

THE EVIDENCE

Source 1 from Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. Francis J. Tschan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 75-76, 190-191.

1. From Adam of Bremen,  
*History of the Archbishops of  
Hamburg-Bremen, 11th century*

BOOK TWO, XXXI.

At that time a fleet [994] of pirates whom our people call Ascomanni landed in Saxony and devastated all the coastland of Frisia and Hadeln.<sup>4</sup> And as they went up the mouth of the Elbe River, they fell upon the province. Then the chief men of the Saxons met, and although their forces were small, engaged the Barbarians, who had left their ships at Stade, which is a convenient port and stronghold on the Elbe. Mighty and memorable, but exceedingly unhappy, was the battle in which, though it was manfully contested on both sides, our men finally proved too few. The victorious Swedes and Danes completely destroyed the whole Saxon troop. Captured there were the margrave Siegfried, Count Dietrich and other distinguished men whom the barbarians dragged to the ships with their hands tied behind their backs, and their feet shackled with chains. After that the barbarians ravaged the whole province with impunity. But since one of the captives, the margrave Siegfried, stealthily slipped away by night with the aid of a certain fisherman and escaped, the pirates forthwith fell into a rage and, mocking all the nobles whom they had in chains, severed their hands and feet and cut off their noses. Thus maimed and half dead, they cast them upon the land....

BOOK FOUR, VI.

There is very much gold in Zealand,<sup>5</sup> accumulated by the plundering of pirates. These pirates, called Vikings by the people of Zealand, by our people, Ascomanni, pay tribute to the Danish king for leave to plunder the barbarians who live about this sea in great numbers. Hence it also happens that the license granted them with respect to enemies is frequently misused against their own people. So it is true they have no faith in one another, and as soon as one of them

4. Ascomanni: literally "shipmen," but conveying the sense of pirates or sea raiders. Frisia and Hadeln roughly corresponded with the modern Netherlands and the North Sea coastal portion of Germany. Saxony, the northwestern part of modern Germany, was then a province in the Carolingian empire.

