

S W E D I S H
COLLEGIUM
for ADVANCED STUDY

Seminar

JOHN LINDOW

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*Oral Religion in Written Culture(s):
Pre-Christian Religion of the North*

Thursday, 19 September, 4:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
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ABOUT JOHN LINDOW

John Lindow received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1972. Throughout his career, he has taught at the University of California, Berkeley, at the Department of Scandinavian and as a member of the Graduate Groups in Folklore and Medieval Studies. He has been a Fulbright Lecturer at the Department of Folkloristics at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik, and Guest Professor at the Department of the Study of Religion at Aarhus University.

Lindow's research focuses on medieval Scandinavian textual traditions and more recent folklore of northern Europe. His books include *Comitatus, Individual and Honor* (1975); *Swedish Legends and Folktales* (1977); *Scandinavian Mythology: An Annotated Bibliography* (1988); *Death and Vengeance Among the Gods: Baldr in Scandinavian Mythology* (1997); and *Handbook of Norse Mythology* (2001). He is co-editor and co-author of *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide* (1985; reprint 2005) and co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Medieval Folklore* (2000).

At SCAS, Lindow will be working in collaboration with Anders Andrén and Jens Peter Schjødt on a multi-volume book project, "Pre-Christian Religions of the North: Histories and Structures". This effort is part of an international venture intended to produce treatment of research history and reception as well as a presentation of the textual and archeological sources.

ABSTRACT

A fundamental paradox of the study of Pre-Christian religion of the North is that the recording of most of the textual materials was only made possible by the conversion to Christianity, for the Church brought the technology of writing with pen and ink. Thus the conceptual and action frames of the religion existed for the most part in an oral world. Runic inscriptions on stones offered a written medium that found little but often fascinating use. However, a development within the oral poetic tradition did offer some of the functions of writing. And when manuscript writing arrived, there were several aspects of continuity in the conceptualization of the past religion, despite the change of medium.