RUNES IN FINLAND

KENDRA WILLSON (ed.)

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SVENSKA LITTERATURSÄLLSKAPET I FINLAND, HELSINGFORS | APPELL FÖRLAG, STOCKHOLM | 2024

Denna bok är nr 875 i serien Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet och utges gemensamt av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland och Appell Förlag.
Boken ingår som nr 26 i serien Runrön. Runologiska bidrag utgivna av Institutionen för nordiska språk vid Uppsala universitet.
För tidigare titlar i skriftserien, se
www.nordiska.uu.se/forskning/publikationsserier/runron

Boken utges med stöd av Ingrid, Margit och Henrik Höijers donationsfond I inom Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Pdf-utgåva

Omslag: Antti Pokela
Inlaga och ombrytning: Maria Appelberg

Typsnitt: Minion Pro, Runlitt B Unicode, Futhark A

ISBN 978-951-583-608-3 (tryckt utgåva, Finland) sls.fi
ISBN 978-91-989128-0-7 (tryckt utgåva, Sverige) appellforlag.se
ISBN 978-951-583-634-2 (epub), http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-583-634-2
ISBN 978-951-583-635-9 (pdf), http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-583-635-9

Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland
ISSN 0039-6842 (tryckt)
ISSN 2490-1547 (digital)
Runrön. Runologiska bidrag utgivna av Institutionen för nordiska språk vid Uppsala universitet
ISSN 1100-1690 (tryck)
ISSN 2003-7058 (digital)

UDK 003.345(480), UDK 904

Contents

Kendra Willson

Runes in Finland: The margins of Scandinavian runic culture

Although Finland is geographically close to the areas in central Sweden with the highest concentration of Viking Age runic monuments, only a handful of runic inscriptions have been recovered from the territory of present-day Finland. In general, Finland has not been considered to have a tradition of runic writing.

Most of the inscriptions found in Finland which have been dated to the Viking Age – the brooch found in Tuukkala in 1882 and a few coins and amulets – are generally believed to have been carved elsewhere and transported to the find sites. It is not clear that any locals would have been able to read the runes. The runestone fragment found in Hitis (Fi. Hiittinen) in 1997 has also been thought to be imported, although it could have been carved or raised near the find site, which is not far from a Viking Age trading post with other Scandinavian artefacts (Edgren 1999). A few late medieval inscriptions from Turku (discussed by Harjula 2008, 2016, 2019 and Palumbo & Harjula in this volume) do provide evidence of a restricted local tradition of runic writing during the Middle Ages. The tradition of runic calendar sticks spread

from Sweden with the Reformation (Oja 2015), and some ownership marks used in Finland are thought to be based on runes (Ekko 1984).

In modern times, much discussion of (the lack of) runic inscriptions in Finland has been tied to debate over the length of time there has been a Swedish-speaking population in Finland. The majority opinion is that the migrations that led to the modern Swedish-speaking communities stem from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Ahola & Frog 2014: 56), after the heyday of runic memorials in Sweden. Speakers of Germanic languages were almost certainly present in the territory of modern-day Finland at different times before and during the Viking Age but the extent of continuity in settlement and language transmission is unknown. Numerous loanwords from North Germanic languages into Finnish appear to date from the Viking Age (Häkkinen 2014: 389) but many borrowings are difficult to date. Place-name etymologies are even more problematic (Schalin 2014: 406). There are many questions about the location and nature of the contacts between North Germanic and Finnic languages during the Viking Age (see e.g. Ahola & Frog 2014: 56; Tolley 2014: 96, 101).

This discussion has often been partisan and connected with contemporary identities and language politics. Runic inscriptions have been seen as proof of the presence of Scandinavian speakers during the Viking Age, which has been connected with the position of the modern Swedish-speaking population. Scholarship has been suspected of partisanship and either seeking to exaggerate or minimise Swedish presence and influence in Finland (see e.g. Bågenholm 1999: 120–121). The discourse shows some commonality with debates over other issues such as place-name etymologies.

This applies in particular to the runic inscriptions from Vörå (Fi. Vöyri) in Ostrobothnia, which caused a stir in the 1980s. Another controversy concerned the inscriptions on the cross of Sund and the cliff by Kastelholm in Åland, which fueled provincial archaeologist Matts Dreijer's highly speculative theory that the Viking Age emporium of Birka was in fact located in Åland, emphasising Åland's centrality in Viking Age Sweden.

Some decades have elapsed since those controversies; many of the central participants in the debates are no longer active. Views of the early settlement history of Finland and of Finland in the Viking Age continue to evolve. Finds such as the runestone fragment from Hitis discovered in 1997 and medieval runic inscriptions found from the 1980s onwards in Turku have provided new evidence of "authentic" runes in Finland. The time therefore seems ripe to revisit the issue of runes in Finland.

Can we speak of a Finnish runic tradition? The phrase can be taken to have a double meaning: on the one hand, to refer to a practice of carving and reading runes, on the other, to ideas about runes which circulate in different discourses in modern times. While the inscriptions from Finland are not numerous, they vary in their medium, age, and find location. Although there were probably very few Finnish rune carvers, it seems likely that there was some familiarity with runes in Finland dating at least from the Middle Ages and perhaps from the Viking Age. Some rune-related traditions remain down to modern times, such as runic calendars and various marks of ownership thought to derive from runes, as well as modern inscriptions carved in a Romantic spirit. In addition, vernacular beliefs about earlier use in Finland are sometimes reflected in writings from scholarly to popular to pseudoscientific. The relation between these two senses of tradition is complicated. Understanding the ideas about runes in circulation and the ways in which these are embedded in wider discussions is important for source-criticism in regard to the finds and their research history. This is especially the case for disputed inscriptions.

The papers in this collection explore different aspects of Finland's runic culture, bringing together for the first time information in English about runes in Finland from different times and areas.

Heikki Oja ("In search of Finnish runes") gives an overview of the runic inscriptions found in Finland, including inscriptions on coins and amulets as well as runic calendars. He concludes with some possible reasons for the dearth of runic inscriptions in Finland. Oja's contribution also tells the personal story of how a retired astronomer

came to write a popular book on runes (*Riimut: Viestejä viikingeiltä* 2015).

The silver brooch from Tuukkala, Mikkeli, discovered in 1883, was the first runic inscription found in Finland that was agreed by scholarly consensus to date from the Late Iron Age. It is assumed to have originated in Gotland. Ulla Moilanen ("The inscribed silver disc brooch from the Tuukkala cemetery in Mikkeli") revisits the brooch from an archaeological perspective, placing it in the context of similar brooches, the find site, and the inferred biography of the artefact.

Magnus Källström ("Who carved the runestone from Hitis?") revisits the one Viking Age runestone known from Finland, the fragment found at Stora Ängesön in Hitis in 1997. Källström believes that the inscription is genuine; some unusual features in its appearance can be attributed to its having lain under water for some time. He finds parallels to several features in the carvings of Balle in Löt in northeastern Uppland, Sweden, and suggests that the Hitis inscription might have been carved by Balle or by a member of his school.

The main evidence for medieval runic practice in Finland comes from runic inscriptions on everyday objects (wooden vessels and an antler comb) found in Turku in the 1980s and 1990s. Alessandro Palumbo and Janne Harjula ("Material and written culture in medieval Turku: Runic inscriptions from an urban environment") discuss these inscriptions in the context of medieval urban culture and religious practice. The carving of Latin prayers in runes on wooden vessels was a widespread practice around the Nordic area. Palumbo and Harjula compare various features of the orthography of the Turku inscriptions (spelling of *ave* and *gratia*, combination of runes and Latin letters, use of bind-runes) to different regions of medieval Sweden and Gotland. Somewhat surprisingly, the Turku inscriptions match more closely with Östergötland than with Gotland, which is geographically closer and where the runic tradition persisted longer than in the mainland of present-day Sweden.

The lack of Viking Age inscriptions from Åland is particularly striking given the close connections between Åland and central Sweden

during the early Viking Age (followed by a mysterious dearth of artefacts from the eleventh century, which has sometimes been taken as an indication of depopulation or discontinuity in settlement). Åland's most prominent inscription, which has been interpreted as runic writing in Latin, is carved on a stone cross from the church at Sund. Long-time provincial archeologist Matts Dreijer used his interpretation of this inscription as the foundation for his discredited theory that the Viking Age town of Birka was in fact located in Åland. Per Olof Sjöstrand ("The cross of Sund") discusses Dreijer's theory in relation to cultural and political developments in Åland and the shaping of Ålandic identity in the twentieth century. Sjöstrand views the inscription as likely to date from the fifteenth century rather than the tenth. If the marks are in fact runes, Sjöstrand suggests the text might be a Latin inscription, possibly *venialis* 'forgiveable', commemorating the resolution of a feud. An apparent copy of the Sund inscription on the cliff at Kastelholm has been connected to the runologist and antiquarian Johan Bure, a.k.a. Johannes Bureus (1568–1652). Sjöstrand places the discussion of the Sund cross in the context of the long-standing scholarly debate over the transition from the Viking Age to the Middle Ages in Åland. While Åland was central to trade routes during the early Viking Age, a dearth of archaeological finds from the late Viking Age and apparent lack of continuity in placenames has led to the hypothesis of a period of depopulation. This is at odds with many Ålanders' sense of their own history, including Dreijer's.

In southern Ostrobothnia as well, the mainstream archaeological view has been that the area was depopulated during the Viking Age. This so-called "tomrumsteori" [void hypothesis] has been viewed by the local population, mainly rural and Swedish-speaking, as a negation of their history and an erasure of the Swedish presence. The discovery of runestones in Vörå from 1978 triggered a crisis of authority and epistemology regarding the authenticity of the inscriptions and the early history of the region more generally. Kendra Willson ("Contested narratives of the Vörå runestones") points out that the discourse surrounding the Vörå runestones is characterised by an emphasis on nar-

rative. The finders, and other local Ostrobothnians who were committed to the inscriptions being old, worked to present the account of their find as believable and themselves as reliable witnesses while elaborating on an imagined narrative about the carvers and the people mentioned in the inscriptions.

Some modern runic inscriptions are not necessarily forgeries or motivated by language politics but part of a general tradition of commemorating events by carving names and dates, as Antti Lahelma, Jouko Pukkila, and Tapani Rostedt argue ("Fake or not? Some observations on finds of runic inscriptions in southwestern Finland"). While inscriptions in Nauvo and Masku are obviously modern, others are difficult to date. An inscription in Naantali is written in Old Norse (with some grammatical peculiarities) and echoes the style of many inscriptions from the late Viking Age from central Sweden. While it is most likely to be a sophisticated imitation, the authors would also like to maintain the possibility that it is a genuine Viking Age inscription.

The papers in this collection are intended to provide both an overview and new insights into the use of runes in Finland at different times. It is hoped that this will lead to further investigation of Finland's runic culture.

I am grateful to (among others) Svenska kulturfonden for support of my research in the course of producing this book, the publishing staff of Runrön in Uppsala and Svenska litteratursällskapet in Helsinki for making possible this joint publication, the anonymous reviewers for constructive suggestions, Mindy McLeod for a thorough expert proofreading of the manuscript, and the authors for their contributions and for their patience.

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Heikki Oja

In search of Finnish runes

Abstract

I BECAME INTERESTED IN RUNES when I compiled a presentation of rune staffs in the almanac archive of the Almanac Office at the University of Helsinki ("Finländska runstavar"). I observed there was no objective book on runes in Finnish, so I wrote my own (*Riimut: Viestejä viikingeiltä* 2015) which describes Finnish rune staffs, runic objects, and runestones. When I wrote the book there were two Finnish entries in the Scandinavian runic-text database (Sw. Samnordisk runtextdatabas): one brooch and one stone. My book describes an additional six well-documented objects with runic signs (five coins and one wooden cup), and one (disputed) inscription in stone, the Sund Cross from Åland, with the same runes cut in a cliff near Kastelholm Castle. Other Finnish runestones, notably the Vörå stones, are probably from the nineteenth or early twentieth century. The conclusion offers some thoughts on the question of why there are so few runic inscriptions in Finland.

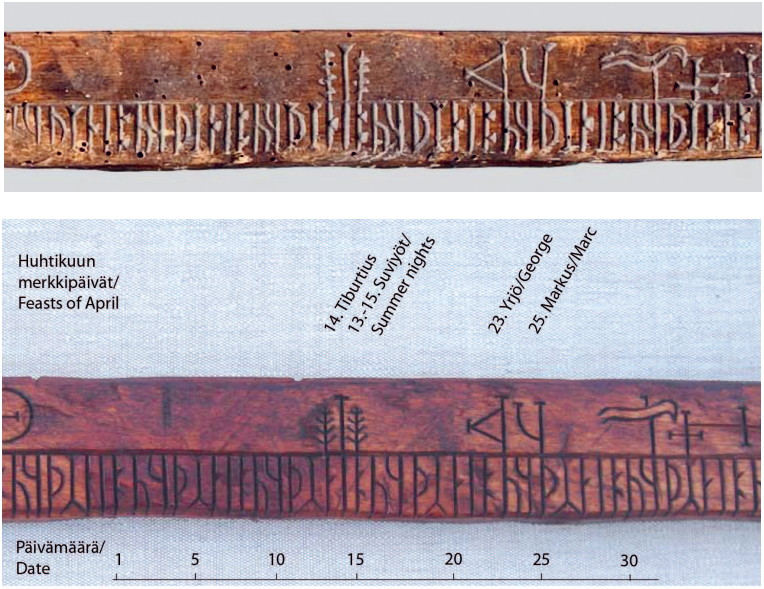

Figure 1: The month of April on the oldest Finnish rune staff from 1566. The upper picture is photographed from the original, the lower picture from the modern copy, with annotations.

Introduction

My interest in runes was awakened through calendars and rune staffs. For nearly twenty years I worked at the Almanac Office of the University of Helsinki – we managed the university business, which largely consisted of collecting copyright fees for name days from the publishers of the calendars. But we also collected old almanacs and set up an online almanac archive where we kept copies of virtually all the calendars and almanacs that have been published in Finland. These consist of calendar parts rather than entire almanacs, i.e. the spreads for each of the twelve months. The almanac archive has been useful, for instance, to historians who want to study the dates of past events. The

Figure 2: The month of April on the Almanac Office rune staff. The tree denotes Tiburtius or the Summer Day; the horse denotes St. George and the quill pen Mark the Evangelist.

archive covers the years from around 1600 to the present, with some even older calendars, and also has copies of many old Swedish almanacs because Finland was for a long time part of the Swedish realm and used Swedish calendars.

I decided to put on display some of the rune staffs in the archive. Rune staffs were used as calendars before paper almanacs came into use, and the National Museum has collected several hundred old rune staffs from Finland. We ordered good-quality photographs of three Finnish rune staffs, one from the sixteenth, one from the seventeenth and one from the eighteenth century. The oldest known Finnish rune staff, from the sixteenth century, had ended up in Paris where it is on display in the Sainte-Geneviève Library (Roussel 1952: 29). Since it is a pity that this special Finnish rune staff can be seen only in France, I made a copy of the staff, based on photographs and notes. As can be seen in Figure 1, not all the runes derive from the futhark proper; some are simply rune-like signs developed by the carver.

Since I was retiring at the same time, I decided to make one more rune staff, to be used as the sceptre of the Almanac Office (Figure 2). I presented this to my successor when she took over responsibility for the office. I also made a copy of the Almanac Office rune staff, modified for our own family, which I presented to my wife. The Roman letters on this copy denote family birthdays, but I used proper runes on the Almanac Office rune staff.

For those unfamiliar with rune staffs, I will briefly explain the signs. In the middle row are the first seven runes of the younger futhark, which repeat through the days of the year. There are therefore 365 signs (plus an extra point at the end of February to denote the leap day), half of them on one side of the staff, from January to June, and the other half on the other side, from July to December. Every seventh rune denotes a Sunday, and tables give each year's Sunday rune. For example, in 2016 there were two different Sunday runes because of the extra leap day at the end of February. In January and February, every thorn-day (ᚦ) is Sunday; in March through December, every ur-day (ᚢ) is Sunday.

In the uppermost row are marked all the special days of the year – such as New Year, the Virgin Mary's different holidays, Midsummer, the most important saints' days, etc., each represented by a suitable symbol, for instance a gridiron for St. Lawrence in August and a horse for St. George in April.

In the lowermost row are the moon runes. The phases of the moon (new moon, full moon) repeat every 19 years, which is to say that the dates of new moons this year are, within a day or two, the same as 19 years ago, and will be the same again in 19 years. We thus require 19 symbols to indicate the relevant year of the 19 possible years. With only 16 runes in the futhark, we need 3 extra signs for these so-called golden numbers, or moon runes: *árlögr* ᛏ, *tvímaðr* ᛯ, and *belgþorn* ᛒ. In 2016, the moon rune was thorn ᚦ, so the dates of that year's new moons are indicated by this rune. In April, we find that the moon rune is on the 7th day, and as shown in the almanacs, the sign of the new moon, the black ball, occurs precisely on the 7th. This rune staff is a valid calendar for about 200 more years, after which the moon runes will have to be moved by one day.

After carving rune staffs, I became quite fascinated by runes and I started to read old publications on runes in the Helsinki University Library. I also observed that there were no objective books on runes in Finnish. The only ones available were written by astrologers or fantasists and were not particularly useful. Having just retired, I had time to write and so I collected material and travelled with my wife to places

Figure 3: Two of the Janakkala coins are preserved in the Coin Cabinet of the National Board of Antiquities.

where runes can be seen – Uppsala with its many fine runestones and other places in Sweden, Vörå in Ostrobothnia, with its dubious Finnish runestones, and Åland with the Sund Cross. My book *Riimut* was published by the Finnish Literature Society in 2015. It has been received rather well and by 2021 was on its fourth print run.

Runic inscriptions in Finland

There are two entries from Finland in the Scandinavian runic-text database, the Tuukkala brooch and the Stora Ängesön runestone. I found for my book an additional six or seven well-documented objects with runic signs. I shall now describe each of the Finnish runic inscriptions.

The first Finnish runic finds were three identical coins (Figures 3 and 4) that were found in Janakkala, southern Finland, in 1832. The coins

Figure 4: The third coin from Janakkala was depicted in Christian Thomsen's *Atlas for Nordisk Oldkyndighed*.

Figure 5: The Tuukkala brooch, as published in Freudenthal 1893. The brooch (and perhaps its owner, Botvi) were probably brought to Mikkeli from Gotland.

were part of a larger treasure comprising about one kilogram of silver objects and are thin bracteates printed on one side only (Talvio 2002: 156–158). A drawing of one of the coins showing the runic signs was published in the 1850s (Thomsen 1857: Tab. III, No. 36). To my knowledge, the only attempt to interpret the text is by George Stephens (1866: 557). His interpretation is **juliani hüug æmiliu** (the text begins slightly before the top mid-point and descends to the left, and then continues from the same point to the right), that is, a minter called Julian minted these coins for a person called *Æmilius*. The coins are from the eleventh century (Talvio 2002: 156) and thus they are the oldest written documents found in Finland.

The Tuukkala brooch (Figure 5) was found in the 1870s in the area of present-day Mikkeli (Sw. S:t Michel) in eastern Finland. The brooch was found in a twelfth-century grave. On the back of the brooch are two short texts, **ḥeui ᛅ mik**, 'Hägvi owns me', where the **ḥeui** has been scratched out and a new name, **botui**, has been written on the brooch (Freudenthal 1893: 1; Moilanen in this volume). Evert Salberger and Helmer Gustavson interpreted the first name as *Hägvi* (Salberger & Gustavson 1987: 41–43). Both *Botvi* and *Hägvi* are female names that were used in Gotland in the first centuries of the second millennium. Perhaps the two people named here, *Hägvi* and *Botvi*, were mother and daughter. The brooch (and perhaps its owner, Botvi) were probably brought to Mikkeli from Gotland.

Figure 6: The Kuusamo coin, as published in Salmo 1934. On the front is a Latin text, Magnus Rex (referring to Svend Estridsen), on the back the runic signs shown below.

The fifth Finnish runic object was found at the end of the nineteenth century in Kuusamo, east of Oulu (Sw. Uleåborg) (Salmo 1934: 39; Talvio 2002: 164). A runic text on a coin from Denmark (Figure 6), dating from about the year 1065, was part of a hoard comprising about 400 coins found in a field by a farmer. Helmer Salmo (1934: 40) transcribed the text as **asurpa i lou it i (ulu?)**. The coin minter was Assur, whose nickname was *Pa* (modern *Påfågel*, 'Peacock'). The end of the text on similar coins is **i lunti**, indicating that they were struck in Lund (Moltke et al. 1982: 466–467).

The next runic coin (Figure 7) was dug up in 1925 in Masku, north of Turku (Sw. Åbo) (Sarvas 1973: 179; Talvio 2002: 170). Found in a grave together with other objects was a bracteate which was rather similar to those found in 1832. Part of the text on the coin was similar to that on

Figure 7: The Masku coin, as published in Sarvas 1973.

Figure 8: The base of the wooden cup from Åbo. On the left is the original photograph by Martti Puhakka in the book *Aarnikotka* (Kostet et al. 2004: 65). On the right, the lines have been decoded and highlighted by Anne Pöyhönen.

the three earlier bracteates; the coin thus comes from the same minting shop although part of the text is different. The coin is very corroded and the text has not been interpreted.

The most recent runic find in Finland that was described in my book was discovered in Turku in 1998 (Kostet et al. 2004: 64–65; Harjula 2008: 16–17). Before construction of the new main building for Åbo Akademi University, the site was excavated and thousands of archaeological finds were made. One wooden cup (Figure 8), probably from the fourteenth century and thus contemporary with the latest inscriptions found in Bergen, Norway, had runes at the base. The text, *Ave Maria gratia*, is familiar from many objects. Since the publication of my book, Janne Harjula has found more runic texts which are described in this collection (Palumbo & Harjula in this volume).

In addition to these objects, some amulets found in Vörå have the rune tyr (ᛏ), on their face (Figure 9), but perhaps such amulets should not be regarded as fully runic objects. The same can be said of many medieval seals and signature marks [Sw. bomärke, Fi. puumerkki] (Hausen 1900; Hildebrand 1862; Ekko 1984, Figure 10). The seals often depict a cross whose stave contains what might be identified as the branches of one or several runes. Ekko (1984: 48–49) found that over ten percent of the signature marks that he collected in certain areas of southwestern Finland had the form of a rune, perhaps the initial of the first owner of the house.

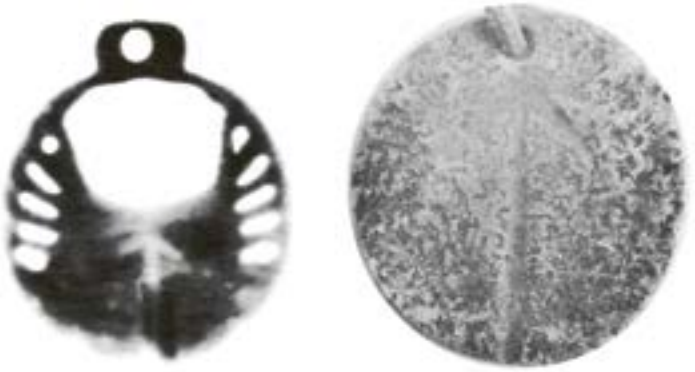

Figure 9: Two amulets found in Vörå, both depicting the rune tyr (ᛏ). The picture on the left is taken using X-ray photography.

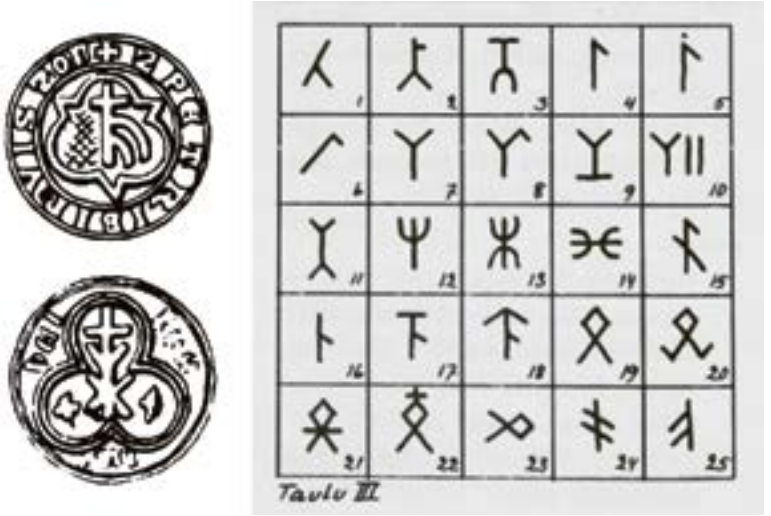

Figure 10: On the left two medieval Finnish seals, the upper one the seal of Petri Finvisson, the lower one of Matts Mattson. On the right some signature marks from Kokemäenjoki valley in southwestern Finland.

Finnish runestones

The only Finnish runestone that has an entry in the Scandinavian runic-text database is the Stora Ängesön runestone, a fragment of a stone that was found in Hitis in 1997 (Åhlen, Tuovinen & Myhrman 1997; Källström in this volume, Figure 11). The fragment was probably brought here from Sweden, perhaps as ballast in a ship. Stora Ängesön, where the stone was found, is near Kyrksundet, in the middle of an old Viking route, "det danska itinerariet", leading from Sweden to Estonia (Gallen 1993, Figure 12). The text in the fragment reads **…þorfas… …si : raþi : ma…** The full text may have been the familiar formula, 'XX made the stone in memory of Torfast. Decipher the runes who can.'

Figure 11: The Stora Ängesön (Hitis) runestone fragment.

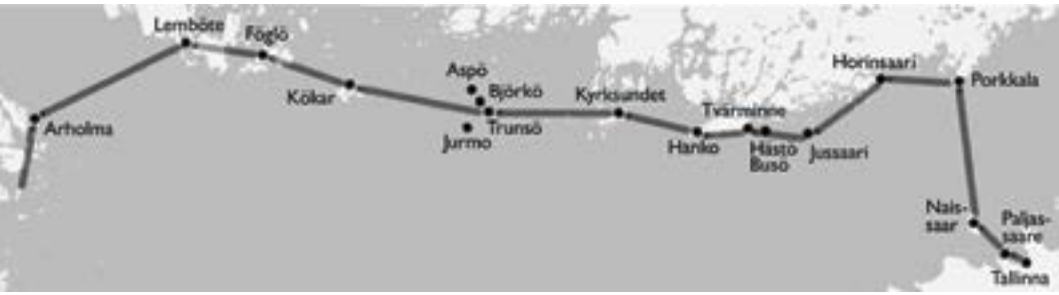

Figure 12: The old Viking route from Arholma to Tallinn. The drawing is based on the information in Fredriksson (2013).

The runic inscription on the Sund Cross in Åland was noticed by Matts Dreijer in 1950, and the same text was found in the 1960s on a cliff some kilometres west of Sund, near Kastelholm Castle (Dreijer 1964, 1968, Figures 13 and 14). According to Ivar Lindqvist, the signs read **uin°i'i ¶ lis**, perhaps Latin and meaning 'Unni (or Wenni) the Holy' (Lindqvist 1969: 43). This interpretation and even the nature of the signs have been disputed by Swedish runic experts (Sjöstrand in this volume).

Figure 13: The Sund Cross can be seen in Sund Church.

Nils Edelman from Åbo Akademi, who tried to date the Kastelholm inscription on the basis of erosion of the letters, estimated that the letters were carved sometime between 1320 and 1720 (Edelman 1968: 17). Since the cliff inscription is clearly a copy of the text on the cross, the cross is older than this. Åsa Ringbom has suggested that the cross is from the fourteenth century and was erected to commemorate the visit of Bishop Unni to Åland (Ringbom 1986: 138–139). Why someone carved a copy of the text on the Kastelholm cliff, and who this was, has not been established. But the Kastelholm inscription is very clear, and Kastelholm and Sund are worth visiting as the sites of the only fixed runic carvings in Finland today.

The runestones in Vörå, Österbotten, are also rather interesting. They caused quite a sensation in the 1970s and 1980s when they were found, one in 1978 and two more in 1982 (Norrman 1983; Willson in this volume). A fourth stone housed at Pohjanmaan museo (the Ostrobothnian Museum), which was found in several pieces during the 1980s and 1990s, did not attract as much attention as the first finds. Uno Forss claimed to have found a fifth inscription but did not reveal its location.

Figure 14: The text carved into a cliff near Kastelholm Castle.

The stones, which have rather long runic legends on their sides, were extensively studied in the 1980s (Salberger 1986a, 1986b, 2008). But sadly the inscriptions are apparently rather recent. Erik Svens, one of the finders of the stones, answered me in 2013 as follows:

> Tyvärr måste jag dock meddela att alla tre runskrifter i Vörå numera är avskrivna som förfalskningar. Forskningen kring runorna är nedlagd. På 1990-talet besöktes runorna av Nordens främsta specialister, nio till antalet. Alla var helt eniga om att runorna är relativt unga. (Erik Svens, personal communication by email on 3 November 2013.)
>
> [I am sorry to say all three runic inscriptions in Vörå are now considered to be forgeries. Research on the runes has been discontinued. During the 1990s the runes were visited by the best specialists in the Nordic countries, nine in number. They were all quite unanimous that the runes are relatively recent.]

Why are there so few runic inscriptions in Finland?

In conclusion, I offer some thoughts on the question of why there are so few runic inscriptions in Finland. The first reason must be that Finland was very sparsely populated at the beginning of the second millennium, when the majority of runestones were erected in Sweden. There was no Finnish state, no administration, and no church but only small groups of people here and there. Oskar Hultman wrote in *Finsk Tidskrift* in 1921 that runestones seem to appear in larger numbers only in those areas where prosperity was greatest and the population densest.

> Då de svenska områdena i Finland och Östersjöprovinserna i afseende å odling och folkrikhet icke voro jämförliga med mellersta Sveriges hufvudbygder, utan fastmer torde liknat de aflägsnare landskapen i Norrland […], kan man […] icke vänta att där finna många runstenar. (Hultman 1921: 43–44)

> [Because the Swedish regions in Finland and the Baltic countries, in terms of culture and population, were not comparable to the main areas of Central Sweden but rather may have been reminiscent of the more remote provinces in Norrland, one cannot expect to find many runestones there.]

Matts Dreijer wrote in *Åländsk odling* in 1945:

> Runstenar och runristningar var någonting, som sammanhängde med stormannabebyggelse och då hövdingar och hövdingars like inte byggde och bodde i en så periferisk del av riket som Åland, kom inte heller här så pass dyrbara minnesmärken att framställas som runristningarna säkerligen voro. (Dreijer 1945: 31)
>
> [Runestones and runic inscriptions were something that depended on large estates and because chieftains and their like did not build or live in such peripheral parts of the state as Åland, neither did they erect here valuable monuments such as runestones certainly were.]

The second reason seems to be that the connections from Finland in the eleventh century were not directed primarily to the west, where the runestones were carved, but to the east and to the south. The directions of the Finnish connections can be seen in the coin finds from the tenth to the twelfth centuries which Tuukka Talvio has investigated (Talvio 2002: 97, 104). There are many coins from Arabia and the Byzantine Empire, as well as Central Europe.

Only from the twelfth century did the Swedish influence start to dominate, as is documented by the missionary activities, immigration, and also the coin finds. At that time the runic tradition in Sweden was diminishing and Roman letters were gaining ground with the new religion. Only the rune staffs continued to be used in Sweden for many centuries to come, and this tradition, as I have shown here, was also adopted in Finland.

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Ulla Moilanen

The inscribed silver disc brooch from the Tuukkala cemetery in Mikkeli

Abstract

The silver disc brooch found in the Tuukkala inhumation cemetery in Mikkeli in 1886, dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century, is one of very few Late Iron Age artefacts found in Finnish territory that contain Scandinavian runic inscriptions. The inscriptions occur in two locations on the reverse of the brooch and the carvings appear to form a typical owner inscription. The text contains at least one, or probably two, proper names, and microscopic examination of the brooch indicates that the texts were probably made with different implements. Because the brooch is a stray find from a cemetery, the exact location of which was destroyed before excavation, closer examination of the individual with whom the artefact was buried is not possible. The runic inscriptions and various traces of repairs visible on the brooch, however, point to a long period of use and possible changes in the significance of the object over its lifespan.

Figure 1: A map of the locations and areas mentioned in the text.

Introduction

Only a few runic inscriptions dated with certainty to the transition between the Iron Age and the Middle Ages are known from Finland. One is on a runestone fragment found in Dragsfjärd (Stora Ängesön, Kimitoön; Källström in this volume). Tuukka Talvio (2002: 157, 164) also mentions eleventh-century Byzantine bracteate imitations with legends resembling runes from Janakkala and Masku, and a Danish penny of Svend Estridsen with a runic inscription from Kuusamo. According to Heikki Oja (2015: 75–76), Finnish finds also include a Late Iron Age amulet from Vörå decorated with a single rune (Oja 2015: 75–76). One of the few runic inscriptions, and one that is deliberately carved on an object, is on a silver disc brooch found in an early medieval inhumation cemetery in Tuukkala in Mikkeli (Figure 1).

The Tuukkala cemetery was discovered in 1886 in conjunction with the leveling of an army training ground during which several graves were destroyed. In the same year, Johan Reinhold Aspelin excavated

32 graves at the site, of which six were cremations and the rest inhumations. Archaeological investigations were conducted at Tuukkala in 1933 and 1934 as well but the number of graves found at that time is not clear (Mikkola 2009: 179; Moilanen 2017: 170). In 1938 two additional graves with artefacts were revealed, but excavations were conducted for the next time only in 2009. The graves that have been investigated include both adults' and children's graves. Both biological sexes are represented. Some of the graves were furnished with grave goods while others were entirely devoid of artefacts (Mikkola 2009). On the basis of the artefact finds and carbon dating, it appears that the burial ground was in use from the twelfth through the fourteenth century (Mikkola 2009: 184).

This dates the cemetery to the cusp of the Iron Age and Middle Ages according to standard periodisation in Finnish archaeology. Finnish chronology places the Viking Age between AD 800/825 and 1050 in western Finland and between AD 800/825 and 1050/1100 in eastern Finland and Karelia. The Crusade period, which dates from AD 1050–1150 in western Finland and AD 1050–1300 in eastern Finland and Karelia (Raninen & Wessman 2015: 216), is the last period that is still considered Late Iron Age. It marks the transition from the Iron Age to the Medieval Period and could also be classified as Early Medieval based on the chronology in the surrounding areas.

Because of the artefact finds, the Tuukkala cemetery is regarded as one of the richest burial sites in eastern Finland. The artefacts indicate contacts with both Karelia and places further east and with Sweden and Gotland in the west (Raninen & Wessman 2015: 356–357). An example of the latter is the silver disc brooch from the cemetery, which according to several researchers was produced in Gotland or continental Sweden (Nordman 1924: 67–68; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1984: 384; Uino 1997: 359). One factor pointing to Gotland is the fact that corresponding brooches in Swedish silver hoards often occur together with Gotlandic coins (Myrberg 2015: 163). Russia has been regarded as another possible place of production on the basis of the stylistic factors of some brooches (Uino 2003: 393; Saksa 1998: 37–38); there, in turn,

Figure 2: The silver disc brooch from Tuukkala in Mikkeli.

such finds have been seen as showing Byzantine influence (Nordman 1924: 16–17). In Finland, silver disc brooches have been found primarily in Häme and Savo (Figure 1). They are also known from Karelia, Russia, Scandinavia, Estonia, and Germany (Kivikoski 1951: 30; Kivikoski 1973: 134; Uino 1997: 359; Uino 2003: 393; Saksa 1998: 37).

The silver disc brooch with the runic inscription found in Tuukkala is one of the finds from 1886 and may have come from one of the graves that was destroyed before Aspelin's excavations. The inscription on the reverse side of the brooch is located in a place which had previously held a pin catch or an attachment loop for a pin. The front of the brooch is decorated with botanical ornamentation which surrounds a small cross in the centre (Figure 2).

On the basis of grave finds, silver disc brooches have been regarded as feminine artefact types. Their placement in graves suggests that they may have been used to attach women's shirts or underdresses at the collar. Sometimes these artefacts may also have been used as pendants, as indicated by a small loop on some brooches. The loop may, however, have been useful on brooches as well, as some finds still had a chain attached (e.g. Myrberg 2015: 164). Pendants or ear spoons that were typical of the clothing of eastern Finland and Karelia at the time could

in turn be attached to the chain (e.g. Kivikoski 1951: 38). The Tuukkala brooch was already broken when it was put in the grave and no longer had a pin catch. Thus it may have been used as a pendant at least in its final period of use. In the literature, artefacts of this type are variously referred to as brooches and pendants (e.g. Saksa 1998: 37; Sarvas 1979: 38).

The inscriptions on the Tuukkala brooch and their interpretation

The runic inscriptions on the artefact occur in two separate groups (Figure 3). One of these comprises an inscription which both Freudenthal (1893: 2) and Nordman (1924: 67) interpreted as the feminine name ᛒᛟᛏᚢᛁ **botui** 'Botvi'. Nordman, following Ailio's (1922: 25) report on a reading provided for him by O. F. Hultman, read the longer text as ᛁᚢᛁᚾᛘᛁᚴ **-iuiamik**, which he interpreted as the words '**-iui** owns me'. If the sequence **-iui** is interpreted as *heui*, it might denote the personal name *Hegvi* or *Hägvi*, normalised Runic Swedish *Hægvī* (Peterson 2007: 126). Freudenthal (1893: 2) tentatively read the damaged first rune as **ḥ**, a reading affirmed by Salberger and Gustavson (1987: 39). Freudenthal interpreted the name as *Hivi*, based on the similar female

Figure 3: The runic inscriptions and scratches on the Tuukkala brooch.

names *Arnvi* (normalised *Ar(i)n/Ær(i)nvī*, Peterson 2007: 24), *Fastvi* (*Fastvī*, Peterson 2007: 60), *Halvi* (not listed in Peterson 2007), *Ketilvi* (*Kætilvī*, Peterson 2007: 154, 156), and *Ragnvi* (*Ragnvī*, Peterson 2007: 179–180). He did not discuss the etymology of the stem *hi-*. Salberger and Gustavson (1987: 39) observed that the second rune is dotted and therefore read **ẖeui**. According to Nordman, in view of the typology of the runes used on the Tuukkala brooch, the text belongs to the Swedish tradition of around the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Silver disc brooches decorated with botanical ornamentation, crosses, and images of saints are, however, dated by Nordman (1924: 57–59) to the thirteenth century. Other artefact finds from the cemetery have been typologically dated primarily to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but radiocarbon dating of graves investigated in 2009 suggests the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which may imply exceptionally long periods of use for at least some of the artefacts found in the cemetery (Mikkola 2009: 184).

Both of the proper names on the Tuukkala brooch are primarily indicative of Gotland. The similar-sounding masculine name *Hegvin* appears on a Viking Age bone comb found in Aarhus, Denmark (DR EM85;361/DK MJy 80), but the name *Hägvi* was also in use in Gotland, where it appears on a thirteenth-century limestone grave slab from Näs Church (Bergman 1998: 54). The form in this inscription (G 33) is **hehuiþa** (gen.) and the Scandinavian runic-text database (Sw. Samnordisk runtextdatabas) treats it instead as a form of the masculine name *Hægviðr*, which is also found in another Gotlandic inscription, G 165 (Klinte Church), in the form **hehuiþar** (gen.) (Jansson, Wessén & Svärdström 1978: 73–75; cf. *Hægvidh*, SMP 3: 516). *Bōtvī*, in turn, appears on Gotlandic runestones such as G 42 Havdhems Church and G 81b Linde Church[1] (Nordman 1924: 69; Salberger & Gustavson 1987: 39–40), and there is in addition an animal-head brooch from Gotland dated to the twelfth century (G 58, Hemse parish) that bears the runic inscription **botui a kik argais sigtiir** which may be interpreted as *Botvi á mik Arngeirs. Sigtýr* 'Botvi from Arges' (farm) owns me(?). Sigtir' (cf. Jansson & Wessén 1962: 75), with **kik** a miscarving

for *mik* 'me' (Jansson & Wessén 1962: 75). The sequence **argais** would reflect the genitive form of the masculine personal name *Arn-gæiʀʀ*, cf. Old Swedish *Arngér* or *Angēr*, which survives in the farm name *Arges* in the parish where the inscription was found (Jansson & Wessén 1962: 76). The word order is, however, somewhat strange. Pipping (1900: 51–54) interpreted the inscription as containing a double expression of the nominative form of the first person pronoun *ek* 'I'. He viewed the final sequence **sigtiir** as a masculine personal name *Sigtir* (not listed in Peterson 2007), perhaps the name of the rune carver: *Bótuí ák ek Argaiss Sigtír* 'I Botvi from Argais own (this brooch); Sigtir (carved the runes)' (Pipping 1900: 53; cf. Jansson & Wessén 1962: 76). The established history of the use of the names and the form of the text on the aforementioned Gotlandic brooch lead one to wonder whether **ẖeui** *Hägvi* on the Tuukkala brooch might be a farm name rather than a given name. Microscopic examination, however, does not support the hypothesis that the two names were carved at the same time. If the construction paralleled that on G 58, one would also expect a genitive form of the farm name.

Microscopic examination shows that the texts on the Tuukkala brooch were made with very thin and sharp points or needles. Two different tools may have been used as the *Botvi* text is composed of slightly broader scratches than the longer text. Another notable feature of the artefact is the clear indication of repair. The original pin either broke or was deliberately removed, at which time the silver plate was scraped off and a new pin catch and pin were attached to the brooch. In conjunction with the scraping, part of the lettering was destroyed, as indicated by the fragmentary name **ẖeui** preceding the words 'owns me'. On the basis of such details of the repairs and the creation of the text, the following stages can be distinguished in the lifespan of the artefact:

1. Production of the artefact and carving of the first text 'Hägvi owns me'.
2. Scraping of silver from the surface and attachment of a new pin; text **ẖeui** partly destroyed.

3. Writing of the name *Botvi* (may also have happened following phase 1).
4. Total removal of the pin and possible change in mode of use from a brooch to a pendant.

Also pertinent to the life stages of the brooch is the journey from Gotland to eastern Finland, where it finally ends up in the cemetery in Tuukkala, as well as its discovery in 1886. The final stages of the artefact's life cycle are represented by its inclusion in an archaeological collection, its display, and the research it inspires.

Understanding of the text and the users of the brooch

Proper names written with runes are comparatively common finds on artefacts, and runic inscriptions carved on artefacts are usually hidden on the back (Hines 1998: 188). Names may, however, be interpreted in different ways. They may indicate the brooch's owner, maker, dedication, gift, inheritance, or the name of the artefact itself (Looijenga 2003: 29). An indication of an ownership relationship is the text 'owns me' appearing on the Tuukkala brooch, which identifies the brooch with the person who owned it. The text is connected with the name *Hägvi* so it would be justified to assume one of the first owners of the brooch bore this name.

Texts that express ownership are common in artefacts with runic inscriptions. Because the Tuukkala brooch contains two different names, it may have had at least two different owners. The visible alterations and partly destroyed inscription suggest that *Hägvi* probably represents an older inscription and possibly an earlier owner than *Botvi*. The change of ownership could have occurred in different ways: by trade, inheritance, gift, or reward. For example, according to Klavs Randsborg (1980: 126), both weapons and personal items, such as jewellery, may have been transferred as inheritance during the Viking Age. Artefacts in inhumation graves that are older in their time of produc-

tion and use may point to the same thing. Older artefacts have also been found in Iron Age graves in Finland, although they are, with a few exceptions, primarily weapons or Stone Age artefacts, of which at least the latter could not have been transferred directly from one generation to the next (Wessman 2009: 100). On the other hand, the aforementioned datings from the Tuukkala cemetery suggest that objects in the area may have remained in use for a long time (Mikkola 2009: 184).

As noted above, silver disc brooches in Finland and Karelia are most often – although not exclusively – found in female graves. In Sweden, on the other hand, corresponding finds come primarily from hoards (Myrberg 2015: 167). On the basis of the grave finds, the artefact type has been regarded as feminine. The names on the Tuukkala brooch are also more suggestive of women than men. Pieces of jewellery may have been typical items passed down from mothers to daughters as heirlooms during the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages (Thedéen 2009: 90), and Ailio (1922: 26) has suggested that the two names on the Tuukkala brooch might represent a mother and daughter. According to common law practice in Karelia in later historical times, which probably reflects a long tradition, girls received a small inheritance as part of their future dowry (Ojala 2013: 53).

On the other hand, the customs and reasons for inheritance may have varied. The chronicler Ahmad ibn Fadlan wrote in the 920s about northern boat funeral rituals in his description of travel to Volga Bulgaria and his account presents an example of the distribution of inheritance from an almost contemporary source. In his depiction, the chieftain is cremated in a boat and human sacrifice of a slave girl forms part of the funerary ritual. The sacrifice is preceded by the distribution of jewellery, primarily to those who conduct the ritual rather than to relatives and close associates of the deceased (Fadlan 2017: 80). Objects could also be taken from older graves for reuse (Wessman 2009: 80). Old objects could thus be related to broader social memory rather than to personal inheritance, which would thus have had collective meaning in maintaining many forms of social relations to ancestors and to the past (see also Moilanen 2021; Wessman 2009). The names engraved on

the Tuukkala brooch thus do not necessarily indicate biological kinship between the named individuals.

Runic inscriptions on artefacts can also be interpreted in other ways. The object itself may have been personified with its own name or that of its maker and it may have had agency (Burström 2015: 4). The decoration on the Tuukkala brooch and the possible change in its use may have indicated a change in the meaning of the object. The second name carved on the brooch could also refer to the person who repaired or altered the object, as in the case of the brooch from Harford Farm in England (Bammesberger 2003: 133–134). The personal name *Luda* on the Harford Farm brooch is followed by the verb **gibcētæ**, which has been interpreted by Bammesberger (2003: 134) as the present subjunctive 3rd person form of *gibcētan* (later *gibētan*) 'repair; make amends'; Bammesberger (2003: 134–135) suggests that the text could be translated as 'may Luda make amends by means of the brooch'.

The Tuukkala brooch may also have passed from one person to another as part of trade or as a gift. These could be closely connected at the end of the Iron Age, since giving gifts may have been a significant part of the creation and maintenance of alliances and trade relations (Gustin 2004: 240–242).

Ailio (1922: 26) flatly denied the possibility of the brooch being a trade item and instead proposed a rather romantic idea involving stolen silver items or even a bride who was eventually buried in Tuukkala. Nordman (1924: 66–68) suggested that a Gotlandic woman could have been buried in Tuukkala if she had crossed the Baltic Sea in connection with marriage. The original context for the brooch is not known and nor can the artefact be identified with any specific grave. It is thus not possible to conduct more precise scientific tests on the corpse buried with the brooch. If the bones had been available for study, it would have been possible to determine the buried individual's biological sex as well as to study the individual's geographical origin and biological kinship relations with the help of ancient DNA and stable isotope analysis. As it is, various scenarios for the possible final user of the brooch remain speculative.

In Anglo-Saxon England as well, artefacts with runes have been found in grave contexts (Hines 1998: 186). The unifying feature of these graves, however, is not the sex of the corpse but the fact that the artefacts were generally imported and thus possibly used by the portion of the population that could afford prestige objects. Silver already formed the basis of the Scandinavian economy by the Viking Age and therefore objects made from this material may have been important simply because of the raw material (Graham-Campbell 2007: 216). The runic inscription on the Tuukkala broach, which probably could not be read by people in the environment of eastern Finland, presumably did not increase the material value of the object. The marks may, however, have made the object distinctive in comparison with similar finds, for which reason the object may have had special significance and power as a grave good.

Although the brooch's date of production and use can be seen as a period of fairly broad mobility, and the movement of single individuals cannot be ruled out, trade is nonetheless a very likely reason for the object ending up in eastern Finland. The finds from the Tuukkala cemetery include other materials that point to broad contacts and trade networks. For instance, the textile fragments from the cemetery include striped fabric which, as indicated by the colour and structure, was imported. The dyes for the red and white stripes on the textiles come from plants that do not grow in Finland. The fabric also has direct analogues in fourteenth-century England and Novgorod (Vajanto 2015: 42, 51; Vajanto & van Bommel 2014: 64).

Earlier research on silver disc brooches has also considered whether the brooches belonged to Christian culture and whether such brooches in eastern Finnish graves represent a population that had accepted Christianity. According to Andreas Koivisto (2006: 174), these brooches do not provide information about the beliefs of the users in eastern Finland as they would in the area where they were produced. This may be influenced by the view that furnished graves do not indicate the complete acceptance of Christianity (Purhonen 1997: 373). Myrberg, on the other hand, has regarded the silver disc brooches as purely Christian (2015: 169).

Summary

Although it is impossible to conduct more precise scientific investigation into those who owned and used the Tuukkala brooch at different times, the artefact is interesting even as a stray find. The runic inscriptions on the brooch, as well as microscopic investigation of the visible traces of repairs on the object, indicate that the letters of the two bands of runes were made with different implements and probably at different times. The alterations help to identify several different stages in the object's history of use and make it possible to contemplate the social significance of the object. The alterations and carvings on the brooch may relate to changes in ownership and thus point to possible changes in the meaning of the object as well over the course of its lifetime.

Translation Kendra Willson

Endnotes

1 The latter has also been read as **butnią**, the genitive form of an otherwise unknown feminine name **Botny* or **Butny* (Jansson & Wessén 1962: 122).

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Magnus Källström

Who carved the runestone from Hitis?

Abstract

In 1997 the first almost certainly genuine Viking Age runestone from Finland was discovered in the sea surrounding the island Store Ängesön in Hitis parish in the Turku archipelago. Only a small part of the inscription was preserved: the masculine name *Þōrfastr* and the words *Rāði ma[ðr]*(?) probably 'may the man(?) read …'. The stone is red sandstone and parts of the incisions are executed in bas-relief.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the authenticity of this inscription and try to determine the origin of the stone and the craftsman behind it. Even if some details remain suspect, most of the evidence speaks in favour of a genuine runestone fragment from the late Viking Age. Many features of the inscription are also found on runestones in the Mälar region; several of them occur in a restricted area in west Uppland, where the rune carver Balle was the most prominent master at the time. It is therefore suggested that he might also be responsible for the runestone from Hitis.

