

Viking raids on the spanish peninsula

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INTRODUCTION

The muslims described «heathens» as Majus. The name Majus-Magians was originally used of the Zoroastrians. It was then extended to other unbelievers, together with the associations of the term —e. g. incest and fire-worship [Communicated by Bernard Lewis: The word Majus, derived like English Magus through Greek Magos, from Old Persian magush, is discussed in various implications by V. P. Buchner and E. Levi-Provencal in EI (III 97ff). Again, the muslims of the west described Spaniards who remained Christian as adjam, that is «Persians»— a term used in the east for non-Arab muslims, usually of Persian origin; cf. Levi-Provencal, *Histoire*, I 77, 130]. Among the muslims of the west the same name was applied to the heathen Scandinavians who were believed to be fire-worshippers. The great fire festivals of northern Europe (which were not confined to Scandinavia), or even the seasonal burning of the heather, may have suggested this Magian connotation [cf. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd. ed., London, 1913, Part. VII (= Balder the Beautiful, I), 106ff, particularly 171f.; also George Henderson, *Survivals in Belief among the celts*, Glasgow, 1911, 208ff]. In later Arab sources the name al-Ordomaniyun is used; it is borrowed from Latin forms Normanni, Nordmanni, Lordomanni, Lormanens, Leodomanni (Listed by Vasiliev, *Russian Attack*, 3. As Shetelig observes, VA I 16, the forms of «Norman» are of Norwegian origin. «The classical example is to be found in Alfred's writings from

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about 880-890, when the Norwegian Ottar is his source on this matter. Ottar speaks of the whole country, from Vestfold to Finnmark, as being «Nordmanna land» or «Nordweg». It is of interest that while the Saxons were fighting the Danes, both Alfred and Æthelstan had Norwegians in the royal circle (Shetelig, *ibid*, 17,19). In Byzantine and Russian sources the names Ros, Rus' were applied to Scandinavians, mostly of Swedish origin, who had penetrated down the rivers of Eastern Europe and who founded the city of Novgorod.

Sometimes the chronicles preserve specific regional names; as Westfal-dingi, Norwegians from Vestfold, round the Oslo fjord. But in general the chronicles are seldom specific and often inaccurate. In referring to the Viking attacks, the Annals of Ulster call the invaders Genti («gentiles»); «the Four Masters» who compiled the Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, use the term Gaill («foreigners»). And it was this Majus/gentiles/gaills who in 844 showed up in the Spanish peninsula.

FIRST ATTACK

The Vikings first made an attack on the coast of Spain during the reign of king Ramiro I of Asturia. Part of the Viking fleet approached the Asturian coast in the vicinity of Gijón (Gegio), but when they realized how strongly this city was fortified, they left. They then arrived at the old lighthouse at Coruna called the Hercules tower, but which at the time was generally known as the Farum Brigantium. They tried to take the city, but the citizens defended it bravely. King Ramiro gathered an army in Galicia and Asturia and defeated the Vikings in a fierce battle by the Hercules tower. The Vikings escaped to their ships. The king then went to St. Jago with his queen Uraca. In gratitude of the victory the queen gave beautiful gifts of gold, silver and silk to Jakob, the Apostle. The Spanish historians rejoiced over this victory which they thought very important. «This victory», says Florenz, «must be reckoned among the gloriest in our history because the Vikings were so powerful». And the Spanish historian Lafuente says it is a great honour for the king of the Asturians to have protected his small states against those horrible Vikings, who had planted their seeds of destruction in the midst of great and powerful states.

However, the ravaging Vikings left a pityful sight behind when they left. The area surrounding Coruna was destroyed, tens of miles inland. Villages, churches and monasteries were in ashes. This was the case with the San Wulalia de Curtis church laying 9 leagues from Coruna and east of Mesia by the Montes de la Tieira as well. It was rebuilt by the bishop Peter of Iria later on. The story goes too, that several other churches in the neighbourhood were destroyed as well, whose names have not been preserved. Neither priests nor sacred books were spared, and only the priest Martin survived together with

his two sons, the priest Adolf and the bishop Pedet who at that times was abbot at the monastry.

The Viking attacks in 844 did not stop after their defeat at the Hercules tower. They sailed around the Punta Nerija hill west of Coruna and sailed to the south where they plundered and ravaged the coast. They reached Lisbon and took possession of the city and the plains around it and stayed there for 13 days. Thereafter they sailed to Cádiz, Sidonia, and arrived in Sevilla on 25 September 844. The city fell on 1 October after some fierce fighting, and they stayed there for 40 days. The citizens of Cordoba were called to arms and the troops gathered at Carmona. The Vikings were in possession of Sevilla but not the castle. They tried to set the mosque afire but were prevented from it, according to the Moors, by divine intervention.

The area surrounding Sevilla was ravaged, Isla Minor for three days, Coria and Talyata. They went towards Firrich in the northeast, towards Lacant in the northwest, Cordoba in the east and Moron in the southeast. The detachment that went towards Moron was ambushed and slaughtered by the muslims at Quintos-Moafir. The Moorish army, that got reinforcements from every direction, headed towards Sevilla and liberated the castle and the city while the Vikings, having learnt of the defeat at Quintos, fled the city.

Having fought several hard battles with varying fortunes they sailed for Sidona and Cadiz. After yet another defeat at Talyata on 17 November 844 the survivors sailed to Niebla by the Tinto river and sacked the city. They then went to Ossonoba, Beja and Lisbon before they disappeared.

