

Who were the Rus During the Samanid Period? A Reexamination of 9th-10th Persian and Arabic Textual Accounts in Light of Recent Archaeological, Genealogical, and Genetic Studies

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Abstract

This paper utilizes an approach that combines studies of Samanid period artifacts and textual accounts with modern genetic studies to explore the identity of the people who were involved in long distance trade from the far eastern regions of the Central Asia into Northern Europe. Although this study does not analyze the Samanid works, it reiterates and illustrates how important Iran/Persia was in the history of Europe as well as Central Asia. The information contained in the artifacts and texts gives us the evidence needed to understand the vast trade network and the people who were responsible for the movement of these goods, people and ideas. This study reconfirmed recent genetic studies that the people, collectively termed Rus or Vikings, were a mixture primarily of Scandinavians, Slavs, and Turks, with additional admixing with local populations. The importance of the Persian and Arabic sources addressing contact between the Rus and Eastern people has been thoroughly discussed by Thorir Jonsson Hraundal. In these texts, the Rus were referred to by different names including Majus, Northmanni, Urduman, Warank as well as by other names. One of his many observations is the unmistakable influence of Turkic culture on that of the Rus. This complex ancestry is supported by recent genetic studies and will be discussed in more detail below in light of archaeological evidence. Thus, the term Rus refers to a way of life rather than a homogenous ethnic or cultural group. However, this study refined the identity of the people responsible by observing a correlation between the distribution of the genetic haplogroup R1a sub-clade and the long-distance trade routes across Central Asia to Northern Europe, with the central focus in Eastern Europe. Despite the vast distance, the evidence indicates that there were cultural contacts between people with linked ancestry. The study is important because it begins to reveal the unexpected influence of Eastern cultures on those of Northern Europe.

Keywords: Rus, Viking, Identity, Samanid, Swords, Trade, Kinship, Ukraine, R1a1a, Religion.

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Introduction

The Samanid Empire stretched from the eastern part of present-day Uzbekistan through to the Caspian Sea in the west. In Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe, the local traditional religions were being replaced by new ones, resulting in many religious movements that were related to but distinct from each other. Tribal affiliations were also slowly giving way to loyalties to kingdoms and nation states. Along with these changes came laws and new economic systems, as well as new concepts of kinship, legitimacy, inheritance and marriage. Understanding the beliefs and relationships between these different groups is important for understanding the causes of conflicts and the creation of alliances. Increase in long distance trade coincides with the beginning of the Medieval Warming Period, when the average temperature in the North Atlantic was rising leading to longer growing seasons and surplus. Thawing of rivers also allowed travel to begin earlier in the spring and go on for longer into the fall. It is during this time that Samanid silver coins and steel and swords were moving from the eastern regions of the Samanid empire, via Central Asia and Eastern Europe, all the way to Northern Europe and into the British Isles.

This study primarily focuses on the period between the late 9th to late 10th century. It does not analyze the Samanid artifacts and textual accounts, but rather uses the evidence from them to help explain the people involved in these trade connections outside the Empire. This reiterates and illustrates the scope and importance of Iran/Persia in the history of Europe and Central Asia. This paper uses a broad anthropological approach that combines three independent categories of evidence, artifactual, textual and genetic, to investigate the contacts between diverse groups of people and begin to identify patterns of behavior. Each of these distinct types of evidence reveals the same pattern of behavior of long-distance trade and contacts.

Over the past two centuries, many scholarly endeavors have been influenced by nationalism and modern anachronistic concepts of ethnic identities that do not necessarily reflect those of people from the past. The terms Rus and Viking will be used throughout this paper; however, it should be noted that they are being used here as general terms and are meant to denote people who practice a particular lifestyle which primarily involved traveling by water to engage in activities including hunting, fishing, trading and raiding, rather than inferring a particular ethnic group or homeland. How far individual traders traveled is uncertain but likely ranged from as far as one could go and return before the weather turned, to longer trips that could last for years.

There are many competing theories with valid arguments that tend to confuse and cloud our understanding of the past rather than elucidating them. It was the intent of this study to provide an independent argument that would either support or refute contested theories. Some of the most debated arguments include what caused the Viking age, and the ethnic identity of the Rus, their conversion to Christianity, or their later involvement in the Varangian Guard, the elite military unit of the Byzantine Army. What

these studies increasingly show is that the idea that the Rus were a homogenous group of pagan Vikings from Scandinavia, is inaccurate. This group of people spent most of their life on the move, rather than living in one location in a settled community. Accurately identifying who these people were and their role in history is necessary for understanding the interactions between different groups of people who met through peaceful or forceful means.

