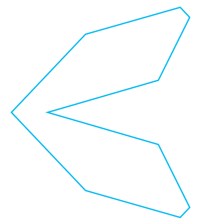
Journal of
Scientific
Exploration

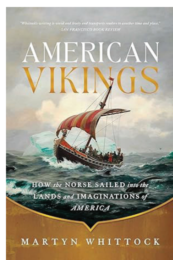
Anomalistics
and
Frontier
Science



BOOK AND
MULTIMEDIA
REVIEW

American Vikings: How the Norse Sailed Into the Lands and Imaginations of America

Stephen C. Jett
Uuniversity of California, Davis



Whittock, M. (2023). *American Vikings: How the Norse Sailed into the Lands and Imaginations of America*. Pegasus Books.

ISBN : 778-1-63936-535-7

https://doi.org/10.31275/20243527

PLATINUM OPEN ACCESS

Creative Commons License 4.0.
CC-BY-NC. Attribution required.
No commercial use.

Among the Norse Scandinavians of earlier medieval times were maritime raiders known as “Vikings.” However, although originally descriptive of only a minority of the Nordic populace, the term “Viking” has, in modern times, vernacularly become a designation for the Norse in general. Author Whittock, a prolific British independent popular historian and theologian, especially of the Middle Ages, adopts this popular nomenclature. I will follow the more scholarly usage.

Whittock’s book has three aims: to synopsize the ascertainable reality of eleventh-century and almost certainly later Norse activity in North America (see also, Enterline 1972, 2002, neither cited), to limn the notion of Vikings in America in popular and political culture, and to identify the differences between reality and myth—and even fraud.

The author notes the high degree of mobility of Norse traders and raiders, their purview extending from at least Atlantic-coastal Canada to the Caspian Sea, and including Baghdad in Iraq. During the ninth century, substantial numbers of settlers left Norway in favor of Iceland, to escape the domination of King Harald Finehair (Fairhair). Further influx to Iceland occurred when the Irish reconquered the previously Norse-occupied Dublin area; Irish females were in the majority in early Iceland (Irish monks already on the island seem to have fled when the fierce Norse first arrived). From Iceland, certain Norse individuals and some Irish ones among them went on to settle in southern Greenland (geographically, part of North America), whence some, under Leifr Eiríksson (Leif Erikson), ultimately traveled farther westward to Canada (pp. 27–30, 37). For about 300 years, the Medieval Warming Period diminished the extent of storm activity and pack-ice in the North Atlantic, creating relatively favorable climatic conditions for exploration and trade (p. 39).

We moderns first knew of the circa-A.D. 1000 Norse presence in Canada from two Icelandic sagas and spotty other medieval records; Whittock accepts the basic accuracy of the originally oral sagas, which were written down during the later Middle Ages. He also rightly notes that the visits recorded in these accounts may not have been the earliest actually undertaken to America on the part of Norsemen.

Beginning in 1960, the Scandian presence in the New World was finally amply verified materially by the excavation of the Norse L’Anse aux Meadows site at the northern end of Newfoundland’s Great Northern Peninsula. There, archaeologists found remains of four Icelandic-style longhouses and appurtenant structures, including an occasionally used iron smithy (Native North Americans did not smelt metals). Telling artifacts were also unearthed. Of 11 red-jasper fire-strikers found, only two were from Newfoundland sources; the others were of materials originating in Greenland and Iceland. As Whittock does not mention, a pig-bone fragment was also discovered there (Ingstad

& Ingstad, 2001, p. 147).

A boat plank at L'Anse had pegs of Scotch pine, common in Norway but not native to the New World. Also recovered were a Scandinavian-style pin, a fragment of a gilded ring, a whetstone, a spindle-whorl, possible stone loom weights, and weaving tools (the natives did not weave; pp. 61–74; but see below). So, the site is clearly Norse; whether it is one actually mentioned in the Icelandic sagas (e.g., Straumfjordr) is ambiguous (it was probably *not* Leifsbudir and certainly not Hóp; the former may have been on southernmost New Brunswick's Passamaquoddy Bay).

