
Rune Stones Create a Political Landscape

Towards a Methodology for the Application of Runology to Scandinavian Political History in the Late Viking Age: Part 2¹

Minoru OZAWA

4. Differences between rune stones

4.1. Why did the Scandinavians create different sorts of stones?

Before proceeding any further in our discussion, it is worth considering two very famous runes stones: the so-called ‘Jelling stones’ (Fig 11), comprising a smaller stone, erected by Gorm the Old (–958), and a larger one, erected by Harald Bluetooth (–987).² The two stones have in common the fact that they were raised by (successive) Jelling kings, but otherwise there are many differences between them. Consider, for example, the text inscribed upon them. The first, by King Gorm, reads:

King Gorm made this monument in memory of his wife Thyre, Denmark’s adornment³

The second stone reads:

King Harald commanded this monument to be made in memory of his father Gorm and his mother Thyre. That Harald won the whole of Denmark and

1 This article is the second part of a two part article which began with M. OZAWA, “Rune stones create a political landscape: towards a methodology for the application of runology to Scandinavian political history in the late Viking Age: Part 1”, published in *HERSETEC: Journal of Hermeneutic Study and Education of Textual Configuration* 1–1 (2007), pp. 43–62.

2 For a general bibliography of Gorm and Harald, see OZAWA, “Rune stones Part 1”, p. 44 n. 24. Recently Klaus Randsborg has published an interesting article about the Jelling dynasty, entitled “King’s Jelling. Gorm and Thyra’s place—Harald’s monument—Svend’s cathedral”, *Acta Archaeologica* 79 (2008), pp. 1–23. In addition, see also K. J. Krogh & B. Leth-Larsen, *Hedensk og kristent. Fundene fra den kongelige gravhøj i Jelling* (Vikingekongernes monumenter i Jelling 2). København 2007; J. Staecker, “Jelling—Mythen und Realität”, in: D. Kattinger et al. (eds.), *Der Ostseeraum und Kontinentaleuropa 1100–1600. Einflußnahme—Rezeption—Wandel*. Schwerin 2004, pp. 77–102.

3 DR41: Side A: kurmR : kunukR : ʔ : k(ar)þi : kubl : þusi : a(ft) : þurui : kunu Side B: sina tanmarkaR but

Norway and made the Danes Cristian⁴

Compared with other Danish rune stones, Jelling stone 1 (Fig 12) bears a relatively simple text; the second Jelling stone 2 (Fig 13–15), on the other hand, has one of the longest and most decorative inscriptions of all the stones erected in Scandinavia at that time.⁵ Gorm's stone seems to have been produced simply to praise and commemorate his wife,⁶ whereas Harald's stone not only commemorates his parents, but also tries to celebrate his historical deeds to all who view his stone.⁷

The differences between these two stones are not limited to content of the runic inscriptions, however. First, as we can see in figures 12 and 13, the forms of the stone on which the runic inscriptions were inscribed differ from each other: Gorm's stone is 139 cm high and rectangular in form, whereas Harald's stone is a triangular prism that stands over 243 cm high.⁸ Second, the larger Jelling stone has what appears to be a decorated image of a beast in one face and the crucified Christ on another face (Fig 14 & 15), whereas the smaller stone is not adorned at all. It is worth remembering that in all probability the larger stone would have been colorfully painted at the time of its erection,⁹ and so it is undeniable that the larger stone is—and would have been—much more attractive than the smaller one in terms of text, form, and decoration.

Why did the kings make these two Jelling stones so differently? As we saw in Section 3 of this article, raising a rune stone required an investment of time and money sufficient to bring a complex, lengthy process to fruition.¹⁰ If a sponsor wanted to make a superior stone or monument, he would organize it so that sufficient time and money was available to raise such a stone. Thus we can assume that Harald Bluetooth invested much more time and money into his stone than his father Gorm did into the smaller stone, because Harald's stone was much more impressive than Gorm's one, and this would have been obvious to contemporary onlookers. The question of course remains: *why* did Harald invest in his rune stone to such a

4 DR42: Side A: haraltr : kunukR : baþ : kaurua kubl : þausi : aft : kurmfapursin aukaft : þaurui : muþur : sina sa haraltr (: ias : saR uan tanmaurk Side B: ala auk nuruiak Side C: auk tani (karþi) kristna.

