# THE TWELFTH CENTURY CHRISTIAN MISSION TO GREENLAND

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The modern mission to Greenland is known best by its establishment in the summer of 1721 by Hans Egede, an orthodox Norwegian Lutheran *prest* sent out by the Danish Church. His mission was not the first, however. Egede himself came looking for descendants of the Norse settlers among whom to work. Tradition maintained that later generations of the original Norsemen had fallen back into paganism, and amalgamated their community with more primitive local culture in southwestern Greenland. In fact, he searched up and down the west coast for latter-day Norsemen, actually recognized some scattered ruins of their medieval homesteads, and even wondered why so many Greenlanders had lighter skin and hair than more northerly natives. But missionary Egede finally decided to work for the salvation of the Eskimo population during his remaining fifteen years in Godthaab. Obviously there were no descendants left in Greenland at this time who could trace their ancestry back to the original Norse settlers.[1]

Six hundred years earlier, in 1112, another Christian missionary, Erik Gnupsson, sailed into Lysefjord, not far from the very point where Hans Egede later founded his mission. Bishop Erik, or Henricus as he referred to himself, made his headquarters on the century-old estate of Thorfinn Karlsefni at the head of the fjord. According to the *Sagas,* not long after Leif Erikssen named his discovery "Vinland," Karlsefni led an expedition of three ships loaded with Norse families, household goods, and various cattle to settle a colony in that newly claimed land. One of the intervening owners of the Karlsefni estate in the Greenland settlement had given it to the Church some time before Bishop Erik arrived. Landholders had learned in Europe as well as Greenland to give portions of their properties to the Church for services and salvation, a custom which made the Church such a formidable power during those centuries before and after the year 1000.[2] Even in Greenland the medieval church also became the largest land-

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[1]Lidegaard, Mads; "Hans Egede: Missionary And Colonizer Of Greenland." *American-Scandinavin Review,* Vol. lix, no. 3, September 1971, p. 229.

[2]de la Tour, Imbart; "Private Churches In Ancient France," from *Les paroisses rurales dans l'ancienne France.* Paris: 1898. Reprinted in *Early Medieval Society,* S. L. Thrupp, editor N.Y.: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967, pp. 58-66.

owner and controller of all significant economic activities. Bishop Erik probably found the house adequate and the lands fruitful surrounding the sizable chapel which was to be his temporary cathedral.

But now, the problem of adequate documentation still clouds the reliability and completeness of our knowledge of the earliest arrival of Europeans and Western Christianity in North America. For a long time Americans interested in their Nordic historical background were dependent only on the Old Norse *Sagas* and a few sketchy references among other medieval sources concerning the western Atlantic adventures of the later Vikings. But during the most recent ten years several archeological and documentary finds have begun to strengthen the historical basis of these legends. On the one hand, in 1965 Norwegian archeologists Helge and Anne Stine Ingstad published the preliminary findings that Norsemen established a substantial settlement at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, Newfoundland, in about the year 1000.[3] Their work has stimulated more general awareness of the extensive studies made under Danish sponsorship long before World War II. It also renews interest in further search for substantiative data not only among medieval manuscripts but especially from several possible archeological site developments in New England and eastern Canada.[4] On the other hand, among recent documentary finds, at least two "new" maps were added to the slowly growing collection of medieval cartography relating to the voyages claimed by the *Sagas,* both by the Ingstads and Yale University Library.[5] The Ingstad map, found in Hungary after World War II, seems to continue the Stefansson-Resen tradition of the sixteenth century, whereas the socalled Vinland Map combines an older European cartographic tradition with new data concerning the North Atlantic islands. Still another kind of discovery relating to documents is that many Norse runic inscriptions in wood and stone are cryptographic in character.[6] More than two thousand such inscriptions have been found in Europe and all around the North Atlantic coasts and islands where Norsemen settled, including Green-

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[3]Ingstad, Helge; *Land Under The Pole Star.* (Translated by Naomi Walford.) N.Y. St. Martin's Press. 1966.

————————; *Westward to Vinland.* (Translated by Erik Friis) N.Y. St. Martin's Press. 1969.

————————; "Vinland Ruins Prove Vikings Found The New World". *National Geographic Magazine,* November 1964.

[4]See *Meddelelser Fra Groenland. Copenhagen.* 1908 - 1941. Cf., *Norsk Historiske Tidskrifter.* Oslo, various articles (q.v.).

[5]Skelton, R. A., T. E. Marston, and G. D. Painter; *The Vinland Map And The Tartar Relation.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965. Ingstad, H.; *Westward To Vinland.* N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1969, Plate 5 and pages 85 to 87.

