



Slavs in Fredegar and Paul the Deacon: medieval *gens* or ‘scourge of God’?

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This article presents a new interpretation of the accounts of Slavs given by two early medieval Latin narrative sources. The first section discusses Fredegar’s Wendish account, while the second section considers Paul the Deacon’s view of the Slavs in his Historia Langobardorum. The instrumental use of the Slavs in the domestic affairs of the Frankish and Lombard kingdoms constitutes the emphasis of the last section, in which the author compares Fredegar’s and Paul the Deacon’s historiographical perspectives.

It has long been noted that prior to the mid-1200s, the territories now defined as Eastern Europe¹ have only episodically retained the attention of western historians. It was only under the impact of the Mongol invasion that westerners began to conceptualize the existence of an east European area.² At that time, however, much of what they knew about that region’s history prior to 900 came primarily from Fredegar and Paul the Deacon. Together with Einhard and the Frankish annals, these were the most important sources of information about regions beyond the eastern frontiers of the (Frankish) empire.³

The importance of Fredegar and Paul the Deacon as historical sources for such groups as Avars or Slavs does not need further emphasis. All modern studies of Eastern Europe rely heavily on these two sources for reconstructing the early medieval history of the region. In contrast, the *image* that both Fredegar and Paul the Deacon had of

¹ For Eastern Europe, as an historiographical concept, see R. Okey, ‘Central Europe/Eastern Europe: Behind the Definitions’, *Past and Present* 137 (1992), pp. 102–33, esp. p. 106; J.W. Sedlar, *East Central Europe in the Middle Ages, 1000–1500* (Seattle and London, 1994), pp. ix–x; J. Kłoczowski, *East Central Europe in the Historiography of the Countries of the Region* (Lublin, 1995).

² J. Fried, ‘Auf der Suche nach der Wirklichkeit. Die Mongolen und die europäischen Erfahrungswissenschaften im 13. Jahrhundert’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 243 (1986), pp. 287–332.

³ J. Reisinger and G. Sowa, [Das] *Ethnikon* [Sclavi in den lateinischen Quellen bis zum Jahr 900], Glossar zur frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte im östlichen Europa, Beiheft Nr. 6 (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 18–20.

the east, the fundamental concepts – such as ‘kings’, ‘peoples’ or ‘nations’ – by which they approached the alterity of Slavs and Avars, and the cognitive framework in which they placed their construction of the Other, have received comparatively less attention. Are Fredegar’s ‘Wends’ or Paul’s ‘Slavs’ concepts based on the self-identification of the groups, on the sense of ‘we’ and ‘they’ on which, according to current anthropological views, is based the very distinction between ethnic groups?⁴ How did they define ‘Slav-ness’ in contrast with their own affiliation to Franks or Lombards, or to other *gentes*? What was for them a *gens Winedorum* or a *rex Sclavinorum*? What were the sources for their image of the ‘Slavs’?

My purpose in this article is to answer some of these questions. I shall first examine problems of chronology and sources posed by both Fredegar and Paul the Deacon, issues that may have implications in explaining their accounts of the Slavs. I shall then focus on their respective concepts of *gens* and *regnum* and contrast their attitudes towards Slavs, looking at their instrumental use of the latter. By emphasizing the image of the Slavs in early medieval sources rather than the truth-value of their accounts, I intend to bring into focus the cognitive role of the *ethnie* in early medieval historiography.⁵

Current historiographical views suggest that Christian historians of the 500s and 600s, while transforming historiography into a form fitting the new world of successor kingdoms, applied to history the causal cycle of sin followed by punishment as a means of interpreting events.⁶ According to Jordanes, the emperor Valens was punished for having converted the Goths to Arianism, while Isidore of Seville saw the Huns as the instrument of punishment for straying nations. The Huns, instruments of the divine punishment, were in Fredegar’s mind when he described the enslavement of the Wends by the Avars ‘iam ab antiquito’.⁷ In relation to each other, *gentes* are thus arranged in history according to the divine plan. It would, however, be a gross mistake to interpret any *gens* as being a mere agent of God’s wrath or reward. Portrayals of *gentes* are not stereotyped by definition, as evidenced, for instance, by Paul the

⁴ F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organisation of Culture and Differences* (Bergen and London, 1969); cf. M. Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (London and New York, 1996).

⁵ The concept of *ethnie* is that of A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford and Cambridge, 1986), p. 32, and *idem*, ‘National Identities: Modern and Medieval?’, in S. Forde, L. Johnson and A.V. Murray (eds) *Concepts of National Identity [in the Middle Ages]* (Leeds, 1995), pp. 21–46, esp. p. 29.

⁶ E. Breisach, *Historiography, Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*, 2nd edn (Chicago, 1994), p. 94.

⁷ Fredegar IV. 48, ed. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations* (London, 1960), p. 39. See D.A. Tirr, ‘The attitude [of the West towards the Avars]’, *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 28 (1976), pp. 111–21.

Deacon's description of the Lapps.⁸ This complex relation between factual records and interpretative accounts further influenced modern historiographical views. Pelzel, the first author to claim Samo for Slavic (Czech) history, simply transcribed Fredegar's Wendish account (IV. 48 and 68).⁹ So did Palacky, the first historian to deal 'critically' with Fredegar and Samo.¹⁰ Fredegar's account was taken at its face-value to such an extent that its use of such phrases as *regnum* or *rex Sclavinorum* led Labuda to claim Samo's 'kingdom' to be the first Slavic state in history.¹¹ Historians therefore strove to delineate on (modern) maps the boundaries of Samo's state, while archaeologists rushed to unearth *castrum Wogastisburg*, where the Wends had so bravely resisted and eventually defeated the Franks.¹² The same is true for Paul the Deacon. Despite considerable doubts raised by Paul's alternation of tales with 'historical reports'¹³ and his typical lack of chronological accuracy, attempts were made to date the story of Paul's great-grandfather escaping from the Avars, guided by a wolf and befriended by a Slavic woman, as a supplementary indication of Slavic expansion into the Alpine area.¹⁴

The nationalistic motivation behind these attitudes is beyond the scope of this article.¹⁵ It is possible, however, that much of this historiographic cul-de-sac derives, at least in Fredegar's case, from an excessive concentration of the scholarly debate on issues of authorship and language. Not surprisingly, Labuda's study, which is entirely dedicated to Fredegar's Wendish account, deals more with the questions of authorship and location than with the purpose of the chronicle or its conceptual

⁸ I. Whitaker, 'Late Classical and Early Medieval Accounts of the Lapps (Sami)', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 34 (1983), pp. 283–303, esp. pp. 297–8.

⁹ F.M. Pelzel, 'Abhandlung über Samo, König der Slaven' in *Abhandlungen einer Privatgesellschaft der Wissenschaften in Böhmen*, vol. 1 (Prague, 1775), pp. 223–6. See O. Klíma, 'Samo: ["natione Francos?"]', in W. Sundermann, J. Duchesne-Guillemin and F. Vahman (eds) *A Green Leaf. Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 489–92, esp. p. 490.

¹⁰ F. Palacky, 'Über den Chronisten Fredegar und seine Nachrichten von Samo', *Jahrbücher des böhmischen Museums für Natur- und Länderkunde. Geschichte, Kunst und Literatur* 1 (1827), pp. 387–413.

¹¹ G. Labuda, *Pierwsze [państwo słowiańskie. Państwo Samona]* (Poznań, 1949), p. 286. Contra: O. Pritsak, 'The Slavs [and the Avars]', in *Gli Slavi occidentali e meridionale nell'alto Medioevo*, vol. 1 (Spoleto, 1983), pp. 353–435, esp. p. 388.

¹² See W. Pohl, *Die Awaren. Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa 567–822 n. Chr.* (Munich, 1988), pp. 256–7. For a critique of these views, see H. Kunstmann, 'Noch einmal [Samo und Wogastisburg]', *Die Welt der Slawen* 28 (1983), no. 2, pp. 354–63.

¹³ For Paul's treatment of legends, see W. Goffart, [*The*] *Narrators [of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800). Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon]* (Princeton, 1988), p. 428.

¹⁴ M. Kos, 'K poročilom [Pavla Diakona o Slovencih]', *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* 26 (1931), pp. 202–16, esp. p. 213. For the use of Paul's account for reconstructing the Slavic expansion to Italy, see more recently O.R. Borodin, 'Slaviane [v Italii i Istrii v VI–VIII vv.]', *Vizantiiskii Vremennik* 44 (1983), pp. 48–59.

¹⁵ See, however, F. Curta, 'The Changing Image of the Early Slavs in the Rumanian Historiography and Archaeological Literature. A Critical Survey', *Südost-Forschungen* 53 (1994), pp. 225–310.

framework. I intend, therefore, to look at some of the relations that may exist between narrative strategies and the interpretation of the author's attitude towards *gentes* in general, with particular reference to the Slavs.

Fredegar's Wendish account

Until recently, the prevailing view was that the *Chronicle of Fredegar* was the product of three different authors, the last of whom was responsible for the Wendish account,¹⁶ but Goffart and Kusternig have rejuvenated Baudot's theory of single authorship.¹⁷ Although Fredegar's book IV ends with events that could be dated to 642, there are indications of a *terminus post quem* in at least 658. Fredegar knows, for instance, that after being elected king by the Wends, Samo 'ruled them well for thirty-five years,' which, according to his chronology, may indicate the year 658 for the death of the Wendish king.¹⁸ Krusch argued that his author C, who may be seen as responsible for the Wendish account, must have written around 660,¹⁹ an argument later used by supporters of single authorship, who claimed that Fredegar's chronicle was written in its entirety after, or in the vicinity of the latest date alluded to in its pages.²⁰ Fredegar shows a most erratic attitude to chronology in Book IV, and usually post-dates events by one or two years.²¹ But Fredegar's motivation for a loose chronology may reside not in his inability to cope with a universal chronological system, but in his interest in matters other than exact dates. He knows that Samo went to the Slavs 'in the fortieth year of Chlothar's reign' and that he ruled them for thirty-five years.²² But all

¹⁶ See B. Krusch, 'Die Chronicae des sogenannten Fredegar', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 7 (1882), pp. 247–351 and 421–516; *idem*, 'Chronicarum [quae dicuntur Fredegarii scholastici libri IV cum continuationibus]' (introduction), in B. Krusch (ed.) *Fredarii et aliorum chronica. Vitae sanctorum* (Hanover, 1888), pp. 1–18. For a detailed discussion of the multiple authorship thesis, see W. Goffart, '[The] Fredegar Problem [Reconsidered]', *Speculum* 18 (1963), pp. 206–41. For author C as the possible author of the Wendish account, see M. Manitius, *Geschichte [der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters]*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1911), p. 224.

