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Schedule Austmarr IV

The Plurality of Religions and Religious Change around the Baltic Sea, 500-1300: Methodological Challenges for Multidisciplinary Data

Pre-Symposium pub night at Gambrinus (Strandgatan 6, close to First Hotel Strand).
Wednesday 3 December, 19.00 and on...

House O, room 111

4 December 2014

Time		Presenter	Title
8.10	Walking from First Hotel Strand	Maths Bertell	To make sure you find the venue, I will pick you up outside First Hotel Strand!
8.30-8.50	Coffee		
8.50-9.00	Welcome	Maths Bertell Jörgen Magnusson	<i>Presentation of the Study of religion at Mid-Sweden University</i>
9.00-10.00	Paper 1	Frog	<i>Mythology as a Symbolic Matrix: Approaching Contacts and Variation in the Austmarr Arena</i>
10.00-11.00	Paper 2	Klas af Edholm	<i>A Comparative and Critical Analysis of the God Tyr</i>
11.00-12.00	Paper 3	Kendra Wilson	<i>Conceptual metaphors in seiðr magic</i>
12.00-13.00	Lunch		
13.00-14.30	Paper 4 Keynote	Sæbjörg Walaker Nordeide	<i>'The past is a foreign country'. A postcolonial perspective on the study of religious change</i>
14.30-15.30	Paper 5	Maths Bertell	<i>A carrot or a whip? A comparative perspective on conversion.</i>
15.30-16.30	Paper 6	Leszek Slupecki	<i>Mökkurkalfi and Golem.</i>
19.00	Dinner		

5 December 2014

Time		Presenter	Title
8.30-9.30	Visit to Sundsvalls museum	Guide	<i>The Högom exhibition</i>
10.00-11.00	Paper 1	Mart Kuldkepp	<i>Genre, Textualization and Religious Change in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature</i>
11.00-12.00	Paper 2	Daniel Sävborg	<i>The Pagan Resistance in 11th Century Sweden</i>
12.00-13.00	Lunch		
13.00-14.00	Paper 3	Kimberley La Palm	<i>"De una peccatore qui promerit gratium" and the International Nature of Late Medieval Religious Drama</i>
14.00-15.00	Paper 4	Sirpa Aalto	<i>Imagined, constructed or real borders? Textual evidence of Scandinavian-Sámi contacts in the Middle Ages</i>
15.00-15.15	Farewell	Maths Bertell	

Abstracts

Kimberly J. La Palm, Ph.D Candidate
UCLA - Scandinavian Section

"De una peccatore qui promerit gratium" and the International Nature of Late Medieval Religious Drama

In the field of Scandinavian drama studies, the middle ages have been largely dismissed due to a perceived lack of primary sources. The assumption has been that this lack of sources is evidence of a lack of practice and, perhaps more troubling, that existing sources that don't show clear evidence of "Nordic origins" aren't actually worthy sources. The goal of my work is to show that, not only did this performance practice exist, but that foreign influences point to Scandinavia as an active participant in pan-European performance culture. In particular, this paper will focus on one of the few texts to have received any extended attention by scholars in the last century, the Swedish miracle play "De una peccatore qui promerit gratium". Despite its Latin title, this play is actually the oldest Swedish drama composed in the vernacular and believed to be written by a Swedish author. Its topic, however, can hardly be called "Swedish". The play tells of a sinner, Vratislaus, as he appeals for the fate of his soul, first to a Saint Procopius, and then as the Saint furthers that appeal to the virgin and as she forwards it

to Christ himself. Stephen K. Wright has previously argued that the names of these characters point to a German or more likely Bohemian tradition (considering the Catholic Church only recognizes two Saints named Procopius and that the Bohemian example has a legendary association with a Bohemian prince by the name of Bratislaus), while specific linguistic indicators point to this as the composition of a native speaker of the Swedish dialect of Östergötland, rather than as a translation of a foreign work. By way of picking up where Wright leaves off, this paper will look at the play within both of its major cultural contexts + as that of a Swedish work demonstrating clear foreign influence and as that of a Marian miracle play within a thriving tradition of Marian miracles. The previous line of inquiry will look further into the assumed author, a priest at the Cistercian convent in Askeby, east of Linköping, and his other writings while the second line will discuss the genre similarities and creative differences between the Swedish text and its continental partners. An extended analysis of this work will support my conclusions about the international nature of medieval performance in general and of the confirmed engagement of Scandinavians within this tradition.