5. Zealand: a Danish island in the North Sea between the Jutland Peninsula and modern Sweden.

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*Chapter 6*

*Vikings and*

*Polynesians:*

*Exploring*

*New Worlds*

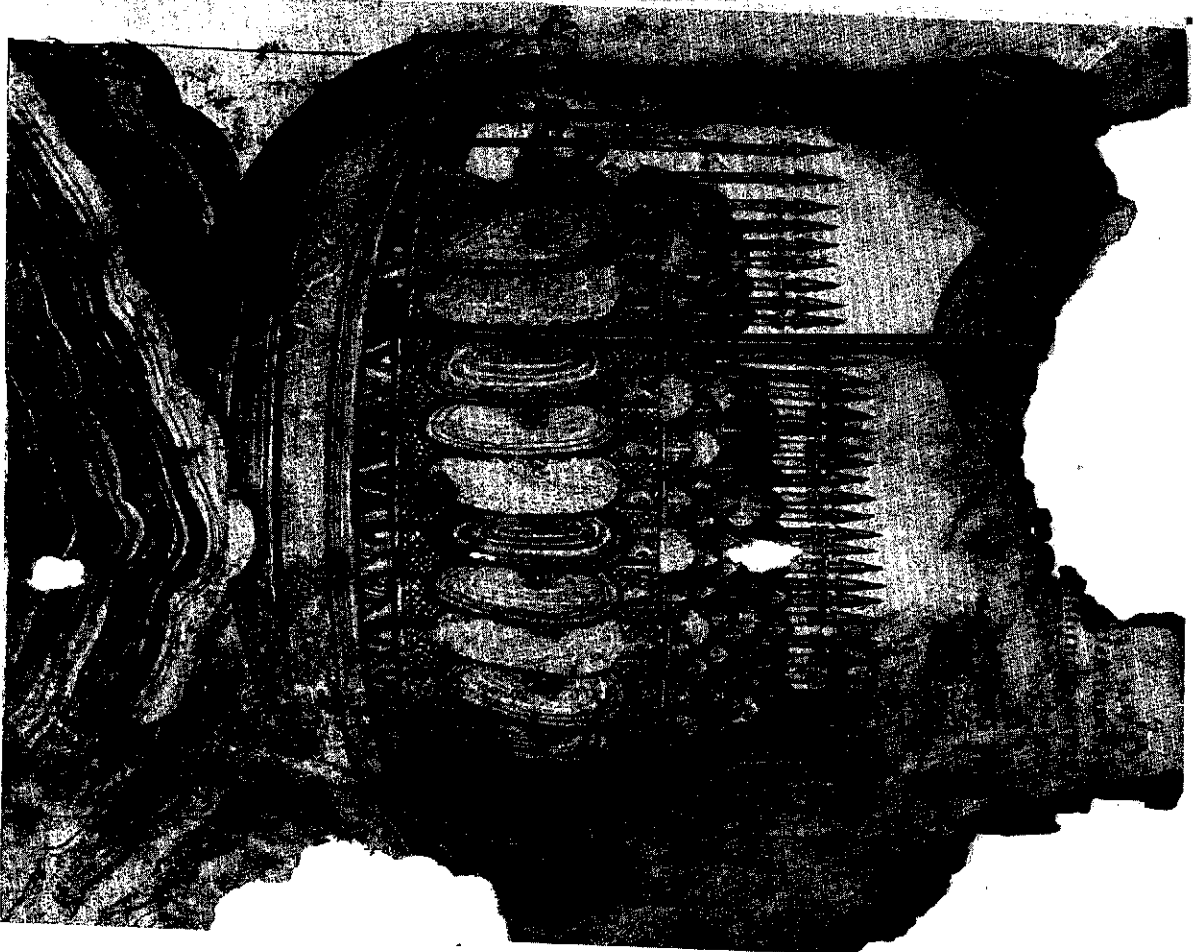
*(300-1100)*

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catches another, he mercilessly sells him into slavery, either to one of his fellows or to a barbarian. In many other respects, indeed, both in their laws and their customs, do the Danes run contrary to what is fair and good. None of these points appears to me to be worth discussing, unless it be that they immediately sell women who have been violated and that men who have been caught betraying his royal majesty or in some other crime would rather be beheaded than flogged. No kind of punishment exists among them other than the ax and servitude, and then it is glorious for a man who is convicted to take his punishment joyfully. Tears and plaints and other forms of compunction, by us regarded as wholesome, are by the Danes so much abominated that one may weep neither over his sins nor over his beloved dead . . . .

Source 2: *Bibliothèque nationale de France. Manuscript 01 NAL 1390 Fol 7.*

2. Illuminated French Manuscript on Life of St. Aubin, St. Aubin Abbey, ca. 1100



Chapter 6

Vikings and

Polynesians:

