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Look What those Pagans Did! Uses of the Memory of Pagan Violence in Hungary, Poland, Denmark, and Bulgaria

Christianization in East Central Europe, particularly the conversion of Poland and Hungary around the year 1000, has received much attention recently, including from scholars interested in a comparative perspective. Comparatively less noted has been the reaction to Christianity among the populations of these realms. Particularly, major “pagan” reactions were recorded in Poland and Hungary around the same time, in the 1030’s and 1040’s respectively. These uprisings are not unparalleled outside East Central Europe. There were similar accounts of revivals of paganism in 11th century Denmark (after Harald Bluetooth's reign and under the reign of his son, Sven Forkbeard) and in late ninth century Bulgaria (after Boris's reign and under that of his son Vladimir-Rasate). The details surrounding these four reactions to paganism have certainly been clouded by various social, political and religious goals of those recording them, so much so that, especially in Sven Forkbeard’s case, it is difficult for historians to disentangle fact from fiction. By contrast, my paper focuses on exploring how pagan revivals were viewed by those who chronicled them and how these revolts figured in the various interests of these chroniclers.