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12. Gods and Mythological Beings in the Younger Futhark

O. Heathen Gods

O 1: Engstad whalebone pin (Nord-Trøndelag, Norway; probably 9th century; →; NIyR 537):

karpas

Garð-Áss (?)

‘Enclosure/Farmstead-god (?)’

This small inscription (2.8 cm long) is on two burnt fragments of a whalebone pin, possibly a weaving shuttle, from a female cremation at the Engstad burial site. The first bind-rune could be read either as **kā** or as **ak**; the reading **ākarpas**, *akr þá's* = *akr, þá er* would, however, be only the beginning of an inscription, and there is no indication of any continuation.

The term *Garð-Áss* would correspond to a protective spirit of the farm, ON **garðvörðr*, though this is only known through a *gār(d)vor(d)* in modern Norwegian folklore.

NIyR, V, 120-123.

O 2: Sparlösa rune-stone (Västergötland, Sweden; ca. 800; →; Vg 119):

A: **A*iułskaf·airikissunrkafalrik??**

B: 1 **??t??lakafrau?atkialti...**

2 **...asa?fapirubsalpalsuaþa?u??ba**

3 **...?amasnqtuauktakar : aslrilaku??rukþ?tajułs**

C: 1 **...s??nuř?A??patsikmaraitimakurairikis**

2 **makinjařu**

3 **þuŋa ·**

4 **Aftaiuisukrap**

5 **runarþaraki?ukutuiuþarsuaþalirikuluþufapi :**

E: 1 **uių?am**

2 **...??ukrþsarþksnuibin?**

3 **??kunuřklius??**

4 **...iu**

A: *Œyuls gaf, Œeiriks sunR, gaf Alrik[R]*

B: 1 *... gaf rau[.] at gialdi.*

2 *[P]a sa[t] fapiR Upsal (?), fapiR svap...*

3 *... nætR ok dagaR ... AlrikR lu[bi]R ugð[i]t (?) Œyuls.*

C: 1 *....., þat Sigmarr hæiti maguR Œeiriks.*

2 *Mæginjaru (?),*

3 *þy na!(??)*

4 *Aft Œyu[l]s. Ok rap*

5 *runaR þaR ræginkundu þar, svað AlrikR lubu faði...*

E: has so far resisted coherent interpretation, but line 3 seems to include the sequence ... *kunnr ok ljus*

A-C have received several widely differing interpretations, whose lowest common denominator may be summarised thus:

A: 'Øjuls Eriksson gave, Alrik gave,

B: 1 ... in exchange / payment.

2 There sat the father in Uppsala, the father who

3 Nights and days ... Alrik **lu[bi]R** did not fear (?) not Øjuls

C: 1 ... that Sigmarr may be called Erik's son ...

2 In mighty fight (?) ...

4 In memory of Øjuls (this memorial is erected), and interpret

5 (these) runes, those derived from the gods, which Alrik **lubu** painted.'

E: ... 'renown and light'....

This large, square-sectioned stone, which is 1.77 m high, is covered with runes and drawings, even on its top surface (E). Apart from the runes with their all-important donor-names, Side A shows a male portrait. The runes on the opposite side (B) are badly damaged and have resisted any convincing interpretation (the various attempts are listed by Birkmann: *Von Ågedal* 1995, 246-254); the left side (C) depicts a dragon (?), flying downwards, surrounded by runes. The right side, D, contains only drawings; it is dominated by a ship under full sail with two birds above it; above that is a mysterious drawing that might represent the gable-end of a building (?). Under the ship there is a large (fabulous?) animal with indications of spots or long hair on it, and below that a rider with drawn sword, followed by what looks like a dog.

The runes on this stone show short- and long-branch runes side by side, and it has been argued that the rune master at Sparlösa may have developed the short-twig runes himself. The pictures point to a date ca. 800, while the runes could possibly be even earlier (Birkmann: *Von Ågedal* 1995, 239).

The gift mentioned in A may indicate that the stone is not only a memorial to Øjuls, but also a legal document recording the transfer or inheritance of property. Jansson (*Runes*: 1987, 40-41) suggests that the name of the man commemorated was actually Æivisl, and that he may be the man of that name who is said on the Kälvesten stone (Östergötland) to have been killed while commanding an expedition to the east.

The traditional alliterating formula in C 4-5 about the runes being 'god-sent' is also found as early as ca. 600 on the Noleby rune-stone (see Y 6), and in similar words in the medieval Eddic poem *Hávamál* (stanza 80):

*Þat er þá reynt, er þú at rúnom spyrr
inom reginkunnum
þeim er góðo ginregin
oc fáði fimbulþulr,
þá hefir hann balt, ef hann þegir.*

‘It proves to be true, when you ask about the runes, derived from the gods, which the magical powers made and the mighty sage stained, (that) he (i.e. one) gets on best if he keeps quiet.’ (Neckel / Kuhn: *Edda* 1993, 29).

The suggestion that the gods Freyr and Ullr are mentioned in C 1 and B 3 respectively (Nielsen) is too speculative to be of any value.

Nielsen: ‘Freyr’ 1969, 103-114; Jansson: *Runes in Sweden* 1987, 30, 40f; Birkmann: *Von Ágedal* 1995, 239-256; Düwel: RK 2001, 114.

The following rune-stones and amulets are all connected with Thor, either by the use of a formula invoking his blessing (O 3-O 6), or else, where he is not mentioned in the text, by some kind of engraving of his hammer on the stone. However, the shape of the hammers varies so drastically that it is impossible to talk of a common iconographic tradition. Hultgård interpreted the Thor-stones as the last remnants of an old custom, but this seems unlikely, since none of the surviving examples is earlier than the tenth century.

Birkmann: *Von Ágedal* 1995, 239ff; Hultgård: ‘Runeninschriften’ 1998; Düwel: RK 2001, 114.