¹⁷ M. Baudot, 'La question [du Pseudo-Frédégaire]', *Le Moyen Âge* 29 (1928), pp. 129–70; cf. Goffart, 'Fredegar Problem'; A. Kusternig, 'Einleitung', in H. Wolfram (ed.) *Quellen zur Geschichte des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt, 1982), pp. 3–43, esp. p. 12. See also I.N. Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', in A. Schärer and G. Scheibelreiter (eds) *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna and Munich, 1994), pp. 359–66, esp. p. 359.

¹⁸ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 40

¹⁹ Krusch, 'Chronicarum', pp. 2–3; Manitius, *Geschichte*, p. 224; see also F. Brunhölzl, *Histoire de la littérature latine du Moyen Âge*, vol. 1 (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1990), p. 138.

²⁰ Labuda, *Pierwsze*, pp. 90–2; Goffart, 'Fredegar Problem', p. 239; Kusternig, 'Einleitung', pp. 5 and 12.

²¹ K.H.J. Gardiner, 'Notes on the chronology of Fredegar Book IV', *Parergon* 20 (1978), pp. 40–4, esp. pp. 40 and 44.

²² Fredegar IV. 48, pp. 39–40.

subsequent dates referring to Slavs are given in Dagobert's regnal years.²³ It could be argued that Fredegar simply employs here a system based on regnal years of Frankish kings, in order to control his narrative, but this very narrative may indicate another solution. Although Fredegar describes Dagobert's conflict with the Wends in his chapter 68, closely followed by references to their raids in chapters 72, 74, 75 and 77, the 'Wendish theme' is carefully introduced in advance in chapter 48.²⁴ We are told how Samo came to the Wends and how he was elected their king, but nothing is said about Dagobert, introduced for the first time in the preceding chapter (47). There are twenty chapters (seventeen pages in Wallace-Hadrill's edition)²⁵ separating the two parts of the Wendish account, with apparently no relation between them. But a closer look at the structure of the narrative shows that this is no mistake.

Based as it is on Frankish affairs, the chronicle divides large sections by introducing what might be called 'foreign affairs' occurring at the time of Frankish events. Chapter 48 is the first part of a large introduction to the beginnings of Dagobert's reign, dealing with affairs in the east (the Slavs) and the south (the Lombards, chapters 49–51). Chapter 68, in turn, is preceded by another survey of foreign affairs, which, again, begins in the east, with chapters 63–5 dealing with Heraclius and his Persian war, then describes the 'race of Hagar' (the Saracens) in chapter 66. Then a short chapter (67) informs us that at the death of his brother Charibert, Dagobert has taken control of the entire kingdom of Aquitaine. After chapter 68, with its account of the Wendish–Frankish conflict, Fredegar turns to the south and to the east, dealing with Lombard (chapters 69–71), Avar (chapter 72), and Spanish (chapter 73) affairs. What follows this survey is then a full description of how Dagobert, alienated from his Austrasian followers, gradually lost control over his kingdom. The Wends (but neither Lombards nor Avars) are involved in almost every episode of this process of fragmentation, in Thuringia as well as in Austrasia (chapters 74, 75 and 77). If Fritze is right in interpreting Dagobert's defeat at Wogastisburg as causing both the Austrasians' *dementacio* and Duke Radulf of Thuringia's proclamation of independence,²⁶ then we must see Fredegar's use of Dagobert's

²³ Fredegar IV. 68, p. 56 (cf. IV. 67, p. 55); IV. 74, p. 62; IV. 75, p. 63.

²⁴ Cf. J. Schütz, 'Fredegar: [Über Wenden und Slawen (Chronicon lib. IV, cap. 48 et 68)]', *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung* 52 (1992), pp. 45–59, esp. p. 48.

²⁵ For the subdivision of the chronicle into chapters as a later (and often absurd) arrangement of the narrative, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill's introduction, in J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (ed.) *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, p. xxv. See also J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, [*The*] *Long-Haired Kings [and Other Studies in Frankish History]* (London, 1962), p. 77; Kusternig, 'Einleitung', p. 15.

²⁶ W. Fritze, *Untersuchungen [zur frühslawischen und frühfränkischen Geschichte bis ins 7. Jahrhundert]* (Frankfurt a.M. and Berlin, 1994), p. 285.

regnal years for dating Wendish affairs as a narrative strategy for emphasizing Samo's role in the decline of the Merovingian kingdom.

But why was Fredegar so much concerned with Dagobert's confrontation with the Wendish king? It has long been recognized that the chronicle itself provides enough evidence for identifying its author(s) as a partisan of the Austrasian aristocracy, in particular of the Pippinid family. In spite of a relatively greater use of rhetorical figures in the last forty-eight chapters of book IV,²⁷ Fredegar shows a good knowledge of juridical and administrative formulaic language,²⁸ of relationships between polities,²⁹ treaties and territorial partitions,³⁰ and even of what might have been the official language of the Byzantine court.³¹ He may therefore have been close to or even involved in the activity of the chancery.³²

On the other hand, Fredegar's purpose seems to have been to entertain his audience,³³ which could explain the epic style of his stories about Aetius, Theodoric, Justinian, or Belisarius.³⁴ It has also been observed that Fredegar, like Paul the Deacon, alternated tales with 'historical reports', inviting his audience to pause and listen closely.³⁵ Both the structure of the chronicle and the legends included in it are appropriate to the needs or wishes of Fredegar's audience.³⁶ His anti-Merovingian attitude and declared hostility toward Brunhild and her attempts at centralization of power also show Fredegar as a partisan of the Austrasian aristocracy.³⁷ Fredegar has only accolades for Pippin, Dagobert's mayor.³⁸ We know that in 629 Dagobert moved the centre of

²⁷ C.J. Bardzik, 'The Style [of the Chronicle Ascribed to Fredegar the Scholastic]', M.A. thesis, St. John's University, New York (1964), p. 32.

²⁸ Fredegar IV. 36, p. 28; IV. 1, p. 4.

²⁹ As his knowledge of embassies shows, see Fredegar IV. 45, 51, 62, 65, 68, 71 and 73.

³⁰ Fredegar IV. 53, 57, 74, 75, 76, 78 and 89.

³¹ Fredegar IV. 64, p. 52: '(Heraclius) advanced to the fray like a *second David* (my italics)'

³² Kusternig, 'Einleitung', p. 12.

³³ Fredegar, *Prologue*, p. 2: 'quisquam legens hic.'

³⁴ Fredegar II. 53, 57–9 and 62; see Kusternig, 'Einleitung', p. 7.

³⁵ Goffart, *Narrators*, pp. 427–8.

³⁶ His story about Xerxes, Theoderich's Avar captive (Fredegar II. 57), is strikingly close to an impressive list of similar stories drawn from Dietrich sagas or the Charlemagne cycle; cf. Tarr, 'The attitude', p. 118.

³⁷ Kusternig, 'Einleitung', p. 12; Goffart, 'Fredegar Problem', p. 217, n. 50; Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', p. 366.

³⁸ Fredegar IV. 61, pp. 50–1. This passage appears in the oldest surviving manuscript of the chronicle (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds lat. 10910, dated to the late seventh or early eighth century; cf. G. Monod, *Etudes critiques sur les sources de l'histoire mérovingienne. II: La compilation dite de 'Frédégaire'* (Paris, 1885), p. 145), as well as in all subsequent manuscripts, derived from a second copy, which reached Austrasia in the mid-700s. We may safely presume therefore that both versions render Fredegar's original thoughts. See Wallace-Hadrill's introduction, pp. xlvi–lvii; Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', p. 360. For the problem of the audience, see R. McKitterick, 'The Audience [for Latin Historiography in the Early Middle Ages: Text Transmission and Manuscript Dissemination]', in A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (eds) *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna and Munich, 1994), pp. 96–114, esp. pp. 99–100.

activities from Austrasia to Paris, probably in order to escape the uncomfortable influence of the Austrasian nobility.³⁹ Fredegar tells us that consensus prevailed only until the king went to Paris.⁴⁰ Just before Dagobert's campaign against Samo, an open conflict emerged between the king and the Austrasian aristocracy. According to Fredegar, the latter's *dementacio* caused the victory of the Wends over the Franks, since the Austrasians now 'saw themselves hated and regularly despoiled by Dagobert.'⁴¹ It is only after Dagobert placed his two-year-old son Sigebert on the throne of Austrasia and confirmed the gifts he had made by separate charters, that the Austrasians agreed to defend bravely 'their frontier *and the Frankish kingdom* against the Wends' (my italics).⁴²

What follows from this analysis is that in Fredegar's eyes, the Wends and their king were an essential ingredient in the dissolution of Dagobert's power, at least in Austrasia. It is because of their role in the Frankish king's failure to control his eastern domains that all dates about the Wends are given in Dagobert's regnal years.

Assigning Fredegar to a specific aristocratic milieu might also be important for the problem of his sources. Fredegar, writing as he does in the late 650s or the early 660s, is surprisingly well informed about the conflict that led to Dagobert's expedition. He even criticizes Dagobert's envoy, Sicharius, for his attitude toward the Wendish king. According to Fredegar, Samo did not reject the idea of punishing those who had 'killed and robbed a great number of Frankish merchants', but 'simply stated his intention to hold an investigation so that justice could be done in this dispute, as well as in others that had arisen between them in the meantime.'⁴³ Samo thus rejected Dagobert's claims that criminals should be sent to him. On the other hand, *Sicharius, sicut stultus legatus*,⁴⁴ reminded Samo that he and his people owed fealty to Dagobert. In other words, he claimed that since they were all under the king's *dicio*, Dagobert was entitled to have the ultimate word in that case.⁴⁵ At this crucial point of the story, Fredegar's narrative approaches the 'rhetoric of the scene' described by Pizarro. Samo's state of mind is marked by standard phrases, as Fredegar makes him reply 'by now weary' to

³⁹ Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, p. 84. See P. Geary, *Before France [and Germany. The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World]* (New York and Oxford, 1988), p. 156.

⁴⁰ Fredegar IV. 58, p. 49.

⁴¹ Fredegar IV. 68, p. 58.

⁴² Fredegar IV. 75, p. 63. As Sigebert's tutor, Dagobert had appointed an opponent of Pippin and Arnulf, namely Otto, son of the *domesticus* Urso (Geary, *Before France*, p. 156).

⁴³ Fredegar IV. 68, p. 56.

