

# ANTHRONOTES

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## VIKINGS: THE NORTH ATLANTIC SAGA

by William W. Fitzhugh

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The year 2000—give or take a year or two—is the thousandth anniversary of the Viking discovery of North America, of Leif Eriksson's touchdown on land he called "Vinland," 500 years before Christopher Columbus. Leif Eriksson's epic voyage, which brought the first Europeans to the New World, culminated two hundred years of Norse exploration and settlement in the North Atlantic. Although his accomplishment did not lead to permanent settlement in the Americas, Leif's voyage achieved an important and highly symbolic circling for humankind, connecting our species into a single global system, completing humanity's million years' journey out of Africa and into the farthest reaches of the earth.

In 1992 school children across America celebrated the Quincentenary—the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' voyage to the New World, yet few teachers or their students probably took note of the earlier episode of European contact in the New World. A recent exhibition at the National Museum of Natural History, *Vikings: the North Atlantic Saga*, focuses attention on this earlier "discovery of America" and the wider contributions of the Vikings and their Norse descendants, who continue to inhabit North Atlantic regions into the modern day.

The exhibition provides the first comprehensive treatment of Norse exploration and settlement of the North Atlantic region between 860 and 1500,

illuminating new research in archaeology, history and the natural sciences that is transforming our understanding of the Vikings and their impact on history. *Vikings: The North Atlantic Sage* tells the story of "West-Vikings," the hardy Norse who settled the Faeroes, Iceland, and Greenland, and from there traveled west to the North American lands they called Helluland (Baffin Island), Markland (Labrador, and Vinland (Newfoundland). The dramatic story of the Viking expansion across the North Atlantic is a chapter of North American history that deserves to be more widely known.

Images of the Vikings have radically changed through the centuries. These images begin in negative European monastery accounts of marauding Vikings pillaging and plundering; appear in 13th century Icelandic saga tales of the daring voyages of Erik the Red and Leif Eriksson; transform to romanticized descriptions of Viking valor by 19th century historians and poets; are reinterpreted in 20th century archaeological descriptions of settlements, ships and cemeteries; and are reanalyzed yet again by today's natural scientists examining pollen and ice cores. The stories of the Vikings unfold through time, creating their own story of how history is written and how images and stereotypes emerge. These stories are often shrouded in mystery, misunderstandings, and popular imagery, only to be transformed at a later date into some quite different conception. The Vikings thus present a rich case study for those interested in learning about the past and about the many ways we learn about that past, since our



knowledge of the Vikings has changed so radically over time as new evidence and analytical tools have emerged.

## THE EXHIBITION

*Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* focuses on the Vikings' little-known North Atlantic story, the inspiring tale of Viking sea-faring farmers who made the North Atlantic a Norse "lake" for one thousand years. It includes those who settled down and maintained a vibrant Christian Norse society in Greenland for 500 years, and those who explored and settled briefly in northeastern North America and maintained contacts with Native American Indians and Inuit for four hundred years before Columbus arrived in the Caribbean. None of this history is well known to North Americans or to Europeans because the historical and scientific evidence documenting this West-Viking story has only just begun to be published. New studies, including literary research into the Viking sagas, archaeological excavations of Norse and Native sites, and historical and environmental research, bring to life an exciting new picture of a western Atlantic portion of the Viking world that has until recently been neglected and unknown.

The exhibition begins with a presentation of Viking history and culture in Scandinavia and its expansion into Europe and the British Isles. The visitor can follow the early Viking pioneers who explored and settled Iceland in the mid-ninth century; and learn about their ships, navigation techniques, and the various reasons why the West-Viking expansion took place, including the need to find new lands for an expanding population and stock-raising economy. One of the lures for the Vikings was walrus ivory, which by this time had become more precious than gold in the high courts and church chambers of Europe.

The Icelandic portion of the exhibition features the social and environmental changes that occurred when Vikings arrived and set up a new society in this land of fire and ice. The rapid peopling of the landscape, the removal of its fledgling forests, and the installation of large stocks of animals

permanently transformed the island into what it is today: an agrarian-industrial nation whose economic interests and environmental resources must be carefully managed to avoid ecological catastrophe. Here archaeological and natural science illuminate the causes of the failed Norse colonies in Greenland and the changes Vikings brought to the Icelandic landscape, which caused great population loss and economic hardship even in that more temperate land. These serve as a reminder of the past, of over-exploitation in a part of the world where climatic cooling can have devastating effects. Iceland also presents a case study of ethnic merging, with a new nation arising out of Celtic and Norse immigrants, a society that adapted a system of Nordic self-government based on community assemblies that has been a model of modern democracy, dating back to the first general assembly at Thingvellir in 930. But perhaps the greatest contribution to emerge from Iceland was the recording and preservation of the sagas. This facet of the Viking World is presented dramatically in the exhibition in a dedicated "saga theater" in which the sagas relating to the discovery of America are presented in sound and light in a simulated Icelandic long house.

Iceland was the staging point for the final series of West-Viking expansions that led to Erik the Red's discovery and settlement of Greenland, and the extension of that effort further west into North Greenland, and then further west into North America. Recent archaeological work not only offers a window into the four-hundred year span of Norse Greenland (985-1450); but also gives us exciting new information about Viking voyages to Vinland. Evidence for the latter is presented from cartography and archaeology and includes a reconstruction of the Viking site discovered at L'Anse aux Meadows in northern Newfoundland. This portion of the exhibition also includes new information about contacts between the Norse and various Native American groups (Indian, Dorset, and Thule culture). These contacts suggest that the Norse may have been trading for ivory as well as gathering timber from Markland (Labrador); that