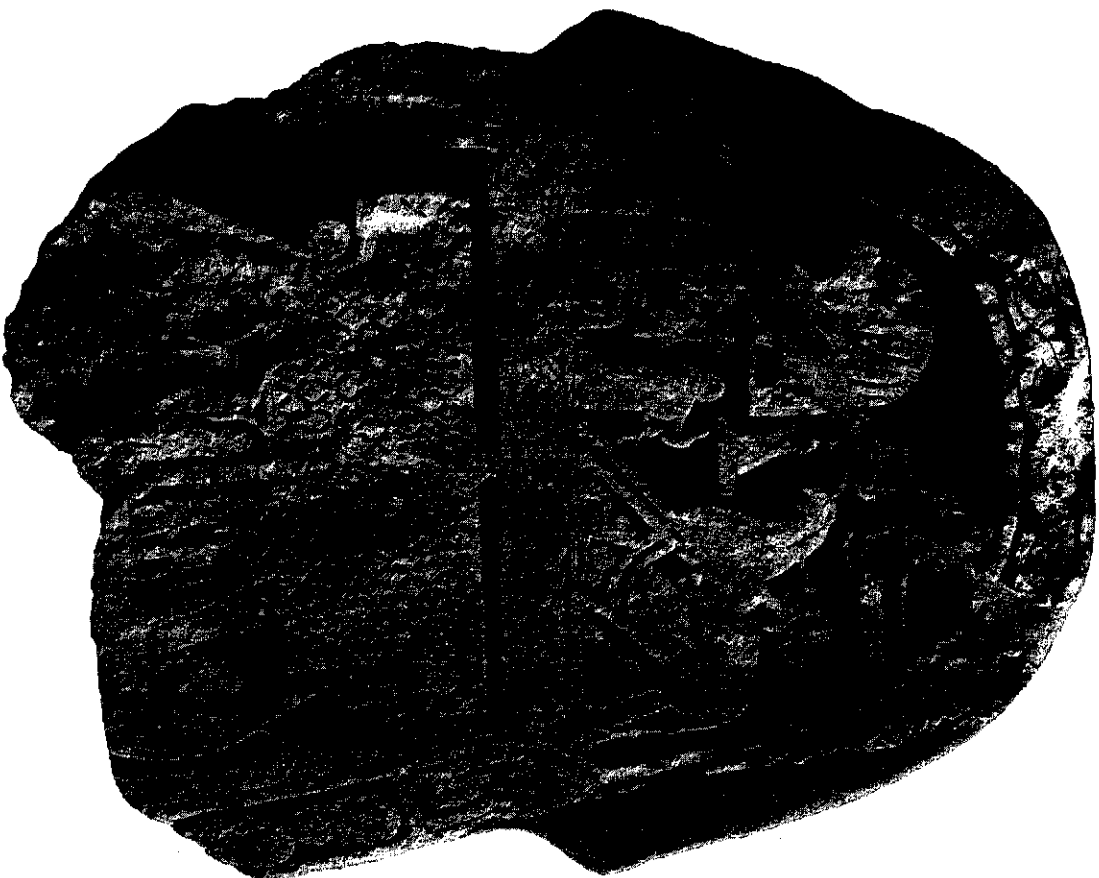
Exploring

New Worlds

(300–1100)

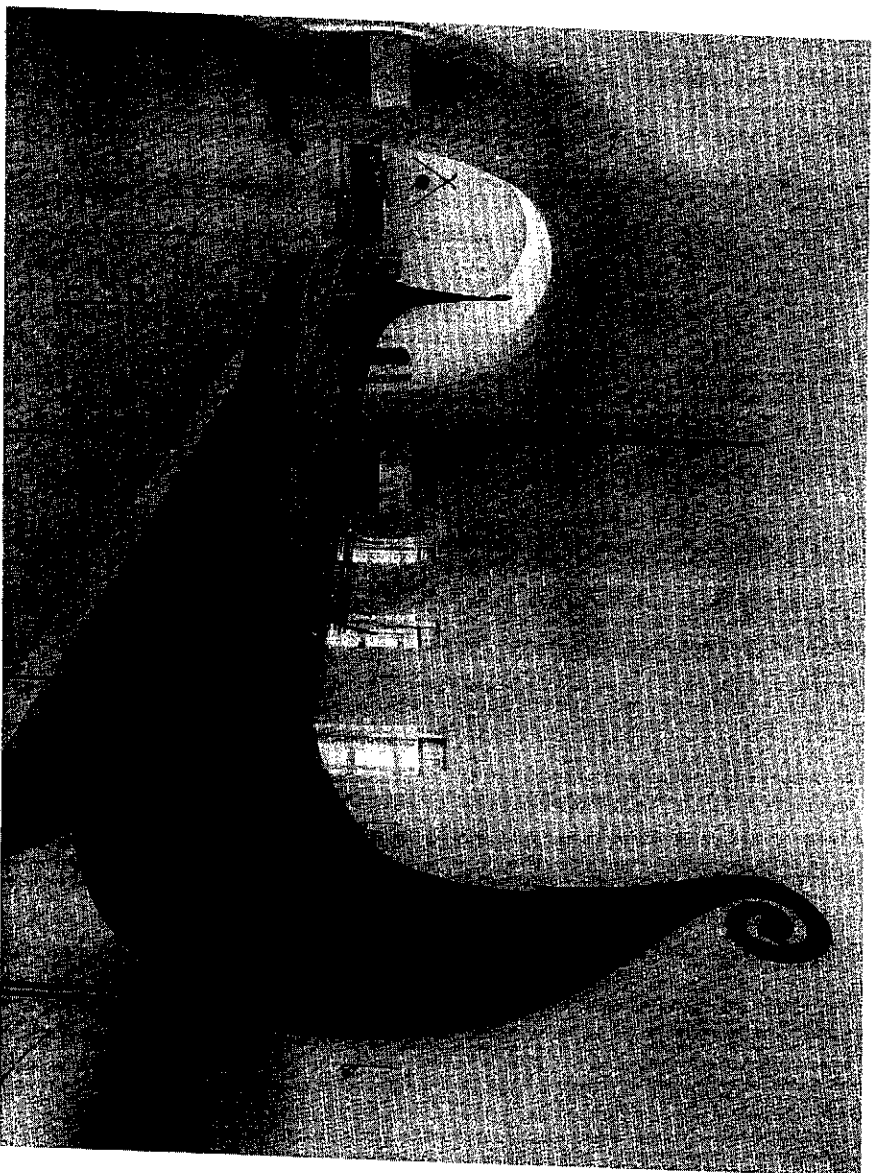
Source 3: Antikvarisktopografiska arkivet/National Heritage Board, Stockholm.

