Gerbert, *Monumenta veteris liturgiae Alemannicae*, 2 vols. (St Blasien, 1777–9), II, 112–13 ('nomina, ut videtur, servorum seu libertorum'); A. Ussermann (ed.), *Chronicon Hermanni Contracti ...*, 2 vols. (St Blasien, 1790–2), I, lxx–lxxii ('Formula convocationis procerum Saxoniae ad conventum Moguntinum sub Carolo M.'): *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH LL* 1, pp. 89–90 ('Mandatum de Saxonibus obsidibus imperatori Moguntiae praesentandis'). The original is found on a bifolium (fols. 191–2) inserted in Sankt Paul im Lavanttal, Stiftsbibliothek, cod. 6/1 (olim 25.4.12; olim XXV a 6), a ninth-century conciliar collection, probably composed at Reichenau (K. Preisendanz [ed.], *Zeugnisse zur Bibliotheksgeschichte*, vol. III, part 2 of A. Holder, *Die Reichenauer Handschriften*, Die Handschriften der Grossherzoglich Badischen Hof- und Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe 5–7 [Leipzig, 1906–18], III.2, 118–21). Fol. 190v, curiously, contains a formula of manumission (*Formulae imperiales* no. 33, pp. 311–12). The most detailed commentary on the document is B. von Simson, 'Der Poëta Saxo und der angebliche Friedensschluss Karls des Grossen mit den Sachsen', *Neues Archiv* 32 (1906–7), pp. 27–50, at pp. 37–42, which focuses primarily on the question of its date. See now also Kershaw, 'Rex pacificus', ch. 4.6.3.

the Westphalians' ('De Westfal<ahis> istos recipiat Hatto episcopus et Hitto comis'). There follows a list of ten individuals; in each case the father's name is given, and in all but the first the name of the person who 'held' the individual is also provided: 'Bishop Aino held Adalrad, son of Marcrad' ('Adalradum filium Marcrad<i> habuit Aino episcopus'). There follows another rubric – 'From the Eastphalians' ('De Ostfal<ahis>') – and a list of fifteen names, presented similarly, and then a third rubric – 'From the Angrarii' ('De Angra<riis>') – and twelve more names. The rhythm 'X filium Y habuit Z' is broken in only four cases: twice, only the father's name is given ('filium Maingis', 'filium Macconis'); once three individuals are named before the holder ('Hadamarum filium Sigimari et Hittun filium Fridileih et Brunherum filium Liutheri habuit Wolfoltus'); once a name is added after the name of the holder ('Fridamundum filium Warmunti habuit Einhartus et Macrinum filium Megitodi'). The list is followed by the (accurate) notation 'there are thirty-seven in total' ('sunt in summa XXXVII').⁹³ The fragment closes with one last rubric: 'Let these come to Mainz at mid-Lent' ('Isti veniant ad Mogontiam media quadragesima'). 'Isti' may refer to the preceding thirty-seven names, or to a new list, to be continued on the next page, which is lost. Although not labeled as hostages in the document, the number of individuals involved, the fact that all are identified as sons of other individuals, and the fact that all are 'held' supports this conclusion.

It has been proposed that this document was drawn up by a commander in the field at the time of the receipt of these Saxon hostages.⁹⁴ This cannot be the context for this record, for it is a list of individuals *already held*, rather than a distribution list for hostages received. Although undated, the document may be assigned on prosopographical grounds to 805 × 6, a full year, at least, after the final defeat of the Saxons. The gathering of these scattered hostages may in fact be a prelude to their return to Saxony.⁹⁵ Here, too, we are in the unfortunate position of not being able to trace the ultimate fate of the hostages. Although the Saxon names are useful for studying onomastic patterns,

⁹³ Boretius and Pertz give 'recipiet', Gerbert and Ussemann 'recipiat'; the MS supports the latter reading. On the extension of the abbreviations of the names of the Saxon groups, see A. Holder, 'Mittheilungen aus Handschriften', *Neues Archiv* 1 (1876), pp. 413–16, at p. 413 (signed 'W[aitz].').

⁹⁴ F.L. Ganshof, 'The Use of the Written Word in Charlemagne's Administration', in Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, trans. J. Sondheimer (Ithaca, 1971 [1951, in French]), pp. 125–42, at p. 132.

