Were Vikings in South America Over 400 Years Before Columbus?

Here is presented the widely dismissed account that probably sometime in the mid-11th century, Danish Vikings from Schleswig and the Danelaw (as ascertained from runic rock inscriptions) arrived at Santos in Brazil and proceeded inland to Paraguay. From a fortified hill near the Brazilian border, they occupied a defensive position for some part of two centuries, keeping watch on a nearby small mountain. It has been reported that in the 20th century, beneath the mountain under observation, was discovered a large area whose walls and roof are built of concrete unknown to science and cannot be opened but are believed to conceal a network of tunnels. The following unravels the story presented by just a few advocates, of Vikings in South America. Like so many of these tales, it needs further investigation to enable verification, but nonetheless, it provides food for thought.

The Vikings in South America

Academic historians generally do not admit the presence of European visitors to South America until after the arrival of Christopher Columbus. Therefore for them, all talk of Vikings travelling anywhere south of Nova Scotia before 1492 AD is not even hypothetical but pure fiction. In order to maintain this pretense, historians have found it necessary to discard what might be to others common sense and replace it with a preposterous theory. The best example of this is: The Case of the Bundsö Sheepdogs .

Were Vikings in South America before Christopher Columbus? Pictured: posthumous portrait of Christopher Columbus. (Sebastiano del Piombo / Public domain)

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It was the custom of the pre-conquest Incas to be mummified with their dogs. A variety of dogs found in graves at Ancon, Chile, by Professor Nehring in 1885 was analyzed by two French zoologists in the 1950s who determined that this variety could not be descended from the wild dogs of South America. They matched them to Canis familiaris L.patustris Rut of which numerous skeletal remains have been discovered, all at Bundsö on the Danish island of Als/Jutland.

The anatomical coincidence being deemed perfect, the difficulty then lay in accounting for how these Danish dogs got to South America before the Spanish Conquest . The French scientists got their heads together and decided that: "the Danish Vikings must have given some of their Bundsö sheepdogs to Norwegian Vikings who took them to Vinland. When the Norwegians were ejected from Vinland by the natives, the dogs must have been carried from Vinland to modern Canada where they must have been passed from hand to hand ever southwards by tribes which did not want them, involving travel by land and sea and then climbing mountains into Peru where they were adopted by the Incas."

This nonsensical explanation was the only scientific theory available, that is, that would fit with the accepted history of the finding of the Americas. But if that account were wrong, a more common sense explanation might be that the Danish Vikings brought the dogs with them when they sailed to South America from Europe in the eleventh century.

Depiction of a Viking and his men heading to land. (Frank Dicksee / Public domain)

Depiction of a Viking and his men heading to land. (Frank Dicksee / Public domain )

The Viking Protectorate in Paraguay?

In 1085 AD, King Knut II had 1700 ships for the "western expansion". For the greater distances involved, a special type of woolen sail, which had been developed for greater speed and sailing much closer to the wind, as proved in experiments by Amy Lightfoot with the Viking Ship Museum, Roskilde. Strangely for Europeans so far from home in the 11th century, the Danish-Schleswig Vikings in this account seemed to know exactly where they were heading.

They came ashore at Santos, Brazil, found the path which had been long previously prepared, and made their way on foot to uplands located at Amambay, 25 kilometers (16 mi) south-east of the modern town of Pedro Juan Caballero in Paraguay.

The Cerro Corá is a ring of three small mountains five kilometers (3 mi) across. Three kilometers (1.9 mi) north of this ring is the mountain Itaguambype , which means ‘fortress’. Long before the supposed arrival of the Vikings, it had been hollowed out to make one, hence its name.

The anthropologist who investigated the area in the 1970s, Jacques de Mahieu, was a French – Argentinian anthropologist and leader of the Spanish neo-Nazi group CEDADE, who has proposed various Pre-Columbian contact theories, and claimed that certain indigenous groups in South America are descended from Vikings. Through his observations, he decided that, at some indefinite time in the past, the construction’s purpose must have been some kind of military observation post large enough for a settlement or a refuge.

