Robert the Strong

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Robert IV the Strong († 866), also known as **Rutpert**, was Margrave in Neustria. His family is named after him and called Robertians. He was first nominated by Charles the Bald *missus dominicus* in 853. Robert was the father of the kings Odo and Robert I of France. Robert was the great-grandfather of Hugh Capet and thus the ancestor of all the Capetians.

Contents

Map of early Frankland, showing Austrasia, where Robert the Strong originated, and Neustria, between the Seine and Loire, where he held the most power.

Origins and rise to power

Robert was a son of Robert III of Worms and Wiltrud of Orleans.[1] While very little is known about the beginnings of the Robertian family, historians have been able to adduce evidence that the family of nobles had its origins in Hesbaye or had perhaps descended from the family of Chrodegang of Metz or that Robert was the son of Robert III of Worms. During the reign of Louis the German, the Robertian family moved from East Francia to West Francia. After Robert's arrival in West Francia, Charles the Bald showed favor toward the family defecting from his enemy Louis by assigning him to the lay abbacy of Marmoutier in 852. In 853 the position of *missus dominicus* in the provinces of Maine, Anjou, and Touraine was given to him and he had *de facto* control of the ancient *ducatus Cenomannicus*, a vast duchy centred on Le Mans and corresponding to the *regnum Neustriae*. Robert's rise came at the expense of the established family of the Rorigonids and was designed to curb their regional power and to defend Neustria from Viking and Breton raids.

Revolt

Despite the fact that he was a favoured noble of Charles, Robert joined a rebellion against the king in 858. He led the Frankish nobles of Neustria with the Bretons under Salomon in inviting Louis the German to invade West Francia and receive their homage. The revolt had been sparked by the marriage alliance between Charles and Erispoe, Duke of Brittany, and by the investment of Louis the Stammerer with the *regnum Neustriae* (856). These actions significantly curtailed the influence both of Salomon and Robert. Charles compensated Robert for the losses suffered in this civil war by giving him the counties of Autun and Nevers in Burgundy, which greatly

enlarged his landholdings. In 856 he had to defend Autun from Louis the German following the death of Lothair I. But following Erispoe's assassination in November 857, both he and Salomon rebelled.

Louis the German reached Orléans in September 858 and received delegations from the Breton and Neustrian leaders, as well as from Pepin II. The Neustrian rebels had chased Louis the Stammerer from Le Mans, his capital, earlier that year. In 861, Charles made peace with Robert and appointed him Count of Anjou, even though he had been involved in the revolt.

While count of Anjou, Robert was able to successfully defend the northern coast against the threat of a Viking invasion. In 862 Charles granted Louis the Stammerer, his son, the lay abbacy of Saint Martin of Tours, a small benefice in comparison with the kingdom he had received in 856 (and lost in 858). The young Louis rebelled and was quickly joined by Salomon, who supplied him with troops for a war against Robert.

In 862 two groups of Vikings—one the larger of two fleets recently forced out of the Seine by Charles the Bald, the other a fleet returning from a Mediterranean expedition—converged on Brittany, where one (the Mediterranean) was hired by the Breton duke Salomon to ravage the Loire valley.[2] Robert captured twelve of their ships, killing all on board save a few who fled. He then opened negotiations with the former Seine Vikings, and hired them against Salomon for 6,000 pounds of silver. The purpose of this was doubtless to prevent them from entering the service of Salomon.[a] Probably Robert had to collect a large amount in taxes to finance what was effectively a non-tributary Danegeld designed to keep the Vikings out of Neustria.[b] The treaty between the Franks and the Vikings did not last more than a year: in 863 Salomon made peace and the Vikings, deprived of an enemy, ravaged Neustria.

He was made Lay abbot of the influential abbey St. Martin at Tours.[3]

Robert made war on Pepin II in his later years. In 863 he had to defend Autun again from Louis the German, this time after the death of Charles of Provence. Robert was in Neustria during 865 and 866, with Bretons and Vikings ravaging the environs of Le Mans.

Death and legacy

In 866, Robert was killed at the Battle of Brissarthe while, unsurprisingly, defending Francia against a joint Breton-Viking raiding party, led by Salomon, King of Brittany, and the Viking chieftain Hastein. During the battle, Robert had entrapped the Viking commander in a nearby church. Thinking he was not endangered, Robert took off his armour and began to besiege the church. Once Robert was unarmoured, the trapped Vikings launched a surprise attack and killed him before he had time to re-arm. His success against the Vikings led to his heroic characterisation as "a second Maccabaeus" in the *Annales Fuldenses*.

Family

While there are many conjectures regarding the wife of Robert, her identity and even her name cannot be definitively determined. Robert had two sons, in addition to several speculated daughters whose existence or identity as Robert's daughters cannot be definitively shown:[4]

- Odo of France, King of Western Francia[1]
- Robert I of France, King of Western Francia.[1]

Notes

a. ^ Robert probably expected Salomon to hire them to replace the defeated Mediterranean Vikings, then to attack Neustria from two sides: with the Viking ships ascending the Loire and Breton troops invading by land.
b. ^ In 860–1 Charles the Bald had collected a general tax to pay a Danegeld of 5,000 pounds. The king had probably authorised Robert's payment.

References

1. ^ *a b c* Detlev Schwennicke, *Europäische Stammtafeln: Stammtafeln zur Geschichte der Europäischen Staaten*, Neue Folge, Band II (Marburg, Germany: J. A. Stargardt, 1984), Tafel 10
2. ^ Einar Joranson (1923), *The Danegeld in France* (Rock Island: Augustana), 59–61.
3. ^ Jim Bradbury, *The Capetians, Kings of France 987-1328* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), p. 24 ISBN 978-1-85285-528-4
4. ^ Stewart Baldwin, "Robert the Strong", *The Henry Project*, [1] (http://sbaldw.home.mindspring.com/hproject/prov/rober100.htm)

Additional References

- Smith, Julia M. H. *Province and Empire: Brittany and the Carolingians*. Cambridge University Press: 1992. ISBN 0-521-38285-8
- Hummer, Hans J. *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm 600 – 1000*. Cambridge University Press: 2005. ISBN 0-521-85441-5

External links

- A comprehensive list of all the original sources for Robert the Strong, his possible ancestors and relatives, and theories about his ancestry by Stephen Baldwin on the Henry Project site (http://sbaldw.home.mindspring.com/hproject/prov/rober100.htm)

Preceded by **Charles II the Bald**	**Dukes of Maine** 831–856	Succeeded by **Louis the Stammerer**
Preceded by	**Margrave of Neustria** 861–866	Succeeded by **Robert I of France**
Preceded by	**Count of Angju** 861–866	Succeeded by **Odo**