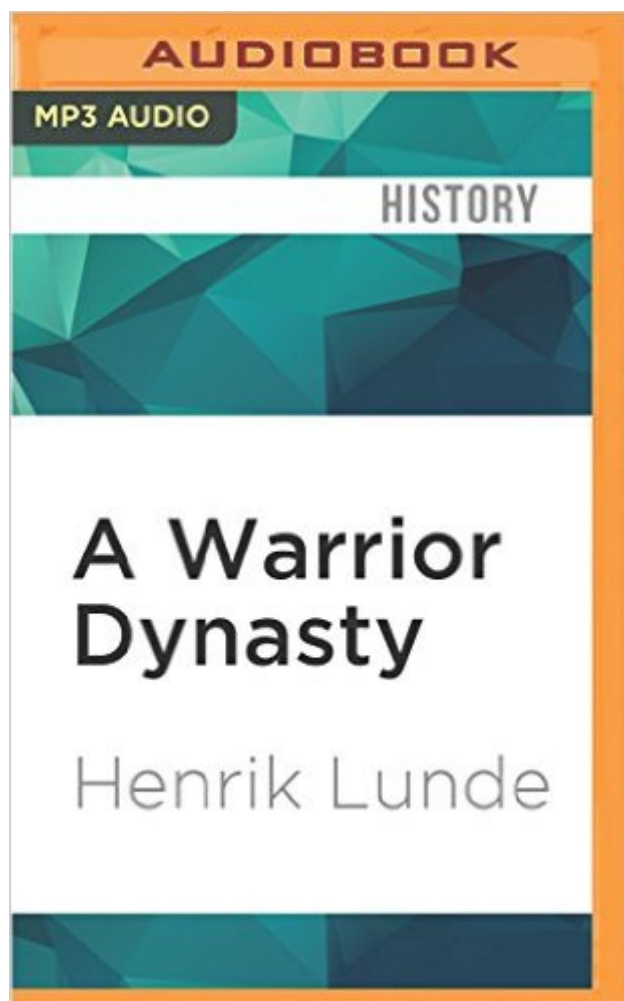


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A Warrior Dynasty: The Rise And Fall Of Sweden As A Military Superpower 1611-1721



Synopsis

This audiobook examines the meteoric rise of Sweden as the pre-eminent military power in Europe during the Thirty Years War during the 1600s, and then follows its line of warrior kings into the next century until the Swedes finally meet their demise, in an overreach into the vastness of Russia. A small Scandinavian nation, with at most one and a half million people and scant internal resources of its own, there was small logic to how Sweden could become the dominant power on the Continent. That Sweden achieved this was due to its leadership—a case-study in history when pure military skill, and that alone, could override the demographic and economic factors which have in modern times been termed so pre-eminent. Once Protestantism emerged, via Martin Luther, the most devastating war in European history ensued, as the Holy Roman Empire sought to reassert its authority by force. Into this bloody maelstrom stepped Gustav Adolf of Sweden, a brilliant tactician and strategist, who with his finely honed Swedish legions proceeded to establish a new authority in northern Europe. Gustav, as brave as he was brilliant, was finally killed while leading a cavalry charge at the Battle of Ltzen. He had innovated, however, tactics and weaponry that put his successors in good stead, as Sweden remained a great power, rivaled only by France and Spain in terms of territory in Europe. And then one of his successors, Karl XII, turned out to be just as great a military genius as Gustav himself, and as the year 1700 arrived, Swedish armies once more burst out in all directions. Karl, like Gustav, assumed the throne while still a teenager, but immediately displayed so much acumen, daring and skill that chroniclers could only compare him, like Gustav, to Alexander the Great. This book examines thoroughly, yet in highly readable fashion, the century during which Swedish military power set an example for all Europe. The accompanying reference guide is included as a PDF on this disc.

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Customer Reviews

For perspective in our current world, this book is a source of valuable insight. It relates and analyzes a remarkable century in the life of a country we do not think of in military terms today. It is a story that tells us much about how the European experience of the 17th and early 18th Century set the stage for what was to follow. As well, it instructs us in how a great power can emerge from an unlikely source and have tremendous influence on events for vast areas of population and geography. It is a very relevant story to our current times. In these times, few who have not sought the knowledge are aware, as this book relates, that Sweden was one of the most powerful European powers--something hard to imagine today. It exploded on the European Stage during the Thirty Years War with an Army whose spectacular performance awed and astounded its opponents and the then European Community--then it receded. As author Henrik Lunde skillfully relates, for the better part of a century, a country that even in the 17th and 18th Centuries had a small population and constrained economic situation, produced one of the most powerful and capable military establishments in Europe. Through remarkable leaders like Gustav Adolph and Karl XII these capabilities were applied to astonishing effect in a continual state of warfare for the better part of 100 years. Through much of the 17th and early 18th Centuries Sweden dominated the entire Baltic Region, the Germanies, Poland and significant parts of Norway and Denmark. As Mr. Lunde determines, under the brilliance and innovation of Gustav Adolph's reform of the Swedish Army and his peerless leadership, a country of barely 1.

A scathing one-star review of this book piqued my interest and prompted me to request this book via Interlibrary Loan. Could it possibly be as god-awful as this solitary reviewer, very much swimming against the tide, claimed in his review? Unfortunately, I regret to say that the other reviewer was square on the mark, and I add my voice to the rather small chorus. This book fails in every respect, and adds nothing to our knowledge of the subject. The author relies almost exclusively on secondary sources, writes in the style of a college student writing a term paper, and seems content to present a chronicle of events rather than offer any meaningful analysis. When he does venture into historical interpretation, it is merely to cite the interpretations of other authors! Other than in his summary chapter, this is literally what Lunde does, again and again. I found myself wondering why he bothered to write this book in the first place. I am also puzzled by the brevity of a book which

purports to cover 110 years of history. The author makes reference to "space restrictions" as the explanation for why he offers virtually no background for the 30 Years War. Was he required to bring this book in under 300 pages? If so, why did he attempt to cover this much history? The 60-year period following the death of Gustaf II Adolf at Lützen receives a grand total of 50 pages of text. This includes the remaining 16 years of the 30 Years War, as well as the Scanian Wars. Seriously? Even the campaigns of Karl XII receive less than 60 pages of text, with the years 1709-1721 getting a whopping 5 pages. I have seen some reviewers gripe that this was too long and detailed, and I have to wonder if they were actually reading the same book which I just finished.

From Breitenfeld to Poltava Lunde chronicles Sweden's rise to being the Baltic's dominant power with a masterful hand, and an eye for detail, writing with the ease of one who knows of what he speaks, and being a soldier, Lunde speaks it better than most. He begins with the early campaigns of Gustavus, following him through his arduous battles against the Poles, all the way to his entrance into the Thirty Years War and the numerous slaughters he and his army were involved therein. Indeed Lunde devotes five full chapters to Gustavus's various military enterprises, including his reforms that turned the Swedish army from the incompetent army of Kircholm, to the unsurpassed military machine of Breitenfeld. As such it is the Gustavian period that receives the most attention, though Lunde does not forget the numerous other Swedish campaigns of the following eighty years. The performance of the Swedes in the Thirty Years War following the Lion of the North's demise is given its due attention, as are the campaigns of Karl X and XI, but it is Karl XII and the Great Northern War that steals the show in the book's second half. Lunde looks closely at the young King's campaigns against the armies of Denmark, Saxony, Russia, and the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, paying particular attention, of course, to the battle that doomed King Karl at Poltava, and that ultimately brought about the fall of the Swedish Empire.

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