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Changing views on Vikings

In this article[1] changing views, not only of Viking activities, but also of the etymology and meaning of the word *viking* will be discussed. Particular attention will be paid to the Netherlands.

Outside Scandinavia, post-mediaeval interest in Old Scandinavian culture including Vikings arose in England at the end of the seventeenth century and France in the middle of the eighteenth century. Other countries followed suit, and this ultimately led to the incorporation of the word *viking* into Modern Dutch. The Modern Dutch word *viking* (also *vikinger, wiking, wikinger*) was introduced from German or English;[2] the earliest entry in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, the large Dictionary of the Dutch Language, is from the year 1835. Both in German and in English, the word had been reintroduced in the beginning of the nineteenth century;[3] in German the word begins with *w-* (*Wiking*),

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[1]   An earlier version of this article was heard in the conference 'North by Northwest. Scandinavia and North Western Europe: Exchange and Integration, 1600-2000', held in Groningen from 24 until 26 November 1998. I thank those who commented on the original paper, especially Alan Swanson (Groningen).

[2]   *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* XXI. 's-Gravenhage & Leiden 1971, cols. 660-662, col. 660: "niet rechtstreeks, maar via het Hd., wellicht ook het Eng., ontleend." ['borrowed, not directly, but through High German, maybe also English'].

[3]   Cf. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Second Edition XIX. Oxford 1989, p. 628:

in English several spellings were used, e.g. *vikingr* (= Old Icelandic *víkingr*), *vikinger*, *vikingir*, *wiking*, before *viking* became the standard form. Dutch *viking* with *v-* reflects English influence.[4]

Dahlerup's dictionary of the Danish language mentions *viking* in an Early New Danish text from 1633; it also has some examples from the eighteenth century.[5] According to Hellberg,[6] in Swedish the word *viking* (*vikingr, vikingur*) can be found for the first time in the sixties and seventies of the seventeenth century; *Vikingen* (1811) became the title of a famous poem by the Swedish poet Erik Gustaf Geijer.

What Vikings did has given rise to many questions. To the lin-guist, however, the w o r d *viking* causes a serious and, as will be shown, probably unsolvable problem: scholars disagree on how the mediaeval word came into being, where it arose, and what it originally meant.

In the Early Middle Ages, the pirates and intruders who came from Scandinavia to Western Europe were referred to with different words, the direct equivalent of Old Norse *víkingr*, e.g. Old English *wīcing*, being only one of them. Other words were even more frequent, and they are transparent as to their morphology and their basic meaning, e.g. Old High German *heidine man* 'pagans', *northman* (plural) 'people from the north', Old English *æscman* and Old Norse *askmaðr* 'sailor on an "ash" (= certain kind of ship)', Old English *þā deniscan* 'the Danes', *se (hǽðen) here* 'the (pagan) army', *flotan* 'sailors'.

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earliest entry 1807; Jacob Grimm & Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* XIV.I.2. Leipzig 1960, cols. 1639f.: earliest entry 1824.

4   Jan de Vries, *Nederlands etymologisch woordenboek*, Leiden 1971, p. 785: *viking*. On the etymology of *wiking* see p. 838.

5   Verner Dahlerup, *Ordbog over det Danske Sprog* XXVI. København 1952, cols. 1469f.

6   Staffan Hellberg, 'Vikingatidens *víkingar*', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 95, 1980, pp. 25-88, p. 74.

Less clear than the words just mentioned are Old Norse *víkingr* and Old English *wīcing* and their cognates in other Old Germanic languages. The earliest examples are not known from a Scandinavian language, but from Old English. The Old English material includes glosses, e.g. *wīcing*, translating Latin *pirata* 'pirate, sea-robber', *wīcingsceaþa*, translating *piraticus* 'pirate'. Other examples of the word *wīcing* can be found in some early Old English poetical texts.

