

## THE TREATMENT OF SOME SPANISH MATTERS IN THE OLD ENGLISH OROSIUS

The aim of my paper is to study some of the mentions about Spain which may sound strange to the modern reader of *The Old English Orosius* (Or., henceforth, in contrast with Paulus Orosius's *Historiarum Aduersos Paganos Libri Septem*, which we shall shorten to OH., for a better and quicker understanding). The fact that they may look strange is because they are either out of date for the age when they were written or simply untrue. In order to discover the cause of these mistakes I have compared Janet Bately's edition of *The Old English Orosius* with that of Marie Pierre Arnaud-Lindet of *Historiarum Aduersus Paganos Libri Septem* (OH.) and I have found that, as far as Spain is concerned, these falacies or mistakes could be divided into three different groups according to the nature of the reason that caused them: mistakes concerning declensions, mistakes due to wrong translations and mistakes which have their origin in false (or out of date) information. We show in the following lines some examples of each:

### 1. MISTAKES CONCERNING DECLENSIONS

In these cases, the author of the English Orosius shows a faulty knowledge of Latin declensions; the fact that the mistakes discussed here are quite similar dismisses, in my opinion, the possibility of misreadings. We shall comment on five cases concerning Hispanic matters:

a. THE GADES ISLANDS. The Latin noun *insulas*, (OH., I, ii. 72), despite being an accusative plural is translated by Or. (19/3) as *iglande* (singular). The fact that Cadis is just one single island (still today) would make us believe that OH. had made a mistake considering it plural, which Or, a few years later, perhaps with a better knowledge of geography, corrected. That would put an end to the trouble, but we are sure that OH. had made no mistake about that, as we also find the plural for Cadis in ancient writings; in fact, Strabo used to

call it *Gederoi*, which is the neuter plural in Greek, as Blázquez et al. (1980: 451), say:

The Phoenicians used to call it Gadir, meaning *castle*. [...]. This is the equivalent for *Agadir*, after having lost the article [typical] of many place names with the same meaning. The Greeks used to call it *ta Gadeira*, or in Ionic *ta Gedira*. The historian [Strabo] refers to it in plural (*Gederoi*).

Probably the plural was due to the fact that besides Cadis, there was Sancti Petri, another minor island, being both the result of a fragmentation of the land in the quaternary age. Once this is assumed, it is logical to suppose that Orosius translated from Greek and kept the original plural number. There was no apparent reason, therefore, for a change of number in Or.

b. THE ISLAND FORTUNATE. The same as explained above can be said about the change of «*insulæ quas Fortunatas uocant*», *the islands called Fortunate* (OH I, ii.10) into «*iglande Íe mon hæť Fortunatus*», *the island called Fortunate* (Or 9/15).

c. HOW MANY HISPANIAS WERE THERE? A third case of *number conversion* happens in Or. 18/29: «*Ispania land*» (singular) is the translation for «*Hispanias*» (OH I, ii. 68): Again, we find no satisfactory reason for the change of number: although the plural «*Hispanias*» in Latin is clearly due to the Roman division of Hispania into two regions (Citerior and Ulterior) at one time, Or.'s conversion into singular cannot be explained in terms of bringing facts up to date, when later in his work we find noun phrases such as «*seo us nearre Ispania*», *the Hispania which is nearer us* (Or. 19/ 9) and «*seo us fyrre Ispania*», *the Hispania which is further from us* (Or. 19/ 7). These clearly show that Or. still believes that there are two Hispanias. Why, then, this change of number?

d) DID LUCULUS AULA EVER EXIST? In Or. 110/30 we read «*pa pa Lucius Lucimius & Lucullus Aula wæron consulas, wearí Romanum se mæsta ege...*», as the translation for OH IV, 21.1: «*Anno ab Vrbe condita DC, L. Licinio Lucullo A. Postumio Albino consulibus,...*».

We must remark here that while Lucius Licinius Lucullus and Aulus Postumius Albinus were consuls in 151 BC., there has never been a Roman consul named Lucullus Aula as far as we know; it seems that Or. has taken

the surname of the former and the first name of the latter and put them together, obtaining thus a new character. The probable origin of this mistake can be found in the juxtaposition of the ablative absolute in OH: «L. Licinio Lucullo [et] A. Postumio Albino consulibus». Or. must have jumbled up the names because he couldn't have expected two proper names joined asyndetically. This is a linguistic resource only used in specific jargons according to Mariner (1987: 176) who states that the syntax of legal and religious writings in Latin is especially prone to juxtaposition and asyndeton, usual resources when giving names of consuls.

e) WHO BEAT WHOM? We read in OH (V, iv. 12) that the consul Fabius obtained victory over Viriatus:

Igitur Fabius consul contra Lusitanos et Viriatum dimicans Buccian oppidum quod Viriatus obsidebat, depulsis hostibus, liberauit et in deditionem cum plurimis aliis castellis recepit.

whereas Or. 115/ 18 states just the opposite:

Æfter pæm Fauius se consul for mid firde ongean Ueriatius & gefliemed wearf.

