

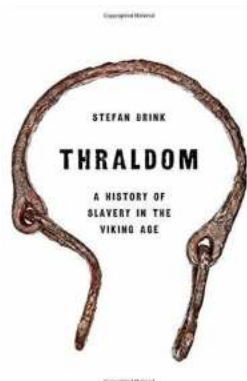
The Untold Story: History Of Slavery In The Viking Age

The Viking Age, spanning from the late 8th century to the 11th century, is often romanticized for its exploration, trade, and warrior culture. However, beneath the façade of heroics and voyages lies a dark aspect of this era - slavery. This article delves into the history of slavery in the Viking Age, shedding light on an often overlooked chapter in Nordic history.

The Origins of Viking Slavery

Slavery was not a concept invented by the Vikings; it existed long before their era. However, the Vikings greatly influenced the slave trade through their extensive raiding and conquests. Scandinavian raids along the coasts of Europe exposed the Vikings to captive slaves, which eventually became a commodity in their society. Slaves were obtained through warfare, raids, or as a result of trade.

The Norse term for a slave was "thrall," and they were considered valuable assets. Slaves represented a status symbol, showing the wealth and power of their owners. They served various purposes within Viking society, from domestic servants to labor on farms or trading ships.



Thraldom: A History of Slavery in the Viking Age

by Stefan Brink (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 42283 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Print length	: 404 pages
Lending	: Enabled



Life as a Viking Slave

The life of a Viking slave was marked by hardship and uncertainty. Slaves were at the mercy of their owners, who had complete control over their lives. Violence and harsh treatments were not uncommon, as slaves were considered mere property.

However, it is crucial to note that not all slaves suffered the same fate. Some were treated relatively well and even given certain rights. Slavery in Viking society was not solely based on race or ethnicity; free individuals could become enslaved due to debt or other circumstances. It is estimated that up to 10% of the Norse population were slaves during this period.

The Role of Slavery in Viking Society

Slavery in the Viking Age was deeply ingrained in Norse society and had an impact on various aspects of life. Slaves provided essential labor for farming, construction, and other economic activities. They also served as household help, helping with domestic chores and childcare.

Moreover, slavery played a significant role in the Viking economy. Slaves were often traded across Europe, with markets established in major Viking settlements. They were exchanged for valuable goods such as furs, weapons, and precious metals. Slavery greatly influenced the wealth and prosperity of Viking society.

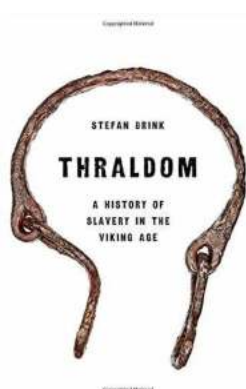
The End of Viking Slavery

As the Viking Age drew to a close, several factors contributed to the decline of slavery in Norse society. The rise of Christianity brought moral objections to enslavement, influencing attitudes towards the practice. Additionally, the

consolidation of power within Scandinavian kingdoms reduced the need for raiding and the acquisition of new slaves.

Over time, slavery transformed into a more feudal system, with serfdom becoming commonplace. Slavery gradually disappeared as societies evolved, and the concept of human rights began to develop.

The Viking Age, although known for its voyages and conquests, also saw the unfortunate existence of slavery. Norse society heavily relied on slaves for labor, trade, and wealth accumulation. Understanding the history of slavery in the Viking Age provides a more comprehensive view of this era, acknowledging both its triumphs and its darker side. It serves as a reminder that even the most celebrated civilizations had their flaws.



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Nordic slavery is an elusive phenomenon, with few similarities to the systematic exploitation of slaves in households, mines, and amphitheatres in the ancient Mediterranean or the widespread slavery at American plantations during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Scandinavians in the early Middle Ages

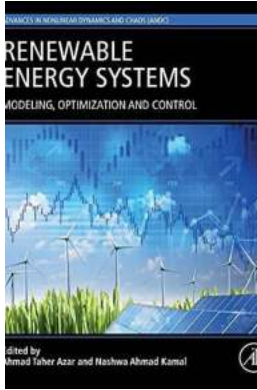
lived in a society foreign to us, characterized by different and shifting social statuses. A person could be at once socially respected and unfree. It was possible to hand oneself over as a slave to someone else in exchange for protection and food. One could be sentenced temporarily to enslavement for some offense but later purchase his manumission. Young men could enter into a kind of "contract" with a king or chieftain to join his retinue, accepting his authority, patronage, and jurisdiction, while at the same time making a quick social elevation.

Slavery was widespread all over Europe during the early Middle Ages and Scandinavians, as Stefan Brink illustrates in this book, became a major player in the northern slave trade. However, the Vikings were not particularly interested in taking slaves to Scandinavia; instead, their "business model" seems to have been to raid, abduct, and then sell captured people at major slave markets. Their goal was not people but silver. Using a wide variety of source materials, including archaeology, runes, Icelandic sagas, early law, place names, personal names, and not least etymological and semantic analyses of the terminology of slaves, *Thraldom* provides the most thorough survey of slavery in the Viking Age.



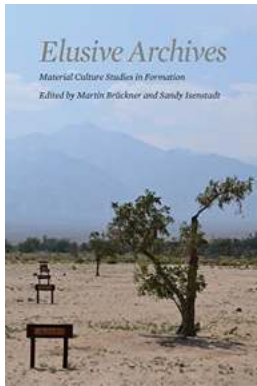
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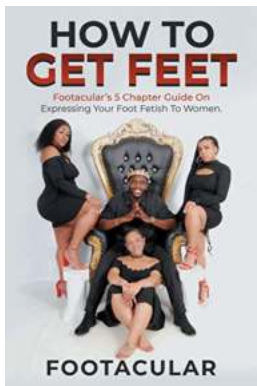
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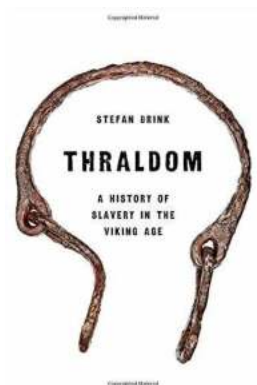
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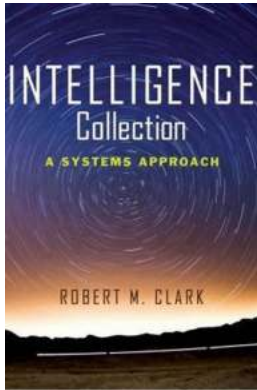
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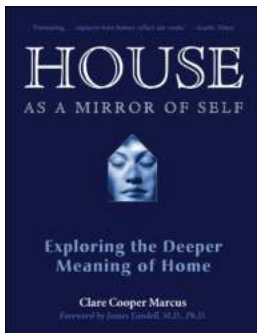
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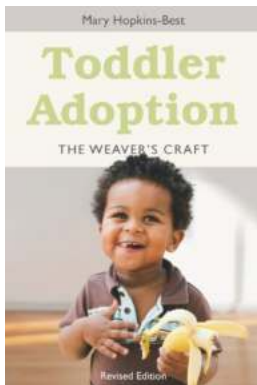
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