3. Memorial Stone, Gotland, Sweden, 8th to 9th century



Source 4: University Museum of Cultural Heritage/University of Oslo.

4. Oseberg Viking Ship, Norway, 9th to 10th century



Chapter 6
Vikings and
Polynesians:
Exploring
New Worlds
(300-1100)

Source 5 from R. I. Paige, *Runes* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 46-51.

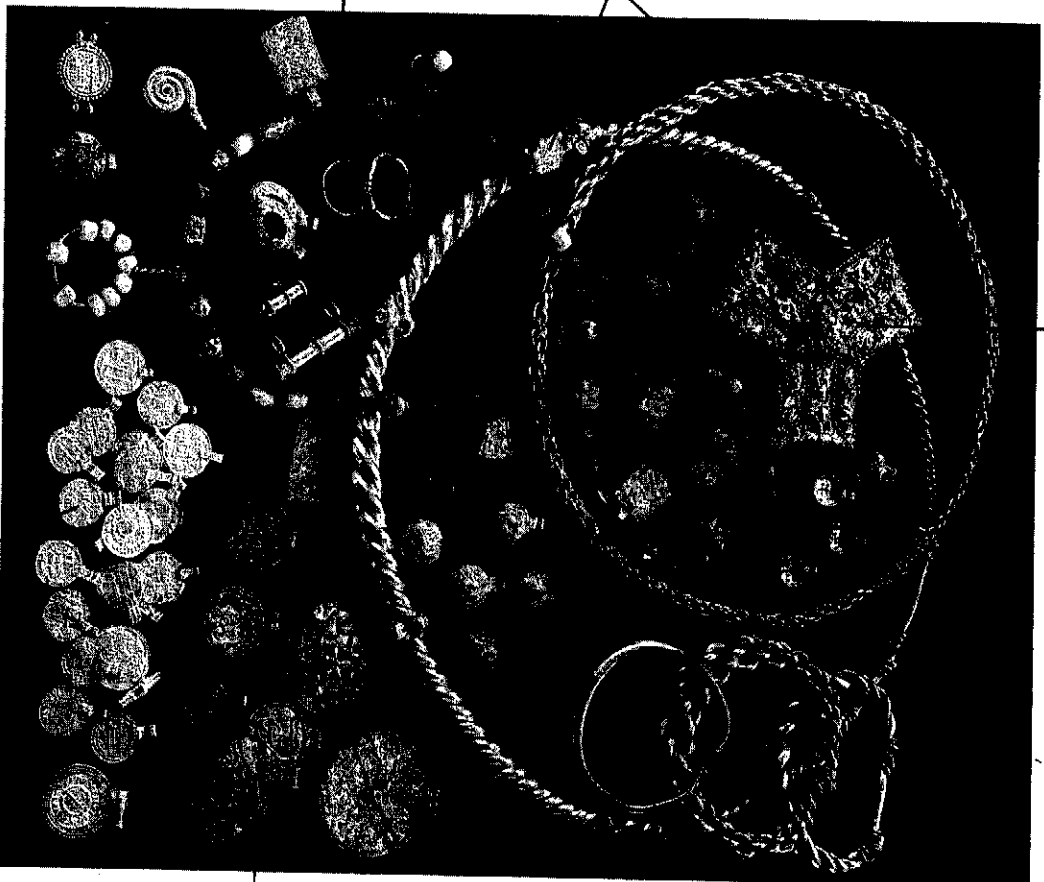
### 5. Runic Memorial Inscriptions, Germany, Norway, and Sweden

