

2^{ème} Conférence plénière / 2. Hauptvortrag

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Multilingualism in Eleventh-Century England

This paper focuses on dynastic history-writing to examine the intersection of complex multilingualism, politics and literary virtuosity in eleventh-century England. This multilingual literary culture was the outcome of two conquests, Danish (1016) and Norman (1066), the presence of an established written vernacular, English, alongside Latin, and the mobility of royal women, elite clerics, as well as military men of all ranks. In bringing together Latin, English, Norse and French (with some reference also to Welsh and Irish) – all in contact in England – it will consider the sociolinguistics of local, supraregional and ‘universal’ languages, some written, and some not. It will pursue throughout a theme of the ‘talk around the text’ – looking at manuscripts in the context of the spoken word. It aims to show that an ostentatiously multilingual literary culture, spanning manuscripts and oral poetry, acted as a powerful political discourse in this period of upheaval. We will consider skaldic verse from the court of King Cnut (an oral form), the vernacular Anglo-Saxon Chronicles (especially British Library, Tiberius B. i and British Library, Cotton Domitian viii), the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (British Library, Additional 33241), and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis* (British Library, Harley 526).
