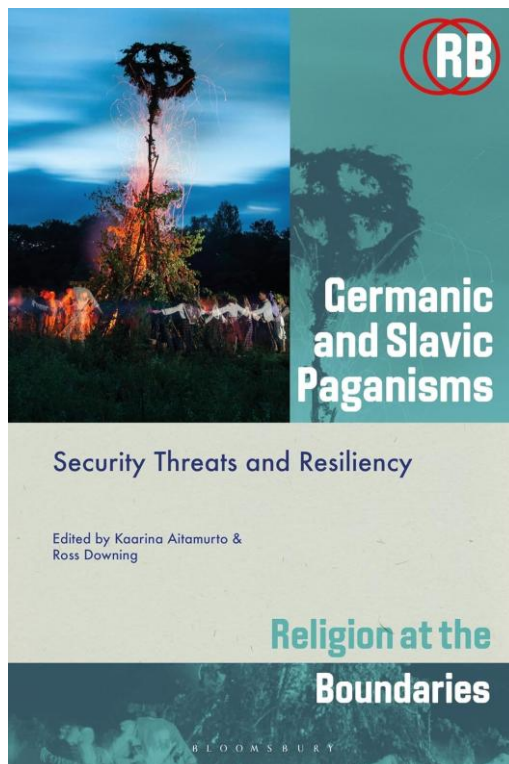


WARRIOR NARRATIVES: GERMANIC AND SLAVIC PAGANISMS

NARRATIVAS DO GUERREIROS: GERMANIC AND SLAVIC PAGANISMS



AITAMURTO, Kaarina; DOWNING, Ross. *Germanic and Slavic Paganisms Security Threats and Resiliency*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2025.

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Contemporary Paganism studies are a fertile field of research with numerous themes and urgent discussions about the impact of constructed narratives on religious movements and contemporary society. Although the numerous Paganisms can be understood as part of a single family of religious movements, the different strands have their own peculiarities.

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Developed under the influence of movements such as Romanticism, nationalism, literature, anthropological theories and the counterculture movement, Contemporary Paganisms on the positive side, propose breaking the patterns of the dominant culture. However, ideas and narratives regarding Romanticism, rationalism, and nativism give rise to contradictions and conflicts within the Contemporary Pagan community. This is especially true for strands related to Contemporary Germanic Paganism, which emerged spontaneously in numerous countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Iceland, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Russia, Ukraine, and in Latin America.

Focusing on Germanic and Slavic Paganisms, the book *Germanic and Slavic Paganisms: Security Threats and Resiliency* edited by Kaarina Aitamurto and Ross Downing, was published in the United Kingdom by Bloomsbury Academic in 2025. It consists of a collection of studies, presented in 20 chapters and divided into three sections. The chapters address issues related to the problems and contradictions presented in the context of Contemporary Germanic Paganism and Contemporary Slavic Paganism. This regards in particular to the extremist discourses that are frequently identified and problematised in various studies addressing issues related to Contemporary Paganisms and their numerous branches. The related publication has contributions from the authors: Kaarina Aitamurto, Ross Downing, Richard Blackett, Denise Vast, Mariusz Filip, Piotr Grochowski, Santiago David Gutiérrez, Joseph Stanley Hopkins, Victoria Hudson, Pavol Kosnác, Natalia Lee, Maryna Liuta, Jakub Ludvík, Richard McDonald, Adrien Nonjon, Angue Padilla, Andrew Parady, Saga Rosenstöm, Hrafnsunna Ross, Oksana Smorzhevskaja, Jennifer Snook, Taras Tarasiuk, Miroslav Vrzal and Barbora Ziacková.

The authors understand that Paganisms in general are highly stigmatised religions, often mistakenly associated with Satanism and have questionable behaviour. Paganisms can be considered a family of spiritual and religious movements inspired by studies of mythology, the occult, and the search for cultural heritage. Regarding the Contemporary Germanic and Slavic Pagan movements, which are the focus of this book, many relevant reflections are made on the dynamics between politics, religion, security, and resilience. Conflicts related to political alignments within the community often generate contradictions in the discourses presented by community members. One of the commonly discussed issues refers to who can

and cannot practice the religion, leading to the use of rhetoric and narratives to support separatist ideologies.

Such ideologies are often permeated by racist and extremist discourses, generating discomfort not only within the community but also stigmatisation, in addition to providing fodder for legitimising extremist rhetoric. These convictions support the use of mythology as a rhetorical element for far-right groups and perpetuate beyond the religious sphere. It is important to emphasise that extremist and religious groups are not necessarily connected; however, the use of mythology as a rhetorical device occurs in both religious and non-religious settings, with both fields influencing each other. Regarding the religious scenario, the authors point out a certain urgency when extremist ideas can create a vulnerable terrain for new practitioners. Erroneous ideas regarding the use of history and mythology can both influence new practitioners to extremist ideas and can also generate legitimacy for the use of symbols, cultural heritages, historical facts and mythological narratives. These can be seen as tools to sustain separatist, nativist, racist rhetoric and, in more extreme cases, violent speeches and behaviours, thus culminating in security problems.

