

## Viking Place names in Aquitaine:

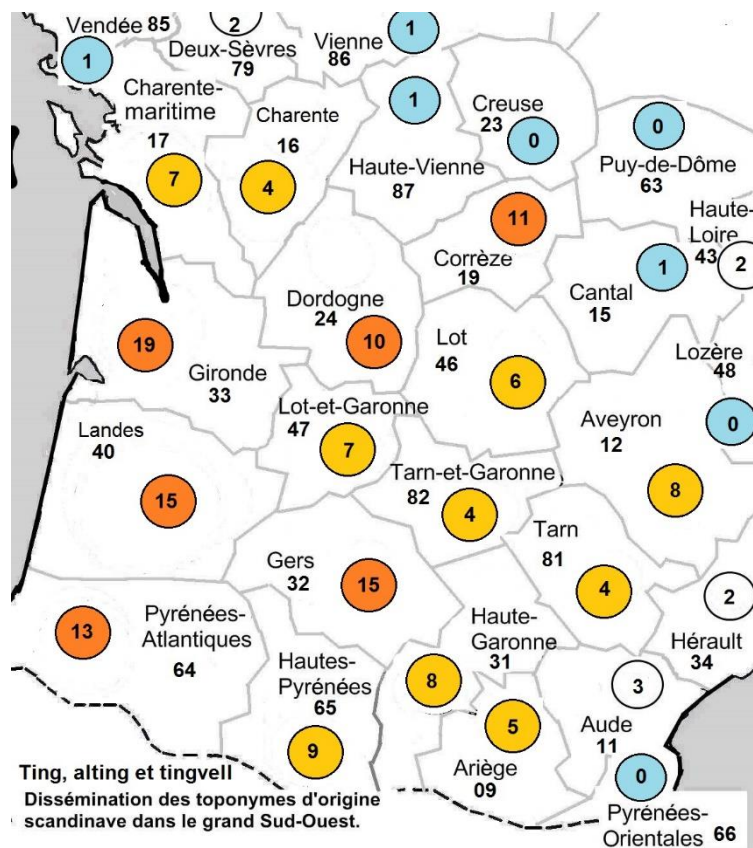
A Southern Normandy revealed?

December 3rd 2014

Modified August, 21th 2018

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**Abstract :** Gascony is covered with strange place names left by “mysterious people”. Linguists are struggling to understand them. Maybe because they don’t use the right dictionary. These place names may be Scandinavian and could reveal the extent of the Viking settlements in the south of France.



This map -in construction -August 2018- represents the number of place names of *aling* type discovered in every French Département. Their dissemination is conform to the os/ac dissemination.

Place names of Aquitaine reveal no traces of Scandinavian occupation. The Linguist Michel Grosclaude is categorical about Béarn, the area around Pau in the Pyrenees : *“You will forgive me if I didn’t see many traces of Celtic or Germanic invasions. To be more precise, I didn’t see one! Place names gave me the image of a country rather calm. Sorry for those who enjoy a catastrophist vision of History.”* (Grosclaude, p.405).

In 2005, I wrote my first book, *Le Secret des Vikings* in which I developed the idea of a Scandinavian settlement in Gascony during Viking invasions. Among many critics, I was reproached with not proving anything. Texts, naval and legal traditions, archeological discoveries and the existence of blue eyed whale hunters of Gothic origin were not enough to prove my theory. I had to find a proof.

When you are confronted with the Vikings who didn’t write anything and who were not fond of stone buildings, the only way to prove their settlement is written in the landscape. In Normandy and in the Danelaw, place names are the most efficient markers of their presence. If Norsemen had settled in Gascony as I believed it, then they should have left place names. I decided to write a second book published in 2009, *Les Vikings au Coeur de nos Régions*. My ambition was to identify place names of Scandinavian origin. I considered that 200 names were enough to demonstrate a settlement. I stopped counting around two thousand. Not all of them villages or towns. Sometimes it was just a place in a wood, a swamp or a hill. These place names were enlightening texts in an absolutely unexpected way.

Unexpected for Linguists and Historians as most of them consider that Vikings raids have been too fast to permit any settlement or leave any place name. *“Norman raids were too fast to leave any trace. The only place where there are place names of Viking origin is Normandy.”* (Grosclaude, p.25) <sup>1</sup> Unexpected also for myself. I expected to find such names in Gascony and I was right, but I also discovered them in a much larger area than expected : in Saintonge, in the Pyrenees, in the Massif Central, in the Rhone valley and even in the Alps. It was absurd if you consider that Normandy is the only place where they settled. It is less absurd when you know that Viking invasions have never been studied south of river Loire. I had to follow that trail wherever it took me.

