

Abstract

The thesis is concerned with time reckoning and time perception in Old Norse culture. Based on the analysis of various prosaic and poetic works or genres I show what the domestic pre-Christian images of time most probably looked like. I also investigate in what respects the original images of time have changed depending on social development, namely as regards the arrival of Christianity and feudalism to the North.

Old Norse images of time are reconstructed by analysing the temporal structure of primary sources. I examine the systems of dating and time indications used in the texts, as well as the properties of narrative time. The last mentioned is achieved based on the categories of *order*, *duration* and *frequency* defined by Gérard Genette.

The primary sources are divided into three groups in the thesis. The first group is comprised of works that include traces of the pre-Christian understanding of time. Besides *Poetic Edda* and *Snorri's Edda*, I have also included the so-called legendary and family sagas in this group. The second group is comprised of different types of texts, all of which adopt foreign ways of time reckoning that spread to Iceland especially through the influence of the Church and through various learned treatises. Besides the Old Norse computistical treatise known as *Rím I*, which introduces for instance the Latin names of months and their duration, I am concerned with two early historiographical works, *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*. Both of these works show an interesting combination of foreign systems of dating with local ones. I also briefly analyse the dating formulas used by the Scandinavian kings and bishops and contained in the medieval documents from the Scandinavian *diplomataria*. The third group of primary sources includes the so-called kings' and bishops' sagas on the basis of which I examine how foreign time reckoning and perception affected the narrative structure of sagas and was blended with local practice.