

Lewis-Simpson, Shannon. 2003. *Vínland Revisited: The Norse World at the Turn of the First Millennium*. St John's, NFLD: Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. 465 pages. Selected Papers from the Viking Millennium International Symposium, 15-24 September 2000, Newfoundland and Labrador. ISBN 091973507.

This book emerges from the ten day Viking Millennium International Symposium held in Newfoundland and Labrador in September 2000. The range of papers and contributors to the volume reflects the diversity of the conference participants. Here the reader will find essays ranging from anecdotal narratives about L'Anse aux Meadows and the role of re-enactors in the World Heritage site to academically founded research articles covering topics such as identity, faith, philology, environmental impacts, and cultural contacts. The contributors include established researchers, new scholars, museum curators and Norse enthusiasts from both North America and Europe.

The book has been divided into three broad sections. The first section of the book, entitled "Voyage to Vínland," contains twelve papers that can be further sub-divided into those that address the identity of the migrants and those that examine Norse Greenland. The issue of ethnicity and identity introduces the section, beginning with Peter Sawyer's keynote address. Among the papers which follow, Przemysław Urbańczyk challenges traditional assumptions about the homogeneous nature of the settlers, proposing a more multi-cultural migrant community and criticizing the application of modern (or even medieval) ethnic boundaries to Norse society. Colleen Batey's essay examines the role of the Scottish Isles in the Norse expansion, while Birgit Sawyer presents a picture of the Scandinavian homelands at the time of the Viking Age.

The second half of section one has a particularly, but not exclusively, archaeological approach to Greenland. Svend Albrethsen presents a detailed analysis of the earliest farm structures in the Western Settlement, while Niels Lynnerup's study establishes a paleodemographic profile of the Norse settlements in Greenland based on population models, settlement sizes and grave sites. Jette Arneborg examines the relationship between the Greenlandic archaeological remains and the textual sources, concluding that written accounts of violent clashes between the settlers and the Inuit are unsupported.

Section two, "Society, Culture and Settlement," begins with a series of papers examining L'Anse aux Meadows and the surrounding region. Birgitta Wallace recounts the details of the excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows in the 1970s. The

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essays by Kevin McAleese, Nicolay Eckhoff and Darrell Markewitz address the role of the archaeological site in the Newfoundland economy, the changes wrought on the local communities by the discovery, and the part played by re-enactors at the site, respectively.

Eight papers in section two focus on a variety of aspects of society and culture. Michèle Hayeur-Smith examines the role of adornment in Icelandic society, arguing that oval brooches played an active role in defining Scandinavian identity in Iceland. David Gardner attempts to reconstruct the forms of Viking Age entertainment that may have been seen in Greenland and *Vínland* on the basis of artefacts found across the Norse world, details within sagas, and a certain amount of extrapolation from other sources. The question of faith is addressed in several papers, including Anne-Sofie Gräslund's examination of the conversion of Scandinavia, where she argues for syncretism between pagan and Christian practices. Neil Price focuses, instead, on the archaeological evidence for *seiðr*, demonstrating the influence of the *Sámi* people on Norse religion.

The tone of section two changes dramatically in its final papers. Here, Magnús Stefánsson and Alan Crozier continue the etymological debate about the naming of *Vínland*. Following a lengthy discussion regarding naming conventions, chronologies and locations, Magnús Stefánsson cautiously concludes that for now we should use the archaeological data as the starting point for interpretation. An underlying issue in this debate is just how far the Norse expansion extended—a topic to which papers in the third section of the book will return.

The final section of the book is entitled: "Exploration, Navigation and Cultural Interaction." Three essays in this section take up the theme of cultural interaction by examining the primarily textual evidence for the contacts between the Norse and the native peoples of the Canadian East Coast. In "Skrælingar Abroad—Skrælingar at Home?", Kevin McAleese identifies and describes the different native populations with whom the Norse may have had contact. Kenneth Baitsholts presents an interdisciplinary argument, which is nonetheless heavily dependent on written sources, for culture contact of a more complex nature than is generally assumed. He argues, for instance, that certain linguistic borrowings and cultural borrowings suggest a potentially intimate relationship between the Thule and the Norse in Greenland.

Birgitta Wallace's paper, "*Vínland* and the Death of Þorvaldr," links the themes of cultural interaction and exploration. Like other papers in this section, she draws on the sagas to examine the routes between Greenland and North America, pointing out how difficult it is to make direct connections between the geographical reality and the literary sources. Similar approaches are taken by the essays of Mats Larsson and George Shendock, both of whom try to place *Vínland* on the map.

The last of the papers in this volume take up the theme of navigation. Here, for example, the Uunartoq-bearing dial is re-examined by Christian Keller and Arne Emil Christensen, while Kirsten Seaver deconstructs the story of the “Vínland Map.” The volume closes with a poem by Trond Woxen, a poem that seems to say that we will never find the answer to the question “Where’s Vínland?”

Overall, this is a valuable resource for researchers and the general public alike. Although it sometimes suffers from being either too generalised or conversely too specialised, this book has enough variety in it to appeal to a wide-ranging audience. One possible weakness in this volume arises from the decision to preserve the order of presentation from the symposium—the three sections reflect the symposium program rather than any strong unifying features of the papers themselves. This sometimes results in a lack of coherence, both geographically and thematically, which might be confusing to some readers.

One of the greatest strengths of *Vínland Revisited* is its interdisciplinary nature, both as a whole, and within many of the individual papers. It represents the opening of a larger dialogue about Viking identities, migration and settlement. Although the discussions in some areas have moved on, this volume will continue to be a valuable resource for anyone with an interest in this dynamic field.

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