

2018

Luke John Murphy

**The Limits of Tolerance and Diversity:
Tensions of Religious Unity in the Early
Medieval North**

The Icelandic Research Fund 2018

Postdoctoral fellowship – New proposal

Detailed project description

Guidelines

Please note that *all proposals and appendices* should be in English.

The highlighted text (<grey>) in this document is provided for guidance purposes only, and requested information should be added by applicant. Please insert appropriate material (i.e. text, pictures and/or tables) and add the principal investigator's name to the header and the project's name to the footer.

The detailed project description should provide the following information, and be divided into the following sections (the order and titles should not be changed):

- a. *Specific aims of the project, research questions/hypotheses, feasibility, originality and impact*
- b. *Present state of knowledge in the field*
- c. *Research plan (time and work plan, methodology, milestones, present status of project, etc.) and deliverables. Explain if consents and/or permits are needed*
- d. *Management and co-operation (domestic/foreign)*
- e. *Proposed publication of results and data storage (including open access policy)*
- f. *Contribution of doctoral and master's degree students to the project*
- g. *Career development plan*

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a. SPECIFIC AIMS OF THE PROJECT, RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESES, FEASIBILITY, ORIGINALITY AND IMPACT

The recent pop-culture fascination with all things “Viking” (both in Iceland and abroad), spurred on not only by museums and tourist guidebooks but also TV shows and video games, has done little to dispel some of the myths surrounding early Medieval Nordic culture. One particularly persistent idea is that there was a united (so-called) “Viking” culture that persisted throughout the early Medieval period across the whole Nordic region, and which reflected the lives and concerns of the entire population of the North at the time. With the advent of modern archaeological methods and techniques, however, there has been a growing awareness of the – sometimes intense – variation in early Medieval Nordic culture, with everything from dress, land usage, and house-building reflecting ideas and concerns at a more local level than the “Nordic” or “Scandinavian” (see extensive discussion in Svanberg 2003). Nonetheless, when it comes to the study of pre-Christian religion, a great many half-truths and misunderstandings from the field’s Romantic past persist, even in academic circles.

The project outlined in this application will therefore explore the implications of the growing breakdown of “Viking” culture, seeking to challenge standing assumptions regarding religion in early Medieval Nordic region (c. 500-1200 AD). Key amongst these is the presupposition that, although Nordic paganism was a “folk” or “ethnic” religion featuring no holy writ or professional priesthood to enforce putative norms (Steinsland 2005, 31-34), there was nonetheless a single religious system featuring the same gods, rituals, and beliefs from Iceland in the west to Sweden in the east, and which remained essentially unchanged until the arrival of Christian missionaries. Building on my previous research (particularly my doctoral dissertation; Murphy 2017a; *cf.* Murphy 2015; 2016; 2017b; forthcoming a; forthcoming b; forthcoming c), this new project thus seeks to ignite a fresh debate about the extent to which pre-Christian religion could diverge from the standard abstract model created by previous scholars. Engaging with debates in the wider Study of Religion, it will question the notion of religious coherence (Fitzgerald 1997; Jensen 2003, 56-59; 2014; Rota 2015), and employ data drawn from across disciplinary lines – including medieval Icelandic sagas, archaeological finds, toponymic records, and folklore narratives – to examine the effects of variables such as the social standing, gender, economic status, or geographic origin of practitioners on religious expression. Ultimately, the project will weigh the usefulness of regarding such diverse forms of religion as (for example) Icelandic belief in Þórr, Swedish elf-sacrifice, and elite warrior cults as part of “the same” religion, aiming to establish the limits of religious tolerance and diversity in the early Medieval North.

