



Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age: The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse

Judith Jesch

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The Vikings were the master mariners and ship-builders of the middle ages: their success depended on these skills. Spectacular archaeological finds of whole or partial ships, from burial mounds or dredged from harbours, continue to give new and exciting evidence of their practical craftsmanship and urge to seek new shores. The nautical vocabulary of the Viking Age, however, has been surprisingly neglected - the last comprehensive study was published in 1912 and was heavily dependent on post-Viking Age sources. Far better contemporary sources from the later Viking Age are available to document the activities of men and their uses of ships from c.950-1100, and Judith Jesch undertakes in this book the first systematic and comparative study of such evidence. The core is a critical survey of the vocabulary of ships and their crews, of fleets and sailing and battles at sea, based on runic inscriptions and skaldic evidence from c.950-1100. This nautical vocabulary is studied within the larger context of "viking" activity in this period: what that activity was and where it took place, its social and military aspects, and its impact on developments in the nature of kingship in Scandinavia. JUDITH JESCH is Reader in Viking Studies at the University of Nottingham, and author of *Women in the Viking Age*.

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