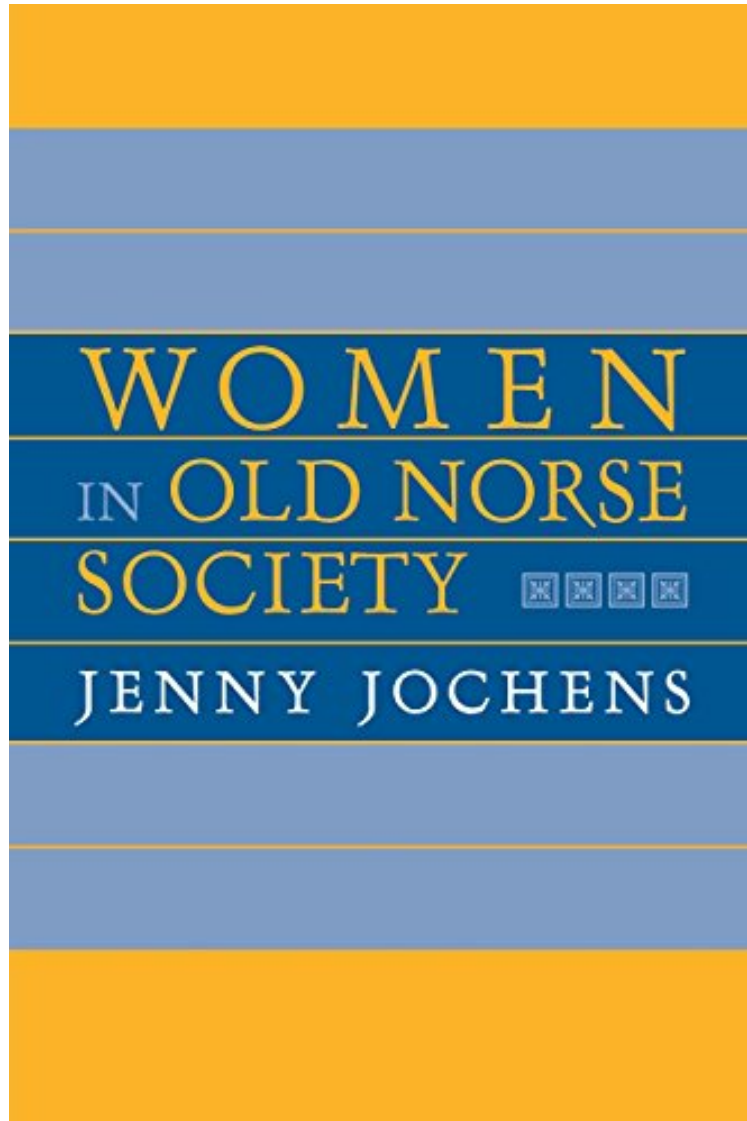


(Download) Women in Old Norse Society

Women in Old Norse Society

Jenny Jochens

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Jenny Jochens : Women in Old Norse Society before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women in Old Norse Society:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Glass Slipper Excellent book. 26 of 28 people found the following review helpful. Deeply Flawed. By Rabid Reader I was very excited to see a book about this and was taken in by the good reviews. I expected some small flaws, because of the age of the research (this research was done in the early 90s.) However, this book is deeply flawed on many levels. I need to explain that I am trained historian. I've got a

degree and everything. I'm no arm-chair hero here. 1. This book pulls from very, very limited sources even when more sources are and were available at the time the research was done. It completely ignores some prime sources, almost never mentioning them or explaining their exclusion from the research. Very little is pulled from archaeological evidence, even when available. Almost nothing is pulled from the myths -- which are a wealth of information about pre-Christian Nordic society. In fact, they seem to be mentioned just once -- when a myth that is almost surely irrevocably ruined by Christian re-writes is cited as a fairly weak argument to believe that women may have drunk with men. (And completely ignores another myth, which clearly states that this happens.) Myths that cover weaving, spinning, cooking and even sexual relations are never addressed in the appropriate chapters. 2. The research purports to discuss the Old Norse which is primarily defined as the pre-Christian society. This book actually starts at the point in which the old pagan ways had been loosened for several generations. This is like studying the 20th century to see how people in the 18th lived. 3. The research centers on Iceland and the Germanic tribes despite supposedly being about Old Norse society. There are many problems here. First, Scandinavia was fairly well isolated from mainland Europe and while they might have sprung from Germanic Tribes, by the time they had an established society, they were very different. Secondly, Iceland is a colony. Studying a colony to figure out how the mother country lives is just plain bad scholarship. People in colonies have always had significantly different lives than they do back home in the old country. If they didn't, America wouldn't look that different from Britain.... Thirdly, this book entirely ignores well known climate data from the time, which indicates that Iceland would have been a society not only isolated from the mother country, but also a society that was slipping into a period of scarcity due to weather, further exacerbated by the fact they'd hit their sustainable population limit during warm times. And yet these factors are never accounted for in this book. Studying a society in stress, and then saying that this was normal everyday operating procedure shows a remarkable lack of insight into how societies function. 4. This author seems to fall to the classic mistake -- Christian explanations of pagan practices are taken as truth and never thought to be even slightly suspect. While I'd like to think of the church as a benevolent overseer like this author does, I know better. The church had a dog in that fight, and in every other case is known to have launched a smear campaign against the old gods. There is no reason at all to believe it did not also happen here. 5. The author also makes some wild assumptions that certainly are not supported by other research that I've encountered. She believes that populations in Norway were badly inbred, for one, with absolutely no cited supporting evidence. Similar to this, she also constantly contradicts herself. Notably, she says that Icelandic women preferred to not nurse their babies, instead feeding them salmon and cows milk. She then turns around and says that the spacing of babies indicates that nursing was used as birth control. Well, which one is it? 6. The author is morbidly focused on the supposed rampant sexual abuse and use of women, at once denouncing the men of the time for discussing them like cattle, and then proceeding to do so herself. She consistently chooses sensational tidbits to underline and highlight this 'fact.' However, it seems her only source for this belief is the writings of one man -- a Monk. Nothing suspect there. While other sources will certainly indicate that women had a rough lot at times, these sources are never addressed. None of the sources that speak about women in positive tones seem to make it near this author. I finally gave up on finding solid scholarly research in this book about a third of the way through -- I scanned the remaining sections but found them as contradictory and confused as what I'd already read. I'd suggest reading pretty much anything else to get real, unbiased, un-agendaed information about Old Norse society. 0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Lena Informative

