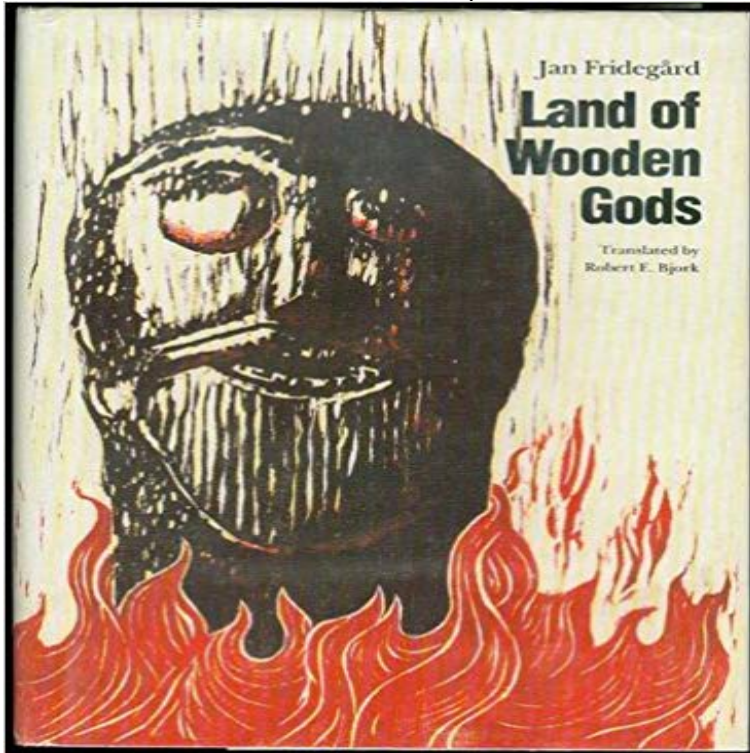


## Land of Wooden Gods (Modern Scandinavian Literature in Translation)



The romantic and powerful Viking warrior is a favorite subject of novelists, moviemakers, and historians. But he is not the hero of *Land of Wooden Gods*. His servant is. Jan Fridegård (1897-1968) recreates the Viking period from a new perspective, bringing to life not only a warfare culture but the institutions that supported it, especially slavery and a religion of fear. Originally published in Sweden in 1940, *Land of Wooden Gods* is the first volume of a trilogy of novels that Scandinavians consider among the greatest and most accurate ever written about the Vikings. For capturing its directness and emotional force in English, Robert E. Bjork won the 1987 Translation Prize of the American-Scandinavian Foundation. A thrall named Holme is the protagonist of *Land of Wooden Gods*, which centers on the slave population of Sweden in the ninth century, when the country was on the verge of Christianization. The novel begins with the abandonment of a slave baby, condemned to the wolf-infested woods by a Viking chieftain upset by thrall unrest. The ensuing action shows Holme, the father, acting as not slave has ever before. Fridegård, a master at creating atmosphere, sets the scene for his monumental work: a Viking village, with its log halls, stable, and sty; feuding families and human sacrifice; broadsailed dragon ships; and a port of pirates. The remaining novels in the trilogy *People of the Dawn* (1944) and *Sacrificial Smoke* (1949) were published by the University of Nebraska Press in 1990.

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