Figure 1: Drawing of the fragment from Stora Ängesön in Hitis parish which appeared in one of the first publications of the find.

Introduction

In August 1997, a remarkable find was made in the parish of Hitis (Fi. Hiittinen) in the Turku archipelago. When Jan Wiik, owner of a summer house in Stora Ängesön, attempted to remove a stone protruding from the bottom of the sea next to his dock at a depth of half a metre, he retrieved a large piece of red sandstone which turned out to be inscribed with runes (Figure 1). Wiik contacted the lecturer Hans Myhrman, director of the Association of Amateur Archaeologists in Dragsfjärd, who in turn informed the project researcher Tapani Tuovinen of Åbo Akademi University of the find.

In order to determine whether the find was a genuine runestone, Tuovinen and Myhrman contacted Marit Åhlén of Runverket, the runic unit of the Swedish National Board of Antiquities. In November of the same year she inspected the stone in Turku and determined that it was authentic. Together they published several articles on the find in quick succession (Åhlén, Tuovinen & Myhrman 1997; 1998a; 1998b); it was also described in other contexts (e.g. Erlin 1997).[1]

Since then there has been general silence about the runestone fragment from Hitis, at least in Swedish. The silence was broken in 2008 by a posthumously published article by the runologist Evert Salberger (who had passed away the same year), which he must have written many

Figure 2: The fragment from Stora Ängesön in Hitis parish.

years earlier.[2] Heikki Oja's book *Riimut: Viestejä viikingeiltä* devotes a rather short chapter to the stone (2015: 213–214). On reviewing what has been written about the Hitis fragment, the state of research seems to be generally unchanged from when the stone was discovered more than twenty-five years ago.

Previous readings and interpretations

The fragment appears to comprise the upper right corner of a runestone. The inscription is partly carved in relief (Figure 2) and the stone has been determined to be Jotnian sandstone, which is found in scattered areas in both Finland and Sweden.[3] The inscription is presented in Åhlén, Tuovinen & Myhrman (1998b) as follows:

Outer band: ᛋᛁ : ᚱᚾᚦᛁ : ᛘᚾ | Inner band: ᛫ · ᚦᚼᚱᚠᚾᛋ
Normalisation: **…si : raþi : ma…** | **…- · þorfas…**
Interpretation: … *si. Raði ma(ðr?) … Þorfas(t)* …
Translation: … Råde/tyde den man(?) … Torfast …
[… Let that man(?) interpret … Torfast …]

The reading seems to present no difficulties apart from the unidentified rune in the inner loop, which receives the following comment:

> Av den inre radens första runa syns bara rester just i brottkanten. Det är sannolikt inte en **i**-runa eftersom linjen inte är helt rak. Snarare rör det sig om bistaven till en **r**-runa. (Åhlén, Tuovinen & Myhrman 1998b: 18–19)
>
> [Only fragments of the first rune in the inner row are visible right at the broken edge. It is probably not an **i**-rune as the line is not entirely straight. It is more likely to be the branch of an **r**-rune.]

Regarding the incomplete rune sequence **mᛅ…** in the outer row, Åhlén, Tuovinen and Myhrman (1998b: 19) suggest that this could be the beginning of the word *maðr*. In this case the closest parallel to this part of the inscription is found on the Ågersta stone (U 729) in Löt parish in Uppland: *Rāði drængʀ þaʀ rynn sē…* 'May the young man who is wise in runes interpret...'. They also maintain (1998b: 19) that the name *Þōrfastr* is a relatively well-attested East Norse name known from 17 Viking Age runic inscriptions.

In the posthumously published article from 2008, Evert Salberger makes some additional contributions to the interpretation of the inscription. He interprets the damaged rune that starts the inner row, previously assumed to be an **r**-rune, as the final rune of the preposition *æftiʀ* 'in memory of', which means that *Þōrfastr* would be the name of the person to whom the stone was dedicated (2008: 174). He also discusses the geographical distribution of this name in runic inscriptions (2008: 175–176), determining that it is centralised in Uppland and Södermanland, with seven and five attestations respectively. The stem *-fastr* is in general very common in Uppland. Salberger also points out that the name survives into the Middle Ages and that at that time it occurs most frequently in Uppland, but that it was also in use in other provinces, including Finland. He further cites a study by Carl-Erik Thors (1959: 92), who maintains that in Sweden the name was primarily found in Uppland and spread from there to Norrland and Finland. According to Salberger (2008: 176), the name on the runestone from Hitis would "med all sannolikhet ha kommit samma väg – från

Uppland till Finland" [in all probability have come the same way – from Uppland to Finland].

The find location is on the west side of Stora Ängesön, next to a bay that during the Viking Age would have been a strait. Nothing is known about the origin of the fragment; Åhlén, Tuovinen and Myhrman (1998b: 19–20) offer several alternatives as to how it could have ended up in the water around this island:

> Eftersom fragmentet är så pass litet kan det ha transporterats dit antingen ombord på någon båt som sjunkit eller som en av stenarna i ett lass på en släde som gått genom isen. Var en sådan sjö- eller istransport startat går inte att fastställa. Möjligt är givetvis också att runstenen stått rest på Stora Ängesön och rasat ut i vattnet nedför den förhållandevis branta strandsluttningen. Endast om ytterligare en eller flera delar av den ristade stenen hittas kommer ursprung[s]platsen att närmare kunna lokaliseras. (Åhlén, Tuovinen & Myhrman 1998b: 19–20)

> [Since the fragment is relatively small, it could have been transported there either on board a boat that sank or as one of the stones in a load on a sled that went through the ice. Where such sea or ice transport would have begun cannot be determined. It is of course also possible that the runestone was raised in Stora Ängesön and fell into the water from the relatively steep bank. Only if one or more additional pieces of the carved stone are found will it be possible to localise the place of origin more precisely.]

There are apparently no signs of Viking Age settlement in Stora Ängesön but the island is located not far from Kyrksundet, where in 1992–1995 the remains of a Viking Age trading place were investigated (see Edgren 1995). There are also remains of a medieval chapel in Kyrksundet. The place has been identified as Örsund, which is mentioned in the famous medieval itinerary in King Valdemar's land registry. It is hardly remarkable that a runestone fragment would show up in the vicinity of this place, which large numbers of Scandinavians must have passed on their way east during both the Viking Age and the Middle Ages.

A Finnish runestone?

No certain examples of runestones in Finland had previously been discovered. In his notebook *Sumlen* (F.a. 12 fol. 231; p. 177 in the printed version), Johannes Bureus, in a list of a few purported runestones in the northernmost part of Sweden, also includes the note "I Åbo kyrkia och en" [also one in Åbo Church], but the basis for this note is unknown and it seems to be impossible to confirm independently. It may refer to a medieval gravestone with an inscription in the Roman alphabet.

A report from 1667 for the so-called *Rannsakningarna efter antikviteter* [Investigations of antiquities] (published in *Rannsakn*. 1:1, pp. 281–282) also mentioned that there were two runestones in Karlby in Kökar parish in Åland: "Widh ett träsk, Calby Opsiöö benembdt, säija Kökarsboar wara twenne Runestenar" [the Kökar residents say that there are two runestones in a bog called Calby Opsiöö]. One of them, said to have earlier been regarded as sufficiently valuable to be covered with birch bark for its protection, was now worn and covered with lichen "så att någon neppeligen meer kan förstå sigh på hwadh samma Skrifft haar innebära, oansedt några Ristor ännu synas kunne" [so that one can hardly understand any more what the inscription contains, even though a few grooves are still visible]. The other runestone would have been located north of the lake "Men vthi siölfwa watnet, och så diupt, att the inth*et* wetta hwar han ther skall finnas" [but out in the water itself and so deep that nothing is known about where it is to be found]. It is subsequently reported that both runestones were carved by "en Runokarl" [a sorcerer] in order to bind a troll who lurked in the lake, a notion that is clearly closely connected to the very widespread legend of Ketill Runske (cf. Enqvist 1938: 162–163; Svennung 1943). Whether there actually were any runestones in this place is quite doubtful considering the nature of the description. They are, however, mentioned in another undated report from Kökar parish.[4]

The so-called Vörå runes in Ostrobothnia are, as is well known, much disputed and their appearance does not suggest runic inscrip-

tions of any great age. (On these inscriptions see Edlund 1983 and other contributions in *Oknytt* 1983: 11–25, see also Willson in this volume.)

The fragment from Stora Ängesön is the first instance of something that seems to be a piece of a genuine Viking Age runestone being found in Finland, which raises the question of who could be responsible for this carving. Primarily, of course, we instinctively turn our attention west toward Sweden, regardless of whether we should assume that the stone was originally raised in Stora Ängesön or found its way there by other means.

New examination of the stone

In order to be able to make any definite statement about this it was of course first necessary to examine the original stone. I had the opportunity to do this on April 5, 2016, at the National Board of Antiquities (since 2018 Finnish Heritage Agency) in Helsinki where the fragment is currently stored (NP Inv. No. 30661). I had previously been acquainted with the find from photographs and the drawing that had been made in connection with the first publication, and I will not deny that I had some doubts about the authenticity of the inscription. The arrangement of the runic band seemed strange and the occurrence of relief carving in Viking Age runestones is very rare apart from late Viking Age grave monuments. There was, in addition, the resemblance to the Ågersta stone's famous challenge to the reader to interpret the runes. Could it perhaps be a skilled runestone imitation carried out in relatively modern times as an experiment or possibly a joke? I also wondered whether the stone could have been created as a fragment from the start and thus never constituted part of a larger entity.

I was not entirely disabused of these doubts when I first encountered the stone in the examination room of the National Board of Antiquities. Admittedly, the carving shows none of the characteristics that often occur in late runic inscriptions – uncertain carving technique or rune forms influenced by stylised printed rune rows – but still something distinguished this stone from the runestones I had previously

examined. Perhaps it was the broad carved lines that caught my attention, or the surface carved in relief, which seemed to be incomplete. At the same time, the stone had lain under water (and furthermore in sea water) for an unknown length of time, and I know of no Viking Age runestone made of sandstone found in a similar environment to which it could be compared.

The fragment measures 27 × 27 cm and is 15–16 cm thick. The runes, which are fairly close to one another, are between 5 and 7 cm high. The inscription is deeply carved with relatively broad (6–10 mm) and weathered carving lines. Certain details, however, are shallower, such as the eye of the rune animal and the remains of the rune that begins the inner rune row. The latter is notable because it appears to be shallower closest to the broken edge, which would indicate that the fracture existed before the stone was carved, and in that case suggest that the stone was prepared as a fragment. Other lines, however, extend to the edge. This applies both to carving lines directed toward an original edge and those that end on broken surfaces. It is also notable that there is no uniform depth for the part carved in relief but there is a shallower part in the upper left, as if this part of the carving was not fully completed.

The runes consistently belong to the long-branch variant of the Viking Age rune row. The **ᛆ** and **ᚿ**-runes have branches that extend on both sides of the vertical stroke. The **ᚮ**-rune also has transverse branches but belongs to a less common type in which the crossing branches slant downward to the left (ᚯ). The **ᛋ**-rune appears in both normal and reversed form. The word dividers include both a single dot (·) and two dots placed as a colon (:). One particular characteristic that I noted was that the dots in these dividing marks were not round but oval.

The inscription is, as noted, very clear and there is no doubt about the reading of the individual runic characters. Some details, however, warrant further comment. It is unclear how to interpret the carvings on the neck of the rune animal. According to Åhlén, Tuovinen and Myhrman (1988b: 18), the ornamentation on the stone consists of "ett rundjurshuvud med ett ovalt öga samt en grop och tre parallella streck på

halsen" [a rune animal head with one oval eye as well as a hollow and three parallel lines on the neck]. The aforementioned "hollow" occurs first and measures 13 × 22 mm. It is clearly carved and should thus be interpreted as an introductory division mark. However, it is not easy to understand the function of the following three parallel lines. There are two examples in the older runic material of three vertical lines surrounded by dots being used to indicate the beginning of an inscription, but both of these have significantly earlier datings. One is on the Forsa ring from Hälsingland (Hs 7), where the inscription is preceded by three vertical strokes surrounded by three vertically placed dots (⁝|||⁝). A nearly identical figure introduces the upper row of a bronze amulet inscribed with runes from Hovgården on Adelsö (NOR1994;26A) and may have a similar function. The Forsa ring should probably be dated to the early tenth century (Källström 2010) while the dating of the Hovgård amulet is less certain. The occurrence of rune forms based on the elder futhark suggests that it belongs to the early Viking Age.

No corresponding markers are known from eleventh-century runestones; there are many examples of inscriptions which begin with interpuncts that have deviant forms but those cases usually take the form of a cross or x (see e.g. Källström 1999: 30). It is thus most likely that the three lines on the stone from Hitis are to be understood differently. Åhlén, Tuovinen and Myhrman (1998b: 18) point out that "[e]n slinglinje passerar ovanför och nedanför halsen" [one line of the loop passes over and under the neck]. The question is whether the first two lines should instead be interpreted as the contours of a line of ornament which crosses the neck of the rune animal.[5] The interlacing around the neck of the rune animal thus becomes clearer and the third vertical line may comprise the first rune of the inscription and be read as **i**. This interpretation is supported by the fact that there is no regular spacing between the three lines. The first two are 10–12 mm apart while there are 15–18 mm between the second and the third. The third is also more deeply carved and leans slightly to the left. It should probably be interpreted as an **i**-rune but as the spacing between the main staff and the broken edge is only 3–10 mm, we cannot discount the possibil-

ity that an additional branch started from the framing line. In that case we should assume the alternatives to be **u**, **r** or **l**.

Åhlén, Tuovinen and Myhrman (1998b: 18–19) interpret the first rune in the inner row as a possible branch of an **r**-rune. This reading was supported by Salberger (2008: 174) and everything suggests it to be correct. While the lower part of the cross-stroke is carved deeply, it is worth noting that the upper, arched part near the broken edge is faint. A small part of the surface is missing after the **s**-rune in the following word **þorfas**.

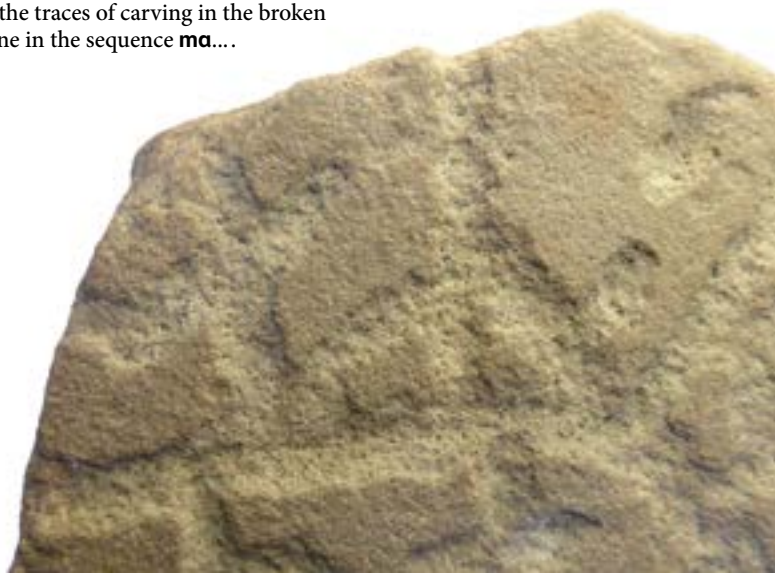
The outer row contains the only complete word in the inscription, **raþi**, which was first interpreted by Åhlén, Tuovinen and Myhrman (1998b: 19) as *rāði*, i.e. present subjunctive 3rd person singular form of the verb *rāða* 'read, interpret'. A possibility that seems not to have been considered is a form of the masculine name *Hraði*, originally a hypocoristic or byname formed from the adjective *hraðr* 'swift' (Lind col. 564), which is known, inter alia, from two Danish runic inscriptions (nom. **ṛaþi** DR 263 and acc. **raþa** DR 77). The name has analogues in Old Danish *Rathi* (DGP 1 col. 1136) and Old West Norse *Hraði* (Lind col. 564) but is not attested in Old Swedish (SMPs). The representation of original *Hr-* only by **r** is unproblematic as usage was clearly variable in the Mälar region during the eleventh century (see Peterson 2012: 33).

Even if we cannot discount the possibility of **raþi** representing this name, it is much more natural, along with previous researchers, to consider the subjunctive form of the verb *rāða*. Strong support is found, as noted above, in the inscription on the well-known Ågersta stone (U 729, Fig. 3), which ends with the words **raþi · tekr · þaʀ · ryn si · runum · þim sum · bali · risti ·**. Sven B. F. Jansson (UR 3: 261) interprets this in the following way:

> *Raði drængʀ þaʀ rynn se*
> *runum þæim, sum Balli risti.*
> 'Råde den man, som runvis är
> de runorna, som Balle ristade.'
> [Let the man who is wise in runes interpret the runes that Balle carved.]

Figure 3: Runestone U 729 Ågersta, Löt parish, Uppland.

Figure 4: Detail of the traces of carving in the broken edge after the **ɑ**-rune in the sequence **mɑ**….



Here the sequence **tekr** is interpreted in line with a suggestion by Otto von Friesen (1913: 60) as a miscarving for **trekr** *drængʀ* m. '(young) man', with an omitted **r**-rune.

As mentioned above, Åhlén, Tuovinen and Myhrman suggested not only that the runes **ma…** on the Hitis stone may be a remnant of the word *maðr* m. 'man' but that the inscription may have contained an expression similar to the one on the Ågersta stone. Salberger (2008: 179–180) has furthermore argued, with reference to other runic inscriptions in which the verb form *rāði* occurs, that this part of the inscription may originally have been formulated in verse.

One feature that does not seem to have attracted previous attention is that after the runic sequence **ma…**, right on the broken edge is a clearly carved section measuring 8 × 7 mm (Figure 4). The traces of carving reach the same height as the right tip of the branch of the **a**-rune and partially converge with it. Because the runes are in general relatively close together, it is possible that these comprise the remains of an additional rune, in that case most likely the tip of a branch of ᚾ **n** or ᚼ **h**. It is thus possible that the sequence originally read **maṇ…** or **maḥ…** . This does not, however, mean that the previously proposed interpretation should be rejected. The form *maðr* is a further development of *mannr*, *mandr* (< Runic Swedish **mannʀ* < Proto-Norse **mannaʀ*) and both variants were evidently in use in the East Norse area during the eleventh century (see further Lerche Nielsen 1998: 167–171). In the Mälar area, for instance, in addition to **farmaþr** *Farmaðr* Sö 229 and **sturimaþr** *stýrimaðr* m. 'helmsman' U 1016, we also find spellings such as **mantr** *mandr* m. 'man' U 703, **knauþimanr** *Gnauðimannr* Sö 46 and **kigumantr** (partially uninterpreted masculine name ending in *-mandr*) U 720.

At the same time, the alternative interpretation of **tekr** on the Ågersta stone should also be mentioned. Evert Salberger (2003: 681–686) suggested that this could correspond to the adjective ON *tækr*, OSw *tøker*, to which, on the basis of later dialect material, he attributes such meanings as 'bold', 'clever' or 'inventive' (p. 686). The suggestion has been supported by Henrik Williams (2010: 33–37) among

others, and has the obvious advantage of not assuming any miscarving. Rather, Salberger (2003: 680–681) suggests that the **e**-rune reflects a delabialised form of (long) *ø*. He presents several examples of such spellings from Upplandic runic inscriptions, although these are not from Balle's corpus.[6] Balle tends regularly to use the dotted **ẏ**-rune for /ø:/ (**bryþr** *brøðr* Sö 203, U 749; **fyra** *føra* U 735). This argument against the revised interpretation does not seem to have been noted. Since there are known examples in which Balle accidentally omitted an **r**-rune in a similar environment – in the nearby inscription U 721 in Löt Church, for example, are found both **hulmfiþaʀ** for *Holmfrīðaʀ* and **boþur** for *brōður* – perhaps we should not entirely discount the possibility that **tekr** is in fact a miscarving for **trekr** *drængʀ*, as has previously been assumed.

There has been no previous discussion of the two runes **…si** that precede the word **raþi** on the Hitis fragment. It is of course impossible to specify the word to which they would have belonged. Considering that the lexical material on runestones is in general very stereotypical and limited, however, it is most obvious to consider the demonstrative pronoun *sā*(*ʀ*)*si*, several forms of which end in *-si* (see Peterson 2006: [63–65] s.v. *sā*(*ʀ*)*si*). In addition to the basic form m. sg. nom., this ending is very frequent in m. sg. acc., which can inter alia take the form *þannsi*, *þennsi* and also f. sg. acc. *þāsi*. In the plural, *-si* is found (at least as an alternative form) in the accusative form of all three genders. As the pronoun is usually postposed, it is not problematic to imagine a phrase in which the last word comprised such a pronoun. Examples of such phrases include **auk : karþi : bru : þesi** *ok gærði brō þessi* 'and made this bridge' (Vg 182) and **irnfastr : iuk : runaʀ : þasi :** *Ærnfastr hiogg rūnaʀ þāsi* 'Ärnfast carved these runes' (U 43). Since the following words look like the start of a challenge to the reader to interpret the inscription, the most probable option may be the end of a carver signature. One can compare the end of the Skillsta stone U 887: *Sialfʀ hiogg Aurīkʀ/Øyrīkʀ æftiʀ sinn faður rūniʀ þessa. Rāði sā kunni.* 'Örik himself carved these runes in memory of his father. Let the one who knows how to do so interpret them.'

One matter that has not been directly discussed is the order in which the inscription should be read. Previous publications presented the two parts of the text separately, beginning with the outer loop. This order has been preserved in the version of the text presented in Samnordisk runtextdatabas (the Scandinavian runic-text database) (under FI NOR 1998;14).

It would be rational to look for the beginning of the inscription at the head of the rune animal but as the carving could have contained more than one of these, it cannot be determined whether it really is the first rune of the inscription that is preserved in the fragment. It is nevertheless reasonable to proceed from such an assumption. One might be inclined to seek the continuation in the outer band which follows the contour of the stone (the runes **…si ᛬ raþi ᛬ maᚿ…**), because runestones that consist of two parallel rows of runes usually begin from the outer row (cf. e.g. Sö 165, Vg 67). However, this reading is not supported by the content of the text which appears most likely to belong to the end of an inscription. In addition, the runes run counterclockwise with their bases at the edge of the stone, which is quite uncommon. The most common arrangement of a runestone inscription leads the reader naturally to read the inner band first, where the runes run clockwise. If Salberger's reconstruction of this part of the inscription as [*æfti*]ʀ *Þōrfas*[*t*] 'in memory of Torfast' is correct, this is suitable as part of the middle of the text. It may be noted that the outer band of text has no delimiting line on the bottom but that the edge of the stone functions as such. It is thus not necessarily an exterior band of text; the runes could instead have been cut between the runic loop and the edge of the stone. If one imagines that the inscription in the main loop ended in the lower right corner of the complete stone, it also seems rather natural for the continuation of the text to follow the right edge upward and the top of the runes to point in towards the centre of the stone. A possible parallel is U 750 Viggeby, Husby-Sjutolft parish, where the signature ᛬ **bali** ᛬ **risti** ᛬ *Balli rīsti* 'Balle carved', executed with free-standing runes, follows the upper left edge of the stone in a similar way (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Runestone U 750 Viggeby, Husby-Sjutolft parish, Uppland. Note how the carver signature · **bali** · **risti** · has been placed between the rune band and the edge of the stone. In the lower left it is interrupted by the word **sin** ·, which belongs to an earlier part of the inscription.

If my observations and considerations lead to the correct conclusion, the inscription on the Hitis fragment should be represented in the following way:

· -...ṛ · þorfas... | ...si : raþi : maṇ...
… [*æfti*]ʀ(?) *Þōrfas*[*t*] … *Rāði man*[*dr*](?) …
[… in memory of(?) Torfast … Let that man(?) read …]

Figure 6: Runestone U 721 from Löt Church, carved in relief.

Figure 7: Runestone U 722 from Löt Church.

Who is the carver?

There are, as previous researchers have observed, many details of the inscription that point to the Mälar region. The name *Þōrfastr* is centred in Uppland and Södermanland, and the closest parallels to the challenge to interpret the runes are also found on runestones from this area, including the aforementioned Ågersta stone (U 729) in Trögd.

One unusual feature of the inscription is that it is partially carved in relief, with an inset surface around the head of the rune animal. Such relief-carved runestones are relatively rare although they occur on both Öland and Gotland. The material in these areas, however, is almost exclusively limestone, with sandstone also occasionally used, especially on Gotland. Ornamentation carved in relief also occurs on grave monuments from the late Viking Age from Östergötland, Västergötland,

Småland, Södermanland, and Närke, but limestone dominates as runic material in these areas as well (see Ljung 2016, passim).

In Uppland, otherwise so rich in runestones, relief carving is thought to have been employed on only two runestones. Both of these are made of red sandstone and found in Löt Church (U 721, U 722) in western Uppland. U 722 is signed by the rune carver Balle who undoubtedly also carved the other stone (see UR 3: 251).[7] These stones differ somewhat in their mode of execution. U 721 has the more traditional form but the runic band that follows the outer edge of the stone lacks all decoration (Figure 6). Instead, two animal figures shaped like a figure eight, together with complex interlace ornamentation, have been placed in the middle of the stone surface. Contrary to convention, the inscription begins in the lower right-hand corner and the tops of the runes point toward the middle of the stone. For a person standing in front of the stone the inscription thus runs counterclockwise. In U 722 the broad surface is occupied by animal ornamentation carved in relief (Figure 7), while the runes are placed on the narrow left-hand side of the stone in two straight rows, with the left row running upward and the right row downward.

Balle was one of Uppland's most productive rune carvers. He signed over twenty runestones but was certainly responsible for 40–50 more.[8] Some of these were purely ornamental, which probably indicates that they formed part of monuments consisting of several stones. His activity was concentrated in the western part of Uppland and especially in Trögd but he also left a number of stones in northern Södermanland. It is however no longer assumed that he was identical with the carver Röd-Balle who carved two stones in Västmanland (see Philippa 1977: 42–43; Williams 1990: 155–160).

Apart from the aforementioned stones, Balle is thought to have operated in relief only once, on the runestone from Husby-Rekarne Church (Sö 92) in Södermanland. This stone is also red sandstone and, as on U 721, the runes are placed on one narrow side of the stone while the broad side is covered by ornamentation carved in relief. These are the only three raised stones in the Mälar valley in which this technique

Figure 8: Detail of the worn carving lines of U 722, Löt Church.

is used and it is thus striking that they were all executed by the same person. As Balle was also responsible for the aforementioned Ågersta stone, which contains a challenge to the reader that is very similar to the one on the runestone from Hitis, it is probably most relevant to focus on this particular runestone.

The carved lines on the Hitis fragment are, as mentioned above, broad and weathered. On my visit to Löt Church, I observed that U 721 also has strongly weathered carved lines (Figure 8) which are sometimes up to 10–12 mm wide, while other less damaged lines had a width of only 5 mm. In regard to the history of the stone, we know that in the seventeenth century it served as a floor stone in the church and was later concealed by a newer floor. It was rediscovered during renovations in 1908, after which it lay in the cemetery for some time before it was moved back into the church. It thus remained for a long time in a relatively protected environment although it was certainly subject to wear. It is therefore difficult to use carving technique as a criterion in this case, apart from the occurrence of relief.

The rune animal head that is preserved on the Hitis fragment, on the other hand, has much that is reminiscent of Balle, including the blade-shaped ear on the back of the neck, but unfortunately the part of the head where features more typical of Balle would occur, such as the characteristic canine teeth, is missing.

The rune forms include long-branch variants of the runes **ɑ** and **n**, which do occur in Balle's production although in many inscriptions he instead uses the short-twig variants of these runes. Balle's corpus also includes the **s**-rune in both forward and reversed form, although the latter is relatively rare. The broad **r**-rune in which the upper part of the branch has a rounded form is well-known from several of his carvings. The rune **o** on the Hitis fragment, on the other hand, has an unusual form, namely ᚬ with crossing branches that slope down to the left rather than to the right. Balle usually uses the forms ᚬ or ᚭ, but three of his inscriptions, U 723, U 727 and U 729 (all in Löt parish) contain a variant with perfectly horizontal branches (see Stille 1999: 158), which is at least closer to the form found in the Hitis fragment.

The word dividers on the Hitis fragment, as noted above, consist either of single dots (•) or dots arranged as a colon (:). Balle usually uses single dots or short vertical lines (ᛌ), but as Stille (1999: 160 n. 6) has shown, single colon-shaped word dividers occur in at least six inscriptions. These include the Ågersta stone (U 729) as well as the two sandstone runestones carved in relief in Löt Church (U 721, U 722).[9]

A notable feature of the word dividers on the Hitis fragment is that the dots are not circular but oval. When I examined U 721 in Löt Church for the first time on April 7, 2016 – two days after my visit to Helsinki – I discovered that many of the dots in the word dividers on the stone had the same oval shape. Unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to further investigate the extent to which this feature occurs in Balle's carvings in granite.

Since so little of the Hitis fragment remains, it is not easy to make many observations on orthography. It can, however, be noted that the name *Þōrfastr* is written with an **o**-rune, which is consistent with Balle's usage. If the preceding word is *æftiʀ*, as Salberger (2008: 174) proposed,

the inscription would provide an example of older /R/ represented by the **r**-rune, which is also common in Balle's carvings. He represents the demonstrative pronoun *þæiʀ*, for example, as both **þaiʀ** and **þair** (and in individual instances also as **þiʀ**, **þaʀ**, and **þir**). However, he consistently writes the preposition *æftiʀ* with **ʀ**, although this preposition is quite rare on his stones.[10] More commonly the same function is served by the shorter preposition *at*. At the same time, the case of the name is not known and one might imagine other completions, such as [*brōðu*]*r Þōrfas*[*taʀ*] 'Torfast's brother', in which case the **r**-rune presents no difficulty.

Morphologically there is even less to note in the incomplete inscription but it can at least be stated that the aforementioned completion of the runic sequence **maṇ...** as *man*[*dr*] has a close equivalent on one of Balle's stones. On U 703 in Västra Väppeby in Veckholm parish one finds the concluding laudatory epitaph: **· mantr · matar · -o-r · auk · mls · riṣia ·**, which Jansson (UR 3: 226) interpreted as *mandr mataʀ goðr ok mals risinn* 'a man generous with food and kind in speech'. On another stone from Trögd (U 720 Hånningby, Vallby parish) the same form of the noun is found in the partially uninterpreted name **kigumantr**. This stone was made by a different carver and must furthermore belong to an earlier period than Balle, which indicates that this variant was established in the area.

Even if the two runes **...si** belong to a demonstrative pronoun, as mentioned as a possibility above, this provides no direct link to Balle. In the masculine singular accusative form, this carver always uses variants ending in *-a* (*þenna* or *þennsa*), and in the feminine accusative plural, the form *þessaʀ* is universal, although there are only a couple of examples (U 707, U 740). On the other hand, the form *þāsi* fem. pl. acc. occurs in the output of another rune carver in Trögd, namely Tidkume, who, inter alia, signed the runestone U 759 from St. Ilian's Church in Enköping with **tiþkumi : risti : runaʀ : þasi.**

The fragment from Hitis thus displays many features that can be associated with the rune carver Balle but there are also details that undermine the attribution, such as the form of the **o**-rune. The similarities,

however, predominate and if one is to name a possible carver for the Hitis inscription from among known rune carves from Uppland, he is definitely the strongest candidate. It can also be maintained that the closest parallels are found in runestones that are relatively close together in a few parishes in Trögd in western Uppland. Specifically, the stones in Löt parish and especially the two sandstone runestones carved in relief in Löt Church have repeatedly recurred in the discussion above. Today the church is situated four kilometres from the shore of Lake Mälaren but in the Viking Age the water level was four metres higher; several bays cut deeply into this area of land and the water came considerably closer. At that time the currents around Stockholm had not yet formed and there was thus a direct water connection between this place and Stora Ängesön in the Turku archipelago.

In addition, it should be mentioned that U 722 – the stone from Löt Church in which the dots in the word dividers have an oval form – in fact contains a concrete example of contact with Finland during this period. The inscription reads:

> **· tafaistr · lit · raisa : stain · at ᛬ t**[11]**…roþur · sin · kuþ · hielbi ᛬ sial · hans :**
> *Tafæistr lēt ræisa stæin at …* [*b*]*rōður sinn. Guð hialpi siāl hans.*
> ‘Tavest lät resa stenen efter …, sin broder. Gud hjälpe hans själ.’
> [Tafæistr had this stone raised in memory of … his brother. God help his soul.]

I refer here of course to the name *Tafæistr*, which is originally identical with the noun *tavast*, i.e. a resident of the region of Tavastland (Fi. Häme) in Finland (see NRL 219, s.v. *Tafæistr*, Schalin 2014: 416–421). The name is thought to have originally been a byname but this does not of course mean that the traveller mentioned on the Löt stone was himself from Häme. It is, on the other hand, hardly inconceivable that he had Finnish roots.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, I approached the runic find from Hitis with a certain degree of scepticism, but my work with the inscription has left me all the more convinced that this inscription should be taken seriously. Admittedly there are still aspects of concern, such as the fact that the surface carved in relief does not seem to be finished and that the branch of the **r**-rune at the beginning of the inner band of runes is shallower nearest to the broken edge. At the same time, the inscription contains many other features that have reliable parallels in the corpus of genuine inscriptions and that, furthermore, almost unanimously seem to point to a particular area on the other side of the Baltic and even to a specific person. Admittedly, these are to a great extent indications only, but many of them are such that it would hardly be possible to gather them without deep familiarity with the runic corpus. This knowledge surpasses that which I had before I began this study.

Translation Kendra Willson

Endnotes

1 As the content of the three articles by Åhlén, Tuovinen and Myhrman is largely the same, in the following I choose to refer only to one of them (Åhlén, Tuovinen & Myhrman 1998b).

2 This is indicated, inter alia, by the fact that Salberger does not mention his own reinterpretation of the Ågersta stone (U 729) which was published five years earlier (Salberger 2003), but rather gives the traditional interpretation of the inscription.

3 This identification was made by Professor Carl Ehlers of the Department of Geology and Mineralogy at Åbo Akademi University (see Åhlén, Tuovinen & Myhrman 1998b: 18, 20).

4 On the purported runestones in Kökar, see also Dreijer 1945.

5 An example of such interlacing can be found in U 699 (see UR 3, pl. 51).

6 Several of the examples come from carvers such as Visäte and Fot; they belong primarily to the eastern part of the province.

7 According to Per Stille (1999: 204), the runestones U 699 and U 757, also executed by Balle, are partially carved in relief. Both of these stones are made of granite.

8 On the rune carver Balle, see for example von Friesen 1933: 212–215; Philippa 1977; Stille 1999: 158–160, 186–189, 200–204; Källström 2009: 49–53.

9 The others are U 699, U 703, and U 838. To this list can probably be added U 697† Veckholm Church, which is thought to have shown many features typical of Balle and where four of the word dividers, according to B 612, were colon-shaped. Stille (1999: 186–187) regards the large number of word dividers of this type as an argument against attribution to Balle but simultaneously presents other features that are reminiscent of Balle's inscriptions. Furthermore, to judge from the older depiction, the **o**-rune had the form ᚬ, just as on the Hitis fragment, but as the stone is known only from a single source, this attestation must be regarded as quite uncertain.

10 In inscriptions signed by or securely attributed to him are found spellings such as **eftiʀ** Sö 175, **yftiʀ** U 726, **iftiʀ** U 729. In U 1161, which Balle appears to have signed together with the otherwise unknown carver Frösten, the word occurs with the unusual spelling **ʀþti** with the final sound not represented.

11 As Stille (1999: 43) was the first to note, this rune should be read as **t**, not **ɑ** as it is mistakenly identified in UR (3: 251). The reading **t** is quite certain; the right branch is preserved to a length of 8 mm between the main staff and the broken edge (according to my own examination on April 7, 2016).

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Alessandro Palumbo and Janne Harjula

Material and written culture in medieval Turku: Runic inscriptions from an urban environment

Abstract

This article deals with four medieval runic inscriptions from the town of Turku, all carved on objects of everyday use. All four artefacts bear inscriptions in Latin, three of them parts of the *Ave Maria* prayer and the fourth the exhortation *bene vale*, 'live well!' The latter text also gives evidence of the biscriptal written culture of medieval Scandinavia as it makes use of both runes and Roman letters. The authors address the reading and interpretation of the texts as well as their role in the domestic religious practices of medieval Turku. The inscriptions also provide important indications of the literacy practices that took place in informal settings and the writing proficiency of the carvers. In particular, the inscriptions are here studied from a textual, palaeographic and orthographic perspective in order to relate the largely unknown Finnish runic tradition to the wider Swedish and

eastern Scandinavian runic culture. The analyses show that the inscriptions from Turku present clear analogies to the rest of the runic tradition, for example as regards choice of content, but also display more specific traits that parallel conventions used mainly in the runic tradition from southwestern Swedish provinces.

Introduction

A substantial portion of the late medieval runic inscriptions found in Scandinavia comes from urban environments. Ranging from writing exercises to personal messages, commercial correspondence, magic formulas and Christian prayers, these inscriptions and the artefacts that bear them shed light on a variety of aspects of medieval daily life.[1] Through their often spontaneous and informal character, they provide a different kind of insight into the religious and literacy practices engaged in by medieval people in comparison with the epigraphical use of script attested on monumental artefacts, such as grave slabs and baptismal fonts, connected to ecclesiastical environments. In this paper, the study of three stave vessels and a comb inscribed with runes and Roman letters will serve to explore some aspects of the material and written culture of a medieval urban centre which until quite recently lacked runic finds, namely Turku. After an overview of the linguistic situation in medieval Turku and the town's connections with other medieval urban and religious centres, the transliteration and interpretation of the inscriptions will be addressed, together with the role that such artefacts played in the informal religious practices that took place in domestic environments. What the Turku inscriptions can tell us about the literacy of their carvers and the runic tradition of that area will be discussed in the last chapter (before the conclusion), where specific orthographic and palaeographic traits will be analysed from an eastern Scandinavian perspective.

Geographical and linguistic context of medieval Turku

Turku (Sw. Åbo, Lat. Aboa) was the oldest and largest town of the eastern part of medieval Sweden (Sw. Österland; Lat. Partes orientales). From the late thirteenth to the early fourteenth century onwards, the town grew to become the centre of the diocese of Turku, covering roughly the geographical area of present-day Finland (on the early phases of Turku see Hiekkanen 2001: 267; 2002: 157–177; 2003: 42–48; Pihlman 2010; Seppänen 2012: 941; Ratilainen et al. 2016). The population of medieval Turku has been estimated at between 2,000 and 3,000 people (Kaukiainen 1980: 105).

The connections between medieval Turku and other towns in the Baltic sphere and beyond can be divided into interconnecting commercial, ecclesiastical, and academic contacts. The burghers of Turku had contact with most of the towns in the Baltic region, the furthest being with Flanders and the Netherlands on the North Sea (Kallioinen 2000: 165). Excluding Sweden, the busiest commercial activities were with Tallinn and Danzig. Other towns mentioned in documents were Königsberg, Lübeck, Riga, Rostock, Stettin, Stralsund, Wismar, and towns in northeast Russia (Kallioinen 2000: Appendix 4). The commercial contacts with mainland Sweden were mostly directed to the capital, Stockholm. Other towns mentioned are Visby in Gotland and Söderköping in Östergötland as well as Gävle in Norrland and Norrköping in Östergötland (Kallioinen 2000: 177–179).

Ecclesiastical catholic networks reached widely across Europe. The Dominican convent in Turku had economic and administrative contacts with Tallinn in particular. Swedish locations mentioned in documents concerning monks from the Turku convent, were, for example, Visby in Gotland, Skänninge in Östergötland, Skara in Västergötland, Västerås in Västmanland, and Kalmar in Småland (Salminen 2003: 44). The Bridgettine monastery of Naantali (near Turku) had close relations with Vadstena Abbey, the motherhouse of the Bridgettine Order situated in Östergötland (Klockars 1979). As the diocese of Turku belonged to the archdiocese of Uppsala, the bishop of Turku evidently had con-

tact with Uppsala, although it has been assumed that he could work rather independently due to the distance between these two towns (Palola 1997: 85–86). There were evidently connections between the dioceses of Turku and Linköping too. For example, Bishop Bengt Birgersson was named as the Duke of Finland in 1284 (FMU I: 182; Tagesson 2002: 440).

Through the archives of the Apostolic Penitentiary in the Vatican, it has been revealed that visitors from the diocese of Turku were not unknown even in medieval Rome (e.g. Salonen 2009; Harjula & Salonen 2014). An important religious network was also formed via the pilgrimage routes throughout Europe and beyond (e.g. Krötzl 2014).

Academic contacts were closely related to ecclesiastical networks. As early as the fourteenth century, Finnish students appear in the records of European universities, with Paris, Prague, and the universities of towns on the southern coast of the Baltic proving especially popular (Nuorteva 1997).

Like urbanisation, the textualisation process in Finland was a medieval novelty, its beginnings linked to Christianisation and the missionary activities of the Crusade Period (last prehistoric period in Finland, c. AD 1025–1200 in SW Finland) and established in the course of the Middle Ages (Heikkilä 2010: 11). Unlike the situation in Scandinavia, there are no indications of a local literary culture before the missionary phase. The two prehistoric artefacts with runic inscriptions found in Finland, a runestone fragment and a silver brooch, both from the Viking Age (c. AD 800–1025) have been considered imported artefacts of Scandinavian origin (Harjula 2016: 215; cf. Källström and Moilanen in this volume).

The roots of textualisation among the wider strata of the population lay in the urban educational and commercial environment and in the development of note-taking technologies. Medieval Finland was multilingual: different languages were used for various purposes and situations. The languages spoken were varieties of Finnish, Swedish, Sami in the north, and to some extent Russian in the east. In addition, Latin, the official language of the church, was used, as was Middle Low Ger-

man, the lingua franca of the Baltic, which developed into a common language for tradesmen. The main languages for written documents were Latin, Swedish, Middle Low German, and sporadically Russian. The written Finnish language mostly appeared in personal names and placenames (see e.g. Blomqvist 2017). Geographically, Swedish was spoken along the coast and in the archipelago of northwestern, southwestern, and southern Finland, but in the interior of Finland, Finnish dominated. In all the towns, Swedish was the main urban language, in combination with Middle Low German and Finnish. Written education in medieval schools must have been in Latin, Swedish, and possibly Middle Low German (Harjula 2016 with the sources cited; Harjula, Immonen & Salonen 2021).

Background and interpretation of medieval runic inscriptions found in Finland

Medieval artefacts containing runic inscriptions have been found in Nordic countries, especially since the 1950s due to the expansion of urban archaeology. These finds have profoundly changed the understanding of everyday medieval literary culture and various other aspects of daily life and supernatural beliefs (e.g. articles in *Runmärkt*). Finland, however, lacked medieval runic inscriptions until recently but, as a result of large and systematic urban excavations especially from the 1980s onwards, runic inscriptions have also come to light here and can now be placed under close scrutiny.

The medieval runic inscriptions found in Finland occur on the undersides of three wooden fourteenth- or fifteenth-century stave vessel bases and on the surface of an antler comb found in archaeological excavations carried out in Turku during the 1980s and 1990s.[2] The finds have been described and dated by their archaeological find context and typological features. Moreover, the inscriptions on the finds have been transliterated and explanations for their purpose have been discussed (Harjula 2008; 2015: 47–49; 2016; 2019). The results are briefly summed up as follows.

Figure 1: Stave vessel found at the Åbo Akademi site (find number Turku Museum Centre 21816:KP51122. Runic inscription FI Harjula2016;218 in the Scandinavian runic-text database 2020, Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University).

Figure 2: Stave vessel found at the Aboa Vetus Ars Nova museum site (find number Turku Museum Centre 21125:148. Runic inscription FI Harjula2016;220 in the Scandinavian runic-text database 2020, Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University).

Figure 3, Left: Front of an antler comb with a bind-rune from the Åbo Akademi site (find number Turku Museum Centre 21816:LU86. Runic inscription FI Harjula2019;237 in the Scandinavian runic-text database 2020, Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University).
Right: The spongy reverse side of the comb. The length of the comb is 69 mm, width 73 mm, and thickness 8 mm.

Figure 4: Stave vessel found at the Old Great Square site (find number Turku Museum Centre 20315:1601a. Runic inscription FI Harjula2016;222 in the Scandinavian runic-text database 2020, Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University).

On both of these vessels and on the comb, the beginning of a Catholic invocation, *Ave Maria*, has been executed using a combination of Latin language and runic characters (see Figures 1, 2 and 3). The transliteration and transcription of these inscriptions read:[3]

Stave vessel from the Åbo Akademi site
auæmariagr | akia
Ave Maria gratia

Stave vessel from the Aboa Vetus Ars Nova museum site
auæmariagrakia | blænatominu | s
Ave Maria gratia plena Dominus

Comb from the Åbo Akademi site
auæ
Ave

Christian prayers, invocations and blessings, especially *Ave Maria* and *Pater Noster*, are the most frequent texts in runic Latin in the Nordic countries. They were as a rule not quoted in their complete form as known in the Middle Ages. Hence, the finds in Turku fit this Scandinavian framework well.

The third vessel bears a combination of runes and a Roman letter (see Figure 4), and its inscription can be transliterated as follows:

Old Great Square site
ʙuɑl͡æ

For this inscription, two alternative readings were presented: it could either be read as the Old Swedish word *bulle*, meaning a round (drinking) vessel or, perhaps more convincingly, as an abbreviation of the Latin blessing, *bene valere*, 'to be in good health' (Harjula 2016: 221–222, n. 30). According to the interpretation proposed in the present article, the sequence **uɑl͡æ** might not be abbreviated at all and the inscription could be interpreted as the exhortation *bene vale*, 'live well!' (see further discussion in the next chapter).

It was argued that all these runic inscriptions could be regarded as invocations and blessings and that their main purpose was apotropaic – to protect the content of the vessel, the meal or drink, and in the case of the comb, the individual's hair. Infants and young children in particular needed protection against the so-called "evil eye", the power to inflict death, disease, or destruction by a single glance. In addition to crosses, symbols such as swastikas, pentagrams, and Saint John's Arms have traditionally been used as protective signs in Finnish folk culture, especially in artefacts which contained easily spoiled items, such as milk vessels and cheese moulds, and where the spoiling was frequently perceived as being caused by malign forces.

The objects in question were everyday objects of low material value and were probably used in a household setting, as emphasised by their find context. They derive from typical secular plots owned by people from the burgher classes and it was argued that the runic inscriptions on these objects were carved either by the burghers themselves or else by a member of their household. As well as being apotropaic, the finds seem to reflect domestic religion, which has been described as the complex of devotions and rituals performed by laypeople in their own homes.

A further aspect of these artefacts considered significant for research was the information they provide about human-artefact relationships, particularly of magical concepts and rites, and religious devotion and

literacy education within urban domestic and public contexts. Moreover, the use of different languages together with the runic writing reminds us of the manifold uses and purposes of languages and texts in the Middle Ages. Most importantly, the finds offer plenty of possibilities for further study, especially in regard to the linguistic details of the scripts.

The runes from the Turku inscriptions in an eastern Scandinavian perspective

The finding of late medieval runic inscriptions in Turku is hardly surprising. The use of runes was in fact still widespread after the Viking Age in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. From Sweden, for instance, we know of around 700 inscriptions from both ecclesiastical and urban environments (Scandinavian runic-text database 2020). As the only late medieval inscriptions found in Finland, the three stave vessels and the antler comb from Turku are nevertheless of great significance for our knowledge of runic literacy in this region.

As is generally appreciated, the medieval runic tradition differs from the Viking Age one in a number of aspects, not least the type of runes that carvers used and the orthographic conventions they followed (Peterson 1994: 71–74; Källström 2013b: 116; Palumbo 2020). A typical medieval feature is, for example, the differentiation between some long-branch and short-twig runes that during the Viking Age had been allographs of the same grapheme but in the late Middle Ages belonged to different graphemes. The short-twig \ᛅ\ **ɑ** and \ᚬ\ **o** were respectively used as allographs of the graphemes <a> and <o>, while their long-branch variants \ᚭ\ and \ᛒ\, normally transliterated **æ** and **ø** in medieval inscriptions, came to represent the graphemes <æ> and <ø>.[4] Further medieval orthographic traits are the increased use of dotted runes and bind-runes, as well as the spread of specific allographs such as the closed shape of the **r**-rune and the so-called Gotlandic **s**, \ᛦ\. These changes, among others, that contribute to the distinctiveness of the medieval use of runes did not however occur at the same time

in all of Scandinavia. Runic orthography was not in fact homogenous and diverse runic traditions can be identified in different geographic areas (Källström 2013b: 117–119; Palumbo 2020: 227–232). The four runic inscriptions from Turku are possibly local Finnish products, giving us the opportunity to study the runic tradition in this region, especially in comparison with other better-documented runic traditions. To what extent does the use of runes in Turku show connections with or influences from other regions? One cannot completely discount the possibility, however, that the stave vessels are imports from elsewhere. In this case, a comparison could reveal the part of Scandinavia from which the vessels might originate. In the following sections of this article, specific palaeographic and orthographic traits that appear in the Turku inscriptions will be examined and compared with the runic spelling attested in other east Nordic areas, primarily Sweden, although some comparisons with Danish inscriptions will also be made.

In this regard, the Turku inscriptions pose a few problems. Firstly, the four texts are quite short. Consisting of one to five words, they do not at first glance offer much material for comparison. Secondly, their being carved in Latin makes it impossible to pinpoint a possible place of origin for the inscriptions or a source of influence through linguistic means. Nor does the formulaic nature of the texts offer any significant leads. Apart possibly from the inscription found in the Old Great Square site, the other three consist of standard Christian prayers that are attested on many runic objects (Zilmer 2013). On closer inspection however, these brief carvings reveal more about their connections to other written cultures than one might initially suppose. The spelling of Latin written with runes, for instance, was not standardised in medieval Scandinavia. On the contrary, even very common prayers like the Angelic Salutation occur in different variants as far as spelling is concerned. Moreover, the specific allographs found in the Turku inscriptions in fact show geographic and chronological patterns that are relevant to the research question. Finally, the mixing of runes and Roman letters on the same artefact is also a relatively rare phenomenon, making it an interesting one to analyse. On a more general level,

we might consider geographic areas that lie relatively close to Turku and where the use of the runic script was still common during the time from which the Turku inscriptions date. There is one region in particular that stands out: Gotland. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Gotlandic runic tradition was still flourishing and the number of runic inscriptions from that period is higher than in any Swedish region (Snædal 2002; Palumbo 2012). A closer look reveals however that the connection to the Gotlandic runic tradition is not as obvious as one might initially assume. But let us start at the beginning, namely with the *Ave Maria*.

