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The Swedish Part in the Viking Expeditions

WESTERN viking expeditions have hitherto been ascribed to Danes and Norwegians exclusively. Renewed investigations reveal, however, that Swedes shared widely in these achievements, notably in the acquisition of England, and that, among other famous conquerors, Rolf, the founder of the Anglo-Norman dynasty, issued from their country.

*Suionum hinc civitates, ipso in oceano, praeter viros armaque classibus valent*¹ contains the earliest allusion to northern vikings. Its form implies that the inhabitants of the southern Baltic shores, who evidently gave the description, must have suffered inroads from the Suiones, the recognised early Sveas or Swedes. The interpretation stands confirmed in the rock inscriptions at different points of the Scandinavian coast, almost exclusively in Sweden, which, according to Hildebrand and Montelius, depict war ships as far back as the bronze age. The traditions of the sagas, moreover, embrace naval expeditions to different parts of the Baltic, from viking seats which studded the entire Scandinavian shore. The raids of the early, even semi-mythical, kings of Upsala on the eastern side are sustained by the many Swedish words grafted by warlike contact on the Finnish language of the Slav border, long

¹ Tacitus, *Germania*, cap. 44.

before the introduction of runes.² Prior to saga times the Swedes had founded Gardaríke, on the shores of Lake Ladoga, whence they subsequently extended their sway over the present Muscovite region and laid the foundation of the Russian empire. King Adils, whose name occurs in the poem of Beowulf, is said to have invaded Saxland, in Germany, and thus given an impulse to the Saxon movement toward England. Ivar Vidfaðme, the wide-ruling, conquered nearly all the Baltic lands, from Finland round into Denmark. Other Svea kings occupied at different times portions of the same region, and raided even along the coast of northern Norway. Danes and Norwegians likewise ravaged in the Baltic, but their historians recognise the supremacy of the Swedes in these waters and as eastern conquerors. The saga records of invasions in the south and south-west are as credible as the verified tales concerning the east, for Germany presented a richer and more alluring field for vikings, with whom trade and plunder went hand in hand. Holmberg's lists of Roman treasures and coins in Scandinavia, from the Augustan period onwards, prove the early contact of Sweden in particular with the south Baltic shore; while the foundation here, at the mouth of the Oder, of the renowned Jomsburg league of warriors and sea robbers, by vikings from the Swedish side, points to the facilities for similar early settlements. Those who object to the theory of a trans-Baltic migration of Aryans or their branches may in the Jomsburg settlement seek a probable solution of the much-disputed traditions among so many Teutonic peoples—Goths, Longobards, Herules, Franks, Anglo-Saxons—of their Scandinavian origin; for some of the conquests mentioned above may have been effected by mere bands, which acquired domination among these Teutons, as the Varangians and vikings did over the Russians and others, and gave rise to the boast of a Swedish origin, for the leading families at least.

For several centuries we behold vikings in operation, but only within the sea bordered and controlled by the Swedes, or upon the coasts of Denmark and Norway. Beyond this limit encroachments are not recorded until the sixth century, when Danes move across their southern boundary. The viking voyages westward are generally reckoned to begin with the raids on England at the close of the eighth century. These descents³ take place, be it observed, not on the richer south-east coast, which would have been heard of

² Thomsen, V., *Den Gotiske Sprog. Indflydelse*; and notably *The Origin of the Rus*, p. 75 &c., by the same author, which reviews the early Swedish occupation of Russia. See also Rambaud's *Hist. Russia*; and Noreen's authorities in Paul, *Grundriss der Philologie*, i. 418–21. It will be observed that the term Sweden is applied to the present territory of that name, and the claims advocated embrace also those pertaining to the districts formerly belonging to Denmark and Norway.

³ Excluding the first of 787, as isolated and blurred by interpolation, according to Steenstrup's recent researches, *Normannerne*, ii. 15.

and sought by Jutland Danes in the course of their gradual advance westward along the continent. They occur higher up, and are, between 795 and 831, confined to Scotland and Ireland. The Danes would evidently not turn away from their partly opened route along the attractive continental coast to the barren north of Scotland; nor would they be likely to seek distant Ireland by way of the Channel, with its extensive and populous slopes, without touching them, or without being noticed for several decades. Palgrave shows that vikings do not enter the Seine until 841, and raids are not resumed in England till the preceding thirties. The invaders of Scotland and Ireland in 795-831 are less likely, therefore, to have come from southern Denmark, and, as Irish chronicles distinguish them from the later dominant yet cognate Norwegians, they must be assigned rather to Sweden or eastern Danish islands.

