

## ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННАЯ ИСТОРИЯ

## The Geopolitical Context of the Rus' Raid on Seville

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The article offers a possible explanation for the raid of the Rus' on Seville in 844 and also attempts to compare this event with the embassy of the Rus' to Constantinople and Ingelheim, and with their raid on Amastris. These events, taken as a part of a complex geopolitical picture of the “long middle” of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, show the origin and nature of the emerging group of the Rus' people. This period started with the renewed Muslim onslaught on Europe through the Byzantine holdings in Asia Minor and Italy in the 820s–830s, and finished in the middle of the 860s with the Byzantine victory over the Abbasids. Other important events of this time were the Great Schism; victories of the Byzantine Orthodoxy over Catholicism and heretics in Great Moravia, Bulgaria and Asia Minor; and the first baptism of the Rus'. This geopolitical background was complemented by the collapse of the Carolingian Empire and the beginning of the German *Drang nach Osten*. During this time, a small group who identified itself as the Rus' first in 838, came into being. Its main goal was to explore new trade routes to the Muslim world bypassing Khazaria. However, eventually they discovered an opportunity of pillaging Byzantium and its allies in Andalusia. The result of their actions, which were probably coordinated from one center in Southern Denmark, was their acquisition of “homeland” in the North of Eastern Europe: a land that was given its accidentally emerged name “Rus”.

*Keywords:* the Rus' people, the raid on Seville, eastern sources, “the island of the Rus’”, geopolitics.

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## Геополитический контекст рейда руси на Севилью

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В статье предлагается возможное объяснение причин набега руси на Севилью в 844 г., а также предпринимается попытка сопоставления этого события с посольством руси в Константинополь и Ингельхайм, а также с военным рейдом на Амастриду. Эти события, взятые как часть сложной геополитической картины 830–860-х гг., показывают происхождение и природу появившейся в этот период этносоциальной группы руси. Данный временной отрезок начался с возобновления мусульманского натиска на Европу через византийские владения в Малой Азии и Италии в 820–830-х гг. и завершился в середине 860-х гг. победой Византии над империей Аббасидов. Другими важными событиями этого времени были великий церковный раскол, победы византийского православия над католицизмом и еретиками в Великой Моравии, Болгарии и Малой Азии, а также первое крещение Руси. Все эти события, рассмотренные системно и комплексно в контаминации с археолого-нумизматическими источниками, свидетельствуют о возможном характере и происхождении формирующейся этносоциальной группы (русы, или росы), вышедшей на историческую арену именно в 830–860-х гг. Этот геополитический фон должен быть дополнен упоминанием краха Каролингской империи и началом немецкого *Drang nach Osten*. В этот промежуток времени и возникла небольшая военно-торговая группа, которая впервые в 838 г. идентифицировала себя в Ингельхайме как народ русь. Его главной целью было освоение новых торговых путей в мусульманский мир в обход Хазарии, но в конце концов они обнаружили возможность грабежа Византии и ее союзников в Андалусии. Результатом этой деятельности, которая, вероятно, координировалась из одного центра в Южной Дании, стало обретение народом новой родины на севере Восточной Европы, и эта земля получила ранее появившееся (в качестве этносоционима) название Русь.

*Ключевые слова:* русь, нападение на Севилью, восточные источники, остров руси, геополитика.

The “long middle” of the ninth century here means a framework from the 820s–830s to the beginning of the 860s. The reason lies in the global geopolitical changes witnessed by Europe and the Near East during this very time, alongside several cycles of military conflicts. This period started with the renewed Muslim onslaught on Europe in 829–831, which had earlier been stopped in 718–735 by the Bulgarians, Franks, and Khazars. Byzantine Crete and Sicily were captured by the Abbasids and Aghlabids, while the Andalusian Umayyads were not only unaffected but also were allies of Byzantium. The end of this period brought about a change in the balance of power: since 863 Byzantium had launched an aggressive attack against the remains of the Abbasid Caliphate and also made great progress in the Slavic world, converting Great Moravia and Bulgaria into Christianity. Other milestones of this period were the collapse of the Carolingian Empire, the start of the German *Drang nach Osten*, and the first (“Photian”) schism of Christianity. The Rus’/Rhos people emerged on the historical stage against this background. Unknown and unnoticed at first, they soon became lords over the most part of the East European tribal communities and threatened overseas cities, like Amastris, Seville, and even Constantino-

ple itself. As a result, the Rus' people became an important player on the Early Medieval international arena, and perhaps even took part in large-scale coalitions.

From this perspective, the goal of the article is to prove that the attack of the Rus' on Seville, Aquitaine, and Galicia in 844 was not an isolated or random event but a part of the entire complex of military and political campaigns, which took place in different regions of Europe. Also, a side goal is to prove that this attack was conducted exactly by the Rus' people, which is sometimes debated by some scholars.

The first mentioning of the Rus' people (ar-Rus) in eastern Muslim sources, which has an actual date (August or September 844), was made in the book by a Baghdadian historian Al-Ya'qubi *Kitab al-Buldan* ("The book of the Countries"), which was finished by 891<sup>1</sup>. It is connected with the raid of the Rus' on Seville. Al-Ya'qubi gives its brief description: "West of the city of Jazira [Algeciras] there is a city of Seville on the bank of a stream. And so the Majus, who are called the Rus', came into the Cordoba river [Guadalquivir] in 229 [Anno Hegirae, or 843/844 CE] and looted, and burnt, and murdered"<sup>2</sup>. However, sometimes doubts are expressed that the raid was undertaken by the Rus' people themselves but not by the Normans. One of the most authoritative works in this field are written by T. M. Kalinina<sup>3</sup>. However, in her latest article dedicated to the analysis of the geographical glossary of the Muslim authors, who somehow mention the raid of the "Normans-Rus" (the term of T. M. Kalinina) on Andalusia in 844, she moderated her view and shifted the emphasis, but did not mention her previous conclusions. No wonder: this latest article, notwithstanding its geographical and source study focus, stems not from the argument of those who consider Seville was attacked by exactly the Rus' people (as her previous work of 2001) but of the scholars of 1950s, like N. K. Nefedova and B. A. Rybakov, who did not deny the fact of the attack, but argued it was aimed at al-Andalus<sup>4</sup>. Their suggestion is the following: there is a "manuscript mistake" in Al-Masudi's work where he writes about the Rus' attack on "An.d.lus" in 844; instead, it should be read as "Ab.d.lus", that is Abydos (on the Hellespont)<sup>5</sup>. This idea was characterized as nonsense already in the 1960s by several Orientalists, and with that it faded into oblivion until its re-emergence in 2014<sup>6</sup>. It seems that for T. M. Kalinina this article became a reason for enunciating her own views on the geographical accounts of several Muslim scholars regarding the "Rusian-Andalusian" subjects. At the same time, her article has a polemic goal: once again to confute the views of Nefedova, Rybakov, and their associate Shumilov, which is reflected in the closing sentence of her work: "The works of Al-Ya'qubi, Ibn Khordadbeh, Al-Masudi, and other authors give no data on the appearance of the Rus' in Asia Minor in 844"<sup>7</sup>. However, in her text T. M. Kalinina continues to connect the reference to the attack of "the Rus' called

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<sup>1</sup> The book itself, according to T. M. Kalinina, refers to another older document — "A letter on the victory over Majus".

