

= Caspian expeditions of the Rus ' =

The Caspian expeditions of the Rus ' were military raids undertaken by the Rus ' between 864 and 1041 on the Caspian Sea shores , of what are nowadays Iran , Dagestan , and Azerbaijan . Initially , the Rus ' appeared in Serkland in the 9th century traveling as merchants along the Volga trade route , selling furs , honey , and slaves . The first small @-@ scale raids took place in the late 9th and early 10th century . The Rus ' undertook the first large @-@ scale expedition in 913 ; having arrived on 500 ships , they pillaged in the Gorgan region , in the territory of present @-@ day Iran , and more to the west , in Gilan and Mazandaran , taking slaves and goods . On their return , the northern raiders were attacked and defeated by the Khazar in the Volga Delta , and those who escaped were killed by the local tribes on the middle Volga .

During their next expedition in 943 , the Rus ' captured Bardha 'a , the capital of Arran , in the modern @-@ day Republic of Azerbaijan . The Rus ' stayed there for several months , killing many inhabitants of the city and amassing substantial plunder . It was only an outbreak of dysentery among the Rus ' that forced them to depart with their spoils . Sviatoslav , prince of Kiev , commanded the next attack , which destroyed the Khazar state in 965 . Sviatoslav 's campaign established the Rus 's hold on the north @-@ south trade routes , helping to alter the demographics of the region . Raids continued through the time period with the last Scandinavian attempt to reestablish the route to the Caspian Sea taking place in 1041 by Ingvar the Far @-@ Travelled .

= = Background and early raids = =

The Rus ' first penetrated to the Muslim areas adjacent to the Caspian Sea as traders rather than warriors . By the early 9th century , the Norsemen settled in northwestern Russia , where they established a settlement called Aldeigja ( Slavic : Ladoga ) about 6 miles ( 9 @. @ 7 km ) south of the Volkhov River entry into Lake Ladoga . From there , they began trading with the Byzantine Empire along the Dnieper trade route and with the Muslim lands around the Caspian Sea along the Volga trade route . In the late 9th century , ibn Khordadbeh described the Rus ' buying goods from the Khazars in the market areas on the lower Volga and selling them on the markets of Caspian towns ; these merchants brought furs , honey , and slaves . Small groups of the Rus ' even went on camels as far as Baghdad to sell their goods ; their European slaves interpreted for them .

Thomas Schaub Noonan suggested that the Rus ' reached Baghdad as early as 800 ; this argument is supported by the finding of Sassanid , Arab , and Arabo @-@ Sassanid dirham coins dated no later than 804 ? 805 at Peterhof , near Saint @-@ Petersburg . In ibn Khordadbeh 's account , the Rus ' are described as " a kind of the Saqaliba " , a term usually used to refer to Slavs , and anti @-@ Normanist scholars have interpreted this passage as indicative of the Rus ' being Slavs rather than Scandinavians . In the interpretation of the Normanist scholars , the word Saqaliba was also frequently applied to all fair @-@ haired , ruddy @-@ complexioned populations of Central , Eastern , and Northeastern Europe , so ibn Khordadbeh 's language is ambiguous here .

The first Caspian raid of the Rus ' occurred sometime in the reign of Hasan ibn Zaid , ruler of Tabaristan between 864 and 884 . The Rus ' sailed into the Caspian Sea and unsuccessfully attacked its eastern shore at Abaskun . This raid was probably on a very small scale . The second raid took place in 909 or 910 and was likewise aimed at Abaskun ; just like the previous attack , this expedition was a minor one with only sixteen ships participating in it . The third minor raid took place in 911 or 912 .

= = Raid of 913 = =

The Rus ' launched the first large @-@ scale raid in 913 . A fleet of 500 ships reached the southern shores of the Caspian Sea through the country of the Khazars . In order to secure a peaceful passage through the land of the Khazars , the Rus ' promised the Khazars half of their spoils . They sailed down the Dnieper River into the Black Sea , then into the Sea of Azov , then up the Don River past the Khazar city of Sarkel , and then by a portage reached the Volga , which led them into the

Caspian Sea .