Research Questions:

The project's principle goal – a better understanding of how religion varied and what its limits were during the early Medieval Period – can be broken down into a number of concrete research questions. The first of these addresses the different ways in which a cultural construction like religion can fluctuate. A key work on this topic is Jens Peter Schjødt's proposed paradigm of cultural diversity (2009), which argues that within any cultural unit (such as “the early Medieval North”), expressions of that culture will vary according to chronological and geographical settings, with constructions such as custom, worldview, and religion emerging in different forms in early or later periods and/or in geographic sub-regions. Schjødt also suggests that cultural constructions differ according to social and cognitive contexts: that is, that variation also occurs on the basis of class or other divisions within the social order, and that people will express their culture differently in different settings without any requirement that their personal culture form a coherent whole. Drawing on theoretical developments from the wider Study of Religion, we might therefore regard the religion practised in such different cultural contexts not as wholly separate religions, but rather as “articulations of systems within which they differ” (Jensen 2015, 471). That is, just as different accents, dialects, and sociolects are at once distinguishable from one another yet are recognisably part of the same language, so different articulations of a religion can differ from one another but remain part of “the same” overarching religion (*cf.* Nordberg 2012). As such, this project must begin by establishing *(1) which axes of religion variation appear to have produced more-or-less distinct articulations of pre-Christian Nordic religion?*

As this question is broad, I have identified a number of specific candidate axes that this project will prioritise for investigation. The diachronic development of pre-Christian religion is an obvious variable that must be compensated for in all other aspects of the project's work, and – as outlined in the *Stand der Forschung* section below – some scholarship has already proposed distinct eastern and western paganisms, as well as a form of pre-Christian religion associated with the martial elite of the period. I have argued elsewhere that Schjødt's “social” variation obscures a great number of potential axes of change that could have shifted independently of one another, and that in addition to social standing, gender, subjective spatial forces, and political identity may all have had significant effects on religious expression (Murphy 2017a; 2017b; forthcoming a). Consequently, this project will seek to establish *(2) what evidence for religious variation along the following axes be established?*

- a) *Geographic Variation*
- b) *Temporal Variation*
- c) *“Social” Variation, including:*
 - i. *Social status*
 - ii. *Gender*
 - iii. *Spatial setting*
 - iv. *Political identity*
- d) *Cognitive Variation*

The model of pre-Christian paganism typically presented in most scholarship to date is a generalised one that sacrifices precision for applicability, rationalising discrepancies to advance an “average” model that describes the majority of cases without being an authentic reconstruction of any one of them in particular (Murphy 2017a; forthcoming c; Schjødt 2012; Jensen 2008a). Establishing the extent to which any semi-distinct articulations identified by the study of the axes above varied from the standard generalised model of Nordic paganism is thus another goal of this project. This project will therefore also ask *(3) if an axis of variation can be identified as having effect religious expression, how intense was the resulting variation?*

This will allow the relative importance of different cultural values to be established, shedding light on how the emic congregation (i.e. the religious in-group) regarded themselves and their religion during the early Medieval period. Of particular interest is any attempt to by the early Medieval population to limit such variation. While there is a significant body of relevant scholarship on the change from “one religion” to another in the area of study during the Christianisation (Abrams 2000; Berend 2007; Brink 2008; Gräslund 2008; Gunnell 2013; Ljungberg 1938; Nilsson 1992; Nilsson 1996; Nordeide 2011; Orri Vésteinsson 2000; Sanmark 2004; Sawyer, Sawyer, and Wood 1987), very little work has been done on the potential for changes in cult practice or belief within pre-Christian paganism. This project will therefore consider *(4) what evidence is there for the exercise of personal or political control over religious diversity?* Finally, the project will attempted to synthesise the findings of the investigations outlined in this section, considering *(5) what limits of religious tolerance and diversity in the early Medieval North can be established?*

Feasibility:

Employing the comparative, model-based methodology outlined below, this project will address its research questions through the qualitative analysis of interdisciplinary data. This approach is drawn from the wider Study of Religion, where questions regarding the productiveness of externally-defined etic categories like “religion” and “paganism” have been