O 3: Glavendrup rune-stone (Fyn, Denmark; ca. 900-950;→; DR 209):

A: **raknhiltr · sa**

ti · stainþansi · auft
ala · sauluakupa
uialipshaiþuiarþanþia
kn

B: **ala · sunir · karþu**

kubl · þausi · aft · faþur
sin · auk · hans · kuna · auft
uar · sin · in · suti · raist · run
ar · þasi · aft · trutin · sin
þur · uiki · þasi · runar

C: **at · rita · sa · uarþi · is · stainþansi**

ailti · iþa aft · anan · traki

A: *Ragnhildr setti stein þessa eptir Ála sölva, véaliðs heiðverðan þegn.*

B: *Ála synir gerðu kumbl þessa eptir föður sinn ok hans kona eptir ver sinn, en Sóti reist rúnar þessa eptir dróttin sinn. Þórr vigi þessa rúnar.*

C: *At rita sá verði er stein þenna elti eða eptir annan dragi.*

A: ‘Ragnhildr placed this stone in memory³⁷ of Áli the pale (?), the worthy thane of the *véalið* (‘army of the shrines’).

B: Áli’s sons made this monument in memory of their father, and his wife for her husband, but Sóti carved these runes in memory of his lord. May Thor consecrate these runes.

³⁷ In this and all following cases we have decided to translate *setti stein eptir* with ‘raised a stone in memory of’ as nearer to modern English, even if this implies an interpretation of the inscription.

C: May he become a *rita* ('pervert?') who removes (lit. 'puts to flight') this stone or distorts it after (i.e. for) someone else.'

This inscription is carved on the three sides of a very large reddish granite boulder (height 1.88 m, width of side A 1.42 m, of side B 1.59 m, of side C 55cm) that serves as the 'prow-post' of a ship-setting made of large stones. It is the longest surviving runic inscription in Denmark. The Ragnhildr who is named here also commissioned the Tryggevælde stone, Zealand (Y 8 in chapter 14 below), in memory of her (previous?) husband; it ends with a very similar curse, but does not include the dedication to Thor.

In C, *rita* (*rata*, *ræta*) may be interpreted as 'pervert (magician?)', and 'to become a *rita*' must mean something shameful along similar lines; this is at least implied by a connection with the term *ergi* 'passive sexual perversion' on the Saleby rune-stone (Y 9 in chapter 14 below). The definition of *rita* as a 'pejorative term for an evil-doer', a sorcerer or 'fiend' (Düwel: RK 2001, 100) is perhaps too mild a euphemism for what is meant. This kind of formula is found on a total of seven Danish rune-stones (see Y 5-Y 11 below) and although three of them are from Northern Jutland, there are also examples from Fyn, Zealand, Scania and Västergötland, so that we can assume that *rita* was a relatively widely-known term. The verbal form *ailti* (here 3rd pers. subj.) should probably be interpreted as 'who damages' or 'who destroys' (cf. Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 226-228). It might possibly refer to removal and re-use of the stone for another similar monument, but the Tryggevælde stone explicitly mentions dragging the stone away 'from here' as an alternative possibility that also comes under the curse. In view of this, the end of the Glavendrup inscription might also be translated literally 'or drags it away to commemorate someone else'; but this boulder is so massive that it would be very difficult to remove it physically.

The *þórr vígi* formula is here given its fullest form, while at Sønder Kirkeby (O 4) it lacks the demonstrative; at Virring (O 5) it refers to the monument rather than the runes, while at Velandá (O 6) it is reduced to only the first two words. The four inscriptions all date from the tenth century and can, as Marold suggested, be seen as a heathen reaction to the progress of Christianity, which led the sponsors of these heathen stones to make a declaration of their own religion.

Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 224-228; Marold: 'Runeninschriften als Quelle' 1998; Hultgård: 'Runeninschriften' 1998; Düwel: RK 2001, 100; Thrane / Nielsen: 'Glavendrup' 1998.

O 4: Sønder Kirkeby rune-stone (Falster, Denmark; 10th century; →; DR 220):

??sur : sati : stin :

þinsi : haft : asku ...

brupur : sin : ian : ...

uarþ : tuþr : a : ku...

pur : uik[i : r]unar ...

[Sa]ssur setti stein þenna eptir Ásg[aut], bróður sinn. En [hann] varð dauðr á Go[tlandi]. Þórr vígi rúnar.

‘Sassur placed this stone in memory of Ásgautr, his brother, but he died in Gotland. May Thor hallow the runes.’

This inscription is on one side of the stone, with each row reading from left to right and the sequence of rows from bottom to top. The dedication at the top is made up of ‘same-stave’ runes, which are incorporated as waves under the line-drawing of a ship above them. The aim is clearly to ‘hide’ the sacred runes in the drawing.

The wording of the *Þórr vígi* formula is closest to the Glavendrup stone, but lacks the demonstrative.

Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 230 and 232f.

O 5: Virring rune-stone (N.Jutland, Denmark; 10th century; →; DR 110):

A: : **ki?mutr** :

???η : **kaṛþi**

: **mini** : **þau** : **aft**

: **sasur** : **star** ...

r?spī : **stin** : **aft** : **tuban** :

B: **þur** : **uiki** : **þisi** : **kuml** :

A: *Geirmundr (?) ... gerði minni þau eptir Sassuri. Stýrr (?) reisti stein eptir dauðan.*

B: *Þórr vígi þessi kuml.*

A: ‘Geirmundr (N.N.’s son?) ... made these memorials in memory of Sassur. Stýrr (?) raised the stone in memory of the dead man.

B: May Thor hallow this monument.’

This inscription is carved on a blue-black granite stone measuring 1.55 x 1.20 x 0.27 m. The five rows of runes in A each run from the bottom of the stone upwards, starting with the left-hand row. While we cannot define **uiki** in detail, it is clear that the blessing is meant to protect the monument (cf. Moltke). This suggests that the blessing invoked on the stones at Glavendrup and Sønder Kirkeby is not directed at the ‘runes’ literally, but at the inscription and thus the whole memorial.