[6]Monge, Alf, and O. G. Landsverk; *Norse Medieval Cryptography In Runic Carvings.* Glendale, California: Norseman Press, 1967. See also: Landsverk, O. G.; *Ancient Norse Messages On Amercian Stones.* Glendale, California: Norseman Press, 1969.

land and New England. They are generally commemorative inscriptions using medieval runic symbols, or "futharks," and the Old Norse language to refer to the exploits of a family or some recently buried individual.[7] But now a growing proportion of them have been found to contain cryptographic material, confirming or expanding the data expressed directly by them. Most of this material involves the names and autographs of many runemasters and historical dates, which are usually presented by reference to the Norse *primstav*, or the ecclesiastical perpetual calendar.

A further philosophical or methodological problem has plagued this subject: the question of the historical validity of medieval runestones in North America. The controversy over the authenticity of the so-called Kensington Stone still echoes among medievalists, even after seventy-five years of search for conclusive evidence that it is, or is not, a fraud.[8] It threatened anew during the past winter in connection with three runestones uncovered in Maine early last summer.[9] However, despite the possibility of becoming embroiled in another such controversy over authenticity, these inscriptions will be examined with other documents as evidence for the extension of the twelfth century Diocese of Greenland to present-day New England. Meanwhile, a brief summary should be made of the historical circumstances pertaining to the establishment of that diocese during the first quarter of the 1100s.

At the end of the first millennium the Nordic world was perhaps the most remote outreach of the Roman Church. Northern Europe had been "Christianized" largely by political maneuvers. Germans and Norsemen generally identified themselves as Christians after the year 1000, although sometimes it seemed that Christian tradition adapted itself to many pagan beliefs and practices rather than *vice versa*. At any rate, the transition from paganism to Christianity was relatively brief.[10] The Church was so preoccupied with practical affairs that needed doing that often great masses of pagans were gathered warmly into the fold, in the hope that someday they could be adequately taught

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[7]Broenstad, Johannes; *The Vikings*. (Translator, Kalle Skov). Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1960. Especially chapter xi.

[8]Holand, Hjalmar; *Norse Discoveries And Explorations In America*, 982 - 1362. New York: Dover Books, 1940.

[9]Langley, Lynne, et al.; series of articles in *Maine Times*, Topsham, Maine for the dates December 3, December 10, December 24, 1971; January 7, and February 4, 1972. (Lead article, "The Great Runic Mystery And Its Startling Solution.")

[10]Ellis-Davidson, H. R.; *Gods And Myths Of Northern Europe*. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1964, espec. pp. 211-223; also Wilson, David; *The Vikings And Their Origins*. N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1970, espec. Ch. 2 & 4.

in Christian ways.[11] But that day never did seem to come, when real Christians could be made of them after all; at least not during the lives of the churchmen who worked during the tenth and eleventh centuries in the North. These new Christians were hard-working, hard-fighting, hard-living people, as history has characterized the Vikings. They largely brought their old cultural ways, their pagan beliefs and customs into the church with them. Not much of the traditional Christian legends and doctrines could have appealed to them, unless they were frankly reinterpreted in terms of the culture of northern and western Europe.

Early Christian priests could hardly have understood the Vikings and their ways either. Yet after all, the dead needed burying, political leaders needed propagandizing, and Roman law needed reconciling with barbarian social principals. In fact, the Christian tradition and authority themselves still needed to be firmly established in medieval culture. In their enthusiasm, Scandinavian political leaders, kings and adventurers all lent a hand to the advance of the church, at least where it suited their purposes, often by policies of "peace through baptism or battle," as well as by quieter means. Churchmen themselves were known to use other than peaceful means to convert the pagan, to destroy or sometimes rededicate pagan temples, and to defend the Christian tradition. The First Crusade was successfully accomplished just before the turn of the twelfth century, when Greenlanders had come to feel the urgent need to secure their relationship to European civilization and the Christian Church.

The Greenland Settlements were originally promoted before 980 by an Icelandic exile, Erik the Red, after he was banished from his homeland for crimes of violence committed after the middle of the tenth century.[12] They consisted of two main districts or clusters of farms along the southern fjords of western Greenland, near present-day Juliannehaab and Godthaab. In time, there were more than 275 archeologically identified stock farms settled by Norsemen, nearly 20 churches, 2 monasteries and a bishop's estate and cathedral.[13] The fjordlands were divided into small scattered farms, marked mostly by isolated homesteads and occasionally by a small hamlet of farmers' and fishermen's houses, surrounded by their yards and fields. Sometimes farmers' properties were separated from each other by rock walls or earth-

[11]Guignebert, Charles; *Ancient, Medieval and Modern Christianity.* N.Y.: University Books, 1961, espec. Part II; also Lewis, A. R.; *Emerging Medieval Europe, A.D. 400-1000.* N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, espec. Chapters iii - v.

[12]Magnusson, M., and H. Paalsson (editors and translators); *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery Of America.* Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin, 1965.

