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The Extent of Indigenous-Norse Contact and Trade Prior to Columbus

Cover Page Footnote

I would like to thank my honors thesis committee: Dr. Michael Rulison, Dr. Kathleen Peters, and Dr. Nicholas Maher. I would also like to thank my friends and family who have supported me during my time at Oglethorpe. Moreover, I would like to thank my academic advisor, Dr. Karen Schmeichel, and the Director of the Honors Program, Dr. Sarah Terry. I could not have done any of this without you all.

Part I: Piecing Together the Puzzle

Recent discoveries utilizing satellite technology from Sarah Parcak; archaeological sites from the 1960s, ancient, fantastical Sagas, and centuries of scholars thereafter each paint a picture of Norse-Indigenous contact and relations in North America prior to the Columbian Exchange.¹ Each of these sources combine like a jigsaw puzzle to illustrate the extent, timeframe, and process of Norse ventures into North America and the extent of their continued contact with Indigenous peoples. Previous attempts at this discussion have been stifled by the academic hegemony of the post-Columbus exploration of the Americas, which left the rich history of the Norse-Indigenous encounters largely ignored and discredited as chance encounters by lost Norse sailors. As recently as 2003 Birgitta Linderoth Wallace, in her discussion of L'Anse aux Meadows, one of the only well-documented and preserved Norse site in the Americas, claims that the incursion into the Americas "was an experiment quickly abandoned".² Ultimately, she concludes that the settlement was a meager resource gathering point – a waystation – or wintering ground for at most fifty years, and notes that keeping the traffic between the North American colonies and Norway would have been difficult.³ Despite this review describing a site occupied for fifty years, discussions of trade and sustained interaction between Indigenous peoples and the Norse is not widely considered; however, the lack of consistent interaction with Greenland coupled with the Norse desire to explore makes interaction crucial to Norse survival in the Americas. Utilizing evidence from ancient and contemporary sources – literary and archaeological – the extent of Norse-Indigenous relations can be evaluated with an aim to dispel historical inaccuracy, preserve cultural identities, and revitalize a now burgeoning historical exploration.

Evidence of this interaction comes through contemporary and ancient sources: modern archaeological reviews and hoary texts written around the time of first contact – primarily the Sagas. These sources contain a wealth of information – locations, names, dates, and, occasionally, the time of day – and provide significant insight into this period due to the loss of primary sources from original voyages. Two primary Sagas are used: The Grœnlendinga saga and Eiríks saga rauða – the Saga of Greenland and Erik the Red's Saga, respectively. These texts were written and preserved in the 14th and 15th Centuries; however, their existence dates to at least the 13th Century through the oral tradition. These texts detail the banishment of Erik the Red and his son's journey to the Americas. The validity of these sources has been brought into question since they were written approximately two hundred years after the exploration attempts around 1000 CE. These two texts are regarded as containing "sound" information, but also contain elements of "fantasy" and tradition "in an extremely muddled form".⁴ As with any legendary text, there are shards of truth hidden within story-enhancing plot elements. Fortunately, archaeological evidence and cross-checking Sagas can give a standardized view of reality. A close reading of the Sagas reveals connections to cultural aspects of Norse society and allows for connections to archaeological evidence that gives both sources significant meaning. Other records from the period provide valuable information such as church and municipal records as well as shorter, tangential Sagas.

¹ Sarah Kaplan "An Ancient Site Spotted from Space Could Rewrite the History of Vikings in North America." *The Washington Post*. April 1, 2016.

² Birgitta L. Wallace, "L'Anse aux Meadows and Winland: An Abandoned Experiment," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 207.

³ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴ Tryggvi J. Oleson, *Early Voyages and Northern Approaches 1000-1632*, ed. W. L. Morton and D. G. Creighton (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1963), 18.

The wealth of evidence supporting this interaction hid in the more esoteric realms of academia throughout the 19th Century, which led to wild speculation. This delusional speculation continued, and saw a resurgence, up until the 1970s. In modern times, there has been one substantial review of the evidence by Canadian archaeologist, Robert McGhee. McGhee describes the entirety of evidence up to 1984. Ultimately, his paper concludes that the evidence hints at contact between the two cultures.⁵ Since that time, a host of new evidence has emerged that builds a much stronger foundation to the idea of substantive contact between the Norse and Indigenous peoples prior to Columbus. The new evidence undoubtedly confirms contact, but the extent, location, and other specifics are still left to be discovered. Three regions consistently appear as influential: the Canadian Arctic, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the Northeastern coast of what is now the United States. A map is included in the appendix that helps conceptualize these locations.

Moreover, it is imperative to reaffirm Norse and Indigenous cultures in an attempt to dispel pejorative fabrications of the past. The scholarly attempts of the 19th century were steeped in thorough fascination with Wagner's depiction of the Norse and James Fenimore Cooper's depiction of Indigenous Americans in works like *The Last of the Mohicans*. With horned helmets and tomahawks, these two cultures were cast into comic oblivion. Diminished to stereotypes of a bygone era that were founded on ethnology. The extermination of these two cultures by Roman Europe has destroyed their cultural identities. With new evidence and open minds, their cultures can be reclaimed. Following this logic, while all names have been anglicized, a table of names in their original form is listed in the appendix.

False histories damage Norse culture identities in favor of Columbus. With new research emerging every day, it is crucial that these myths are dispelled as a reopened field of history emerges. While it is true that the Columbian Exchange marks the beginning of the largest period of colonization in the Americas, the evidence suggests that the Norse were not only there first, but were communicating with Indigenous populations without causing a plague and war-induced genocide while promoting trade. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of cultural trade between the Norse and the Indigenous people, and there were some instances of hostility.⁶ Although the Norse explorers had intermittent skirmishes with Indigenous peoples, their primary goal was not to exploit them. The Norse were attempting to gather wood for ship maintenance and construction (a difficult resource to find in their homeland). Moreover, the location of the most well known settlement, L'Anse aux Meadows, was likely chosen because it did not infringe on Indigenous lands.⁷ This drastically contrasts the view of Columbus and the subsequent colonization of North America. Furthermore, the pre-Christian Norse mind has been wrongly tied to that of Early Medieval mainland Europe. The structure of governance was radically different from that of mainland Europe despite a close geographic proximity. The introduction of European social norms and culture into the Norse society had substantial effects on the Norse ethos. The egalitarian governments of the Scandinavian world fell to strictly feudal lords, and with this transition, the values of exploration and equity disappeared as well. Modern Scandinavian nations idolize the "Viking" past because it represents a time of equity between all genders, expansionism, and

⁵ Robert McGhee, "Contact between Native North Americans and the Medieval Norse: A Review of the Evidence," *American Antiquity* 49, no. 1 (January 1984): 20.

⁶ Andrew J. Dugmore, Christian Keller, and Thomas H. McGovern, "Norse Greenland Settlement: Reflections on Climate Change, Trade, and the Contrasting Fates of Human Settlements in the North Atlantic Islands," *Arctic Anthropology* 44, no. 1 (2007): 14.

⁷ Birgitta L. Wallace, "L'Anse aux Meadows and Winland: An Abandoned Experiment," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 231.

superior military power. Despite this, new evidence shows sustained contact that can no longer be ignored and no longer be looked at with erroneous speculation. Revitalizing this discussion opens the floodgates for new historical research and a possible paradigm shift.

In the same vein, Indigenous voices have been marginalized from the conversation about European contact. This rekindled discussion makes Indigenous peoples vital to initial European contact. Furthermore, many records were lost in the Columbian Exchange, but a resuscitated North American archaeological community has more resources to explore the complex trade networks of Indigenous Americans. This simultaneously dispels myths of “savagery” and sheds light on an often forgotten group that suffered a horrendous genocide – corporeal and cultural. Trading goods provide insight into the value system of the society, and their acceptance, or rejection, of Norse settlers provides insight into their cultural opinions on outsiders. All of this develops a clearer picture of North America prior to European contact – Norse or otherwise.

Reclaiming the cultural identities of both Norse and Indigenous peoples gives them agency to their heritage in the modern day. The ability for these cultures to reclaim their cultural inheritance is crucial to dispelling stereotypes perpetuated in modern society. By dispelling the notion that Indigenous peoples were backwards, a paradigm shift occurs that allows this marginalized group to reinvigorate their history at a time when they are often forgotten. Wagner was wrong. The Vikings did not wear horned helmets, and while they did pillage, they also farmed. The ideas of the noble savage invented by explorers and thinkers such as Cartier and Rousseau are decidedly wrong. There exists evidence of sophisticated civilizations in North America prior to European colonization. It is patently fallacious to mischaracterize either group. While post-Columbian colonization is an important period of history, the pre-Columbian contacts are more valuable for understanding European desires for the Americas, Indigenous culture, and new evidence is being found steadily.