The Angelic Salutation: the words ave and gratia

The Latin word *ave* occurs in many runic inscriptions from all of Scandinavia. In all three relevant inscriptions from Turku, *ave* is spelled as a monogram consisting of a triple bind-rune, **a͡u͡æ** \ᚬ^ᚢ^ᚮ\ on the antler comb and **a͡u͡æ** \ᚬ^ᚢ^ᚮ\ on the two stave vessels. This is however not the only attested spelling of this word. To begin with, *ave* is carved as a monogram in roughly a third of the Swedish instances. Furthermore, both the consonant and the final vowel could be represented by different graph-types. As regards the consonant, the graph-type used most often is \ᚢ\ **u**, followed by \ᚠ\ **f** (e.g. Sm 22 and G 60) and by the rare \ᚤ\ and \ᚡ\ transliterated **v** that, to our knowledge, are attested in the word *ave* only on a church stool from Suntak (Vg 227) and a grave slab from Ukna (Sm 145) respectively. The carver(s) of the three Turku inscriptions have thus used the most common spelling which can be linked neither to a specific area nor a particular period. On the other hand, the representation of the final vowel on the stave vessels is far from common.

The last component of the bind-rune in these inscriptions in fact consists of a descending branch that intersects the branch of the **u**-component of the bind-rune, as in a long-branch **n** \ᚾ\. The same graph-type also appears on the third stave vessel found at the Old Great Square site, where it is part of the bind-rune **l͡æ.** This graph-type, when used for an

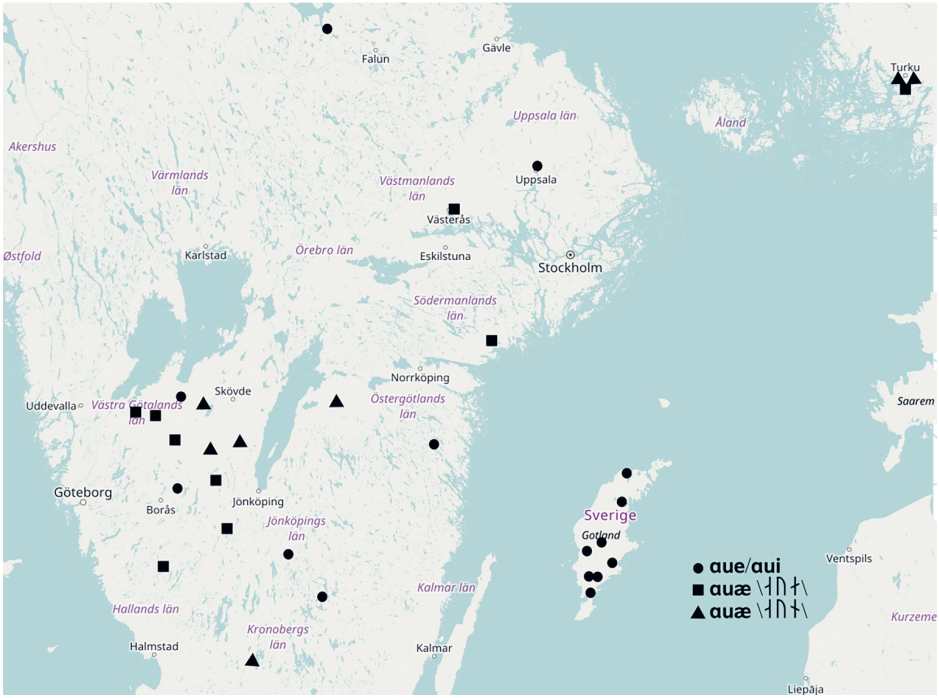

Figure 5: Geographic distribution of the spelling variants of the word *ave* in Sweden.

[e] or [æ] sound, is fairly rare, especially if compared to its reversed analogue \ᛆ\ **æ**, used on the antler comb, which was in fact the standard representation of the grapheme <æ> in most parts of Scandinavia in the Middle Ages.[5] As regards the word *ave* and its final vowel, there are four attested spelling variants that, on a scale from most to least common, are: \ᛅᚢᚼ\ **aue**, \ᛅᚢᛆ\ **auæ**, \ᛅᚢᚽ\ **auæ**, and \ᛅᚢᛁ\ **aui**. As shown in the map in Figure 5, the spelling \ᛅᚢᚼ\ **aue** is not bound to a specific geographic area. It is in fact the most common variant wherever more than one occurrence of *ave* is found. The region of Västergötland is the only exception: there, most instances are spelled \ᛅᚢᛆ\ **auæ**. The variant used in the stave vessels from Turku can be found in only a few areas. It is notable that *ave* is never spelled \ᛅᚢᛆ\ **auæ**, or \ᛅᚢᚽ\ **auæ** for that matter, in Gotlandic inscriptions. This is perhaps not particularly surprising. Both graph-types \ᛆ\ and \ᚽ\ are in fact very rare on

the island, most likely because Gutnish, unlike mainland Swedish, had no phoneme /æ(:)/ (Snædal 2002: 192–193). Moreover, the two graph-types seem not to occur as a representation of /e(:)/ in any inscription dated before the sixteenth century (Palumbo 2012; Snædal 2002). In the Danish inscriptions, *ave* is attested in two variants, namely \ᛆᚢᛂ\ **aue** and \ᛆᚢᛅ\ **auæ**, with a predominance of the former.

Unlike the situation in Gotland and Denmark, there are a few examples of \ᛆᚢᛅ\ **auæ** on mainland Sweden, namely one each in Småland and Östergötland and three instances in Västergötland. Interestingly, this last region is also the one with the highest number of instances of \ᛅ\ used for /e(:)/ and /æ(:)/ irrespective of the word in which it is used, although a few examples also appear in Småland, Östergötland, Södermanland, Uppland, and Närke (Palumbo 2020: 128). Of the aforementioned five instances of \ᛆᚢᛅ\ **auæ**, only two are exact parallels to the ones found in the Turku inscriptions, meaning that the whole word *ave* is spelled with one single bind-rune. The first one is an inscription carved into plaster in the church of Kinneved, Västergötland (Vg Fv2007;37). The second is from a baptismal font in Pjätteryd Church, Småland (Sm 38). This last instance is however slightly uncertain, firstly since the part of the inscription where *ave* was carved is now lost and secondly because the older sources on Sm 38 are not agreed on this point (see SRI 4: 123). However, all the preserved æ-runes consist of a stave and an intersecting, descending branch, which makes it probable that even the final component of the lost bind-rune **a͡uæ** had such a shape \ᛅ\.[6]

From the later part of the *Ave Maria* prayer, the word *gratia* also appears in the Swedish, Gotlandic and Danish corpus in several spelling variants. Disregarding the possible use of bind-runes as well as the occurrence of a **k**-rune rather than a dotted **k**, i.e. **g**-rune for the word's first consonant, *gratia* is attested in four main spellings: **grakia**, **grazia**, **gratia** and **grasia**.[7] The variants spelled with an **s** or **z**-rune possibly reflect the pronunciation as [s] or [ts] of the Latin <ti> followed by another vowel (Knirk 1998: 489; Steenholt Olesen 2007: 41; Palumbo 2020: 200), whereas **gratia** more closely follows the written Latin norm. In the case of the spelling **grakia**, the use of the **k**-rune seems to

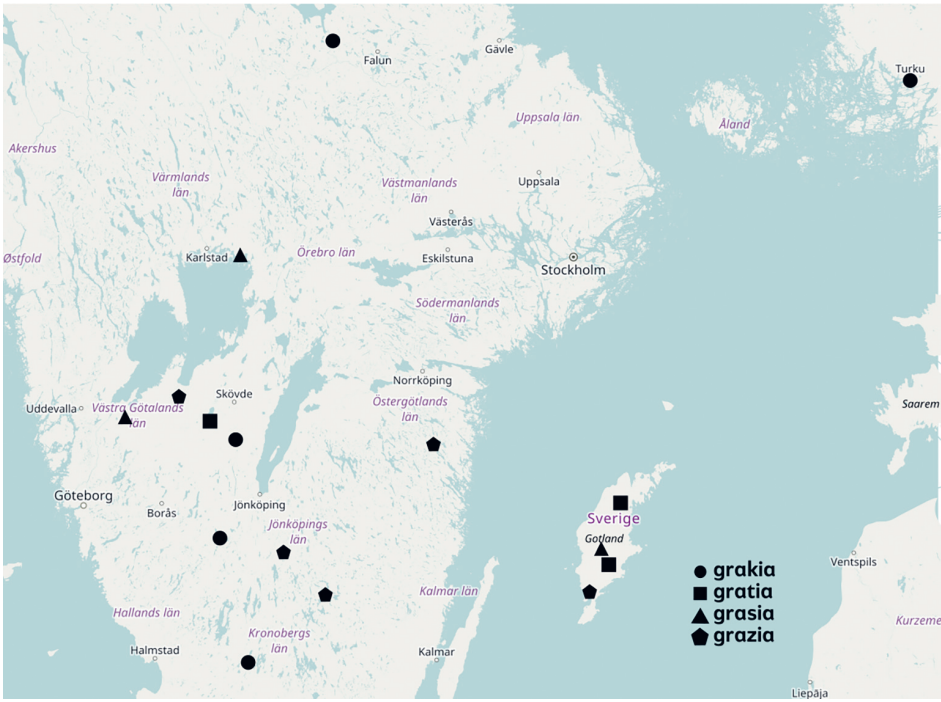

Figure 6: Geographic distribution of the spelling variants of the word *gratia* in Sweden.

be the result of hypercorrection (Gustavson 1994: 75) and to "reflect an automatic substitution of **k** for 'c', even here where it was pronounced with an *s* sound" (Knirk 1998: 491).

The variant **grakia**, which is the one found in the Turku inscriptions, is the most widespread and on par with **grazia**. Although these two spellings are equally common in the material analysed here, there seems to be a chronological difference between them, **grakia** being an older spelling than **grazia**. The former occurs, at least in Sweden, mainly during the twelfth and possibly thirteenth century, while the latter is attested in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[8] This is relevant to the discussion on the dating of the two Turku inscriptions, since the presence of the spelling variant **grakia,** at least compared to the rest of the Swedish corpus, would point to an older date than that suggested by the stratigraphy.

In regard to the geographic distribution of the different spellings of the word *gratia*, we can observe that parallels to the Turku inscriptions are found in a few Swedish regions, namely Dalarna,[9] Västergötland and Småland[10] (see Figure 6). There is on the other hand no Gotlandic equivalent to the Turku inscriptions.

Dominus and the **s**-rune

For the fricative consonant in the Latin word *dominus*, the carver of the stave vessel base from the Aboa Vetus Ars Nova museum site used a long-branch **s**-rune, \ᛋ\. This is the most commonly used graph-type for **s** during both the Viking Age (Meijer 2000: 25) and, in most areas, the Middle Ages. In both periods, however, other graph-types are also attested. Two notable examples are the so-called *chair*-**s**, \ᚺ\, and the *Gotlandic*-**s**, \ᛙ\. Most instances of the latter are found in medieval Gotlandic inscriptions but some also occur in Viking Age inscriptions and in other geographic areas of Sweden and Denmark (see Meijer 2000: 25–26).[11] Much more infrequent variants include graph-types consisting of two full-length staves, \ᚺ\ and \ᚼ\ (e.g. Sm 49), and the graph-type \ᛊ\ (e.g. Vg 203). Other variants can be found in various overviews of specific runic corpora (Thompson 1975; Åhlén 1997; Stille 1999; Spurkland 1991; Palumbo 2020). Some of these variants must be explained by the fact that the long-branch **s** has a structure that differs from all other runes of the younger futhark, not consisting of a full-length staff and thus deviating from some of the principles that characterise the development of the futhark and other alphabets (Fridell 2011: 78; 2015: 12). The need to resolve this discrepancy led to the creation of graph-types such as \ᚺ\ and \ᛙ\ (Meijer 2000: 25).[12]

Of all the graph-types of **s** used in medieval east Nordic inscriptions, the long-branch \ᛋ\ and the Gotlandic \ᛙ\ are by far the most common. They occur both in mainland Sweden and Gotland but as the name of the latter suggests, they show a different geographic distribution, where \ᛙ\ mostly occurs in Gotland and \ᛋ\ in the other Swedish regions.

	ᛋ	ᛌ
Medieval Sweden	87 %	13 %
Gotland	19 %	81 %

Table 1: Approximate frequency of the long-branch **s** and the Gotlandic-**s** in preserved medieval runic inscriptions from Gotland and the rest of medieval Sweden.

Table 1 shows a comparison between the number of instances of long-branch **s** and Gotlandic-**s** in Gotland and in other regions of medieval Sweden (reversed variants are included in each column; cf. Palumbo 2012: 67). It is clear that the geographic distribution of these graph-types is almost complementary. While this does not permit us to draw any parallels between the Turku inscriptions and any specific region in the western part of medieval Sweden, it does show that in this aspect, too, the Finnish inscriptions differ from the Gotlandic runic tradition.

Runes and the Roman script

The fact that some rune carvers in the Middle Ages knew at least some Latin is attested by the many runic inscriptions in this language within the medieval corpus. On the other hand, these inscriptions also show clearly that there was a great variation in the carvers' proficiency in Latin. From the different spelling solutions adopted and the presence of mistakes, for example, one can conclude that while some must have had a degree of formal training in Latin, others clearly lacked it (see e.g. Gustavson 1994: 74; Knirk 1998: 490–491; Steenholt Olesen 2007: 39; 2021; cf. Palumbo 2022). Some inscriptions also show that not only were there bilingual carvers but also carvers that mastered and mixed both the runic script and the Roman alphabet (see e.g. Källström 2018; Blennow & Palumbo 2021; 2022; Palumbo 2023; Zilmer in press). The Swedish examples containing both runes and Roman letters used

together on the same artefact are rare however, which makes the stave vessel base found at the Old Great Square noteworthy. This in fact bears not only runes but also a decorated initial, a Roman majuscule B.

In the previous literature on this inscription, it is not completely clear whether the sequence of the majuscule and runes should be interpreted as one word, the Old Swedish *bulle*, 'round drinking vessel', or rather as two abbreviated Latin words, *bene valere* (Harjula 2016: 221–222 n. 30). An interpretation of the sequence B**ua͡læ** as *bulle* presupposes that the **a**-rune was erroneously carved before the **l**, and that the word was meant to be written B**ulaæ**. However, there are convincing arguments against this interpretation. Firstly, the **l** and the **æ** constitute a bind-rune, which makes this kind of error, namely the switching of one of the bind-rune's components with a previous rune, improbable at least. Secondly, an /e/ occurring at the end of a Swedish word is never written **aæ** or **ae**. The sequence **ae**, with a dotted **i**, does occur in a few medieval inscriptions, but there it is used for a diphthong or two vowels in hiatus position, such as in the names *Mikael* and *Raphael*.[13] If one assumes that the carver made no mistakes and that the form B**ua͡læ** was intended, we incur the problem that /u/ and /o/ in the Swedish medieval corpus are never realised with a digraph, let alone with **ua**. These arguments are also relevant if one considers that the form B**ua͡læ** could reflect the name *Bulli*/*Bolli*/*Bōli* (see Peterson 2007: 46, 52). Formally, if the runic sequence is seen as separated from the majuscule, it could also represent the male name *Vāli*. In this case, however, the connection of the runes to the Roman letter would be unclear.

Of the different possibilities presented above, it seems more plausible that the inscription consists of two Latin words. The first is probably the word *bene*, abbreviated with a majuscule B. The second could be the abbreviated Latin word *valere*, as suggested before (Harjula 2016: 222 n. 30), which would give the phrase *bene valere*, 'to be in good health'. It is worth observing that the verb *valere* in fact occurs in a couple of medieval runic inscriptions from Norway, conjugated in the second person plural imperative *valete*.[14] This verb also appears in letters in the formulas *bene vale* or *bene valeatis*, commonly abbreviated to B.V.

(Cappelli 1912: 38). This strengthens the hypothesis that the majuscule B is in fact an abbreviation for *bene*. As for runic **ualæ**, it is preferable, instead of assuming the use of another abbreviation, to regard the sequence on the Finnish stave vessel as an occurrence of the second person singular imperative of this verb, *vale*, which would result in the exhortation *bene vale*, 'live well!'[15]

It is interesting to compare this inscription with the rest of the medieval Swedish material with regard to the co-occurrence of runes and Roman letters. As previously noted, the cases where both runes and Roman letters occur on the same object are scarce, but this limited corpus nevertheless includes a great deal of variation. In several cases, both the part of the inscription carved in runes and the part carved in Roman letters are in Latin. One example is the grave slab from Öreryd, Sm 115, where majuscules are used to write the Latin formula *hic iacet* followed by a personal name while the *Ave Maria* prayer is in runes. A few other funeral monuments, such as the lost grave slab Vg 131, Sjögerås, use both Old Swedish and Latin, written with runes and Roman letters respectively. In other instances, the same alphabet is employed to write both Swedish and Latin. Along with the formula *hic iacet* in Roman letters, the carver of Sm 145, Ukna Church, uses runes for both the Old Swedish part of the text and for the *Ave Maria* prayer. On the other hand, the carver of Vg 95, Ugglum Churchyard, writes the main part of the inscription twice in Old Swedish, using runes and Roman letters, the latter also employed for his signature in Latin.

As regards the unlikely possibility of interpreting the Turku inscription as one Old Swedish word combining the two writing systems, rather than two Latin words, we can note that this in fact is something that occurs, albeit infrequently, in the rest of the Swedish corpus. One instance can be found on the grave slab from Gudhem's church (Vg 88) where the two writing systems are mixed in the *Ave Maria* prayer: AVE MARIA : **grati**A. A further two examples are found on a spindle whorl from Saxholmen (Vr NOR1995;19B) that bears the inscription **kristin a mi**K, 'Kristin owns me', and on a pax board

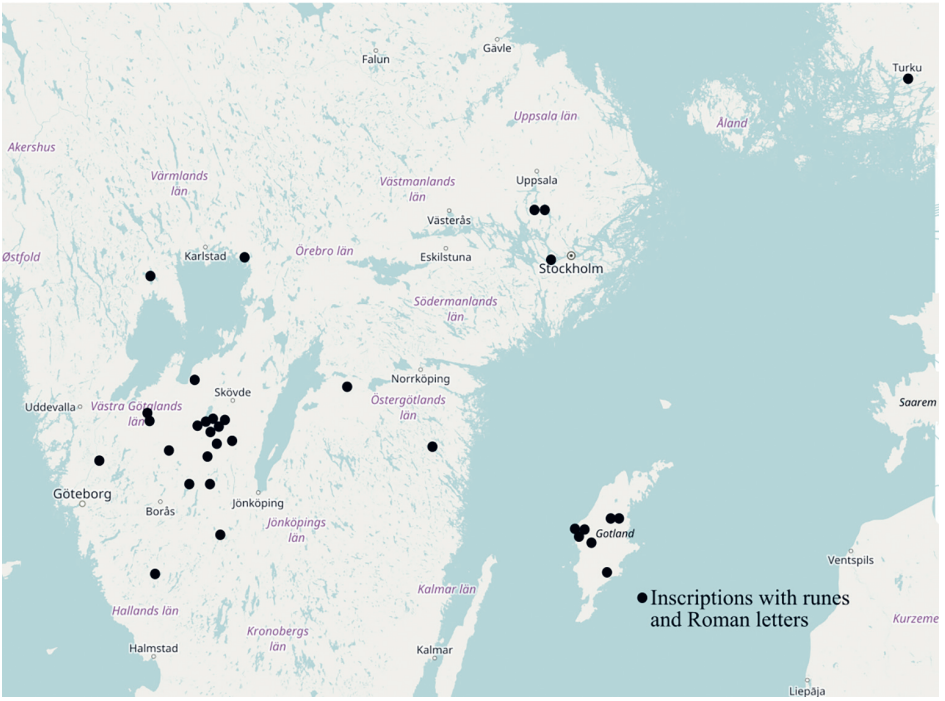

Figure 7: Geographic distribution of inscriptions with both runes and Roman letters in Sweden.

from Lönsås Church (Ög Fv1999;177) with the inscription IES[US] NAZAREN[US] **re**X **iudeorum**.[16]

The map in Figure 7 shows the geographic distribution of the artefacts with inscriptions comprised of both runes and Roman letters.[17] In general, we can observe a concentration of these objects in the province of Västergötland, but inscriptions bearing both alphabets occur in other areas too, for instance Gotland and Småland. In regard to the instances in Västergötland, it must be added that at least nine of the eighteen inscriptions from this province were carved by only two masters, namely Harald and Haquinus (on the work of Master Harald, see Blennow & Palumbo 2021; 2022; Källström 2018).

According to the interpretation proposed here, the inscription from the Old Great Square consists of a Latin abbreviation followed by a word in runes. This kind of combination has no exact parallels in

the Swedish corpus. The closest counterparts are two bronze stamps from Västergötland, Vg 215 and Vg 225, and a rune-carved bone from Sigtuna, U NOR2000;30B. On the bronze stamps, a majuscule s that stands for *sigillum* is followed by a personal name in Roman letters, together with what is probably a house mark or an abbreviated personal name in runes, e.g. + S · GOBBE · STRET · **ku** (Vg 215). The carved bone bears the inscription **fr** PAX TEC, where the runes have been interpreted as the abbreviated word *friðr*, 'peace', and the Roman letters probably stand for *pax tecum*.[18]

In the Danish corpus, there is one inscription that possibly comes closest to the Finnish stave vessel in this regard, namely DR EM85;432C. This is carved on plaster in the cathedral of Roskilde and reads: D **iasobus ru**. The Roman letter, which in this case is a minuscule *d* much smaller than the runes, has been interpreted as an abbreviation for *dominus* while the part in runes stands for the name *Iacobus*. Apart from this example, runes and Roman letters are used in the same word in four interpreted Danish medieval inscriptions: DR 111, DR 416, DR Aarb1987;205, and possibly DR 366, which however is now lost.[19]

Conclusion

Despite their brevity and formulaic wording, the Turku inscriptions can be compared with the larger runic corpus from the rest of medieval Sweden in several aspects. On a general level, the carvings from Turku fit well with medieval Swedish writing practices. Much of the runic writing in the Middle Ages was produced for religious purposes, just as is the case with these stave vessels and the comb, and evidence of runic literacy in urban milieus, such as Sigtuna and Lödöse, is very common. The commercial and ecclesiastical contacts (outlined in the chapter "Geographical and linguistic context of medieval Turku") that Turku maintained with several Swedish provinces also support the supposition that its written culture was in some regards similar to the written culture attested elsewhere in medieval Sweden. This also proves

true on a more specific level when studying the orthographic and palaeographic features attested on the stave vessels. In the previous sections, the Turku inscriptions were compared with the rest of the Swedish corpus in regard to a few such traits: the spelling of the word *ave* as **a͡uæ** \ᛆ^ᚢ^ᛅ\, the spelling of *gratia* as **grakia**, the graph-type \ᛋ\ **s** in *dominus*, and the co-occurrence of both runes and Roman letters.

	ave	**gratia**	**Runes + Roman letters**	**long-branch s**
Turku	×	×	×	×
Småland	×	×	×	×
Västergötland	×	×	×	×
Östergötland	(×)		×	×
Dalarna		×		×
Södermanland			×	×
Uppland			×	×
Gotland			×	(×)

Table 2: Presence or absence of the studied features in different geographic areas. An *x* marks the occurrence of a certain feature, while the instances that differ in some regard from the Turku inscriptions or that are very uncommon in the region in question are given in parentheses.

This comparison, summarised in Table 2, shows that these features are by no means unique to the Turku inscriptions; on the contrary, parallels can be found in Swedish carvings. On the other hand, some of the orthographic solutions adopted by the carver of the stave vessels are far from common and can in fact be linked to specific geographical areas. There are two regions where all the featured spellings are attested, namely Småland and Västergötland.

The use of the graph-type \ᚼ\ in the word *ave* is, due to its infrequency, a telling practice. This particular spelling of *ave* appears in only three regions: Småland, Västergötland, and Östergötland. At the same time, only in Västergötland and perhaps in Småland do we find a direct parallel to the Turku spelling, that is where *ave* consists of one bind-rune. The graph-type \ᚼ\ used for /e/ or /æ/ appears in other regions too, attested in words other than *ave*, but only sporadically. Moreover, even when considering other words where this usage is attested, most examples are still found in Västergötland, which suggests that this spelling variant might have originated in this province.

Another feature of one of the Turku vessels that may bring it closer to a southwest Swedish runic tradition is the use of both runes and Roman letters. Evidence that some carvers employed both writing systems can be found in a few inscriptions, and as shown in the chapter "Runes and the Roman script", most of these occur in Västergötland, although some examples do appear in other provinces too.

A region that one could expect to have exerted some influence on the written culture in Turku, considering its flourishing medieval runic tradition, its geographic proximity and its contacts with Turku, is Gotland. The study of the aforementioned spelling solutions makes clear, however, that the runic tradition represented on the stave vessels can hardly be connected to the Gotlandic one.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Dr. Georges Kazan (University of Oxford & University of Turku) for proofreading the manuscript. Alessandro Palumbo's contribution received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 839290.

Endnotes

1 For recent studies on runic corpora from Scandinavian medieval towns, see Blennow, Palumbo & Pettersson 2022; Harjula, Immonen & Salonen 2021; Imer 2021; Steenholt Olesen 2021; Zilmer 2021; 2020a; 2020b.

2 The sites with runic finds in Turku are: Åbo Akademi (main building) site (excavations 1998), Aboa Vetus Ars Nova museum site (excavations 1992), and Old Great Square site (excavations 1986–1987).

3 The transliteration of the inscription from the Aboa Vetus Ars Nova museum site presented in Harjula (2016: 220) is here slightly rectified. The last *a* of the name *Maria* is in fact carved as part of a bind-rune with the **g** of *gratia*, and the **t**-rune in *dominus* is not dotted. For the graph-type \ᚼ\, present in all three inscriptions and transliterated **e** in Harjula 2016, a transliteration of **æ** is used. In the transliterations, bold letters represent runes while small capitals represent Roman letters. The vertical bar | indicates a line break in the inscription.

4 Backslashes are used here for referring to so-called graph-types. A graph-type is a graph-typological unit that identifies a group of graphs (every unique occurrence of a written character) that share the same distinctive graphic features. Graphs whose shape is sufficiently similar are grouped under the same graph-type. The term graph-type does not, on the other hand, refer to the function that a certain graph might have, i.e. the phoneme or allophone it realises (see e.g. Allén 1965: 80; Spurkland 1991: 53; Mårtensson 2011: 111; Palumbo 2020: 37–44). In this paper, every graph-type between backslashes is represented by a runic character that reflects its graphic features. The characters in boldface that follow the graph-types refer to the most common transliteration used for each graph-type when it occurs in East Scandinavian medieval inscriptions.

5 The graph-type \ᚼ\ has been transliterated in various ways in the medieval inscriptions in which it occurs, depending on whether the person editing the inscription in question considered it a reversed or even miscarved variant of the **æ**-rune \ᚼ\ (see for example SRI 5: 272 on the grave slab from Näs, Vg 143) or instead a variant of the **e**-rune \ᚾ\ with a descending branch as a dot (see for example Källström 2013a on the carvings in St. Olof's Church in Falköping, Västergötland). The use of \ᚼ\ as well as its geographic and chronological distribution are analysed in detail in Palumbo (2020: 133–138). Here, this graph-type is transliterated as **æ**, although in this context it is irrelevant whether \ᚼ\ is an **e**- or an **æ**-rune. It is in fact the occurrence of a graph with this shape that is of interest for the comparison between the Turku inscriptions and other runic traditions.

6 In one inscription from Gamla Uppsala (U Fv1959;98) the word *ave* is spelled in a way that comes close to the inscriptions from Turku, Kinneved and Pjätteryd, i.e. as a monogram where the last vowel seems to be represented by a falling branch that does not, however, intersect the branch of the **u**-rune. This is a very

rare shape for an **e**-rune. One possible parallel can be found in a Gotlandic inscription carved into the plaster of Garde Church, which also features the word *ave* spelled as a monogram (Källström 2016a: 39). The shape of the bind-rune's final component is uncertain, however, as it could either consist of a horizontal line intersecting the branch of the **u**-rune, or of a diagonal line angling down from the branch of the **u** without intersecting it (Källström, personal communication, 17.2.2017).

7 The transliteration **grasia** refers to the use of either a long-branch **s**-rune or a so-called Gotlandic **s**-rune, whereas **grazia** refers to the use of a short-twig and often dotted **s**-rune.

8 As is often the case when dealing with runic inscriptions, the number of dated instances is rather scarce, which calls for caution when studying possible chronological trends. In this case, the spelling **grakia** occurs in Sweden in two inscriptions from the twelfth century (Sm 115 and Vg 227), in one dated to the first half of the thirteenth century (Sm 38), and lastly in one inscription that is more vaguely dated to the end of the twelfth or to the thirteenth century (D Fv1980;230). On the other hand, **grazia** is attested on a church bell (Vg 210) self-dated to 1228, on a grave slab (Sm 145) dated on linguistic grounds to the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century, and finally on another church bell (Sm 22) dated on art-historical criteria to the first half of the fourteenth century. The only instance of **grazia** that is possibly from the twelfth century was found on a now-lost church bell (Sm 82) whose dating is however rather uncertain and supposedly based on unspecified conservative palaeographic traits (SRI 4: 205).

9 As the inscription from Dalarna is on a portable object, namely a small lead amulet (D Fv1980;230), we cannot be sure of its original provenance.

10 It can be observed that three parallels to the Turku inscriptions also appear in Skåne, which belonged to Denmark during the period studied and therefore are not included in the map. However, one of these instances (DR 336) differed from the Turku inscriptions in so far as both its **k**-runes were dotted: **gragia.**

11 Meijer (2000: 25–26) distinguishes between the Gotlandic-**s** and the inverted chair-**s**, whereas Palumbo (2012: 68 n. 22) categorises them as the same graph-type since they have the same structure and share the same typologically distinctive traits.

12 Meijer (2000: 25) also mentions an alternative explanation, namely that some carvers might first carve all or some of the staves of the inscription before adding the branches. According to him, this practice would sometimes lead to the carver forgetting that the **s**-rune lacked a full-length stave and producing, for example, a chair-**s** by mistake. It cannot be discounted that some instances should indeed be regarded as carver errors. On the other hand, the consistent use of runes such as the Gotlandic-**s** later in the Middle Ages clearly points to a process of development, rather than a mistake, and follows the general principles of alphabet history (Watt 1979; Brekle 1994; Fridell 2011; 2015).

13 The Swedish examples are three: **mikael** and **mikaeꞁ**, *Mikael* on Sö AA29;8 and U ATA351-1796-2014 respectively, and **st[a]en**, *stainn* on G 319. In a similar way to the latter example, the sequence **ae** is used for the diphthong /ai/ in some Swedish Viking Age inscriptions. Also, the preposition *æftiʀ* occurs spelled with **ae** in the Swedish Viking Age corpus, alongside other digraphic spellings such as **ai**, **au** and **ay** (Peterson 2006).

14 The inscriptions in question are N 446, N 583, and N 641.

15 A similar exhortation, this time in the vernacular, is found on a wooden vessel from Lund (DR EM85;474A) which bears the sequence **faruel** (or **faruel**) *far vel* (Källström 2016b).

16 Another slightly uncertain example is found on Vg 272 (cf. Svärdström 1972: 94–98).

17 Biscriptal inscriptions where the Roman letters constitute a later, post-medieval addition have not been included in the map, and neither is one instance where the runes are clearly a later, albeit medieval, addition (G 146). A few other inscriptions have been excluded because they seem to contain letter-like symbols rather than real Roman letters (Sm 158 †, Sm 160, Vg 249), and one inscription containing Roman numerals has been excluded as well (G 99).

18 Kristel Zilmer (in press) has instead proposed that the runes **fr** should be interpreted as an abbreviation for *frater*.

19 Other medieval Danish inscriptions where Roman letters and runes are mixed in the same sequence are DR 57, DR DKBh65, DR DKSj8, DR NA1998;66, and DR ATA322-1309-2007, but since none of these are interpreted, they are not taken into account here. Apart from these, a possibly post-medieval inscription, DR 396, contains runes and Roman letters arranged in alphabetical order.

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Per Olof Sjöstrand

The cross of Sund

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the research and history of ideas regarding the enigmatic "cross of Sund" in Åland, observed by the Ålandic antiquarian Matts Dreijer in 1949 and made a cornerstone of his Åland-centered theories. According to Dreijer, the rune-like carvings on the top sides of the cross showed it to be the gravestone of Archbishop Unni of Hamburg-Bremen, who is said to have died and been buried in Birka in 936, thus placing Birka in Åland. These fabulous theories, which gained little or no support among scholars outside Åland, are rather to be seen in the context of producing an identity and ideology for the self-governed community of Åland in the political situation prevailing right after WW2. According to a later modification of Dreijer's interpretation by church researcher Åsa Ringbom, which was first presented in 1986, the cross is considerably younger, from approximately the fourteenth century, and does not place Unni's grave and Birka in Åland but would nevertheless be evidence of a tenacious tradition that Unni visited Åland and that Åland was an early target for Christian missionary activities. This complex of ideas can also be viewed in the light of attempts to bridge a problematic transition in Åland from the Late Iron Age to the Medieval Period and disprove theories of a comprehensive demographic decline or total depopula-

tion of the islands around the beginning of the second millennium. Besides highlighting the ideological sides of scholarship on Ålandic history and the ever-perplexing riddle of continuity, the present author uses source-critical grounds to denounce any connection between the cross and Archbishop Unni and the early missionary history of Åland and the Baltic Sea region; he proposes that it is a reconciliation cross [Germ. Sühnekreutz] from the latter part of the Middle Ages, probably the fifteenth century, raised because of a deadly conflict between foreign construction workers, most likely from Gotland, at the church of Sund. Not least considering the fact that the same theme as on the middle arm of the cross has been carved into the rockface by the nearby Kastelholm Castle, it seems more likely that the carvings are to be perceived as a form of secondary runic graffiti with a meaning tied to the reconciliation rather than mere random scribbles. The Latin adjective *venialis* 'excusable, forgivable' is suggested.

Figure 1: The cross standing inside the church of Sund.

Introduction

The "cross of Sund" (Sw. Sundskorset) in Sund parish in Åland has been known since time immemorial among locals and is, according to tradition, from the fourteenth century and erected in memory of church builder Mårten Klas, who had fallen after his envious rival, a church builder in the neighboring parish of Saltvik, had tampered with the scaffolding, a story first recorded in 1871.[1]

There are a few crude rune-like carvings on the cross, which is remarkable in light of the fact that there are otherwise almost no known runestones or runic writing in the Baltic area just east of modern-day Sweden, although they are numerous in Sweden itself, especially in the province of Uppland which is closest to Åland (cf. Lindquist 1969: 36–37, 47–49; Tarkiainen 2008: 108).[2] The situation is complicated by the fact that the carvings are placed on the upper sides of the cross in a rather peculiar composition so that it appears that they should be read from opposite directions (Lindquist 1968: 26–34). The cross is puzzling even in a European context. It is preserved unusually well and is extremely well carved. The placing of the carvings on the top sides is wholly unique (Ringbom 1986: 28–30). The cross has been called "the Nordic region's most controversial", with the ironic addition that "few people can disagree with greater learning than runologists" (Matz 1981: 138–141). It is natural that most topics relating to the more distant and obscure times around the dawn of Nordic history have been debated (cf. Hagerman 1996: 12), arousing more interest in paradoxes, ambiguity, instability, and indeterminacy. The subject is multidimensionally cryptic and lacks full transparency. Instead of a hardly accessible absolute correspondence, the emphasis is rather on the innovative and the creative, although not without an aim at synthesis (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994: 244–245).

The cross was originally situated c. 7.5 meters south of the southeastern corner of the church porch. Its full height is 188 cm, 135 cm above the ground; it is 75 cm wide and 9.5–12 cm thick. It is cut well and evenly and has the form of a Latin cross with a longer shaft. The equally

long, straight-ended arms diverge outwards. The cross has been broken, which allegedly, but hardly realistically, occurred in connection with a fire in May 1921. After that, it stood leaning on its foot. Due to a fantastic theory concerning the peculiar carvings on the top sides of its arms, it was taken to Ålands museum in Mariehamn for a short examination in February 1950 and after that was placed inside the church of Sund where it still stands today.[3]

Matts Dreijer and the cross

In order to understand the historical context in which this cross has been placed, the history of Åland in the twentieth century must additionally be considered. In the turbulent years of 1917–1918, a strong movement emerged in the culturally Swedish island province of Åland for a reunion with Sweden, which led to a protracted conflict between Sweden and the newly independent Finland; this was finally resolved in June 1921 by the newly formed League of Nations, so that Åland was granted to Finland in return for internal unilingual Swedish autonomy and a reinforced continuation of the demilitarisation the islands had enjoyed since 1856. Åland thus became to some extent a political unit of its own, which also entailed a growing need to construct its own identity.[4]

This has had a noticeable impact on the writing of history as an element in building a national identity. History was consciously used by the political movement for the reunification of Åland with Sweden, forming a matrix for the historiography that was to follow. The antiquarian office and educational institutions, as well as the provincial authorities, actively provided for historical learning. In the 1940s these activities were directed toward schoolchildren; in the 1950s a series of historical monuments were erected; the 1960s saw a marketing campaign for the system of autonomy; and in the 1970s a huge parliament house and administration building were erected in central Mariehamn, flanked by a provincial grand hotel and an extensive museum complex. This process meant a shift from reunion to self-government.[5]

The first head of the provincial government [Sw. lantråd], Carl Björkman (active 1922–1938), one of the leaders and the intellectual master of the reunion movement as well as the architect of the basic internal self-government structure, is said to have shown a keen interest in history, particularly stressing education for the masses in this field. It was especially important that the exploration of the history of the province be carried out by the Ålanders themselves, as this knowledge was a crucial ingredient in the sense of identity that he considered to be indispensable for the assertion of hard-won self-government. Funds were procured in 1929 to train a provincial archaeologist. The designated person did not, however, manage to complete his studies, so in 1933 the post was instead given to Matts Dreijer (1901–1998), whose lengthy and colourful career as an Ålandic history writer well into the 1990s cannot be ignored by any historiographer. In 1938, Ålands folkminnesförbund (the Ålandic association of folklore and historical remembrance), with Dreijer as secretary, established the yearbook *Åländsk odling* as a proper antiquarian channel for publication, complementing popular articles in the local newspaper *Åland*, for which Dreijer had also worked in various roles since 1920. In 1947, the Ålandic parishes, through the efforts of the energetic pastor of Finström, Valdemar Nyman, began to publish the annual Christmas book *Sanct Olof*, which in addition to ecclesiastical and spiritual topics also contained more general cultural-historical material.[6]

Dreijer was not committed only to history but was also widely engaged in industry and commerce as well as in politics as an *éminence grise*. In short, he was involved in most of what was happening in Åland from the 1920s almost to the end of the century (Snellman 1998–1999; Steinby 2000: 31–32; Nordman et al. 2022: 39, 61, 492–497). His significance in forming a self-governmental ideology by highlighting Ålandic particularity can hardly be overestimated.[7] His skilled political influence in stressing the continuing need for autonomous management for the preservation of ancient monuments in Åland is still well evident today in the fact that the antiquarian sector is obtrusively large in relation to other provincial management authorities (cf. Tudeer 1993: 224–227; Sundback 2006: 94–95).

An important local platform for Dreijer was the cultural foundation, Ålands kulturstiftelse, formed in 1949–52, with its starting economic basis in a major donation by the Swedish newspaper publishers' association VECTU, whose profits from Finland had been set due to prevailing currency regulations. The foundation is led by a college and Dreijer was its chairman (titled *preses*) from 1950 to 1970. It was a very exclusive coterie during its first decades, quite obscure on the outside and made up of the local intelligentsia; the members were selected internally. Significant safety devices had been introduced to keep the foundation firmly in Ålandic hands and the focus on Åland. The foundation was in practice more or less a creation of Dreijer, who received the purchased title of professor in 1969 – almost a kind of canonisation. During his time as chairman, Dreijer also repeatedly invited favourably-inclined researchers as lecturers to obtain support for his ideas (Steinby 2000).

As archaeological research in Åland developed, there appeared to be a lacuna in the archaeological record in and around the eleventh century, as the finds from the Late Iron Age start to decrease in the latter half of the tenth century and wholly disappear around the beginning of the eleventh, whereas the stone churches were dated to the latter part of the thirteenth century. In 1948, the Finnish archaeologist Helmer Salmo (1903–1973) proposed, in connection with the seemingly anomalous complete lack of eleventh and twelfth century coins from Åland, that the population had diminished drastically or had disappeared altogether (Salmo 1948: 423).

This obviously provoked Dreijer (cf. Hiekkanen 2012: 47), as that left, according to him with reference to Salmo (M. Dreijer 1950), only two alternatives, total depopulation or pervasive Christianisation from as early as circa 1000, so that the first Christian artefacts would in fact be from the eleventh century. In contrast to Salmo, Dreijer preferred the latter alternative, which also meant that the stone churches had to be considerably older, from the twelfth century; in practice this represented a return to the research situation current at the beginning of the twentieth century, when churches were mostly seen as artistic archi-

Figure 2: The middle arm seen from above.

tecture and were represented as being as old as possible (cf. Hiekkanen 1994: 21; 2020: 31). This line of reasoning was motivated by the discovery of an archaic limestone sculpture of a lion's head in the church of Jomala, which according to Dreijer dated from the first half of the twelfth century; this in turn turned his thoughts towards the archiepiscopal seats of Lund and Bremen.[8]

Following the journeys of the Frankish monk and later archbishop, Ansgar (801–865), as an imperial envoy to both Danes and Swedes in the ninth century, these peoples were formally claimed to be under the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen.[9] According to the clerical chronicler Adam of Bremen (I: 54–63) in the mid-1070s, Ansgar's later successor as archbishop, Unni (in office 918–936), travelled to Denmark in 935 and the next year to Birka in Sweden, where he fell ill, died and was buried, though his head was taken back to Bremen where it was entombed in the cathedral. He was venerated as a saint after his death. When the altar was taken down in 1840, a lead plate was found with the inscription *XV K. OCTOB(ris) O(biit) VNNIS ARCHIEP(is)C(opus)*, i.e. 15 days before the Kalendae in October (= September 17) Archbishop Unni died. His tomb was identified in the 1970s and appropriately contained only his head.[10]

Dreijer had observed the cross in Sund earlier but had not been able to find any meaning in its carvings. As his thoughts in 1949 turned to Birka and Adam of Bremen's story of Archbishop Unni's death and grave in Birka, he found that the carvings, or, as he believed, runes, on the cross could read **uin°i'i**, which suggested to him that they could be interpreted as *Uini e(piscopus),* 'Bishop Unni' (**i** can represent both *i* and

e). The sequence is broken by an equal-armed cross with additional, thinner diagonal lines, hereafter called *beaming cross* (represented with ✹ in transcriptions and with ° in transliterations). In February 1950, experts were called from both Sweden and Finland. According to the renowned Swedish runologist Sven B. F. Jansson (1906–1987), popularly known as "Run-Janne", the carvings were not runes but ornamentation and natural formations. The Finland-Swedish linguist, soon professor, Olav Ahlbäck (1911–1989), in turn, remarked that no connection could be established between the name *Unni* and a possible **uin°i** on the cross.[11]

Jansson held later a personal professorship in runology at Stockholm University 1955–1966 and was head of the Swedish National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet) 1966–1972 (Palm 2010a: 416). According to Edvard Matz (1981: 140), in a conversation in 1980 on the carvings on the cross of Sund, Jansson stated, "Foolishness! I do not believe in that at all [....]. It is not an inscription. I know there are divided opinions. But I do not believe in that." Lars Gahrn (1988: 175 n. 42) also reports that Jansson, in a phone call in 1983, still held the view that there were no runes on the cross, and he mentioned as well that his fellow antiquarian Sverker Jansson (1908–2005), who also participated in the examination of the cross in February 1950, was of the same opinion. It is hard to evaluate this strongly asserted negative assessment beyond a blank "no!", as it is only known through laconic correspondence between Jansson and Dreijer and later secondary sources. Jansson provided no detailed motivation and published nothing at all on the topic (cf. Lindquist 1968: 42, 46; Ringbom 1986: 22; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 32).[12]

Dreijer did not, however, give up. He began studying the papal letters concerning the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen and found that Unni's name was written *Wenni* in his pallium letter from 920, which would correspond to **uin°i** on the cross.[13] According to Dreijer, the beaming cross, turned 90 degrees clockwise, was also identical in its details to a symbol in the aforementioned letter, believed by Dreijer to be Unni's ideograph and later explained as a papal symbol. It seemingly

then became clear to Dreijer that the cross marked Unni's grave and thus that Birka was located in Åland.[14]

In May 1950, the site of the cross was excavated. It stood in a set of stones above a decomposed wooden coffin. Inside and beneath the coffin were the remains of several skeletons.[15] Later that year, Dreijer published an extensive paper on his new theories (M. Dreijer 1950), proudly and bombastically sensationalised by the local newspaper *Åland*. The issue of November 28, 1950, could be characterised as a "special edition" almost wholly dedicated to the topic of Birka in Åland. The reactions among scholars outside Åland were, however, quite tepid. The news was obviously not taken seriously and apart from a few short dismissive comments, there was only an embarrassing silence (Ringbom 1986: 11–13).[16] Dreijer later stated that he was not quite satisfied with his initial paper from 1950, as he was not at the time sufficiently initiated in the subject. After broadening his studies, he returned to the topic in numerous later publications and newspaper articles. His view of history, he said, had now been given a new direction. A total re-evaluation was required (M. Dreijer 1965a: 7).[17]

In June 1964, an accurate duplicate of the carvings on the middle arm of the cross, almost twice the size, was registered (Su 12.21) in a rockface by the open-air museum Jan Karlsgården in Kastelholm, also in Sund parish (c. 2.5 km from the church).[18] An archaeological excavation was being conducted nearby under the leadership of Professor Ella Kivikoski (1901–1990). The carving was discovered during a break by one of the members of the excavation team, the young Kurt "Mosse" Weber.[19] This is where this topic becomes curious. Was this perhaps some kind of prank or hoax? Malicious rumours had already been circulating that the carvings on the cross of Sund could have been made by Dreijer himself. According to what he had been able to find out, the carving in Kastelholm had been known to the locals for ages; people in their eighties had testified to seeing it in their youth but nobody had understood its meaning. One of the witnesses is mentioned by name, Margit Karlsson, a well-known and well-regarded longtime keeper of the café and inn by the open-air museum.[20]

On the other hand, the ethnologist Conny Andersson (b. 1970), himself a native of Sund who lives near Kastelholm, has stated he has not met anyone among the local population who had seen or heard of the carving before the 1960s (pers. comm.). While this represents a later perspective, it must nevertheless, along with the late discovery, reflect how the carving was not deeply rooted in local tradition. In any case, it seems now, c. 60 years later, futile to try to re-investigate definitely whether anyone living nearby in fact saw the carving well before 1964, but at least no one since has publicly claimed to know anything about its late creation and it also seems highly unlikely there was some kind of trickery behind a named well-known witness in the 1960s. To judge from photographs from the time of the discovery, the carving was quite weathered on the surface and must certainly have been there for a considerable time. It was geologically examined a few years after its discovery by Nils Edelman (1918–2005), professor in geology and mineralogy at Åbo Akademi 1964–1981. According to his estimate, it was c. 450 ± 200 years old (Edelman 1968a; 1968b; 1968c), which would mean from c. 1320 to c. 1720 with c. 1520 as a mid-point. The margins of uncertainty are quite wide but it must in any case be regarded as impossible that a prominent geologist such as Edelman could have been so wrong about a very recent carving.

Urged by Dreijer and by the professors Ella Kivikoski in Helsinki and Gerhard Hafström in Lund, another Swedish runologist, Professor Ivar Lindquist (1895–1985) from Lund, visited Åland in August 1968 in order to closely examine both the cross of Sund and the carving in Kastelholm. His two main questions were whether the carvings were runes and which one was copied from the other. Lindquist and Edelman were invited to speak at the autumn meeting of Ålands kulturstiftelse in October 1968; both their lectures were published in *Åländsk odling* later that year. Lindquist was even elected an honorary member of the cultural foundation (Steinby 2000: 94, 130).

Lindquist's paper on the subject is rather verbose and discursive, claiming the carving in Kastelholm could not be a recent fabrication but nor could it be from the classic runic epoch. Details in it suggested

it had been made by the antiquarian Johannes Bureus (1568–1652), known to have stayed in Åland in 1622 together with Queen Maria Eleonora while waiting for King Gustavus II Adolphus to return from the Livonian war, a time which also falls inside the frame of the geological dating. Bureus would have observed the characters on the cross of Sund and carved a larger copy in the rockface near the Crown's castle at Kastelholm, where they could be seen along the bridle path. There could be no doubt that the carvings on the cross were primary and authentic runes, Lindquist concluded (Lindquist 1968: 20–28; M. Dreijer 1984: 256–258). Lindquist's examinations were sensationalized in the ever-loyal and supportive local newspaper *Åland*, whose front page stated on August 24, 1968, "The runic cross in Sund is genuine" and, with reference to Dreijer, "Åland IS Birka", flanked by a huge photograph of Lindquist hard at work in Kastelholm.

