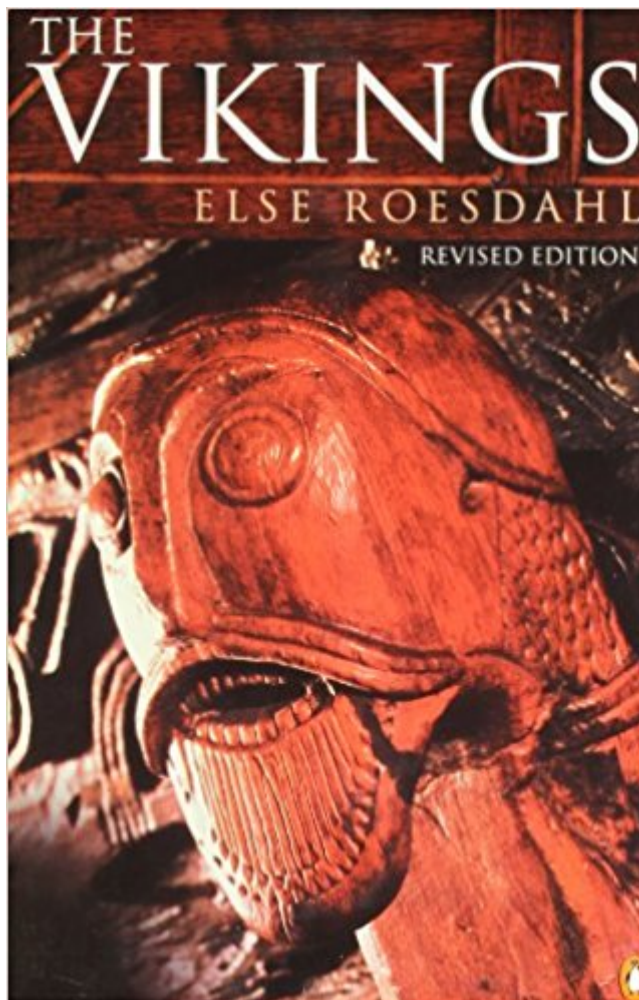


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The Vikings: Revised Edition



Synopsis

Far from being just 'wild, barbaric, axe-wielding pirates', the Vikings created complex social institutions, oversaw the coming of Christianity to Scandinavia and made a major impact on European history through trade, travel and far-flung consolidation. This encyclopedic study brings together the latest research on Viking art, burial customs, class divisions, jewellery, kingship, poetry and family life. The result is a rich and compelling picture of an extraordinary civilisation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A survey of Viking civilization, originally published in Denmark (1987), concentrating on the period c.750-c.1050. One chapter covers sources, and about one-third of the book deals with Viking expansion into Russia, Normandy, the British Isles, Iceland, Greenland, etc. (Only a few pages touch upon activities in North America.) Most of the book surveys the geography, people, society, religion, art, etc., of the Vikings' Scandinavian homelands, stressing the complexity of their civilization. The Vikings is a sober, factual, accurate, though somewhat pedestrian account accessible to laypersons and reflecting recent scholarship. Public or academic libraries needing an up-to-date (post-1980) survey should acquire it. Roesdahl is the author of Viking Age Denmark (State Mutual Bk., 1982)-- J.F. Husband, Framingham State Coll., Mass. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Danish

A great first book to begin ones journey with the ancient Vikings fascinating age of expansion from the 700s to 1100s. Thanks to their Vikings ships, they covered great geographical areas by crossing oceans and sailing up river routes. Sure they were ferocious warriors to start with when exploring new lands, but they loved peace and harmony as well as evidenced by their successful integration with natives through matrimony, conversion to Christianity, peaceful trading and adopting local customs and assuming local names. Thanks to archeology and artefacts scattered in all the lands they covered, we know today they were so well integrated in the lands they ventured to that their graves intermingled with the graves of the natives. An insight into the ancient Vikings will throw great light onto what we witness of Scandinavian societies today. Their pride and joy is deeply rooted in their path to Christianity and the bridges they built with the natives of many lands.

I was looking for a good introduction to the Viking Age, having been interested in the Vikings since I was a kid I knew a lot of sporadic information on the Vikings but I lacked a general understanding of the Viking Age. The Vikings provides a broad and engaging introduction to the period. At times it may feel like a somewhat scholarly read but I highly recommend it for anyone interested in the Viking Age. However, the entire Viking Age is a very wide subject and hard to cover in a single volume and due to this the author must decide where to go into detail and where to brush over subjects with a broad stroke. I was slightly disappointed that it seemed to focus more on Denmark than the other Scandinavian countries. It went into substantial detail about various Danish expeditions and settlements but provided less information on Norwegian and Swedish activities. Despite that, I found it to be a comprehensive guide to the period.

There was a lot in this book that I didn't know about the Vikings - of course, I knew the usual stuff - Normandy etc, but it was a revelation to read how extensive their travels were into Asia and the Med. The story is supported by plenty of pictures of artifacts recovered from burial sites, but more impressive from the "hoards" of silver, gold, and coins being dug up even after this book was published. Two disappointments: I didn't think the author did more than touch upon the fact that the Vikings were in what is now Newfoundland long before John Cabot or Christopher Columbus. Nor does she seem knew of or understood the real reason for the outsurge of the Vikings and the eventual slowdown and withering of their colonies in Greenland and the failure to make a foothold in what is now Canada. The most probable cause, I have been led to believe from climate studies, is because of the growth of population which demanded expansion in the period of warmer weather in the higher latitudes. And the most likely reason for the withering is probably the onset of the Little

Ice Age in the 12th-13th Century. Nor is there a satisfactory explanation why the landings in Newfoundland did not mature into a colony. Once again, the most likely explanation is not mentioned - the Vikings were probably outnumbered by "skraelings" as they called the native inhabitants. Both sides were vigorous fighters with approximately the same level of weaponry - bows arrows, spears. The natives probably did not have metal weapons but they must have outnumbered the Vikings who strayed into their territory. I am not sure what the real answer is but the author gives little consideration to what would have been a momentous colonization had it succeeded. By the time the white man came again he was equipped with weapons that outclassed any the native Americans had.

This book covers just about everything about the vikings from their language, art, religion, government, ships, clothing, expeditions all over Europe, weapons and warfare, homes and other aspects of these northern people. The author opens up your eyes to the fact that the vikings were civilized just as much as other people in those times which helps give you a new respect for these people. It's just amazing how these people went all over Europe, the Middle East and all the way to North America centuries before Christopher Columbus and spread their culture and in turn took aspects from other cultures back to Scandinavia. There are maps which show where the vikings travelled and there are a bunch of pictures of weapons, ships, burial mounds, artwork and rune stones. There are also two rune alphabets that they used for writing. Some things I didn't like was that some of the subjects were rushed through and not too informative as they could have been like very little is mentioned about the military aspects of the vikings like offensive and defensive tactics whether it be about a king's army or raiding pirates. They also don't mention that much about the vikings in North America or the Middle East which I found to be very disappointing to say the least. I guess that there was so much to cover that the author couldn't fit everything in. Overall this is a good introductory book about the vikings at a very low price. So if you want to read about the true vikings and not stereotypes about vikings being mindless, dirty heathen killers wearing horned helmets then you should get this book.

Well written. Very detailed and descriptive. The Vikings, by Else Roesdahl, reveals how Vikings were not just warlords that pillaged and plundered. They had trading colonies and were economically and politically elite. The Vikings conveys how the people had an influence on most of the world and continues with this influence to this very day. Reviewed by James David
Author of The Coast Guard Oracle

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