5 The Glavendrup stone in Fyn (DR209) has 210 runes which is the longest inscription in Denmark. L. Jacobsen & E. Moltke (eds.), *Danmarks Runeindskrifter. Text*. København 1942, col. 251.

6 Thyre seems to have played an important political role in the making of the Jelling dynasty. One of the most recent discussions is B. Sawyer & P. H. Sawyer, "A Gormless history? The Jelling dynasty revisited", in: *Runica—Germanica—Medievalia*. Berlin/New York 2003, pp. 689–706. In spite of partly out-dated thesis, see also, K. Erslev, "Dronning Tyre og Danevirke", *Historisk Tidsskrift* 9 r. 6 (1929), pp. 1–53 and V. La Cour, "Kong Gorm og Dronning Tyre", *Historisk Tidsskrift* 9 r. 5 (1926–27), pp. 189–252.

7 For example, E. Roesdahl, "Harald Blauzahn—ein dänischer Wikingerkönig aus archäologischer Sicht", in J. Henning (ed.), *Europa im 10. Jahrhundert. Archäologie einer Aufbruchzeit*. Mainz 2002, pp. 95–108. As a classical but still important article, S. Bolin, "Danmark och Tyskland under Harald Gormsson: Grundlinjer i dansk historia under 900-talet", *Scandia* 4 (1931), pp. 184–209.

8 See B. Sawyer, *The Viking-Age Rune-Stones: Custom and Commemoration in Early Medieval Scandinavia*. Oxford 2000, p. 200.

9 Regarding the difficulty of the restoring of the original colors of rune stones, see OZAWA, "Rune stones Part 1", pp. 61–62.

10 OZAWA, "Rune stones Part 1", pp. 56–62.



Fig 12: Jelling stone 1 side A & B
(DRAt. 117–118)



Fig 13: Jelling stone 2 side A
(DRAt. 119)



Fig 14: Jelling stone 2 side B
(DRAt. 120)



Fig 15: Jelling stone 2 side C
(DRAt. 121)

considerable degree, thus ensuring that he had erected a larger and more impressive stone than his father? I will suggest one possible answer of his question in Section 8 (2) of this article.¹¹ Now we need only acknowledge that it *was* necessary for Harald to make a much attractive rune stone than his father.

Of course, the case of the Jelling stones is a dramatic one: not all differences are as striking as this. Nevertheless, it is clear that no two rune stones in Scandinavia are alike: each one can be distinguished from the others. There are differences between inscriptions, types of stone, sites where the stones are erected, and, of course, differences in the social contexts in which the stones were erected. Furthermore, as discussed in Section 2.4, some stones were raised singly, while others were raised to form part of a monument consisting of other rune stones or non-inscribed stones.¹²

These differences hardly occurred by chance. On the contrary, it seems to me that the sponsors of each rune stone made the effort to emphasize the differences between their own stones and those of others. Of course, one of the assumptions of this argument is that the distinctions between the stones depend, to some degree, on how much the sponsors invested; by extension this means that a contemporary Danish

¹¹ I will discuss it in greater detail in another article from the viewpoint of historical background.

¹² OZAWA, “Rune stones Part 1”, pp. 54–56.

viewer of stones would have recognized how much investment had gone into the making of a stone that he saw at a crossroads, say, or on the sponsor's farm.¹³ Of course, we know that rune stones were originally conceived as memorials to the dead, but it is undeniable that they also inform us about the value of the stones themselves, and thus, by extension, reflect the social status of the sponsor.

