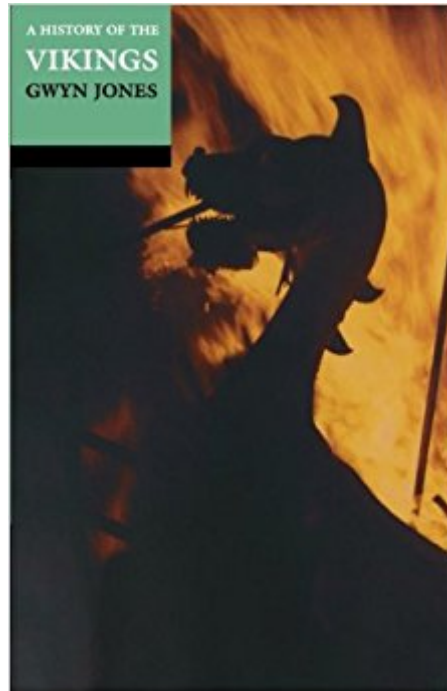




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A History Of The Vikings



Synopsis

"An utterly splendid book, quite the most brilliantly written, balanced, and explanative general work on the Vikings ever to appear in English or in any language."-- Scandinavian Studies
The subject of this book is the Viking realms, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, their civilization and culture, and their many sided achievements at home and abroad. A highly readable narrative follows the development of these Northern peoples--the Nordmenn--from their origins and the legendary pre-history to the military triumphs of Canute and the defeat of Harald Hardr di at Stamford Bridge in 1066, which symbolically ended the Viking age. The book recounts the Vikings' exploits in war, trade, and colonization: the assault on Western Christendom; the trading and military ventures to the Slav and Muslim worlds and to Byzantium; and the western voyages of discovery and settlement to Greenland, Iceland, and America. Numerous photographs, maps, and drawings contribute to Gwyn Jones's rounded portrait of Viking civilization and vividly evoke the importance in their culture of religion, art, and seafaring.

Book Information

Paperback: 552 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 2 edition (July 19, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0192801341

ISBN-13: 978-0192801340

Product Dimensions: 7.5 x 1.4 x 4.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 65 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #429,497 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #166 in  Books > History > Europe > Scandinavia #16763 in  Books > History > World

Customer Reviews

"Excellent revision and useful for both graduates and undergraduates."--Benjamin T. Hudson, Pennsylvania State University
"In this revised edition of his 1968 volume, hailed as the definitive study of the three hundred years during which Scandinavians changed the face of medieval Europe, Jones has updated his text to incorporate the latest scholarly findings from both Europe and North America."--The Philadelphia Inquirer
"Excellent survey - in-depth and well balanced."--Cassandra Potts, Middlebury College

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Professor Jones is a master of the history of the Vikings, and anyone wanting to know about them will be glad they got this book. It goes into lots of details about everything: culture, religion, wars and battles, dynastic arguments and of course, sagas. What I like the best about Jones' book is that his sense of humor comes through and you always feel as if he is not taken in by any particular theory but is willing to look at all of them. He presents evidence fairly and thoroughly and there are many photos and drawings throughout the book. I would say that this book is very much needed if one is to delve further into Viking history and culture. There is a fine list of sources at the end but unfortunately, some have not been translated for us English speakers yet, such as *Islendabok* and others. The footnotes are also quite informative and Jones shows that he has done a thorough background reading for his subject. Highly recommend to the beginning student of history to the person who just wants a good picture of what life was like for the Vikings up to the 1400s.

Jones' *A History of the Vikings* is epic in scope, detailing not only the political history of Scandinavia, but also the cultural, economic and social history of the region. Jones begins with the pre-historic record of Sweden, Denmark and Norway, discussing their geography and how it shaped and influenced culture before focusing on the period of history most associate with Scandinavia, the "viking age" between 750 - 1100. In writing about the vikings, Jones provides so much detail that it is at times overwhelming - the petty rivalries and infighting between lesser nobles, while relevant to scholars and those interested in such minutiae was oftentimes distracting from the larger historical picture. That said, Jones shows the complicated variety of forces that led to viking exploration, conquest and settlement. Everything from details of the construction of the long ships to details maps of exploration and various ideas on navigation are presented. Abundant illustrations and maps of sites and the layout of viking settlements in Iceland and Greenland give detail to the sophistication of their society. Of course, no history of the vikings would be complete without a discussion of the raids that is so often associated with this group, which Jones shows from a variety of primary sources; historical context is provided around not only the internal forces that pushed the vikings westward, but also the climatological and sociological forces that enabled the vikings to be successful in their forays. It is a very dense book, rich with information. Those with an interest in medieval Europe in general will want to skim or skip to the relevant parts - which is rewarding and can be done easily given the clarity of the organization of the text. Historians or readers interested in all aspects of these people (or of this place and time) will similarly find much to relish here given the

tremendous amount of information Jones provides. A first-rate history, strongly recommended.

I want to begin by saying that this is a very good book. Jones provides a small library of sources/continued reading and to say this is an information dense book is to vastly understate the matter. Potential buyers should know, however, that this is not so much a book that one would read as a means of relaxation: it is a book you study. There are many small details Jones does not explicitly elaborate on, expecting the reader to either have previous knowledge of this field, or to look up some basic information themselves. Some might also find her somewhat archaic vernacular to be a challenge in itself. That being said, if you're genuinely interested in Scandinavian history, I can hardly think of a better book for jumping in.

For a historical book it is incredibly easy to read and full of interesting information! I can barely put it down and it has inspired me to look into further information regarding the Vikings!

This book seems to me a thorough history, but I am no expert. Subjects of interest are broken down and described separately. There aren't many pictures, but it does have a few black-and-white maps. Some of the reading is heady, but sticks to history and goes into a good amount of detail. If you don't like to read long pages of information and prefer pictures, this may not be the book for you. I bought another Norsemen book to supplement this one, and that is what I suggest. If you only have a passing interest in Vikings, this is probably not the book for you.

Gwynn Jones traces the origins of the various viking communities and their settlements, with the Danes making inroads into England and France, the Norwegians into North England, Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, Greenland, and America, and the Swedes into Russia. I was particularly interested in the account of the Arab traveler Ibn Fadlan who describes the vikings he found in Russia as "tall as date palms". In addition, Ibn Fadlan's accounts depicts a culture that appeared to him as barbaric. "A man will have sexual intercourse with his slave girl while his companion looks on." In the event of the death of such a viking, his slave girl (after lying with her master's companions) then is ritually killed so that she might follow her master into the afterlife. The deceased viking, his sacrificed slave girl, and whatever else, is then burned in a longship.

A much drier read than anticipated. Extremely detailed.

I love to read, but this is no easy book. It took me a lot longer than expected to read through it, but great and in depth. If you got a passion brewing about vikings then give it a try. It can get a bit stagnated at times though.

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