This study begins by looking at the distribution of Samanid silver coins found in great quantities in Viking contexts in Northern Europe (Naismith, 2005). The year the coins were minted provide the earliest possible date for the trade and indicated their place of production. The second type of artifacts are swords and ingots made of crucible steel. While their origins in Central Asia are not proven, this is a distinctive and identifiable method of steel production that is only known to have been produced in certain locations in Central Asia and India, to be traded widely across Europe, Asia and into Africa. Most notably, this steel was used to create one group of Vikings swords referred to as “Ulfberht” (Feuerbach, 2016). These and other artifacts began their “life” in Central Asia, alongside the coins, and then traveled to Northern Europe where they were eventually deposited and became part of the archaeological record.

The next aim was to identify the people responsible for the movement of the coins and steel, beyond their broad identification as Viking. For this the textual accounts were consulted. One of the major scholarly arguments is the identity of the Rus because there appears to be inconsistencies in names and descriptions in the textual accounts. There are still major gaps in our understanding of this time period, so claims that the information in the texts is false, simply because it does not fit with modern preconceived ideas, is unwarranted. This paper does not evaluate the texts for accuracy or veracity, but rather considers them to be a form of “archival testimony” that reflect the beliefs about a particular group of people or events at a particular point in time.

Finally, recent genetic studies were used to refine the identity of the most influential groups. Genetic studies can tell us about the makeup of people in different locations in the past and present. They can reveal the percentage of similar genes in populations and identify the movements of people. These studies can tell us where the gene is found and in how much of the population has it. However, they cannot explain how those genes arrived at those destinations or why or when it occurred. The genetic distribution pattern requires additional information about past events, and knowledge about past cultural traditions, such as kinship and mating patterns. It is this intangible information that can be extracted from the textual accounts and the distribution of artifacts.

One of the most valuable aspects of the Persian and Arab textual accounts from the Samanid period is that they record some of the last vestiges of these people and their traditions before kingdoms and Christianity changed the shape of Europe and the people’s way of life forever. Although there is a diverse range of archaeological and textual evidence from this period, our understanding of the customs of different groups

of people and the interactions between them is unclear because of the sparsity of written sources in Europe. Therefore, one needs to look for information about these people from the trade in artifacts and in the textual accounts from Samanid Empire.

Artifactual evidence

While many studies on the early Medieval period concentrate on armies, raids and wars, it is during the 10th century CE when goods traded between regions of Western Asia and Central Asia and Northern Europe appear in significant quantities. There is archaeological evidence for an extensive trade network between the people of Northern Europe and Central Asia (Watts, 2015) particularly during the Samanid period. For the coins and steel to have reached Northern Europe from Eastern Uzbekistan, they would have had to travel great distances, around 4000 miles/6000 Km. The number of Samanid coins exported to Northern Europe is estimated to have been over a million a year (Kovalev 2002, 12). Over half the coins date to the reign of Nasr II (914-943 CE) (Naismith, 2005). There was a sudden reduction in coin imports after this time, corresponding to the decline of the Samanid Empire. While the number of coins from eastern lands declines, there is an increase in Carolingian coins in Northern Europe (Garipzanov, 2005: 65). This increase coincides with the formation of Nation-states and the growing importance of Roman Christianity throughout Northern and Western Europe. These coins give us a small window of time to investigate the people involved in this trade.

In addition to the influx of silver coins, steel and swords were also traded to Northern Europe. Their unique place in society provides the opportunity to understand the role they played in the events and interactions between and within people, and under different circumstances. Swords were a symbol of nobility and the tool of the elite warriors, so they were often mentioned in textual accounts. There are many methods that have been used to make steel for swords. Crucible steel was a distinct method of steel production that is distinguishable from the steel being produced in Europe at that time. This steel was the choice material for swords because of their reputation for high performance quality, some of which also had a desirable water pattern. Evidence shows that the steel was being produced in vast quantities through the Samanid Empire. Archaeological evidence indicates that it was being produced in numerous locations throughout Central Asia at this time, including sites such as Pap, Tuva, Akshiket in the Ferghana Valley (Rehren and Papachristu, 2000), and at Merv, in Turkmenistan (Feuerbach, 2006). Two of the most notable scholars who recorded crucible steel production in Iran/Persia were the polymaths Al-Beruni (973-1050 CE), and Omar Khayyam (1048-1131 CE). They record various steel “recipes” as well as the location of other production centers throughout Iran/Persia (Allan and Gilmour, 2000).

Swords made of crucible steel can be distinguished from those made by other methods using scientific analysis (Feuerbach, 2006). Although comparatively rare,

these swords have been found in Europe. Alan Williams (2009) studied a group of swords collectively known as “Ulfberht” and he discovered that some of the swords have a microstructure characteristic of crucible steel. When considering the number of Samanid coins found in Viking contexts, and the amount of crucible steel that was being produced in these regions of Central Asia at the same time, it is plausible that the steel too originated from production centers in the Samanid Empire. The likely location was the Ferghana Valley where there are mountains of mineral wealth and archaeological sites that indicate the production of crucible steel ingots on an industrial scale. How these artifacts reached Northern Europe, the extent of long-distance trade networks, and Eastern influence in the lives of Northern Europeans are questions that have not been adequately addressed. Where trade items travel, so do people and ideas.

