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THE AMERICAN VECTOR OF VIKINGS' SEA CAMPAIGN

At the beginning of 1493 Christopher Columbus told the Europeans about his first travel to America. But he wasn't the first European who had seen the coast of an amazing New World. The team of Scandinavians had reached America 400 years earlier.

The relevance of the subject is caused by the question if a Viking explorer travelled from Greenland to a modern-day America in the 11th century beating Christopher Columbus by nearly 400 years.

The aim of the article is to elucidate, generalize and determine the backgrounds and consequences of discovering North America by Vikings.

This subject was researched by such scientists as Heather O'Donoghue (professor of Old Norse Oxford University), Gisli Sigurdsson (historian), Vilborg Davidsolottir (writer and historian) and many others.

It is known that it was the age when the Vikings ruled. They were brave, bold and adventurous and lived in the country we now know as Scandinavia. One of them was Leif Erikson himself the son of another intrepid explorer Erik the Red. Eric was born on the west coast of Norway. His nickname Erik the Red probably referred to the colour of his hair. He had already spent some years in Iceland, but in the 980 AD he led an expedition to a new territory, establishing a settlement there. Erik the Red called this new land Greenland. He figured that giving it an attractive name would make it seem like a desirable place to live. When Eric had a son he was called Leif Erikson in keeping with the Viking tradition of adding the word son to the father's name. But Leif inherited more than just his father's name. He had adventure and exploration in his blood. Furthermore his father taught him the necessary skills to be an explorer, leader and navigator. And so it was that at the age of 25 Leif Erikson set sail with a crew of 35 men to explore the sea even further to the west going well beyond Greenland. He was sailing through uncharted water without maps or a compass. It would be a journey of unrivaled discovery and one that would take its leader to immortality. Eventually Erikson landed in a place he called "Vinland" and that was apart of what we now call North America.

Erikson's achievement was celebrated for hundreds of years in Norse legends and stories [2, p. 62].

But many people doubted that it had really happened. Was it true that Viking could have beaten Columbus by 400 years? Doubts about Erikson's discovery were finally dispelled in 1960.

That was when the modern-day explorers Helge and Ann Ingstand identified a North settlement at the northern tip of Newfoundland in what is now Canada. The site has the remains of nine houses that are unmistakably Nordic in their design. Explorers also established that the remains dated back from around 1000 AD exactly the time when Erikson's voyage had taken place and they found artifacts on the site which further proved the truth of Erikson's story [1, p. 74].

So Leif Erikson has now taken his rightful place in the world history. In the United States his achievement is commemorated every year on October, 9. For it does indeed seem to be true Leif Erikson the Viking was the first European to set foot in America.

LITERATURE

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