An interesting feature of this stone is that the final invocation of Thor is not on the front of this narrow stone, but on the flat top, where it is barely visible.

Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 230 and 232f.

O 6: Velanda rune-stone (Västergötland, Sweden; 10th century; →; Vg 150):

× **þurui** : **risþi** : **stin** : **iftir** : **ukmut** : **buta** : **sin** : **miuk** : **kuþan** : **þikn** ×
þur : **uiki** ×

Þyrvi reisti stein æftir Ögmund, bonda sinn, miök góðan þegn. Þórr vígi.

‘Þyrfi raised the stone in memory of Ögmund, her husband, a very good (free-)man. May Thor bless.’

The inscription on this tall, narrow stone (1.9 x 0.5 m) is in a double band surmounted by a drawing of an eagle's head. As on the Glavendrup stone (O 3 above), the Thor-formula is not encrypted or hidden, but is clearly visible at the end of the inscription and does not differ from it in any way. Hultgård: 'Runeninschriften' 1998, 726 & 728f; Jansson: *Runes in Sweden* 1987, 118.

O 7: Læborg rune-stone (C. Jutland, Denmark; ca. 900?; →; DR 26):

A: **rhafnukatufi : hiau : runar : þasiaft** [hammer]

B: **þurui : trutnik : sina**

A: *Rafnunga-Tufi hjó rúnar þessar ept[ir]*

B: *Þyrvi dróttning sína.*

A: 'Tue, of Rafn's family, hewed these runes in memory of

B: Thyra, his queen.'

This inscription is on a long granite stone (2.36 m long, face A 64 cm wide, face B 72 cm wide). The author of these lines is also named in another runic inscription, from Bække 1 (DR 29): 'Ravnunge-Tue and Funden and Gnyple, these three made Thyra's mound'; this very probably refers to the first of the two monumental mounds at the royal sanctuary at Jelling. Here, in ca. 966, king Harald Bluetooth was baptised and thus made the Danes accept the Christian faith; he had his father Gorm the Old transferred from the older northern hill to the newly built church. As Gorm had died only in 958/59 and was himself the patron of the huge northern grave-mound (Krogh: 'The Royal Viking-Age monuments' 1982; Roesdahl: 'Pagan Beliefs' 1993, 129f), the Læborg stone may have been made later than previously suggested, perhaps in the 950's, when the (already Christian) queen Thyra was first buried in the northern grave mound. Its two Thor's hammers (at the end of each line) may be a last record of the Danish heathen reaction (like that of Thyra's husband at Jelling?) to the advance of Christianity.

Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 228, 246-247, 272.

O 8: Hanning rune-stone (N. Jutland, Denmark; late 12th century (?); →; DR 48):

ua?? : tofa : sun

rspj : sten : þene x

eftir : gyþu : mop?

r : sina x [hammer] x

[e]sjkil : h ...

Va[gn] Tofason resti sten þenna eftir Gyþu, mopir sína. E[si]kil h[jó] ...

'Va(gn), son of Tofi, raised this stone in memory of his mother Gyða. [hammer] E(s)kil h(ewed the runes?).'

This inscription is on a stone of rough-grained red-brown granite measuring 1.07 x 0.47 m; its thickness cannot be determined, because it is built into the south wall of the church choir. The runes themselves imply an original orientation in which lines 1-4 ran → across the stone, starting at the bottom, while line 5 ran upwards along the left-hand margin.

Although the hammer on this memorial stone is quite similar in shape to those on the Læborg stone (O 7), though with a much longer handle, the late date (200 years after the conversion of Denmark to Christianity) makes a heathen statement rather unlikely. Moltke has therefore suggested that the hammer may be a symbol of a smith's tools (presumably declaring Vagn's craft), though we have no parallels for that on other medieval rune-stones. Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 401f.

O 9: Spentrup 2 rune-stone (Scania, Sweden; ca. 1000-1050;→; DR 120):

ąskatla x rispi ls x sbaka x sun x stin x þąnsi x [hammer]

Ąskatla resti stein þenna spaka son [hammer]

‘Askatla raised this stone (in memory of) [...]ls, Spaki's son.’ [hammer]

This blue granite stone streaked with red now measures 1.32 x 1.1 x 0.18 m, but it has lost part of its rounded top. As the runes run in an arch round the edge, this has resulted in the loss of the middle of the inscription. The last word and the final Thor's hammer are in a second row which runs up the left edge of the stone. Moltke has warned that the hammer might well be a hammer-cross, but in any case its shape is very similar to that on the Karlevi stone (O 14 below).

Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 231, 272 and 541.

O 10: Gårdstånga 3 rune-stone (Scania, Sweden; ca. 1000-1050;→; DR 331):

ąsur x sati x stina x þisi : iftir tuba : [hammer]

Ąssur setti steina þessa eptir Tobba.

‘Assur placed this stone in memory of Tubbi.’ [hammer]

Most of this inscription is in a doubled band which begins and ends at the bottom of the stone, but the name of the dead man and the hammer-like T-shape that follows the inscription run upwards along the left-hand edge, with the hammer very near the top of the stone, as in the previous inscription. This hammer is similar to the comparable symbols on the Karlevi stone from Öland (O 14 below) and the Jursta stone from Södermanland (O 15 below); it may be the briefest possible reference to Thor or to the *Þórr vígi* formula.

Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 246f, 272 and 526.

O 11: Ąby rune-stone (Södermanland, Sweden; 11th century;→; Sö 86):

: ąsmuhtr : auk : frąybjiurn • liu kera : meki • sirun • at • herbiurn • fąþur : sin

Ąsmundr ok Fręybjiorn létu gæra mæ[r]ki sirún at Hærbiorn, faður sinn.

‘Asmundr and Freybjörn had a memorial with victory runes made for Herbjörn, their father.’

