THE ICELANDIC SAGAS

I. Historical Background

Viking Age (800-1200 A.D.)

Settlement Period (874-930 A.D.)
King Harald Fairhair - 872-930
Ingólfur Arnarson - 867

Saga Age (930-1030 A.D.)
Christianity (1000 A.D.)

Family Saga Compositions (1200-1300 A.D.)

II. Cultural Background

Livelihood
Farming, Trading, Fishing

Legal System
The Thing
Legal Settlement
Marriage/Divorce

III. Literary Background

Runic alphabet = dead end

Oral Literature

Latin Alphabet (ca. 1050)
Oldest mss. ca. 1150 in Iceland

Poetry
Eddic (orig. 900-1150)
(Prose rendition ca. 1222 by Snorri Sturluson)

Mythological
Heroic

Skaldic (ca. 800-1300)

12th c. - modern

\[\text{Amber, \textit{velvet}}\]

\[\text{peril, \textit{bord}}\]

\[\text{to Norway, \textit{c. 1440}}\]

\[\text{Hunting, \textit{rout}}\]

\[\text{district, \textit{top}}\]

\[\text{battle, \textit{top}}\]

\[\text{wagon, \textit{run}}\]

\[\text{shadow, \textit{run}}\]

\[\text{settle, \textit{run}}\]

\[\text{will, \textit{run}}\]
Prose

Kings' sagas (1150-1280)

Bishops' sagas (ca. 1180-1350)

Sagas of Ancient Times (1250-1350 [1400])

Translated Foreign Romances (1226-ca. 1300)

Native Romances (1300-1550)

Family Sagas (ca. 24) ca. 1210-1310 (+ 10)

Egils saga ca. 1215
Laxdoela saga
Njals saga ca. 1280
Hrafnkels saga
Grettis saga ca. 1310

IV. Njals saga

A. Prologue [chs. 1-17]
   1. Hrut und Unn (chs. 1-8)
   2. Hallgerd's marriages (chs. 9-17)
B. "Gunnars saga" [chs. 18-99]
   1. Introduction (chs. 18-34)
      a. Recovery of Unn's dowry (chs. 18-24)
      b. Gunnar's travels and marriage (chs. 25-34)
   2. Feud betw. Hallgerd and Bergthora (chs. 35-45)
   3. Feud with Ottur (chs. 46-56)
   4. Feud with Egil and Starkad (chs. 57-66)
   5. Feud with the two Thorgeirs (chs. 67-74)
   6. Gunnars fall (chs. 75-81)
   7. Feud betw. Thrain and sons of Njal (chs. 82-99)
      a. Fall of Thrain (chs. 82-94)
      b. Rise of Hoskuld Thrainsson (chs. 95-97)
      c. Death of Hoskuld Njalsson & reconcil. (chs. 97-99)
C. "Njals saga proper"
   1. Conversion of Iceland and results (chs. 100-107)
   2. Murder of Hoskuld Thrainsson (chs. 108-112)
   3. Attempted settlement with Flosi (chs. 113-123)
   4. Burning of Njal & co. (chs. 124-132)
   5. Lawsuit against the burners (chs. 133-145)
   6. Kari's revenge and final reconciliation (chs. 146-159)
      a. Feud betw. Kari and Flosi in Icel. (chs. 146-152)
      b. Continuation of the feud abroad (chs. 153-158)
      c. Reconciliation (ch. 159)
V. Saga Structure
   Introduction
   Conflict
   Climax
   Revenge
   Reconciliation
   Aftermath

VI. Saga Style
   Scaffolding
   Escalation
   Retardation
   Symmetry
   Foreshadowing
   Staging
   Posturing

VII. Concluding Remarks
   Honor
HELPFUL BOOKS


