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Arochi/Harudes/Charudes (Hordaland, Norway, Aarhus, Denmark – Gallic War)



Today I am going to look at the Norwegian tribe of the “Arochi”, better known as Harudes or Charudes, or by their own Old Norse name, Hǫrðar. The spelling “Arochi” was provided by Jordanes in his 6th century work “Getica”, but he had taken the spelling from Latin translation of a Greek 2nd century source, the “Geography” of Ptolemy. In the Greek original, the tribal name is spelled Charudes (Χαροῦδες). Julius Caesar, however, spelled their name “Harudes” in his “Commentaries on the Gallic War”. The different spellings are depended on how different languages and dialects pronounce an “H” in the beginning of a word, and on Latinized or Greek spellings. The Arochi are identical to the Old English spelling Hærudes – and the original Old Norse name of the tribe must have been Hǫrðar, a powerful tribe off the west-coast of Norway, a land that to this day is known as Hordaland (in the Hardanger fjord area).

The Pine Forest Dwellers



Hǫrðar is a way of referring to the inhabitants of Hordaland and the Hardanger fjord. The name of the land and the fjord may be related to Germanic *xaruþaz (IE *kʰosdho) “forest” (cf. OE harað, OHG hard “mountain forest, wooded hills”, MHG hart). The meaning of their tribal name thus indicates that they were “forest-dwellers”. To be even more precise, it could be added that this particular Germanic word for “forest” (there were lots of words for forest, as for waves and various kinds of mountains and hills in these languages) is considered to stem from Indo-European *kʰóss meaning “pine, conifer”, akin to Russian sosná “pine”, Greek kōnos “pinecone, pine-seed, cone”, kōna “pitch”, kýneion “hemlock; giant fennel”, [Oroshi](#) sãnj “post”.

It is also possible that the name is derived from *harud – “warrior” (related to ON hardráð – “hard counsel”, i.e. “battle”, “warrior”). At least this is what is said in Hordaland County’s own homepages.

Tribal Schisms of the Iron Age

Jordanes, who lived during the sixth century AD, placed the Arochi in Scandza (Scandinavia), but his main source, Ptolemy, who lived 400 years earlier, placed them in “East Cimbria” – that is on the eastern Baltic coast of Jutland in Denmark/Sachsen. It is possible that this move is due to migration northwards, since the earliest sources place the tribe further to the south.

The Hǫrðar must have been among the many tribes that split up during the early Iron Age – much like the Goths believed that they had come out of the tribe of the Gutes in Gotland or the Gauts (Geats) of Götaland in south

Sweden. The Gotland Gutes themselves had a legend about how one third of the tribe emigrated towards the south and became the Goths.

Similar things appear to have happened in many tribes during that turbulent age – a part of the tribe would simply take off and move away – for the most part they moved south of Scandinavia, fighting their way through the European continent or elsewhere in search of land to hold. Often enough they kept in touch with their mother tribe for centuries – sometimes they even returned after hundreds of years!

In the case of the Hǫrðar we are either speaking of an early BC migration from Hordaland in the north to Jutland in the south, or else of a much later AD migration from Jutland in the south to Hordaland in the north. That the southern Hǫrðar of Jutland are mentioned first could simply be due to the fact that this was where they first met Romans whose descriptions of them were written down and preserved up to our time. Only later would Roman writers like Jordanes know about the Hǫrðar in “Scandza”.

The Harudes in Gaul

If the first is the case, then the Hǫrðar must have experienced their great tribal schism (or whatever it really was) some time before BC, because when Caesar described them just after 58 BC, the Jutland part of the Hǫrðar tribe seems to have contacts as far south as Gaul: They were among the tribes that had joined the Suebi federation and followed Ariovistus into Alsace in Gaul and settled there for almost two decades.

Then, in 58 BC, Julius Caesar and his Roman legions attacked and chased the tribal federation all the way back northeast to the Rhine and beyond. The event is well described in this episode of “The Germanic Tribes episode 1 – Romans Against Barbarians” (watch on Youtube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHEosX_qxWk&feature=player_embedded)

About the Harudes, Caesar wrote: “But a worse thing had befallen the victorious Sequani than the vanquished Aedui, for Ariovistus, the king of the Germans (he meant the Suebi federation of many different tribes – they were all “Germans” to him), had settled in their territories, and had seized upon a third of their land, which was the best in the whole of Gaul, and was now ordering them to depart from another third part, because a few months previously 24,000 men of the Harudes had come to him, for whom room and settlements must be provided.”