1. Haddeby Stone, Schleswig, Germany: "[T]his stone was raised by Thóróft, Svein's retainer for his comrade Eiríkr] who met his death when *drengiar* . . . besieged Haddeby. He was master of a ship, and a very good *drengr*."<sup>6</sup>
2. Uppland Stone, Uppland, Sweden: "Áli had this stone put up in his own honour. He took Knútr's *danegeid* in England. May God help his soul!"<sup>7</sup>
3. Veda Stone, Uppland, Sweden: "[I]renmuder set up this stone. ] He bought this estate and made his money in the east, in Gardar."<sup>8</sup>
4. Fjuckby Stone, Uppland, Sweden: "[L]iót set up this stone in memory of his son, Áki. ] He was master of a freighter, docking in the harbors of Greece. He died at home."<sup>9</sup>
5. Gripsholm Stone, Södermanland, Sweden: "Tola set up this stone in memory of her son Haraldr, Ingvar's brother. Like men they went far to seek gold, and in the east they fed the eagle. Died south, in Serkland."<sup>9</sup>
6. Dynna Pillar, Opland, Norway: "Gunnvor, Thyrdrik's daughter, made a bridge in memory of her daughter, Ástrídr. She was the most skilful girl in Hadeland."<sup>9</sup>
6. *drengr*: a young warrior; *drengjar* is its plural form.
7. *danegeid*: "Danish gold," the money Danish invaders exacted from the Anglo-Saxons in England.
8. *Gardar*: the name Scandinavians used for eastern Russia.
9. *Serkland*: Norse for "Saracen land," the usual European term for Muslim territories.

Source 6 from Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga, ed. William W. Fitzhugh and Elizabeth I. Ward (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000) p. 120. Photo: Universitity Museum of Cultural Heritage, Oslo, Norway.

### 6. Buried Viking Hoard, Hon, Norway

Trefoil Frankish brooch



Russian  
neck rings

Greek-  
inscribed  
ring

Danish or  
Swedish  
pendant

Coins (Arabic, Byzantine,  
Anglo-Saxon)

[163]

Chapter 6
Vikings and
Polynesians:
Exploring
New Worlds
(300-1100)

Source 7 from *Gwyn Jones, The Norse Atlantic Saga* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 142-152.

### 7. From *Greenlanders' Saga*, 13th century

I  
Learned men tell us that this same summer Eirik the Red went off to colonize Greenland, thirty-five [some versions say twenty-five] ships set sail from Breidafjord and Borgarfjord, but only fourteen of them succeeded in getting there. Some were forced back and some perished. . . .

II  
[Bjarni Herjolffsson, an Icelander, away in Norway when his father accompanied the settlers to Greenland, decided to follow him in his own ship, but was blown off course.] . . . Then their following wind died down, and north winds and fogs overtook them, so that they had no idea which way they were going. This continued over many days, but eventually they saw the sun and could then get their bearings [or determine the quarters of the heavens]. They now hoisted sail, and sailed that day before sighting land, and debated among themselves what land this could be. To his way of thinking, said Bjarni, it could not be Greenland . . . [for] the land was not mountainous and was covered with forest, with low hills there, so they left the land to port of them and let their sheet turn towards the land.