Trade went in both directions. There is further evidence for connection between the Vikings of Norway, Orkney, Shetland Islands, and Samanid Persia, through the Walrus Ivory trade. Walrus ivory was a luxury material used for carving high status items including chess pieces, religious art, and it was the preferred material for sword and knife grips (Khorasani, 2006). Ivory from walrus that only live in Greenland and eastern Canada were found in archaeological context in Kyiv, evidence of a 4000 km trade route (Barrett et al., 2022).

The study of the imported coins, along with William’s discovery, produced a knock-on effect that led to subsequent research resulting in the ability to link some of the “Ulfberht” swords with Haakon “the Good” Haroldson of Norway (920-961 CE), and some of the swords to King Athelstan’s other nephews (Feuerbach and Hanley, 2017). Haakon grew up in the court of his foster-father King Athelstan of Britain, but his biological father was the Norwegian Viking Harold Fairhair. This discovery was significant for a many reasons. It provided a date for the sword distribution, around 935 CE, which is consistent with the coin dates of the first half of the 10th century (Feuerbach and Hanley, 2017). This information allowed for sword types to be linked to specific groups of people, and this also correlated with their kinship relationships to King Athelstan. It also identified previously unappreciated family relationships. Thus, the information gleaned from the Samanid period coins and the steel for the swords, combined with historical accounts, lead to the ability to link the “Ulfberht” swords to individuals and their supporters.

The evidence illustrates the complex nature of cultural influences, contacts and religious traditions that were occurring side by side. Interestingly, although Haakon’s father was reputed to be a follower of Odin, Haakon “the Good” was a Christian and he could not speak the local languages in Norway. The majority of his supporters to whom he would have given swords were from Scandinavia and Baltic regions and primarily followers of Odin and Thor. Furthermore, non-Christians were known for serving Christian kings, illustrated by the story of St Christopher. Others lived their lives

as Vikings, but converted to Christianity later in life, such as Óláfr Sigtryggsson Viking ruler of York and Dublin (and also King Athelstan's nephew) who was baptized in 942 CE, and also Sigurd Hlodvirsson converting Orkney and Northern Isles to Christianity in 995 CE (Gylfason, 1997). The conversion of the Rus of Kyiv in 988 CE was not the first group of Viking-Rus to convert to Christianity but the most discussed. Haakon was a Christian but was buried as a pagan, whereas Olafr and Sigurd lived as pagans and died as Christians. This illustrates the problems with generalizations and describing all the Vikings and Rus as pagans; it is imprecise and skews the way the evidence and events are understood. One reason the Samanid period textual accounts are so valuable is because they offer additional descriptions and accounts of these people at virtually the same point in time, and not only from multiple cultural perspectives, but also from different geographic angles as well.

The importance of the Persian and Arabic sources addressing contact between the Rus and Eastern people has been thoroughly discussed by Thorir Jonsson Hraundal (2014). He explains how these texts give an "alternative narrative" of the Rus. In these texts, the Rus were referred to by different names including Majus, Northmanni, Urduman, Warank as well as by other names (Hraundal, 2014, 69). One of his many observations is the unmistakable influence of Turkic culture on that of the Rus. This complex ancestry is supported by recent genetic studies (Maróti et al., 2022) and will be discussed in more detail below in light of archaeological evidence.

Genetic studies have given the most unexpected discoveries particularly that these Vikings were not an ethnically homogenous group, but rather, their genetic heritage is far more complex than initially believed. It has often been assumed that these accounts are referring to the same or similar group of people or culture, most commonly referred to as Vikings who left their homeland in Scandinavia by the sea, to trade and pillage their neighbors. With more research, this simplified understanding has changed dramatically in the last few decades. Previously generalizations have been made, but these are too broad to be of great use in identifying specific groups of people and their actions, but by teasing out traits and characteristics, we can begin to see the behaviors and influences of distinctive groups of people.

Even before the 10th century there are accounts of the long-distance trade in swords and other goods. The Book of Roads and Kingdoms written by the 9th century Persian geographer Ibn Khurradadhbih, described different groups of people, from the Rus in North Europe to the people of Indonesia in far southeast Asia. He discusses various trade routes and the people who are undertaking this trade. According to Ibn Khurradadhbih, the Radhaniya were Jewish traders who travelled from Europe to China and back. Among the items they traded were furs and swords. Crucible steel was known in China for centuries as pin tie, and it was said to come from the "Western Barbarians" (Laufer, 1917: 515). The languages the Radhaniya traders spoke included Persian, Arabic, Greek, Frankish, Andalusian and Slavic, indicate the major groups involved with trade between

the Middle East and Persia, but also Byzantium, Western and Eastern Europe including the land of the Jewish Khazars in the northern Caucasus.