The relative paucity of artifacts at the site suggests a total time of occupance of only a decade or so, and the conclusion has been that the place served not as a "permanent" colony but as a sporadically utilized base or staging site for exploration and resource-procurement farther to the west and south. The dwellings at L'Anse had a combined capacity of 70 to 90 individuals, so it seems that a relatively huge workforce was present, at least at the outset; the entire Norse population of Greenland had reached only some 400 souls. Accordingly, the place must have been perceived as highly important (pp. 66–67). It would seem that any alleged association with Leifr himself is dubious, however, because the latter's only known visit to the region occurred two decades earlier than L'Anse's inception (Jett, 2000).

The original radiocarbon dates taken at the site spanned a significant period and, accordingly, were not at all exact. Whittock recognizes this and summarizes the very latest dating, based on tree-rings of human-worked local wood scraps. All three that were tested displayed cutting dates of A.D. 1021, thereby establishing the time of the inception of construction there (pp. 70–72). (Note that the *Annals of the Kings of Iceland* declare that "in 1021 Bishop Erik [Gnupson] of Greenland went to look for *Vinland*" [p. 56]).

Old maps associate the location with "Vínland," whose name has always been thought to derive from the discovery of an abundance of wild (fox) grapes.[1] However, since such grapes' range does not currently extend northward to near L'Anse, the Gulf of St Lawrence's shores are concluded to be the probable heart of Vínland. L'Anse did yield specimens of American basswood and butternut, trees whose contemporary ranges run no farther northward than New Brunswick (p. 68).

New World products procured for export probably included fur, grapes, "walnuts" (apparently, "white walnuts," i.e., butternuts), and, particularly importantly, timber (Gudmundsdóttir, 2023). In treeless Greenland, chests made of wood of the American larch (tamarack) are known, as are ship parts made from American larch and spruce (pp. 67–68); many house beams of elites—since, rotted away—no doubt came from the western continent. Bog iron was likely also an important North American product.

Accepting McCrone's early (but dubious) findings, Whittock (very probably correctly) labels Yale's Vinland Map a fake but fails to cite the book that makes that almost certain (Floyd, 2018).

Although the Norse (including Leif) are the best-known of proposed pre-Columbian European visitors to the New World, there are a few additional individual candidates; Whittock provides modest discussions of three. The most plausible, he declares, is that of the Irish anchorite monk (St.) Brendan of Clonfert, of Galway, plus his crew, during the sixth century. The surviving accounts of his voyages are detailed, and their geography seems to match real places such as the Faroe Islands, Rockall, and Iceland; Brendan is also said to have reached the "The Promised Land for Saints," a lush country that some have supposed to have been North America. Tim Severin's 1976–1977 experimental "Brendan voyage" in a replica skin-covered curragh demonstrated the feasibility of a transatlantic traverse in the kind of craft attributed to Brendan (pp. 76–82).

The Welsh (bastard) prince Madoc ap Owain Gwynedd is also alleged to have sailed to America in, A.D. 1170. Whittock finds no reason to believe that the voyage described in the old literature has any correspondence with historical reality. He dismisses the many (and probably at least mostly fanciful) accounts of Welsh-speaking American Indians (pp. 82–89). He does not cite Richard Deacon's 1966 *Madoc and the Discovery of America*.