Cerro Corá national park in modern day Paraguay, the site where the Danish Vikings in South America were once believed to hold a settlement. (Christian Frausto Bernal / CC BY-SA 2.0)

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The low mountain Itaguambype lies on a north-south axis. It is two kilometers (1.2 mi) in length and one hundred meters (328 ft) high. The ex-fortress is a section cut off at the south end, 300 meters (984 ft) long with a 20-meter­-wide (66-ft) opening for access. The sides are of natural rock, a quarter of the way up from the ground with above it blocks of unequal-size, stone tailored to fit together perfectly smoothly in the manner similar to anti-earthquake walls in Peru and Bolivia.

Along the crest a 3-meter-wide (10-ft) flat path runs; at the southern extremity is a platform with the ruins of a round lookout tower raised 5 meters (16 ft) above the crest for a panorama of the entire territory but particularly Cerro Corá. The fortress would have been abandoned either in about 1250 AD, when a native rebellion succeeded in expelling the Vikings, or earlier, once it had served its true purpose.

Of additional interest in the area is the Norse temple at Tacuati excavated in the 1970s, and the fact that the total of engraved runic inscriptions in Paraguay runs in the thousands and exceeds that of all Scandinavia: 71 have been translated from the South American Futhorc dialect. One 5-letter runic inscription was found inside Itaguambype but has defied translation.

700 Years Later - Fritz Berger Investigates

Fritz Berger was a 50-year-old mechanical engineer, a native of what was then the Sudetenland. He admitted that he suffered mental disturbances from time to time. He wandered South America doing odd jobs, and during the War of the Chaco between Paraguay and Brazil in 1932-1935 served the Paraguayan Army in one of their workshops reconditioning captured enemy weapons. From 1935 until 1940 he stated that he prospected unsuccessfully for oil deposits in the Brazilian State of Paraná, but more likely in this period he gathered the information leading to the investigation which followed.

In February 1940, Berger crossed into Paraguay at the Pedro Juan Caballero border post and contacted the Army of Paraguay. Simply as a result of what he told them, they agreed to form a company with him known as Agrupación Geológica y Archaeológica (AGA). A clause in the agreement stipulated that the treasure trove was the property of Paraguay. The Paraguayan signatory was Major Samaniego, later the Paraguayan Minister of Defense.

Major Samaniego of Paraguay pictured in 1948, the military official who helped Fritz Berger in his investigation of Vikings in South America . (Public domain)

Major Samaniego of Paraguay pictured in 1948, the military official who helped Fritz Berger in his investigation of Vikings in South America . ( Public domain )

At the heart of this contract was the Legend of the White King of Amambay. The tradition relates:

 "In those days there reigned in this region a powerful and wise king called Ipir. He was white and wore a long blond beard. With men of his race and Indian warriors loyal to him, he lived in a community situated on the crest of a mountain. He possessed fearsome weapons and had immense riches in gold and silver. One day however he was attacked by savage tribes and disappeared for ever. That is what my father told me, who had heard it from his father."

The reader should note here that King Ipir was never identified, and his followers "disappeared" and there is no suggestion that they were massacred.

Berger had a female correspondent in Munich to whom he wrote occasionally describing the developments in Paraguay, possibly for passing on to the German government, and copies of these letters passed into the possession of de Mahieu much later for inclusion in his book. In May 1940 Berger wrote to Munich mentioning that he knew of tunnels in the Cerro Corá area "130 kilometers long" (81 mi). By October 1941, he had drawn up a plan of the subterranean installations and sketches of four tunnels, including careful measurements but insufficient information to identify the locations of the various entrances.

The Mysterious Bald Mountain and Impenetrable Slab

On another day in 1940, based on mysterious information he probably brought with him from Brazil, Berger "happened to notice" a great rock forty meters (131 ft) in height in the direction ten kilometers (6 mi) south-south-east of Cerro Corá. The rock was in two parts and covered in dense vegetation halfway up. For this reason the natives called it Yvyty Pero - "Bald Mountain".