The bold connection to Bureus is based on a comparison with copper plates with runes that Lindquist incorrectly attributed to Bureus. The carvings on these plates were actually made by Sigismund von Vogel (c. 1615–1655), a German graphic artist and engraver, connected from 1636 to the Swedish royal court where he was on the staff of the widow Queen Maria Eleonora (Svärdström 1936: 13). It is worth noting that he travelled to Moscow as a member of a large Swedish diplomatic delegation in 1647. It is, however, mere unconstrained speculation that he stayed in Åland, saw the carvings on the cross in the churchyard of Sund and made a copy of them in the rockface in Kastelholm. The carving in Kastelholm is nonetheless undoubtedly identical to the motif on the middle arm of the cross and would seem to be connected to the adjacent castle (Su 12.23) that has been there since the 1380s. The castle had by the mid-1600s lost its role as an administrative center in Åland and was ravaged by fire in 1644 (Palamarz 2004: 58–59; Samuelsson 2015: 205–207).

Lindquist also stated that there were additional runes on the cross (not included in the carving in Kastelholm). After the runes on the middle arm, the sequence continued upside down (that is, the signs would have to be seen from the opposite direction) on the left arm.

These signs read **lis**, which were related to the last **i** on the middle arm. The whole sequence on the cross would thus read **uin°i᾽i §lis** (**§** marks different carving surfaces, **°** the beaming cross and **᾽** a short vertical line at mid-height), which was given the meaning *Wenni Eliae s(on)*, 'Wenni Elis's son', that is, the latter part would be Unni's otherwise unknown patronymic, written in two parts. Lindquist also concurred with Dreijer that the beaming cross was identical with a sign in Unni's pallium letter composed by the Pope (Lindquist 1968: 26–36).

As regards the dating of the runes, Lindquist automatically assumed that they were from 936–950. Although the inscription was seen to contain only five distinct signs (ᚢ **u**, ᛁ **i**, ᚾ **n**, ᛚ **l**, ᛋ **s**), these were enough to establish clear conformity with Vedelspang I near Hedeby/Schleswig in today's northern Germany (this refers to DR 2), with typically Swedish runes from just after 950. The only punctuation mark (ᛁ᾽) on the cross of Sund also had an equivalent on Vedelspang I. The runes on the cross of Sund and Vedelspang I could even have been made by the same rune carver (Lindquist 1968: 36–41; cf. M. Dreijer 1979: 158).

A year later, Lindquist published a new interpretation as he considered 'Elis's son' both far-fetched and complicated. As the cross was seen to be connected to a high-ranking church dignitary, the language on the cross should rather be Latin. The sequence **uin°i᾽i §lis** would thus be *(hic iacet) Wenni ille s(anctus)*, '(Here lies) Wenni that man of God' [Sw. gudsmannen, meaning 'pious, godly'] (Lindquist 1969: 42–47). This was also endorsed by Dreijer, who nonetheless wanted to retain his *episcopus*. A single vertical line on the right arm, which Dreijer assumed to be **i**, was instead identified as the first letter in the word *ille*. The runes would thus be read from one direction on the middle arm and from the opposite direction on the side arms, **uin°i᾽i §i §lis**, *Wenni e(piscopus) ille s(anctus)*.[21]

This seems highly cryptic regardless of the arbitrariness in alternately interpreting individual characters as representing whole words. Besides, as Lindquist (1968: 32–33) also pointed out regarding **i** for *episcopus*, Unni had the rank of *archiepiscopus*, archbishop. Lindquist's own ponderous suggestion, with the rather irrelevant demonstrative pronoun

ille, conveying such a compressed message in two separate sections is hardly convincing either. There is, furthermore, nothing to indicate the order in which the two – or three – different parts on the arms, standing in opposite directions to each other, are to be read. The fundamental premise for these audacious interpretations is of course the fanciful assumption that the initial signs on the middle arm relate to the historical Archbishop Unni of Hamburg-Bremen who died and was buried in Birka in 936. As supposed Latin written in runes, the inscription should also be from later than the Viking Age and the *n* in *Wenni* might have been written twice, as with Roman letters (cf. Palumbo 2022a: 190–191).[22]

Furthermore, as Lindquist (1969: 49–51) admitted in his later paper, which hinted at verbal objections by colleagues, the few runic signs could provide no clues: they were commonplace and similar signs could be found all around Sweden. Nor is the Vedelspang inscription, to which he compared the cross of Sund, in Latin (cf. Ringbom 1986: 21–22; Nielsen 2000: 127–147). The dating of the supposed runes to the middle of the tenth century thus had no real basis. As the carvings were uniquely situated on the top sides of the cross, they hardly contained an epitaph. The cross could hardly mark the grave of Unni as the ground beneath was full of human skeletons. There had been several overlaying burials at the site in the hallowed ground of a Christian graveyard long before the coffin was interred.[23] This would in turn mean that the cross, or at least its placement, must be relatively young.

Nevertheless, although this view is not widely accepted and the whole topic is shrouded in ambiguity and uncertainty, it seems reasonable to state, not least with regard to the identical carving in Kastelholm, that the carvings on the cross *could* be taken to be meaningful runic or rune-like signs at least of some kind, although from a relatively late period, i.e. at least a few centuries after the classical epoch or even later.[24] The reluctance to even consider the possibility that the carvings could be runes of some type has obviously had less to do with the carvings as such than with the fact that the cross and the carvings on it were a cornerstone of Dreijer's and his followers' imaginative

and controversial theories *in majorem honorem Alandiae*, indefatigably reiterated and defended with infinite confidence. It is almost as if the mere idea that these carvings could be runes would be tantamount to acknowledging Dreijer's entire Viking Age and medieval history package. Any even tentative different runological interpretations have never even been attempted, at least in writing, most likely out of reluctance to deal with the problematic subject at all.

The very centrality of the cross for Dreijer, almost like a monopolised personal emblem, is well illustrated for example by the artistic sketch of the cross on the front cover of the anthology (ed. Weber 1984) published in honour of his 80th birthday in 1981 by Ålands folkminnesförbund. For Dreijer's 85th birthday in 1986, 250 copies of a medal were struck by Ålands kulturstiftelse, the same day he resigned from its college and was named an honorary member of the foundation. He himself contributed to the design: on the front it featured his portrait in profile, on the back a stylised image of the cross of Sund with its carvings highlighted along with the Latin inscription *PRO LABORE USUI ALANDIAE* ['for work for the benefit of Åland']. According to him, it should not be called the Dreijer Medal but the Wenni Medal. It was, he said, just a coincidence that the provincial archaeologist happened to be named Dreijer; anyone would have come to the same result (Hallenblad 1990: 42; Ylinen 1998: 29–30; Steinby 2000: 23–25).

Changing perspectives

Matts Dreijer was originally strongly influenced by the Swedish National History school of Harald Hjärne (1848–1922) in Uppsala, which advocated in the question of Åland around 1920 (Holmén 2015: 155). A shift occurred around 1950 after Helmer Salmo's unpopular suggestion of a break in Ålandic settlement in the eleventh century and after Dreijer found an archaic limestone sculpture in the church of Jomala. Instead of linking Åland with Sweden, the focus was now on emphasizing Åland as an important center in the northern part of the Baltic Sea with close Danish and continental contacts, with Åland,

along with southwestern Finland, attached to the Swedish kingdom only around 1240. Archaeological writing concentrated first and foremost on the question of where Birka had been situated. According to established understanding, the town of Birka was located on the island of Björkö in Lake Mälaren.

However, Dreijer was by no means unique in postulating a different location. Over the years, several places around Sweden have been identified as Birka by local patriotic enthusiasts.[25] In order to combine the pieces, Dreijer conducted extensive literature surveys (cf. M. Dreijer 1984: 254–255), showing an impressive knowledge of the sources connected with the period. But pressing his Åland-centered theories into these required a comprehensive denial of generally accepted facts, as well as imaginatively far-reaching interpretations and conjectures and omissions; a "cherry-picking" methodology characterised by free association and combination, which as time went on became increasingly deterministic and formulaic.[26] As with extreme constructionism, the "truth value" can hardly be intellectually grasped in terms of correspondence and coherence; the main point concerns pragmatism, practical usefulness, and significance, an underlying implied meaning.[27]

Dreijer states in his memoirs that the ambitious series *Det åländska folkets historia* ['The history of the Ålandic people'], which was launched in the 1970s and of which he wrote the first part, covering the period from the Stone Age to Gustavus Vasa in the 1520s (M. Dreijer 1979, second rev. ed. 1983, in English 1986a), was intended to strengthen the Ålandic people's sense of identity (M. Dreijer 1984: 323).[28] The historiographer Janne Holmén (2015: 157) notes that the aspiration of nation-building could hardly have been expressed more clearly. There is, however, little that is unique in this. Old churches and a rich pre-historic and early historic age of one's "own" have generally been important instruments in forming a national consciousness and self-assertion in relation to the outside world (Fewster 2006).

Dreijer's prolonged historical writing activity can be seen as serving varying needs of political legitimacy during different times with a radicalisation towards the end, when his questions and methodology,

based mostly in the earlier twentieth century, had become badly outdated vis-à-vis developments in the historical and archaeological disciplines. The basic shift around 1950 with the emphasis on north-south lines in the Baltic Sea is also to be viewed in light of the fact that the intimate political identification with Sweden, inherited from the Åland question in the aftermath of WW1 around 1920, was no longer possible in the new and harsh Cold War situation. On the other hand the state management in Finland led by President J. K. Paasikivi showed, in line with his *Realpolitik*, a new benevolent attitude toward the development of the autonomy of Åland, manifested in a thorough revision of the act of autonomy that came into force at the beginning of 1952.

Dreijer personally played an important role behind the scenes in formulating the Ålandic requests and finally in the dramatic approval of the revised law by the provincial parliament. As one studies the articles in the local paper *Åland* in late 1950 on the sensational discovery of Birka in Åland, it is impossible not to observe that they are intimately accompanied by excited voices surrounding the Finnish parliament's handling of the revision of the Ålandic self-government with both Soviet and Swedish diplomatic interventions due to the international character of the Åland solution in 1921 and the war-related Finnish-Soviet treaties from the 1940s.[29] In 1954, Åland was, on the basis of the new law, given an official flag of its own, a yellow cross on a blue background with a red stripe inside, after an earlier proposal had been vetoed by the President as too similar to the Swedish flag. The official flag was of great symbolic value and became very popular almost immediately. Dreijer also played a crucial role in devising heraldic symbols and emblems for both the province and the municipalities. The fact that Dreijer's historical theories could take such a wild and radical form was, according to Janne Holmén, due to the fact that the intellectual stratum in the small Ålandic society was relatively sparse, as well as to Dreijer's institutionalised head position and immense personal authority. There was thus no critical counterweight. On the other hand, Holmén also points to strong pragmatism, the use of history as a practical tool to promote the idea of autonomy, and the idea that sen-

sationalism was needed to enthuse an otherwise grudging audience (Holmén 2009: 323–325; 2015: 232–236).[30]

In his final great synthesis in the first part of *Det åländska folkets historia* (1979/1983), Dreijer states that "Unni's grave", marked by the cross of Sund, was excavated in 1951 (sic!) and that the coffin was entirely empty after having been plundered.[31] This is most obviously not in accordance with the original report from the excavation in May 1950, according to which both the coffin and the ground beneath it were full of skeleton parts. The bones were never subjected to any osteological investigations. The depiction of a small mound, on which the cross was supposed to have been standing, is also hardly compatible with the original report (Ringbom 1986: 30; 1991: 54–55).[32]

The sign in the pallium letter of Unni from 920 (facsimile M. Dreijer 1979: 159) that would correspond to the beaming cross on the cross of Sund is not the sign of either Unni or the Pope but a symbol of the invocation of God (functionally identical to a verbal phrase like *in nomine Domini amen*) in the initial protocol part and as such a conventional diplomatic feature. What is more, the letter in question is one of the pious forgeries of Hamburg from the eleventh and twelfth centuries that have been known since the seventeenth century. They list, for instance, as does the B-version of Rimbert's *Vita Ansgarii*, the Atlantic islands Faroes, Iceland, and Greenland, of which the latter two became known in Scandinavia only in the middle of the ninth and the late tenth century respectively.[33]

However, to address this concern and warp historical geography in general, Dreijer (1960: 31–32, 207–209; 1979: 124–142, 156–157, 168–169, 176–181, 186–187) in connection with attempts by the German Jesuit scholar W. M. Peitz (1876–1954) in the early twentieth century to "clean" these letters, claimed that the Atlantic islands in question were settled several centuries later than has usually been believed and that their names were originally Old High German "colonial" designations for areas around the Baltic Sea, namely Gotland, Åland, and western Finland respectively. The issue of the Hamburg forgeries is presented as the reverse, that is, the fake documents are genuine and vice versa. The

forger is considered to be none other than Pope Gregory VII around 1080, who wanted to separate the countries in the north from Hamburg-Bremen. This lack of scientific stringency, as well as many exaggerated features, made Dreijer's theories controversial and unacceptable to scholars outside Åland.[34] Dreijer himself (1984: 291–296) made no secret of the fact that he was targeted by severe criticism and was mostly ignored, which in turn only strengthened him in his beliefs. He was a monologist, immune to criticism and repeatedly and tirelessly hammering the same theses over and over (cf. Villstrand 1984: 337–338). Unfortunately, this has overshadowed his achievements in other areas (cf. Nordman et al. 2022: 497).

Since the end of the twentieth century, the popularity of Dreijer's theories has been in steep decline in local Ålandic historiography as well. This reflects the modernisation and diversification of Ålandic society as well as the fact that the radical tradition had become obsolete and had been dismissed as somewhat embarrassing by younger educated generations. In the publications of the local antiquarian authorities from the early twenty-first century there is little left of Dreijer's grandiose outlines (Holmén 2009: 319–320; 2015: 190–195).

However, the question of how the period c. 950–1250 in Åland is to be understood has remained an exceptionally divisive and controversial issue among scholars ever since the late 1940s, to a large degree depending on discipline and methodology and also whether Åland is seen as a center in the northern Baltic Sea in its own right or as a peripheral extension of the surrounding mainlands.[35]

Figure 3: The cross standing inside the church of Sund.

In the 1980s a new perspective was introduced by Professor Lars Hellberg (1914–2006), who systematically showed that the placenames are mainly of the same types connected with medieval settling as in the Swedish tracts in Finland, where the main element for primary settlements is *-by* and a male name as qualifier as well as secondary settlements with names constructed with *-böle* ['farm on outland'] and *-boda* [< OSw. *bodha*, 'sheds, barns'] and topographic names in the outskirts (cf. Brink 2008: 58–60), thus suggesting, in line with Helmer Salmo, depopulation and a later re-settlement in Åland in the twelfth century (Hellberg 1980; 1987).

Hellberg's general theory of a c. 150-year-long "void" in the settlement can be seriously questioned in light of later research in other fields and it is easy to criticise him for being too confident of details at times as well as presenting an outdated paradigm of the Nordic and Swedish state-building processes, yet various subsequent attempts to dislodge the etymologies, typologies, denotations and relative datings of the placenames *per se* have not been particularly convincing (cf. Orrman 1994: 682–683; 2002: 59; Sjöstrand 2014, passim).[36] Names can naturally have changed to some degree in a time when there were no cameral documents that could confirm their use (cf. Lars Huldén 2002: 64), but this could hardly have affected all or even a large portion of these – and new names would nevertheless naturally reflect contemporary settlement organisation.[37]

As regards considerations of geography and climate – the *longue durée* (cf. Samuelsson 2015: 371–377) – it is important to stress the ubiquitous interaction between land and water as well as the myriad of islands, sounds and inlets and the dominance of waterways. The Åland archipelago has been a stepping-stone between the Swedish and Finnish mainlands since time immemorial. The sea was important for communication and marine resources while the islands with their inland sheltered waterways were a convenient stop for the seafaring network. Duties and tributes were probably levied for pilotage and use of the inner straits during the Late Iron Age; these straits were well utilised and stimulated local shipping and eastern travel. Being closely tied to

the sea also had a negative side, as the islands were open to piracy, hence the six hillforts. This maritime nature has further meant that the landscape has been subject to constant change due to the land elevation to which the settlements and waterborne communications have had to adapt. The mainland Åland of today has grown by around 50 % since the end of the Late Iron Age. An extensive structural transformation has thus taken place from a distinctly archipelago-like landscape to an increasingly mainland-like one with larger flat surfaces.[38]

The Early Iron Age in Åland is quite obscure and difficult to define archaeologically. In the sixth century, the islands seem to have received a considerable influx of immigrants from central Sweden and formed a part of the Scandinavian cultural area throughout the Viking Age when the settlement was in full bloom. Both the material culture and the graves are generally Scandinavian in character but objects from Finland and the Baltics are also present. The most common form of burial is cremation under an earth mound. Almost 10,000 mounds have been raised on around 400 burial grounds, making a relatively dense settlement which mostly consisted of single farms. Special more diversified subsistence strategies were developed, with fishing, fowling and seal hunting as well as farming on light sandy soils and grazing on clay soils; pastoralism was concerned with sheep and goats rather than cattle.[39] The sixth-century immigration from the west could have been associated with the catastrophic so-called "dust veil event" of AD 536 and the following climate deterioration and turmoil as displaced populations moved to the islands where they were able to expand their subsistence beyond agriculture to marine livelihoods and find better and calmer living conditions (Ilves 2018b; 2022: 213–215).[40]

The societal system in general was, however, probably more like the Finnish in the east, with intertwined local powers based on farms and hillforts. Each single farm had its own family burial ground. The settlement was fairly dense but each burial ground's circle of users was quite limited (Harrison 2006: 425; Ruohonen 2018: 51). Several contiguous smaller, naturally demarcated settlement and farmland areas [Sw. bygder] can be distinguished. The six hillforts are built next to

or on the outskirts of such districts. The distribution of these hillforts in combination with differences in the archaeological record implies that Åland consisted of two broad polities, one in the northeast and one in the southwest, with somewhat different external contacts. Each of these two polities had three hillforts, symbolic manifestations of each of the six different cohesive polities or regions. These might all have had a common meeting point or assembly place on the island of Tingön ['Assembly island'] at the geographical center of the Åland islands by the bay Lumparen, where the waterways radiate out in several directions (Heininen et al. 2014: 335–337; Fallgren 2020: 170–171; Ilves 2022).[41]

Towards the shift of the millennia, however, and simultaneously with the disappearance of the town of Birka in Mälaren and the dissolution of the eastern trade, the influx of coins ends, and the grave goods seem to disappear. Almost 1,400 coins from the Late Iron Age have been found in Åland, most of them in hoards. The oldest are from the sixth century but most date from the ninth and tenth centuries and consist exclusively of Oriental coins, with the exception of one Anglo-Saxon coin from 924–936. The youngest coin is from 959. The finds of characteristic Ålandic clay paws – or just simply "hands" – in graves in Yaroslavl and Vladimir by the river Volga in Russia seem to indicate that Ålanders had travelled far to the east, if the Russian "hands" are not just a distant parallel phenomenon. When in Scandinavia and Sweden the influx of Oriental coins ceased around the turn of the millennium, huge amounts of western coins started to flow in instead, especially Anglo-Saxon ones, reflecting the renewed Scandinavian activity in the west which obtained increasingly large tributes in England and finally resulted in a short-lived Danish-English empire 1013/16–1042. In Åland, however, the Oriental coins were not replaced by western coins or indeed any coins whatsoever. Coins are thereafter found only in the church floors from the late twelfth century and the first part of the thirteenth. This seems quite striking as SW Finland also boasts c. 300 Islamic, c. 1,000 Anglo-Saxon and c. 4,000 German coins together with a few Scandinavian, Irish, Bohemian, Hungarian, Spanish and Byzantine ones, mostly from the latter part of the eleventh century.[42]

The grouping and toponomy of the historically known settlement is in general not congruous with the numerous Late Iron Age remains as the basic primary villages are so relatively few and have names of medieval origin, denoting single farms.[43] There are also several villages with names of the collective type denoting the dwellers' origins from different Swedish provinces and one (Fin[n]by in Sund) from southwestern Finland. As well as some other names incorporating *Fin[n]*, there are probably also a few names of direct Finnish origin, originally denoting natural features: *Sålis* [< EFi. **Soolaksi* 'marsh inlet'] in both Hammarland and Saltvik respectively, possibly also *Posta[d]* [< EFi. **Poosta* 'shore meadow'] in Hammarland. The odd parish name *Jomala* [< EFi. *jumala* 'god'] most likely has a more complex hybrid background, ultimately arising from a topographic feature in Jomalaby important for seafarers. Remarkably, there are also some names incorporating *Lapp-* (Sjöstrand 2021). These phenomena could have been due to the comprehensive diversion of trade routes and increasing piracy in the Baltic; Åland fell into severe isolation with considerable instability and demographic decline starting from the late tenth century. Åland once again became a place of interest during the late twelfth century in the Swedish expansion eastwards, which resulted in a mostly new settlement of the islands and thus a toponymic disruption and dislocation of the settlement, a process which also attracted some smaller groups of Finnish and Lappish settlers, perhaps mainly fishermen and hunters with a special ecological and economic niche (Heininen et al. 2014: 342–345; Sjöstrand 2014: 143–144; Hiekkanen 2020: 457–459).

Silver coins as well as precious metals in general were associated with more abstract forms of social wealth, such as honour and success, a materialisation of the owner's prosperity and good fortune (cf. Hagerman 1996: 37–41). Although traffic and the exchange of goods and coins was greatly reduced, however, fields, forests, fishing, and sealing waters and livestock did not stop yielding (cf. Raninen & Wessman 2015: 301), but as a distinctive archipelago region, Åland must have been more vulnerable to natural hazards and changing economic impacts (cf. Jaatinen et al. 1989: 28, 55); falling outside traffic flows and

being exposed to increased piracy and enslavement could well have had devastating effects (cf. Harrison 2019b: 52–53). The time around the year 1000 also meant an important phase in the Nordic state formation in terms of Christianisation, transformation of the plunder economy into internal appropriation as well as external relations with the German Empire, Poland, and the Russian Empire (Hagerman 1996: 95, 99, 414; Hyenstrand 1996: 151–152).

A discontinuous scenario c. 950–1250 would mean that the subsequently known Ålandic settlement had no direct and strong roots tracing back to the archaeologically known settlement in the Late Iron Age but rather a common history with the Finland-Swedish settlement established c. 1150–1350 (cf. Orrman 2002: 59–60). That does not – *per se* – seem to be contradicted by the fact that Åland was counted as part of the eastern land(s) of the Swedish realm (*partes orientales*) and was thus seen in the same context as the other eastern lands open for Swedish settlement. Åland was part of the Finnish bishopric of Turku as well as the Turku castle county and the Finnish lawspeaker's district; after the latter was divided in 1435 Åland became part of the northern district (Norrfinne) together with northern Finland Proper, Satakunta and Ostrobothnia. With the erection of Kastelholm Castle in the 1380s, Åland became a castle county of its own c. 1400. The Ålandic ecclesiastic taxation was also of the same kind as in the young medieval Swedish settlements along the coasts of SW Finland; a special Ålandic seal tithe [Sw. tionde, Fi. kymmenys] is mentioned in the 1330s.[44]

The toponymic discontinuity also leaves open the question of the vernacular language or languages of the Late Iron Age settlement beyond the most general impressions of Scandinavian predominance (Ahola et al. 2014). Archaeology alone is really not an unambiguous source in questions of ethnicity (the kaleidoscope of "us and them") and language affiliation.[45] Regardless of the placenames, if Nordic languages had been spoken continuously in Åland as an eastern frontier offshoot since far back in prehistoric times, a more or less peculiar insular dialect should have developed, but it is not possible to trace it in later local language; such a population must have disappeared or become so

small and scattered that it was wholly assimilated by medieval immigrants. The dialects spoken in Åland in historical times are part of a continuum of the neighboring areas in the west and east (cf. Ivars 2002: 96–97; Ahola et al. 2014: 234).

The depopulation thesis has not been accepted, or has at least been regarded as far less likely, by "official" history writers in Åland (cf. Holmén 2009: 323; 2015: 196–197), who have instead spoken of an early Christianisation and thus held the view that the Ålanders have continuously comprised the same mainly Scandinavian stock since prehistoric times.[46] There has, however, been a divide concerning this in Åland as well.[47] Notably, these outlooks also tend to mix the historical population with the "ideological people" (cf. Fewster 2000: 107–113).

Nevertheless, some recent archaeological excavations and especially pollen investigations attest to continuous cultivation and settlement in larger sectors as well as an intensified clearing of the landscape and an increase in land use during the critical period in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[48] It can also by and large be regarded as improbable that a prosperous settlement area would suddenly be left wholly unused (cf. Asplund 2008: 367). The period c. 900–1300 in general was characterised by a favourable climate and tremendous economic and demographic expansion.[49]

The early phases of the transition to Christianity can only be investigated archaeologically, almost solely through changes in burial customs, a meagre and fragmented source material which is open to different interpretations as so little is known about contemporary understandings of Christianity.[50] As the Ålandic archaeological picture is so fragmented, only a handful of burial grounds have been fully excavated and a firm chronology based on modern scientific dating methods is still lacking concerning the date of abandonment of the pre-Christian burial grounds; the available dating of the youngest artefacts found in some of these to c. 1000–1050 on partly obsolete, stylistic grounds alone are most probably too early as older forms and customs could have prevailed due to the displacement of trade routes.[51]

Inhumation graves appear simultaneously all over SW Finland around AD 1000. According to one opinion, the upper layers of society would have started to build private farmyard churches from the late eleventh century. These were not necessarily associated with cemeteries but more likely the first Christian communities were village communities [Fi. kyläyhteisöt, Sw. bygemenskaper]; one or a few villages together built private churches, probably at older burial grounds, thus ensuring cultic continuity of place. They may have been served by an employed priest or an itinerant missionary. A later parish area could contain several such small private village churches. A fixed parish organisation and related taxation led to the construction of public "central churches" that could encompass tens of villages, whereby the older small village churches fell out of use. The first signs of a lasting and more stable ecclesiastical organisation date from the second quarter of the thirteenth century with the English-born bishop Thomas (d. 1248), who appears to have been an effective organiser (Ruohonen 2018: 51–65; Salonen 2018: 13–17, 47–50, 65–72; Hiekkanen 2020: 16–26).

In addition to considerable chronological uncertainties in Åland, the question of Christianisation in general is also enigmatic, as there seems to be no typical transitional stage (cf. Ambrosiani 1981–1982: 78; Raninen & Wessman 2015: 299–301; Hiekkanen 2020: 457). This could, however, be an oversimplification due merely to the lack of investigation.[52]

Rapid shore displacement and land elevation must also have been beneficial to the agrarian economy (cf. Fallgren 2020: 169). Considering that most of today's arable land is situated under 10 and a large portion even under 5 m above sea level, the land was most probably more or less fully utilised as far as technically possible already in the Late Iron Age when the sea level was c. 6 to 9 m higher. A proper agricultural landscape may have appeared only at the beginning of the Middle Ages. Prehistoric Åland was barren and inhospitable; there were simply no large-scale land resources (Jaatinen et al. 1989: 25–35).[53] The sixth-century establishment of a new grave custom with earth mounds

instead of stone cairns can in itself be seen as a result of neolithisation, i.e. a relative shift or extension of the focus of supply strategies to agriculture and animal husbandry along with maritime industries (Tuovinen 2002: 117). The area suitable for cereal cultivation with light soils was nevertheless very limited. There was extensive dependence on imports of grain, iron, and salt. Exports included seal products, hides, foodstuffs, and other natural products. The import of luxury items and silver in addition to the basic needs for iron, salt and grain required considerable exports, including seal-oil, hides and the like (Tomtlund 2005: 30; Lindholm 2020: 27–30, 35–36).

The indications of an expanding agriculture given by pollen investigations are most likely at least partly connected with the land elevation which, on the other hand, also had the effect that the central north-southerly waterway passage through Åland was cut off at Strömma [< OSw. *strömber*, *strömer* 'stream'] in Saltvik; it is unknown exactly when, but probably sometime between 900 and 1100.[54] It must in any case have been a blow for those dependent on it (cf. Núñez 1995: 114–116) and meant that central places in the middle of Åland, such as "Saltvik"/Kvarnboda, were frequented by external shipping much less than before. At the same time, there must have been some changes in the organisation of agriculture itself and in agricultural technology with new and better tools and more efficient farming and working methods (cf. Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 113–114).

There was, furthermore, a dense ecclesiastical network quite early on.[55] In the oldest surviving documents from the 1320s, Åland was already a provostry [Lat. praepositura, Sw. prosteri, Fi. rovastikunta] with a provost as middleman between the bishop and the parish priests. The first stone churches in the Finnish diocese were built in Åland (cf. Ullén 1999: 263–264). Parishes were formed a few decades into the thirteenth century and it became possible to build stone churches with the development of ecclesiastical taxation from the latter part of the same century. The church of Jomala, at least from c. 1280, is actually the oldest masonry stone construction in the whole of modern Finland. Fifteen independent parishes and semi-independent chapel con-

gregations were created between about 1220 and 1560. Eleven stone church projects were initiated, and there was in addition a Franciscan convention in Kökar and a seafarers' chapel in Lemböte (Hiekkanen 2020: 459, 489, 511–512, 515).[56] As revealed by investigations underneath the churches, coins were also in general use in Åland as early as the first part of the thirteenth century, which testifies to a certain societal organisation with authorities. On the Finnish mainland, monetisation took place only at the beginning of the fourteenth century.[57]

As well as in age and style, Åland's stone churches also differ from most of the diocese's other parish churches in their sturdy towers, which were mostly built separately later; the towers were also visible markers for seafarers.[58] Eight Ålandic medieval mother parishes and a total of 15 independent and semi-independent congregations can be compared to Finland Proper with 26, Satakunta 15, Tavastia 15, Uusimaa 14, Ostrobothnia 12, Karelia 8, and Savonia 3, a total of 101 (in 1540). The density was clearly greatest in the southwest including Uusimaa, as the demographic point of gravity was here (Pirinen 1991: 155, 344–347; Törnblom 1993: 314–318).[59]

There can thus hardly have been any long general evacuation of the Åland islands at all but that does not rule out shorter local breaks and dislocations.[60] Pollen investigations have a low time resolution and do not reflect short-term fluctuations and disruptions; neither do they tell who the cultivators were or how their settlements were organised (cf. Roeck Hansen 1991: 23; Orrman 2002: 58; Taavitsainen 2002: 103).[61]

The common basis for settlement archaeology are sites containing archaeological data and their patterning (Asplund 2008: 11). A further peculiarity in the Åland archaeological record is the significant number of stone house foundations that have been loosely dated to the Late Iron Age and Early Medieval Period.[62] They have at times been interpreted as signs of major desertion (cf. Ambrosiani 1981–1982: 78; Orrman 2002: 58).[63] Another explanation has been that they result from a general redistribution of cultivated land so that scattered single farms were nucleated into villages with joint cultivations divided into strips (M. Dreijer 1979: 103–104, 199; Roeck Hansen 1988: 133–134; 1991:

27–29). General conclusions of this or any other type concerning these foundations are however doomed to fail as some are obviously considerably younger and no solid chronology is available.[64]

The house types are uniquely "Ålandic" and the building tradition seems in any case to have lived on unchanged from the Late Iron Age into the Late Medieval Period. Although the overall picture of the house foundations is fragmented and uncertain, they must at least belong mainly to the period 950–1250 and are, above all, to be seen, along with the burial grounds, in direct connection with the very common placenames containing *bolstad* ['dwelling site'], *tomt(en)* ['plot'], *kulla* and *hög* [both referring to mounds] that describe the traces of abandoned settlement superimposed by later settlement (cf. Hellberg 1987: 142–167; ironically also M. Dreijer 1979: 58, 120). Even the very "flagship" of Late Iron Age Ålandic settlement research, Storhagen in Kulla in Finström (Fi 10.3), consisting of seven house foundations excavated in their entirety in the 1940s by Ella Kivikoski, is said to have been in use from the late seventh century and abandoned in apparently orderly form in the early eleventh century, supplemented by recent radiocarbon dates concerning the internal chronology.[65] Historic Kulla [Kulla 1406, 1438 < OSw. *kulle* 'hill'] belongs to a group of villages in SW Finström secondary to Gölby [*Göl* < *Görd*, 'Görd's farm'] in northern Jomala.[66]

This peculiarly contradictory picture of expanding cultivation and an unbroken building tradition but few or no indicative artefacts, many deserted settlements and the best-known Late Iron Age settlement site being abandoned in the early eleventh century, while the placenames reflect medieval settlement, is indeed a very intriguing and frustrating problem (cf. Fallgren 2020: 169).

Should then theories of catastrophe or reorganisation be preferred (cf. Roeck Hansen 1988: 134)? Conclusions have been drawn depending on which bodies of superficially conflicting evidence have been favoured, with the extremes of harmoniously continuing settlement versus total break and depopulation respectively, whether shorter or longer or a varied process but involving the replacement of the popu-

lation. The latter has typically been espoused by those who place most weight on onomastic evidence, given the absence of any reliably recognisable pre-medieval names. Placenames, however, illuminate the end result of processes rather than the events themselves. Placenames do not provide full historical narratives, only contextual hints, but since they are a mass material, their potential as socio- and cultural-historical sources is great (Brink 2008: 57).

And venturing beyond demographics, it is worth asking how Åland became part of a diocesan network and how royal power established itself in Åland (cf. Lindkvist 2002: 39). Was this a peaceful process or could there have been a more or less violent confrontation between the traditional local powers and a new expanding supraregional regnal power (cf. Harrison 2020a: 102–109; 2020b: 8–9, 127–128)? Could Åland even have been forcefully conquered and existing settlements thus taken over and renamed, as recently suggested by the archaeologist Jan-Henrik Fallgren (2020; cf. Lindström 2022: 501)?[67]

The obscure personal power structures of the Iron Age are difficult to understand empirically. They have left no institutional traces although archaeological evidence can be utilised for rudimentary local reconstructions.[68] Åland or parts thereof may well have been included in larger, more or less loose and short-lived naval overlordships and concluded transitory peace agreements with different neighbors, but it is impossible to know anything in detail. A Christian Swedish regnal state claiming monopoly on legitimate violence has only existed from around the middle of the thirteenth century. First starting to take shape in Götaland under Danish and Western European influence with a more institutional exercise of power, it then spread to Svealand, and included Finland at the end of the thirteenth century, while larger war efforts were directed towards the innermost parts of the Gulf of Finland, the prerequisites and ideological framing of which lay in older contacts with the Greek Orthodox Russian Empire. Medieval Sweden remained, however, a very confederate kingdom, consisting of different "lands".[69]

The available sources are of a very varied, vague, and ambiguous character.[70] Not only have different disciplines come to different conclu-

sions but even representatives of the same discipline can give wholly contradictory statements. Whereas the archaeologist Torsten Edgren (1993: 228; 2008: 477) talks of evident continuity, for example, there are, according to his colleague Markus Hiekkanen (2010a; 2012: 48; 2020: 457–459), no known artefacts whatsoever from the decades after the beginning of the eleventh century and thereafter until around 1200 when the first wooden churches began to be erected, mostly by recent Christian settlers from Sweden.[71]

As well as the inevitable influence of personal point of view and superficially conflicting source material, there are also issues of semantics (especially what is meant by "continuity" in specific contexts) and poor chronological resolution (cf. Barrett 2008: 412–413). The meeting of quite different disciplines and methodological traditions easily leads to confusion concerning concepts and categories (cf. Moe 1995: 37, 53–54, 101). A lack of consensus does not, however, have to be seen as a disadvantage. It means that the problematic field is kept alive and that new research is added from different viewpoints (Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994: 258, 261–262; Nordbladh 2009: 79). It is, in regard to these dim and distant times, often very easy to criticise but more difficult to create something tenable of one's own from ambiguous clues.[72] In this lies a pedagogical lesson about how much is obscure and elusive in the absence of written sources. One must show humility in the face of the unsolved riddles and allow various interpretive possibilities leeway (Harrison 2009: 152–153, 166–167).

Given the lack of written sources on Åland before the fourteenth century, the churches and the areas around them appear all the more important as sources for the previous centuries.[73] Since the 1990s there has, however, also been an emotional controversy concerning the age and character of the stone churches of Åland.[74] Whereas the Ålandic project *Ålands kyrkor*, led by Åsa Ringbom (2010), dates six of the stone churches in mainland Åland along with Eckerö to the thirteenth century, the Finnish archaeologist Markus Hiekkanen (1994; 2003; 2020) has launched a wholly new understanding of stone church architecture in Finland in which traditional dating methods have been replaced

by a new classification system, according to which most of the stone churches of the medieval Finnish diocese and their inventories are considerably younger, which also largely applies to Åland. The differences are first and foremost due to different methods of research, and especially concern the reliability of radiocarbon dating of mortar.[75] There is also an apparent ideological divide.

Despite dissimilar views on the dating and description of the stone churches as well as the question of continuity, there is nevertheless a fairly good mutual understanding between Ringbom and Hiekkanen, mainly due to archaeological evidence under the churches (including coins from the early thirteenth century and in Finström one from the late twelfth century) that the stone constructions were preceded in the same places by wooden churches, probably from around the very beginning of the thirteenth century. At the latest before the mid-thirteenth century, a network of parishes was formed in central Åland. A major argument for settlement continuity by Ringbom based on Milton Núñez (1993: 61–62, 68–70; 1995: 117–121) is the fact that the mainland Ålandic churches, with the exception of Finström, were built by the largest Late Iron burial grounds in each parish, thus attesting to cultic and demographic continuity.[76] This would of course seem natural as parish churches in general were often built where people had gathered earlier in pre-Christian times.[77]

That is true in the cases of Saltvik, Jomala, Lemland and Eckerö, but not in regard to Sund, nor really Hammarland either.[78] Nor is general spatial centrality necessarily synonymous with unbroken chronological continuity as the settlement's possible spread was in any case dictated by the natural topography and the scarcity of arable land (cf. Jaatinen et al. 1989: 32–35). Seen from a historical perspective, the places where the churches were built are secondary to settlements with clearly medieval names, to which much be added the total lack of any kind of placenames indicating pre-Christian cultic sites or activity, be it by the churches or anywhere else.[79]

According to archaeologist Marcus Lindholm (2020: 28), it is undeniable that there was during the latter part of the eleventh century a

strong demographic recession in parts of Åland; the population size decreased and many peripheral settlements were abandoned. The causes are unknown; in the absence of written material one can only speculate. Lindholm concludes that land elevation could have played a role by making the harbor locations unusable and therefore initiating the formation of villages. In my opinion, the decline must largely be seen as the result of the reversal of the major seaborne trade routes along with profound political changes in Northern Europe and the closure of the major sheltered north-south internal waterway through Åland due to land elevation, placing Åland in an unfavourable isolated backwater. An increased concentration on local agriculture, forced by necessity, would then in fact seem quite logical simultaneous with total settlement contracting after a zenith in the Viking Age. This process may by some stage around the middle of the twelfth century or soon thereafter have gone so far that the population's collective resistance to extended external threats of slave-seeking piracy had reached a critical level, resulting in one or several short-term disruptions and subsequent much sparser re-settling of both the older indigenous population and Christian new-comers from several different directions (cf. Sjöstrand 2014: 143–144).[80]

This final swift stage in this process unfolded to a certain degree independent of the previous denser and now probably largely inapplicable settlement pattern (cf. Ambrosiani 1981–1982: 78–79). The possible spread and land utilisation in general nevertheless remained the same as before. The phenomenon of burial grounds on the actual borders between villages also shows an awareness of these monuments, but in a partially new context as markings of new boundaries and territories. A more fixed cultural landscape did not in any case exist at this time (cf. Jaatinen et al. 1989: 25–30). With an initially confused new demographic situation, the interaction between ideological, political, and economic systems was volatile alongside a troubled and unstable linguistic environment, where different dialects struggled with each other for supremacy. All of this contributed to the re-shaping of the onomastic landscape and finally, along with a new administrative order, in

creating a new medieval "Ålandic" provincial identity alongside local farm, village and parish identities.

This was in the era of the Swedish kings Knut Eriksson (d. 1195) and Sverker Karlsson (d. 1210), Earl Birger Brosa (d. 1202) and his sons, the earls Knut (d. 1208) and Folke (d. 1210), Earl Jon (d. 1206) and the ambitious Danish archbishops of Lund Absalon Assarsen (d. 1201) and Andreas Sunesen (d. 1228) who also oversaw the Swedish Church with papal authority. They were all closely related to each other, which shows the insignificance of the concept of "nation" during this era when kinship and religion dominated politics. By the end of the twelfth century, the mission on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea entered a militarised crusading phase (Hagerman 1996: 361–373; Lindström 2015; Harrison 2019c: 89–111).

Even if the new stirred-up settlement in Åland was not necessarily "controlled" from on high, but rather the encouraged spontaneous movement of free peasants, this was the time when crown and church stepped in directly as more effective protective and organising powers. This power was manifested in the creation of a stationary bishopric for the lands east of the Mälaren region at the beginning of the thirteenth century, later known as the bishopric of Turku. Seen from a wider perspective, the resettling of Åland was obviously part of a larger Swedish population wave from the late twelfth century which continued on to Turunmaa and western Uusimaa (cf. Haggrén 2015: 421; Lindström 2015: 194, 197; Raninen & Wessman 2015: 340; Hårdstedt 2023: 52–53).

Early mission?

In almost every instance, the cross of Sund has been given attention only in the context of Matts Dreijer's theories rather than as an artefact in its own right. Some have treated it briefly as being of no significance at all.[81] Others have shown more curiosity, although without admitting to any preference for placing Birka in Åland.[82] One of the first undertakings of Ålands kulturstiftelse was to commission the com-

pilation and publication of medieval sources on Åland. The editor and translator Johannes Sundwall (1877–1966) had been a professor in history of classical antiquity (Steinby 2000: 15–16, 60–66). The cross was included in the first part of *Ålands medeltidsurkunder* (I: 1, 1954: VIII), with photographs and a drawing of the carvings together with a mention of Dreijer's interpretation. In a review of the volume, Jan Liedgren (1955) stated that it had a "disfiguring stain" [Sw. vanprydande fläck], as the cross had been included among the images. The sensational interpretation that Dreijer had made of the carvings on the upper cross arm was, as Sven B. F. Jansson had pointed out, completely wrong.[83]

At home in Åland, Dreijer had a loyal follower in Valdemar Nyman (1904–1998), and later in Erik Bertell (1911–1996) at a stage when the theories were already in question.[84] As Dreijer was the chairman of Ålands kulturstiftelse 1950–1970, he was succeeded by Nyman 1970–1971, who had been vice chairman 1957–1970. Dreijer and Nyman sat on the board of the foundation 1950–1986 and Bertell 1973–1992 (Steinby 2000: 135–136). Dreijer was also chairman of the editorial board of *Det åländska folkets historia* launched in 1970 while Nyman was one of its four members (M. Dreijer 1979: VII, IX). While the ecclesiastical yearbook *Sanct Olof* (established in 1947) was managed by Nyman (Gäddnäs 2015: 118–121), both he and Dreijer were also members of the four-man editorial board of *Åländsk odling* from 1943, Dreijer until 1972, Nyman until 1981 (Moring 1981). This should more than amply illustrate the astonishing narrowness of local public historical life in Åland back in those very formative years.

Serious scholars outside Åland who wholeheartedly accepted the idea of the cross placing Birka in Åland are hard to find.[85] Friedrich Ochsner (1973: 26) seems to be one of only a few while J. A. Hellström (1971: 72–78) is ambivalent.[86] It was, incidentally, through Hellström's earlier studies and his work on a dissertation in Lund which was completed in 1971 that Professor Ivar Lindquist in the mid-1960s first became acquainted with the alleged runic carvings in Åland (M. Dreijer 1984: 257). The professor of medieval history in Copenhagen, Niels Skyum-Nielsen (1921–1982), is reported to have stated in a lecture for

Ålands kulturstiftelse in Mariehamn in 1974 that it was "clearly proven" [Sw. klart bevisat] that the cross of Sund was erected for Archbishop Unni, either as a death cross or as a memorial cross, for which reason it could not be ruled out that Unni had died in Sund (Steinby 2000: 97). The German stone cross specialist and editor of *Steinkreuzforschung*, Rainer H. Schmeissner (1978) in a separate brochure on the cross of Sund closely follows Dreijer and Lindquist. A late decisive argument for Birka being in Åland with very free interpretations was made by the amateur historian Carl O. Nordling (1998). Heikki Oja (2015: 215–220) refers to Dreijer's theories without himself taking any stance on the issue.[87]

For decades, nobody but Dreijer himself had tried to analyze the cross of Sund in any thorough way. In his earlier writings he still discussed the topic openly but later his reasoning became quite narrow and rigid. According to him, the cross could be from 936, the year of Unni's death although it could also be from the following century, having replaced an original cross of wood.[88]

In 1986, art historian Åsa Ringbom published a new wide-ranging study of the cross, viewing it in a larger context and in comparison with other stone crosses with respect to function, meaning, dating, and origin.[89] She also wanted to emphasise traditions connected to Archbishop Unni that would show that the cross had parallels elsewhere.

The cross is made of limestone from the Ordovician period, which can also be found as loose boulders in Åland (Nyman 1980: 2; Ringbom 1986: 22–23; Roeck Hansen 1991: 39). The phenomenon of stone crosses is spread over most of Europe and they are difficult to date precisely. The variations are vast and the same types could be in use for long periods. Typological reasoning is thus of limited use. The crosses could also serve different functions, such as commemorating missionaries and preachers, or as reconciliation and grave markers. The first functions mentioned are the oldest ones while the reconciliation crosses are younger and more common. A uniform tradition all over Europe from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, they were erected to commemorate people who had died in violent circumstances. Grave

crosses are relatively rare and also quite late. Detached grave crosses of stone date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and onwards (M. Dreijer 1953a: 51–53; Ringbom 1986: 24–30).

A strikingly similar cross of stone found in Pernaja (today a part of the town of Loviisa), eastern Uusimaa, originally on the southern side of the church in the church yard, was subsequently lost although it was still there in the 1870s. Its arms were 60 x 60 cm and it appears that it had nothing written on it. According to tradition, it was raised in honour of the builder of the church. The cross was documented in 1876 by Reinhold Hausen (1850–1942), who also noted the parallel in Sund in Åland (R. Hausen 1887: 236; Cleve 1972: 128; Hiekkanen 2020: 580). Dreijer, too, noted the similarity with the cross in Pernaja, which according to him was associated with the mission of Archbishop Unni along the eastern route in the Baltic Sea (M. Dreijer 1950: 99–100; 1953a: 51–52, 54).

The two crosses were, however, not fully identical. The one in Pernaja was smaller and appears rather to have been of a Greek type with uniform dimensions. That is, however, not fully certain, as the cross may have been fixed in the ground (Ringbom 1986: 33–34). According to C. A. Nordman (1892–1972), it was from the thirteenth or fourteenth century (Kartano 1947–1948: 93–94). In Korpo (now a part of the town of Pargas), Åboland, Finland Proper, there is a 147 cm high cross of limestone fixed into the gable of the church which is also associated with a tradition of the death of a church builder. However, it differs in decoration and shape as the arms end triangularly and it is decorated with four-pass rounds along with cross-like ornamentation (Cleve 1972: 128; Ringbom 1986: 34). Markus Hiekkanen (2020: 109–110) dates the church in its entirety to around 1440 and the cross, also noted by him, accordingly appears to be contemporary.

Only a few corresponding crosses can be found in Sweden. In Gotland there are a handful of limestone crosses from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries while in Estonia it has numerous counterparts dating from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century (Ringbom 1986: 34–36). The recurring element of the dead church builder would seem

to be a migratory legend and thus of dubious historical value (M. Dreijer 1953a: 53–54; Ringbom 1986: 38; Ekrem 2008: 81–84). This argument must, however, be assessed critically, as it is simultaneously actively tied to the attempts to give the cross of Sund a completely different background. There are in any case no known folk traditions whatsoever in which the cross had anything to do with a Viking Age German high-ranking church official, still less that Birka really could have been in Åland.

The cross in Korpo was made in Estonia. The same is probably true of the cross in Pernaja as such limestone is not found in eastern Uusimaa. The cross in Sund might also be from Estonia. Gotland might also be suggested but that would seem less likely as the cross should then have been made of Silurian limestone. It is hard to get beyond circumstantial evidence. The cross in Sund could have been locally made or it could have been made by an expert from Gotland or Estonia working on building the church in Sund. Ringbom believes that the question must be left open, as must the exact dating of the cross. In any case, it was not erected to mark the grave of Archbishop Unni and it is not from the tenth or eleventh centuries. The popular dating to the fourteenth century seems quite reasonable and, if a grave cross, it would probably be from an even later period.[90] Nor is it certain that the cross has any connection with the traces of a decomposed coffin beneath it; rather, it looks as though the coffin was damaged when the cross was put in place (Ringbom 1986: 38–39). The several skeletal parts in the hallowed ground of the church yard as well as beneath the coffin, and even the fact of the coffin being older than the cross, indicate that the cross was put in place relatively late, or in any case *not* in the earliest Christian times.

Although Ringbom acknowledges that the cross does not mark the grave of Unni and that Birka was not in Åland, she nonetheless does not abandon the idea that the cross is, via Dreijer's and Lindquist's interpretations of the carvings on its top sides, connected to Archbishop Unni of Hamburg-Bremen. She recasts the framework, making the cross an indicator of a tenacious tradition that Unni on his journey to Scandinavia in the mid-930s visited Åland, among other places, a tradition that

would still have been alive in the seventeenth century when a copy was carved in the rockface in Kastelholm. Åland would have been part of an early missionary sphere visited by both Ansgar and Unni.[91]

To support this assumption, Ringbom also tried to find parallel phenomena connected to Unni. In the graveyard in Husaby, Västergötland, Sweden, is a runic carving **uhnẹ** on a grave monument from the twelfth century (Vg 54), which has been connected with the fact that Unni is mentioned in the interconnected tradition of the bishoprics of Skara and Växjö. The Gotlandic prelate Hans Nilssön Strelow (c. 1583–1656) states briefly in his *Cronica Guthilandorum* (1633) that Unni visited Klinte in Gotland, from which the farm Hunninge got its name. A subsequently-lost cross of wood there was also connected to this tradition.[92]

The cross of Sund – Ringbom states – is evidence of an older popular tradition that Unni also visited Åland. Similar crosses could even have been standing in other places as well but later vanished. These would have been memorial monuments in honour of early apostles rather than grave monuments. Ringbom stresses the significance of the cross of Sund which had by then been neglected for far too long. It is, she says, an important secondary source for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and a testimony of early ecclesiastical activity and thus in a "key position" [Sw. nyckelposition] as regards the mysterious period c. 950–1200 in Åland's history (Ringbom 1986: 38–41; cf. Lindh 1998: 335–336). In a later connection, Ringbom seems almost to base the whole idea of there being no break in the settlement on this interpretation of the cross (Ringbom & Remmer 1995: 9–10).