Henry I Sinclair (Saint Clair), Earl of Orkney, has been contended also to have voyaged to coastal Canada and New England, circa-1380. "This claim has no basis in fact," says Whittock (p. 89). The notion rests on the allegedly baseless identification of Sinclair with a "Prince Zichmni" mentioned in a 1588 publication by the Venetian Zeno family, founded on alleged letters of about 1480 that describe a traverse by two of the family's forebears, the brothers Nicolò and Antonio. In any case, "the claim is clearly a hoax by the Zeno brothers or their publishers," since the record shows that the Zenos were in Venice at the time of the alleged ocean traverse and since mainland North America is not mentioned in the letters. "Even the original hoax makes no such claim. It clearly states that Zichmni landed in Greenland (or *Engrouelandia*). It was later . . . writers who tried to make a connection with the New World" (p. 90). Here, Whittock relies on Websites and the online *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. He does not cite the extensive (and, admittedly, sometimes fantastic) print literature on the topic. Most notable (and

quite sober) is de Robilant 2011, which reports, among other things, that at least Nicolò was in reality *not* in Venice at the critical time, and that philological studies have shown much of the relevant text to be, in fact medieval (p. 194; see also, Enterline, 2002, pp. 277–280). Since the book presently under review is largely about Vikings, I do not further elaborate here.

In Chapter 7, Whittock switches from a consideration of attested Norse history in the New World to the topic of the ascendance over time of Vikings in the United States national-origin mythology. Although Cristoforo Columbo (Christopher Columbus) never set foot on the North American mainland to the north of Central America and slaughtered the indigenous Taínos of Hispaniola, he had been adopted as a U.S. hero over the Italian voyager Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot), official discoverer of the northern continent in 1497. Cabot had suffered in the post-Revolutionary U.S. psyche from his association with the rejected British crown. With the latter nineteenth-century influx of hoards of Catholic Italian immigrants, perceptions of Italian (?) Columbus's worthiness became diminished among the majority Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans, and a second origin-story, that of Massachusetts's 1620 *Mayflower* "pilgrims" who fled religious persecution in England, gained increased luster; from 1816 onward, the celebration of Thanksgiving gained ever more ground as a holiday nationwide. The ordinary-family-farmer nature of the Massachusetts Bay Colony carried more appeal than did the earlier 1607 settlement of entrepreneurs representing the commencement at Jamestown, VA, of an influx of mostly male tobacco-plantation-founding "Cavaliers."

Meanwhile, in 1837, the Danish historian Carl Christian Rafn published Danish and Latin translations of the Icelandic Vínland sagas, with an English summary and "claimed to have identified Viking-Age artifacts along America's eastern seaboard. . . (pp. 100–101). This furthered a "Viking revival" in the U.S., which was added to by 1874's *America Not Discovered by Columbus*, by Rasmus Bjørn Anderson, Professor of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Wisconsin, which contemplated repeated Norse visits to New England from the tenth through the fourteenth century. This book had considerable popularity and impact in the country (pp. 100–102; in 1890, Middleton Reeves translated and edited the sagas for an English-speaking audience, countering some of Rafn's overenthusiastic speculations). Even though some of the Norse had been pagans and the rest Catholic, this was mitigated in the WASP public mind by the fact that these folks' descendants had become Protestants. Too, these explorers had been Germanic Northwest Europeans as had the Anglo-Saxons, and their individualistic freedom-loving restlessness, bravery, optimism, and ambition were sometimes seen as personifying American cultural values; in the consciousnesses of many, Leif and Vikinghood were certainly preferable as icons to the looked-down-upon Southern European Catholics represented by Columbus and Cabot (and Amerigo Vespucci; pp. 102–105)—never mind that the Vikings had been cruel and rapacious pillagers, slavers, murderers, torchers, and torturers.

These pro-Viking notions resonated particularly with Scandinavian-Americans of the Upper Great Lakes region. Columbus's slippage in public sentiment helped to set the stage for the rise of awareness of Leif Erikson and the *pre*-Columbian Norse "discovery." In 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition was held in Chicago. Norway's Capt. Magnus Andersen provocatively sailed *Viking*, a replica of the ninth-century Norse Gokstad ship, across the Atlantic and on up the Hudson River, the Erie Canal, and the Great Lakes to the Exposition named for Leif's cultural rival (p. 120).

