

The **Carpenter-Meldgaard Endowment** at the National Museum of Denmark

MELDGAARD'S **VINLAND** VISION

By Christian Koch Madsen
& Martin Appelt



MARKLAND

VINLAND

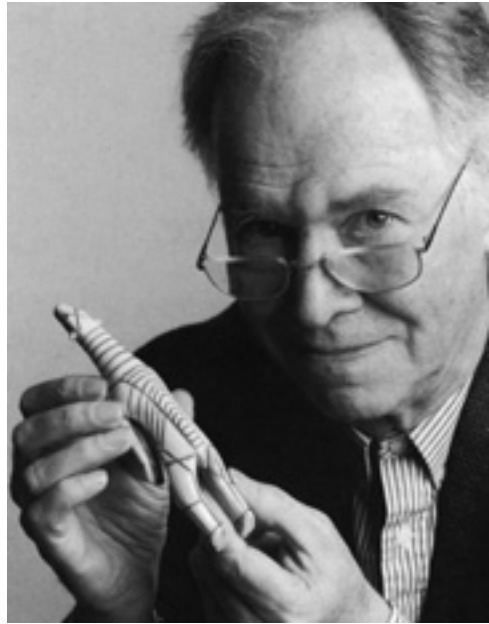
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HELLULAND

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Water colour maps: Nuka K. Godtfredsen

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Foreword

Jørgen Meldgaard (1927-2007), curator at the Ethnographic Collections, The National Museum of Denmark, was one of the ‘grand old men’ of Arctic archaeology. He was a generous mentor for generations of researchers, including the authors of this book. His broad interest and profound knowledge of Inuit and Norse archaeology served as a model, and has been a great source of inspiration.

Sorting dozens of boxes with notes and photographs, researcher Martin Appelt identified a number of diaries, photographs, and notes that were primary sources of what had become almost a myth to the younger generations of archaeologists that he mentored: Jørgen’s 1956 odyssey in search of Norse Vinland along the coast of Labrador to Newfoundland. We felt for him when we read, or on rare occasions, heard his account of the one-man journey across the Davis Strait, where he was only a short step away from finding the first traces of a Norse settlement in Newfoundland. This book is based on Jørgen’s personal archival material, and retells the story of his Vinland journey, primarily through his own impressions as they are recorded in the diaries, letters, and photographs that he left.

This book “Meldgaard’s Vinland Vision” is the first outcome of a comprehensive registration and research project based on Jørgen Meldgaard’s archaeological archives. The project, named The Car-

penter-Melgaard Endowment, was established at the National Museum via generous funding from the Rock Foundation in 2009. We are most grateful to the Rock Foundation for this support. Edmund Carpenter and Jørgen were close friends, and as a tribute to their friendship, we have attempted to prepare this book as a narrative that they both would have appreciated.

Martin Appelt, and Kristian Koch Madsen – a brilliant young researcher who specializes in Norse Archaeology – have collaborated seamlessly on the text and the selection of Jørgen’s photographs. Our artist, Nuka Godtfredsen, skilfully prepared the map of the journey, and Matthew Walls made the linguistic revisions.

We express our gratitude to the Canadian Embassy in Denmark for supporting the production of the book. That part of this book’s funding came from this source stands for us as a confirmation of the partnership between SILA – Arctic Centre at the Ethnographic Collections and the Canadian Embassy. This ongoing relationship is in perfect accordance with Jørgen Meldgaard’s activities throughout his life, which linked the cultural histories of Denmark, Greenland, and Canada. This is clearly expressed in “Meldgaard’s Vinland Vision”.

Bjarne Grønnow

Research Professor, head of

The Carpenter-Meldgaard Endowment Project

Meldgaard's Vinland Vision

Introduction

In July of 1956, an archaeologist from the Danish National Museum named Jørgen Meldgaard, embarked on a journey through time. He carried with him a strange chert arrowhead, a copy of the Icelandic *Vínland Sagas*, and the intent to answer the questions that had captured the imagination of many academic researchers before him – how much of the Sagas were true? Did Norse explorers actually settle the Americas around 1000 A.D.? During the next month and a half, this question took him from Greenland, along the Labrador coast for 670 miles from Goose Bay by Lake Melville, to Englee in northern Newfoundland. With minimal funding and equipment, depending entirely on local transportation, this one-man voyage of discovery was meant to trace the route that Viking explorers must have taken. Indeed, Meldgaard managed to do just that, and he was able to convincingly identify landmarks from the *Vínland Sagas*, including *Krossanes* (Cross Point), and *Kjalarnes* (Keel Point). Meldgaard meticulously documented his journey through photography, which even today, and in this book, allow us to follow him in experiencing the same journey, seeing the Americas for the first time as the Vikings did a thousand years ago.

With almost the quality of a 19th Century romantic poem, Meldgaard came as close to discovering

the North American Norse Settlements as he could possibly get without actually finding them. Having only a day and a half in northern Newfoundland to conduct the actual reconnaissance for the ruins, he concluded that Bartlett River, by Pistolet Bay, was a plausible location for the Norse settlement, if it existed. This was a mere 15 kilometres from the L'Anse aux Meadows site, where the Norwegian explorers, Helge Ingstad and his wife the archaeologist Anne Stine Ingstad, found the first and only conclusive evidence of Norse presence in the Americas four years later. Prior to the discovery, Helge Ingstad had corresponded extensively with Jørgen Meldgaard, but the connection between their exchange of information and the Ingstads' eventual discovery of L'Anse aux Meadows remains unclear. However, by late 1961, the Danish and Norwegian media had conjured a heated feud between the two countries as to who should be credited with first proving the Vikings had settled the Americas. Though the echoes of the so-called "Vínland dispute" would carry for years, it was neither provoked, nor encouraged by Meldgaard. In fact, he seems to have wanted nothing more than to let the matter rest, and focus more on the broader implications and developments that the archaeology had revealed. This book respects his sound sentiment, and through his photos and notes, it attempts to recreate the story of Meldgaard's Vínland journey of 1956.

The Journey Begins...