Part II: The Process and Necessity of Norse Exploration

A voyage like Leif Erikson’s can only result from intense socioeconomic pressures and a social climate that encourages trade and exploration. Popular opinion would suggest that the Norse were constantly raiding, feasting, and pillaging. This is the first of many misconceptions about their culture. The Norse, like many other cultures, relied on farming and animal husbandry. However, the Northern climates made growing seasons shorter and required the Norse to capitalize on other resources around them – primarily fish. Additionally, the Northern climates are not hospitable to many plants; this resulted in lower yields and less variety. Individual homesteads with surrounding trade centres built the backbone of the Norse society. The Norse had to rely on this farming like any other European society. Moreover, the Norse also relied on fishing to supplement their food supply. Despite this reliance on farming, the Norse always had a seafaring identity. Fishing was more prevalent in Norse communities prior to 1050 than farming.⁸

Land is vital for supporting increasingly larger population. Only 2.7% of modern Norway’s land is arable and Sweden and Finland are equally low on arable land with 7.5%

⁸ Ian A. Simpson, James H. Barrett, and Karen B. Milek, "Interpreting the Viking Age to Medieval period transition in Norse Orkney through cultural soil and sediment analyses," *Geoarchaeology* 20, no. 4 (April 2005):355.

for both.⁹ For a comparison, in the United Kingdom, 70.9% of the land is arable.¹⁰ As populations exploded around the turn of the millennium, food security became a significant concern. The Scandinavian Peninsula was not ideal for supporting the increased need for food due to the paucity of arable land. This created an economic incentive to expand and that translated into a cultural identity emphasizing exploration.

Pillaging or settling were the most effective ways to expand the borders of the Norse cultural empire. Within Jarldoms, there was trade, and that trading spirit translated to help boost the economy of Ireland when the Norse invaded.¹¹ To compound the issue of land scarcity, Germanic inheritance laws create either disenfranchised sons or increasingly smaller domains for poorer lords. Well-regulated traditional Norwegian inheritance and Germanic inheritance structures created a codified system that distributed land upon death. The eldest son inherited first, but often a man allocated land for his other sons creating a pseudo-gavelkind.¹² Most often, a son inherited from his father, but brothers could inherit from brothers and fathers or grandfathers could inherit from sons or grandsons.¹³ This significantly stifles growth since these new domains often fight while having smaller yields due to smaller pieces of farmed land. Alternatively, sons would raise their armies to fight for land. Fortunately, this practice did not occur often since it required sons to have pre-existing standing armies. Thus, these sorts of conflicts usually only occurred between the sons of very wealthy landowners and the sons had likely already made a name for themselves with a homestead of their own. Men and women had rights to land and a desire to retain prestige, and women could leave their husbands for any reason. Ahead of its time, Norse culture allowed women to seek divorce. "When the story was confirmed by witnesses," the archbishop or other religious leader was obligated to grant an annulment.¹⁴ All of these issues combined to force young Norse out of their homeland to explore Europe and beyond.

The Norse were well equipped to fulfil these expansionary values. The design of the Norse fleet was unlike any other in Europe. The design maximized strength while conserving wood. In the high latitudes of Northern Europe, the construction of buildings or ships necessitated the use of already sparse trees. The Norse utilized two main ship types, the karve and the knarr. Karves fulfilled the need for transport around shallow waters, and their primary use facilitated local cargo or person transport. Knarrs were for transport over long distances. Knarrs carried large amounts of cargo with a smaller crew and could travel long distances making them ideal for prolonged voyages during the Viking Expansion.¹⁵ Utilizing the Knarr, the Norse were able to sail long distances – to West Francia, England, Russia, and beyond.

Pillaging soon began, as did claiming land to be new homesteads. The rich monasteries of Europe were easy initial targets. This was "unthinkable that such a holy place should suffer attack from foreign heathens," yet the hit and run tactics of the Norse raiders prevented their capture despite strong resistance from local populations.¹⁶ With military hegemony established, the Norse quickly saw the countryside and fell in love, which caused

⁹ The World Bank, *Agricultural land (% of land area)*, (2015)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ T Jones Hughes, "The Origin and Growth of Towns in Ireland," *University Review* 2, no. 7 (Fall 1961): 8.

¹² Laurence M. Larson, *The Earliest Norwegian Laws* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), 108.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁴ Jenny M. Jochens, "Consent in Marriage: Old Norse Law, Life, and Literature," *Scandinavian Studies* 58, no. 2 (Spring 1986):146.

¹⁵ Peter Sawyer, s.v. "Knarr," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁶ Anna Ritchie, "Lindisfarne sacked," *BBC*, September 18, 2014

them to establish a foothold in the British Isles and Northern France for centuries. In Scotland, place names are still influenced by Norse colonization, and one Norse lord's "drinking hall was so big; there was nothing in Orkney to compare with it."¹⁷ Richard Dance even goes so far as to say that a "Norse Sea cultural milieu" likely happened and it can be seen through Nordic traditions found in "Anglo-Saxon literary production."¹⁸ While initial interactions were fierce and filled with battle, the subsequent interactions were a cultural exchange. The Norse colonization machine contains a methodological simplicity that is lacking in later European colonization attempts. The Norse initially capitalized on fear and destabilized the infrastructure of the land. Once settled, the Norse quickly severed feudal ties of vassalage from their homeland, became autonomous, and integrated their culture into the local culture to create cultural amalgamations. The purpose of Norse colonization was not to eradicate local populations, but rather to alleviate inflated populations in the Norse homeland.

Over the course of the Viking Age, the Norse travelled to all of these places as well as North America. However, North America was different primarily by how uninhabited it was where the Norse made landfall. The Norse did not face challenges with "their landnam, or land-taking" by foreign populations like in England or Francia, but rather by "the natural environment."¹⁹ The northern reaches were much colder, but no different to the Norse from an exploratory perspective. Icelandic annals from 1145 CE note that there was "much ice,²⁰" but this ice was off the coast "in the deepest part of the sea."²¹ The only route from Europe to North America that the Norse could have taken travels by way of Iceland and Greenland. The waters were harsh and sea ice could sink you at any moment. Getting from Greenland to Europe was difficult. It is because of this fact that the Norse needed to interact with Indigenous populations. They could not sustain a population in an area so far removed from their traditional trade routes. Therefore, it was critical for the Norse to find new trade partners. As trade routes declined due to plague and political events, the new colonies became increasingly autonomous, like the older colonies in Scotland and Normandy, except in this remote area, the colony reached a point of "population contraction," and needed to find new ways to grow or go extinct.²² They chose to interact with the Indigenous population.

Part III: Evidence from the Sagas

The Norse did not jump immediately from the coast of Norway, or even Scotland, to North America. Instead, several intermediate discoveries were made; the two most major being Iceland and Greenland. Prior to the Norse discovery of Iceland, it was likely that Irish monks lived there, and a small Irish settlement existed. Modern studies of Icelandic blood types link them more closely with "the Scots and Irish" rather than "that of Norway."²³ This

¹⁷ Hermann Pálsson and Paul G. Edwards, *Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney* (Penguin Books, 1981), 14.

¹⁸ Richard Dance, "North Sea Currents: Old English-Old Norse Relations, Literary and Linguistic," *Literature Compass* 1 (2004): 2.

¹⁹ Benjamin J. Vail, "Human Ecological Perspectives on Norse Settlement in the North Atlantic," *Scandinavian Studies* 70, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 293.

²⁰ Astrid E.J. Ogilvie, "Climatic Changes in Iceland c. AD 865-1598," in *The Norse of the North Atlantic*, ed. Gerald F. Bigelow (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1991), 240.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

²² Andrew J. Dugmore, Christian Keller, and Thomas H. McGovern, "Norse Greenland Settlement: Reflections on Climate Change, Trade, and the Contrasting Fates of Human Settlements in the North Atlantic Islands," *Arctic Anthropology* 44, no. 1 (2007): 21.

