



Vanished Kingdoms: the History of Half-forgotten Europe

Norman Jordan Davies

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'The past is a foreign country' has become a truism, yet we often forget that the past is different from the present in many unfamiliar ways, and historical memory is extraordinarily imperfect. We habitually think of the European past as the history of countries which exist today - France, Germany, Britain, Russia and so on - but often this actually obstructs our view of the past, and blunts our sensitivity to the ever-changing political landscape. Europe's history is littered with kingdoms, duchies, empires and republics which have now disappeared but which were once fixtures on the map of their age - 'the Empire of Aragon' which once dominated the western Mediterranean; the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, for a time the largest country in Europe; the successive kingdoms (and one duchy) of Burgundy, much of whose history is now halfremembered - or half-forgotten - at best. This book shows the reader how to peer through the cracks of mainstream history writing and listen to the echoes of lost realms across the centuries. How many British people know that Glasgow was founded by the Welsh in a period when neither England nor Scotland existed? How many of us will remember the former Soviet Union in a few generations' time? Will our own United Kingdom become a distant memory too? As in his earlier celebrated books "Europe: a history" and "The Isles", Norman Davies aims to subvert our established view of what seems familiar, and urges us to look and think again. This stimulating surprising book, full of unexpected stories, observations and connections, gives us a fresh and original perspective on the history of Europe.



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