[13]See: Ingstad, Helge; *Land Under The Pole Star.*

works, which are familiar on Norwegian and British landscapes. Enclosures still outline the houseyards, barnyards and corrals for cattle and sheep or goats near the buildings of older homesteads in Norway and old Greenland. Pastures and range lands in Greenland were usually open and unmarked, however.[14] Altogether, a population of perhaps five thousand permanent settlers supported these facilities at the peak of their development, according to Dr. Ingstad.[15] The East Settlement (Ostrebygd) was larger than the West Settlement (Vestrebygd), perhaps because soil conditions and climate were more favorable there, and the founders first claimed their homesteads in greater numbers at the more southerly location. Estates often included hunting and fishing rights, and claims for the exploitation of other natural resources at various locations far up both coasts of Greenland. Smaller camps or colonies were developed elsewhere for short-term use by fishermen, hunters, loggers and traders along the shores of Labrador, Newfoundland, and New England. The evidence points to economic reasons for these isolated colonies operated by single families or small groups of Norsemen in North America. They were maintained for varying periods, from perhaps a few seasons at a time to a decade or more of steady occupancy. Timber, wild grain, meat and fruit were always in demand by the Greenland settlers. By trading with the American Indians they could also gather marketable furs for shipment to Europe along with other products gathered farther north. There is also evidence among the most recent documentary finds in Maine that a Norse colony kept up a lively existence in that part of New England probably for as long as a century.[16]

The Greenland Settlements themselves remained vigorous and independent for nearly three of their five hundred years of existence.[17] Following the pattern of Norse political tradition, medieval Greenland was governed through a parliament, or *ting*, without administrative interference or patronage from either Iceland or Norway. These older countries, of course, provided the Greenlanders with their primary commercial and cultural contact with Europe until the early fourteenth century, when climatic deterioration reduced travel convenience.

Before the year 1000, religious practices among Norsemen generally consisted of the traditional cults of Thor, Odin, and Frey, with their annual cycle of seasonal observances and sacrifices. The cults were imported to Greenland by the earliest settlers, after being trans-

[14]Hoskins, W. G.; *The Making Of The English Landscape.* Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1955. Especially Chapters i - iv.

[15]Ingstad, H.; *op cit.*, p. 24.

[16]See the Langley series in *Maine Times,* December 1971 - February 1972.

[17]Ingstad; *Ibid.*, chapters 30 - 34.

planted first from pre-Christian Scandinavia to Iceland, as part of the comprehensive Old Norse culture.[18]

The legends preserved by the Icelandic *Sagas* describe Leif Eriksen's discovery of Vinland around the year 1000[19] and his preliminary exploration of the country to assess its potential for colonization. A year or two later, he sailed to Norway, probably to report his discovery to King Olav and to enlist some kind of support for the new venture overseas. Leif adopted Christianity during that winter in Trondheim, probably as most other supporting allies were recognized among the more powerful leaders of the time. In western Europe the Church provided the means whereby political powers officially approved of each other, and established diplomatic communication with each other. Christian baptism became the sign and rite of diplomatic recognition and cooperation, as much as the sign of Christian fellowship, even more effectively perhaps in medieval Scandinavia than elsewhere. The Church was the means whereby Norway, at least, was unified.

After his winter in Norway, Leif Erikssen returned home, accompanied by Christian missionary priests and monks assigned by King Olav Trygvasson. They were to baptize converts and to maintain services in the churches and private chapels among all the Greenland communities. The *Sagas* imply that Christianity was accepted almost immediately in Iceland and Greenland during the year before King Olav's death. But it is worth recalling the *Allting's* negotiations during the Christianization of Iceland, where compromise and the interim acceptance of particularly popular pagan rites were the rule among families and in the home. Redactors of pagan oral traditions in the North were Christians themselves, if not actually churchmen. They recorded the oral traditions perhaps two or three hundred years after the events they describe took place. The function of the editors of the *Sagas,* and their ideological influence on the meaning of the traditions no doubt were similar to those exercised by editors of the early Christian oral tradition, and the Pentateuch.

When Leif returned to Christianize Greenland, however, his missionaries worked not only under King Olav's appointment, but also under the ecclesiastical administration of the Archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen, through the Bishop of Skaalholt in Iceland. A century later, when Denmark established its own archdiocese at Lund in 1104, the Greenland mission was transferred there from Hamburg-Bremen. Another fifty years later, or in 1152, the first Archbishop of Nidaros was

[18]See: Ellis-Davidson; *op cit*; and Turville-Petrie, E O G; *Myth and Religion of the North* N Y · Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964, and Ellis-Davidson, H R, *Pagan Scandinavia* N Y Praeger, 1967.

[19]Magnusson and Paalsson; *op cet*, Introduction, Groenlendingasaga, Eirikssaga

consecrated in Norway, and the Norwegian Church headquarters was located in the medieval capital, Trondheim. From then on, the affairs of the Norwegian dioceses were managed from there, as well as those of the various bishoprics of Iceland, the Faeroe Islands, the Orkneys, Sudreys, the Isle of Man, and of course Greenland. After 1112 the Bishop of Greenland was also responsible for the religious welfare of Christian communities not only in the East and West Settlements, but also in neighboring lands such as Helleland, Markaland, and Vinland — in fact, wherever Norsemen went to settle more or less permanently in North America.