The notion that Norse pioneer farmers made exploratory voyages and actually settled unknown lands to the west of Greenland originated from two Icelandic Sagas: Eirík's Saga and Grænlendinga Saga, which are together known as the Vínland Sagas. Written to paper centuries after the actual events, these medieval sources inform us that the years around 1000 A.D. marked the final stage of the Viking expansion – a stepwise migration that started in the mid 8th century and had, from island to island, carried Scandinavian culture and lifestyle westward across the North Atlantic and all the way to the west coast of Greenland. According to the Vínland sagas, Viking boats left West Greenland at the turn of the last millennium, again heading westwards – but this time, the only possible destination was North America. The Norse explorers named these new lands *Helluland* (“the land of flat stones”), *Markland* (“the forested land”), and the fabled *Vínland* (either “wine land” or “land of excellent pastures”). The Vínland sagas contain vivid accounts of these voyages; this include information as specific as sailing directions and distances, notable topographical features of the coastline, comments on vegetation, and even descriptions of the first cultural encounters between Europeans and the Indigenous populations of the American continent. However, the sagas are not historical accounts *per se*; they are the continuation of a long oral narrative tradition, and as such, are tales that were preserved by personalities who often embellished or added details to emphasize drama in their recounting of events. Thus, the academic exercise regarding the sagas has always been to separate fact from fiction. Although many early re-

searchers have postulated the actual course of the Viking voyages to the Americas, the authenticity of the sagas remained questionable in the 1950s, due to a lack of tangible evidence.

This is what Jørgen Meldgaard set out to remedy; he intended to locate Norse settlements in North America, and prove unequivocally that Vínland was something more than myth. Like many academic researchers before him, Meldgaard was allured by the apparent richness and vivacity of the sagas, and doubtlessly the prestige of discovering the first archaeological evidence of Viking presence in North America. Having pioneered Inuit and Norse archaeology in Greenland and Canada prior to his interest in the Vínland problem, Meldgaard brought a profound academic knowledge to the research problem, along with an intimate familiarity with the archaeology and settlement patterns of both Inuit hunters and Norse farmers. When Meldgaard first voiced his interest in the Vínland journeys in 1953, it seems to have sprung not only from the content of the sagas, but also from a single chert arrowhead that had been excavated in 1930 at Sandnes, a Norse farm in the western settlement of Greenland. He had proven that the arrowhead was neither a local Inuit type, nor of a local material; rather, it was a North American style made from Ramah chert, a special material only found in the northeastern part of Labrador. Meldgaard surmised that the projectile point must have been brought to Greenland by Norse travelers returning from Labrador – perhaps even imbedded in an unfortunate Viking explorer, which would certainly have fit well with the violent interaction between Vikings and “Skraelings” (Native

North Americans) described in the *Vínland* sagas. During 1953-54, Meldgaard spent time in America and Canada, preparing for his one-man Vinland Journey, going through artifact collections, registers, maps, and aerial photographs of Newfoundland and Labrador. By the spring of 1954, he was ready and began making preparations for his field season; on April 13th Meldgaard wrote to N.C. Crewe of St. John's, Newfoundland:

“As an archaeologist from the Danish National Museum with special interest in the Norse settlements in Greenland, my task for the coming summer will be an attempt to track down the route of the Norsemen to Helluland, Markland, and Vinland. It is my plan to start at Pond's Inlet in Baffin Island in August with excavation of Eskimo sites, and in September along parts of Labrador and Newfoundland, starting from Goose Bay, where I shall probably arrive by plane about September 1st.

I am in favour of the theory of V. Tanner and W.A. Munn, of St. John's as to the location of Markland and Vinland. I intend to do reconnaissance work in the areas of Hamilton Inlet – the Strait of Belle Isle, and from St. Anthony down to White Bay (...).”

As is apparent from this letter, the idea of identifying the topographical landmarks described in the *Vínland* sagas was not his own; always the professional academic, Meldgaard never neglected to point out that V. Tanner, the former Prime Minister of Finland (1926-1927), had been working on the *Vínland* question for a number of years and had himself made expeditions to Labrador and Newfoundland in 1937 and 1939. Tanner combined his interpretation of the saga descriptions with topo-

graphic observations that he had made during his expeditions. In 1941, Tanner presented his contribution to the *Vínland* problem, convincingly depicting *Helluland* as the southeastern part of Baffin Island, *Markland* as the eastern coast of Labrador, and *Vínland* as the northern part of Newfoundland. Tanner was even specific enough to suggest potential matches for a few of the topographical features described in the *Vínland* sagas. The most important of these was associating *Furdustrandir* (“the marvel beaches”) with The Strands – a series of broad white sand beaches between the west bay of Hamilton Inlet in the north and Cape Porcupine in the south (Tanner 1941: 28pp). This was the key location from which several of the other topographical features could be anchored. South of the *Furdustrandir*, the Vikings found an island, *Straumsö* (“current island”) at the mouth of a large fjord, *Straumsfjord* (“current fjord”), which must have been Belle Isle in the Strait of Belle Isle. The lands south of here, at the northern end of Newfoundland, constituted *Vínland* and according to Tanner's work, the settlement of the first explorers, the *Leifsbuðir* (Leif's Camp), should be found somewhere in Pistolet Bay west of Cape Bauld. North of the *Furdustrandir*, Lake Melville, and possibly English River, must have been the location of Torvald Eiriksson's exploration, where a clash with the Indigenous occupants resulted in the wounding of Torvald by an arrow, and his eventual death.

