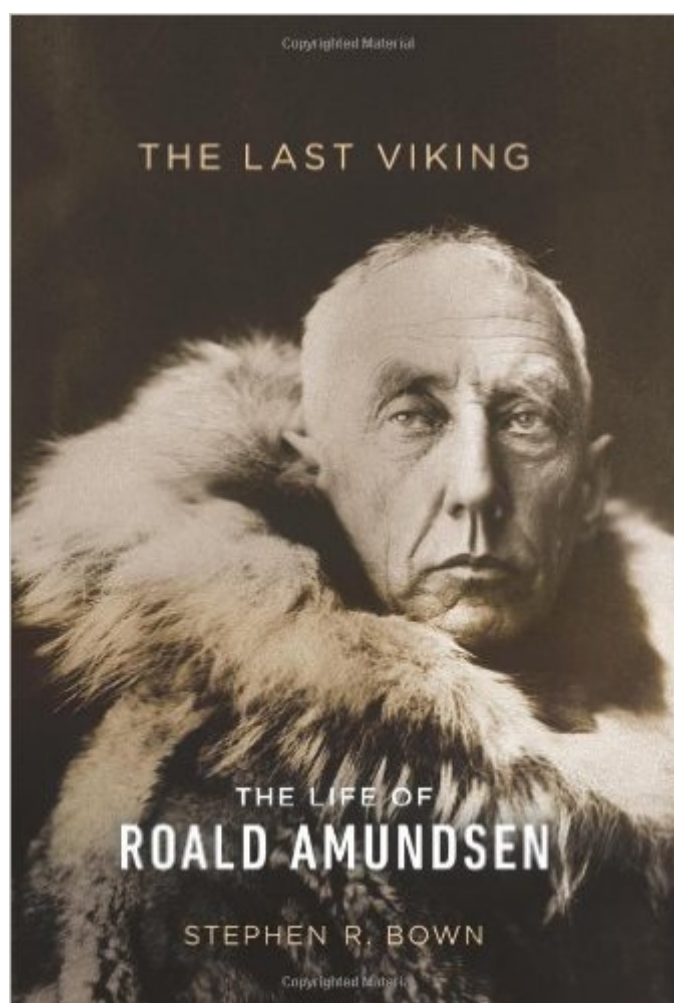


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The Last Viking: The Life Of Roald Amundsen (A Merloyd Lawrence Book)



Synopsis

The Last Viking unravels the life of the man who stands head and shoulders above all those who raced to map the last corners of the world. In 1900, the four great geographical mysteries—the Northwest Passage, the Northeast Passage, the South Pole, and the North Pole—remained blank spots on the globe. Within twenty years Roald Amundsen would claim all four prizes. Renowned for his determination and technical skills, both feared and beloved by his men, Amundsen is a legend of the heroic age of exploration, which shortly thereafter would be tamed by technology, commerce, and publicity. Feted in his lifetime as an international celebrity, pursued by women and creditors, he died in the Arctic on a rescue mission for an inept rival explorer. Stephen R. Bown has unearthed archival material to give Amundsen's life the grim immediacy of Apsley Cherry-Garrard's The Worst Journey in the World, the exciting detail of The Endurance, and the suspense of a Jon Krakauer tale. The Last Viking is both a thrilling literary biography and a cracking good story.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (89 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

My sister in law gave this to me for Christmas, and it's amazing that she found something I hadn't read on polar explorers, since I have 3 shelves full of books. "The Last Viking" is well worthy of sitting alongside the others. I'm a particular fan of Amundsen because my mom was from Norway (she saw him in a parade in Oslo sometime in the early 1920s when she was a little girl and used to talk about that a lot), so I grew up with the Norwegian perspective of Amundsen as the pre-eminent explorer of his age. Roland Huntford's "The Last Place On Earth" flipping the received wisdom on

Scott and Amundsen was thus no surprise to me. The comparison between the guy who studies every aspect of his task, prepares with the utmost care, and then accomplishes it with seeming ease to a fellow who thinks he can get through by will power and spontaneous creativity but then dies in the effort is a lesson with universal applicability. But a strength of "The Last Viking" is that it doesn't get wound around the axle of the supposed Scott vs Amundsen competition. Author Stephen Bown recognizes that Amundsen developed his methods independently of any knowledge of Scott in being the first to complete the northwest passage, and the competition only existed to the extent that Amundsen knew that the continued funding for his explorations was dependent on achieving firsts, so he needed to make haste. But the two men never came anywhere near each other in the supposed race, and the competitive aspect is largely the result of revisionist writings. Most books about Amundsen elevate his conquest of the South Pole to the detriment of his many other accomplishments.

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