SKAGAFJÖRÐUR CHURCH AND SETTLEMENT SURVEY

Grænagerði on Hegranes: TP2 Excavation Report 2018

Melissa Ritchey
Grace Cesario

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Picture on front page – Grace Bello and Kathryn Catlin excavate the eastern expansion of TP2 while John Steinberg observes

Byggðasafn Skagfirðinga/Fiske Center for Archaeological Research, UMass Boston
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Acknowledgements

We are greatly indebted to the farmers at Grænagerði (Hulduland), María Eymundsdóttir and Pálmi Jónsson, who allowed us to excavate on their land over two field seasons, and who have been incredibly kind and helpful throughout.

In the summer of 2016, a team of 4 students, led by Kathryn Catlin cored the entire farm, and in the summer of 2017 Kathryn and 3 more students opened up a 1x1 meter test excavation. The summer of 2018 brought 4 more students to expand the previous test pit to a total of 2x2 meters. The student specialists were Kathryn Catlin (present all three years and directing for two), Grace Cesario (present for coring in 2016 and supervision in 2018), Shala Carter and Allison Carlton for coring; Sarah Breiter, Sean Deryck, and Lauren Welch O'Connor for TP1 excavation; Melissa Ritchey and Grace Bello for TP2 excavation.

The project was dependent on a number of permissions.

- Minjastofnun Íslands (The Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland) granted permission for the excavation. Project number: *201606-0051*
- And Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (The National Museum of Iceland) granted the site number used for finds: *Þjms-2018-49*

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Introduction

A test pit at Grænagerði (site 447-1, TP1) was excavated in 2017 by Kathryn Catlin, Lauren O'Connor, Sarah Breiter, and Sean Deryck (Catlin et al. 2018). This excavation was placed based on the presence of midden below the AD 1104 tephra (see Catlin et al. 2018 for more information and site background).

Macrobotanical and archaeofaunal remains from TP1 were analyzed over the winter and spring and the results (Cesario 2018) drove us to return to Grænagerði for another excavation to increase sample sizes. The 2018 excavation, called TP2, was placed using TP1 as a guide. The first expansion was focused on collecting archaeobotanical samples—a 1x1 meter test pit directly south of TP1. After this first 1x1 was complete, it was clear that the faunal sample would not be large enough for Cesario's dissertation and the unit was expanded east. This final expansion made the entire excavation area 2x2 meters, with TP1 as the northwestern unit.

Sampling Strategy: Seeds

Archaeobotanical analysis of the 2017 excavation at Grænagerði found twenty-three oat (*cf. Avena)* caryopses and two barley (*Horduem)* caryopses. The large number of oat seeds was surprising and has challenged our understanding of cereal production in Iceland, which drove us to return to Grænagerði to recover a more robust sample.

The first 1x1 meter unit (TP2 SW) that extended to the south of the 2017 unit (TP1) followed the same sampling strategy as the previous excavation. No sample was taken from context [101], which encompasses the root mat. All lower contexts were sampled until sterile H3 tephra or subsoil was reached. The top and bottom of contexts were taken as separate flotation samples, each filling an approximately seven-liter plastic bag. Two of these bags were filled per sample for the top and bottom of each context. For thinner contexts, two flotation sample bags were taken that covered the full vertical extent of the context.

Most of the contexts from TP2 matched up to those from TP1. Those that did not were the remobilized H3 tephra layer [107], H3 capping the charcoal pit [109], and the charcoal pit feature [110]. The previous year's excavation came down upon the remobilized H3 layer, which was believed to be the extent of the cultural layers. However, after digging through it, more cultural contexts were found and it is now understood that this is actually a layer of remobilized H3 tephra. For this year's extension units, the remobilized H3 was sampled and excavated as a separate context because it is now known to represent a separate depositional process. Additionally, a wood ash lens within context [108] was sampled separately.

This same sampling strategy was followed in the further extension east (1x2). The two 1x1 meter blocks within this new unit were labeled TP2 NE and TP2 SE and were sampled separately. This was done to keep a consistent volume of soil sampled from

the same size unit. Therefore, two approximately seven-liter bag flotation samples were taken from each context in both the NE and SE sides of the 1x2 meter unit. A single bag sample was taken from a charcoal pit feature [110] located below context [108] in the NE unit. This pit was only present in the NE unit. Additionally, a two-bag sample was taken for the NE and SE units for context [107], the remobilized H3 layer, because it was a thicker deposit in these units and allowed for a larger sample. In the NE unit of the extension, samples were taken from what was perceived as the bottom of the context. When we came down further, we found the Landnám layer, and sampled this in the NE unit. The table below (Table 1) shows the samples taken from contexts in the NE, SE and SW units.

