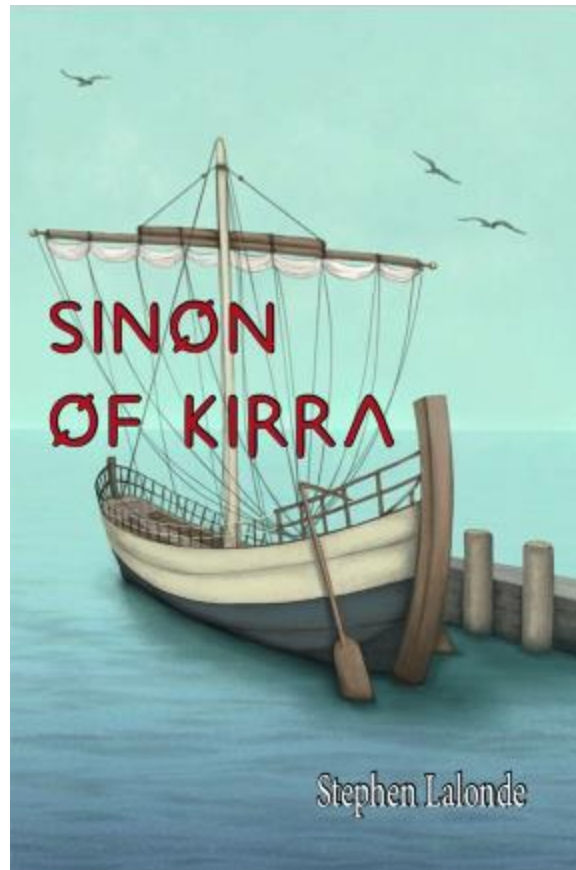


Sinon of Kirra



By Stephen Lalonde

Reviewed by Esther J. Hildahl

Sinon of Kirra begins in 612 BCE (Before the Christian Era), the last year of the 41st Olympiad in Ancient Greece.

Sinon, age sixteen, and Mentu, his Nubian servant and best friend, decide to leave their village of Kirra and embark on a journey to find a golden fleece at the end of the Black Sea. Soon they join Captain Aristomachos and his crew on the ship *Amphitrite*. When the wind doesn't blow enough to fill the sails of the ship, they spend their time rowing, which builds up their arm muscles and makes them strong. But first, they had to learn to oar together in rhythm with the rest of the crew.

On the ship they meet Strymon who is a storyteller and becomes their friend. Often, they and the crew enjoy listening to Strymon tell exciting stories about their Greek gods and goddesses. Sailing from island to island they have many adventures, including learning how to get a golden fleece, which was very interesting, and experiencing the devastation of being shipwrecked.

When I was in high school, I enjoyed reading books about Greek and Roman mythology, so this book was a fun read for me. Local author Lalonde has created a well-written story with

believable characters that is never boring and has a great ending. I liked that the author included an appendix that listed the characters in the story. And I liked the glossary that tells about the gods and goddesses and other interesting facts about Greek mythology. I recommend this book to anyone who likes to read about long ago, the age of sail, and adventures into the unknown. Also, if you like this story, you can continue reading about Sinon and Mentu's adventures in *Mentu the Nubian*.

Reviewed by Sue Eller

The setting is ancient Greece, before the time of Christ. With the blessing and encouragement of his father, 16-year-old Sinon sets out alone on a pilgrimage to Delphi. He desires to ask, "What does my future hold for me?" He walks the road from Kirra to Delphi, leading a sacrificial goat and wondering if he will even be allowed to ask his question of Apollo. He is successful in gaining an audience in the temple, but the answer comes out in a strange language and needs to be translated by the priest. Through the translator, Apollo asks questions in reply to Sinon's query. "What will you find at the end of the Black Sea? A Golden Fleece?" the Pythia (priest) says.

Puzzled, Kirra leaves the goat as payment and walks back home. He ponders along the way what he should do, and his father offers to arrange passage for him and Sinon's servant Mentu on a ship which is to sail to the Black Sea. Thus begins the adventure of Sinon and Mentu, and the cementing of their relationship and their friendship.

Lalonde masterfully weaves the culture and practices of the time into this coming-of-age tale. It is full of adventure, family, challenges, love, and loss. It is steeped in the traditions of the time, yet it is also a timeless tale of how a boy becomes a man and finds his way in the world.

Reviewed by Elena S. Smith

Stephen Lalonde's book transported me to Ancient Greece, a distant era and land that initially promised an exploration of exotic customs and mythological influences. At the outset, I anticipated an immersive journey into a world shaped by legendary gods and heroes. And that was all there. However, as I delved deeper, I experienced a poignant realization—both uplifting and disheartening—that despite the passage of 2,600 years, human nature and society remain strikingly unchanged. Parents then, as now, loved and worried over their children, while the younger generation searched for meaning and their place in the world. Yet, the enduring struggles of humanity—ethics and morality, racism, gender discrimination, and wars driven by power—persist as grim constants, defying the progress one might expect over millennia.

Lalonde's vivid and realistic portrayal of Ancient Greece challenged my once-idealized vision of it as a beacon of freedom and democracy. Instead, it prompted deep reflection on the unsettling parallels between past and present, leaving me with a lingering question: *Why?*



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