⁴⁴ For the rhetorical duel between Sicharius and Samo, see Schütz, 'Fredegar', p. 56. Fredegar's critical attitude toward Sicharius is betrayed here by his use of alliteration (Bardzik, 'The Style', p. 6).

⁴⁵ For *dicio* as a supreme attribute to the king, see Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, p. 138.

Sicharius' threats.⁴⁶ As if talking with a fool, Samo restrained his anger and proposed instead friendly relations with Dagobert. But *amicitia*, as Fritze has shown, would have again implied equal rights and obligations.⁴⁷ Sicharius maintained his position, although, as Fredegar points out, 'he had no authority'. Fredegar's criticism appears to be based on the assumption that Sicharius had no right to bring into discussion the *seruitium* that Samo presumably owed to Dagobert. This criticism is later extended to Dagobert, who, when learning about the outcome of Sicharius' mission, 'confidently ordered the raising of a force throughout his kingdom of Austrasia to proceed against Samo and the Wends' (my italics).⁴⁸ Sicharius' foolishness in threatening the Wendish king has its counterpart in Dagobert's imprudent confidence.⁴⁹

But where did Fredegar find information about these events? Baudot proposed that he had obtained it all from Sicharius' mouth.⁵⁰ Goffart believed Sicharius' episode to be a too vivid a story – in other words, a tale – to be reconciled with the idea of sober contemporary information.⁵¹ But as shown above, Fredegar's detailed knowledge of the juridical background of the conflict contradicts this interpretation. Fredegar was certainly not a contemporary, but nor can his account be classified as legend. Much more important is the argument of Fredegar's critical position towards both Sicharius and Dagobert. His account sounds, again, more like a political commentary of an Austrasian, such as one of the survivors of the debacle at Wogastisburg. This is further substantiated by another piece of evidence of the Wendish account.

Fredegar first introduced the Wendish theme in chapter 48 in order to explain how it was possible for the Wends and their king to become such an important power at the eastern border of the Frankish kingdom.⁵² In this chapter, the chronicler combines two narratives, namely Samo's story and what I would call the 'ethnogenetic myth' of the Wends. According to Fredegar, the Wends emerged from a particular union of Avar warriors and Slavic women:

Every year, the Huns wintered with the Slavs, sleeping with their wives and daughters, and in addition the Slavs paid tribute and

⁴⁶ J.M. Pizarro, [A] *Rhetoric [of the Scene. Dramatic Narrative in the Early Middle Ages]* (Toronto, 1989), p. 123.

⁴⁷ Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, p. 102.

⁴⁸ Fredegar IV. 68, p. 57.

⁴⁹ For Samo as *superbus*, see Fredegar IV. 68, p. 56. Cf. Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, p. 283. For barbarians as haughty in early Byzantine sources, see R.C. Blockley (ed.) *The History of Menander the Guardsman* 21 (Liverpool, 1985), p. 195. Cf. Y.A. Dauge, *Le Barbare. [Recherches sur la conception romaine de la barbarie et de la civilisation]* (Brussels, 1981), pp. 456–7.

⁵⁰ Baudot, 'La question', p. 161. See also Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, p. 75.

⁵¹ Goffart, 'Fredegar Problem', pp. 237–8.

⁵² There is no evidence to substantiate Wallace-Hadrill's idea that chapter 48 is a late interpolation (see Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, pp. 77 and 91).

endured many other burdens. The sons born to the Huns by the Slavs' wives and daughters eventually found this shameful oppression intolerable; and so, as I said, they refused to obey their lords and started to rise in rebellion.⁵³

The Slavs paid tribute to the Avars and 'endured many other burdens'. Fredegar also records that the Slavs have long since been subjected to the Avars, 'who used them as *Befulci*'.⁵⁴ Much has been said about *befulci*, to the extent that the term was ultimately derived from the name of the buffalo in several (modern) Slavic languages, which led scholars such as Wallace-Hadrill to an odd conclusion: the Slavs were forced to drive the Avars' buffalo-wagons on campaigns or look after their herds of buffalo.⁵⁵ But Fredegar provides a different explanation: 'The Wends were called *Befulci* by the Huns, because they advanced twice to the attack in their war bands, and so covered the Huns.'⁵⁶ As Schütz has shown, *befulci* is cognate with *fulcfree*, a term occurring in the Edict of the Lombard king Rothari. Both words derive from the Old German *felhan*, *falb*, *fulgum* (hence the Middle German *bevelben*), meaning 'to entrust to, to give someone in guard'.⁵⁷ The Wends may therefore be seen as special military units of the Avar army, as Fredegar carefully explains. There are several other sources, both Greek and Latin, that indirectly support this interpretation.⁵⁸ Fredegar certainly had knowledge about the specific way in which the Wends were organized as special units of the Avar army.⁵⁹ The term *befulci* and its usage further suggest that Fredegar aims here at (re)interpreting what might have been a 'native', presumably Wendish

⁵³ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 40. For a slightly different version of this account by the ninth-century chronicler Aimoin of Fleury, see *Aimoini historiae Francorum libri quatuor*, ed. J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* [PL], 139, cols 772–3. For further imitations, see J.-F. Lemarignier, 'Autour de la royauté française du IXe au XIIIe siècle', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 113 (1955), pp. 5–36, esp. pp. 28–34.

⁵⁴ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 40, n. 1; Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, p. 91. Cf. Labuda, *Pierwsze*, pp. 321–2.

⁵⁶ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 40.

⁵⁷ J. Schütz, 'Zwei germanische Rechtstermini [des 7. Jahrhunderts. Fredegari: *befulci* – Edictus Rothari: *fulcfree*]', in *Festschrift für Erwin Wedel zum 65. Geburtstag* (Munich, 1991), pp. 409–14, esp. pp. 410–11; *idem*, 'Fredegar', p. 51.

⁵⁸ Cf. Theophylact Simocatta 1.7.3–6, trans. Mary Whitby and Michael Whitby (Oxford, 1986), pp. 28–9; 6.3.9–6.4.1, p. 162; 6.4.4–5, p. 163; *Miracula Sancti Demetrii* L.12.107, ed. P. Lemerle (Paris, 1979), p. 126; I.13.117, p. 134; I.14.138, p. 148; Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV. 28, trans. W.D. Foulke (Philadelphia, 1974), pp. 170–1; *Chronicon Paschale*, trans. M. Whitby (Liverpool, 1989), pp. 173–4.

⁵⁹ Schütz, 'Zwei germanische Rechtstermini', p. 412. For Avar–Slavic relations, in general, see W. Fritze, 'Zur Bedeutung der Awaren für die slawische Ausdehnungsbewegung im frühen Mittelalter', in G. Mildenerger (ed.) *Studien zur Völkerwanderungszeit im östlichen Mitteleuropa* (Marburg, 1980), pp. 498–545, esp. pp. 498–505. For the Balkans, see also J. Kovačević, 'Rapports entre les Avars et les Slaves dans les Balkans', in *Actes du VIIIe Congrès international des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques. Beograd, 9–12 septembre 1971*, vol. 3 (Belgrade, 1973), pp. 332–44. Cf. Pritsak, 'The Slavs', pp. 397 and 411.

account. It has long been noted that this passage strikingly resembles the story of the Dulebians in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*:

The Avars, who attacked Heraclius the Emperor, nearly capturing him, also lived at this time. They made war upon the Slavs and harassed the Dulebians, who were themselves Slavs (*primuchisha Dulēby, sushchaia Slověny*). They even did violence to the Dulebian women (*i nasile tvoriakhu zhenam' Dulēp'skim'*). When an Avar made a journey, he did not cause either a horse or a steer to be harnessed, but gave command instead that three or four or five women should be yoked to his cart and be made to draw him. Even thus they harassed the Dulebians.⁶⁰

A direct relation between the two chronicles is naturally out of question. However, Shakhmatov, the first historian to claim a western origin for Nestor's account of the early Slavs, believed that a lost Moravian source of the late ninth and early tenth century may have been used by the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, an idea further developed by Jakobson and Zasterová.⁶¹ The insistence of the twelfth-century chronicler that Dulebians 'were themselves Slavs' may indicate his awareness that the story first applied to Pannonian Dulebians and his intention to adapt it to the case of those of Rus'. It is also not impossible that the story, as rendered by Fredegar, survived in a slightly modified form until the late ninth century. The fact that the dissemination of Fredegar's chronicle began with an abundance of ninth-century copies may have contributed to this.⁶² It is less important to the present study whether or not we can bridge the gap between a seventh-century chronicle in Latin and its twelfth-century counterpart in Old Slavonic than that both recorded a *story*, that might have possibly circulated via manuscript copies and translations for almost three hundred years. This story may have been first 'invented' by Fredegar, who probably used a 'native' version of the conflict between Avars and Slavs. His use of such technical terms as *befulci* betrays Fredegar's attempts at adapting this

⁶⁰ *Laurent'evskaia Letopis'. Povest vremennykh let* (Leningrad, 1926), p. 12. For the English translation, see S.H. Cross and O.P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (trans.) *The Russian Primary Chronicle. The Laurentian Text* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 55. The Dulebians dwelt along the Bug river and were again mentioned as participating in Oleg's expedition against Constantinople in 907 (*ibid.*, pp. 56 and 64).

⁶¹ A.A. Shakhmatov, 'Skazanie o prelozhenii knig na slovenskii iazyk', in *Sbornik u slavu Vatroslava Iagicha* (Berlin, 1908), pp. 172–88; R. Jakobson, 'Minor Native Sources for the Early History of the Slavic Church', *Harvard Slavic Studies* 2 (1954), pp. 39–73, esp. p. 42; B. Zasterová, 'Zu den Quellen zur Geschichte Wolhyniens und der Duleben im 6. Jahrhundert', in J. Irmscher (ed.) *Byzantinische Beiträge* (Berlin, 1964), pp. 231–8. Cf. W. Swoboda, 'O wiarygodności przekazu Powieści dorocznej o Obrach', *Slavia antiqua* 17 (1970), pp. 73–91, esp. p. 76.