The Swedes here present several strong claims for consideration. Until the eleventh century they stand forward as the leading and most enterprising of the Scandinavian powers; as the earliest vikings and the most extensive conquerors east of the North Sea—so Norwegian historians affirm. The continental chroniclers, moreover, distinctly name them, the Sveones—not Sweden generally—together with the Danes, as being the ‘Northmen,’ or western vikings, of the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries.⁴ Danish historians, like Steenstrup, actually declare that foreign annals afford no distinct evidence of Norway’s participation in western expeditions until the eleventh century, except one solitary instance in favour of Vestfold, near the Swedish border, when it ravages western France. But this is open to doubt. Norwegians, like Swedes, were, in truth, merged in the terms Northmen and Danes, both of which were general to all Scandinavians abroad, as appears from Einhard, and as has been shown by Maurer, Thorsen, and others. The earlier conversion of the Danes to Christianity and their more immediate contact with Germany account for the frequent application of their name to all Scandinavians, whose language and customs were at that time identical, or appeared so to foreigners, as a rule, long after differences became marked among the natives.

The expansion of Sweden concerns us closely, since one of its effects was the inauguration of the western viking age. For centuries there had been a struggle for supremacy between the rulers of the northern Sveas, centering round the lake of Mælar, and the southern Sveas, who, according to the Hildebrand school, in course of time had spread over lower Sweden and Denmark, merging with

⁴ *Dani siquidem ac Sveones, quos Nortmannos vocamus*, observes Einhard, in *Vita Karoli Magni*. cap. xii., placing the emphasis upon the Swedes. Helmold, *Chron. Slav.*, copies *verbatim*. Steenstrup refers to still other chronicles for similar remarks.

the earlier Gautic or Gothic inhabitants. This rivalry terminated toward the close of the eighth century at the battle of Bravalla—the greatest in the north, according to the sagas. The northerners or Swedes proper, here affirmed the political ascendancy which, excepting a brief interruption, had been theirs since the beginning of the Ynglinga dynasty and of the great Scandinavian shrine at Upsala. In order to assure the acquired control over Denmark and southern Norway, the victorious Sigurd Ring moved his court into West Gothland, on the central west coast of Sweden. The battle of Bravalla took place between 770 and 785, or just before the advent of vikings in England. The victory relieved from service a large fleet. The number of vessels on Sigurd's side alone has been estimated at 2,500. The idle crews naturally bethought themselves of congenial piracy, and competition obliged a portion, with the larger craft, to seek fresh fields westward. Who were these men? The answer opens with the significant fact that none of the early viking chiefs of renown, notably Rollo and the Lodbroc line, who achieved the first important conquests in England and France, can be identified as either Danes or Norwegians, notwithstanding the large number of sagas and chronicles covering the period in question. These sources are almost exclusively Norwegian and Danish; for the Norwegians of Iceland preserved and transcribed the sagas, while the Danes acquired native and foreign chroniclers at a comparatively early date, by receiving Christianity nearly two centuries before the Sveas did so. Sweden stands recorded only in a few sagas, chiefly fragments, and in brief, distorted allusions. These allusions point, nevertheless, to her, rather than to the sister countries, as the home of some of the greatest chiefs.

The southern Danes undoubtedly began to figure early as sea-rovers, and acquired possessions along the south-eastern coast of the North Sea; but they advanced slowly, while other raiders, as already said, gained Ireland by a northerly route many decades before them. A few vikings, like Hasting and his comrade Biorn Jærnsida, are traced to the Dano-German corner, which Munch claims as a Swedo-Norwegian settlement. It certainly seems to have been held by a mixed gathering of adventurers, like the Jomsburg league, for Biorn Jærnsida is the peculiar name of a then roving prince of Sweden; Rolf of Normandy comes from Sweden to obtain reinforcements here, and the Lodbrocs frequent the district, so do Norwegians. The many vikings calling here, or sailing hence, need not, therefore, be Danes or natives of the place.