The Rus ' attacked in the Gorgan region around Abaskun , as well as Tabaristan , pillaging the countryside as they went . An attempt to repel them as they lay in anchor near islands in the southwestern part of the Caspian Sea proved unsuccessful ; and they were then able to roam and raid at will . Across the sea they raided at Baku , penetrating inland a distance of three days ' journey , and plundering the regions of Arran , Tabaristan , Beylagan , and Shirvan . Everywhere they looted as much as they could , taking women and children as slaves . The news of their outrages preceded them as they headed homeward and , in the Volga Delta , the Rus ' were attacked by Khazars , as well as by some Christians , apparently with the acquiescence of the Khazar ruler . According to al @-@ Masudi , those who escaped were finished off by the Burtas and Volga Bulgars .

= = Raid of 943 = =

The second large @-@ scale campaign is dated to 943 , when Igor was the supreme leader of the Rus ' , according to the Primary Chronicle . During the 943 expedition , the Rus ' rowed up the Kura River , deep into the Caucasus , defeated the forces of Marzuban bin Muhammad , and captured Bardha 'a , the capital of Arran . The Rus ' allowed the local people to retain their religion in exchange for recognition of their overlordship ; it is possible that the Rus ' intended to settle permanently there . According to ibn Miskawaih , the local people broke the peace by stone @-@ throwing and other abuse directed against the Rus ' , who then demanded that the inhabitants evacuate the city . This ultimatum was rejected , and the Rus ' began killing people and holding many for ransom . The slaughter was briefly interrupted for negotiations , which soon broke down . The Rus ' stayed in Bardha 'a for several months , using it as a base for plundering the adjacent areas , and amassed substantial spoils .

The city was saved only by an outbreak of dysentery among the Rus ' . Ibn Miskawaih writes that the Rus ' " indulged excessively in the fruit of which there are numerous sorts there . This produced an epidemic among them . . . and their numbers began thereby to be reduced . " Encouraged by the epidemic among the Rus ' , the Muslims approached the city . The Rus ' , their chief riding on a donkey , made an unsuccessful sally after which they lost 700 warriors , but evaded encirclement and retreated to the Bardha 'a fortress , where they were besieged by the Muslims . Exhausted by the disease and the siege , the Rus ' " left by night the fortress in which they had established their quarters , carrying on their backs all they could of their treasure , gems , and fine raiment , boys and girls as they wanted , and made for the Kura River , where the ships in which they had issued from their home were in readiness with their crews , and 300 Russes whom they had been supporting with portions of their booty . " The Muslims then exhumed from the Rus ' graves the weapons that had been buried beside the warriors .

George Vernadsky proposed that Oleg of Novgorod was the donkey @-@ riding chief of the Rus ' who attacked Bardha 'a . Vernadsky identified Oleg with Helgu , a figure mentioned in the Schechter Letter . According to that document , Helgu went to Persia by boat and died there after a failed attack on Constantinople in 941 . On the other hand , Lev Gumilev , drawing on the name of the Rus ' leader ( as recorded in Arabian sources ) , hypothesizes that this leader was Sveneld , a Varangian chieftain whose wealth was noted in the Primary Chronicle under 945 .

= = Destruction of Khazaria = =

The sources are not clear about the roots of the conflict between Khazaria and Rus ' , so several possibilities have been suggested . The Rus ' had an interest in removing the Khazar hold on the Volga trade route because the Khazars collected duties from the goods transported by the Volga . Byzantine incitement also apparently played a role . Khazars were the allies of the Byzantines until the reign of Romanus I Lecapenus , who persecuted the Jews of his empire . According to the Schechter Letter , the Khazar ruler Joseph responded to the persecution of Jews by " doing away with many Christians " and Romanus retaliated by inciting Oleg of Novgorod ( called Helgu in the

letter ) against Khazaria .

The conflict may also have been spurred by the Khazars ' decision to close passage down the Volga in response to the raid of 943 . In the Khazar Correspondence , written around 950 ? 960 , the Khazar ruler Joseph reported his role as defender of the Muslim polities of the Caspian region against Rus ' incursions : " I have to wage war with them [ Rus ] , for if I would give them any chance at all they would lay waste the whole land of the Muslims as far as Baghdad . " Earlier conflict between Muslim elements of the Khazar army and Rus ' marauders in c . 912 may have contributed to this arrangement and the hostility of the Rus ' against Khazaria .