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Ya'kubi. Kniga stran (Kitab al-buldan) // Drevniaia Rus' v svete zarubezhnykh istochnikov: in 5 vols. Vol. III. Moscow, 2009. P. 38.*

<sup>3</sup> *Kalinina T. M. Arabskie uchenye o nashestvii normannov na Sevil'iu v 844 g. // Drevneishie gosudarstva Vostochnoi Evropy. Materialy i issledovaniia, 1999 g. Moscow, 2001.*

<sup>4</sup> *Nefedova N. K. Kuda ezdili drevnie rusy — v Andaluziyu ili Anatoliyu? // Sovetskoe vostokovedenie. 1958. No. 4. P. 113–115; Rybakov B. A. Rus' i strana "Andalus" v IX–X vv. // Ibid. P. 116–119.*

<sup>5</sup> *Kalinina T. M. Ob istochnikovedenii. Thesis 21, 24.*

<sup>6</sup> *Shumilov E. N. Severnoe poberezh'e Maloi Azii kak ob'ekt ekspansii i torgovli v IX–X vv. // Evropa: Mezhdunarodnyi al'manah. Vol. XIII, no. 1–2. Tyumen', 2014. P. 28–33.*

<sup>7</sup> *Kalinina T. M. Ob istochnikovedenii. Thesis 34.*

al-Majus”<sup>8</sup> only with Al-Yaʿqubi<sup>9</sup>, while other sources mention only either “Normans” or “Majus”, or both of them<sup>10</sup>. The only deviation from her previous views is expressed in the following sentence: “Al-Yaʿqubi’s information on the raid of the Rus’ also known as *al-Majus* on Seville in 844 agrees with the data from other Arabian sources of that year describing the attacks of the Normans (*al-Urdumanijja*)”<sup>11</sup>. And in Kalinina’s translation: “Al-Majus, who are called the Rus (ar-Rus)”<sup>12</sup>. Then, it is totally unclear what the following sentence can possibly mean: “The eastern sources are aware not only of the West European Normans’ voyages, but also of their sea-crafts... In this respect, the arguing on the East European Vikings’ flat-bottomed boats, which could only be used to sail along the rivers and thus could not reach Andalusia, decline in importance”<sup>13</sup>. First of all, it is well-known without the eastern sources that the “Normans” used different types of sea-crafts. Secondly, it is not clear why the evidence on them should be extended to the “east European Vikings”, that is the Rus’, especially taking into account that the eastern sources differentiate between them. Thirdly, the Rus’ raids across the Black and Caspian Seas are well known from different sources. So, all these reflections are totally meaningless due to their obviousness. However, all of them concern a single argument put forward by T. M. Kalinina for (it seems) the identification of the Normans with the Rus’. In this respect, her arguments against such identification, at least in the case of the raid on Seville, which were expressed in a more well-grounded and specially dedicated to this event article of 2001, and which are not renewed in the article of 2020, still retain their importance. She states three groups of arguments against matching those “Majus” who attacked Seville with the Rus’ people. They are the following:

1. Other Muslim authors who wrote about this raid later did not use the term “ar-Rus”.
2. The Rus’ people of the first half of the ninth century were Swedes (Sueones, according to *Annales Bertiniani*), and they could not make their way to Andalusia. “The Normans who attacked Andalusia were called al-Majus or al-Urdumanijja by the Arabian authors and were probably connected with the history of the West European Normans and could hardly be identified with the Sueones, well-known in Eastern Europe”<sup>14</sup>.
3. The “Majus” sailed to Seville from the west, across the Atlantic Ocean, and as a result, could not be the Rus’. The embassy of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Rahman took the same route in 845. Nevertheless, Ibn Hayyan, writing in the eleventh century, mentions that the “Majus” attacked Seville from the “Rum Sea” and calls them “al-Urdumanijun”, and *Annales Bertiniani* report that a group of Normans reached Andalusia sailing along the French coast and the coast of Galicia: “The Normans sailed along the Garonne to Toulouse and sacked, and plundered everywhere. Some, on their return, attacked Galicia, but were slaughtered partly by catapults, partly by a sea storm. But some of them attacked the remote lands of

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<sup>8</sup> Kalinina T. M. Ob istochnikovedenii. Thesis 34.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Thesis 3, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Thesis 6, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Thesis 34.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Thesis 33.

<sup>14</sup> Kalinina T. M. Arabskie uchenye o nashestvii normannov na Sevil’iu v 844 g. P. 209.

Spain, where they had long and fierce fights with the Saracens. Finally, they were defeated and returned”<sup>15</sup>.

Let's examine these arguments. Out of fifteen authors, who mention the Majus' raid on Seville or Andalusia, only two — Ibn Hayyan (987/988–1076) and Al-Maghribi (or Al-Gharnati) (1214–1278) — call them al-Urdumanijja. Other three (Al-Yāqubi, Al-Masudi — directly, and Al-Bakri — indirectly) call them “Rus”, and Ibn Hawkal calls them “Rus” without adding “Majus”.

These Rus' people are sometimes identified with the Normans, but the Eastern sources separate them terminologically, albeit not always<sup>16</sup>. As for the raids on Andalusia, the majority of sources uses a general and neutral term “Majus”, without further elaboration. T. M. Kalinina mentions that “the Arabs called Majus the pagans, fire-worshippers, and those who burnt their dead. This name was used for the Persians, Hindu, and Rus”. This is confirmed by Ibn al-Athir (1160–1234) who described the “Majus” as “polytheists”<sup>17</sup>.

It is noteworthy that the term “ar-Rus” as a specification of “Majus” type, can be found only in the earliest sources (tenth or even ninth century), which describe these people's raids on Andalusia (Al-Masudi, Ibn Hawqal, Al-Yāqubi). Only one author of the tenth century (Ibn al-Qūṭīyya, d. 977) used the term “Majus” without elaboration. And the new identification of “Majus” with “al-Urdumanijja” appeared only in the eleventh century (Ibn Hayyan)<sup>18</sup>, but still the memory of identifying them with the Rus' had preserved (Al-Bakri, d. 1094). The latter should be trusted more as he spent his whole life in Andalusia — in Almeria and Cordoba<sup>19</sup>. To be fair, another author, albeit of the thirteenth century, associated “Majus” with “al-Urdumanijja” — it was Al-Maghribi (Al-Gharnati) who was born in Granada, studied in Seville, although later he left Andalusia and used the materials from Baghdad and Aleppo libraries<sup>20</sup>. However, according to T. M. Kalinina and also D. E. Mishin, Al-Maghribi's term “al-Urdumanijja” originally belonged to Ibn Hayyan<sup>21</sup>, which means that this word was mentioned only once.