Meldgaard must have been thoroughly convinced by the work of V. Tanner, for his own *Vínland* journey, as outlined by the letter of 1954, actually traced the route proposed by the latter. However, Meldgaard was temporarily sidetracked by the

excavation of Inuit archaeological sites in 1954. Though these excavations forced him to postpone his Vínland journey, they would prove decisive for the establishment of a chronology for the pre-Inuit cultures, and remain one of Jørgen Meldgaard's most important contributions to Arctic archaeology. Thus, on February 19th 1955, he wrote the following to his Norwegian colleague, Helge Ingstad:

" (...) Yes, that was also a successful summer (1954, ed.), which yielded a fine chronology for not only the oldest Eskimo cultures, but also, for the first time, passage houses and graves from the Dorset culture. Actually, I had only planned to spend half the season up there (Igloolik, northern Foxe Basin (ed.)) and then devote the other half to the Vínland journeys, but, as said, the Eskimos maintained me. The Vínland journey was, in fact, planned in every detail even with support of the Canadian government, aerial reconnaissance with RCAF etc. But that had to be postponed. Possibly, I will have time to do it this summer in corporation with a couple of American archaeologists. If not, we of the (Danish, ed.) National Museum have plans of an expedition in 1956 with participation of Canada, Norway, and possibly Iceland. However, this will, on paper – and probably also in effect – focus on Eskimo and Indian archaeology. (...)" (Auth. transl.).

When Meldgaard applied to the Rask-Ørsted Foundation for 16,000 Danish kroner (c. 2270 CAD) to fund his one-man Vínland journey in 1955, the application emphasized that archaeological investigations of Inuit and Native North American sites were to be the focus of his survey, whereas secondary investigations of the Norse pioneers would

merely be opportunistic. The wording of this application was probably partly due to Meldgaard's general interest in the development of Inuit and Native North American cultures, which could assist in identifying arrowheads of the type found at Sandnes. However, it can be seen from his preparations and letters leading up to the Vínland journey, that his primary objective was actually to investigate the authenticity of the sagas. Downplaying this goal in his application probably reflects the nature of funding personal research; he had to assure the foundation that his project was something more than the pursuit of the mythical Vínland, and that he would bring home original and tangible results such as artifacts, excavation plans, photos, and new discoveries. The Rask-Ørsted Foundation grant only came through on Dec. 22nd 1955, so Meldgaard was delayed again, and he spent that year's field season in Denmark.

In the spring of 1956, Meldgaard began to make practical preparations, and finally sent the formal permit applications for his project to Labrador and Newfoundland, which he had originally drafted in 1953. He spent the first half of the 1956 field season in Greenland, completing an archaeological reconnaissance around Sisimiut/Holsteinsborg. He then flew out from Greenland on July 7th, and at 20:15, local time, landed in Goose Bay, Labrador. Meldgaard's own ambitious Vínland journey had begun.

It is clear from Meldgaard's 1956 Vínland diary and photographs, that despite the officially stated focus on Inuit and Native North American archaeology, his actual aspiration was, in fact, the opposite;

it is evident that he wished to follow directly in the wake, so to speak, of the Viking explorers. Although Meldgaard did succeed in finding several new Inuit and Native American sites, and even did a few trial excavations, the discussion of these in his diary is taciturn. This is especially striking when compared with the thoroughness and enthusiasm evident in his documentation of the Norse voyages.

Meldgaard's discussion of the Norse voyages also reveals a unique dimension to his Vínland journey that separated him from his contemporaries; in a manner that lets the observer follow each step of the journey, Meldgaard masterfully pursued the Vínland problem by combining the very different fields of archaeological "objectivity" with personal experience and perception of the landscape. While he was very much influenced by Tanner's "archaeo-topographical" approach, Meldgaard strived to combine Tanner's bird's-eye view with a more experiential perspective of the journey as seen from the ever-changing sea. He felt the sagas might best be interpreted by witnessing the same view that would have met the Viking explorers who sailed the route a thousand years earlier. Furthermore, Meldgaard's experience excavating the Norse settlements in Greenland gave him a special archaeological perspective; it allowed him to view the landscapes of Labrador and Newfoundland by "looking over the shoulder" of the explor-

ing Viking farmers who were searching for clearly distinguishable landmarks, favorable landing sites, protected natural harbours, good pastureland for animals, and catchment opportunities. In other words, Meldgaard knew better than anyone how the Norse explorers had lived in Greenland, and was trying to think like them, and understand their *taskscape* – an epistemological position reminiscent of the one that phenomenological schools of archaeology have only recently advanced.

Always the scientific archaeologist, Meldgaard meticulously documented his experience of the landscape through photographs composed so that we, in the present, can follow him on his journey, "looking over his shoulders", while he directs our attention through his diary notes. When Meldgaard set off for Labrador with the Vínland sagas in one hand, V. Tanner's works in the other, and a strange chert arrowhead lying snugly in his pocket, he was a keen young man with the eye of an explorer headed into a landscape that was unfamiliar to him. There is much convergence between his story and that of the pioneering Vikings he was searching for. The rest of this book will try to tell the story of Meldgaard's travels the best way possible, through his own pictures and words, hopefully enticing the reader to make a Vínland journey of their own.



Meldgaard lands at the Furdustrandir on July 20th 1956. For his one-man expedition, Meldgaard brought only the most necessary equipment needed for camping, trial excavations and reconnaissance



A Ramah-chert arrowhead found in 1930 at the edge of the Sandnes (V51) churchyard, a Norse chieftains-farm in the Western Settlement of Greenland. Meldgaard would later prove it was made in North America, thereby providing the first tangible evidence of the Viking journeys to Vínland.



On July 7th, Meldgaard departed from Kangerlussuaq, West Greenland, with the RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force), on a flight to Goose Bay, Labrador. During transit, he incidentally met and photographed two famous Danish actors of that time, Poul Reichardt and Astrid Villaume, who had just finished filming the movie "Qivitoq" which premiered in Denmark later that year. The actors are here seen in front of a Danish Navy Consolidated Catalina and *enroute* over Disco Bay.



Having stopped a few days for preparation in Goose Bay, Meldgaard landed at North West River on the northern shores of Lake Melville on the evening of July 10th. With the energetic verve of a man who has just started a long awaited adventure, Meldgaard immediately set about gathering information from locals and filling the diary with descriptions of landscape and vegetation.



Meldgaard was obviously quite impressed with the richness of the vegetation around North West River; for instance, he took several photos of the long-horned cattle found in the settlement. With clear reference to the situation of the Norse farmers he also noted that some cattle races *“would get swollen knees from the prolonged stay in the stall (during the winter, ed.)”* and that; *“Earlier the cattle was primarily fed on locally produced hay during the winter (...) stocking levels are now 5-6 heads of cattle, the first imported 25 years ago!”*.



