

## Editorial Note

The Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History organised a symposium in Åbo (Turku), Finland on August 19–21, 1987. The title of the symposium was *Encounters between Religions in Old Nordic Times and Cultic Place-Names*. It was planned as a continuation to the inventory of Nordic research into old religions in Scandinavia and Finland which began with the Donner Institute's symposium on Saami (Lapp) religion on August 16–18, 1984.

It is no secret that Nordic research into the religions of prehistoric Norse times is a neglected field. On the other hand, it is well-known that research in this field is pursued in Europe, the USA and Australia. To remedy this shortcoming the Nordic Cooperation Committee for Humanistic Research set up a joint working group in 1985 to produce a document that might form the basis for long-term efforts to intensify research into Norse religion within the Nordic region. The group completed its report, *Innstilling om førkristen nordisk religion* (Approach to Pre-Christian Norse Religion) in September 1986. The report pointed out that research into Norse religion should be a matter of the greatest importance for Nordic scholars. Furthermore, it was also stressed that different aspects of the topic are studied in neighbouring disciplines, e.g. philology, archaeology, place-name studies and runology. The Donner Institute's symposium in 1987 therefore constituted a swift reaction to the group's intentions.

A parallel theme for the symposium was *Cultic Place-Names in the Nordic countries* and the symposium was organised jointly with the Nordic Cooperation Committee for Place-Name Studies (NORNA) with Dr Peter Slotte as contact person. It is difficult to imagine a more suitable partner for scholars of the history of religion than philologists engaged in the study of pre-Christian place-names — and vice versa. Peter Slotte observed in his invitation to the symposium that even though place-names form a very important part of the scant sources we have casting light on pre-Christian beliefs and pre-Christian cult in the Nordic region, research into cultic place-names has been neglected for several decades, partly as a result of the hypercritical attitude caused by earlier over-hasty conclusions. This had led to a suppressed

need for research in the field — not only place-name scholars but also neighbouring disciplines awaited the interpretations and views of place-name experts on this much maligned and neglected group of names.

The papers read at the symposium have now been published. They bear witness to the extent and direction of Nordic research in this field.

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