

THE SO-CALLED  
SECOND GRAMMATICAL TREATISE

AN ORTHOGRAPHIC PATTERN  
OF LATE THIRTEENTH-CENTURY ICELANDIC

EDITION, TRANSLATION, AND COMMENTARY  
BY

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FILOLOGIA GERMANICA  
TESTI E STUDI

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*To Daniela:  
she knows why*

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## PREFACE

*During the last half century or so, scholarly interest in early Icelandic grammatical literature has been limited almost exclusively to the so-called "First Grammatical Treatise" (FGT). The other three extant treatises, originating in the same cultural tradition, have been put in the shade or even disregarded, so much so that the expression "grammatical treatise" has occasionally been used to refer to FGT alone (e. g., in S. Nordal 1953, pp. 190-95).*

*In 1975, F. Albano Leoni made the first formal complaint concerning this neglect (pp. 34-35), and, while stressing the importance of, and the necessity for, a critical comparison between the FGT and the "Second Grammatical Treatise" (SGT), he implicitly expressed the need for a deeper knowledge of the latter.*

*In fact, critical research on the last three treatises came to a virtual standstill by the end of the nineteenth century. Interest in SGT was particularly intense during the last two decades of that same century, when it was at the centre of a lively controversy, principally concerning its relationship with Snorri's Edda and, in consequence, the treatise's purpose for being. However, by 1898, Finnur Jónsson's acute criticism of E. Mogk's essay on SGT seemed to put an end to the whole question (although a number of central problems still remained unsolved), and the treatise was no longer considered except occasionally and on a merely informative level.*

*Since then, our knowledge of the linguistic and cultural landscape of medieval Iceland has deepened, and notable progress has also been made in the study of grammatical activity during the Middle*

*Ages and in the techniques of textual criticism, so that the time seems ripe for a radical revision of work previously done in this field.*

*This study is therefore meant to be a first attempt to resume, by introducing new elements that have come to light as knowledge has grown, a discussion long since abandoned, although of primary importance for the history of Icelandic culture. Its principal aim, in addition to furnishing an updated edition of the text, is to sum up and reconsider critically the main points made in earlier research, thereby bringing to the fore those aspects which have been neglected or not sufficiently examined by previous commentators — for instance, the problem of the “sources” and the dating of the treatise.*

*I wish to express my thanks to all those who have contributed, in one way or another, to make this work possible. I owe particular gratitude to the staff of the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen for their courtesy and assistance during my stay in Denmark in autumn 1980; to the late Prof. Jan Pinborg, of the Institute for Greek and Latin Medieval Philology at the University of Copenhagen, whose suggestions were invaluable in the search for possible theoretical connections between SGT and the medieval grammatical doctrines; and to my maestro, Piergiuseppe Scardigli, professor of Germanic Philology at the University of Florence, who devoted so much of his time to following the study and whose help and encouragement went far beyond the purely professional aspect. I would also like to thank the University of Florence and the Italian National Research Council (CNR) for their contributions without which it would have been impossible to meet the heavy publishing costs involved.*

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FABRIZIO D. RASCHELLÀ

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Copies of the volume are available from the author.

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