

2^{ème} Conférence plénière / 2. Hauptvortrag

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North Sea Currents: Traveling Books and Traveling Texts in the Norse World

Already around 1200 the Icelanders had a reputation for being a particularly bookish people who, in the words of Saxo Grammaticus, found it “just as elevating to discourse on the prowess of others as to display their own (trans. Fisher).” When Old Norse literature is read and studied today, it is mainly the works of the Icelanders that are studied. Although the Icelanders lived far from the rest of Europe, they were not totally isolated. In particular, there is evidence of lively contact between Iceland and Norway in the Middle Ages.

Texts and people regularly crossed the North Sea from Iceland to Norway. Icelandic monasteries produced manuscripts for export to Norway and Icelanders entered the royal service in Norway where they occasionally found employment as scribes. Goods and literary trends also crossed the North Sea in the other direction, from Norway to Iceland. The nodal point was Bergen in Western Norway.

In my presentation I will focus on one such individual on the move, the book he appears to have brought with him, and the texts it contains. His name was Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) and his codex is known as *Hauksbók* ‘the Book of Haukr’. A meticulous study by Stefán Karlsson (“*Aldur Hauksbókar*” 1964) has established a chronology for the composition of the manuscript and, with the help of this one can follow Haukr’s developing literary taste and interests and perhaps correlate them with his career which took him from Iceland to the royal council of the Norwegian kingdom in Bergen.