⁶² McKitterick, 'The Audience', p. 100.

version to the Procrustean bed of his narrative, which, as we have seen, seems to have been tailored to suit his audience's expectations. The 'ethnogenetic myth' of the Wends, just like Fredegar's loose chronology, may thus be viewed as a narrative strategy for explaining the disintegration of Merovingian power. In order to illustrate how Samo and the Wends contributed to the decline of the Merovingian *regnum*, Fredegar needed to explain first how the *gens* emerged, which would later play an instrumental role in the history of the Frankish *gens*. Thus he may have chosen a story that would have suited the specific *forma mentis* of his audience. He stressed that the Wendish *gens* was the outgrowth of a military conflict, much like the Langobardic one.⁶³ If, as Wood observed, one of the major themes of the chronicle is female power used for good or for ill,⁶⁴ then it might not be an accident that in both Wendish and Langobardic cases, women play such an important role. It is through the long-suffering *uxores Sclavorum et filias* that the *befulci* turned into a fully-fledged *gens*. (I shall return later to the role assigned to *gentes* in Fredegar's concept of history.) It is, however, already evident that in the general economy of the chronicle, the story of how a Wendish *gens* was created operates as a counterpart to other equivalent stories, such as that of the Trojan origin of the Franks or that of chapter 65 of book III, significantly entitled *De Langobardorum gente et eorum origine et nomine*. If the re-interpretation of the Warchonite myth of the Avars by Fredegar's contemporary, Theophylact Simocatta, may be seen as an example of *interpretatio Romana*, then Fredegar's 'ethnogenetic myth' of the Wends may have been a case of *interpretatio Francica*, specifically designed to play the role of the saga in a period and within a historiographic genre obsessed with *origo gentis*.⁶⁵ A quick glimpse at Fredegar's ethnic terminology may strengthen the argument.

From the very beginning, Fredegar introduces two apparently

⁶³ Cf. Fredegar III. 65, ed. B. Krusch, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* [MGH, SRM] II (Hanover, 1888), p. 110. A slightly different version of the story is given by Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* I. 8, ed. G. Waitz (Hanover, 1878), p. 58. Both seem to have borrowed the story from an anonymous ecclesiastical history, the *Anecdota Cramer*, whose account probably terminated at the start of Justin II's reign, but was revised in about 610. The original Greek version had Slavic instead of Lombard women. See *Anecdota Graeca e codd. manuscriptis bibliothecarum Oxoniensium*, ed. J.A. Cramer, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1835), pp. 353–4. For the dating of the *Anecdota Cramer*, see L.M. Whitby, 'Theophanes' Chronicle, Source for the Reigns of Justin II, Tiberius and Maurice (A.D. 565–602)', *Byzantion* 53 (1983), pp. 312–45, esp. p. 320 and n. 38.

⁶⁴ Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', p. 361.

⁶⁵ For the historiographic genre of the *origo gentis*, see H. Wolfram, 'Gothic history [and historical ethnography]', *Journal of Medieval History* 7 (1981), pp. 309–19, esp. p. 311; *idem*, 'Le genre de l'Origo gentis', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 68 (1990), pp. 789–801; H.H. Anton, 'Origo gentis – Volksgeschichte. Zur Auseinandersetzung mit Walter Goffarts Werk "The Narrators of Barbarian History"', in A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (eds) *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna and Munich, 1994), pp. 263–307. For Theophylact's myth, see Pohl, *Die Awaren*, pp. 36–7.

equivalent terms for the same *ethnie*: 'Sclauos coinomento Winedos.'⁶⁶ Although he employs a similar construction for the Avars ('contra Avaris coinomento Chunis'), it might be that the Slavs were not the same as Wends.⁶⁷ The latter's name is usually interpreted as deriving from Jordanes' *Venethi*.⁶⁸ While being traditionally regarded, at least in Polish historiography, as forefathers of the western Slavs, and therefore successors of the Veneti mentioned by Pliny, Tacitus or Claudius Ptolemaeus,⁶⁹ recent studies argue that the name may have not been a self-designation. By calling the Slavs 'Wends', German-speaking groups may have alluded to a pre-Slavic population. It is, however, not clear how an ancient terminology came to be used in the case of the early medieval Slavs.⁷⁰ Moreover, there is no evidence that Fredegar ever read Jordanes. He most probably took his ethnic terminology from another source. He is not alone in applying the name 'Wends' to the eastern neighbours of the Franks. The *Life of St Columbanus* applies to them the same pair of names (*Veneti/Sclavi*).

Fredegar shows an apparently unpredictable use of both ethnic names. He has variants for *Sclavi*, such as *Esclavi* or *Sclavini*, but also for *Winidi*, such as *Winodi*, *Winedi*, or *Venedi*. This may further indicate different sources for his Wendish account, especially for chapters 48 and 68, where the two terms, along with their variants, appear together. It is interesting to note, however, that 'Wends' occur particularly in political contexts: the Wends, not the Slavs, made Samo their king.⁷¹ There is a Wendish *gens*, but not a Slavic one.⁷² In contrast, *Sclavini* are a mere

⁶⁶ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 39; IV. 68, p. 56.

⁶⁷ Cf. Schütz, 'Fredegar', p. 50.

⁶⁸ Jordanes, *Gothic History* 5.34–5, C. C. Mierow (trans.) (Princeton, 1915), p. 59. For Jordanes' account of the Venethi deriving from an ancient source similar to Claudius Ptolemaeus's *Geographia*, see A.N. Anfert'ev, 'Iordan', in L.A. Gindin, S.A. Ivanov and G.G. Litavrin (eds) *Svod pis'mennykh izvestii o slavianakh* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 98–169, esp. p. 131; cf. *idem*, 'Drevneishee svidetel'stvo o rasselenii slavian (Iord. Get. 34–35)', in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress 1986. Abstracts of Short Papers* (Washington, 1986), pp. 9–12.

⁶⁹ See, among others, H. Lowmianki, *Początki Polski*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1963), p. 9; J. Zak, 'Problematik der westlichen Ausbreitung der Westslawen zu Beginn des Frühmittelalters (5./6.–7. Jh.)', in *Rapports du IIIe Congrès international d'archéologie slave*, vol. 1 (Bratislava, 1979), pp. 917–39, esp. pp. 921–3. See, more recently, K.W. Struve, 'Zur Ethnogenese der Slawen', in M. Müller-Wille (ed.) *Starigard/Oldenburg. Ein slawischer Herrschersitz des frühen Mittelalters in Ostholstein* (Neumünster, 1991), pp. 9–28, esp. p. 14; U. Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau* (Bonn, 1992) p. 6.

⁷⁰ H. Schelesniker, *Der Name der Slaven. Herkunft, Bildungsweise und Bedeutung* (Innsbruck, 1973), p. 4; Pohl, *Die Awaren*, p. 95. See also D.A. Machinskii and M.A. Tikhanova, 'O mestakh obitania i napravleniakh dvizhenii slavian I–VII vv. n.e. (po pis'mennym i arkhéologicheskim istochnikam)', *Acta Archaeologica Carpathica* 16 (1976), pp. 59–94, esp. pp. 62–5; G. Schramm, 'Venedi, Antes, Sclaveni, Sclavi. Frühe Sammelbezeichnungen für slawische Stämme und ihr geschichtlicher Hintergrund', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 43 (1995), pp. 161–200, esp. pp. 161–2.

⁷¹ Fredegar IV. 48, pp. 39–40.

⁷² Fredegar IV. 48, p. 40: 'uxores ex genere Winidorum'.

genus.⁷³ Elected by the Wends, Samo is nevertheless *rex Sclauinorum*.⁷⁴ After those chapters in which he explained how a Wendish polity had emerged (48 and 68), Fredegar refers exclusively to Wends (chapters 72, 74, 75 and 77). This further suggests that there is a meaning behind Fredegar's presumably inconsistent ethnic vocabulary. Perhaps 'Wends' and 'Sclavenes' are meant to denote a specific social and political configuration, in which such concepts as 'state' or 'ethnicity' are relevant, while 'Slavs' is a more general term, used in a territorial rather than an ethnic sense; Samo as a merchant went *in Sclauos* to do business, those *gentes* eager to receive Dagobert with open hands lived *circa limitem Auarorum et Sclauorum*, and Lombards made a hostile attack *in Sclauos*.⁷⁵

That Fredegar's terminology is not erratic is also proved by a similar pair of ethnic names used in Jonas of Bobbio's *Life of St Columbanus*, written sometime between 639 and 643.⁷⁶ According to Jonas, Columbanus had once thought to go preaching to the Wends who are also called Slavs (*Venetiorum qui et Sclavi dicuntur*), but gave up this mission of evangelization, because those people's eyes were not yet open for the light of the scriptures.⁷⁷ This parallel is substantiated by the citation in Fredegar's chronicle of a long passage directly from *Vita Columbani*.⁷⁸

Amandus, a contemporary of Jonas of Bobbio, is also known for attempting to convert the Slavs. His *Life*, written about thirty years after Amandus' death in 675, describes how the saint heard that 'the Slavs, sunk in great error, were caught in the devil's snares'. 'Greatly hoping he might gain the palm of martyrdom', Amandus crossed the Danube in

⁷³ Fredegar IV. 68, p. 58: 'Deruanus dux gente Surbiorum, que ex genere Sclauinorum.' Along with John of Biclar, Isidore of Seville and Pope Gregory I, Fredegar is among the earliest Latin sources using the shorter form *sclavus*, instead of *sclavinus*. See H. Köpstein, 'Zum Bedeutungswandel von σκλάβος/sclavus', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 7 (1979), pp. 67–88, esp. p. 76. See also C. Verlinden, 'L'origine de 'sclavus' = 'esclave', *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 17 (1937), pp. 97–128, esp. 125. To my knowledge, Fredegar's chronicle is the only Latin source to use all three ethnic names.

⁷⁴ Fredegar IV. 68, p. 56. There is even a specific Sclavene dress which Sicharius strove to imitate in order to be received by Samo.

⁷⁵ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 39; IV. 58, p. 49; IV. 68, p. 58. Fredegar's use of *Winidi* and *Sclaveni* may be viewed as comparable to such phrases as *Franci seniores* (as opposed to *Franci*) employed by *Liber Historiae Francorum*. See I. Wood, 'Defining the Franks: Frankish origins in Early Medieval Historiography', in S. Forde *et al.* (eds) *Concepts of National Identity*, pp. 47–57, esp. p. 48. See also Schütz, 'Fredegar', p. 50. Cf. *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze *MGH, Scriptores* [SS] VI (Hanover, 1895), p. 85; *Herimanni Augiensis chronicon*, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH, SS V* (Hanover, 1844), p. 93. For the interpretation of the triplet *Sclaveni-Sclavi-Winidi*, see Reisinger and Sowa, *Ethnikon*, p. 22 and n. 63; and G. Korth, 'Zur Etymologie des Wortes 'Sclavus' (Sklave)', *Glotta* 48 (1970), pp. 145–53, esp. pp. 152–3.

⁷⁶ V.K. Ronin, "'Zhitie sv. abbata Kolumbana i ego uchenikov'" Iony iz Bobbo', in S.A. Ivanov, G.G. Litavrin and V.K. Ronin (eds) *Svod drevneishikh pis'mennykh izvestii. oslavianakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1995), pp. 359–63; I. Wood, [The] *Merovingian Kingdoms [450–751]* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 248–9.