### **Mysterious Aquitanic names in –os.**

Place names of Gascony, that triangle bordered by the Pyrenees, river Garonne and the ocean, are very particular. Very often specialists comment a name by an appreciation of this type : *“Primitive name of unknown meaning”,* or *“Aquitanic name in –os.”* Specialist of place names in Béarn, Michel Grosclaude multiplies comments of this type *“Origine et signification*

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<sup>1</sup> « *Les raids normands ont été trop rapides pour laisser des traces quelconques. Le seul endroit où on trouve des toponymes d’origine viking est la Normandie* » GROSCLAUDE, p. 25

obscures” or « Avec les plus extrêmes réserves ». Most of the time the appreciation begins with « probably », « very probably », « certainly » and very rarely a clear « from ». The scholar is remarking : “ *In the North of France, the pre-Indo-European stratum is stopping nearly 1000 years before our era. In the whole of Bearn, this stratum is remaining until the Roman conquest and even later as the language of a conquered people doesn’t disappear from one day to the other.*”<sup>2</sup> (Grosclaude, p.23) The Linguist Bénédicte Boyrie-Fénié is writing : “*The trace of these mysterious people of Aquitaine is not limited to place names in –os.*”<sup>3</sup> “Mysterious people of Aquitaine”. One day, maybe, genetics will help us.

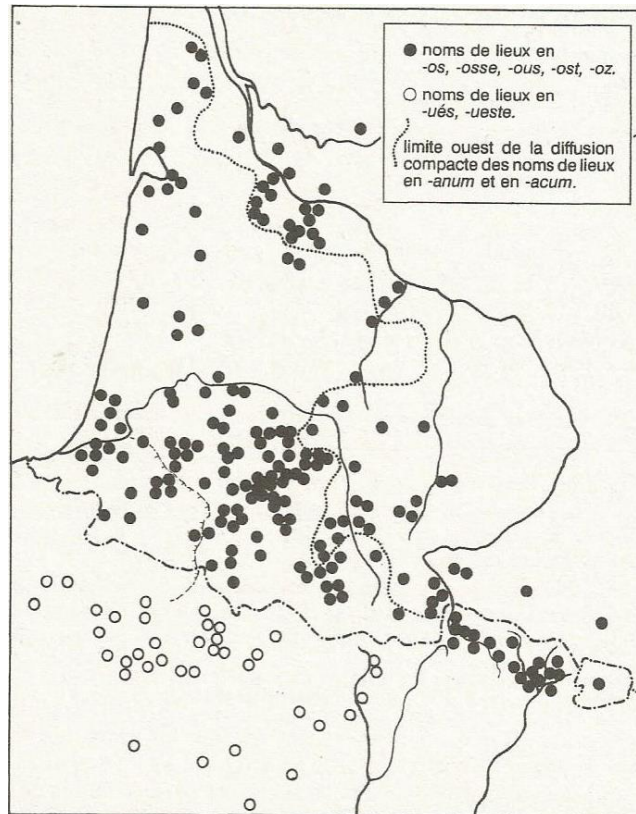
These names in –os (Biscarosse, Arengosse, Bardos, Guillos, Bilos and some 200 others) have always puzzled Linguists. In 1970, a German philologist. Gerhart Rolfhs noticed that many of these names were cousins of place name in –ac located on the right bench of river Garonne. (Bernos/Bernac, Guillos/Guillac, Balanos/Blagnac, Arnos/Arnac, Siros/Sirac). He concluded that these names in –os were contemporary of the names in –ac. As these names in –ac were coming from a Gallo-roman –acum, Rolfhs concluded that in a period “difficult to determine”, people of Aquitaine refused to adopt the Latin –acum and preferred to keep their local suffix in –ossum which had the same meaning. These place names were demonstrating the “resistance of the locals” to the Romanization of their land. Of course, when a German is talking about the “resistance of our proud ancestors” everybody tends to accept such a cool verdict. Among these names, several have without any possible doubt an Aquitanic origin : Biscarosse, Arengosse, Bernos, Binos, Garros, Urdos, Bachos and Angos have their cousins in the mountains in Southern Pays Basque : Biscarrues, Arangues, Bernues, Binues, Garrues, Urdues, Bagues and Angues. This would be the geographic proof that these names are very ancient and belong to the antic dialect Euskara, the language of the Basques. In Basque, *bizkar* means back, crest, dune; *aran* is a valley, *urd* a tableland. Everybody accepted these conclusions.

Then I came, looking for Scandinavian place names.