Table 1: Samples taken from TP2 in each unit of the expanded test pit.

Contexts	SW	NE	SE
[105] Aeolian deposit with wisps of H1	Sample 1: 2 bags – full vertical of context	Sample 16: 2 bags – full vertical of context	Sample 17: 2 bags – full vertical of context
[106] Midden	Sample 3: 2 bags – Top of context (including turf lens) Sample 7: 2 bags – bottom of context	Sample 19: 2 bags – Top of context Sample 24: 2 bags – Bottom of context	Sample 20: bags – Top of context Sample 25: 2 bags – Bottom of context
[107] Remobilized H3	Sample 8: 1 bag – full vertical of context	Sample 26: 2 bags – full vertical of context	Sample 27: 2 bags – full vertical of context
[108] Midden	Sample 11: 2 bags – Top of context Sample 14: 2 bags – Ash lens Sample 15: 2 bags – Bottom of context	Sample 30: 2 bags – Top of context Sample 33: 2 bags – Bottom of context Sample 35: 1 bag – Landnam; actual bottom	Sample 31: 2 bags – Top of context Sample 34: 2 bags – Bottom of context
[110] Charcoal pit		Sample 36: 1 bag – Charcoal pit feature	

Excavation

TP2 was excavated by Melissa Ritchey, Grace Cesario, Grace Bello, and Kathryn Catlin between July 8-10, 2018. The first task was to dig out TP1 in order to follow the stratigraphy from the old unit and match contexts in TP2 Table 2.

The root mat was designated context [101] and matched with [101] in TP1. It was mostly removed with shovels. This layer was bioturbated and had AD 1104 tephra present at the bottom of the context, but it was not a clear layer. The tephra was mostly visible in the NE unit.

Context [105] is same as [102] in TP1—cryoturbated aeolian, mid orangish-brown in color, with very few inclusions. Some charcoal bits and a few small pieces of bone were present near the bottom of the

context, and it is likely that these were coming up from the midden below because of the cryoturbation.

Context [106] was a dark brownish-black midden with wood ash, charcoal, fire-crack rocked, and bits of turf mixed in as well as bone throughout. There was possible burnt turf in SW unit. The midden began as a mottled layer with ashy lenses and became more homogenous as we got closer to the bottom. Some lenses of remobilized H3 tephra were present in this context, likely upcast from the layer below. Finds from this context include white stones and a bone pin (Figure 1) found near the top of the context in the NE unit. The presence of ash and bone suggests that this deposit represents household cooking debris.

Context [107] is the remobilized H3 layer that was not given a separate context designation in the 2017 excavation. It is equal to [103] from TP1 (along with [106], see Table 2 below for context correlations). It was a light brownish-yellow, with tephra mixed in with the aeolian. Some lensing may have been the 1000 tephra (Catlin et al. 2018).

Context [108] is a midden context that is equal to [104] in TP1. This layer was filled with bone, charcoal, and wood ash and was less mottled and lighter in color than the previous midden [106]. There was an ashy lens in the SW unit that did not extend far into the other units, but that can be seen in the profile on the southwestern end. This lens was sampled separately for flotation, but was not given its own context number. There was a smaller (1x10 cm, ~1 cm thick) ashy lens in the northwest but it did not show up in the profile. In the eastern wall of the unit, on the northern end, we uncovered a large burnt log. Pieces were collected for charcoal identification. In addition to the burnt log, charcoal pieces had spread throughout the unit in context [108]. There were rocks near this log and they seem to be part of a pit feature. It is not clear how or if the log is associated with the pit feature.

Contexts [109] and [110] are parts of a charcoal pit feature present in the northeast corner of the excavation, underneath the burnt log in [108] (Figure 2). This feature is present in the profile. At the end of [108], we thought we were coming down onto the subsoil at reaching the end of the excavation; however, charcoal started popping up within a semi-circle of rocks that we could see in the midden. The rocks made the shape of a pit more obvious, and so we continued to excavate that area. We came down on a layer of H3 with small charcoal pieces [109], underneath of which was a charcoal-filled layer [110]. This context [110] was a pit-shape (deeper in the middle and more shallow on the sides) that filled in the area between the rocks on the walls of the unit. The pit was dug directly into sterile subsoil. Charcoal of various sizes filled the pit and some pieces were relatively large (~3-5 cm).

Figure 1: Bone pin from context [106]. Find #9.