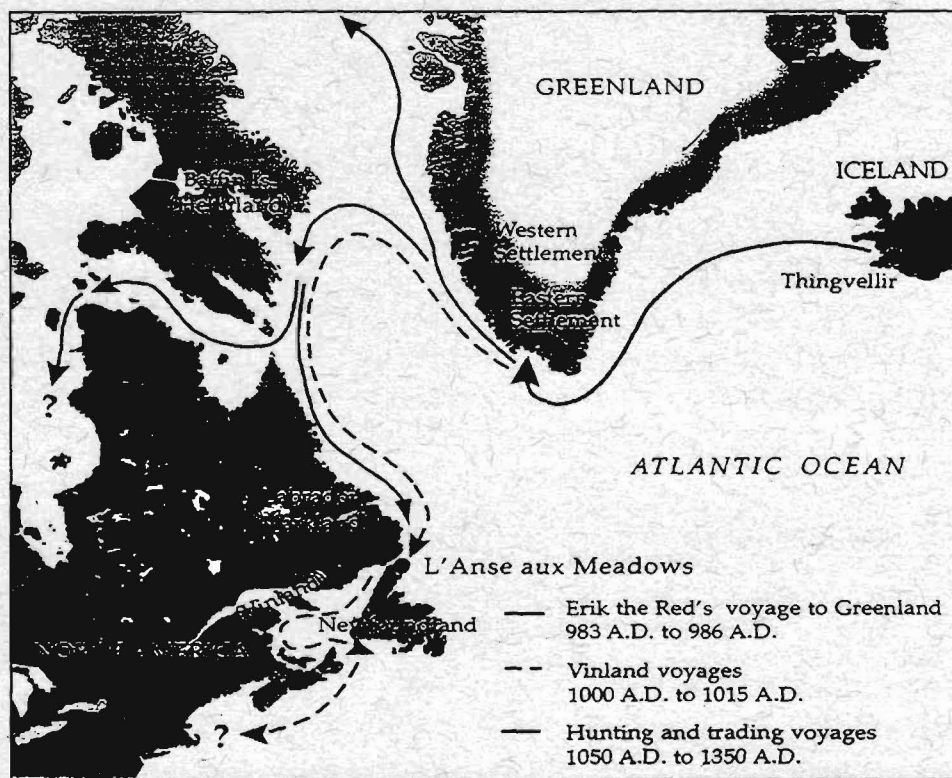
their voyages to America continued for several hundred years after the Vinland voyages ceased in the early 11th century; and that Norse-Native contacts were confined largely to the Arctic regions of northeastern North America. Recent archaeological research now shows that Norse activities in North America were much more extensive than previously believed and may have included purposeful trade and exchange. Finally, the exhibition deals with the controversial question, "Where was Vinland?" and the many claims and counter-claims made about Viking landings in America.

The exhibit could not be more timely. Even today, Leif Eriksson remains at best a shadowy figure, mentioned only in passing in textbook accounts of the early history of North America. Fortunately, his exploits were passed down as oral literature for more than two hundred years, then were written down in the 13th century by Viking descendants in Iceland, in the *Saga of the Greenlanders* and *Erik the Red's Saga*. For generations, most historians discounted these sagas as valid sources, but in 1960 the discovery of the Norse settlement in northern Newfoundland changed the world's view of the Vikings in North America. An earlier *AnthroNotes* article, "Vinland Revisited: 986-1986," by Alison S. Brooks, offered a detailed description of these saga accounts and the archaeological evidence supporting Norse settlement in the New World:

*For years, archaeologists searched for the original location of the Vinland settlement from Nantucket to Labrador. Finally, in 1960, at L'Anse aux Meadows on the northern tip of Newfoundland,*

*a Norwegian archaeologist, Helge Ingstad, discovered remains of three long sod houses on a sheltered harbor, on land visited both by ancestral Eskimos before the Norse era, and by Indians. Greenland Norse houses had stone foundations. But these New World houses lacked such foundations and so could be explained as temporary dwellings. Furthermore, one of five small outbuildings contained a small amount of slag from an iron smithing operation. Radiocarbon determinations of charcoal associated with the slag suggest an age of around A.D. 1000. Over 100 objects of European manufacture were unearthed; a spindle whorl attests to the weaving of wool and to the presence of women. A cloak pin of bronze, a material unknown to Native Americans, was similar in style to those found in Viking settlements of the British Isles. Finally, some wooden floorboards from a boat indicate directly the presence of Norse ships. The authentication of the L'Anse aux Meadows site as a Norse settlement of brief duration has been widely accepted by archaeologists (1986:4).*

Since Brooks wrote her summary account in 1986, even more Viking objects have been found in



Map By Marcia Bakry, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution

archaeological sites from northern Maine to the High Arctic, indicating a wide zone of Norse activity and revealing a pattern of Norse exploration and native contacts that lasted for nearly 500 years.

### **"VIKINGS" AND "NORSE"**

By the latter part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Norse had largely mastered the challenges of making a living in their Scandinavian homelands and had developed a remarkable ship that gave them the ability to seek adventure, profit, and new lands beyond the coastal farms of western Norway. In doing so, the early Norse earned a new identity—Vikings—in the eyes of their European neighbors, an identity that followed them far across the North Atlantic and down to modern times.

To many, the term "Viking" has become indelibly associated with seafaring warriors, explorers, and entrepreneurs, despite the fact that this word was only sporadically applied directly to the Nordic peoples; the British used it to refer to the "curse of the north," the marauding sailors who regularly despoiled the British coastal settlements after the famous Viking raid on Lindisfarne monastery in A.D. 793. That date is generally taken as the beginning of the Viking Age, which lasted two hundred and fifty years until the Normans, descendants of the Vikings, crossed the channel from Normandy, France, to invade England in 1066. The term Viking is thought to have originated from a place in southern Norway called "Vik," which became an early center of Viking raiding fleets. The name soon came to refer to Norse-speakers, called "Northmen" by their southern adversaries, who sallied forth from "viks" ("bay" or "harbor" in Old Norse, or "refuge" in Old English) seeking adventure and profit. Those "bay men" who went off raiding were said to go "a-viking" or were simply called "vikings."

The term Viking did not refer to the Nordic peoples who stayed home. Those who shared a similar language (Old Norse) and cultural traditions that distinguished them from other linguistic or ethnic groups were known by various ethnic names, such as Goths, Norwegians, or Danes. The

pioneering Norse who discovered and settled lands in Iceland and Greenland during the Viking Age were not technically Vikings. Collectively these 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century Norse are sometimes called West Vikings, although their traditions and history are primarily those of Nordic seafaring farmers rather than the Viking marauders who terrorized Europe.

Thus the term "Norse" is preferred and is especially appropriate for medieval Nordic peoples of the North Atlantic who were predominantly Christian after A.D. 1000 and culturally derived primarily from Norway. However, the long history of the search for the "Vikings" in North America and its modern popular use has made it the only term recognizable to a general North American audience. Hence the term Viking is used throughout the exhibition and this article to characterize the "Northmen" during the entire period from A.D. 793 until A.D. 1066, when William the Conqueror of Normandy invaded England and defeated King Harold, effectively ending the Viking Age. Following this period raids ceased and the political and economic integration of Scandinavia, Europe and the North Atlantic settlements moved forward rapidly. After this time Nordic peoples of northern Europe, Iceland, and Greenland should more correctly be called Norse, as befitting the Christian medieval society that they had become, rather than Vikings, which unfortunately is North American customary usage for all Viking Age and Medieval Period Nordic contacts in North America.