⁹⁵ Hitto first appears as bishop of Basel in 805; Waldo, abbot of Reichenau, was transferred to St-Denis in 806. See Simson, 'Der Poëta Saxo', p. 42. Attempts to connect this document directly to the *Divisio regnorum* of 806 (*Capitularia* [ed. Boretius and Krause], no. 45, c. 13, I, 129.12–13) make no sense, as the capitulary speaks (in contrast to the *Indiculus*) of *future* distribution of hostages; see e.g. W. Volkert (ed.), *Die Regesten der Bischöfe und des Domkapitels von Augsburg*, vol. I: *Von den Anfängen bis 1152* (Augsburg, 1985), p. 29.

none of the seventy-two individuals listed (the hostages and their fathers) has been identified.⁹⁶

Some of their hosts are identifiable, and this leads in more promising directions. Among the roughly twenty individuals named are three well-known ecclesiastical figures: Egino, bishop of Constance; Sinbert, bishop of Augsburg; and Waldo, abbot of Reichenau.⁹⁷ The housing of hostages in ecclesiastical households is attested elsewhere. Flodoard writes of Archbishop Wulfar of Rheims (803–14): ‘That Emperor Charlemagne put a great deal of trust in him is proven by the fact that he committed to his safekeeping fifteen noble hostages of the Saxons whom he had brought back from Saxony.’⁹⁸ Why were hostages sent to these ecclesiastical households? Other hosts in the *Indiculus* are designated counts,⁹⁹ and the ecclesiastical lords may simply have been other trustworthy magnates. But youthful hostages at cathedrals or abbeys were in a perfect position to receive instruction in the Christian faith.

The link between hostages and conversion may date back to the reign of Pippin. The *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* (870 × 71) reports that in the early 740s the Slavic prince Boruth asked that his son Cacatius and nephew Cheitmar, whom he had granted to Pippin as hostages, be ‘educated in the Christian manner and made Christian’; Cheitmar was sent to Cheimsee.¹⁰⁰ One of the earliest mentions of

⁹⁶ R. Wenskus, *Sächsischer Stammesadel und fränkischer Reichsadel*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse, Dritte Folge, 93 (Göttingen, 1976), pp. 47–8. The names of two of the hostages are not given. Only one name repeats: Macco.

⁹⁷ *Helvetia sacra* (Bern, 1972–), I.2, 247–8; Volkert (ed.), *Die Regesten*, pp. 28–9; E. Munding, *Abt-bischof Waldo, begründer des goldenen Zeitalters der Reichenau*, Texte und Arbeiten, I. Abt., Beiträge zur Ergründung des älteren lateinischen christlichen Schrifttums und Gottesdienstes, 10–II (Beuron, 1924), esp. p. 89.

⁹⁸ Flodoard of Reims, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae*, II.18, ed. M. Stratmann, *MGH SS* 36, pp. 172.21–173.2: ‘Cui valde credidisse Karolus imperator Magnus ex eo probatur, quod illustres Saxonum obsides XV, quos adduxit de Saxonia, ipsius fidei custodiendos commisit’. For what follows, see Walther Laske, ‘Zwangsauenthalt im frühmittelalterlichen Kloster: Gott und Mensch im Einklang und Widerstreit’, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung*, 64 (1978), pp. 321–30, at p. 324, nn. 10–12; S. Abel and B. Simson, *Jahrbücher des fränkischen Reiches unter Karl dem Großen*, 2 vols. [vol. 1 is 2nd edn] (Leipzig, 1883–7; repr. Berlin, 1969), II, 306–7.

⁹⁹ Some have been tentatively identified. See M. Borgolte, *Die Grafen Alemanniens in merowingischer und karolingischer Zeit: Eine Prosopographie*, Archäologie und Geschichte 2 (Sigmaringen, 1986), pp. 55, 65, 74, 159, 175, 205, 207, 211, 271, 276, 297–8. Einhartus has been identified, without much support, as the historian: A. Kleinclausz, *Eginhard.*, *Annales de l’Université de Lyon*, 3rd ser., Lettres, 12 (Paris, 1942), p. 39, n. 63.

