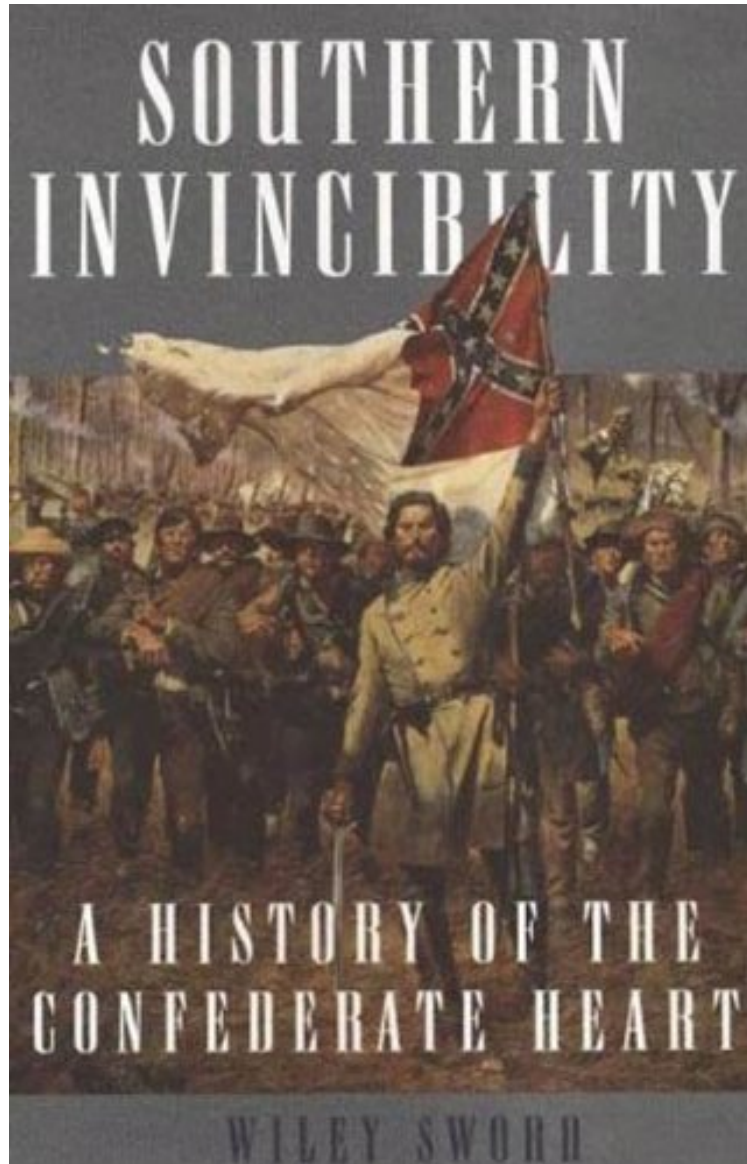


[Free pdf] Southern Invincibility: A History of the Confederate Heart

Southern Invincibility: A History of the Confederate Heart

Von Wiley Sword

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Von Wiley Sword : Southern Invincibility: A History of the Confederate Heart before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Southern Invincibility: A History of the Confederate Heart:

Kundenrezensionen Hilfreichste Kundenrezensionen 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Good, but with a few glaring defects Von KySgt64 As Garrison Keillor might say (and I have no idea if he even cares about books like this) this is a pretty good book. But it suffers from a number of defects, the most serious of which I'll