As regards the Lodbroc line, the most widespread and famous of the rovers, the direct evidence assigns them to Sweden. 'All the sagas agree,' says Munch, that Ragnor Lodbroc is the son of Sigurd Ring, the Svea conqueror, and his successor as ruler of the

united northern kingdoms, yet also a viking. Sven Aggeson, the earliest chronicler of Denmark, and Dahlmann, one of her latest, likewise recognise him as such, while Mr. Howorth seeks to solve certain doubts by assuming him to be a younger son and sea-rover, or that sub-kings rule for him at Upsala. Certain Danish writers insist that he is the son of a Danish king; but then Sigurd was sovereign of Denmark as well as of Sweden. If western accounts at times allude to the Lodbrocs as Danes, we need only recollect that the term was applied also to Scandinavians in general.⁵

Lodbroc could not have been born before 760, was born probably decades later, and may have lived beyond the middle of the ninth century. While Sigurd lived he would, in accordance with prevailing taste and social requirements, seek glory as viking, and very likely lead direct western expeditions across the North Sea to England from the river Götha, where a Swedish fleet must have been stationed, to assure the conquests of Sigurd Ring and to be near the court. He kept to the north, and subsequently toward Scotland and Ireland, probably because the superior attractions of the southern regions were unknown to him. It has already been shown that the southern Danes would not have deviated from the richer continental route to the bleak north, and did not touch the English Channel coast till after 830, and that Irish chroniclers indicate Swedes or eastern Danes, not the later dominant Norwegians, as the first intruders in their land. Now, as Ireland was ravaged before the above date, and as Saxo, the Danish annalist, describes Lodbroc as being one of the raiders, the evidence points to Swedes as the early invaders in England and Scotland as well as Ireland. Lodbroc may not have opened this northern route, but followed the indications of trading pirates, who so frequently acted as pioneers. That these forerunners can be claimed as his countrymen is supported by the testimony of the sagas and of contemporary German missionaries that Swedes early navigated the upper and lower parts of the North Sea;⁶ and by the established fact that Garðar Svavarson, who first occupied Iceland, long named after him, was a Swedish trader, or semi-pirate, on his way to the islands north of Scotland—evidently held by people of his own nationality, partly at least.⁷

⁵ Einhard (in his *Vita Karoli*, as also in the *Annales* attributed to him) repeatedly uses Danes or Northmen as synonymous; so does Helmold, *Chron. Slav. passim*; Maurer, *Bekehrung*, i. 58, Howorth, in *Royal Hist. Soc.* ix. Steenstrup relies greatly on O'Donovan's *Three Fragments*, 159, which refers to 'Raghnall, son of the king of Lochlan,' but this determines nothing.

⁶ Rimbert (*Vita Anskarii*, cap. 27) shows that Swedish men and women frequented Dorestad, in Holland, and we have seen that sagas refer to Swedish raids in Saxland as well as on the northern coasts of Norway.

⁷ *Hist. Norveg.*, fol. 5, declares him the first discoverer of Iceland, but this honour is also attributed to another. See *Fornmanna Saga*, *Sognbrut*, and Munch, *Norsk. Hist.* i. 446, which has further references.

The greatest among the many achievements ascribed to the Lodbroc line is the conquest of Northumberland and other counties, dating from 866, which laid the foundation for Scandinavian domination in England. The leaders were Ivar, Halfdan, and Ubba, the recognised sons of Lodbroc, and their associates;⁸ but, as the northern kingdoms are said to have been divided among these and other sons, it is probable that the invasion of Great Britain was undertaken by the brothers, who acquired sovereignty or property in southern Sweden and Denmark. The followers of the Swedish princes may, therefore, have been chiefly from this quarter, thus explaining the subsequent Danish mastery. Worsaae admits that other Scandinavians, besides Danes, settled here in large numbers, and Steenstrup very properly observes that the preference must be ceded not to Norwegians, but to the intermediate Swedes, who were then more closely associated with Denmark.⁹

The independent operations of Swedes in western waters are sustained by other evidence. The great viking region, north of Denmark, from which issued most Norwegian expeditions, particularly those which founded kingdoms in Ireland and the Scottish waters, was Viken, a term embracing in general the inlet approaches to the present Christiania, but applying properly to the coast strip north of the river Götha, constituting the kingdom of Ranrike, the present county of Bohus in Sweden. From this term, indeed, is probably derived the word 'viking,' although some prefer to trace it to the similar name for entrenched camps formed by the sea-rovers. While Viken was their chief resort, as shown by the sagas and by the characteristic rock inscriptions, which are more numerous in Bohus than in any other part of western Scandinavia, their principal rendezvous here, as Munch, the Norwegian historian, further explains, was close to the present Gothenburg, on the river Götha, a stream at all times in Swedish possession, although its mouth formed the common border-point at least at some periods for the three nations.