⁷⁷ *Vita Columbani* I. 27, ed. H. Haupt (Darmstadt 1982) p. 488. Cf. *Flodoardi canonici Remensis opuscula metrica*, ed. J.P. Migne, *PL* 135, col. 875.

⁷⁸ Fredegar IV. 36, pp. 23–9. Cf. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 248.

c. 630 and, 'journeying round, freely preached the Gospel of Christ to the people.' The Slavs were not very attracted by Amandus' mission and he soon returned 'to his own flock, and caring for them, led them by preaching to the heavenly kingdom.'⁷⁹

Despite his failure to convert the Slavs, Amandus seems to have been the first to preach to pagans outside the former Roman provinces.⁸⁰ It is possible that Fredegar's Wendish account is based on missionary reports, such as those presumably given by Amandus.⁸¹ This interpretation dovetails with his explanation of Samo's behaviour: 'as is the way with pagans and men of wicked pride.'⁸² It may also explain Sicharius' attitude, especially his bold reply to the Wendish king: 'It is impossible for Christians and servants of the Lord to live in terms of friendship with dogs.'⁸³ This metaphor reminds one of the answer given by Caesara, the wife of the Persian emperor, to the envoys that her husband had sent to seek for her: 'I shall not address these fellows. *They live dogs' lives*. I will answer them only if they will do as I have done, and become Christians' (my italics).⁸⁴ Sicharius may thus be viewed as a good example of a member of that Frankish aristocracy described by Geary, to which Columbanus and his monastic tradition had provided 'a common ground around which networks of northern aristocrats could unite, finding a religious basis for their social and political standing.'⁸⁵ As for Fredegar, he might have put flesh on the skeleton of his narrative about the Wends using the

⁷⁹ *Vita S. Amandi, episcopi et confessoris* 16, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH, SRM V* (Hanover, 1910), p. 440; the English translation in J.N. Hillgarth (ed.) *Christianity and Paganism, 350–750. The Conversion of Western Europe* (Philadelphia, 1986), p. 144 (for the dating of the *Life*, see *ibid.*, p. 138). See also Philip of Harveng's *Vita S. Amandi*, ed. J.P. Migne, *PL* 203, col. 1255 and Milon's *Vita metrica S. Amandi*, ed. L. Traube, *MGH, Poetae Latini aevi Carolini [PLAC]* III (Hanover, 1886–96), p. 592.

⁸⁰ Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 191, 245 and 313. St Marinus and St Robert, bishop of Salzburg, were also known to have preached to the 'Vandals', i.e. Wends, in the late 600s. See *Die Vita sanctorum Marini et Anniani*, ed. B. Sepp (Regensburg, 1892), p. 13; *Vita Hrodberti episcopi Salisburgensis*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH, SRM VI* (Hanover, 1913). For 'Vandals' as Wends, see L. Steinberger, 'Wandalen=Wenden', *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 37 (1920), pp. 116–22. Missionary activities among Avars and (presumably) Slavs are also attributed to St Emmeram, bishop of Poitiers, whose *Life* was written by Arbeo of Freising in about 772. See E. Donnert, 'Das Heidentum der Slawen in der schriftlichen Überlieferung der fränkischen Frühzeit im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert', *Slavica Gaudensia* 7–8 (1980–1), pp. 31–40, esp. pp. 35–6. At the sixth ecumenical council at Constantinople (November 680) *Sclavi* were among those *gentes* known to have welcomed Christian missionaries. See *Sacrarum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. J.D. Mansi (Paris and Leipzig, 1901–27), vol. 11, p. 770.

⁸¹ Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, p. 89; Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', p. 360.

⁸² Fredegar IV. 68, p. 56.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Fredegar IV. 9, p. 8. Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 281 and 428, n. 1736. *Contra*: Schütz, 'Fredegar', p. 56. For the metaphor, see Bardzik, 'The Style', p. 18. The term *pagani* was rarely used in association with the Slavs until about 900 (Reisinger and Sowa, *Ethnikon*, p. 16). See, however, St Boniface's letter no. 73, ed. M. Tangl, *MGH, Epistolae Selectae I* (Hanover, 1916), p. 150: 'Uinedi, quod est foedissimum et deterrimum genus hominum.'

⁸⁵ Geary, *Before France*, p. 172.

perspective, if not the accounts, of the missionaries. If the latter may have been responsible for the transmission of the 'native' version of the 'ethnogenetic myth', it may thus have provided Fredegar with useful material for explaining the extraordinary success of Samo against Dagobert and his Austrasian army.

Slavs in Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*

Much of what we know about the early history of the western Slavs, especially those living in the Alpine area, is based on Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* (*History of the Lombards*). Like Fredegar, Paul never finished his work, whose purpose may have been to edify and instruct young Grimoald III, the son of Paul's one-time patron, Adalperga.⁸⁶ As the *History of the Lombards* is his last work, it cannot antedate the later 780s.⁸⁷ However, unlike Fredegar's *Chronicle*, Paul's *History* does not pose any major problems of authorship or chronology. We know enough about his early life and the sources he used for his *History* to delineate the origins of his image of the Slavs. It is significant that he introduces them only in book IV, the first book to look, for the most part, like a chronicle. Book IV also contains the largest number of entries concerning the Slavs, although each of them is typically short. In book IV, Paul adopts an Old Testament pattern of action, namely the one of the chosen people (the Lombards), who prosper, but lapse into the worship of false gods (Arianism) and are punished (civil strife), before being rescued by a hero sent by providence (Grimoald).⁸⁸ At first glance, the Slavs do not have any place in this scheme. The entries in book IV concerning them fall into two groups: those referring to conflicts between Slavs and Bavarians (chapters 7, 10 and 39) and those in which Slavs are linked in some way with Lombards (chapters 28, 37, 38, 40 and 44). Except chapter 44, all these references cannot post-date 612, if we are to believe Paul the Deacon.⁸⁹ Except for two or three chapters, these references are very short and are characteristically dated, sometimes even by month, a practice uncommon in the rest of Paul's *History*.⁹⁰ This is the only part of the whole work in which exact dates are given.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Goffart, *Narrators*, p. 333.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

⁸⁹ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV. 40, ed. G. Waitz, p. 168; trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 189. If Paul's chronological indications are to be taken at their face value, then Secundus must have died in March 612; see K. Gardiner, 'Paul the Deacon [and Secundus of Trento]', in B. Croke and A.M. Emmett (eds) *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Sydney, 1983), pp. 147–54, esp. p. 147.

⁹⁰ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV. 7, ed. G. Waitz, p. 146; IV. 10, p. 150; IV. 28, p. 157; IV. 39, p. 167; IV. 40, p. 168.

⁹¹ Gardiner, 'Paul the Deacon', p. 150.

Taking into consideration both this exceptional concern with precise dating and the nature of the entries, it appears that chapter 40 represents a break, since all subsequent chapters are comparatively longer and different in form. But chapter 40 is precisely the one in which Paul refers to Secundus' death and to his *historiola*. Following Mommsen, therefore, scholars tended to attribute all chapters of book IV preceding chapter 40 to a source of annalistic material, most probably Secundus' work. Kos noticed that this is further substantiated by the fact that all entries concerning Slavs in this part of book IV refer to areas in the immediate vicinity of Trento, Secundus' see.⁹² Secundus, according to Paul, was an important cleric, apparently a supporter of the Three Chapters Schism, and had close relations with the Lombard court, at the time of King Agilulf and Queen Theudelinda.⁹³ The latter was a Bavarian princess, which may explain the Bavarian references (in which Slavs are also involved), all restricted to this part of the *History*.⁹⁴

However, the group of two to three chapters preceding chapter 40, with which Paul presumably came to the end of Secundus' *historiola* as an important source, suggests that the relation between Paul and Secundus is much more complex, and that the former was not simply imitating the latter. Chapter 37 contains the first intrusion of the Avars as a hostile force, since all previous references described them as allies or friends of the Lombards. As Goffart pointed out, this chapter is designed to contrast the incredible exploits of young Grimoald, who will become the king-saviour of the Lombards, and the depravity of his mother, Romilda.⁹⁵ The chapter is also meant to introduce 'a few things of a private character' concerning Paul's genealogy.⁹⁶ Here Paul inserts the story of his great-grandfather escaping, just like Grimoald and his brothers, from the Avars, helped by a mysteriously vanishing wolf and an old Slavic woman, as if he were the hero of a folk-tale.⁹⁷ It is hard to believe that this story and the chapter in which Paul enclosed it were taken from Secundus' *historiola*. It is also difficult to ascribe a precise date to this tale, taking into account both its function within the general structure of the narrative and Paul's difficulties in covering with generations of his family the period between the events described and himself.⁹⁸ For the purpose of this article it is important however to note that chapter 37 is exceptional because it first introduces not only the Avars as enemies, but also the Slavs as friends. Though the atmosphere

⁹² Kos, 'K poročilom', p. 207.

⁹³ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* III. 29; IV. 27.

⁹⁴ Gardiner, 'Paul the Deacon', p. 151; cf. Kos, 'K poročilom', p. 208.

⁹⁵ Goffart, *Narrators*, pp. 405–6.

⁹⁶ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV. 37, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 184.

⁹⁷ Pizarro, *Rhetoric*, p. 129.

⁹⁸ *Contra*: Kos, 'K poročilom', p. 213.

seems to be dominated by general hostility,⁹⁹ since Lopichis, Paul's great-grandfather, had to be hidden from the eyes of the inhabitants of the village, the old woman plays a major role in the whole story, because she not only fed the Lombard and helped him regain his strength, but also *showed him the way*. The old woman (or women) as helper is an important, universal motif of folk-tales and if the whole story should be read in symbolic key, as indicated by the wolf (*lupus*) guiding Lopichis, then I suggest the Slavic woman is a counterpart of Romilda in constructing a mothering model. Romilda is the 'detestable betrayer of her country who looked out for her own lust more than for the preservation of her fellow citizens and *kindred*' (my italics),¹⁰⁰ whereas the Slavic woman, who has apparently no family in her dwelling, took pity upon him, precisely because, Paul argues, she understood that Lopichis was a fugitive, and a stranger. By the agency of this Slavic 'mother' the hero thus finds again the direction of his journey. The instrumental role of the Slavs in Paul's narrative results from all further references to them. I suggest therefore that chapter 37 contains *in nuce* the key for interpreting Paul's attitude towards Slavs.