¹⁰⁰ *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*, c. 4, ed. F. Lošek, *MGH Studien und Texte* 15, p. 104: ‘quem pater eius more christiano nutrire rogavit et christianum facere’. See H. Wolfram, *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum: Das Weißbuch der Salzburger Kirche über die erfolgreiche Mission in Karantien und Pannonien* (Vienna, 1979), pp. 86–7; A. Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe: Kaiser, Könige und Päpste als geistliche Patrone in der abendländischen Missionsgeschichte*, Arbeiten zur Frühmittelalterforschung 15 (Berlin, 1984), pp. 229–32.

hostages taken from the Saxons, dating from Pippin's Saxon campaign of 753, also draws a connection between hostages and conversion. One account records that they were granted to guarantee the safety of missionaries, another that they secured a promise that the Saxons would become Christians.¹⁰¹ The *Miracles of S. Wandregisil* tell of a Saxon named Abbo, sent to the abbey of St-Wandrille, where he was baptized.¹⁰² The conversion of the Saxons (and others) was principally the work of missionaries, but giving a religious education to Saxon youth would have been a wise investment in the long-term success of the endeavour. Hostages, in most cases children from influential families, were the perfect instruments. Whether at this early point there was an intention that they be returned to instruct their countrymen is not known, but this certainly happened later. Both Cacatius ('now made Christian') and Cheitmar ('made Christian') returned to their homeland as rulers, where they wielded significant influence over the conversion of their people.¹⁰³ More striking is the case of Hauthumar, the first bishop of the Saxon diocese of Paderborn. He was granted as a boy to Charlemagne as a hostage, entered the monastic community at Würzburg, and then returned to his native land as a bishop.¹⁰⁴ In fact, there is a contemporary statement of this policy: the *Translation of Saint Vitus* reports that Charlemagne, concerned about the state of monasticism in Saxony, ordered that Saxons 'whom he had led back as hostages and captives at the time of the conflict be distributed throughout the monasteries of the Franks so that they might be instructed in Scripture and monastic rules'.¹⁰⁵ Just as Charlemagne brought Lombard scholars to his court and then returned them to Italy where they were in a position to 'introduce Frankish perspectives',¹⁰⁶ so he and other rulers brought Saxons to Frankish ecclesiastical institutions and then sent them back home as a means of introducing Christianity.

¹⁰¹ *Annales Mettenses priores, s.a.*, p. 44.7–11. The editor (p. 44, n. 5) suggests that this account is unlikely, as it anticipates Charlemagne's actions of 780, but 780 was not the first attempt at the conversion of the Saxons. The *Annales S. Amandi* (p. 12) describe the events of 776 with a simple 'dederuntque hospites, ut fierent christiani'; cf. *Annales regni Francorum, s.a.*, pp. 46–8, and *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi, s.a.*, p. 47.

¹⁰² *Miracula Sancti Wandregisili abbatis* [BHL 8807], I.4–5, AASS Iulii V (1868), p. 282D–E.

¹⁰³ *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*, c. 4, p. 104: 'iam christianum factum'; 'christianus factus'.

¹⁰⁴ *Translatio Sancti Liborii* [BHL 4913], c. 5, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 4, p. 151.12–17. A similar origin has been proposed – and rejected – for Ebo, archbishop of Rheims (845–51); see H. Goetting, *Die Bistümer der Kirchenprovinz Mainz: Das Bistum Hildesheim*, vol. III: *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe von 815 bis 1221* (1227), *Germania sacra*, n.F., 20 (Berlin, 1984), p. 58.

¹⁰⁵ *Translatio Sancti Viti* [BHL 8718–19], ed. P. Jaffé, *Monumenta Corbeiensia*, Bibliotheca rerum Germanicarum 1 (Berlin 1864; repr. Aalen, 1964), pp. 6–7: 'quos obsides et captivos tempore conflictionis adduxerat, per monasteria Francorum distribuit, ad legem quoque sanctam atque monasticam disciplinam institui praecepit'.

¹⁰⁶ McKitterick, 'Paul the Deacon', p. 323.

