

**GULDAGER, Ole, Steffen Stummann Hansen and Simon GLEIE**  
**2002 *Medieval Farmsteads in Greenland — The Brattahlid***  
**region 1999-2000, Copenhagen, Danish Polar Center.**

Charles E. Schweger

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1986      Dialektfordeling og lydforandringer i grønlandsk, in *Vort sprog — vor kultur*, Nuuk, Pilersuiffik: 123-141.

Birgitte Jacobsen  
Department of Greenlandic Language and Literature  
Ilisimatusarfik / University of Greenland  
Nuuk, Greenland

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2002      *Medieval Farmsteads in Greenland — The Brattahlid region 1999-2000*,  
Copenhagen, Danish Polar Center.

Banished from Iceland, Erik the Red used his penance to discover, explore and in 986, with his followers, settle the rich farmlands of the interiors of the fjords of southwest Greenland. Common history places Erik's farm at Brattahlid (Qassiarsuk) on Tunulliarfik Fjord. With surrounding farms, the region became the core of the Norse Eastern Settlement. Sagas suggest that it was from here that parties sailed north to hunt walrus and perhaps to trade with the Inuit (Skraelings), and it was from here that voyages of exploration probed North America. It is in this region of 680 km<sup>2</sup> that the three authors carried out 10 weeks of intensive archaeological survey during the summers of 1999 and 2000; the results of which are reported on in this book.

A very useful first chapter briefly reviews previous Norse Greenland archaeological research allowing the authors to situate their contribution. Over the past century the emphasis has been placed on the description and development of settlements, and the architectural details of structures, farmsteads and churches. In recent years, while Norse archaeology has become more integrated with multinational / multidisciplinary teams examining Norse history and adaptations over the North Atlantic region, settlement patterns and architectural traditions continue to be a focus. Following this trend, the authors identify "a great need for continued investigations of the settlement, its development and cultural links" which can "form a solid basis for an interpretation of both the placing of the types of structures in the landscape and their relationships with each other." This need shaped the modest aims of this project: to re-register already known sites in the region, identify new sites and structures, and locate "subjects for more detailed investigations of the development of the settlement and its cultural contacts." Details of the survey and methods including definitions of types of structures (ie. byre, saeter, stable, dwelling) are covered in the next two short chapters. As dates are rare, criteria used to distinguish early (long house) and late (complex multiroom) dwellings are presented. The long house style has links with the rest of the Norse world and in Greenland is believed to be the initial dwelling type.

What follows over the next 105 pages are descriptions, photos and site maps of 92 ruin groups that range from single structures to complex settlements with multiple dwellings, byres, buildings, pens, walls and ditches. Although 29 ruins are newly discovered, there are numerous structures from previous surveys that have been lost, or

destroyed by modern building and farming. It is clear, though, that the Greenland landscape harbours many more Norse settlements than previously known, raising questions about existing population estimates. I was surprised that farms were found up to 300 meters above sea level, higher than some saeters (summer farms) although these farms may be large saeters. Abundant evidence for irrigation and drainage in the form of ditches, dams and water storage was also surprising. Ruin 519 on Sermilik Fjord provides evidence of climate change as it must have been settled at a time of warmer climate when glacial ice fronted further up the fjord. Now glacial ice and icebergs make navigation in this part of the fjord impossible. This raises a critical point; the survey would have benefited greatly had a geoarchaeologist or geomorphologist participated. Present speculation on whether non-sustainable agricultural practices led to the Norse abandoning their Greenland settlements would have been reduced had landforms and offsite soil pits been examined. I found myself viewing the small photos with a magnifying glass for any telltale signs of erosion, fan deposition, terracing or stoney lag. The authors comment only on erosion around ruin 524, "perhaps as a result of over-intensive exploitation in early days." Ruin 524 is in fact located on the upvalley, unprotected side of a ridge extending into the north end of Tunulliarfik Fjord, leaving it highly susceptible to down valley winds, which certainly would have increased during the Little Ice Age making erosion a likelihood. In fact, their survey data demonstrates that the Norse accomplished a sophisticated adaptation to the sub-arctic environment of southern Greenland.