Ibn Khurradadhbih also records that the Rus also traded in furs and swords and that the Rus are one of the Saqaliba people. This implies that he does not consider them an ethnically homogenous group, and this description corresponds with later genealogical accounts of royal marriages (Lenhoff, 2015) as well as the genetic studies (Maróti et al., 2022). Ibn Khurradadhbih makes an important observation when he states that Rus, “pretend” to be Christian. This is significant because it would fit the description of an oath swearer. These were non-Christian mercenaries that would be in the service of Christian kings and thus would have to act in a Christian manner. This also fits with the contemporary story of St Christopher, the sailor who wants to serve the greatest king and ends up carrying “Christ” across the water; thus, physically transporting Christian pilgrims, and metaphorically carrying the message of Christ across the seas. St Christopher was born a pagan but later was baptized a Christian (Stokes, 1890). The story parallels the lives of these Rus transporting people, goods, and ideas.

Ibn Khurradadhbih also records that the Rus had two major north/south trade routes originating in Northern Europe; the western route went via the Dnieper River through Ukraine to the Black Sea ending in Constantinople, while the eastern route followed the Volga River to the Caspian Sea and then on to Bagdad. The Radhaniya may have been from Radhan, a city in Iraq near Bagdad that had a large Jewish population and Christians that were members of “The Church of the East”, the eastern branch of Christianity that goes back to the earliest days of the religion. The association with sea travel and Bagdad as a destination, could support the idea that the Jewish merchants employed Rus as sailors. Furthermore, the Church would have also been involved with the trade to these different branches.

The fullest source on the Rus and other cultures of Central Asia is found in the accounts of Ibn Fadlan. His descriptions of the people he encountered is detailed and insightful, and worth further study from an anthropological perspective. For part of his journey, Ibn Fadlan travelled with an embassy sent from Bagdad to the Finno-Ugric Khanate at the northern part of the Volga River, in 922 CE (Lunde and Stone, 2012). As for the people of Finno-Ugric Khanate, it is significant to note that Fadlan claims the region had recently converted to Islam, further illustrating the far reach of cultural diffusion via the rivers from Bagdad towards the Northeast. His accounts of the Volga Rus are often cited as examples of Rus customs in general, but this is problematic because this assumes that the Rus were a single homogenous ethnic or cultural entity, which they were not.

Fadlan describes these Rus swords as being broad bladed and of the “Frankish” type, and he also reports about a blacksmith called Tikin, who sold steel to the Slavs, once again indicating the Slavs as a significant player in the trade of steel and swords. Thus, Fadlan’s reports clearly show the complexities associated with the movement

of steel and swords from various regions being transported northwards through Eastern Europe.

The Persian geographer Ibn Ruṣṭa claimed that the Rus use Sulayman swords, and this is usually interpreted as an Arab or Muslim sword. His accounts are of particular importance because he records behaviors and what was believed about other parts of the world including the British Isles. The Anglo-Saxon world was also aware of the Islamic world. Beckett's (2003) study of "Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World, also clearly demonstrates that the clergy knew of the Islamic lands and traditions. In regard to Rus customs, he states that when a son is born, he is given a sword and no other property from his father. This is consistent with information found in the Icelandic sagas. Harold Fairhair said that women inherit the land, while men inherit the title of king. The inheritance of property through the mother's line is consistent with some tribal societies, particularly in those where the men are away for long periods of time and engage in risky activities such as those undertaken by the Viking or Rus.

The patterns that are witnessed in the earlier texts are also discussed a century later by the Andalusian traveler Abu Hamid (1080-1170 CE) (Lunde and Stone, 2012). He discusses swords that match the locations of crucible steel production as well as the steels characteristics. He states that they are "from the lands of Islam, made in Zanjan, Abhar, Tabriz and Isfahan, but only bare blades without pommel or decoration; simply the iron blank as it comes from the furnace, after being tempered in water for a considerable time, until when it is hung from a string and struck with the fingernail or with some object of wood or iron, it resonates for a long time (Lunde and Stone, 2012: 78). The description of the steel is consistent with descriptions of the "ring" of crucible steel and the trade in ingots rather than forged blades. He also records that swords from Islamic lands were traded to the Bulgars who then trade them further North to the Yura people.

Abu Hamid also describes the Saqaliba (Slavs) as Nestorians like the Byzantines (Lunde and Stone, 2012: 76). The term Nestorians is hotly debated in scholarly circles, but nevertheless, it seems to be used here to mean that they are Christians and belong to the Church of the East, rather than to that of Rome. He also mentions that he met a man who married into the Muslim community, indicating it is a multi-religious city. Furthermore, he states that in Kyiv, they are descendants of the Maghribs and they look like Turks. Maghribs is a term used to describe people from Northwest Africa and Spain. This claim has also been debated and dismissed as inaccurate, even though he was from the region and his other accounts are deemed accurate. When considering the Byzantine history of the Maghrib prior to it becoming part of the Islamic world, the extent of trade with the region by sea, the multiethnic nature and the various religious sects and long-term contacts, there is no reason to assume that his account is unreliable. Umayyad Spain was known to be ethnically and religiously diverse, with Muslims, Rus, Jews and Christians living and intermixing together.

