



# Chronicles of the Vikings: Records, Memorials, and Myths

R.I. Page

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The Vikings are not known for their literate legacy. Little of what they once inscribed in runes on wood, bone, and stone has survived. However these runic inscriptions are a valuable primary source of information on the Viking Age. They alow us to see the Vikings from their own point of view, unlike the records of prejudiced observers who saw the Vikings only as savage invaders. *Chronicles of the Vikings* attempts to show the Vikings through their own writings: runic inscriptions left behind, poems of their official skalds, literary works that entertained them, the few prose historical accounts that derive direct from Vikings, and eyewitness reports of how the northern peoples lived.

Chronicles of the Vikings defines the social values of the Viking Age, their heroic view of life which sometimes contrasts with their more prosaic way of looking at things. It looks at the problems they encountered in discovering, populating, and cultivating new lands, the difficulties of keeping law and order and the solutions they tried. We discover how they coped with famine and other natural disasters, travel and its perils, something of their popular culture, proverbs and aphorisms, and their sometimes irreverent approach to their gods and goddesses, the supernatural, magic and charms. Both at home and overseas, the Vikings live in this book.

To understand the primary sources it is essential to have some idea of how they came into being and how they were preserved. In his extensive introduction, R.I. Page discusses the problems involved in using writings of this sort and looks at the information that is preserved solely in these primary sources.



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