The book is divided into three sections: (1) Shifting Foundations - How the Core Features of Paganisms Are Changing; (2) Prescient Threats - Realities of Social and Real Violence from Pagan Extremism; (3) Innovations: New Approaches Indicating Innate Solutions. The first section, Shifting Foundations - How the Core Features of Paganisms Are Changing, consists of seven chapters that seek to update discussions on the relationship between Germanic and Slavic Paganisms and their relationship with the far right and "Trumpism". It also demonstrates how political polarisation manifests itself in the Germanic and Slavic Inspired Contemporary Paganisms movements. The first section also addresses black metal, the cult of Loki in the contemporary world, the use of runes, metamodernism, and the relationship with the digital world. It discusses issues related to political polarisation and how this manifests itself in the Germanic and Slavic Contemporary Paganisms scene. Furthermore, the session brings to light important questions about the war between Russia and Ukraine, holding important discussions on the impact of this war as a phenomenon that influences not only nationalist notions and traditional values, but also has had an impact on Contemporary Pagan groups in Russia and Ukraine.

The second section, *Prescient Threats: Realities of Social and Real Violence from Pagan Extremism*, consists of seven chapters focused on the security challenges faced both within the religious movement and in the academic context. The issues surrounding Ukrainian Pagan soldiers are discussed, as well as the English and French prison systems, offering a critical reflection on the prison system and how this context also generates the risk of radicalisation. The second section broadly discusses how mythology and religion can be used in specific contexts as tools to direct individuals to embrace extremist thinking. Given this scenario, the authors critically discuss how Contemporary Germanic Paganisms is often overlooked when it comes to radicalisation, thus missing the opportunity to develop strategies to address such complexities. In addition, Contemporary Germanic Paganisms is considered a minority religious movement by many. However, when it comes to radicalisation and extremist discourse, it is observed that the use of Norse mythology is widely used as a rhetorical device. This fact generates an urgent need for further investigation and study, making it necessary for such discussions to reach community settings, such as schools and other settings where it is possible to shed light on the need to inform more vulnerable populations and bring a closer look at this phenomenon, devising effective intervention strategies.

Finally, the third and final session, *Innovations: New Approaches Indicating Innate Solutions*, presents an innovative approach, consisting of six chapters, some of which were written by community members. This session invites practitioners of Contemporary Pagan religions to present their thoughts, insights, and stories, including them in the debate as active agents in positioning and confronting the issues presented. The final session also proposes strategies for building community resilience to combat misinformation, as well as radicalising discourse and propaganda. External and internal community actions are provided, such as the involvement of government agencies and training among security agencies to facilitate detection and prevention in combating Pagan extremism. Political and security agencies are not fully aware of the complexities surrounding Contemporary Pagan extremism. It is crucial to bring a sensitive perspective to identify individuals most vulnerable to misinformation.

Fostering strategic dialogues with religious groups and leaders, including community members as important tools for disseminating information, enables communication between the media and other sectors, thus involving the community. It is crucial to maintain academic

dialogue and understand the importance of having community members involved in the academic and research context. Moreover, seeking ways to regulate practices and groups is vital for providing legitimacy and enabling control of disinformation. Although such a strategy does not necessarily resolve the problem, it is nonetheless understood as an important means of combating radicalisation. It is noteworthy that a significant portion of the issues raised in the book also relate to identity, authenticity, and legitimacy as immensely relevant factors when viewed alongside the use of nativist and ethnicist rhetoric, such as the use of history, albeit inaccurately. Additionally, motivations permeate the desire for legitimacy and recognition of the religious movement as deserving of policies regulating its rights.

This publication is considered relevant reading for Pagan studies and brings up extremely relevant debates that impact society as a whole. Even though mythology is used as a tool for rhetoric speech, issues surrounding this are not exclusive to religious movements, but rather are strategies widely used in countless other contexts alongside many ideologies involving extremist ideas. It is essential to bring community members as active participants in the debate, and it is important that practitioners take responsibility for their actions. At the same time, it is essential to create tools that enable them to build a more favourable environment for questioning extremist narratives. It also provides possible interventions and solutions to combat radicalisation, including Contemporary Paganism as a religious phenomenon worthy of observation and discussion.

It is also significant that the authors seek to dispel some generalisations and assumptions made about the Germanic Inspired Contemporary Paganisms, commonly interpreted through stereotypes that associate it with nationalism and militant behaviour. The authors draw attention to the fact that the development of different groups varies in different contexts and countries. According to the authors, nationalism can manifest itself in a non-aggressive manner, which presents itself in different ways in different groups and countries. This book proposes to discuss the themes of radicalism within an understanding of security and social well-being. Thus, it contextualises the widely debated phenomena within an economic and social context, opening the possibility for dialogue and discussions on possible solutions and/or interventions.

**Reference:**

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