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About the Author

Magnus Magnusson is an Icelander who has been resident in Scotland for most of his life, and is well-known for his presentation of the BBC's Mastermind. He is also chairman of the Scottish National Heritage. He studied English and Old Icelandic at Oxford University.

Hermann Palsson studied Icelandic at the University of Iceland and Celtic at University College, Dublin. Formerly Professor of Icelandic at the University of Edinburgh and General Editor of the New Saga Library, he has written many books on the history and literature of medieval Iceland. He died in 2003.

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The bestselling saga of Eirik the Red, Leif the Lucky, and the first American explorers

The all-time bestselling of the sagas in Penguin Classics, The Vinland Sagas are published here in a vibrant new translation. Consisting of The Saga of the Greenlanders and Eirik the Red's Saga, they chronicle the adventures of Eirik the Red and his son, Leif Eirikson, who explored North America 500 years before Columbus. Famous for being the first-ever descriptions of North America, and written down in the early thirteenth century, they recount the Icelandic settlement of Greenland by Eirik the Red, the chance discovery by seafaring adventurers of a mysterious new land, and Eirik's son Leif the Lucky's perilous voyages to explore it.

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About the Author

Magnus Magnusson is an Icelander who has been resident in Scotland for most of his life, and is well-known for his presentation of the BBC's Mastermind. He is also chairman of the Scottish National Heritage. He studied English and Old Icelandic at Oxford University.

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Most helpful customer reviews

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Excellent new edition

By Jordan M. Poss

This is the second edition of *The Vinland Sagas* that I've purchased from the Penguin Classics series. The first, published a few decades ago, was adequate, but this new edition is well worth having an extra copy around. These translations, by Keneva Kunz, are fast-paced, clear, and easy to read.

The two sagas included here are *The Saga of the Greenlanders* and *The Saga of Eirik the Red*. Both tell of the Norse discovery of and attempts (there were more than one) to settle in North America. They differ in focus and emphasis, but tell essentially the same stories. First, Eirik the Red settled himself in Greenland. Then, when Norse sailors were blown off course and sighted more land even farther west, Eirik's son Leif decided to check it out for himself. Leif, later known as "the Lucky" after rescuing wrecked sailors, discovered a land where wild grapes and "self-sown wheat" grew and named it Vinland. He and others explored up and down the coast of Canada and New England, perhaps as far south as Manhattan. They settled in several places all along the coast and even traded with the natives. Then things turned sour.

The Vikings, many are shocked to learn, actually fought wars with the Indians. Of course, the Norse settlers won handily in every engagement, but the fighting was enough to convince them that the sheer numbers of the natives would eventually wear them down, and after several years of exploration, settlement, and farming, they packed up and returned to Iceland and Greenland. But Vinland was never forgotten.

The book is short, and the sagas even shorter--the two combined take up only 48 pages in this edition. But the book is rounded out with an informative--if sometimes dry--introduction and notes by Gisli Sigurdsson. Sigurdsson mentions several instances from later records in which people were said to have sailed to Vinland, including a man cutting lumber who returned from his trip and a bishop who did not. Also included are illustrations and diagrams of Icelandic farms and Norse ships that have been lifted from the Sagas of Icelanders collection.

Perhaps the most helpful appendix in the book is the map section. There are six pages of maps and a two-page table setting out scholars' guesses on the locations of places in the sagas. For example, is Vinland actually Newfoundland? Or perhaps Prince Edward Island? The maps themselves are labeled according to Sigurdsson's suggestions, which certainly helps while reading the sagas.

But even if you aren't going to look at the introduction or back matter, the sagas themselves are well worth reading. And of course, if you are interested in learning more about Leif the Lucky and the New World's first European settlers, this edition of the *Vinland Sagas*, with its strong translation and good supplementary material, is the one to have.

Highly recommended.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Ancient Mariners

By PA reviewer

Gisli Sigurdsson provides an informative introduction to *The Saga of the Greenlanders & Eirik the Red's Saga*, and Keneva Kunz provides an accessible translation of the sagas. There are useful appendices showing diagrams of the likely exploration routes, family trees, ships, and farms the Vikings associated with these sagas would have used.

It was fun to finally read these sagas. I always knew that "Leif Landed First" -- that Scandinavians were the first to discover North America and interact with the indigenous people of North America back in 1000 A.D. However, actually reading the sagas really drives home just how comfortable the Vikings must have been with sea travel. It was nothing for them to constantly move about year to year from Norway to Iceland to

Ireland to Greenland to Vinland etc., and various combinations thereof. I am duly impressed.

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By Amazon Customer

great value

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