In the Old English *Widsith*, perhaps from the seventh century, a victory by two Danish kings on Vikings is mentioned:

> *Hroþwulf ond Hroðgar   heoldon lengest*
> *sibbe ætsomne   suhtorfædran,*
> *siþþan hy forwræcon   wicinga cynn*
> *ond Ingeldes   ord forbigdan,*
> *forheowan æt Heorote   Heaðobeardna þrym.*
> (*Widsith*, lines 45-49)[7]

> 'Hrothgar and Hrothwulf held their bond
> - father's brother and brother's son -
> long after their victory over the viking clan
> when they made Ingeld's edge bow,
> hewed down at Heorot the Heathobard troop.'[8]

In the same Old English poem *wīcingas* is used as if it were the name of a Germanic tribe:

> *Ic wæs mid Hunum   ond mid Hreðgotum,*
> *mid Sweom ond mid Geatum   ond mid Suþdenum.*
> *Mid Wenlum ic wæs ond mid Wærnum ond mid wicingum.*

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[7] George Philip Krapp & Elliott van Kirk Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*. London & New York 1936, pp. 150f. This edition does not use quantity marks.

[8] Translation by Michael Alexander (transl., introd.), *The Earliest English Poems*. Third edition. London 1991, p. 17.

> *Mid Gefþum ic wæs ond mid Winedum ond mid Gefflegum.*
> *Mid Englum ic wæs ond mid Swæfum ond mid Ænenum.*
> (*Widsith*, lines 57-61)[9]

> 'I was among the Huns and among the Hreth-Goths
> among Swedes, among Geats and among South Danes,
> among Verns I was, among Vikings, and among Vendels,
> among Gepids I was, among Wends, and among Gefflegs,
> among Angles I was, among Swaefe, and among Aenenes.'[10]

In the Old English *Exodus* the compound *sæwīcingas* occurs:

> *Æfter þære fyrde flota modgade,*
> *Rubenes sunu; randas bæron*
> *sæwicingas   ofer sealtne mersc,*
> *manna menio; micel angetrum*
> *eode unforht.* (*Exodus*, lines 331-335)[11]

> 'Behind the host the heart of the seafarer, Reuben's son, was filled with valour; their shields those rovers bore over the salt seaward lands, a multitude of men, a mighty and ordered host they marched as one, fearing nought.'[12]

From Old High German only names like *Wihhing* (in different spellings, already in the eighth century) are recorded; the Old High German name can be connected with Germanic **wīk-* (as most

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[9]   Krapp & van Kirk Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*, p. 151.

[10] Translation: Alexander, p. 17.

[11] Joan Turville-Petre (ed.), *The Old English* Exodus. Text, Translation, and Commentary by J.R.R. Tolkien. Oxford 1981, p. 11. In this edition quantity marks are not used.

[12] Translation by J.R.R. Tolkien, in: Turville-Petre (ed.), *The Old English* Exodus, p. 27. Tolkien adds the following note at page 63: "333. *sæwicingas*: one of the earliest examples of OE *wicing* 'sea-rover'. The form shows that it was a native word, cognate with ON *víkingr*. *Wicingas* occurs as a tribal name in *Wids* 47, and again in a similar North Sea context with *Wen<d>lum ond Wærnum*, *Wids* 59."

etymological proposals for Old Norse *víkingr* do), but it does not seem to be necessary to do so; maybe *Wihhing* has no connection at all with the Vikings. In his Dictionary of Old Saxon Holthausen mentions the name *Wiking* and interprets it as belonging to Old Saxon *wîk* 'dwelling place, village', a loanword from Latin.[13]

In Old Frisian (thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts containing texts which go back to the eleventh century) the word *wîzing* can be found several times. Its meaning is 'Viking, Scandinavian pirate'; it competes with other words, e.g. *northmann*, *northliude* 'people from the North'.[14]

If Old Norse *víkingr* would be a word of Common Germanic descent, than its Common Germanic form could have been **wîkinga-z*, a masculine noun. I will use this reconstruction **wîkinga-z*, without pretending that Old Norse *víkingr* really is of Common German origin. The reconstruction **wîkinga-z* would at least agree with Old Frisian *wîzing*, and - more important - with Old English *wîcing*.

