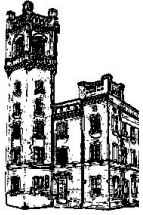




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Nordic Ideology between Religion and Scholarship

Pagan and Christian Imaginations in
Scandinavian-German Scientific Exchange
in the First Half of the 20th Century

International Symposium at the
University of Uppsala

23-25 of August 2010



Venue of the Conference: Uppsala Universitet, Universitetshuset, Room IV

Organizers:

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For more information see the homepage of the Forum for German Studies:
<http://www.fft.uu.se>



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Description

The international symposium on “Nordic Ideology Between Religion and Scholarship” emphasizes the religious and scientific context in which the idea of the North evolved into a mainstay of extreme nationalism not only in National Socialist Germany but in a number of pro German movements in Scandinavia as well. Starting from the initial observation that the imagination of the North could prosper equally on Pagan and on Christian premises, the apparent indeterminateness of the Nordic idea in religious regard calls for clarification. The revival of Nordic and Old Norse myths was not restricted to an anti-Christian heathendom where it served as spiritual fundament of a new Pagan religion. Also within the realm of Christianity, especially among Lutheran Protestantism and *voelkish* German Christians, the idea of a Nordic heritage found a firm rooting. Essential characteristics of both a Nordic Christianity and a Nordic Paganism included the deeply ingrained antagonism against Judaism and Bolshevism. To a lesser extent the British Empire functioned as political antipode helping to consolidate the idea of a Nordic alliance especially in the course of World War I and II.

In addition to the religious dimension of the Nordic ideology, the conference aims at a new scientific occupation with the North that increased considerably in the first half of the 20th century. Only from a narrow-minded religious or anti-religious point of view the amalgamation of science and religion seems to be inappropriate or even mutual exclusive. On the contrary, the correlation between scientific and religious constituents is an indispensable prerequisite for any successful religion in modern times. Therefore disciplines like archeology, Germanic and Nordic studies, ethnography, folklore studies, history and prehistory as well as religious studies played an important role in the shaping of a Nordic worldview. In search for the inner bond of the assumed fellowship of all Nordic men and peoples, a science-based religious perception turned out to be the crux of the matter. Questions of a biological lineage were closely intertwined with questions of a spiritual kinship. But since the natural and biological sciences totally failed to produce any substantial evidence of a Nordic race or of Nordic physical traits, other factors had to constitute the community of the North and to establish a discernible border line between Nordic and un-Nordic. On these grounds a combination of religious and scientific features formed the ideological core of a commonly shared Nordic identity with the ultimate goal to justify theories of a Nordic supremacy and to rationalize a quasi-natural contradiction between people of Nordic descent and their enemies.

The main objective of this conference is to fathom the ideological principles and intellectual depth of European Nordicism. Due to the great many of Nordic mythologems that have gained contour in various fields in the first decades of the last century, we need a reflective interdisciplinarity to deal with the iridescent and multifaceted character of the Nordic idea adequately. It is not easy to apply stable categories to a rather unstable and frayed subject matter developing tenable generalizations in so doing. Therefore we thought it necessary to bring together different methodologies and scholarly



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approaches in order to overcome the usual phenomenology of glimmering ideas and repulsive behaviors. Only if we widen our perspective and sharpen our methodological tools we will be able to come to grips with the ramifications and heterogeneous character of the Nordic ideology. The question in which manner the situation in Scandinavia coincided or stood at odds with the German understanding of the North still waits to be answered in the context of a broader analysis of politics, religion and culture in Europe. An international and interdisciplinary approach obviously ought to go hand in hand in the case of European Nordicism. It is our hope that this symposium may help to strengthen cross-border networking in both geographical and subject-related regard. Although history does not repeat itself, the reinvigoration of the North as ideological reference point against a threat connected with the East, the West or the South seems to be not purely hypothetical in times of crises.

Invited speakers

- 1 Puschner, Uwe (Freie Universität Berlin):
- 2 Myrda, Sönke (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin):
'Nordic' Men and Women in Public Media and Academia, 1920-1940
- 3 Junginger, Horst (Eberhard Karls-Universität Tübingen):
Nordic Ideology in the SS and the SS Ahnenerbe
- 4 Dusse, Debora (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main):
The Norse Myth between Scientific and Religious Interpretations
- 5 Mees, Bernard (University of Melbourne):
Charisma, Authority and Heil: Walter Batke and the Chasm of 1945
- 6 Löw, Luitgard (Nordkapp Museum):
"Den store gudens äldsta runor"
- 7 Alkarp, Magnus (Uppsala Universitet):
From Odin's Banquet to the Conference at Wannsee. Swedish Archaeology and the Nordische Gedanke
- 8 Åkerlund, Andreas (Uppsala Universitet):
"Nordic Studies" and "Nordic ideology" as Career Opportunity for Swedish Academics in National Socialist Germany
- 9 Salomaa, Ilona (University of Helsinki):
Through the Xenophobic Looking Glass? – "The Religion and 'the Other' in Finnish Comparative Religion of the 1920s and 1930s"
- 10 Berggren, Lena (Umeå Universitet):
The Manhem Society: Nordic Ideology and Voelkish Antisemitism in Sweden



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- 11 Karcher, Nicola (Universitetet i Oslo):
Right-Wing Networks between Germany and Norway: Ideology, Political Approach and Working Method
- 12 Muir, Simo (University of Helsinki):
The Role of Christian Anti-Semitism and Nordic Thought in the Rejection of Israel-Jakob Schur's PhD Thesis
- 13 Werner, Yvonne Maria (Lunds Universitet):
Anti-Catholicism and Nordic Ideology
- 14 Gerdmar, Anders (Uppsala Universitet):
Protestant Root Ideology and the Jews
- 15 Schnurbein, Stefanie v. (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin):
In Search of Authenticity – The History, Ideology, and Context of Contemporary Neogermanic Paganism

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