The front of this large boulder (ca. 1.77 x 1.56 m) shows a massive Thor's hammer in the central field of the stone, very similar in shape to the one on the Stenkvista stone (O12 below). However, in this case the hammer is held up from below by the heads of the two snakes that form the bands within which most of the inscription is carved (there was no room for the

last word, which is added in the central space next to the head of the right-hand snake). Above the hammer, there is a smiling (or moustached?) face. Hultgård has tried to show that this and other faces, which are sometimes understood as masks (of a god? Odin?), are actually faces of the god Thor, who is symbolised both by this face and by the hammer (see also Perkins: *Thor* 2001, 122-124 and fig. 20).

There are also three other stones from Södermanland (Kolunda Sö 112; Landshammar Sö 167, Släbro Sö 367) that have faces or masks similar to those on Danish stones from Jutland (Århus 3; Sjellebro; Sjelle; Skern) and Scania (Lund I C and D DR 314; Bösarps DR 258; Hunnestad DR 284 and 286; Västra Strö DR 335). But the face on the Åby stone is quite unlike these and rather resembles Christ's face on the large Jelling stone, although no close connection is likely. Of the Danish masks, at least the one on the Hunnestad monument is part of a Christian grave monument, so an interpretation of it as the face of a heathen god is risky. The three stones from Södermanland mentioned above are all on stones with strong Christian symbolism, and this led Hultgård: 'Runeninschriften' 1998, 732, to assume that Christ slipped into the role of a pre-Christian god (perhaps Odin?). But as the Åby stone is not noticeably older than the others, it seems likely that just as Thor's hammers were used instead of Christian crosses in contemporary heathen burials, so the face came to be incorporated into the design of late-heathen rune-stones like Åby in imitation of Christian iconography. There is no reason to believe that the faces or masks on Swedish rune-stones antedate the contact with Christianity, and the appearance of a face or mask certainly does not in itself demonstrate that a stone is a heathen monument.

Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 257f; Hultgård: 'Runeninschriften' 1998, 733ff and Table 33; Perkins: *Thor* 2001, 122-124.

O 12: Stenkvista Kyrka rune-stone (Södermanland, Sweden; 11th century; →: Sö 111):

A: **· helki · auk · fraykair · auk · þorkautr · raistu**

B: **· merki · sirun**

C: **· at · þiuþmund**

D: **faþur · sin**

A: *Hælgj auk Frøygeirr auk Þórgautr ræistu*

B: *mærki sirún*

C: *at Þiuðmund,*

D: *faður sinn.*

A: 'Helgi and Freygeir and Thorgautr raised

B: a memorial with victory runes

C: for Thiudmund,

D: their father.'

Most of this inscription is carved within the bodies of two snakes; the longer snake runs round the perimeter at the top of the front of the stone, with its head at bottom left and its tail at bottom right. The shorter snake, interlaced with the first at both ends, runs along the bottom, with its head and tail pointing upwards at right and left. The massive sledgehammer (similar to the one on O 13) which forms the central decoration of the stone hangs down from lappets that branch off the middle of the longer snake. Inscription A runs along the body of the longer snake, starting at the bottom left; B runs upside-down along the body of the shorter snake; C runs → above the body of the shorter snake, and D upwards from the middle of C to meet the middle of the head of the hammer.

Hultgård: 'Runeninschriften' 1998, 733f; Perkins: *Thor* 2001, 123f.

O 13: Bjärby rune-stone (Västergötland, Sweden; 11th century; →; Vg 113):

takh : risþi : stn : þaisi : efti : burn : fritu : harþa : kuþih : þikn :

Dag[R] resti sten þansi æftir Biorn frænda, harða goðan þegn.

'Dagr raised this stone in memory of Biorn, his relative, a very good (free-) man.'

The hammer on this very tall stone (2.5 x 0.55 m) has a very long handle, formed by the inner edges of the two bands in the inscription, with its head at the top of the stone. Although the head of the hammer measures somewhat less than 30 x 20 cm, it stands out as clearly as the much larger example on the Stenkvista Kyrka stone, and makes a clear statement of religious allegiance.

Perkins: *Thor* 2001, 109.

O 14: Karlevi rune-stone (Öland, Sweden; ca. 1000; →; ÖI 1; DR 411):

A: **+stain : sasi : ias · satr · aiftir · siba**

... · kuþa · sun · fultars · inhans

liþi · sati · at · u · tausaiþ · ?

⊥ fulkin : likr : hins : fulkþu : flaistr :

uisi : þat · maistar · taiþir : tulka

þruþar : traukr : i : þaimsi · huki :

munat : raiþ · uiþur : raþa : ruk : starkr

i [:] tanmarku : a(i)ntils : iarmun ·

kruntar : urkrantari : lanti

B:NINONI ⊥ EH +

A: + *steinn þessi var settr eptir Sibba*

... *góða son Fultars, en hans*

liði setti at ey dauðs ? ...

⊥ *Folginn liggr hinn's fylgðu*

(flestr vissi þat) mestar

dáðir dolga Þrúðar

draugr í þessi haugi.

Mun-at reið-Viðurr ráða

*rógstarkr í Danmörku
Endils jörmungrundar
ørgrandari landi.*

B:NINONI ᚏ EH +

A: ‘This stone was set in memory of Sibbe ... the good, son of Foldar, and his followers set on this island this (memorial to the?) dead.

“Hidden lies the man whom the greatest deeds followed – many know that –, the warrior / battle-revenant, in this mound. A strife-strong warrior will not rule in Denmark (who is a) more just man, over the land.”

B: ?

This inscription is on a roughly cylindrical piece of grey sandstone 1.37 m high and 0.7 m in diameter. Each line runs from left to right, but alternate lines run up and down the stone, covering about two thirds of its surface.

The first three lines are in prose, but are not without problems. **tausaiþ** remains partially unexplained: **taus** may be the gen. form *dauðs* ‘of the dead’, but how the rest may be read is not clear, despite the tempting resemblance to OHG *dadsisas* ‘death-songs’. Either **dauðs-eið* ‘a dying oath’ or **dauð-seið* ‘magic connected with the dead’ looks possible, but neither compound survives elsewhere in ON.