Profound studies of the Old Norse word *víkingr* and its cognates in other Old Germanic languages have been published by Askeberg in 1944[15] and by Hellberg in 1980.[16] Detailed information on etymological proposals (and their protagonists) can be found in these two studies and in an article by Hødnebø published in 1976.[17] Several etymological dictionaries of Germanic languages provide concise information, partly with bibliographical notes. The bibliographical information will not be reproduced here.

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[13] Ferdinand Holthausen, *Altsächsisches Wörterbuch*. Münster & Köln 1956, p. 87.

[14] Cf. Ferdinand Holthausen, *Altfriesisches Wörterbuch*. 2nd rev. ed. by Dietrich Hofmann. Heidelberg 1985, pp. 132 and 77.

[15] Fritz Askeberg, 'Vikingerna'. In: Askeberg, *Norden och kontinenten i gammal tid. Studier i forngermansk kulturhistoria*. Uppsala 1944, pp. 114-183.

[16] Staffan Hellberg, 'Vikingatidens *víkingar*' [note 6].

[17] Finn Hødnebø, 'Viking'. In: *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid* XX. København 1976, cols. 20-25.

The interpretations of *víkingr* etc. can be divided into several morphological groups: a group with nominal *wīk- + -ing-*, a group with nominal/verbal *wik- / wīk- + -ing-*, and a group with verbal *wīk- + -ing-*. The suffix *-ing* is very common in Germanic; it was used in word formation to denote persons and things having characteristics which are expressed by the word-element (a noun, an adjective, less frequently a verb) preceding the suffix.

The nominal element *wīk-* can be identical with Old English *wīc* 'dwelling place, lodging, house, village, town, camp, street, lane', Dutch *wijk* 'district in a town'. Old English *wīc* and Dutch *wijk* are commonly considered as loanwords from Latin: Latin *vīcus* means 'district of a town; minor settlement, village'. The original meaning of *wīking-* in this interpretation is 'inhabitant of a *wīc*'; the semantical development is supposed to be 'inhabitant of a *wīc* → 'merchant' → 'merchant / sailor' → 'pirate'. In Dutch the words *kopen* 'to buy' and *kapen* 'to act as a privateer' differ only slightly; *kopen* is the Franconian continuation, *kapen* possibly the Frisian continuation of Germanic *kaup-*, a loanword from Latin.[18] Admittedly, at least in Old English *Eoforwicingas* ('inhabitants of Eoforwic = York'; recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A.D. 918) a derivational suffix *-ing* is attached to (*Eofor*)*wic*; it is, however, hardly likely that Scandinavian Vikings were named on the basis of marketplaces in England.

The nominal element *wīk-* to which *-ing-* was added, can alternatively be identified with Old Norse *vík* 'inlet, small bay, creek' (Old English *wīc* 'bay, creek'). If *víkingar* can be thought of as persons who preferred to stay in small bays or persons who used to go ashore in small bays or to make their raids from there, then the element *wīk-* can be conceived as identical with Old Norse *vík* and Old English *wīc* 'bay, etc.'. In the absence of harbours with jetties,

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[18]   Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. 2nd ed. Leiden 1962, pp. 662f.

however, all sailors had to use bays as anchorage for their ships; therefore it is difficult to understand why Scandinavian pirates were named after a common anchoring habit. Even more important is that Vikings used to operate from islands.

A variant of the above interpretation does not refer to small bays used as anchorages or shelters in general, but to one single bay: *Vík*, the name of the Oslo Fjord in the South of Norway. In this view Vikings originally were inhabitants of the shores of *Vík*. Those who combine the word *víkingar* with the name of the Oslo Fjord have to make clear, how the designation of a small part of the Norwegian population can expand its meaning to denote all Scandinavian pirates; cf. p. 156.

