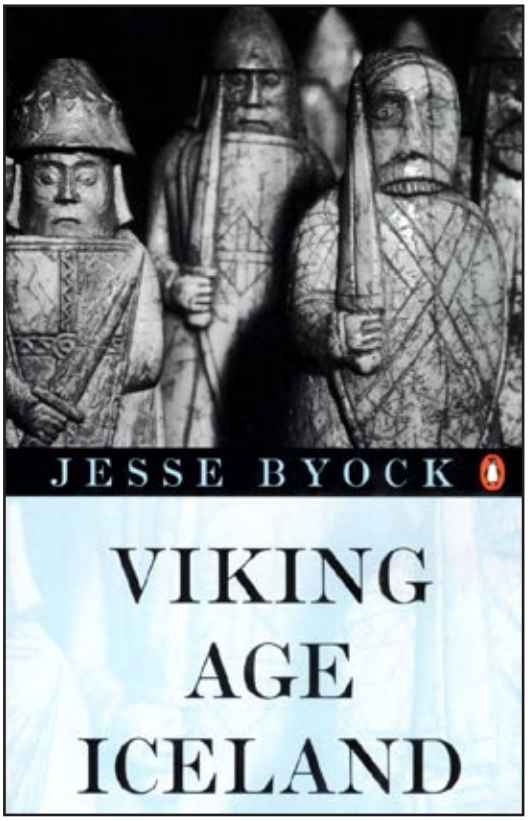
BOOKS *by* JESSE BYOCK

ABOUT THE VIKING AGE

Web Page (includes complete Book List): http://www.viking.ucla.edu/



Jesse Byock

Viking Age Iceland

Penguin History, Penguin Books

ISBN 9780140291155

Back Cover

The popular image of the Viking Age is a time of warlords and marauding bands pillaging their way along the shores of Northern Europe.

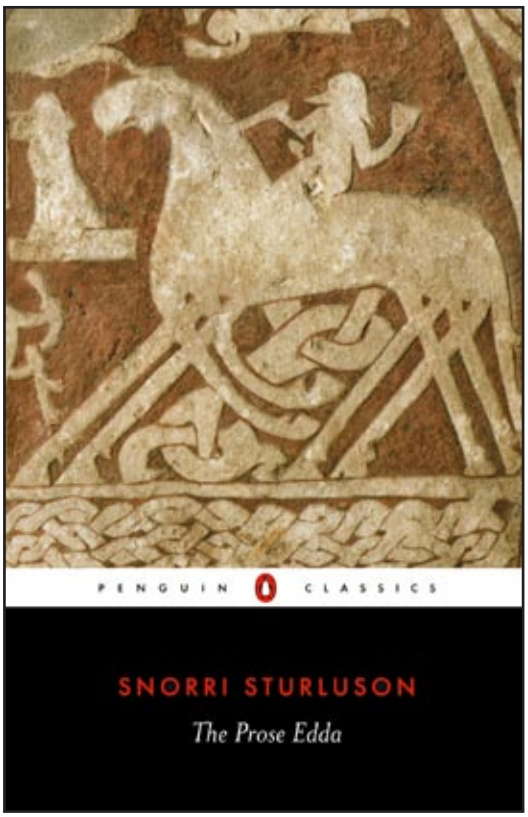
Yet, as Jesse Byock reveals in this deeply fascinating and important history, the society founded by Norsemen in Iceland was far from this picture. It was, in fact, an independent, almost republican Free State, without warlords or kings. Honour was crucial in a world which sounds almost Utopian today. In Jesse Byock's words, it was like 'a great village': a self-governing community of settlers, who adapted to Iceland's harsh climate and landscape, creating their own society.

Combining history and anthropology, this remarkable study explores in rich detail all aspects of Viking Age life: feasting, farming and battling with the elements, the power of chieftains and the church, marriage, the role of women and kinship. It shows us how law courts, which favoured compromise over violence, often prevented disputes over land, livestock or insults from becoming 'blood feud'. In Iceland we can see a prototype democracy in action, which thrived for 300 years until it came under the control of the King of Norway in the 1260s.

This was a unique time in history, which has long perplexed historians and archaeologists, and which provides us today with fundamental insights into sometimes forgotten aspects of western society. By interweaving his own original and innovative research with masterly interpretations of the Old Icelandic Sagas, Jesse Byock brilliantly brings it to life.

