

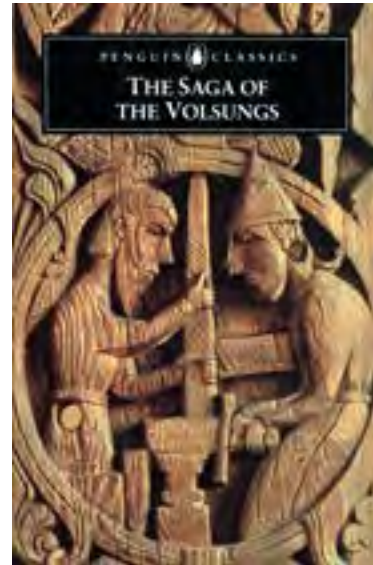
## A SELECTION OF BOOKS BY JESSE BYOCK ABOUT ICELAND AND THE VIKING AGE

### The Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer

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



An unforgettable tale, 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 set in a 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 is the Norse version of the *Nibelungenlied* and a primary source for J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and for Richard Wagner's *Ring* cycle.— *from the back cover*

[Amazon \(US\)](#) | [Amazon \(UK\)](#)

### The Prose Edda: Norse Mythology

Snorri Sturluson

Translated with Introduction and Notes by Jesse L. Byock  
Penguin Classics, Penguin Books



*The Prose Edda* is the most renowned of all works of Scandinavian literature and our most extensive source for Norse mythology. Written in Iceland, it tells ancient stories of the Norse creation epic and recounts gods, giants, dwarves and elves struggling for survival. It 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 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 includes detailed notes and appendices.— *from the back cover*

[Amazon \(US\)](#) | [Amazon \(UK\)](#)

## A SELECTION OF BOOKS BY JESSE BYOCK ABOUT ICELAND AND THE VIKING AGE

### Viking Age Iceland

by Jesse Byock  
Penguin History, Penguin Books



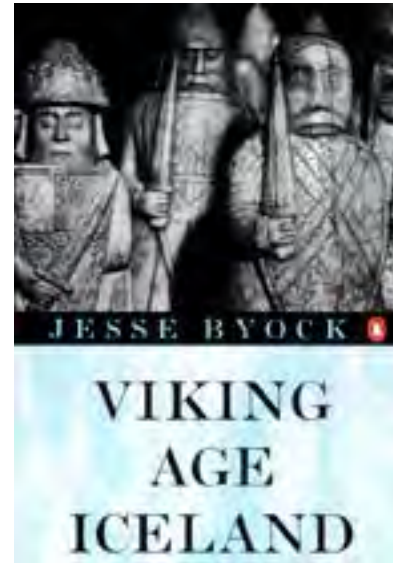
The popular image of the Viking Age is a time of warlords and marauding bands pillaging the shores of Northern Europe.

This deeply fascinating and important history reveals the society founded by Norsemen in Iceland was far from this picture. It was 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 '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, battling the elements, the power of chieftains, the church, marriage, women's roles, and kinship. It shows us how law courts, which favoured compromise over violence, often prevented disputes and insults from becoming 'blood feud'. Iceland 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.—*from the back cover*

[Amazon \(US\)](#) | [Amazon \(UK\)](#)



### The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki

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

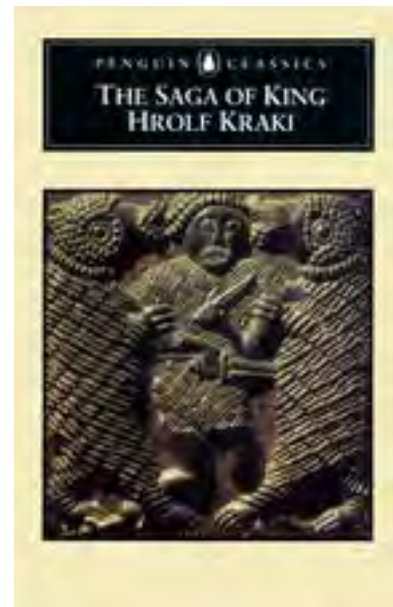


Composed in medieval Iceland, Hrolf's Saga recalls ancient Scandinavia of the Migration Period, when the warrior chieftain King Hrolf ruled in Denmark.

