



Seafaring Saint: Sources and Analogues of the Twelfth Century Voyage of Saint Brendan

Clara Strijbosch

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The *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, written in Latin around AD 800, describes how the 6th-century Irish saint Brendan set sail for an island paradise on the other side of the ocean. Three and a half centuries later, around 1150, another story about St Brendan was written in the vernacular of the area around Trier, Germany. In this story, *The Voyage of Saint Brendan*, Brendan is said to have thrown a book into the fire in utter disbelief of the veracity of the marvelous phenomena which the book describes. As a punishment he is sent out into the world to see for himself that which he would not credit. The relationship between the Latin *Navigatio* and vernacular *Voyage* has long been one of the most baffling problems of Brendan scholarship. In *The Voyage of Saint Brendan* Clara Strijbosch reconstructs the contents of the original *Voyage*, now lost, comparing it with the *Navigatio*, 12th-century texts about the marvels of the East (among them Herzog Ernst) and the wonders of creation, as well as with a host of older Irish *immrama*, among them *Mael Dáin* and *Ua Corra*. She argues convincingly that the *Voyage* has its roots in an agglomerate of stories of Irish origin, which also gave rise to the *Navigatio*. The *Voyage* author can be seen to have made an original use of his source material, conflating elements from various sources and adapting the story to his own ideas.

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