Meldgaard was equally impressed with the productiveness of the vegetation and mildness of the climate at North West River, describing in his diary how grain, beets, potatoes, and other vegetables could be grown in considerable quantities. His interest in the area's productivity was clear: *"Here it is lush and fair (during the summer); a perfect spot for a subartic Viking farmer!"*.



During his two day visit, Meldgaard also spent some time at “Brinco’s Camp” on the outskirts of North West River, where he did several test excavations on some beach terraces, and interviewed locals about the archaeology and history of the Lake Melville area. Among others, he met the settler Mr. Blake (photo), who loaned Meldgaard two quartz arrowheads that he had found in his garden. Meldgaard also mentions in the diary: “ (...) on his old house two harp seal skins were stretched and two silver jaws; caught in nets, there is good seal hunting in here in May-Sept”.



On July 13th Meldgaard managed to get an air lift along the northern shores of Lake Melville from North West River to Rigolet. Depending completely on whatever local means of transportation he could acquire, Meldgaard had to take every opportunity that he could. For example, this photo is an aerial view towards the islands in front of Reed Point on the southern shore of Lake Melville; this was, unfortunately, as close as Meldgaard could get to English River, a locality that both he and V. Tanner suspected to be the place where Thorvald Eiriksson was fatally wounded by Natives according to the Saga of Eirik the Red. However, Meldgaard remained convinced that Reed Point could be *Krossanes*, where Thorvald was subsequently buried.



Once in Rigolet, Meldgaard's primary concern was obtaining passage to English River, along with learning what he could about ruins and graves at English River and in the Narrows – a constricted waterway connecting Hamilton Inlet and Lake Melville. The picture is taken outside of Rigolet, looking south, towards Lake Melville, with the Mealy Mountains just visible in the background over Henrietta Island.



On July 14th Meldgaard found that his privately hired transport to English River was cancelled. Instead, he sailed from Rigolet with one of the Hudson Bay Company's salmon boat to Snookes Cove, just to the south. In Snookes Cove Melgaard met with the elderly trapper Freeman Baikie, who is seen here in front of his salmon house together with his son Ross Baikie.



Later on July 14th, Ross Baikie took Meldgaard for a short visit to Eskimo Island, where he quickly located a number of Inuit structures, and decided to return the next day. This photo was taken on the return trip from Eskimo Island to Snokes Cove with Ross Baikie. From here on, travelling with salmon fishers became Meldgaard's standard means of transport.



While in Snookes Cove, Meldgaard became quite familiar with the Baikies, especially as he stranded on July 15th due to poor weather: *“The rain has fallen incessantly. Drumming on and shaking the tent canvass all through the night. (...) Spent the day reading, luckily the tent is waterproof”*. In the photo Freeman Baikie is seen in front of his salmon house on July 14th 1956, cutting chips for kindling with the characteristic “crooked knife”. One of the things Meldgaard noted in his conversations with Freeman was that *“There used to be many more Eskimos. (...) They all died during the great flue several years ago”*.



Also at Snookes Cove Meldgaard identified several Inuit and Native structures. In this photo, taken on the morning of July 16th, before heading off to Eskimo Island, one is faintly visible in the lush grass in front of the abandoned summerhouse of the “southernmost Inuit”, Josef Palliser or “Big Joe”, whom Meldgaard had befriended in Rigolet. Meldgaard’s tent is visible in the left hand side of the photograph.



Meldgaard spent the rest of July 16th in poor weather on Eskimo Island, writing in his diary: *“On this fabled island the remains of 11 Eskimo winter houses can be found (photo). A few Eskimo tent rings with free lying stones can be seen (...) though they are hardly older than the houses. Graves are found everywhere on the island, especially in the flat middle part. (...) A few test trenches did not reveal much”*.



Meldgaard was picked from Eskimo Island by Ross Baikie on July 17th, but the weather was still too harsh for an excursion to English River. Instead they sailed around in The Narrows to Back Run Cove, which had been suggested to him as another possible landing site of Thorvald Eiriksson. Clearly referencing the saga description, Meldgaard noted on a scrap of paper: *“The river is quite wide at its mouth, but shallow (“One cannot sail up the river”) (...) When I first mentioned, with regards to the Vikings, a river flowing from the east he (Joe Palliser, ed.) immediately said English River! However, his own little river might be “the place”.*





In the early evening of July 17th, Meldgaard set out from Rigolet for Turners Bight in Hamilton Inlet with another salmon boat. In the picture, one of the Killicks, used by fishermen as anchors for salmon nets, is seen. Sailing from Turners Bight on July 18, Meldgaard made several observations of the seascape in Hamilton Inlet, noting: *“One does not see the bottom of Hamilton until reaching Saddle Isl.! Accordingly, Hamilton Inlet would, when seen from a ship, appear as a sound, indeed a very wide sound!”*.



On July 18th, Meldgaard reached Fish Cove, just south of West Bay at the northern end of The Strand. He wrote in his diary: *“The beginning of the Furdustrandir! (...) Just at Fish Cove and West Bay the sand strands begin. 1 mile south of West Bay and 5-6 miles onwards (?) the sand is visible far out at sea because of its 5-6m (up to 8-9m) high eroded slopes. (...) From the small hill behind the cove (Fish Cove, ed.) Cape Porcupine is discernable to the south and it can, furthermore, be seen immediately when rounding Pottles Cove Head”*. The photo shows local Jim Pottles in front of his salmon house at the beginning of The Strand/Furdustrandir.