The double quotation marks within the translation indicate a complete stanza of *dróttkvætt*, the highly formalised metre used for ON court poetry. The *kenningar* (poetic metaphors) used in it have strong heathen connotations:

draugr dolga Þrúðar ‘tree of the battle-Þrúðr’ = ‘warrior’ (Þrúðr is a valkyrie-name; kennings for men often compare them to trees; but *draugr* is also the term used for one of the walking dead, so the kenning also conjures up a picture of the dead man still ‘living’ in his mound).

Endils jörmungrundar reið-Viðurr ‘the wagon-Odin (*reið-Viðurr*) of the huge ground of (the sea king) Endill (i.e. of the sea)’ = ‘sea warrior’.

Although the stone commemorates a Danish leader buried on the Swedish island of Öland, most scholars have seen the skaldic stanza as either Norwegian (Marold) or Icelandic (Düwel). This would illustrate the close cultural connections that existed within Scandinavia at the end of the tenth century.

Apart from the heathen content of the kennings, this undoubtedly heathen inscription makes reference to Thor by mingling crosses (of the Greek type at the beginning and the Latin type at the end) with stylised Thor’s hammers (e.g. before the stanza). A comparative table drawn up by Moltke (*Runes* 1985, 272, see no. 4) shows that they are similar to other simple representations of hammers on rune-stones.

Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 272, 320-322; Marold: ‘Runeninschriften als Quelle’ 1998, 670-672; Andersson / Marold: ‘Karlevi’ 2000; Düwel: RK 2001, 147.

O 15: Jursta rune-stone (Södermanland, Sweden; 11th century; →; Sö 140):

A: : **santar** : **raisþi** : **stain** : **eftir** : **iuar** : **franta sin** : **inki** : **fupir** : **sun** : **snialira**

B: **ṣīþi þur**

A: *Sandarr ræisþi stæin æftir Ivar (Joar) frænda sinn. Ængi fœðir sun sniallara.*

B: *síði Þórr.*

A: 'Sandarr raised this stone in memory of his kinsman Ivarr. No braver son will (ever) be born.

B: 'May Thor protect.' (or: 'May Thor work magic')

The secret runes set on two crossing staves in the centre of the rune-stone may make up the words **þur ṣīþi**; this is made all the more likely by the presence of a very simple T-shaped Thor's hammer like the one on the stone from Gårdstånga (O 10 above).

Hultgård: 'Runeninschriften' 1998, 734.

O 16: Sigtuna copper amulet (Uppland, Sweden; late 11th century?; →):

A: **þur × sarriþu × þursa / *³⁸ / trutinfliupunufuntinis**

B: **afþirþriarþrarulf×**

af þir niu nöþir ulfr iii +

isiR [þ]is isir aukis unir ulfr niut lu ·*fia

A: *Þórr (or Þurs?) sárríðu, þursa dróttinn;*

Fly þú nú, fundinn es!

B: *[H]af þér þrjár þrár, úlf[r]!*

[H]af þér níu nauðir, úlfr!

iii isir þess, isir eykis, unir úlfr!

Njót lyfja!

A: 'Thor (or 'Demon') of gangrene, Lord of demons, flee! You have been found!'

B: 'Receive three torments, wolf! Receive nine-fold harm (or 'nine n-runes'), wolf! Three ice(-runes), these ice(-runes) may cause that you are satisfied, wolf! (Or: 'This drives on, it drives on further, the wolf grants (or experiences?) it'.) Benefit from the charm!'

The amulet is a thin plate of copper, ca. 82 by 29 mm, with an eyelet at the narrower end so that it could be worn on a string. Side A is written continuously from the broad end, round the hole in the narrow end (indicated by * in our transliteration) and back; side B is in three rows, reading left to right and each containing a separate statement; row 3 runs out of space, and its last three runes are added in a small space on side A, at point *. At the end of side B row 2 there are three staves with a single curling stroke through all three; they are here rendered as **iii**, but could have been intended as **nnn**, or merely as a decorative filler.

The charm is directed at 'the Thor (or ogre) of gangrene', seen as the demon and lord of (other) demons who causes the disease (cf. the giant-kennung *berg-Þórr* 'rock-Thor' in a verse by the eleventh-century skaldic poet Skraut-Oddr). Alternatively, the charm could have been carved by a

³⁸ The * in this transcription indicates a hole in the narrow end of the amulet.

zealous Christian who regarded the heathen gods as demons, but in that case it seems odd that Thor should become the lord of his traditional foes. The last line of B is problematic, but Krause (*Runen* 1970, 55f) understands ‘ice’ to mean ‘ice-runes’ which offers a possibility of interpretation; he thus translates: ‘three ice(-runes), these ice(-runes) may cause you to be satisfied, wolf. Use the magic (i.e., be overcome by it)’. The formula **niut lufia** may be seen as a parallel to those magical charms directed at revenants which declare ‘use/enjoy your grave’ (cf. Q 1 and Y 12; see Lindquist, *Religiösa Runtexter* I 1932; Nordén, ‘Bidrag’ 1943, 171f). It might alternatively be a postscript directed to the wearer, in which case it would mean ‘benefit from the charm’.

The amulet shows a close resemblance to the so-called Canterbury formula (O 17 below), which also evokes Thor, but as an enemy of demons rather than a ‘demon’ himself. The *níu nauðir* (literally ‘nine needs’) are also mentioned on the Ribe healing stick (R 1 below).

Lindquist: *Religiösa Runtexter* I 1932; Eriksson / Zetterholm: ‘En Amulett’ 1933; Nordén: ‘Bidrag’ 1943, 171f; Krause: *Runen* 1970, 55f; Melnikova: *Skandinavskije runicheskiye nadpisi* 2001, 177 etc; Düwel: RK 2001, 135f.

