

# The Legendary Sagas

## Definition

A prose narrative recounting deeds of a legendary nature in a setting that is remote in time and space (Continental Scandinavia; occasionally further). The action tends to centre on adventure and warfare.

c. 30 legendary sagas survive. c. 7 shorter tales (legendary *þættir*) survive.

# Themes

- ▶ Raiding and warfare
- ▶ Quests
- ▶ Exploration / distant lands
- ▶ Royalty
- ▶ *troll* and *finnar* (Sami)
- ▶ Óðinn and the valkyries
- ▶ Magic and the supernatural assume a more prominent place: these texts are closer to fairytales than to being at all realistic

# Compare

- ▶ Kings' sagas
- ▶ Bishops' sagas and saints' lives (*heilagra manna sögur*)
- ▶ Sagas of Icelanders
- ▶ Contemporary sagas

## Some Notable Titles

- ▶ *Völsunga saga*: the Nibelungen one
- ▶ *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*: the English one
- ▶ *Hrólfs saga kraka*: the *Beowulf* one
- ▶ *Ketils saga hængs*: the Sami one
- ▶ *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*: the Russian one
- ▶ *Qrvar-Odds saga*: the one with the long-lived hero
- ▶ *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*: the warrior princess one
- ▶ *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*: the dirty one

## Bibliography

- Arnold, Matthew, and Alison Finlay, eds. *Making History: Essays on the fornaldarsögur*. Exeter: Short Run, 2010.
- Driscoll, Matthew J., ed. "Stories for All Times: The Icelandic Fornaldarsögur." Accessed January 15, 2017.  
<http://fasnl.ku.dk>.
- Lassen, Annette, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson, eds. *The Legendary Sagas: Origins and Development*. Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2012.
- Torfi H. Tulinius. *The Matter of the North: The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-Century Iceland*. Translated by Randi C. Eldevik. The Viking Collection 13. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2002.