### **VIKINGS AT HOME**

Most Norse lived as farmers on small plots of land or served as retainers to kings or locally powerful chiefs and their supporters. Despite their reputation as shipbuilders, sailors, and warriors, the Norse identified themselves as farmers rather than as fishermen, hunters, trappers, or traders, even though individuals might spend considerable periods of the year engaged in these tasks. Carpentry and especially boat building were not trades; they were skills known to all Viking men, just as spinning, weaving, and clothes-making were known to all Viking women. However, there were



no activities more central to Norse identity than stock-farming—the raising of cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs.

The technological element upon which Viking expansion and influence depended was boat-building and maritime skill. Little was known about Viking ships until the late 1800s when Norwegian burial mounds were excavated revealing well preserved ships; more recent excavations have further documented Viking ship types and their development from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Tree-ring dating of the wooden ships has provided a precise chronology for their construction and repair. Viking boats were designed to be dragged across long portages as well as to withstand fierce ocean storms. Such ships gave Vikings the ability to trade, make war, carry animals, and cross open oceans.

The magic ingredients that made Viking ships possible were iron, carpentry skills, abundant timber, and a large labor force. The Viking technique of smelting produced iron that could withstand salty waters. The availability of iron for tools and fastenings meant that even moderately well-off farmers could muster the materials and manpower to build a ship. Before the Viking Age, owning a ship was a mark of status for the powerful chieftains. During the Viking Age ships became a necessity for even lesser chieftains and successful farmers. Swarms of Viking boats could be produced, and during the long midwinter farming break, the Baltic and North Sea came alive with Viking crews out for valor and profit.

### THE VIKING AGE

The territorial expansion of the Vikings from their Scandinavian homelands that began in the last decades of the 8<sup>th</sup> century was the fundamental historical reality that created the Viking Age. This expansion started as seasonal raids on the northern and western British Isles by Norwegian Vikings, who first invaded the Shetlands and Orkneys and then used these as bases for staging raids on northern Scotland, Ireland, and the west coast of England. Danish Vikings struck along England's eastern coast and along the northwestern shores of

the mainland south of Denmark. Viking chiefs had already become familiar with these lands through trading activities, and within a few decades after the strikes began, the purpose of the raids became more economic and political. Soon, Vikings were trading and extorting money (called *Danegeld*) more than they were raiding and stealing, although the raids continued sporadically throughout the British Isles and western Europe for the next two centuries, and even extended to Spain, the Mediterranean, and North Africa.

Over time Vikings who went raiding returned to regions they had first visited as marauders and took wives and land and settled there permanently, leaving younger and more boisterous generations to go "a-viking" elsewhere. In this way Viking population and lands expanded rapidly during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and soon farming, trading, and diplomacy became as common as raiding and pillaging for Vikings living abroad. Danish Vikings expanded settlements along the eastern coast of Britain, and towns soon grew up in Dublin and York, while Normandy became a Nordic territory and later a Duchy of France.

At the same time as Viking raids and settlements were transforming western Europe, Vikings from Sweden were exploring, raiding, and building economic relationships to the east through European and Russian river systems leading to the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the eastern Mediterranean. Swedish Vikings became powerful traders, politicians, and mercenaries in these regions, and founded a dynasty that ruled Novgorod in what is today Russia, and Kiev in modern Ukraine. During the Byzantine Empire, they sold their services as protectors of the ruling caliphs. These eastern Vikings brought back immense wealth to Scandinavia in the form of Eastern silver and artifact treasures from as far away as the Caspian Sea, Baghdad, and even India.

Vikings who ventured west, primarily Norwegians and those who had resettled in the British Isles, embarked on a different course, settling the islands of the North Atlantic as farmers and hunters who supplied medieval Europe with such exotic goods as ivory, falcons, and precious

fur, in addition to wool. These hardy Norse farmers reached the Faeroes by 825 and Iceland by 870. By 930 a population of 30,000 Norse had become established in Iceland, and all its arable lands were occupied. Thereafter, communication between Iceland and Norway and the British Isles was maintained on a regular basis. By 930 the Icelandic parliament was founded, and in 982 Erik the Red, outlawed from Iceland, set off to explore Greenland, returning to Iceland in 985 to lead a colonizing effort that founded Greenland's Eastern and Western Settlements.

On or about 1000 A.D. Leif Eriksson set out to explore lands west and south of Greenland, which he called Helluland (Baffin Island), Markland (Labrador), and Vinland (Newfoundland). During the next decade or so other Vinland voyages were made by other members of his family. Thereafter, Vinland explorations ceased and during the following three hundred and fifty years, until the Greenland colonies were abandoned about 1450, the Norse in this distant settlement remained oriented primarily to Iceland, Norway, and the British Isles. However, historical records and finds of Norse artifacts in Native American archaeological sites show that throughout this period, Greenlandic or Icelandic Norse occasionally visited Markland for timber and made sporadic contacts with native peoples in northwest Greenland and the Canadian arctic.

The West Viking story may be likened to a 9<sup>th</sup> century Nordic wave that surged out of Scandinavia and the northern British Isles at the peak period of the Viking Age and raced across the North Atlantic to Iceland, Greenland, and northeastern North America

during a period of unusually warm, stable climatic conditions. Many theories have been advanced to explain the events that propelled the Vikings outward from their northern homelands: developments in ship construction and seafaring skills; internal stress from population growth and scarce land; loss of personal freedom as political and economic centralization progressed; and the rise of state-sponsored Christianity over traditional pagan belief. Probably all are correct in degrees, but the overriding factor was the awareness of the opportunities for advancement abroad that lured Norsemen from their home farms. By taking on lives as soldiers of fortune, Vikings, who faced declining opportunities at home, could dramatically alter their prospects by becoming wealthy, reaping glory and fame in battle, and achieving high status as leaders and heroes based on their own abilities and deeds. With success abroad, one could advance rapidly to positions of prestige and power in the relatively open structure of Viking society.

### THE GREENLAND COLONIES

The final chapter of the Norse story in the North American region concerns the history of the two colonies established by Erik the Red in Greenland. Much is known of life in Norse Greenland from the sagas and from nearly two hundred years of archaeological investigations. In recent decades





important new sites have yielded rich information about the Greenland Norse, including the "Farm Beneath the Sand" site. Here a farm that was occupied for 300 years was preserved in permafrost and yielded many spectacular artifacts including an entire door, loom, and whole animal carcasses. Studies of such sites enable scholars to ask how the Greenland colonies functioned and whether they died out as the result of a little Ice Age, overpopulation and depletion of natural resources, isolation from Europe, raids by pirates, Inuit (Eskimo) attack or territorial infringement, immigration to America, or simply gradual population loss.