Genealogical and Genetics Evidence

What accounts for so many names for different groups of Rus in the tales and reports? Are they Scandinavian or Slavic? Why are there seemingly contradictory accounts of their “ethnicity”? The descriptions in sagas of mating practices of Vikings indicate the widespread polygamous relationships (Raffield et al., 2017). Polygamy, having more than one wife, was not an uncommon behavior for certain groups. Its effect on the culture including the distribution of genetic material, deserves more objective study. It has been linked to increased violence and competition over resources, but it might also have facilitated the transfer of knowledge, the movement of people and trade items, over long distances. Harold Fairhair, for example, had at least two dozen children with least 6 women in many locations outside of his homeland in Norway. Furthermore, the sagas tell of movement of kings and queens from the British Isles to locations eastward. Christian women are also known to have had children with powerful men in the Islamic world. The women are often referred to as coming from lower strata of society and the terms “slave” or “servant” are often used. These terms are used to discredit the maternal line, because the women’s kin were initially the landowners and the group who supplied the military might, whereas the male lineage was tied to divine right to rule and the church. With the changing religions and the accompanying changes in marriage laws and inheritance systems, the negative terms reflect the new concepts of legitimacy. Referring to someone as illegitimate discredits their right to inherit and to rule. Treating the maternal line as insignificant results in missing the influence of half the population and this, in part, explains why this time period seems so difficult to understand.

To compound the problem, classifying children as the product of either a marriage partner or a concubine is a product of anachronistic scholarship rather than objective study. From a broad anthropological perspective, “marriages” come in many forms. The concept that marriage requires monogamy and a life-long commitment is a product primarily of later Roman Catholic church doctrine more than past customs. Dismissing women as concubines and children as illegitimate is a culture distinction and does not necessarily reflect the beliefs or customs of the people that lived at a different time or place. This long-distance trade, and the preponderance to genetically mix with local populations can begin to explain some of the genetic distribution patterns. For example, Abu Hamid claimed that red hair and white skin of the Kyrgyz was due to their mixing with the Saqlabs (Slavs). There is some genetic evidence for this as well, specifically the R1a sub-clade gene which is found in the highest concentration in Eastern Europe, but pockets are also found in other Eastern Regions of Central Asia. Many of these locations where the R1a sub-clade are found in the population is also where there is evidence of crucible steel production. Furthermore, Muqaddasi states that there are six stages to the journey from Merv to Amul and “the fifth stage on the desert route is called Ribāt Bāris, the same name as the Slavic envoy” (Lunde and Stone, 2012: 223). This is significant because this area seems to correspond with traces of Eastern European genetic evidence.

Interestingly, there is also a concentration in northern India where Urdu is spoken which could explain the description of the Rus as Urduman. The various names of the Rus could indicate the location of the homeland of that group, rather than designating a single ethnic or cultural makeup.

Geographic areas being named after the people who live in that territory is a common practice; the use of the suffix “-stan” meaning “stone” in Anglo-Saxon (Foot, 2011) or “land of” in Persian (Maciuszak, 2008). This is of particular interest because of its use in personal names in Britain during this time, King Athelstan, meaning “Noble stone”, Archbishop “Wolfstan”, and St Dunstan who was in charge of both The Church of the West and the Church of the East. Dunstan was also reported to be a blacksmith who kept the devil away with his tongs. Even a cursory investigation of some of the artwork produced during this early period shows close parallels with Eastern lands. The genetic evidence also indicates eastern connections.

Genetic studies can identify gene variations and compare them between populations to investigate the movement of people over place and time. One gene variant of interest is the R1a1a sub-clade because it seems to have originated in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe, and then spread to other areas (Underhill et al., 2015). This gene is passed down the paternal line, from father to son. When and how this variant reached these populations are questions that genetics cannot answer without additional cultural information. It is significant to note virtually only one R1a1a variation is found in Scandinavia, the British Isles and Iceland, and it appears during the Viking period (Lall et al., 2021). It is found in the highest percentage on Shetland and Orkney (Goodacre et al., 2005). The Icelandic saga's state that it was Harald Fairhair who claimed the islands for Norway in 875 CE. These islands are known to have been bases for Vikings and walrus hunters out of Norway. This suggests that the R1a variation in Northern Europe was a particular group of Rus, that had ancestors who were from Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, including an ancestor of Turkic origin. The study of a woman from a Viking burial in Trondheim revealed her Eastern ancestry (Krzewińska et al., 2015). Given what we now know about the extent of admixing of populations, it is likely that she, or her maternal ancestor, traveled to Norway via Eastern Europe during the Viking age.

