

Activity I Handout

Comparing Versions of Viking Sagas

- A. Leif Ericsson and Christianity.** Read the first selection from *The Saga of Eric the Red*, and then answer the following questions. Next, read the selection from *The Vinland History* and go back and answer the same questions. You will have to leave some answers blank, since some information is only in one version or the other. Identify and discuss where you have different answers. Do the texts contradict one another, or does one just provide more detail than the other? Explain. Why do you think there are differences? What makes more sense to you? What do you think really happened, and why?
- What were the names of Leif's parents?
 - Why did he go to Norway?
 - What was the name of the King of Norway?
 - How did Leif's trip to Norway go? What was the weather like? Did he stay anywhere before he reached Norway? When did he leave Greenland, and when did he get to Norway?
 - What did the King of Norway do to Leif?
 - What did the King of Norway ask Leif to do?
 - What was Leif's response to the King of Norway?
- B. How did Leif get the nickname of "Leif the Lucky?"** Read the next selection from *The Saga of Eric the Red*, and then answer the following questions. Next, read the selection from *The Vinland History* and go back and answer the same questions. You will have to leave some answers blank, since some information is only in one version or the other. Identify and discuss where you have different answers. Do the texts contradict one another, or does one just provide more detail than the other? Explain. Why do you think there are differences? What makes more sense to you? What do you think really happened, and why?
- Where was Leif traveling? Where had he left, and where was he going to?
 - What is a "skerry"?
 - Was religion a part of the story?

- C. Eric the Red joins his sons on their journeys.** Read the version from *The Saga of Eric the Red* and answer the following questions. Then read the two versions from *The Vinland History* and answer the same questions. You will have to leave some questions blank, since some information is only in one version of the story. Identify and discuss where you have different answers. Do the texts contradict one another, or does one just provide more detail than the other? Explain. Why do you think there are differences? What makes more sense to you? What do you think really happened, and why?
- Which son asked Eric the Red to join him?
 - Where were they going to explore?
 - What does the text say about Eric's son? How does it describe him?
 - Why did he want his father to join the expedition?
 - What happens to Eric? Why did Eric believe it happened?
 - What did Eric do?
 - Did he go on the journey or return home?
 - Was the trip successful?
 - Did either of Eric's sons (Thorstein or Leif) go on a journey without him? Was it a successful voyage?
- D. Thorfinn Karlsefni and Vinland.** Read the version from *The Saga of Eric the Red* and answer the following questions. Then read the two versions from *The Vinland History* and answer the same questions. You will have to leave some questions blank, since some information is only in one version of the story. Identify and discuss where you have different answers. Do the texts contradict one another, or does one just provide more detail than the other? Explain.
- How many people sailed with Thorfinn Karlsefni? Were there women on the voyage?
 - Why did they go—to explore, or to settle?
 - Had any other Vikings been to Vinland before?
 - What was their first meeting with native people like? Did they trade or fight with the people? What actions did each group take?
 - What did the Vikings call the native people?
 - What items did the native people want to trade for?
 - Did the Vikings give weapons to the natives?
 - How does a bull come into the story?
 - What did the native people do with an axe?
 - Did they stay or leave Vinland? If they left, why?

Activity 2 Handout

Vinland

Read the selections **either** from *The Saga of Eric the Red* or from *The Vinland History*. Then answer these questions.

From *The Saga of Eric the Red*:

A. Leif Ericsson:

- a. Why did he go on this journey?
- b. What were the places he found? For each, did he land or just sail past? How is it described in the document? What name did he give it, and why?

B. Thorfinn Karlsefni:

- a. How many people sailed with him to Wineland? Were there any women with him?
- b. What were the places he found? For each, did he land or just sail past? How is it described in the document? What name did he give it? Had Leif Ericsson been there before him?
- c. What did they eat? How did they get through the winter in Vinland?

From *The Vinland History*:

A. Thorvald Ericsson:

- a. Why did he go on his journey? Was he the first person to explore these new lands?
- b. How many people sailed with him? Were there any women with him?
- c. Does the story tell anything about their journey across the ocean?
- d. What was the land like? How is it described in the story?
- e. Did they encounter other people?
- f. How did they come to name one place "Keelness?"
- g. What place did Thorvald especially like? How is it described?
- h. Describe their encounters with the natives of that area.
- i. What happened to Thorvald? Did he return to Greenland?