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<sup>2</sup>« *Dans le nord de la France, la strate pré-indo-européenne s’arrête environ 1000 ans avant notre ère . Dans la totalité du Béarn, elle subsiste jusqu’à la conquête romaine et même un peu au-delà car la langue d’un peuple conquis ne disparaît pas du jour au lendemain.* » GROSCLAUDE, p. 23

<sup>3</sup>« *La trace de ces assez mystérieux peuples aquitains ne se limite pas aux toponymes en-os.* » BOYRIE-FENIE, p.18



Map presented by Michel Grosclaude in *Dictionnaire toponymique des communes du Béarn*, CAIRN, 2006

### Scandinavian names in –hus.

Bénesse, Angresse, Seignosse, Contis, Messanges, Ondres are villages located on that long beach of white sand that runs from the mouth of river Garonne to Biarritz, the toe of the Pyrenees. I noticed that in Normandy, there were very similar names : Benneville, Angreville, Senneville, Conteville, Mésangueville, Ondreville. Remarkable fact : no linguist had ever remarked that similarity. Explanation : when they try to understand their place names, Linguists of Normandy are turned toward Northern Europe and Linguists of Gascony are turned toward the Mediterranean and Iberian peninsula. Never anybody had the idea of comparing place names of Gascony and Normandy... And as Historians of Normandy and Aquitaine agreed to blacklist Norsemen south of river Loire (See *Viking invasions, the French Failure*, 2014), Linguists have no reasons to look for place names of Scandinavian origin in Gascony... Of course, if somebody demonstrated that Vikings had come, what is today considered impossible –the existence of Scandinavian place names- would become very likely. Poor Linguists!

We believe these names of Normandy are built with a Scandinavian name and the Latin suffix –villa: Benneville/Björnvilla, Angreville/Asgeirvilla, Senneville/Steinvilla, Conteville/Knott-villa, Mésangueville/Mysing-villa, Ondreville/Ondver-villa. To be honest and complete, Linguists who studied place names of Normandy only admit Asgeirvilla and have no certainties for the rest of these place names...

Such an observation leads us to two hypothesis. One, the Aquitanic -os may be the equivalent of –villa. Two, the suffix -os, like the radical, may be of Nordic origin. Now, is there a Scandinavian word meaning villa and sounding like os ? Answer : yes.

The Scandinavian word for villa is *hus*, *Haus* in German, *house* in English. This would be the answer. Bardos would have been a Bard-hus, Guillos, the house of Gili, Bilos, the house of Bili. Among the two hundreds place names in -os, some 90% have an identified Scandinavian name as a root. Hordosse (Hord), Julos (Juli), Ygos (Ygg), Goudosse (Godi), Balanos (Blann), La Guirosse, (Asgeir), Bilos (Bili), Libos (Libbi), Gounosse (Gunki), Saumos (Sam), Alos (Hall), Bernos, Bournos, Biros, Béros, Bénos (Björn, Bern or Bier), Andernos (Eindrid), Agos (Aghi), Arnos (Arni), Banos (Vani), Bédos (Ved), Bouricos (anc. *Oricos*, Horik), Bachos (Bakki), Mano (anc. *Manos*, Manni), Esténos (Hastein), Navarosse (Havarr)...

But, in fact, such names in -hus are much more numerous. Names in –os are just a part of a larger family. Grosclaude is writing : *“It would seem that our suffixes in -os and -otz belong to a category much larger that we could call as J-B Orpustan (Basque Linguist) “suffixes à consonne sifflante”, including vocalic variations (-tz,-atz, -etz, -itz, -otz).”*<sup>4</sup> (Grosclaude, p.377.)

There are names in –esse : Gestières (Gestil), Agonès (Hakon), Altès (Hjalti), Marcolès (Markulf), Samès (Sam), Sigoulès (Sigulf), Escufès, Escoubès (Skufi), Tourtrès (Thorstyrr), Reynières (Ragnar), Bayonnès (Björn), Gouzes (Gusi), Seyresse (Sejerr), Seignes (Hastein), Angresse (Asgeir), Ondres (Ondverr)..

There are names in -isse : Arnautis (Arnot), Guizerix (Gizurr), Goutevernisse (Gudbjörn), Gounis (Gunki), Aranguisse (Haering), Contis (Knött), Hondritz (Ondver), Bénis, Bernis, Beyris, Beyries, Veyries, Biarritz, anc. *Bearis*, (Björn or Bier), Agris (Asgeir)

There are names in -ens : Escatalens (Asketill), Tonneins (Toeni), Lavardens (Lavard), Agens (Aghi), Bassens (Bassi), Bazens (Bausi), Brugnens (Bruni), Glatens (Gloti), Arcins (Harek), Canens (Kani), Manens (Manni), Escalquens (Skaeling), Escueillens (Skuli), Saubens (Solvi), Espiens (Spjalli)

