

**THE SAGA OF KING HROLF KRAKI
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JESSE L. BYOCK**



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The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki

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About the Author

Jesse Byock has also translated the Saga of Volsungs, published by Penguin.

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THE SAGA OF KING HROLF KRAKI (PENGUIN CLASSICS)

BY ANONYMOUS, JESSE L. BYOCK PDF

Composed in medieval Iceland, Hrolf's Saga is one of the greatest of all mythic-legendary sagas, relating half-fantastical events that were said to have occurred in fifth-century Denmark. It tells of the exploits of King Hrolf and of his famous champions, including Bodvar Bjarki, the 'bear-warrior': a powerful figure whose might and bear-like nature are inspired by the same legendary heritage as Beowulf. Depicting a world of wizards, sorceresses and 'berserker' fighters - originally members of a cult of Odin - this is a compelling tale of ancient magic. A work of timeless power and beauty, it offers both a treasury of Icelandic prose and a masterful gathering of epic, cultic memory, traditional folk tale and myths from the Viking age and far earlier.

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About the Author

Jesse Byock has also translated the Saga of Volsungs, published by Penguin.

Most helpful customer reviews

17 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

An Incredible Work

By Michael Chu

Having had the incredible opportunity to attend a class in Norse mythology at the University of California, Los Angeles with Mr. Byock, I wholeheartedly encourage anyone with the slightest bit of interest in the area of Scandinavian literature and Norse mythology to read Byock's translation of THE SAGA OF KING HROLF KRAKI. The translation is accurate and detailed, and Byock's introduction and notes are elucidating and easy to read.

THE SAGA OF KING HROLF KRAKI is probably derived from the same oral stories as the Anglo-Saxon classic, BEOWULF. Byock details the many similarities in one section of the book, showing the uncanny parallels. The saga recounts the tragic life of King Hrolf, the king of Denmark, his lineage, and of his

companions. Thoroughly entertaining, THE SAGA OF KING HROLF KRAKI features berserks and wizards, the dooming love of Hrolf's father for his daughter, and the villainous King Adils of Sweden in an engrossing narrative.

Byock is a leader in his field and tells the story like no other, readable and informed. Readers who enjoyed BEOWULF or THE PROSE EDDA will find nothing but joy in reading THE SAGA OF KING HROLF KRAKI, and there is enough between its covers to be recommended to everyone.

30 of 34 people found the following review helpful.

A Tale of Great Warriors and the Supernatural

By James Paris

This saga tells much the same story as BEOWULF -- 500 years later and from half an ocean away. In their volcanic fastnesses, the Icelanders not only told and retold the famous Sagas of Icelanders, but also sagas of kings, warriors, and saints -- even when they had little or nothing to do with Iceland. As the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus wrote around 1200, Icelanders "take great pleasure in discovering and commemorating the achievements of all nations; in their view, it is as enlightening to discourse on the prowess of others as to display their own."

Fortunately, this book is translated and edited by Professor Jesse L Byock of UCLA, whose VIKING AGE ICELAND is a model introduction to the subject of the Icelandic saga. In addition to providing an excellent translation, Byock's introduction is both thorough and enlightening; and, typical of his work, there are illustrative maps, drawings, genealogies, notes, charts and tables, and a useful glossary of characters.

If you've read BEOWULF, why bother cracking Kraki? For one thing, the Icelanders are great story-tellers, and the saga is a great read. I found it interesting that while the saga was written some 350 years into the Christian era, it is every bit as pagan as the Anglo-Saxon story. Odin appears in disguise twice in the story, with nary a bishop or saint in the offing. (Only a few oblique references toward the end point to some inkling of Christianity.) It has long been my contention that Christianity sat ever so lightly on the mailed shoulders of the Icelanders. The grim gods of the Asatru never quite disappeared. In fact, it would not be surprising if the SAGA OF KING HROLF KRAKI were written by Christian monks at Skalholt or Holar or some other monastic community.

Picture the long dark Arctic winter nights in those scattered sod huts with their grass roofs. There was nothing like good food and drink punctuated with a story of great warriors and the supernatural to make the time pass quickly. Funny thing, it still reads well today.

14 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting and Distinctive Saga

By R. Albin

This is an interesting saga featuring semi-legendary Norse characters. It is presented and translated by the distinguished scholar of Icelandic history, Jesse Byock. The saga is a series of linked tales related to the life of the legendary Danish monarch, Hrolf Hraki. It is an example of a form of Icelandic saga based on the legendary or semi-legendary Norse past rather than the family or historical basis of many well known Icelandic sagas. This saga is drawn from the same stock of legends and characters used by the Beowulf poet. The stories are definitely interesting, the translation reads well, and Byock's introduction and notes are excellent. Nonetheless, this saga is of greater intellectual than artistic interest. Unlike Beowulf, this is a compilation of tales, not a unified poetic work. While the tales are good reading, this saga lacks the focus and poetic majesty of Beowulf. This saga lacks also the intensely realistic qualities of the family sagas and the unity derived from concentration on a few characters. This book is short, reads smoothly and is well worth the time expended on reading it.

See all 17 customer reviews...

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