Administratively, the Church of Greenland went into decline after 1380, and the diocese went without benefit of the episcopal office, or at least without a resident bishop until the Settlements finally disappeared toward the end of the fifteenth century.[20] Priestly offices were performed during the first developmental century from 1000 to 1112. After several requests for more priests and a resident bishop, a papal legate was finally sent out to Greenland, to determine the need and extent of such a diocese. Eventually, after Bishop Erik completed his survey and made his recommendations, a Bishop of Gardar was installed in 1124, suffragan to the Archbishop of Lund.

For the first two hundred years, the bishop's seat in St. Nicolas Cathedral of Gardar was continuously occupied, except during the delays in arrival of a few new appointees, or when news of the death of an old bishop was delayed in reaching Trondheim. There was a seven-year vacancy from 1281 to 1288. When communications began to worsen after 1314, the post remained vacant for about a quarter century. For some reason a bishop was "erroneously" appointed and never took office. Another twenty-five years passed while a priest, Ivar Baardsson, maintained regular cathedral services after 1341. The last resident prelate was Bishop Alf, who served in Gardar from 1365 until he died there in 1377. Then, for the remaining century and a half until the Lutheran Reformation reached Norway in the middle 1530s, the Bishop of Gardar remained a titular office. The Papacy once more assumed these appointments when they were discontinued by the Archbishop of Nidaros. Despite the fact that two separate lines of "Bishops of Gardar" were maintained by both the Roman and the Avignon papacies, no effort was made to take up residence by those who accepted the title, nor were they evidently expected to do so by their superiors.[21]

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[20]Skelton, R. A.; *op cit.* See also Table I.
[21]Skelton, *loc. cit.*

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| 1112-1123 | ERIK Gnupsson (Henricus) made his seat in the church at Sandnes, Vestrebygd. In 1115 (or 1117?, 1121?) he set out to "find" Vinland. According to tradition, he died in Vinland. |
| 1124-1150 | ARNALD, established the episcopal seat at St. Nicolas Cathedral. |
| 1150-1187 | KNUT |
| 1188-1209 | Jon SMYRILL |
| 1211-1230 | HELGE |
| 1234-1242 | NICOLAS |
| 1247-1280 | OLAF |
| 1281-1288 | (vacant) |
| 1288-1314 | THORED |
| 1314-1346, | ARNE consecrated by "mistake"; never took office. |
| 1341-1365, | Ivar Baardsson, a resident priest, took up interim custodial duties at St. Nicolas Cathedral. |
| 1365-1377 | ALF, the last resident bishop in Greenland. |
| ca. 1380-1396 | Henry was appointed, but managed diocesan affairs *in absentia*. Two Roman papal appointees, John and Berthold, were made nominal Bishops of Greenland from 1400 to 1426. Several Avignon papal appointments were also made during this period: George before 1389, Peter Staras after 1389, Eskil in 1411, Jacob from 1411 to 1425. |
| 1426-ca. 1525 | Titular Bishops of Gardar: Robert (1425), Gobelius (1431), John (1432), Nicolas (1433), Bartholemew (1433), Gregory (1440), Andrew (1446), Jacob Blaa (1483), Matthias Knutson (1492), Vincentius (1519). |

TABLE I. BISHOPS OF GARDAR (Greenland); after *Marcus, G. J.*; "Gardar, Diocese At The World's End." *Irish Ecclesiastical Record.* Vol. 79 (1953). Dublin. pp. 105-106.

There were several good reasons for this neglect, including the greater difficulty of trans-Atlantic transportation and generally increasing harshness of northern climate. The change of climate also made existence far more difficult than it had been in Greenland for a number of centuries earlier. A mild climatic trend had been in effect from the eighth century on, of which all northern peoples took advan-

tage, especially the Norsemen. But it seems to have reversed itself by the early fourteenth century, when northern Norway, Iceland and Greenland became generally parallyzed by frost, foul weather, and ice which blocked harbors and made ocean travel hazardous.[22]

However, when Bishop Erik came to Greenland in 1112 as its first missionary bishop and papal legate, climatic conditions were still quite mild, and the agricultural pursuits of Norsemen in North America were still expanding. There was promise of further economic growth and strength for the settlements, after the first century of early development. Not much was known until recently about Bishop Erik, or Henricus. He was known to be an Icelander who probably participated in the First Crusade. It is conjectural that he entered theological training in a monastery in Westphalia, Germany, perhaps during the year 1100. He may have intended to serve in either of the two bishoprics in Iceland; but of course, he would go wherever else he would be needed in the Church. Meanwhile, in response to the several delegations sent from Greenland after 1050, the Archbishop of Lund finally consecrated Erik as a bishop and probably secured his designation as an emissary of Pope Paschal II to Greenland, where his service was actually needed. With such an appointment it became Erik's duty to determine the actual need and geographic extent of the proposed Diocese of Greenland. As the population of the settlements grew during the first century of their history, and the number of churches increased, larger numbers of parish priests were requested during the later decades of the eleventh century. Many private chapels were now converted to regular parish churches all over both Settlements, and even in "Vinland." Adam of Bremen, the historian of the medieval Archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen, recorded several visitations from Greenland and wrote down his well-known impressions of the Scandinavian Church and its members, and particularly those in Greenland.[23]