Daniel Sävborg, professor
Universitetet i Tartu

The Pagan Resistance in 11th Century Sweden

For a long time the standard view among scholars was that the conversion of Sweden took place relatively late in a Scandinavian context, and there was still a pagan opposition around the year 1100. During the recent decades, the opinion among scholars seems to have changed. The conversion is assumed to have taken place already around the year 1000, as in Norway, Denmark and Iceland. A case study in my paper is the story of Blotsven and his pagan rebellion in the end of the 11th century. In my paper I discuss the Old Norse and Old Swedish sources for the Christianization process, and I discuss their possible dependence of each other. I also compare them with foreign, contemporary sources about the Christianization of the Baltic Sea area in the 11th century in general.

Frog, Associate professor
University of Helsinki

Mythology as a Symbolic Matrix: Approaching Contacts and Variation in the Austmarr Arena

Abstract:

The investigation of mythology in prehistory presents a number of challenges. The present paper outlines an approach relevant for handling two of these: 1) how to approach mythology in arenas where two or more mythologies are in contact; 2) how to relate evidence of mythology and ritual practices documented in one period to archaeological and related material evidence of an earlier period. The approach offered here is based on a theoretical approach to mythology as a quality of symbolic resources and constructions (e.g. schemas etc. like a grammar) according to which these are used and combined in different contexts. Mythology becomes characterized by the quality that these symbols and constructions have that enables them to function as resources in

everything from ritual and narrative to the concepts behind taboos. The quality of mythology is always dependent on perspectives. The approach introduced here treats mythology as a 'matrix' of resources and different groups can have different perspectives on the resources in a shared symbolic matrix of a culture or community. This will be introduced through examples of interactions of Christian and non-Christian groups who have mutual (if non-specialist) awareness of each other's symbols, narratives and rituals, as well as the ability to use and manipulate these. Different perspectives held by different types of specialists within a community will also be introduced. Discussion will then be extended to the long-term interaction of communities and cultures in the Circum-Baltic region. The symbolic matrix approach will be expanded from communities to cultures to the Circum-Baltic region more generally and evidence that certain key aspects or symbols of mythology are shared cross-culturally in this region. Anna-Leena Siikala's approach to 'dialects' of mythology will be adapted to looking at mythology in the Circum-Baltic region. This value of this approach for the study of cultures in the Iron Age will be illustrated by case study of the so-called 'clay paw rite' of Viking Age Åland. The Åland Islands present significant challenges for investigations of Iron Age culture because the geographical situation leaves it ambiguous whether the culture(s) reflected were Finnic or Germanic. By situating this cultural area within the broader Circum-Baltic cultural arena, the symbolic matrix approach presented here will develop new knowledge and more reliable interpretations of the symbols and conceptions behind ritual practices exhibited in the archaeological record. This approach presents many new possibilities for analysis in the future.

Sirpa Aalto, PhD
University of Oulu

Imagined, constructed or real borders? Textual evidence of Scandinavian-Sámi contacts in the Middle Ages

The contacts between the Sámi people and the Scandinavians in the Middle Ages have been studied (Hansen & Olsen 2013) but they are still contested. Archaeological excavations cast light on this matter and the picture of the Scandinavian-Sámi relations is constantly renewed. Therefore it is important to look at the latest results in the light of the few, written sources from the Middle Ages. The written sources consist of diplomatic documents, Old Norse-Icelandic sagas and Norwegian and Swedish laws. Because the written sources do not give a covering, overall picture of the Sámi people and their contacts with the Scandinavians, it is necessary to compare and contextualize the archaeological evidence with this data.