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.—*from the back cover*

[Amazon \(US\)](#) | [Amazon \(UK\)](#)



## A SELECTION OF BOOKS BY JESSE BYOCK ABOUT ICELAND AND THE VIKING AGE

### Sagas and Myths of the Northmen

Translated by Jesse Byock  
Penguin Classics / Penguin Epics xvi  
(Penguin Series: The Greatest Stories Ever Told)



A short introductory sampling of selected Norse myths and legends for beginners to Old Icelandic mythology and sagas with excerpts from *The Saga of the Volsungs*, *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*, and *The Prose Edda*.

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. —*from the back cover*

[Amazon \(US\)](#)



### Grettir's Saga

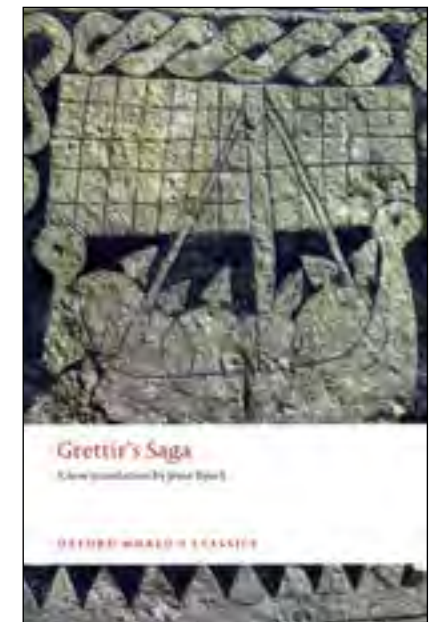
Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Jesse Byock  
Oxford University Press, Oxford World's Classics

'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, a poet, and a lover who is afraid of the dark. Unable to resolve the dispute that has outlawed him, Grettir lives outside the bounds of family life. He roams the countryside, ridding Iceland and Norway of berserkers, trolls, and walking dead. The saga presents medieval Icelandic life, including love life, food, blood feud, folklore, and legend. *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. —*from the back cover*

[Amazon \(US\)](#) | [Amazon \(UK\)](#)



## A SELECTION OF BOOKS BY JESSE BYOCK ABOUT ICELAND AND THE VIKING AGE

### Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas, and Power

Jesse L. Byock  
University of California Press

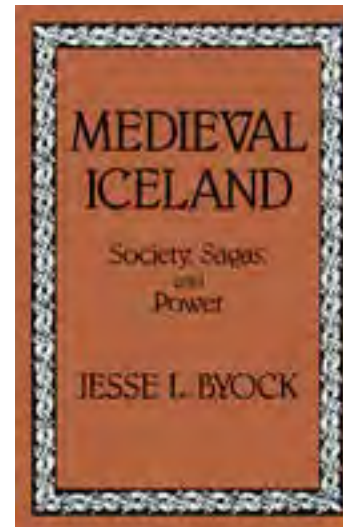
“Byock’s book is a tour-de-force of historical argument. He brilliantly reconstructs the inner workings of an intriguing society, not elsewhere to be found in the Western world.” — David Herlihy, *History Book Club*

“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*

[Amazon \(US\)](#)



### Feud in the Icelandic Saga

Jesse Byock  
University of California Press (UCPress)

“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 Arnason, *Skírnir*

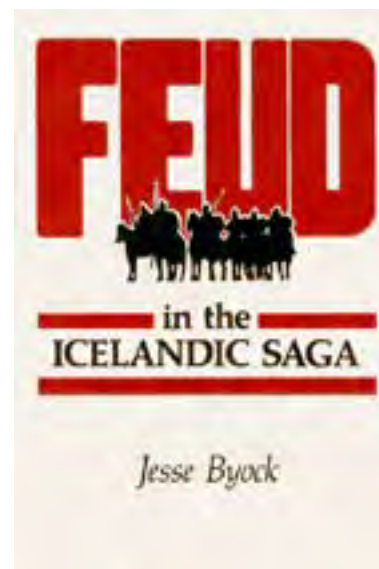
“Jesse Byock has here established an admirable basis for further research by clearing away much of the debris of the past. We are now ready for a full-scale reevaluation of saga materials in light of socio-historical and evolutionary views.” — Einar Haugen