To judge by Bishop Erik's activities in Greenland and Vinland, he was not only well motivated and trained in ecclesiastical affairs, but also in such practical sciences as geography and navigation. He is known as both Bishop Erik and Bishop Henricus, because like many churchmen he adopted a new name to signify his rededication to the service of the Church, and also perhaps because "Henricus" was a more familiar equivalent of his Nordic name. Again, because most Christian missionaries, teachers, and administrators, including a number of Popes, were Benedictine monks during these times, he very likely be-

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[22]Carson, Rachel; *The Sea Around us.* N.Y.: New American Library, Signet Books, 1950. (Revised Edition, 21st printing, 1961) pp. 156 - 172.

[23]Koht, Halvdan; *Den eldeste norges-historia.* Second edition, Oslo: 1950, p. 88, *et pass.*

longed to that order too.[24] At any rate, Benedictines were still the dominant order in western Europe at the beginning of the twelfth century. His ordination and consecration as a bishop made it possible for him to serve more effectively as a missionary in this remote frontier, because it empowered him to maintain all of the traditional sacraments among Christians settled where otherwise duly authorized bishops were unable to come regularly. The Vinland Map refers to him as a "legate of the Apostolic See" and as "Bishop of Greenland and the adjacent regions." Evidently the duty of evaluating and establishing a new diocese was appropriate only to a papal legate, and being such a legate either entailed or required the status of a bishop. Although the formula of his title rings true, it is different than the one given to more than two dozen later bishops who followed during the next four centuries. Bishop Erik's successors were known simply as "Bishop of Gardar," without reference to any lands in the neighborhood of Greenland.

Among the traditional sources there are two references to Bishop Erik, one in the *Icelandic Annals* and the other in the *Lawman's Annals*. But these are the only references to his departures from Iceland, except that his name heads later lists of the Bishops of Gardar. These *Annals* deal with the history of Iceland and related colonies. The former reference is the more frequently cited by later historians. The *Icelandic Annals'* entry for the year 1121 states simply that Bishop Erik "left in search of Vinland." The other mentions only that Erik the Bishop of Greenland departed in 1112, supposedly to take up duties shortly after his ordination.[25] Other documents discovered recently confirm his presence in North America over the course of nearly ten years before Bishop Arnald arrived in Gardar to begin the episcopal establishment in the East Settlement.[26] Therefore the record of Bishop Erik's later departure probably indicates his final rather than his first tour of duty in North America.

When Father Ivar Baardsson was deputized by his bishop during the middle decades of the fourteenth century, he was instructed to bring the affairs of St. Nicolas Cathedral up to date in Greenland, and especially to determine the status of the West Settlement. Among his journals he maintained a *Description of Greenland* in which he recorded his firsthand observations about Church properties in the north as well as in the more densely populated south. When he described the

[24]Southern, R. W.; *The Making Of The Middle Ages.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953 (13th Printing, 1967) pp. 154-170. Cf., Southern, R. W.; *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages.* Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1970. pp. 214 - 300.

[25]Storm, G. (editor); *Islandske Annaler.* Oslo: 1888, p. 251.

[26]Langley, series cited, *Maine Times* Dec. 1971 - Feb. 1972.

old farming district of Lysefjord he referred to the Sandnes Church as . . . "once a cathedral and episcopal seat. But now the Eskimos have taken over the entire settlement, where no Norseman remains, but only their horses, cattle, sheep and goats."[27]

From these several references we gather that the Greenland Diocese was first based at Sandnes, specifically on Thorfinn Karlsefni's original homestead. To recall the *Sagas* for a moment, it was Karlsefni who led the expedition to colonize Vinland shortly after Leif Erikssen's first landing. It seems appropriate that Bishop Erik should set off as early as 1115 to the Norse colonies in Vinland from Lysefjord. He had spent about three years circulating among the churches of both Settlements, dedicating new churches, and confirming new members, training and ordaining priests for their parish duties all over Norse Greenland, beside taking his inventory of the proposed diocese. But when Pope Paschal died in January 1118, Bishop Erik's appointment probably was terminated. This would give him his opportunity to report his survey to the Archbishop of Lund, who in turn later consecrated the first Bishop of Gardar.