Cover photo of The Lewis Chessmen in the British Museum © C. M. Dixon

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The Prose Edda

Norse Mythology

Snorri Sturluson

Translated with Introduction and Notes by **Jesse Byock**

Penguin Classics, Penguin Books

ISBN 9780140447552

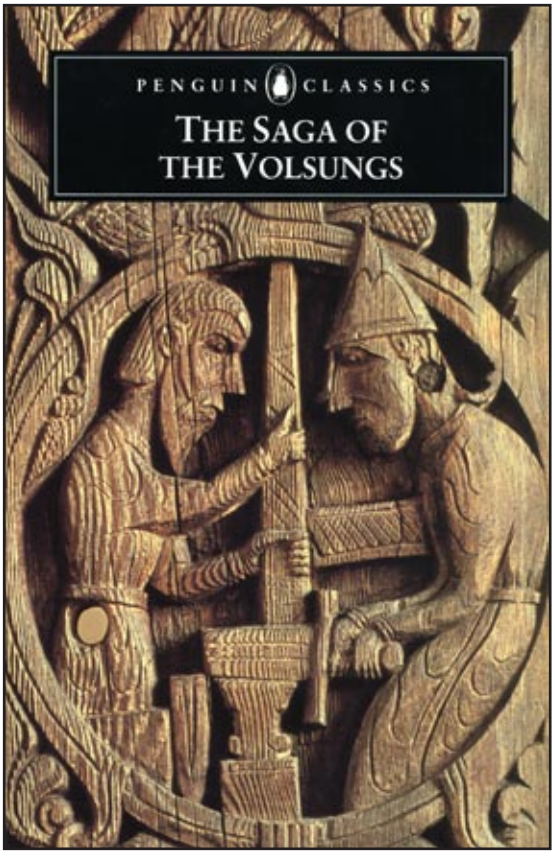
Back Cover

'What was the beginning, or how did things start? What was there before?'

The Prose Edda is the most renowned of all works of Scandinavian literature and our most extensive source for Norse mythology. Written in Iceland a century after the close of the Viking Age, it tells ancient stories of the Norse creation epic and recounts the battles that follow as gods, giants, dwarves and elves struggle for survival. It also preserves the oral memory of heroes, warrior kings and queens. In clear prose interspersed with powerful verse, the *Edda* provides unparalleled insight into the gods' tragic realization that the future holds one final cataclysmic battle, Ragnarok, when the world will be destroyed. These tales from the pagan era have proved to be among the most influential of all myths and legends, inspiring modern works as diverse as Wagner's *Ring Cycle* and Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

This new translation by Jesse Byock captures the strength and subtlety of the original, while his introduction sets the tales fully in the context of Norse mythology. This edition also includes detailed notes and appendices.

Cover: Detail from a ritual stone from Alskog Tjängvide depicting Odin (9th century AD), in the Historiska Museet, Stockholm (Photo: Ted Spiegel/Corbis)



The Saga of the Volsungs

Translated with an introduction
and notes by **Jesse Byock**
Penguin Classics, Penguin Books

ISBN 9780140447385

Back Cover

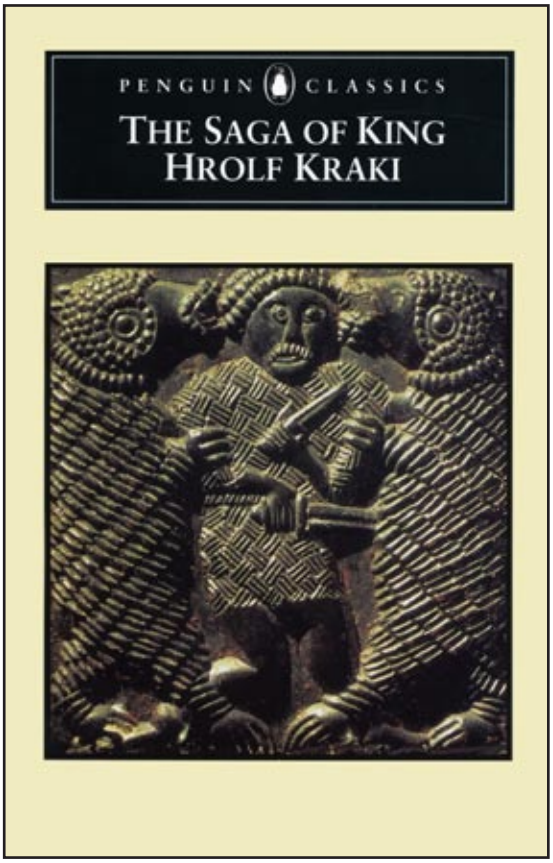
An unforgettable tale of princely jealousy, unrequited love, greed and vengeance, the *Saga of the Volsungs* is one of the great books of world literature.

