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Charlemagne in the Norse and Celtic Worlds

Helen Fulton, Sif Rikhardsdottir

DESCRIPTION

Essays bringing out the richness of the hitherto neglected Charlemagne tradition in medieval Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Wales and Ireland.

The reception of the Charlemagne legends among Nordic and Celtic communities in the Middle Ages is a shared story of transmission, translation, an exploration of national identity, and the celebration of imperialism. The articles brought together here capture for the first time the richness of the Charlemagne tradition in medieval Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Wales and Ireland and its coherence as a series of adaptations of Old French *chansons de geste*.

Emerging from the French sources is a set of themes which unite the linguistically different Norse and Celtic Charlemagne traditions. The ideology of the Crusades, the dichotomy of Christian and heathen elements, the values of chivalry and the ideals of kingship are among the preoccupations common to both traditions. While processes of manuscript transmission are distinctive to each linguistic context, the essential function of the legends as explorations of political ideology, emotion, and social values creates unity across the language groups. From the Old Norse *Karlamagnús saga* to the Irish and Welsh narratives, the chapters present a coherent set of perspectives on the northern reception of the Charlemagne legends beyond the nation of England.

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