



Seminar

THOMAS A. DUBOIS

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*Seeing the Stars:
Pre-Christian Nordic Perspectives on the Winter Sky and the Work
of Reconstructing Medieval Religious Contact and Exchange*

Tuesday, 24 January, 11:15 a.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
www.swedishcollegium.se

S W E D I S H
C O L L E G I U M
for ADVANCED STUDY

ABOUT THOMAS A. DUBOIS

Tom DuBois received his Ph.D. in Folklore and Folklife from the University of Pennsylvania in 1990 and his undergraduate degree in English (medieval studies focus) from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, in 1983. Since 2000, he has researched, taught, and frequently chaired in the departments of Scandinavian Studies, Comparative Literature and Folklore Studies, and Religious Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. From 1990 to 2000, he taught at the University of Washington, Seattle, and has held visiting lectureships in Folklore Studies, Ethnology, and Sámi Studies at Harvard University, the University of Helsinki, Stockholm University, the University of Oslo, and Umeå University, which awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2011. In 2013, he was inducted into Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur (the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture). He is a former president of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, a former co-editor of the *Journal of American Folklore*, and a past recipient of fellowships from the Fulbright, Mellon, and Guggenheim foundations.

His books include *Finnish Folk Poetry and the Kalevala* (1995), *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age* (1999), *Lyric, Meaning and Audience in the Oral Tradition of Northern Europe* (2006), *An Introduction to Shamanism* (2009), and the edited or co-edited volumes *Finnish Folklore* (2000), *Sanctity in the North: Saints, Lives, and Cults in Medieval Scandinavia* (2008), and *The Nordic Storyteller: Essays in Honour of Niels Ingwersen* (2009).

At SCAS, he will work on a comprehensive revision of his influential book *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age* in preparation for a twentieth-anniversary reissue.

ABSTRACT

The various linguistic and cultural groups of the North shared a single sky. How did they understand that sky in terms of its various stars and planets, as well as the sun and moon? The first part of the presentation focuses on the methodological hurdles involved in trying to compare evidence of different sorts and ages from the various populations of the Nordic-Baltic region, who can be categorized (using modern ethonyms) as Balts, Estonians, Finns, Norse, and Sámi. The second part of the presentation looks at some of the potential payoffs of such reconstructions with specific reference to understandings of particular constellations and the identity and nature of the sun.