



Tools of Literacy: The Role of Skaldic Verse in Icelandic Textual Culture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

Guðrún Nordal

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Tools of Literacy is a thorough and ground-breaking examination of thirteenth-century skaldic verse or dróttkvætt, the literary production of Iceland in the thirteenth century, and of the textual culture which nurtured the poets. Nordal demonstrates the connection between thirteenth-century skaldic verse and the formal study of grammatica in schools, and establishes that skaldic verse was treated much like a Nordic equivalent of classic texts. She also reevaluates and reemphasizes the versatility of skaldic verse, and demonstrates the link between Icelandic authors and intellectual currents in Europe at the time. The study systematically links the thirteenth-century poets with leading families and with ecclesiastical and secular learning, and shows that skaldic verse-making was one of the class symbols of the new aristocracy in thirteenth-century Iceland.

In giving a faithful account of verse making in thirteenth-century Iceland, Nordal has developed a database of approximately 1900 entries which serves as a point of reference throughout the book. The book's content is new, its overall coverage unique, and it will certainly be of interest to scholars and students in the fields of comparative literature, comparative mythology, Old Norse/Icelandic literature and language, and medieval studies.

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