B. Thorfinn Karlsefni:

- a. Why did he go to Wineland?
- b. How many people sailed with him? Were there any women with him?
- c. What did they eat? How did they make it through the winter?
- d. Describe their encounters with the natives in that area. Did they return to Greenland? Why?

Background Handout

Eric the Red and His Children

Eric the Red and his father got in trouble – “on account of manslaughter” – in Norway. They fled to Iceland, which was then owned by Norway. Once in Iceland, Eric got into more trouble, and again had to flee. He was banished from the area of Iceland where he lived, and he sailed to a small settlement already established in Greenland. Once there, he explored the western part of Greenland. He returned to Iceland, made peace with his neighbors there, and then led a group of settlers to the new region he had explored. He came up with the name “Greenland” because he thought it would sound pretty, and would make people want to go there with him to live.

Eric married a woman named Thorhild. They had several children who explored new lands west of Greenland. Their sons were Thorstein Ericsson, Thorvald Ericsson, and “Leif the Lucky”/Leif Ericsson. (Ericsson means “Eric’s son, so that became his sons’ last name.) Eric’s daughter was named Freydis.

Leif traveled to Norway, then went back to Greenland to bring Christianity to that island. He also explored other lands west of Greenland and may have been the person who led the first expedition to Vinland.

Thorvald voyaged to Wineland. He was killed in an encounter with “Skreelings,” while they were on their way home to Greenland. “Skreelings” is the name the Vikings gave to the native peoples they met.

Thorstein married a woman named Gudrid. He set out on a journey to explore west of Greenland but weather prevented him from discovering any new land. He went back to Greenland and died a few months later. As a new widow, Gudrid moved into her father-in-law’s household.

The following year, Gudrid remarried. Her new husband was named Thorfinn Karlsefni. Gudrid went with her new husband when he led a journey to Vinland. They lived in Vinland for three years, and then went back to Greenland.

Excerpts from *The Saga of Eric the Red and The Vinland History*

A. Leif Ericsson and Christianity

1. From The Saga of Eric the Red: Leif Ericsson goes to Norway, and the King gives him the task of bringing Christianity to Greenland.

Concerning Leif the Lucky and the Introduction of Christianity into Greenland. — Eric [the Red] was married to a woman named Thorhild, and had two sons; one of these was named Thorstein, and the other Leif. They were both promising men. Thorstein lived at home with his father, and there was not at that time a man in Greenland who was accounted of so great promise as he. Leif had sailed to Norway, where¹ he was at the court of King Olaf Tryggvason. When Leif sailed from Greenland, in the summer, they were driven out of their course to the Hebrides. It was late before they got fair winds thence, and they remained there far into the summer. ... Leif and his companions sailed away from the Hebrides, and arrived in Norway in the autumn.² Leif went to the court of King Olaf Tryggvason.³ He was well received by the king, who felt that he could see that Leif was a man of great accomplishments. Upon one occasion the king came to speech with Leif, and asks him, "Is it thy purpose to sail to Greenland in the summer?" "It is my purpose," said Leif, "if it be your will." "I believe it will be well," answers the king, "and thither thou shalt go upon my errand, to proclaim Christianity there." Leif replied that the king should decide, but gave it as his belief that it would be difficult to carry this mission to a successful issue in Greenland. The king replied that he knew of no man who would be better fitted for this undertaking, "and in thy hands the cause will surely prosper." "This can only be," said Leif, "if I enjoy the grace of your protection."

2. From The Vinland History: Leif Ericsson converts to Christianity.

Leif the Lucky Baptized. — After that sixteen winters had lapsed, from the time when Eric the Red went to colonize Greenland, Leif, Eric's son, sailed out from Greenland to Norway. He arrived in Drontheim in the autumn, when King Olaf Tryggvason was come down from the north, out of Halagoland. Leif put in to Nidaros with his ship, and set out at once to visit the king. King Olaf expounded the faith to him, as he did to other heathen men who came to visit him. It proved easy for the king to persuade Leif, and he was accordingly baptized, together with all of his shipmates. Leif remained throughout the winter with the king, by whom he was well entertained.

¹ This was evidently the first time that the voyage from Greenland to Norway was accomplished without going by way of Iceland, and was a remarkable achievement. ...