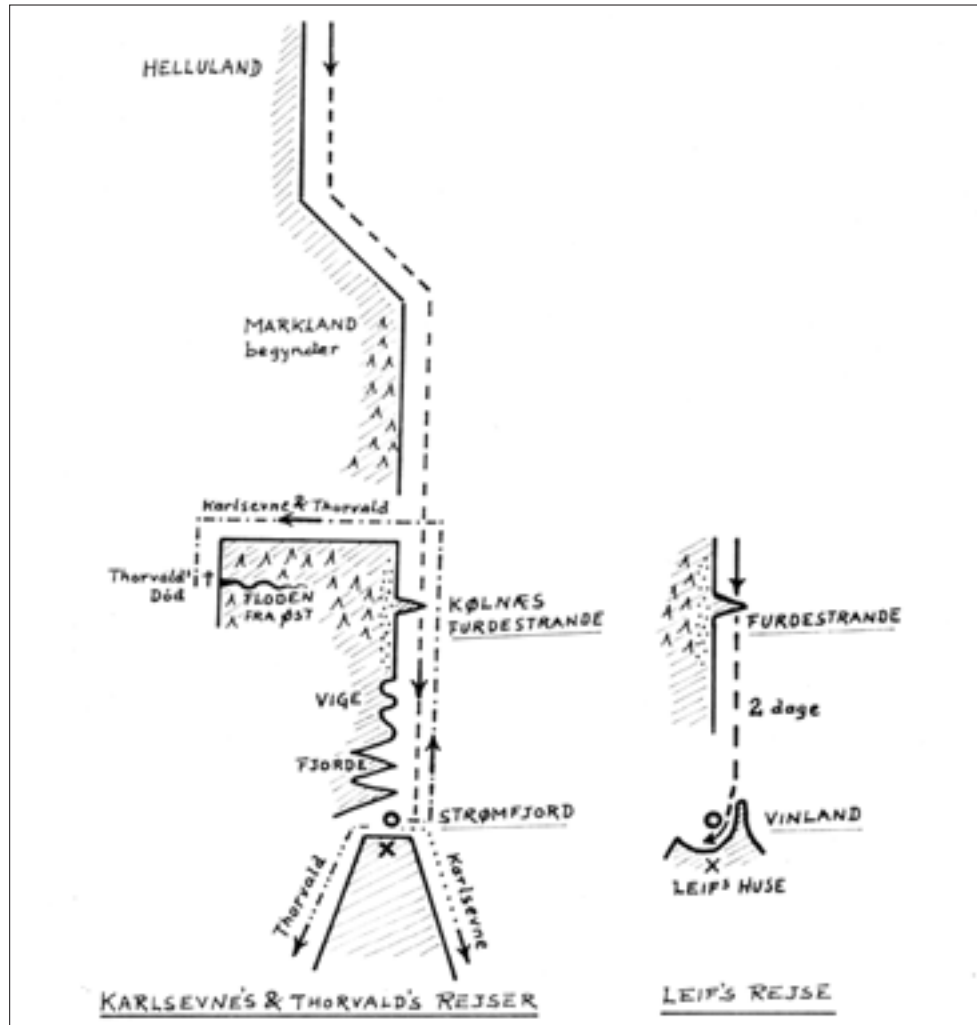
Meldgaard was picked up by a salmon boat headed south along The Strand for Packs Harbour on July 19th. Meldgaard noted: *“Cape Porcupine dominates in the south with its characteristic oblong, flattened truncated cone shape. Kjalarnes: the keel of a Viking ship, the roof ridge of the Trelleborg houses. Just one irregularity in the otherwise strictly symmetrical profile: a slight depression about in the middle of the horizontal line, a “crack in the keel”. How about the story of the broken keel of Thorvalds ship at Kjalarnes, which “gave name to the point?!”*



Having persuaded Steve MacDonald, the owner of the local salmon boat fleet, to drop him off at Cape Porcupine, Meldgaard arrived there on July 20th accompanied by a 14 year old, named Bruce, from Packs Harbour. Bruce is here seen by the remains of a schooner which had run aground, years before, on the south side of Cape Porcupine. The strands south of Cape Porcupine are seen behind him. Melgaard enthusiastically wrote *"c.60 meters wide, a fine, even sand surface (of white sand). (...) the trees follow the beach in a sharp, straight line, and it is good, straight growing trees. This must be the place!"*



Setting out from Packs Harbour on July 21th for Quirpon Harbour, Newfoundland, with yet another salmon boat, Meldgaard commented: “ *The ship weighs c.60 tons, build 15 years ago, but is particularly poorly maintained. Filthy everywhere, especially in the combined kitchen-dining-sleeping quarters of the 4 man crew, where the stench is horrendous*”.



During idle time on the salmon boats, Meldgaard kept track of the sailing speeds, distances, and time spent on each step, by making notes in his diary, on the edges of maps and slips of paper etc. These observations he would then compare with the descriptions in the Vínland sagas, sketching theoretical maps of the Viking journeys, which could then be compared to the actual landscape he experienced on the journey. The image shows such a final sketch produced by Meldgaard, combining several of his initial rough sketches.



On July 21st, Meldgaard was nearing Newfoundland and wrote in the diary: “ *Belle Isle in the south seems a significant landmark (...) with Cape Bauld and the Pistolet Bay area in the background, one would immediately get the impression of “a new land” in the south. And after two days of sailing along the fjord cut coast and the sight of an equally naked cliff coast to the SW, an explorer would naturally set his course towards this southern new land*”. And later, as he closed in on land: “*Newfoundland surprised! Even Cape Bauld is green – of grass! What a difference from the Labrador coast (...) I think there is a real chance!*”. The photo shows a view from the salmon boat of Cape Bauld and, to the west, Pistolet Bay.



Once he landed in Newfoundland, on the evening of July 21st, Meldgaard was thoroughly impressed with the general vegetation, writing: *“The lush vegetation on the cliffs here on the northern coast of Cape Bauld and Pistolet Bay can hardly be attributed only to “better climate”; the soil must be different”*. The pictures show drying racks at Quirpon Harbour



On July 22nd Meldgaard hired a local boat to take him to Raleigh. Here he spent a day investigating the nearby Burnt Island, where Mallory had claimed to have found traces of a site where Vikings had “*produced stone axes*”. Meldgaard proved this to be a natural phenomenon. Still, he was impressed with the lush vegetation. The photo depicts the hayfields with wildflowers at Raleigh, and Meldgaard noted with some astonishment that: “*for a couple of years ago there was 80 cows, now c.5-6*”.



