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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Book Review: Bows and Arrows of the Vikings, by Dan Høj

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Dan Høj, a Danish archer and Viking reenactor, is very well known for his expertise in archery, especially in regard to the history of the bows used in North European (pre)history and in his new book he addresses the Viking era.

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He starts with a very good overview of the mythology and the written and depicted sources of the early Middle Ages, which allow for conclusions on the construction and use of this ancient weapon system. Subsequently, he presents some of

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the best-known archaeological finds, from the Stone Age onwards and not just from the Viking period.

The second part provides instructions to the reader on how to build their own bow, arrows and related equipment; such as arm protection, quivers and more. All illustrated by numerous sketches, drawings and colour photos.

While reading the book, I, as a more or less experienced archer and bowyer, appreciated the large amount of experience Dan has gathered over the years he has devoted to woodworking and making bows. When he offers advice you can be sure that it is of great value as it obviously stems from countless hours in the workshop and on the archery ground. Even I learned new historical facts and skills while for beginners Dan´s work is recommended as a true treasure chest of knowledge.

Regretfully however I must pour some cold water on the matter too. As an author myself, I know only too well the types of errors inherent in writing such extensive books. Dan´s text could have used thorough proofreading before the second edition, because there are numerous errors in typesetting as well as in translation, which in some cases makes it hard to understand the text.

To be honest, given the title, I would have expected the book to be more focussed on detailed information about Viking bows, particularly regarding technical aspects such as the very unusual backward bent limb tip design. Unfortunately, in that respect the book remains vague and cloudy and, from my point of view, could be reworked.

Nevertheless I highly recommend Dan´s work to newbies taking their first steps into the beautiful craft of creating a “bent stick” by themselves. It helps to prevent rookie mistakes and imparts a number of tips and tricks of the trade directly from the workbench.

Book information:

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