Removing Unni

Ringbom can in some sense be regarded as a pared-back continuation of Dreijer, with an "Ålandic view" of history that places Åland in a very self-sufficient and rather unlikely historical context in relation to surrounding regions.[93] Alongside the fact that the churches are depicted as quite magnificent and distinctive, although not as old and fantastic as Dreijer made them out to be, there is a pronounced but empirically elu-

sive focus on an enigmatic "early mission" which is supposed to be considered contrary to research, mainly concerned with placenames, that speaks in favour of depopulation in the eleventh century.[94] Such ideas are, however, hardly supported by the dating of the stone churches to the latter part of the thirteenth century (cf. Carlsson 1997: 5–6, 11–12; Hiekkanen 1997: 57). Early Christianisation, i.e. long before Uppland, has also been regarded as the reason for the lack of runestones in Åland.[95] The absence of runestones has otherwise been explained by the assumption that Åland in this respect was more oriented to the east (Heininen et al. 2014: 341 n. 11) or that it lacked the social circumstances and need (Roeck Hansen 1991: 162). It could also be the effect of a considerable demographic decline (Ambrosiani 1981–1982: 77; Sjöstrand 2014: 126–128).

There are in fact no prehistoric rock carvings or paintings or cup marks in Åland either although there are clear traces of habitation ever since the Stone Age, which could be seen in the same light as the absence of runestones, that is, the archipelagic society – or perhaps rather societies – through the whole prehistoric period were relatively uncomplicated and tied to such socio-economic organisation and subsistence strategies that the preconditions and need for that kind of symbolic, artistic and ritual phenomena were not present.[96] Any traces of an older organisational structure before the fiscal and administrative new order of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries can hardly be found in the historical material from the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century.[97] In addition to the fact that there are no old central farms named Husaby and Tuna, hypothetical reconstructions of Viking Age and Early Medieval administrative organisations of the Svealand type (*hundare*, *skeppslag* etc.) based on anachronistic calculations of the numerical distribution of burial grounds are of little value (cf. Roeck Hansen 1991: 23; Hagerman 1996: 319; Sjöstrand 1998a: 420).[98]

The great transformations from the Viking to the Medieval World were the conversion and the integration into a Christian monarchy, and the transformation and institutionalisation of political power in the form of kingship and church, but how and when this occurred, along

with regional variation, is open for debate (cf. Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 61–71; Lindkvist 2008: 668). It makes sense to let a Swedish kingdom begin somewhere around the eleventh century (Welinder 2009: 20–22). In view of the fact that none of the millions of royal silver coins struck in Sigtuna c. 995–1035 have been found in Åland and assuming that the numerous runestones in Uppland and the Mälaren Valley c. 1000–1130 were associated with the upper levels of a far more stratified agricultural society and tied to organised Christianity and later diocesan missionary activity centered in the royal town of Sigtuna (Zachrisson 1998: 123–200, 224–226), it seems obvious that Åland was not part of this sphere and was only later attached to the Christian Swedish state formation; this is also reflected in the fact that Åland became part of the young Finnish diocese and administratively and judicially tied to the mainland in the east.[99]

That means that organised episcopal Christianity was established in Åland along with SW Finland at the very beginning of the thirteenth century, a time when the pre-Christian burial custom finally ceased in southwestern Finland.[100] The Ålandic wooden churches which preceded the stone churches in the same places accordingly seem to have come into existence at that very time.[101]

Even though contact patterns in and around the Baltic Sea changed around the year 1000, the Scandinavian voyages to the east did not end by any means. Several runestones in Uppland and the Mälaren region were erected during the eleventh century in memory of travelers to Greece (the Byzantine Empire), Russia and other eastern areas. These far-travelers were often aristocratic young men who wanted to see the world, obtain glory, and become rich in silver. This continued well into the Middle Ages (Hagerman 1996: 93–99; Harrison 2009: 104–107).[102] If by chance any men from Åland made or took part in such voyages and entered the military service of eastern princes, there are at least no visible traces of this.[103]

The Ålandic stone churches do not reflect an aristocratic society. They were built by the congregations and made possible by the introduction of ecclesiastical taxation. No runestones have been found in

the churches of Åland, nor even any runic art, which might be compared with the fact that, for example, at the entrance to Anga church in Gotland, there is a long, painted runic inscription from the later thirteenth century detailing which peasants were involved in the building of the church (Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 84; Harrison 2009: 197). Gotland and Visby in particular, only loosely tied to the Swedish political system and the bishop of Linköping, experienced a huge flowering and expansion during the Early Middle Ages when a total of 92 lavish parish churches were built on the island. The Black Death and the Danish conquest in 1361 were followed by a severe decline and changing fortunes. Gotland came under Swedish rule again only in 1645.[104]

About half of all c. 800 known medieval runic inscriptions in Sweden are found in Gotland (Palumbo 2022b: 134–138). Although there are, according to Ringbom (2010: passim), plenty of Gotlandic influences in the Ålandic stone churches before the latter half of the fourteenth century when Gotland was hit by a severe downturn, there seems to have been no interest whatsoever in making use of runes in any respect, most likely for the simple reason that there was no local runic tradition; perhaps the local priesthood and the Finnish diocesan leadership were also completely unfamiliar with or even actively dissuaded such art. Runic elements in churches in Finland, even in the Swedish-speaking parts, are non-existent.

General discussion of the history of Åland is simultaneously a latent debate on Åland's special contemporary status. History as a subject is closely linked to identity and perceptions of ideology, politics and culture; it has a valuating function (Zander 2020: 12). As a counterweight to what was said above about Ringbom, note for example Hiekkanen's (2010a) criticism of her giving Åland a separate role in relation to Finland and use of Swedish periodisation.[105] While Finnish periodisation includes a special interval, c. 1050–1150 for archaeologists and c. 1155–1323 for historians, called "the Crusading Period" (Fi. ristiretkiaika, Sw. korstågstiden), there is no such term in Sweden; the Iron Age, of which the Viking Age is the last part, is followed directly by the Middle Ages c. 1050/1100. This is of course important to keep in mind in order

to avoid misunderstandings.[106] To designate the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Åland as "medieval" is, however, undoubtedly problematic and misleading in the absence of written documents, organised Christianity and royal power (Hiekkanen 1997: 58). It is in fact a rather obscure transition period between prehistoric and historic times, the frames of which are loose and debatable (cf. Jaatinen et al. 1989: 5–6; Roeck Hansen 1991: 35). The non-use of the Finnish term "Crusading Period" in Åland is suspected by Hiekkanen (2020: 691 n. 4) to have "political dimensions" [Sw. politiska dimensioner].[107] Suvanto (1980: 266) is also slightly dismissive of the concept of "Ålandic people's history". One should not ignore the perspective of a unifying Finnish nationalistic archaeology/history ousting a "Swedish" prehistory and local reactions to this, nor the right to one's own history and identity.[108]

Scholarship that clings to the notion that the cross of Sund is in any way connected with Archbishop Unni and reflects the early Christianisation of Åland has on several occasions been criticised by Hiekkanen.[109] In the latest version of this critique, the cross is considered more likely to be a funeral monument for a wealthy farmer from Sund or a leading person from Kastelholm Castle. The character of a grave cross would also be supported by traditions associated with the cross. Its form reveals it is from somewhere between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. The "indistinct carvings or scratches and depressions", alternatively "scratch marks and irregular depressions" on the top sides are probably "graffiti of their time", created by the parishioners as they spent time in the cemetery waiting for services to start. The most natural place for such scratching, which could have continued for hundreds of years, was precisely the upper sides of the cross arms. There are no signs on the front where a real memorial inscription and decoration would have belonged (Hiekkanen 2020: 523–524, 792–793 n. 453–454).[110] It is worth nothing that Hiekkanen does not deal with the carving in Kastelholm.

Ringbom says nothing about the cross in her monograph on the churches of Åland from 2010, but in a paper from 2012, for instance, in direct opposition to Hiekkanen, she imperturbably maintains her

interpretation that the cross marks a tradition that Unni visited Åland, thus implying early missionary activity in Åland, and she also mentions alleged parallels referring to Unni in Gotland and Västergötland (Ringbom 2012: 50).

This shows the difficulty of formally abandoning old ideas that have become integral parts of general theories as well as views into which much has been invested. The aforementioned "parallels" are, from a source-critical point of view, hardly sustainable. The first part of the mid-thirteenth century list of bishops in Skara in Västergötland goes back to Adam of Bremen (c. 1075) but is heavily distorted. Unni is mentioned together with his title of archbishop as the second bishop and is said to have been consecrated in England, between the eleventh century bishops Sigfrid on the one hand and Asmund and Stenfinn on the other, all certainly found in Adam, of Bremen's chronicle but not in connection with Västergötland. The first bishop of Skara, Thurgot according to Adam, is, on the other hand, not mentioned at all. The very oldest parts of the lists of bishops are notoriously untrustworthy as they are free compilations intended to give the dioceses historical legitimacy. Connecting such a fictive basis with the obscure runic letters **uhnẹ** on a grave monument from the twelfth century by the church in Husaby (Vg 54) is not defensible.[111]

In turn, the claim in Strelow's chronicle from the 1630s that Unni had visited Gotland must be seen in light of the fact that this late chronicle is a splendid example of the period's use of historical writing for national self-assertion (Axelsson & Gislestam 2007–2011: 649). Strelow seems in every single case to use some type of source, the character of which is not easy to establish (Dittmer 1961). He mentions Adam of Bremen's chronicle (as "Bremske krönika"), which, as he gives the year 936, is also most likely his source for the fanciful etymological association (typical for the time, cf. Harrison 2019a: 87–88) of the name Hunninge with Unni. It may be noted that the theory of Unni being commemorated in Husaby in Västergötland has similarly been connected with a seventeenth-century story that connects Unni with the parish name Undenäs by the lake Unden. In reality the name Undenäs has

(like Hunninge in Gotland) a completely different etymology (Gahrn 1988: 248–250, 274; SOL: 337).

The fact that someone carved the same motif as on the middle arm of the cross of Sund in a rockface in Kastelholm implies that there was some kind of meaning attached to all this, but it does not in itself reveal what this meaning is. It should also be noted, as Jan Samuelsson (2015: 343) has pointed out, that the cross was not mentioned by the priest in Sund in his account to the National Inventory of Antiquities from 1667. Nor was anything said about the carving in Kastelholm (Bomansson 1859: 120–122). The same is true of major descriptions of Åland from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which discuss churches and their graveyards, with Sund among them (Radloff 1795: 56–58; Weckström 1852: 60–61; Olsson 1895: 71–72).[112]

The cross was documented for the first time by an art-historical expedition of the Finnish antiquarian association to Finland Proper and Åland in 1871, the first in a long series of such expeditions around the Grand Duchy of Finland. Their main mission was to document the medieval churches and their inventories. The association had been founded only the year before and the initiator of these expeditions was the art historian Emil Nervander (1840–1914). This first expedition was formally led by the Swedish artist Nils Månsson Mandelgren (1813–1899), a very skillful draftsman who had studied art history and archaeology and was a specialist in medieval churches and ecclesiastical art. He is known to have undertaken numerous similar expeditions to different parts of Sweden (Jacobsson 1983). Besides the two noted above, seven other participants are mentioned in the expedition to Åland.[113] In the report from the excursion, stored in the archives of the Finnish National Board of Antiquities, the cross is denoted as "Det göthiska korset", the Geathic or Gothic cross, and is dated to the fifteenth century supported by information from Mandelgren.[114]

It is notable that there was no perception that there were runes on the cross although the participants, especially Mandelgren, would certainly have had some knowledge of that field. In his published letters from the expedition, Nervander (1872: 86) said nothing about the cross in rela-

tion to the church of Sund.[115] The idea that the carvings on the cross were readable runes and that they even revealed that the cross was the gravestone of Archbishop Unni who died and was buried in Birka in 936 was invented only in late 1949 or early 1950 by Matts Dreijer.

If every connection to Archbishop Unni of Hamburg-Bremen and the missionary history of Åland and the Baltic Sea region is abandoned altogether as a mere freak of ambitiously associative fantasy and identity politics, how then should the carvings on the cross of Sund be understood? The cross seems to exhibit a plethora of anomalies as it has no clear parallels; it is situated in a region with no other known runic carvings; the carvings are placed on the upper sides of the arms; the composition appears (in contrast to the superbly cut cross) inelegant and rather odd, revealing no obvious and unconstrained interpretation, and the same motif as on the middle arm (only) has been carved into the rockface in nearby Kastelholm. Three main possibilities can be suggested: 1) there are no runic signs forming any real meaning on the cross, only coincidentally "rune-like" ornamentation or mere scribbles, with at least half of the single characters seeming to consist only of a vertical line; 2) there are runic signs there but either they were carved haphazardly with no coherent meaning or they contain an impenetrable riddle; 3) there is a message with a "conventional" meaning written in runes but in a rather exceptional manner. To this is added another fundamental question: did the carvings on the upper sides of the cross belong to the cross right from the beginning or were they put there later for some other purpose?

Hiekkanen's claim that the carvings are mere scratches created over a long period of time by waiting parishioners seems quite unlikely. Despite teaching, supervision, and various forms of punishment by the authorities, popular religiosity and mentality before the nineteenth century often combined a strong faith in God with apparently unruly and disrespectful behavior (Malmstedt 2002). One should then, however, also encounter similar scribbles on the upper sides of many other old stone monuments in churchyards. The claim appears even less likely with regard to the identical carving in Kastelholm. It is neverthe-

less worth noting that medieval runic graffiti is known from churches in Sweden, usually in the form of names or prayers (Palumbo 2022b: 138).

The basic critical questions that must be asked are *who*, *how*, *what* and *why* (cf. Göransson 2022: 95)? When aiming at the third possibility mentioned above, the ideal would be an interpretation that distances itself as little as possible from the actual "letters" (cf. Sjöstrand 2012a: 220). It is hardly random that a cross (marked as +) is engraved at the end of each arm. If the carvings are interpreted as runes, the starting point for the interpretation of the whole composition must reasonably be + ᛁ ᚢᛁᚾ✹ᛁ·ᛁᚴᛁᛋ + i.e. + **i ¶ uin°i'i ¶ lis** +; the last part **lis** on the left arm must however be read from the opposite direction, making the relationship and reading order of the various parts uncertain. The deciphering of single characters can also change the whole meaning and context (cf. Williams 2008: 281). There are two special features in the carvings on the middle arm of the cross and in Kastelholm. These are the so-called "beaming cross" (✹ °) and what has been explained as a separation mark (ᛁ᛬) between the second and third **i**.[116] The beaming cross could be taken as a centerpiece around which the other carvings were arranged (cf. Lindquist 1968: 35–36, of course excluding the detail of the papal sign).

If it is assumed that the "separation mark" instead stands for an abbreviation following a model written in the Roman alphabet, one word that would fit both signs and context of an ecclesiastical memorial monument is the Latin adjective *vene(rab)ilis* (m. sing. nom.) 'venerable, worthy, of honour' (cf. Sjöstrand 2014: 84 n. 1).[117] The "separation mark" would thus represent the one missing syllable *-rab-*. The referent of "venerabilis" is naturally impossible to tell with any certainty, but it would at any rate most likely have been a highly learned clerical "celebrity" with some connection to local parish life.

Assuming that the cross has a commemorative function and stems from the latter part of the Middle Ages, a likely prominent candidate would be Johannes Peterson of Västerås who had been parson in Sund. He had studied at the university in Paris, where he obtained a master's

degree and was for a short time in 1366 the principal of the university. In 1367 he was elected bishop of Turku, in which capacity he acted very vigorously on behalf of the church and the priesthood of the diocese. He died in 1370 and is buried in the cathedral of Turku.[118]

His first name happens to coincide with that of the saint to whom the church of Sund is dedicated, John the Baptist (Radloff 1795: 56; Ringbom 2010: 17). The single vertical line on the right arm of the cross could even be read as an **i**-rune and interpreted as standing for *I(ohannes)* although, as already stated, it is highly dubious to regard single ambiguous characters as representative of whole words.

This is not, however, fully in accordance with the prescribed ideal mode of interpretation, in addition to how utterly unwieldly the composition would appear. Folk tradition in connection with the cross must also be taken into account. Another suggestion would be to ignore the single vertical line on the right arm and read the signs in Latin as they stand, starting with *veni e* on the middle arm and *lis* upside down on the left, together forming *veni e lis* (correct: *lite*), meaning 'I came [to be] of conflict (or dispute, clash, feud)'. The signature formula *NN me fecit*, 'NN made me' on different kinds of man-made objects is widely known. There are innumerable medieval and later ecclesiastical artefacts such as bells and fonts that describe themselves in the first person singular like a human being or a living creature, or talk about their origin and function, e.g. *Festa decoro* 'I adorn holidays' or *Fulgura frango*, 'I crush lightning', as well as who made them and so on. Scandinavian works also often contain runes. The function of such messages was probably to strengthen the power of the object.[119]

Such an interpretation of the cross of Sund would at least accord with local tradition of a deadly dispute or feud between the church builders in Saltvik and Sund; the tradition need not be taken literally beyond the core of a conflict with fatal outcome. A stereotypical story need not in itself be completely fictional. It is, after all, one matter to embellish an event with common formulas, another to invent it entirely. The cross would thus be seen as a reconciliation or murder cross [Germ. Sühnekreutz, Mordkreutz]. Such crosses, or merely stones with crosses

engraved, were erected in the period c. 1200–1600 in countless varieties in places where tragic events or important historical events in the life of the community or the country had occurred. They were usually surrounded by stereotypical folk traditions seasoned by superstition and ghost stories – as is most obviously the case in Sund as well. These memorial crosses are mainly found in Central and Western Europe but there are also examples from Scandinavia, e.g. Föra in Öland. The usual reason was murder or accidental manslaughter. Sometimes the weapon of death (such as an axe) or an attribute typical of the deceased's profession was depicted. Sudden death meant a hasty departure from this world without the last sacraments, so the crosses begged for the prayers of passers-by for the unfortunate soul.

Crosses of this type, closely linked to criminal law, were private reconciliation agreements between the culprit and the family or other relatives of the victim to prevent a vendetta, with the church as mediator; these were sealed by a donation to the church for masses for the souls of both the murderer and the murdered, for example. Some preserved reconciliation agreements (e.g. a complete one from Weikersheim 1463, Baden-Württemberg, Germany) include material compensation and soul masses. The crosses, erected at the culprit's expense, were symbolic admissions of guilt, repentance, and a plea for forgiveness. They were mostly situated in places where they could be seen or at the place of the killing or somewhere in the vicinity. In rare cases, the year was recorded but there were otherwise no written messages on any of these reconciliation crosses, mostly since commoners could not read them, for which reason they instead had something else depicted on them.[120]

As the alleged arranged accident in Sund occurred at the building of the church, the placement of the cross c. 7.5 meters south of the southeastern corner of the church porch seems natural. There are clear signs of the use of scaffolds in Ålandic churches (Ringbom 2010: 13) so the details of tampering are not impossible. If in fact a competing church builder (or someone tied to a construction team) was responsible for the killing and thus also the reconciliation cross, he was versatile and able to obtain a very well-carved cross. A master builder was in gen-

eral a combination of architect, engineer, artisan, and supervisor and could have several jobs in progress at the same time. All the craftsmen involved in church construction works were subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, as were those in the service of ecclesiastical households (Hagerman 1996: 258–263, 393; Hiekkanen 2020: 42).

This or any other interpretation of the carvings on the cross of Sund as an integral part of the original function of the cross does not, however, accord well with the fact that the carvings are on the top sides and that reconciliation crosses in general never have anything written on them. The suggested phrase *veni e lis* is not particularly fluent Latin either; the correct ablative form is *lite*, and the verb *venire* would hardly be used in this way. The common people could not read written messages in any case; they simply recognised reconciliation crosses as such. Nor has local tradition, first documented in 1871, ever claimed the carvings to be runes bearing a message. Any intentionally written original message connected to the original function of the cross should have been placed on the front of the cross. It must otherwise be assumed that the cross of Sund is in this respect wholly unique, which is not particularly convincing. A fair assumption in any case is that the maker of the cross was a Gotlander working on building the church while the raw material for the cross was of local origin. The interpretation of the cross itself as a reconciliation cross tied to a deadly conflict at the construction site should in any case be preferred. A similar interpretation can of course also be suggested for the stone crosses in Korpo and Pernaja.[121]

What then can the carving in Kastelholm possibly reveal? It has almost automatically been designated as a later "copy" of the carvings on the middle arm of the cross of Sund but that is merely a consequence of the Unni-interpretation of the cross. Certainly, there is no doubt that the motif is identical although the scale is almost twice as large. The proportions are perfect compared with the cross, which testifies to skills in applied geometry (cf. Hagerman 1996: 259). It would seem far more likely, however, that rather than someone seeing some obscure ancient marks on the cross and being so enthralled by them that they undertook to reproduce them accurately elsewhere (or possibly the other

way around), the two carvings were made by the same person or group of persons as some form of statement. There seems to have been an explicit idea of display in a certain wider sphere as regards placement.

The carvings on the upper sides of the cross are most probably secondary to the cross itself and not directly related to its original construction or function. Any functional original written message would have been placed on the front side and, in agreement with the well-cut cross, made decorative and well-balanced and universally comprehensible according to established conventions. The cross was originally blank, as is expected for a reconciliation cross. The carvings on the cross and in the rockface in Kastelholm obviously played no significant role in local tradition and nothing was known about their origin and possible meaning or their mutual identity.

The carvings on the cross are in other words rather to be seen as secondary graffiti. On this basis, a final suggestion is the Latin adjective *venialis* (m. sing. nom.) > Eng. *venial* (cf. Fr. *véniel*, Spa. and Port. *venial*, Ital. *veniale*), 'pardonable, excusable, forgivable, remissible, absolvable'. On close inspection, there is a short vertical line at mid-height (the "separation mark") where *-a-* would be, followed by a vertical stave, together represented as **ˈl, ʾi**. If viewed as a single character, this is actually very close to ᛅ, a medieval short-twig **ɑ**. It can be noted in comparison that the joining line in the middle of ᛋ (**s**) is also little more than a dot and not attached to the vertical staves. The single vertical stave on the right arm must then be disregarded as having no further meaning. This interpretation would also fit logically into the context of a reconciliation cross due to a deadly dispute between hired foreign, most probably Gotlandic, construction workers at the church, the Latin word being scribbled there a little later by associates as a marked "statement" in a complicated and protracted dispute about guilt, penance and forgiveness among the related workers and local spiritual and temporal authorities.

That would also explain why the same "statement", in abridged form, was also symbolically carved into the rockface in Kastelholm – to be seen by superiors at the royal castle, as these must also have been con-

nected to the case. The fact that the crime was committed at a church, in a cemetery, made it particularly grave; it violated the royal peace oath [Sw. edsöret, 'that which is sworn'], or to be more precise the church peace [Sw. kyrkofriden] and resulted in outlawry [Sw. biltoghet] as well as loss of property. What was considered a breach of the royal oath was subject to a special section of the land law (Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 141–142). For the part of the locals, Latin recorded with such runic scribbles was not familiar and the carvings on the cross were never understood in local tradition as more than appurtenant ornamentation; the locals only acknowledged the cross itself.

The church of Sund (Su 18.3), located on a terrace on the slope down to Västra Kyrksundet, is closely connected with a burial ground from the Late Iron Age (Su 18.1). It has 50 visible objects and was apparently once larger. Just north of the churchyard wall are the remains of a medieval house. The parish name, meaning 'sound, strait', originally with an *a*-suffix, Sunda (G. Hausen 1927: 158), appears to have been taken from the village or farm or outfield area (by the former strait through the parish) where the church was built. From a purely archaeological point of view, of course, it seemed natural to see a continuous connection between the medieval church and the Late Iron Age settlement unit behind the burial ground (M. Dreijer 1979: 114, 333; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 16; Ringbom 2010: 123), but the larger picture is disturbed by the fact that the church area appears to be have been separated from the neighboring village to the west named Gesterby (Gestrikaby 1397), 'village of the Gästrikar', after medieval settlers from Gästrikland in Sweden (Skogsjö 2003: 205–206; 2007: 257; Sjöstrand 2013: 84; 2014: 96–97, 142). A direct parallel can be found in Kyrkslätt (Fi. Kirkkonummi, 'church plain') in western Uusimaa where the parish church is located on land belonging to a village called Gesterby (Haggrén 2006: 64), a name that also appears in several other places in the Swedish parts of Finland (Lars Huldén 2001: 30, 53, 70, 133, 170, 215, 264, 305).[122]

The church of Sund, dedicated to John the Baptist, is the largest in Åland, has the mightiest west tower and seems to have been the model for the other churches. The longhouse is dated by Ringbom to 1250–

1275, with carbon dating of fire-damaged mortar which is said to be in accordance with a dendrochronological analysis of a crucifix with a mourning St. Mary to the 1260s. Its lime paintings are dated to 1280–1300; the sacristy and west tower were added at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The Gotlandic influence is said to be most clearly visible here among all the Ålandic churches (Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 43–226; Ringbom 2010: 54, 122–127, 144, 148, 150).

This is in turn rejected by Hiekkanen as being based on methodologically incorrect grounds such as the use of carbon mortar dating and loose furnishings. According to him, the longhouse was built in the 1290s, the sturdy tower and the porch at the end of the fourteenth century, and the sacristy c. 1450; the burial ground close to the church is not noted. As elsewhere in Åland, the area is said to have been deserted from around 1000. New Christian settlers, mostly from Sweden, arrived at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century; the parish was founded in 1225–1250 and the first wooden church was erected (Hiekkanen 2020: 519–524, 792 n. 441).

Any attempts to relate the cross of Sund directly to any of the phases in the genesis of the church are based on little more than guesswork, especially as the datings are both inexact and disputed, but there were obviously alterations and additions to the church during the Late Middle Ages. In any event, the cross of Sund does not mark the grave of Archbishop Unni and does not place Birka in Åland, nor does it have anything to do with any tradition of Unni visiting Åland. It is of no relevance whatsoever to the controversial eleventh and twelfth centuries and an empirically impalpable "early Christianisation" of Åland. It is obviously from the later part of the Middle Ages, most likely the fifteenth century, or possibly even the early sixteenth century. As the carvings on the cross appear crude and are on the upper sides of the arms, they were most probably not there from the beginning, but as the same motif was carved in the rockface in Kastelholm, they are hardly merely meaningless scribble either. The exceptionally well-cut and preserved cross is most likely a reconciliation cross [Germ. Sühnekreutz], probably arising from a fatal conflict between hired Gotlandic con-

struction workers at the church, while the carvings on the cross are secondary graffiti following the settlement of the crime, a somewhat clumsy rendering in runes of the Latin adjective *venialis*, 'forgivable'. The carvings both on the cross and in Kastelholm were, unlike the cross itself, of no particular significance in local tradition; neither their meaning nor mutual identity seem to have been recognised.

Endnotes

1 M. Dreijer 1950: 48–50, 94–95; 1953a: 48, 54; Ringbom 1986: 18–19; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 31, 34–35. The cross has also come to be known as *Wennikorset* (e.g. Nyman 1980: 2), 'the Wenni cross', mirroring Dreijer's theories. The use of this designation is not recommended.

2 On the Ålandic Late Iron Age grave mounds are usually round (sometimes flattened) stone spheres, always of light-coloured stone, and also raised slabs, a few of them of larger size, however none with any inscriptions (e.g. Le 10.1, Fi. 8.6. Jo 10.1). It is possible that many such larger slabs have been removed for various purposes (M. Dreijer 1979: 65, 103).

3 M. Dreijer 1950: 94–95; 1953a: 48; 1968: 14; Cleve 1972: 127–128; Ringbom 1986: 18–19; 1991: 51; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 31, 34–35.

4 Gustafsson 1997: 219–220; Tarsala 1998: 110; Eriksson 2006: 11–20; Johansson 2006: 40–46; Sundback 2006: 81–90; Meinander 2016: 197; Hårdstedt 2023: 231–245, 308–311. For overall presentations of the history of Åland in the twentieth century, see Tudeer 1993; Nordman et al. 2022.

5 De Geer-Hancock 1986: 10, 17, 21, 118–126; Tudeer 1993: 131–275; Gustafsson 1997: 277–278; Sundback 2006: 92–99; Holmén 2009: 311, 323–325; 2015: 232–236; Nordman et al. 2022: 295–343, 486–542. This special and at times disputed position between two modern nations has also influenced how Åland is viewed from the outside, often only as the furthest peripheral extension of either surrounding mainland and an object for external impulses, decrees, measures, and agreements, where the local population is assigned no decisive role. In recent decades, the discourse has been conducted more in neutral terms of "east" and "west". The islanders themselves, on the contrary, like to think of themselves as lying in the middle where influences and interests meet and also attribute to themselves considerable self-sufficiency and a certain suspicion of foreign authority (cf. Sjöstrand 1998a: 408–411; Tarsala 1998: 109–115; Lucenius 2014: 48–53; Meinander 2016: 197; Hårdstedt 2023: 310–311). Depending on perspective, ancient Åland has thus incongruously been regarded as everything from outermost periphery to supercentre of the

northern Baltic. Unsurprisingly, the very long-term ethnic population history has also been a contentious issue (cf. Harrison 2019a: 28–29). The difficulty of ever understanding how ancient people defined themselves ethnically has led to many misunderstandings and controversies (cf. Harrison 2019a, passim; 2020b: 21–24). In any case, the conditions prevailing in the region must to a large extent have determined the effect of external influences (cf. Roeck Hansen 1991: 26–27).

6 Nyman 1947; 1986; Moring 1981; M. Dreijer 1984: 131–133, 141–143; Remmer 1998: 170–198; Sjöstrand 2000; Steinby 2000: 10, 75; Holmén 2009: 312; Gäddnäs 2015: 118–121. *Åländsk odling* was originally (1938–1939) published as a booklet with four issues per year and from 1943 regularly as a yearbook. The older volumes also cover general topics related to society but the yearbook soon comprised purely antiquarian and historical features with Matts Dreijer as the main writer. Several of his contributions in the 1950s are extensive, filling the whole or almost the whole volume, and moreover contain English summaries translated by Jocelyn Palmer. The latter fact also indicates that the revisionist ambitions aimed at an audience beyond the Nordic countries. Since 1989, *Åländsk odling* has been published by the Ålandic antiquarian authorities.

7 Matts Emanuel Dreijer was born in Ruhnu (Sw. Runö) in Estonia and raised by his paternal aunt Lydia in Mariehamn; he returned to Åland in the late 1920s after his studies and became CEO of Ålands Centralandelslag. He was the provincial archaeologist from 1933 until his retirement in 1970 (Steinby 2000: 118–119). Dreijer's very deep, broad, and central involvement in the system of autonomy and administration in general is particularly reflected in the fact that the official 25th and 50th anniversary publications in 1947 and 1972 respectively were singlehandedly written by him.

8 M. Dreijer 1950: 27–29, 110–113, 141–142; 1965a: 20–22; 1968: 3–4. The limestone sculpture, known as the "lion of Jomala" (Sw. Jomalalejonet), depicts a lion's head with a human face in its mouth (cf. Nyman 1980: 3–5; M. Dreijer 1983: 370–371). It is stylistically close to a wooden head in Finström's church made of a tree felled c. 1180 (Ringbom 2010: 11, 13). However, it is possible that the latter sculpture is somewhat younger than the wood itself.

9 Ekenberg et al. 1986; Pirinen 1991: 20–24; Hagerman 1996: 64–72; Hyenstrand 1996: 54–66; Nilsson 1998: 42–97; 2012: 20–23; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 29–33; Harrison 2009: 61–67, 120–121, 135–146; 2019b: 147–151; 2020b: 31–33, 41–44; Janson 2012; 2014. Despite Hamburg-Bremen's German imperial ecclesiastical supremacy until the archbishopric of Lund was founded in 1103–1104, the organisation of the Nordic Church was undoubtedly influenced by the English; later hagiographies and other sources tell of several English missionaries, bishops and administrators, at least some of whom could have been descendants of Scandinavians in England. English influence is also evident in church artefacts, e.g. the oldest baptismal fonts as well as in the parish institution. There has obviously also been a Polish missionary contribution through the archbishopric of Gniezno. It seems that Nordic rulers could

alternatively rely on different churches to further their own power ambitions against competitors as well as to balance the churches against each other. In 1103–1104, as part of the conflict between the Pope and the German Emperor, Lund became the centre of Christianity in the whole of Scandinavia and even after the establishment of the Swedish archbishopric in 1164, the archbishop of Lund was *primas* of the Swedish Church (Brink 1996: 272–273, 285–286; Hagerman 1996: 130–131, 165–191, 202–203, 256–257, 261, 275–276, 281–350, 355–356, 414; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 77–78, 81–89; Lindkvist 2008: 669; Lindström 2015: 32–33, 158, 162–163, 169).

10 Kretschmar 1973: 120; Adam of Bremen 1984: 42–43, 56–63; Pirinen 1991: 21; Tegnér 1995: 280; Hagerman 1996: 85; Nilsson 1998: 45, 51–55, 77, 165; 2012: 23; Sauser 2000: 1443; Harrison 2009: 63, 121; 2020a: 51–52, 85–86; 2020b: 31–33, 41–44. The s in VNNIS is something of an enigma. It has been suggested to stand for *sanctus* 'holy' but is much more likely to be a Latin nominative case postfix. *Uni* or *Unni* is a known male personal name in Scandinavia too (OSw. *Une*, *Unne*, ODa. *Uni*, *Unne*) and can be found on Viking Age runestones; it is formed from the verb *una* 'thrive, be satisfied' (Peterson 2007: 243).

11 M. Dreijer 1950: 48–50; 1965a: 22; 1968: 4–9; 1984: 249–258. The significance of the examination of the cross by first rank experts at Ålands museum in Mariehamn in February 22, 1950, is also reflected in the fact that both the state governor [Sw. landshövding] Herman Koroleff and the head of the provincial government [Sw. lantråd] Viktor Strandfält were present, as were bank manager Jan Sundberg and renowned photographer Uno Markström.

12 Obviously Sven B. F. Jansson and his colleague Sverker Jansson were not impressed by what they saw in February 1950, and further confronted by Dreijer's fantastic ideas on the carvings on the cross, they found themselves in an uncomfortable position and rejected the topic altogether. Ahlbäck also avoided ever having to deal with the subject, at least in public writings.

13 As the **i**-rune can have the sound value of both *i* and *e* and the **n**-rune also can have the sound value of *nn* (Williams 2008: 282), a sequence **uin°i** could thus technically stand for *Wenni*.

14 M. Dreijer 1950: 99; 1953a: 48–49; 1968: 6; 1969: 4–5; 1983: 196, 199–201, 240–241; 1984: 254–255.

15 M. Dreijer 1950: 94–95; 1953: 50–51; 1968: 8–9, 12–14; Ringbom 1986: 19–20, 38; 1991: 54–55; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 31, 34–35.

16 The major Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* 25.11.1950 wrote about Dreijer through a local correspondent on the front page under the heading "Ansgar's Birka was in Åland. Historical bomb by archaeologist." A large photograph of the cross was included. The claims were dramatically outlined: "An explosive historical projectile with a deep thousand-year effect has been shot from Sund's church […]. It shatters the history of Sweden's Christianisation and the cultural history that has followed in its tracks." The newspaper had also turned to a few scholars for comments. Sven B. F. Jansson stated that the whole theory was "insane" [Sw. vansinnig], "almost worse than the Kensington stone"; it was

"regrettable [Sw. beklagligt] that it was ever presented". There were no runes on the cross, only "ornamental scrawl" [Sw. ornamentkrafs]. The ecclesiastical historian Knut B. Westman (1881–1967) was more cautious, saying that hypotheses could be presented but conclusions lay in the future. In *Historisk tidskrift för Finland* (35, 1950: 147–148), the editor, Professor Eric Anthoni (1893–1978), reviewed Dreijer's paper in *Åländsk odling* 1950, giving him credit for his compilation of ancient monuments but expressing deep disappointment at the idea of Birka. Having briefly pointed out a few obvious blunders, Anthoni stated that the paper was "a highly compromising opus for the author's scientific reputation" and that no debate on the topic would be permitted in the journal. This was answered by Dreijer with a "critique of a critique" in the next issue of *Åländsk odling* (M. Dreijer 1951: 79–84).

17 This paper in *Åländsk odling* 1965, here referred to as M. Dreijer 1965a, derives from a lecture held by Matts Dreijer on March 30, 1965, at the spring meeting of Nordenskiöld-samfundet in Turku. He held the same lecture on June 1, 1965, when Ålands kulturstiftelse organised a festival in Mariehamn City Hall on the occasion of the 1100th anniversary of Archbishop Ansgar's death, with the prior at St. Ansgar's Benedictine monastery in Nütschau near Lübeck, Father Amandus Eilermann, as guest of honour (Steinby 2000: 91–92).

18 The codes given in connection with ancient monuments, as in this case Su 12.21, refer to the registration system in the surveys of ancient monuments (Fornminnesinventering/Fornminnesregistret) by the Ålandic antiquarian authorities. The initial letters refer to the municipality (Su=Sund, Jo=Jomala, Fi=Finström etc.); the first number (before the full stop) is the code of the village and the second refers to the monument in question. Information is provided about the type of monument, number of objects, periodic dating, and the surrounding environment. It is also noted whether archaeological investigations have been made at the site. Often the name of the piece of land where the monument is found is also given. These names often denote an earlier use of this land and thus provide valuable information (Roeck Hansen 1991: 34). See further list of sources and literature.

19 Kurt "Mosse" Weber (b. 1944) was later employed at the Ålandic antiquarian office and was head of Ålands Museum until his death in December 1990 (S. Dreijer 1989).

20 M. Dreijer 1965a: 23–24; 1965b: 124–125; 1968: 8; Lindquist 1968: 19–20; Matz 1981: 141, 146; Järvenpää-Lithén 1988: 38–39. In a version of the last-mentioned official pamphlet about Jan Karlsgården from around two decades later, the carving is still described but the names and opinions of Matts Dreijer and Ivar Lindquist have been omitted (2007: 44).

21 M. Dreijer 1969: 4–5; 1979: 160–161, 188–189; 1983: 199; 1984: 257–258.

22 On runes and Latin and their interdependence, see Gustavsson 1994; Palm 2010b. There are in Sweden c. 700 medieval runic inscriptions and up to 100 known through older drawings. About half of these inscriptions originate from Gotland, but such can also be found in most other provinces. A significant

proportion are placed on various types of grave monuments, usually horizontal slabs, and constitute a continuation of the tradition of carved memorials (Palumbo 2022b: 134–138).

23 Ringbom 1986: 19–20, 38; 1991: 54–55; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 31, 34–35.

24 Cf. Ringbom 1986: 22; 1991: 54; Ringbom & Remmer 1995: 9–10; Lindh 1998: 335–336; Skogsjö 1999: 39.

25 This special focus on Birka dates back to nineteenth-century Scandinavistic ideology (Fewster 2000: 121). The first larger archaeological excavations in Björkö by Hjalmar Stolpe (1841–1905) began in 1871 and continued until 1895. With these investigations, "the first town of Sweden" became famous, giving rise to ideas about probable similar ancient trading places elsewhere, also in Finland (Immonen 2018: 22–23). The town is uniquely mentioned in Rimbert's (d. 888) biography over Ansgar from c. 870 and has thus traditionally been regarded as the very cradle of Christianity in Sweden, although the town was relatively small and short-lived and the mission there was a fiasco. Due to this, many other places, both larger and significantly more long-lived, have ended up in the shadows. In reality, Västergötland was the first successfully Christianised area in Sweden and served as a stable base for the Christian kingdom; the first Swedish diocese was established there in Skara. An anonymous mission had been conducted in Västergötland since the late ninth century. A stone church was erected in Varnhem in the early eleventh century (Harrison 2009: 64–65, 119–121, 138; 2019b: 154–155; 2020a: 51–54, 85–87; 2020b: 31–35, 41–46, 56, 124–125; Nilsson 2012: 19–27). Seen from a higher power perspective, Västergötland may rather be regarded as Denmark's outermost province around AD 1000 and the contemporary Swedish kings as Danish royal family offshoots and retainers in an ambivalent emancipation process. There was really no unambiguous "Danish" or "Swedish" kingship but a supreme Nordic family network (Hagerman 1996: 147–149, 165–178, 414–415; Hyenstrand 1996: 67–68, 146, 148, 151; B. Sawyer 2000: 147–148; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 37).

26 See esp. M. Dreijer 1950; 1952; 1953b; 1956b; 1960; 1966; 1970: 6–22; 1979; 1983; 1984: 137–139, 249–260. A distinctive and consistent feature is the imaginative twisting and bending of historical geography to fit Åland and the identification of Åland in the sources under a great multitude of other names. Concerning Birka, according to Dreijer's (1979: 129, 152–153, 181) free explanation (cf. Suvanto 1980: 264; Gallén 1982a: 220; Sjöstrand 1995: 272–273) Old Frisian **berek* for an administrative unit and *-a* for 'island', meaning 'the island with its own jurisdiction', 'the island district', the same as OSw. *A-land*, it is notable that there is no consistency in what Birka actually is (cf. Carlsson 1997: 5); sometimes it is Åland as a whole (i.e. a petty kingdom), sometimes some undefined smaller territory and sometimes it is the area around the church of Saltvik (as a harbour and trading place). Björkö in Mälaren in turn was, according to Dreijer (1966: 29–32; 1979: 69, 92–94, 170), a sheltered slave traders' nest founded only c. 840, that is after Ansgar's first journey to Birka around 830.

27 Villstrand 1984: 330–338; Sjöstrand 1998b: 44–48; Nordman et al. 2022: 495–497. On a trilateral concept of truth, regarding correspondence, usefulness and meaning, with different emphases, see Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994: 35–39, 48.

28 "I managed to interest Ålands Kulturstiftelse and the provincial board of governance in publishing the 'Åländska folkets historia' from ancient times to the present-day on a scientific basis and myself offered to write the first part, which was published in 1979. The intention was not only to spread knowledge but also to consolidate the old feeling of being a special people in the young Åland, which, because of its history, its aspirations for freedom and its self-government, had received this distinctive designation, despite its Swedish nationality." Actually, the final nine chapters of Dreijer's memoirs (1984: 279–324) revolve intimately around Åland's particular history, autonomy and identity. The series *Det åländska folkets historia* by Ålands kulturstiftelse was, as the grandiose title itself reflects, a very ambitious project. It was originally launched on an initiative in 1970 by Dreijer, who also became chairman of the editorial committee; this included Valdemar Nyman as well. The series was intended to comprise five volumes. Dreijer considered his part from 1979 as his most important publication; it is also the only one in the series published in a subsequent revised version. He was awarded the cultural prize of the foundation in the same year. Of the English edition of Dreijer's section, published in 1986 through Almqvist & Wiksell International in Stockholm, 150 copies were intended to be used as gift books by the "top management of the province". The cultural foundation has lamented that "established historians have been critical and have not given the works the importance they have". The books in the series, it is further stated, did not gain the popularity that the foundation had hoped for (Steinby 2000: 73–79, 108, 118–119). The part about "established historians" concerns the time up to the 1990s. The foundation took thereafter a new and considerably broader form and the previous romantic-political orientation began to appear obsolete; a certain hiatus followed in publishing activity. The later volumes in the series that have been released after the turn of the millennium have quite a different scientific stringency and sharpness.

29 At the end of the war, there was obviously a diligent search for historical Ålandic symbols to gather around, and attempts were made to highlight the medieval provincial patron saint St. Olof (d. 1030) with large provincial folk feasts [Sw. landskapsfester] on his day, July 29; note also the title of the yearly Christmas book the Åland parishes established in 1947. Jomala church, dedicated to St. Olof, was also the focus of special contemporary interest; this formed a pre-chapter to Matts Dreijer's historic reassessments. This church was, according to Dreijer (1979: 173, 316–326), the oldest stone church in Åland, dating from around 1100. A medieval royal saint who during his actual life probably never set foot in Åland seems, however, to have been too distant and insubstantial for further general success. Enter Ansgar and Unni of Hamburg-Bremen. The Norwegian St. Olof and Frankish/German Ansgar and Unni were suitable symbols when self-government and independence from the surrounding mainlands were to be stressed.

30 A good storyteller and performer is of course alert to the atmosphere of his/her audience and what it wants to hear and accept. Representing history with passion and vision is also probably far better than with no commitment or implied meaning at all. Seen from an utilitarian perspective, the validity of constructed knowledge is not, at least primarily, determined by truth content but usefulness, in economic terms a market value, where the "story" is rather seen as a commodity designed to meet the demands of a certain market and implicitly aim at a higher political goal or ideal (Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994: 244–245; Moe 1995: 28, 92–93, 102–103). An ancient local or regional greatness works as a deep psychological temptation and a political motivator. Few among the Ålandic public knew anything in detail about Dreijer's theories beyond the idea that Åland had been an important place. Dreijer's shift around 1950 is most obviously also connected with the contemporary Swedish historiographic turn, as the liberal and source-critical school initiated in the 1910s by the brothers Lauritz (1873–1960) and Curt Weibull (1886–1991) outflanked the older conservative and national school of Harald Hjärne. Dreijer (1984: 281) explicitly stresses as his main sources of inspiration the Weibull brothers and their Danish associate Erik Arup (1876–1951) and notes that his historical discoveries had meant a catastrophe for his national romantic view of the deeds of the Svear. The Weibull school was originally geographically based in and focused on southern Scandinavia; it was marked by radical polemic reassessments of Viking Age and medieval history in opposition to older Swedish "nationalistic" views held in upper Sweden, as well as a materialistic emphasis on trade and power politics (Åmark 1998: 56–63; Svenstrup 2009: 358–372; Torstendahl 2009: 35–39). This was part of a broader international development that culminated in the optimistic post-war era with the rapid progress of the natural sciences and a call for a unitary science with raised demands for empiricism that also affected the status of the humanities and social sciences. Speculation and metaphysics were to be pushed aside and a special focus on method was prescribed, and for the subject of history a detailed source critique. The subject would be "exact", not least through economic-material descriptions. A rational, calculating view of man was emphasised (Moe 1995: 89–91, 97–100). The Weibullian polemic traits with radical reassessments are easily seen in the works of Dreijer, along with clear features of materialism, focusing on property relations, wealth formation, production conditions, social classes, economic differences and a crass collaboration between mission, trade and imperialism, while ancient Scandinavia is seen as an utterly primitive and barbaric colonial area, the production and raw materials of which were vastly exploited by merchants and entrepreneurs from the continent (first and foremost Frisians) and the British Isles, in accordance with a dictum by Arup that initiatives for contact always come from the technically and socially more developed people. Dreijer's interrupted national romantic view of the Svear was, however, followed by his own great Ålandic patriotic reassessments. Considering the Swedish regional opposition, it is noticeable that Sven B. F. Jansson belonged to the Stockholm region, whereas Ivar Lindquist was from Lund in the southern Scandinavian

sphere. It should also be remembered that Åland was still quite an isolated place in the early 1950s. Travel to or from the islands was difficult and time-consuming: Cultural and scientific life had to be managed almost entirely internally. The financial opportunities to bring in renowned lecturers from outside were extremely limited (Steinby 2000: 86).

31 M. Dreijer 1979: 161–162; 1983: 199–201; so also 1984: 138, 255.

32 Ringbom also notes that no C-14 datings were taken of the coffin, but this method, developed by the American physical chemist W. F. Libby (1908–1980), was only in its very infancy back in 1950. Dreijer organised some datings of other objects in Åland in the late 1960s, which now, over 50 years later, appear quite vague due to the continuing refinement of the method. In Finland, the use of this method began somewhat later. When applied to organic material, the margins of uncertainty, given as ±-values, are also quite wide (Hiekkanen 2020: 35–37).

33 SDHK 157; Curschmann 1909 (esp. on Unni's pallium letter p. 37); Levison 1919; Seegrün 1976 (esp. on Unni's pallium letter pp. 9, 105); Gallén 1982a: 219–220; Hallencreutz & Odelman 1986: 130–132; Gahrn 1988: 6; Scior 2002: 41–48. The pallium is a sign of dignity awarded by the Holy See to archbishops in the Roman Catholic Church, consisting of a white collar or woolen band decorated with six black crosses, woven from lambswool in a monastery in Rome (Nilsson 1998, 74, 76, 142–144; Lindström 2015: 164). It may be observed that much concerning the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen and its Scandinavian mission is widely debated (cf. Janson 2012; 2014). According to Eric Knibbs (2011), the figures Ansgar and Rimbert were clever forgers who wove a complex tapestry of myths and half-truths about themselves and their mission. They worked with the tacit approval of kings and popes to craft a fictional account of Ansgar's life and work. Ansgar did not found an archdiocese at all; rather, the idea of Hamburg-Bremen only took root in the tenth century. Royal sponsorship of Ansgar's mission to Denmark and Sweden had already ended with the death of Emperor Louis the Pious in 840. The concept of persistent "forgery" is taken by Knibbs well beyond the probable and credible.

34 Kivikoski 1964: 234–235; Suvanto 1980; Ambrosiani 1981; Gallén 1982a; 1982b; 1998: 73–86; Villstrand 1984: 337–338; Ringbom 1986: 11–13; Hellberg 1987: 58, 69–70, 124–128; 217, 246; Gahrn 1988: 87–91; Slotte 1988: 62–65; Orrman 1990: 219; Pirinen 1991: 21; Carlsson 1993: 127–134; Törnblom 1993: 305–307; Lamm 1995: 228; Ringbom & Remmer 1995: 10–11; Sjöstrand 1995; 1996: 91–94; 1998b; 2000; Hyenstrand 1996, s. 11–12; Lindh 1998: 333–336; Nilsson 1998: 45; Skogsjö 1999: 39; Mattsson-Eklund 2000: 80; Edgren 2004; 2011; Ahl 2006: 12: Tarkiainen 2008: 298 n. 10; Holmén 2009: 313–319; 2015: 154–157, 184–190, 232–236; Hiekkanen 2010a; Meinander 2016: 197; Nordman et al. 2022: 492–497; Hårdstedt 2023: 310–311. Ålands kulturstiftelse's historiographer A.-G. Steinby (2000: 24) also notes, somewhat awkwardly, in connection with the foundation's tribute to Dreijer on his 85th birthday in 1986, that "no research unequivocally supports Dreijer›s assumptions" and later she (Steinby 2000: 103)

mentions Björn Ambrosiani's lecture in Mariehamn April 27, 2000, on "the Viking town of Birka on Björkö in Lake Mälaren".

