



Viking Age Iceland

Jesse L. Byock

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The popular image of the Viking Age is of warlords and marauding bands pillaging their way along the shores of Northern Europe. In this fascinating history, Jesse Byock shows that Norse society in Iceland was actually an independent one—almost a republican Free State, without warlords or kings. Combining history with anthropology and archaeology, this remarkable study serves as a valuable companion to the Icelandic sagas, exploring all aspects of Viking Age life: feasting, farming, the power of chieftains and the church, marriage, and the role of women. With masterful interpretations of the blood feuds and the sagas, Byock reveals how the law courts favored compromise over violence, and how the society grappled with proto-democratic tendencies. A work with broad social and historical implications for our modern institutions, Byock's history will alter long-held perceptions of the Viking Age.

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