The medieval documents in general refer to the presence of the Sámi in the periphery of the Norwegian and Swedish kingdoms, but their presence is not restricted to these areas. The Norwegian *landskapslagar* from Borgarthing and Eidsivathing in the southern part of the country, dated to the 12th century, prohibit Norwegians (or Christians in general) to be in contact with the Sámi. This has been seen as a proof that there really were Sámi people living in southern Norway (Mundal 1996). Considering this background, it is curious that the Swedish *landskapslagar* do not mention the Sámi at all – not even *Hälsingelagen* that was applied in the northern peripheries of the Swedish realm. It would imply that the Sámi have been outside the Swedish jurisdiction, but it

does not explain why the Sámi are mentioned so seldom in Swedish context. The Sámi appear only in the 14th century in Swedish documents and first as objects of taxation (of *birkarlar*).

The Old Norse-Icelandic saga evidence implies that the Norwegians and the Sámi had close relations, but there is no similar evidence from the Swedish side. Therefore it is relevant to ask to which extent the borders that we see in the documents between the Scandinavian and the Sámi were constructions of the emerging royal bureaucracy and to what extent they are based on real conditions. In this case it is relevant to ask, what are the possibilities of gaining information about the Scandinavian-Sámi contacts and relations from sources that have been selective and biased?

Mart Kuldkepp, PhD
Department of Scandinavian Studies
University of Tartu

Genre, Textualization and Religious Change in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature

In my paper, I will explore the question of how stories of supernatural events and encounters with the otherworld were transformed and reinterpreted when being written down. Although such narratives might originally have reflected some kind of authentic spiritual experience, these have been cast in literary modes such as conversion narrative, exempla or learned instruction. These literary modes reframe the narrative and how it is interpreted. Rather than treating such episodes as purely fictional inventions of the authors, I will consider texts – especially texts in certain genres – as interfaces of negotiation between different belief systems that had the function of culturalization or “making sense” of various kinds of religious experience. In Old Norse-Icelandic literature, this is especially evident in ways that “paganism” is conceptualized in relation to “Christianity”, defined as beginning where Christianity ends: they are juxtaposed, ordered in temporal succession, even equated in some way etc. A close reading of such texts can produce information about categories including, but not limited to: continuity, discontinuity, otherness, sameness, rationalization and mystification. The information produced by this can serve as a basis for analytical models of rhetorical strategies for examining the construction, uses and relative valorization of such categories. Insofar as such categories are found in widely diverse cultures, these analytical models can also be adapted and applied outside the Old Norse-Icelandic context, relating to other cultures and eras where collective memory of religious change found expression in textual material. The analytical models developed here may therefore provide a framework for analogical comparative research.

Klas af Edholm
Master student in History of Religions, Stockholm University

A Comparative and Critical Analysis of the God Tyr

From the early days of the study of comparative mythology, the Old Norse god Tyr has been interpreted according to trends in the study of the field. The older scholars have

used the mythological figure as a “projection surface” of the theories. The interpretation of the god has been a result of the trends in the discipline of the age.

Tyr is a debated Old Norse deity. The name *Týr* is referring to both a specific god in the Old Norse pantheon, and the appellative *týr*, meaning ‘god’, pl. *tívar* ‘gods’. The name is etymologically derived from proto Germanic **tīwaR*, and is found in the name of the Germanic god *Tiwaz*. *Tiwaz/Týr* is described as a war god, comparable to *Mars* in Roman religion and *Ares* in Greek religion. Tyr is given a very marginal role in the Old Norse mythology, as we have it. Perhaps another god has fulfilled the need of the cult of this old war god, and Oden is a strong candidate.

