

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the comic layers in Eddic mythological poetry, namely in *Lokasenna*, *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Þrymskviða*, and on their relation to the Old Norse religion. In the past, these comic and seemingly blasphemous poems used to be interpreted as a display of criticism of the religious system or, due to the impossibility to date their origin, as a product of late decadent paganism or even as a Christian satire of this religion.

This paper shows that such interpretations are not necessary, and that the comic Eddic poems could have existed as a functional part of the Old Norse religion. It points out the affinity of the categories of religious humour and chaos. Subsequently, it presents various theories, mostly from the field of anthropology of religion, which show that a temporarily confrontation of order with chaos can be a desirable practise for a religion, and that humour can serve as a suitable means to achieve such a confrontation.

The second part of the paper focuses on the particular Eddic poems. It analyses in detail their comic layers, and examines the possibilities of their function within the Old Norse religion on the background of the notion of piety and blasphemy in their time. It demonstrates their link to the tradition of ritualized verbal duels and other socio-cultural phenomena, thus presenting a context in which the comic poems might have existed as an integral and functional part of the Old Norse religion.