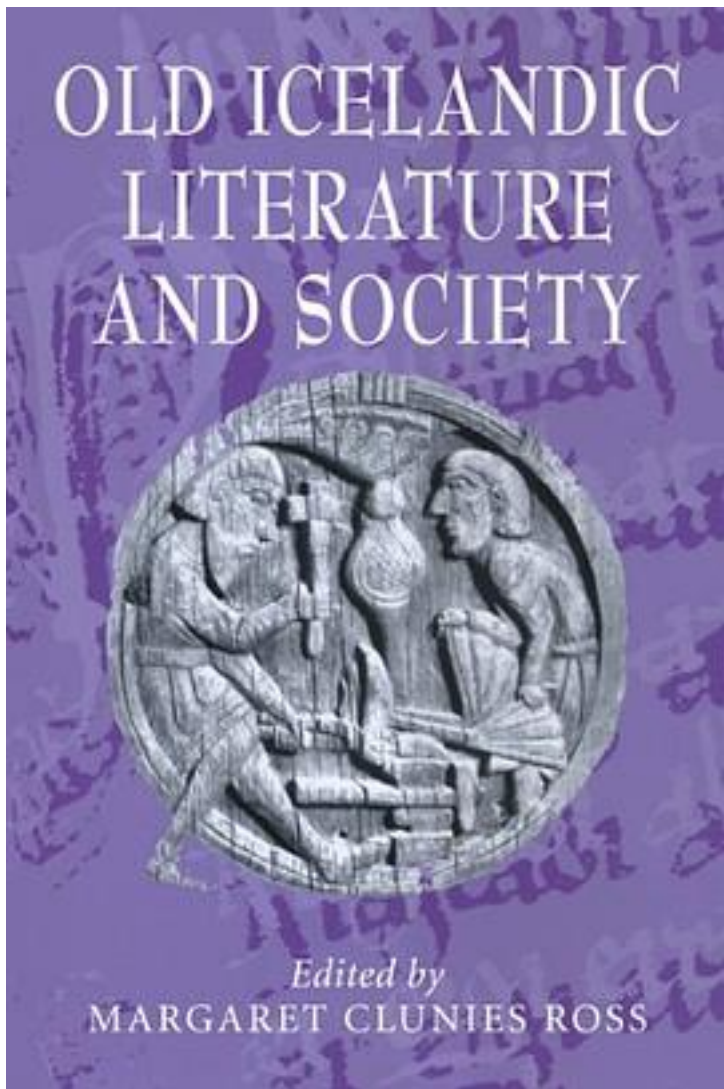


Old Icelandic Literature and Society



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From the period of settlement (870-930) to the end of the fourteenth century, Icelanders produced one of the most varied and original literatures of medieval Europe. This is the first book to provide a comprehensive account of Old Icelandic literature within its social setting and across a range of genres. An international team of specialists examines the ways in which the unique social experiment in Iceland, a kingless society without an established authority structure, inspired a wealth of innovative writing composed in the Icelandic vernacular. Icelanders explored their uniqueness through poetry, mythologies, metrical treatises, religious writing, and through saga, a new literary genre which textualised their history and incorporated oral traditions in a written form. The book shows that Icelanders often used their textual abilities to gain themselves political and intellectual advantage, not least in the period when the state's freedom came to an end.

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