There are names in –oux : Vergeroux (Berggeir), Biloux (Bili), Granoux (Grani), Abenoux (Habein), Oueilloux (Hofi), Mauroux (Mar), Moiroux (Moir), Espeyroux (Spoer), Vernoux (Björn or Bern), St Jean d'Aubrigoux (Asfrigg),

Names in –ais : Verdélais (Bertill), Marcenais (Marstein), Bernais (Björn), Anais (Ann), Echillais (Egill)

Names in –s : Linars (Leiknar), Eyran (Haering), Favars, Vars (Havarr), Maurs (Mar), Ors (Orn), Cars (Kari), Auzers (Özurr), Lagorce, Gours (Asgeir), Sers, Sillars, Sauyères (Sejer),

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<sup>4</sup>« il semble bien que nos suffixes en –os et –otz(e) doivent faire partie d'une catégorie bien plus vaste qu'on pourrait dénommer à la suite de J-B Orpustan suffixes à consonne sifflante, comportant des variations vocaliques (-tz, -atz, -etz, -itz, -otz) et dont on peut simplement présumer que le sens global est collectif ou locatif. » GROSCLAUDE, p. 377

Espeils (Spjalli), Esperce (Spoer), Bayons, Bayers, Biars, Vers (Björn or Bier), Esbints (Svein), Tourrenquets (Thorketill), Tourriers (Thorir), Royans, Rians (Ragnar), Hostens (Hastein or Oynstein), Toutens (Thorstein), Bostens, Boussens (Bostein), Gratens (Grastein), Bessens (Vestein), Abense (Habein).

Some are in -x : Eyrax (Haering-s), Arx, (Harek-s), Orx, (Horek-s), Bax (Bakk-s), Brax (Bragg-s), Baudreix (Baldrek-s).

Names which have lost their -hus : Aigre, Hossegor, Escayre (Asgeir or Asker), Siguer (Siggeir), Azur, Ozourt (Özurr), Laudine (Lodinn), Gouze (Gusi), Gondrin (Gudrid), Goubern (Gudbjörn), Grimard (Grimarr), Andrein (Eindrid), Audon (Audunn), Saubion (Soybjörn), Arnaute (Arnot), Arné (Arni), Arbonne, Arbon (Harbjörn), Bayonne, Béarn, Born, Béar (Björn/Biarn), Marestaing, Marsan (Mars(t)ein), Visker, Biscarre, Giscaro (Viskarr), Tursan (Thors(t)ein), Mouguerre (Mundgeirr), Orègue (Horek), Arout, Arrode, Hérault (Harald), Asté, Aste, Astien, Estaing, Estang, Aston, Astun (Hastein), Espiute (Spjoti), Engomer (Ingmarr), Mane (Manni), Guilleman (Vilman), Baque (Bakki), Blan (Blann), Labarthe-Inard (Einar), Albine (Hallbein), Tourgueille (Thorgils), Vertheuil (Bertil), Hollebarde (Halvard), Faraman (Farmadr), Gandaille (Gandalf), Caraman, Calmon, Calmont, Calamane (Kalmann), Carcen-Ponson (Karstein), Carbonne (Korbjörn), Gimont (Gismund), Germond (Germund), Gumond (Gudmund), Aumont (Aumund), Quittimont (Ketilmund), Fréguimont, Frémont, (Frigmund), Rimont (Römund), Almont (Hallmund), Luby-Betmont (Vestmund), Saumont (Solmund), Gillemont (Vilmund), Bimont (Vigmund), Bajamont (Valmund), Brignemont (Brunmann).

And even names in -us : Barcus (Bark), Orus (Orn), Ambrus (Arnbjörn or Ambier), Bélus (Beli), Carlus (Karl), Catus (Kati), Cornus (Korni), Manus (Manni), Escalus (Skali), Saubusse (Solvi), Caylus (Kali), Archus (Harek), Bazus (Bausi).

Remarkably enough these names didn't convince French Linguists in five years. Linguists of Normandy are claiming to the world that Normandy is the only part of France to have Scandinavian names. The more you present them names, the louder they repeat their conviction. In the south, Grosclaude and Fénié repeat: "*Viking raids have been too fast to leave place names in Aquitaine.*" Jean Michel Orpustan, the specialist of Basque language, director of Laboratoire IKER in Bordeaux, is still struggling with three quarters of the names I mentioned, but he will never study any other trail. He's a specialist of the Basque language, not of Scandinavian dialects... These Linguists are like that guy who lost his keys in a dark car park, but is looking for them on the pavement because there are street lamps.

