

GODS AND HUMANS IN MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA

The coming of Christianity to Northern Europe resulted in profound cultural changes. In the course of a few generations, new answers were given to fundamental existential questions and older notions were invalidated. Jonas Wellendorf's study, the first monograph in English on this subject, explores the medieval Scandinavian reception and re-interpretation of pre-Christian Scandinavian religion. This original work draws on a range of primary sources ranging from *Prose Edda* and Saxo Grammaticus' *History of the Danes* to less well-known literary works including the *Saga of Barlaam* and the *Hauksbók* manuscript (c. 1300). By providing an in-depth analysis of often overlooked mythological materials, along with translations of all textual passages, Wellendorf delivers an accessible work that sheds new light on the ways in which the old gods were integrated into the Christian worldview of medieval Scandinavia.

JONAS WELLENDORF is an assistant professor in the Department of Scandinavian at University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of multiple articles in journals and peer-reviewed anthologies and has also co-edited anthologies and an edition of an Old Norse rhetorical treatise.

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Retying the Bonds

JONAS WELLENDORF

University of California, Berkeley



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Allir menn þeir sem sannfróðir eru at um tíðendi, vita at Tyrkir ok Asíamenn byggðu Norðrlond. Hófsk þá tunga sú er síðan dreifðisk um öll lond. Formaðr þess folks hét Óðinn, er menn rekja ætt til.

All men who possess true knowledge about events know that Turks and Asians populated the North. The tongue which later spread across all lands originated then. The chieftain of this people was called Óðinn, and people trace their ancestry to him.

Sturlaugs saga starfsama, FAS vol. III, p. 107

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As a starting point for this book, I will identify an interest in medieval versions of the story of the Babylonian Confusion which led me to the *Codex Wormianus* version of the Edda prologue that I discuss in Chapter 5. I began working on this text while I was a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen. The work on the other chapters, which can be seen as ways of contextualizing the Edda prologue, began after I had taken up my current position at the University of California, Berkeley. There I have not only benefited from the inspiring atmosphere of the Department of Scandinavian, the Program in Medieval Studies, and the university at large, I have also had the immense pleasure of teaching classes on Scandinavian myth and religion at the undergraduate and graduate levels. This has helped me shape my ideas on the topic. I have also benefited greatly from invitations to present my work on mythology at annual conferences on Old Norse mythology. These meetings have been a great inspiration for me and have helped me sustain my interest in the material.

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