²³ G. Thordarson et al., "ABH Secretor and Lewis Type Frequencies in an Icelandic Series," *Journal of Medical Genetics* 9 (1972): 47.

would suggest that the Norse populations mixed with Irish populations already there. We also know the Irish were there because of the 325 BCE voyage of Pytheas of Massalia, in which he recorded meeting a strange group of people north of Scotland and even stayed with the Icelandic Irish for a brief period.²⁴ Iceland's discovery by the Norse was inevitable due to its proximity to Orkney and the allure of monasteries to sack.

Greenland's discovery embodies the exploratory spirit of the Norse. Gunnbjörn's Skerries were discovered around 930. The skerries were just a grouping of rocky inlets reported by a lost Gunnbjörn Ulfsson. Erik the Red, father of Leif Erikson, "was sentenced to outlawry for three years," and during this time, he explore the skerries and discovered Greenland.²⁵ On a clear day, seeing Greenland from the shores of Iceland is possible with the naked eye.²⁶ Over the course of his journey, he sailed "as far north as Melville Bay," and in 985, he quickly returned home to Iceland to tell of his discovery and form a colonizing expedition.²⁷ These colonies were successfully formed and gathered populations "more likely about ten thousand in the thirteenth century."²⁸ For the period, this was a substantial population, and due to Greenland's proximity to North America, Norse contact with North America was imminent.

With haste, North American contact occurred by Bjarni Herjolfsson when he "was driven off course and discovered three lands to the southwest of Greenland."²⁹ Herjolfsson described this land as "well wooded and with low hills," and his men demanded to land for firewood and water, but "Bjarni said, 'You have no shortage of either.'³⁰ Herjolfsson did not land and instead returned to Greenland, but told Erik the Red of this new land. An exploration party was soon planned. Erik the Red fell off his horse and injured his leg, which prevented him from joining the party. He told his son to continue and that he was "not meant to discover more countries than this one," referring to Greenland.³¹ From this, Leif Erikson "bought Bjarni's ship" and sailed towards this land that Bjarni had seen.³²

Leif's voyage was approximately 1000 or 1002 CE.³³ On his voyage, Leif discovered three lands. The first land he came upon was *Helluland*, literally translated as slab-land and located near the modern Baffin Island. It is described as a "worthless country" with "great glaciers" that seemed "like one great slab of rock."³⁴ The second land discovered was named *Markland*, literally translated as forestland and located near present-day Labrador, Canada. It

²⁴ Cameron McPhail, "Pytheas of Massalia's Route of Travel," *Phoenix* 68, no. 3/4 (Winter 2014): 247.

²⁵ Tryggvi J. Oleson, *Early Voyages and Northern Approaches 1000-1632*, ed. W. L. Morton and D. G. Creighton (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1963), 14.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁹ Robert McGhee, "Contact between Native North Americans and the Medieval Norse: A Review of the Evidence," *American Antiquity* 49, no. 1 (January 1984): 9.

³⁰ Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, eds., *The Vinland Sagas: Grænlendinga Saga and Eirik's Saga*, , Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (New York University Press, 1966), 53.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

³² Robert McGhee, "Contact between Native North Americans and the Medieval Norse: A Review of the Evidence," *American Antiquity* 49, no. 1 (January 1984): 9.

³³ Birgitta L. Wallace, "L'Anse aux Meadows and Winland: An Abandoned Experiment," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 210.

³⁴ Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, eds., *The Vinland Sagas: Grænlendinga Saga and Eirik's Saga*, , Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (New York University Press, 1966), 55.

was much more hospitable than Helluland, and described as being “flat and wooded, with white sandy beaches.”³⁵ They landed, but quickly left.

After sailing for two more days, they came upon a third land with dew on the grass. They put their lips to it and “it seemed the sweetest thing they had ever tasted.”³⁶ They decided to winter there and put up houses. According to the Saga, the sun rose by 9 a.m., “and did not set until after 3 p.m.,” on the shortest day of the year.³⁷ This information from the Saga gives significant insight into their location. Since they were wintering, this day would have been approximately 21 December. Given the account, a daylight length of six hours at a minimum and eight hours at a maximum can be calculated. 58.5 degrees N results in six hours of daylight on the winter solstice, and 48.2 degrees N results in 8.1 hours of daylight on the winter solstice.³⁸ The Gulf of Saint Lawrence lies at 48 degrees N. Given the accounts of Leif’s voyage, the Gulf of St. Lawrence is an excellent possible landing site. Further solidifying the location of initial Norse exploration comes from the Saga as well. While exploring the newfound land, a member of the party emerged from the woods and told the men that he had found grapes and vines.³⁹ This discovery of fruit appears insignificant to the modern observer; however, during that period there was a great warming, which could have pushed the location of grapes northward. Today, wild grapes are known to have grown “as far north as Passamaquoddy Bay,” which lies between Maine, United States and New Brunswick, Canada.⁴⁰ Aside from solidifying the location of Leif’s initial voyage, Leif named this land *Vinland*, which literally translates to wine-land. Leif did not encounter any Indigenous people over the entire voyage.

Leif’s brother, Thorvald, set out with a crew of 30 men. Their voyage is not detailed, but they reached the houses Leif had built in Vinland and also wintered there. Thorvald’s expedition ventured westward in the spring, and saw no signs of people except “on one westerly island, where they found a wooden stack-cover.”⁴¹ However, in the next autumn, while returning to their ships, they encountered “three skin-boats,” under which nine men were hiding.⁴² A battle ensued, and the Indigenous people and Thorvald were killed during the battle. Thorstein, the third brother, also set out for Vinland, but died of the plague before the expedition launched.

The expedition did not stop due to Thorstein’s death. Thorfinn Karlsefni fell in love with Thorstein’s newly widowed wife, Gudrid. The pair rekindled talks of expedition and Thorfinn took Thorstein’s place as the leader. Thorfinn sailed with “sixty men and five women,” and “took livestock of all kinds, for they intended to make a permanent settlement.”⁴³ This is a significantly larger expedition than any prior expedition. In the first summer, Indigenous people came to the colony. Thorfinn, frightened, locked the gates, but the Indigenous group was able to convince him to trade. When they “saw the milk they wanted to buy nothing else.”⁴⁴ The two groups traded milk for furs. This is the first recorded

³⁵ Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, eds., *The Vinland Sagas: Grænlendinga Saga and Eirik's Saga*, , Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (New York University Press, 1966), 55.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 56.

³⁸ University of Nebraska Lincoln Astronomy, "Daylight Hours Explorer," University of Nebraska Lincoln, last modified 2014

³⁹ Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, eds., *The Vinland Sagas: Grænlendinga Saga and Eirik's Saga*, , Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (New York University Press, 1966), 57.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 60.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

instance of trade and good will in the Americas and shows that the Norse and Indigenous peoples were willing to prosper together. Another trading party was less successful. An Indigenous man picked up an axe and swung “it at a man standing beside him, who fell dead at once.” This would seem to indicate that the man killed during the trade was genuinely interested in the axe, not realizing it was a weapon since the Norse note that the Indigenous used well-crafted bows and arrows, not axes. Furthermore, this colony survived long enough for Thorfinn and Gudrid to have a son, Snorri. This highlights the extent of colonization in the Americas during this period. The colony would have been successful enough to entertain the idea of having children and supports the idea that the settlers thought of the colonies as permanent. The last child of Erik the Red to travel to the Americas was Freydis Eriksdatter. A colony of at least sixty individuals was established; however, Freydis’ colony was unsuccessful due to an altercation with a partner in the colony. Nonetheless, this shows that Norse colonization attempts were frequent. Only the attempts made by the progeny of Erik the Red are included in the Saga, but that is only because of their fame. This establishes a significant desire for colonial advancement among the Icelandic Norse.

These initial voyages show peaceful and violent contact between the Norse and the Indigenous Americans. The Indigenous peoples were interested in Thorfinn’s red cloth and iron weapons.⁴⁵ There was interest in trade. However, there were also battles. This is not an isolated phenomenon. In previous cases of settlement, such as England, initial battles and conflict gave way to settlement and trade. The Norse were not interested in killing the Indigenous people. They were interested in collecting grapes, pelts, and lumber. Vinland and Markland were vibrant landscapes compared to Greenland or Iceland. The desire to settle in a hospitable environment was important to the Norse. Despite some accounts of violence, it cannot be underestimated that the North and Indigenous people had contact.

