

The Invention Of Scotland: Myth And History - Hugh Trevor-roper

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This book argues that while Anglo-Saxon culture has given rise to virtually no myths at all, myth has played a central role in the historical development of Scottish identity. Hugh Trevor-Roper explores three myths across 400 years of Scottish history: the political myth of the ancient constitution of Scotland; the literary myth, including Walter Scott as well as Ossian and ancient poetry; and the sartorial myth of tartan and the kilt, invented ironically, by Englishmen in quite modern times. Trevor-Roper reveals myth as an often deliberate cultural construction used to enshrine a people's identity. While his treatment of Scottish myth is highly critical, indeed debunking, he shows how the ritualization and domestication of Scotland's myths as local color diverted the Scottish intelligentsia from the path that led German intellectuals to a dangerous myth of racial supremacy. This compelling manuscript was left unpublished on Trevor-Roper's death in 2003 and is now made available for the first time. Written with characteristic elegance, lucidity, and wit, and containing defiant and challenging opinions, it will absorb and provoke Scottish readers while intriguing many others. I believe that the whole history of Scotland has been coloured by myth; and that myth, in Scotland, is never driven out by reality, or by reason, but lingers on until another myth has been discovered, or elaborated, to replace it.

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Author: Trevor-Roper, Hugh
Publisher: Yale University Press
Illustration: N
Language: ENG
Title: The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History
Pages: 00304 (Encrypted EPUB)
On Sale: 2008-07-16
SKU-13/ISBN: 9780300136869
Category: History : Europe - Great Britain - General
Category: History : Historiography

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