There is other potential evidence found in naming systems. It has been argued that the names Harold and Haakon are not Scandinavian in origin. Haakon the Good was named by his uncle-by-marriage Sigurd Haakonson, after his father. Decades later, Sigurd marries Haakon's half-sister, and carrying on this tradition, Haakon “the Good” names this nephew Haakon Sigurdsson. It is important to note that Sigurd is both Haakon's uncle and nephew by marriage. This kinship system needs further exploration to better understand how people understood their relationship and responsibilities to each other. The similarity between the names Haakon, and the name of the Fatimid ruler al-Hakim (985-1021 CE), and the ruler of Umayyad Cordoba al-Hakam (915-976 CE), is intriguing and may not be merely a coincidence. Al-Hakim is described as having

blue eyes and red-blond hair, and it is argued that his mother was a Melkite Christian of Eastern Christianity. At this point the connections are primarily speculation, but the intermarriage of Muslim men with Christian women during the 10th century is known to have been practiced in Umayyad Spain and elsewhere in the Islamic world. With more research it may be possible to better understand these complex relationships.

Conclusion

The evidence created during the Samanid period allowed the research to progress resulting in new insights into the identity of the Rus, and the people living in the surrounding areas who did not leave many written records of their own. In particular, the Samanid period silver coins and crucible steel artifacts, together with the information from the textual accounts, and coupled with modern genetic studies, show a correlation in the distribution of artifacts, and patterns of behavior. People were engaged in long-distance trade, and they were having intimate contacts between people from vastly different cultural and genetic backgrounds. Further research from an anthropological perspective on different kinship, kingship, and marriage practices, along with more research on the artifact distribution and religious practices, should identify specific clusters of evidence and refine specific patterns of behavior for particular groups of people.

The strength of this study is that it combined independent evidence and different perspectives to identify clusters of behaviors, relationships, and links between groups. The need to identify the Rus-Vikings as a single homogenous ethnic and cultural group of pagans who ransack peaceful Christians before returning to their homeland in Scandinavia, is a product of modern history more than evidence. In the same way the term Viking refers to the activity, vik as a place for trade, Rus refers to an activity, “people of the river”, rather than a specific ethnic or cultural group. This is evident by the various descriptive names given to them, the variations in their customs, their genetic diversity, and the distribution of artifacts. When all this the information was taken together a definite pattern of behavior appears that can be tested in future studies.

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پښتونستان د علومو او مطالعاتو فریښی
پرتال جامع علوم انسانی

به چه کسانی در دوره سامانیان «روس» گفته می‌شد؟ بازنگرش در گزارش‌های متنی فارسی-عربی سده نهم تا دهم میلادی با یاری از دستاوردهای اخیر باستان‌شناسی، تبارشناسی و ژنتیک

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چکیده

این پژوهش از رویکردی ترکیبی برپایه مطالعات مربوط به آثار تاریخی برجای مانده از دوره سامانیان، گزارش‌های متن‌شناسی همراه با مطالعات مدرن تبارشناسی (ژنتیکی) برای هدف خود بهره خواهد برد؛ هدف از این ترکیب، پرده برداشتن از هویت کسانی است که از دوردست‌ترین کران جغرافیایی، یعنی از شرقی‌ترین بخش‌های آسیای میانه تا به شمال اروپا در موضوع بازرگانی فعال بودند. این پژوهش به «هویت‌شناسی» کسانی می‌پردازد که در مسیر بازرگانی این کران (بیرون از اروپا) فعال بودند. در حقیقت، این پژوهش بار دیگر به اهمیت و جایگاه ایران (پارس) در تاریخ اروپا و آسیای میانه (در این دوره) مهر تأیید می‌زند. اطلاعات موجود برپایه آثار و متون، شواهد موردنیاز برای فهم شبکه گسترده تجارت و مردمی که مسئول جابه‌جایی این کالاها بودند، شناخت آن مردمان و افکارشان را به ما می‌دهد. این جستار، گواهی پژوهش‌های تبارشناسی اخیر از دو گروه قومی به نام «روس» یا «وایکینگ» است؛ و البته عمدتاً با ترکیبی از اسکاندیناوی‌ها، اسلاوها، ترک‌ها تا به مردمان محلی را شامل شده است. آن دسته از متون عربی-فارسی که به موضوع پیوند میان روس و اروپای شرقی می‌پردازد پیش‌تر و به درستی از سوی «توریر جانسون هاراندل» مورد بررسی قرار گرفته است. در این متون، قوم روس با نام‌های دیگر چون «مجوس»، «نرثمائی»، «اوردومان»، «وارنک» و دیگر اسامی نیز نامیده شده است. یکی از دیدگاه‌های قابل دفاع وی، تأثیر فرهنگ ترک بر قوم روس بوده است. این اصل و نسب به هم پیچیده این اقوام، به یاری پژوهش‌های ژنتیکی اخیر و نیز شواهد باستان‌شناسی مورد بحث قرار خواهد گرفت. به عنوان نتیجه‌گیری، اصطلاح «روس» نه به عنوان نام یک «گروه قومی»، که به یک «شیوه زندگی» اشاره دارد.