productively discussed for some time (Fitzgerald 1997; Geertz 2000; Headland, Pike, and Harris 1990; Jensen 2008b; 2015; Mostowlandsky and Rota 2015; Rota 2015). The balance of evidence drawn from each corpus will vary according to the research question under study: geographic variation, for example, has previously been successfully addressed via toponymic data (e.g. Brink 2007); while cognitive variation is best addressed via grave-find archaeology and textual – particularly poetic – evidence. Regardless, this project will combine multiple forms of data in the construction of all its models, thereby seeking an attempt to alleviate the (sometimes severe) source-critical issues of the individual corpora, such as the interpretive difficulties of archaeology (Price 2006), and the transmission difficulties and temporal disconnect that plague texts preserving toponymic and philological material (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2007, 246-253). While original research necessarily entails some risk of failure – or at least a lack of productive results – my doctoral dissertation on religious and cultural variation along an axis of what I termed “social setting” has demonstrated the productivity of this approach when applied to early Medieval religious culture (Murphy 2017a; *cf.* forthcoming c), and therefore serves as a proof of concept for this expanded, wide-ranging research project.

Originality and Impact:

As outlined below, there has been very little scholarly consideration of the effects of diversity in pre-Christian Nordic religion. It is therefore hoped that this project – via its multiple publications and conference dissemination – will about bring a paradigm shift to mainstream scholarship on Nordic paganism, with future research no longer concerned with the reconstruction of a generalised abstract, but rather with specific contextual models of early Medieval religion. This would catalyse a new area of discussion for a number of academic fields – particularly in the identification and investigation of axes of cultural variation not envisaged as part of this work – as well as introducing methodological developments from the Study of Religion to Cultural History and the emerging field of so-called “Viking Studies”. Being based at the University of Iceland will also allow me to contribute to the education of graduate students in multiple programmes, introducing them to concepts and approaches from outside their own fields. This project will thus have a lasting impact not only on my own academic career and the scholarly discourses at both the University of Iceland and Aarhus University, but also on the Medieval milieu in Iceland more generally, and on a range of international academic fields including the study of pre-Christian Nordic religion, the wider Study of Religion, Nordic cultural history, and Viking Studies.

b. PRESENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIELD

The scholarly study of pre-Christian Nordic religion has a long and storied history, stretching back at least as far as the works of the Icelandic scholar-statesman Snorri Sturluson in the 1220s (Sigurður Nordal 1920; *cf.* Beck, Jankuhn, & Wensku 1992; Brodeur 1952; Clunies Ross 1987; 1994; 2000; Faulkes 1993; 2008). Until only relatively recently, academic work on Early Medieval Nordic culture was – consciously or not – inspired by the discovery of the Indo-European linguistic roots of philology (*cf.* Grimm 1819; 2007), and sought to reconstruct a single, unified picture of “how things really were”. In the study of religion, this often consisted of attempts to restore a consolidated pre-Christian mythology, such as Gabriel Turville-Petre’s discussion of “the Norse Olympus” (1964, 23). Whether deliberately or not, much modern scholarship has been influenced by *Snorra Edda*’s presentation of a rationalised mythological world simultaneously inhabited by a range of supranatural beings from gods and *jotnar* to *dvergjar*, and – by implication – known by the early Medieval population at large. General handbooks of the field that present a (more or less) rationalised picture of pre-Christian religion include not only those of Grimm (2007) and Turville-Petre (1964), but also Ellis Davidson (1964), Ström (1967), Ólafur Briem (1968), de Vries (1970), and Steinsland (2005). Such generalising approaches do not, however, allow for the diversity inherent in a “single culture” that spans a huge geographic area (from modern Russia in the east to North America in the west) and many centuries of history (arguably from the sixth to the early thirteenth century in some areas), which calls assumptions of a “common religion” into question.

This is not to say that no work has been done on more localised or specific articulations of pre-Christian Nordic paganism. However, what studies of religious diversity there have been have typically focused on individual deviations and ignored the wider implications of their findings for a more general model of religion in the pre-Christian Nordic region. Two axes in particular have received scholarly attention: distinctive geographic regional models on the one hand, and articulations based on social status on the other. Examples of the former include examinations of the cults of particular gods in different areas, work on the range of Swedish and Danish sacrally-charged buildings now dubbed “cult houses”, and my own previous work, which has drawn on theoretical developments in the wider Study of Religion to examine both geographic and temporal variation in the sacrally-charged spaces of the pre-Christian Nordic region (Murphy 2015; 2016; 2017a; 2017b; forthcoming a; *cf.* Jensen 2003; 2008b, 140-62; 2011; 2015; Mostowlandsky and Rota 2015).