Based on Viking Age poems, the *Volsung* (*Völsunga*) *Saga* combines mythology, legend and sheer human drama. At its heart are the heroic deeds of Sigurd the dragon slayer who acquires runic knowledge from one of Odin's Valkyries. Yet it is also set in a very human world, incorporating oral memories of the fourth and fifth centuries, when Attila the Hun and other warriors fought on the northern frontiers of the Roman empire. An illuminating Introduction links the historical Huns, Burgundians and Goths with the events of this Icelandic saga, whose author claimed that Sigurd's name was 'known in all tongues north of the Greek Ocean, and so it must remain while the world endures'.

With its ill-fated Rhinegold. the sword reforged and the magic ring of power, the saga resembles the *Nibelungenlied*. It has been a primary source for fantasy writers such as William Morris, and for J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and for Richard Wagner's *Ring* cycle.

The front cover shows a twelfth-century woodcarving depicting Sigurd the Volsung breaking the sword which the smith Regin has just forged, from the doorway of Hylestad Church, Setesdal, Norway. (Photo © Universitets Oldsaksamling, Oslo)

Web Page (includes complete Book List): http://www.viking.ucla.edu/



The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki

Translated with an introduction
by **Jesse Byock**
Penguin Classics, Penguin Books

ISBN 9780140435931

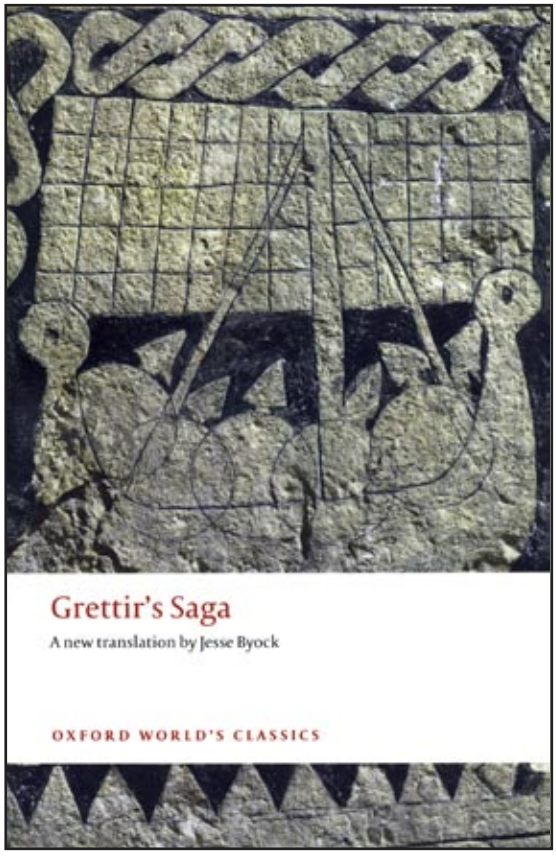
Back Cover

Composed in medieval Iceland, *Hrolf's Saga* recalls ancient Scandinavia of the Migration Period, when the warrior chieftain King Hrolf ruled in Denmark.

In the Old Norse / Viking world, King Hrolf was a symbol of courage. Sharing rich oral traditions with the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*, *Hrolf's Saga* recounts the tragedy of strife within Denmark's royal hall. It tells of powerful women and the exploits of Hrolf's famous champions – including Bodvar Bjarki, the 'bear-warrior', who strikingly resembles Beowulf. Combining heroic legend, myth and magic, *Hrolf's Saga* has wizards, sorceresses and 'berserker' fighters, originally members of a cult of Odin. Most startling is the central love triangle: Hrolf's father, a man of insatiable appetites, unknowingly abducts his daughter, who later marries the despised sorcerer King Adils of Sweden.

A powerful human drama with deep historical roots, extraordinary events and fierce battle scenes, *Hrolf's Saga* ranks among the masterworks of the Middle Ages, influencing writers such as J.R.R. Tolkien.

