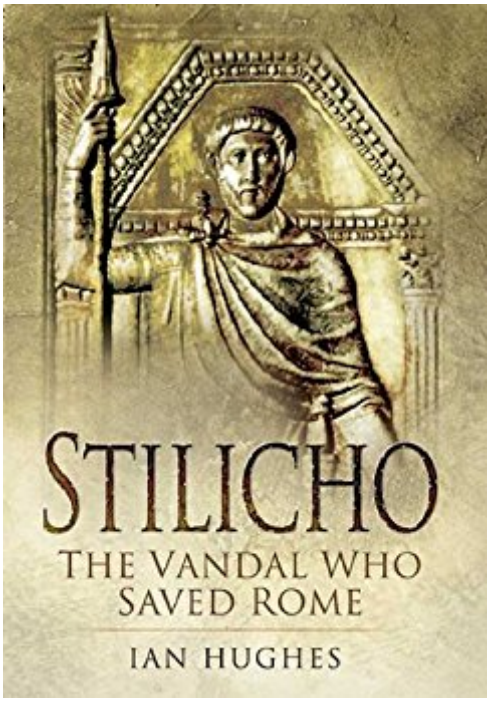
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Stilicho: The Vandal Who Saved Rome



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Synopsis

The period of history in which Stilicho lived was one of the most turbulent in European history. The Western Empire was finally giving way under pressure from external threats, especially from Germanic tribes crossing the Rhine and Danube, as well as from seemingly ever-present internal revolts and rebellions.Ian Hughes explains how a Vandal (actually Stilicho had a Vandal father and Roman mother) came to be given almost total control of the Western Empire and describes his attempts to save both the Western Empire and even Rome itself from the attacks of Alaric the Goth and other barbarian invaders.Stilicho is one of the major figures in the history of the Late Roman Empire and his actions following the death of the emperor Theodosius the Great in 395 may have helped to divide the Western and Eastern halves of the Roman Empire on a permanent basis. Yet he is also the individual who helped maintain the integrity of the West before the rebellion of Constantine III in Britain and the crossing of the Rhine by a major force of Vandals, Sueves and Alans - both in AD 406 - set the scene for both his downfall and execution in 408 and the later disintegration of the West. Despite his role in this fascinating and crucial period of history, there is no other full-length biography of him in print.

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Customer Reviews

This is a decent study of the late Roman Empire focused on Stilicho, who was the highest military leader of the Western Empire from 395 ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ 408 AD under the Emperor Honorius (9 September 384 ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ 15 August 423).The period in which Stilicho lived was one of the most turbulent in European history. The Western Empire was finally giving way under pressure from external threats, especially from Germanic tribes crossing the Rhine and Danube, as well as from seemingly ever-present internal revolts and rebellions.At the same time his brother Arcadius (377/378 ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ 1 May 408) was ruling the Eastern part of the Empire, strongly dominated by a series of powerful ministers and by his wife, Aelia Eudoxia.For non-historians you definitely need to keep a print of the Theodosian dynasty by the hand as well as a good historical atlas and an overview of the organization of the later Roman army. Otherwise you might get lost in the complexity of family, geography, military campaigns etc.Stilicho, half Vandal, was married to Serena, the niece and adopted daughter of Emperor Theodosius I (the Great) and considered himself as the protector of the legacy (including the children) of that Emperor. When Theodosius died (17 January 395), his very sons were appointed as Emperors of the West (Honorius) and the East (Arcadius).The book gives an exhaustive overview of the military problems the Empire was struggling with: the attacks of Alaric the Goth (which who Stilicho had a love/hate relationship), the rebellion of Constantine III in Britain and the crossing of the Rhine by a major force of Vandals, Sueves and Alans - both in AD 406 and with the looming threat of the Huns.Also the complex and sometimes difficult relationship of Stilicho and the Roman Senate, the sometimes aggressive strive between both parts of the Empire and the role of protagonists such as Galla Placidia (a major force in Roman politics for most of her life) and other protagonists ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ mostly military commanders - are well represented in the book.One negative remark: the constant back and forth between topic areas breaks up the narrative flow, and also results in the reader losing his/her place because the subchapters tend to wander from the main topic.My advice to (future) readers of the book, in order to get a good overview of the history of the Late Antiquity is to read the following books in order:1. Lenski, Noel. Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D. (Transformation of the Classical Heritage). University of California Press; 1 edition (March 3, 2003)2. Freeman, Charles. AD 381: Heretics, Pagans and the Christian State. Vintage Digital (February 15, 2011)3. Hughes, Ian. Stilicho: The Vandal Who Saved Rome. Pen & Sword (June 19, 2010).4. Hughes, Ian. Aetius: Attila’s Nemesis. Pen and Sword Military (July 19, 2012).5.