### VIKING AMERICA THROUGH TIME

After the disappearance of the medieval Norse from Greenland and the integration of the Icelandic Norse into the broader European economic and political scene, little was heard of Vikings in North America until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before the 1830s North Americans knew the Vikings only as the Europeans saw them—as raiders and pillagers of Europe. These views changed rapidly after 1837 when the saga texts became available in English translations. These sagas indicated that Leif Eriksson and others had explored and settled in as-yet-unknown areas of northeastern North America. The discovery of literature describing Viking explorations that may have reached southern New England struck American antiquarians like a thunderclap. Information about mysterious rock engravings; a conspicuous old stone tower in Newport, Rhode Island; and a pagan burial containing "plate armor" all became grist for a new 19<sup>th</sup> century Viking craze in North America. This early American obsession with Vikings was sealed when Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his epic poem, *The Skeleton in Armor*. This tale of a love-struck Viking warrior who sailed to America, built the Newport Tower for his lost love, and came to an unhappy end buried in his armor in an unmarked grave in nearby southeastern Massachusetts became an indelible part of 19<sup>th</sup> century American literary romanticism. Scholars later discovered that the inscriptions and burial



A NEW IMAGE FOR THE VIKINGS (?)

were Native American and dated to the colonial period and that the tower was built in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century by Governor Benedict Arnold, but by then the popular Viking imagery was indelibly imprinted in the American imagination.

In the 1890s Ebenezer N. Horsford of Boston lectured and published scores of books on his theories of Viking contacts in New England. Although his and many other claims of Viking cities like Norumbega and artifact finds have been dismissed by scholars, the allure of a "Viking America" lives on and continues to motivate a small circle of advocates whose steadfastness in promoting evidence of Viking and earlier European Neolithic or Bronze Age finds in America have been termed "fantastic archaeology." Most of these finds are the results of innocent mistakes, but a considerable number are pranks or hoaxes based on finds of real Viking artifacts that came to America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century as heirlooms with Scandinavian immigrants.

Understanding the history of this phenomena and its broader roots in popular attitudes about Vikings in European and American society helps explain the enduring nature of the American public's romance with things "Viking." North Americans today associate "nordic" with winter track events or episodes from the public radio show

"Prairie Home Companion." The term Viking connotes a brawny, battle crazed berserker from comic books or the Monty Python movies, but its only assured recall is the Minnesota Viking football team. All Vikings in popular culture renditions wear helmets with horns, despite the fact that Vikings never had horns on their helmets; this persistent image seems to have originated as a 19<sup>th</sup> century Wagnerian opera costume based on archaeological finds of Danish Bronze Age horned helmets. Clearly America's romance with the Vikings is based on more than historical fact!

### CONCLUSION

The new millennium presents us with the opportunity to explore a little known chapter in the history of North America that has been emerging with evidence from the L'Anse aux Meadows site and finds of Norse artifacts in Native American sites in northeastern North America. These finds confirm information related in the *Vinland Sagas* and extends the range of Norse contacts or influence in North America from Greenland to Maine. The fact that these finds date from 1000 to 1400 corroborates historical evidence that the Iceland and Greenland Norse continued to visit North America long after Leif Eriksson's initial Vinland voyages ceased about 1015. Even though the Norse did not establish permanent settlements in North America, their continuing visits ensured that a tradition of knowledge about these lands, resources, and peoples remained alive in Greenland until about 1450 and in Iceland down to the present day.

Perhaps the most important outcome of contact was the familiarity Native Americans gained from European habits, behavior, and materials that helped them take best advantage of future European interactions. This information must have been passed down through time within Native societies, for when later Europeans arrived (for example, Martin Frobisher in Labrador in 1576-78), Inuit groups were already familiar with people they called *Kablunat* (white men) who came in big ships with interesting things to trade.

Finally, our investigation of the Norse North Atlantic Saga teaches us much about the Vikings and later Norse societies who opened this early northern bridge to North America. To date, the Scandinavian component in the history of the Americas is absent from the popular tradition and educational base of American history. It is useful, therefore, to consider how this tradition—a northern European Nordic tradition—played a crucial role in the early American contacts, maintained itself through the Middle Ages, and passed information on to others, perhaps even to Columbus himself. In fact, it is believed that Columbus visited Iceland shortly before his voyages to North America and surely he would have heard about the saga lands to the west from sailors or scholars he met. After a quiescent period between 1400 and 1800, Nordic influence reemerged as a wave of immigrants to North America in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries began making major new contributions to North American society.

To a great extent, our next millennium will be shaped by the very same values that motivated the Vikings in their western push across the Atlantic—the need to explore new horizons, to test the human spirit, to seek opportunities wherever they exist. Such is the historical message of *Vikings: the North Atlantic Saga!*

**Note:** This article is based on the author's much longer introductory essay, "Puffins, Ringed Pins, and Runestones: The Viking Passage to America" in the exhibition catalog (Fitzhugh and Ward:11-25).

### FURTHER READING

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Vesilind, Priit. 2000. "In Search of Vikings." *National Geographic Magazine* 197 (May):2-27.

Ward, Elisabeth. 2000. "Vikings in America." *Muse*: 4(5):30-36.

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#### VIKING TOUR SCHEDULE

New York City, October 20, 2000 - January 20, 2001. American Museum of Natural History.

Denver, Colorado, March 2, 2001 - May 31, 2001. Museum of Natural History.

Houston, Texas, July 13, 2001 - October 11, 2001. Houston Museum of Natural Science.

Los Angeles, November 23, 2001 - March 16, 2002. Los Angeles County Museum.

Ottawa/Hull, May 16, 2002 - October 14, 2002. Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Minneapolis, Minnesota, tentatively scheduled.



## TEACHER'S CORNER: VIKINGS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

by Elisabeth Ward

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With the millennial anniversary of the Vikings' arrival in North America upon us, the Vikings have become a hot topic. This teacher's corner builds on that enthusiasm with solid teaching ideas. Following the reading of the *AnthroNotes*' lead article, the questions below should provoke lively class discussion.

### DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. **Viking Ships.** The impressive double-prowed ship of the Vikings is a well known icon. Viking ships were essential components of the Viking culture. How important was the Viking ship during the Viking Age? How did technological changes, like iron production and ship building techniques, influence Viking society? Finally, what have archaeologists learned about Viking ships in the last 100 years?

2. **Contacts with Native Peoples.** According to the Vinland Sagas, when Vikings first arrived in North America they met strange people they called Skraelings. Who were the Skraelings? What evidence do we have that the Vikings met them? How extensive do anthropologists believe that interaction was? How was the Viking meeting with Native Americans different from Columbus' encounter 500 years later? What might have motivated these two peoples to interact?