As far as the Lombards are concerned, the Slavs are either helping King Agilulf to take Cremona from the Romans¹⁰¹ or paying tribute to the dukes of Forum Julii, 'up to the time of Duke Ratchis.'¹⁰² Since Paul, as an adolescent, was at the Lombard court at Pavia during the reign of Ratchis (744–9), he may have acquired this information there, particularly if, as suggested by Bullough, he was acknowledged at Pavia as the next link in a chain of oral transmission.¹⁰³ If the reference to Gisulf's sons, Taso and Cacco, who ruled over the Slavic territory of the Gail valley¹⁰⁴ and imposed the payment of this tribute to the Slavs, looks like a purely 'historical report' in annalistic mode,¹⁰⁵ Paul's following account of their assassination by Gregory, 'the patrician of the Romans', raises a much more complex problem. The story is strikingly similar to the one narrated by Fredegar, who even has the victim named Taso, though not

⁹⁹ Paul has already announced that the Slavs were at the orders of the Avars, as indicated by the Slavic military force sent by the chagan to King Agilulf (*History of the Lombards* IV. 28, trans. W.D. Foulke, pp. 170–1).

¹⁰⁰ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV. 37, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 183; ed. G. Waitz, p. 164.

¹⁰¹ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV. 28, trans. W.D. Foulke, pp. 170–1.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, IV. 38, p. 187.

¹⁰³ D. Bullough, 'Ethnic History and the Carolingians: an Alternative Reading of Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*', in C. Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (eds) *The Inheritance of Historiography 350–900* (Exeter, 1986), pp. 84–104, esp. p. 96.

¹⁰⁴ For Taso and Cacco, see L. Hauptmann, 'Politische Umwälzungen unter den Slowenen vom Ende des 6. Jhs. bis zur Mitte des neunten', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichte* 36 (1915), pp. 229–87, esp. pp. 252–3; Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 90 and 110.

¹⁰⁵ So, for instance, Borodin, 'Slaviane', p. 54.

as duke of Forum Julii, but of Tuscany.¹⁰⁶ The coincidence in both narrative structure and names is too obvious to presume that there are two different stories referring to two different events. There are several other stories that are strikingly similar in both works.¹⁰⁷ Monod was the first to suggest that Paul knew Fredegar's chronicle, though he never acknowledged it.¹⁰⁸ A comparison of Paul's *History* with both *Liber Historiae Francorum* and Fredegar's chronicle in their respective versions of the events described in book IV yields however no positive result.¹⁰⁹ It is not impossible that at Charlemagne's court in Francia, where he certainly read Gregory of Tours and Bede,¹¹⁰ Paul also had access to one of the manuscripts including Fredegar's book IV. In their treatment of legends, Fredegar and Paul are nevertheless very similar: both of them alternate tales with 'historical reports', inviting the audience to pause and listen closely.¹¹¹ The evidence is too important to rule out completely the possibility that Paul used to some extent Fredegar or another text inspired by him. If this were proved, then it would be of great interest, for the purpose of this article, to note that Paul borrowed from Fredegar only tales or tale-like stories, and no 'ethnogenetic myth' or Wendish account. Paul never uses the term 'Wends' and constantly employs *Sclavi*.

Lombard Italy was nevertheless not ignorant of Slavic ethnography. According to Paul, when Raduald, the duke of Benevento, attempted to revenge the death of Aio by the hands of the invading Slavs, he 'talked familiarly with these Slavs in their own language, and when in this way he had lulled them into greater indolence for war', he fell upon them and killed almost all of them.¹¹² Raduald was Gisulf's son and had previously been duke of Forum Julii,¹¹³ an area in which Slavs were a constant

¹⁰⁶ Fredegar IV. 69, p. 58. Here the patrician Isaac replaces Gregory, but the entire setting remains the same. There are several details in Fredegar's story, particularly the involvement of the king, which are absent from Paul's story.

¹⁰⁷ The history of Caesara, Fredegar IV. 9, pp. 7–9; cf. Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV. 50, ed. G. Waitz, pp. 173–4. Fredegar refers to Alciocus, the Bulgar leader who fled to the Wendish March, after almost all Bulgars on Frankish territory were killed by Bavarians at Dagobert's order (Fredegar IV. 72, p. 61). Paul knows that a *dux* named Alzeco came into the Lombard kingdom, where Bulgars, he argues, 'usque hodie ... quamquam et Latine loquantur, linguae tamen propriae usum minime amiserunt' (Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* V. 29, ed. G. Waitz, pp. 196–7). For Alzeco, see Kunstmann, 'Noch einmal', p. 356; Pohl, *Die Awaren*, pp. 269–70; Borodin, 'Slaviane', p. 58; cf. Goffart, 'Fredegar Problem', p. 238.

¹⁰⁸ G. Monod, Review of Bethmann, *Paulus Diaconus, Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature* 7 (1879), pp. 272–6.

¹⁰⁹ Gardiner, 'Paul the Deacon', p. 150.

¹¹⁰ Bullough, 'Ethnic History', pp. 97–8.

¹¹¹ Cf. Goffart, *Narrators*, pp. 426 and 402–4.

¹¹² Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV. 44, ed. G. Waitz, p. 170; trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 199.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, IV. 39, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 167.

presence at the time. Paul's story of the Slavs invading Beneventum by sea is confirmed by the *Chronica S. Benedicti*, who refers to Aio's death by the hands of the Slavs in about 642.¹¹⁴ It is probably to the same Friulan sources that Paul owes his knowledge of the name the Slavs gave to present-day Kärnten, 'which they corruptly call Carantanum.'¹¹⁵ Where did this knowledge come from? Certainly not from missions of evangelization or embassy reports. The nature of contacts along the 'Slavic limes' in Friuli was very different. Paul refers in his book VI to the 'freebooters of the Slavs, who fell upon the flocks and upon the shepherd of the sheep that pastured in their neighbourhoods and drove away the booty taken from them.'¹¹⁶ The Slavs were a familiar presence: in times of trouble, both Arnefrit, Lupus' son, and Duke Pemmo fled to the Slavs.¹¹⁷ The latter event may be dated close to Paul's own date of birth (sometime between 720 and 730).¹¹⁸ When Duke Ratchis was raiding the Slavic settlements in Carniola, Paul was already a young boy.¹¹⁹ It is therefore difficult to know how many of these late references to the Slavs come from the presumed training Paul received at the Lombard court at Pavia and how many from his own or his family's experience. I am inclined to give credit to the latter, because in Paul's *History*, when seen retrospectively, even earlier events are distorted by contemporary concerns. For instance, Paul argues that, sometime after 663, when the invading Slavs saw Duke Wechtari coming from Forum Julii against them with only twenty-five men, 'they laughed, saying that the patriarch was advancing against them with his clergy.'¹²⁰ This is pure anachronism, since according to Paul's own testimony, Calixtus, the patriarch of Aquileia, was to move to Forum Julii only in 737 or shortly before that.¹²¹ Moreover, Wechtari raising his helmet and thus provoking panic among Slavs, is a stereotypical gesture, pointing to the style and ethos of an oral

¹¹⁴ *Chronica sancti Benedicti Casinensis*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH SS III* (Hannover, 1839) p. 200: 'dimicavit [Aio] cum Sclavis ad Aufidum, et interfecerunt illum per ingenium'. See Borodin, 'Slaviane', p. 56.

¹¹⁵ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* V. 22, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 230. Cf. *ibid.*, VI. 52, p. 236; Ratchis invades Carniola, 'the country of the Slavs'. Paul's etymological explanation of the name of the Carantani was taken verbatim by Regino of Prüm (*Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*, ed. F. Kurze, *MGH, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum [SRG] L* (Hanover, 1890), p. 112. See W. Pohl, 'Paulus Diaconus und die 'Historia Langobardorum'. Text und Tradition', in A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (eds) *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna and Munich, 1994), pp. 375–405, esp. p. 401.

¹¹⁶ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* VI. 24, ed. G. Waitz, p. 222; trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 267.

¹¹⁷ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* V. 22, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 230; VI. 45, pp. 286–7.

¹¹⁸ For the dating of the event in 716, see Borodin, 'Slaviane', p. 55.

¹¹⁹ In 738; cf. Borodin, 'Slaviane', p. 55.

¹²⁰ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* V. 23, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 231.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, VI. 51, p. 294.

heroic model, and may be easily paralleled by a series of similar accounts.¹²²

To Paul, the Avars, in contrast to Slavs, are an undifferentiated 'mass', only defined by *Avarorum libido*.¹²³ But he frequently refers to their *cacanus*, who is explicitly *rex Avarorum* and plays a central role in the episode of Romilda.¹²⁴ We even know that he was 'in the bloom of his youth'.¹²⁵ There is nothing comparable about Slavs in Paul's *History*. Since we know that at the time Paul wrote his *History*, the *Carantani* were already organized as a polity under their *dux* Boruth and his successors,¹²⁶ Paul's attitude could only be interpreted as deliberate choice to avoid details that would have not been suitable to his portrait of the Slavs. Though Paul's Slavs are a *gens* and even have a *patria*, they lack any political organization that would make them comparable with other *gentes*. Unlike Fredegar's Wends, they have no *rex* and no *regnum*. Paul's Slavs are thus closer to the model of the barbarians as incapable of living according to written laws and only reluctantly tolerating kings. Despite his detailed account of the 'Slavic humanity', his image is strikingly similar to that of Procopius, who also ignores any Slavic leaders.¹²⁷

It may well be that Paul's image of the Slavs comes from the experience and the memory of his family, close friends or neighbours, but one can hardly fail to notice that Paul's portrait is more 'artificial' than Fredegar's. At least this is the impression left after reading the Wechtari episode. Moreover, Paul may well have thought that the Slavs corruptly call Carnuntum in their own language Carantanum; he however completely ignored the fact that, during his own lifetime, the Carantanian Slavs have already emerged as a strong polity under their rulers of the dynasty of Boruth.¹²⁸ No Slavic leader whatsoever appears

¹²² Cf. *Liber Historiae Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH, SRM II* (Hanover, 1888), p. 41. See Pizarro, *Rhetoric*, pp. 153 and 238, n. 51.

¹²³ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards IV*. 37, ed. G. Waitz, p. 164.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, IV. 10, 20, 22, 37 ('rex Avarum, quem sua lingua cacanus appellant'), 51; V. 2, 19.

¹²⁵ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards IV*. 37, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 181. For Bayan's younger son who replaced him as chagan sometime between 602 and 610, see Pohl, *Die Awaren*, p. 238.