Studies of pre-Christian cultic architecture have gradually come to disprove Olaf Olsen’s famous rejection of Nordic “temples” (1966), and have identified two distinct regional

models of religious buildings – multipurpose spaces in Iceland and Norway, and dedicated sacral constructions in Denmark and Sweden – although there has been little explicit discussion of what this discrepancy might reflect in Nordic culture more generally (Bican, Beck, and Klingenberg 2012; Christensen and Schmidt 1991; Christensen 1991; 2008; 2013; Grimm and Pesch 2011; Hårdh 2008; Helgesson 2004; Jørgensen 1994; 2003; 2008; 2009; Jørgensen 2011; Larsson, Hårdh, and Crozier 2006; Larsson and Lenntorp 2004; Larsson 2001a; 2001b; 2004; 2006; Larsson 2011; Michaelsen 1996; Nielsen and Lindeblad 1998; Nielsen 1997; 2006; Nielsen, Randsborg, and Thrane 1994; Rønne 2011; Sørensen 1994; Sundqvist 2016; Thrane 1993; Åqvist 1996). Similarly, examinations of regional tutelary deities include work on the local cults of Óðinn in Iceland (Turville-Petre 1972; Gunnell 2013; *cf.* 2015), the Vanir (Sundqvist 2002) and Lýtir in Sweden (Strömbäck 1928), and the northern Norwegian figure of Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr (Chadwick 1950; McKinnell 2002; Røthe 2006), but only rarely have such works reflected upon the implications of these localised models for a wider understanding of pre-Christian religion across the Nordic region. Terry Gunnell’s examination of how Þórr fulfilled multiple roles for pagan Icelanders and the implications of this for the importance of the traditional pan-Nordic pantheon is one such exception, and the project outlined in this application seeks to respond (*inter alia*) to his call that scholars should give “more consideration to the possibility that potential differences existed between the religious activities and beliefs seen in the local settlement, and those encountered at the larger communal *þing*, in the court or in the military camp” (2015, 70).

Similar deficits can be seen in scholarship on the religions practiced by different social classes. Such research has also generally concentrated on a single expression of religion in the Nordic region – the cult of the early-Medieval warrior elite – with little consideration for the relationship between this religion and the wider “system” of which it is at once both a deviant articulation and a constituent part. These studies, despite sometimes drawing on extensive comparative material from other Indo-European cultures (Kershaw 2000; *cf.* Enright 1996), only rarely seek to connect the high-status cult of the martial elite to the religions of the wider population (Höfler 1934; Murphy 2012; 2013; Nordberg 2004; Schjødt 2008; *cf.* Lindow 1976; Price 1994; Weiser 1927). While the focus on the pre-Christian social elite may be to some degree understandable – it was the descendants of this group who went on to form the Christian aristocracy of the Middle Ages and who produced much of our medieval textual source material (Gísli Sigurðsson and Vésteinn Ólason 2004; Soffía Guðný Guðmundsdóttir and Laufey Guðnadóttir 2004; Stéfan Einarsson 1957) – other social classes must also have had their own understandings and articulations of Nordic paganism. That this tiny proto-nobility was

geographically concentrated in socially-central locations – with very little representation in Iceland (Bagge 2008; Hastrup 1990; Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1998; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2013; Orri Vésteinsson 2000; Steinsland 2011) – only serves to reinforce the desirability of research on the religiosity of other segments of pre-Christian Nordic society (Brink 1983; 1996; 1997; 1998; 2007; Fabech 1998; Hedeager 2001; Jørgensen 2001; Lundqvist 1997; Munch, Johansen, and Roesdahl 2003; Murphy 2016; Rindel 2002; Thrane 1993).