3. **Understanding the Sagas.** Sagas are a form of literature developed in Iceland; tales that had been told for generations were preserved in books during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The best known sagas focus on the adventures of the early settlers of Iceland (ca. A.D. 900), some of whom also went on Viking raids. Which sagas are important for the discovery of North America, and why? Do you see

any problems with using the sagas for information about the past?

4. **The Viking Age in Europe.** The Viking Age was a time of transition and change in Europe and in Scandinavia. What event marks the beginning of the Viking Age, and what event marks the end? How far did the Vikings get, and what were their main areas of interest? What motivated the Viking raids? What influence did the Vikings have in Europe? Discuss the problems and advantages to using the name "Viking". What did "Viking" mean in the narrow sense or literal meaning of the word?

5. **Religion and the Vikings.** What religion did the Vikings practice, and what religion did their southern neighbors believe in? Look on the web or in other Viking books for names of the Viking gods. How might religious differences color Vikings' understanding of other cultures and vice versa? By the end of the Viking Age, Viking kings and Viking settlers abroad were converting to Christianity. How do you think this conversion changed Viking society?

6. **Greenland.** The Greenland colony existed for almost 500 years and then mysteriously died out. Explain the importance of ivory in the economy of the Greenland Norse before it became extinct. What new sources of information are archaeologists using to understand what happened to the Greenlanders? What was the temperature like in Greenland when the Vikings first arrived, and how did it change? What other changes were taking place that might have led to the colony's collapse?

7. **Vikings in Popular Culture.** What is wrong with our current stereotypical image of the horned helmeted Viking warrior? Look for modern advertisements using horned-helmeted characters; what is the context, and what does this imply about the symbolism of the horned-helmets? How has this modern image emerged? Why do you think the Vikings continue to be popular today?

## WEB RESOURCES

The Internet is teeming with sites about the Vikings and the Viking Age. However, the following four sites have been recommended by the National Museum of Natural History's Office of Education.

<http://www.mnh.si.edu/vikings/> is the web site developed with the National Museum of Natural History's exhibition. In addition to an overview of the exhibit, it also has a multi-media "voyage" of the Viking world, focusing on how we know about the past.

<http://viking.norden.org> links to many Scandinavian Viking sites, most with English summaries or translations. Often these are the best sources for basic Viking information.

[www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/vikings/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/vikings/) is the new PBS site related to the documentary listed below. It is an excellent site for students doing research, rather than for teachers.

[www.realtime.com/~gunnara/](http://www.realtime.com/~gunnara/) is the home of the Viking Answer Lady, who really knows her subject and conveys information in a fun way. The graphic style does make it difficult to read for extended periods.

## FILM DOCUMENTARIES

Four documentaries your class might enjoy are:

*Leif Eriksson, the Man who Almost Changed the World* (2000) was developed concurrently with the Smithsonian's exhibit, though it focuses on the life of Leif Eriksson and his discovery of North America. It is available both as VHS and as High Definition CD. To order, contact Ward TV in Georgetown, Washington D.C. at (202) 333-4500.

*"The Vikings" by Nova* (2000). This two-hour special is divided into two parts. Part one focuses on the Vikings at home and their expansion westward, touching on their discovery of North America. Part two, adapted from Swedish Television, features new



information on the Viking activities in Russia. To order, call 1-800-949-8670.

*Secrets of the Dead: The Lost Vikings of Greenland* (1996). Part two of a four part series, this documentary provides insight into current research in Greenland that helps scientists reconstruct past environments, particularly from clues such as bug remains and ice-core samples. To order call 1-800-PBS-SHOP (727-7467); email: [www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/vikings/resources](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/vikings/resources).

*Ancient Mysteries: The Vikings in North America* (1996). Narrated by Leonard Nimoy, this one hour documentary summarizes what is known from archaeology and history about the Viking voyages to North America. Available from New Video Group, 126 Fifth Ave. NY, NY 10011; (212) 206-8600.

## MUSEUM RESOURCES

### National Museum of Natural History

In conjunction with the Smithsonian's exhibition, each museum on the venue schedule (above) is developing educational components. Please contact your nearest venue to discover what they have planned. The National Museum of Natural History has developed the following supplemental materials that you can order from the Scheduler, Office of Education, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560-0158; (202) 357-2747; fax: (202) 786-2778.

*Family Guide:* This 13-page workbook is intended for families with children aged 3 to 15 as they walk through the exhibition. It will be available wherever the exhibit tours. Young students also enjoy doing these activities at home. The activities were developed by a Maine teacher.

(Continued on page 17)



" AT THIS RATE IT'LL PRBABLY TAKE THEM 500 YEARS TO SORT IT OUT..."

## IN THE ARMS OF AFRICA: THE LIFE OF COLIN TURNBULL

by Roy Richard Grinker



I have spent the past two years writing the biography of the late anthropologist Colin Turnbull, best known for his bestselling books, *The Forest People* and *The Mountain People*. While I initially considered the biography of an anthropologist to be far afield from the usual anthropological enterprise—fieldwork in local communities—I now view it as a powerful tool for understanding how an anthropologist's life is inextricably linked with his or her work. Despite the popularity and influence of his books, which are required reading in many high schools and colleges, even decades after their publication, little is known about how and why Colin Turnbull wrote them.

Narrating the life of such an unusual person as Colin Turnbull is like narrating the life of a foreign culture. Biography, like ethnography, is the study of the structure and meaning of the ideas and actions accessible to an outside observer. As an outsider looking in, my perspectives on someone else's world are limited.

I see what my biases let me see; I see much of what other people—my informants—want me to see. Turnbull even wrote his own autobiography of sorts, an unpublished account of his relationship with his partner of thirty years, Joseph Towles, in order to influence the work of a future biographer. But I am both constrained and liberated because, as an outsider, I can see the obstacles posed by the people I am studying as a topic for analysis. Because I can sometimes see things invisible to those who live within that world, Turnbull's attempt to influence his own biography became a central focus of my book.

When I, a non-gay writer, tried to sell the biography of Turnbull, a gay writer, to major publishing houses, I was confronted with the same sort of challenge I have heard so often within

African studies and in anthropology more generally: how, as an outsider, can you understand your subject? The fact is that, inasmuch as the author constructs the subject in the act of writing, the author is always an integral part of the subject. My teachers in college and graduate school consistently emphasized that much of the work of ethnography is a self-reflective effort to overcome one's biases. And when the first draft of my biography of Turnbull was returned to me from a gay editor with a post-it reading simply, "You're straight," I knew that I had failed to extend myself into Colin Turnbull's world. It is not that I wanted to mask my own identity, but rather that my own identity had gotten in the way. I had been unable to represent Turnbull's world in a way that seemed meaningful to a gay reader or, almost certainly, that would have been meaningful to Turnbull himself. When I looked carefully at the manuscript, I realized that my representations of gay relationships were clinical, distant, and mechanical; my representations of heterosexual relationships, in contrast, were nuanced, deep, complex, and passionate. Biography, like ethnography, became a process of self-reflection and change.