Jenny Jochens captures in fascinating detail the lives of women in pagan and early Christian Iceland and Norway: their work, sexual behavior, marriage customs, reproductive practices, familial relations, leisure activities, religious practices, and legal constraints and protections. Much of this information also applies to everyday life in the entire Germanic world. Conveying the experiences not only of aristocrats but also of ordinary farmers, the author draws from her extensive knowledge of the oldest and fullest record of the Germanic tribes. Women in Old Norse Society places particular emphasis on changing sexual mores and the impact of the imposition of Christianity by the clergy and the Norwegian kings. It also demonstrates the vital role women played in economic production: homespun was used for every conceivable domestic purpose; the lengths of cloth became the standard of measurement for local commercial exchange and were used to obtain commodities abroad. Jochens's masterly command of the Old Norse narratives and legal texts enables her to provide a rich social history that includes the fullest analysis to date of pagan and Christian marriage and the first comprehensive study of infanticide in the North.

"Jochens's study is a model of interdisciplinary techniques and research; she carefully describes her sources largely laws and sagas of various types and their limitations, and then draws from them information, such as the etymology of key words ('wife,' 'husband'), possible only for a linguistic scholar of her caliber." Choice "Although a number of scholars have begun in recent years to approach Old Norse literature from a feminist perspective, Jenny Jochens has been the only historian in the United States to use gender analysis to study the society represented in that literature. . . . Jochens brings to bear on the Icelandic material a very broad range of knowledge: not only the Old Norse sources in all their complexity but also the body of scholarship in women's history and feminist theory. . . . This book can be read

with profit by all medievalists and is essential reading for anyone interested in Old Norse society."Speculum "A thoroughly rewarding book. . . . The section on economics and production of wadmal and shaggy overcoats deserves close attention as the best treatment in English of an important topic hitherto neglected."English Historical "Jenny Jochens has been one of the most prolific scholars working on the perennially interesting theme of the role played by women and scholars in Old Icelandic history and literature. Jochens presents a wealth of fascinating detail, never before collected to this extent . . . offering a full picture of the lives of medieval Icelandic women."Saga-Book "Well documented and well presented, Women in Old Norse Society covers much material that has not been dealt with in English. It serves the dual purpose of establishing a focus on women and of providing an enormous amount of good cultural history."Theodore M. Andersson, author of The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180-1280)From the Back CoverJenny Jochens captures in fascinating detail the lives of women in pagan and early Christian Iceland and Norway - their work, sexual behavior, marriage customs, reproductive practices, familial relations, leisure activities, religious practices, and legal constraints and protections. Much of this information also applies to everyday life in the entire Germanic world. Conveying the experiences not only of aristocrats but also of ordinary farmers, the author draws from her extensive knowledge of the oldest and fullest record of the Germanic tribes. Women in Old Norse Society places particular emphasis on changing sexual mores and the impact of the imposition of Christianity by the clergy and the Norwegian kings. It also demonstrates the vital role women played in economic production: homespun was used for every conceivable domestic purpose; the lengths of cloth became the standard of measurement for local commercial exchange and were used to obtain commodities abroad. Jochens's masterly command of the Old Norse narratives and legal texts enables her to provide a rich social history that includes the fullest analysis to date of pagan and Christian marriage and the first comprehensive study of infanticide in the North.About the Author Jenny Jochens is Professor of History Emerita at Towson University.