The damages the ravaging Vikings had brought upon the land, cities sacked, even the suburbs of Sevilla in ashes, had put such fear into the people of Andalucia that they called the Vikings «the enemies of mankind». Every possible precaution was now taken in order to protect the coast in the future. Ships were built. Sailors were drafted. The people of Merida, Santarem and Coimbra were ordered to guard the coastline. The fear spread to the cities in the Mediterranean as well. In order to deny the shores to the Vikings, ships were built in Tarragona, Carthagen and Cadiz. Sailors were drafted from Andalucia, and they were equipped with warmachines and naphtha. Troops were raised and messengers were put on standby in order to tell everybody, especially the government, about the arrival of an enemy. The fear caused by the ravaging Vikings in 844 placed the whole of Catalonia on the alert when rumours arrived about their attack on France in 848. The Vikings were said to be the worst enemies of Spain, even worse than the Moors.

I have now gone through this first attack in detail in order to show the dimension of this attack and to show that there are sources on this, at least in Norway, relatively neglected area of research. In W. E. D. Allens view neither the Westfaldingi nor the muslims can have found the campaign in Andalucia as strange as some historians have assumed. More than four decades had passed since the Vikings had first raided the coasts of Aquitaine; Irish

monks for two centuries had had some knowledge of the Spanish scene; and it is clear that the Vikings had a general idea about the peninsula before they descended on it. They found in Seville a population which was still largely Gothic and Romano-Spanish. (Cf. Levi-Provencal, *L'Espagne Muselmane au Xe siècle*, 36; *Histoire*, I 78.) The Gothic elements were important in the Andalusian amirate. (Levi-Provencal, *Histoire*, III 184ff. Musa al-Qasi, who took a leading part in the defeat of the Vikings of Tablada, belonged to a powerful muwalad family of Gothic descent.) The amir's household troops were composed of non-Arabic speaking «mutes» —partly negroes and partly «Slavs». (Slav-Sakaliba, became a name which covered Germans and Franks as well as Wends.) Again, there were in Spain thousands of slaves imported from the eastern borders of the Frankish empire, many of them taken in the Carolingian wars, Saxons, Slavonic Wends, and, doubtless, Danes. Some of these men had become freemen and had risen to good positions in service or in trade. The Westfaldingi seem to have had no difficulty in finding interpreters and in making themselves understood. (For the multilingual character of Andalusian culture, Levi-Provencal, *Histoire*, III 182ff.)

What was the reason, then, that the Viking hordes went to the Spanish coast? Why did they start their expeditions?

THE NORWEGIAN BACKGROUND FOR THE VIKING EXPANSION

The Viking Age, with its raids on far away countries, has often been regarded in Scandinavia, by historians and people alike, in a highly romanticised way. Even today most people tend to feel that the Vikings merely was an adventurous, seafaring group of people that heroically fought foreigners to obtain the riches they brought back home to Norway, Sweden or Denmark.

The Viking Age is further distinguished by an internal and an external expansion. At this time a powerful increase in the population of the Scandinavian countries occurs, and the need to populate new areas of land arises. Viking raids can be divided into three categories: 1. Reconnaissance/exploration of unknown territory and plunder. 2. Trade. 3. Settlement.

This phenomenon can be compared with the violent increase in population in Western Europe and in Norway in the 19th century, when many families more or less were forced to seek their fortune in the United States.

Another important aspect of the expansion of the Viking Age was highly developed boatbuilding skills. These vessels, well known from various ship tumuli are examples of something approaching the perfect in boatbuilding. They are highly seaworthy and could achieve considerable speed employing oars or sail. The Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune ships are all examples of this.

Viking settlements in the British Isles, Iceland and elsewhere in Western Europe bear evidence of a peaceful group of people that were highly skilled as farmers and traders, but who also knew how to defend themselves.

We have now examined the «Norwegian» background and premises for the Viking raids. I will therefore return to the Viking attacks on Your country. I do not intend to go into this as detailed as I treated the first attack, but to communicate their extent so as to give a feeling of the proportions this «contact» between our two nations had.

THE SECOND ATTACK

Ramiro I died 1 February 850 and was succeeded by his son Orondo I (850-866). In 859 a huge Viking fleet attacked Galicia and Asturia with fire and steel. Orondo was occupied with preparing a campaign against the Moors but sent men at once to Don Pedro, his governor, who directly moved against the Vikings. «It is worth noticing», says a Spanish writer, «that this people, however skilled in sailing and war, never was victorious in the kingdom of Asturia, but were always destroyed.

This force was led by Hastings and his fosterling Bjørn Jærnside, the son of Ragnar Lodbrog. In the year 245 (8 April 859 - 27 March 860) the Majus appeared again. The raid seemed to be going as follows: Galicia and the coast of present day Portugal, the mouth of Guadalquivir, the area around Raya, Cartama, Malaga, la Raduya and the whole district of Ronda. Scores of buildings, lighthouses, guard buildings and mosques were destroyed. After that they went towards Djezirat-al-Khandra or Algericas. They sailed to the coast of Africa where they landed in Mauretania, present day Morocco, and penetrated into the city of Nacchor or Nachor, later Mezema and now Nekor again, 80kilometers west-southwest of Cape Tres-Forcas. They staved there for 8 days, and an old Irish fragment tells about a battle here between the king of Mauretania and the sons of Lodbrog in which the king lost his hand and escaped. They ravaged the whole of the land and took a great number of Moors or «bluemen» to Ireland where they lived for a long time. (This Irish tale compares well with Spanish and Arabic sources as well as Nordic sagas, where the sons of Ragnar Lodbrog were worried about the faith of their father and sensed his death.)

They returned to Andalucia and landed at Todmir, on the coast of Murcia. After they beatr the people there they took the Castle of Orihuela and made several raids inland, some as far as the French border. Then they sailed away. They took Pamplona by surprise and made Garcia the Frank, the king, their prisoner. He paid a ransom of 90,000 denars and was released. They continued their raid on the Balearic islands of Malorca and Menorca and Jviza and Formentera. After this they turned on Roussilon and plundered a monastery at the mouth of the river Tech. Then they settled on the island

of Camargues at the Rhone estuary and ravaged Valence, Nimes and Arles. In the spring they went to Italy and destroyed Pisa and took Luna. In 862 they were back in Brittany.