In light of the fact that subsequent claims concerning a Norse presence included surprising areas deep in the interior of the U.S., Whittock makes a stab at defining what we can say for certain about their real rovings in the continent. Although they were certainly capable of penetrating deeply into interiors using the rivers, says the author, we don't have firm evidence that they did. We do know, he asserts, that they must have operated to as far southward as New Brunswick in order to have encountered grapes and butternuts (he does not consider the possibility that these plants' ranges extended farther northward during the three-centuries-long Medieval Warming Period that he mentions).

The writer then turns to potential signs of Norse activity beyond historic Vínland, starting with the Kensington Runestone, unearthed by a farmer in 1898 in the roots of an aspen near an eponymous town in Minnesota (note that, at this writing, the *Wikipedia.com* entry "Kensington Runestone" is helpful in drawing upon Scandinavian-language sources).[2] The "KR" is a slab of greywacke largely covered with a runic inscription describing a Norse exploration party that had been attacked by hostile natives in the year 1362. Immediately upon the stone's (ostensible) discovery (and enduring to the present), debate as to its authenticity arose. Looking briefly at the historical, linguistic, and circumstantial pros and cons as he knew them, Whittock wrote, "While the jury is still out regarding the final verdict on the Kensington Runestone, the overall view among most archaeologists and historians is that it is probably a fake," and the writer admits to being "very skeptical," as well (pp. 121, 144, also, 166; Whittock cites and has contributed to *The Skeptic Encyclopedia of*

Pseudoscience, Shermer 2002—rendered "Sherman" in the book being reviewed). In his work on the stone, the author depends quite a bit on *Hoax Springs Eternal: The Psychology of Cognitive Deception* (Hancock, 2015), which carries a long, skeptical chapter on the Runestone. One may note that *Wikipedia* (accessed 5 Dec. 2023) labels the object as nineteenth-century in manufacture and points to a local contemporary of Öhman's having possessed a Futhark (alphabet) of runes said to resemble the odd ones of the stele.

Since this object is one of such central potential importance to Euroamerican history and to the subject of the author's book, and although he has admirably unearthed a number of obscure relevant references during his research, it seems strange that he neglects to cite much at all the numerous (perhaps, overwhelming number of) relevant books out there and depends largely on unrefereed Websites for his information and argument—reflecting a troubling trend of our times. Most particularly, he (like *Wikipedia.com*) has ignored the seminal efforts of the late Danish-American engineer Richard Nielsen (1933–2016), who obtained his Ph.D. in ship structures in Denmark (disclosure: I provided some editorial assistance to Nielsen at an early stage of his investigation and followed his research all along; I possess his last, never-published manuscript).

Nielsen, beginning with the premise that the object looks like a genuine Norse document, for decades studied the inscription's purportedly anachronistic runes, foreign usages, lexical issues, and so forth that are still almost universally accepted as belying the stone's bona fides. Nielsen eventually found that essentially all of these "anomalies" *are*, in fact, attested in the runic writings of the period in question, permitting the carvers to be traced to Sweden's Gottland. The fact that he discovered much that was unknown to experts of the time of the accused perpetrator (Swedish-immigrant farmer Olof Öhman) demonstrates the *genuineness* of the inscription, since any faker would have been ignorant of these usages as well. Too, the stone's dialect was not that of Öhman or his wife.

Nielsen and the forensic petrographer Scott Fred Wolter (2006) conducted a microscopic study and other tests on the stone, which revealed that the "too-fresh-looking" runes had, following discovery, been scraped out with a steel nail to enhance visibility but that vestiges of considerable age-patination still survived here and there in the grooves. The pair also did historical research on the circumstances of the find and did not conclude for any dishonesty.

I examined the object (and the find site) in 2021 and can attest that what appear to be root marks on the slab are actually present. My overall conclusion has become that the Kensington stone is an authentic Norse object, manufactured on-site but ultimately overtaken by the growth of the tree and hidden from view until Öhman felled the aspen while clearing land near his house.