Cover photograph: a sixth-century A.D. bronze plaque showing a hero struggling with two bears, found at Torslunda, Öland, in the Statens Historiska Museet, Stockholm (photo: Carl Löfman/Promedia)



Grettir's Saga

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by **Jesse Byock**
Oxford University Press, Oxford World's Classics

ISBN 9780192801524

Back Cover

'You will be made an outlaw, forced always to live in the wilds and to live alone.'

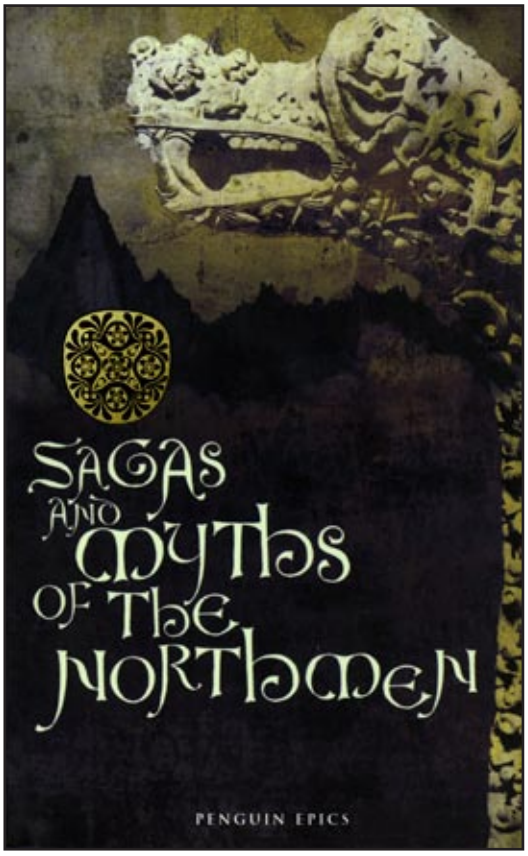
A sweeping epic of the Viking Age, *Grettir's Saga* follows the life of the outlaw Grettir the Strong as he battles against sorcery, bad luck, and the vengefulness of his enemies. Feared by many, Grettir is a warrior and also a poet and a lover who is afraid of the dark. Unable to resolve the dispute that has outlawed him, he lives outside the bounds of family life and he roams the countryside, ridding Iceland and Norway of berserker warriors, trolls, and the walking dead. The saga presents a poignant story of medieval Icelandic society, combining details of everyday legal disputes with folklore and legend. Written in the fourteenth century, but based on earlier oral and written sources, *Grettir's Saga*, with its scathing humour, explicit verses, and fantastic monsters, is among the most famous and widely read of Iceland's sagas.

This new translation features extensive maps and illustrative material.

Introduction • Textual note • Bibliography • Appendix • Explanatory notes • Maps • Glossary

Cover illustration: detail from Viking picture stone showing a longship, 9th century.
© Historiska Museet, Stockholm, Sweden. Photo: akg-images/Erich Lessing.

Web Page (includes complete Book List): http://www.viking.ucla.edu/



Sagas and Myths of the Northmen

Translated by **Jesse Byock**
Penguin Classics / Penguin Epics XVI
(The Greatest Stories Ever Told)

Excerpts from:
The Saga of the Volsungs • The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki • The Prose Edda