² Of the year 999. ...

³ King Olaf ruled from 995 to 1000. ... It was in the same year that Leif started out as the King's missionary to Greenland.

B. Leif Ericsson gets a nickname.

1. From *The Saga of Eric the Red*: Leif Ericsson discovers new lands on his return from Norway to Greenland; and how Leif comes to be known as Leif the Lucky.

Leif put to sea when his ship was ready for the voyage [going home from Norway to Greenland]. For a long time he was tossed about upon the ocean, and came upon lands of which he had previously had no knowledge. There were self-sown wheat⁴ fields and vines growing there. There were also those trees there which are called “mausur,”⁵ and of all these they took specimens. Some of the timbers were so large that they were used in building. Leif found men upon a wreck, and took them home with him, and procured quarters for them all during the winter. In this wise he showed his nobleness and goodness, since he introduced Christianity into the country, and saved the men from the wreck; and he was called Leif the Lucky ever after. Leif landed in Ericsfirth, and then went home to Brattahlid; he was well received by every one. ...

2. From *The Vinland History: How Leif Ericsson comes to be known as Leif the Lucky*.

Leif the Lucky finds Men upon a Skerry at Sea. — ... They sailed out to sea [returning to Greenland from Wineland], and had fair winds until they sighted Greenland. ... “I do not know,” says Leif, “whether it is a ship or a skerry [island] that I see.” Now they saw it, and said, that it must be a skerry; but he was so much keener of sight than they, that he was able to discern men upon the skerry. “I think it best to tack,” says Leif, “so that we may draw near to them, that we may be able to render them assistance, if they should stand in need of it; and if they should not be peaceably disposed, we shall still have better command of the situation than they.” They approached the skerry, and lowering their sail, cast anchor, and launched a second small boat, which they had brought with them. ... Leif rescued fifteen persons from the skerry. He was afterward called Leif the Lucky. Leif had now goodly store both of property and honor.

C. Thorstein Ericsson’s journeys, and Eric the Red is asked to join his son.

1. From *The Saga of Eric the Red*: Thorstein Ericsson’s unsuccessful voyage, and Eric’s involvement in that journey.

At this time there began to be much talk about a voyage of exploration to that country which Leif had discovered. The leader of this expedition was Thorstein Ericsson [Leif’s brother], who was a good man and an intelligent, and blessed with many friends. Eric [Eric the Red, father of Leif and Thorstein] was likewise invited to join them, for the men believed that his luck and foresight would be of great furtherance. He was slow in deciding, but did not say nay, when his friends besought

⁴ A wild cereal of some sort. [Probably Indian corn or wild rice.]

⁵ Supposed to be maple.

him to go. They thereupon equipped that ship in which Thorbiorn had come out, and twenty men were selected for the expedition. They took little cargo with them, nought else save their weapons and provisions. On that morning when Eric set out from his home he took with him a little chest containing gold and silver; he hid this treasure, and then went his way. He had proceeded but a short distance, however, when he fell from his horse and broke his ribs and dislocated his shoulder, whereat he cried "Ai, ai!" By reason of this accident he sent his wife word that she should procure the treasure which he had concealed, for to the hiding of the treasure he attributed his misfortune. Thereafter they sailed cheerily out of Eric's firth in high spirits over their plan. They were long tossed about upon the ocean, and could not lay the course they wished. They came in sight of Iceland, and likewise saw birds from the Irish coast [so they were near Ireland]. Their ship was, in sooth, driven hither and thither over the sea. In the autumn they turned back, worn out by toil, and exposure to the elements, and exhausted by their labors, and arrived at Eric's firth at the very beginning of winter. ... They landed thereupon, and went home to Brattahlid, where they remained throughout the winter.

2. From *The Vinland History*: Thorstein Ericsson's unsuccessful voyage.

Thorstein Ericsson dies in the Western Settlement. — In the meantime it had come to pass in Greenland, that Thorstein of Eric's firth had married and taken to wife Gudrid, ... Now Thorstein Ericsson, being minded to make the voyage to Wineland after the body of his brother, Thorvald, equipped the same ship, and selected a crew of twenty-five men of good size and strength, and taking with him his wife, Gudrid, when all was in readiness, they sailed out into the open ocean, and out of sight of land. They were driven hither and thither over the sea all that summer, and lost all reckoning, and at the end of the first week of winter they made the land at Lysufirth in Greenland, in the Western Settlement. ... [Thorstein died, and Gudrid returned to the home of her brother-in-law, Leif Ericsson.]