4.2. Text and context of runic inscriptions

Underlying this discussion is a pressing concern: how can we analyze rune stones? As discussed above, most runologists have concentrated on the linguistic study of runic inscriptions.¹⁴ Clearly this linguistic approach has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the differences between runic inscriptions, but it is limited by its focus on textual analysis. As I indicated in Section 1.3, my aim is to move from a textual study of rune stones to a contextual one.¹⁵ As Birgit Sawyer has shown, a rune stone was a social manifestation of the sponsor to the community to which he belonged.¹⁶ And, despite Terje Spurkland's recent assertion to the contrary,¹⁷ I believe that most—or at least many—Danes in the Viking Age could not read runic inscriptions.¹⁸ However, the transmission of information is not restricted to the runes, because although contemporary observers might not have been able to read the runes, they could see and understand the visual language that the stones themselves embodied, through the form of the stone, the degree and type of ornamentation, the amount and type of color, and so on. Accordingly, although we know the function of rune stones, it is very important that we also comprehend the differences both between the contents of the runic inscriptions and between the contexts of the rune stones.

In order to analyze the context of a particular rune stone, then, we should not confine our investigations to the runic inscriptions alone, as former generations of scholars have done. In addition to analyses of the text, we must consider two contextual elements: the stones themselves, on which the runes were inscribed, and the circumstances in which the rune stones were erected. We may call the former a codicological approach to rune stones, and the latter a functional one.¹⁹

Here we have to remember another important aspect of these two contextual

13 Was a rune stone erected in a private estate or in a public space? This is the very important problem, but we cannot discuss here.

14 OZAWA, "Rune stones Part 1", pp. 43–44.

15 OZAWA, "Rune stones Part 1", pp. 47–49.

16 Concerning the role that rune stones played in the late Viking Age, see Sawyer, *Viking-Age Rune-Stones*, pp. 16–19.

17 His data came mostly from Upplandic rune stones, not Danish ones. T. Spurkland, "Viking Age literacy in runes—a contradiction in terms?", in: P. Hermann (ed.), *Literacy in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavian Culture*. Odense 2005, pp. 136–150; See also A. Liestøl, "The literate Vikings", P. Foote & D. Strömbäck (eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Viking Congress*. Uppsala 1971, pp. 69–78.

18 M. OZAWA, "A 1085 charter in context: considered in terms of relationship between text and voice in 11th century Denmark", *Haskins Society Journal, Japan*, 4 in press.

19 Of course, research of Greek and Roman inscriptions has been long made from this contextual viewpoint.

approaches. Differences between the runic inscriptions would only have been recognizable to contemporary onlookers only when those literate in the runes either read them loud or conveyed the information to the illiterate of the community in some other way. The other elements of each rune stone, however, *would* have both visible and readily understood by everyone in the community. The textual approach thus tends to presuppose a literate audience for the rune stones, whereas the contextual approach is more focused on the contemporary viewer of the stones. And it is to be hoped that a combination of these three approaches will engender a new dimension in the study of rune stones.

Nevertheless, it remains regrettable that we have no methodology to help us to explain the differences between rune stones. What approach could we take to help us distinguish between each rune stone? It is hoped that by using the three-tiered approach to analyze the differences between the rune stones more minutely we will be able to understand them with a proper sense of context. The remainder of this paper thus follows this tripartite structure: in Section 5 I present an analysis of the textual differences between runic inscriptions; in Section 6 I look at the differences between the stones themselves; and finally, in Section 7 I consider the differences between the sites where rune stones were erected.

5. Textual differences

As previously mentioned, almost all the inscriptions on the rune stones follow the same formula: X (sponsor) raised this stone in memory of Y (deceased). This formula is, however, only a basic part of the full text written on each particular stone: on each rune stone this basic formula is connected to additional elements—elements which are not mere decoration, but which reveal something about the meaning of each stone.

These additional elements can be categorized into three types, formulae explaining: (1) the relationship between X and Y (2) the titles and epithets of X or Y and (3) the deeds of X or Y. In the following we will make clear what kind of influences each type had on both literate and illiterate viewers.

