



The Vikings: Wolves of War (Critical Issues in World and International History)

Martin Arnold

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This concise and balanced history traces the 300-year saga of the pirates and warlords who poured out of Scandinavia between the eighth and eleventh centuries, terrorizing, conquering, and ultimately settling vast tracts of land throughout Europe. Undaunted by the might of the Arab caliphates and the Byzantine Empire, they founded Russia, originated the bloodline that came to rule France, and created a North Sea empire that included England. They also established settlements across the North Atlantic, notably in Iceland and Greenland, and their adventurous spirit and extraordinary seafaring skills led them to explore and briefly build colonies in North America. These were the Vikings, initially ferocious pagan warriors seeking land and booty under the banners of their gods, but eventually belligerent Christian kings commanding vast armies.

Martin Arnold provides a lively and accessible account of the early medieval period that became known as the Viking Age. Drawing on rich literary and archaeological source material, the first half of the book focuses especially on Viking culture, religious beliefs, and battle tactics and weaponry. The second half ranges over the four main theaters of Viking activity—the British Isles, Western Europe, the Slavic regions, and the North Atlantic settlements. Arnold vividly illustrates the two faces of the Vikings: on the one hand, savage, greedy, and implacable; on the other, adventurous, innovative, and artistic.

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