Bately (1980: 302) hints that the evident mistake in translation could be due to a wrong reading of *depulsis* (later miscopied as *depulsus*; We have found another likely origin of error: «igitur» (consecutive conjunction meaning *so, therefore...*) might have been mistaken by «agitur» (3rd person singular, passive voice of the verb *ago*, which means *make someone* (esp. an enemy) *flee or run away*). If this was really assumed, then the ending *tur* would have had a suitable subject in *Flavius*

## 2. MISTAKES DUE TO VERBATIM TRANSLATION

Here, Or. translates too literally, obtaining untrue statements. We shall study here several cases:

a. THE HISPANIA WHICH IS NEARER TO US: Or.'s interpretation of «Hispania Citerior/ Ulterior» as «seo us nearre/fyrre Ispania», *the Ispania nearer/further from us* (Or 19/8) and 9) is not accurate, and a couple of questions arise at once:

i) Who is *us*? After reading Or 19: 8, one naturally wonders; if it is the British, then Hispania Citerior is not nearer to them than Hispania Ulterior is, or, at any rate, the distance is not an argument distinctive enough. Of course, what probably happens is that Or. translates literally, but in keeping the concepts of *far* and *near* changing the reference, he creates confusion.

ii). Is the concept of distance what really gives the two Hispanias the names «Citerior» and «Ulterior»? That is what most people believe (including Bately, who pays little attention to the subject) but, probably, they had nothing to do with distance from Rome: as Montenegro and Blázquez (1982: 89) say, Hispania had already been divided into two regions in, at least, 206 BC., taking into consideration the dividing line between both and not, as it is popularly believed, because they might be nearer to or further from Rome. Still more conclusive is Spranger (1960: 132):

[...] thus, we wonder which point of view was adopted to make both sides of Ispania different. Perhaps they had the idea of an Ispania closer or further (...) or maybe, on the contrary, we should think of a more accurate dividing line. This latter theory seems to be backed up by the words 'eis' and 'ultra'. (...). In the contract of 226, the river Ebro was taken to divide both regions of power (...). The Ebro became again a dividing line between both powers [...]. That would also explain how Livy, in his writings about the war, told about one Ispania north of Ebro using the words *this side* and the land south of Ebro with *that side*. Likewise, Artemidoros of Ephesus in 100 BC told about a nearer Iberia and a further one with similar parameters.

### 3. OUT OF DATE (OR ERRONEOUS) INFORMATION

We include here those mentions of Spanish matters which provide an information that might have been true in OH. but it definitely was not in the times when Or. was written (or that information was simply false).

a) THE TWO BALEARIC ISLANDS. When translating «insulas Baleares» (OH I, ii. 102), Or. (21/20) implicitly provides additional information (namely, that there are but two Balearic Islands), which is, obviously false: «Balearis ía tu igland». This information had been taken from OH. itself a few lines below: «Insvlæ Baleares duæ sunt, maior et minor» (OH I, ii.104). It is certainly

difficult to understand why Or. does not correct an information which, in his time was fully out of date: in fact the name *Baleares* had been once applied to only two of the islands (Majorca and Minorca), whereas Formentera and Ibiza had been called *Pytiusas* but, as a matter of fact, keeping this division could not have made much sense in the times of King Alfred since, at the end of III AD., all those islands became part of a single Balearic province, which belonged to the diocesis of Hispania.

b). CARTAGENA, NOW CALLED CORDOVA. The present-day reader of Or. is most surprised at Or.'s addition, stating that Cordova is the new name for Cartagena (Or. 104/30): «Cartaina, Íe mon nu Cordofa hætt». Bately (1980: 291) attributes the mistake to a sort of exchange of historical roles:

Or's substitution of *Corduba* may have been inspired by the fact that while Carthagenia was one of the most important cities in Spain in antiquity, Cordoba was the capital of the Spanish Caliphate in the 9th century, and thus the most important city in that part of Spain once held by the Carthaginians.

which is, in my opinion, too big a mistake to be expected from Or. The mistake is difficult to explain because, as I shall try to demonstrate, the confusion probably had over the years two different stages: first Carthagenia was identified with Carteya (or Carteia), an antique city in the south coast of Spain (today in the province of Málaga, half way between Algeciras and La Línea); then, once this identification had been established, the resulting new city was mistaken with Cordova. Let us study these two stages in depth:

i). As for the confusion Cartaina/Carteia both cities share some similarities:

I) In Spelling (and probably in Phonetics);

II) In Geography (they are not too far from each other);

III) In History (both cities played important roles and were the setting of many historical events in Roman Hispania: both were early Roman settlements and both were closely related to Mago (Hannibal's brother) and to the Scipia saga too)

ii). Once we accept that Cartaghena and Cartaina had been mistaken, we have to show the identification of this city with Cordova, for which we present the following line of thought:

I) Both Cordova and Carteya have disputed the honour of being the first Roman colony in the different books of History in the past: if this unique privilege had been attributed to two cities, why could Or. not conclude that Cordova and Carteia were but two different names applied to the same city?

II) Both Cordova and Carteia were taken and destroyed by Cesar.

#### CONCLUSIONS

This bunch of inaccurate mentions of Hispania are not a picturesque exception to the work of a scholar or learned man; many other mistakes in Or. when dealing with Hispania matters (whose absence has to be explained in terms of space) would clearly show that the author of *The Old English Orosius* did not have a good knowledge of Latin and was no expert in Geography (as far as Hispania is concerned): his wrong interpretation of the Latin text makes him describe some events and characters in an inaccurate way. On the other hand, it is surprising, to say the least, to see how Or. supports statements about Geography and History which had proved wrong much earlier than it were written.

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