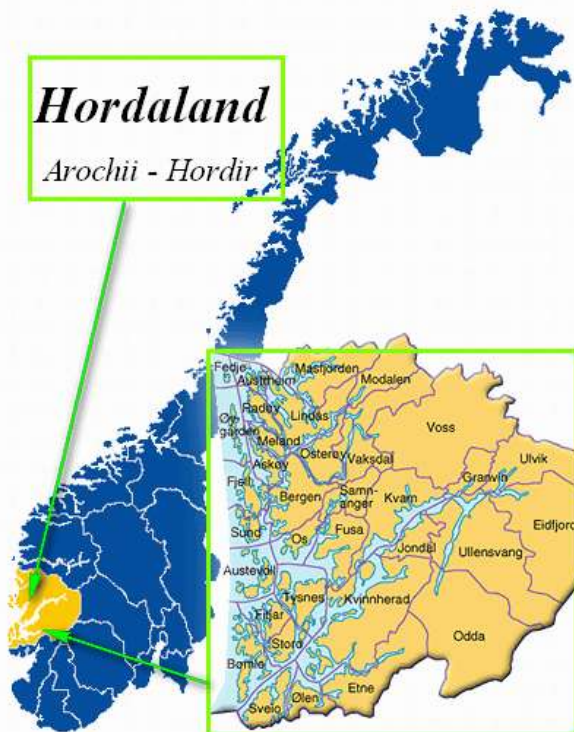
In the final battle against the Romans, well described graphically in the documentary linked to above, the Harudes formed one of the seven triangular flanks. In man-to-man battle, the Germans were both bigger, stronger and better skilled, and made use of terrifying tactics and took advantage of natural defenses such as forests, in which these “forest dwellers” held all advantage, as they would show fifty years later, in the year 9 AD (Teotenburg battle, when they finally won). But when it came to open field battle, discipline and strategy, they were at a great disadvantage. The Germans fought as much for glory and showing off their individual courage and fearless fearsomeness to the gods and to their women (who stood and watched, cheering) as they fought for victory, while the Romans fought like one unified body under men who were masters of strategy. The Romans played on exactly what they had picked up on when dealing with “barbarians” – challenging them in a manner that they could hardly not respond to without losing honor. And so they fought, against the council of their oracular priestess, who had tried to postpone the battle until they could assume a more advantageous position. And then they lost. This battle happened in 58 BC.

The Charydes in Jutland, Denmark

After this battle, we hear of the Harudes after a naval expedition in the year 5 AD, when Tiberius led a fleet in the name of Emperor Augustus that visited “Cimbria” (Jutland) and observed there both the Cimbri, the Semnones and the “Charydes”, the Greek way of writing Harudes or Arochi (“Res Gestae Divi Augusti”).

When Tacitus wrote his book “Germania” in the year 98 AD, he makes no mention of this tribe at all, however. But while the written sources seem to have forgotten the tribe altogether by the end of the 1st century AD, there is still an area in mid-Jutland where the people were called “Haruder” in Old Danish: They are thought to have been the founders of the first Danish city in the center of east Jutland – Harusam or Arus. The city was situated within a bay with a natural port and later became a center capital for the Danish Viking kings. The city was called known as Aros until 1200 AD, when it became what is today Aarhus. Beneath the present day city of Aarhus have been found several coins with the name of the town inscribed, as well as plenty of evidence for the existence of this town “Of The Harudes”.

The Arochi/ Hǫrðar in Hordaland, Norway



It is possible that the disappearance of the Harudes on the European continent and the Jutish peninsula is because they emigrated into Norway and settled in what was forever after called Hordaland. It is also possible that the surviving members of the tribe that had lost against the Romans in 58 AD retreated first to Jutland and then returned to their original homeland in Norway – whoever knows? According to Jordanes, Norway was in fact their homeland, and parts of the tribe had emigrated southwards some time in prehistory.

By the 7th century AD, Jordanes describes the Arochi as living in Scandza once more. Whether they were “originally” from Norway or “originally” from Jutland is uncertain, but it is beyond doubt that the Hǫrðar were a tribe that came to rule the enormous fjord and mountain landscape known as Hordaland – no longer a land in its own right but to this day, Hordaland is the name of a great county region (and people of Hordaland are called Hordalendinger).

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hordaland> .

I must admit I have few sources that would really say anything about the Hordaland tribes in Norway – in the sagas we keep hearing of men and kings from that area, but little more. It is also, of course, possible to look at the early history of its greatest town, Bergen. What is clear is that the Hǫrðar were important and powerful throughout the Viking Age and after.

Hordaland before the Conversion seems to have consisted of multiple smaller tribes, all ruled democratically by their own tribal councils, and then meeting up to greater inter-tribal councils that finally included all the tribes of

Hordaland. Many of the lesser tribes seemed to have been kingdoms of their own – Hordaland was scattered with petty kings. The council-system was a part of the larger Norwegian parliament known as the Gulating. Well into the Middle Ages, we find several important royal seats here.

One very interesting place name along the Hardanger fjord is Kvinnherad – “The Woman Reign”. The legend goes that all the men went out on maritime expeditions one summer and failed to return. It took a long time for the male population to reestablish a normal balance, and so the place became known as the place where women ruled alone.

There are many known and lesser known archaeological sites in Hordaland, and the place has been populated for thousands of years. One of the more curious archaeological objects are the phallic stones, so-called Frøsteiner (Frey-stones), an abundance of which have been discovered in Hordaland.

Worship of Freyr makes sense, also because of many place-names suggesting that the god’s father (and probable predecessor), Njördr, must have been very important in these lands.

Christianity came to Hordaland earlier than in the rest of Norway – the Church was already well-established here in 995 AD.

One Response to *Arochi/Harudes/Charudes (Hordaland, Norway, Aarhus, Denmark – Gallic War)*



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