

the last war, however, some Norse ruins, such as those which were very badly preserved and not among those known from written sources, were allowed to be demolished if cultivation of land, building of houses or other important reasons made it necessary. Among these ruins were those registered as no. 17a. As it was most doubtful whether an excavation could yield but modest results, we would not spend time and money on an excavation here. This decision, however, proved to be a mistake! In 1953 the late Mr. K. N. Christensen, who was then in charge of the new combined sheep-slaughterhouse and cannery at Narssaq, started digging in one of the ruins to obtain gardening mould. Very soon Mr. Christensen found some surprising Norse relics, particularly artefacts of wood, and among them first and foremost the important stick with the runic inscriptions with which I will deal in detail later in this paper. Mr. Christensen at once stopped digging, preserved the finds and sent them to the National Museum. Of course we then had to revise our opinion of the ruins at Narssaq, and next summer, on behalf of the Danish National Museum, I carried out the sample excavation of which I have given a short account to the Third Viking Congress, and—as said before—the work was continued in 1958.

As in most Norse farms the houses lie scattered over rather a wide area. At no. 17a there are at least nine or ten houses, all completely collapsed and grown over with grass; probably more houses have, however, been claimed by the sea as a result of erosion. Excavation has only been carried out in the largest of the ruins where the first finds were made. The excavation was most difficult as a result of the extreme state of collapse of the walls mainly due to the house being built on sloping ground. Nevertheless we succeeded in obtaining a reliable plan.

The dwelling is a long-house, with its rooms in one row only. It is orientated north-south fronting west towards the sea. The total length of the house is 33 to 34 metres, and across it measures 6 to 9 metres. It is rather difficult to say anything certain concerning the division into rooms, except that there has been at least four: a small one, which is quite clear, to the north; most probably two larger rooms in the middle of the house and a fourth, nearly square, to the south. The latter seems to have been built later than the rest of the house, as an extension. One of the rooms in the centre must have been the living-room or hall, possibly the one to the north. The other may have been the kitchen, or fireroom. No doorway has been found, but it is beyond doubt that there has been a door or maybe two in the front wall. The walls have been built in the usual way—a construction of stones and turf with rather heavy lower courses, clearly seen in the north gable. The thickness of the walls vary from 1 to 2 metres. The wall is well preserved along the east side of the house, where in some places it is still standing to a height of about 1 metre. In other parts of the building only the lower course is left while in the rest of the house, especially in parts of the front, the walls are completely destroyed. There cannot be any doubt that the outer side of the

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AN ELEVENTH-CENTURY FARMHOUSE IN THE NORSE COLONIES IN GREENLAND

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At the Third Viking Congress in Reykjavik in 1956 I had the privilege to give the members of the Congress a survey of the topographical and archaeological investigations carried out in the medieval Norse settlements in Greenland during the years 1945-54. At the end of my lecture I gave a short account of the latest, then unfinished excavations at *Narssaq* in the Julianchaab district. I regret to say that these excavations have not been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. In the summer of 1958, however, I had the opportunity to make a more extensive investigation of the most important of the ruins, the dwelling-house, and as the results obtained by this investigation together with what we had already achieved in 1954 may be of some interest to archaeologists and linguists as well—and furthermore, as the finds from 1954 are only known through the paper which I read in Reykjavik in 1956 (and from another which I gave to the Congress of Americanists, in Copenhagen that same year), I am glad to get this opportunity to lay forth the principal results of the excavations carried out by the Danish National Museum at Narssaq.

The locality we are dealing with is situated near the small but rapidly growing south Greenland town Narssaq, north of Julianchaab. The area is the centre of the Norsemen's East Settlement, and of the some 200 farms which existed in this settlement quite a considerable number are found here. Very near the mouth of the Tunugdliarfik fjord—which is identical with the Norsemen's Eiriksfjorðr (named after Eirik the Red, the famous Icelandic chieftain who about 985 started the Norse colonization in Greenland)—is a small but beautiful green plain just below the majestic Mt. Qaarsuaq. The plain falls towards the sea with rather high and steep cliffs, which are constantly being broken down by frost and rain; no doubt the plain was considerably wider in the Middle Ages. To the Greenland Landnamsmen the place must have looked inviting; here they found the best conditions imaginable for settling in this country, and here lie the ruins of a Norse farm, no doubt one of the earliest so far found and examined in Greenland.

The farm is registered as East Settlement no. 17a but unfortunately we are unable to identify this farm with any place-name known from written sources. The ruins of the farm were found in 1935 by Aage Roussel and, as all other Norse ruins in Greenland, they were protected by law. After