These names were massively represented in Gascony, but also in Saintonge and Périgord. In fact, these names in hus are present all over Massif Central, but in much smaller quantity. The more you get away from the coast, the less they are. These names were enough to publish a very interesting book, but Rohlf's had noticed something perfectly true : these names in -os of the left bank of river Garonne were cousins of names in -ac of the right bank. If names in -os were Scandinavian, then those in -ac had great chances to be Scandinavian too. I could not ignore these names in -ac. I had to cross river Garonne and follow them wherever they took me and first of all, check if they could be Scandinavian.

## Gallo-roman names in -acum

These names in –ac are considered as Gallo-roman. The suffix –*acum* would be a contraction of the Gallic –*akos* and the Roman –*anum*. As many of them had a Germanic radical, some specialists suggested either that they were created by Germanic invaders who chose to add the local –*acum* to their name in the hope of a faster integration (Ernest Nègre). Or, that these Germanic names were the result of a fashion. Locals would have chosen to give Germanic names to their sons to integrate a world become Germanic after Frankish invasion. *“Most certainly names of Germanic origin are found in the anthroponymy of Béarn (and therefore in place names), but these names entered our homeland during Early Middle Age when there was a fashion of Germanisms (as there is today a fashion of Anglicisms)”* (Grosclaude, p.25)<sup>5</sup>. How convenient. When you discover a Germanic artefact in Aquitaine, it just reveals that locals enjoyed Germanic fashion... Why not ?

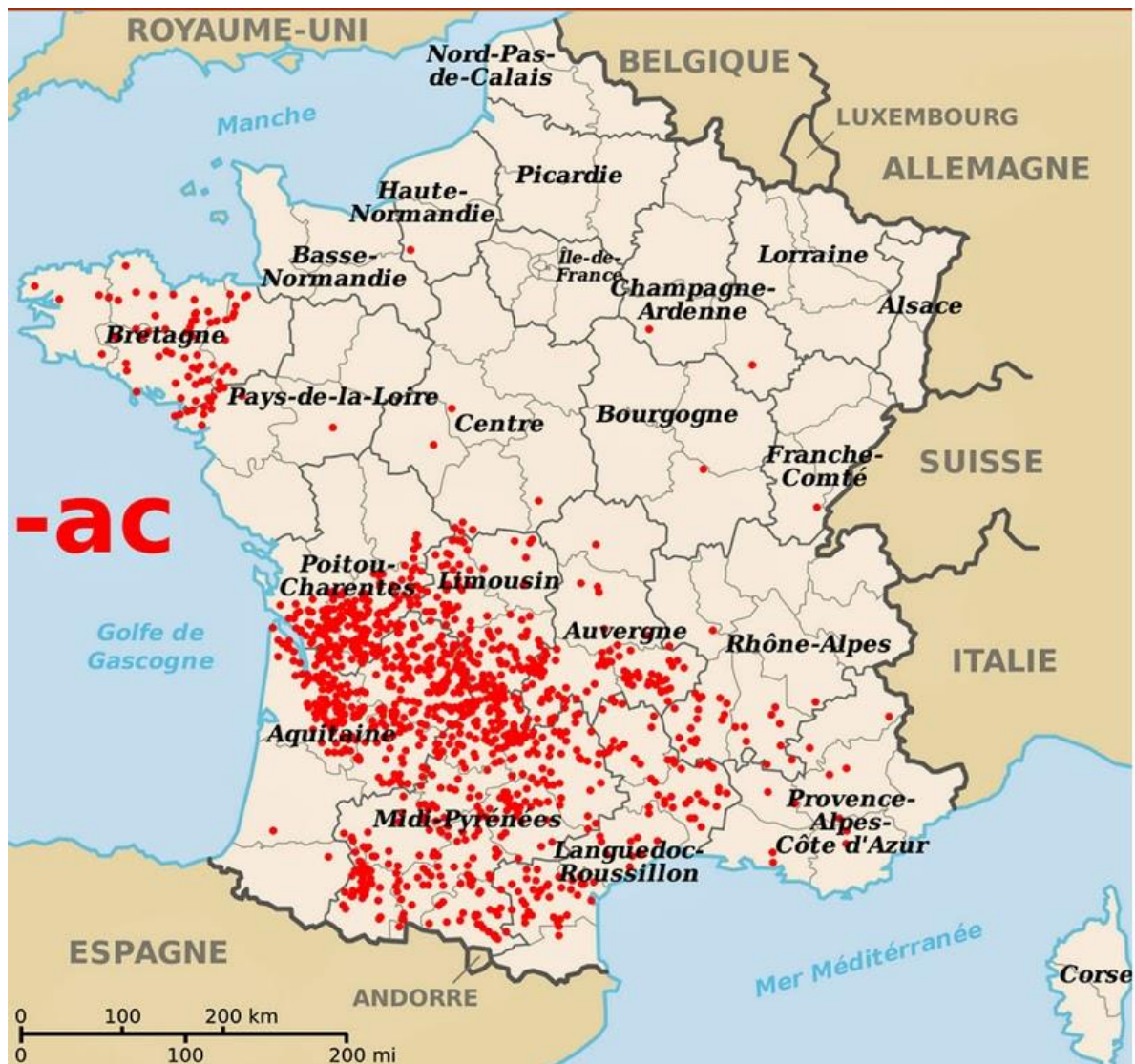
But there is third option never imagined to explain these words: the suffix -ac wouldn't be Gallo-roman, but a Germanic suffix that was assimilated to the Gallo-roman –*acum* afterwards. We know that clerics “translated” easily Scandinavian names in Latin. *Vik*, “bay”, is becoming *vicus*, “town”; *gat*, “passage”, is becoming *gatus*, “cat”; *Holm*, “island”, is becoming *homme*, “man” ; *borg*, “fortress”, is becoming *bois*, “wood” etc... A Viking name could have become –ac, a suffix known by the locals. (Supéry, 2009, p.291)