The country behind it was mainly Swedish, and far superior to the adjoining narrow strips of Danish and Norwegian territory in fertility and population, while the river itself was the great and only western outlet for the rich and thickly settled lake region of central Sweden, with its several viking seats, as enumerated by

⁸ In support of the sagas may be adduced the statement of Bishop Asser that their banner was worked by the hands of 'their sisters, the daughters of Lodbroc' (Camden's *Anglica Script.* p. 10; Munch, i. 614). Adam of Bremen, i. cap. 39, alludes to 'Inguar (Ivar), filius Lodparchi,' as the chief.

⁹ Steenstrup, *Normannerne*, i. 84-8; Worsaae's *Danes and Norwegians in England*. Both are Danish writers. Many of the deeds attributed to the Lodbroc line cannot well be brought within two generations, but may have been achieved by descendants, who would be proud to proclaim themselves of his blood, or eager to wield so awe-inspiring a name.

Geijer.¹⁰ At the opening of the western viking period, moreover, the warlike Svea court had been moved near to this outlet, and served to attract and encourage daring and enterprising men. As Norwegians and Danes had their own havens, at Vestfold and elsewhere, and would not be likely to enter to any extent the harbour of the frequently hostile neighbour, it follows that the chief viking rendezvous, on the river Götha, belonged to the Swedes, and that the large fleets here gathered were mainly theirs. Sweden must accordingly have operated extensively and independently in Great Britain, France, and the Mediterranean.¹¹

Let us now examine the indirect or subordinate participation of Sweden in the expeditions from Norway and Denmark, and note indisputable evidence that she contributed a much larger proportion of the Scandinavian invaders in England and adjoining countries than has been supposed. Munch admits that the testimony of the sagas reveals a conquest of south-eastern Norway by Swedes from the adjoining Vermland about the beginning of the eighth century. The later suzerains of Sweden installed rulers in Vestfold and other districts, the last appointments being by Eric the Victorious and Olaf Skautkonung, in the beginning of the eleventh century. The leading chieftom in the group so long controlled by Sweden, actually and nominally, by virtue of conquest and immigration, was Vestfold, the site of the great western shrine of Skiringsal, with its Svea cult. Hence issued the greatest of the Norwegian vikings, notably those who held possession of the long-enduring Scandinav kingdoms in Ireland. Sogn and other Viken districts shared with her those acquisitions in Scotland and the island group northward which are conceded to be essentially Norwegian, and in expeditions to England, France, and southward.

Apart from the nominal share in these operations, which may be assigned to Swedes as recent immigrants or conquerors of Viken, there appears a more substantial claim. It is likely that the inhabitants of Sweden's west provinces, more populous than those of Viken and filled with viking seats, would not only sail in ships of their own from the river Götha, but would cross the narrow strip of Viken proper and enlist on Norwegian vessels. Indeed, the geographical position and physical aspect of this narrow fjord-indented land, which as a rule formed a distinct chieftom, indicate that it must have been occupied largely or mainly by people from the rich and broad Swedish provinces behind, which required its harbours. The fame of Vestfold's shrine and markets would alone suffice to attract a number of these adventurers, eager for the booty and

¹⁰ *Hist. Sverige*, i. 61, Heeren and Ukert's edition. Munch. i. 455, &c.

¹¹ The Arab writer Al Katib identifies rovers in Spain with the Swedish 'Rus,' who ravaged the Black Sea regions. See Gayangos, *Hist. Mohamm. Dynasty*, lib. vi. &c. *Ynglinga Saga*, cap. 26, also alludes to such Svea expeditions.

martial glory which were then deemed indispensable to Northmen. The Viken folk, therefore, to whom the renown and acquisitions of Norwegian vikings mainly belong, were a mixture of pure Swedes, recent Swedish colonists, and Norwegians. Even the latter may be regarded as earlier Svea conquerors of Norway. This attempt to analyse the composition of the Norwegian element in Great Britain harmonises with the data of Munch, the jealously national historian of Norway.¹²

We can now turn southward, to examine the Swedish factor in the Dano-English element. Until the seventeenth century the Danes generally held possession of south-west Sweden. The reason lay partly in the proximity of these provinces to their capital, and partly in the traditional feeling which regarded them as the cradle of that branch of Sveas which, after overrunning the southern half of the peninsula and merging with the preceding Gothic inhabitants, settled in Scania, the south-west corner, and thence crossed to the isles and peninsula of the present Denmark. Sweden proper, however, remained the leading power until the eleventh century, and more than once assumed direct control over Denmark, particularly under Eric Vidfädme, Sigurd Ring, Eric the Victorious, and Olaf Skautkonung. The last two, indeed, drove out successively Harold Bluetooth and his son Svein, the father of Canute the Great.¹³ But Svein was wily. He managed to win and wed Sigrüd the powerful, widow of Eric, who reconciled her son Olaf with him. Denmark became independent, and joined as ally of Sweden in the temporary division of Norway.