There is now considerably stronger evidence for such an interpretation of the establishment of the Greenland Diocese than there was even ten years ago, because of new documents brought to light since then. The *Vinland Map,* known by Yale University Library's vellum manuscript,[28] was transcribed in about 1440 and bound with a copy of the journal of the Carpini mission to the Tartars. This manuscript codex was analyzed and translated by a team of researchers, R. A. Skelton, Thomas Marston, and George Painter, associated with Yale Library and the British Museum. Their work was published in 1965 under the title of *The Vinland Map And The Tartar Relation.* Although the narrative journal is historically significant in other connections, we are concerned with the map alone.

The *Vinland Map* is especially important for several reasons. It illustrates the generally accepted conception of the world during the early middle ages. It represents an early instance of the common practice of adding new geographic information to older base maps. The Vinland Map is a lone surviving example of early Norse cartography, despite the fact that it probably was not used at all in Norse navigation. Its purpose is illustrative, as it was incorporated in this medieval volume concerning the Carpini mission. While it is a copy of the original, it is primarily outstanding because of its delineation of Greenland, apparently based on field data and accurate firsthand observation.

[27]Jonsson, F.; *Ivar Baardsson: Det gamle Groenlands beskrivelse.* Copenagen: 1930, p. 30.
[28]See Skelton, et al., *op. cit.*

Though its delineation of Vinland is far less precise, the characteristic landmarks of that so-called "island" are at least as easily recognized as are most medieval depictions of Africa, say, or India, or Scandinavia. Our purpose rules against a full treatment of these cartographic factors, except to point out that in Europe, Greenland was not generally known to be an island before the middle of the nineteenth century. Even when Christian missionaries were active in Greenland during the eighteenth century, it was still thought to be a peninsula extending from an unknown and uninhabited landmass attached to Europe somewhere north of the Scandinavian peninsula.

The documentary value of the Vinland Map in our connection consists of its confirmation of the work and times of Bishop Erik, written as a marginal note referring also to the Norse discoverers of Vinland, Bjarne and Leif. This marginal note, or legend, in the northwest corner of the map consists of eight or nine lines of Latin script, some almost touching the sketch of northern Greenland. The second to the last word is split and hyphenated at that point, and the sentence is finished on the next short line below. The Latin text is transcribed in the following paragraphs, together with a translation, designated as *Table II.*

Volente deo post long*u* iter ab insula Gronelanda per meridiem ad
relinquas extremas partes occidentalis occeani maris iter facientes ad
austsr*u* inter glacies byarnus et leiphus errissonius socij terram nouam uberrim*a*
videlicet vinifer*a* inuenerunt quam Vinilland*a* insul*a* appellauerunt. Henricus
Gronelande regionumq finitimar*u* sedis apostolicae episcopus legatus in hac terra
spaciosa vero et opulentissima in postmo anno p.ss.nrj. Pascali accessit in nomine die
omnipot*e*tis longo tempore mansit esttiuo et brumali postea versus Gronel*a*d*a* redit
ad orientem hiemal*e* deinde humillima obediencia superiori vo-
l*u*tati processit.

*Translation:* By the will of God, after a long voyage from the island of Greenland, traveling south among icebergs along the meridian at the last extreme parts of the western ocean-sea, Bjarne and Leif Erikssen together brought to light a very fertile new land, where they came upon viniferous fruit for which they named the island Vinland. Henricus, bishop legate of the Apostolic See to Greenland and neighboring regions, came in the name of the omnipotent God into this truly

vast and most opulent land during the last year of our most blessed father Paschal, remained a long time summer and winter; whereupon he returned to Greenland toward the northeast and proceeded in humble obedience to the will of his superiors.

TABLE II. Transcript of a Marginal Note in the Northwest corner of *The Vinland Map*. Italicized letters were overscored in the original, to indicate the addition of an "m" or "n." Letters in bold type comprise most of the double acrostic; see text below for a more complete method of decipherment.

There are a few inconsistencies between this note and the data found in other sources, one involving the date of Bishop Erik's arrival in Vinland, another involving the question whether Bjarne and Leif really made the discovery of Vinland "together," or as "comrades" (socij). There are also several abbreviations and peculiarly misspelled words in the Latin text, which do not confuse the meaning, but which lend a certain air of carelessness to the otherwise precise formulation and script. This seems even more peculiar because some of the misspelled words are also spelled correctly elsewhere on the map and within the notation itself.[30]

Contrary to the marginal note, the *Sagas* state that Bjarne sighted the coast of North America without landing on it several years before Leif bought his ship and retraced his voyage to find the land later called Vinland. There is no hint in other sources that they made the voyage together. Of course, the writer may have confused the legends, or conflated them in this statement which conveys the unintended implication, or he may have meant to say nothing more than that these two Norsemen were both responsible for finding Vinland.

Furthermore, since Pope Paschal died in January 1118 and the map notation states Bishop Erik arrived in Vinland during the Pope's last year, the *Icelandic Annals* apparently contradict this with their note that Erik left in 1121. Moreover, the recent runestones must be reconciled with both of these other sources because they indicate the Bishop's presence in Vinland at still earlier dates.