3. From *The Vinland History*: Eric the Red's involvement in his son Leif's journey to explore new lands.

Here begins the Brief History of the Greenlanders. — ... There was now much talk about voyages of discovery. Leif, the son of Eric the Red, of Brattahlid ... bought a ship ... and collected a crew, until they formed altogether a company of thirty-five men. Leif invited his father, Eric, to become the leader of the expedition, but Eric declined, saying that he was then stricken in years, and adding that he was less able to endure the exposure of sea-life than he had been. Leif replied that he would nevertheless be the one who would be most apt to bring good luck, and Eric yielded to Leif's solicitation, and rode from home when they were ready to sail. When he was but a short distance from the ship, the horse which Eric was riding stumbled, and he was thrown from his back and wounded his foot, whereupon he exclaimed, "It is not designed for me to discover more lands than the one in which we are now living, nor can we now continue longer together." Eric returned home to Brattahlid, and Leif pursued his way to the ship with his companions, thirty-five men; ...

D. Various explorations of Wineland (Vinland).

I. From *The Saga of Eric the Red*: Leif Ericsson's exploration of Helluland, Markland, and Wineland (Vinland).

They put the ship in order, and when they were ready, they sailed out to sea, and found first that land which Biarni and his ship-mates found last. They sailed up to the land and cast anchor, and launched a boat and went ashore, and saw no grass there; great ice mountains lay inland back from the sea, and it was as a table-land of flat rock all the way from the sea to the ice mountains, and the country seemed to them to be entirely devoid of good qualities. Then said Leif, "It has not come to pass with us in regard to this land as with Biarni, that we have not gone upon it. To this country I will now give a name, and call it Helluland." They returned to the ship, put out to sea, and found a second land. They sailed again to the land, and came to anchor, and launched the boat, and went ashore. This was a level wooded land, and there were broad stretches of white sand, where they went, and the land was level by the sea. Then said Leif, "This land shall have a name after its nature, and we will call it Markland." They returned to the ship forthwith, and sailed away upon the main with north-east winds, and were out two "dcegr" before they sighted land. They sailed toward this land, and came to an island which lay to the northward off the land. There they went ashore and looked about them, the weather being fine, and they observed that there was dew upon the grass, and it so happened that they touched the dew with their hands, and touched their hands to their mouths, and it seemed to them that they had never before tasted anything so sweet as this. They went aboard their ship again and sailed into a certain sound, which lay between the island and a cape, which jutted out from the land on the north, and they stood in westering past the cape. At ebb-tide there were broad reaches of shallow water there, and they ran their ship aground there, and it was a long distance from the ship to the ocean; yet were they so anxious to go ashore that they could not wait until the tide should rise under their ship, but hastened to the land, where a certain river flows out from a lake. As soon as the tide rose beneath their ship, however, they took the boat and rowed to the ship, which they conveyed up the river, and so into the lake, where they cast anchor and carried their hammocks ashore from the ship, and built themselves booths there. They afterwards determined to establish themselves there for the winter, and they accordingly built a large house. There was no lack of salmon there either in the river or in the lake, and larger salmon than they had ever seen before. The country thereabouts seemed to be possessed of such good qualities that cattle would need no fodder there during the winters. There was no frost there in the winters, and the grass withered but little. The days and nights there were of more nearly equal length than in Greenland or Iceland. ... When they had completed their house Leif said to his companions, "I propose now to divide our company into two groups, and to set about an exploration of the country; one half of our party shall remain at home at the house, while the other half shall investigate the land, and they must not go beyond a point from which they can return home the same evening, and are not to separate [from each other.]" Thus they did for a time; Leif himself, by turns, joined the exploring party or remained behind at the house. Leif was a large and powerful man, and of a most imposing bearing, a man of sagacity, and a very just man in all things.

2. From *The Vinland History*: Thorvald Ericsson explores Wineland, and dies there.

... There was now much talk about Leif's Wineland journey, and his brother, Thorvald, held that the country had not been sufficiently explored. ...

