**Abstract Submission: Orkney Rune Rede**

**Religion and Runology: How Religious Concepts Impacted Upon Antiquarian Interpretations of the Maeshowe Inscriptions**

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The discovery of runic inscriptions in Maeshowe, Orkney, in 1861 generated a wealth of interest. Interpretations of the inscriptions were produced by a number of antiquarians and scholars of Scandinavian history and published both in specialist journals and newspapers. This paper examines the impact of concepts of belief/ religion in the initial interpretations of the Maeshowe runic inscriptions.

By examining selected inscriptions this analysis will elaborate upon the way in which the interpretations were deeply interrelated with wider Antiquarian discourse, especially with regard to Orkney’s history and concepts of Nordic identity and its Scottish heritage. Indeed, the analysis of the inscriptions maintained, reproduced and contributed to Victorian concepts of the ‘Old North’ and reproduced pagan–Christian binary identities.