This second attack on Spain, led by Hasting and the sons of Ragnar Lodbrog, lasted for more than a year and took place between 859 and 861. The effect of this attack can be noticed in the years afterwards in both muslim and christian Spain. Ordone's successor, Alfons III or Great (866-910), strove to protect the coast against attacks from Vikings or Moors. It was probably because of the Vikings he erected high walls around the city Oviedo. The fort at Gauzon was built on several high cliffs by the sea, three leagues from Oviedo and one from Gijon. «This fort offered firm protection for our coast and was a good place to spot the ships of the Vikings who earlier used to come and destroy everything they could.

THIRD AND FOURTH ATTACK

Nearly a century passed before the Vikings attempted another attack on the coast of Spain. This time the Vikings seemed to be few in number and the attack was less dangerous. One Spanish writer simply states that they were «not many». Some years later, however, the Galicians were exposed to another attack, the last of considerable size but the most dangerous of them all.

King Sancho the Thick died towards the end of 966 and five year old Ramiro III (966-982) ascended to the throne of Leon. In the second year of his reign, 968, a powerful Viking fleet of 100 ships landed in Galicia led by king Gundered (Gudrød).

The attacking fleet supposedly landed in a harbour known as Juncariæ, and from there they went towards Iria. Destroying places and villages the Vikings advanced towards St. Jago de Compostella. The whote area around St. Jago was destroyed at Vincerio, Tornellos, now Torneiros southeast of St. Jago a fierce battle took place. After the death of the bishop his people fled the field. Unopposed the Vikings spread over the countryside as far as the Cebrarian mountains on the border between Galicia and Leon. Some say they even penetrated to the Campi, the Campi Gothici plains in Leon, north of the Duero. They stayed in Galicia for a year. Then there was a battle between the Vikings and the count of Galicia, Gonzalo Sánchez, whose huge army threw themselves on the Vikings. Most of them fell, including king Gundered.

This attack was obviously the largest and most dangerous of them all, whether you take into account the state of the kingdom of Leon or the number of Vikings, the length of their stay or the size of the area they controlled.

There were no substantial Viking attacks after 969, but several minor ones are mentioned without revealing any details. They occurred in 984,

1016, 1018 and about 1050. Vikings continued to ravage parts of the Spanish coast until the middle of the 11th century. After that there seems to be no more attacks. The attacks seem stretch over a period of some 200 years (844-1050). Later attacks by Scandinavian fleets are known, and Arabic writers have seen these as a continuation of the viking attacks, but these were made by crusaders whom the Arabic writers naturally did not separate from the heathen Vikings.

So far, I have been concentrating on what happened on Spanish shores. But these events were not isolated, they were part of something bigger. Let me therefore go a bit further and place the Viking attacks in Galicia and Andulucia in a larger context.

In June 843 a Viking fleet was observed off the mouth of the Loire. The visitors established a base on the island of Hero (Noirmoutier) which had been the seat of the Monastery of St. Philibert, abandoned by the monks because of recurrent Viking raids during the past twenty years (For the incidents round Nantes, see Ferdinand and Louis Halphen, *Le Règne de Charles le Chauve*, I 77ff. (= Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes Etudes, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques, 175e fasc.); for Messac, 77, for Lambert and citizens of Nantes, 79 n. I. St. Philibert, the founder of Noirmoutier in the seventh century, had Irish connections, see Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland*, I 491. His *Life* contains an incidental allusion to Irish commerce with the Loire: «Not much later an Irish ship filled with various merchandise came to shore, and supplied the brothers with an abundance of shoes and clothings», *ibid.* 495). As a call for barks engaged in the Breton salt trade, «Noirmoutier was doubtless well known to the northern adverturer merchants, and it was this place which became the first goal of northern pirates in Atlantic waters». (Kendrick, *Vikings* 193ff. The Vikings arrived on a west wind. Lot/Halphen, 82 n. I, citing *Chronique de Nantes*, ed. Herlet, 13. This would have been favouring wind from the south coast of Irland, cf. Bay of Biscay Pilot, 1956, 28. For appreciation of topography of Noirmoutier, see A. R. Bridbury, *England and the Salt Trade in later Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1955, 56ff.) It was characteristic of the Viking that trading was combined with raiding, and according to the author of *Les Miracles de St. Martin de Vertou*, the citizens of Nantes did not even shut their gates when the sixty-seven Viking ships hove up the river. They thought that the Vikings had come to trade at the great annual fair of St. John and allowed them to enter the city with their arms concealed. A slaughter then took place. After ravaging the country to the south of the Loire, the Vikings withdrew with their loot and captives to the island of Noirmoutier. (Lot and Halphen, 80ff., 79 n. 3, for discussion of original sources. See also Keary, *Vikings in Western Christendom*, 249ff.; Kendrick, *Vikings*, 199ff.)

The *Annales angoumoisines* preserved the regional name of the viking host which captured Nantes. They were Westfaldingi who had come from «the Britannic Ocean» –the name then generally applied to the Irish Sea. At

the time contact was frequent and easy between the Viking posts on the Atlantic coast of France and the recently occupied Viking strongholds in Munster. There is circumstantial evidence for believing that the Westfaldingi came from Ireland and that they formed part of the large host which had for some years been engaged in ravaging that country under Turgeis who was a Vestfold prince.

In the summer of 844 the Vikings sailed up the Garonne towards Toulouse. When the Westfaldingi withdrew from the Garonne, it seems that they returned to Noirmoutier and from there set sail «to their own country». However, they were beset by a violent north wind which carried them towards the coast of Galicia. They made a landfall near Coruna, in the kingdom of Asturia, and were sharply attacked by the levies of king Ramiro I.