The first trend of interpretation of Tyr was given already in the beginning of the 19th century. Jacob Grimm meant that Tyr was representing an archaic phase of monotheism. Several other scholars have joined this trend and interpreted the Old Norse pantheon as a cleavage from a high god. Another simultaneous trend in the study of Tyr was the nature mythological school, with Max Müller as its front figure. During the end of the 19th century, the study began to highlight interpretations of mythology as celestial motifs. Tyr was then interpreted as a sun god, or as a personification of the sky or shining daylight. In the middle of the 20th century, a new paradigm grew forth, structuralism. The without counterpart most significant scholar of this era was Georges Dumézil. Dumézil changed the focus of the study of Tyr totally, from the interpretation of a sky god, to the interpretation of a law god. Although the structuralistic method has a lots of advantages, it (too) tends to become too simplifying, according to the source material. There is an inclination to shape the terrain from the map. The last trend of interpretation is a hypercritical trend to dismiss the literary sources as late and worthless to the study of the Pre-Christian religion, and even assert that the god Tyr is a mediaeval construction invented by Snorri Sturlusonar! It is a deconstruction that turns into a hyper-deconstruction. But this is likewise a trend of the discipline of the age; just as bound to its time, as were the early nature mythological interpretations of the Old Norse mythology.

The mythology concerning the god Tyr is sparse. It mainly contains the myth about the fettering of the demonic wolf Fenrir. The other myth is a short mentioning of him in the myth of Ragnarök, where he fights the monstrous hellhound Garmr (identical with Fenrir), and they kill each other. Tyr is otherwise only mentioned as brave, wise, one handed, and “no reconciler of men”, which is to be interpreted as a vicious, ferocious, and warlike attribute. The names of the weekdays must be seen as one of the best sources to the study of Tyr. The *interpretatio germana* of *dies Marti* to Old Norse *Týsdag*, Old High German *Ziestag*, probably during the second or third century, proves the emic perception of the god Tyr, i.e. as a war god.

If we look to the comparative material we have on hand, we may first turn to the continental Germanic tribes. The classical authors mention a cult of Mars, i.e. Tyr, only in terms of a war god, and he is often also seen as their highest god. In the Netherlands, a votive stone was erected to *Mars Halamardus* ‘Mars the man slaughterer’, which must be seen as a proof of the vicious character of the god. The continental Germanic tribes seem to have been worshiping a high god, closely connected to war. If we look to the Celtic material, we find that also the Celts knew a martial god, a godly father, and not least, a one handed warlike god.

The name *Týr* could be explained as the name of an original high god *Tiwaz*, invoked by different by-names, that describes the aspect or the function of the god that is in focus of the prayer, a *Tiwaz-NN*. Among them we could in a later stage find *Týr-Thincso*, or *Týr-Halamardus*. These epithets are sometimes taken to be the name of the

god, within time; and sometimes the noa name become the ordinary name of the god. Jupiter is one example of this (Jovis Pitar), Freyr another, and Tyr could be a third one.

Keynote

Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide, PhD
Bergen

The past is a foreign country'. A postcolonial perspective on the study of religious change.

There is a meaningful relation between religious belief and religious practice, and accordingly between scientific ideas and models on one hand, and methodology and outcome on the other. Over the years, scholars have relied on various sources and methodology, and these choices have had an effect on interpretations.

Written and archaeological sources, and to a minor degree, place names, are explored in the study of religion in the past. These sources are all associated with problems, however. Written sources are predominantly written by Christian authors, out of context in time and space regarding the events described. These authors were not neutral in their view on Christianity and the process of Christianisation, like some Christian, more recent scholars. Archaeological sources are even more complex and may communicate several meanings to us. Besides, when monuments and place names mostly are found in the original geographic context, objects may travel and change meaning with context. All these aspects may cause serious problems, and we should consider this carefully when deciding on sources and methods in studies of religion. Models of interpretation of the Christianisation process in Norway may be understood on this background. A relatively homogenous model of Old Norse religion have dominated, but a dichotomy of a gradual versus abrupt conversion to Christianity has existed. The Saami case has been mostly ignored. The interpretation of the date when the earliest Christian activity manifested itself in Norway is suggested as early as in the Merovingian period. Based on archaeological sources, one easily get the impression of a gradual and peaceful conversion, in contrast to information in written sources. However, recent studies have somewhat challenged these models. By relying on practice, i.e. rituals, rather than objects, and paying closer attention to context, the dichotomy of a gradual / abrupt change is less interesting; we may achieve models of a higher degree of regional variations, and there may be more differences in religious practice that could cover for one, homogenous block of 'Old Norse Religion'. Besides, we may find that religious differences may have made communication difficult across borders in Scandinavia and the Baltic.