The results chapter draws attention to the discovery of new sites, recognition and architecture of early long house dwellings, multiple farm sites, and identification and use of saeters. While saeters are the focus of much North Atlantic Norse archaeology, I found recognition of multiple farm sites to be especially interesting for what it might reveal about aspects of Norse social organization. Conclusions in the final chapter focus on the challenge of following the work of Roussell, accomplished sixty years earlier, in developing a detailed house and farm typology for Greenland that will facilitate comparisons between Greenland and other parts of the Norse and Celtic North Atlantic.

This survey report sticks to the facts and remains conservative in problem formation and speculation. Reading descriptions of byres and dwellings, room dimensions, and construction types may not be everyone's cup of *skyr* but it does show, to paraphrase the authors, the value of survey research as a central element in future research strategies.

Detailed descriptions of a large number of settlements at the center of the Eastern Settlement is an important contribution whose potential will be revealed through future research. This book presents the initial data set. *Medieval Farmsteads in Greenland* is well written, edited and printed with minimum errors. The ruins should have been better photographed and the site photos are probably too small to be very useful although circles are used to help identify the ruins. The use of historical and colored photos and reproductions make this an attractive volume. Thanks go to the Danish Polar Center for publishing 142 pages of a type of material rarely dealt with by others publishers and therefore mostly unavailable. I sure wish that I had had a copy of the

book when I boated up Tunulliarfik Fjord and visited Qassiarsuk, and how I envy Guldager, Stummann Hansen and Gleie's opportunity to hike around that beautiful and interesting landscape.

Charles E. Schweger  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Hallendy, Norman

2001 *Inuksuit, Silent Messengers of the Arctic*, Douglas and McIntyre, University of Washington Press, Vancouver and Toronto, Seattle, 127 p.

Les *inuksuit* sont aujourd'hui une figure emblématique des Inuit et du Nord, Norman Hallendy allant même jusqu'à les qualifier d'icônes. Ce n'est cependant pas à ce phénomène qu'il s'intéresse, mais bien aux *inuksuit* dans toute leur complexité, tels qu'il a peu à peu appris à les connaître au cours de plusieurs décennies de recherches (son premier séjour nordique, pour le compte du gouvernement, date de 1956) mues par la curiosité bien plus que par un questionnement formalisé de type scientifique. Fasciné par les paysages arctiques et le savoir des aînés, il construit avec ceux de Kinngait (Cape Dorset) une relation de confiance et de respect grâce à laquelle il entre progressivement dans le mystère des *inuksuit*.

Le livre est le récit cette quête centrée sur la région de Seekuseelak (péninsule de Foxe) au sud-ouest de Qikiqtaaluk (Terre de Baffin). Quête des lieux où se trouvent des *inuksuit*, mais aussi quête de la diversité de leurs formes et de leurs sens. Norman Hallendy présente dans le détail toutes les variations possibles, du rocher isolé à l'empilement le plus sophistiqué. Chaque type d'*inuksuk* est désigné par un nom spécifique, suivant une classification plus attentive à la fonction qu'à la forme. L'importance première de la fonction s'exprime aussi dans le terme générique qui, insiste l'auteur, signifie «ce qui a la capacité d'agir comme un être humain,» (*to act in the capacity of a human*) et non pas «qui a la forme d'un être humain,» comme le veut la traduction courante et médiatique. On comprend alors pourquoi une simple pierre posée sur le sol sera considérée par les Inuit comme un *inuksuk* si elle indique, par exemple, une direction à suivre, alors que la forme humaine devenue si populaire n'est pas un *inuksuk* mais un simple *inunnuaq* «ce qui ressemble à un être humain» (*in the likeness of a human*).

Il faut insister ici sur la qualité de la documentation. Les informations concernant ces constructions sont riches et précises, accompagnées de croquis et d'un index détaillant quelque 58 termes attachés aux divers types d'*inuksuit*, classés en cinq catégories: «types généraux,» «liés aux activités cynégétiques,» «liés aux déplacements et à l'orientation,» «formes ressemblant à des *inuksuit*,» «formes ressemblant à des *inuksuit* et objets de vénération.» Les 54 magnifiques photographies qui rythment l'ouvrage, agrémentées de légendes qui complètent à merveille le texte, constituent