Cryptanalist Alf Monge and medievalist O.G. Landsverk began publication in 1967 concerning their finding that nearly all runic inscriptions found in North America, as well as many others in Europe, are cryptographic. They found this to be true also of the Latin text concerning Vinland, reproduced here by line and by letter as it appears on the Map. One level of the cryptogram is in the form of an

[29]Skelton, *ibid.*, p. 140.
[30]See Monge and Landsverk, *op. cit.*

acrostic, or rather two acrostics, one constructed at each end of each line in the Latin text. One side of the double acrostic supplies the autograph "Henricus," and the other offers a short statement of faith in immortality. The method of constructing them in pairs involves the number of words in each line. By counting a certain number of alphabetic letters from each end of the line, as determined by the number of words in the line, two letters are selected from each line. After all pairs of letters are listed as they come from the legend, except the last short line, they must be rearranged in proper order to spell out the two acrostics. The pairs of letters were distributed at random by the author among the lines of the marginal note. When they are put in proper sequence by pairs, they spell out "Henricus" on the righthand side and "Et spe ero" on the left. Monge and Landsverk translate this phrase as "And by hope I shall be," or "And because of hope I shall become."

The last short line of the annotation consists of fifteen letters spelling out two remaining words. If a similar count of letters is made in ratio to the number of words on the line, an apparently useless pair is obtained. On the other hand, a series of numbers seem to be emphasized: 2-11-2. If this is rearranged into a series 11-2-2, it calls to mind a decimal number 1122, which is a year falling within the period of Bishop Erik's association with Greenland and Vinland.

As the cryptogram is deciphered, the number series comprising the year 1122 confirms other hidden statements of the date on which it was constructed. Even the fifteen letters written on the last line of the marginal note are significant. But, without reviewing the procedure in detail whereby our cryptanalists recovered the date by referring the cryptogram to the perpetual calendar of the medieval Norse Church, they specify August 23, 1122, as the day on which the legend was prepared. Their interpretation of the Map and its notation persuasively conclude that both were originally produced at the same time, and that the arrangement of the legend and the sketches to which it refers emphasize their cryptographic interdependence. Furthermore, by showing that the fifteenth century copyist nearly destroyed the cryptogram by correcting some misspelled words, they also demonstrate two facts about the Vinland Map. First, they confirm by this correction that it is indeed a transcription of an original, as shown by another analysis by R. A. Skelton of the British Museum. Second, Monge and Landsverk infer from the existence of the cryptogram in the original, and from the autograph acrostic, that the original may be attributed to Bishop Erik, and that it was produced in Greenland in 1122.

Finally, a collection of runestones represents the most recent

confirmation of both subjects of Bishop Erik's map legend. Three of these stones were found a year ago not far from Portland, Maine, where another similarly inscribed stone was found some years ago. In all, about a dozen cryptographic runestones were discovered in such places as Byfield, Massachusetts, Freeport, Rhode Island, and elsewhere. Several of them date from the second decade of the eleventh century, which correlates significantly with Karlsefni's attempted colonization, or a later one. But of course none of the names of persons associated with such expeditions, excepting someone named "Haakon," is provided. One of the three stones is especially interesting because of its use of schematic and illustrative materials, together with runic notations in Old Norse. On one side a sketch map is inscribed and named "Hoop" and associated with a notation of "Vinlant - 1011". The *Sagas* describe Karlsefni's "Hop" in some detail, and call for geologic correlation with the history of the Popham area in Maine. On the other side of the stone there are several pictographs referring to hunting, fishing and food-gathering activities, as well as to fur trade with Indians. Once again this reminds us of the primary economic purpose of the medieval colony in Vinland.

Another group of these stones, however, bears Bishop Erik's autograph of "Henricus," and their dates show they originated a century afterward, from 1115 to 1123, beginning three years after he was assigned to the Greenland mission and continuing to the year before Arnald was consecrated as the first Bishop of Gardar. All of them are cryptograms, providing not only his autograph and his self-characterization as "runemunk," but also furnishing a series of specific dates.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Original Popham Beach | 28 Nov. 1115 | 9 runes |
| Byfield (Mass.), No. 3 | 3 Dec. 1116 | 9 runes |
| Newport Tower (Rh. Island) | 10 Dec. 1116 | 7 runes |
| Vinland Map Annotation | 23 Aug. 1122 | (Latin) |
| Popham, Elliott No. 2 | 6 Oct. 1123 | 12 runes |

TABLE III. Runestones and other cryptographic materials attributed to Bishop Erik, or "Henricus" (after Monge and Landsverk.)

The rune-writing bishop used numerical values of the Norse alphabets or "futharks" as factors with which to enter the medieval "primstav" or perpetual calendar, and to determine dates which he registered and confirmed in various ways in his cryptograms. Each of his brief inscriptions was intended, of course, to give some bits of information to other clergymen; but a somewhat farther-reaching reward was also reserved for those who were able to decipher his cryptograms. In a

sense, they conveyed a certain comradeship especially among the Benedictine monks, who maintained this cryptographic game among themselves even as late as the fourteenth century.