Now, in 1002, came news of the massacre in England of Scandinavians, chiefly Danes, whose leader Svein had been during his exile. Duty and patriotism bade him hasten to the rescue. The situation was grave and required a strong force. Aid seems, indeed, to have been given by the Swedish Olaf, his ally and relation, whose fleets lay in readiness near the newly acquired domain in Norway, and whose interests and sympathy, like those of his entire people, were roused by a bloody deed that must have involved so many Swedes. The feelings of Norway, on the other hand, whose western possessions lay mainly in Scotland and Ireland, must have been greatly neutralised by political jealousy, aggravated by the recent overthrow of both king and freedom. It is also

¹² He argues, however, that the Sveas separated in Russia, whence the Norwegian branch proceeded by way of the White Sea, round the North Cape, into Norway. But the immigration through Sweden is now admitted. The boast by the chief kings of Norway of being descended from the Svea Yngling dynasty, as Munch explains, would hardly have been indulged in unless a strong and recent Swedish infusion had existed in the country.

¹³ Danish writers recognise only the latter occasions as actual conquests. Adam of Bremen, ii. 28, 37, limits the Swedish occupation to fourteen years. The Swedish supremacy is strikingly emphasised in the *Västgöta Laws*, *Konungabok*, 67.

certain that Svein's queen encouraged her numerous followers to join her husband, and that he was only too eager to relieve Denmark from the host of adventurers who had overrun his kingdom during its long occupation by Swedish troops and officials. This interpretation is supported now by the acknowledged fact that Olaf gave Canute the Great the aid he implored for the reconquest of England a decade later, when the Danish power was greater and the urgency less, while the Swedish friendship and sympathies had diminished.¹⁴

In addition to Swedish troops and adventurers men were drafted from the Danish provinces in Sweden, the most populous part of the peninsula.¹⁵ It is evident that the enrolment here must have been very large, for the loyalty of these districts was doubtful, owing to their constant intercourse with the adjoining Swedes and the exposure to their attacks and intrigues. Indeed, they had more than once revolted and maintained temporary independence. When, therefore, the Danish kings embarked on distant undertakings, like the conquest of England, it became necessary to secure the home possessions, not so much by planting these provinces with Danish garrisons as by taking with them a large proportion of the troublesome people, partly as hostages, and attracting them to the enterprise with prospects of fame and riches.

The forces mustered against England consisted accordingly of troops from Denmark proper, of Swedish regular soldiers, of levies from Danish Sweden, of Swedish adventurers in Denmark, and volunteers from the many poor provinces of Scandinavia. As Norway was at first embittered by subjugation, and subsequently in revolt from Denmark, few auxiliaries could have come from there. Hence the proportion from Sweden must have been half, or even more, of the total; and this applies to the expeditions both of Svein and Canute in nearly equal degree. Indeed, the Danish kings could not take a very large force from Denmark, in view of her frequently complicated relations with Germany as well as

¹⁴ Canute prepared his expedition. *Denique, missis legatis, duos reges ad suum evocat suffragium: Lacman equidem Suavorum, & Olavom Noricorum. Hi ad eius auxilium advenientes cum suis copiis militum, &c.*, writes William of Jumièges, lib. v. cap. 8. Geijer (*Hist. Sv.* 122) quotes another early chronicler to the same effect. See *Leges Edwardi*, and Adam of Bremen, ii. cap. 50. Lacman means lagman or earl of the Svea king, according to Scandinavian writers, including Munch, ii. 478, who also believes that Earl Ulf, grandson of the Swedish prince Styrbjorn and founder of a new dynasty in Denmark, led the Swedes. St. Olaf of Norway, who is mentioned as the other companion, was not yet a king, only a slighted princeling, and could not have brought many followers, so that the 'strong auxiliary forces' must have been nearly all Swedish. Geijer intimates that Swedish troops assisted during the entire preceding conquest (Steenstrup, p. 279).

¹⁵ Superior in arms and people to any of the Danish districts, says Helmold, *ubi sup.*; Geijer, p. 51.