“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 Thorláksson, *Ný Saga*

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

[Amazon \(US\)](#) | [Amazon \(UK\)](#)



[www.vikingnorse.com](http://www.vikingnorse.com)

## A SELECTION OF BOOKS BY JESSE BYOCK ABOUT ICELAND AND THE VIKING AGE

### Viking Language 1:

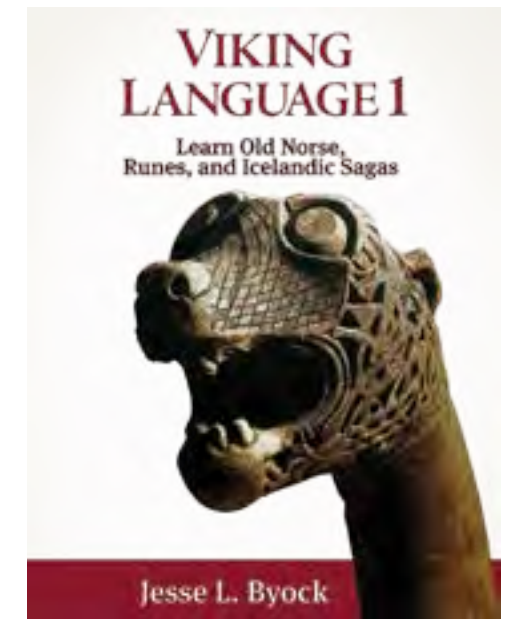
#### Learn Old Norse, Runes, and Icelandic Sagas

Jesse L. Byock

*Viking Language 1: Learn Old Norse, Runes, and Icelandic Sagas* is an introduction to the language of the Vikings offering in one book graded lessons, vocabulary, grammar exercises, pronunciation, student guides, and maps. It explains Old Icelandic literature, Viking history, and mythology. Readings include runestones, legends, and sagas.

*Viking Language 1* focuses on the most frequently occurring words in the sagas, an innovative method which speeds learning. Because the grammar has changed little from Old Norse, the learner is well on the way to mastering Modern Icelandic. It provides a wealth of information about Iceland, where the sagas were written and Old Scandinavian history and mythology were preserved. *Viking Language 1* is accompanied by *Viking Language 2: The Old Norse Reader*.

[Amazon \(US\)](#) | [Amazon \(UK\)](#)



### Viking Language 2:

#### The Old Norse Reader

Jesse L. Byock

*Viking Language 2: The Old Norse Reader* is a collection of original texts to accompany *Viking Language 1*. A stand-alone book for classes and the self-learner, *The Old Norse Reader* immerses the learner in Icelandic and Viking Age sources. It provides the tools necessary to read complete sagas and Norse mythic and heroic poetry. *The Reader* includes:

- Sagas of blood feud in Viking Age Iceland accompanied by introductions, notes, maps, and cultural discussions.
- Extensive vocabulary, a comprehensive Old Norse reference grammar and answer key to the exercises in *Viking Language 1*.
- Mythic and heroic poetry teaching eddic, skaldic, and runic verse.
- Selections from Old Norse texts ranging from the doom of the gods at the final battle Ragnarok to descriptions of the ring and the dwarves’ gold that inspired Richard Wagner’s *Ring Cycle* and J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*.

[vikingnorse.com](http://vikingnorse.com)



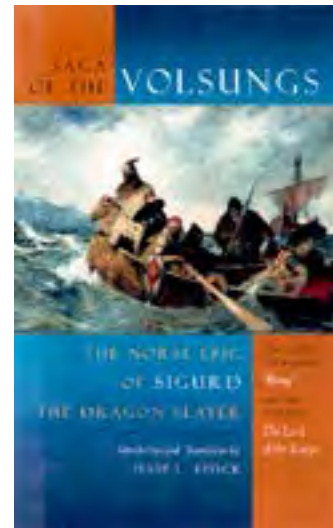
[www.vikingnorse.com](http://www.vikingnorse.com)

## A SELECTION OF BOOKS BY JESSE BYOCK ABOUT ICELAND AND THE VIKING AGE

### Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Jesse L. Byock  
University of California Press  
The source for Wagner's *Ring* and for Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