Thorvald goes to Wineland. — Now Thorvald, with the advice of his brother, Leif, prepared to make this voyage with thirty men. They put their ship in order, and sailed out to sea; and there is no account of their voyage before their arrival at Leif's-booths in Wineland. They laid up their ship there, and remained there quietly during the winter, supplying themselves with food by fishing. In the spring, however, Thorvald said that they should put their ship in order, and that a few men should take the after-boat, and proceed along the western coast, and explore [the region] thereabouts during the summer. They found it a fair, well-wooded country; it was but a short distance from the woods to the sea, and [there were] white sands, as well as great numbers of islands and shallows. They found neither dwelling of man nor lair of beast; but in one of the westerly islands, they found a wooden building for the shelter of grain. They found no other trace of human handiwork, and they turned back, and arrived at Leif's-booths in the autumn. The following summer Thorvald set out toward the east with the ship, and along the northern coast. They were met by a high wind off a certain promontory, and were driven ashore there, and damaged the keel of their ship, and were compelled to remain there for a long time and repair the injury to their vessel. Then said Thorvald to his companions: "I propose that we raise the keel upon this cape, and call it Keelness," and so they did. Then they sailed away, to the eastward off the land, and into the mouth of the adjoining firth, and to a headland, which projected into the sea there, and which was entirely covered with woods. They found an anchorage for their ship, and put out the gangway to the land, and Thorvald and all of his companions went ashore. "It is a fair region here," said he, "and here I should like to make my home." They then returned to the ship, and discovered on the sands, in beyond the headland, three mounds; they went up to these, and saw that they were three skin-canoes, with three men under each. They thereupon divided their party, and succeeded in seizing all of the men but one, who escaped with his canoe. They killed the eight men, and then ascended the headland again, and looked about them, and discovered within the firth certain hillocks, which they concluded must be habitations. They were then so overpowered with sleep that they could not keep awake, and all fell into a [heavy] slumber, from which they were awakened by the sound of a cry uttered above them; and the words of the cry were these: "Awake, Thorvald, thou and all thy company, if thou wouldst save thy life; and board thy ship with all thy men, and sail with all speed from the land!" A countless number of skin-canoes then advanced toward them from the inner part of the firth, whereupon Thorvald exclaimed: "We must put out the war-boards, on both sides of the ship, and defend ourselves to the best of our ability, but offer little attack." This they did, and the Skrellings, after they had shot at them for a time, fled precipitately, each as best he could. Thorvald then inquired of his men, whether any of them had been wounded, and they informed him that no one of them had received a wound. "I have been wounded in my arm-pit," says he; "an arrow flew in between the gunwale and the shield, below my arm. Here is the shaft, and it will bring me to my end!

I counsel you now to retrace your way with the utmost speed. But me ye shall convey to that headland which seemed to me to offer so pleasant a dwelling-place; thus it may be fulfilled, that the truth sprang to my lips, when I expressed the wish to abide there for a time. Ye shall bury me there, and place a cross at my head, and another at my feet, and call it Crossness for ever after." ... Thorvald died, and when they had carried out his injunctions, they took their departure, and rejoined their companions, and they told each other of the experiences which had befallen them. They remained there during the winter, and gathered grapes and wood with which to freight the ship. In the following spring they returned to Greenland, and arrived with their ship in Eric's firth, where they were able to recount great tidings to Leif.

[There is no parallel story in *The Saga of Eric the Red*.]

3. From *Saga of Eric the Red*: Thorfinn Karlsefni and Vinland (Wineland).

Concerning Thord of Hofdi. —

... Thorfinn Karlsefni ... was engaged in trading voyages, and was reputed to be a successful merchant. One summer Karlsefni equipped his ship, with the intention of sailing [from Norway] to Greenland. ... there were forty men on board the ship with them. There was a man named Biarni ... equipped [another] ship, the same summer as Karlsefni, with the intention of making a voyage to Greenland; they had also forty men in their ship. When they were ready to sail, the two ships put to sea together. It has not been recorded how long a voyage they had; but it is to be told, that both of the ships arrived at Eric's firth in the autumn. Eric and other of the inhabitants of the country rode to the ships, and a goodly trade was soon established between them. ...