Sweden and Norway. An attack by the latter compelled Canute, in fact, to hurry back home soon after.¹⁶

The conquest of England might have been undertaken by Sweden but for the vacillation of feeble Olaf and the influence of his mother Sigrid, whose marriage with Svein and disagreements at home served to gain conquests as well as independence for Denmark. The political character of the three northern peoples explains, moreover, why the Swedes allowed their foreign conquests to lapse and the supremacy in the west to fall to others. Nordstrom and Sars show that the Swedes were more democratic and independent of their rulers than the Danes with their despotic sovereigns and the Norwegians with their many aristocratic chieftain families. The former were as eager for viking expeditions as their neighbours, but it required a more cohesive power than that of mere pirates to maintain territorial acquisitions and transform them into kingdoms. Thus we find that Danish official interference became necessary to save both the English and Norman conquests. Nor was the control of Svea kings over the west coast sufficiently strong throughout to interest them or their eastern chiefs in the western operations. Indeed, Denmark took advantage of this, and acquired the supremacy in England and Normandy partly through her proximity to and influence in western Sweden. Norway, acting mainly under petty chiefs, did accordingly found comparatively small domains in Ireland and Scotland, being otherwise content to enter as auxiliaries or settlers in the Danish acquisitions. Swedes had a double impulse to do likewise in their connexion both with the leading Norwegian viking districts and the Dano-Swedish provinces, and in the growing custom among them to leave their poor land for foreign military service. The Varangian legions of Russia and the Byzantine empire were founded by, and composed mainly of, Swedes; and we know they formed a proportion of the Thingalið forces in England. Great Britain and France, presenting more congenial features than distant Greece, must have attracted larger numbers.

The wide participation of Sweden in the western conquest is sustained by archæological evidence.¹⁷ Rune stones exist all over

¹⁶ Canute asked Olaf the Swede to assist him first in the reconquest of England, then of Norway (Adam of Bremen, ii. cap. 50; Munch, ii. 478). German chroniclers contain frequent allusions to hostile as well as friendly relations with the adjoining Denmark. Munch, ii. 729-31, relates how Canute hurries home to check the Norwego-Swedish attacks. Concerning these points and Swedish intrigues and wars in Danish Sweden, see also Dahlmann, *Hist. Dan.* vol. i.; *Hist. Sverige*, vol. i. *passim*, and other general histories of Scandinavia. A careful consideration of the data therein presented will show that the preceding analysis of the Danish armies in England is not mere guesswork.

¹⁷ Concerning coins, jewelry, rune stones, &c., see Hildebrand, *Anglosachs. Mynt*; *Sverige Hist.*, i. 293 *et seq.*; Montelius's works; Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, ii. last appendix; Holmberg, &c.

Sweden, in the east and centre as well as west and south, with notices of men who served and died in England. As such stones were raised mostly or wholly to influential persons, they represent an imposing total of followers likewise. Anglo-Saxon coins, more numerous than in any other country, Great Britain not excepted, have been dug up in almost every county of central and southern Sweden, in troves of hundreds or several thousand pieces each. A still greater mass must have been smelted by the finders, particularly prior to this century, before the authorities began to collect such relics. About half of them pertain to Gotland, one-fourth to Scania, and the rest chiefly to the east coast provinces. The west coast exhibits comparatively few, like Denmark proper, while Norway has only 1,500.

This distribution has led to the belief that Sweden acquired her coins mainly by trade. But it must be considered that the east coast, which holds one-fourth of the finds, and is shown by rune stones to have shared in British expeditions, was comparatively poor and had few things to sell. The only likely commodity, furs, was more readily procured on the eastern shores of the Baltic or in Norway. If amber was sought the coin would go to the German side. The trade that alone could attract money from England, or from Danes and Norwegians, was the oriental, *viâ* Russia and the south-eastern points of the Baltic. Now, the upper Swedish east coast never had any great mart, save Birka, on the Mælar Lake, destroyed prior to the Danish conquest of England. The Mælar trade with the west, moreover, would have passed along the great water channel to the stations on the river Götha, the great entrepôt on the North Sea; but here are hardly any coins. Besides Birka we know of only three or four great Scandinavian marts in the Baltic at that period—Wisby, on the island of Gotland; Oeland, its rival; and Hedeby or Sleswig, in Denmark; to which may be added the Jomsburg viking seat. Oeland can be classed with the lower east coast of Sweden, which it almost touches, and coins hereabouts transferred in trade would naturally seek this point; but a very insignificant proportion has been disclosed, beside the goodly number of southern stamp, drawn by way of Germany. The Gotland coins evidently came by traffic, but mostly, no doubt, from the near-lying Swedish provinces: for the island had not yet attained the commercial supremacy which later raised it to a power in the north. Indeed, the oriental trade, according to Sartorius and Geijer, still delayed in making central Russia its main channel, and Wisby did not found her famous factory at Novgorod, for its control, until the beginning of the thirteenth century. The Danes, who acted also for England, would, therefore, either have had recourse to their own emporiums—say, at Sleswig, situated upon a peninsula, which geography had so distinctly assigned as trading centre between Russia and the Baltic on one side

