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The Vikings and Their Outreach: From Buddhas to Butternuts

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THE VIKINGS AND THEIR OUTREACH

FROM BUDDHAS

TO BUTTERNUTS





How the Vikings may have seen themselves: as depicted on a C9th funerary monument ("picturestone", *bildsten*) from Gotland, Sweden



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- Rather, a livelihood or way of life on the part of self-selecting groups composed of:
 - (dominantly) Mainland-Scandinavian speakers of Proto-Norse (= ancestor of Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Faroese)
 - (secondarily) Contiguous peoples bearing other languages: Saami, Balts, Slavs, Saxons, Frisians

- Classic "mixed-income" type:
- raiding

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- trading
- farming
- fishing
- crafts, e.g., smithing
- poetry and (oral) narrative

C11th Resurrection egg from Ukraine, found at Sigtuna, a royal and trading centre in Sweden *At the "gift" end of the spectrum?*



More plunder? Silver bracelets and other C9th "bling" from the British Isles cut up into conveniently-sized "hacksilver" for use in barter



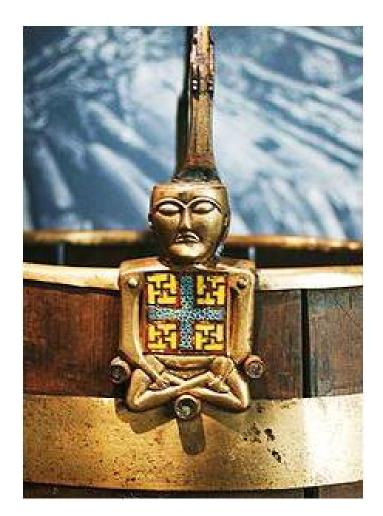
Polar bears from Greenland (and perhaps the Ungava Peninsula). *A trophy gift for emperors, kings, and popes.*



Irish crozier and Coptic christening scoop found in association with the Buddha figurine



Emulation of a Buddha figure: handle attachment on a pail (bucket, *bytta*) found in the C9th Oseberg burial, to west of Oslo Fjord, Norway.



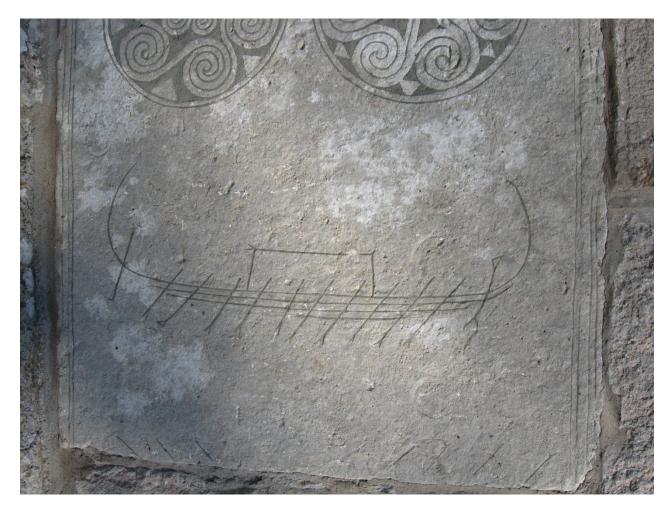
The Vikings were eclectic in their systems of belief. Viking After-worlds included, alongside the classic (native?) 'shipsetting',...



...entry to an After-world in the style of Near-Eastern religions (NB the costumes): from a C9th Gotland picture-stone



After-world voyage (?) in boat with sun-shade, as seen on the Nile: from a C8th(?) Gotland picture-stone



Contact and trade/gift exchange in the "far west"?



L'Anse aux Meadows, NL 51 36'N, 55 32'W: a Norse "gateway" to Vinland ("Wine-land") from ca. 1000CE (990~1050). Location faces Strait of Belle Isle and commands access to Gulf of St Lawrence from the Atlantic Ocean.



Remains of turf-walled buildings at LAM: they might have accommodated 60-90 people, probably a mixture of leading settlers in Greenland and their slaves; distinctively Norse items were found in occupation layer.



LAM: Reconstructed Norse-style building: provision of such accommodation would require resources available only to magnates and kings.



Early Canadian Literature? Verses of complaint attributed to Þórhallr veiðimaðr "the hunter": whose propaganda is he resisting?

- Hafa kváðu mik meiðar malmþings, es komk hingat, (mér samir land fyr lýðum lasta) drykk enn bazta; Bílds hattar verðr byttu beiði-Týr at stýra, heldrs svát krýpk at keldu; komat vín á grǫn mína.
- Fǫrum aptr, þar es órir eru, sandhimins, landar, lǫtum kenni-Val kanna knarrar skeið en breiðu, meðan bilstyggvir byggva bellendr ok hval vella Laufa veðrs, þeirs leyfa lǫnd, á Furðustrǫndum.

People claimed that when I came here I would have the best drink; I think it right to condemn this land publicly.

Instead I have to use a bucket and crawl to a spring; wine does not cross my lips.

Let's go back to where our compatriots are; let our ship explore the broad sea-road,

while rash warriors who praise these lands settle at Wonderstrands and boil up whale. *Goods? Gifts?* Butternut burl and one of two butternuts from Norse occupation layer at LAM: burls (singular *mösurr* "mazer" in Old Norse) were used for prestige drinking-bowls presented by the king.



The Butternut = Juglans cinerea (a relative of the North American black walnut = Mohawk *akiehwa:ta*, French *noyau cendré*).

Butternut trees in Fredericton, NB



Butternut facts and inferences

- Known for edible, flavoursome nuts with oil content of up to 60%.
- Reaches northern limit in SE Canada.
- Along the St Lawrence River, does not grow east of Tadoussac.
- Range expanded into New Brunswick region as recently as 600BP.

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- Transplanted and propagated by Indigenous peoples; trees cultivated handy to villages.
- Nuts must be picked promptly once ripe, since oils become rancid.

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- Nuts must be picked promptly once ripe, since oils become rancid.
- Norse voyagers not likely to have located the resource unaided.
- Most probably they derived it via trade or gift from indigenous peoples.

Traditional pharmacology Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, MI

EXTRACT OF BUTTER-NUT.

useful for bowel affections, particularly dysentary *The probable end-use of the butternuts:* note the role of the king in the presentation. First European poem about a Canadian commodity?

Sendi mér enn mæri – man þengill sá drengi – síð munk heldr at hróðri – hnytr þjóðkonungr – snytrask. Opt, en okkr bað skipta, Óttarr, í tvau dróttinn – endask mál – sem myndim manndjarfr fǫðurarfi.

'To me the renowned king of the people sent nuts; this king thinks of his men; it will be a long time before I devote greater artistry to eulogy. The king, bold towards men, repeatedly bade us divide them between us, Ottarr, just as we would a father's legacy: my speech is ended.'