Whittock stresses what could be called the "Viking-nationalist" tenor of the time and region, which may help account for the small stir that the find first precipitated and the enthusiasm with which it came to be embraced in modern Minnesota and beyond but which hardly demonstrates fraud. When plausible circumstantial context and hard evidence are in conflict, the hard evidence must prevail (actually, the *local* circumstantial evidence supports a lack of fraud). Too, as Whittock chose not to mention, some of many's *dismissal*s of authenticity could have come from loyalty to Columbus as the discoverer.

Nielsen's published work, which commenced in the mid-1980s, was mentioned in the semipopular literature at least as early as 1992 (Huyghe, 1992, pp. 158–159, 247; also, Nielsestuen, 1994, Ch. 4). The prominent anthropological archaeologist Alice Beck Kehoe (2005), acquainted with Nielsen, drew upon his and Wolter's work in preparing her small but authoritative and synthetical book *The Kensington Runestone: Approaching a Research Question Holistically* (although Nielsen and Wolter's magnum opus was not released until a year later than Kehoe's, in 2006). Kehoe's volume (from a mainline press) objectively considers the question, scientifically and historically, from all sides and as a whole—including, uniquely, the fourteenth-century Scandinavian context—and concludes for genuineness (p. 86). Whittock cites this work once (p. 235), but—very oddly, indeed—not in connection with the Kensington stone, Kehoe's topic. The Nielsen and Wolter book *was* issued by an obscure press, but Internet searching could have called it up, and it is available on *Amazon.com*.; in any case, it and other Nielsen titles are cited in Hancock (2015), which Whittock draws upon. Also earlier available were plural serious books arguing for authenticity (e.g., Hall, 1995; Nilsestuen, 1994), most importantly chemist Barry Hanson's 2002 pregnant self-published two-volume *Kensington Runestone: A Defense of Olof Ohman the Accused Forger* (listed in *WorldCat* and *Amazon.com*). One hesitates to conclude that Whittock has shied away from sources that did not contribute to his theory that the era's cultural-context led to all sorts of hoaxes, hallucinations, half-baked hypotheses, and ethnic hype—including, most likely he thinks, in the form of the Kensington stone. One may note, however, that his context chapter follows consideration of the accepted L'Anse site but *precedes* the discussion of the non-L'Anse purported evidences of a Norse presence, all of which he ends up rejecting as showing that "the Norse were here."

Whittock does recognize the genuineness and implications of Norse-related finds in indigenous sites on some of Canada's eastern-Arctic islands across Baffin Bay from Greenland. In Native sites on Ellesmere Island have been found Scandinavian-style cloth, bits of mail, fragments of iron and copper, and part of a bronze balance. These date to as early as the twelfth century (p. 124). Devon Island has yielded part of a cast-iron bowl and some smelted iron, from the fifteenth century (p. 125). Baffin Island has produced a small twelfth–thirteenth-century wooden figurine of a seeming Norse cleric, and comparable figurines, of a century later, come from Greenland's little Kingiktorsaug (sic; Kingittosuaq) Island, on whose summit a perhaps-early-fourteenth-century runestone was also found, in 1824; six undeciphered runes follow the main text—whose stated date is ambiguous.

Spun cordage and other artifacts have been found both on Baffin Island and in northern Labrador (pp. 125–126). These were all attributed to the Norse, as Whittock observes. However, recently some of the cordage and cloth has been dated to around the time of Christ, thus substantially prior to any acknowledged Scandinavian presence in the region (but see Peterborough, below), which has caused some scholars to attribute independent invention of textile technology to the Native population (Hayeur, Smith, Smith, & Nilsen 2018). This strikes me as very implausible in light of its complete absence in historic times; it most likely speaks to earlier European (and not necessarily Norse) contacts, from established weaving cultures.

Whittock's survey of other claimed Norse objects and inscriptions in America is unusually broad. He first tackles those in the continent's northeast: "Do they *really* constitute evidence of North American Vikings moving down the eastern coast of North America? Or do they tell us more about the grip of Vikings on later imaginations?" (p. 127).