کلیدواژگان: روس، وایکینگ، هویت، سامانیان، شمشیر، بازرگانی، اکراین.



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مقدمه

مرزهای شاهنشاهی سامانی از شرق ازبکستان امروزی تا به دریای خزر در غرب امتداد مرزمند می‌شد. در آسیای میانه، خاورمیانه و اروپا، بسیاری از مذاهب سنتی محلی (با گذشت زمان) جای خود را به باورهای جدید دادند؛ این رخداد هرچند موجب درهم‌آمیختگی برخی از آئین‌ها شد، اما برخی ناهمانندی‌های میان آن‌ها همچنان پابرجا ماند. این پژوهش هرچند به سده ۹-۱۰ م. می‌پردازد، اما هدف آن بررسی متون و میراث سامانیان نیست؛ این پژوهش از رویکردی ترکیبی برپایه مطالعات مربوط به مصنوعات دوره سامانیان، گزارش‌های متن‌شناسی همراه با مطالعات مدرن ژنتیکی برای هدف خود بهره خواهد برد؛ هدف از این ترکیب، پرده برداشتن از هویت کسانی است که از دوردست‌ترین کران جغرافیایی، یعنی از شرقی‌ترین بخش‌های آسیای میانه تا به شمال اروپا درگیر بازرگانی بودند.

این کنکاش به «هویت‌شناسی» کسانی می‌پردازد که در مسیر بازرگانی این کران (بیرون از اروپا) فعال بودند. درحقیقت، این پژوهش بار دیگر به اهمیت و جایگاه ایران (پارس) در تاریخ اروپا و آسیای میانه (در این دوره) مهر گواهی می‌زند. این جستار از یک رویکرد مردم‌شناختی بر پایه سه دسته مدارک مشخص، یعنی مصنوعات (دوره)، متن‌شناسی و دانش ژنتیک برای مطالعه نوع روابط بین گروه‌های مختلف با الگوهای رفتاری بهره خواهد برد. در این پژوهش از دو نام-قوم «روس» و «وایکینگ» در معنی عام آن، نه گروه خاص قومی، استفاده شده است؛ این دو واژگان اشاره به کسانی دارد که با سبک خاص زندگی خود بیشتر با سفر از طریق آب (مسیر آبی) به کارهایی چون: شکار، ماهیگیری و تجارت می‌پرداختند.

بحث و تحلیل

شواهد باستان‌شناسی کافی بوجود یک شبکه تجاری گسترده بین مردم اروپای شمالی و آسیای مرکزی (Watts, 2015) به‌ویژه در دوره سامانیان مهر گواهی زده است. برای ارسال سکه‌ها و فولاد از شرقی‌ترین نقطه ازبکستان به اروپای شمالی نیازمند طی مسافتی بزرگ در حدود ۴۰۰۰ مایل/۶۰۰۰ کیلومتر بوده‌اند. شمار سکه‌های صادر شده از دوره سامانی به اروپای شمالی به هزاران (Kovalev, 2002) در سال می‌رسیده است. بیش از نیمی از این سکه‌ها به دوره پادشاهی «نصر دوم» (۹۱۴-۹۴۳ م.) سامانی (Naismith, 2005) برمی‌گردد. باوجود این، با توقف ناگهانی صادرات سکه‌ها بدین منطقه از اروپا با فروپاشی سامانی روبه‌رو هستیم. افزون بر سکه‌ها، فولاد و شمشیر نیز به اروپا صادر می‌شده است. این شمشیرها نماد بزرگ‌زادگی (اشرافیت) و ابزاری برای جنگجویان برگزیده (نجبا) بود؛ این موضوع از راه گزارش‌های متن‌شناسی قابل فهم است.

روش‌های زیادی برای ساختن شمشیر از فولاد استفاده می‌شده است. بهره‌گیری از فولاد بوته‌ای نه تنها روشی ممتاز برای تولید محصول فولاد بود، که از فولادی که در آن زمان در اروپا نیز تولید می‌شد، بسیار متمایز بود. این فولاد به دلیل شهرت آن‌ها به کیفیت عملکرد بالا که برخی از آن‌ها دارای الگوی آب مطلوبی بودند، ماده انتخابی برای شمشیرها بود. این فولاد به دلیل شهرت و عملکرد فوق‌العاده، ماده اصلی ساخت شمشیر شد؛ برخی از آن‌ها، فولاد گوهردار (با استقامت بالاتر) بودند. شواهد کافی نشان می‌دهد که سامانیان به تولد مقادیر زیادی فولاد مبادرت کرده‌اند. مدارک باستان گواه تولید فولاد در همین زمان در