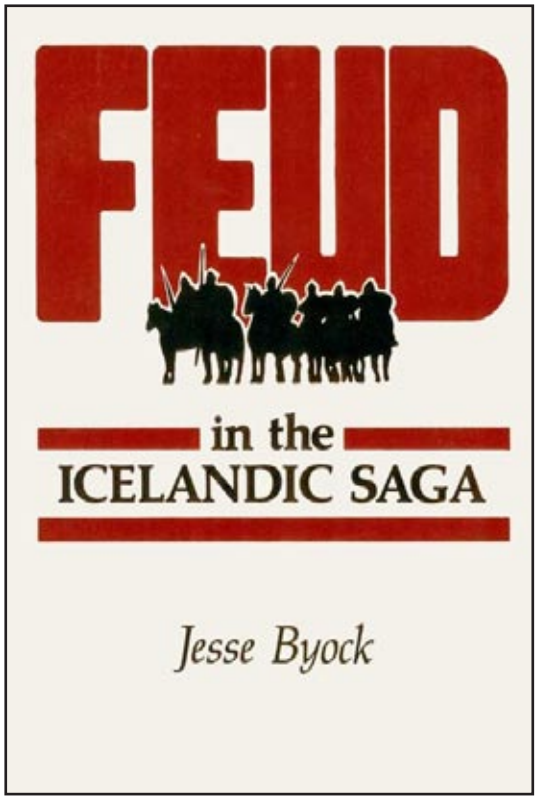
ISBN 9780141026411
ISBN 0-141-02641-3

Back Cover

In a land of ice, great warriors search for glory…

When a dragon threatens the people of the north, only one man can destroy the fearsome beast. Elsewhere, a mighty leader gathers a court of champions, including a noble warrior under a terrible curse. The Earth's creation is described; tales of the gods and evil Frost Giants are related; and the dark days of Ragnarok foretold.

Journey into a realm of Old Norse and Viking legend, where heroes from an ancient age do battle with savage monsters, and every man must live or die by the sword…



Feud in the Icelandic Saga

Jesse Byock

University of California Press (UCPress)

ISBN 9780520082595

Back Cover

"Byock's thorough inquiry into the Icelandic feud system and its impact on the saga literature is valuable and fruitful in itself. But his specific research work also results in important general conclusions concerning the Icelandic saga as a medieval epic genre… A sound and convincingly motivated statement on the unique character of the Icelandic saga."
— Peter Hallberg, *International Journal of Scandinavian Studies*

"Byock has not only succeeded in grounding, in a convincing manner, the social roles of individuals in the sagas but has also laid bare the role of narrative in Old Icelandic society." —Vilhjálmur Árnason, *Skírnir*

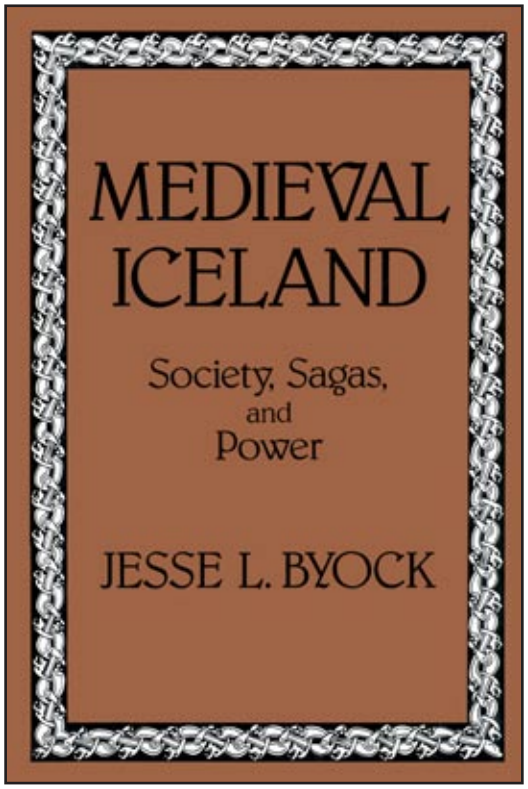
"Jesse Byock has here established an admirable basis for further research by clearing away much of the debris of the past. We are now ready for a full-scale reevaluation of saga materials in light of socio-historical and evolutionary views." —*Einar Haugen*

"An admirable study… A wealth of information about the political, social, and economic development of Icelandic society and the social thought underlying institutions and practices." —*The Scandinavian-American Bulletin*

"Jesse Byock's work has illuminated fundamental social concepts better and more clearly than has previously been done because he uses Icelandic sources in a new way." —Helgi Thorlákssson, *Ný Saga*

"Boldly imaginative and on the cutting edge of the human sciences."
—Dwight Conquergood, *Journal of American Folklore*