* * * *

Beginning of the Wineland Voyages. — About this time there began to be much talk at Brattahlid, to the effect that Wineland the Good should be explored, for, it was said, that country must be possessed of many goodly qualities. [Thorfinn Karlsefni led an expedition.] ... They had in all one hundred and sixty men, when they sailed to the Western Settlement,⁶ and thence to Bear Island. Thence they bore away to the southward two "dcegr."⁷ Then they saw land, and launched a boat, and explored the land, and found there large flat stones [hellur], and many of these were twelve ells wide; there were many Arctic foxes there. They gave a name to the country, and called it Helluland [the land of flat stones]. Then they sailed with northerly winds two "doegr," and land then lay before them, and upon it was a great wood and many wild beasts; an island lay off the land to the south-east, and there they found a bear, and they called this Biarney [Bear Island], while the land where the wood was they called Markland [Forest-land]. Thence they sailed southward along

⁶ There is doubt as to why the expedition sailed northwest to the Western Settlement. Possibly Thorfinn desired to make a different start than Thorstein, whose expedition was a failure.

⁷ "Dcegr" or "doegr" was a period of twelve hours. ... A doegr's sailing is estimated to have been about one hundred miles.

the land for a long time, and came to a cape; the land lay upon the starboard; there were long strands and sandy banks there. They rowed to the land and found upon the cape there the keel of a ship, and they called it there Kialarnes [Keelness]; they also called the strands Furdustrandir [Wonder-strands], because they were so long to sail by. Then the country became indented with bays, and they steered their ships into a bay. ... Now when they had sailed past Wonder-strands, they put the Gaels [slaves] ashore, and directed them to run to the southward, and investigate the nature of the country, and return again before the end of the third half-day. ... Karlsefni and his companions cast anchor, and lay there during their absence; and when they came again, one of them carried a bunch of grapes, and the other an ear of new-sown wheat. They went on board the ship, whereupon Karlsefni and his followers held on their way, until they came to where the coast was indented with bays. They stood into a bay with their ships. There was an island out at the mouth of the bay, about which there were strong currents, wherefore they called it Straumey [Stream Isle]. There were so many birds⁸ there, that it was scarcely possible to step between the eggs. They sailed through the firth, and called it Straumfiord [Streamfirth], and carried their cargoes ashore from the ships, and established themselves there. They had brought with them all kinds of live-stock. It was a fine country there. There were mountains thereabouts. They occupied themselves exclusively with the exploration of the country. They remained there during the winter, and they had taken no thought for this during the summer. The fishing began to fail, and they began to fall short of food. ... The weather then improved, and they could now row out to fish, and thenceforward they had no lack of provisions, for they could hunt game on the land, gather eggs on the island, and catch fish from the sea.

Concerning Karlsefni and Thorhall. ...

It is now to be told of Karlsefni, that he cruised southward off the coast, with Snorri and Biarni, and their people. They sailed for a long time, and until they came at last to a river, which flowed down from the land into a lake, and so into the sea. There were great bars at the mouth of the river, so that it could only be entered at the height of the flood-tide. Karlsefni and his men sailed into the mouth of the river, and called it there Hop [a small land-locked bay]. They found self-sown wheat-fields [possibly wild rice] on the land there, wherever there were hollows, and wherever there was hilly ground, there were vines. Every brook there was full of fish. They dug pits, on the shore where the tide rose highest, and when the tide fell, there were halibut in the pits. There were great numbers of wild animals of all kinds in the woods. They remained there half a month, and enjoyed themselves, and kept no watch. They had their live-stock with them. Now one morning early, when they looked about them, they saw a great number of skin-canoes,⁹ and staves were brandished from the boats, with a noise like flails, and they were revolved in the same direction in which the sun moves. Then said Karlsefni: "What may this betoken?" "It may be, that this

⁸ Hauk's Book says "eider-ducks."

⁹ "Skin-canoes," or kayaks, lead one to think of Eskimos. ... the saga-writer may have failed to distinguish between bark-canoes and skin-canoes.

is a signal of peace, wherefore let us take a white shield and display it." And thus they did. Thereupon the strangers rowed toward them, and went upon the land, marvelling at those whom they saw before them. They were swarthy men,¹⁰ and ill-looking, and the hair of their heads was ugly. They had great eyes, [deep eye sockets] and were broad of cheek. They tarried there for a time looking curiously at the people they saw before them, and then rowed away, and to the southward around the point.