These colonies were well established, and the most compelling evidence for contact and establishment during the timeline of the Sagas is L’Anse aux Meadows. This site is a set of homes containing many artefacts of the Norse Expansion period. L’Anse aux Meadows sits at the “northernmost tip of Newfoundland’s Great Northern Peninsula.”⁴⁶ As evidence of “Norse presence in temperate North America,⁴⁷” the camp contains “three building complexes and a bloomery,” with each complex comprised of “a large hall and a small hut.”⁴⁸ The site did not have any buildings for animal husbandry. Nonetheless, several artefacts have been found including slag from the bloomery and personal items, such as a ring, a needle, and a glass bead. The overall size of this camp could accommodate “eighty-four to one hundred one individuals,” and the grouping of sites into three complexes suggests three ship crews – a large settlement for the time.⁴⁹ The site was subjected to 141 radiocarbon dating tests and they showed “with a 95% confidence level that the site was occupied sometime between 990 and 1030.”⁵⁰ Wallace notes that the storage space is unusually large for a Norse settlement, and that indicates that it is “a place where goods were collected.”⁵¹ From this evidence, it is

⁴⁵ R. M. Perkins, "Norse Implications," *The Geographical Journal* 140, no. 2 (June 1974): 201.

⁴⁶ Birgitta L. Wallace, "L'Anse aux Meadows and Winland: An Abandoned Experiment," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 216.

⁴⁷ Thomas H. McGovern, "The Archaeology of the Norse North Atlantic," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990): 343.

⁴⁸ Birgitta L. Wallace, "L'Anse aux Meadows and Winland: An Abandoned Experiment," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 219.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 228.

likely that L'Anse aux Meadows was a resource collection site – a trade post and supply depot. Moreover, Leif Erikson's Vinland home is not L'Anse aux Meadows, but L'Anse aux Meadows is within the area of Vinland.⁵² The settlement was orderly and the items that were left behind were waste, production excess or broken personal items. This suggests that the colony was well established and consistently used, maintained, and eventually abandoned in an orderly fashion. Once thought to be the only settlement of its kind, L'Anse aux Meadows is no longer alone. New evidence from Sarah Parcak potentially proves the existence of other sites. As recently as March 2016, Parcak discovered a new site using satellite imaging three hundred miles south of L'Anse aux Meadows and further testing and excavation will begin in the summer of 2016.⁵³

The initial settlement was brief, but opened up a new path to a viable alternative for resources for those leaving the Scandinavian Peninsula. For the people of Greenland, this colony facilitated the collection of many valuable resources – lumber, nuts, and grapes. The distance between the eastern settlement of Greenland, modern-day Qaqortoq, and L'Anse aux Meadows is less than 750 miles, which is a shorter distance than Qaqortoq to Reykjavik – approximately 900 miles.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the distance from Greenland to Norway is about 1700 miles. Although the Greenlanders kept political ties to Norway and Iceland, it was “a struggle” to keep traffic between Norway and Greenland going.⁵⁵ This leaves Vinland and Markland as two close alternatives for luxury goods with massive Indigenous populations living away from the coast, yet still desiring trade.

Part IV: Archaeological and Post-Erikson Literary Evidence

Amateur preservation of history, while often well thought, is occasionally malicious. The most famous cases are generally of the later. Fortunately, these falsifications usually fail to withstand academic rigor. It is important to recognize these finds as possible evidence, but it is exceedingly important to scrutinize such finds. There are several small pieces of evidence found by both amateurs and professionals. Most debunked amateur finds come from individuals who wish to create an aliohistorical view of the Norse. There was a period during the 1970s where rampant unsubstantiated claims of fabricated alternative history became commonplace. This significantly hurt the credibility of actual work. One benefit of the fabrications is the extremely high expectation of evidence in modern times. Minor speculation is rarely tolerated or accepted, and only completely logical, evidence based conclusions are allowed.

In 1957, a small coin was found at the Goddard site. Puzzled researchers discovered upon closer inspection that the coin had origins in Norway. The coin has been attributed to various Norwegian Kings, Magnus I “the Good,” Harald III “Hardrada,” and Olaf III “the Peaceful”.⁵⁶ The lifetimes of those kings place the coin's minting date between 1035 C.E. and 1093 C.E. Given our knowledge of Leif Erikson's 1001 contact with North America, the

⁵² Birgitta L. Wallace, “L'Anse aux Meadows and Winland: An Abandoned Experiment,” in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 231.

⁵³ Ralph Blumenthal. "View From Space Hints at a New Viking Site in North America." *New York Times*, March 31, 2016. Accessed March 31, 2016.

⁵⁴ Google Maps, "North Atlantic," Google, last modified 2015

⁵⁵ Birgitta L. Wallace, "L'Anse aux Meadows and Winland: An Abandoned Experiment," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 233.

⁵⁶ Robert W. Hoge, "Current Cabinet Activities," *American Numismatic Society Magazine* 4, no. 1 (2005)

period certainly fits. This leaves the question of the coin's journey to America. Scholars have hypothesized three possibilities for the existence of a coin that is over three-thousand miles from home: Hoax, Indigenous trade networks, and genuine trade between the Norse and the Indigenous population.

The American Numismatic Society believes that the Maine Penny "came from the important Gressli (Graeslid) Hoard, found in 1878," and was subsequently hidden by an archaeologist seeking fame.⁵⁷ McKusick and Wahlgren even note that the "term *Scandimaniacs*" characterized the surge of "misguided and deluded authors" in the 1970s seeking to find some evidence of massive Scandinavian colonization of the Americas.⁵⁸ The time of discovery is a little before the massive craze of *Scandimaniacs*; however, it is difficult to prove or disprove its authenticity. There are two main contentions surrounding the hoax argument. There have not been any other coins found at other excavation sites in Greenland or Newfoundland, and such coins have only been found as far as the Faroe Islands.⁵⁹ This would seem to suggest that the Norse had very sturdy coin purses, or that the use of silver coins did not make it to the far reaches of the Norse world. Secondly, it is important to note that while the coin has been proven authentic to the period aforementioned, it also, "had a perforation for use as a pendant."⁶⁰ This is a very important insight. This helps disprove the first accusation since the Western Nords, while not formally using currency, did use pendants. Moreover, many plausible theories come from this knowledge: those not loyal to a Norse king (i.e. Indigenous peoples) could have used the coin as a pendant well after the death of the kings. While the Maine Penny could be a hoax, its use as a pendant shows Indigenous fascination with the Norse and implies trade.

The second origin theory of the Goddard Coin claims that Indigenous Americans had an extensive, exclusive trading network. Other well-documented trade networks, such as the Hopewell Exchange existed in other areas around the same time. The coin was traded somewhere in Canada, and made its way south through trade routes. The Smithsonian Museum of Natural History states that the penny shows "an extensive northern native trade network rather than direct contact between Vikings and late prehistoric Indians."⁶¹ Indigenous Americans in present-day Maine may not have been directly trading with the Norse in order to get the coin, but it is likely that Scandinavians participated in trading routes elsewhere. There is still evidence that the Maine penny was the result of "some limited trading" among the "Inuit and Norse".⁶² At the Goddard site, 5% of the stone tools found were from the Labrador region.⁶³ It is likely that there was a trading post or entire trade network where Scandinavians, Dorset people, and Algonquians exchanged goods. The Norse and Indigenous American populations traded furs. It is therefore likely that the trade of other goods, even a more luxurious item, a silver pendant, were occurring during the period. Furthermore, given the existence of the Hopewell Exchange, it is likely that other trading networks existed. Depending on Vinland's location, the plausibility of Norse trade in Maine

⁵⁷ Robert W. Hoge, "Current Cabinet Activities," *American Numismatic Society Magazine* 4, no. 1 (2005)

⁵⁸ Marshall McKusick and Erik Wahlgren, "The Norse Penny Mystery," *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 8 (Fall 1980): 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Smithsonian Institute, "Vinland Archaeology," National Museum of Natural History, last modified 2000

⁶¹ Maine State Museum, "Maine Penny," National Museum of Natural History, last modified 2000

⁶² Thomas H. McGovern, "The Archaeology of the Norse North Atlantic," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990): 343.

⁶³ Robert McGhee, "Contact between Native North Americans and the Medieval Norse: A Review of the Evidence," *American Antiquity* 49, no. 1 (January 1984): 13.

or even further south becomes a realistic possibility. In an effort to be conservative with evidence, the safest assumption is that the coin reached Maine through trading networks.