III  
[After more landfalls, none of which he was willing to explore, Bjarni reached Greenland itself.] . . . There was now much talk about voyages of discovery. Leif, son of Eirik the Red of Brattahlid, went to see Bjarni Herjolffsson, bought his ship from him, and found her a crew, so that they were thirty-five all told. . . .

. . . They now prepared their ship and sailed out to sea once they were ready, and they lighted on that land first which Bjarni his people had lighted on last. They sailed to land there, anchor and put off a boat, then went ashore, and could see no grass there. The background was all great glaciers, and right up to the glaciers from the sea as it were a single slab of rock. The land impressed them as barren and useless. "At least," said Leif, "it has not happened to us as to Bjarni over this land, that we failed to get ourselves ashore. I shall now give the land a name, and call it Helluland, Flatstone Land." After which they returned to the ship.

After that they sailed out to sea and lighted on another land. This time too they sailed to land, cast anchor, then put off a boat and went ashore. The country



was flat and covered with forest, with extensive white sands wherever they went, and shelving gently to the sea. "This land," said Leif, "shall be given a name in accordance with its nature, and be called Markland, Wood Land." After which they got back down to the ship as fast as they could.

From there they now sailed out to sea with a north-east wind and were at sea two days before catching sight of land. They sailed to land, reaching an island which lay north of it. . . . After which they returned to their ship and sailed into the sound which lay between the island and the cape projecting north from the land itself. . . . Later they decided to winter there and built a big house.

There was no lack of salmon there in river or lake, and salmon bigger than they had ever seen before. The nature of the land was so choice, it seemed to them that none of the cattle would require fodder for the winter. No frost came during the winter, and the grass was hardly withered. Day and night were of a more equal length there than in Greenland or Iceland. On the shortest day of winter the sun was visible in the middle of the afternoon as well as at breakfast time.

One evening it turned out that a man of their company was missing. This was Tyrkir the German. Leif was greatly put out by this, for Tyrkir had lived a long while with him and his father, and had shown great affection for Leif as a child. He gave his shipmates the rough edge of his tongue, then turned out to go and look for him, taking a dozen men with him. But when they had got only a short way from the hall there was Tyrkir coming to meet them. . . .

"Why are you so late, foster-father," Leif asked him, "and parted this way from your companions."

By way of a start Tyrkir held forth a long while in German, rolling his eyes all ways, and pulling faces. They had no notion what he was talking about. Then after a while he spoke in Norse. "I went no great way further than you, yet I have a real novelty to report. I have found vines and grapes."

. . . They slept overnight, then in the morning Leif made this announcement to his crew. "We now have two jobs to get on with, and on alternate days must gather grapes or cut vines and fell timber, so as to provide a cargo of such things for my ship. . . ."

. . . Leif gave the land a name in accordance with the good things they found in it, calling it Vinland, Wineland; after which they sailed out to sea and had a good wind till they sighted Greenland and the mountains under the glaciers.

#### IV

There was now much discussion of Leif's expedition to Vinland. His brother Thorvald considered that the land had been explored in too restricted a fashion. So Leif said to Thorvald, "If you want to, go you to Vinland, brother, in my ship. . . ."

. . . Next summer Thorvald set off eastwards with the merchantship and further north along the land. . . . and into the mouth of the next fiord they came to, and to a headland jutting out there which was entirely covered with forest.