A trove of traditional lore, this Icelandic prose epic tells of love, vengeance, war, and the mythic deeds of the dragonslayer, Sigurd the Volsung. Richard Wagner drew heavily upon this Norse source in writing his Ring Cycle. With its magical ring, and the sword to be reforged, the saga was a primary source for J.R.R. Tolkien and romantics such as William Morris. Byock's comprehensive introduction explores the history, legends, and myths contained in the *Volsung (Völsunga) Saga*. It traces the development of a narrative that reaches back to 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*

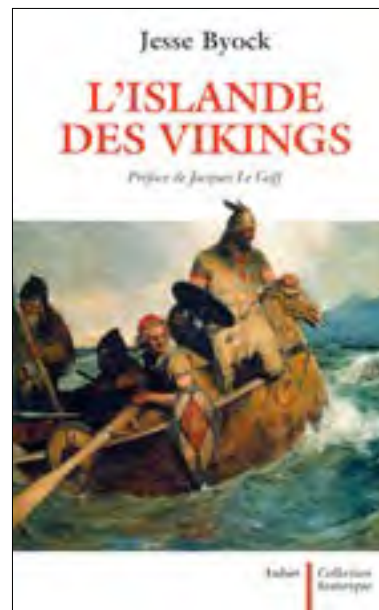
"This is a book of the highest importance. No one should attempt to teach about Viking society or claim to understand it without being familiar with this chilling and enduring myth." — Eleanor Searle, *Medieval Academy of America*

[Amazon \(US\)](#) | [Amazon \(UK\)](#)

### 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

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 IX<sup>e</sup> 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. — *quatrième de couverture*



[Amazon \(France\)](#)

## A SELECTION OF BOOKS BY JESSE BYOCK ABOUT ICELAND AND THE VIKING AGE

### Исландия эпохи викингов

Джесси Байок  
Москва, Corpus, 2012  
Translated by Ilya Sverdlov (Jesse Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*)

Джесси Л. Байок - специалист по древнеисландскому языку и средневековой Скандинавии, профессор Калифорнийского университета, автор множества книг, переводов и научных статей. Его главный труд, "Исландия эпохи викингов", - это и увлекательное путешествие по исландской действительности в период X-XIII вв., и полезное пособие по чтению саг, и экскурсия в удивительное общество, которое настолько занято делом, что вынуждено вместо междоусобных войн развивать правовую систему.



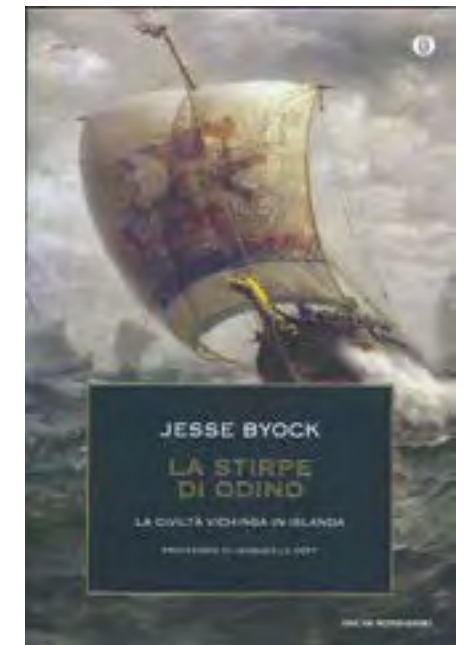
### La Stirpe di Odino: La Civiltà Vichinga in Islanda

Jesse Byock  
Traduzione di Marco Federici  
Prefazione di Jacques Le Goff  
Arnoldo Mondadori Editore

I primi raggiunsero l'Islanda dalla Scandinavia e dalla Britannia vichinga alla metà del IX secolo e qui diedero vita a uno stato libero, indipendente e non gerarchico, che costituisce un unicum nella storia europea. Le strutture sociali, economiche, politiche e giuridiche, infatti, per quanto ispirate a quelle delle zone d'origine, dovettero essere modellate su una realtà geografica del tutto nuovo, difficile e affascinante, e durarono con minime evoluzioni fino alla conquista norvegese del 1260, dando vita a una civiltà rurale, con una stupefacente cultura del diritto e un forte senso dell'onore.