It is clear that we can't absolutize the information by any author separately for many of them followed a certain tradition of description, taking information from one another's books. It especially concerns the works of the 12<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries, whose authors followed the descriptions of the 9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries, but faced a controversial identification of the “Majus” and strived to avoid it, except Al-Maghribi (Al-Gharnati). In this case, it is impossible to identify the “Majus” who attacked Seville in 844 based solely on Eastern sources.

T. M. Kalinina also uses *Annales Bertiniani* to prove that “Majus” can't be identified with the Rus' people. According to this source, in 838/839, the ambassadors of a *chacanus*

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<sup>15</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* // Monumenta Germaniae Historica. T. I. Hannoverae, 1826. P. 441 (all the translations from Latin into English are made by the authors of the article).

<sup>16</sup> In this respect it is interesting to consider A. V. Nazarenko's point of view that the Normans of the Eastern sources should be often identified with the “Rhos” of the Byzantine and Western sources. Alternatively, in some Western sources (e. g., *Annales Xantenes*, *Annales Fuldenses*, and *Annales Bertiniani*) there is an interesting binary opposition: the words “Normans” and “pagans” are often interchangeable.

<sup>17</sup> *Seippel A. Rerum normannicarum fontes arabici. Christianiae/Osloae*, 1896–1906. P. 21–22.

<sup>18</sup> Only he mentions that “al-Urdumanijun” sailed from the side of “the Rum Sea”. Al-Masudi indirectly, based on logical deductions, traced the Rus' attacks on Andalusia from the Pontus (Buntus) connected to the “Ukijanus Sea” with a different strait, not the Gibraltar Strait.

<sup>19</sup> *Kalinina T. M. Arabskie uchenye o nashestvii normannov na Sevil'iu v 844 g.* P. 124.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* P. 146.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* P. 196.

*Rhos* came to the court of Emperor Louis the Pious in Ingelheim alongside with the Byzantine embassy of Emperor Theophilos: “He [Theophilos] also sent with the envoy some men who say — meaning their whole people — were called Russians and had been sent to him [to Theophilos] by their king whose name was *chacanus* for the sake of friendship, so they claimed. Theophilos requested in his letter that the Emperor in his goodness might grant them safe conducts to travel through his empire and any help or practical assistance they needed to return home, for the route by which they had reached Constantinople had taken them through primitive tribes that were very fierce and savage, and Theophilos did not want them to return that way in case some disaster befell them”<sup>22</sup>.

But soon it was found out that the “*Rhos*” ambassadors were the Sueones, and probably spies, and, according to T. M. Kalinina, the Sueones could not attack Andalusia from the west, across the Atlantic Ocean<sup>23</sup>. Now let’s check the veracity of the phrase *ex gentis sueonum* from *Annales Bertiniani*: Louis’s assumption that the “*Rhos*” ambassadors were of Scandinavian stock sounds plausible for Scandinavians were well known at his court. In addition, it seems the ambassadors knew it rather well, and so they had to provide a proper explanation for their language and looks. Perhaps, they were the Sueones, but not necessarily<sup>24</sup>. In any case, we know their ethnical background only by their own statement. Moreover, T. M. Kalinina assumes that the Scandinavians in the ninth century did not have sharp ethnical distinctions.

As for the Byzantine embassy, it was looking for military help from the Vikings against the Abbasids or Bulgaria, according to the Polish-Swedish researcher W. Duchko<sup>25</sup>. Was it really so? Let’s address to sphragistic, numismatic and, finally, archaeological sources.

According to the findings of seals of Theophilos Babutzikos, who headed the Byzantine embassy, upon leaving Ingelheim, it (or at least the charters and letters, to which the seals were attached) reached Hedeby in Southern Denmark, where the first seal was found, — Ribe on the west coast of Jutland or Tisso on the island of Zealand. From there, a sort of credential letters of paiza type, which were obtained from the Byzantine diplomats — twelve coins featuring Emperor Theophilos — reached Birka, Rurikovo Gorodishche (near Novgorod), and even Gnezdovo (near Smolensk)<sup>26</sup>. In four sites out of five (excluding Rurikovo Gorodishche), the coins were found in burials. In mound 47 in Gnezdovo, an indicative finding was discovered in a Scandinavian male grave: a gold solidus (nomisma) of Theophilos, his father Michael II, and son Constantine (835–840)<sup>27</sup>, which was turned into a pendant. It has a ribbed loop for carrying<sup>28</sup>, which obviously signifies a symbol of a high status. Other grave goods include a Scandinavian iron torque, boat rivets, and a marching kit, alongside with cutglass and carnelian beads, and dice and

<sup>22</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*. P. 434.

<sup>23</sup> Kalinina T. M. *Arabskie uchenye o nashestvii normannov na Sevil’iu v 844 g.* P. 209.

<sup>24</sup> Several scholars sometimes include Gotland and even East Baltic region in “Sveonia”. Also, there is an opinion which connects ethnonym and choronym “*Rhos/Rus*” with a cultural area, which, according to M. Magi, comprised Central Sweden, Gotland, and East Baltic region, including Saaremaa, where a residence of *chacanus Rhos* is sometimes said to have been located.

<sup>25</sup> Duczko W. *Rus wikingow. Historia obesnosci Skandynawow we wczesnosredniowiecznej Europie Wschodniej.* Warszawa, 2007. S. 52–54.

<sup>26</sup> Lebedev G. S. *Epokha vikingov v Severnoi Evrope i na Rusi.* St Petersburg, 2005. P. 550.

<sup>27</sup> Avdusin D. A. *Gnezdovskaia ekspeditsiia // Kratkie soobshcheniia o dokladakh i polevykh issledovaniiax instituta istorii material’noi kul’tury.* Moscow, 1952. P. 101. Fig. 28:1.

<sup>28</sup> Ravdina T. V. *Pogrebeniia X–XI vv. s monetami na territorii Drevnei Rusi.* Katalog. Moscow, 1988. P. 44.

counters. In Hedeby, in a male burial 42 a bronze follis was found together with a belt fitting of Saltovo-Mayiki archaeological culture<sup>29</sup>. In Birka, in a female burial Bj632 there were: a silver miliareseon, cutglass and carnelian beads similar to the ones in Gnezdovo, and silver pendants of Danish and Khazarian types<sup>30</sup>. Follis and half-follis were deposited into a female burial 159 in Djupet in Ångermanland 400 km away from Birka<sup>31</sup>. To compare, in the cultural layer in Rurikovo Gorodishche's only folles of copper-alloy were found, although there were four<sup>32</sup> — the same number as in Birka. There, three folles were found in different parts of the settlement, including a long-house<sup>33</sup>. The places and conditions of findings of coins and the accompanying goods show tight connections of their owners with Eastern Europe and with one another. If the leader of the whole group of the Rhos people was buried in Gnezdovo — a key point on a crossroad of several trade routes — the majority of them originated from Birka and Rurikovo Gorodishche. It should be mentioned here, that in Walcheren, which is sometimes identified with the base of the Rus', no such coins and seals were found.