The Maine Penny highlights the uncertainty of this study and general studies of the period. A lack of records due to destruction of records or poor record keeping makes infallibility impossible. Given current knowledge of Indigenous culture from mainly post-Columbian sources and knowledge of Norse culture, the likelihood of a contact event becomes easier to approximate. It is not farfetched to think two populations living in close vicinity engaged in trade, but it is also important to recognize the possible falsehood of Scandimaniacs and amateur archaeologists. The Maine Penny emphasizes the level of caution that is necessary when working with amateur archaeologists. Despite all of this, McGhee states “contacts must have occurred more frequently than recorded in the Norse historical accounts” due to the large amount of archaeological evidence and brevity of the Sagas.⁶⁴ The historiography relies on a certain degree of uncertainty and trust in primary sources and physical evidence. The following examples are evidence of extensive contact and trading.

The Beardmore relics are almost certainly a hoax and highlight the need for rigorous investigation of any evidence of Nord incursions into the Americas. While findings by lay people are occasionally academically verifiable, ultimately, it becomes very difficult to confirm or deny the authenticity. In 1930, James Dodd, a Canadian gold prospector and railroad man, found, “a clump of white birch, consisting of an old tree that had died and a group of young trees sprung from the roots.”⁶⁵ Mr. Dodd had found a vein of quartz nearby and thought nothing of the trees. Upon inspection of his new mine, he found “some pieces of iron,” and proceeded to throw them “out and went on with his work.”⁶⁶ Several days after his discovery of these iron pieces, he thought them odd and took them to town to see if they were anything of note. The Beardmore relics “were authentic Norse artefacts: a 10th century sword, an 11th century axehead” and “the bar of a rangal or rattle,” which today would be considered a good luck charm that was put on workhorses.⁶⁷

Dodd’s findings surprised him as well as the Royal Ontario Museum. The Museum jumped on the opportunity to purchase the artefacts assuming authenticity. After countless inspections by academics of the area, the Beardmore relics were considered authentic. The museum made an offer on the pieces for a price of \$500.⁶⁸ There was some scepticism surrounding the relics, but the museum displayed them proudly nonetheless. The location of Beardmore places the Northmen very far from the Atlantic since the discovery site is “about seven miles from Lake Nipigon [, a secondary lake of the Great Lakes, near Lake Superior], in northern Ontario.”⁶⁹ The distance between the most well known site in Newfoundland, L’Anse aux Meadows, and Beardmore is approximately 2,250 kilometres (1,400 miles). This is the same distance between Reykjavik, Island and L’Anse aux Meadows. An expedition this far inland requires land travel, which is a significantly larger investment than naval travel.

⁶⁴ Robert McGhee, "Contact between Native North Americans and the Medieval Norse: A Review of the Evidence," *American Antiquity* 49, no. 1 (January 1984): 20.

⁶⁵ Charles T. Currelly, "Viking Weapons Found Near Beardmore, Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review* 20, no. 1 (March 1939): 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Edmund Carpenter, "Further Evidence on the Beardmore Relics," *American Anthropologist* 59, no. 5 (1957): 876.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 877.

⁶⁹ Charles T. Currelly, "Viking Weapons Found Near Beardmore, Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review* 20, no. 1 (March 1939): 4.

Upon further inspection, the investigation showed that the relics were brought to Port Arthur, Canada sometime in the 1920s through a family of Norwegian immigrants.⁷⁰ The relics came from the family of Jens Bloch, who had used them “as security on a loan” to J. M. Hansen.⁷¹ Both Hansen and Bloch’s widow confirmed this story. Eli Ragotte, a friend of Dodd and a renter of Hansen confirmed that the pieces were “discovered while helping Dodd clean the basement” of a home owned by Hansen.⁷² The academic who purchased the piece for the museum, C. T. Currelly, was unconvinced and dismissed the story of Hansen and Ragotte as merely, “the statements of a drunken brakeman [Ragotte] and a cellar owner [Hansen] of more than doubtful honesty.”⁷³

The hoax came to an official end when Dodd’s foster son offered “a sworn statement corroborating the Ragotte-Hansen-Bloch version.”⁷⁴ Walter Dodd, the foster son, stated that he “had actually seen his father place the artefacts in the ground.”⁷⁵ This affidavit destroyed the credibility of Dodd’s story and confirmed it as an amateur hoax. The museum pulled the exhibit following the retirement of Currelly, and retreated, mostly embarrassed, from laying such claims again. In recent times, the museum has again put the Beardmore relics on display, “not as evidence of an early Norse presence in Ontario,” but as Norse artefacts used in a “poorly carried out archaeological hoax.”⁷⁶

This hoax highlights the ease with which an individual could falsify a discovery and utilize the discovery to acquire fame or money and highlights the historical narrative and popularity surrounding Norse artefacts – it was once a fad to fake artefacts. Ideally, all primary pieces of evidence – pottery sherds, sword fragments, jewellery, etc. – would be found by academics through a thoughtful archaeological process adhering to standards that stand up to academic tests, but this is not always possible. To increase our knowledge on the subject, punctilious evaluation is imperative and prevents false information from entering the canon.

The Kensington Runestones show another example of possible Nordic involvement deep into the Americas. Another amateur find, the Runestones illustrate an additional example of amateur finds influencing the historical narrative. While the authenticity is debated, the archaeological establishment firmly holds that the Kensington stones are likely a hoax. The Kensington Runestones were found near Kensington, Minnesota in 1898. The stone’s inscription reads as:

“1. Eight Götlanders and twenty-two Norwegians on 2. this exploration-journey from 3. Vinland over the West. We 4. had camp beside two sheds, one 5. day’s journey north from this stone. 6. We were and fished one day; after 7. we came home, found ten men red 8. with blood and tortured. Hail, Mary! [Originally AVM for Ave Maria] 9. Deliver from evil! 10. Have ten men by the sea to look 11. after our ships, fourteen-day journey 12. from this island. Year, 1362.”⁷⁷

There is a distinct problem of dating this stone because the writing on the stone cannot be dated. However, observations can be derived by examining the linguistic patterns

⁷⁰ Kenneth L. Feder, s.v. “Beardmore Relics,” in *Encyclopedia of Dubious Archaeology* (ABC-CLIO, 2010).

⁷¹ Edmund Carpenter, “Further Evidence on the Beardmore Relics,” *American Anthropologist* 59, no. 5 (1957): 877.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 878.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 875.

⁷⁵ Kenneth L. Feder, s.v. “Beardmore Relics,” in *Encyclopedia of Dubious Archaeology* (ABC-CLIO, 2010).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ S. N. Hagen, “The Kensington Runic Inscription,” *Speculum* 25, no. 3 (July 1950): 323.

of the script and other pieces of linguistic evidence. The inscription did not show any “apparent alteration by weathering.”⁷⁸ For a stone that remained open to the weather for over five hundred years, there would be some weathering of the script or some damage due to wind and rain, but none could be found. There has been great scholarly debate surrounding the linguistic accuracy of the text. Numerous scholars have attacked certain verb conjugations or letter sets. It has been noted that “only through faulty reasoning and by accepting superficial similarities can medieval ‘parallels’ be found.”⁷⁹ Other scholars disagree by saying that despite containing “obvious Anglicisms and incorrect verb forms and that its pentadic numerals are just a particularly clever device for suggesting a mediaeval date,” the inscription could just be a result of trends within the Scandinavian languages to trend towards English and Mainland styles in spelling, syntax, and even poetic enumeration.⁸⁰ Ultimately, there is a wide consensus that the stone is likely a fake, and Scandinavian Scholars romanticising a fantasy about thirty Swedish and Norwegian men propagated these theories.

The three strongest pieces of evidence in favour of Norse-Indigenous contact are L’Anse aux Meadows, the recent discovery by Sarah Parcak that could provide valuable insight once fully investigated, and the Maine Penny. In the same site as the Maine Penny, there were other artefacts found. One of the most compelling finds from the Goddard site is a tool that resembles the tools used by the Dorset culture. The tool is made from Ramah chert, which would not have been native to that area of Maine. This type of rock comes from regions north of Maine and “may suggest contact between the Norse and the Point Revenge Indians of central and southern Labrador.”⁸¹ This fits the timeline perfectly. A coin from the late 11th Century found with tools probably originating from Indigenous peoples occupying the area around L’Anse aux Meadows.

Sarah Parcak has recently discovered a site, called Point Rosee, south of L’Anse aux Meadows that appears to have an iron foundry dating to the time of Norse occupation. The site has not been heavily excavated, but could provide significantly more evidence of Norse occupation during that time. Current evidence points clearly to the Norse primarily due to the composition of the iron found at the site.⁸² This find could have major implications about Norse occupation that could further clarify the Norse range and purpose in the Americas.