Karlsefni and his followers had built their huts above the lake, some of their dwellings being near the lake, and others farther away. Now they remained there that winter. No snow came there, and all of their live-stock lived by grazing.¹¹ And when spring opened, they discovered, early one morning, a great number of skin-canoes, rowing from the south past the cape, so numerous, that it looked as if coals had been scattered broadcast out before the bay; and on every boat staves were waved. Thereupon Karlsefni and his people displayed their shields, and when they came together, they began to barter with each other. Especially did the strangers wish to buy red cloth, for which they offered in exchange peltries and quite gray skins. They also desired to buy swords and spears, but Karlsefni and Snorri forbade this. In exchange for perfect unsullied skins, the Skrellings would take red stuff a span in length, which they would bind around their heads. So their trade went on for a time, until Karlsefni and his people began to grow short of cloth, when they divided it into such narrow pieces, that it was not more than a finger's breadth wide, but the Skrellings still continued to give just as much for this as before, or more.

It so happened, that a bull,¹² which belonged to Karlsefni and his people, ran out from the woods, bellowing loudly. This so terrified the Skrellings, that they sped out to their canoes, and then rowed away to the southward along the coast. For three entire weeks nothing more was seen of them. At the end of this time, however, a great multitude of Skrelling boats was discovered approaching from the south, as if a stream were pouring down, and all of their staves were waved in a direction contrary to the course of the sun, and the Skrellings were all uttering loud cries. Thereupon Karlsefni and his men took red shields and displayed them. The Skrellings sprang from their boats, and they met then, and fought together. There was a fierce shower of missiles, for the Skrellings had war-slings. Karlsefni and Snorri observed, that the Skrellings raised up on a pole a great ball-shaped body, almost the size of a sheep's belly, and nearly black in color, and this they hurled from the pole up on the land above Karlsefni's followers, and it made a frightful noise, where it fell. Whereat a great fear seized upon Karlsefni, and all his men, so that they could think of nought

¹⁰ [May mean] ... "small men" instead of "swarthy men." The explorers called them Skrcelingar, a disparaging epithet, meaning inferior people, i.e., savages. The name is applied, in saga literature, to the natives of Greenland as well as to the natives of Vinland. ... [may have been] the Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia.

¹¹ This would seem to place Vinland farther south than Nova Scotia, but not necessarily. Storm cites the Frenchman Denys, who as colonist and governor of Nova Scotia passed a number of years there, and in a work published in 1672 says of the inner tracts of the land east of Port Royal that "there is very little snow in the country, and very little winter." He adds: "It is certain that the country produces the vine naturally, that it bears a grape that ripens perfectly, the berry as large as the muscat."

¹² An animal unknown to the natives. ... "It is the unknown that frightens."

but flight, and of making their escape up along the river bank, for it seemed to them, that the troop of the Skrellings was rushing towards them from every side, and they did not pause, until they came to certain jutting crags, where they offered a stout resistance. Freydis came out, and seeing that Karlsefni and his men were fleeing, she cried: "Why do ye flee from these wretches, such worthy men as ye, when, meseems, ye might slaughter them like cattle. Had I but a weapon, methinks, I would fight better than any one of you!" They gave no heed to her words. Freydis sought to join them, but lagged behind, for she was not hale [pregnant]; she followed them, however, into the forest, while the Skrellings pursued her; she found a dead man in front of her ... his naked sword lay beside him; she took it up, and prepared to defend herself with it. The Skrellings then approached her, whereupon she stripped down her shift, and slapped her breast with the naked sword. At this the Skrellings were terrified and ran down to their boats, and rowed away. Karlsefni and his companions, however, joined her and praised her valor. Two of Karlsefni's men had fallen, and a great number of the Skrellings. Karlsefni's party had been overpowered by dint of superior numbers. ... The Skrellings, moreover, found a dead man, and an axe lay beside him. One of their number picked up the axe, and struck at a tree with it, and one after another [they tested it], and it seemed to them to be a treasure, and to cut well; then one of their number seized it, and hewed at a stone with it, so that the axe broke, whereat they concluded that it could be of no use, since it would not withstand stone, and they cast it away.

It now seemed clear to Karlsefni and his people, that although the country thereabouts was attractive, their life would be one of constant dread and turmoil by reason of the [hostility of the] inhabitants of the country, so they forthwith prepared to leave, and determined to return to their own country. ...