As the preceding examples show, the most promising context for the study of hostages in the Carolingian world is not legal but social and political relations. The role of hostages in early medieval politics has been noted before, but never studied in depth,¹⁰⁷ and a wealth of research in the 1990s on problems of social networks has made the broader implications of the practice of giving hostages all the more significant. The situation of hostages who are children is parallel to that of youths commended for education to a noble court¹⁰⁸ or, in the case of oblation, to a religious institution.¹⁰⁹ The situation of hostages who are family members of the grantor is parallel to that of individuals involved in marriage alliances¹¹⁰ or ties of fictive kinship such as adoption and godparenthood.¹¹¹ Because hostages are generally noble, and generally exchanged as part of a conflict between political or quasi-political groups, they are implicated in systems of *amicitia*.¹¹² Given the complexity of these various relationships and the nature of the sources, it is often difficult to tell precisely which of these structures applies to

¹⁰⁷ See now, however, Kershaw, 'Rex pacificus'. Earlier works include: G. Tellenbach, 'Vom Zusammenleben der abendländischen Völker im Mittelalter', in R. Nürnberger (ed.), *Festschrift für Gerhard Ritter zu seinem 60. Geburtstag* (Tübingen, 1950), pp. 1–60, at pp. 7–8; M. Wielers, 'Zwischenstaatliche Beziehungsformen im frühen Mittelalter (Pax, Foedus, Amicitia, Fratrnitas)', Ph.D. thesis, Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster (1959), p. 6; K. Bosl, *Das Großmährische Reich in der politischen Welt des 9. Jahrhunderts*, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, Jahrg. 1966, Heft 7 (Munich, 1966), p. 17; M. Innes, 'Franks and Slavs c. 700–1000: The Problem of European Expansion before the Millennium', *EME* 6 (1997), pp. 201–16, at p. 210.

¹⁰⁸ E.g. M. Innes, "'A Place of Discipline": Carolingian Courts and Aristocratic Youth', in C. Cubitt (ed.), *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, forthcoming). Cf. J. Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York, 1988), p. 37, n. 85, and esp. p. 370. The cases of Dhuoda's son William and the fictional Waltharius (above, nn. 45 and 46) demonstrate this connection.

¹⁰⁹ M. de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 12 (Leiden, 1996).

¹¹⁰ E.g. M. Aurell, *Les noces du comte: Mariage et pouvoir en Catalogne (785–1213)*, Série histoire ancienne et médiévale 32 (Paris, 1995). The related subject of captive wives deserves a separate study: e.g. Swanahild/Sunnichild, second wife of Charles Martel (Fredegar, *Chronica*, cont., c. 12, p. 90; Paul Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel* [Harlow, 2000], pp. 108–10, 161–5). Captives, like hostages, could play a role in conversion, as perhaps in the case of Khan Boris of Bulgaria (*Theophanes Continuatus*, IV.14, ed. I. Bekker, *Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae* 33 [Bonn, 1838], pp. 162–3; John Zonaras, *Epitomae historiarum*, XVI.2, ed. T. Büttner-Wobst, *Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae* 46 [Bonn, 1897], pp. 387–8; R.E. Sullivan, 'Khan Boris and the Conversion of Bulgaria: A Case Study of the Impact of Christianity on a Barbarian Society', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 3 [1966], pp. 53–139, at p. 68, where the Khan's sister is incorrectly labeled a hostage). See generally C. Nolte, *Conversio und Christianitas: Frauen in der Christianisierung vom 5. bis 8. Jahrhundert*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 41 (Stuttgart, 1995).

¹¹¹ E.g. B. Jussen, *Patenschaft und Adoption im frühen Mittelalter: Künstliche Verwandtschaft als soziale Praxis*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 98 (Göttingen, 1991).

¹¹² E.g. G. Althoff, *Amicitiae und pacta: Bündnis, Einung, Politik und Gebetsgedenken im beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert*, MGH Schriften 37 (Hanover, 1992). The synthetic approach of V. Epp, *Amicitia: Zur Geschichte personaler, sozialer, politischer und geistlicher Beziehungen im frühen Mittelalter*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 44 (Stuttgart, 1999) is exemplary; on hostages, see pp. 226–9.

any given individual, and certainly for some questions, the fact of a bond is more important than its precise nature. Still, a consideration of the role of hostages in the Carolingian world adds another piece to this increasingly challenging historical puzzle.¹¹³

Department of History, Columbia University

¹¹³ I would like to thank Paul Kershaw for kindly sharing with me and allowing me to cite portions of his unpublished Ph.D. thesis. I am grateful to Matthew Innes, Warren Brown, Robin Stacey and Michael McCormick, as well as an anonymous reader for *EME*, for comments on earlier versions of this article.