Seals and coins of Emperor Theophilos in Northern Europe, including Rurikovo Gorodishche and Gnezdovo, could be connected to a certain single and extraordinary event, but not to the trade route "from the Varangians to the Greeks". A very narrow time range of their mintage, from 835 to 840 for the above-mentioned solidi, testifies to such an assumption. A mass mintage of bronze folles and half-folles was also started in 835, probably during the preparation for a big war in Sicily against the Aghlabids who declared jihad<sup>34</sup>. T. Arne and J. Shepard connected the emergence of these coins with the return movement of the Rus' from Hedeby to their homeland<sup>35</sup> or to their khaganate<sup>36</sup>, whose capital was Rurikovo Gorodishche<sup>37</sup>. However, we consider that the coins were taken by the participants of the Rus' embassy of 838–839 to their places of origin or to the places whose rulers sent them on this journey. The collation of sphragistic and numismatic data shows that the letters of Patricius Theodore did not reach the places where J. Shepard locates the Khaganate of the Rus'. Emperor Theophilos's seals are found only in the insular and southern Denmark, which probably supports the deduction of Emperor Louis that the Rhos were rather spies, not ambassadors, especially if we take into account that the Rus' attacked Amastris (no later than 842) directly after the embassy took place, and in 845 the Vikings sacked Hamburg and Paris. It could have been the result of an agreement between different groups of Vikings and Rus', although the raids on Paris and Hamburg could have followed the agreement between Patricius Theodore with southern Danish konungs as these cities after the division of the Carolingian Empire belonged to Charles the Bold and Louis the German. In 842, they formed an alliance against Lothair I, who was a Byzantine ally. Hamburg at least was easier to reach from Ribe or Hedeby along

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<sup>29</sup> *Arbman H.* Birka I. Die Graber. Tafeln. Stockholm, 1940. Tabl. 19 b, c.

<sup>30</sup> *Duczko W.* Rus wikingow. S. 51.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Nosov E. N., Plokhov A. V., Khvoshchinskaia N. V.* Rurikovo gorodishche. Novye etapy issledovani. St Petersburg, 2017. P. 24. Fig. I:93.

<sup>33</sup> *Duczko W.* Rus wikingow. S. 50–51.

<sup>34</sup> *Treadgold W.* The Byzantine Revival 780–842. Stanford, 1988. P. 288.

<sup>35</sup> *Arne T. J.* Birkagraven nr 632 och keisar Theofilos' mynt // *Forvannen*. Nr. 41. Oslo, 1946. S. 224.

<sup>36</sup> *Shepard J.* The Rhos guests of Louis the Pious: whence and wherefore? // *Early Medieval Europe*. 1995. No. 4. P. 41–60.

<sup>37</sup> *Franklin S., Shepard J.* The Emergence of Rus. 750–1200. London; New York, 1996.

the river Eider<sup>38</sup>. But the Rhos could not have participated in these attacks, as at the time a part of them could have occupied Walcheren, which belonged to Lothair, and another part flourished in north-east Europe. Besides, the Rus' attacks on the Umayyad holdings in Andalusia damaged the interests of Lothair as the Umayyads were also allies of Byzantium. At the same time, this campaign was beneficial to Louis the German, who allied himself with Charles the Bold attacking his constant enemies in Andalusia and deflecting attention of the Normans from his own holdings. A famous Danish Konung Rorik of Jutland could have coordinated the actions of different Rhos groups. At that time, he served Louis the German and could have made a deal with Heriold or Harald, his brother, who was a formal vassal of Lothair. Rorik's position somewhere in Friesland (perhaps on one of its islands) made him a favorable mediator in contacting different Rhos groups who lived further to the north and east, all the way to Rurikovo Gorodishche and Gnezdovo. In this case, it is possible to call those people who attacked Seville "ar-Rus". Could Rorik have participated in the raid on Aquitaine, Galicia and Sevilla of 844 himself? It is likely, but only if he concealed it from his suzerain Lothair, or if he had a secret agreement with Louis the German. However, Rorik could have taken part in a campaign against the Slavs, which was started by King Louis in 844. This event is described a little differently in *Annales Fuldenses* and *Annales Xantenses*. *Annales Fuldenses*: "Hludovic turned his arms against the Obodrites and subdued them, for they were planning a treason. Their King Gostomysl perished, and Hludovic ordered this country and people, who bowed before him by the God's will, to be ruled by a duke". It is tempting to identify this unnamed duke with Rorik, but it would be too bold. *Annales Xantenses*: "That year King Ludovic went to war with the Vends. One of their kings, Gostimusl by name, died there and the others came to Ludovic and pledged fealty to him. But when he left, they broke their oath". The last record seems more reliable as in 845 Louis had to repeat his campaign against the Vends, raising a large army. The advantage was taken by the Normans, who attacked Hamburg. They were probably the Danes — neighbours and, perhaps, allies of the Vends/Obodrites.

Returning to the findings of coins, we should point out that none of the Theophilos's coins are found to the south of Gnezdovo, and later Byzantine coins are rarely found in Rus until the time of Basil I and his son Constantine (869–877). However, these and later numerous coins could testify not to the trade, but to gifts and tribute to Russian kings, or even to a result of a Bulgarian mediation<sup>39</sup>. "Byzantine coins were treasured, and probably recognized not only as objects of wealth, but also as things of symbolism," A. G. Shpilev writes<sup>40</sup>. E. A. Shinakov earlier suggested that Byzantine coins could be used as signs of power of different levels<sup>41</sup>. Certainly, not only Byzantine coins could mark a status, but also dirhems and *srebriniki*<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Lebedev G. S. Epokha vikingov v Severnoi Evrope. Leningrad, 1985. P. 214.

<sup>39</sup> Domanovskii A. M. Prichini nechislennosti znakhidok vizantiiskikh monet na territorii Davnoi Rusi IX–X st.: pogliad z Vizantii // Drevnosti-2004. Khar'kov, 2004. P. 70–71, 73.

<sup>40</sup> Shpilev A. G. O simvolicheskom znachenii vizantiiskikh monet Krasnikovskogo klada kontsa X v. iz Kurskoi oblasti // Russkii sbornik. Issue 6. Briansk, 2011. P. 68.

<sup>41</sup> Shinakov E. A., Zaitsev V. V., Piskunov V. O. Vizantiiskie monety kontsa IX — serediny XI v. v Srednedesninskom regione kak sotsial'nyi indikator // Stratum Plus. Arkheologiya i kul'turnaia antropologiya. 2018. No. 6: Balansy istorii: tsennosti i sredstva. P. 161, 162.

<sup>42</sup> Sotnikova M. P., Spasskii I. G. Tysiacheletie drevneishikh monet Rossii. Svodnyi katalog russkikh monet X–XI vekov. Leningrad, 1983. P. 110; Shpilev A. G. O simvolicheskom znachenii vizantiiskikh monet... P. 68.