As such, relatively little attention has been paid to the axes along which pre-Christian Nordic paganism may have varied, nor to the limits on this variation. A handful of recent works have tentatively initiated a more abstract discussion of this topic: John McKinnell first argued that pre-Christian religion was *Both One and Many* in 1994, Fredrik Svanberg pushed for *Decolonizing the Viking Age* in 2003, and Stefan Brink demonstrated intense regional variation in sacral toponymy in 2007. Attempting to systematise the extent to which our methods have informed this development, Jens Peter Schjødt has proposed four potential axes for religious variation (2009; 2012), and Andreas Nordberg's analogy of articulations of a religion as comparable to the dialects of a language helped communicate the issue to a wider audience (2012). These developments have led to a slow groundswell of dissatisfaction with the idea of a single reconstructable pre-Christian religion practiced throughout the early-Medieval North. This project has been explicitly designed to address this shortcoming, and will both interrogate and seek to define the tensions between diverse articulations of pre-Christian Nordic paganism.

C. RESEARCH PLAN (TIME AND WORK PLAN, METHODOLOGY, MILESTONES, PRESENT STATUS OF PROJECT, ETC.) AND DELIVERABLES. EXPLAIN IF CONSENTS AND/OR PERMITS ARE NEEDED

Deliverables:

The project outlined in this proposal has a number of deliverables, primarily a number of high-quality scholarly publications that will have a lasting impact on the academic and cultural medieval milieu in Iceland and abroad. The key deliverable will be the publication of a new scholarly monograph addressing the project's research questions – tentatively entitled *The Limits of Tolerance and Diversity: Religious (Dis)Unity in the Early Medieval North* – to be submitted to a reputable academic publisher (as outlined below). At present, it is anticipated that the monograph will adhere to the following structure:

- Chapter 1: Introduction (research questions, methods, etc.)
- Part One: Axes of Variation
 - Chapter 2: Part Introduction

- o Chapter 3: Temporal Models
 - 3.1 Early Nordic Paganisms
 - 3.2 Late Nordic Paganisms
- o Chapter 4: Geographic Models
 - 4.1 Eastern vs. Western Paganisms?
 - 4.2 Icelandic vs. Scandinavian Paganisms?
- o Chapter 5: Social Diversity
 - 5.1 Gendered Religion
 - 5.2 Elite vs. Non-Elite Paganisms
 - 5.3 Localised vs. Regional Paganisms
 - 5.4 Religion in the Pre-Christian Nordic Diaspora
- o Chapter 6: Cognitive Diversity
- o Chapter 7: Part Conclusions
- Part Two: Limits of Tolerance
 - o Chapter 8: Part Introduction
 - o Chapter 9: The Political Control of Religion
 - 9.1 (So-Called) Sacral Kingship in Norway and Sweden
 - 9.2 The role of Icelandic *goðar*
 - 9.3 Elite-Driven Conversion and Christianisation
 - o Chapter 10: Personal Determination
 - 10.1 Personal Choice in Selecting Deities
 - 10.2 Individual-Driven Conversion and Christianisation
 - o Chapter 11: Part Conclusion
- Chapter 12: Conclusions

The project will also produce a number of subsidiary publications (describing my goals, methods, and interim findings) in high-quality scholarly journals to ensure a constructive and ongoing critical discourse. The project's first (2018) and second (2019) years will each see one article submitted for publication: the first examining regional tutelary deities in the pre-Christian North, and the second a study of personal determination in Nordic paganism.

Ongoing research, interim results, and methodological issues will also be regularly presented at academic conferences and as part of scholarly seminars on an ongoing basis. Each year of the project, I will present a paper at a major scholarly conference (the *17th International Saga Conference*, Reykjavík in 2018; the *International Medieval Congress*, Leeds, UK in 2019; and the *International Congress on Medieval Studies* in Kalamazoo, USA in 2020). In addition, I will present at a number of smaller more specialised conferences both in Iceland and abroad (such conferences are not announced far in advance, and I thus cannot detail when or where they will be held). Additional working publications are possible on the basis of conference papers, where publication in proceedings does not conflict with the other dissemination outlined here. Beyond sole-authored work, it is my intention to contribute to scholarly discourse by organising of two-day conference on cultural variation in the early Medieval North at the University of Iceland in autumn 2019, funded by applications to

external funding bodies such as Stiftelsen Clara Lachmanns fond (from where I have previously secured conference funding). Subject to contributor take-up, the papers presented will be published as proceedings under my editorship.