TP1	TP2
101	101
102	105
103	106
	107
104	108
-	109
-	110

Table 2: Context correlation table

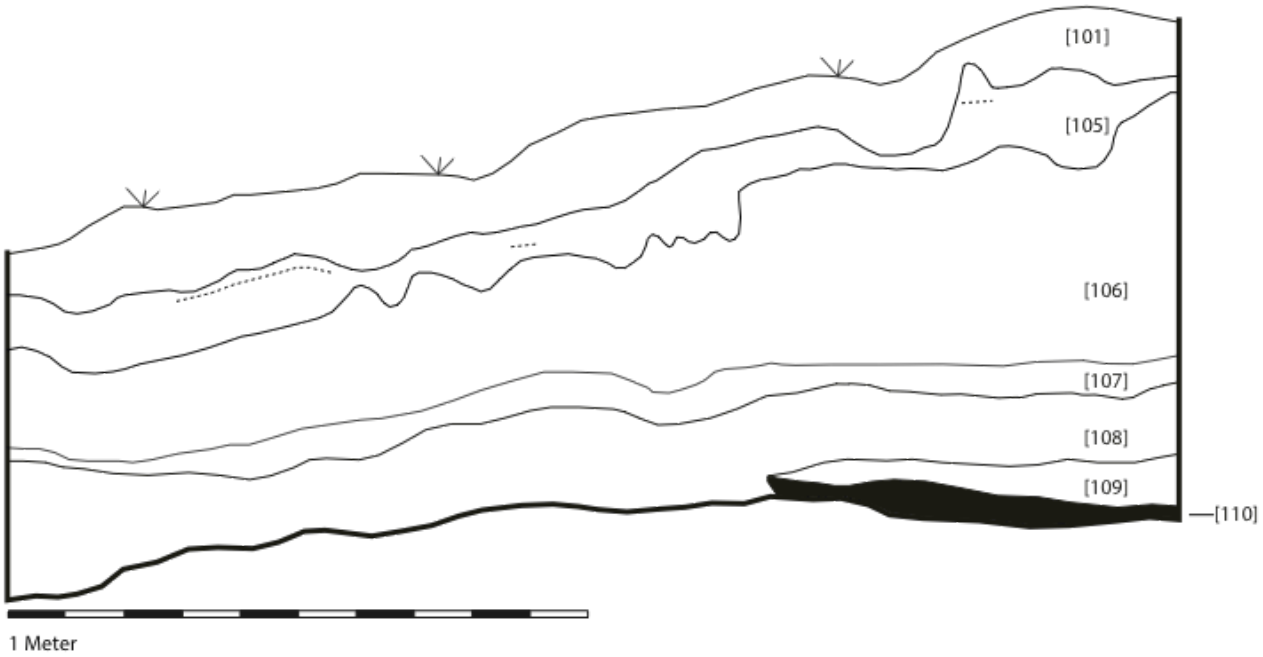
Figure 2: Charcoal pit feature (NE unit, above north arrow) in Grænagerði TP2 extension.

Profiles

Grænagerði - 447-1
TP2- North Wall

Context	Description
101	Rootmat
105	Aeolian Deposit
106	Midden
107	Remobilized H3
108	Midden
109	Remobilized H3
110	Charcoal Pit