We are now back in the first Viking attack on the Spanish peninsula, which I started this lecture with. As you may remember, the Vikings were last seen by the Muslims off Lisbon. Nothing is heard of the Vikings for some month until, in the course of the year 845, they regained the coast of Aquitaine and landed between Bordeaux and Saintes. The *Chronique de Nantes* expressly states that they had come on a westerly wind from Galicia. It was only in the early autumn of 845 that they resumed offensive action, perhaps after some reinforcements had reached them. They pillaged the cities of Saintes and Bordeaux in October-November 845, exactly a year after the expedition against Seville. According to the *Chronique de Nantes*, the Westfaldingi, loaded with pillage, then returned to their own country – «greatly longed for». (Lot and Halphen, I 196f.) But it is apparent from the *Chronicon Aquitanicum* that the Viking fleet, or a great part of it, stayed on the Aquitanian coast until the middle of 846. In July 846 the Westfaldingi came to Noirmoutier, and here they set fire to their base and took to the sea. The fact that they destroyed their stronghold where they had been masters for ten years implied, in the view of Lot and Halphen, that they had no hope of return.

At his time there was a serious crisis in the affairs of the Norwegian Vikings in Ireland. Turgeis had been killed in 845 or 846, and in 846-47 they suffered a series of defeats at the hand of the Irish. These disasters were followed by a calculated offensive of the Danes to displace the Norwegians from Ireland and Aquitaine and to secure the hegemony of the coast round the western Ocean. It would appear to have been a call for reinforcements by the hard-pressed Norwegians in Ireland, which caused the Westfaldingi to evacuate Noirmoutier in July 846, and that fear of their base falling into the hands of the Danish rivals may have prompted them to destroy it.

The Westfaldingi, who sailed into Loire in June 844, who attacked Seville in the autumn of 844 and who had been operating against Saintes and Bordeaux in October and November 845, came to Noirmoutier, set fire to their base and took to the sea. The arrival of these men as reinforcements in

Ireland could be related to a change of the military situation in favour of the Vikings during the year 847. That was a bad year for the Irish.

As we can see from this, the Viking raids on the Spanish peninsula can be seen in relation to other raids in Europe. In this connection I would like to dwell briefly on another attack from about the same time.

At the beginning of March 845 Viking ships appeared at the mouth of the Seine and began to work their way up the river. The name of the leader of the vikings in the Seine has been recorded in the Frankish chroniclers as Raginerus, Ragneri. (Eks. *Miracles de St. Riquier*, Chron. Fontan.) He has been identified by modern historians with the celebrated hero of the sagas, Ragnar Lodbrok. (Steenstrup, Lot, Halphen, Keary, Kendrick, Shetelig, Hodkin.)

As had happened four years earlier, Rouen was taken without a fight and sacked. But the objective of the invaders was Paris, which they on Easter Sunday entered and pillaged. The French army at St. Denis refused to engage the enemy and on the advice of his nobles the young king Charles the Bald offered to buy the withdrawal of the Vikings. Ragnar came to interview the king at St. Denis and against a payment of 7,000 pounds in silver took an oath not to penetrate into the kingdom. The Vikings returned to the coast towards the end of April.

To put the Viking attacks mentioned in this lecture in an even larger context, I would like to present a couple of remarks about the Viking expeditions in general.

The first raid on the island of Lindisfarne in 793 is usually regarded as heralding the beginning of the Viking Age in Britain, perhaps because historians «find the pillaging of a monastery a more fitting opening than a slight but fatal misunderstanding with their customs» (such as the clash with the king's reeve at Portland between 789 and 802). The apocalyptic entry in the *Annales of Ulster S.A.* —«Devastation of all the islands of Britain by the gentiles»— is the beginning of a dire catalogue of raiding and plunder which does not cease for the next half-century. It is remarkable how closely this ties in with the evidence of the first raids on England already mentioned.

But it was the Scottish Hebrides and the coast of Ulster which bore the brunt of the attacks (according to the Irish sources): in 795 «The burning of Rathlin by the gentiles; and Skye was pillaged and devastated»; in 798 «The Hebrides and Ulster were plundered by Scandinavians (*Lochlannaibh*)». In 795 Iona was devastated as well as the monasteries of Inishmurray and Inishboffin, unprotected island communities, like Iona, down the west coast of Ireland «right in the path southward bound vessels». In 798 St. Patrick's Island (off the east coast of Ireland) was burned by the gentiles «and they took away tribute from the provinces, and Dochonna's shrine was broken by them and other great invasions (were made) by them, both in Ireland and Scotland». The litany continues and from the 790s to the 830s the raiding followed a clear pattern of «hit and run affairs» by small and very mobile

seaborne forces who were probably independent freebooters, attacking island and coastal monastic settlements, but with no certain raids recorded further than 20 miles inland in Ireland. They gradually moved south until by 823 they had made a complete circuit of the Irish coast. It is likely that these raids had been launched from somewhere nearer than western Norway.

In conclusion, the historical sources give us sure evidence that the start of the Viking raids on western Scotland and Ireland was in the last decade of the eighth century. These early raids were the precursor of the much more intensive raiding with political purposes, and the seizure of land for settlement purposes, which dominated the ninth century. The early raids were conducted by Norwegians only, for Danish participation starts a little later. The next point to be shortly considered, is a part of the origins and causes of the whole Viking movement. In this connection we are encouraged to think of the preexisting contacts between Scandinavia and Western Europe, stimulated by trade.

It seems that more and more of the population of the Scandinavian north were becoming involved in the process of trading as the eighth and ninth centuries progressed, and not all of them were as respectable as the merchant Ottar who told King Alfred all about his mercantile resources and the routes which he followed in the pursuit of his trading. It is these great trading possibilities, and the need for traversing long stretches of water, which can be seen as the stimulus behind the development of the ships of the northern peoples in the century before the Viking Age. All these factors lie behind the Viking movement as a whole and they were steadily developing during the centuries before the ships appeared off the coasts of Britain and Ireland.