Web Page (includes complete Book List): http://www.viking.ucla.edu/



Medieval Iceland

Society, Sagas, and Power

Jesse Byock

University of
California Press

ISBN 9780520069541

Back Cover

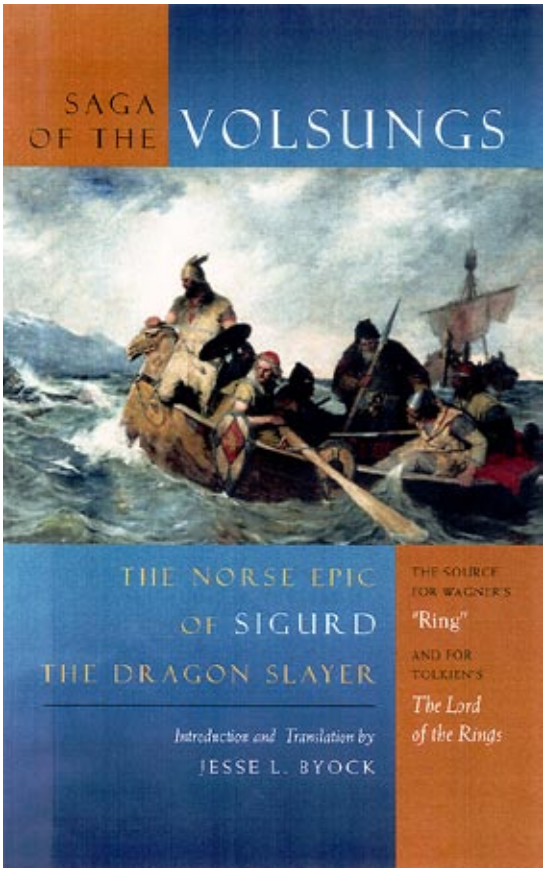
"Byock's book is a tour-de-force of historical argument. He brilliantly reconstructs the inner workings of an intriguing society, not elsewhere to be found in the Western world." —David Herlihy, *History Book Club*

"The first to demonstrate the importance of brokerage, advocacy, and arbitration as a social method of maintaining the governmental system, the balance of power, and the peace." —Helgi Thorláksson, *Skírnir*

"Medieval Iceland was a kind of pure-environment anthropological laboratory… It ought to have been a Utopia. It had: no foreign policy, no defence forces, no king, no lords, no peasants, no dispossessed aborigines, no battles (till late on), no dangerous animals, and no very clear taxes. What could possibly go wrong? Why is their literature all about killing each other? Answers lie, says Byock, in 'the underlying structures and cultural codes' of the island's social order… The most fascinating parts discuss the ways in which saga characters operate within a system of checks and balances to gain their ends." —Tom Shippey, *London Review of Books*

"In this stimulating and important work, Byock has succeeded in rehabilitating the Icelandic sagas as important sources for the social and economic history of the Free State (c. 930s to 1262-64)… Highly recommended." —C. W. Clark, *Choice*

Web Page (includes complete Book List): http://www.viking.ucla.edu/



Saga of the Volsungs

The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by **Jesse Byock**
University of California Press

The source for **Wagner**'s ***Ring*** and for **Tolkien**'s ***The Lord of the Rings***

ISBN 9780520232853

Back Cover

A trove of traditional lore, this Icelandic prose epic tells of love, jealousy, vengeance, war, and the mythic deeds of the dragonslayer, Sigurd the Volsung. The saga is of special interest to admirers of Richard Wagner, who drew heavily upon this Norse source in writing his Ring Cycle. With its magical ring acquired by the hero, and the sword to be reforged, the saga has also been a primary source for writers of fantasy such as J.R.R. Tolkien and romantics such as William Morris. Byock's comprehensive introduction explores the history, legends, and myths contained in the saga and traces the development of a narrative that reaches back to the period of the great folk migrations in Europe when the Roman Empire collapsed.

"Byock extends the background to the saga beyond the interest of 'Wagnerites' to the complex relationship between history and legend in the Middle Ages and the social context of the myths and heroes of the saga... [Byock is] very successful in his adept renderings of Eddic rhythm... The translation of prose is equally fine." —Judy Quinn, *Parergon*

"This is a book of the highest importance. No one should attempt to teach about Viking society or claim to understand it without being familiar with this chilling and enduring myth." — Eleanor Searle, *Medieval Academy of America*