"Wild wheat and Sealskins" Meldgaard named this photo in the diary. He probably saw this as the epitome of the mixed economy that represented the Norse Greenlanders, who had been documented to have subsisted equally on both wild and domesticated resources. The photo was taken from Burnt Island looking across Ha Ha Bay with the green fields of Raleigh in the far back.



Being put ashore at Bartlett River on the inner part of Pistolet Bay, July 23rd, Meldgaard evidently felt he was very close to the Viking settlement. He wrote in the diary that Bartlett River *“has the best hay of the whole Pistolet Bay area (...) much wild wheat (...) It is the best salmon river in Pistolet Bay”*. However, Meldgaard also noted that: *“the pristine forest is so dense and impenetrable that the chances of finding old ruins here are very slim. The former hayfields are covered with 1-2½m shrubberies which are equally hard to “search” in”*. Concluding his remarks on Bartlett River, Meldgaard wrote: *“Beautiful place – and the most fertile I have yet seen. This would be a good place to erect ones home, if not mosquitoes and, foremost, flies were worse here than anywhere in the arctic”*.



One of the reasons Meldgaard seems to have been so convinced that Bartlett River was the right place, was a narrowing in the innermost part of Pistolet Bay, Milan Arm, just one kilometer west of the river. Across this narrowing ran a sandbank, which was submerged during high tide, which seemed to fit well with a mooring incident described in the sagas. Meldgaard proposed that this: “ (...) would be an obvious place for one unfamiliar with the local waters to *moor*. *And it fits well with Leifs ship..*”, whereas he also noted that; “*At high tide a Viking ship would have been able to sail only c.50m up Bartlett River, i.e. only into the mouth*” (photo).



On July 24th, Meldgaard sailed to St. Anthony, seen in the picture. Here he was offered a flight to Cartwright on the 26th, but was reluctant to do so, arguing: “(...) *I must have some Dorset from here (St. Anthony, ed.)*”. Instead he used July 26th to revisit Bartlett River, this time going from the land side. Between July 27th-29th, Meldgaard was stuck in St. Anthony, and had to settle with making daily excursions from the town. From here on, Meldgaard’s journey was solely determined by opportunities of transportation; between July 30th to August 4th, he visited Roddickton, Englee, and Conche on the east coast of Newfoundland, making a few small scale excavations, finally returning to St. Anthony on Aug. 5th.



Revisiting Bartlett River on July 26th, in the company of Melvin H. McNeil, Meldgaard encountered Squash berries (picture), which he thought to have “ (...) an astonishing resemblance with wine (...) growing in small bunches of up to 10-12 berries, now green and the size of blue berries. (...) The local people of Raleigh and Cook Harbour pick them great quantity and make them into jelly or good “wine”. (...) Squash berries is a better suggestion than Dog-berries (dog-wood-berries (...)) if there is any grain of truth in the mention of wine in Vínland”.



On August 6th, Meldgaard departed St. Anthony for Cartwright, and after a short stop here, returned to Goose Bay on August 10. He briefly revisited North West River and Brinco's Camp before flying to Montreal on August 16th, finally on his way back home. On his journey homewards, Meldgaard continued his observations of the landscape; for instance, when stopping briefly on Belle Isle, he wrote: "*(...) has a very unapproachable coast, 50-100 meter high, steep cliffs which rise straight from the sea, not a single harbor or landing site on the east coast*".

Det drejer sig om Amerikas opdagelse

Udforskningen af Vinland bør ikke blive en national prestigesag

NORDISKE forskere har tidligere kunnet læse betydningfulde videnskabelige oplysninger i fællesskab — f. eks. ved at undersøge de nordiske

undersøgelser af 'Vinland' og andre steder i nordlige og i Canada findes videnskabeligt, hvis saglige indsigt og erfaring ikke står i samme målretning med den begrænsede, at

Samlige de 5 nye på tide og særligt indførelse af hvidt sølv, hvad udforskningen

Vinlands norske genopdager

Den norske forfatter Helge Ingstad i København i går på vej hjem efter et opdagelsesfund af vikingetårn og nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland

Helge Ingstad gennemførte i København i går på vej hjem efter sit fund af Newfoundland, hvor han i dette efterår havde fundet det opdagelsesfund af vikingetårn og nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland. Det



Opdagelsen af Vinland har sat Blodet i Kog

Jørgen Meldgaard har aldrig set sine Ben i Læse Meadows, paastaar Helge Ingstad

der er for alvor og som ingen anden i verden har set sine Ben i Læse Meadows, paastaar Helge Ingstad, som har fundet et nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland.

Den norske forfatter Helge Ingstad har fundet et nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland. Det

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NEWFOUNDLAND
CANADA
Miramichi
St. John's
The site where the ruins were found is marked with a cross on the map.

'VIKING' RUINS DUG IN NEWFOUNDLAND

Norwegian Explorer Says Leif Ericson Settled in Remote Spot on Coast

5 SOD BUILDINGS FOUND

Excavations Indicate One Home Had a Great Hall—Carbon-14 Tests Due

By JOHN C. DEVLIN
A Norwegian explorer, Helge Ingstad, has discovered ruins on the northern tip of Newfoundland land where he believes Vikings under Leif Ericson came to the North American Continent 500 years before Columbus. Mr. Ingstad said the newly buried ruins of seven "European-type" structures included one with a great hall in the Viking style. He said he believed

Fortsatt Vinland-strid Et kanadisk dementi

Ottawa's L. Sommers: 'Vikings' Tidligere for det canadiske Nationalmuseum i Ottawa. Danskene angret at de ikke grov i 1957

Skarpt Ingstad-angreb på dr. Aage Rou:

Ingstad spørger, hvad det egentlig er, Jørgen Meldgaard og Meldgaard lykaner nordbohuset

Ingstad, der i 1961 blev opdaget, har nu fundet et nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland. Det