The second piece of archaeological evidence that provides strong evidence are small “fragments of copper from Ungava and Richmond Gulf.”⁸³ These small fragments are little amulets and other copper fragments. The pieces of copper are dated between 800 and 1200 CE. Despite being found near the Ungava Bay, these pieces of copper have the same iron and nickel composition as copper found in sheet copper from known “Norse sites in Greenland.”⁸⁴ Composition analysis of the metal suggests that it is not native to the region and smelting occurred elsewhere. The pieces were found in a Dorset “longhouse,” well into the Hudson Bay area.⁸⁵ The Dorset culture did not build longhouses. These longhouses

⁷⁸ James E. Knirk, "Kensington Runestone," *Scandinavian Studies* 69, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 105.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁸⁰ S. N. Hagen, "The Kensington Runic Inscription," *Speculum* 25, no. 3 (July 1950): 351.

⁸¹ Robert McGhee, "Contact between Native North Americans and the Medieval Norse: A Review of the Evidence," *American Antiquity* 49, no. 1 (January 1984): 14.

⁸² Mark Strauss, "Discovery Could Rewrite History of Vikings in New World." *National Geographic*. March 31, 2016.

⁸³ Robert McGhee, "Contact between Native North Americans and the Medieval Norse: A Review of the Evidence," *American Antiquity* 49, no. 1 (January 1984): 14.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Plumet 1982, cited in Robert McGhee, "Contact between Native North Americans and the Medieval Norse: A Review of the Evidence," *American Antiquity* 49, no. 1 (January 1984): 14.

closely resemble that of “structures from the Viking Period,” but the size is where the resemblance stops.⁸⁶ Furthermore, in the same Dorset community, a trade axe was found. This axe has attributes that “are consistent with a Norse Origin” of the period.⁸⁷

Pieces of copper penetrating Indigenous territory suggests relatively frequent trading. Copper and coinage would have been a luxury to both the Indigenous peoples as well as the Norse settlers. As taken from the Greenland Saga, we know that the Norse primarily wanted wood and pelts – two items that do not stand the test of time. However, the development of trade utilizing metals shows an additional level of interaction between the two cultures. While these artefacts could have been acquired through pillaging, it is far more likely that trades were brokered between the Norse and the Indigenous peoples that resulted in a transfer of coin and copper.

The Norse were in North America around 1000 CE, and current evidence from L’Anse aux Meadows puts their occupation well into the middle of the 12th Century. Trade certainly occurred between the Indigenous and Norse populations during this era of early Norse Atlantic Exploration. The settlements of Greenland eventually collapsed by the middle of the 15th Century due to the Little Ice Age and the disastrous effects of the Plague on Norway’s population.⁸⁸ Iceland, Greenland, and North America were isolated because of this population decline. This still leaves the history of the North Atlantic settlements between 1200 and 1450 CE unexplained. There is a wide range of evidence suggesting Norse contact through this period and with an eventual diminishing of North American colonies– ending the period of trade and communication until the European colonization.

There was a distinct shift in Norse colonization away from Labrador and further North towards Baffin Island. Two main hypotheses arise. First, the resources of Vinland were not significantly better than those of Markland were and could have been acquired through trade if needed. Examples of Norse artefacts appearing further south of L’Anse aux Meadows and buildings in Indigenous villages that resemble Norse structures support this trade hypothesis, and highlight the purpose of early Norse colonization efforts – wood gathering. The second hypothesis is that proto-Mi’kmaq or “the ancestors of the Beothuk/Naskapi/Montagnais” became increasingly aggressive due to growing populations and political strife within the mainland.⁸⁹ The Norse do note some aggression of the Indigenous peoples in the Sagas, but this level of aggression is only retaliatory. The primary objective of the Indigenous tribes is peace. Nonetheless, just as increasing population drove the Norse to England and Francia, fighting between Algonquin tribes and the ever-expanding Mississippian culture pushed the Algonquin tribes further north. Moreover, the Algonquin population was growing as well. The governmental structure of the Algonquin relied on confederated tribes that were highly mobile. The Algonquin viewed space much more openly and not in “narrowly juridical, terms.”⁹⁰ The Norse exodus from this region between 1050 and 1100 CE lends credibility to this hypothesis. It is impossible to determine if the

⁸⁶ Robert McGhee, "Contact between Native North Americans and the Medieval Norse: A Review of the Evidence," *American Antiquity* 49, no. 1 (January 1984): 18.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Jared Diamond, "Why societies collapse," *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, July 17, 2003, <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2003/07/17/2858655.htm>

⁸⁹ Birgitta L. Wallace, "L'Anse aux Meadows and Winland: An Abandoned Experiment," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 231.

⁹⁰ Bettina Koschade and Evelyn Peters, "Algonquin Notions of Jurisdiction: Inserting Indigenous Voices into Legal Spaces," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 88, no. 3 (September 2006): 299, doi:10.1111/j.1468-0459.2006.00223.x.

Indigenous peoples forced them out or if a land vacuum caused by northward expansion noted in aforementioned hypothesis caused the exodus.

The Norse were entrenched in the Northern Canadian Arctic and interacting with the Indigenous Inuit culture. A variety of archaeological evidence supports this. Charred oak, chainmail, a boat rivet, and possible axe head were found on Skraeling Island, and the oak was “dated to AD 1160-1440”.⁹¹ The Skraeling Island site contains twenty-three homes that match floor plans and building materials to other northward sites including Ruin Island and Thule Meadows.⁹² These sites are near Ellesmere Island along the Baffin Bay. They show considerably large populations living there for a sustained period. Norse cloth dated from Ruin Island originated between 1043 and 1413 CE.⁹³ There are hundreds of artefacts showing extensive industry such as ship rivets, iron knives, a woodworker’s plane, cloth, and a carving of a face.⁹⁴

The volume of diverse materials indicates a thriving community, and the number of ship rivets, use of iron, chainmail, and other carpentry supplies confirms the heavy emphasis on ship upkeep. These were at extremely northward locations and locations further south, such as on Baffin Island where “a nearly ten-foot length of yarn” of likely Norse origin was found, were likely established earlier and maintained longer than the Skraeling or Ruin Island sites. The Inuit and Norse “coexisted in Greenland for at least two centuries,” and their contact was “likely related to hunting and possibly trading activities.”⁹⁵ This establishes consistent contact between the Norse and northern Algonquin and Inuit as early as 1043 and as late as 1440 CE.

Greenland and the Norse in general had abandoned their pagan ways and converted to Catholicism. Bishop Eric of Greenland “set out to find Vinland” according to 1121 CE Icelandic Annals.⁹⁶ He returned a year later and continued to be the Bishop. The purpose of his visit was not noted other than exploration. Prior to his 1121 CE trip, his mission was to administer Catholicism to the local population, Norse or Indigenous. He returned to Norway in 1120 CE and “advised the establishment of a bishopric in the new colonies.”⁹⁷ He was then made Bishop of Greenland and the new colonies and set out in 1121 CE. The establishment of a bishopric shows that the region was of some importance and that the colonies in Vinland and Markland were of a sufficient size to support a bishop.

The third bridge between those two periods comes from the court of William II of Sicily. Keep in mind that William was a Norman and a member of the House of Hauteville.⁹⁸ His wife, Joan, was the daughter of Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine.⁹⁹ With such connections and his Norman background, he was able to maintain relations with Northern Europe despite living in Sicily. He was a patron of nature and within his palace at

⁹¹ P. Schledermann and K. M. McCullough, "Inuit-Norse Contact in the Smith Sound Region," in *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2003), 201.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 186.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 188-189.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁹⁶ 1121 (*Annales Regii*). Storm, G (ed.), 1888 in R. M. Perkins, "Norse Implications," *The Geographical Journal* 140, no. 2 (June 1974): 204.

⁹⁷ Daniel Appleton, s.v. "Eric, bishop," in *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, ed. James G. Wilson and John Fiske (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1900).

⁹⁸ Donald Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 271.