The «quest for moveable wealth» was the dominating motif of Viking history, and this wuest took the form not only of direct plundering, but also of the «more subtle exaction of tribute», and eventually the «actual take over of landed property»; all three aspects were practised in Scotland. Even plundering was a controlled exercise, for monasteries were not destroyed, but the surplus wealth of stock and provisions creamed off and the community left to re-establish itself so that it could be a source of exploitation on a future occasion.

Moreover, the Vikings learnt to raid monasteries on the great festivals of the church when apparently thousands of people gathered together, thus providing them with the opportunity to take captives and enslave large numbers of Irish and Scots. There is nothing very mindless about such exploitation; even though it can be glossed by historians under cover of the respectable practice of «trade», it was a policy of acquiring wealth coldly and ruthlessly put into practice.

Such a lifestyle demanded manoeuvrability —which we know the Vikings had— as well as good knowledge of the geography and political circumstances of the societies they were marauding —which we can see they acquired. Throughout Europe they installed themselves on convenient and

welldefended maritime points, such as headlands or islands, from which they could launch their attacks when local weather and political conditions allowed. In general, so far as we know, they do not appear to have launched piratical raids on merchant ships at sea, but to have attacked sea-borne wealth where it was most concentrated and convenient, that is in the merchant centres of western Europe or in the monasteries of Ireland and Scotland. So, suitably located islands were used as bases from which the Vikings could raid ports and prey upon nearby churches. Off-shore islands anywhere were very convenient temporary or permanent bases, although few are as well documented as the Vestfold Vikings» settlement on the island of Noirmoutier at the mouth of the Loire, as I already has mentioned.

Let us now go back to the development in Viking activity. One significant feature of the mid-ninth century is the emergence in the sources of named individuals who were leaders of the Gall in Ireland and Scotland. The first of these was the legendary Tuirgeis, whom we already have been acquainted. He was followed by Olaf, «son of the king of Laithlinde» (or Lochlainn), who come to Irland in 853, and the Foreigners —or Norse—submitted to him, and tribute was given him by the Irish.

The many references in the Irish sources to high-born leaders of the Norse, and soon Danish, raiders does suggest that a new and significant phase of the Viking period in Ireland and Scotland had started. No longer does it appear to have been just a matter of raiding for the acquisition of available wealth wherever it might be obtained, but of permanent establishments for the regular extraction of tribute from the host country, as well as the pursuing of a lucrative trading business from well-placed and defended centres. We can also see the launching of more ambitious plans in the direction of political conquest of Scotland under the leadership of powerful individuals. However, the death of Ivar «king of the Northmen of all Ireland and Britain» in 873, and the apparent withdrawal or death of Olaf of Dublin about the same time, meant the decline of the strong leadership which such far-seeing and wide-ranging policies required.

With the death of these two leaders a new period in the history of Viking attacks on Britain and Ireland begins. A process of assimilation was taking place in Ireland, as well as growing dissension amongst the Foreigners of Dublin. This enabled the native Irish kings to root out Viking bases around the coasts, culminating in the destruction of Dublin and the expulsion of the Dublin Norse in 902. During the last decades of the ninth century secondary migrations were taking place from Ireland to Iceland, to north-west England, and very possibly to south-west Scotland. This is also the period when the Scandinavian settlement of the Northern isles begins to acquire some historical foundation and when the earldom of Orkney emerges as political reality.

What can we, on the background of what I now have said about the «Viking development», say about the Viking raids on Spanish shores?

CONCLUSION

The use of the Hebrides and Orkneys as a base for piratical raids was well known in Inceländic tradition, and this phase of *landnam* (land-taking) in the Scottish Isles may have gone on for a very long time. The existence of headland dykes in some of the Orkney island can be interpreted as indicating that a process of «ness-taking» by the Vikings was a necessary preliminary to permanent conquest. We do not know how long this process took, but it may have started before the first historical record of raids in the late eighth century and continued perhaps until the establishment of the earldom in the second half of the ninth. This piratical phase may not have meant immediate conquest and subjection of the Pictish population. Political control of the settlement was necessary to achieve that. Establishment of pirate «lairs» was part of the raiding phase of Viking activity and not part of the real process of colonization, settlement on the land by fishing and farming communities, which eventually took place.

In the 860s we get the impression of serious attempts to exploit the wealth of Pictland. The taking of hostages is the classic Norse method of enforcing compliance, and along with the demand for tribute this shows that the treatment which Ireland had suffered for two generations or more was now being extended to southern Scotland. The process of establishing a political presence was furthered in 870.

The islands around the northern and western coasts of Scotland were eventually to become permanent Norse territory, but it may have taken some time for the Vikings to get a secure hold, establish complete possession and settle the land. It depends very much on the numbers of the Celtic population in these islands and how well organized they were, and historians have differed in their conclusions about this.

The normal tactics of the Vikings, scattered in raiding parties over the countryside, proved fatal in a land with a well-organized and active government used to waging war.

The Scottish kingdom was in the long run very successful in defending itself against Viking attacks, at least if you take the sparsity of settlements apparently established in the south of Scotland into account.

Scattered bands of Vikings had been cut off in the districts east and south-east of Seville. Eventually they capitulated and became Muslims. They took to dairy farming in the valley of the Guadalquivir and for a long time they continued to supply Seville and Cordova with their famous cheese. Lèvi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I 224. It may be noted that in the fourteenth century the best rowers in the Castilian fleet came from the marismas de Seville (see F. E. Russel, *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the time of Edward III and Richard II*, Oxford, 1995, 232).