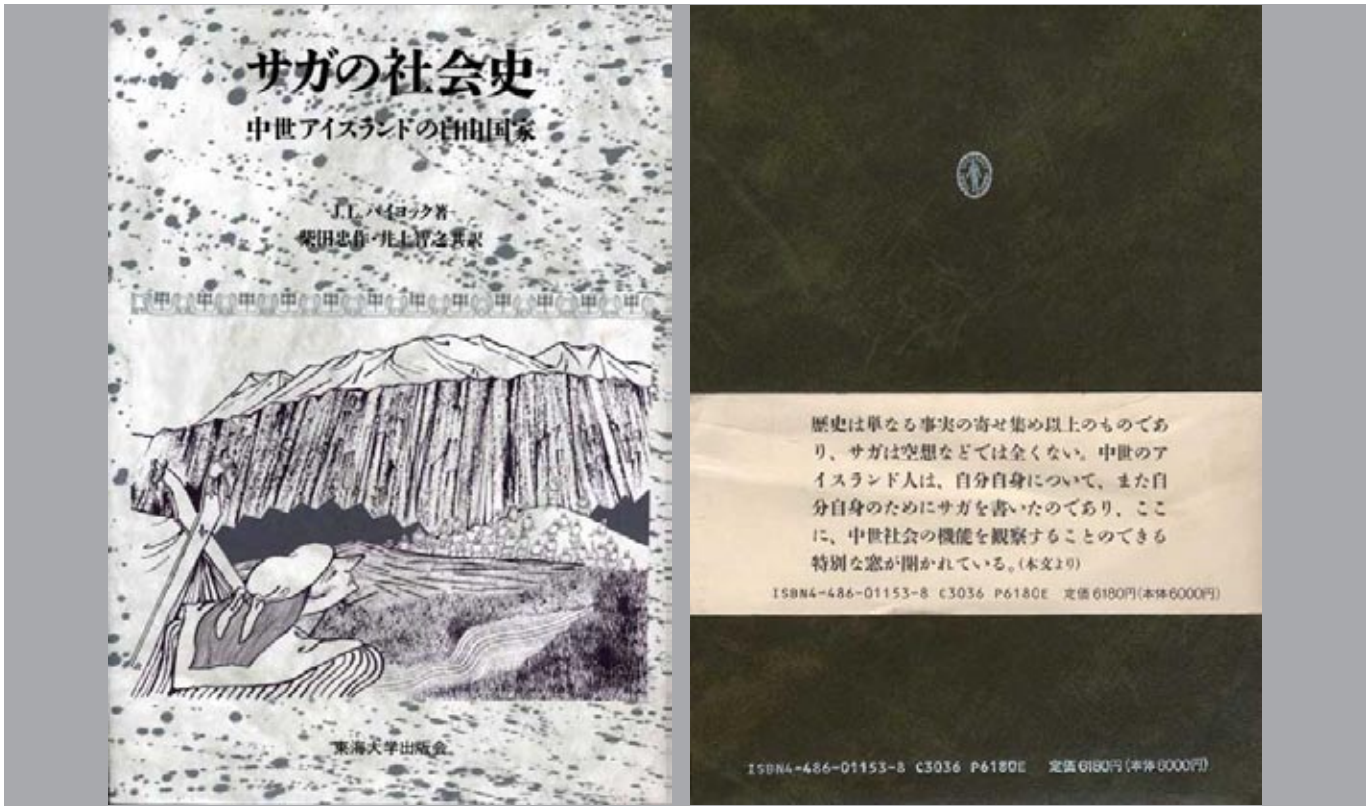
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Feud in the Icelandic Saga (Japanese edition) — **Jesse Byock**

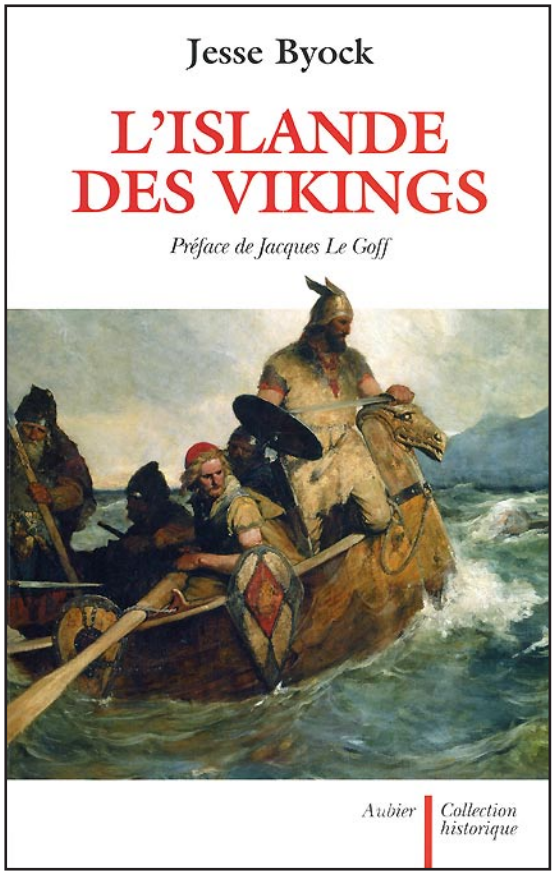
Translated by **Prof. Chusaku Shibata** and **Tomoyuki Inoue** – **Tokai University Press, Tokyo** – ISBN 9784486014089