However, among other coins used as symbols of status, Byzantine suited the best for designation of official power and ranks. Out of nine coins connected to the embassy of 838/839, there were four of different face value: gold solidus, silver miliaresion, follis, and half-follis. It seems they were handed to people of different ranks within the Rhos embassy. Also, these coins were more prestigious due to high legitimation and gravitas of the Byzantine emperors, whose portraits and symbols were depicted there. C. Raffensperger states that “Rus’ was not a satellite of Byzantium, but one of many European kingdoms appropriating Byzantine titulature, art, architecture, coinage, and so on to reinforce their own legitimacy”<sup>43</sup>, and that “the rulers and elites of these European kingdoms subscribed to the Byzantine Ideal by using Byzantine titulature, imagery, and art to enhance their own status both with their peers and with their people. These rulers did not create their own legitimating devices; instead, after converting to Christianity, they needed a new source for the legitimacy of their rulership as they could no longer claim descent from a god or gods, as had previously been common”<sup>44</sup>.

In this respect, it is interesting to establish the connection between the presumptive residence of *chacanus Rhos* in Rurikovo Gorodishche and “bronze” Byzantine coins found there. If we accept that there existed not only a title, but a real pre-state unit — the Rusian Khaganate — then, according to numismatics, it should have reached out to South Denmark, Central Sweden, and North-East of Eastern Europe, but without Ladoga. Its capital was probably Gnezdovo (was it called Smolensk back then?), the second centre was Birka, and the third — Rurikovo Gorodishche, and its influence reached Hedeby and northern Swedish borderlands with the Finnish territories. However, such an empire would have been noticed by the contemporaries and mentioned in the sources, while they are silent on this matter. As a result, we can make a conclusion that the Rusian Khaganate is just a historiographical fraud which never existed in reality.

Nevertheless, the important thing is that there was doubtless and contemporary links between Hedeby, Ribe, Birka, Rurikovo Gorodishche, and Gnezdovo, and also between the “Rhos” of *Annales Bertiniani* and the Danes. At least, two of these places (Hedeby and Rurikovo Gorodishche, perhaps Gnezdovo as well) are united by the legendary leader of the Rus’ Rurik and his possible historical prototype — Rorik of Jutland, who lived in the middle of the ninth century. His uncle Harald (Heriold of *Annales Bertiniani*) received the island of Walcheren as a fief: “He [Lothair] gave Gwalakras and other settlements as a benifice”<sup>45</sup>. Rorik, alongside with his brother Heriold received Dorestad in Friesland during the reign of Emperor Louis (that is, before 840), and in 857 Danish King Horik made him lord of Hedeby, Rosengau, and the whole South Denmark at the river Eider on the Danish-Slavic border<sup>46</sup>. Here a route from the west (including Friesland) through the snaking trail into the inlet of Schlei, where Hedeby was situated, started, and where-through the main trade route from the Baltic to the North Sea ran<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Raffensperger C. Reimagining Europe. Kievan Rus’ in the Medieval World, 988–1146. Cambridge; London, 2012. P. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. P. 12.

<sup>45</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*. P. 438.

<sup>46</sup> *Annales Fuldensis / Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. T. I. Hannoverae, 1826. P. 370.

<sup>47</sup> Khennig R. Nevedomye zemli: in 4 vols. Vol. 2. Moscow, 1961. P. 86–87.

In connection with this, it is appropriate to remember the information of Adam of Bremen on the existence of the old ties between Denmark and *Ostragardr*<sup>48</sup>, and also an account of Jaques Margeret: “According to Russian scriptures, the Grand Princes descend from three brothers from Denmark”<sup>49</sup>. There is no such information in Russian chronicles and scriptures, and so it is unclear where Margeret found it or who told him this, but indirect facts in support of this theory are found in the Primary Chronicle<sup>50</sup>. Also, there is a totally legendary data that Rorik of Jutland’s grandsire, konung Harald, fled to Gardariki after the Battle of Bråvalla in 770<sup>51</sup>.

As far as the raid on Seville is concerned, it is clear that the Rus’ people could not reach Andalusia on a regular basis, sailing along the west coast of Europe. But in the 840s it was possible if we accept Danish-Frisian (or Walcheren) theory of their origin, which is fully presented in A. A. Alexandrov’s works<sup>52</sup>. We use it here not as additional evidence but because it explains the Russian raid on Seville from the west in 844. Alternatively, this theory accounts for the reason why almost all Muslim authors after the tenth century refrained from identifying the “Majus” with the Rus’ and from their identification in general — they definitely knew where the Rus’ lived, but at the same time they could not ignore the records of the earlier authors.

Now, let’s imagine, that in the 830s the base of the Rus’ was still situated somewhere in Southern Denmark (e.g., Hedeby), although there were also several outposts in the north-west part of the route “from the Varangians to the Greeks” and *Austervegr* (Rurikovo Gorodishche and Gnezdovo pendent-coins of Theophilos). However, in 841 Rorik’s relative received the island of Walcheren as a benefice, and from there the Rus’ could reach abundant Mediterranean lands. It could explain the Muslim records on their insular base, which was attended by ambassadors of Abd al-Rahman in 845: “The first domain he [the ambassador] reached was an island”. Then “the ambassadors went to his royal residence. It is a big island in the World Ocean, with running water and gardens. This island is separated from the continent by three straits. There are many other islands, small and large, near this island. They are populated by the Normans only, as well as the nearby lands”<sup>53</sup>.

Different Muslim sources of the first tradition inform that Russian motherland lies on an island, which describes the realities of the ninth century: “As for the Rus’ people, there is an island in the sea, which is three days in length and width and is covered with forests. Its soil is so humid that if you step on it, it will sink because of its moisture. They have a king, who is called Khakan-Rus. There are 100 000 [people] living on this island”... “These people always raid Slavs on their ships and capture them and turn them into slaves, taking them to Khazaran and Bulgar and selling there. They have no crops and fields, and they

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<sup>48</sup> Adamus Bremensis. *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20050207105412/http://hbar.phys.msu.ru/gorm/chrons/bremen.htm> (accessed: 19.07.2021); *Rydzevskaia E. A. Kholm v Novgorode i drevne-severnii Holmgardr // Izvestia Rossiiskoi Akademii istorii material’noi kul’tury*. Vol. II. Petrograd, 1922. P. 107.

<sup>49</sup> *Marzheret Zh. Sostoianie Rossiiskoi imperii i velikogo kniazhestva Moskovii / Rossiia XV–XVII vv. glazami inostrantsev*. Leningrad, 1986. P. 231.

<sup>50</sup> *Shinakov E. A. Gosudarstvovenez Rusi v otechestvennoi istoriografii serediny IX — nachala XVII v. // Vestnik BGU*. 2015. No. 3 (26). P. 114.

<sup>51</sup> Saxo Grammaticus. *De Gesta Danorum*. URL: <https://norroen.info/src/other/saxo/htm> (accessed: 08.04.2021).

<sup>52</sup> *Aleksandrov A. A. O rusakh na Zapade i na Vostoke: ot Ingel’khaima do mogilevskogo klada // Gistarychna-arkheologichny zbornik*. 1997. No. 12. P. 17–22.

<sup>53</sup> *Khennig R. Nevedomye zemli*.

usually use Slavic crops. Around 100–200 of them go to the Slavs all the time and take supplies from them”<sup>54</sup>. The similarity of two descriptions is evident, but the details differ essentially.