The second group of interpretations combines a nominal and/or verbal **wik-* / *wīk-* with *ing-*. Daggfeldt[19] linked in 1983 Old Norse *víkingar* (with long vowel *i*) with Scandinavian compounds as *vikusjö, veckosjö* 'a seamile' (with short vowel *i* or *e* < *i*); he compares also Old Norse *vika sjáfar*, Old Swedish *vika siöfar*, Old Swedish *vika siō(s)* 'seamile', i.e. 'distance to be rowed between two shifts of oarsmen'. *vikusjö* is seen as the denotation of a distance after which the rowers on a (Viking) ship were relieved by another team. In this view *víkingar* originally were 'long-distance rowers who row in shifts'.

Holm's opinion[20] is closely related to Daggfeldt's. According to Holm *víxl* 'change' is a derivation from *víkja*;[21] *víkingr* and *víking* are, according to Holm, derivations from the same root as *víxl*; Holm bases his interpretation of *víkingr* on three uncertain presuppositions: 1. the verb *víkja, víka* had an earlier second

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[19]   Bertil Daggfeldt, 'Vikingen – roddaren'. *Fornvännen* 78 (1983), pp. 92-94.

[20]   Gösta Holm, 'Tre bidrag till norrön etymologi'. In: Finn Hødnebø et al. (eds.), *Eyvindarbók. Festskrift til Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen 4. mai 1992*. Oslo 1992, pp. 118-122, especially pp. 120f.

[21]   See on the *sla*-suffix in deverbative nouns Hans Krahe & Wolfgang Meid, *Germanische Sprachwissenschaft* III: *Wortbildungslehre*. Berlin 1967, pp. 89f.

meaning 'to change' (this meaning is not recorded, however); 2. masculine derivations with *-ing-* were made not only from weak verbs (i.e. verbs with preterite forms with a dental element), but also from strong verbs (i.e. verbs with preterite forms with vowel change in their first syllable, like *víkja* with its preterite form *veik*); 3. these derivations on *-ing-* were already possible before the Viking Period.

As pointed out by Holm himself, Old Norse masculine deverbatives on *-ingr* like *hlutræningr* 'a person who is robbed of his share' and *skiptingr* 'changeling, idiot' belong to weak verbs and they often have a passive semantical content. An example of a masculine *ing*-derivation belonging to a strong verb, *umrenningr* 'vagrant, marauder' (and its feminine counterpart *umrenning* f. 'vagabondary') is less helpful, since the strong verb *renna* has partly mixed with the weak verb *renna*. Feminines on *-ing* belonging to strong verbs, however, are known (e.g., Old Norse *heiting*, plural *heitingar* 'threats, imprecations'), and for that reason Holm is inclined to suppose that at first a feminine *víking* existed and that afterwards a masculine *víkingr* was created. A weak point in Holm's explanation, however, is the supposition that a deverbative masculine **wiking-* existed already before the beginning of the Viking Period.

A third group of explanations links a verbal element **wīk-* with the *-ing-*suffix. Most daring is the derivation of **wīking-* from verbal **wīk-* < **wīg-k-* [22] (cf. Old Norse **vígka* 'to fight as a habit', derived with a *k*-suffix[23] from *víg* 'battle'[24]); the reconstruction

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[22]   Per Thorson, 'A new interpretation of *Viking*'. In: Peter Foote & Dag Strömbäck (eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Viking Congress ... 1969*. Uppsala 1971, pp. 101-104.

[23]   Other verbs with *k*-suffix are Old Norse *dýrka* 'to glorify, celebrate, worship' (adjective *dýrr* 'dear, precious'), *þurka* 'to (make) dry' (adjective *þurr* 'dry'), *þrælka* 'to enthral' (*þræll* 'thrall, slave'), Old Norse *stanka* 'to be reluctant' (cf. Old English *stenan* 'to sigh, groan').

requires an ad-hoc sound-law *gk > k*; moreover, a verb **vígka* is not attested in Old Norse. So interpreting the word *viking* as originally denoting a professional fighter is rather hypothetical, if not hazardous.