My interest in Colin Turnbull began in 1985 when I left for central Africa for the first six months of what would ultimately be twenty-two months of fieldwork with the Pygmies and farmers of the Ituri rainforest. I intended to disprove Colin Turnbull. No cultural anthropologist had studied the Pygmies so intensively, and since his classic book, *The Forest People*, published in 1961, no cultural anthropologist had even attempted a follow-up study. Like many other anthropologists, I assumed that Turnbull's characterizations of Pygmy life were romantic and somewhat fictionalized. When I finished my fieldwork, I accused Turnbull of not knowing the language of the Pygmies and of ignoring important aspects of Pygmy life that would have led him to construct a different picture of Pygmy society. It was only many years later, after I found myself occupying his former faculty position at George Washington University and became close friends with the



executor of his estate, Professor Robert Humphrey, that I stopped seeing him as a scholar I needed to debunk and became aware of the complicated relationship between his work and his life.

When I decided to write the biography, I remembered that I had corresponded with Colin Turnbull when I was in the field. I located one letter from him in my files, but even though I was working on the biography, it still took me nearly six weeks to read it. What I found was disturbing

and the reason why I had removed the letter from memory: it is one of the kindest professional letters I have ever received. I felt terrible not only because of his generosity—indeed, the letter also included much practical advice

on working with the Pygmies—but because I never replied to the letter. And when, subsequently, he wrote to me again, suggesting that the Pygmies I was studying were too westernized and that I should go elsewhere, I was too angry to respond. I never heard from him again.

It is difficult to immerse oneself so fully in a single life unless driven to do so by something more than simple curiosity. For me, it was the knowledge that I had failed to meet a remarkable person because I was consumed by a youthful narcissism. And because I wanted so much to dismiss his work, I also failed to engage with him intellectually. What I discovered next was that his fascinating life opened a window on the Mbuti Pygmies of central Africa and the Ik of Uganda, because nearly everything we know about these



two societies comes from the work of Colin Turnbull.

Turnbull was born in 1924 at home in Harrow, England to a Scottish accountant father James Rutherford Turnbull and a Canadian-Irish mother Dorothy Chapman. He was raised primarily by a series of German nannies and was educated at the prestigious Westminster School, where he became a renowned organist. After a year at Magdalen College, Oxford, he joined the Royal Navy

Volunteer Reserves, where he served on motor launches searching for torpedos and recovering dog tags from soldiers killed at sea. Though he had every comfort during childhood, Turnbull interpreted his privilege as a duty to help people of color,

those with little money or the possibility for social mobility, those who in any way suffered from discrimination. In fact, he felt himself to be discriminated against, coerced into living in a society that seemed to value status assigned at birth more than achievement, the individual more than the community, inequality rather than equality. This was not simple white liberal guilt. Loving those who were oppressed was an act of resistance against his society and his parents, neither of whom had given him the emotional stability and nurturing he wanted. In the poor or marginalized, he saw himself, and he determined to do for them what had not been done for himself.

Following the war, Turnbull completed a shortened course at Oxford for a bachelor's degree and enrolled at Benares Hindu University in

Benares, India, where he earned a master's degree in Indian religions and philosophy. Between 1949 and 1951, he was one of only a handful of Europeans to be permitted residence at the exclusively Brahman ashram of one of the most illustrious female gurus in contemporary Indian history, Sri Anandamayi Ma. India, she told him, was about self discovery. There was no real Anandamayi or Colin Turnbull. Anandamayi Ma taught him that there was only that which Colin made real for himself. She also taught him that something beautiful and pure can emerge from something ordinary, inconspicuous, or ugly, like a lotus growing up from the mud, its beauty and purity unsullied by its origin. Truth could be found in the most unexpected places, in the mountaintops of India or in temples and ashrams, but perhaps just as likely on a river bank, a city slum, or a farmer's field. It might even be found in one person, someone who Turnbull might someday meet and in whom, deep inside, there was a brilliant light, an inner truth, struggling to blossom.

With an American friend, a music teacher from Ohio named Newton Beal, Turnbull went to Kenya to stay with a wealthy entrepreneur, Sir Charles Markham, who recommended Turnbull and Beal visit his friend Patrick Putnam, a former Ph.D. candidate in anthropology from Harvard University. Putnam, who was living among the Pygmies and managing a small tourist hotel there, received Turnbull warmly but when Turnbull ran out of money, Putnam could not honor his request for paid work. Turnbull found work instead with the famed Hollywood producer, Sam Spiegel, for whom he constructed and transported the boat, "The African Queen," for the famed film of the same name, starring Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn.

Turnbull found the Mbuti Pygmies to be even more exciting than the *African Queen*. He was quickly convinced that Mbuti culture, especially their music, spirituality, and child rearing practices, was what Anandamayi told him he might one day find. Widely seen as a "primitive" or simple people, Turnbull found the Mbuti to have social

institutions more humane and more sophisticated than anything that existed in western civilization. As described in *The Forest People*, Mbuti children are never pitted against one another. People live in harmony not because they are coerced to do so by laws, the threat of violence, or other external impositions, but because of an internal desire for unity, reciprocity, and social equality, a desire every Mbuti parent unselfconsciously and automatically foster in their children. A Mbuti child learns to love others not because love is imposed upon him, but because he has spent at least the first three years of his life, not with nannies, but in his mother's arms, or on her back, and in her bed, in a relationship of constant and selfless giving and receiving. Mbuti teenagers, he wrote, practice sex freely and yet have no unwanted pregnancies, while in the west sex is often seen as something impure and dirty and without spirituality. Turnbull wrote that old age in Europe and the United States is a "frightening anteroom to extinction," while among the Mbuti it is seen as a time of wisdom, serenity and power.

In addition, for Turnbull, the Mbuti's apparent subordination to the neighboring farmers was only playacting. The Mbuti pretended to be inferior when they were, in fact, far superior in almost every way. Turnbull loved seeing the Mbuti outsmart the villagers, proving to him that those in power are fooled by their own pretenses, and that the imaginary evolutionary schemes of western science were merely self-congratulatory illusions. And so, when Turnbull was appointed curator of African Ethnology at the American Museum of Natural History in 1959, he continued his quest for the unpolished gem, and thought he found it in Joseph Towles, a poor, uneducated African American man with whom Colin would live for the next thirty years. When he first saw Towles, Turnbull said to himself, "I am back in Africa."