Such a hypothesis is all the more interesting that obviously these place names in -ac referring to Germanic names are too many to be the result of a simple fashion: Escoubiac (Skufi), Solsac (Solsi), Sorlhac (Sorli), Sousceyrac, Soucirac (Sössur), Espeilhac, Espagnac (Spjalli), Espeyrac (Spoer), Sonac, (Soni), Estarac (Stari), Sénouillac (Steinulf), Estirac (Styr), Espartignac (Svarting), Les Lèves-et-Thoumeyragues, Doumérac (Thomrir), Touvérac (Thorfrid), Tauriac (Thorir), Tourtinhac (Thorstein), Tourtoirac, Tourtirac, Tourtrac (Thorstyr), Tonnac (Toeni), Toutigeac (Tostig), Veyrignac (Varinn), Ventenac (Bentein), Vignac, Figeac (Vigi), Vintilhac (Vandil), Balzac (Balsi), Cadillac (Kaetill), Cognac (Hakon), Armagnac (Armund), Bergerac (Berggeir).

These Germanic radicals look very much like Scandinavian names. Only a French Linguist appointed by the CNRS can say the contrary.

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<sup>5</sup>« Certes, on trouve dans l'anthroponymie béarnaise (et par conséquent dans la toponymie) des noms d'origine germanique. Mais ce sont des noms qui se sont introduits chez nous pendant le haut Moyen Age au moment où il y eut une mode des germanismes (comme il y a aujourd'hui, une mode des anglicismes) » GROSCLAUDE, p. 25



Names with suffix in –ac in France (Source Wikipedia)

### Scandinavian names in haug.

In fact, like names in –os, names in –ac seem to belong to a larger family. We find names in –age (Bernage), -auge (Benaug), -ague (Benague, Gragnague, Roquiague, Thoumeyragues), -aguet (Bournaguët, Reillaguët, Meyraguet, Juillaguët), -argues (Baillargues, Bouillargues, Goussargues, Candillargues, Coussargues, Marsillargues, Mouillargues). There are also many names in –hac : Tourtinhac, Vintilhac, Espeilhac, Manhac.

These names in –hac, –age, -auge, -ague, -argue remind us of place names in Scandinavia. In Denmark, we find : Arnager, Mariager, Ansager, Hojager. In Sweden, there is a variation : Solhaga, Öxenhaga, Storhaga, Lillhaga. In Norway, we have Varhaug, Skjønhaug, Solhaug, Marhaug. These Norwegian place names remind us of Varac, Esconnac, Soulac, Marracq. All this suggests that these place names in –ac, -hac, -age, -auge, and -ague could refer to a Norwegian *haug*, hill, motte. Espartignac could come from *Svartinghaug*, the motte of Svarting. Bergerac, the motte of Berggeir, Toutigeac, the motte of Tostig.

As we can see on the map above, these names in –ac are mainly found around Gascony and in Bretagne. Rolfhs saw in them Gallo-roman names and, in his view, their absence in



Gascony where there were so many names in –os would have revealed a resistance of locals to the surrounding Gallo-roman civilization... But Rohlf's cannot explain place names of Bretagne.

If these names are Scandinavian, the meaning is completely different. The area where we find names in –os would be a land of settlement where peace is guaranteed by a natural barrier: river Garonne and those where we find names in –ac would correspond to a “military march” protecting the colonial settlements. But it's a simplistic vision.

If you consider not only names in –os, but all the names in hus, “with their vocalic variations”, then you discover these names all over the area covered by the names in –ac. In other words, Scandinavian settlements cover all the south of France.