Is one and the same island described in two sources? This question is really complicated because in the first case we have a description of the embassy left most likely by its participants, and in the second we have a generalized description of the Rus’ homeland created not upon the first hand-information. Surely, the Rhos did not yet possess their “island” at the time when Bishop Theodosius and *spatharios* Theodore came to Louis’s court in Ingelheim. According to *Annales Bertiniani*, Rorik’s brother or uncle Heriold received Walcheren (Gwalakras in *Annales Bertiniani*) only in 841. Things had changed by 844. Although it is clear that the Rus’ (if it was them) didn’t stay there for long, having lost it and all their holdings in Friesland by 855, still it was enough to leave a trace in the Muslim historiography.

However, there is another opinion based on the record in *Annales Fuldenses* that in 837 the Normans captured Walcheren and Dorestad to levy a tribute from the Danes and Frisians. V. E. Iamanov considers that Hemming, son of Halfdan, who was killed during the defense of Walcheren, was Harald’s brother and Rorik’s uncle. Even if the Danes did not hold the island (its Count was certainly a Frank named Eggihard), they could’ve lived there before this date<sup>55</sup>.

In conclusion, let’s consider such an allegedly isolated event as the sack of Seville in a broader military-political context of the end of the 830s — the beginning of the 840s. All the events of that time centered around two axes: the first one — the relations between Byzantine Empire, the Abbasid Caliphate and its vassal in Tunis, the Aghlabid Emirate, which erupted into warfare off the coast of Sicily in 829–831. The second one — the situation in the North-West of Europe where the Carolingian Empire started falling apart accompanied by Vikings’ raids and temporal alliances with some of their warbands. The secondary actors here were these groups of Vikings, pursuing an independent policy, and the Rus, who controlled *Austrvegr* and started using the route “from the Varangians to the Greeks”. Perhaps, at first the new trade route was opened not to divert the source of wealth from the Islamic world to Byzantium but to avoid Khazarian control over the trade with Muslims on the Volga<sup>56</sup>. The First Bulgarian Empire and the Rus’ were de facto, if not de jure, enemies of the Khazarian Khaganate and allies of the Abbasids and Aghlabids. Good and constant relations (trade, mostly) of the Rus’ with the Abbasids Caliphate are recorded in all Muslim sources of the first tradition, which locate the centre of the Rus on an island. It is not surprising since the Rus’ were the main Arabian contractor and even monopolist of the trade between the Caliphate and Europe. It is totally clear that the mutually advantageous trade was the best foundation for other forms of cooperation. At the same time, Byzantium negotiated with the Umayyads of Andalusia, the Carolings (with Louis the Pious and then with Lothair), the Rus’ and probably with the Danes. The real result was achieved only by an alliance with Venice (joint, though unsuccessful naval operations against the Arabs), protectorate over Serbia and probably Croatia. The latter, albeit formally subjected to the Byzantium, was a subordinate of Lothair I and his son, also

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<sup>54</sup> *Gardizi*. *Krasa povestvovanii (Zain al-akhbar) // Drevniaia Rus’ v svete zarubezhnykh istochnikov*. Vol. III. P. 59.

<sup>55</sup> *Iamanov V. E.* Rorik Iutlandskii i letopisnyi Riurik // *Voprosy istorii*. 2002. No. 4. P. 127–137.

<sup>56</sup> *Lebedev G. S.* Epokha vikingov v Severnoi Evrope. P. 478.

Lothair, in ecclesiastical issues. Croatia was also claimed by Bulgaria, and this fact brought together Byzantium and Lothair's patched-up state. From 838 to 842, Byzantium waged war on Bulgaria for Serbia, which brought the Empire on the brink of collapse as it had to fight on three fronts: against the Bulgarians, against the Abbasids, whose troops captured Amorion — the cradle of the ruling Amorian dynasty — in August 838, and against Tunisian Aghlabids, who captured Taranto in 840 and then besieged Bari — the capital of the Byzantine holdings in Italy. Then they sacked Marseille in Provence, which belonged to Lothair. The treaty between Charles the Bold and Louis the German against Lothair only raised tensions. It was against this background that the Rus' attacked a Byzantine city of Amastris and then Andalusia, its ally. On the one hand, these attacks might have been part of a tentative agreement. On the other hand, the Normans, attacking Paris and Hamburg in 845 acted for Byzantium, Lothair, and the Umayyads.

The Rus', as we can see, played a peripheral role in these events. In this geopolitical mixture of the end of the first half of the ninth century, they presented themselves as a small consolidated trade-military, multinational, very active, and adventurous group without a permanent settlement territory<sup>57</sup>. Their real number is hard to estimate. Judging by the number and registered places of the Theophilos's coins, there were twelve ambassadors in the Rhos embassy of 838/839. Counting oarsmen, companions, and servants or slaves — no more than a crew of a ship. They could of course have represented one group, as they claimed themselves, saying that they were sent by *chacanus Rhos*, but it is more likely that they acted for different communities all over the Baltic region. This is not an invention made by the authors but a deduction logically stemming from the analysis of different categories of sources, so the repetition would not seem irrelevant.

It is sometimes stated that such a small group of people couldn't have raided even Amastris, not to mention Constantinople or Seville. True, the number of the ships of the "Madjus" which attacked Seville was relatively small: 54 (Al-Usri) or 80 (Ibn al-Isari). Askold and Dir in Constantinople had 200 ships<sup>58</sup>, but probably of a smaller size. John the Deacon in *Chronicon Venetum (Istoria Veneticorum)* states that "the Normans" attacked Constantinople on 360 ships<sup>59</sup>. However, there is an opinion that John described a completely different attack. A. A. Vasiliev correlated the data of Ibn al-Qūṭīyya that after the sack of Seville the "Majus" sailed to Alexandria and then stayed there for 14 years with Venetian records, and concluded that it was exactly these Rus', who attacked Constantinople in 860<sup>60</sup>. But the "Majus" that raided Andalusia had nowhere near as many numbers of ships. We could assume, of course, that additional ships were provided by the Abbasids already in Alexandria, but it would be a purely fictitious guess. As for the Scandinavian sources, they mention the Vikings' raid on the Mediterranean of 859–860 led by Bjorn the Ironside and Hastein, who only had 62 ships and, besides, never reached Constantinople.

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<sup>57</sup> Again, the authors do not support the idea of the existence of the "Rusian Khaganate". Moreover, nowadays it is mainly advocated in Anglo-American historiography, while in the Russian literature there are very few works on this subject, e.g.: Zorin A. V., Shpilev A. G. Kaganat russov i "strana slavian": Vostochnaia Evropa v IX stoletii (opyt istoricheskoi rekonstruktsii) // Russkii sbornik. Trudy kaf. otechestvennoi istorii drevnosti i Srednevekov'ia BGU, vol. 12, issue 5. Briansk, 2009.

<sup>58</sup> Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei (PSRL). Vol. 2: Ipat'evskaia letopis'. Moscow, 1962. P. 9.

