

CALL FOR PAPERS—Deadline January 31, 2017

# Old Norse Myth and völkisch Ideology

September 6 – 8, 2017, Basel

**Abstract:** Myth has long been an object of scrutiny for scholars of Old Norse language, literature and culture. For many of our forebears, myth, because it dealt with Odin and co., gave access to the pre-Christian religion and so represented an important tool to recover the ancient Germanic worldview, social structure, or mentalité. Such a project, however, poses at least three problems. First, it implies an essentialization of the category through a definition in terms of contents; second, it disregards the historical context of the texts themselves; third, it opens the door to the projection of one's fancy on what is – historically speaking – essentially a blank slate.

Filling in the gaps in such a way amounts to little else than ideological work. Interestingly, a number of scholars beginning with Roland Barthes have sought to re-conceptualize myth as a variety of ideology. Drawing from these insights, the proposed conference will pursue two aims. The first will be to evaluate critically specific scholarly productions on Old Norse myth focusing on the subtexts embedded within them (For an example of such critical work, see B. Lincoln, "Rewriting the German War God", *History of Religions*, 37 (1998), pp. 187-208). The second will be to focus on contemporary uses of Old Norse myths outside the Academy, whether in literature (e.g. J.R.R. Tolkien, George R.R. Martin) or in new religious movements (e.g. Ásatrú, Heathenry). The aim of the conference is thus to create a wide-ranging, critical discussion on the political dimension of Old Norse myth in academic and popular contexts.

## Topics to be considered (examples):

- Ideological subtexts in scholarship on Old Norse myth
- The völkisch context of scholarly production on Old Norse myth
- Uses of Old Norse myth in contemporary literature
- Old Norse myth in new religious movements

**Call for papers:** In order to encourage young scholars to participate, we invite submissions from graduate and post-doctoral students in the field on Old Norse studies, religious studies, medieval history, textual/literary studies.

Abstracts of no longer than 300 words, along with a CV, should be sent before January 31, 2017 to: [lukas.roesli@unibas.ch](mailto:lukas.roesli@unibas.ch) and/or [nicolas.meylan.2@unil.ch](mailto:nicolas.meylan.2@unil.ch)

**General information:** The conference will be held at Landgut Castelen, Giebenacherstrasse 9, 4302 Augst, Switzerland. Keynote speakers will be given 45 minutes; other speakers will be given 30 minutes each. Every presentation will be followed by a 15-minute discussion.

**Keynote Speakers:** Confirmed keynote speakers are Prof. **Ingrid Tomkowiak** (University of Zürich, Institut für Sozialanthropologie und Empirische Kulturwissenschaft), Prof **Julia Zernack** (Goethe Universität Frankfurt a.M., Institut für Skandinavistik), and Prof. **Horst Junginger** (Universität Leipzig, Dept. for the Study of Religion).

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There will be no registration fees.