According to the Historian Jean François Maréchal : *“In the areas where they had to organize their conquest..., they had to leave garrisons.”* Then he adds: *“every family or group of colonists had to face rapidly an attack, leave quickly their occupations and entrench.”* (Maréchal, p.18). This Historian considers that there should have been Scandinavian settlements near these mottes disseminated across south of France. Those who were guarding these mottes had families, very often local wives. The fact of having place names in hus (not fortified settlement) beside names in haug (fortified settlement) is logical.

### **Place names completing texts.**

This map enlightens the texts. Texts tell us that the twelve cities of Gascony were taken in 840. This was an invasion confirmed by the names in –os. In 861, Andrea de Bergame talking about the battle of Fontenay in 841 is writing : *“A great massacre was done, especially among nobles of Aquitaine... Until that day, the nobility of Aquitaine is so ravaged that Norsemen seize her lands and she has not the strength to resist them.”*<sup>6</sup> These place names reveal the extent of these seizures. *Annales Bertiniani* tell us that Pippin II is fighting on the side of Norsemen. This alliance began in 848, when Pippin is abandoned by the nobility of Aquitaine and lasted until the capture of Pippin in 864 (Supéry, 2009, p.112). During these 16 years, the allies of Pippin had plenty of time to weave a military net over the kingdom of their penniless ally. Pippin needed this military support to go on his fight against Charles the Bald and control his kingdom. By helping Pippin, Norsemen chiefs were gaining an access the Mediterranean Sea and to the commercial routes crossing the Alps and the Pyrenees. Warriors were gaining a beautiful land and a sunny life.

A Scandinavian origin would explain why we find names in –ac also in Bretagne. The main Viking settlement would have been at the tip of Bretagne where Vikings may have settled as soon as 836 according to Robert Wace. Around 1170, the chronicler is describing the conquest of Cotentin in 836, an invasion which also touched “the islands” (Jersey, Guernesey), “the coasts of the Mont” (Mont Saint Michel) and the Bretagne “where the army stopped”. The place names in –ac would reveal a march between Christian land and Scandinavian settlements, but also a route crossing Bretagne from north to south. This route

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<sup>6</sup>« *Un grand massacre fut fait, spécialement parmi les nobles d'Aquitaine [...]. Jusqu'à ce jour la noblesse d'Aquitaine est si ravagée que les Normands s'emparent de ses terres et qu'elle n'a pas la force de leur résister.* » André de Bergame, 861, « *Historia* », MGH SRL, p.226.

is running from the Baie d'Yffiniac in the north to the Baie de Quiberon, south. Yffiniac, anc. *Finhac*, is the *fine motte*... The Viking camp of Péran above the bay is the fortress.

In France, Historians and archeologists disagree about the origins of mottes. Most of them consider they appeared during the eleventh century. But as Professor Jean-François Marechal remarks, it is very unlikely that such a system of defense appeared in the same time all over Europe to the detriment of traditional defense sites as crests, oppida and other natural strongholds. In fact, the motte is an emergency construction, not that much to protect a population, but to control a strategic point : a river, a harbor, a route, a pass, a bridge. A motte is a "foot in the door" and those who behave like that are first of all attackers. In 1975, Robin E. Glasscock remarks that in Ireland mottes are found only in the areas controlled by Norsemen. He considers their origin is Norse. (Maréchal, p.16). We share this opinion. *Annales Mettenses* mention in 891 « *The army approaching, Norsemen fortified on the bank of a river named Dyle, forming according to their custom a mound of earth and wood.* »<sup>7</sup>. This is to our knowledge the first description of a motte. We know Franks used to build "castella", but "according to their custom" suggests that mottes were typically Scandinavian.

### **The pre-indo-european illusion.**

But what about the primitive names of Pays Basque : Biscarrues/Biscarosse, Arengosse/Aragues, Bernues/Bernos, Binues/Binos, Garrues/Garros, Urdues/Urdo, Bagues/Bachos and Angues/Angos. Don't these names and their location prove their "pre-indo-european origin"? Everybody agrees on that. Such names cannot be Scandinavian : *bizkar* is Basque. Nobody can deny this ! Moreover: if Vikings had settled in Navarra, texts would tell us. Precisely.