Another 'solution' is the interpretation of **wīking-* as a derivation from **wīka-* 'to give way', a so-called strong verb, or any of its 'strong' side-forms: Old Norse *víkja* and Old Norse *víkva* (both with preterite singular *veik*, plural *vikum*) 'to move, to turn, to go, to trend'. In this view a *viking* originally was 'a person who moves, who goes (aside), a person who travels abroad'. The number of *ing*-derivations from strong verbs, however, is confined.

Askeberg preferred a derivation not from a verb, but from a noun *vík* f. *'deviation, being abroad', belonging to the verb *víkja* 'to turn aside': *víkingr* as 'a person who makes a deviation', i.e. 'a person who goes away from home, who is abroad'[25]. De Vries is of the opinion that this interpretation is not very likely.[26]

For morphological reasons, for syntactical reasons (constructions in so-called Scaldic poetry, as *Vikinga skeiðar* 'ships of the Vikings' comparable to constructions as *dana skeiðar* 'ships of the Danes', showing an ethnonym) and for reasons of content of so-called Scaldic poetry, Hellberg prefers the interpretation of *víkingr* as a designation of the origin of people, *víkingr* = inhabitant of the Oslo Fjord.[27] The meaning 'pirate' in 12th- and 13th-century literature is, according to Hellberg, due to influence from English religious literature, where *víkingr* was used in a negative sense.[28]

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[24] Verbal *k*-derivations of strong verbs are very rare; those *k*-verbs derived from strong verbs have (IE) *o*-grade (> Germanic *a*-grade) or zero grade in their root syllables. Usually *k*-verbs are derivations from weak verbs. Cf. Krahe & Meid, *Germanische Sprachwissenschaft* III: *Wortbildungslehre,* pp. 261f.

[25] Askeberg, 'Vikingerna', pp. 176-178, 182f.

[26] De Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch,* pp. 662f.

[27] Cf. Hellberg [note 6], pp. 57f.

[28] See Hellberg, p. 69.

Favourable to Hellberg's interpretation is Old English *Wīcingas* occurring in *Widsith*, a poem commonly dated in the late-seventh century. The word can be found twice, in different forms, as can be seen from the quotations made above; the formal difference depends on the structure of the sentences. The context of the second *Widsith* quotation shows that *Wīcingas* are conceived as a tribe between other tribes. Swedes, Geats, Danes, Verns (Latin: *Varini*) and Vendels (Latin: *Vandili*) all once lived either in or close to Scandinavia; thus, the conjecture that the *Wīcingas* settled somewhere in the same area lies near at hand.

Several arguments can be adduced against an interpretation 'men from the Oslo Fjord'. First, the female noun *víking* f. 'plundering, feebooting voyage' would not fit in. Second, in ninth-century Carolingian France, people from the Oslo Fjord area are called *Westfaldingi*. Third, people from the Oslo Fjord are called *víkverjar*, or *-verir* elsewhere, e.g. in Scaldic poetry and in prose (ca A.D. 1150). The second objection can be easily disposed of: *Westfaldingi* possibly refers to Vestfold only, the region west of the Oslo Fjord, the region east of the Oslo Fjord being called Østfold; therefore, *Wīcingas* would be a perfect designation of all the inhabitants of the Oslo Fjord region.

It looks as if **wīkinga-ʒ* is an early word, even older than 793, the beginning of a Viking presence on the English coast. The least problematic etymology of *viking* is the derivation from *Vik-* 'Oslo Fjord',[29] which morphologically does not cause any problem; as to the semantical development 'inhabitant of a certain region' → 'person with a certain way of living' Hellberg adduces a few parallels, e.g. *slave*, *vandal*.[30]

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[29]   The new etymological dictionary of Norwegian prefers the interpretation of *vikings* as 'people, (sea)men from the coastal areas in the *Vik*-region, i.e. Skagerrak and Oslo Fjord': Harald Bjorvand & Fredrik Otto Lindeman, *Våre arveord. Etymologisk ordbok*. Oslo 2000, pp. 1050f.