O 17: Canterbury Charm (MS BL Cotton Caligula A.xv, ff 119v-120r, MS completed 1073;→; DR 419):

**kurilsarþuarafarþunufuntinistuburuigipik
[þ]orsatrutiniurilsarþuarauipraþrauari ·**

Gyril sárþvara, far þú nú, fundinn ertu. Þórr vígi þik, þursa dróttin, [G]yril sárþvara. Við æðrafari.

‘Gyril (from *gyrja* ‘to smudge, stain with blood’?) wound-stirrer, go now! You are found! May Þórr ‘hallow’ you, lord of ogres (= demons), (G)yril wound-stirrer. Against rushing (infection?) in the veins.’

As Thor uses his hammer to ‘hallow’ things, in the case of giants this could be an ironic way of referring to them being killed or else an analogy to magic charms.

This is a rare example of a runic charm in a manuscript. Its text is quite closely paralleled in the first part of the Sigtuna amulet (O 16), which may be ironic in a different way. There, the ‘Thor of gangrene’ is the demon and lord of demons, but is on a literal level quite the opposite of Thor (unless the Sigtuna amulet was inscribed by a zealous Christian, see above). Both are clearly magical charms against gangrene or blood-poisoning.

Moltke: *Runes* 1985, 360f.

O 18: Urnes church (XXII) wooden block (Sogn og Fjordane, Norway; 11th century or later;→; N1yR 339):

tmir

Týr mér! (?)

‘Týr (help) me!’(?)

This inscription is on a block of wood inside the church; its inscribed surface measures 7.5 x 6.5 cm, and the block is 2.7 cm thick. The rune **t** is called *Týr*, and here may stand as an ideogram, either for the name of the rune or as the imperative of *týja* ‘to help’. Below is an inverted triangle with rows of deeply incised lines inside it – seven in the top row, then six, and so on down to one at the bottom, which may be an allusion to a reduction charm as in the West Saxon Leechdom (R 2 below).

NIyR IV, 121-125.

O 19: Bergen (Bryggen) rune stick (W.Norway; late 12th century;→; B 380):

A: **hæil : seþu : ok : ihuhum : goþom**

B: **þor þik þig : gi : oþin : þik : ælhi:**

A: *Heil[!] sé þú ok í hugum góðum.*

B: *Þórr þik þiggi, Óðinn þik eigi.*

A: ‘May you be healthy and in good thoughts.

B: May Thor accept you, may Odin have you.’

Liestøl: ‘Rúnavisur’ 1965, 29, rightly points out the similarity to two lines of the Eddic poem *Hymiskviða* 11, which reads:

Ver þú heill, Hymir, í hugom góðom

The half-stanza in the inscription is composed in a variant of *galdralag*, the old metrical form for magic poems and incantations. It has often been interpreted as a heathen ‘blessing’, wishing somebody health and the (posthumous) protection of the heathen gods Thor and Odin (see e.g. Knirk; Hultgård takes it as ‘an expression of private faith’ by a heathen). But the date of the inscription is too late for an expression of serious heathen belief to seem likely. Furthermore, if the carver intended a blessing, he or she did not realise the implications of commending someone to Odin, for the expressions *Óðinn á yðr, gefa ein Óðni* (‘Odin owns you’, ‘to give someone to Odin’) are elsewhere always associated with a wish that someone should die a violent death. At this late date, however, such ignorance of genuine heathenism is quite possible. Alternatively, the first line might be designed to camouflage a curse in the second, using a bipartite magical formula which begins with a greeting but ends with a malediction, parallel to the *citatio* and *execratio* of other magical formulae (Liestøl). More likely, the whole inscription may – like such expressions in *Hymiskviða* and other Eddic poems – be a playful antiquarian literary attempt at the old heathen metre, which tries to fit content to form, possibly by way of parody (Marold).

Liestøl: ‘Runer’ 1963, 37f; Liestøl: ‘Rúnavisur’ 1965, 29f; Hagland: ‘Les découvertes’ 1994, 131; Knirk: ‘Tor og Odin’ 1995, 28; Hultgård: ‘Runeninschriften’ 1998, 730; Marold: ‘Runeninschriften’ 1998, 680f.

O 20: Kiev dirrhem (Ukraine; coin from 751/2, inscription 11th century?;→)

a s

kuþ

áss guð

Although this Abbasid coin was struck in the eighth century, the inscription is in the Younger Futhark. The five runes on the back of the coin run from left to right, and the three runes in the second line clearly make up the word **kuþ** ‘god’. But the **a** and **s** of the first line stand apart, and it is difficult to feel confident that the word *áss* ‘god’ is intended. Cf. the similar inscriptions from among the Rus’ in the Older Futhark (B 7 and B 8 above).

Melnikova: *Skandinavskije runicheskiye nadpisi* 2001, 159.

See also:

Y 6: *Noleby rune-stone (Västergötland, Sweden; ca. 600; KJ 67; Vg 63).*

P. Other Supernatural Beings

P 1: *Hønen rune-stone (Buskerud, Norway; 11th century?; →; NIyR 102):*

utuk : uit : uk : þurba : þiruukas : uin : kalþa : isai :

ubukþapþkumuaupmailt : uika : tauí : ar

*Út ok vítt, ok þurfa þerru ok áts,
vind(kalda?) á ísa, í óbygð at kómu.*

Auð má illt vega, [at] deyi ár.

‘Out west and far away, in need of a towel and food, they came ashore onto the wind-(cold?) ice, into the uninhabited land.

It is bad to fight against Fate, in the form of dying young.’

This inscription, which was discovered between 1814-1823 and had disappeared again by 1834, is known only from a drawing and transcription made by L.D. Klüwer in 1823. It must therefore be regarded with some suspicion. It was apparently carved on the narrow edge of a stone, like most of the inscriptions from the Isle of Man.

The long lines are composed in a metre resembling the Eddic *málahátt*, but far less regular. Interestingly (and perhaps suspiciously, in a lost inscription), this carver does not name anybody, although he seems to refer to a (disastrous?) expedition to the west, perhaps to Greenland. The evocation of fate puts this inscription (if it is genuine) close to the following one.