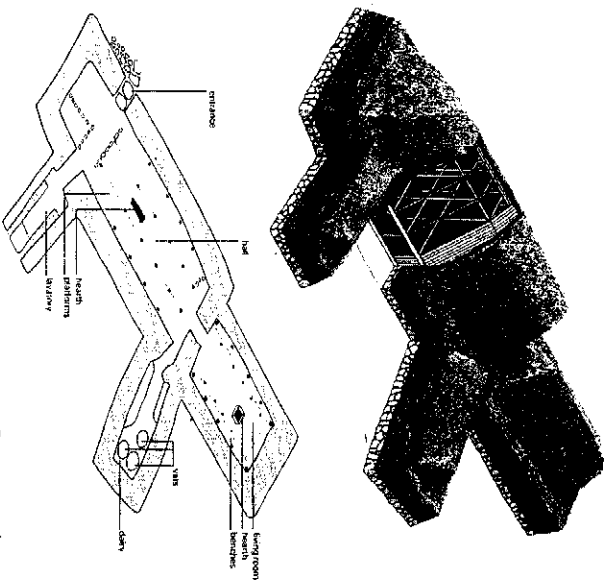
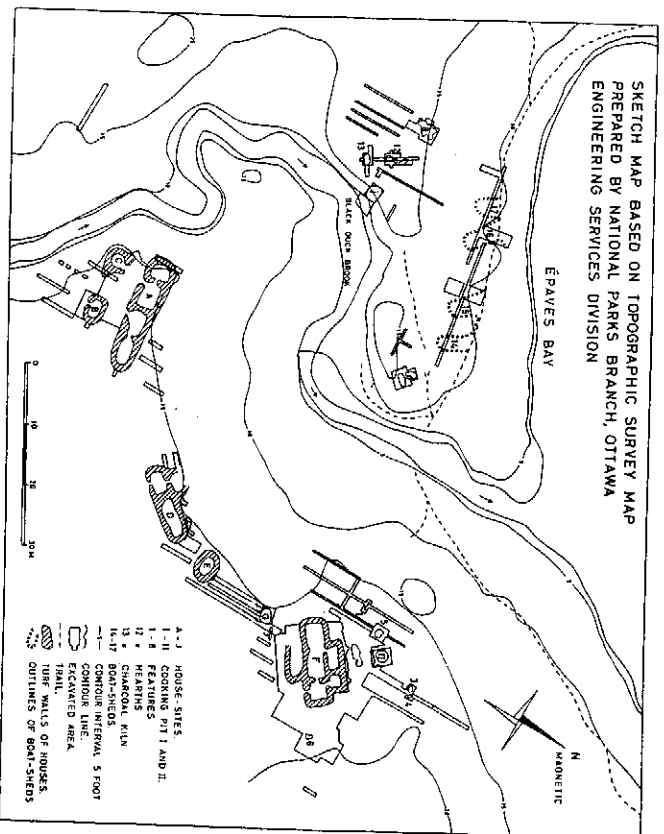
Chapter 6
Vikings and
Polynesians:
Exploring
New Worlds
(300-1100)

They brought the ship to where they could moor her, thrust out a gangway to the shore, and Thorvald walked ashore with his full ship's company. "This is a lovely place," he said, "and here I should like to make my home." Then they made for the ship, and saw three mounds on the sands up inside the headland. They walked up to them and could see three skin-boats there, and three men under each. So they divided forces and laid hands on them all, except for one who got away in his canoe. The other eight they killed, and afterwards walked back to the headland, where they had a good look round and could see various mounds on up the ford which they judged to be human habitations. Then after this so great a drowsiness overtook them that they could not keep awake, and all fell asleep. Then a cry carried to them, so that they were all roused up, and the words of the cry were these: "Rouse ye, Thorvald, and all your company, if you would stay alive. Back to your ship with all your men, and leave this land as fast as you can!" With that there came from inside the ford a countless fleet of skin-boats and attacked them. . . . The Skrælings kept shooting at them for a while, but then fled away, each one as fast as he could [leaving the party intact, save for Thorvald, who was mortally wounded].

. . . Then they stayed there that winter and gathered grapes and vines for the ship. The following spring they prepared to leave for Greenland, and brought their ship into Eiriksford, and the news they had to tell Leif was great news, indeed.

Source 8 site plan from Anne S. Ingstad, *The Discovery of a Norse Settlement in America* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1977); reconstructed Stöng Farmhouse from James Graham-Cambell, *The Viking World* (New Haven and New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1980), p. 81.

### 8. Site Plan, L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, Canada and House, Stöng, Iceland



[167]