Kelly, Christopher. Theodosius II (Cambridge Classical Studies). Cambridge University Press; 1 edition (July 31, 2013)6. Hughes, Ian. Patricians and Emperors: The Last Rulers of the Western Roman Empire. Pen and Sword Military (September 30, 2015).For those who think that 6 books a little bit too much, there are also good works, summarizing the whole story in one book, such as:1. Heather, Peter. The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians. Oxford University Press; 1 edition (December 1, 2005)or2. Ward-Perkins, Bryan. The Fall of Rome: And the End of Civilization. OUP Oxford (July 13, 2006)

This is a fascinating study of the late Roman Empire focused on Stilicho, who was the leader of the Western Empire under the Emperor Honorius from 395 - 408AD. This is a key period of time of the Western Roman Empire leading to its fall later that century. The book does an excellent job of laying out key reasons why that happened (shared briefly below).The author starts the book by laying out the primary sources of that period providing the pros and cons for each source. This is something that I've seen in other books on the Roman Empire but never done quite this well.The author then provides the lead in to Stilicho's period: the battle of Adrianople, the reign of Theodosius, the two civil wars, the battle of Frigidius (which was a lot more intensive and resulted in a lot more casualties especially in the Western Roman Empire than earlier authors mention), and the death of Theodosius.The book then lays out a chronology of the events of Stilicho's period of leadership including his campaigns and battles with Alaric and his troops, the destruction of Radagasius and his invaders, the invasion of Gaul by the Vandals, et al in early 407AD, and the arrival and fight with Constantine III who took over Gaul, Britain and Spain in 407AD, ending with the events leading to Stilicho's fall and death.Through the tracing of these events, some common themes are presented: (1) the Roman army of this period was small, often fewer than 10,000 Roman troops were used in a battle (and in a couple of instances 5-6,000 were the size of the Roman forces - which is backed by facts listing the units) enhanced by barbarian foederati; (2) Stilicho had to beg the Senate for money and recruits to support the army and it became impossible to replace troops making it necessary to be very conservative in battle (due to concern with irreplaceable losses); (3) parts of the Western Empire were left undefended or poorly defended, e.g. Northern Gaul, Britain, Spain, due to the shortage of troops, and (4) puling the troops from these areas impacted the local economy negatively - closing of farms, and reduction of population and importance of cities, e.g. Trier.These four points are a fascinating, detailed study of key elements to why the Western Roman Empire fell 45-70 years later. The analysis that the author provides to lead to these conclusions is very logical and powerful. This makes the book very valuable in my opinion to any reader interested in this

period of the Roman Empire.

I enjoyed reading this book very much. Having read quite a bit on Late Roman history I think this book gives a fresh perspective on Stilicho and his life. I look forwad to the author's book on Aetius.

A good read and clarification of a few historical assumptions. It portrayed Stilicho's life in full detail, rising and falling on a grand landscape of changing political and military alliance. A master class in loyalty under duress while holding back the tide.

Ian Hughes paints a vivid picture of the life and time of Stilicho, as well as other lesser known Roman generals from the late empire - his book on Belesarius being my favorite.

Enjoying the book, but it gets really technical. Just want to hear about this man and what it was like for him under Honorius

Very informative.

I was really looking forward to this book. It was a topic and a period of history that I was interested in and wanted to know more about. Unfortunately, I didn't like this book. The author spends too much space discussing and refuting ancient sources and I really didn't care about who said what about obscure events. I also didn't care for the repeated use and reference to Latin terms and titles This was annoying and slowed down the narrative because I had to look up the English translation. The author never connected with me and as a result I was disappointed,especially since I was really looking forward to this book.

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