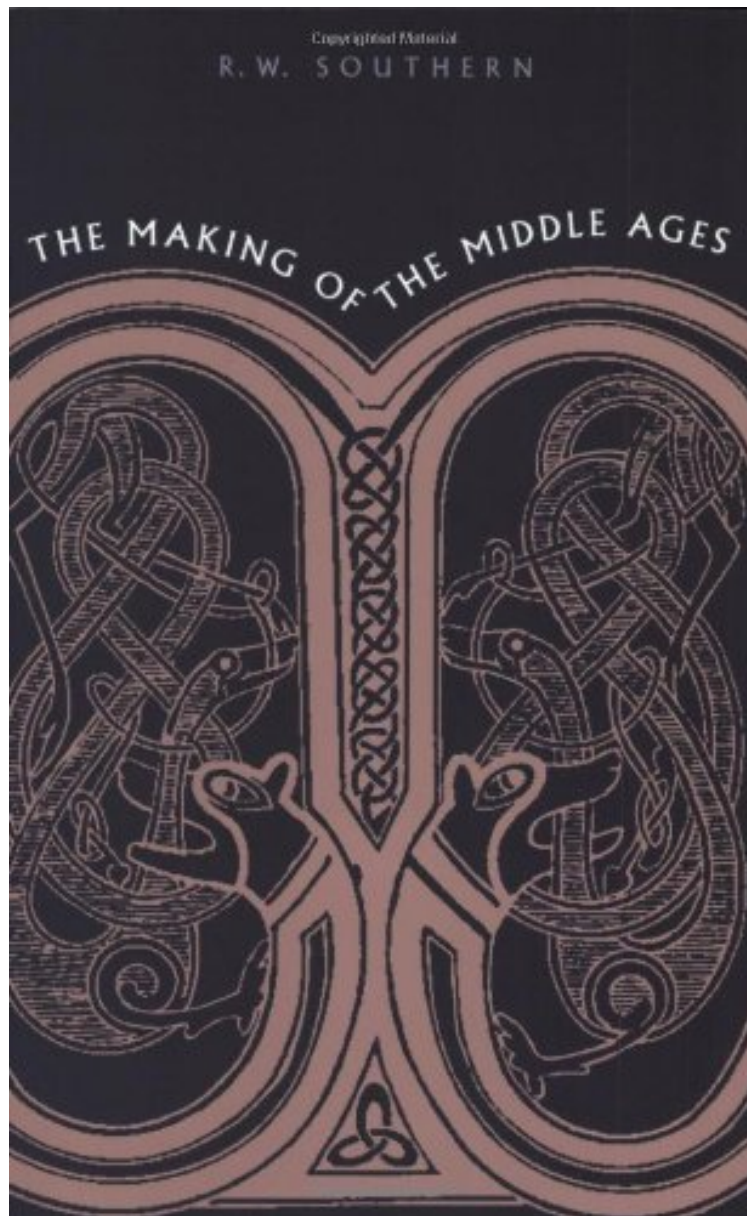


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The Making of the Middle Ages

R. W. Southern

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R. W. Southern : The Making of the Middle Ages before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Making of the Middle Ages:

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Romanticism and the Middle AgesBy Stephen BalbachThe Making of the Middle Ages is a study of the period 972 to 1204. Before Southern wrote this book in 1952, the period

has traditionally been called the High Middle Ages or the "Renaissance of the 12th Century". However Southern sees it as more than a Renaissance (usually thought of as a period of *re* discovery of classical texts and ideas), but also a period of *new* and original ideas and institutions. Southern says the period "had been overtaken by a creative spirit, which was not derived from the past, but nourished by a medley of influences both past and present." What is the "creative spirit"? According to Southern, it is Romanticism, which can be defined as a heightened sense of self-consciousness in perceiving the physical and natural world, both in the secular and spiritual. It was with the publication of "Making" that decades of subsequent research into the period has focused on Romanticism as the primary creative movement that helped propel European culture from a backwater throughout the early middle ages to a leading civilization by 1500. The Virgin Cult, courtly love, the Arthurian tradition, the origins of Gothic architecture, are just a few of the peculiar institutions and ideas that have been re-examined from a Romantic viewpoint. And it is for that reason "Making" is so often classified as one of the most important medieval history books of the 20th century. Further, it was groundbreaking stylistically because it legitimized speculative and imaginative cultural history, which has found many imitators, such as Peter Brown (The World of Late Antiquity) and Robin Lane Fox (Pagans and Christians). Its influence on generation or two of Medieval scholars can not be over-estimated and it still remains one of those classic books every medieval student is familiar with. Although "Making" is accessible and readable by anyone, the book's intent as described above is subtle and nuanced, in particular outside of the "state of the art" of medievalism in 1952 which saw the 12th century as a Renaissance at best, or a "dark age" at worst. This was a revolutionary and groundbreaking book for its day and is as interesting today for historiographical reasons, some of the actual content has since been refuted. Literarily speaking, it is well written and delightful. It does contain interesting anecdotes about the period, but this is not a survey text and those looking for an introduction to the Middle Ages may be disappointed if not bedazzled.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent classic text in the field of medieval studies
By A. Hernandez
Excellent classic text in the field of medieval studies! A must read for all serious students and professional scholars of the middle ages.
3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent Work of Scholarship
By TheEngineer
Focusing on a period of about 200-years, this brief study is very perceptive and it points out a number of important issues. These are both ideas and events that lead to profound changes in society and in the social contract between the various strata of these societies. This is history at its finest. Not simply, this happened, then that happened, but what the impact of an event and the impact that the actions of principal players in society had on the life of the times. With the hindsight of 1000-years we can see clearly and appreciate the impact of seemingly disparate happenings. History like this should be studied far more. Our current world outlook would be sharpened if we reminded ourselves of how our society and culture was forged. Ideas that we take for granted and never question were being hammered out with significant gains for the winners and colossal impacts for the losers. A king is anointed by God, does he also represent God? Is his power both spiritual and temporal or is the office simply administrative and military? We know the settled answer to this now, but at the time it could have gone the opposite way. The ideas formed in this time lasted till the 1st World War and many are central to political organization today. This is history that should be studied and understood as it informs the very basis of our present society.

A distinguished Oxford historian presents an absorbing study of the main personalities and the influences that molded the history of Western Europe from the late tenth to the early thirteenth century, describing the chief forms of social, political, and religious organization.

"This is the work of a man with a rare historical gift: the imagination to recreate the world of which he writes and the critical scholarship to make the exercise of imagination fruitful. . . . One of the most exciting books on history to appear in recent years." The Economist