

Reading Material Culture in the North Atlantic: Traditional wooden boxes as intercultural objects

This article explores intercultural links between the coastal communities of the North Atlantic region by discussing the cultural and social history of Norwegian objects displayed in regional heritage collections in Orkney and Shetland. The relationship between Norway and the Northern Isles of Scotland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially trading links, is considered using the bentwood box as a way of accessing both tangible and intangible knowledge. Different types of traditional wooden boxes from Shetland, Orkney, Norway, and Iceland are compared using a microhistorical approach, which enables us to consider Norway and Scotland both as individual “ethno-territories” and as part of continuously changing networks of social and cultural contact across the North Atlantic.

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