Yarmouth Rock in Nova Scotia is a quartzite slab that came to the fore in 1812. It carries 13 markings that may be runes. We may never know for certain, because, seemingly, someone "improved" the characters with a hammer and chisel, and before-and-after "translations" differ. Still, points out Whittock, the site is not all that far from Newfoundland (pp. 127–132).

Three portable stones with runic inscription and an etched map were reported from Spirit Pond in Maine, in 1971. The map shows "Vínland" and "Hóp," toponyms found in the sagas. Whereas the (largely amateur) New England Antiquities Research Association (NEARA) has favored authenticity, Whittock says "hoax" (pp. 130–132). I do not at this time have a firm opinion but do harbor some reservations.

Rafn identified what he saw as a Norse text on Massachusetts's petroglyph-covered tidal Deighton Rock (pp. 133–135). However, although there are a handful of letter-like characters among many other marks, they are scattered and not explicitly rune-like, and nothing suggests a true text to me.

The poet Longfellow romanticized Rhode Island's circular Newport Tower (which I have inspected) as a Norse-associated structure, but in his 1677 will, land-owner Benedict Arnold, Sr., referred to it as "my stone built Windmill," and Whittock accepts it as such and therefore as Colonial. Although he cites NEARA in connection with Spirit Pond, he does not cite NEARA's extensive studies of the Tower, which include the observation that the erection is of a European style earlier than the seventeenth century, that it was seemingly mentioned in a document of 1630, that the site is shown as Norman Villa or Tolovilla on sixteenth-century maps, and that the structure displays astronomical alignments (Carlson & Dranchak, 2006; see also, Nilsestuen, 1994, Ch. 11). It would be problematic to operate as a windmill as built; its top is not a perfect circle and the building contains a fireplace. On the other hand, a fireplace would have been a rarity in the 1300s, the building's proposed time of erection. Mortared stone masonry—especially, involving arches—is not attributable to Native New Englanders.

Then, there is the Narragansett Runestone in Rhode Island, consisting of eight runes on one line and two on a second line; three characters are unclear, possibly owing to weathering in the rock's original low-tidal location. Attempted translations differ; Whittock, who believes the inscription likely to be modern, scoffs at Sue Carlson's interpretation as *skraumli* 'screaming river' but notes that one gloss of the term *Skraeling* for an indigenous person is 'screamer'. Whittock does look more tolerantly on this and the Yarmouth stone than he does on the distant Kensington stone.

Whittock considers the genuine 1080 Norse penny that avocational archaeologist Guy Mellgren in 1957 (initially, privately) reported from the Native American Goddard site (A.D. 1086–1235) near coastal Brooklin, ME, probably a true archaeological find but likely traded southward to this locale, which appears to have been a hub of indigenous long-distance exchange (I have been told that Mellgren did not publicize the discovery during his lifetime because he feared being accused of having salted the site; note his Swedish surname).

Not mentioned are the bedrock inscriptions at Canada's Peterborough, Ont. Some of these have, controversially, been attributed to Scandinavian-speakers of an age long prior to the Viking Age (Fell, 1980; Kelley, 1998; Vastokas, 2004).

Chapter 10 treats "Viking" objects and texts that "are clearly, forgeries and hoaxes; or possibly Native American monuments which have been culturally highjacked in the search for evidence of Vikings." This, he says, "reveals penetration of the minds and imaginations of later Americans." Relevant circumstances include increased consciousness of the Icelandic sagas, particularly after 1850. "Heightened awareness led to a search for corroborative evidence. . . ." (pp. 144–145). This and the Kensington stone should also be seen in the context of Scandinavian immigrants to the Middle West, who sought to legitimize their land claims, he continues. "This explains several 'Viking' finds that were later made there" (p. 147). Further, these claims incentivized the reimagining of any sophisticated "monuments" as having been authored not by Native Americans but, instead, by Northern Europeans—and Scandinavians, at that (pp 145–146, 159–160). One must ask, is Whittock really saying here that items like the Kensington runestone were actually American Indian-made? Probably not; he seems to have architectural monuments in mind. However, other than l'Anse and the Newport Tower, no pre-Columbian American architectural works have ever been attributed to the Norse.