Runic inscriptions have been found in a wide variety of places, carved on statues in Rome, on baptismal fonts in Sweden, on rafters and building stones of churches and monasteries in Northern Britain, Denmark, Norway and Iceland, and on stones carefully placed in landmark columns or "cairns" in northern Greenland. No doubt the recent stones were also part of such a cairn along the shores of waterways near Popham Beach, Maine. When the stone landmark collapsed in later times, it was covered probably by some geomorphic agent, only to be exposed again in recent years to become useful in establishing some of the history of medieval Christian missions to North America. At any rate, Bishop Erik left a record of his visits to several localities in Vinland during the course of his preliminary survey of the diocese between 1115 and 1117. Then, when Pope Paschal died, he probably was recalled to the Archbishop's office in Lund during 1118 to report what he had found in Greenland and Vinland.

There are indications both in the papal correspondence of this period and in the Icelandic *Sagas* that Greenland and the Church were involved in economic and political disputes at this time. In 1106 Pope Paschal had appointed the first bishop of the second episcopacy in Iceland, as part of his reorganization and strengthening of papal control over the Norse Church. Another diocese in Greenland seems to have been on the Pope's mind when he appointed Bishop Erik as his legate to that part of northern Christianity. At the same time, according to the *Saga of Einar Sokkason*[31], Greenland settlers also wanted to secure a separate diocese for themselves, not only because of the inconvenience of communication through the Bishop of Skaalholt in Iceland, but especially for their economic and political stability as a frontier settlement. Then when Einar Sokkason led a delegation to the Norwegian King, Sigurd Jorsalfar, in 1123 to secure the desired bishop, it was only a year later when Bishop Arnald was actually commissioned. Further evidence of this tension between the papacy and secular leaders of Greenland underscores some of the problems faced by churchmen in the north. The *Sokkason Saga* continued to relate that, not long after his arrival in Greenland, Bishop Arnald became involved in a bloody struggle between the West Settlement and Norwegian merchants on one side, and the East Settlement – especially the Sokkasons – on the other, over the disposition of shipwrecked merchandise which the Sokkasons found and claimed for themselves

[31]Ingstad, H.; *Land under the Pole Star*, pp. 196 - 197.

along the east coast of Greenland. Bishop Arnald took the side of Einar Sokkason against the merchants of Norway, and was handsomely rewarded with one of the repaired ships and other properties, as well as the armed protection of the Sokkason forces, for the cathedral estate of Gardar.

It is quite possible that Bishop Erik was exposed to this intrigue, and chose to work independently in the West Settlement and Vinland, rather than to fall into the Sokkason trap. In any case, when Arnald was considered as the prospective Bishop of Gardar, and was asked whether he would accept the appointment, he protested. It was not merely because of its remoteness from Europe, but especially because he thought "the Greenlanders would be hard to deal with." The King's answer was also quite to this point, that "the more sorely he was tried by his flock, the greater would be his merit." Of course, Arnald complied and was consecrated by the Archbishop of Lund shortly afterward. But the question persists, whether Bishop Erik could not have brought this aspect of his experience in Greenland to the attention of the churchmen, as well as his formal report to the Archbishop.

No record has been found as yet among European medieval sources as to the nature of Erik Gnupsson's next assignment after the accomplishment of his papal legature. By October 6, 1123 however, he was back in Vinland once again. Another of the three runestones bearing that date and Henricus' autograph refers to his having just completed a 34-day voyage. In those days, Norse *knorrer,* or "longships" were capable of traveling from six to twelve knots an hour under reasonably favorable sailing conditions. In thirty-four days, Bishop Erik could easily have come from Trondheim, with time to spare for a short visit in Iceland, if his family were still living there.

During the rest of the twelfth century, three successors followed Bishop Erik. They were "Bishops of Gardar," rather than "Bishop of Greenland and adjacent regions." Arnald stayed from 1124 to 1150, Knut from 1150 to 1187, and Jon Smyrill from 1188 to 1209. Incidentally, it was probably Bishop Jon's bones that were found under the floor of the northeast chapel of the Cathedral of Saint Nicolas, according to Paal Noerlund, one of the Danish archeologists who worked in Greenland during the 1920s. According to this source, the bishop was a husky man, buried in the cathedral still wearing his gold episcopal ring and still holding his bishop's crosier. But for some reason, although he wore shoes, still part of his right foot was missing.

All these events took place in Greenland and New England while Saint Anselm was Archbishop of Canterbury, Saint Bernard was Abbott of Clairvaux, and Abelard endured the vicissitudes of his life at

Paris and Soissons. The Concordat of Worms was ratified, and the First Lateran Council took place, while Bishop Erik completed his final Christian service in Vinland, and before Bishop Arnald took office in Greenland as the first resident Bishop of Gardar.