[30]   Hellberg, p. 27.

Besteman points out that in the Carolingian Period, the word *Frisian*, originally an ethnonym, more and more developed a secondary meaning 'merchant, trader'.[31] This leads to the second best etymology: *viking* is a derivation from *wīc-* 'market place', Vikings originally being traders, getting hold of their commodities not only by trade in the proper sense, but also, and sometimes preferably, by plundering.

Whatever the word's descent and its original meaning may be, an influential Dutch publication should be mentioned, a book that with respect to the Dutch designation of the Vikings is rather misleading: the official *Woordenlijst Nederlandse taal*.[32] This *Woordenlijst* put an end to the alternative spelling *wiking* (with *w-* besides the spelling *viking*). This is regrettable, because Dutch words with a common Germanic background and having parallels in Old Germanic languages with an initial sequence *w* + vowel, normally have initial *w* + vowel in Modern Dutch as well.

Jan de Vries, the well-known Dutch scholar of Old Germanic culture, language and literature, wrote a book in 1923 with special attention to Viking activities in the Low Countries.[33] More books in Dutch on Vikings have been published, but they were translations from other languages, and they did not focus on the Low Countries.

Rather unexpectedly, a few years ago an archaeological find made clear that Vikings not only took away objects from the Netherlands, but that they also brought valuables or at least left them here. A silver hoard, discovered in 1996 on the former Isle of

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[31] Jan C. Besteman, *Vikingen in Noord-Holland? De zilverschat van Wieringen in het licht van de Noormanneninvallen.* Haarlem 1996, p. 4.

[32] *Woordenlijst Nederlandse taal samengesteld door het Instituut voor Nederlandse Lexicologie in opdracht van de Nederlandse Taalunie.* Den Haag & Antwerpen 1995, p. 959.

[33] Jan de Vries, *De wikingen in de lage landen bij de zee.* Haarlem 1923.

Wieringen in the Northwestern part of the Netherlands and described by Besteman,[34] leads us to the middle of the ninth century. The silver hoard had a weight of 1.7 kg. Among the objects were seven bracelets, one of them being of twisted silver; other objects include a necklace, 16 ingots (bars) of silver [together ca 750 grams], and 78 Carolingian coins.[35] The necklace, the bracelet of twisted silver, the 16 bars of silver and some other objects point to Scandinavia, especially Denmark.[36] On the basis of the coins Besteman dated the deposit about 850 A.D. Besteman argues that the deposit must have belonged to a Dane who, at least temporarily, settled on the Isle of Wieringen.

In 1995 a book on "Early Medieval circular fortresses in Zeeland", written by several authors, mainly archaeologists, linked the circular fortresses in the province of Zeeland with the Viking threats in the last quarter of the 9th century.[37] Maybe a revival of scientific interest in Viking activities in the Low Countries is dawning.

In 1996 Raymond ten Berge published a booklet, that had a question as its title: "Were the people of Drenthe and part of the people of Groningen Vikings?"; an enlarged edition with a slightly altered title appeared shortly after.[38] Surprising is Ten Berge's view

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[34]   Besteman, Vikingen in Noord-Holland? [note 31]

[35]   Besteman, pp. 14-22.

[36]   Besteman, pp. 24-26.

[37]   Robert M. van Heeringen et al. (eds.), *Vroeg-Middeleeuwse ringwalburgen in Zeeland.* Goes & Amersfoort 1995. On the function of the fortresses as means of defence against the Vikings see: Peter A. Henderikx, 'De ringwalburgen in het mondingsgebied van de Schelde in historisch perspectief'. In: *Vroeg-Middeleeuwse ringwalburgen*, pp. 71-112, especially pp. 94-101 and 110f.