We can say, then, that the Viking voyages were made for roughly three purposes: 1. Reconnaissance/exploration of unknown territory and plunder. 2. Trade. 3. Settlement.

The Viking voyages to Spain were primarily of the reconnaissance and plunder category, but some trade occurred as well. The Vikings did not stay as long in Spain as they did in for instance France and the British Isles because of the distance and because of the fact that Spain was more densely populated than these areas. The Vikings characteristically left a country as quickly as they entered it, preferably on the great rivers which were an important part of the infrastructure. The rivers made it easy for the Vikings to come and go as they pleased.

We do not know of lasting Scandinavian Viking settlements in Spain. There are no evidence of a «Spanish connection» whatsoever in Norwegian finds from the Viking era. However, it was earlier believed that the damask technique found on swords from Norwegian Viking finds could be traced to Toledo, Spain, well known for this technique way back in time. But, this technique was widely known, probably by Norwegian sword makers of the Viking era as well.

In present day Galicia in northwestern Spain there are storage buildings placed on posts like those we have in Norway. More modern versions of these Galician buildings have wallboards made of cement due to lack of proper wood. Some historians have tried to link this technique with the Norwegian tradition and thus make the possibility of Viking settlement in Spain more probable. One of the foremost experts of construction techniques, professor Hilmar Sligum, feels, however, that this type of building can be found in several remote areas of Europe like Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and north-east Spain. Therefore it cannot be used as evidence of a tradition stemming from Viking settlement in Spain.

A permanent settlement of a new group of people in a foreign country can usually be traced in the names of places. I do not know of any Norwegian or Norse names of places on Spanish territory. Norwegian scholars generally confirm this view. An investigation of names of places with traces of Norse make an interesting project indeed.

However, we can quite clearly recon that short stays and trade were made in Spain by Vikings in connection with the Viking raids on the Iberian Peninsula that were made in connection with passing through Gibraltar and into the Mediterranean. Arabic coins found in Kaupang in Norway, for instance, may have passed through Spain on their way to Norway. This may be the case with bars of silver as well, and a certain piece of jewelry, «tistesøljen», that can come from a Moorish form collected by the Norwegians in the West, and that was particularly popular among Vikings in countryside Norway. This is a Norwegian-Western type.

I have tried to shed some light on the contact made between Scandinavian Vikings and Spain with the aid of historical sources. In addition I have gone through the archeological material from the Viking Age in Norway.

There is no link to Spain in this material, as is the case, among others, with France and the British Isles. No artifacts whatsoever can be traced to Spain. However, it would be highly interesting if one could find, in Spanish archeological material from this time, artifacts from Scandinavia. Spanish scholars might perhaps be able to find names of places with Scandinavian origin. This field has been neglected for many years. We have to rely on old works which may be outdated. It would be interesting if these problems could be investigated in light of modern research and methods.

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Invasiones vikingas en la Península Ibérica

(Extracto)

Rolf Scheen*

Los musulmanes llamaron «magos» a los infieles. El nombre fue originalmente utilizado por los zoroástricos y se fue extendiendo a otros infieles, asociando su nombre con la idea de incesto y de adoración del fuego. Asimismo los musulmanes occidentales llamaron «adjan», esto es, «persas» a los españoles que se mantenían cristianos y al mismo tiempo entre estos musulmanes se utilizó el mismo nombre para denominar a los «infieles» escandinavos, que se creía que adoraban al fuego. Fuentes árabes posteriores utilizan el nombre de «al Ordomaniyun», que se deriva de las formas latinas Nomani, Nordmanni, Lordoman, Lormanés, Leodomanni. Los nombres «norman» tienen su origen en Noruega. Con referencia a los ataques vikingos, los Anales del Ulster los llaman «genti» (gentiles) y en los Anales del Reino de Irlanda se les llama «gail» (extranjeros). Son estos magos/gentiles/extranjeros los que aparecen en el 844 en la Península Ibérica.

EL PRIMER ATAQUE

El primer ataque de los Vikingos tuvo lugar en las costas de Asturias, cerca de Gijón, en el reinado de Ramiro I, pero se vieron obligados a abandonar. Bordeando la costa llegaron al faro de la Torre de Hércules, de la Coruña, que por entonces se llamaba Farum Brigantium. Trataron de tomar la ciudad, pero sus habitantes la defendieron bravamente.

El Rey Ramiro logró reunir un ejército en Galicia y Asturias y derrotó a los vikingos en una fiera batalla en la Torre de Hércules. Éstos huyeron en

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sus barcos. El Rey entonces fue con su Reina, doña Urraca, a Santiago, y ofrecieron al apóstol cuantiosas donaciones de oro, plata y seda, en gratitud por la victoria.

Sin embargo, los vikingos dejaron una gran huella de destrucción, reduciendo a cenizas las ciudades, iglesias y monasterios de la zona.

Esta derrota no detuvo a los vikingos por completo. Salieron hacia el sur hasta llegar a Lisboa donde se apoderaron de la ciudad en la que permanecieron trece días. Posteriormente salieron hacia Cádiz y Sidonia para llegar a Sevilla el 25 de septiembre del 844. La ciudad cayó el 1 de octubre tras cruel batalla, y ellos permanecieron allí cuarenta días. De allí partieron hacia otras ciudades andaluzas y portuguesas, sembrando la destrucción y el horror a tal extremo que los andaluces los llamaban «los enemigos de la humanidad».

Con todo esto se extendió por toda la península el temor a los vikingos y la necesidad de preparar defensas por toda la costa, no sólo atlántica sino también mediterránea. Se llegó a decir que los vikingos eran los peores enemigos de España, más aún que los moros.