NIyR II, 23-68; Marold: ‘Runeninschriften’ 1998, 673; Düwel: RK 2001, 150.

P 2: *Borgund church IV (Sogn og Fjordane, Norway; probably ca. 1200; →; NIyR 351):*

A: **þorir · ræist · runar · þissar · þan · olaus · mess oæppan**

B: **erhan · for · herum**

C: **∴ bæþegerþonornar · uæl · ok · illa · mikla · møþe**

D: **⁹skapapu · þærmer**

A: *Þorir reist rúnar þessar þann Ólausmessuaptan //*

B: *er hann fór hér um.*

C: + *Bæði gerðu nornir vel ok illa; mikla mæði //*

D: *sköpuðu þær mér.*

A: ‘Thorir carved these runes on the eve of St. Ólaf’s feast, //

B: when he passed by here.

C: + The norms did both good and evil; great weariness / trouble //

D: they created for me.’

This inscription is on the north side of the western part of the wooden stave-church at Borgund. The inscription is in the form of a cross, whose arms intersect at // in each line. The single rune **g** at the beginning of D may have been the beginning of the verb *gerðu*, with the carver then realising that he had already used this verb and that *skapa* would be preferable. The Christian context and the cruciform shape of the inscription make it seem unlikely that Thorir believed in the norms as more than a figure of speech.

NlyR IV, 147-150.

P 3: Storhedder III rock graffito (Aust-Agder, Norway, date unknown; →; NlyR 192):

ekuiltakusamayþærfahsteriþhaiminum

Ek vilda kjósa mey þá er fegrst er í P(URS)heiminum.

‘I would like to choose the girl who is most beautiful in the (ogre) worlds’.

This inscription, which is 54 cm long, is carved under the shelter of a large overhanging rock. In the last word, **iph** is in the form of a single bind-rune. It seems likely that the original graffitist carved a simple romantic message, like e.g. Maeshowe 21 and several of the Bergen inscriptions, and a second then added the bow of **þ** to the bind-rune, standing for the word *þurs* ‘ogre’. This might allude either to something like the giantess of the Gerðr-Freyr myth, or more probably to the curse of marriage to an ogre with which the female is threatened in *Skirnismál* and the Bergen love-curse (see below). The secondary addition of **þ** was probably meant as a rather crude joke.

NlyR III 51-61; Düwel: RK 2001, 155.

P 4: Hennøy III rock graffito (Sogn og Fjordane, Norway; 13th century or later?; →; NlyR 422):

A: **her : lāgu þeir men er komu af**

B: **riſa gulli^{lade} meþ lōþnu skipi af gulli**

C: **ok þet er i þesum steini**

A: *Hér lāgu þeir menn er kómu af*

B: *Risalandi með hlöðnu skipi af gulli,*

C: *ok þat er í þessum steini.*

A: ‘Here lay the men who came from

B: Giant-land with a ship loaded with gold,

C: and that is inside this stone.’

This large stone (now split into two pieces – did someone take the fantasy seriously?) is at a landing-place on the shore of the island of Hennøy, with nine separate graffiti on it. The rather regular spelling, the **p** rune and the double **ll** suggest a late medieval date. In line B, **la(n)de** has been added above the line. Similar fantasies about hidden treasure (but without the attachment of it to giants) can be found in a number of inscriptions from Maeshowe, Orkney, which were carved by visiting crusaders, probably in 1152 (see Maeshowe 4, 8, 25-28 in Barnes).

NIyR IV 229-233; Barnes: *The Runic Inscriptions* 1994, 71-7, 84-95, 190-203; Düwel: RK 2001, 155.

P 5: Hennøy VI rock graffito (Sogn og Fjordane, Norway; date unknown;→; NIyR 425):

ræist : ramr : iotun · rúnar

Reist rammr jötunn rúnar.

‘A strong giant carved (these) runes.’

This inscription, on the same boulder, seems to be another joke, carrying on the fantasy of Hennøy III (P 4). It uses the formula: *x reist rúnar* (*bessar*), which is common in runic signatures, but of course it would spoil the joke if the carver gave his real name.

NIyR IV 235f.

P 6: Bergen (Bryggen) rune stick (W.Norway; ca. 1380-90;→; B 257):

A: ristek : bot : runar : rist : ekbiarh : runar : eæin : faluip : aluom : tuialtuip : trolom : þreualt : uip : þ(us) ...

B: uipenneskø : þo : skah : ualkyrriu : sua : at : eæimehi : þo : atæuili : læuis : kona : liui : þinug ?...

C: eksender : þer : ekseaper : ylhiar : erhi : okopola : aþer : rini : upole : auk : ialuns : mop : sittu : aldri : soppu : aldri ...

D: - ant : mer : sem sialpre : þer : beirist : rubus : rabus : eþ : arantabus : laus : abus : rosa : gaua ...

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| A : <i>Ríst ek bótrúnar,</i> | <i>ríst ek bjargrúnar,</i> |
| <i>einfalt við álfum,</i> | <i>tvífalt við tröllum</i> |
| <i>þrífalt við þursum...</i> | |

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| B: <i>við inni skæðu</i> | <i>skag- Valkyrju,</i> |
| <i>svá at ei megi</i> | <i>þó at æ vili</i> |
| <i>lævis kona</i> | <i>lífi þínu...</i> |

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| C: <i>Ek sendi þér,</i> | <i>ek sé á þér</i> |
| <i>ylgjar ergi ok ópola.</i> | |

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>A þér renni ópóli</i> | <i>ok jötuns móð.</i> |
| <i>Sittu aldri,</i> | <i>soppu aldri...</i> |

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| D: <i>Ant mér sem sjalfri þér.</i> | <i>Beirist rubus etc. ...</i> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| A: ‘I carve healing runes, | I carve protective runes, |
| <i>once against elves,</i> | <i>twice against trolls,</i> |

thrice against giants ...