Time Plan & Milestones:

- First year (2018):
 - Q1: Initial fundamental research, data gathering, source acquisition
 - Q2-4: Research on and drafting of monograph chapters 1-7
 - Q3-4: Applications for conference funding, initial conference planning
 - Q4: Writing and submission of journal article 1, on regional tutelary deities
- Second year (2019):
 - Q1: Submission of initial Progress Report to the Icelandic Centre for Research
 - Q1: Redrafting and publication of journal article 1, on regional tutelary deities
 - Q1-2: Spring Semester: research stay at the Department for the Study of Religion, Aarhus University, Denmark
 - Q2-3: Research on and drafting of monograph chapters 8-11
 - Q1-3: Continued applications for conference funding & planning work
 - Q4: Redrafting of monograph chapters 2-7
 - Q4: Writing and submission of journal article 2, on personal determination in pre-Christian religion
 - Q4: Conference held at the University of Iceland, editorial work on proceedings begins
- Third year (2020):
 - Q1: Submission of second Progress Report to the Icelandic Centre for Research
 - Q1: Redrafting and publication of journal article 2, on personal determination in pre-Christian religion
 - Q1-2: Redrafting of monograph chapters 1 and 8-11
 - Q1-3: Editorial work on conference proceedings, submission of manuscript
 - Q1-4: Application for future research funding and subsequent employment
 - Q3: Drafting of monograph chapter 12
 - Q4: Submission of monograph manuscript
- Post-Project (2021-):
 - Submission of final Progress Report to the Icelandic Centre for Research
 - Publication of the final monograph and conference proceedings
 - Continuing research along avenues identified by the project

Methodology:

This project is an examination of religious culture in the Germanic Nordic cultural region during the early Medieval period, c. 500-1200 AD. This is understood to refer to the period succeeding the Migration Period (that is, from c. 500 AD on) until the close of the pagan period (as early as the 960s in Denmark, as late as the 1220s in parts of Sweden). The geographic region under study encompasses not only the Scandinavian mainland, Iceland, and the Faroes, but also the areas of Scandinavian settlement during the period in question

(including regions of the British Isles, modern Finland, Russia, and North America). The religion that is the focus of this project is understood to have varied intensely within these areas, but may be regarded as the pagan and early-Christian religious output of the (broadly understood) Germanic-speaking culture originating in Scandinavia during the period outlined. It thus includes non-Germanic members of that culture (primarily slaves and similarly low-status individuals from Celtic regions, although these are not thought to have been particularly numerous), but excludes members of other cultural units that occupied overlapping settlement areas, such as Sámi society and the independent Celtic and Anglo-Saxon populations of the British Isles.

The project will employ a range of qualitative data drawn from across disciplinary boundaries – including archaeological, toponymic, philological, and folkloristic material – in order to establish useful models of the cultural phenomena under study, a methodology established in the Study of Religion. (As noted above, such a comparative approach offers significant compensation for the source critical issues of individual corpora.) The use of models is intended to pre-empt issues arising from historical studies that claim to produce “reconstructions” of “how things really were”: the fragmentary corpora of material relevant to early Medieval cultures and the inherent selection bias of scholarship prohibits complete accuracy (Jensen 2008a; Murphy 2017a; forthcoming c; Schjødt 2012) and casts doubt on absolute claims. Instead, this project will construct useful approximations of its subject matter and acknowledge their fallibility. It therefore leaves room for renegotiation and the conscious reflection of the concerns of the project’s own time, employing, for example, the emic concept of “religious diversity” rather than attempting reconstructed a non-existent etic category of “Nordic paganism” (*cf.* Murphy 2017a; forthcoming c.) This project will establish a number of both etic (internal perspective) and emic (external models) on the basis of educated judgements as to the data’s comparative value, thereby attempting to establish illuminating answers to the research questions outlined above.