35 Ringbom 1991: 50–51; 1994: 459–460; 2010: 9; Roeck Hansen 1991: 21–29; Carlsson 1993: 131–133; Edgren 1993: 227–229; 2008: 477; Törnblom 1993: 304–309; Hiekkanen 1995; 126–128; 2010; Ringbom & Remmer 1995: 9–10; Thunmark-Nylén 1995: 300; Sjöstrand 1998a: 408–411; 2014: 83–93, 143–144; Sjöstrand & Tarsala 1998; Tarsala 1998: 109–115; Skogsjö 1999: 6; Wickholm 2000: 110, 127, 130–134; Ahl 2006: 10–14; Tarkiainen 2008: 106–112; Hårdstedt 2023: 52.

36 Hellberg's depopulation theory, along with his assumption of a number of Finnish placenames in Åland, was undoubtedly an abomination to Dreijer (e.g. 1988; Hellberg is simply pushed aside and the usual repetition of Dreijer's views follows). The same applies to Erik Bertell (esp. 1983a: passim). The archaeologist Kristin Ilves (2015: 5) notes that "the unwillingness on behalf of placename researchers to consider approaching the matter [of settlement in Åland] in a more nuanced manner is beginning to feel tiresome". This seems to imply that placenames should be assigned a subordinate significance and interpreted more freely to fit contradicting views. The dialogue between placename research and archaeology has, unfortunately, often been a stormy and uneven affair marked by both mutual curiosity and suspicion (Gräslund 2010; Vikstrand 2012). Every worthy debate includes disruptions and contradictions. In addition, the goal in any interplay between linguistics, settlement history and archaeology should not be consensus but rather paralogy, a fruitful disagreement that undermines the prevailing discourse. Consensus as liberation would be based on a claim to have found the ultimate explanation of the problem(s) at hand, or a "Grand Narrative" while an effort to make the research system work better corresponded to instrumental power interests. Tension, disagreement, and differences are irreducible elements in a performance that aims for creative development rather than total victory over the opponent(s) as the tension would thus be lost (Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994: 242–245; Hyenstrand 1996:7–8).

37 At times, attempts to reverse and explain everything as late imports have gone too far; for example, the suggestion the island names Hammarland and Eckerö are loans from Hammarby and Ekerö in Uppland (Lars Huldén 2001: 460; 2002: 71) seems far-fetched. Fundamentally, a methodologically correct interpretation of placenames should be the result of etymological, name-typological, and extra-linguistic, i.e. factual analysis. Concerning settlement names in general, the basic starting point is that they are older (secondary names) or contemporary (primary names) with the settlement. The names are given, used, and handed down by the surrounding inhabitants, a larger circle of name users. A settlement name not only denotes the actual place of dwelling but the whole area belonging to the settlement, which means that the name will likely endure even if the dwelling site moves or completely disappears. The probability of time-honoured settlement names changing in the case of continuous

endogenous development in a firmly established larger habitation is quite small and is related to the size of the circle of name users (Pamp 1979: 21, 72; Brink 1989; Strid 1993: 11–17, 33, 43–52). The possibility that the total set of any kind of placenames in entire densely populated districts changed and the former names vanished completely during an undisturbed endogenous development is wholly improbable, as are completely irrational developments where new names were given with no factual connection to the settlements they denote. A disrupted toponymic record signifies pervasive demographic changes, to which it can be added that stages of colonisation are associated with an increased frequency of personal prefixes (Fridell 1992: 224–225; Strid 1993: 33). These, as noted, are consistently dominant among the primary village names in Åland.

38 Kivikoski 1964: 232; Jaatinen et al. 1989: 23–35; Núñez 1995: 113–118; Karlsson 1997: 87; Heininen et al. 2014: 330; Ekman 2017; 2021; Lindholm 2020: 29, 35; Hårdstedt 2023: 52. As Matts Dreijer 1966: 28–29 points out, Åland was not only located on one of the main roads of world trade during the Viking Age but this literally ran right through Åland. Regardless of exactly how and when the obscure names Sw. Åland and Fi. Ahvenanmaa ['-land'] really originated, the main theories about their prefixes circle around old proto-Germanic and proto-Nordic words and phenomena associated with islands, water, and seafaring. The process of shore displacement is not linear but was also strongly influenced by changes in the sea level, which can in a short time vary c. ± 50 cm. Based on Martin Ekman (2017; 2021), the map's 5-m contour is today to be placed in central Åland in approximately AD 1200–1220, while Roeck Hansen (1991: 41–43) placed it tentatively in the later tenth century based on research that was current at the time, cf. Núñez (1995: 115) who says in AD 1000 the water level was 5–7 meters higher. Such considerable differences seem essentially important for chronological reasoning based on shore regression concerning both archaeological features and placenames. Uotila (2018: 35), for example, states that the sea level in the Turku region and SW Finland was in the first part of the thirteenth century 3–3.5 meters higher.

39 Edgren 1993: 199–200; 2008: 472; Callmer 1994: 18–19; Núñez 1995; Tomtlund 2005; Karlsson 1997: 89–93; Hiekkanen 2010b: 301–303; 2020: 457; Wessman 2010: 18, 34–35; Storå et al. 2012; Raninen & Wessman 2015: 255, 264, 276–277, 281, 286–288, 291–293, 334–335, 355, 364. The "Finnish" elements are largely women's jewellery (Kivikoski 1963: 127–128), which along with female jewellery from Gotland indicates an ongoing external exchange of marriage partners, wives and concubines, either peacefully or by force. With small settlement units and a small population, continuous immigration and emigration was necessary for reproduction (cf. Jaatinen et al. 1989: 23). Extensive contact networks connected families all around the Baltic Sea, in addition to which there were most probably also thralls taken from the eastern side of the sea (cf. Harrison 2019a: 202–203).

40 The alleged Viking Age "Kvarnbo Hall" (at Sa 14.9), an aristocratic assembly hall, cult hall, or moot hall (OSw. *sal* < PNordic *saliz*), with the united functions of theatre, court, and temple at the centre of a group of principal farmsteads

and likely serving as a basis for influence and control over a larger area, envisioned by Kristin Ilves and playing a central role in her views of the political structure of Late Iron Age Åland is most obviously a predetermined theoretical construction beyond anything empirically graspable. This does not however mean that Kvarnboda (Qverneboda 1559), former "Saltvik" (Salthwik 1322), is of less interest. The medieval provincial assembly ordinarily met here and it was said in 1351 that the village had once belonged to the crown and later been handed to the bishop of Turku (Bertell 1953: 18–21, 43–44, 48–49), which means that the place, an offshoot from the medieval primary village Rangsby ['Ragnvald's farm'] and secondarily named after the adjacent inlet [Sw. vik], was at some point in time (around 1200?) expropriated, by force or negotiation, likely as a strategic bridgehead. Along with the harbor, church (Sa 22.3) and the adjacent hillfort in Borgboda (Sa 21.7), the Kvarnboda area represents a concentration of legal, military, economic and religious functions. The first wooden church there was probably a central royal public church for all of Åland, dedicated to St. Mary. On the "volcanic winter" or "dust veil event" of AD 536 and its effects in Northern Europe, see Gräslund & Price 2012. It can be debated whether the archaeological changes in Åland in the sixth century were rooted in a major immigration from the west or if they rather were a local adaptation to the crisis phenomenon of the time in accordance with a larger Scandinavian pattern, including the burial custom with mounds (cf. Tomtlund 2005: 3) and the establishment of the Vendel culture in eastern Middle Sweden (c. 550–750/800). Was the barren Ålandic archipelago really an attractive place for mainland agriculturalists? In general, migrants tend to prefer areas that are naturally reminiscent of their place of origin as they want to transfer their livelihood technology in as unchanged a manner as possible (cf. Lindström 2015: 199–200). The extent to which new types of burials, houses and objects imply that a new people had immigrated is a classic problem (cf. Welinder 2009: 446). In the case of Åland, it can also be suspected the recent state border in the Åland Sea has contributed to steering the interpretations in a certain direction, to which is added the question of what happened to the former population. These puzzles are of no less interest concerning parallelism with the demographic problems associated with the transition from the Iron Age to the Middle Ages.

41 The general division into a NE and a SW part also had a counterpart in the cultural landscape, later visible in a varied relationship between fields and meadows depending on the topography, with a dominance of cereals (NE) and animal fodder (SW) respectively, which should have resulted in an exchange between the areas (Jaatinen et al. 1989: 48–50). Almost all medieval and early modern assets of both church and crown, along with the central Kastelholm Castle, were situated in the NE part (Bertell 1953). It is hard to tell how far back the polity *terra Alandiae* of the fourteenth century really has existed. Was it only a late creation of the church and crown in the thirteenth century or was it once a petty kingdom, a chieftainship or a large, natural conglomerate of settlements held together by family, cult, geography or other relationships (cf. Strid 1993:

92; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 34–35, 143; Lena Huldén 2004: 15; Brink 2008: 23–24; Harrison 2020b: 20)? Tingön is probably the most mysterious island in Åland. The name is attested as Tingöön in 1543, Tingerd hålma in 1556 and Tingers holmenn in 1557. The island was then under the crown's castle of Kastelholm (G. Hausen 1927: 181). The two latter forms testify to a fenced-in assembly area on the island, the location of which appears to be altogether perfect as a judicial focal site for all of Åland. But no historical sources ever mention any assemblies being held there. Assemblies of local communities presupposed the acceptance by all of a common, traditional, religious cult. Conversion resulted in exclusion from the traditional assembly and the need for an alternative Christian one (Zachrisson 1998: 154; B. Sawyer 2000: 151). Was it perhaps the case that Tingön was Åland's pre-Christian assembly site but with formal Christianisation a new assembly site was created by the newly founded royal farm of "Saltvik" (later Kvarnboda) and the first church there, either by negotiation or force by the crown?

42 M. Dreijer 1979: 99–103, 108–109, 170–171; Roeck Hansen 1991: 21; Callmer 1994; Hagerman 1996: 95, 115–118; Talvio 2002; Edgren 2008: 477; Raninen & Wessman 2015: 327–338. The number of Viking Age Islamic coins in Åland is quite significant compared to c. 300 on the Finnish mainland (incl. the NW shore of Lake Ladoga) but is very modest compared to Gotland's c. 70,000 and c. 450,000 in the whole of Northern Europe. When the three Scandinavian kings started to mint coins in the mid-990s, these were modelled on English coins and were produced by imported English mint masters, reflecting the contemporary close ties to England (Hagerman 1996: 118–121; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 37–38, 121; Harrison 2019b: 131–134; 2020b: 49–53).

43 This relates to the subject of the formation of villages (cf. Lindholm 2020) as well as to the peculiar recurring phenomenon of burial grounds on the actual borders between villages, which can hardly be something contemporary with the burial grounds (cf. Roeck Hansen 1991: 85, 87). It is not simply a matter of "placenames" but an overall reconstruction of the development and roots of the historic settlement with regard to onomastics, patterning, delimitations, topography, taxation, and administration. The very backbone of the main island Ålandic settlement only consists of a little more than 20 primary villages with names consisting of a personal male name in the prefix and *-by* as suffix, a medieval type originally denoting a single settler's farm (there are in total c. 30 of this type but some of them are secondary to each other). The name in the prefix is in some cases even Christian (Grelsby, Persby, Klemetsby) or of Low German origin (Bertby, Stålsby, Heinarby). The often strikingly large undivided domains of these villages, which are concentrated in clusters around the parish churches or otherwise located in the centre of clusters of secondary villages, in other words by the most attractive soil for cultivation, usually contain numerous Late Iron Age burial grounds (roughly corresponding to contemporary individual farms), some also on the actual village borders. Trying to relate this to any rigid demographic continuity hardly makes sense, nor can be it be the result of dispersed farms agglomerating to villages or a somehow "renamed"

version of the Late Iron Age settlement due to a new territorial division; this is also the case for the category of primary villages with collective names referring to medieval settlers from different provinces in Sweden, these too having numerous Late Iron Age burial grounds on their large undivided domains. If one cites only archaeological and palynological information, one can of course arrive at an uninterrupted development but the perspective is significantly shifted by the historical settlement reconstruction. Looking further east of Åland, the basic Swedish name structure is strikingly similar in the former parishes of Kimito (Fi. Kemiö) and Pargas (Fi. Parainen), settled by Swedes from the late twelfth century onwards until the Black Death in the middle of the fourteenth century (Thors 1972; Orrman 1990; Zilliacus 1990). There is a core cluster around the parish church of primary villages with names with a male name as prefix and *-by* as suffix, surrounded by secondary villages with names incorporating *-böle* and *-boda* and further topographic names. The very rare names Hulta and Tjuda in Kimito/Kemiö are in all probability connected with Hulta, Tjudö and Tjudnäs in Åland. Just as in Åland, there is also a Gesterby and a Dalkarby (< settlers form Gästrikland and Dalarna in Sweden), a type of name also found in numerous other places in the Swedish parts of Finland (cf. Hellberg 1987: 25–35, 65–74; Rosendahl 2008: 63–64; Tarkiainen 2008: 109). In the forest areas of Roslagen in Sweden closest to Åland, which were populated only in the Middle Ages, names of villages with personal names in their prefixes are common too. A further striking parallel is that the term *bol* as a mansus and taxation unit appears both in Åland and in Åboland in the oldest sources from the fourteenth century; it must stem at least from the latter part or the middle of the previous century (Orrman 1981–82: 110–112; 1990: 230–231). There is, however, a significant difference as there is no corresponding Finnish substrate (Pitkänen 1985; 1990) in Åland, i.e. the most probably prehistoric names of the major Ålandic islands are Scandinavian. The question concerns more the lack of any pre-medieval substrata as such (apart from the names of the major islands), also noticeable e.g. in the absence of uncompounded names of lakes of an older type such as Largen, Ruggen, Viren etc. The Åland onomastic record appears, in peculiar contrast to the neighboring regions to the east and west, something like a medieval carpet with no real Iron Age floor underneath.

44 Pirinen 1962: 90–96; Orrman 1990: 212, 206–208, 213; 1994: 681; Kivistö 2006: 18–19; Tarkiainen 2008: 109–110; Heininen & al. 2014: 341; Sjöstrand 2011: 26–27; 2013: 86–87; 2014: 120–123; Hårdstedt 2023: 64–65.

45 Trigger 1994; Taavitsainen 2002; Viklund 2002: 132; Welinder 2009: 81–97, 106–108, 337–338, 447. The Estonian archaeologist Marika Mägi (2015: 171) observes that ideas among Finnish scholars about the Viking Age Ålanders as Scandinavian-Finnic bilinguals and accordingly playing an essential role in binding together the Viking Age network is, considering that the archaeological evidence is "so strongly Scandinavian", probably just a projection from a modern Finnish political situation. It would perhaps make more sense to suggest Scandinavian-Finnic bilingualism in the coastal areas of Estonia and SW Finland, where the material is strongly Eastern-Scandinavian as regards

the warrior sphere while the rest of artefacts are of local types. More than anything else, such a division in artefactual evidence should be interpreted as a synthesis of two cultures, Mägi concludes. The underlying theoretical question here concerns where the outer limits for the Scandinavian and Finnic languages should be drawn and where these languages are supposed to have met and overlapped. The basis for interpretation is always some form of concept or pre-understanding. Sensory experiences can never be pure and impeccable; the world is viewed through socially and culturally pre-designated concepts and categories. Observation always takes place from a certain point of view (Moe 1995: 101, 104). This is again an illustrative example of how Åland lands in an ambivalent situation when modern nation-state borders and ideologies (cf. Hårdstedt 2023: 12–16) tend to provide a matrix for interpretation, although on the other hand it seems clear that the relationship between ethnicity, culture and language is complex and fluid; almost every society has had minorities and trans-cultural features; ancient people could have had a wide range of linguistic capacities to be used in different contacts (cf. Rosendahl 2008: 69; Kortekangas 2022: 545). Questions about the relationships of ancient cultures to later peoples hold a particular fascination but are also anachronistic and in terms of languages, one or many, the archaeological material is far too ambiguous to provide any unconditional and definitive answers. The *lingua franca* in the Baltic Sea area since the Bronze Age may have been some kind of Indo-European (Welinder 2009: 338) that later evolved into synthetic North Germanic and from the Middle Ages Low German. It is nonetheless hard to agree with for example the claim by Ahola et al. (2014: 237) that there are "many medieval names of Finnish origin in Åland". Excluding the northeasternmost outer archipelago closest to Finland Proper, an area which obviously during its settlement stood in an ambivalent administrative position between the provinces (cf. Orrman 1990: 224), such names are really very rare (cf. Ahlbäck 1989). On the other hand, there is no reason to endorse the position of Matts Dreijer (1979: 82, 115, 121–123) and claim a total lack of any Finnish element. As Roeck Hansen (1991: 22) points out, there has been particular concentration on a few types of Ålandic placenames, often in cases in which it is not quite clear whether their origin is Swedish or Finnish. This is obviously an expression of a clash between different linguistic ideological approaches – and more generally also a part of the political Åland discourse.

46 M. Dreijer 1979: 170–173; Mattsson-Eklund 2000: 77; Tomtlund 2005; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 11–28; Ringbom 2010: 9–10. The stone church in Finström was preceded by a smaller wooden church. In an interview in *Åland* 17.4.2023, "Finströms kyrka – en skatt av kulturhistoria", Åsa Ringbom states that excavations in 1951 revealed ancient graves around the church which were re-excavated in 2020 and with modern technology dated to the twelfth century (Sw. 1100-talet): "This effectively puts an end to the old discussion that Åland would have been depopulated around the year 1000 and 200 years on. I have never believed that." The 20 radiocarbon dates of bones from these graves (Ringbom 2023: 345–346) do not, however, show these burials as being older

than around AD 1200. In Ringbom 2023, almost the entire opening chapter on the parish of Finström (pp. 11–32) is dedicated to similar forced refuting of any "hiatus" in the Ålandic settlement, none of which can be taken up here. Of special relevance in this context, however, is that the cross of Sund is not mentioned here.

47 Skogsjö 2010: 16–21; Sjöstrand 2011: 26–27; 2012b; 2014.

48 Roeck Hansen 1991: 130–134; Alenius 2014; Gustavsson et al. 2014: 162, 183; Ilves & Perttula 2020; Alenius, Ilves & Saarinen 2022.

49 Ambrosiani 1981–1982: 78–79; Orrman 1990: 223; Magnusson 1996: 36; Lindkvist 2002: 46; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 17–19, 111–118; Charpentier Ljungqvist 2009: 147–148; Harrison 2009: 336; 2020a: 256–260; Haggrén 2015: 421.

50 Nilsson 1996: 349–368; 2012: 19, 23–25, 86; Haggrén 2015; 379; Raninen & Wessman 2015: 343; Ruohonen 2018: 51–65; Salonen 2018: 47–50; 65–66; Harrison 2019b: 151–153; 2020b: 58–59; Hiekkanen 2020: 18–20.

51 Roeck Hansen 1991: 23–24, 28–29, 35, 77–82, 161–162, 166–167; Carlsson 1997: 4–5; Núñez 1995: 117; Ilves 2022: 219–221. The dating of this burial custom, both beginning and end, is also of the greatest importance for the general assessment of the density of the Late Iron Age settlement. Of course, not all burial grounds are contemporary and it is evident that the calculations and notions of centrality vs. peripherality become completely different if the boundaries are set at 600–1050 (450 years) or 500–1200 (700 years).

52 The fairly common square stone settings, of which only a few have been investigated, belong to the youngest types in the burial grounds and seem to be associated with early Christianity (M. Dreijer 1979: 62–63).

53 The statement by Fallgren (2020: 169) that "the Iron Age and Viking Age agrarian economy of Åland appears to have been of exactly the same type as in other parts in north-western Europe" seems to be completely insensitive to the actual position of Åland as a mostly barren outer archipelago during the relevant period.

54 The desktop calculations by Irissou (2022: 42–44) showing that the waterway was closed at Strömma as early as the beginning of the ninth century are obviously seriously distorted by the fact that located on the exact spot is a municipal maintenance depot on an elevated artificial plateau and the passing road runs along a raised bank. The neck of land in question between Saltviksfjärden and Lake Tjärnan is known as *Dragedet* (Weckström 1852: 14; Andersson 1939: 132) < OSw. *dragha,* 'pull' and OSw. *edh*, 'neck of land', from a root meaning 'walk', thus actually 'walking distance' (cf. Granlund 1956: 87–89), which indicates that smaller boats were pulled over there and that the land neck was a walking trail between eastern and western Saltvik ever since its emergence. The name Strömma, on the other hand and contrary to what has sometimes been believed, derives not from a time when water still flowed through here but from the approximately 400 meter-long stream further north

between the lakes Tjärnan and Strömma träsk next to the village settlement; that stream must have formed well after the neck of land emerged (cf. Hellberg 1987: 190–191).

55 The time scale is the same as for the densely settled areas of SW Finland in general, where parishes were formed c. 1225–1250 (Hiekkanen 2010b: 343–344; Ruohonen 2018: 64).

56 Åland actually also had a local saint in St. Signil [< *Signelill*] connected primarily with the skerries in the Åland Sea named after her, Signilskär (Sancta Singned skier 1538); there are the remains of a medieval chapel here, probably from the thirteenth century (Ringbom & Remmer 1995: 168–172). One of the skerries is named Heligman 'holy man'. The background of this highly obscure local saint has been the subject of much speculation (cf. Matz 1981: 23).

57 Klackenberg 1992: 62–63, 100–101, 132, 165–166; cf. Haggrén 2015: 495–498; Ehrnsten 2019.

58 Pirinen 1991: 217–218, 232–233; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 222; Ringbom 2010: 54; Hiekkanen 2020: 27, 29.

59 These numbers are of course quite modest compared to the fact that the province of Uppland alone by way of example had almost 180 medieval parishes (Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 85). Around AD 1300 there were c. 1,750 churches in Sweden, c. 1,200 in Norway and c. 2,800 in Denmark (Hagerman 1996: 277). This indicates how sparsely populated medieval Finland really was. It may be observed that all 15 of the medieval ecclesiastical units in Åland still live on as modern municipalities.

60 Ringbom (2023: 11–12) emphasises that the unique character of the Ålandic stone churches in itself must mean that Åland cannot have been depopulated at an earlier stage. This is also a striking expression of the Åland-centric approach. One might just as well turn the tables and claim that Åland was "repopulated" by already-Christian people from several different directions, which led to a special multifaceted ethnic mix and thus also an early and peculiar construction of stone churches, diverse but still uniform compared to other regions – if the "peculiarity" is to be specially underlined. The sturdy Ålandic church towers, on the other hand, would according to Ringbom & Remmer (2005: 222) probably have functioned as bell towers, i.e. campaniles, while they could also have been secondarily used for storage spaces and defensive purposes. This seems to lack a wider social perspective. They can hardly be a result of decision-making on the single local level but constitute components in a far wider hierarchical structure. As the churches along with the towers were not "privately" built by magnates but collectively by parish congregations, the towers instead appear as symbolic reminders of the Finnish diocese's spiritual supremacy in its linguistically, economically and militarily west-facing insular outskirts: the need to mark symbolic affinity between those in power and subordinates increases with distance from the center and the use of symbols is enhanced with an intensified need to mark power, affinity and acceptance (cf. Hyenstrand 1996: 147–149). Massive stone towers at churches in general were expensive and difficult to

construct and are redundant from a strictly spiritual perspective. The suspension of the bells could be arranged much more easily in independent wooden belfries. Medieval stone towers certainly served various functions which today only can be the subject of speculation. It seems in any case evident that they symbolised power over and protection of the local population (cf. Hagerman 1996: 312–315, 368–369; Harrison 2020b: 60–61).

61 In regard to pollen investigations, it is of great comparative interest that the well-attested historical Ålandic population flight and the Russian devastations 1714–1721 during the Great Northern War, which also led to extensive changes in ownership as many farmers never returned and were replaced by newcomers (cf. Jaatinen et al. 1989: 6–7, 29, 55–59; Roeck Hansen 1991: 32, 47; Mattsson-Eklund 2000: 200–220; Skogsjö 2010: 25–29; Samuelsson 2015: 345–378; Meyer ed. 2020) give no visible indications of interrupted cultivation.

62 Karlsson 1987; 1997: 89–93; Núñez 1995: 113, 116, also with reservation for a possible large time spread.

63 Orrman speaks of multifunctional longhouses of Scandinavian type in Åland and relates these to a general Scandinavian transition in the late Viking Age to functionally separated smaller timber houses, which is supposed not to have occurred in Åland. The idea that such longhouses were ever a typical feature of Åland can clearly be rejected (Ilves 2018a).

64 The Ålandic survey of ancient monuments counts 163 stone house foundations at 64 sites although in reality it is often impossible to determine the exact number of houses at each site, particularly without any thorough and systematic investigations. Over time, new houses were built over old ones, the sites are often messy and much has been destroyed by later cultivation.

65 Kivikoski 1946; M. Dreijer 1979: 66; Karlsson 1997: 90–91; Tomtlund 2005: 22; Ilves 2018a.

66 The name is also attested as Berströmdz kulla 1544 and Berströmskulla 1545, showing together with other evidence that the settlement was a former part of Bjärström (Berström 1406; Bärström 1492), which is also in turn a topographic name meaning 'mountain/rock stream' (G. Hausen 1927: 21–22, 28). It is difficult to determine whether Kulla is an oblique singular form of *kulle* ['hill'] or a plural thereof (cf. Granlund 1956: 89). While the background is also somewhat unclear, it could possibly refer to burial mounds: there are three Late Iron Age burial grounds (Fi 10.4–6) in the village area (cf. Hellberg 1987: 47–50, 66, 167). All the farms in the village in fact have names incorporating *-kulla* (Weckström 1852: 37). On Gölby, see Sjöstrand (2014: 110–111). Gölby ['Görd's/Göl's farm'] is a striking example of the huge undivided domains of the primary villages with names of this type, in this case a large area in N Jomala and SW Finström containing Andersböle, Björsby, Buskböle, Ringsböle, Emkarby, Östanåker, Kulla, Bjärström, Svartsmara. The whole SE part of Finström along with the church area in turn is the undivided domain of Godby ['Gode's farm'], whereas the separate northern part is the undivided domain of Stålsby ['Stolt's farm']. The northernmost part, Geta, is a former island and formed a chapel annex of its

own in the latter part of the fifteenth century. The church of Finström was built in the middle of the first three settlement clusters, in a former small secondary settlement named Finström from which the parish name stems. As Roeck Hansen (1991: 44) quite rightly points out, the boundaries of the parish were not determined by the topography but are the result of administrative planning on a higher level. The parishes of Hammarland, Jomala, Saltvik and Sund are also composed of two or more naturally demarcated settlement districts.

67 Fallgren earlier presented the idea that Öland was conquered from the Swedish mainland c. 1170 (cf. Lindström 2015: 211, 214), which was obviously a model for his theory of the conquest of Åland. His opinion that this happened sometime between the beginning of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century is clearly impossible. If this conquest hypothesis had any validity, it should most reasonably be placed in time to the latter part of the twelfth century (cf. Lindström 2022: 501). Ahola et al. (2014: 251) also mention the possibility that the toponymic discontinuance could result from an influx of early medieval immigrants having a hostile relation to indigenous groups, thus not assimilating the prior onomastic landscape. This brings in mind the enigmatic cases of Shetland and Orkney, where Norse settlement began in the ninth century and gradually ousted all the older names of Pictish and Celtic origin; almost no traces have survived of these earlier names (Fellows Jensen 2008: 396). It must in this context, alongside further unclarities, be pointed out that theories and models implying overtly brutal conflicts and more or less genocidal takeovers are hardly probable (cf. Barrett 2008: 419–422; Haggrén 2008: 39). Cf. the extremely savage depiction in Lindström 2022: 501: "They [mainland-Swedes in organised fleets of levies] drove away the pagan islanders [of Åland] or killed the men and kept the women and children as slaves." Drastic events of such magnitude should also have left at least some traces in contemporary and later written sources as well as in local tradition (cf. Harrison 2020a: 137). After all, what would the point have been? Were the barren Åland islands really so attractive that someone would go to such bloody excesses?

68 Without any pre-medieval historic or toponymic evidence, only archaeology remains to determine the hierarchical features in the Late Iron Age Ålandic settlement structure. In that respect, the hillforts and the areas around them, as well as their placement in the landscape and possible symbolic function, are of special interest (cf. Karlsson 1997: 92–93; Ilves 2022). Burial grounds with mounds in the biggest class of c. 20 meters in diameter could be considered as reconstructions of local petty lordships. The chronology of Late Iron Age monuments in general should in any case not be interpreted on the basis that they foreshadow the medieval parish churches.

69 P. Sawyer 1991; Hyenstrand 1996: 146–152; Lindkvist 2002: 42–43, 45–46; 2006: 29–32, 35; 2008: 668–674; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 29–174; Harrison 2004: 23–51, 84–85; 2009: 70–74; 2020a: 177–243; Hårdstedt 2023: 35–56, 64.

70 Cf. Carlsson 1997: 4; Lindh 1998: 336; Ringbom 2010: 6; Hårdstedt 2023: 30, 48, 51.

71 This brings us back to Matts Dreijer (1965a: 22), who, for example, in the mid-1960s, asserted that there are so many finds in Åland from before and after 1100 that the depopulation theory "should be ripe for definitive cancellation" (similarly 1979: 170–171), whereas e.g. Lena Thunmark-Nylén (1995: 300) notes the lack of finds from the eleventh century has not been explained in any satisfactory way. According to Ella Kivikoski (1963: 132–133) inhumations dated to the first part of the eleventh century were the latest burials in the burial grounds and the result of Christian influence, filling the hiatus in the critical period.

72 Of course, if it is decided and demanded in advance which solutions and conclusions are correct and laudable in terms of research policy (cf. Hiekkanen 1997: 57–58), these are in turn usually also reached. Scholars in general are not emotionless, passionless, and undominated entities but are actually deeply involved in what they do and are often limited in their receptiveness to factual arguments from other theoretical bases. In clashes between opposing positions, one's own attitudes are usually stated to be based on empirical data, methods, and other rational considerations while competitors are said to be strongly influenced by irrational phenomena such as speculative ideas, social ties, personal investments and psychological characteristics (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994: 8, 293–296).

73 Ringbom 1991: 51; 2010: 6–10, 55; 2023: 11, 14, 21; Ringbom & Remmer 1995: 9–11; Haggrén 2015: 445. The period 1305–1319 was one of the most troubled in Nordic history (Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 50–51, 71; Harrison 2020b: 143–145). In 1318, the Russians burned down the bishop's castle Kuusisto and the town and cathedral of Turku; the archives of the bishop and cathedral went up in smoke, destroying much older history of the areas of the Finnish Church, including Åland (Orrman 1990: 197; Pirinen 1991: 76, 90; Tarkiainen 2008: 191; Salonen 2018: 16–17).

74 Cf. Sjöstrand 1996: 94; Ringbom 2012: 52; Wienberg 2012: 130–140.

75 Cf. Ringbom 2010: 137–139, 152, 155; 2012: 52–53; Wienberg 2012; 139–140; Haggrén 2015: 386–390, 481, 555 n. 234; Hiekkanen 2020: 29–30, 36–38.

76 According to Matts Dreijer (1979: 58, 88–89, 292–373), the mainland Åland churches were deliberately built on pre-Christian cult places.

77 Cf. Hagerman 1996: 192; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 144–145; Nilsson 2004: 97; 2012: 33–34; Brink 2008: 62.

78 Around Saltvik's church, consecrated to St. Mary (Sa 22.3), there is a great density of large burial grounds and other features from the Late Iron Age (Sa 14.1–8, 22. 1–3; cf. Roeck Hansen 1991: 45; Fallgren 2020: 173–174), indicating a probable village formation. Ringbom (2010: 83) claims that the church of Hammarland (Ha 18.8) is also situated by the largest burial ground (Kjusarn) in the parish. This burial ground, Ha 18.3, is however registered with only 32 objects, of which some are of quite considerable proportions, whereas there are over a dozen larger burial grounds in other places in the parish; the largest are Ha 22.22 in Torp with 125 objects and Ha 21.1 in Sålis with 133 objects,

both far away from the church. Ringbom (2010: 105) also states that the church of Lemland (Le 14.4) is situated in Söderby next to the largest Late Iron Age burial ground in the parish. The church is, however, in Norrby (cf. Sjöstrand 2012b: 156 n. 18). This mistake, also appearing elsewhere, has obviously spread from Gardberg (1973: 66). There are actually two burial grounds close to the church, with only 10 or 20 objects respectively; both were originally larger and are badly damaged (Le 12.3–4). They are almost undetectable above ground. In Lemböte south of Norrhamn (also in Lemland) is one of the most magnificent burial grounds in the whole of Åland with some of the largest mounds in the province (Le 10.1), most probably reflecting a close connection with bypassing sea traffic (Sjöstrand 2012b: 150). Godby appears as the centre of Finström, with ten burial grounds (cf. Roeck Hansen 1991: 89), one of which with 37 registered objects was once larger and also exhibits some of the largest mounds in Åland (Fi 8.6). This leads to another aspect of the question at hand, namely that in the aforementioned cases the Late Iron Age burial grounds by the churches are the largest counted in numbers of preserved and registered objects, thus reflecting a long period of use, whereas burial grounds with mounds of considerably deviant dimensions can be found elsewhere. In Jomala, for instance, large burial grounds with some of the largest mounds in the whole of Åland are found in Gölby (Jo 10.1) and Överby (Jo 37.7), obviously reflecting an ambitiously self-conscious local elite. The largest mounds measure c. 20 meters in diameter and are c. 3 meters high; these are few in number and occur only occasionally. One is in Hammarland in Bredbolstad (Ha 4.1) and two in Boda (Ha 1.4); these also far from the church. Mounds with a diameter of c. 15 meters are quite numerous. The smallest mounds and stone settings measure only a couple of meters in diameter. The burial ground (Ec 3.1) near the church in Eckerö (Knösena) for its part presents strikingly large mounds, one of which is in the largest class of c. 20 meters in diameter (M. Dreijer 1979: 60–61, 65–66). Smaller burial grounds grouped relatively close to each other could also represent chronological chains and could therefore rather be understood as single burial grounds (cf. Ambrosiani 1981–1982: 75–77). On the other hand, according to Núñez (1995: 113) all of the data suggest that the settlement unit was the farmstead, though the clustering tendency of cemeteries may reflect some sort of rural hamlet. Questions of this kind can hardly be decided without archaeological investigations along with modern radiocarbon dating methods.

79 Hellberg 1987: 42–43, 91–92, 212, 218–219, 261–262; Skogsjö 2010: 16, 18; Sjöstrand 2012b: 153–154; 2013: 84–85; 2014; 96–98. On such pre-Christian cultic names in Scandinavia see e.g. Strid 1993: 97–106; Elmevik 1999: 31–38; Brink 2008: 63–65. They often occur in connection to churches, reflecting a spatial cultic continuity (cf. Nilsson 2012: 33–34). There is in other words in Åland no traceable onomastic tradition surviving from the pre-Christian cultic landscape, which is fully in line with the fact that there are no other pre-medieval placenames either (apart from the names of the major islands). The entire onomastic system of the Iron Age has largely disappeared without a trace, also the names of old lakes, former sounds, islands etc. Archaeological

arguments about continuity between Late Iron Age features and later settlement have in general been made completely ignoring the onomastic record, alternatively resorting to fanciful free and isolated theorising, interpreting, and dating (cf. Sjöstrand 2014: 133–134, 143). The late attempts to tackle the problems by explanations of violent conquest have at least the distinct and laudable advantage of trying to weigh in linguistics and onomastics more seriously.

80 The twelfth century was troubled in the Baltic Sea with plundering, crusades and power developments resulting in extensive militarisation of the cultural landscape with sturdy defense churches, restored hillforts and individual stone towers [Sw. kastaler] placed all along the Swedish eastern coast, where a system of naval warfare called *ledung* [< OSw. *leþunger*] was introduced along with a signaling system. A terrible raiding expedition was undertaken from the eastern side of the Baltic Sea into the Mälaren region in 1187 (Orrman 1990: 211–212; Hagerman 1996: 361, 407–408; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 64–65; Lena Huldén 2004: 18–34; Harrison 2019c: 65–74; 2020a: 119–122, 132–141; 2020b: 95–98). It seems highly unlikely that the Åland islands were unaffected by such developments and events. A major defense problem in islands and archipelago regions in general is that if an overwhelmingly strong enemy gains supremacy, there is no local hinterland to flee to; the flight must be directed further away. It may in any case be noted that traces of a corresponding, apparently simplified naval system of warfare are also found on Åland (Sjöstrand 1998a: 420–425).

81 Andrae 1961: 402; Ambrosiani 1981; Gallén 1982a: 217; Gahrn 1988: 90, 175 n. 42; Pirinen 1991: 21; Nilsson 1998: 45; Tarkiainen 2008: 298 n. 10.

82 Kivikoski 1955: 33–34; 1964: 234–235; Cleve 1972: 127–128; Lindberg 1975: 424–425; Pernler 1977: 49–50; Lundén 1983: 27; Adam of Bremen 1984: 412–413.

83 Liedgren is answered in M. Dreijer 1956a.

84 Carlsson 1993: 127; Lindh 1998: 335–336; Palamarz 2004: 18; Holmén 2009: 317–318; 2015: 188–189. The theologian Nyman was a very intense personality and an incredibly prolific writer in many different genres; he also had a fairly easy-going relationship to historical interpretation in general as he rather favoured wordy artistic narration (Gäddnäs 2015). His relevance in this context concerns church history and art in particular. His major work in this field was a volume on medieval Ålandic church art, published in 1980 in the series *Det åländska folkets historia* as a close complement to Matts Dreijer's *magnum opus* in the same series from the previous year (Steinby 2000: 58–69, 76, 89, 92, 111). Bertell for his part was a school inspector during his working life and made a great scholarly effort to investigate the local medieval fiscal, judicial and administrative systems as well as the holdings of the church and crown (main works Bertell 1953; 1983a; 1993), but in trying to explain their origins with poor theoretical guidance and burning Ålandic patriotism in adherence to Dreijer's theories, he got lost in the Birka syndrome and ideas of a "Danish" period in Åland (Sjöstrand 1998a). As Steinby (2000: 70) observes, Bertell received sharp criticism from various experts.

85 Dreijer and his "alternative" theories were given much attention outside Åland in lighter contexts, often presented as a peculiar Ålandic cultural phenomenon

along with the special position of the province in general. The Swedish journalist Edvard Matz (1981: 121–123, 138–141) sensitively and diplomatically stated that the theories were "powerful" and that Dreijer "does not yield to authorities", but that it was not easy for laymen to determine their reliability. In Gallén (1998: 73), the editors commented that Dreijer's theory that the ancient town [Sw. fornstaden] Birka was not on Björkö in Lake Mälaren but in Åland is "one of the few issues of debate in medieval history known to the general public in Finland", to which "the Ålanders' ability to use the Birka theory to build an Ålandic identity has contributed". Note in this Ålandic context the confusion not only about *where* "Birka" was but also *what* it was: a town, a province, or what?

86 This ambivalence is lost in Hellström 1996 (posthumous) although he briefly mentions alternative locations for Birka, among them Dreijer's. A recent major work on medieval Sweden also notes in passing that other places besides Björkö have been suggested but that the rich finds in Björkö have strengthened its identification (Harrison 2020a: 51). The name Björkö (in Berkø 1324) is a compound of OSw. *biærk* 'birch' (*Betula*) and *ö* 'island', referring to the vegetation on the island. This name was naturally transferred to the Viking Age settlement on the island and was Latinised as *Birca* > Sw. *Birka* (Strid 1993: 47; SOL: 32, 36–37). Whether there is a direct relation between the names of the town and the laws of Scandinavian towns and harbors known as Bjärköarätt (OSw. *bjærkøa rætter*, ONo. *Biarkeyiarréttr*) seems more uncertain (cf. Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 139–140).

87 As Kendra Willson (2017: 56–57) also points out in her review of Oja's book, the factual exploration of runic inscriptions in Finland has at times been affected by emotions stirred up by language politics. Oja (2015: 218–219) also touches on an older issue, raised by Matts Dreijer in the 1940s, of old stories about two runestones in Kökar, based mainly on the dispatch of the local chaplain G. O. Hamnodius' to the National Inventory of Ancient Monuments in 1667. Troubled by a gruesome troll living in Lake Uppsjön in heathen times, the locals had hired a "rune man" [Sw. Runokarl], who could bind the troll with his runic writing [Sw. Runeskrifft] on two stones. While one stone had been placed in the water of the lake, the other was still raised by the lake (Dreijer 1945; cf. Zachrisson 1998: 49, 220–221). I have addressed this topic in Sjöstrand 1993: 55-89. There are also other, slightly older, written records from the seventeenth century that refer to the same legend, which seems to indicate it was relatively widely known. At least one of them quite clearly implies these were not real runes. I researched the area around the lake in late July 1991 and found in the given direction in relation to the lake a conspicuous stone which most likely was the "runestone" on the shore. It has the outer proportions of a common runestone and there are some indistinct patterns on it but these are most likely natural and in any case certainly not man-made Viking Age runes in any historical sense. The chaplain's report also encompasses the "lady of the lake" theme, which together with the "runestones" is to be attributed mainly

to the fields of ethnology and folklore. It may in this context also be noted that in Kökar in Finnö ['Island of the Finns'] there is a Runholm ['-island'], which, however, is unlikely to be related to runes but is from Fi. 'ruona', a fishing device [Sw. mjärde] (cf. Pitkänen 1990: 185–186). In the small medieval seafarers' chapel at Lemböte in Lemland, there was according to an obscure tradition a "large stone" [Sw. en stor sten] walled in by the entrance "with a fine line of figures (runes?), which the common people could not understand". The stone was removed by the Russians in the early 1840s (Bomansson 1858: 20–21; cf. Olsson 1895: 92–93). Speculation as to whether these "figures" were runes is of little value (cf. Matz 1981: 94–95).

88 M. Dreijer 1950: 99; 1953a: 54–58; 1956a: 118; 1979: 160–164; 1983: 199–201.

89 Ringbom's paper is rebuffed in M. Dreijer 1986b, a unilateral repetition of his views of the cross, Unni and Birka.

90 Ringbom 1986: 34, 38–39; 1991: 55–56; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 32. It should, however, be pointed out in regard to popular datings like this that such a linear chronological awareness of a "universal time" counted in numbered centuries does not rest on any genuine ancient tradition but is the result of relatively recent mass schooling. Trying to use such a tradition as an aid for dating becomes a fallacious circular argument.

91 This reflects old ideas about an early German "Baltic missionary sphere" that also involved early Christianised Åland and northern Finland Proper, woven together from Adam of Bremen's obscure report of a bishopric c. 1060 in Birka for "the islands of the Baltic Sea" and Mikael Agricola's claim in 1548 that the Swedish coastal population in Finland had been Christianised before the Finns (cf. Pirinen 1991: 33–34). Agricola is not necessarily an independent source (cf. Lena Huldén 2004: 22). Adam also asserted that a bishop's seat was established in Hälsingland, by him called a town [*civitas*]. Adam's information about these two bishop's seats is so incongruous and difficult to interpret that no definite conclusions can be drawn from it (cf. Nilsson 1998: 77, 79; 2012: 26). However, it would not seem too daring to assume it concerned optimistic missionary ambitions further east and north of the Mälardalen area where a bishop's seat was established in Sigtuna.

92 Ringbom 1986: 16–18; 1991: 56–57; 1994: 461; 2012: 51; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 32.

93 Sjöstrand 1996: 94; 2014: 87, 143; Hiekkanen 1995: 126–128; 2010a; 2012: 47–50; Holmén 2015: 195–198. Ringbom (2010: 29; cf. 2023: 22) says that Åland came under the cathedral chapter in Turku no later than 1330 and came to belong to the Turku diocese, thus implying that Åland had at an earlier time either belonged to some other diocese (which is not specified) and later been transferred or else was some kind of undefined autonomous ecclesiastic unit of its own. Neither alternative is very likely (cf. Pirinen 1962: 96; 1991: 77). There can be no doubt that Åland has belonged to the Finnish diocese since its inception around 1200 (Törnblom 1993: 315–316; Sjöstrand 2013: 86–87; 2014: 120–123). This vagueness is related to the fact that in order to

imagine organised Christianity in Åland well before the thirteenth century, it becomes necessary to twist the geography and associate Åland with the diocesan development in the west and let Åland only at a later stage be transferred to the young Finnish diocese (see M. Dreijer 1970: 16–20; 1979: passim, pp. 124–373).

94 Ringbom 1986: 13, 41; 2010: 9; Ringbom & Remmer 1995: 9–10; cf. e.g. M. Dreijer 1983: 214–215.

95 M. Dreijer 1950: 115; 1965a: 21; 1968: 17; 1979: 171; 1988; Lindquist 1968: 40–41; Pirinen 1991: 30–31, 34; Lindh 1998: 23, 335; Mattsson-Eklund 2000: 77; Ringbom 2010: 9–11. Christianisation must be seen as a slow change involving three phases; contact, mission, and organisation (Sigurðsson 2003: 12–13, 110–115). The truly revolutionary aspect of Christianity in the final stage was that political power merged with public monotheism, and a new institutionally organised spiritual expertise with lavish buildings for divine worship was established (Harrison 2020b: 54–63). The idea that Åland, part of the relatively young medieval Finnish diocese from its beginning around 1200, had somehow been organisationally Christianised a few generations *before* Uppland and Gotland is highly unlikely and quite out of context. A far more plausible explanation in this respect is that organised Christianity became established in Åland only after (cf. Roeck Hansen 1991: 166; Carlsson 1997: 4–5; Hiekkanen 1997: 57) the runestone period – or the "runologic Viking Age" – had ended in Uppland around 1130 (on the last date, see Zachrisson 1998: 124; Williams 2008: 285). No further pre-Christian reactions or perhaps rather opposition to the monarchy and the ecclesiastical ideals and organisation supporting it are known after that time in Uppland (Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 78–79; Lindkvist 2008: 672; Harrison 2019b: 159–160). There was obviously a religious and political "new deal" in the region in the early 1130s as a new royal dynasty came to power through Sverker the Elder from Östergötland after a period of power struggles: the old cult centre (Gamla) Uppsala began to be referred to as a bishop's seat and the construction of a cathedral was begun there; in 1164 Uppsala was elevated to the seat of a Swedish archbishop, most probably with a view to further Christian advances in the directions of both Norrland and Finland (Hagerman 1996: 290–291, 318–350; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 41–42, 81–89).

96 The concept of "complexity" here essentially stands for "how human relationships are interwoven", summarised as "tradition and culture" (Welinder 2009: 129–130). In this context, it primarily concerns a lack of vertical complexity. The Scandinavian runestones are a symptom of crisis connected with the contemporary political and religious transformation and the need for old magnates and new royal agents to defend old and new rights. This process was swift in Denmark but very slow in eastern Sweden, especially in Uppland, where the conversion was more voluntary; that is also why there are exceptionally many runestones in Uppland. The runestones express the relationship to Christianity and its new royal power and their influence in regard to inheritance and individual gifts to the church (B. Sawyer 2000: 146–152). It is quite obvious that Åland was not affected by such societal phenomena during the Scandinavian runestone era.

97 Cf. Ambrosiani 1981–1982; Orrman 1981–82; Sjöstrand 1998a. Åland is not mentioned among the parts of *Svíaveldi* ['The Wealth of the Svear'] by Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241) in a description c. 1230 probably relevant for the mid-twelfth century (Sjöstrand 2014: 94).

98 Ringbom (2023: 20–21) has dusted off Matts Dreijer's (1979: 120) and Erik Bertell's (1983a: 209–210; 1983b) idea of an Iron Age central farm Tuna in Finström and claims that Lars Hellberg has missed this element, which is not correct: the name is recorded only in 1659 and refers to a small croft belonging to Skräddarböle mansion (later Strömsvik) (Hellberg 1987: 257–258 n. 168). This supposed old Tuna in Finström is obviously also what Kristin Ilves (2015: 5) had in mind when claiming that my statement (Sjöstrand 2014: 133) that there are no Tuna-names in Åland is "inaccurate".

99 This does not entail adhering to the so-called "Svea-view" [Sw. sveasyn] of a continuous Swedish state formation from the Iron Age with the Mälaren region as epicenter and Sigtuna (founded c. 980) in southern Uppland as an "internal" royal centre. The town was more likely to have been a bridgehead in the NE periphery of an overlordship exercised by a central power at a higher level far away in Denmark, where King Harald Bluetooth's large runestone in Jelling from c. 985 was ultimately the catalyst for the late Viking Age Scandinavian runestone phenomenon. Only in the later thirteenth century did the Mälar region emerge as a central political area in an expanding Swedish realm. The oldest Sigtuna is strikingly similar to Danish Lund and Norwegian Nidaros/Trondheim, an exclusive establishment for the king's socialisation with Christian magnates and priests in a region where his power was otherwise not as strong (Hagerman 1996: 109–161, 382–384, 392–393, 407–411; Hyenstrand 1996: 9–11, 20, 146–152; B. Sawyer 2000: 146–152; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 21, 41, 50, 63, 84–89, 121, 147–148, 159, 165; Harrison 2020b: 49–53, 58, 64). In any case, it is clear that no one from Åland was directly included in these elite circles.