(1) The relationship between X and Y

According to Sawyer's catalogue, words expressing a relationship between two persons can be found in 149 of all 168 of the Danish rune stones,²⁰ and the types of relationships so expressed, and the frequency of them, can be seen in Table 1. It is remarkable that the number of formulae revealing brother-brother and man-man relationships is higher, compared to the average across all of Scandinavia,²¹ but this is not our concern here. It is more important to explore the function of the relationship expressed in the

20 Sawyer, *Viking-Age Rune-Stones*, p. 167.

21 Sawyer, *Viking-Age Rune-Stones*, pp. 43–46. She suggests that there is a distinction between the relationship patterns of the western region (i.e. Denmark and Norway) and the eastern region (i.e. Södermanland, Uppland and Öland).

Table 1: Relationships between the sponsor and the deceased in Danish rune stones

Relationship	% in Danish stones	% in all Scandinavian stones
son—father	18.8	31.5
brother—brother	23.2	14.8
father—son	4.3	10.4
wife—husband	7.9	8.0
man—man	11.6	7.6
mother—son	2.4	7.2
daughter—father	—	3.8
kinsman—kinsman	3.7	3.4
sister—brother	—	1.2
male partner—ditto	9.8	1.1
all others	18.3	11.0
	100.0	100.0

Based on B. Sawyer, *The Viking-Age Rune-Stones*. Oxford 2000, p. 169.

runic text.

Take an example from the Fuglie stone 2, found in Scania (DR260; Fig 16):

Atte raised this stone in memory of **his son** Thorsten²²

This is one of the simplest inscriptions found in Denmark.²³ Only one piece of information has been added to the ‘X raised this stone in memory of Y’ formula: the information that Atte was Thorsten’s father. This denotation of the relationship between X and Y would have provided the literate viewers with certain facts: first, and most obviously, the fact that Atte was Thorsten’s father; and second, that Thorsten



Fig 16: Fuglie stone 2
(DRAt. 616)

died before his father. As I have already noted, the added inscription did not simply act as a personal and familial commemoration of the deceased, but also attested to a social relationship between the sponsor and his community. What, then, was the nature of this expressed relationship? Did Atte raise this stone simply in order to mourn and commemorate his son in the context of his Scanian community? Probably not. As Birgit Sawyer has suggested, the expression of the relationship between X and Y in this way would have been a useful way of announcing X’s property and inheritance rights to the community.²⁴ It is to this aspect of the function of the rune stones that I wish to turn to now.

22 DR260: *ati : rispi : stin : þasi : aft : þurstin : sun : sin*

23 Jacobsen & Moltke, *DR. Text*, col. 314.

24 Sawyer, *Viking-Age Rune-Stones*, pp. 45–70. However, regarding DR260, we do not know whether Atte gained something of his son’s inheritance rights simply because Atte was the father of the children, including the deceased Thorsten.

Table 2: Titles found in Danish rune stones

rulers	Number in <i>DR</i>
king (konungr)	3, 4, 41, 42
lord (dróttinn)	131, 209, 295
chieftain (goði)	190, 192, 209
leaders	
captain (stýrimaðr)	1
estate-steward (landhirðir)	107, 134
landholder (landmaðr)	133, 314
estate-holder (búmaðr)	291
retainers	
retainer (heimþegi)	1, 3, 154, 155, 296, 297
retinue (liði)	411
herald? (tiðenda maðr)	N3
skipper (skipari)	82, 218, 275, 363
thegn (þegn)	115, 121, 123, 130, 143, 209, 213, 277, 283, 294, 343, N5
warrior (drengr)	1, 68, 77, 78, 127, 150, 262, 268, 276, 288, 289, 295, 330, 339, 345
þegn or drengr	53, 94, 129, 228, 278
warrior? (sveinn)	344
others	
steward (bryti)	40
smith (smiðr)	58, 91, 101
lady or queen (dróttning)	26, 134
?	217

Based on B. Sawyer, *The Viking-Age Rune-Stones*. Oxford 2000, pp. 176–177.