Ingstad, der i 1961 blev opdaget, har nu fundet et nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland. Det

DAGENS EKKO

Ikke dansk eller norsk

Der er næppe tvivl om, at en og anden såvel i Danmark som i Norge i disse dage har fået en lidt bitter smag i munden ved at blive konfronteret med den videnskabelig-arkæologiske broderstrid, der er opstået, siden dr. phil. Aage Rou udsendte sin udsendte samfundserklæring om Nationalmuseets og Aars andel i opdagelsen og lokaliseringen på New Found-

Vi anråber Ingstad om snarest at løfte sløret

De fundne huse svarer til søreverbuse fra Helge Ingstad slår ben under dansk påstand

Hadde allerede funnet boplassen i Vinland da han ifjor snakket med Meldgaard

Ingstad, der i 1961 blev opdaget, har nu fundet et nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland. Det



Helge Ingstad

Vi gemte fundet, og nu graver andre det ud. Dansker fandt Vinland

Skarpt angreb på dr. Aage Rou: Ingstad spørger, hvad det egentlig er, Jørgen Meldgaard og Meldgaard lykaner nordbohuset

Ingstad, der i 1961 blev opdaget, har nu fundet et nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland. Det



Helge Ingstad

Videnskab eller best-seller?

Af red. Jens E. Møller

Med baggrund i den danske videnskabelige undersøgelse af Leif den Lykkelige har dr. phil. Aage Rou udsendt sin erklæring om Nationalmuseets og Aars andel i opdagelsen og lokaliseringen på New Found-

Hvem tilhørte egentlig Leif den Lykkelige?

Medlemmer af Danmarks og Norges Forskningsråd og Nationalmuseets direktør dr. phil. Aage Rou har udsendt sin erklæring om Nationalmuseets og Aars andel i opdagelsen og lokaliseringen på New Found-

Er Vinland-fundet truet af amatør-arkæologer?

Udgravning af nordbohus i Amerika fra det 10. århundrede

Ingstad, der i 1961 blev opdaget, har nu fundet et nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland. Det

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Ingstad, der i 1961 blev opdaget, har nu fundet et nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland. Det

Dr. Russell i Vinland-polemikken:

De udgravninger kan ikke være forsvarligt gjort

Efter besigtigelsen er Helge Ingstads fund siden forbindelse med Leif den Lykkelige

Ingstad, der i 1961 blev opdaget, har nu fundet et nordbohus i nordenden af Newfoundland. Det

Another Vínland journey ends... in conflict

As an unfortunate parallel to the experiences of the Vikings in the Vínland sagas, Meldgaard's own Vínland journey also ended in a conflict, though by no means of his own design or intent. Being tied up by fieldwork in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic, Meldgaard was not able to follow up on his conviction that he had ventured very close to the Norse settlement in Newfoundland. However, it is clear that he was indeed hoping to return to conduct archaeological investigations in Pistolet Bay. This is plainly expressed in a letter to Dr. Jacques Rousseau, then Director of the Canadian Museum of Human History, dated Apr. 26th, 1957:

" (...) In northernmost Newfoundland was Vínland, probably in Pistolet Bay and possibly in the mouth of Bartlett River was Hóp with the houses of Leif (Eiriksson, ed.). I did not make any excavations, but I hope once to make use of spade and shovel at Bartlett R. (...)"

Whatever Meldgaard's future excavation plans were, they were rendered obsolete in 1961 when Norwegian adventurer and explorer Helge Ingstad announced that he had discovered and was excavating the remains of the now-famous Viking houses at L'Anse aux Meadows, just to the west of Cape Bauld. The first short statements, such as this one in the New York Times, were released in early October.

"A Norwegian explorer, Helge Ingstad, has discovered ruins on the northern tip of Newfoundland where he believes Vikings under Leif Ericson came to the North American Continent 500 years before Columbus.

Mr. Ingstad said the nearly buried ruins of seven "European-type" structures included one with a great hall in the Viking style. He said he believed Ericson, son of Eric the Red, had used this building as his home and headquarters in the period when he explored Vinland"

(John C. Devlin in New York Times October 10th 1961)

When Ingstad published a series of articles, entitled "In the Wake of Leif Eriksson", which outlined the expedition and the first excavation in Danish and Norwegian newspapers, the dark clouds of an impending conflict began to gather. By the end of October, this had progressed to a media storm, when the full results of the excavations were revealed. This coincided with the Ingstads' passing through Copenhagen on their way back from North America to Norway, which allowed Helge to give several interviews to Danish reporters.

Since the early 1920's the Danish National Museum had been the exclusive proprietors of the archaeology of the Norse settlements in Greenland. Therefore, the Norwegian discovery of the Viking

settlement in the Americas aroused strong feelings on both sides; indeed, many unresolved sentiments lingered from the Danish-Norwegian dispute of territorial rights to Greenland between the years 1921-33. Some Danish newspapers accused the Danish National Museum of lacking initiative in allowing the Norwegians to discover the first tangible evidence that Vínland was indeed Newfoundland. By November 9th 1961, the pressure from the media had become so great that Dr. Aage Rousell sent out a public statement on behalf of the National Museum that outlined Meldgaard's Vínland journey of 1956. Rousell explained how Meldgaard already undertaken his archaeological reconnaissance in Labrador and Newfoundland, though he did not actually claim that Meldgaard had found any Norse ruins in the area. Nonetheless, Rousell's statement was misinterpreted by some Danish newspapers to the extent that they reported Meldgaard *had* already discovered the ruins at L'Anse aux Meadows during his Vínland journey. From this point, the Danish and Norwegian media had enough information to conjure a debate as to who should be credited with proving that the Norse had actually travelled to the Americas. In reality, both Ingstad and Meldgaard were unwillingly forced into a feud propelled by nationalistic feelings that were deliberately provoked and sensationalized by the Danish and Norwegian press.