Al parecer, los vikingos tenían referencias sobre la península antes de venir. Encontraron, además, cierta población goda e hispano-romana en Sevilla, población de cierta relevancia en el emirato andaluz. La guardia personal del emir estaba compuesta por elementos no árabes —parte negros y parte «esclavos»—. Tales esclavos eran importados de las fronteras de los francos, tomados principalmente en las guerras carolingias entre sajones, eslavos, y sin duda, daneses. Algunos de éstos ya eran libres y habían alcanzado una buena posición en el servicio o el comercio. Es posible que se hicieran, pues, entender los vikingos en esta zona de cultura multilingüe.

Pasemos a analizar las razones por las que las hordas vikingas llegaron a las costas españolas:

LOS ANTECEDENTES NORUEGOS PARA LA EXPANSIÓN VIKINGA

La Era Vikinga se ha solido tratar de una forma totalmente romántica en Escandinavia. Incluso hoy en día la mayoría de la gente tiende a verlos como un grupo aventurero navegante que luchó heroicamente en el extranjero para obtener las riquezas que luego se trajeron a Noruega, Suecia o Dinamarca.

Se distingue la Era Vikinga como de expansión externa e interna. Sucede en este momento una gran explosión demográfica en los países escandinavos.

Las incursiones vikingas pueden dividirse en tres categorías:

1. Reconocimiento/exploración de territorio desconocido.
2. Comercio.
3. Asentamiento.

Este fenómeno se puede comparar con la violenta explosión demográfica de Europa Occidental y en Noruega en el Siglo XIX, cuando muchas familias tuvieron que buscar fortuna en Estados Unidos.

Otro importante aspecto de la expansión vikinga fue el gran desarrollo de las artes constructoras de barcos.

Los vikingos que se asentaron en las Islas Británicas y otras partes de Europa Occidental son la evidencia de que también eran un grupo pacífico, buenos granjeros y comerciantes, pero que también sabían defenderse.

Examinados estos antecedentes y los lugares «noruegos» de las incursiones vikingas, volvamos a los ataques a su país. No lo haré con el detalle del primer ataque; sólo daré una noción de las proporciones de este «contacto» entre nuestras dos naciones.

EL SEGUNDO ATAQUE

Ramiro I murió el 1 de febrero del 850 y le sucedió su hijo Ordoño I (850-866). En 859 una enorme flota vikinga atacó Galicia y Asturias con fuego y acero. Ordoño, ocupado en preparar la campaña contra los moros, envió unos hombres en seguida a don Pedro, su gobernador. Éstos fueron directamente contra los vikingos, que fueron derrotados.

No obstante, los vikingos siguieron hacia el sur bordeando la costa de Galicia, el Portugal de hoy, la boca del Guadalquivir, zonas de Raya, Málaga, Ronda, sembrando la destrucción por doquier. De allí pasaron a África, a la tierra mauritana, a la ciudad de Nakor. Volvieron a la península, esta vez a la costa mediterránea, y llegaron a Orihuela. Subieron hasta la frontera con Francia, se metieron tierra adentro, llegando a Pamplona donde hicieron prisionero al rey navarro García el Franco, que tuvo que pagar 90.000 dineros por su libertad. De ahí llegaron a las Baleares, retornado después al Rosellón, penetrando en Francia e Italia. En el 862 volvieron a Gran Bretaña.

Este segundo ataque a España, conducido por Hastings y los hijos de Ragnar Lodbrog, duró más de un año y tuvo lugar entre el 859 y el 861.

Los efectos de este ataque se dejaron ver en los años subsiguientes en la España cristiana y en la musulmana. Alfonso II el Grande, sucesor de Ordoño I, se preocupó de proteger la costa contra los ataques de los vikingos o los moros. Es probable que los altos muros que rodean la ciudad de Oviedo fueran erigidas para protegerlas de los vikingos, así como el fuerte de Gauzón.

ATAQUES TERCERO Y CUARTO

Pasó casi un siglo hasta que los vikingos intentaran otro ataque a la costa de España. Pero esta vez los vikingos eran menos y el ataque no tan peligroso. Un escritor español simplemente dice «que no eran tantos». Pasados

unos años, sin embargo, los gallegos sufrieron otro ataque, el último de grandes dimensiones y el más peligroso de todos.

El Rey Sancho el Fuerte murió a finales del 966 y Ramiro III, de sólo 5 años de edad, subió al trono (966-982) como rey de León. En el segundo año de su reinado, en 968, una poderosa flota vikinga de 100 barcos tomó tierra en Galicia, liderados por el Rey Gundero.

Se supone que desembarcaron en un puerto llamado Juncaria, y de ahí partieron hacia Iría, destruyendo todo a su paso camino de Santiago de Compostela. Destruyeron toda la zona que rodea Santiago: Vincerio, Tornellos. En Torneiros, al suroeste de Santiago, tuvo lugar una cruel batalla. Tras la muerte del obispo su gente huyó del campo de batalla. Los vikingos se extendieron por Galicia llegando a la frontera con León. Permanecieron en Galicia durante un año. Entonces tuvo lugar una batalla entre los vikingos y el Conde de Galicia, Gonzalo Sánchez, que derrotó con su gran ejército a los vikingos. Murieron la mayor parte, entre otros su rey Gundero.

Éste fue el mayor ataque y el más peligroso. Ya no se produjeron más ataques importantes después del 969, salvo unos de un menor entidad en los años 984, 1016, 1018 y alrededor del 1050. Los vikingos siguieron acosando las costas españolas hasta mediados del siglo XI. Y a partir de entonces parece que ya no ha habido más ataques.

Los ataques, pues, se sucedieron a lo largo de un período de 200 años (entre el 844 y el 1050). Se sabe de posteriores ataques de flotas escandinavas, pero ya no eran vikingos, sino cruzados, a los que los historiadores árabes no sabían distinguir de los «infiel» vikingos.