⁹⁹ British Broadcasting Corporation. "Richard I (1157-1199)," (2014), accessed March 30, 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/richard_i_king.shtml

Palermo; he built a park “called the *Genoard*, or *Gennoardo*, a name deriving from the Arabic *gennat al-ard*, signifying ‘earthly paradise.’”¹⁰⁰ This magnificent garden highlighted “ornithological and mammalian species” not only for their beauty, but also for their use in hunting.¹⁰¹ Gyrfalcons of northern climates were prizes worthy of only the noblest rulers, and were given as gifts by Norwegian Kings. King Haakon Haakonarson of Norway gave several of these falcons to Henry III of England, and many other rulers received falcons as gifts as well.¹⁰²

These menageries of Kings demanded more specimens, and some of the most valuable goods came from Greenland and the Canadian Arctic. Emperor Frederick II gave a polar bear to Sultan Al-Kamil of Egypt.¹⁰³ Rulers frequently exchanged these items in the 13th Century as well as the furs of arctic foxes and caribou. These are luxury goods and require a well-established colony in order to collect them. The Norse of the Canadian Arctic and Hudson Bay could not have been fighting with Indigenous groups because they needed enough control of the land to transport polar bears and prized falcons. The industry of the Norse North Atlantic did not just contain lumber collection, but rather also utilized trapping for export to Europe.

A 1347 CE Icelandic Annals states that a ship made a voyage from Greenland to Markland. This proves that in 1347 CE, the Greenlanders were still traveling to Markland. “It is reasonable to assume that the expedition was not the only one the Greenlanders made” during that period.¹⁰⁴ This is the last mention of voyage to Markland since the Greenlandic colonies were abandoned due to decreased trading with Europe because of the Plague. The ship was “storm-driven” to Iceland after trying to return to Greenland.¹⁰⁵

There are other pieces of evidence that suggest minor colonization further south and intercultural contact. There are accounts of groups of Irish and other Brythonic people migrating to a place called *Hvitramannaland*.¹⁰⁶ The Sagas mention the “land of the white men” as well. Thorfinn Karlsefni captures two Indigenous boys, proceeds to teach them Norse, and baptises them. From Erik’s Saga, they tell of a country near their own land where “the people went about in white clothing, uttered loud cries, and carried poles with patches of cloth attached.”¹⁰⁷ Karlsefni identified this as *Hvitramannaland*. According to Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, the Norse *Hvitramannaland* corresponds to Irish Legend and the story of “the *Tír na bhFear bhFionn* (Land of the White Men)”¹⁰⁸ This land is said to be a six days’ sail west of Ireland, and was also known as Greater Ireland.¹⁰⁹ Depending on the wind, this could be 500 (at 3 knots) to 2000 (at 12 knots) miles from Ireland. After conquering the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland were a “sail of but a day or two. The latter land could not remain long unknown.”¹¹⁰ A six days voyage would place *Hvitramannaland* past

¹⁰⁰ Marco Masseti, "In the gardens of Norman Palermo, Sicily (twelfth century A.D.)," *Anthropozoologica* 44, no. 2 (2009): 8.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Robert S. Hoyt, *Life and Thought in the Middle Ages* (University of Minnesota Press, 1967), 135

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ R. M. Perkins, "Norse Implications," *The Geographical Journal* 140, no. 2 (June 1974): 201.

¹⁰⁵ 1347 (*Skálholtsannáll*). *Íslandske Annaler* in R. M. Perkins, "Norse Implications," *The Geographical Journal* 140, no. 2 (June 1974): 204.

¹⁰⁶ Translated as “White Man’s Land”

¹⁰⁷ Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, eds., *The Vinland Sagas: Grænlendinga Saga and Eirik's Saga*, , Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (New York University Press, 1966), 103.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Carl H. Meinberg, "The Norse Church in Medieval America," *The Catholic Historical Review* 11, no. 2 (July 1925): 183.

Greenland, which means that this place was likely North America. It is impossible to say that this is a real place, but references exist in both Erik's Saga as well as the Landnamsbok. Ari Marson travelled there and the Sagas note the location as lying "in the ocean westward, near Vinland the Good, said to be a six day sail west from Ireland."¹¹¹ Marson "visited around the year 983."¹¹² Because this is mentioned many times in the records, the land was perhaps near Vinland and used as a place for Irish and Norse individuals to escape. Richard Thornton speculates that the Irish and Norse were running from reform movements in the church that "were aimed directly at the Gaelic and Norse churches."¹¹³ The corroboration between Norse and Irish sources suggest that a Hvíttramannaland was real and travelled to often enough to be of note. Furthermore, this place was likely south of Vinland since Markland was to the north. The common knowledge of land south of Vinland furthers the colonial range of the Norse.

The Irish were not the only Celtic culture to claim ventures into the Americas. Myths of Welsh speaking Indigenous people were also propagated in the 1580s. Reports in the 17th Century told of "Welsh-speaking Indians" that had been encountered on the American Mainland.¹¹⁴ Widely considered false, this story confirms the desire by later scholars to create the Greater Ireland story. During the time, it "was accepted by serious scholarship."¹¹⁵ These two examples show that it is ultimately impossible to know the extent of colonization by runaway groups of Irish or Norse.

Stories are not the only evidence. Genetic drift and similarities of these populations can show clear relationships as well. Genetic tests on individual tribes and ethnic groups track genes and provide greater insight to European colonization as well as Indigenous migration within North America. Icelandic and Greenlander populations show genetic markers that are very similar to Irish and Scottish populations.¹¹⁶ This suggests that either Norse from Ireland after the Norse conquest of the British Isles or Irish and Scottish groups were key founders of the Greenlandic and North American colonies. Additionally, the Greenland colony was unable to sustain contact with Europe, but they did maintain and work with the Thule and Inuit cultures. Eighty-two Indigenous individuals from various localities in Greenland were sequenced for mtDNA and "not a single European mtDNA sequence (haplotype) was found."¹¹⁷ However, when looking at Y-DNA, 60% of the population had European Y-DNA groups.¹¹⁸ This indicates that Norse males assimilated into the Inuit gene pool. The Y-DNA did correspond more to Danish groups, which would better correspond to the Danish colonization of Greenland in 1721 CE, and therefore, the Norse impact on the Inuit gene pool "was very little" as assimilation would have included Norse females and would not contain so many Danish genes.¹¹⁹ There is still work in the realm of genetically tracking history such as extensive testing of individual tribes; it could confirm extensive cultural assimilation between the Norse and Indigenous groups.

¹¹¹ Hermann Pálsson, *The Book of Settlements: Landnámabók* (University of Manitoba Press, 2007), 61.

¹¹² Kirsten A. Seaver, *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the Exploration of North America, Ca. A.D. 1000-1500* (Stanford University Press, 1996), 27.

¹¹³ Richard Thornton, "Florida's Native People," *People of One Fire*, July 15, 2014, , <http://peopleofonefire.com/floridas-native-people.html>.

¹¹⁴ Gwyn A. Williams, "Welsh Indians: The Madoc Legend and the First Welsh Radicalism," *History Workshop* 1 (Spring 1976): 140.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹¹⁶ G. Thordarson et al., "ABH Secretor and Lewis Type Frequencies in an Icelandic Series," *Journal of Medical Genetics* 9 (1972): 47.

¹¹⁷ Niels Lynnerup and Søren Nørby, "The Greenland Norse: bones, graves, computers, and DNA," *Polar Record* 40, no. 213 (2004): 110.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Part V: An Emerging Paradigm Shift

The community of North American historians is on the cusp of a paradigm shift away from post-Columbian research towards pre-Columbian, Norse-inspired investigations of Norse and Indigenous contact. The technology has finally advanced with curiosity and researchers are poised to discover novel, profound insights into North American history. A vibrant written history has detailed trade and the impact of luxury goods and traditional archaeology has left minuscule morsels of evidence that provoke an insatiable appetite for knowledge.

The cultural identities of Norse and Indigenous cultures during that time were ripe for contact and trade. Both cultures had strong identities surrounding trade and realized the importance of trade. The circumstances of the Norse forced these cultures together out of necessity. These sources are voices from the past screaming to be heard. The well-designed Norse settlement process – explore, pillage, settle – highlights the ability of these seafaring peoples. Scholars have been wary to support theories of Norse colonies in the Americas, but the evidence increasingly points towards not only Norse contact, but also sustained colonization. The Norse-Indigenous relations were not without struggle and strife, but ultimately, the two cultures were able to find common ground and were able to trade without infringing on each other's sovereignty or culture.

