

[The Medieval Review](#) 15.08.70

McLeod, Shane. *The Beginning of Scandinavian Settlement in England: The Viking 'Great Army' and Early Settlers, c. 865-900*. Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 29. Turnhout: Brepols, 2014. pp. xvi, 330, 8 figures, 6 maps, 3 tables. €80.00 (hardback). ISBN: 978-2-503-54556-1 (hardback).

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Historians, archaeologists, and philologists have debated the character and extent of Scandinavian settlement like hardly any other phenomenon in Anglo-Saxon England, and more than seventy years after the publication of F.M. Stenton's ground-breaking *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943) agreement on the main issues seems far away. McLeod therefore does all parties a great service by assembling and reviewing a good deal of the pieces that make up the puzzle. He boldly imagines some new pieces to make a full picture emerge. Many readers will value McLeod's book for its up-to-date review, while the model suggested may encourage further research.

The first chapter outlines the main problems and reviews potential sources, and the second chapter presents an explanatory framework of migration theory. The following four chapters deal with the likely origin of early Scandinavian settlers, the role of client kings, Scandinavian innovation and acculturation in the newly conquered lands, and finally the Christianization of the settlers. A brief conclusion rounds off the book. The origin of the book as a PhD thesis may be the reason for a rather dry and cumbersome style but apart from an unfortunate duplication of presentation in the introduction the book is well edited and the language clear.

McLeod eschews the term "Viking" for the more neutral "Scandinavian" settlers and identifies the beginnings of Scandinavian settlement with the arrival of the great army in 865 rather than the earlier sporadic raids. The latter may be somewhat controversial as we have evidence of overwintering Scandinavians decades earlier and the beginning of settlements may therefore arguably be earlier. However, there can be little doubt about the significance of the arrival of the "great army." The key question is of course how great or numerous was this army? Stenton interpreted the evidence of place-names to be a clear indication of mass immigration while P. H. Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings* (Oxford 1962), argued for a much smaller number of raiders on the basis of annalistic evidence and ship archaeology. Surprisingly, given the nature of the debate, readers who want a thorough review of the two positions look in vain. McLeod considers the debate unsolvable with the current evidence and simply decides to take a side: "Believing in a (relatively) numerically large great army I obviously also consider it likely that there were a large number of settlers" (13). Refreshingly candid as this position is, it does leave McLeod's work open to criticism by those who do not agree. However, as this reviewer tends to agree that the army must have commanded thousands of raiders, my reading continued past this bifurcation. It is certainly true that the question of numbers has left the debate at an impasse, and that we probably need to await new evidence, most likely archaeological, to enlighten us. Nevertheless, it would have been useful to have a thorough review of the debate as it currently stands; asking readers for a leap of faith must be considered a major omission in a work of this nature.

The consequence of McLeod's position is apparent from chapter two which deals with universal migration theory. He acknowledges that "scholars who believe that few settlers arrived are less likely to be concerned with migration theory than scholars who believe that a significant number of settlers arrived" (21). In other words, the theoretical framework, which informs McLeod's work, rests on his basic premise. The chapter identifies nine tenets of migration theory, and McLeod discusses their relevance for his study. Surprisingly, McLeod does not refer to J. Barrett's recent discussion and evaluation of the possible causes of early Viking migration (*Antiquity* 83 [2008]). While he dismisses five tenets of universal migration theory as unknowable given the nature of our sources, he stresses the importance of the remaining four of the list for any interpretation of the Scandinavian migration: the universal importance of early migrants or "scouts," the development and sustained character of a migratory flow, the generational and gender profile of typical migrants (young, and more males than females), and the habit of migrants to re-migrate. The usefulness of these tenets is discussed at length. The outcome is that McLeod outlines the likelihood that Scandinavian migration flows were sustained throughout the early medieval period, i.e. continued largely uninterrupted if undocumented through the seventh and eighth centuries, and he stresses that recent osteologically sexed Scandinavian burials indicate that Scandinavian migrants of the ninth century did include a number of females, contrary to what theory might predict.