100 Cf. Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 167, 169; Sjöstrand 2014: 95, 120–123; Lindström 2015: 173, 181, 189–190, 194, 199; Fallgren 2020: 172: Harrison 2020a: 142; 2020b; 98; Hårdstedt 2023: 42–43. I would like to assert that the Finnish bishopric was most probably founded in connection with an expedition to Finland mentioned in a Danish annal in 1202 by the newly appointed archbishop of Lund and primate of the Swedish Church, Andreas Sunesen and his aristocratic brothers, who also had close ties to the contemporary Swedish king Sverker Karlsson, first married to a niece of Andreas and then to a daughter of Earl Birger Brosa. This neatly complements Pope Innocentius III's *Ex tuarum* letter of October 30, 1209, to Andreas about Finland. The country [*terra*] had "recently been converted to the Christian faith through the mediation of certain nobles" [*nuper quorundam nobilium mediante sollicitudine ad fidem conversa sit Christianam]*. Its bishop [*Episcopo ejusnem terræ*] had died and a successor was to be installed (SDHK 321). Andreas had an exceptionally strong position in northern Europe and was even quite independent in relation to the Danish king. He and his brothers also carried out other Christianising projects on the

eastern side of the Baltic Sea, probably also with Swedish assistance (Lindström 2015: 182–186, 189–197, 311).

101 This does not, of course, discount the possibility of there being smaller private wooden churches in other places before. It is not easy to discover the remains of these (cf. Ruohonen 2018: 59, 62). Of particular indicative interest in this context are various placenames incorporating *Kors-* ['cross'] and the like. In Jomala, the parish name seems to point to a previous church in Jomalaby (Jumalaby 1333) (cf. Bertell 1953: 27). As the name of the village is also several times attested as a simplex (e.g. Jommala, Jommale 1496; G. Hausen 1927: 87); the suffix *-by* seems to be a secondary epexegetic addition for the purpose of separating the village from the parish. Some wooden furnishings in the church of Finström have been dendrochronologically dated to c. 1180. Ringbom (2010: 10–11) falls back here on her assumption that sculptures must be of the same age as the wood even if the stylistic design indicates a considerably later period. This applies in particular to the sculpture of the smiling Michael (cf. Hiekkanen 2020: 471, 781 note 83).

102 The significance of the lively Nordic connections to the east has been subject to differing opinions. It is, however, very hard to find any trace of eastern missionaries or eastern ecclesiastical influence in Scandinavia; this is also true of SW Finland. Some Russian loan-words in Early Finnish and Estonian such as *raamattu* ['Bible'], *risti* ['cross'], and *pappi* ['priest'] are hardly the result of an active Russian mission (Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 79; Beskow 2005: 559–563; Nilsson 2012: 30). This means that it is hardly worthwhile to search for possible early Eastern Christian elements in Åland either.

103 One would imagine that at least some people travelling from Åland to the western mainland would have been impressed by runestones, but, in any case, they themselves found no need to erect such stones at home. Åland or Ålandic places, on the other hand, have not traditionally been identified on Nordic runestones. Recently, however, Staffan Fridell (2019) has argued that the place of death **in akru** mentioned on the Upplandic Viking Age runestone U 170 at Bogesund in Vaxholm and traditionally interpreted as Ekerö west of Stockholm could just as well refer to Eckerö in Åland; the names have an identical etymology, a derivative **Ækra* < **Æikra* < *Aikrōn* of the word for 'oak' [Sw. ek]. This linguistic interpretation of the name Eckerö itself in any case implies that it is older than the Viking Age.

104 Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 57, 169–172; Harrison 2004: 47; 2009: 196–201, 263; 2020b: 72–73; Lena Huldén 2004: 27, 32–33; Lindkvist 2008: 672.

105 There is a further political twist to this. According to Hiekkanen (2012: 48), for instance, the names Finström (Finnaström c. 1325) and Finby (Fynnaby 1431) are OSw. translations from Early Finnish. These genuinely Norse names obviously refer to Finns, meaning 'the creek of the Finns' and 'the village of the Finns' respectively (cf. Granlund 1956: 152, 214, 258–260; Hellberg 1987: 79, 110–111, 123–124, 215–218, 266; Pitkänen 1990: 198; Zilliacus 1990: 302, 362; Lars Huldén 2001: 30, 57, 70, 91; Sjöstrand 2014: 108–110) and thus denoting

an ethnic "otherness" in respect to the name givers. It is hardly likely from any perspective that the names would be translations of originally Finnic – withal self-referring – names like *Suomenvirta and *Suomenkylä. The names were given and used in a Norse environment and also indicate that the existence of Finns or persons of Finnish descent was unusual enough to be recorded onomastically. Ringbom, for her part, does not in her book on Finström's church (2023: 11, 20) provide any proper analysis of the parish name Finström and also does not appreciate the connection between the name of the parish and the fact that the church (Fi 12.2) was built in a settlement named Finström (Fijnneström 1537) in the centre of a community [Sw. samfällighet] of small villages with names containing the elements *-böle* and *-bolstad*. By the end of the 1530s, the village consisted of two farms, which in 1556 were joined to Grelsby royal manor. One of the farms was returned to the previous owner in 1560 and was in the late eighteenth century divided into two parts, Nedre and Övre Finströms gård, surviving today as neighbors to the parsonage in Pålsböle (Nyman 1942; Bertell 1953: 21–27). On the formation and naming of parishes in general, see Ferm (ed.) 1991.

106 This is hardly unambiguous. In a recent major Finnish work (Haggrén 2015: 369–370), the Iron Age in southwestern Finland in the latter part of the twelfth century is directly followed by the Middle Ages, whereas the transitive twelfth and thirteenth centuries are labelled "Early History" (Fi. varhaishistoria). A regional Viking Age c. 750–1250 in turn seems awkward in view of the major changes 1000–1050 (Mägi 2015: 170). The Finnish term "Crusading Period" refers to the old nationalistic image of Swedish "crusades" to Finland, associated with violent conquest, forced Christianisation and colonialism. Since the contemporary sources are so few and almost no details are known, perhaps "Early Christian Period" (Fi. varhaiskristillinen aika, Sw. tidigkristen tid) is a better designation for this obscure period (Raninen & Wessman 2015: 338, 343). Another proposal for the interval c. 1000–1323 is the "realm formation period" (Sw. riksbildningstiden) (Hårdstedt 2023: 18, 35, 38–42, 45–46); this does not, however, have a particularly nice ring in English.

107 This type of politicised argumentation is magnified in Hiekkanen (2020: 31, 694 n. 88, 778 n. 8, 792 n. 452), who claims there have been no investigations of the expressions of "Finland-Swedish local nationalism" in historical scholarship, including Åland, harshly characterised as "rather disgusting expressions that still survive today" and "local chauvinistic perceptions of superiority".

108 Fewster 2000: 119–120; Viklund 2002: 122–123; Granberg 2020: 33–43.

109 Hiekkanen 1995: 126–127; 2003: 145, 149; 2012: 48.

110 It is also stated here that Sjöstrand (1995: 283) draws attention to the empty front surfaces of the cross but "approves despite this without source criticism" of Ringbom's opinion of "Unni's great significance for Åland"; I can hardly agree with this.

111 Schmid 1934: 88; Hellström 1979: 67–71; B. Sawyer 1987: 101; Gahrn 1988: 248–253; P. Sawyer 1991: 19–20; Nilsson 1998: 45, 79–81; Larsson 2002: 115–118, 188–189; Harrison & Svensson 2007: 336–337.

112 Older historical literature on Åland before the end of the nineteenth century is discussed, for example, by R. Hausen (1895: 294–297).

113 "Finska Fornminnesföreningens årsberättelse (uppläst vid årsmötet den 30 sept. [1872])", *Morgonbladet. Tidning för Politik, Ekonomi och Litteratur* 30.10.1872.

114 R. Hausen 1887: 236; Gallén 1981–82: 98; Gardberg 1987: 49; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 31, 34–35; Ringbom 2010: 52; Ekrem 2008: 47–50; Valkeapää 2014: 13, 20–21; Hiekkanen 2020: 30, 694 n. 80–84. A general description of the expeditions of 1871–1902 can be found in *Kuvia katoavasta Suomesta*/*Det Finland som försvinner* (1970) published by the association on its centennial celebration. In the Swedish kingdom, the Gothic style period lasted from about the middle of the thirteenth century until the Reformation. The breakthrough came with the rebuilding of the cathedral in Linköping, which began in the 1230s. The style then spread throughout the rest of the thirteenth century, most consistently in Uppsala Cathedral, and had become widely accepted by the following century (Hagerman 1996: 254–255, 400–402; Ullén 1999: 254; Lindkvist & Sjöberg 2003: 157; Harrison 2021: 49–51). Ringbom (2023: 14) accordingly sets the end of the preceding Romanesque period at 1230; cf. Ringbom 2010: 11, where it is claimed that Gothic sculpture would have existed on Åland as early as the end of the twelfth century. Such a strict and early time limit as 1230, is, however, less relevant in direct connection with Åland.

115 On Nervander, see Valkeapää 2014.

116 M. Dreijer 1950: 48–50; Lindquist 1968: 36, 1969: 42–47.

117 Another outwardly similar shorter Latin word is *venalis* 'for sale, corrupt, open to bribery', which in that case would appear as some form of defamation, but it is hardly possible to read **i³i** as *a*.

118 On Johannes Peterson, see *ÅMU* 51; Pirinen 1991: 102–103, 204; Ringbom & Remmer 2005: 20; Ringbom 2010: 29.

119 Hagerman 1996: 123, 207, 260, 262, 269; Pernler 1999: 63; Bringéus 2004; 444–445, 451.

120 Brockpähler 1963; Losch 1981. This category of stone cross is also noted by Ringbom 1986: 26–27. See also Pirinen 1991: 243. Before an anticipated natural death, the priest was summoned; he received confession, handed out communion and unction and then recommended the soul into the hands of God (*commendatio animae*). Death was a social event with a line-up of relatives, neighbors, friends, and church officials. It was also important to protect oneself from the deceased. The deceased was sprinkled with consecrated water and candles were lit around the deathbed. Church bells were rung for the soul of the departed and acted as a call for prayers and

protection. The priest held a vigil until the funeral, usually the next day, with various rites. A sudden ghastly death through murder or accident then meant serious complications as the deceased approached the next world without these important rites and was thus prone to return to the living as an unholy ghost. Prayers to the saints who mediated them to God were of great necessity (Pirinen 1991: 174; Nilsson 2004: 137–139, 144–146; 2012: 55–56). A secret killing was more serious than a public one (Harrison 2009: 295).

121 Church building involved constant hazards such as climbing on scaffolds and ladders (cf. Hagerman 1996: 257–258). It seems self-evident that serious accidents of various kinds cannot have been uncommon.

122 There are in what remains of Gesterby in Sund three burial grounds from the Late Iron Age (Su 7.2–4). One of the village's secondary settlements is named Lappböle (Lappaböle 1537), which seem to indicate a Lappish element among the settlers from Gästrikland. In NE Jomala, the villages Överby and Ytterby are parts of a former village also named Gesterby, OSw. *Gæstrikaby*, 'village of the Gästrikar' (Hellberg 1987: 336–338). It appears as though Jomalaby had earlier been broken out of this same former village. If, as the parish name Jomala indicates, a former (wooden) church stood in Jomala(by) (cf. Bertell 1953: 27), this means that this former church was also erected in an area which once belonged to a Gesterby. In any case, as the two Gesterbys in Sund and Jomala respectively were located only c. 6 km from each other with an intermediate water connection, it seems rather likely they were in fact named after the same early medieval immigrant group from Gästrikland.

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Kendra Willson

Contested narratives of the Vörå runestones

Abstract

The discovery of several runic inscriptions in Vörå (Fi. Vöyri), Ostrobothnia, starting in 1978, set off a fierce debate. Some were convinced that they stemmed from the Viking Age while others were equally certain that they were modern. While the majority of scholars viewed the inscriptions as recent, there were dissenting voices; runologist Evert Salberger from Gothenburg became a favourite of locals by championing the possibility that they were old despite their unusual features. The issue was treated as metonymic for the antiquity of Swedish settlement in Ostrobothnia and by extension for the legitimacy of Swedish speakers as an integral part of Finnish society. The polarised viewpoints escalated into a crisis of authority in which trust and communication between the academic community and the local amateur archaeologists broke down. Each side suspected the other of ulterior motives and of suppressing or tampering with data. Views on the antiquity of the runes were interpreted through the lenses of identities and loyalties, pitting Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnian farmers against academics from southern Finland and Sweden. The archaeologists resented lay interference with their work while the locals felt excluded from their own history. Eventually the local amateur archaeologists

ceased to report finds while some reported cases were not investigated thoroughly. As the matter became heated, contributions to the debate across genres emphasised narrative, using a variety of techniques to construct the authority and credibility of the narrator. The polyphony of stories is a way of negotiating the contested history of Vörå on a personal and emotional basis. The debate itself has become the subject of tradition, representing different imagined pasts and the possibility of error in the interface between scientific communication and identity politics.

Introduction

Runologist Henrik Williams has stated that the most famous runestone in the world is neither Jelling nor Rök nor any of the Viking Age monuments, nor one of the oldest, but one that is regarded by most scholars as stemming from the late nineteenth century and which is located in Minnesota (2019: 876). The Kensington runestone acquired its significance not least by being controversial – repeatedly "debunked", it retained staunch supporters who were not primarily scholars but members of the local community.

As Williams (2018) has explained, North American runestones are in general connected with staking a claim and projecting an identity of European heritage onto the North American landscape. While some carvings are homages to aspects of modern (popular) culture, such as the partial copy of the runic text from Jules Verne's *Voyage au centre de la terre* (*Journey to the Center of the Earth*, 2001 [1864]: 16) in San Antonio, Texas (Williams 2019: 881), most often there is a claim to antiquity, a desire to demonstrate a pre-Columbian presence for people identified with the ancestors of the carvers. Similar impulses are also enacted in other ways, for instance, in Sherwin's (1940) lay effort to show "the Norse roots of the Algonquin languages" (described by Sturtevant 1940: 114 as "effrontery to American scholarship and to ON philology in particular"). In the early twentieth century this desire was connected to competition between different European groups –

northern Europeans such as Leifr Eiríksson vs. southern Europeans like Christopher Columbus. Later the opposition was largely between Europeans and non-Europeans. Some monuments, such as Dighton Rock in Massachusetts, have been alleged to represent many different cultures (Hunter 2017). The association of runes with heritage culture is not restricted to Scandinavian-Americans; the Lithuanian-American Joseph Pashka devised a system for writing a reconstructed Baltic language with runes, which was then used in a cave in Arizona (Williams 2015). Carving modern runestones is a way of performing a history one wishes had existed or feels intuitively must or should have happened.

David Krueger (2015) describes attitudes toward the Kensington runestone as a case of civil religion. Belief in the authenticity (i.e. age) of the Kensington inscription became part of a foundation myth for Scandinavian-American identity. Continuity is projected between Leifr Eiríksson's expedition to North America around AD 1000 and nineteenth century migration from the Nordic region to North America. Religious language is frequently invoked in discussing belief in the stone's origin, with words like "testimony" and "false prophet". Krueger suggests that this framing provides advocates with moral justification for ignoring scholarly evidence that contradicts the chosen narrative. The "civil religion" of the runestone cult is intertwined with Christianity.

Krueger (2015: 6) points out that views of the Kensington inscription tend to divide by "social class", defined not in economic but in cultural terms:

> the public debates over the authenticity of stone have been charged with class tension. By "class," I am referring not to group differences based on material conditions, but on cultural distinctions. In this analysis, class distinctions are marked by residence (urban versus rural), region (Midwest versus East Coast), education level (academically trained versus self-taught), and aesthetic preference (the celebration of versus the condemnation of kitsch).

A dispute in some ways parallel to the Kensington runestone controversy unfolded in Finland starting from 1978, in which several runic inscriptions were discovered over a period of a few years around the community of Vörå (Fi. Vöyri) in Ostrobothnia. Different experts made equally confident but contradictory claims, and the difficulties for laypeople in evaluating these fostered conspiracy theories that ascribed motivations to the archaeologists and runologists based on language politics. Questioning the age of the inscriptions was viewed by locals as suppression of the Swedish presence and as a personal attack on the finders. The resulting crisis of authority pitted several different demographics against each other: Ostrobothnia vs. southern Finland, rural vs. urban, laypeople vs. academics (and academics against each other), Finns vs. Swedes, Swedish vs. Finnish-speaking Finns.

There were insinuations of forgery countered with complaints of libel. Artefacts seemed to appear in the Vörå woods under mysterious circumstances. Eventually the dispute became so heated that communication between the factions broke down. The debate itself persists in oral tradition, showing the fierceness of language loyalties and failures in scientific communication.

Runes and the origins of the Swedish-speaking Finns

The question of how long there has been a Swedish-speaking population in Finland has been a recurring theme in language-political discussion since at least the early twentieth century. The current *opinio communis* is that the settlement that led to the modern Finland-Swedish community stems from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when Finland began to be integrated into the Swedish kingdom (Ahola & Frog 2014: 56). There is evidence of close contacts between speakers of Germanic and Finnic languages long before that, at least from early in the Common Era, notably from many Germanic loanwords in Finnic languages (Heikkilä 2014; Häkkinen 2014; Kallio 2015). Some loanwords from North Germanic languages appear to date from the Viking Age

(Häkkinen 2014: 389, 394–396), but the circumstances of this contact are unclear; as Tolley (2014: 101) summarises: "there was clearly prolonged contact in Finland between Swedish and Finnish speakers but we cannot form any detailed picture, either geographically or chronologically, of what was going on in prehistory." Etymologies reflecting older stages of Germanic languages have been proposed for many Finnish placenames. However, those earlier Germanic speakers may have been assimilated before the start of the Viking Age (Ahola & Frog 2014: 56). Archaeological evidence indicates a Scandinavian cultural presence at some coastal trading points, such as Hitis (Fi. Hiittinen) in the southwestern archipelago (Edgren 1999), where the one runestone fragment generally agreed to be from the Viking Age has been found (see Källström in this volume; Åhlén, Tuovinen & Myhrman 1998), but the trading post is located some distance from the settlement (Ahola & Frog 2014: 56) and the extent to which the trading post had a permanent population is unclear. A few runic inscriptions from Sweden commemorate persons who died in parts of present-day Finland (**o fin·lonti** 'in [Southwestern] Finland' U 582 Söderby-Karl; **a tafstalanti** 'in Häme' Gs 13 Söderby). Finland appears to have been a familiar area but more of a waystation than a destination on the eastern route (*austrvegr*) of the Scandinavian expansion during the Viking Age.

The continuity of the Swedish-speaking presence in Finland has been popularly seen as a proxy for its legitimacy as a part of Finland's culture. According to those who resent the continued status of Swedish as one of Finland's official languages, if the settlement is relatively young and a product of Swedish "imperialism", it is a foreign imposition.

Establishing the early history of Swedish speakers in Finland has been seen as important for Swedish-speaking culture in Finland. Bertel Holm is quoted as having stated in 1979, "Det folk som har en forntid har en framtid" (cited in Granö 2017a) [The people who have a past have a future]. Some Swedish speakers have taken pains to argue for a long and continuous Scandinavian presence.

The prehistory of southern Ostrobothnia has been a particular focus of this debate. A dearth of findings from the Viking Age in that region

led to the hypothesis that the area had been depopulated during that time (Europaeus 1925). This view, treated as received wisdom by later establishment archaeologists (e.g. Kivikoski 1955; 1961: 185–186), was derogatorily dubbed "tomrumsteorin" [the void theory] by the Ostrobothnians in the 1980s (Granberg 2020: 35). They perceived the archaeologists as treating the depopulation as axiomatic and therefore dismissing any finds that appeared to date from the period in question as likely to be hoaxes. If an area had been thought to have been uninhabited, finds that appeared not to fit the established paradigm might be subject to particular scrutiny or treated as exceptions. Kivikoski (1961: 186) notes that a coin hoard found in Housulanmäki in Vähäkyrö dating to the mid-ninth century, a time when the area was thought to have been abandoned, "jää arvoituksselliseksi" [remains mysterious]; she cautiously states, "Löytöä tuskin saattaa selittää muulla tavoin kuin otaksumalla sen paikallisen asukkaan kätköksi; toisin sanoen täytynee edellyttää täällä olleen asutusta vielä vuosisadan puolivälissä" [the find can hardly be explained in any other way than to assume it to be a local resident's hoard; in other words, it may be necessary to assume that there was still settlement here in the middle of the century], but does not appear to reconsider or reject the overall depopulation hypothesis in light of this find. Conversely, Bågenholm (1999: 118) has argued that since the area has been inhabited by Swedish speakers throughout recorded history, the burden of proof is on those who would claim that this did not hold for the period immediately prior. He further suggests (120) that the depopulation hypothesis conveniently served the interests of the formation of national identity in the decades following independence that focused on the Finnish-speaking population and de-emphasised the Swedish contribution.

Discussion of the dearth of runic monuments in Finland has been tied to this debate since the early twentieth century. Many people have felt that if there were Scandinavian speakers in Finland during the Viking Age, there should be runestones. This view is expressed by Heikki Ojansuu (1920: 262) in his study of Finnish placenames. Ralf Nordling (1938: 41–42) responds with a negative argument by point-

ing out that there are many areas that were inhabited by Scandinavians during the Viking Age but that lack runestones, such as Dalarna and Åland, so that the absence of such does not prove a lack of Scandinavian settlement. While small runic artefacts, particularly from the early period, are scattered around a large area of Europe, and runic graffiti were famously carved in Istanbul (Hagia Sophia Cathedral) and Athens (Piraeus lion, moved to Venice in 1687), the large runic monuments of the late Viking Age are largely restricted to Scandinavia and the British Isles, with a few outliers such as the Berezan' stone at the mouth of the Dnieper. Birgit Sawyer (1991) views the post-Jelling runestone boom as connected to a social crisis surrounding the transition to Christianity and associated political changes.

While an absence of runestones does not prove that there was no Scandinavian presence in Finland during the Viking Age, their presence would be a strong indication to the contrary. Hence there was of course great excitement at the discovery of runic inscriptions in Ostrobothnia, followed by acute disappointment when the age of the carvings was questioned.

The Vörå finds in brief

The first of the Vörå inscriptions, known as the Höjsal (or Höisal, Fi. Höysälä) or Jonund inscription, is said to have been discovered on Midsummer 1978 by the farmer Hugo Berg. It consists of eight letters under a picture of a (mastless) boat. The main readings are **aft iunut** or **aft sunut**. The fourth rune is a descending stroke that is shorter than the other staves and bends slightly to the left. It has been read variously as **i** and as short-twig **s** (see discussion in Salberger 2008: 155–161). The third rune was first read by Kurt Jern as **l** rather than **t**, likely because the short-twig **t** contrasts with rune 8, the long-branch **t** at the end of the inscription (Salberger 2008: 151–152). The interpretations cited most often are *aft jonund* 'in memory of Jonund', which was widely quoted shortly after the find, and *aft sun nut* 'in memory of the capable son', Salberger's eventual interpretation (Salberger 2008: 168)

Figure 1. The Höjsal inscription in July 2021.

and the one favoured in the annotation at the site (as of 2021). (See discussion in Salberger 1986c: 19–21; 2008: 151–154, 161–168.) There has also been a rather fanciful suggestion that the final symbol ↑ is not a long-branch **t** alternating with the short-twig 1 **t** in **aft**, but rather an arrow pointing upward, suggesting the direction in which the son was to be found (Otterbjörk 1983: 16).

The second, Båtholmen/Härtull or Egil, inscription was discovered by Uno and Anna Forss and Erik Svens in August 1982 while they were picking berries in the Härtull wetland on the island of Båtholmen (Granö 2017 I). Salberger (1986c: 24) gives the following reading:

aft · ...n- · sun- · sin ·
fiarri · austarla · do ·
egʟ · faþʀ · risti ·
runar · guþ · ialpi · ans ·
salu ·

Salberger (1986c: 24) reads the penultimate rune in the damaged second word as **n** and gives the interpretation 'Efter (till mine av) … sin

Figure 2. The Båtholmen inscription in July 2021.

son (som) fjärran österut dog Egil fadern ristade runorna. Gud hjälpe hans själ!' [In memory of ... his son [who] died far away in the east Egil the father carved runes. God help his soul].

In July 1983, Uno Forss announced a third runic find, known as the Pethskiften or Anund inscription. Forss claimed to have found the inscription in November 1982 but did not reveal the discovery until after the conference, which Otterbjörk (1983: 16) found strange and regrettable:

> På mycket märkliga grunder förtegs upptäckten av den tredje ristningen, endast 400 m från Båtholmen, vid runseminariet i juni och offentliggjordes inte förrän i slutet av juli! Det hade annars varit ett lysande tillfälle att få också denna inskrift granskad av all önskvärd sakkunskap.
>
> [For very peculiar reasons the discovery of the third inscription, just 400 m from Båtholmen, was concealed during the runic seminar in June and not made public until the end of July! It would otherwise have been an excellent opportunity to have this inscription also inspected with all the desirable expertise.]

Salberger (1986c: 27) gives the following reading of the Pethskiften inscription:

anut · lit · rista
runaʀ · ift · ulf
sun · sin · kuþ ·
hialbi -t
-ans

His interpretation is, 'Anund lät rista runorna efter Ulv, sin son. Gud hjälpe hans ande!' [Anund had the runes carved in memory of Ulv, his son. God help his soul!], with **-t** assumed to represent *and* 'spirit, soul'.

In June 1992 Uno Forss reported that he had found a fourth runestone in Pörnullbacken, near Rejpelt, that spring, in conjunction with an explosion that broke the stone into seven pieces (Granö 2017 III, citing Vbl 15.2.1996). Six fragments together form a block 67 × 22 cm; the seventh is lost. The fragments were delivered to the Ostrobothnian museum, then transferred to the Board of Antiquities and returned to the Ostrobothnian museum in 1995.

The inscription was interpreted by Bertel Holm:

brianti biurn
ulfr risti
'Brända Björn, Ulf ristade' [Burnt Björn, Ulf carved]

Holm viewed the sequence brianti as a byname perhaps connected with pagan rituals. (Bagge 1992; Granö 2017; Pentti Risla pers. comm.) However, this fourth find was not discussed as extensively as the earlier ones. Most of the attention focused on the Höjsal inscription, found in 1978, and the Båtholmen inscription found in 1982. Later finds were not investigated to the same extent, largely due to the breakdown in relations between locals and academic institutions that arose during the controversy. Forss did not reveal the location of one putative runestone, the so-called Olaf stone, which he claimed to have found in 1985 (Granö 2017 II). The present paper focuses on the discussion of the first finds.

Ralf Norrman: Establishing credibility

Among a myriad of articles in newspapers and some Finnish archaeological journals, the one book-length treatment of the Vörå inscriptions is Norrman's *Vöråru*norna (1983b). While the volume includes an analysis of the inscriptions (Esko Pursiainen's chapter in Norrman 1983b: 68–72 has the scientific-sounding title "Rapport över mikroskopering av runstenen i Härtull lördagen den 25 september 1982" [Report on microscopic examination of the runestone in Härtull on Saturday, September 25, 1982]), it is primarily a collection of first-person accounts and reflections by different people on the unfolding of the Vörå case, from discovery through examination to controversy, with summaries in English, Finnish, and German. The book simultaneously participates in and documents the controversy.

Ralf Norrman (1946–2000) came from Malax, Ostrobothnia, and studied at British and American universities, completing a doctorate in 1976. He became Acting Professor in 1980 and Professor of English at the University of Tampere starting in 1984. His research specialty was literary semiotics; titles include *Techniques of ambiguity in the fiction of Henry James* (1977), *Samuel Butler and the meaning of chiasmus* (1986), and *Wholeness restored: Love of symmetry as a shaping force in the writings of Henry James, Kurt Vonnegut, Samuel Butler and Raymond Chandler* (1998). He was, in addition, an outspoken advocate for Swedish Ostrobothnia (the "hurrarna" movement of the 1970s). In the wake of the Vörå controversy, he also wrote a book on placenames (*Några österbottniska vattennamn* 1988 [Some hydronyms from Ostrobothnia]), which met with little scholarly approval ("Norrman, Ralf").

The 1983 volume of *Vöråru*norna is listed as Part 1. The preface states:

> Bokens andra del, som skall skrivas av runologen Evert Salberger, kommer ut sedan han sommaren 1983 fått tillfälle att på ort och ställe slutföra sina undersökningar av de två runinskrifterna i Vörå. (3)

> [The second volume of the book, which will be written by the runologist Evert Salberger, will appear once he has, in the summer of 1983, had an opportunity to complete his examination of the two runic inscriptions in Vörå on site.]

It seems, however, that this second part never appeared in monograph form, although Salberger published numerous articles in *Studia Archaeologica Ostrobotniensia*.

In connection with the runic finds, Österbottniska fornforskningssällskapet (The Ostrobothnian Antiquarian Society) was founded in 1984. The society publishes a journal *Studia Archaeologica Ostrobotniensia (SAO)* and a monograph series Acta Archaeologica Ostrobotniensia, of which Norrman's *Några österbottniska vattennamn* (1988) was the first volume. The first issue of *SAO* (1985) is dominated by contributions from Norrman. Salberger wrote several articles about the Vörå inscriptions in the second issue (Salberger 1986a; 1986b; 1986c), as well as a few that appeared in other journals (Salberger 1983; 1988). He also wrote articles in later volumes of *SAO* concerning other runic inscriptions, including the other runic finds from Finland (Hitis, Tuukkala) and Swedish inscriptions that he viewed as showing parallels to the Vörå inscriptions or connections to Finland. These writings seem intended to contribute to the plausibility of the Vörå inscriptions dating from the Viking Age. Salberger returned to the topic of the Höjsal runes in the last issue of the journal (Salberger 2008).

Although contributions to *SAO* cover many other topics as well, the close connection between the journal and the Vörå rune controversy is reflected in the way publication thinned out once it died down: *SAO* appeared annually 1985–1988, there was a single volume in 1989/1990, one issue for 1993–1997 and the most recent volume at the time of writing covers 1998–2008 and includes a necrologue for Ralf Norrman (Österbottniska fornforskningssällskapet).

Norrman's *Vörårunorna* aims to present a definitive account of the finds. *Vörårunorna* repeatedly emphasises its "objectivity" (Norrman 1983b: 4):

> Denna boks tillskyndare och författare har betraktat det som en plikt att försöka bidra till att runinskrifterna i Vörå får en saklig och objektiv behandling. Dessa inskrifter kan, vid sidan av Tuukkala-spännet, visa sig vara Finlands första hittills upptäckta forntida runinskrifter, och det vore oansvarigt att låta dem gycklas bort, eller att underlåta att ombesörja att de blir objekt for sakkunnig och ingående forskning.
>
> [The authors and instigators of this book have regarded it as their duty to try to contribute to the inscriptions in Vörå receiving a dispassionate and objective treatment. These inscriptions may, alongside the Tuukkala brooch, prove to be the first ancient runic inscriptions found in Finland, and it would be irresponsible to allow them to be laughed away, or to fail to take pains to make them the object of expert and detailed study.]

In an announcement in *Vasabladet*, Norrman (1983a: 5) states more directly that "Gycklets och löjets tvivelaktiga roll i rundebatten kommer att kartläggas i boken *Vörårunorna*" [the dubious role of mockery and lies in the runic debate will be mapped out in the book *Vörårunorna*].

The book acts as the establishment of authority, trustworthiness, and local identity. It opens with a series of first-person experience narratives by eyewitnesses to the discovery of the runestones. The techniques used in these reports draw on patterns from oral narration. The authors emphasise their familiarity with the local landscape and weather, and agricultural and other work routines:

> Vid middagstid beslöt jag att gå och titta på sädesodlingarna och se hur mognaden framskred. Det såg vid detta datum ut att bli en sen skörd [...] Sedan återgick jag till mina sysslor [...] När jag var färdig med kvällsjobbet i ladugården. (Erik Svens in Norrman 1983b: 6)
>
> [Around dinnertime I decided to go and take a look at the sowing and see how development was proceeding. At that time it looked like it would be a late harvest [...] Then I returned to my chores [...] When I had finished with the evening chores in the barn.]

> Dagarna före midsommar arbetade jag, liksom alla andra arbetsdagar under de senaste tolv åren, på säckavdelningen vid Wiik & Höglunds plastfabrik i Gamla Vasa. (Hugo Berg in Norrman 1983b: 12)
>
> [In the days before Midsummer I worked, as on all other work days for the past twelve years, in the bag department at Wiik and Höglund's plastic factory in Old Vaasa.]

They make use of Ostrobothnian Swedish dialect ("Tide je in t-runo!" (Anna Forss, Norrman 1983b: 9, 24) [Look, a **t**-rune!], an utterance quoted in a normalised form by Erik Svens two pages earlier: "Se en t-runa!" (7) and again by Uno Forss as "Titta en t-runa!" (10)). By such means, the narrators establish themselves as in-group members for the target audience. The presentation of multiple first-person accounts of the find also connects it with folklore.

As in migratory legends, there is an extension of plausibility from the circumstances of the experience to the contested element. A believable account of the discovery process also counters possible accusations that the "finders" themselves carved the inscriptions.

Some of the accounts emphasise marked times of year that frequently feature in migratory legends. The title of Hugo Berg's account of the finding of the Höjsal inscription is "En minnesvärd händelse midsommaren 1978" (Norrman 1983b: 12) [A memorable occurrence at Midsummer 1978]; Uno Forss' chapter is "En kvällspromenad jag alltid kommer att minnas" (10) [An evening walk I will always remember]. Midsummer is a traditional liminal time when magical things can happen and buried treasure may be revealed (Lindow 1982: 262). Berg even suggests that some moose may have led him to the runes:

> Det var en ren tillfällighet. Jag såg att älgarna hade hållit till i skrevan, och jag gick dit för att se på spåren. Jag var nära att gå ut därifrån på nytt, men då upptäckte jag några sprickor i bergväggen. Älgarna hade stått och skrubbat sig mot berget och på det viset skrapat bort en del av mossan. (Norrman 1983b: 20).

> [It was pure chance. I saw that the moose had been hanging out in the crevice and I went there to look at the tracks. I was about to leave again, but then I discovered some cracks in the rock wall. The moose had been standing and rubbing themselves against the rock and in that way rubbed away some of the moss.]

The animals here lead the narrator to the discovery, a motif attested in legends of buried treasure (Lindow 1982: 262). Animals also function as helpers in wonder tales. These tropes have of course entered popular culture – e.g. the crow's knocking that draws Bilbo Baggins' attention to the keyhole in Mt. Doom in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1975 [1937]: 178–179). Personal experience narratives tend to become traditionalised when repeatedly told; it is difficult to say what traditions may be influencing Berg's account in addition to his own experience.

In her description of the circumstances of the discovery of the Båtholmen inscription, Anna Forss notes the weather and atmosphere: "Som sagt var vädret vackert och solen brann vid horisonten och jag upplevde omgivningen sagolik" (Norrman 1983b: 9) [As stated, the weather was lovely and the sun burned on the horizon and I experienced the surroundings as being like a fairy tale]. T. Bertel Nygård reports on a discussion of the runic finds that occurs "sent i december 1982, årets nästsista dag" (Norrman 1983b: 15) [late in December 1982, the second-last day of the year]. Christmas and New Year are further liminal times in the calendar. These significant dates contribute to the impression of the finds as a revelation from another world (perhaps in this case the past). The experience is exceptional but the narrators take pains to establish their credibility and their own reliability as witnesses.

Evert Salberg: The academic "merchant of doubt"

The Swedish runologist and onomasticist Evert Salberger was embraced as the academic expert who most strongly endorsed the view that the inscriptions were old. Salberger, although a qualified and productive

researcher, was never particularly prominent in Sweden. His involvement in the Vörå case may have been his "fifteen minutes of fame" and his chance to challenge the establishment.

Salberger's first article on the topic (1983: 40), which appeared in the Finland-Swedish journal of ethnography and folklore *Budkavlen*, begins with a one-paragraph summary of Hugo Berg's account of the find. The second paragraph emphasises Berg's upright character and good name, and the unexpectedness of the discovery and ensuing controversy. "Naturligt och uppriktigt har han själv i en ny tryckt redogörelse berättat om hur han först lade märke till två vägrätta 'sprickor' i bergväggen" (Salberger 1983: 40) [He has himself naturally and sincerely recounted in a now-published report how he first noticed two horizontal 'cracks' in the rock wall.]

Salberger presents the controversy in terms of loyalties and demographics, Finns vs. Swedes, linguists vs. archaeologists. The language is lively and personal, with an emphasis on the personalities involved and an evaluative tone. Rather than presenting the task as an objective search for truth, he views support for the age of the inscription as "positive" and the opposing views as disappointing. His argument is structured as "is there a way the old dating can be saved?"

> De finländska språkforskare, bl.a. Carl-Eric Thors och Lars Huldén, som behandlade runinskriften i tidningsartiklar hade överlag en positiv inställning till den, även om de på grund av den något osäkra läsningen av vissa runor och frånvaron av ordskillnadstecken i inskriften intog en avvaktande hållning, när det gällde datering och tydning. (Salberger 1983: 41)
>
> [The linguists from Finland, including Carl-Eric Thors and Lars Huldén, who discussed the runic inscription in newspaper articles, in general had a positive attitude toward it, even if due to the somewhat uncertain reading of certain runes they took a cautious attitude in relation to dating and interpretation.]

> Janssons auktoritativa datering av Höisal-inskriften [...] betydde i varje fall en partiell scenförändring och lade en viss sordin på den positiva stämningen. (Salberger 1983: 42)
>
> [Jansson's authoritative dating of the Höisal inscription [...] in any event meant a partial shift in the landscape and laid something of a damper on the positive atmosphere.]

In the course of the article, Salberger repeats the same few quotes several different times. He emphasises the individual researchers' personalities and backgrounds and repeatedly questions the qualifications and motivations of the writers who view the inscription as modern. He states that Loman writes "utan att vara någon egentlig runforskare" (43) [without being a real runologist]. The very different evaluations of the Höjsal carver's skill by Sven B. F. Jansson and Bengt Loman are contrasted to cast doubt on expertise. Salberger also views Jansson's positive evaluation of the carver's skill as incongruent with his view that the carving is modern.

> Det kan [...] ha sitt intresse att här göra en kort jämförelse mellan hur Sven B.F. Jansson, den verkligt erfarne fältrunologen, och Bengt Loman, den högst tillfällige rungrafematikern, den förre efter självsyn, den senare veterligen utan självsyn, bedömt graden af Höisalristarens skicklighet eller oskicklighet. (Salberger 1983: 51)
>
> [It may [...] be of interest here to make a brief comparison between how Sven B. F. Jansson, the truly experienced field runologist, and Bengt Loman, the very occasional runic graphemologist, the former after a personal inspection, the latter admittedly without inspection, judged the level of skill or lack of skill of the Höisal inscription's carver.]

Salberger (1983: 43) criticises the rhetoric of Loman's writing:

> Omedelbart därefter förklarar han abrupt och utan någon som helst föregående motivering "Jag vill visa att Höisal-ristningen är av sent datum, att den ingenting annat är än ett försök att kopiera en östgötsk runristning från vikingatiden".

> [Immediately afterward he explains abruptly and with no preceding motivation whatsoever, "I wish to show that the Höisal carving is of a late date; that it is nothing more than an attempt to copy an Östergötland inscription from the Viking Age".]

The rhetorical presentation here suggests that Loman is stating a foregone conclusion or agenda rather than laying out the thesis for which he is about to present evidence in scientific style.

The personal tone of Salberger's writing could be taken by laypeople as an insider's tip that scholars are biased and that evaluations on the part of Swedish runologists and Finnish (mainly Finnish-speaking) archaeologists reflect a predetermined agenda to discount the significance of the Vörå finds.

Salberger published numerous further articles connected to the Vörå inscriptions (including 1986a; 1986b; 1986c; 1988; 2008). Some of them respond to particular claims by others regarding unusual inscriptional features by citing partial parallels elsewhere. The style of his posthumous return to the Höjsal inscription (2008) is less gossipy and evaluative than the original 1983 treatment and was presumably written with some distance from the heat of controversy.

Salberger functioned somewhat like the scientists that Naomi Oreskes (2010) has described as "merchants of doubt", keeping debate open in the face of near-consensus. The style of argumentation is defensive, pushing the burden of truth onto those who maintain that the inscriptions are modern. As an academic, Salberger may have been viewed by laypeople as a kind of whistleblower revealing the hidden agenda of other scholars. In this way he became a favourite son for the Vörå locals but set himself at odds with the runological establishment in Sweden. Henrik Williams comments (in Granö 2017 III) that while Salberger was clever in pointing out weaknesses in others' arguments in regard to specific points, he does not address the whole picture.

Viktor Granö: The detective narrative

Granö (2017 I) presents his journalistic investigation of the "cold case" of the Vörå runes very much as detective work involving archival sleuthing, interviews, and visits to the scene of the crime – like a Stieg Larsson thriller. He tells his personal story of getting "hooked" on the case.

> – Det var visst en tokig bonde som gick omkring och spred förfalskade fornfynd i Vöråskogarna.
>
> Jag hade aldrig hört talas om Vörå runstenar. Men med den repliken från min väns pappa var jag fast.
>
> – Du kan ju prata med runologerna i Uppsala, de har ett och annat att säga om Vörårunorna, skrattade min vän som själv är språkvetare.
>
> Det gjorde jag. Och jag kom att prata med arkeologer, geologer, kemister och vanliga vöråbor, med en fysiker, en forstvetare och en lyriker.
>
> För ju mer jag lärde mig om runorna i Vörå, desto flera blev mina frågor.
>
> ["There was a crazy farmer who went around spreading forged archaeological finds in the Vörå woods."
>
> I had never heard of the Vörå runestones. But with that statement by my friend's father I was hooked.
>
> "You can talk to the runologists in Uppsala; they have something to say about the Vörå runes," my friend, himself a linguist, laughed.
>
> And I did. And I talked with archaeologists, geologists, chemists and ordinary Vörå residents; with a physicist, a forester and a poet.
>
> Because the more I learned about the Vörå runes, the more questions I had.]

Granö (2017 I) reports that his query about the subject at Brages pressarkiv, an archive of Finland-Swedish publications, yielded "Tre tunga mappar av tidningsurklipp. Fyra dagar av intensiv läsning. Minst fyra

till hade krävts ifall jag faktiskt läst all text." [Three heavy folders of newspaper clippings. Four days of intense reading. At least four more would have been required if I had actually read all the text.]

The discourse that Granö discovers in the archives is also full of narratives of different types. The locals call the inscriptions by the names that appear in them: Jonund, Egil, and Anund (Donner 1986: 73). The names mentioned in the inscriptions are fleshed out into characters in a community attempt to make them believable as real people. They became local household names: the local yearbook *I rågens rike* contains such headlines as "I Jonunds år 1980" (Liljeström 1981: 4) [In the year of Jonund 1980] and "Egil fyllde ut tomrummet" (Liljeström 1983: 1) [Egil filled the void].

Granö (2017 I) reports that schoolchildren were assigned to write essays about Jonund. Several headlines authenticate the inscription by personification, using the personal name so that a scholar's verdict on the age of the stone becomes an act of violence against a person,[1] as seen in headlines from *Vasabladet*:

> Professor Sven B. F. Jansson, känd över världen som Run-Janne, kom till Vörå och avlivade Jonund. (Kevin 1978: 1, quoted in Granö 2017 I)
>
> [Professor Sven B. F. Jansson, known around the world as Rune-Janne, came to Vörå and killed Jonund.]
>
> Jonund tarvar nog en grundlig undersökning. (Vbl 23.9 78 , quoted in Granö 2017 I)
>
> [Surely Jonund can survive a thorough investigation.]

A connection was also made between the name Jonund and a local dialect word:

> Hos oss betyder jåånor ungefär originella vanor eller infall. Tänk om det där aft jonund, eller vad det nu är, bara betyder till minne av ett infall? (Vbl 26.8 78, quoted in Granö 2017 I)

> [For us *jåånor* means unusual habits or whims. What if that *aft jonund*, or whatever it is, just means in memory of a fancy?]

Alternative explanations for the carvings that were introduced in the course of the investigation also spawned rumours and narratives. When it was suggested that the inscription might be a forgery, "hela vöråbygden anstränger sina minnesmuskler" (Granö 2017 I) [the whole Vörå community strains their memory muscles] in search of a possible culprit.

> På så vis minns nu Hugo Höijer att han på en begravning under andra världskriget förde ett samtal med "Blusi-Isak" som visste berätta att en målare från Vörå talat om att han på 1920-talet knackat in en runskrift i skogen efter en bild tecknad av poeten och arkeologen Jacob Tegengren. (Granö 2017 I)
>
> [In this way Hugo Höijer now remembers that at a funeral during the Second World War he had a conversation with "Blusi-Isak", who thought to tell him that a painter from Vörå had talked about how he had knocked out a runic inscription in the woods following a picture drawn by the poet and archaeologist Jacob Tegengren.]

In a small rural community, the suggestion that the inscriptions are modern will inevitably be taken as an accusation of forgery against local people or their ancestors, hence a character attack. In response, advocates for the age of the inscriptions emphasise the honest character of the finders, hence their reliability as witnesses:

> Efter att ha personligen lärt känna Hugo Berg och i honom ha funnit en fin och äkta människa, en hedersman i ordets bemärkelse, finner jag det angeläget att framhålla, att det inte faller någon som helst skugga på honom i hans egenskap av Höisal-ristningens upptäckare. (Salberger 1983: 40)
>
> [After having personally got to know Hugo Berg and having found in him a fine and genuine person, a man of honour in the true meaning of the word, I find it imperative to stress that no shadow

> whatsoever falls on him in his role as the discoverer of the Höisal inscription.]
>
> Det bör nämnas, att Hugo Berg skrev ner dessa anteckningar, alltigenom präglade av omutlig sanningskärlek, på hösten 1978, då han fått beskedet om sin svåra sjukdom. I ett brev den 4 okt. 1981 skriver han: "Anteckningarna kom alltså till för att ingenting framledes skall vara oklart om min återupptäckt av runan." De orden är ett garanti mot alla vinklingar. Det inger trygghet att veta, att det var Hugo Berg, en hedersman i ordets bemärkelse, som upptäckte den första runinskriften i Vörå. (Salberger 1986c: 19)
>
> [It should be mentioned that Hugo Berg wrote down these notes, characterised throughout by his incorruptible love of truth, in the autumn of 1978, when he had received word of his serious illness. In a letter of October 4, 1981, he writes: "The notes came about so that nothing should henceforth be unclear about my rediscovery of the rune." These words are a guarantee against any bias. It inspires confidence to know that it was Hugo Berg, an honourable man in the true sense of the word, who discovered the first runic inscription in Vörå.]

Despite all the pains taken to establish the credibility of the narrators in Norrman (1983b), later writings by Erik Svens cast some doubt on the veracity of the account of the discovery of the Båtholmen inscription. According to three first-person accounts in Norrman (1983b: 6–11), Svens accompanied Anna and Uno Forss on the Midsummer discovery of the Båtholm inscription. In a letter to the Board of Antiquities dated 4 March 1998 (cited by Granö 2017 II), Svens suggests that he had felt pressured to streamline his account for greater credibility. According to this later version, Forss first saw the runestone by himself and then asked Svens to accompany him to the find site in order to make the discovery more credible and allay suspicion that Forss had carved the inscription himself.

> Jag blev manipulerad av syskonen [Uno och Anna Forss] för att ge fyndet en viss trovärdighet. [...] Med facit i hand kan sägas, att

> det var ett misstag att jag lät mig övertalas att vara med på detta skälmstycke.
>
> [I was manipulated by the siblings Uno and Anna Forss to give the find a certain degree of credibility. [...] With the report in hand it can be said that it was a mistake that I let myself be persuaded to take part in this prank.] (quoted in Granö 2017 II)

Svens published a further article (2014) suggesting that two brothers who liked to play at being Vikings in the 1940s might have carved the inscriptions.

Obviously the runes could be both younger than the Viking Age and older than the 1970s. Sven B. F. Jansson had considered the Höjsal inscription to be from around 1900 (Salberger 1983: 42) and rune-carving as a part of memorial practice, partly mediated by books, is known from the nineteenth century. As Taavitsainen (1980: 40) notes, a modern inscription is not necessarily a forgery (though Norrman 1983b: 109 expressly rejects this view: "Den eufemistiska komprosmisslinjen accepteras inte av österbottningarna [...] I österbottnisk terminologi är det endast forntida runor som räknas som äkta runor" [the euphemistic line of compromise is not accepted by the Ostrobothnians [...] in Ostrobothnian terminology only ancient runes count as genuine runes]). An inscription in Masku in Modern Swedish contains the date 1922 (Lahelma, Pukkinen & Rostedt in this volume). Norrman (1983b: 149) suggests that an archival recording of an interview conducted in the 1970s refers to local knowledge of the inscriptions, which were interpreted not as runes but as "ryssbokstäver" [Russian letters]:

> Jag har inte heller beaktat alla muntliga traditioner kring Höjsal-ristningen. Men det finns intressanta vittnesmål bland dessa. Bland annat existerar på band en 1978 inspelad intervju med Anna Dalkarl, som dog 1980. Hon kunde via en bekant spåra kännedomen om Höjsal-runorna ("ryssbokstäverna") tillbaka till 1832.
>
> [Nor have I taken into account all the oral traditions surrounding the Höjsal inscription. But there are interesting testimonies among

> these. Among others, there exists on tape an interview recorded in 1978 with Anna Dalkarl, who died in 1980. She could, via an acquaintance, trace knowledge of the Höjsal runes ("the Russian letters") back to 1832.]

The idea that the same inscription could be seen as either runic or Cyrillic (if this is in fact a reference to the same inscription) shows a recognition of it as writing, but unintelligible – nonetheless the writing of the adjacent or known other. This alternative explanation reflects the concerns of a different time.

In the continuation of his long reportage, Granö describes his own visit to the site (2017 II) and discussions with various scholars (2017 III), culminating in considerations of various natural scientific methods for dating the inscriptions and the proposal of a chemical test to seek possible traces of metals from the carving implement. This detective story showcases the different methods involved in such detective work, creating a kind of scientific thriller. On the age of the inscriptions, however, Granö reserves judgement.

Heikki Oja: A personal pilgrimage in an expository account

In the expository introduction to runology *Riimut: Viestejä viikingeiltä* by astronomer and nonfiction writer Heikki Oja, the chapter "Vöyrin riimukirjoitusten jäljillä" [On the traces of the Vörå inscriptions] (2015: 159–162) stands out as personal narrative, which is matched only by his account of how he became interested in runic calendar sticks through his almanac work and carved one of these on the occasion of his retirement. The chapter on his pilgrimage to the Vörå site describes the landscape conditions and his journey. This section includes his own pictures of his wife at the site while most other illustrations in the book are reprinted from older sources.