The Norse exploration and colonization finds its roots in a mythic period where increasing pressures to leave home fostered a sense of exploration. The famous voyage of Leif Erikson in 1000 CE sparked an intense rush to explore this new land for scarce resources like lumber. Colonization continued through the reign of Haakon IV of Norway in the 13th Century and marked a period of luxury exports – falcons and bears!¹²⁰ A miniature ice age and plague devastated Norway and by proxy, the Norse colonies. A “notable change in storminess in 1425 AD” finally devastated the colonial populations.¹²¹ With the extinction or assimilation of the final colonists, the Americas would be untouched by Europe until Columbus.

Geographic isolation of the Norse colonists necessitated sustained trade, and documentation once only existed through the Sagas. Increasing archaeological evidence paints a broader picture that leads to an exciting paradigm shift occurring in North American-European contact studies. Speculation and confirmation of the Norse exploration is not a recent development, but only now have experts begun to realize the larger role the Norse played in North America beyond Leif's voyage. Two distinct historiographic conclusions emerge from this research.

Norse trade, in the Americas and elsewhere, was much more important to their culture than previously thought. No longer are the Vikings savages. They have escaped this assumption. When found by classical Europe, the Norse were entering a more savage culture, not the opposite. A strong drive for trade and exploration amalgamated with cultural values like egalitarianism to create a group of people who travelled extensively around the world seeking new lands and possible trading ventures. The Norse needed luxury goods,

¹²⁰ Jana K Schulman, *The Rise of the Medieval World, 500-1300: A Biographical Dictionary*, (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 191.

¹²¹ Andrew J. Dugmore, Christian Keller, and Thomas H. McGovern, "Norse Greenland Settlement: Reflections on Climate Change, Trade, and the Contrasting Fates of Human Settlements in the North Atlantic Islands," *Arctic Anthropology* 44, no. 1 (2007): 29.

particularly lumber, and the American colonies provided that valuable resource. Geographic isolation forced a culture of autonomy and loose vassalage to form. The combination of these two necessities and trading habits of the Norse created a unique situation in the Americas that led to extensive trade, contact, and exploration.

Similarly, Indigenous Americans escape the brand of “savages” as this field expands. As more information about their culture is unearthed, the evidence increasingly points towards a civilized society that valued all peoples and traded among themselves. Moreover, new studies of Norse sites can help modern observers learn about Indigenous cultures, which had their histories eradicated by the Columbian Exchange. Often the great cultures of North America are glossed over, but the Itza Maya and the Inca had massive cities, and even among smaller groups, there was writing and trading. Marginalized and forsaken, this diverse group of peoples is given a voice and a story that is finally uplifting.

The extent and timing of Norse contact with the Americas rises out of esoteric circles as a flourishing field. Cultural identities are reclaimed and new evidence is waiting to be explored. With the Sagas as the backbone, a new understanding emerges and has significant historiographical implications that will forever change discussions of European contact with Indigenous peoples of the Americas.

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Appendices: Maps and Tables

A Map of the Region

Taken from Tryggvi Oleson's "Early Voyages and Northern Approaches"

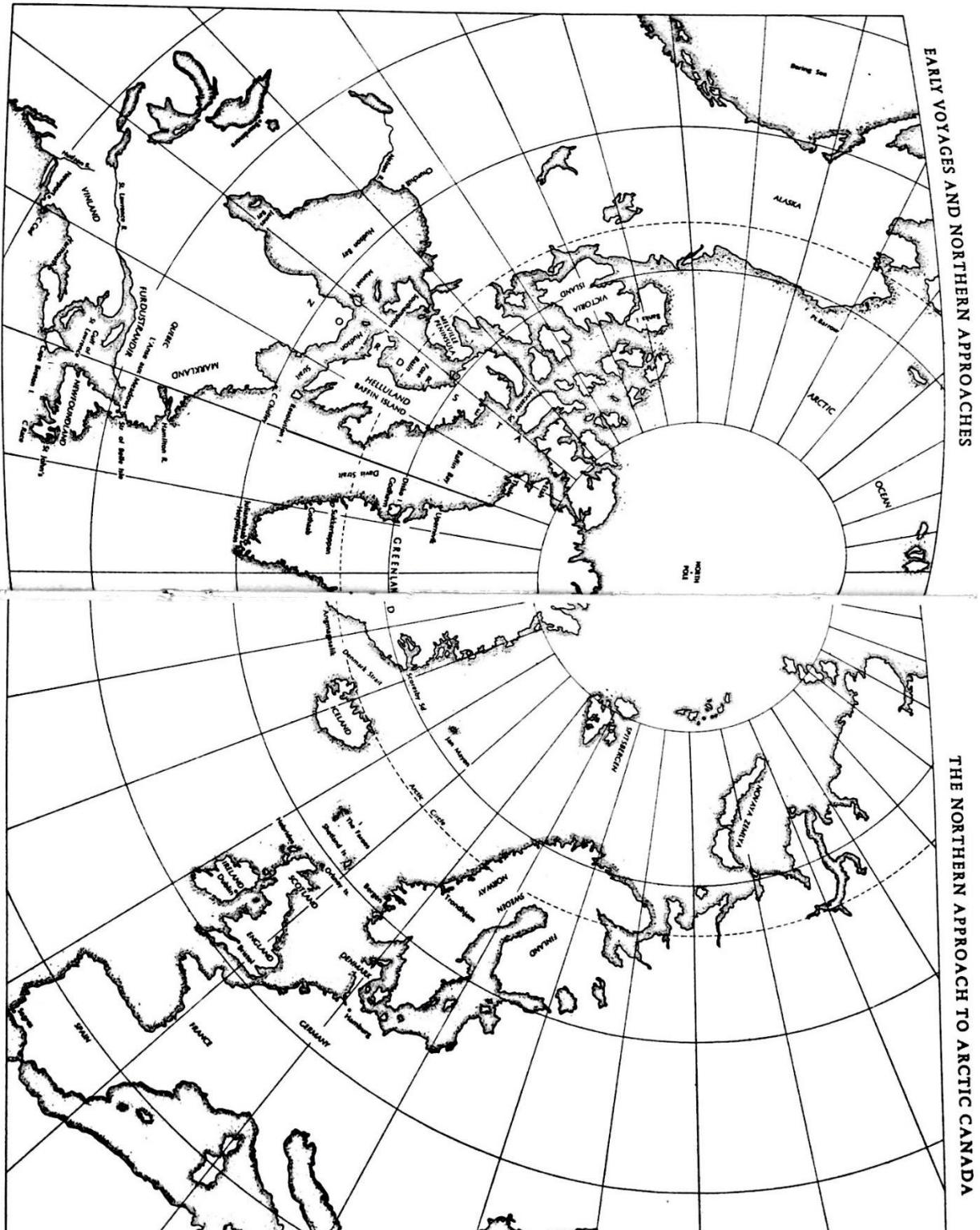


Table of Original Names

Anglicized Name	Original Name
Leif Erikson	Leifr Eiríksson
Erik the Red	Eiríkr hinn rauði
Gunnbjörn Ulfsson	Same as Anglicized
Herjolf Bardarson	Herjólfur Bárðarson
Bjarni Herjolfsson	Bjarni Herjólfsson
Thorvald Erikson	Þórvaldr Eiríksson
Thorstein Erikson	Þórsteinn Eiríksson
Gudrid Thorbjarnardotter	Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir
Thorfinn Karlsefni	Þorfinnr Karlsefni
Snorri Thorfinnsson	Snorri Þorfinnsson
Freydis Eriksdotter	Freydís Eiríksdóttir
King Magnus the Good	Magnús góði
King Harald Hardrada	Haraldr harðráði
King Olaf the Peaceful	Óláfr kyrri
King Haakon Haakonarson	Hákon Hákonarson
Ari Marson	Ári Marsson

Table of Place Names and Modern Locations

Place Name	Modern Location	Description
L'Anse aux Meadows	See Map	The location of a Norse Settlement
Vinland	See Map	One of the locations found by Leif
Markland	See Map	One of the locations found by Leif
Helluland	See Map	One of the locations found by Leif
The Danelaw	Eastern Coast of England	A Norse Controlled Part of England in the 10th and 11th Centuries
West Francia	Modern France	A Kingdom of the Carolingian Empire
Gulf of St. Lawrence	See Map	The likely location of Vinland
Kjalarness	Unknown. Likely near Vinland	Where Torvald Erikson fixed his keel
Krossaness	Unknown. Likely near Vinland	Where Torvald Erikson was buried
Eiríksfjord	The southern tip of Greenland	Erik the Red's capital in Greenland
Reykjavik	City still exists	The Norse capital of Iceland