and West Germany, France, and England on the other; or they would have sailed to the direct and cheaper markets which evidently still existed along the south-east shores of the Baltic. The mouths of the Vistula and Oder had been the main avenues for trade with the Black Sea and the Mediterranean since Greek times, although with occasional interruptions from migrations and wars, and at Jomsburg, which dominated the Oder, Danish influence was at this time paramount.¹⁸ The same observations apply to Norway, which exhibits the correspondingly smaller share of money to be expected in a country whose operations lay chiefly beyond the Anglo-Saxon border. The larger proportion of English coins found on Gotland, as well as the east coast of Sweden, can, therefore, safely be regarded as an originally Swedish acquisition in booty, pay, and tribute. This conclusion is affirmed by the retention in Scania of so large a number. This share could not have come from Denmark proper, for Scania had nothing to offer save agricultural products, in which the neighbouring islands were far richer. Besides, the small Dane capital then lay on the further side of Seeland. The comparatively sterile east provinces of Sweden probably did buy from her, so that any treasures here acquired by trade must have come mainly from Swedes. The reason why Denmark proper exhibits so small a number of coins can be partly explained. Her people were compelled to serve in the British expeditions, receiving little or no pay, only maintenance and booty. Scandinavians, indeed, are shown to have bargained only for food and clothing when fighting under Ethelred. The not over-abundant money obtained by the Danish chiefs returned to the king in taxes and other form, to pass in due time to Swedes, who received pay as well as booty.

The conquest of Normandy, which so intimately concerns us, has, like many other viking deeds, been a bone of contention between Danes and Norwegians. Steenstrup and other late Danish writers show that most names and records in Normandy testify in their behalf, and that Rolf, or Rollo, the redoubtable founder of the Norman dynasty and dominion, cannot have been the saga hero Ganger Rolf, as widely believed. Indeed, Palgrave and Mr. Freeman evade the doubtful question. Among the several irreconcilable points in the sagas concerning the Norwegian Rolf may be mentioned his gigantic stature, the reason for the double appellation, which prevented him from riding. So remarkable a feature would not have escaped his biographers, had Rollo possessed it. The accounts of the family chroniclers, on whose statements Dudo built up his chronicle, and who derive him not from Norway, do therefore merit the attention which they now begin to receive. Dudo, who

¹⁸ Wiberg, *Klassiska folkens förbindelser med Norden*; Sadowski, *Handelsstrassen*; Genthé, *Etrusk. Handel*. See also Sartorius, Geijer, *ubi sup.*, and Ottar's voyage in *King Alfred's 'Orosius.'*

was born three decades after Rolf's death, and gathered data from surviving comrades and children of the conqueror, describes Rolf's father as a prominent chieftain, with possessions in Dacia (Denmark, including Scania) and on the borders of Dacia and Alania (Halland, in the Danish territory, on the west coast of the Swedish peninsula). His independent attitude had roused the ill-will of the Danish king, who upon the death of the old man proceeded to wrest the domain from his two sons, Rolf and Gorm. After several unsuccessful attacks he succeeded, with the aid of treachery. Gorm fell, and Rolf escaped to 'Scanza Insula,' as the Swedish peninsula was then named abroad. He dwelled here for a long time, until admonished in dreams to seek his future in the west. He accordingly fitted out several vessels with men, arms, and provisions, and sailed first to England, then to the German side of the North Sea, and finally reached the Seine with increased forces.

On examining the narrative we find that preceding geographical allusions, coupled with the flight to and long stay in Sweden, confirm the interpretation of Steenstrup, the Danish commentator, that Alania, as the name indicates, must be Halland, the district on the Swedish coast then belonging to Denmark; and that the portion of Rolf's domain bounded by Halland, and consequently by Scania, must be partly or wholly within Sweden proper. As the possessions of such chiefs were most likely in one body, not scattered over regions far apart, the probability is that they lay entirely in the Swedish peninsula. Indeed, preceding geographic details indicate that Dacia means Scania, the most important Danish part of that peninsula, or even of all Denmark; and this is sustained by the coupling of Dacia with Alania as a common border for the territory in question. Moreover the hostility of the king upholds the idea that Rolf was one of the suspected chiefs in the frequently rebellious and independent Scania, or a Swede encroaching on the Danish side of the disputed frontier. When expelled, Rolf would naturally take refuge on the Swedish side, and his doing so shows that he can hardly be assigned to southern Denmark, with its independent viking resorts.¹⁹ If, again, Denmark was still divided among several minor kings, as generally assumed, the flight to Sweden, rather than to a Danish territory, likewise points him out as belonging to the Scania region. His retreat was either in warlike Smoland, or more likely in West Gothland, the main abode of Swedish west vikings—

