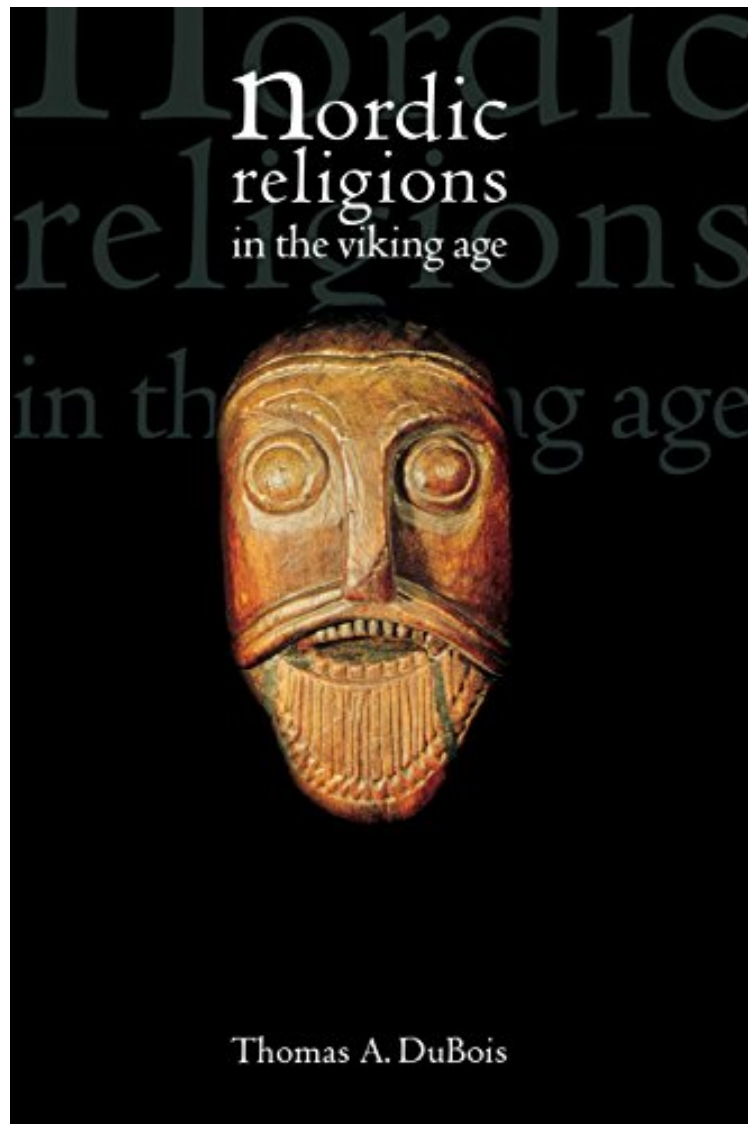


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## Nordic Religions in the Viking Age (The Middle Ages Series)

*Thomas DuBois*

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**Thomas DuBois : Nordic Religions in the Viking Age (The Middle Ages Series)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nordic Religions in the Viking Age (The Middle Ages Series):

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Not What I ExpectedBy Joe WardI 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. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fresh perspective, good use of data  
By KC Resident  
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. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Informative without being boring  
By Scooter Rider  
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.

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.

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