When Canadian authorities and institutions were asked to clarify their involvement in the matter and vouch for either Instad or Meldgaard, they could do nothing to calm the media storm. Canadian institutions were themselves treading the waters of larger politics, trying to not to stir up a conflict

between federal authorities and the newly joined province of Newfoundland. As William E. Taylor of the Canadian National Museum wrote Meldgaard in a confidential letter dated Oct. 17th 1961:

" (...) the provincial government (of Newfoundland, ed.) is of different political persuasion than the federal and loves to embarrass Ottawa (the Canadian National Museum, ed.) (...)".

The conflict peaked in the winter of 1961-62, but the national feelings that the Vínland dispute evoked allowed the Danish and Norwegian media carry the feud for the next couple of years. In the midst of this media storm were the two explorers that had shared the dream of reliving the Viking voyages along with an attitude of collegial openness, placing scientific discovery as the prime objective. For example, on August 25th 1955, Ingstad had written to Meldgaard from a tent near Edinburgh, Scotland:

" (...) My heartfelt congratulations on the economics of your Vínland journey being resolved so that you can start in 1956. When my own journey is taking off, I cannot say with certainty at the moment. By all probability, it will be after you. But that is of little consequence. Between the two of us there is no competition. It is simply a matter of locating the traces of the Norse, which can be difficult enough in that vast area. I wish you the best of luck. More than most people, you have the prerequisites of succeeding in this endeavor. (...)" (Auth. Trans.).

Considering the vigor and often harsh rhetoric that characterized the media conflict, it is little wonder

that the collegial relationship between Meldgaard and Ingstad cooled after 1961. Yet even at the height of the conflict, both men seem to have wanted to refrain from any personal assaults or accusations. For instance, Ingstad, in an otherwise heated and forceful response to the misinterpretations of Danish newspapers Nov. 13th 1961, took care to underline that none of his statements “*carried any animosity towards the Danish scientist Jørgen Meldgaard*” (Auth. Trans.). Meldgaard, on his part, obviously did his best to stay completely out of the conflict and when forced to a reply had told the Norwegian radio on Nov. 11th 1961:

“(...) It is very possible that Ingstad has had the luck of finding the houses of Leif (“the lucky”, ed.) and when the definitive evidence from the excavations have been presented, Ingstad will, and should, be accredited as the real discoverer of the fabled Vínland. I wish Helge Ingstad congratulations, if he has really found the ruins. Other than that, I, for my part, have nothing else or more to add to the standing discussion of Vínland” (Auth. trans.).

Throughout the media storm, Meldgaard maintained such a sober and professional tone of voice that in 1967, one Danish newspaper, with just a slight hint of frustrated pride, proclaimed that had the Vikings themselves met Meldgaard, they would have dubbed him “Jørgen the Modest”. This modesty did evidently not reflect any kind of submission to media pressure or indifference towards the subject, but rather the attitude of a professional archaeologist that thought the whole debate was utterly misplaced. This attitude was clearly expressed by Meldgaard in a 1966 article, where

he commented on a new Vínland debate that had started in 1965; this time the feud was between historians in Spain and Yale, and had been instigated by the disclosure of a medieval map, allegedly from 1440, and marked with the location of Vínland – some 52 years before the voyage of Columbus. To this discussion Meldgaard, with an all-embracing cultural view, bluntly pointed out that both Native Americans and Inuit had been in the continent for thousands of years prior to European colonization, whether by Vikings or Conquistadores. The question of who discovered the Americas was, therefore, essentially pointless and to that question, Meldgaard further surmised, an Inuit might ask the counter-question “who discovered Denmark”?

Beyond l’Anse aux Meadows

The last couple of decades have seen a renewed academic interest in the Norse voyages to North America. It continues to be a painstaking task to produce new evidence, as nothing matching the magnitude of l’Anse aux Meadows has been discovered. All of the new evidence that has been produced is not easily interpreted, and is often controversial. However, the emerging image seems to suggest that there was a complex and regionally diverse history of encounters between the Norse and Inuit, as well as a much older culture known as the Dorset who disappeared from the Arctic after 1200 A.D.

The nature of these meetings was probably brief and revolved around trade, but there are some indications that it led to transference of technology, at least from the Norse to the Dorset in Baffin Is-

land. It seems that after the 11th Century attempts to settle the Americas, as recounted in the Vínland sagas, Norse interaction with North America was focused on obtaining various raw materials that were either in short supply in Greenland (such as wood), or commodities that could be used in sustaining contact with Norway and other parts of Europe, i.e. pelts, narwhal and walrus ivory, and walrus hide ropes.

Whether or not L'Anse aux Meadows is, in fact, the actual *Leifsbuðir* mentioned in the Saga texts, one might still speculate, as many have done, if this really is the only archaeological trace left of Norse ventures into North America? Both the Sagas and the growing body of evidence for contact in the Canadian Arctic would seem to suggest otherwise. Considering how close Meldgaard came to finding L'Anse aux Meadows, one might also emphasize that his and Tanner's other ideas could be the perfect point of departure for a new Vínland exploration; if Thorfinn Karlsefni's expedition involved 160 persons as the Saga informs us, could there not be other Norse houses at Bartlett River in Pistolet Bay, as Meldgaard was convinced? If *Kjalarnes* really was the most important landmark on the Labrador coast, might the Vikings have left some kind of marking or structure on Cape Porcupine? If Thorvald Eiriksson really was killed and buried at *Krossanes* north of the English River, could his grave be found somewhere on Reed Point? Although such questions might appear to be the dreams of hope-

ful archaeologists, the story of Meldgaard's Vínland odyssey demonstrates that it is occasionally worthwhile to make such daring journeys, not only across physical landscapes, but also in the creativity that we use to perceive and explore the past.

Read more.....

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Turner Bight •
Rigolet •
Snookes Cove •
Eskimo Island •
Back Run Cove •
West Bay •
Fish Cove

FURDURSTRAUDIR

KROSSANES
KJALARNES
Packs Harbour
Cartwright

North West River
Goose Bay

STRAUMFIORD
STRAUMEY
Cape Bauld •
Raleigh •
Bartlett River •
St. Anthony •
Crémaillère Harbour •

L'Anse aux Meadows

Conche •
Roddickton •
Englee •