- B: against the harmful jutting (spear-carrying?) valkyrie
so that she cannot though she may always wish to,
the evil woman hurt your life ...
- C: I send on you, I chant onto you
the she-wolf's perversion and intolerable longing.
May unsatisfied longing come upon on you and the giant's rage
May you never (be able to) sit (still), may you never sleep ...
- D: Love me like yourself (fem.) *Beirist rubus* etc.'

This four-sided rune stick has been broken off at one end, so that the ends of all four lines of the inscription are lost. With **skah : ualkyrriu** in B, cf. the valkyrie-names *Skögul*, *Geirskögul* ('Spear-Skögul'), e.g. in *Völuspá* 30. For the emendation **ialuns** to *jötuns* in C, see Gallo. In D, *beirist* might represent the ON pres. subjunctive *berist* 'may there be born', so we might expect a list of the woman's threatened monstrous progeny to follow. However, the remaining elements look like someone's idea of Latin; but even if some of the words actually exist in Latin, they do not fit together grammatically, and are probably only pseudo-Latin rhyming gibberish or very simple pseudo-charms, like 'hokus-pokus'.

It is by no means certain that the inscriptions on all four sides of this stick belong to the same charm. A and B look like part of a protective charm against demons, while C and D seem to be love-magic of the most forbidden kind. However, it remains possible that they represent two contrary aspects of the same spell – a blessing if the woman gives her love to the carver combined with a curse if she refuses it. That the curse is aimed at a woman becomes clear from the fem. form *sjálfri* in line D.

The Eddic poem *Skirnismál* 36 also names three magically carved 'staves' aimed at a woman: *ergi ok æði ok óþola* 'sexual perversion, frenzy and intolerable (desire)' (cf. the *ylgjar ergi ok óþola* and *jötuns móð* 'she-wolf's perversion and what is intolerable' and 'giant's frenzy' mentioned here). Together with the curse of not being able to sit still or to sleep, all these elements obviously form part of a (black) magic love charm aimed at a woman. Von See et al: *Kommentar* 2 1997, 136f also stress the sexual connotations of *óþola*; the formula *æði ok óþoli* also appears in *Duggals leiðsla*, where it is a hellish punishment for the unchaste. We may thus interpret this passage on the rune stick approximately 'like a she-wolf on heat, with unquenchable sexual desires and the rage of giants, unable to sit still or to sleep'.

The *bótrúnar* 'healing runes' mentioned in A offer an attractive emendation for the form *bócrúnar* in *Sigrdrífumál* 19 (see chapter 10 G above, under *alu*), as 'healing runes' make far more sense in both contexts than 'book runes'.

Liestøl: *Runer* 1963, 41-50; Liestøl: 'Rúnavisur' 1965, 33-39; Söderberg: 'En runstrof' 1988; Hagland: 'Les découvertes' 1994, 131; Knirk: 'Tor og Odin' 1995, 289; von See:

Kommentar 2 1997, 136f; Marold: ‘Runeninschriften’ 1998, 683f; Dillmann: ‘Um rúnir’ 2000, 366f; Gallo: ‘On the Interpretation’ 2001; Düwel: RK 2001, 158.

P 7: Lincoln 2 rune-bone (England; date uncertain, possibly 11th century;→):

b.....il × hitir × stin ×

B.....il heitir steinn

‘A stone is called B.....il.’

Despite the mention of a stone, this inscription is carved on a broken piece of cattle-rib. This makes all other interpretations (‘B. heats the stone’ or ‘B. gives orders [to raise] a stone [in memory of X]’) very doubtful, unless it was written down as practice for an inscription on stone. The parallel with the two inscriptions below (P 8 and R 1), which also mention stones that have a name, point to a magical meaning, since those inscriptions are not carved on stone either. Since the stones there are named *Ími* ‘Sooty’ and *Svart* ‘Black’, it seems likely that the damaged proper name here may have had a similar meaning, but no suggestion has yet emerged as to what this name might have been.

Holman: *Scandinavian Runic Inscriptions* 1996, E16 = p. 50-53.

P 8: Bergen (Bryggen) rune stick (W.Norway; later 13th century;→; B 252):

imistæinhæittaldriroykrriuki : aldrisæypirsopne : utyl : innkylimistæinhæitti:

Ími steinn heiti! Aldri reykr rjúki! Aldri seyðir soðni! Út yl! Inn kyl! Ími steinn heiti!

‘Let a stone be called Ími (‘Sooty’)! May the smoking fire never smoke! May what is boiled never cook! Out, warmth! In, cold! Let a stone be called Ími!’

Liestøl (‘Rúnavisur’) interpreted this inscription as a rhythmic ‘kitchen curse’, and translated the opening and closing invocation ‘May Ími (a soot-demon) heat the stone!’ (so also Marold). The strong form *Ímr* appears as a giant-name in the eddic poem *Vafþrúðnismál* 5 and elsewhere, but there is no other instance in the runic corpus of the verb *heita* ‘to heat’. Comparison with the Lincoln bone-fragment (P 7) and the Ribe healing-stick (R 1) suggests that the verb here is probably *heita* ‘to be called’. In that case, the semantic similarity between the names of the stones – *Ími* ‘Sooty’ here and *Svartr* ‘Black’ at Ribe – may also be significant; cf. also the phrase *íms undirguði* and the name *Ámr* ‘Dark’ on the Kvinneby amulet (D 12 in chapter 9 above). All of these are probably compulsion charms of some sort, though the middle of the Bergen charm suggests that if the formula was usually part of healing charms, as at Ribe and (probably) Kvinneby, it has been re-used at Bergen to curse someone’s efforts at cooking.

Liestøl: ‘Runer’ 1963 38-41; Liestøl: ‘Rúnavisur’ 1965, 32f; Marold: ‘Runeninschriften’ 1998, 681f.

See also:

R 1: Ribe Healing Stick (Jutland, Denmark; ca. 1300;→)