Together, Towles and Turnbull went to Uganda in the late 1960s to study the Ik, a people on the brink of utter starvation and extinction, a people whose depravity Turnbull described in stark detail. In *The Mountain People*, Turnbull had thanked his Indian guru, Sri Anandamayi Ma, for



giving him his mantra, "Satyam, sivam, sundarm" (truth, goodness, beauty), and for convincing him that those qualities could be found if he looked hard enough; they were the qualities he had found among the Pygmies and which he believed the Ik had cast aside. The Ik, he believed, had become materially and morally impoverished, having abandoned the values of family, love, and altruism for a cut-throat individualism matched only by western civilization. He watched with horror as Ik men and women attacked one another, even within their own families. They induced vomiting and then ate the vomit; people defecated on each others' doorsteps, expressed joy at the tragedies of others, and having abandoned any effort to cooperate or share, the stronger left the weaker, usually children and the elderly, to die of starvation. "That is the point," he wrote in *The Mountain People*, "at which there is an end to truth, to goodness, and to beauty...The Ik have relinquished all luxury in the name of individual survival, and the result is that they live on as a people without life, without passion, beyond humanity."

He proposed to the Ugandan government that the Ik society should be eliminated, that individuals should be rounded up and dispersed over an area wide enough to make sure they never found each other again. The Ugandan government and the anthropological community were outraged. Angered by the proposal and what was called a complete lack of objectivity, Fredrik Barth, the anthropologist who led the international attack against Turnbull, wrote that *The Mountain People* "deserves both to be sanctioned and to be held up as a warning to us all" and that the book was "dishonest," "grossly irresponsible and harmful," threatening to the "hygiene" of the discipline (1974). Turnbull was unmoved by the academic criticisms because he did not want to write for academics. For him, the truth of the central African rain forest or the tragedy of the Ugandan mountains could not be conveyed in an academic publication to be read by a few hundred scholars. It had to reach millions of people and to come from the heart, not through science but through the

emotional and spiritual paths for which his anthropology was an ongoing quest.

Turnbull hated the Ik. The Pygmies, and even Joseph Towles (who had begun his training as an anthropologist), empowered him. But because he could do little to stop the famine and social behaviors that emerged in that context, the Ik threatened his role as protector or saviour. Because they did not seem to respect him or care for him, the Ik never gave him the sense of self-worth he derived from Joseph and other underdogs. And because the Ik never gave him someone like the Pygmy young boy, Kenge, whom he could love and idolize, he grew angry and lonely. The Ik were unlikable to Colin to the end, sadly unyielding to any Pygmalion-like efforts. Joe would undermine him too. During their fieldwork period, Towles became depressed and alcoholic and had many affairs. Turnbull saw himself becoming an utterly miserable person and his depiction of the Ik in his ethnographic writings reflects that change.

Turnbull resigned from the American Museum of Natural History amid charges that the museum had discriminated against him and Towles. But he left his mark on the museum in the permanent exhibition in the *Hall of Man in Africa*, which he conceived and executed and which remains on display at the turn of the millenium. Turnbull would subsequently teach at Vassar College, Hofstra, Virginia Commonwealth, West Virginia, George Washington, and New York universities. From 1975 and 1977, he devoted most of his energies to producing the play "The Ik" with Peter Brook, the former director of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Between 1970 and 1988, Turnbull and Towles lived openly as a gay, interracial couple in one of the smallest and most conservative rural towns, Lancaster, Virginia. Few people know that during this time, Turnbull devoted himself to championing the cases of death row inmates in Florida and Virginia. He had once argued that a starving society in Uganda should be eradicated, an argument for which he was widely condemned both by anthropologists and human rights workers. Now

he would try to show the humanity of the death row inmate. In focusing on the prisoners as victims, Turnbull echoed his earlier work among the Ik. He did not write about the relationship between his studies of prisons and the Ik, probably because, given the on-going controversy over his Ik project, he wanted to avoid deflecting attention from the prisoners or giving the impression that his prison mission was an act of repentance for having failed to help the Ik.

Both projects focused on the humanity of the so-called depraved or inhuman, and the Ik were, indeed, something like prisoners, trapped in a drought-stricken land that was foreign to them. Turnbull had, of course, never believed there was anything essentially wrong with the Ik as human beings. It was their culture, or lack of culture, combined with an ecological tragedy, that was the problem. Likewise, the prisoners on death row were stripped of their humanity, confined in cages and treated like animals, by a penal system convinced that its own power was right and natural. From the perspective of the prison system, there was nothing wrong with the culture of discipline and punishment. When Colin Turnbull looked at the guards he must have seen himself in Uganda, dehumanized and unfeeling. Perhaps he could master that horrible experience for once and for all, do for the prisoners what he could not do for the Ik, and do it without losing his own compassion.

In 1983, Turnbull rejected tenure when it was offered to him at George Washington University and devoted himself to the care of Towles, who, only a few years after receiving a Ph.D. in sociology from Makerere University for his study of Mbo ritual in Zaire, began to suffer from AIDS. When Towles died in 1988, Turnbull buried two coffins, one for Towles and one for himself, and then virtually disappeared. He severed all family ties, donated his entire savings and real estate, worth about one million dollars in 1988 as well as all future royalties, to the United Negro College Fund. His tombstone, now overgrown with weeds on his former Virginia estate, says that both he and

Towles died on December 19, 1988, but Turnbull, in fact, outlived his death by nearly six years.

In 1989, Turnbull traveled to American Samoa, India, and Bloomington, Indiana. In Bloomington, he helped his former museum colleague, Thubten Norbu (the eldest brother of the Dalai Lama) build the Tibetan Cultural Center, and Norbu arranged for Colin to be trained as a Buddhist monk. He spent the last years of his life attempting to publish the works of Towles and training to become a Buddhist monk. In 1993, at the Nechung Monastery in Dharamsala, India, Turnbull was ordained a Gelong monk by the Dalai Lama and given the new name of Lobsong Rigdol. He died of AIDS on July 24, 1994 in Kilmarnock, Virginia and was buried next to Towles on their former Virginia estate. At Turnbull's request, there were no formal services. However, on January 21, 1995, in Epulu, Democratic Republic of Central African, the Mbuti Pygmies performed a funeral ceremony for both Turnbull and Towles.