¹²⁶ Boruth ruled between c. 740 and c. 750, followed by his son Cacatius (c. 750 to 752) and his nephew Cheitmar (752 to c. 769), then by Waltunc (c. 772 to c. 788), and Priwizlauga (c. 788 to c. 799). Cf. *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* c. 9:4–5, ed. H. Wolfram (Vienna, Cologne and Graz, 1979), pp. 42–5.

¹²⁷ Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars* 7.14.22, ed. H.B. Dewing (New York, 1914), p. 269. Cf. *Strategikon* XI.4.1, trans. G. Dennis (Philadelphia, 1984), p. 120; Leo the Wise, *Tactica* 18.79, in *Patrologia Graeca* 107, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1863) col. 968.

¹²⁸ *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* c. 4–5, pp. 42–5. See H. Wolfram, *Die Geburt Mitteleuropas. Geschichte Österreichs vor seiner Entstehung 378–907* (Vienna, 1987), p. 342. For the relation between *Conversio* and Fredegar, see Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 95 and 98. As for Paul's 'selective' view of the Slavs, it is worth mentioning that his *History of the Lombards* does not refer to the Slavic raid in Italy in 706, otherwise known to Siebert of Gembloux (*Sieberti Gemblacensis chronographia*, ed. L.K. Bethmann, *MGH, SS VI* (Hanover, 1844), p. 329).

in Paul's account. Here and there individuals such as the old Slavic woman may remain in focus for a moment. If looking for more narrowly defined social groups, we are left only with the *latrunculi Sclavorum*. Despite its animation, Paul's picture is thus a stereotypical one, probably rooted in 'national' stereotypes developed along the Friulan border by successive generations of Lombards.

Gens and regnum: the instrumental role of the Slavs

Since the publication of Wallace-Hadrill's edition, it is generally accepted that book IV, particularly from 625, where Fredegar's 'own uninhibited writing begins', to its end, provides the most detailed, exciting and chaotic narrative of the entire chronicle. A chaotic narrative, Wallace-Hadrill has argued, because this 'original' part of book IV is not written on a year-to-year basis.¹²⁹ That Fredegar, when writing, had a plan in mind and carefully designed his narrative is suggested by a short comment at the end of chapter 81:

How this [the recovery of Byzantine forces under Constans] came about I shall set down under the right year in its proper sequence; and I shall not remain silent if, God willing, I finish this and other matters as I desire; and so I shall include everything in this book that I know to be true.¹³⁰

Fredegar never fulfilled this promise, but one can hardly fail to notice his eagerness to display events in their 'proper sequence' which strictly corresponds to his concept of 'chronicle' explained in the Prologue:

I have brought together and put into order in these pages, as exactly as I can, this chronology and the doings of many peoples and have inserted them in the chronicles (a Greek word meaning in Latin the record of the years [*gesta temporum*]) compiled by these wise men, chronicles that copiously gush like a spring most pure.¹³¹

The Prologue itself is constructed upon an astute combination of a quotation from Eusebius' (St Jerome's) *Chronicle* with another from Isidore's *Etymologies*, which provides Fredegar with the basic arguments for expressing his own historiographical concept:

At the end of Gregory's work I have not fallen silent but have continued on my own account with facts and deeds of later times (*temporum gesta*), finding them wherever they were recorded, and

¹²⁹ Wallace-Hadrill, *Long-Haired Kings*, p. 77.

¹³⁰ Fredegar IV. 81, p. 69.

¹³¹ Fredegar, *Prologue*, p. 2.

relating of the deeds of kings and the wars of peoples (*acta regum et bella gentium quae gesserunt*) all that I have read or heard or seen that I could vouch for.¹³²

The Eusebian idea that *reges* and *gentes* are agents of secular history is easily recognizable. It is more difficult to explain what exactly Fredegar meant by *temporum gesta*. At first glance, the 'facts and deeds of later times', narrated by his chronicle, are simply *bella gentium*.¹³³ But *temporum gesta* refer to a synchronous history, to a juxtaposition of 'partial' histories of various *gentes*, which is illustrated by Fredegar's surveys of international relations at the beginning of Dagobert's reign and in its middle, at the point where the king alienated himself from Austrasia. Fredegar took seriously Eusebius' concept of *παντοδαμη ιστορία*, though his work is not a truly universal history.¹³⁴ It lacks the teleological force of Eusebius' concept. Universal history provided Fredegar with the necessary framework in which Frankish supremacy could be explained and emphasized.¹³⁵ The accent, therefore, shifts from *religio* to *gens*.¹³⁶ The latter is the crucial concept of this new, rather hybrid form of universal history. Because history is defined only in secular terms, as the Prologue shows, Fredegar's chronicle lacks any sacred foundation for the idea of *gens*. To him, just as to many other early medieval historians, such as Cassiodorus or Isidore of Seville, *gens* is simply the agnatic community based on blood relations. Bishop Leudegarius' story for Theuderic stresses this particular meaning.¹³⁷

Fredegar also employs *gens* in a political sense, especially in contexts where he describes alliances or conflicts.¹³⁸ Moreover, *gens* is the ultimate source of kings' suzerainty (*dicio*), which explains Fredegar's particular hostility toward Brunhild and her attempts at political centralization.¹³⁹ *Regnum* is therefore a function of *gens*, the exercise of royal power through *gens*.

¹³² Fredegar, *Prologue*, pp. 2–3.

¹³³ Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, p. 128.

¹³⁴ Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, p. 131.

¹³⁵ Kusternig, 'Einleitung', p. 15.

¹³⁶ For Fredegar's concept of *religio*, see Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 126–7.

¹³⁷ Fredegar IV. 38, p. 31. Fredegar uses *natio* in the same sense, although he also has *gentium nationes* (IV. 58, p. 49). For a similar usage in both Jordanes and Einhard, see F. Lošek, 'Ethnische und politische Terminologie bei Iordanes und Einhard', in H. Wolfram and W. Pohl (eds) *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1990), pp. 147–52, esp. pp. 150–1. Slavs have been viewed as *gens* first by John of Biclar (*Johannis abbatis Biclarenensis chronica*, ed. Th. Mommsen, *MGH, Auctores antiquissimi* XI (Hanover, 1894), p. 214), then by Pope Gregory I (*Gregorii I papae registrum epistolarum*, ed. P. Ewald and L.M. Hartmann, *MGH, Epistolae* II (Hanover, 1892–9), p. 249). See Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, p. 134; cf. Klíma, 'Samo', p. 492.

¹³⁸ Cf. Fredegar IV. 87, p. 74.

¹³⁹ Kusternig, 'Einleitung', p. 5; Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', p. 361.

In Fredegar's eyes, the Wends are a *gens* primarily in the political sense of the term. Recognizing his *utilitas*,¹⁴⁰ the Wends made Samo their king.¹⁴¹ As *rex Sclauinorum*, Samo's election is described with the same stereotypical terms as other royal elections.¹⁴² As suggested above, Fredegar prefers 'Wends' and 'Sclavenes' to 'Slavs' when referring to political concepts.¹⁴³ That Fredegar's multifarious terminology is not an accident is also suggested by the fact that, although the Wends made Samo their king, his subjects are *populus regni sui*, not the Wends or the Slavs.¹⁴⁴

It is the clash between the Frankish and the Wendish *regna*, in other words *bella gentium*, that justifies Fredegar's chapter 48, which is therefore designed to explain the emergence (that is, the history) of the *gens*, whose *regnum* caused Dagobert's decline. But, as shown above, both chapter 48 and chapter 68 are parts of larger sections of the chronicle dedicated to synchronous histories of other *gentes*, such as Burgundians, Goths, Lombards, Persians, or Saracens. It follows from this that in Fredegar's eyes, the Wends are agents of secular history, part of *acta regum et bella gentium*.¹⁴⁵ But they are so only because of their military achievements against both Avars and Franks.

Fredegar does not go so far as to make the Franks and the Wendish *gens* equally important. Although under Samo, the Wends inflicted a serious defeat upon Dagobert's army, 'it was not so much the Slavic courage of the Wends (*Sclauinorum fortitudo*) that won them this victory over the Austrasians as the demoralization of the latter, who saw themselves hated and regularly despoiled by Dagobert.'¹⁴⁶ As good historians, we may ask how Dagobert did not notice this demoralization before waging war against Samo. But Fredegar's argument is consistent. As soon as Dagobert confirmed his grants made to Austrasian aristocrats, the Austrasians 'bravely defended their frontier *and the Frankish*

¹⁴⁰ For *utilitas* as aristocratic virtue, see Kunstmann, 'Noch einmal', p. 356.

¹⁴¹ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 40. For *gens* as agnatic community with reference to Wends, see *ibid.* ('uxores ex genere Winidorum').

¹⁴² Authari's election in IV. 45, p. 38; the election of a new Persian emperor in IV. 64, p. 53. Cf. Wolfram, 'Gothic History', p. 313. In contrast, the late-ninth-century chronicle of Regino of Prüm, while borrowing from *Gesta Dagoberti*, makes Samo a simple *dux* (ed. F. Kurze, *MGH, SRG L* (Hanover, 1890), p. 32).

¹⁴³ I am inclined to believe that this is also true for *Deruanus dux Sorbiorum, que ex genere Sclauinorum*, which would further imply that the Sorbs were not a Slavic 'tribe', but a specific social or political category. Cf. *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, *MGH, SS VI* (Hanover, 1895), p. 61 and *Poetae Saxonis annalium de gentis Caroli Magni imperatoris libri V*, ed. P. v. Winterfeld, *MGH, PLAC IV* (Hanover, 1899), p. 19.

¹⁴⁴ Fredegar IV. 68, p. 56. Dagobert, however, raises his Austrasian armies *contra Samonem et Wimidis*, in which case the latter should be interpreted in a political sense.

¹⁴⁵ Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, p. 281.

¹⁴⁶ Fredegar IV. 68, p. 58 (Wallace-Hadrill's 'Slavic courage of the Wends' is an unfortunate mistranslation, since Fredegar refers only to Sclavenes).

kingdom against the Wends' (my italics). Through the latter, the kingdom found its necessary balance of power. It would be a mistake to conclude that, in Fredegar's eyes, the Slavs are *ancilla regni*. We may admire with the Wends Samo's *utilitas*; we may even assume that there *was* some Slavic courage involved in the victory at Wogastisburg. In the end, Samo is no more than a haughty pagan and the Wends simply took advantage of the Austrasian *dementacio*. They were in fact an agent of political dissolution, as indicated by their alliance with Radulf, whose victories 'turned his head' to the extent that he rated himself king of Thuringia and denied Sigebert's overlordship.¹⁴⁷ He behaved in this way, Fredegar argues, 'because, as they say, he who likes fighting picks quarrels'.¹⁴⁸ The moral, if any, is that, in Sicharius's words, only rebels and usurpers would live on terms of friendship with 'dogs'.

