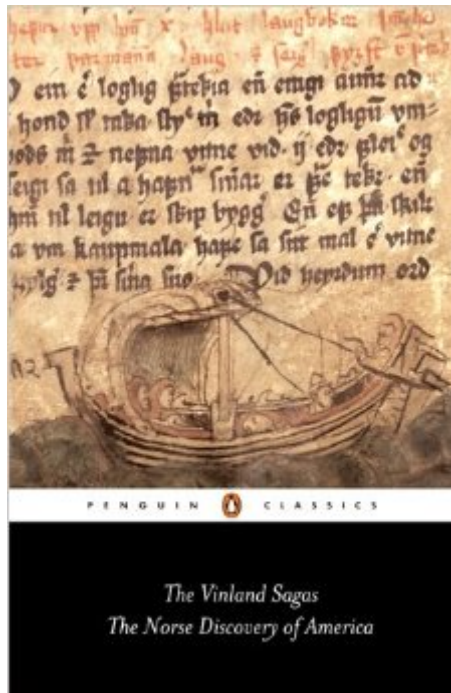


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The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery Of America (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

One of the most arresting stories in the history of exploration, these two Icelandic sagas tell of the discovery of America by Norsemen five centuries before Christopher Columbus. Together, the direct, forceful twelfth-century Graenlendinga Saga and the more polished and scholarly Eirik's Saga, written some hundred years later, recount how Eirik the Red founded an Icelandic colony in Greenland and how his son, Leif the Lucky, later sailed south to explore - and if possible exploit - the chance discovery by Bjarni Herjolfsson of an unknown land. In spare and vigorous prose they record Europe's first surprise glimpse of the eastern shores of the North American continent and the natives who inhabited them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Vinland Sagas" brings together English translations of two medieval Icelandic sagas: "Graenlendiga Saga" and "Eirik's Saga." These tales tell the story of the discovery and exploration of North America by the Norsemen in the 10th and 11th centuries. Together, they offer fascinating glimpses into a remarkable era in the history of the Americas. Translators Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson have also produced a thorough 37-page introduction which discusses the archeological evidence for the medieval Norse presence in the Americas, the historical development of the sagas themselves, and the evolution of the saga as a unique genre of literature. Maps, a chronology, and other resources further enhance this book's usefulness for students and teachers. But don't let the scholarly apparatus fool you into thinking that "The Vinland Sagas" is just

a text for the classroom. The sagas themselves, likely written in the 12th and 13th centuries, are still great reading all these hundreds of years later. With their simple, no-nonsense prose style, along with the presence of characters with such names as "Thorhall the Hunter" and "Aud the Deep-Minded," the sagas have a truly unique quality. And for those interested in the history of the Americas or in multicultural issues, these two sagas contain a wealth of tantalizing episodes and characters. Each tale reflects the conflict between Christianity and Paganism within Norse culture during that great age of exploration. Also fascinating are the accounts of the first encounters between the Norsemen and the "skraelings" (the Norse word for the indigenous inhabitants of this new world).

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