Once we understand the relationship between Turnbull's life and work, *The Forest People* and *The Mountain People* make more sense. At some level, these books can tell us more about Turnbull than about the Mbuti or the Ik. Yet anthropologists continue to draw on Turnbull's descriptions as if they represent a verifiable reality. Turnbull never pretended to be an objective observer, and he offered his works more as subjective accounts than scientific descriptions. But if they were not scientific, then what were they? They were the expressions of someone searching, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, for the ideals he imagined as a child, glimpsed in India, and later discovered in the rainforest and in the person of Joseph Towles. Throughout his life, Turnbull was motivated by a deep-seated wish to find goodness, beauty and power in the oppressed or ridiculed and, by making those qualities known to the world, reveal the evils of western civilization. The Ik, the Mbuti, and Joseph Towles, were all Turnbull's creations. His visions of the world were so perfect, so true, so right for him, that they gave all the appearances of being real.



[Note: Photograph of Colin Turnbull in the Ituri Forest, 1951. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Avery Research Center.]

#### FURTHER READING

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(*"Vikings," continued from page 11*)

*Teacher's Guide:* Developed by Carolyn Sadler (National Museum of Natural History) for grades 4 and above, this guide includes a discussion of how we know about the Viking past, suggested activities for the classroom, a pronunciation guide, and an excellent general bibliography.

The York Archaeological Trust. This is the research division of the Jorvik Viking Center in York, England, a tremendously popular museum with a Disney inspired "ride" through the actual archaeological site. The Center also has a hands-on archaeological workshop. Though visiting the museum is best, they also have materials available. For more information or to order samples of their activities, write: Cromwell House, 13 Ogleforth, York YO1 2JG or e-mail: [postmaster@yorkarch.demon.co.uk](mailto:postmaster@yorkarch.demon.co.uk).

Roskilde Ship Museum. In conjunction with the Lejre Learning Museum of Denmark, Roskilde's education department has developed a number of hands-on activities for a range of ages. This includes making trade bags and beads, weaving, and painting runestones. Most importantly, Roskilde has a prepared, English language guide for building one's own Viking ship. At least one high-school in the US (Minersville, PA) has built a ship using this plan. Roskilde can be reached by phone at: (45) 46 30 02 00 or by mail: Postbox 298, Roskilde, Denmark DK-4000.

*Elisabeth Ward is assistant curator of the Viking exhibition and co-editor of the exhibit catalog, "Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga."*

## BOOK REVIEW

by Sylvia Thompson

*Mother Nature: A History of Mothers, Infants, and Natural Selection.* By Sarah Blaffer Hrdy. Pantheon Books. 723 pages. \$35. 1999.

**M**other Nature is a fascinating and exhaustive review of the literature on the topic of mothering, viewed from the points of view of sociobiology, history, anthropology, sociology, evolutionary psychology, and literature. Sarah Hrdy has produced a book that covers an enormous amount of territory, but leaves bookstores confused about exactly where to categorize it. One friend reports finding it at Border's Books among the various how-to manuals on mothering, along with books on potty training and nursing, choosing a school for your child, and learning to discipline. Another friend and fellow graduate student was so impressed by the book that she investigated having it promoted on "Oprah."

Hrdy's book may be a bit erudite for Oprah and certainly will not help a frantic mother trying to deal with an immediate child care issue. However, it does make fascinating reading for anyone interested in what it means to be a mother or to have a mother, or how to best nurture future generations. The book is extremely well written, and numerous photographs and amusing cartoons illustrate Hrdy's points with whimsy and insight.

In analyzing the role of natural selection on motherhood, Hrdy defines motherhood as anything that the female does to ensure genetic representation in subsequent generations. The questions that Hrdy sets about to answer include:

- What are maternal instincts?
- What are the forces behind infanticide and child abuse?
- What is the role of the male?
- How have infants evolved to be so helpless and yet so adorable?

Hrdy reviews studies of mate choice, gender selection, pregnancy, lactation, maternal-infant



MOTHER NATURE COMMUNES WITH HER CHILDREN



bonding, infanticide and child abandonment, maternal ambition and other issues of parent-offspring conflict. She begins by examining issues from the mother's point of view and then goes on to analyze the situation from the infant's point of view. The tensions that arise from the different needs of mothers and their offspring are explored fully. Hrdy views the female as being much more of an active player in the process of evolution than previously thought and points out dramatic differences in reproductive success among females.

Hrdy is equally thorough in reviewing the literature on child abuse and neglect around the world and throughout history. In a chapter on infanticide she not only calls upon her own research on many continents and in many cultures, both human and non-human, but she also reports on instances throughout history. Her research is exhaustive and fascinating, including examining last wills and testaments, data from foundling homes and even the pages of phone books to trace ancestry. In some cases infanticide is practiced at birth, for instance when a child of the less desirable gender is born. In other cases, the infant is sent out to a wet nurse or foundling home to face less than optimum circumstances—and poor chances of survival. Hrdy examines a behavior that at first seems totally maladaptive and helps us understand the many complex issues surrounding this difficult issue.

Hrdy gives numerous examples from the animal kingdom, including spiders "with the bad manners" to eat their mothers alive, and coypus (beaver-like rodent) who can selectively terminate their pregnancies depending upon their nutritional status. Trained as a primatologist, Hrdy seeks her evidence not only from the primate world but also from human cultures around the world, in history and in literature. She also draws extensively on her own experiences as a mother of three.

Hrdy points out that each of us is a product of a mother who made choices to ensure that at least one offspring survived, and that we, therefore, carry some of our mothers' emotional legacy and decision-making equipment. She also points out

that primate mothers have always been dual career mothers, having to balance foraging for adequate nutrition with caretaking duties, and thus they have had to compromise maternal and infant needs. For this reason mothers have always shared the care of offspring with others, when feasible. Armed with this knowledge, the question for today's working mothers, Hrdy believes, is to determine the circumstances under which it is acceptable to delegate infant care and then motivate the caregiver to provide optimal care.

By examining the mother-infant relationship in a broader comparative and evolutionary context, Hrdy sheds new light on issues relevant to modern women's lives. Understanding why an infant may be throwing a tantrum, or why the male only offers to help out reluctantly, or what constitutes adequate care by a parent or caretaker may help all of us make better decisions about how to provide for the future of our species. This is an important book with messages for us all.

*Sylvia Thompson teaches science at Beauvoir, the National Cathedral Elementary School. As a graduate student at Harvard, she worked with Sarah Hrdy on langurs.*

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## RESOURCE ON FAMILY FOLKLORE

One of our readers has offered to be a resource for further information on family folklore (see *AnthroNotes* article "Family Folklore in the Classroom," winter/spring 2000:13-19). Contact Paddy Bowman, Coordinator, National Task Force on Folk Arts in Education, 609 Johnston Place, Alexandria, VA 22301; (703) 836-7499; [pbowman@ix.netcome.com](mailto:pbowman@ix.netcome.com); <http://www.carts.org>.

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