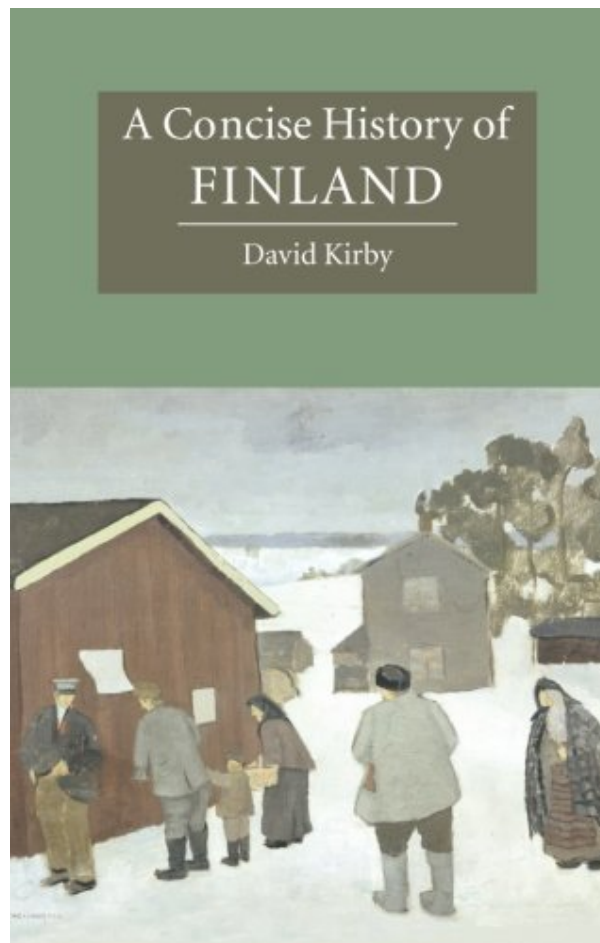


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"In his impressive work...University College of London Professor David Kirby exemplifies both the importance of Finland to the expansion of the Swedish and Russian empires and the struggle to attain an independent Finnish identity amidst unwavering interference by its neighbors to the east and west." -Kenneth Shonk Jr., World History Bulletin

About the Author

David Kirby is Professor of Modern History at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. His previous publications include The Baltic World 1772-1993. Europe's Northern Periphery in an Age of Change (1995) and The Baltic and North Seas (with Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, 2000).

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Few countries in Europe have undergone such rapid social, political and economic changes as Finland has during the last fifty years. David Kirby here sets out the fascinating history of this northern country, for centuries on the east-west divide of Europe, a country not blessed by nature, most of whose inhabitants still earned a living from farming fifty years ago, but which today is one of the most prosperous members of the European Union. He shows how this small country was able not only to survive in peace and war but also to preserve and develop its own highly distinctive identity, neither Scandinavian nor Eastern European. He traces the evolution of the idea of a Finnish national state, from the long centuries as part of the Swedish realm, through self-government within the Russian Empire, and into the stormy and tragic birth of the independent state in the twentieth century.

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Most helpful customer reviews

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.
Could be quite a bit better.

By M. S. Chaitin

This book does what it says on the tin, in that it is concise history of Finland. However, that's about it. If you are looking for any sort of depth into the events, this is not the book for you. Secondly, if you are looking for something that's fairly readable, this is not the book for you. There are numerous sentence format errors throughout this book, which caused me to have to reread parts over and over again, and I still don't actually know what he was trying to communicate. There are also frequent spelling errors, which cause me to wonder if this book was edited by anyone.

Mr. Kirby's focus is very clearly academia, as he frequently goes into depth about the various happenings at the primary universities. The most notable was a full two pages about a number of papers, which Mr. Kirby dismisses as fairly unimportant. However, a major political and cultural turning point (acknowledged as such by Mr. Kirby) gets a sentence. This sort of imbalance in focus is consistent throughout all chapters of the book. I was specifically hoping that this book would give me an overview of the major points of their history, so that I would then know which areas and aspects I wished to delve further into, but sadly this book did not deliver as I wanted. I would not purchase this item again.

24 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

I'm glad I bought this book!

By Mrs. L. M. Bolton

For those who love Finland and would love to know the history of this small nation which is having such an impact on the world right now, this is the book for you. You can read with a curiosity that is guaranteed to be satisfied. You'll find yourself turning pages eager to know more. But you must be prepared for lengthy spells of academic reading. It is not an easy quick "read." You must surely have a love for Finnish people and for all things Finnish and a great abiding interest in the discipline of history, especially political history. You will find out how Finland has come to be. It has excellent appendices, including a list of the nation's key dates of events in history, political statistics, an extensive guide to further reading, a comprehensive index, and good notes.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A Difficult Road to Nationhood

By Jim Fredsall

This book is an informative account of the development of a modern nation from its beginning as the home of a unique people with a unique language, the Finns. Overlaid on this were colonisation in the 12th century by the Swedes who also brought with them western Christianity. This placed the new country at odds at many levels with its burgeoning neighbour, Russia. However, through some deft handling by the country's politicians, diplomats and occasionally its military, Finland managed to keep Russia pretty well at arm's length until well into the last century. In fact the last restrictive arrangement with Russia was not removed until 1995 with Finland's entry into the EU.

The book did concentrate on the vital political aspects which was probably necessary to remain "concise", but perhaps it would have been even more interesting to expand on other national aspects. For example the creation of the Nokia company was barely mentioned. Another improvement would have been a couple of larger scale maps for areas of interest.

My conclusion - it was well worth the purchase.

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