

Specimen Lexici Runici

Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás: SPECIMEN LEXICI RUNICI and GLOSSARIUM PRISCÆ LINGUÆ DANICÆ.

Edited by Anthony Faulkes and Gunnlaugur Ingólfsson. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum and Viking Society for Northern Research 2010. Soft cover. ISBN 9780903521802. Price £60 (£30 to members of the Viking Society).



Specimen Lexici Runici was the first dictionary of Old Icelandic, compiled in the early seventeenth century by the Icelandic clergyman Magnús Ólafsson and printed in Denmark in 1650. It contains over a thousand entries, and the majority include illustrative quotations, sometimes of considerable length (two or more pages) from Old Icelandic sagas and other kinds of writing, including many poems, none of which were printed until after Magnús's time. The head words were transcribed into runes, as it was believed at the time that in the Middle Ages Icelandic books had been written in runes.

The edition offers scanned images of the pages of the printed work with a transcription of the only surviving manuscript (entitled *Glossarium Priscæ Linguæ Danicæ*; not an autograph) parallel. The introduction contains a short biography of the author and the history of the work, which was revised for publication after the

author's death, and a summary of the sources of the quotations. There are extensive notes to each dictionary entry, which identify the source of each quotation (where possible) and attempt to identify the version, or even the actual manuscript, used by the compiler for his quotations from each work. Where an entry lists a word or words without any illustrative quotation, the note mentions chief occurrences of these words in texts from the time of the compiler or earlier (if any). There is a word list containing all the words included in the book as examples of Icelandic usage, with references to the pages of the book (or folio nos of the manuscript) where each word is to be found.

The dictionary throws valuable light on the history of Icelandic words and the knowledge of and attitudes to Old Icelandic literature in the Renaissance period in Iceland and Denmark, and in some cases preserves readings and vocabulary from Old Icelandic manuscripts which have since been lost.