Returning to the "hoaxes," although he refers to the AVM Stone near Kensington as clearly a prima-facie fake, he seems not to have noticed that in 2001, some UM graduate students actually confessed to having created it in 1985 (Kehoe, 2005, p. 14; Powell, 2002). Note that although some have textual and/or runic issues that inspire dubiety, the AVM is the only U.S. runic rock inscription that is demonstrably fake on the basis of science, witness, or confession; no faker has ever legitimately been identified.

Whittock does show that earlier-alleged Norse "mooring stones" in the area were not such.

In eastern Oklahoma are the Heavener Runestone, a cliff carving first noticed in 1923. The mixture of runes is wrong, he says, and "We may safely conclude that it is a modern fake" (p. 153); he does not mention the hypothesis that it was created by a nineteenth-century Norwegian farmer as a boundary marker rather than as a fraud. The portable Poteau Stone was discovered by children in 1967; for Whittock, it falls into the same category as the Heavener (pronounced "*Hee*vuhner"), which I have also visited in the field. Children also found the Shawnee Stone, which is of a kind. In his discussions, Whittock fails to speak of the local dynamo behind consideration, Gloria Farley (see her 1994 book, listed in *WorldCat* and *Amazon.com*).

The writer refers to what he terms West Viginia's "Braxton County Runestone" and "Grave Creek Runestone" (pp. 155–157); why, I am not sure, since the writing on these look Semitic rather than runic and I have never before heard of them being called "runestones."

Altogether, Whittock provides a generally reasonably comprehensive, cogent, and up-to-date—if conservative and incomplete—sketch of the Norse expansion into North America a thousand years ago, stressing Newfoundland's Norse L'Anse aux Meadows site but also looking at a number of lesser-known and less-unambiguous Norse objects/inscriptions as well as lesser-known proposals for non-Norse medieval transatlantic European contacts. He does lean heavily on Websites and secondary sources. There are some repetitions and a few minor inconsistencies through the text, as though the book was put together over a considerable period of time. More seriously, the treatment of the Kensington Runestone is seriously deficient in not reporting on Nielsen's crucial findings (and linguist Robert Hall's before him) and on Kehoe's exemplary comprehensive synthesis of not just the stone but of the entire Norse-in-America picture.

The author's interest in this book is focused not only on true Norse history, however, but—in something less than half of the book—also on the cultural embrace, popularization, transmogrification, and "weaponizing" of cultural symbols like Leif Erikson and Vikings in general for contemporary ethnosociopolitical, entertainment, and economic purposes. Intrinsically intriguing though it may be, I do not here review Whittock's observations on the contemporary cultural appropriations of Viking character and history other than to mention that he examines topics such as Vikings as represented in comic books, the cinema, and television, as well as as an icon of QAnon-influenced White-supremacy culture as manifested during the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol building. He also reviews Vikings as a theme in merchandising. I take note of books displaying similar themes but preceding Whittock's that he does not draw upon (e.g., Herman, 2022; Krueger, 2015; Machan & Helgason 2020).

A virtue of the book is the writer's understanding of the complexity of history and that cascades of consequences can be set off by any event (pp. 33–34).[3]

ENDNOTES

1. Alice Kehoe (personal communication) has forwarded the idea that "Vínland" is the Old Norse form of the Latinized Gaulish Vindolanda 'White Field', a possible reference to the "white beaches" of Labrador.
2. Note that the stone's current home, the Runestone Museum in Alexandria, MN, holds a whetstone whose label indicates that it was unearthed just beneath where the runestone had been extracted, and a short while later.

[3] This review will also appear in *Pre-Columbiana: A Journal of Long-Distance Contacts*.

