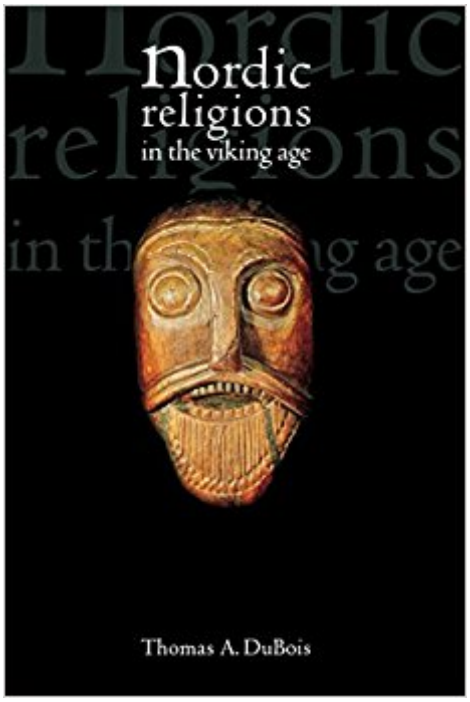
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Nordic Religions In The Viking Age (The Middle Ages Series)



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Synopsis

The popular image of the Viking as a horn-helmeted berserker plying the ocean in a dragon-headed long boat is firmly fixed in history. Imagining Viking "conquerors" as much more numerous, technologically superior, and somehow inherently more warlike than their neighbors has overshadowed the cooperation and cultural exchange which characterized much of the Viking Age. In actuality, the Norse explorers and traders were players in a complex exchange of technology, customs, and religious beliefs between the ancient pre-Christian societies of northern Europe and the Christian-dominated nations surrounding the Mediterranean. DuBois examines Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, and Mediterranean traditions to locate significant Nordic parallels in conceptions of supernatural beings, cults of the dead, beliefs in ghosts, and magical practices. These beliefs were actively held alongside Christianity for many years, and were finally incorporated into the vernacular religious practice. The Icelandic sagas reflect this complex process in their inclusion of both Christian and pagan details. This work differs from previous examinations in its inclusion of the Christian thirteenth century as part of the evolution of Nordic religions from localized pagan cults to adherents of a larger Roman faith.Thomas DuBois unravels for the first time the history of the Nordic religions in the Viking Age and shows how these ancient beliefs and their oral traditions incorporated both a myriad of local beliefs and aspects of foreign religions, most notably Christianity.

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Customer Reviews

"This is a sophisticated, well-written, and convincing reconception of the nature of religious change in the early medieval world."Ã¢â ¬â •Journal of Ecclesiastical History"A seminal study of Nordic religions that future scholars will not be able to avoid."Ã¢â ¬â •Church History

Thomas A. DuBois is Associate Professor in the Department of Scandinavian Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin. He is the author of Finnish Folk Poetry and the Kalevala.

I bought this book thinking it would focus on pre-Christian Norse Heathenism and was a bit surprised to find a heavy focus on the Celtic, Byzantine and Roman Christianity of the Middle Ages. At first I was a bit annoyed by this but as the author points out these often conflicting and competing branches of Christianity were very much an influence during the Viking Age and it is necessary to understand this influence when interpreting the Heathen Lore, since Snorri Sturluson and all the anonymous authors of the Icelandic Sagas were Christians. None of the Lore comes down to us from Heathen authors and every one of the Christian authors who wrote of Heathen times and practices had an agenda of defaming Heathenism. In this light "Nordic Religions of the Viking Age" is very illuminating although it was not what I expected when I ordered the book. An interesting and eye-opening read overall but those uninterested in Medieval Christianity or looking for an overview of Norse Heathenism might look elsewhere.

The book is a fresh perspective on early medieval religions in northern Europe, and the author made good use of a wide range of data. A small criticism is that he misuses "Nordic". More important criticism are that the book gives a large amount of information, the analysis is logical throughout, but the case of mutual influence of Northern European cultures is not so convincing in the latter half or third of the book, where Mr. DuBois tries to convince us that seith and Sami shamanism have a lot in common. The argument is very informative even where I see the opposite implication in the data. The book is written as a corrective to the common tendency to analyze data on early medieval northern European religions as if they were all "pure" and isolated. In fact, it is interesting that people would (by conscious will) maintain very distinct ethnic identities with as much intercultural contact as this book shows -- but that is a topic for another study.

I ordered this book because of a Viking history course I was in this fall semester. I never thought I

would use it as much as I did! This book is amazingly detailed without being a hard read. The text flowed well and I learned a great deal; also, I ended up with an 'A' in the course and received lots of feed back about how informative my essays were, largely due to this book. I do not often say that a text is definitive on any topic, but this one is well done that I think this book has earned it.

This is a great reference, just what I was looking for and just what I wanted. I'm very pleased with this purchase. It's a bit dry, a bit dense, and there are moments where it doesn't hold up as well, or makes a call based on dubious evidence, but for the most part it is exceptional scholarship. This is a fantastic book for the library of the academic Norse pagan, but you'll doubtless find this book derided by those who find that their imagination of pagan practice is rudely rebuffed by the reality presented here.

This book covers the interaction between the varioius Nordic cultures, the Finns, the Sami and continental Europeans during the period from about 800 to 1300 CE. It covers the ancient pagan religions and their relationships and the relationships between the Christian converts of the north and other Europeans.The chapters are as followsPreface: Introduction: Communities of Belief1 : The Cultures and History of the Viking Age North2 : Religions in the Viking Age: Contexts and Concepts for Analysis3 : Gods, Guides, and Guardians: Spiritual Aids4. : Visitors from Beyond: Death, Afterlife, and the Problem of Ghosts5. : Concepts of Health and Healing6. : The Intercultural Dimension of the Seidr Ritual7. : The Coming of the Cross: Religious and Artistic Effects8. : Achieving Faith: Christian Themes and Pagan FunctionThe author covers the relationship between the pagan religions of the people of the North, the shamanistic beliefs of the Sami and the Christian beliefs of Europe and the newly converted Norse.I would have liked a more in depth discussion of the ancient pagan, shamanistic and medieval Christian beliefs but the author does give us tantelizing tid bits. For example, I was unaware that the Cross had sush an important part in Medieval Christianity including visions of the Cross speaking, the Cross as an anulet of protection and other functions that it does not have in present day Christiantiy. The relationship between pagan beliefs and Christian beliefs was interesting in as much as they existed simultaneously.It is not a book to read for discovering the beliefs and details of the religions covered but is very interesting in its discussion of the cultural interactions between the groups discussed. There were trade relations and hostile raiding relations between the groups and this was also reflected in their religious relations. Groups of Christians fought other Christians and the same with the non-Christians. The author gives an interesting picture of the era.

A great read! Buy it!

Very academic

Wonderful book and Wonderful service!

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