Berger's secret reasons for wanting to dig there convinced Major Samaniego to set up a permanent military encampment with wooden houses within twenty meters (66 ft) of Bald Mountain, and he also renamed the range of hills "Cerro Ipir". Once his sappers began excavating, to their surprise they reportedly found "a piece of gold in a triangular shape, which appeared to be the broken corner of a table" and "a walking stick with a gold head."

After that the rainy season set in, impeding progress by flooding: the excavation was suspended once all explosives available could not damage a great slab of reinforced concrete encountered at the level of the mountain floor eighteen meters (59 ft) down. At this point, de Mahieu leaves us guessing what happened next in the year from "the end of 1941" until "the end of 1942" during which time the Third Reich became involved and appears to have agreed to send to Paraguay a special kind of pneumatic drill. We know this because in November 1942, US agents reported to their naval attaché at Montevideo the arrival of a German U-boat at the Argentine naval base of Bahia Blanca and this coincided with the unexplained visit there by Major Pablo Stagni, Commander-in-Chief of the Paraguayan Air Force, known to the Americans as the German agent "Hermann."

Following this ‘coincidence’, according to Berger, in December 1942 work at Bald Mountain resumed. The Paraguayan sappers worked into the mountainside obliquely to connect with the vertical shaft. At 23 meters (75 ft), they encountered again the huge slab of concrete, which could not even be scratched by the drill or explosives and was now described as "a definitely artificial material harder than reinforced concrete and unknown to science." After further attempts in 1944 were thwarted for the same reason, the excavation was abandoned. Fritz Berger died in Brazil in 1949. This part of Amambay is inaccessible today as a military area.

Years Before Columbus: Leif Erikson, His Life and His Voyage of Adventure to the New World

Vikings Didn’t Just Pop into Canada for a Visit, They Stayed for Centuries

A Ship in the Desert? Searching for a Lost Viking Ship in California

Viking ship from the Ship Museum in Oslo. (Alex Berger / CC BY-NC 2.0)

Viking ship from the Ship Museum in Oslo. (Alex Berger / CC BY-NC 2.0 )

Conclusion

So, to tie together this theory, using legend, possible runic evidence, and Nazi involvement, long before the 11th century, the rich and powerful white king Ipir and his followers, unknown to the world's historians, inhabited the crest of the mountain fortress Itaguambype. When attacked by an overwhelmingly superior force of natives, Ipir and his court retired to safety below Bald Mountain. Perhaps the Vikings were sent to Amambay later to protect and oversee the installation of the impenetrable concrete roof and sides over the portal below Bald Mountain.

What is interesting about this story is that all the main actors are hiding something. All academic historians and scientists, some knowingly, adhere to the apparent lie that no European reached southern America before Columbus in 1492. Therefore, "no Vikings could have been there". Fritz Berger never revealed the source of his information about Bald Mountain and the network of tunnels extending cross-country from beneath it, but when he crossed into Paraguay from Brazil he knew for sure exactly where he was going and so did the Paraguayan Army.

Depiction of the first Vikings arriving in the Americas. (Christian Krohg / Public domain)

Depiction of the first Vikings arriving in the Americas. (Christian Krohg / Public domain )

The author, anthropologist/archaeologist Jacques de Mahieu, an outcaste from the scientific fraternity for having been an officer in the French Waffen-SS Division, perhaps revealed much ‘hidden history’, they would prefer he had not mentioned. Decades after the war, the SS oath he had sworn bound him, and there were still official German secrets with regard to which he was obliged to remain silent. Therefore in his book, he omitted any mention of the year 1942 and details of where the pneumatic drill had come from.

The Third Reich was in the middle of a major war, which it was already in danger of losing. Its outcome depended on the Battle of the Atlantic, yet they could spare a U-boat to detour to Argentina with a pneumatic drill for an archaeological dig in Paraguay. Probably they did not care two hoots for King Ipir and so their interest was in two things:

(i) They needed the tiniest chip of the reputedly impenetrable concrete roof and walls of the underground refuge for scientific analysis to obtain the formula.

(ii) They needed to know where the tunnel beneath Bald Mountain led? Was the mountain one of the portals into the Vril world or similar?

Top image: Representation of Vikings in South America. Source: Nejron Photo / Adobe stock

By Geoffrey Brooks