مناطق مختلفی از آسیای میانه، از جمله در دره فرغانه (Rehren & Papachristu, 2000) و مرو (Feuerbach, 2006) است. «آلن ویلیامز» (۲۰۰۹) به بررسی مجموعه‌ای از شمشیرها پرداخت که به نام «Ulfberht» شناخته می‌شوند؛ او کشف کرد که برخی از این شمشیرها دارای ریزساختار فولاد بوته‌ای هستند. از یک سو، با توجه به شمار سکه‌های سامانی که در لایه‌های مربوط به وایکینگ‌ها یافت شده، و نیز از سوی دیگر، مقدار فولاد بوته‌ای که هم‌زمان در این مناطق از آسیای میانه تولید می‌شد، جای هیچ پرسشی باقی نمی‌گذارد که این مراکز تولید فولاد در شاهنشاهی سامانیان فعال بوده است. «دره فرغانه» یکی از مهم‌ترین مراکز تولید آن به شمار می‌رفت؛ اما مسیر رسیدن این فولاد به اروپا چگونه بود؟

شواهد دیگری مبنی بر ارتباط بین وایکینگ‌های در نروژ، «اورکنی»، «جزایر شتلند» و ایران سامانی از «مسیر تجارت دندان شیرماهی (در زبان پارسی امروزی، گراز ماهی)» (با ۴۰۰۰ کیلومتر) وجود داشته است. عاج (ماهی) والروس، ماده گران‌قیمتی برای حکاکی بر روی اشیاء ارزشمند چون مهره‌های شترنج، هنر دینی بود و البته ماده قابل قبول در ساخت دسته‌های شمشیر و چاقو (Moshtagh Khorasani, 2006) نیز به شمار می‌رفت. عاج به دست آمده از دندان شیرماهی، که فقط در (آب‌های) «گرینلند و شرق کانادا» زندگی می‌کنند، در لایه‌های باستان‌شناسی «کیف» یافت شده است (Barrett et al., 2022).

مطالعات ژنتیکی، داده‌هایی غیرمنتظره را درباره وایکینگ‌ها به دست است؛ بنابراین داده‌ها، نه تنها وایکینگ‌ها گروه قومی همگن و یک‌دستی نبوده‌اند، بلکه میراث ژنتیکی آن‌ها بسیار پیچیده‌تر از آن چیزی است که در ابتدا تصور می‌شد. پیش‌تر تصور می‌شد که گزارش‌های مربوط به وایکینگ‌ها، به همان گروه یا گروهی از مردم یا فرهنگی با همین نام خاص اشاره دارد؛ یعنی وایکینگ‌هایی که سرزمین خود را در اسکاندیناوی در کنار دریا، برای تجارت و غارت همسایگان خود ترک کردند.

افزون بر این، متون فارسی-عربی از نقش ایرانیان در میان دو گروه روس و مردمان شرقی سخن گفته‌اند. این متون از نام‌های متفاوت برای نامیدن روس استفاده کرده‌اند؛ از جمله نام‌ها می‌توان به: «مجوس»، «نورثمان»، «اوردومان» و «ورنک» می‌توان اشاره کرد. با وجود این، دانش ژنتیک، از تأثیر عمیق فرهنگی تُرک بر روس گواهی کرده است. با وجود این، روس و وایکینگ مهاجر به بهانه درهم آمیختگی زادگاهی از یک سو و گزارش‌های متن‌شناسی، گروه قومی یکسانی بوده‌اند. با وجود این، نمی‌توان نادیده انگاشت که مردمی که در این مسیر طولانی به تجارت مشغول بودند، با وجود پیوندهای انسانی و فرهنگ مختلف، به تبارشناسی متفاوتی تعلق داشته‌اند.

نتیجه‌گیری

این پژوهش با تأکید بر شواهد مستقل و دیدگاه‌های مختلف به هویت‌شناسی خوشه‌هایی رفتاری، پیوندها و ارتباطات بین گروه می‌پردازد. احساس نیاز به شناسایی روس-وایکینگ‌ها به عنوان یک گروه قومی و فرهنگی واحدی از کافرانی بودند که مسیحیان صلح‌جو را قبل از بازگشت به سرزمین خود در اسکاندیناوی، غارت کردند؛ هم‌چنین، اصطلاح «وایکینگ» در معنی نوعی فعالیت است؛ این واژه، یعنی «Vik» در معنی «مکانی برای تجارت، تجارتخانه» را معنی می‌دهد؛ واژه «روس» نیز در همین معنی، «نوعی فعالیت» را فریاد دارد؛ این واژه، یعنی

“Rus” در معنی «مردمان رودخانه، مردمان رودخانه‌نشین» است؛ از این روی، به‌کارگیری این دو واژه به معنی یک گروه قومی یا فرهنگی (وایکینگ یا روس) خاص نبوده است. این موضوع کمترین دلیلی است که، چرا آن‌ها با نام‌های مختلف (متون)، با آداب و رسوم متفاوت، مصنوعات ناهمگون از هم و تبارشناسی (ژنتیک) مختلف توصیف شده‌اند!