¹⁹ The expression *Scansam insulam cum sex navibus aggressus est* need not signify that he came from any Danish island. The possessions of such a chief would naturally extend to the shore, where, like others, he kept vessels, which would also afford the best means for escape. The retreat was naturally as near as possible to his friends and estates, in order that funds, &c., might be obtained. See Dudo, in *Du Chesne*, p. 71.

two counties which adjoin Halland and Scania. After long dwelling here he fits out several vessels with men, arms, and other requisites. His men must therefore be mainly pure Swedes, with probably an admixture of Dano-Swedes. Since his domain lay in Scania, or on the border of the Danish provinces, he would be called a Dane, and the subsequent preponderance of Danes among his followers, or in Normandy, may have rendered it politic to describe him as one of them. The term was besides applied to Scandinavians in general. The assumption is sustained by the suspicious omission of the father's name—probably to hide the Swedish origin from jealous Danes, or to cover up a parvenu. In confirmation may be added the significant statement by the sagas that the father of the Norman conqueror was Earl Ragnvald—a name borne by the great chief of West Gothland, who assumes so independent an attitude under Olaf Skautkonung. As celebrated names are continually revived in families, here as elsewhere, it is not unlikely that Rolf's father was an earlier member of this chieftain line. Steenstrup emphasises the statement that Rolf's grandson asked for aid from the Danish king Harald, who in reply alludes to the relationship between their families as a reason for the assistance twice given by him; but the utterance is doubtful, and if true might refer to later kinship by marriage. Had Rolf's father been related to the king, his name would never have been allowed to escape. When, therefore, in addition to other facts, the important admission is made—by and among rather jealous Danes—that Rolf's expedition was fitted out in Sweden, with men as well as other requisites, there is every reason for assuming him likewise to have been a Swede, or at least from Danish Sweden.²⁰ Although Danes predominated in Normandy probably from the first, their writers recognise that Swedes proper as well as Norwegians here formed part of the settlers, which, half gallicised, issued not long after to achieve the final conquest of England.

The preceding evidence deserves consideration, and it must to a great extent modify the exclusive claims to western viking achievements by Norwegians, and particularly by Danes. The independent and extensive operations of Swedes in the west stand affirmed by continental chroniclers as well as by sagas, by their reputation as the earliest and greatest of eastern sea-rovers, by their possession of the chief viking resort on the Scandinavian side of the North Sea, and by their wars and conquests, which served to inaugurate the western viking age. Further, sagas and foreign annals unite

²⁰ Rolf's life is given most fully in Dudo and William of Jumièges, in Duchesne and other editions, and in Steenstrup, *Normannerne*, i. 180, 161, &c. It is significant that Frankish annals, as already shown, combine Danes and Swedes as the 'Northmen' of those times, and that Dudo, as the mouthpiece of the dominant Danish element, makes so many and important references to disliked Sweden. This consideration renders even the doubtful statements in these works of value for the argument.

in pointing to the present Sweden as the home of many great viking leaders—notably Rolf, Biorn Jærnsida, and most probably the Lodbrocs sons. Lastly, it becomes clear that western Europe, and England in particular, in the course of two centuries received from the Swedish peninsula a much larger number of people than hitherto supposed. This influx may be divided into several classes—independent invaders, warlike and peaceful, from Sweden direct, by way of the river Götha and other Swedish ports, throughout the viking age; troops tendered by the Swedish monarch to two Danish kings for the conquest of England; volunteers constantly flowing from different parts of Sweden, whom poverty and custom prompted to enlist in foreign service; adventurers who had stranded in Denmark, or settled there during the several Swedish occupations; precautionary levies at different times from the suspected Dano-Swedish provinces; men from the western and interior provinces of Sweden, who entered the Viken districts to join the wide-spread and prolonged Norwegian expeditions. With this record may be compared the invasions by Swedes of continental Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, under Gustavus Adolphus the Great and the two succeeding Charles, whose achievements with mere handfuls of men against great empires bear the very stamp of a final viking episode.

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