> Jätämme auton metsätien varteen. Lähimpiin asumuksiin on kilometrien matka, ympärillä on soita ja metsiä. Kartan mukaan

> paikalta lähtee polku kohti Båtholmenia, jossa on yksi Vöyrin kolmesta riimukivestä. (Oja 2015: 159)
>
> [We leave the car by the side of the logging road. It is several kilometres to the nearest habitation; around us are swamps and woods. According to the map, a path starts from here toward Båtholmen, where one of the three Vörå runestones is located.]

Interestingly, Oja places the account of his own visit to the Vörå site (2015: 159–162) in the book before the general presentation of the history of the finds, the interpretation of the inscriptions and the controversy about their age (163–167). His presentation is fairly neutral: he describes the circumstances of the finds and interpretations of the inscriptions before mentioning the debate over their age. Oja distances himself from the Vörå controversy, closing the chapter with and relegating evaluation of the inscriptions' authenticity to a long quote from Erik Svens saying that research on the inscriptions has ceased.

> Minun on valitettavasti todettava, että Vöyrin kaikkia kolmea riimukirjoitusta pidetään nykyään väärennöksinä. Riimuja koskeva tutkimus on lopetettu. 1990-luvulla riimuja kävivät tutkimassa Pohjolan parhaat asiantuntijat, yhdeksän luvultaan. Kaikki olivat täysin yksimielisiä siitä, että riimut ovat suhteellisen nuoria. (Svens 2013, quoted in Oja 2015: 167)
>
> [Unfortunately I must state that all three Vörå runic inscriptions are now regarded as forgeries. Research on the runes has been discontinued. In the 1990s the best experts of the Nordic region, nine in number, came to study the runes. All of them were completely unanimous that the runes are relatively young.]

The emphatic tone of Svens' reply seems to reflect painful memories. Oja nonetheless quotes an evaluation by Peter Holmblad: "Hur man än väljer att se på Vörårunorna utgör de en intressant del av arkeologihistorien i Österbotten och de utgör redan i denna egenskap en form av kulturarv" (Herrgård & Holmblad 2005: 204) [However we want to see

the Vörå runic inscriptions, they form an interesting part of the archaeological history of Ostrobothnia and are in this sense a kind of cultural heritage]. Granö cites a similar sentiment: "Oberoende av sin ålder har de värde som kulturarvsobjekt, helt enkelt på grund av mediehistorien kring dem." (Granö 2017 III, paraphrasing Satu Mikkonen-Hirvonen) [Regardless of their age they have value as objects of cultural heritage simply by virtue of the media history surrounding them.]

Crisis of authority

The Vörå runic controversy developed into a crisis of authority (cf. Johnson 2010), in which the legitimacy of actors and institutions and the reliability and motivations for their statements came to be a priori suspect or rejected by parties in other factions. The National Board of Antiquities was perceived as hostile to the interests of the Ostrobothnians, who responded by founding the Österbottniska fornforskningssällskapet with its "alternative" publication series. Forss' refusal to share his supposed final runic find indicates a persistent grudge.

One factor contributing to the authority crisis was a failure on the part of established runologists to investigate the inscriptions seriously from the start and to make a systematic case for their dating. Jansson himself did not publish an academic article after inspecting the Höjsal inscription, merely some comments quoted in *Vasabladet* (Kevin 1978; cf. Norrman 1983b: 76–77; Bågenholm 1996: 58). The same applies to some other runologists, who may have been wary of becoming involved in such a controversy. Various runologists pronounced the inscriptions modern without having visited the sites (cf. Salberger 1983: 51–52; Norrman 1983b: 59, 86–90). The response, perceived as dismissive, allowed laypeople to attribute political and personal motives to these scholars.

Norrman (1983b: 82) observes that the sides were characterised by incompatible views in regard to "objektivitetens 'nolläge'" [the "zero position" of objectivity], i.e. whether it would be more surprising if there were or were not runic inscriptions in Ostrobothnia (78). Norr-

man (1983b: 27) sees the overall debate over the runes as being characterised by "omvänd bevisföring" [reverse burden of proof]:

> Det har från tvivlarnas sida mera varit fråga om att frenetiskt leta efter tecken på runornas oäkthet än att granska frågan sakligt. På amatörforskarna har man försökt lägga skyldigheten att bevisa att ristningarna inte är förfalskade – som om detta vore en rimlig utgångspunkt för debatten!
>
> [From the side of the sceptics it has been more a question of frantically searching for signs of the runes' inauthenticity than investigating the matter dispassionately. They have tried to place the responsibility for proving that the carvings are not forged onto the amateur researchers – as if this were a reasonable starting point for debate!]

Norrman takes particular exception to C. F. Meinander's suggestion that the Vörå locals are not objective in wanting to see long-term continuity in their history (quoted in Norrman 1983b: 91–92; Norrman's commentary 88–96).

Donner (1986: 73–74) emphasises the difficulty of dating carvings in stone. Philological examination of the linguistic forms cannot reliably distinguish between a Viking Age inscription and a well-made imitation but runologists' experience with the appearance of inscriptions in general can give a sense of the authenticity of new finds. "Då inga vikingatida fynd gjorts i runristningarnas omgivning finns inga andra indicier för att vikingar skulle besökt Vörå." (Donner 1986: 73) [Since no Viking Age finds have been made in the vicinity of the rune carvings there are no other indications that Vikings would have visited Vörå.] Pollen analysis and carbon 14 dating can indicate whether the area was inhabited during the Viking Age but not of course what language the possible inhabitants spoke. The moss covering the inscriptions had been removed by the finders and so could not be examined, although the Vörå finders considered this complaint, also voiced by Taavitsainen (1980: 39), to be an unfair criticism (Norrman 1983b: 22,

129). Donner compares the Vörå inscriptions with Viking Age runic inscriptions from Sweden and carvings in Hangö (Fi. Hanko) from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries in a similar hard granite. In his view the shape of the grooves indicates that the Vörå carvings were made with a hard metal tool of a type that was used by masons in Finland from only the 1950s. He also notes that they show little weathering in comparison with the stone surface. In Donner's view, the carvings were probably made no earlier than the 1950s. In this he concurs with the opinion of the majority of runologists and archaeologists; Salberger appears there as the dissenting voice, based primarily on the linguistic evidence and letter-forms. It is however possible that some pre-existing marks were "touched up" with modern tools after discovery. Archaeologists have complained that by cleaning and painting the surfaces in order to get better pictures, the finders destroyed important evidence for dating the inscriptions (e.g. Lehtinen 1982: 3–4). The locals perceived this criticism as "djupt orättvist" (Norrman 1983b: 22) [deeply unfair]; Hugo Berg is said to have protested, "Hur kan någon vänta sig att man ska veta hur man ska bete sig vid en sådan här upptäckt?" (Norrman 1983b: 22) [How can anyone expect one to know how one should behave around such a discovery?"] Norrman (1983b: 129) further suggests that there is a "logisk absurditet – ett s.k. catch 22-moment" [logical absurdity – a so-called Catch-22 moment] in the prohibition against removing the moss cover, as it would have been impossible to discover the inscription without doing so.

Nor are all the inscriptions necessarily of the same age. Citing the story of the "Russian letters", Otterbjörk (1983: 16) suggests that the Höjsal inscription may be authentic and might have inspired a modern elaboration in the Båtholmen inscription, which repeats several elements from Höjsal, including the words **aft** and **sunu** and an arrow-like **t**.

> Om nu Höjsal skulle vara en forntida inskrift – traditionen om "ryssbokstäver" i berget redan omkring 1850 är ju ett starkt stöd för detta – så kan det förvisso tänkas att en sentida och runkunnig österbottning därav inspirerats till en längre och mera informativ inskrift.

> [If Höjsal were in fact an ancient inscription – the tradition of the "Russian letters" in the rock from as early as around 1850 speaks strongly in favour of this – it is certainly conceivable that a later Ostrobothnian skilled in runes could have been inspired by this to produce a longer and more informative inscription.]

The idea that modern people might supplement accidental finds with "additional evidence" is consistent with behaviour observed in the 1980s. Donner (1986: 78) describes a kind of feedback loop in which finds related to items mentioned in scholarly discussions of the inscriptions appeared in the vicinity under suspicious circumstances:

> Efter författarens slutsats 1984 att Vöråristningarna gjorts med mejsel publicerades en tidningsartikel 1985 som avbildade ett rostigt järnföremål som tolkades vara en mejsel och sades ha blivit funnen 1983 nära Båtholmens inskrift. Den grav som 1984 blev funnen omkring 13 m söder om inskriften visade sig efter en arkeologisk utgrävning inte vara förhistorisk såsom först meddelats, den innehöll bl.a. till platsen nyligen förd sand. Nära Höisal-inskriften har man funnit fluoritstenar som inte är vikingatida och måste ha förts till platsen senare. Betydelsen av dessa fynd måste f.n. anses ytterst oklar. Vad som däremot är klart är att de inte kan lämna någon som helst information beträffande åldern på ristningarna.
>
> [After the author's conclusion in 1984 that the Vörå inscriptions were made with an awl, a newspaper article appeared in 1985 that depicted an iron object that was interpreted as being an awl and said to have been found in 1983 near the Båtholmen inscription. The grave that was found in 1984 around 13 m south of the inscription turned out, following an archaeological excavation, not to be prehistoric as was first reported; it included inter alia sand that had recently been brought to the site. Near the Höisal inscription people have found fluorite stones that are not from the Viking Age and must have been brought to the place later. The significance of these finds must for the time being be regarded as extremely unclear. What is clear, however, is that they cannot provide any information whatsoever regarding the age of the inscriptions.]

This implies that people may have been "planting" artefacts they hoped would corroborate the case for the inscriptions' being old – trying to deceive the archaeologists. If true, this shows a deep breakdown of trust in the scientific process and the scholars involved.

The repeated use of the word "objective" by contributors to Norrman's (1983b) book presents this breakdown from the other side.

> Börjar man fatta vidden av den arbetsuppgift som ligger framför dem som vill återföra rundiskussionen på en saklig bas och säkerställa att fornfynden i Vörå blir objektivt undersökta av kompetenta forskare. Den samling dokument som efterhand samlats hos de forntidsintresserade österbottningarna, berättar en del av den beklagliga historien om hur läget kunnat bli sådant det är. En nyckelroll spelar tvärsäkra och korthuggna utlåtanden från olika konsulter (framför allt geologer), som Museiverket i Helsingfors anlitat. Dessa utlåtanden har Museiverket okritiskt accepterat och på basen av dem behandlat rejpaltforskarna på ett sätt som dessa upplevt som sårande. (Bertel Nygård in Norrman 1983b: 15)

> [One starts to grasp the extent of the task that awaits the person who wishes to restore the discussion of the runes to a factual basis and ensure that the finds from Vörå will be studied objectively by competent researchers. The collection of documents that has been collected after the fact by Ostrobothnians interested in the past tells a great deal about the unfortunate history and how the situation came to be the way it is. A key role is played by the confident and brief statements from various consultants (primarily geologists) recruited by the Board of Antiquities. The Board accepted these statements uncritically and on this basis has treated the Rejpalt researchers in a way that the latter perceived as insulting.]

> Klyftan mellan de fria forskarna och Museiverket måste överbryggas. Framför allt måste det – på ett eller annat sätt – garanteras att fluoritstenarna, skifferstenarna och hängamuletterna blir objektivt undersökta av sakkunniga och sakliga forskare. Om detta inte går att arrangera med finländsk hjälp, måste man anlita utländska experter. (Bertel Nygård in Norrman 1983b: 16)

> [The gulf between the independent researchers and the Board of Antiquities must be bridged. Among other things it must be guaranteed – one way or another – that the fluorite stones, slate and amulets will be studied objectively by experts and dispassionate researchers. If this cannot be arranged with assistance from Finland, one must turn to foreign experts.]

More than thirty years after the discovery, the Vörå runestones remain a controversial topic. The kind of personal narrative approach chosen by Granö and Oja is one way to write about them (in different genres) without having to take a stand on their authenticity.

Narrative is an important tool in the negotiation of contested spaces and contested histories (see e.g. Rimstead & Beneventi 2019). Vörå can be considered a contested space, not in terms of physical ownership or control but in terms of history. The rural Swedish speakers in Ostrobothnia felt marginalised in relation to the Finnish-speaking majority and to urban centres, and this feeling was probably increasing as the proportion of Swedish-speakers in Finland slowly declined and along with it the visibility of and availability of services in Swedish.

I visited the Höjsal and Båtholmen inscriptions in July 2021 but do not feel qualified to give a definitive judgement regarding their age. I consider it possible that there was settlement in the relevant area during the Viking Age (as indicated by the pollen record). Given the proximity to Sweden and the intensity of traffic across the Gulf of Bothnia in later times, it is plausible that travel and migration occurred in the Late Iron Age as well. Certainly an old runestone is more likely to occur there than in Minnesota. However, it seems most probable that the inscriptions are modern (from the nineteenth or twentieth century). The combination of forms from different periods is suspect and the stones differ stylistically from other Viking Age runestones. Taavitsainen (1980) and Donner (1986) have argued that the inscriptions were carved with modern tools. As with some other disputed inscriptions, parallels can be found for individual features but the aggregate of exceptions adds up to unlikelihood.

Nonetheless, the inscriptions do not strike me as "forgeries" per se. Höjsal in particular feels like a special place, with an unusual rock formation that one can easily imagine as a memorial site. The stones are by no means a tourist trap. While the signs from the 1980s are still standing, the paths to the stones are overgrown and the guest books fill only a few pages a year. It took me a full day of wandering in the woods to locate the Höjsal and Båtholmen inscriptions and I failed to find the Pethskiften one despite walking in circles for hours; on a sunny summer day, I encountered no other visitors. References to the inscriptions are found around town – on an informational placard about Vörå (pre)history, a display of local books in the public library, lecture rooms named "Jonund" and "Egil" at the Norrvalla community centre, the reproduction of the Båtholmen inscription in the Viking ship sculpture "Tomrummet" by Ernst Ehrs in the sculpture garden Ehrsparken – but they do not dominate. The runestone controversy is one part of Vörå's heritage among many.

Conclusion

The Vörå inscriptions are not the only runic inscriptions in Finland nor the only ones whose age has been disputed (see the articles by Sjöstrand and by Lahelma, Pukkila & Rostedt in this volume), but no others have generated the same level of controversy. Why did these particular finds lead to such an intense debate? Individual personalities undeniably play a significant role. Without a Ralf Norrman or an Uno Forss, the Vörå history might have looked quite different. There were several parties who took the controversy very personally and who were prepared to fight. Journalism is also significant in deciding which stories media run with. However, in order to "resonate" with a community, the dispute must relate to issues of importance at the time and place. From the start, the discussion of the runes was connected to long-standing debates and issues central to local self-image. Prominent voices emphasised this interpretation. When experts disagree, the arguments may be hard to grasp and it is easy to assume ulterior motives.

Granberg (2019) says of the Vörå inscriptions, "nuförtiden ses de enbart som intressanta ur ett kulturhistoriskt perspektiv" [nowadays they are regarded as interesting only from the perspective of cultural history]. The debate over the age of the inscriptions settled into a stalemate in the 1980s. The current significance of the Vörå sites is shaped perhaps less by the runes themselves than by the controversy surrounding them. Multiple levels of competing narratives embed the place in a network of associations. The framing of the discourse in narratives of personal experience by the finders and their supporters pushes subsequent contributions to discussion into narrative modes. This reflects the emotional strength of narrative, the need for personal positioning and credibility. Vörå represents a failure in scientific discussion and town-gown relations but a touchpoint for Ostrobothnian Swedish-speaking identity. Although debate over the runestones has died down, metanarratives about the controversy live on.

Acknowledgements

I thank Svenska kulturfonden for financial support as well as all those who have helped with insightful conversations and tips on sources, including the other members of the research group "Invisible Forces" (Joonas Ahola, Jesse Barber and Karolina Kouvola), as well as Christopher Crocker, Niklas Huldén, Anna Kirveennummi, Risla Pentti and Henrik Williams.

Endnotes

1 A partial parallel can be seen in popular responses to the 2006 decision by the International Astronomical Union to refine the definition of planet, which resulted in Pluto being reclassified as a dwarf planet. Many writers expressed sympathy for or a desire to defend a personified Pluto.

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Fake or not? Some observations on finds of runic inscriptions in southwestern Finland

Abstract

Aside from a single fragment of a runestone, which probably ended up on the island of Hiitiinen (Sw. Hitis) on board a wooden vessel as a ballast stone, no undeniably authentic Viking Age runic inscriptions carved in stone have been found in Finland. A number of runic inscriptions made on other types of materials have been registered and a few inscriptions on stone have also been documented, but the latter have usually been deemed forgeries and their significance for archaeological research has been broadly dismissed. This paper considers three sites with runic inscriptions located in Finland Proper, the southwesternmost province of the country, and argues that terms such as "forgery" or "copy" do not adequately describe all of the inscriptions found. Some are interesting as a material legacy of Viking romanticism in Finland, but the site of Luonnonmaa near Naantali in southwestern Finland does not seem to fall into that category, nor is it an obvious forgery. In the light of present knowledge, the possibility that it is an authentic runic inscription cannot be rejected outright.

Figure 1: A section of the Carta Marina by Olaus Magnus showing southwestern Finland and central Sweden.

Introduction

The famous sixteenth-century map of Northern Europe known as *Carta Marina*, published by the Swedish archbishop and scholar Olaus Magnus (1490–1557), depicts southwestern Finland as a landscape dotted with numerous runestones[1] – just like the mother country of Sweden (Figure 1). Even though it is a landmark of cartography and Bishop Olaus was certainly both a widely-travelled man and one of the foremost Scandinavian intellectuals of his time, it is, of course, a highly fanciful representation of the northern regions. Many of the illustrations on the map are based on legend and hearsay and were, moreover, executed by Venetian craftsmen (or possibly Dutch or German ones residing in Venice) who clearly were not overly familiar with Fennoscandian conditions, although they must have been guided by Olaus (Miekkavaara 2008: 4). Far from being dotted with runestones or any other type of "standing stones", there has been according to present understanding only one apparently authentic Viking Age runestone ever found in Finland (Åhlen et al. 1997; 1998; Salberger 2008; and cf. below). Although

individual inscriptions that turn out to be authentic may still be found – one candidate is discussed in this paper – runestones clearly are not a major part of the archaeological heritage of the country.

Yet the *Carta Marina* also gives interesting testimony of a centuries-long understanding among scholars that runestones *should* be found in Finland as well. Somewhat more hypothetically, it may indicate that runestones were viewed as a characteristic feature of the heartlands of the Swedish realm and for this reason were depicted in southwestern Finland as well. Olaus Magnus' map emphasises this connection between Sweden and Finland Proper through other visual clues as well, such as the strangely elongated shape of the southwestern tip of Finland, which reaches towards the west via Åland and almost touches the Swedish mainland (a feature that is even more pronounced in the somewhat earlier map of Jacob Ziegler published in 1532). As mentioned above, plenty of runestones are marked in the map in this part of present-day Finland but they are absent in all of the other Finnish provinces, such as Tavastia or Karelia. In the same way, runestones are not marked in the area of present-day Denmark and are depicted at just a few locations in southern Norway.

Although it has yielded few demonstratable successes, a quest to find authentic runic inscriptions in Finland can be traced over at least the past 160 years, as exemplified by Carl Axel Gottlund's announcement in 1859 of the discovery of "den första runsten, funnen i Finland" [the first runestone found in Finland] in the village of Potoskavaara in Kitee (Sw. Kides), a municipality in northern Karelia (Gottlund 1859: 3). The precise location of Gottlund's site is no longer known, and although the drawing (Figure 2) he published seems intriguing, it has to be viewed with some scepticism as Gottlund was a character of rather mixed repute. He was a fervent Finnish nationalist, and although he conducted ethnographic and linguistic research of lasting value, many of his theories were viewed as outlandish even by his contemporaries (Pulkkinen 2003: 4 et passim). Moreover, he had a keen interest in studying runic staffs (Pulkkinen 2003: 223–224), i.e. wooden sticks inscribed with runes related to major calendric events, which are pre-

served in ethnographic collections in both Sweden and Finland, and thus perhaps had a vested interest in "finding" runestones.

The Kitee stone may perhaps have been a border marker along the Swedish-Russian border which runs nearby, although this is currently impossible to verify. Several other sites featuring purported runic inscriptions are also listed in the Finnish archaeological site database (Fi. muinaisjäännösrekisteri) maintained by the Finnish Heritage Agency.[2] Many of them have been identified as natural striations in

Figure 2: A drawing of the "runic carvings" in Kitee, published by Gottlund in *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* in 1859 (p. 5).

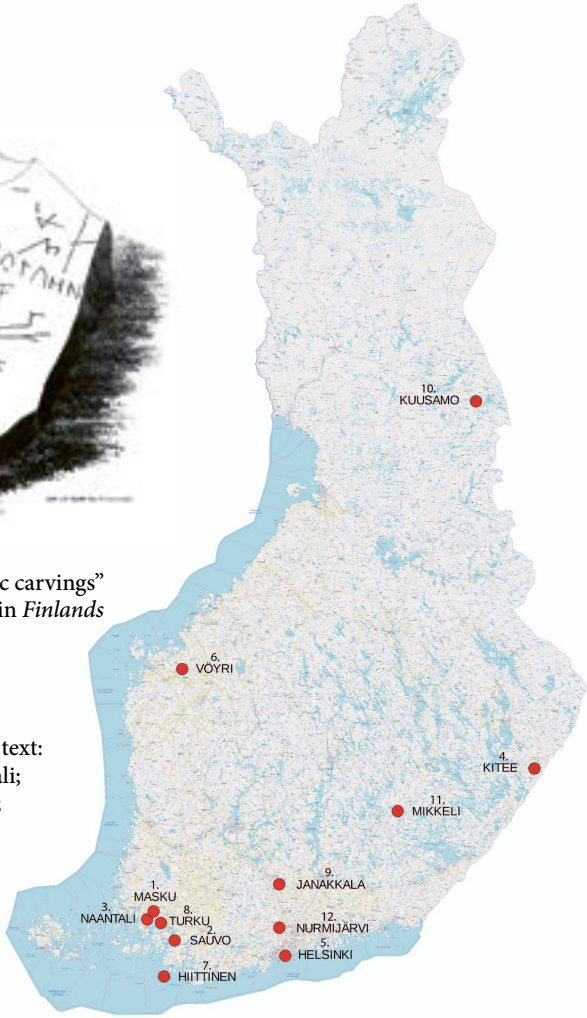


Figure 3: Sites mentioned in the text:
(1) Masku; (2) Sauvo; (3) Naantali;
(4) Kitee; (5) Helsinki; (6) Vöyri;
(7) Hiittinen; (8) Turku;
(9) Janakkala; (10) Kuusamo;
(11) Mikkeli; (12) Nurmijärvi.

rock, while those that are clearly man-made have usually been interpreted as "forgeries" and dismissed by Finnish archaeologists as being of little interest. In this paper, we take a closer look at three previously unpublished sites in Finland Proper that bear runic inscriptions: a site from Masku (Sw. Masko), a site from Sauvo (Sw. Sagu), and a site from Naantali (Sw. Nådendal). The first two feature personal names that can be identified from local historical sources and thus although from the historical period were never intended as forgeries – there must have been some other motivation for making carvings and using the runic script. The last site, located on the island of Luonnonmaa to the southwest of the town of Naantali, differs from the other two in that it shows exceptional skill in carving and provides evidence of a good understanding of Viking Age runic script. However, unlike some outwardly similar sites, it was never involved in political/ideological debate. It was found in the course of a routine archaeological survey in the 1950s (Ahlbäck 1957), was quickly and without due investigation dismissed as a forgery, and was never discussed again.

Viking romanticism in Swedish-speaking Finland

The quick assessment of the runic inscriptions found in Finland as forgeries may relate to the fact that attempts to find runestones have to some extent become politicised in Finland. In the intellectual climate of nineteenth-century Finland, runes and other references to Viking romanticism were associated with the identity-building of the Swedish-speaking minority, and particularly towards the end of the century their use could be seen as a political statement in the heated language struggle between the Finnish and Swedish-speaking intellectuals (or "Fennomans" and "Svecomans"). An outstanding example of Viking romanticism and the political use of runic script in Finland is the grave monument of the linguist and antiquarian Axel Olof Freudenthal (1836–1911), a leading ideologist in the emerging Finland-Swedish nationalist movement in late nineteenth-century Finland. His elab-

Figure 4: The grave monument of Axel Olof Freudenthal in Hietaniemi cemetery, Helsinki.

orate funeral, arranged by Swedish-speaking university students in 1911, took the form of a romanticised "Viking chief burial", and the grave (Figure 4), located at Hietaniemi cemetery in Helsinki, is marked by a huge imitation of a runestone (Ahl & Bränn 2004: 35).[3] A number of similar runestone-inspired grave markers can be found nearby at the same cemetery.

In the course of the early twentieth century, the conviction that the Swedish-speaking populace in Finland descended from Vikings trickled down from academia to the local communities, and in some cases –

the "Vörå runes" in Finnish Ostrobothnia (Sw. Österbotten) being the most famous example – may have inspired locally-produced and politically motivated runic inscriptions. As Barnes (2012: 139) writes, "It is possible that the Vörå inscriptions were made in an attempt to document Viking-Age Scandinavian settlement in Österbotten, and thus have a political dimension." A study by a geologist (Donner 1986) concluded that they are probably of recent origin, with a maximum age of 100–200 years. However, some archaeologists (e.g. Holmblad & Hergård 2005: 212–213) still entertain the possibility that they could be authentic.

History of the use of runes in Finland

Although runes in general do not seem to have been widely used in prehistoric or early historical periods in Finland, a few runic inscriptions made on various materials have been found.[4] Probably the most famous of these is the only so-far confirmed discovery of a runestone in Finland, found on the island of Hiittinen (Sw. Hitis), where a fragment (c. 24 kg) of a Jotnian sandstone block carved with a runic inscription came to light in 1997 (Åhlen et al. 1997; 1998; Källström in this volume). The find spot was in shallow water but would have been c. 5 m deep in the Viking Age and located in a natural harbour at the island. Given the location and the fact that an underwater survey failed to produce any material related to the runestone (Jansson & Virtanen 1998: 5), the find has been interpreted as a ballast stone of unknown provenance, although perhaps a local origin should not be fully discounted. Jotnian sandstone is not found in the bedrock at Hiittinen but Jotnian sandstone sediments are found fairly close by (e.g. the Åland Sea and Satakunta regions in SW Finland), and boulders of glacially-deposited sandstone might well be found locally. The island itself is certainly interesting from a Viking Age or Early Medieval point of view. A Viking Age harbour site found at Kyrksundet has been plausibly identified as one of the stops mentioned in the thirteenth-century "Danish itinerary" which describes a sailing route from Blekinge in Sweden

to Tallinn in Estonia, and archaeological investigations at the site have yielded evidence of a prosperous Viking Age community (e.g. Edgren 2005).

In addition to the runestone from Hiittinen, runic inscriptions have been found in Finland in association with a small number of portable finds, such as coins and pieces of jewellery. The first finds bearing runic script from Finland were registered in 1832: a silver cache from Janakkala in southern Finland which included three bracteates with runic inscriptions (Sarvas 1973: 179). The Viking Age (AD 800–1050) or Crusade Period (AD 1050–1150) inhumation burials of Raatomäki in the municipality of Masku, SW Finland, likewise included a silver bracteate with a runic inscription, probably from the same mint as the Janakkala bracteates. Finally, a silver bracteate probably minted in Lund (Sweden) with a runic inscription has been found in northern Finland, at the Pyhälahti site on Lake Kuusamojärvi (Talvio 2002: 164; Salmo 1934: 39–40; cf. also Oja 2015: 72–76).

A silver oval brooch found in the 1870s in the village of Tuukkala near the town of Mikkeli, SE Finland, features two lines of runic writing. These were interpreted by Freudenthal (1893), the same scholar whose burial monument was discussed above, as indicating that the object had initially belonged to a mother (*Hägvi*) and later her daughter (*Botvi*) (Freudenthal 1893; Salberger & Gustavson 1987; Moilanen in this volume). A hoard found in 1981 in Vöyri (Sw. Vörå) featured semi-precious stones and five amulets made of copper and silver. Three of the amulets are said to feature the **tiwaz*-rune (Oja 2015: 75–76; cf. Norrman 1983: 67). More recently, excavations of the wet and muddy medieval-period layers at Turku have yielded a number of artefacts made of organic (and thus usually perishable) materials with runic inscriptions. A vessel probably dating to the fourteenth century AD found at the so-called Åbo Akademi plot features part of the *Ave Maria* prayer in runic script, and a similar inscription has been found at the Aboa Vetus site (Harjula 2008: 16–17; Harjula & Palumbo in this volume; Oja 2015: 76–77). A third inscription on a wooden vessel, found in the excavations of the Vanha Suurtori square at Turku, probably fea-

tures the word *bulle* meaning 'vessel' in runic script (Hyytiäinen 2013, for a different interpretation see Palumbo & Harjula in this volume). Finally, a medieval bone comb with the runic inscription *Ave* was found at the Åbo Akademi site and published by Janne Harjula (2019), who dates it (on the basis of find context and typology) between the latter half of the fourteenth and the fifteenth century AD.

In addition to actual runic inscriptions, runes have traditionally been used in Finnish folk culture in runic staffs or calendars (Oja 2015: 81–156), approximately two hundred of which are preserved in the ethnographic collections of Finnish museums, and in the so-called house marks [Fi. puumerkki, Sw. bomärke]. The latter are traditional symbols used as signatures or to indicate ownership, especially by the illiterate lower classes, and many of them were derived from runic signs or combinations thereof (Ekko 1984: 44–49; Oja 2015: 77–78). Some are fantastic and only resemble runes but many do appear to relate to the name of a person or that of a farm, and thus suggest knowledge of the phonetic values of different runes. They were particularly common in Finland Proper and are known early on from medieval documents and wax seals. All of these testify to at least some level of awareness of runic script in Finland.

Three runic inscriptions from Finland Proper

In the following, three sites bearing runic inscriptions and registered in the Finnish antiquities database are described in some detail. They were inspected by the authors and found to be of considerable interest, but they probably represent just a fraction of similar sites in Finland Proper. This is not an attempt at a comprehensive review, which would be rather difficult and time-consuming to carry out since it appears that such sites are only sporadically recorded and registered. The main purpose is to shed some light on the fact that runic inscriptions made on outcrops of rock do exist and to argue that they merit some attention from researchers.

Figure 5: Runes in Masku.

Myllymäki, municipality of Masku

This site (register number 1000025617) is located right next to the medieval church of Masku, close to the main road running through the village. In addition to the runes, the cliff features other carvings, probably made on a different occasion. To judge from the shape and location of the outcrop, it is quite possible that it was a so-called "play-hill" or "dancing-place" (Fi. leikkimäki/tanssipaikka), where the youth would gather (e.g. Vuorela 1975). The inscription (Figure 5) can be read as:

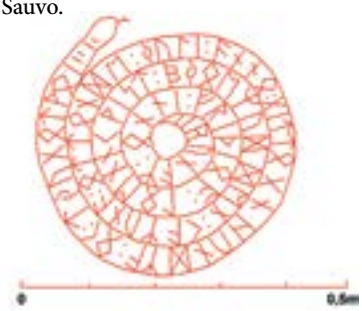
ossim · rosengren

This appears to be a personal name and may perhaps be identified with a local resident (see below). The inscription has apparently been known to locals since the nineteenth century.

Rantalankalliot, municipality of Sauvo

This site, which is not yet registered in the antiquities database, is located north of the youth centre of Karuna, on a group of cliffs rising c. 3 m above current sea level (Coordinates N=6690331.689, E=255714.114, Z=2.07 m asl, ETRS-TM35FIN). The Karuna village

Figure 6: Runes in Sauvo.



youth centre has traditionally arranged dances and other kinds of festivities on top of the cliffs during summertime. The carving features a text written in runic script carved inside a curled-up snake-like figure within an area that is c. 40 cm wide (Figure 6). The text consists mainly of Scandinavian runes but also features older types of runes as well as English runes.

The inscription can be read as follows:

runar : onni : friþiof : loennkwist : bjoerudden : karuna:
ottonde : juli : anno : nittonnhundra : ok : tjugotwo

The inscription can be interpreted as: 'runar onni frithiof loennkvist [of] bjorkudden [in] karuna eighth of July year nineteen-hundred and twenty-two.' Two vertical lines at the snake's tail (in the centre of the spiral, preceding the inscription) and a sequence of four parallel lines and an angle at the snake's head after the end of the inscription are presumed to be decorative. As with the text discussed above, the inscription appears to feature a personal name, but here a date and a placename are also included.

Figure 7: The cliff of Luonnonmaa is a low, unremarkable outcrop partly hidden by mixed forest. The insert in the upper right corner shows a close-up of the runic carving, with a yellow scale 1.0 m long positioned against the cliff.

Luonnonmaa, town of Naantali

This site (register number 1000006343; registered under the site name "Keitilä") is located in the village of Keitilä on the island of Luonnonmaa, on a small upright cliff overlooking the Baltic Sea. The carving covers an area of c. 1 m2 and features a curved snake-like figure inside which runes have been made using runic script of the Scandinavian Viking Age type. The inscription has been made on an east-facing cliff face c. 3 m wide and 1 m high, located in a rather thick mixed deciduous and evergreen forest c. 20 m from the current shoreline. The runes are carved inside a serpentine animal figure, the head of which overlaps the tail while its body is curled up within a larger circle, so that a smaller circle is formed towards the right end of the figure. The pecked line is 6–8 mm wide.

The carving was first (briefly) described in a 1957 survey report by Gunlög Ahlbäck who made no effort to interpret it (Ahlbäck 1957). She labelled it a forgery on the basis of information from the landowner, who claimed that it was made by boys in the early twentieth century.

The photographs included in her report show that the carving was even then partly covered by lichen and moss. Here it should be pointed out that the story about "some boys" making the carving does not have to be taken at face value, because similar stories about the recent origin of prehistoric archaeological sites have commonly been told by the local populace, as for example in the case of many Stone Age rock paintings found in Finland. Whether right or wrong, this account suggests that the carving is at least around 100 years old. Exactly forty years later it was inspected by Esa Laukkanen and Harto Roth (1998), whose report also features a tracing of the carvings. The authors of the present article have inspected the site thrice: once in 2006 (Pukkila 2006), the second time in December 2013, and the third time in July 2015. In the course of these visits, we have tried to correct what we observed as deficiencies in the original tracing. Figure 7 shows a photogrammetric rendering of the carving, made using the Structure from Motion (SfM) technique and the Agisoft PhotoScan (v1.2.6) and MeshLab (v1.3.3) software tools, and a digital tracing of the carving made with photo editing software.

The text itself reads:

astriþʀ · risti · runoʀ · þisaʀ · aftaʀ · karl · faþir · sin · kuþǫn

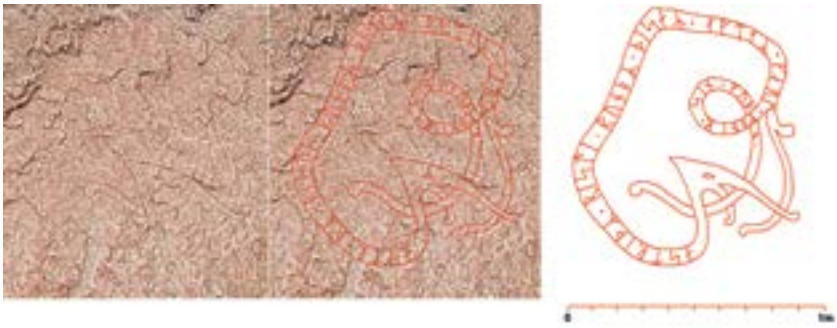


Figure 8: Runes in Naantali, Luonnonmaa.
Left: unmodified photogrammetric model of the inscription;
middle: tracing of the inscription drawn with red on top of the model;
right: tracing removed from the background.

This may be translated as follows: 'Astrid made these runes in the memory of her (good?) father Karl.' The translation was kindly offered by Magnus Källström of the Swedish National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet), who further notes in an email message to the authors that:

> The language is good "Runic Swedish", probably partly inspired by inscriptions by the well-known rune carver Åsmund Kåresson, but I'm convinced that the runes were cut in modern times. This is evident from the form of the **ʀ**-rune, which has a "closed" form, which never occurs on Viking Age runestones. The spelling with the "palatal" **ʁ**-rune after **þ** in **ᛅstriþʁ** is also unexpected in a late Viking Age runic inscription (this spelling occurs on early Viking Age runes such as the Rök stone). In addition the ornamentation is rather strange. (Magnus Källström, Swedish National Heritage Board, email message 29.9.2015.)

Discussion

All three carvings described above appear to identify the name of the carver: at Masku, it is **ossim · rosengren**; at Sauvo the name can be read as **onni : friþiof : loennkwist**, and at Naantali the author is identified as **ᛅstriþʁ**. The Sauvo carving also specifies the date of carving: **ottonde : juli : ᛅnno : nittonnhundrᛅ : ok : tjugotwo** or 'eighth of July year nineteenhundred and twenty-two'.

The carvings from Masku and Sauvo can thus hardly be described as "forgeries". Instead they may be associated with the centuries-long tradition of marking "special" places and events through rock carvings featuring a family – identified by a coat-of-arms or surname – and a year. The carving site of Hauensuoli or Gäddtarmen in Hanko, southwestern Finland, is a particularly renowned case: it features more than 600 such inscriptions dating from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century and was discussed by Olaus Magnus as early as the sixteenth century (Edgren 2000: 11–12). In the cases of Masku and Sauvo, the use of runic script is somewhat shaky, with futharks of different time peri-

ods being mixed in the same inscription. It seems probable that different published sources were used in composing the text and a recent dating is evident in both cases – indeed it is specified in the latter case.

Having studied local histories, we conclude that in the case of the Sauvo inscription, the runes were most probably carved by the school teacher Runar Lönnqvist (1905–1987), who lived in Björkudden at Karuna. He was born in Sweden but moved to Finland and worked for a lengthy period of time as rector of Turunmaa folk high school (Åbolands folkhögskola) at Parainen (Sw. Pargas) in the early part of the twentieth century (Pipping et al. 1948: 15–16). Several similar carvings made inside a curled-up snake are known from Scandinavia (e.g. Growth 1995: 154). The Masku carving, on the other hand, can most probably be identified with a certain Ernst Ossim Martinus Rosengren (1853–1877), whose father, Elias Rosengren, worked as a vicar at Masku between 1858 and 1874 (Kotivuori 2005).

Runic inscriptions younger than the Viking Age, often featuring a personal name, a place, a date, or an event, are fairly common in Scandinavia. Although the carving at Sauvo features a snake and thus emulates authentic runic inscriptions, neither of them should be seen as forgeries, as the carvers made no effort to hide their authorship or conceal the age of the carving (cf. Oja 2015: 221). In Finland, the choice of the runic script over the Latin alphabet may conceivably be related to the political aspirations of the carvers, but we found no evidence that a "Germanic" ideology motivated the carvers of Masku and Sauvo. It seems rather that they are associated with a centuries-old tradition of carving initials and dates on rock in memory of a significant event. The use of the runic script in such cases reflects shifting cultural fashions, an expression of Nordic and romantic sentiment, but is is essentially "innocent" and archaeologically rather interesting.

One illustrative example of historical-period event-recording of a similar type came to light in the course of an archaeological survey at Nurmijärvi, southern Finland, where three sets of rock carvings within the premises of a single household bearing initials combined with a year were detected. These sets of letters and numbers ("W1866",

"FRW 1900" and "FR Vuori 1968") would all have remained uninterpreted by the archaeologists were it not for the fact that the owner of a nearby house was willing to share their meaning with one of us (see Rostedt 2008: 115). The carvings, bearing the dates 1866 and 1900, were made by a certain Fredrik Wuori although the reason for their carving is unfortunately no longer fully clear. The earlier date, however, was most likely carved in honour of Fredrik's obtaining a job at his brother's forge, while the latter may relate to his building a new house in the vicinity of the carvings (Vuori 1955: 86–87, 96). The youngest of the carvings was made by Fredrik Vuori, the grandson of Fredrik Wuori, in recognition of the deep friendship between the owner of the house and one of his workmen. The date of carving also coincided with the death of Fredrik Wuori the elder.

The Luonnonmaa inscription at Naantali is distinguished from the other two sites described in this article in several respects. While the sites of Masku and Sauvo, for example, are found in centrally located places – near the medieval church and the river at Masku, and close to an open-air dance hall by the sea at Sauvo – the Luonnonmaa inscription is located in a wooded and remote area. The oldest available map (from 1881) shows buildings belonging to Keitilä farm, but they are located c. 750 m to the east of the carvings. The modern summer cottages close to the inscribed cliff are first indicated in the basic survey maps of 1968. Before that, there seems to have been little land-use in the area.

The writing also differs from the other two inscriptions in terms of its textual content and the ornamentation featuring a runic animal, which does not differ significantly from Viking Age iconographic parallels. The somewhat exceptional shape of the animal's head does raise some doubts in regard to its age, as does the closed **ʀ**-rune and the unusual spelling of the name Astrid (cf. the observation by Magnus Källström above). However, as noted by scholars present at Runråd 2016 (Turku, Finland), all of these unusual features can be paralleled in authentic runic inscriptions, even if it seems strange that several such features should be found within a single inscription. For example the spelling

Figure 9: Carvings in Nurmijärvi.

with the "palatal" ᚱ-rune after ᚦ in **ᛅstriᚦᚱ** has a parallel in the Ladoga plate from Russia (Melnikova 2001: 199–200). Larsson (2002: 192) and Pereswetoff (2019: 275–276) note the late preservation of the distinction between **ᚱ** and palatal **ᚱ** in the east, making us wonder if this might relate to some kind of eastern "dialect"? Even if the archaeological record in Finland is scanty on runestones or finds of artefacts with runes, we cannot rule out the possibility that they were more widely used on perishable materials such as birch bark that have left no traces. An incantation written in Karelian (but using the Cyrillic alphabet) was found among the famous early thirteenth-century birch bark letters of Novgorod, and Haavio (1964) notes some ethnographic evidence for the use of birch bark letters in Karelia still in the historical period.

The location of the Luonnonmaa inscription, which is found 5.51 m above sea level (measured 22.11.2016), does not discount a Viking Age dating. The island itself does not feature sites dating to the Late Iron Age but it does lie close to areas and routes of travel that were central to the Viking Age and the Early Medieval period in Finland. It is located on the eastern shore of a bay of the Baltic Sea, not far from the central Iron Age/Medieval period regions of Masku, Nousiainen, Raisio, and Turku. The bay acted as a sea route between these regions as well as providing access to the Archipelago Sea (Fi. Saaristomeri, Sw. Skärgårdshavet)

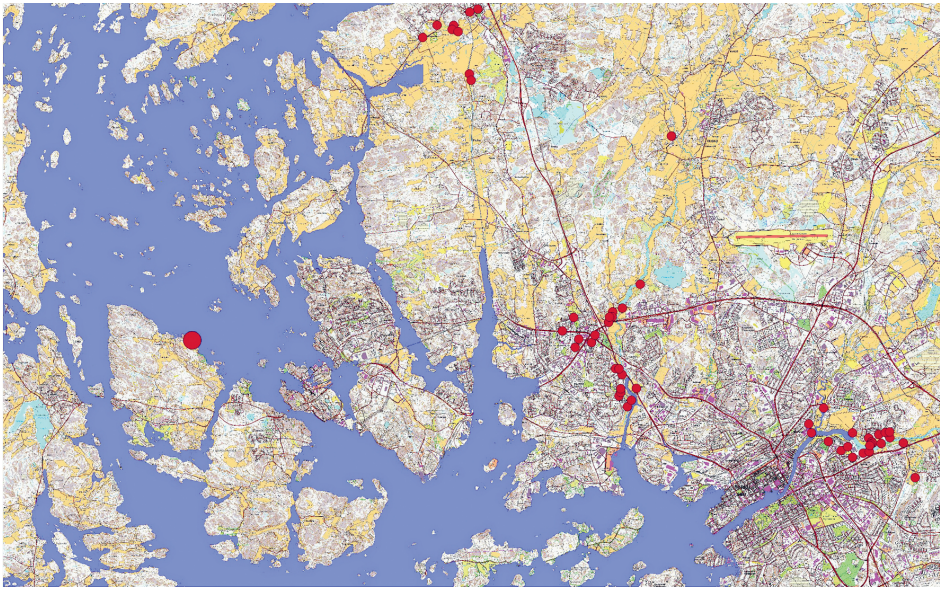


Figure 10: Map showing sea level 5 metres higher than today (about the same as in the Viking Age) and the sites dated to the younger Iron Age in the vicinity of Naantali Keitilä.

and the Baltic Sea. The carving is today largely hidden by bushes and vegetation but during the Viking Age, the cliff would have been located right on the seashore (Hatakka & Glükert 2000) and kept clear of moss and vegetation by winter ice and sea spray. If the carving was made during the Viking Age, it would have been clearly visible to seafarers in this relatively densely populated part of the country.

It is interesting to note that the lower part of the inscription seems noticeably worn and weathered while the upper part seems fresher. This would make sense if the carving was originally made by the shoreline and was worn by the sea ice but is more difficult to explain if it was made later in the forest. On the other hand, the uppermost part of the carving does seem suspiciously fresh: when the cliff is dry, the colour of the carved lines is clearly lighter than the surrounding rock. It is beyond our expertise to determine whether this is the effect of geological factors (the shape of the cliff might protect it from water seepage) or because the carving is comparatively young.

If, on the other hand, the carving is a recent forgery, the location seems quite poorly chosen: today, the site is difficult to find even if one has the exact coordinates, and even the owners of nearby summer cottages were unaware of it when we inspected the site in 2015. One could perhaps argue that the hypothetical forger made the carving in a difficult-to-find location in order to make its "discovery" more convincing. But why then was it never really discovered or heralded in the media like the Vörå runes were?

Conclusions

Rock carvings of any type of notoriously difficult to date and, together with the fact that they can be used to advance political/ideological/religious purposes, are thus a particularly attractive medium for forgers. The three sites discussed in this paper, however, seem to be aimed at commemorating a site, an event, or a person, and none of them gives the impression of being an outright forgery. Two of them represent the interesting heritage of Viking romanticism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Finland, worth studying as a somewhat quirky material legacy of the (presumably) Swedish-speaking national-romantic political movement. However, the third site, located on the island of Luonnonmaa at Naantali, seems to fall outside both categories of "forgery" and "Viking romantic inscription". Where then should we place it?

As noted above, the paleography of the carving is to some extent inconsistent with Viking Age runic script but not, perhaps, fatally so. The carving style and language of the inscription suggests deep familiarity with runic script, indicating that the author either must have been very familiar with runic expression or that he copied an existing (but so far unidentified) previously published inscription. If we believe the original survey report, which suggests that it must be (at least) a hundred years old, the availability of and access to published inscriptions and related scholarship would have been vastly more limited than it is today. From an archaeological perspective the site appears plausible, or

at least there is nothing to contradict a Viking Age dating. No obvious historical or political objective for producing the carving can be identified either, as its message is of a purely personal character, and no attempt has been made to publicise it in local press or related media.

Archaeologists and scholars of text tend to view their sources from rather different perspectives. The authors of this paper are all archaeologists and thus claim no expertise in reading runes but we do have a fair amount of experience in identifying prehistoric sites based on other criteria. We focus on the natural environment of the sites, their technical aspects, material characteristics, connection to other archaeological sites, history of research and so on. Runologists see red flags if characters, style, or grammar deviate from the norm, which we acknowledge and respect, but as archaeologists we are also keenly aware of the role of taphonomy, or the often poorly understood processes that affect the preservation of the archaeological record. We have little idea of what data we are missing and thus must be very careful in identifying any strict rules for archaeological phenomena, especially in (from the perspective of runes) marginal and possibly "creolised" regions such as Finland. Here, as noted, the scant surviving evidence suggests that some level of knowledge of runes existed in the medieval period and perhaps earlier, but runes seem to have been applied mainly to perishable materials and thus have left behind few preserved records. This already seems like a deviation from the situation in Sweden. The birch bark letters of Novgorod are a useful reminder of how little we know: were it not for the exceptional conditions for preservation and major Soviet excavations in the city, we would have had little idea that such a rich vernacular literary tradition existed in Early Medieval Russia.

Is the runic inscription of Luonnonmaa fake or not? Was Finland Proper a "runic landscape"? Obviously not to the extent that Olaus Magnus imagined, but the sites discussed in this paper as well as many other finds of possible runic inscriptions in Finland should not be rejected outright as "forgeries". All of them are interesting in their own right as expressions of local identities, and it is possible that some of them may date back to the Viking Age. In the case of Luonnon-

maa, it is conceivable that it is a genuinely commemorative inscription made in the historical period by someone exceptionally well-educated in runes. If so, it should be possible to identify such a person by interviewing local residents and summer guests, or by searching the pre-1957 municipal records of Naantali for any possible occurrences of an Astrid, a daughter of someone called Karl, who is somehow connected with the island. It may also be possible to employ natural-scientific methods developed for dating exposed rock surfaces (such as cosmogenic radionuclide dating) to settle the dating, although these are at present technically demanding and relatively imprecise, and some of them cannot be used with granite. For now, we would prefer simply to keep the question – and our minds – open until further evidence can be produced.

Endnotes

1 Since the stones depicted do not feature runic script (which would have been difficult to fit on the small figures), it may be debated whether they actually represent runestones or some other type of "standing stones", such as grave markers or *bauta* stones. It is unlikely, however, that this was a distinction of great importance to Olaus and his contemporaries, as both runology and antiquarianism (the predecessor of archaeology) emerged as disciplines largely after Olaus' death.

2 The register does feature a site with historical-period inscriptions from Kitee (260500012 Lahdenkylä Toropainen), but it is in a different village, the description given in the register is very short and vague, and the coordinates given are imprecise. We have not attempted to locate this inscription.

3 The writing on the stone does not, however, feature actual runes but is composed in a "runic-style" Roman alphabet.

4 Two possible runic inscriptions have been found in the Åland islands (Oja 2015: 215–220; Sjöstrand in this volume) but fall outside this discussion.

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