Hasta ahora me he concentrado en lo que ocurrió en las costas españolas. Pero no se trata de un acontecimiento aislado. Eran parte de algo mayor. Dejenme, pues, ir un poco más allá y colocar los ataques vikingos de Galicia y Andalucía en un contexto más amplio. Se trata de incursiones por toda Europa, comenzando con la aparición de una flota vikinga en la boca del Loira en junio del 843.

Desde ahí se extendieron a otros lugares de Francia, donde combinaron su extraña característica de atacantes con la de comerciantes, al extremo de que los ciudadanos de Nantes ni siquiera cerraron sus puertas a los 67 barcos vikingos que aparecieron subiendo el río. Creyeron que habían venido a comerciar a la gran feria anual de San Juan y les permitieron entrar en la ciudad con sus armas escondidas. Tuvo lugar, entonces, una carnicería. Después de devastar el país al sur del Loira, los vikingos se dirigieron con su botín y cautivos a la isla de Noirmoutier.

El verano del 844, los vikingos navegaron por el Garona hasta Toulouse, de nuevo de vuelta a Noirmoutier y desde allí «regresaban a su país». Pero un violento viento del norte los llevó hacia las costas de Galicia. Y fue cuando tuvo lugar el primer ataque antes mencionado.

Tras saquear las ciudades de Saintes y Burdeos en octubre del 845, un año después de la expedición contra Sevilla, regresaron con sus bolsas llenas

a su propio país «tan añorado». Pero según el *Chronicón Aquitanicum*, gran parte permaneció en la costa de Aquitania hasta mediados del 846. En julio del 846 regresaron a Noirmoutier y prendieron fuego a su base, en la que habían permanecido durante 10 años, para no tener la esperanza de regresar.

En aquel tiempo había habido graves crisis en los asuntos de los vikingos noruegos de Irlanda, que junto con una calculada ofensiva de los daneses para echar a los noruegos de Irlanda y Aquitania para asegurar su hegemonía en la costa del Océano occidental, debió impulsar a los vikingos de Noirmoutier a quemar su base para evitar que cayera en manos de los daneses. De allí partieron hacia Irlanda donde produjeron un cambio en la situación en favor de los vikingos en el 847.

De todo esto se desprende que existe una relación entre los ataques vikingos en la Península Ibérica y los de otros lugares de Europa. Nos podemos remontar al 845 cuando Ragnar subió por el Sena con la intención de llegar a París. Saqueó Rouén y luego llegó y saqueó París el Domingo de Pascua. El joven Rey Carlos el Calvo ofreció pagar a los vikingos 7.000 libras de plata si abandonaban. Y así lo hicieron.

Podemos, incluso, ir más atrás, a la primera invasión a la isla de Lindisfarne en el 793, que se considera el inicio de la Era Vikinga en Bretaña.

Para terminar, las fuentes históricas nos muestran la evidencia del comienzo de las incursiones vikingas en el oeste de Escocia e Irlanda en la última década del siglo VIII. Estos tempranos ataques fueron los precursores de otros más intensos por intereses políticos, para la obtención de tierras con el fin de asentarse en ellas como tema dominante del siglo IX. Los primeros ataques fueron conducidos por noruegos, solamente, ya que la participación danesa aparece un poco más tarde. El siguiente punto a considerar brevemente es una parte de los orígenes y causas de todo el movimiento vikingo. A este respecto creemos en los contactos preexistentes entre Escandinavia y Europa occidental, estimulados por el comercio.

A lo largo de los siglos VIII y IX la población del norte de Escandinavia fue poco a poco involucrándose en el proceso comercial, y no todos eran tan respetables como Ottar el mercader, que fue quien aconsejó al Rey Alfredo sobre sus fuentes mercantiles y las rutas que él seguía para comerciar. Son estas grandes posibilidades de comerciar y la necesidad de atravesar largos brazos de agua los que se pueden ver el estímulo que alentó la construcción de barcos de las gentes del norte el siglo anterior a la Era Vikinga. Todos estos factores se encuentran tras el movimiento vikingo en bloque y fueron desarrollándose paulatinamente durante los siglos anteriores a la aparición de barcos en las costas de Gran Bretaña e Irlanda.

La «búsqueda de riqueza móvil» fue la nota dominante de la historia vikinga y esta búsqueda tomó la forma, no sólo de saqueo directo, sino también del «más sutil pago de tributos» y ocasionalmente la «toma de tierra en propiedad», tres aspectos que fueron practicados en Escocia. Incluso el saqueo fue ejercitado con control ya que los monasterios no se destruían,

pues se llevaban las riquezas y provisiones y se dejaba a la comunidad que se restableciera con el fin de que pudiera ser fuente de futuras explotaciones.

* * *

Un asentamiento de un grupo nuevo de gente en el extranjero se puede localizar normalmente en los nombres de los lugares. No conozco ningún nombre de origen noruego en suelo español y los estudiosos de mi país confirman este punto de vista. Puede que fuera interesante iniciar una investigación en este sentido, en el futuro.

He tratado de hacer un poco de luz sobre el contacto de los vikingos escandinavos y España, con la ayuda de fuentes históricas. Además, he consultado material arqueológico de la Era Vikinga en Noruega. No existe una relación con España en este material, como es el caso —entre otros— de Francia y las Islas Británicas. Ningún objeto puede ser relacionado con España. Sin embargo, sería sumamente interesante si alguien pudiera encontrar entre los hallazgos arqueológicos españoles de esa época algún objeto de Escandinavia. Los estudiosos españoles podrían, quizá, ser capaces de encontrar topónimos de origen escandinavos. Es un campo que se ha abandonado durante muchos años y tenemos que fiarnos de antiguos trabajos que pueden ser obsoletos. Podría ser interesante que estos problemas se pudieran investigar a la luz de los métodos modernos de búsqueda.