This paper will elaborate on sources, methods and interpretations along these lines, based mainly on archaeological sources in the case of Norway c. AD 560-1200.

Kendra Wilson
Associate Professor

Conceptual metaphors in *seiðr* magic

We will analyze conceptual metaphors underlying *seiðr* magic as described in Old Norse sources, using theories of metaphor and blending developed in cognitive linguistics (since Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Fauconnier 1985). I will compare the cognitive metaphors seen in *seiðr* with cognitive analyses that have been conducted on Sámi shamanism (Pentikäinen 2006) and traditional Finnish women's magic (Apo 1995, Stark-Ahola 1998). Study of conceptual metaphors in religious systems is a new field. Martin (2013) discusses religious schemas as conceptual mappings between domains of human and divine. Sørensen (2008) uses blending theory to make sense of the linguistic mappings found in Trobriand spells. *Seiðr* has been studied extensively since the classic work by Strömbäck (1935), with several major studies in the current millennium, including Price (2002) and Dillmann (2006). However, to my knowledge *seiðr* has never been analyzed using cognitive linguistics.

Cognitive analyses that do not have a specifically linguistic focus but employ very similar concepts have been applied to other magical and shamanic traditions in the region. Pentikäinen (2006) has discussed Sámi shamanism from a cognitive viewpoint. Apo (1995) and Stark-Arola (1998) have analyzed the core cognitive metaphors involved in traditional Finnish women's magic, focusing on " **core motifs**, that is, the metaphors, metonyms, propositions and central symbolic images which were used to organize other cultural concepts, symbols and relations" (Stark-Arola 1998: 23).

Etymological studies of key terms such as *seiðr* 'type of magic' and *gandr* 'type of spell' (Heide 2006, Parpola 2004) provide evidence for conceptual metaphors, which have led to polysemy and semantic change (cf. Sweetser 1990: 18-20). For example, Almqvist (2000: 262) connects the etymological meaning of *seiðr* with the idea of luring something toward oneself. This involves the Location Event-Structure Metaphor, in that the 'string' or 'yarn' of the magic metaphorically ensnares its targets.

Comparing the cognitive metaphors underlying *seiðr* with these neighboring traditions known from modern times may help shed light on the development of Norse magic and its connections to these other traditions.

Leszek P. Słupecki (Rzeszów and Warsaw)

Golem and Mokkurkalfi

The aim of the paper is to reconsider striking similarities between short story about Mokkurkalfi by Snorri Sturluson (Skaldskaparmál 17) and some narratives from Jewish folklore telling about Golem, already noticed some years ago by Rudy Simek (Lexicon..., 1995, 280). "In Jewish folklore Golem is an animated anthropomorphous being magically created entirely from inanimate matter (...) usually out of stone and clay..." as correctly stated in Wikipedia. But the most interesting fact is that the best known of Jewish golems, the Golem of Prague, created allegedly by famous rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel (known as Maharal) in late 16th century (contemporary sources know the rabbi but tell as much as nothing about his golem!) is in fact described (but in German!) for first time in early 19th century. The legend was created after an earlier one, concerning another golem created by rabbi Eliyahu of Chelm (Poland) in the second half of 16th century and described already in 17th and 18th century by Jewish and Christian authors.

So both Golem-stories are anyway much later as parallel story about Mokkaurkalfi by Snorri who died in 1241.

The idea of golem is old in Jewish tradition. In Bible the word appears just once and means some unshaped form (Psalm 139, 16). In Mishna golem denote and uncultivated person. Talmud (Tractate Sanhedrin 38b) tells that Adam was originally created as a golem. In Middle Ages began a kabalistic idea to obtain ability to create and animate a golem. The earliest written account describing how to create golem appears in "Sodei Razaya" of Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (1165-1230) – what fits well to the lifetime of Snorri.