<sup>59</sup> Ioann Diakon. Istoriia Venetiitsev. URL: [http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus17/Ioann\\_Diakon/frameset1.htm](http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus17/Ioann_Diakon/frameset1.htm) (accessed: 02.05.2021).

<sup>60</sup> Vasiliev A. A. The Russian attack on Constantinople in 860. Cambridge, 1946. P. 42–63.

So, John the Deacon got his information probably from a Byzantine description of the Rus' attack on Constantinople of exactly 860<sup>61</sup>.

Recruitment is another issue here. How did the Rus' manage to gather enough warriors for their campaigns, which demanded hundreds, if not thousands, of armed men? It seems that they used the same strategy as the Vikings: a successful leader or a group spread a word of the upcoming campaign, and everybody interested came to participate. These participants could represent different tribes and nations and come from different lands, and means of transport of that time allowed an army to get gathered in several months. Consequently, the army, which then raided Aquitaine and Andalusia, could have gathered, say, on Walcheren, roughly in three months after the word had been spread. It could not be too difficult within a small trade-military community or micro-society which was aware of its unity.

In any case, the Rus' comprised of no more than several thousand of oarsmen-warriors, who could be recruited from different tribes and peoples for a certain campaign, so in this case the Rus' could be rather a socionym, which gained new value and interpretation after the acquisition of the homeland. Their multi-ethnic origin is indirectly proved by the Theophilos's coins, which were found in five different parts of the Baltic region where they could be used as memorial tokens or souvenirs and be preserved for some time. Also, Al-Masudi informs that the Rus' are numerous, and there are different kinds of them.

According to the numismatic materials, they could hold Rurikovo Gorodishche in the 830s (but not Staraya Ladoga where a separate group of the Normans lived), and could appear in Gnezdovo if the settlement there had already existed. But their main base, if we accept Danish-Frisian theory and according to the materials of sphragistics, was situated in Southern Jutland, while their activity reached Friesland (Rüstringen, later — Walcheren and Dorestad). In connection with this, the Rus' sailing down the Dnieper to Constantinople in 838 could have been determined by the goal of finding a way to connect western and eastern points of their activity and also to find new routes to the Abbasids Caliphate and Muslim world on the whole, as it was the main source of the European silver at that time, or to find new non-Muslim sources of wealth accumulation. It is possible that the upfront information was given to them in the Abbasid Caliphate and Khazaria during the trade operations and associated agreements with Bulgarian rulers — Khan Presian I and Kavhan Isbul<sup>62</sup>.

The name Rhos/Rus itself could have been chosen due to profession, appearance, or qualities of the members of this group, or due to associations with the regions of their previous, simultaneous and forthcoming stationing (Rüstringen, Rosengau, Roslagen). Judging by *Annales Bertiniani*, this group is sometimes identified with the Sueones, although such identification, as mentioned above, is known only according to their own words. More importantly, it seems that such an explanation satisfied the Franks; besides, the Scandinavian nations were still shaping at that time, and so their differences were not too obvious.

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<sup>61</sup> Kuzenkov P.V. Pokhod 860 g. na Konstantinopol' i pervoe kreshchenie Rusi v srednevekovykh pis'mennykh istochnikakh // *Drevneishie gosudarstva Vostochnoi Evropy*. 2000 g. Problemy istochnikovedeniia. Moscow, 2003. P.150.

<sup>62</sup> Shinakov E.A., Dzhambov I.Kh. Bolgarskie aspekty "posolstva khakana rosov" v 838–839 gg. // *Sbornik za s"vmestnata muzeino-arkheologicheska ekspeditsiia*. Plovdiv; Briansk, 2013. P. 12.

Now, the embassy of the “Rhos” in 838/839, which was discussed above, should be considered on a broader scale. It was the first encounter of the Byzantines with the Rus’. In the same 839, the Bulgarian Khan Presian waged war on Serbia<sup>63</sup>, a protectorate of Byzantium. In three years, the Rus’ attacked Amastris<sup>64</sup>, according to several scholars<sup>65</sup>. It happened in summer or autumn of 842, or in spring of 843. This time period best suited for a trial attack on a peripheral town of the mighty empire as Emperor Theophilos died at the beginning of 842, and the empire was ruled by his infant son Michael III. Finally, in 844 Seville was sacked. The latter event coincided with the escalation of warfare between Byzantium and the Abbasids, while the Umayyads of Andalusia remained Byzantine allies. It is likely that Russian attacks on both Amastris and Seville were coordinated from one centre. Ibn al-Qūṭīyya even writes that after the raid on Seville the Rus’ found a safe haven in Alexandria, where they then stayed for fourteen years<sup>66</sup>, it means — until 858/859. If we take his information for granted, then these Rus’ could be connected with those who attacked Constantinople in 860. However, it is highly unlikely that the Rus’ could idly stay in Egypt for such a long time.

But even if this information is wrong, it is undeniable that Byzantium and its allies (the Umayyads and West Franks) were almost simultaneously attacked from several directions: Björn the Ironside and Hastein raided Andalusia, Provence, and Italy in 859–861. In the south, in 859, the Aghlabids took Castrogiovanni, the last Byzantine stronghold on Sicily and destroyed the Byzantine fleet. At the same time, Bulgarian Khan Boris I, supported by East Francia, attacked Byzantium from the north. And finally, in 860, the Rus’, probably under command of Askold and Dir<sup>67</sup>, besieged Constantinople right after Emperor Michael III had led the army against the Abbasids<sup>68</sup>. The author of the Nikon Chronicle even connects these two events: Askold and Dir attacked Constantinople after *learning* that Michael III had gone to war against the Muslims<sup>69</sup>. It means that the Rus’ of Kiev were well aware of the situation in Constantinople, perhaps, due to the possible alliance with Bulgaria, which started war against Byzantium in 859. Also, we can suggest an agreement on cooperation between the Rus’ and Muslims, especially taking into account their constant and well-established trade relations. Such an assumption was first suggested by M. D. Priselkov in 1939<sup>70</sup>, and the given examples of almost synchronous actions of different Byzantine foes support this point of view. The Rus’ attack on Constantinople, albeit unsuccessful, derailed Michael III’s great campaign against the Muslims and their allies Paulicians. As Serbia, Croatia, and Great Moravia were involved in war on the Byz-

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<sup>63</sup> *Andreev I. B*”lgarskite khanove i tsare VII–XIV vek. Istoriko-khronologichen spravochnik. Sofiia, 1994. P. 46–47.

<sup>64</sup> *Zhitie Georgiia Amastridskogo // Drevniaia Rus’ v svete zarubezhnykh istochnikov. Vol. II: Vizantiiskie istochniki. Moscow, 2010.*

<sup>65</sup> *Shinakov E. A. Gosudarstvogenез Rusi v otechestvennoi istoriografii serediny IX — nachala XVII v. P. 160–163.* — If the Rus attack happened in the 830s, as it is sometimes claimed, then it is unclear why Emperor Theophilos treated their ambassadors well after their atrocities, and then even recommended them to Emperor Louis.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn al-Qūṭīyya. *Tarikh Iftitakh al-Andalus. Beirut, 1982. P. 88.*

<sup>67</sup> PVL dates this attack to 866: PSRL. Vol. 2. P. 9.