Consents and Ethical Concerns:

The historical nature of this project means it does not raise any ethical concerns. The only consents that might be required would be for the publication of material previously disseminated in draft form (in interim working documents) in the final monograph.

d. MANAGEMENT AND CO-OPERATION (DOMESTIC/FOREIGN)

This project is designed to take full advantage of the opportunities available for a junior researcher like myself at the University of Iceland. In addition to the excellent library and archival facilities available at the National Library and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, the project will benefit greatly from collaboration with established scholars at my host department (Folkloristics & Ethnology; particularly Terry Gunnell, a specialist in pre-Christian Nordic religion), the Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural studies (particularly Ármann Jakobsson and Torfi Tulinius, both experts on medieval Icelandic literary sources), and the Árni Magnússon Institute (particularly Gísli Sigurðsson, a leading scholar on the use of post-medieval folklore for the study of pre-Christian culture). What is more, the University of Iceland has a thriving community of scholars and students working on Medieval topics, including regular seminar series on both pre-Christian religion and general Medieval studies, each of which I have previously contributed to. The project would also be an opportunity for me to deepen my existing ties to Snorrastofa in Reykholt, a research institution with excellent library and writing facilities, and The Reykjavík Academy.

In addition, the project will include a semester's stay at the Department for Study of Religion in Aarhus, Denmark, where I will work with Jens Peter Schjødt (an expert on elite Nordic paganism) and Jeppe Sinding Jensen (a leading theorist in the Study of Religion) and their graduate students to deepen the project's engagement with the wider Study of Religion. This visit will expose the project's methods and interim results to a wider range of established scholars, and fundamentally enrich the final deliverables.

e. PROPOSED PUBLICATION OF RESULTS AND DATA STORAGE (INCLUDING ADHERENCE TO OPEN ACCESS POLICY)

The project will adhere to the policy of Green Open Access, and all publications will be available on the opinvísindi.is repository. As outlined in the above timeline, the project will engage in an ongoing dialogue with relevant religious and historic academic discourses via paper presentations at number of conferences, as well as producing at least two interim articles and a final monograph, with the potential for further interim publications in the proceedings of conferences (where these would not hinder other planned publications). The journal articles will be submitted to journals with readerships relevant to their subjects: the first, examining regional tutelary deities in the pre-Christian North, will be addressed to *Nordic Historians of Religion*, and will therefore be submitted to journals such as *Chaos – skandinavisk tidsskrift for religionshistoriske studie* or *Temenos*; the second, a study of

personal determination in pre-Christian religion, will be submitted to more general journals of Nordic medieval studies such as Brepols' *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* or *The Saga Book of the Viking Society*. The final monograph will be published with a high-status international publishing house that offers open-access publication such as Routledge (whose series include *Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture* and *Routledge Research in Medieval Studies*) or Brepols (whose series include *Acta Scandinavica*).

f. CONTRIBUTION OF DOCTORAL AND MASTER'S DEGREE STUDENTS TO THE PROJECT

At present I have no plans to enlist student assistants on this project. In the event that suitable tasks (such as transcription) arise in the course of the project, I will apply for external funding in order to employ MA students from my host institution to perform only such research as would be beneficial for their education and future academic careers.

g. CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The project outlined in this application is a vital step in my career as an emerging researcher. In order to secure permanent employment in the research sector, junior scholars such as myself are increasingly required to provide not only a substantial publication record, but also to have published a monograph. The stability of this three-year grant will allow me to refine my previous work and conduct new research towards the publication of just such monograph, to continue improving my profile via the publication of interim articles, and to complete the (often lengthy) application process for subsequent academic positions. Following the successful completion of the project, I will have identified a number of directions for future research, likely exploring the implications of the relative importance of the different axes of cultural variation established in the monograph, as well as entirely new axes of variation. What is more, the possibility to work alongside leading Icelandic scholars will allow me to grow professionally, in particular through the improvement of my Latin-language skills and the deepening of my established teaching and supervisory relationships with both the Department of Folkloristics & Ethnology and the Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural studies. These opportunities to contribute to and expand upon my professional network both in Iceland and abroad (notably during the planned research semester in Denmark) will have a lasting effect on my career trajectory, as – it is hoped – will the impact of the research I will conduct as part of this project.

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