Between Jewish Golem(s) and Norse Mokkaurkalfi are similarities and differences. Golem of Prague was created like Mokkaurkalfi of clay what is the first and basic similarity. But it is a very basic fact which brings for comparison a long line of analogies including Adam from the Bible and Enkidu from Gilgamesh epic. Secondly, Golem of Prague was created to defend local Jews from pogroms. Mokkaurkalfi had to play a bit similar function as his task was to fight along Hrungnir as his companion in his duel against Thor. But the idea how to animate Golem and how Mokkaurkalfi was different. Mokkaurkalfi was animated by putting into his artificial body a real heart of a mare. Golem by some magic (not specifically described) but especially because of the use of some charm written in Hebrew and forming a "shem" and inserted in Golems mouth (or fixed or written on his forehead). Some variants of the story tells that the inscription sounds in Hebrew "emet" (truth) but if the first letter was erased it change in "met" what means death and made Golem inactive (some others play with words Adam and dam, blood. But even here some similarities are to be find in Scandinavia! Saxo Grammaticus (I, 6, 4) telling about Haddingus described necromantic magic used by Giantess Harthgreipa who in order to obtain important prophecy from a dead man was putting into his mouth a piece of wood carved with charms (*carmina*, obviously in runes) what made him speaking.

The end of Mokkaurkalfi who according to Snorri (Skaldskaparmal 17) in the combat against Thjalfi "fell with little glory" is not very picturesque (I am not going to develop here the intriguing possibility to interpret Mokkaurkalfi as an *alter ego* of Hrungnir!). The story about Golem of Prague ends in more interesting way. Important with Golem was to make him inactive for the time of Sabbath what rabbi Loew did simply by taking the "shem" away from his mouth (like a credit card!) at every Friday evening. But once the rabbi forgot to do that (in some variant Golem fell unsuccessfully in love) what caused problems with gigantic Golem who became furious. But the rabbi take of the "shem" out from his body and Golem felt into pieces (after the Prague city-legends preserved up today in Old New Synagogue of Prague).

Mokkaurkalfi is not the only one golem-like robot (a word invented by Karel Capek under the influence of Golem story) who is described in the North. In Thorleifs thattr jarlaskald the hero, an enemy of Jarl Hakon, is finally killed on Iceland according to jarls order by some human like creature made of wood and animated by true heart of a dead man. The motif of the heart echoes Mokkaurkalfi, the wood as a material of which the killer was made appeals to the Old Norse myth of creation. This suggest some consequence with golem and golem-like legends which seems to play with the myth of creation of the man (if made of clay – in biblical version, if of wood – in Old Norse one).

Rudy Simek doubted if one may see Jewish kabalistic influence in Scandinavian stories about Mokkurkalfi and Thorleifs killer. The chronological sequence of sources seems for the first glance to support such a view. But remembering the fact that the Jewish folklore just echoed some much older motives and taking into consideration the fact that Yiddish is a Germanic language the intercultural relations are quite possible. The first trace of golem narrative, if really present in Eleazar ben Juddah of Worms work is really intriguing.

Maths Bertell, PhD
Mid Sweden University

A carrot or a whip? A comparative perspective on conversion.

The conversion of Scandinavia has usually been an isolated discussion. From a religious study perspective, the idea of not comparing the processes of religious change and mission with similar processes in history is remarkable. Conversion theory has not only been left unused in most cases, but occasionally also mocked as silly and of little use. Comparison is of course a tool to be used with care, and the risk of falling into a trap where you simply use sources and developments of other geographical, historical and cultural settings as the answers to fill out gaps is great. My paper will discuss possible parallels to the Scandinavian Viking age and Medieval religious change in general, but specifically use the conversion of the Saami in the 17th and 18th centuries as inspiration on how to use comparison. No answers will be given, but a bundle of new questions.