4. From *The Vinland History*: Thorfinn Karlsefni and Vinland (Wineland).

Of the Wineland Voyages of Thorfinn and his Companions. — That same summer a ship came from Norway to Greenland. The skipper's name was Thorfinn Karlsefni; ... a very wealthy man, passed the winter at Brattahlid with Leif Ericsson. [Thorfinn and Gudrid married.] ... A renewed discussion arose concerning a Wineland voyage, and the folk urged Karlsefni to make the venture, Gudrid joining with the others. He determined to undertake the voyage, and assembled a company of sixty men and five women, and entered into an agreement with his shipmates that they should each share equally in all the spoils of the enterprise. They took with them all kinds of cattle, as it was their intention to settle the country, if they could. Karlsefni asked Leif for the house in Wineland, and he replied, that he would lend it but not give it. They sailed out to sea with the ship, and arrived safe and sound at Leif's-booths, and carried their hammocks ashore there. They were soon provided with an abundant and goodly supply of food, for a whale of good size and quality was driven ashore there, and they secured it, and flensed it, and had then no lack of provisions. The cattle were turned out upon the land, and the males soon became very restless and vicious; they had brought a bull with them. Karlsefni caused trees to be felled, and to be hewed into timbers, wherewith to load his ship, and the wood was

placed upon a cliff to dry. They gathered somewhat of all of the valuable products of the land, grapes, and all kinds of game and fish, and other good things. In the summer succeeding the first winter, Skrellings were discovered. A great troop of men came forth from out the woods. The cattle were hard by, and the bull began to bellow and roar with a great noise, whereat the Skrellings were frightened, and ran away, with their packs wherein were gray furs, sables, and all kinds of peltries. They fled towards Karlsefni's dwelling, and sought to effect an entrance into the house, but Karlsefni caused the doors to be defended [against them]. Neither [people] could understand the other's language. The Skrellings put down their bundles then, and loosed them, and offered their wares [for barter], and were especially anxious to exchange these for weapons, but Karlsefni forbade his men to sell their weapons, and taking counsel with himself, he bade the women carry out milk to the Skrellings, which they no sooner saw, than they wanted to buy it, and nothing else. Now the outcome of the Skrellings' trading was, that they carried their wares away in their stomachs, while they left their packs and peltries behind with Karlsefni and his companions, and having accomplished this [exchange] they went away. Now it is to be told, that Karlsefni caused a strong wooden palisade to be constructed and set up around the house. ... In the early part of the second winter the Skrellings came to them again, and these were now much more numerous than before, and brought with them the same wares as at first. Then said Karlsefni to the women: "Do ye carry out now the same food, which proved so profitable before, and nought else." When they saw this they cast their packs in over the palisade. ... One of the Skrellings, who had tried to seize their weapons, was killed by one of Karlsefni's followers. At this the Skrellings fled precipitately, leaving their garments and wares behind them. ... "Now we must needs take counsel together," says Karlsefni, "for that I believe they will visit us a third time, in great numbers, and attack us. Let us now adopt this plan: ten of our number shall go out upon the cape, and show themselves there, while the remainder of our company shall go into the woods and hew a clearing for our cattle, when the troop approaches from the forest. We will also take our bull, and let him go in advance of us." The lie of the land was such that the proposed meeting-place had the lake upon the one side, and the forest upon the other. Karlsefni's advice was now carried into execution. The Skrellings advanced to the spot which Karlsefni had selected for the encounter, and a battle was fought there, in which great numbers of the band of the Skrellings were slain. There was one man among the Skrellings, of large size and fine bearing, whom Karlsefni concluded must be their chief. One of the Skrellings picked up an axe, and having looked at it for a time, he brandished it about one of his companions, and hewed at him, and on the instant the man fell dead. Thereupon the big man seized the axe, and after examining it for a moment, he hurled it as far as he could, out into the sea; then they fled helter-skelter into the woods, and thus their intercourse came to an end. Karlsefni and his party remained there throughout the winter, but in the spring Karlsefni announces, that he is not minded to remain there longer, but will return to Greenland. They now made ready for the voyage, and carried away with them much booty in vines and grapes, and peltries. They sailed out upon the high seas, and brought their ship safely to Ericsfirth, where they remained during the winter.

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