In questo libro, che il grande medievista Le Goff ha definito "splendido e affascinante", l'autore indaga l'Islanda indipendente in modo globale, facendo ricorso a molteplici tipologie di fonti, da quelle giuridiche a quelle archeologiche, e in particolare analizza le splendide saghe, capolavori letterari dai quali è possibile ricavare la più esatta descrizione di quello che voleva dire vivere nella "terra dei ghiacci" tra IX e XIII secolo.

[Amazon \(UK\)](#)



## A SELECTION OF BOOKS BY JESSE BYOCK ABOUT ICELAND AND THE VIKING AGE

### Island i sagatiden: Samfund, magt og fejde

Jesse Byock  
Oversat av Jon Høyer  
C. A. Reitzels forlag

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.

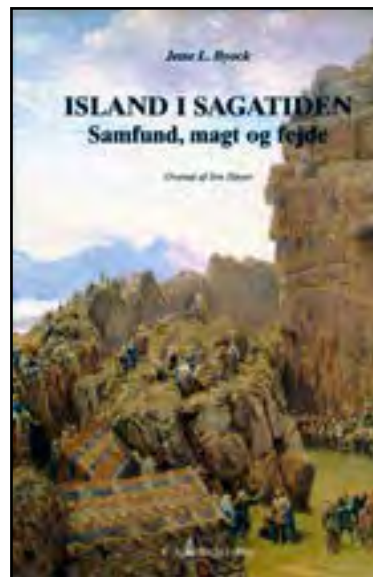
Sagaerne opfattes i denne bog som et middelalderfolks beretninger om sig selv, fortalt til sig selv, til underholdning og social orientering. De opfattes således som pålidelige gengivelser af sociale mønstre og normer igennem den islandske fristatstid, der var kendetegnet ved en forbavsende kontinuitet. Læst i sammenhæng med anden islandsk middelalderlitteratur kaster sagaerne et gennemtrængende lys over hele dette historiske forløb. — *bagsidetekst*

*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, *Skirnir*

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 blottelægger de måder, som sagapersoner handler på for at nå deres mål inden for samfundets kontrol- og balancesystem. — Tom Shippey, *London Review of Books*



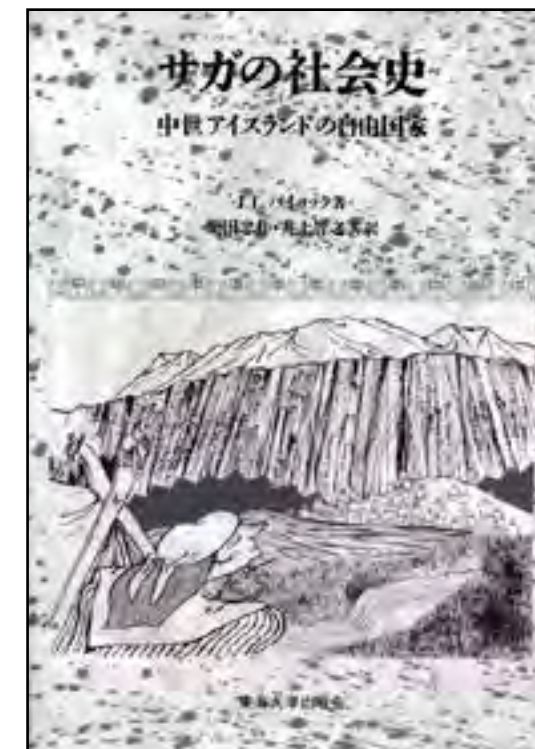
## A SELECTION OF BOOKS BY JESSE BYOCK ABOUT ICELAND AND THE VIKING AGE

### アイスランド・サガ 血鬻の記号論

Feud in the Icelandic Saga (Japanese edition)

Jesse L. Byock  
Translated by Chusaku Shibata and Tomoyuki Inoue  
Tokai University Press, Tokyo

[Amazon \(Japan\)](#)



### サガの社会史 中世アイスランドの自由国家

Medieval Iceland (Japanese edition)

Jesse L. Byock  
Translated by Chusaku Shibata and Tomoyuki Inoue  
Tokai University Press, Tokyo

[Amazon \(Japan\)](#)