In 965 , Sviatoslav I of Kiev finally went to war against Khazaria . He employed Oghuz and Pecheneg mercenaries in this campaign , perhaps to counter the Khazars ' superior cavalry . Sviatoslav destroyed the Khazar city of Sarkel around 965 , and possibly sacked ( but did not occupy ) the Khazar city of Kerch on the Crimea . He subsequently ( probably in 968 or 969 ) destroyed the Khazar capital of Atil . A visitor to Atil wrote soon after Sviatoslav 's campaign : " The Rus ' attacked , and no grape or raisin remained , not a leaf on a branch . " Ibn Hawqal is the only author who reports the sack of Semender , after which the Rus ' departed for " Rûm and al @-@ Andaluz " .

Sviatoslav 's campaign brought the prosperity and independence of Khazaria to an abrupt end . The destruction of Khazar imperial power paved the way for Kievan Rus ' to dominate north @-@ south trade routes through the steppe and across the Black Sea , routes that formerly had been a major source of revenue for the Khazars . Moreover , Sviatoslav 's campaigns led to increased Slavic settlement in the region of the Saltovo @-@ Mayaki culture , greatly changing the demographics and culture of the transitional area between the forest and the steppe .

= = Later expeditions = =

In 987 , Maymun , emir of Derbent , asked the Rus ' to help him against local chiefs . The Rus ' , many of whom appear to have been professional soldiers , arrived on 18 ships . Uncertain of their reception , they sent only one ship to reconnoitre the situation . When its crew were massacred by the local population , the Rus ' went on to loot the city of Maskat . In 989 , this same Maymun is reported to have refused the demand of a local preacher to turn over his Rus ' mercenaries to him for either conversion to Islam or death . In the ensuing struggle , Maymun was driven from the city and forced to surrender the Rus ' soldiers , but he returned in 992 .

In 1030 , the Rus ' raided the region of Shirvan ; the ruler of Ganja then paid them much money to help suppress a revolt in Beylagan . Afterwards , the Rus ' returned home . According to one source , in November 1031 the Rus ' returned , but were defeated near Baku and expelled . The year of 1032 saw another Rus ' raid into Shirvan ; they were joined by the Alans and Sarir . Local Muslims defeated the Rus ' in 1033 . It is unclear to which Rus ' grouping these raiders belonged . Omeljan Pritsak suggests that they operated out of a base near the Terek estuary and had their principal home in Tmutarakan . Pritsak also speculated that the Rus ' , operating from the Caspian basin , shortly thereafter lent support to the Oghuz in a power struggle in Khwarezm .

The legendary saga Yngvars saga víðförla describes the last expedition of the Vikings into the Caspian , dated to 1041 and possibly connected with the Georgian @-@ Byzantine Battle of Sasireti in which a Varangian force participated around the same time ; in the saga much legend is conflated with the historical facts . This expedition was launched from Sweden by Ingvar the Far @-@ Travelled , who went down the Volga into the land of the Saracens ( Serkland in Norse ) . There are no less than twenty @-@ six Ingvar Runestones , twenty @-@ three of them being in the Lake Mälaren region of Uppland in Sweden , referring to Swedish warriors who went out with Ingvar on his expedition to the Saracen lands , an expedition whose purpose was probably to reopen old trade routes , now that the Bulgars and the Khazars no longer proved obstacles . A stone to Ingvar 's brother indicates that he went east for gold but that he died in the Saracen land . Afterwards , no attempts were made by the Norsemen to reopen the route between the Baltic and Caspian seas .

Khaqani tells about the invasion of Shirvan in 1173 or 1174 . In his odes , Khaqani names the Rus ' and Khazars , Rus ' and Alans , Rus ' and Sarir as the invaders . Peter Golden argued that the Rus '

mentioned by Khaqani were Volga pirates who came in 73 ships . Yevgeni Pakhomov and Vladimir Minorsky thought the invasion was initiated by the ruler of Darbent , Bek @-@ Bars b . Muzaffar . According to Minorsky , " the initiative of Bek @-@ Bars was independent of Kiev , and he must have used bands of free @-@ lances ( ????????? ) who were roaming in the south , as a prototype of the future Cossacks " . The shirvanshah Ahsitan I turned to the Georgian king , George III for aid and a combined army , which also included the future Byzantine emperor Andronikos Komnenos , defeated the invaders and recaptured the fortress of Shabaran . Georgian sources speak of the Khazars , but do not mention Rus ' in connection with this event .