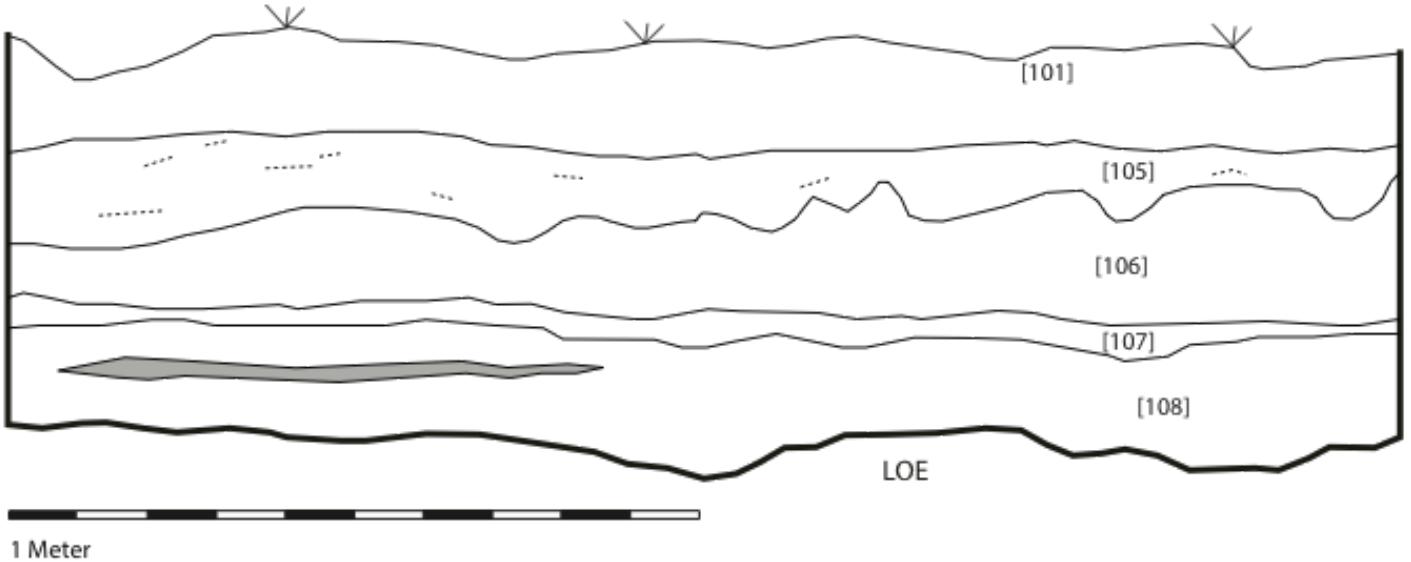
Tephra
1104
Charcoal



Grænagerði - 447-1
TP2- West Wall

Context	Description
101	Rootmat
105	Aeolian Deposit
106	Midden
107	Remobilized H3
108	Midden

Tephra
1104
Ash Lens



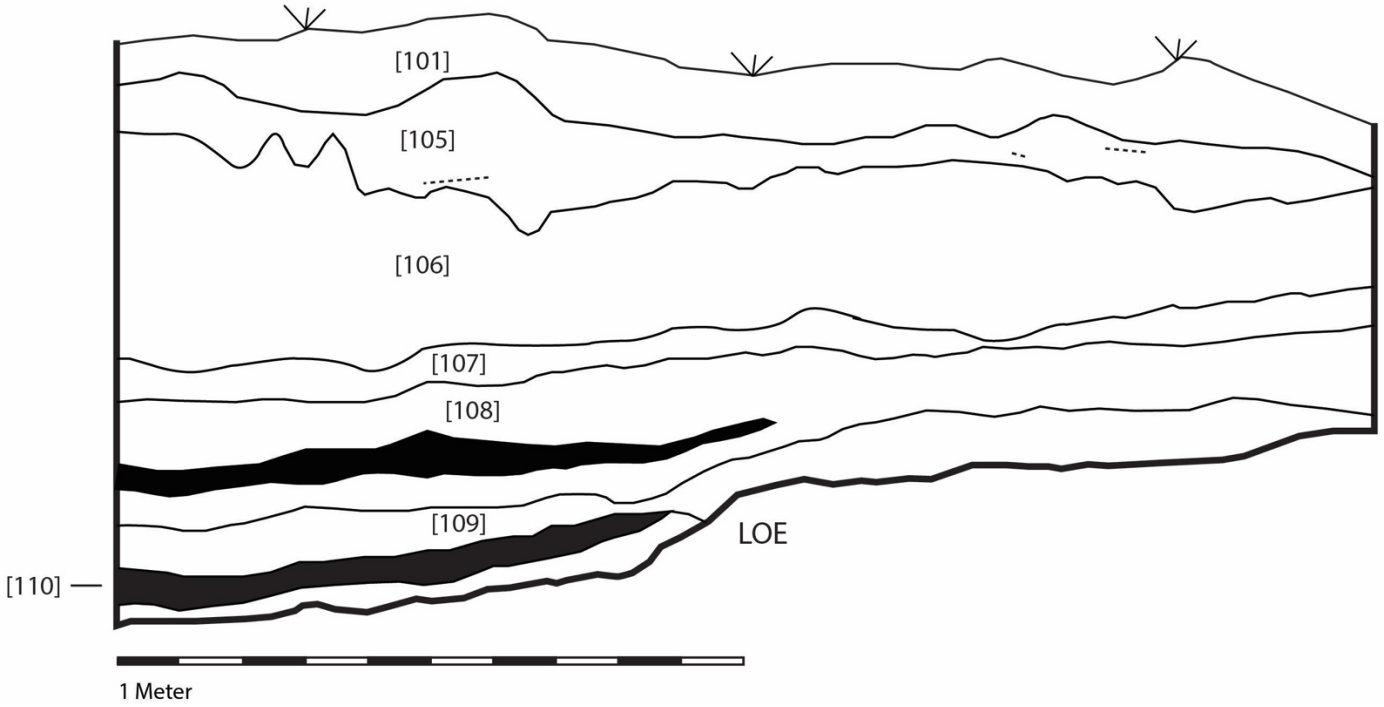
Grænagerði - 447-1
TP2- East Wall

Context	Description
101	Rootmat
105	Aeolian Deposit
106	Midden
107	Remobilized H3
108	Midden
109	Remobilized H3
110	Charcoal Pit

Tephra

1104

Charcoal



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