<sup>68</sup> *Fotii. Pervaia i vtoraia besedy «Na nashestvie rossov».* Okruzhnoe poslanie // *Materialy po istorii SSSR. Issue 1. Moscow, 1985. P. 267–271.*

<sup>69</sup> *Kuzenkov P. V. Pokhod 860 g. na Konstantinopol’... P. 165–166.*

<sup>70</sup> *Priselkov M. D. Russko-vizantiiskie otnosheniia v IX–XII vv. // Voprosy drenei istorii. 1939. No. 3. P. 98–109.*

antine side against Bulgaria and Germany, it turned into a small world war in the south of Europe.

The next apex of warfare fell on 859–860, but its causes are rooted in 855–856, or even earlier, during a relatively peaceful period of 844–846. A new geopolitical factor of this period was the emergence of the independent German Kingdom which strived for expansion eastwards (famous *Drang nach Osten*). The war with the second most powerful (after Bulgaria) Slavic state — Great Moravia — at the beginning of 846 became the milestone. With the collapse of the Carolingian Empire, Great Moravia overthrew Frankish domination and probably supported the Obodrites in their war with Germany. Yet the interests of Louis the German collided with the Bulgarian ones, as Bulgaria de-facto was aiming at redistribution of the “Avarian legacy” in Central Europe and in ideological sphere positioned itself as a defender of the Slavs. What territory became an apple of discord between Germany and Bulgaria is clear from *Annales Quedlinburgenses*: “King Louis, son of Louis, conquered Pannonia and on his way home sacked Czech lands”<sup>71</sup>. *Annales Altahanses* inform under the year 855 that Moravia itself was not sacked<sup>72</sup>. However, this year the power balance in Central and South-East Europe was redressed drastically. Khan Boris was defeated by the Germans in 853 and had to make peace with them. Judging by the following events, he promised to adopt Christianity from Germany and take part in the war with Great Moravia, and in return got a permission to conquer Croatia. As a result, Moravian ruler Prince Rostislav had to turn to the Bulgarian archenemy — Byzantium, which in the 860s started to restore its military power. During the same period, the status of the Rus/Rhos people changed. Their presence in Rurikovo Gorodishche and Ladoga became more significant<sup>73</sup>. Why did it happen exactly at that time? The possible answer is the advent of the presumable prototype of the annalistic Rurik-Rorik of Jutland with his followers, who are sometimes identified with the Rus people. The necessity for Rorik to find a new place of living and service came in 855 when Lothair gave Friesland, a former Rorik’s benefice, to his son. Rorik sailed to Denmark trying to get a crown there but failed. Only in 857, he received a new fief near the Eider. As a result, the year 856 was when Rorik could have come to the North-West of the prospective Rus. This conclusion is seemingly supported by some Russian chronicles: in the Novgorod First Chronicle, the beginning of Rus is dated back to exactly 856<sup>74</sup>. Could Rorik be summoned, as the Russian Primary Chronicle claims? Certainly, as he had an abundant experience in warfare and managing different lands; he also had a high status as a member of the Danish royal dynasty. At the same time, he was a “sea king” — a leader with a strong retinue, but without lands<sup>75</sup>. Was he aware of East European special features, local conditions, and mentality? It is highly unlikely, only if someone gave him this information, perhaps, some of his followers, who had visited these lands earlier. But whoever actually was a coordinator of the “Rusian corporation” activities along the *Austervegr*, and later — along the Dnieper route, he could, after establishing his control on the east, return to South Denmark to strengthen his positions there and farther to the west in Friesland.

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<sup>71</sup> Nemetskie annaly i khroniki X–XI stoletii. Moscow, 2012. P. 37.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. P. 97.

<sup>73</sup> Nosov E. N., Plokhov A. V., Khvoshchinskaia N. V. Rurikovo gorodishche. P. 478.

<sup>74</sup> Novgorodskaiia pervaiia letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov. Moscow, Leningrad, 1950. P. 104.

<sup>75</sup> Sturluson S. Krug zemnoi. Moscow, 1980. P. 28.

Such a detailed analysis of the course of events of 859-860 could retrospectively be extrapolated on the events discussed above. The main conclusion is that different groups of the Vikings and the Rus' could coordinate their actions with one other and also with the Abbasids and, probably, with Bulgaria. And it is not impossible that the raids on Amas-tris and Seville were undertaken by a micro-community or sub-ethnos, which was called "Rhos" by the Byzantines and "ar-Rus" by the Arabs. But the latter is only possible, if the Eastern sources mean Walcheren, or, less likely, Zealand, when they describe "the island of ar-Rus", and it was the place visited by the embassy of Abd al-Rahman in 945.

Alongside with the military campaigns of 859–860, different and important diplo-matic and religious events took place. In 859, according to *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, Louis the German concluded a sworn peace with his nephews Charles of Provence and Lothair of Lorraine<sup>76</sup>. This peace ended the rift within the Catholicism and strengthened the Papacy. As a result, Pope Nicholas I tried to intervene in the elections of Constantino-ple Patriarch Photios but failed, and on the ecumenical council in 861 Photios managed to prove his legitimacy. Reaping the benefits of his victory, Photios developed active mis-sionary work in Slavic countries, sending Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia. It was probably the Byzantine support that helped Serbia and Croatia defeat Khan Boris, which resulted in Bulgarian conversion into Orthodox Christianity with the guidance of Byzan-tine priests. At the time, Great Moravia also adopted Orthodoxy, as well as Pannonia (the Blaten principality of Kocel), which gained independence with the Byzantine help and due to the strife of three powers — Germany, Moravia, and Bulgaria. The Byzantine sphere of influence was constantly spreading, and Nicholas I, who tried to interfere, was anathema-tized on the Constantinople Council of 867. In the same year the Rus', according to some sources, adopted Orthodoxy, not least because of the imperial military successes on the "eastern front": in 863 emir of Melitene and the head of Paulicians suffered utter defeat in Armenia<sup>77</sup>, and Byzantium started advance on the Abbasids Caliphate.

The war went on but the Muslim expansion on the East was stopped for 200 years until the Seljuk invasion in 1067. This led to such an expansion of the Byzantine sphere of influence and its gravitas that new Pope Hadrian received Orthodox missionaries Cyril and Methodius in Rome, blessed the church service in Slavic languages and canonized Cyril upon his death. Methodius was made archbishop of Moravia and Pannonia, which were thus separated from the German Salzburg diocese<sup>78</sup>. As a result, almost all Slavic lands fell into Byzantine range of power, including the Middle Dnieper region — future core of the Kievan Rus.

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<sup>76</sup> Nemetskie annaly i khroniki X–XI stoletii. P. 38.

<sup>77</sup> *Dashkov S. B. Imperatory Vizantii*. Moscow, 1996. P. 158.

<sup>78</sup> *Istrin V. A. 1100 let slavianskoi azbuki*. Moscow, 1988. P. 32–36.



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