discuss momentarily. (From the outset, I should point out that a better title would have been, "The Myth [or "Notion" or "Idea"] of Southern Invincibility," but that probably would have limited sales in the South, so I don't really fault it for that. In this day and age in which the idea of secession seems about as remote in our reality, and even in our history, as the Pony Express, we may ask: What on earth compelled thousands of people (men in battle, women at home) to endure the horrors of 19th century war and the hardships of having almost nothing for the sake of defending "states' rights," or "the southern way of life," or even slavery (which modern southerners don't like to admit) which now, with the benefit of hindsight and 140 years of intervening history, seem like sure-enough losers? By peering into the minds of people at the time, as preserved in their own words, author Wiley Sword attempts to give us an idea. We come away with a much better understanding of why at least some (those that didn't avoid conscription in the first place or desert later) Confederate soldiers were willing to brave bad food, uncertain supplies, and no shoes to submit to tactics that were woefully outdated in the face of technologically-advancing weaponry. As "psycho-history," this is about as good as it gets. But the book suffers from at least two serious defects. First--and this isn't really the author's fault--from this distance, we are able to look only into the minds of those who left a written record, and who had descendants thoughtful enough to preserve it. In all likelihood, this limits the historical record to a statistically-skewed sampling. Second, and more serious, the author made virtually no attempt to look into the minds of those who dissented--those who did NOT share the idea of an "invincible South." The idea of a monolithic, single-minded South, rising up as one to defend itself from an equally-monolithic North which cared little for the peculiarities of southern life, is at best, simple-minded, and at worst, plain wrong. In some areas, even in the Deep South--the hill country of northern Alabama, for example--as well as in the border states, dissent was so strong that whole regiments of southerners were raised for the Union army, and pro-Unionists were derided as "tories." In Atlanta, Richmond, and New Orleans, there were underground cliques of pro-Union sympathizers, and as the war progressed, even the Confederate government was wracked by doubters and defeatists. As Sword points out, toward the end, Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens eventually gave up on Jefferson Davis, labeled him a "tyrant," and when home to Georgia for good. Many came to the same conclusion long before. In short, although mis-titled, the book serves a useful purpose. But it falls more than a little short of giving us a comprehensive look inside southern minds. It only looks inside some of them, and the most literate ones at that.

Kurzbeschreibung Southern pride--the notion that the South's character distinguishes it from the rest of the country--had a profound impact on how and why Confederates fought the Civil War, and continued to mold their psyche after they had been defeated. In *Southern Invincibility*, award-winning historian Wiley Sword traces the roots of the South's belief in its own superiority and examines the ways in which that conviction contributed to the war effort, even when it became clear that the South would not win. Informed by thorough research, *Southern Invincibility* is the historical investigation of a psychology that continues to define the South. From Booklist If perception is reality, the Southern perceptions before, during, and after the Civil War have had a significant impact on the reality of Southern regionalism. Sword, the author of several Civil War histories, examines the roots and consequences of the Southern sense of cultural uniqueness. He makes extensive use of the recollections of individual Confederate soldiers and civilians. The effect is frequently dramatic and moving, particularly when individuals find their dreams of glory running smack up against the squalor of war. Yet one wonders if Sword buys too easily into the southern sense of uniqueness. After all, recent research has shown far less solidarity and far more desertions in Confederate armies than has been previously indicated. It is also irrefutable that most Confederate states had active Unionist sympathizers who harried the war effort. Unfortunately, Sword has neglected their voices in his study. Still, despite a somewhat one-sided view, this is a frequently fascinating glimpse at the genesis and durability of such Southern myths as Confederate "valor" and the "lost cause." Jay Freeman From Kirkus A representative study of "the mainstream thinking of white southerners" during the Civil War ponders the psychological roots and eventual consequences of the Confederacy's flawed belief in its own invincibility. "This is a book more concerned with 'why' than with analyzing a culture," writes Sword (*Mountains Touched by Fire: Chattanooga Besieged, 1995*, etc.). "Why the southern soldiers fought so long and well. Why they thought they could win. Why the enormous effort, even in the face of imminent defeat. Why, long after total defeat, much of the pride and passion aroused by the war still remained deeply rooted in the South." Relying on letters, journals, and contemporary memoirs of soldiers and their families, Sword traces the evolution of Southern self-image, from early confidence in their superior bravery and physical hardiness to the eventual rise of the romantic "Lost Cause" myth, which cast the Confederacy's defeat as moral right overwhelmed by industrial might. Though he ultimately judges the South's reliance on personal prowess "absurd" in a war that saw the emergence of modern military technology like the repeating rifle, Sword gives Southern pride its due, expertly tracing shifts in public attitudes from gung-ho mobilization to weary surrender, analyzing key turning points like Shiloh and Gettysburg. That analysis is hamstrung at times by a rather formal style and academic diction. Thankfully, the author liberally salts the text with quotations from primary sources. Most effective are extended portrayals of representative

characters: Sarah Morgan, a young New Orleans woman who suffered under Northern occupation; Sandie Pendelton, a Stonewall Jackson aide killed just weeks before the birth of his son; and ambitious Harry Burgwyn, at 20, the war's youngest colonel, also killed in battle. Focusing on the personal, Sword effectively dramatizes the arc of Southern mental resolve on the front lines and the home front. Despite starting slowly, Sword's study gathers momentum enough to fashion a compelling and nuanced accounting of the South's flawed confidence in its cause. (16 pages bw photos) -- Copyright 1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.