Web Page (includes complete Book List): http://www.viking.ucla.edu/



Medieval Iceland (Japanese edition) — **Jesse Byock**

Translated by **Prof. Chusaku Shibata** and **Tomoyuki Inoue** –**Tokai University Press, Tokyo** – ISBN4-486-01153-8



L'Islande des Vikings

Jesse Byock

Traduit de l'anglais (E.-U.) par Béatrice Bonne
Préface de Jacques Le Goff

Aubier Collection historique
Flammarion / Aubier

ISBN 9782700723656

Quatrième de couverture

Seigneurs sanguinaires, maraudeurs sillonnant les rivages de l'Europe du Nord et pillant tout sur leur passage, les Vikings n'ont pas bonne réputation. Et pourtant ils ont fondé, en Islande, sur cette île demeurée quasi vierge de toute présence humaine jusqu'au IXe siècle, une société unique : basée sur un État libre et indépendant, elle est en grande partie exempte des hiérarchies sociales habituelles – y compris dans les rapports entre hommes et femmes – et fait reposer le règlement des conflits davantage sur le consensus que sur la violence et la guerre. Entre festins de raie pourrie et manuel de survie en milieu hostile, conflits juridiques et méthode de construction des maisons en mottes de terre herbeuse… c'est la vie quotidienne des Vikings à l'époque médiévale qui nous est ici dévoilée. En entrelaçant ses propres recherches historiques et archéologiques avec ses interprétations magistrales des sagas, ces récits littéraires typiquement islandais, Jesse Byock fait revivre cette civilisation avec brio.

Groupe de Vikings à l'approche des côtes islandaises en 872, d'après le tableau d'Oscar Wergeland (1877).
Photo: Jacques Lathion © The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo.

Web Page (includes complete Book List): http://www.viking.ucla.edu/



Island i sagatiden

Samfund, magt og fejde

Jesse Byock

Oversat av Jon Høyer

C. A. Reitzels forlag

ISBN 9788778760548

Bagsidetekst

De islandske sagaer udgør i denne bog et vindue ind til et usædvanligt samfund: Uden nogen central og udøvende myndighed formåede denne sociale nyskabelse at inddæmme fejder og konflikter og holde fred og forlig i omkring 300 år. I hele denne tradition, med dens tingsamlinger og kompromisløsninger, har de nordiske samfund dybe rødder.

Sagaerne opfattes i denne bog som et middelalderfolks beretninger om sig selv, fortalt til sig selv, til underholdning og social orientering. De opfattes således som pålidelige gengivelser af sociale mønstre og normer igennem den islandske fristatstid, der var kendetegnet ved en forbavsende kontinuitet.

Læst i sammenhæng med anden islandsk middelalderlitteratur kaster sagaerne et gennemtrængende lys over hele dette historiske forløb.

Island i sagatiden udkom første gang i 1988 i USA og England med titlen *Medieval Iceland* og er en meget benyttet fagbog i mange lande. Denne danske udgave er gennemgribende udvidet siden da og omkring halvanden gang så omfattende.

Denne bog kan anbefales til både erfarne forskere og nybegyndere inden for sagastudierne. Byock fremlægger sine undersøgelsesresultater og sine præmisser forbilledligt og klart, og netop derfor vil denne bog stimulere debatten på bedste vis.
— Nanna Damsholt, *Scandinavian Journal of History*

Byock er sandsynligvis den første forsker, der viser, hvordan mægling, tredjepartsindgreb og forhandling udgør en vigtig social metode til at sikre statssystemet, magtbalancen og freden.
— Helgi Þorláksson, *Skírnir*

Byock's bog er en *tour-de-force* inden for historisk argumentation. På fremragende måde rekonstruerer han de underliggende styringsmekanismer i et fejdesamfund, der ikke findes noget andet sted i den vestlige verden. — David Herlihy, *History Book Club*

De mest fascinerende dele af Byock's bog blotlægger de måder, som sagapersoner handler på for at nå deres mål inden for samfundets kontrol- og balancesystem.
— Tom Shippey, *London Review of Books*