Though different in many details from that to which I have referred above, Paul the Deacon's account is based on similar ideas. He also views Slavs as a *gens*,¹⁴⁹ which, like other *gentes*, has a *patria*, Carniola.¹⁵⁰ The meaning of these terms is, as in Fredegar, primarily political. Arnefrit fled *ad Sclavorum gentem in Carnuntum*, Pemmo arranged to flee with his followers *in Sclavorum patriam*. However, as discussed above, there are no leaders of the Slavs in Paul's account, as if all invasions were anarchical movements of people.¹⁵¹ One could give money to 'certain Slavs' to send an army against Forum Julii. One must nevertheless be 'a man tricky and conceited,' like Duke Ferdulf, to do that.¹⁵² If anybody would wonder why a Lombard duke would call the enemy against Lombards, Paul has the answer: because he wanted to have the glory of a victory over the Slavs, as if this were important. But Duke Ferdulf is a special character, namely Pemmo's symmetrical counterpart: the one brought the parents to disaster, the other led the victims' sons to victory. And Paul builds his character using more contrasts: Ferdulf gives money to the Slavs, but – as if not persuaded by that – the *latrunculi Sclavorum* plunder their neighbours' flocks. And binary oppositions are still to come: challenged by Argait, whose name apparently means 'coward', the conceited duke wants to prove his prowess; both will die in battle against the Slavs. What is the role of the Slavs in this story? Paul ends on a note strikingly similar to Fredegar's Wendish account: 'And thus they [the

¹⁴⁷ Fredegar IV. 77, p. 64; IV. 87, p. 74.

¹⁴⁸ Fredegar IV. 77, p. 64.

¹⁴⁹ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* V. 22, ed. G. Waitz, p. 194.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, VI. 51 and 52, p. 236. The Alamanns (II. 15, p. 96), the Avars (IV. 37, p. 165) and the Franks (V. 32, p. 198) are other examples of *gentes* with *patria*.

¹⁵¹ The Slavs 'collected a strong multitude' (*congregata valida multitudine*); Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* V. 23, ed. G. Waitz, p. 195. Cf. *Vita Sturmi abbatis auctore Eigilo*, ed. P. Engelbert (Marburg, 1968), p. 139: 'ibi magnam Sclavorum multitudinem reperit'.

¹⁵² Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* VI. 24, ed. G. Waitz, p. 222; trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 267.

Slavs] obtained their victory, not by their own strength, but by chance.' Here again the 'Slavic courage' is ruled out in favour of an explanation emphasizing lack of unity. To make this point clearer, Paul adds at the end of the chapter: 'We put these things into this history especially for this purpose, that nothing further of a like character may happen through the evil of dissension.' Paul's conclusion thus strengthens Fredegar's argument: the Slavs *are* the 'evil of dissension'. Through them, the chosen people is punished with civil strife. As soon as unity is restored, there is no need for Slavs to interfere; one can simply enter a treaty of peace with them, like Duke Pemmo, 'fearing lest he should lose in battle anyone more of his own.'¹⁵³ When Lombards are united, the normal attitude for Slavs is to be terrified by either Wechtari's bald head or 'the arms of the Friulans.'¹⁵⁴ This terror is typically sent by God,¹⁵⁵ which indicates that the Slavs are instruments in God's hands dealing with his chosen people. I have argued above that the story of Lopichis is the symbolic key for interpreting Paul's attitude toward Slavs. Just as the old Slavic woman has shown Lopichis 'in what direction he ought to go', so have Slavs indirectly shown Friulans the way to unity. Just as the old Slavic woman had provided shelter for the hero, so did the Slavs for Arnefrit and Pemmo. Here ends their role. Arnefrit, an usurper, like Fredegar's Radulf, daring to come with the Slavs, 'as if about to resume the dukedom by their means', is killed, but nothing is said about his Slavic army.¹⁵⁶ On the point of rebelling, Pemmo arranges to flee to the Slavs, but his son, Ratchis, 'besought the king and reinstated his father in the monarch's favour'. Again, nothing else is said about the Slavs.¹⁵⁷

It is difficult, in the light of the various aspects discussed above, not to see the instrumental role of the Slavs in both Fredegar's and Paul's eyes. In constructing their image of the Slavs, they were both inspired by a possibly biblical model in dealing with *gentes*, finding a place for the Slavs within their specific concept of history. Both viewed the Slavs as a *gens* in a political sense. To both of them, the Slavs were a necessary ingredient of 'domestic affairs', a more or less familiar neighbour involved in internecine strife. Slavs were intimately tied to the idea of dissension. To our early medieval historians, they seem to have played a role commonly assigned to barbarians in late Roman and early Byzantine historiography.¹⁵⁸ Unlike Roman historians, however, neither Fredegar

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, VI, 45, ed. G. Waitz, p. 233; trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 235.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 23, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 231.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 22, p. 230.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, 51, p. 236.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Maria Cesa, 'Etnografia e geografia nella visione storica di Procopio di Cesarea', *Studi classici e orientali* 32 (1982), pp. 189–215, esp. p. 201.

nor Paul conceptualized Slavs as barbarians.¹⁵⁹ Their image of the Slavs does not include any of the stereotypes so frequently applied to *gentes* by late Roman and early Byzantine sources.¹⁶⁰ No good-looking, blond and tall Slavs emerge from their accounts. Despite Fredegar's contempt for Samo's haughtiness, he did not view Wends primarily as heathens. Nor can Paul's Slavs be interpreted as 'two-legged animals', dominated by strange instincts or by a horrible wish to die.

On the other hand, neither Fredegar, nor Paul seem to have endorsed Regino of Prüm's later programme of 'ethnographic research'.¹⁶¹ Theirs is not an attempt to untangle the alterity of the Slavs. Nor were they concerned with understanding the internal mechanisms of the Wendish or Slavic society, its *mores* and *leges*. Their perspective remained static, focused on specific circumstances, with no interest in an emic definition of the Other.¹⁶²

Beyond common traits, moreover, there are substantial differences. Fredegar gives Slavs a place among other *gentes*, not simply by ascribing them a name (Wends), but also by providing them with an *origo gentis*. He is readier than Paul to conceive of Slavs as capable of having a *rex*, a *regnum* and military power. Fredegar's Slavs, however, do not play any *active* role, besides fighting or raiding, 'on Samo's orders' or under his leadership.¹⁶³ They always appear in a passive role: subjects to the Avars, 'called *befulci* by the Huns',¹⁶⁴ or paying tribute to them. In the fore is always the *leader*, either Samo, Dervanus, the duke of the Sorbes, or Walluc, the Wendish duke. In contrast, there are no names of Slavic leaders in Paul's *History* – indeed there are no Slavic leaders at all. However, Paul's Slavs, particularly those referred to later in books V and VI, are lively beings, have 'faces' and feelings, and are always in an active, not passive, role. The old woman is capable of pity, furnishes Lopichis with food, gives him provisions and tells him in what direction he ought to go. One can speak with the Slavs in their own language or use their corruptly constructed place-names. They can laugh, recognize a hero

¹⁵⁹ When Fredegar employs the term *barbarus*, he refers to Franks (IV. 17, p. 12; IV. 37, p. 29).

¹⁶⁰ For the standard image of the barbarians in late Roman literature, see G.B. Ladner, 'On Roman Attitudes Toward Barbarians in Late Antiquity', *Viator* 7 (1976), pp. 1–26; Dauge, *Le Barbare*; H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), pp. 6–7.

¹⁶¹ 'Diversae nationes populorum inter se discrepant genere, moribus, lingua, legibus.' (*MGH, SRG L* (Hanover, 1890), p. xx.)

¹⁶² For the perception of *gentes* by ninth- and tenth-century Frankish chroniclers, see J. Fried, 'Gens und *regnum*. Wahrnehmungs- und Deutungskategorien politischen Wandels im früheren Mittelalter. Bemerkungen zur doppelten Theoriebindung des Historikers', in J. Miethke and K. Schriener (eds) *Sozialer Wandel im Mittelalter. Wahrnehmungsformen, Erklärungsmuster, Regelungsmechanismen* (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 73–104, esp. pp. 78, 80 and 89.

¹⁶³ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 40; IV. 75, p. 63.

¹⁶⁴ Fredegar IV. 48, p. 39.

from his bald head, be alarmed or terrified, cry or even fight manfully.¹⁶⁵ More important, they can give help and possibly military assistance to rebels and usurpers. Paul provides valuable information about Slavic warfare practices.¹⁶⁶

In conclusion, Fredegar and Paul the Deacon may have been the first among medieval historians to assign Slavs a place in history.¹⁶⁷ Theirs was an attitude combining interest for the origins of the Slavic *gens* with the perception of the Slavs as an instrument of divine punishment. It is on this basis that Helmold of Bosau, Adam of Bremen, and Thietmar of Merseburg would later construct their image of the Wends.¹⁶⁸

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¹⁶⁵ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* VI. 24, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 267. See Reisinger and Sowa, *Ethnikon*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁶⁶ Slavs set their fortified camp (*castrum, castrametati sunt*) upon the very top of a hill or mountain and dug hidden pit-falls around it, which proved their efficiency in 642 (Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV. 44, trans. W.D. Foulke, p. 199; V. 23, p. 230; VI. 24, p. 266). Cf. Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars* VII. 40.31–45, ed. H.B. Dewing (New York, 1914), pp. 49–53; Theophylact Simocatta 7.2.1–10, p. 180; *Strategikon* XI. 4.29, trans. G. Dennis (Philadelphia, 1984), p. 123; cf. XI. 4.33, p. 124.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Fritze, *Untersuchungen*, p. 285.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. G. Cerwinka, 'Völkercharakteristiken in historiographischen Quellen der Salier- und Stauferzeit' in H. Ebner (ed.) *Festschrift Friedrich Hausmann* (Graz, 1977), pp. 59–76, esp. pp. 71–6. See also H.-D. Kahl, 'Heidnisches Wendentum und christliche Stammesfürsten. Ein Blick in die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Gentil- und Universalreligion im abendländischen Hochmittelalter', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 44 (1962), 72–119. On Thietmar's portrait of the Slavs (including his treatment of them as *avari canes*), see L. Weinrich, 'Der Slawenaufstand von 983 in der Darstellung des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg', in D. Berg and H.W. Goetz (eds) *Historiographia mediaevalis. Studien zur Geschichtsschreibung und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Franz-Josef Schmale zum 65. Geburtstag* (Darmstadt, 1988), pp. 77–87.