A key factor in the book is the question of the origin of the great army (or rather armies as he identifies two major components). McLeod stresses the links between the Northern great army of 865 and the Scandinavians of Ireland. The crucial piece here is the identification of Ímhar of Dublin in the Irish annals with Inwære in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Inwære is mentioned along with Halfdan as the brothers of an attacker on Devon who came with twenty-three ships; a later source, Æthelweard, further mentions one Iguuar's troops attacking from the north; the ASC in 870-1 mentions one Halfdan as a king along with Bagsecg. McLeod surmises: "therefore, Ivar could have led the great army from 865 to 869-70 without being recorded, after which Halfdan was a leader." This is certainly a possible interpretation but not the only one. However, when McLeod later discusses the likelihood of a strong Dublin background to the invasion the hypothesis is stacked upon other observations to a near-certainty of the origin of invaders of northern England.

Regarding the invasion of eastern England, McLeod looks east but not to Scandinavia. The issue of coin by the Scandinavian kings in eastern England is the key: "Frisia is the only place in the Scandinavian world in the mid-ninth century where a Scandinavian group is likely to have had direct knowledge of both minting and moneyers" (153). Later, this argument turns full circle: "Guthrum's apparent familiarity with Frankish coinage strengthens the likelihood that he had emigrated from Francia" (229). McLeod seems strangely unaware of the fact of minting at Hedeby by the second quarter of the ninth century, continuing through the century and likewise makes no mention of the possible early mint at Ribe (for a recent review see Brita Malmer, "South Scandinavian Coinage in the Ninth Century," in J. Graham-Campbell & G. Williams (eds.), *Silver Economy in the Viking Age*, Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, Ca., 2007). Indeed, McLeod plays down the possibility of direct immigration from Scandinavia and finds that "the evidence for Scandinavian immigrants direct from the Scandinavian homelands prior to 900 is underwhelming" (162).

The discussion of client kingdoms deals at length with the fact that the great army made good use of client kings. McLeod makes an interesting but quite hypothetical observation: "Although there is no documentary evidence to support the claim, the actions of the great army in establishing client kings in England could suggest that there was a conscious attempt by its leader to elevate themselves to a higher level of kingship, such as the high kings of Ireland and the Frankish overlord of the Scandinavian benefice in Frisia" (203).

The question of assimilation is usually discussed mostly in terms of Christianisation. McLeod does a good job at discussing other indications before discussing Christian beliefs at length. Unfortunately, the discussion suffers from a lack of familiarity with the Scandinavian background as indicated by this statement: "The immigrants were not dedicated pagans proceeding directly from the Scandinavian homelands with little awareness of the customs of Christian Europe, but were instead people with experience in Christian Europe and were consequently adapting to a culture with which they were already familiar" (280). McLeod believes that religious conflicts were limited because "immigrants from Ireland and northern Francia would have had significantly different personal cultural experiences than one who had arrived in England directly from Scandinavia, including more familiarity with Christianity, and this is likely to have affected the acculturation process." In this case McLeod turns that which should be demonstrated, namely the origin of settlers, into a statement of fact.

McLeod concludes, "when looking at the acculturation of the Scandinavians in England scholars have consistently looked to the culture of Scandinavia [...] such comparisons should now be largely abandoned, and scholars should instead consider the culture of the Scandinavians in the Irish Sea region, particularly Dublin, and northern Francia, particularly Frisia. [...] Rather than emigrating from the largely non-Christian Scandinavian homelands, many of the settlers in England are likely to have been familiar with such cultural products as written laws, coin economies, and east-west aligned burial in churchyards, thereby making the adoption of these elements of Anglo-Saxon culture soon after settlement, and perhaps during the campaigning period, much easier" (282). In sum, "the willingness of the Scandinavians to settle in Anglo-Saxon England, given their probable foreknowledge of its culture, suggests that many arrived prepared to adapt to its political, religious, and economic cultures" (283).

McLeod's work is well researched for the grounds that he covers but frustratingly incomplete and out-of-date especially in regards to the Scandinavian backdrop to the migration. He proposes some tantalising ideas that definitely warrant further research but ignores some knotty questions that put a question mark to some assertions. He has mapped the minefield of one of the great, unsolved conundrums of the Viking period and read with caution the book serves as a highly useful field guide.