REFERENCES

Deacon, R. (1966). *Madoc and the discovery of America: Some new light on an old controversy*. George Braziller.

di Robilant, A. (2011). *Irresistible north: From Venice to Greenland on the trail of the Zeno brothers*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Carlson, S. (Comp.), & Dranchak, J. (Ed.). (2006). *The Newport Tower Arnold to Zeno*. New England Antiquities Research Association.

Enterline, J. R. (n.d.). *Viking America*. Doubleday.

Enterline, J. R. (2002). *Erikson, Eskimos & Columbus: Medieval European knowledge of America*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Farley, G. (1994). *In plain sight: Old World records in ancient America*. ISAAC Press. (Reprinted in 2007 by Gloria Farley Publications, Golden, CO).

Fell, B. (1980). *Saga America*. Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co.

Floyd, J. P. (2018). *A sorry saga: Theft, forgery, scholarship . . . and the Vinland map*. Independently published.

Gudmundsdóttir, L. (2023). Timber imports to Norse Greenland: Lifeline or luxury? *Nature: International Journal of Science, 97*(392), 162–174. https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2023.13

Hall, R. A., Jr. (1995). *The Kensington Rune-Stone: Authentic and important, a critical edition*. Edward Sapir Monograph Series in Language, Culture, and Cognition 19. Jupiter Press.

Hancock, P. (2015). *Hoax springs eternal: The psychology of cognitive deception*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107785311

Hanson, B. J. (2002). *Kensington Runestone: A defense of Olof Ohman the accused forger* (Vols. 1–2). Archaeology ITM.

Hayeur, S. M., Smith, K. P., & Nilsen, G. (2018). Dorset, Norse, or Thule? Technological transfers, marine mammal contamination, and AMS dating of spun yarn and textiles from the Eastern Canadian Arctic. *Journal of Archaeological Science, 96*, 162–174. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2018.06.005

Herman, A. (2022). *The Viking heart: How Scandinavians conquered the world*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Huyghe, P. (1992). *Columbus was last: From 200,000 B.C. to 1492, a heretical history of who was first*. Hyperion.

Ingstad, H., & Ingstad, A. S. (2001). *The Viking discovery of America: The excavation of a Norse settlement in L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland* (E. S. Seeberg, Trans.). Checkmark Books.

Jett, S. C. (2000). The Norse in the North Atlantic: An overview. *Pre-Columbiana: A Journal of Long-Distance Contacts, 2*(1), 2–21.

Kehoe, A. B. (2005). *The Kensington Runestone: Approaching a research question holistically*. Waveland Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/ac.2006.17.2.106

Kelley, D. H. (1998). Writing in the Americas. *Journal of the Southwest, 37*(4), 25–30.

Krueger, D. M. (2015). *Myths of the Rune Stone: Viking martyrs and the birthplace of America*. University of Minnesota Press. https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816696918.001.0001

Machan, T. W., & Helgason, J. K. (Eds.). (2020). *From Iceland to the Americas: Vinland and historical imagination*. Manchester University Press. https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526128768

Nielsen, R., & Wolter, S. F. (2006). *The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling new evidence*. Lake Superior Agate Pub.

Nilsestuen, R. M. (1994). *The Kensington Runestone vindicated*. University Press of America.

Powell, E. A. (2002). Runestone fakery. *Archaeology, 55*(1), 9.

Reeves, M. (Ed. & Trans.). (1890). *The finding of Wineland the Good: The history of the Icelandic discovery of America*. Henry Frowde.

Shermer, M. (Ed.). (2002). *The skeptic encyclopedia of pseudoscience*. ABC Clio. https://doi.org/10.5040/9798216015123

Vastokas, J. M. (2004). The Peterborough Petroglyphs: Native or Norse? In C. Diaz-Granados & J. R. Duncan (Eds.), *The rock art of eastern North America: A new world view* (pp. 277–289). The University of Alabama Press.