[38]   Raymond ten Berge, *Waren de Drenten en een deel van de Groningers Vikingen? Het verschijnsel Viking verklaard aan de hand van regionale geschiedenis ofwel de vernietiging van de laatste dichters door het vroege christendom.* Groningen 1996. Idem, *Waren de Drenten en een deel van de Groningers Vikingen? Het verschijnsel Viking mede verklaard*

on Viking activities in the Northern Netherlands. In his discussion of several aspects of mediaeval history of the province of Drenthe Ten Berge shows no doubt as to the origin of the word *viking*. He is of the opinion that the Dutch word *viking* is a derivation of the verb *wiken* and points out that in the story of the conversion of parts of Western Flanders by Saint Amand it is told that certain people tried to escape from being converted to Christianity by going away (*wīken*);[39] the source, which is mentioned by Ten Berge in 1997, but not in 1996, appears to be a Middle Dutch text. *Wīken* in the meaning 'to withdraw, to duck out of something' is recorded only once by the *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek*, in the text about Saint Amand.[40]

Ten Berge is convinced that Vikings originated at the end of the eighth century. In those days Charlemagne tried to christianize the Old Saxons (and those Frisians who still were pagans); many Saxons fled, possibly in the company of Frisian merchants, to Scandinavia. In Ten Berge's vision these Old Saxons came back and took avenge on churches, monasteries and other Christian institutions and on the Christians themselves.[41] In Scandinavia these Saxons had been influenced linguistically, as can be seen, at least in Ten Berge's opinion, from Viking place-names in England, e.g. place-names on *-by*. Some place-names in Drenthe are

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aan de hand van regionale geschiedenis ofwel de vernietiging van de laatste Europese dichters door het vroege christendom. Groningen 1997.

[39] Ten Berge 1996, p. 16; 1997, p. 33.

[40] Cf. E. Verwijs & J. Verdam & F.A. Stoett, *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek*. 's-Gravenhage 1929, cols. 2531-2535, col. 2531: *wiken* 'Zich van iets of iemand afwenden, er niets van willen weten': *Hi* (Amand) *vulbrochte met pinen dat tkerstin gheloove mochte scinen beede t'Inghelmenstre ende t Aerlebeke ende weet, dat doe niet langhe wek(en) die van Corteryke, ende senden schiere om Sente Amande ... dat hi quam binnen der poirt predicken.*
Other meanings of Middle Dutch *wiken* are: 'wijken, de wijk nemen, vluchten' [English 'to give way, to go away, to flee'].

[41] Cf. Ten Berge 1996, p. 29; 1997, p. 47.

interpreted by Ten Berge as being Scandinavian as well, esp. Norwegian; those names supposedly were given to places in the North of Drenthe by people who came back to Drenthe after a long stay in Scandinavia (esp. Norway).[42]

Whatever the word *viking* originally may have meant, and wherever it may have originated, it appears clearly from Carolingian sources, which will not be discussed here, that people from Scandinavia visited the Low Countries.[43] The written sources from the Carolingian Period, all being more or less connected with the Carolingians themselves or with Christian institutions, generally don't depict the pagans from the North as sympathetic people. On the contrary, the Vikings are described as committers of plunderings, burnings, killings, and rapings. Part of Viking activities should be seen in a positive light: Viking craftsmanship in shipbuilding and sailing, the Viking fortifications and the bridge construction in Denmark during Harald Bluetooth's reign in the second half of the ninth century cannot be considered as proofs of inclination towards destruction; the same applies to Viking art. In pointing out these positive elements in Viking life I do not intend to join Ten Berge on his way through Viking history. Ten Berge's view of Vikings confines itself largely to their real or supposed impact on the northern part of the Netherlands. Admittedly Ten Berge displays an original and fresh vision of the origin of the Vikings and of the word *viking*; he, however, pays too little attention to broader Northwest European dimensions. Never-theless, a thorough discussion of his ideas may contribute to a better understanding of details in the history of the provinces of Groningen and Drenthe. Such a discussion, however, was not the subject of this paper.

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[42]   Cf. Ten Berge 1996, pp. 45-48; 1997, pp. 66-68.

[43]   See on this issue Peter A. Henderikx [note 37].