In 858, Vikings assaulted Pampelona and captured her king. This event is mentioned by Muslim chroniclers Nowairi, Ibn Jaldun, and Al Muqtabis. They kept him prisoner for one year until the complete payment of a 70 000 gold coins ransom. During that year, Norsemen, who had come from Bayonne, had plenty of time to convince their prisoner to accept peace. The king of Pampelona had been backing the resistance of the Gascons in the mountains for eighteenth years. Norsemen wanted to get rid of this guerilla and to use the mountain passes for trade. Once freed, the king of Pampelona broke his alliance with the emir of Saragosse and allied with the king of Asturias, an ally of the Vikings of Gascony. Spanish Historians consider this event as the beginning of the Reconquista. After that, the count of Gascony is said fighting the Saracens in Spain, but no longer in Gascony. This peace between Pampelona and Bayonne lasted one century. During that century, Norsemen had plenty of time to develop trade and settle in Navarra. These names in -ues may be Scandinavian too. Arangues is Haeringhus, Bernues is Björnhus, Binues may be (Ha)Beinhus, Garrues is the House of Geir, Bagues is the House of Bakki, Angues is the House of Hoeng and Biscarrues, coming from the Basque *bizkar*, the "proof" that these primitive names in -os come from ancient Euskara, Biscarrues would come from the name *Viskarr* as Biscarrague, Visker and other villages of Gascony. Viskar gave the names Giscard and Guiscard. In Gers, Giscaro is a former Viskarhus.

These names in -os/-ues are a "pre-indo-european" illusion. Those who created these names were "pre-indo-european men" of the ninth century.

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<sup>7</sup>« *Les Normands à l'approche de cette armée, se fortifièrent sur les bords d'une rivière nommée la Dyle, formant selon leur coutume des amas de terre et de bois* » *Annales de Metz*, 891.

## Conclusion

French Historians and Linguists know that the south of France is covered with Germanic names, but they are completely unable to tell us which Germans left them. Grosclaude solved the problem with his hypothesis of a Germanic fashion. How convenient !

However, such an analysis is quite surprising as we know of Germans who conquered Limoges, Poitiers, Clermont, Bourges, Angouleme, Bordeaux, Valence, Arles, Nimes, Narbonne, Toulouse, Cahors, Périgueux, all the cities of the “haug names’ area”: these Germans were Norsemen.

We have texts mentioning the falls of the cities of Aquitaine, we have texts telling the settlement of Norsemen in Aquitaine and we have Germanic place names, but nobody ever tried to put these elements together and to verify the hypothesis. This is simply incredible.

These place names may reveal the extent of the Norse settlement south of river Loire. These names cover all the kingdom of their ally Pippin II. It is however wrong to consider, as Rohlf did, a strict cut between the areas of names in –hus and in –haug. Names in –os are mainly in Gascony, that is true, but if you consider names in –oux, –ais, –es, –is, –as, –us, then you discover that the names in hus and the names in –haug are found in the same areas. Just the ratio is different. More names in hus along the coast, a safe area, more names in haug on lands in contact with the Franks.

What is more surprising is to find Scandinavian names in Provence and in the Alps. These names reveal that Norsemen stayed “long enough” in Provence and in the Alps to create place names. It sounds strange, but, in a way, this information was already given by *Annales Bertiniani*. In 860, the chronicler is writing about the raid led by the Norsemen in Provence: « *Danes who were on the River Rhone leave for Italy, take and plunder Pisa and other cities* ». The Viking danger seems to be over. However, the following year, in 861, the chronicler is writing: « *Charles... advanced in Burgundy with his wife to the city of Macon. He was called by some against Norsemen and to take domination of Provence... but as things were not prospering, after having done a lot of plunder, he came back at his palace of Ponthion.* »

This text is revealing several things: one, Vikings are still in the area after the departure of the fleet for Italy. Two, they are numerous enough to justify that “some” –who must be counts and bishops- ask for help to get rid of them. Three, they don’t ask their king for this help–which let us imagine that he’s powerless, either because he passed a treaty with Norsemen or because his armies are overwhelmed. Four, they turn toward Charles the Bald, uncle and rival of their own king to “take domination of Provence” –which is a treachery. They must have been desperate. In other words, in 861, Provence or parts of Provence were under the control of Norsemen and the situation which was threatening to last was unbearable to many. We found a rather important concentration of names around Arles and Manosque, but also in the Massif des Monges near Sisteron.

In our mind, the king of Provence, son of Lothar, had a treaty with Norsemen. Few years later, in 866, *Annales Bertiniani* declare : “*Norsemen leave (river Seine) in the month of July ; and a part of them settle for some time in a place of Italy, and, by a treaty passed with Lothar (king of Italy) enjoy that place according to their will..*”<sup>8</sup> These two lines suggest that a third fleet entered Mediterranean Sea in 866 (after the two expeditions of 844 and 859),

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<sup>8</sup> « Les Normands prennent la mer au mois de juillet ; et une partie d’entre eux s’établit pendant quelques temps dans un canton d’Italie, et, par un accord passé avec Lothaire, en jouit à sa volonté. » *Annales Bertiniani* 866.

that Norsemen settled in Italy and that Lothar was an ally who granted them a land...  
I have identified an area in Italy where several place names appeal to me... but I cannot tell  
you where. It's absurd.

Joël Supéry

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