(2) The titles and epithets of X or Y

In addition to declaring the existence of personal relationships, some Danish rune stones attested to the fact that particular individuals held certain titles within the community that denoted their social status.²⁵ Birgit Sawyer classified these titles into general categories: rulers, leaders, retainers and others (Table 2).²⁶ Certain epithets might also have been added to the personal names of X or Y. Compared to the titles, some scholars believe that epithets do not seem to a great deal of significance in runic inscriptions. However, once we realize the proportion of epithet bearers in all stones (47 out of 168) we can see that epithets are not merely verbal decoration: there is a distinct difference between epithet-bearers and non-epithet bearers. Sawyer's catalogue classifies all of the epithets into 5 types: 1 'good', 2 'able, bold/strong', 3

²⁵ Sawyer, *Viking-Age Rune-Stones*, pp. 92–123.

²⁶ Some titles, especially 'warrior' (*dreng*), have been researched by scholars. See, S. Aakjær, "Old Danish thegns and drengs", *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* 2 (1927–28), pp. 1–30; A. Christophersen, "Drengs, thegns, landmen and kings. Some aspects on the forms of social relations in Viking society during the transition to historic times", *Meddelanden från Lunds universitets historiska museum*, New series 4 (1981–82), pp. 115–34; M. Syrett, "Drengs and thegns again", *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* 25–3 (2000), pp. 243–271.

Table 3: Epithets found in Danish rune stones

1. good group	Number in <i>DR</i>
good (góðr)	53, 55, 98, 127, 129, 143, 150, 154, 212b, 262, 298, 314, 339, 365, 411
all-good (allgóðr)	293
very good (mjok góðr)	94, 99
very good (harða góðr)	1, 68, 7, 86, 106, 115, 123, 127, 130, 213, 228, 268, 276, 278, 288, 289, 294, 338, 343
better (betri)	230
best (beztr / betzti)	133, 217, 291, N5
3. noble or first group	
loyal to his lord (dróttinnfastr)	81
valued (dýrr)	81
first (fyrstr)	277
honourable (heiðverðr)	209
4. wise or eloquent group	
quick-witted (ráðspakr)	161
foresighted (spar)	294
wise (uheimskr)	56
5. generous group	
free with food (mildr matar)	291

Based on B. Sawyer, *The Viking-Age Rune-Stones*. Oxford 2000, pp. 180–181.

‘noble, first’, 4 ‘wise, eloquent’, 5 ‘generous’ (Table 3).²⁷

Take an example from the Ålum stone 1 in North Jutland (DR94; Fig 17):

Tole raised this stone in memory of **his son** Ingeld, a **brave warrior**.²⁸

In addition to the familial relationship expressed by ‘**his son**’, we can see that the title **warrior** and the epithet **brave** were added to the deceased Ingeld’s name, and the reason that the titles were appended to the name of the deceased is clear: by adding the titles, those who erected the stone were honoring the deceased Ingeld and his (then living) father Tole and raising their status in the community.²⁹ Because there were very few title-holders in the community at that time, the appending of a title to the deceased Ingeld would have encouraged all who saw the stone to recognize that he was a brave warrior, and this in turn would have raised the status of his living father, Tole, who was the father of such a brave person. The fame accrued by his son’s high standing would have elevated Tole’s position in his community and made him more favored as a result.

27 There are no examples of epithets from category 2 in Danish territory. Generosity was one of the most important virtues in late Viking Age.

28 DR94: tuli : (ri)s [þ] (i) : stin : þasi : aut ilalt : sun : sin : miuk(:)(k) (u) [.....] k : þau : mun(u) mini : mx(r)gt : iuf [:] þirta :

29 Jacobsen & Moltke, *DR. Text*, col. 129–130.

(3) The deeds of X or Y

Very few rune stones celebrate the deeds of those named on the stones; the most famous exception is, of course, the larger Jelling stone, which records the deeds of Harald Bluetooth. Here I would like to consider another example, the Hedeby stone 1 (DR1; Fig 18), the inscription of which reads:

Thorulv, **Swein's retainer**, raised this stone in memory of **his companion Erik, who died when Hedeby was occupied by warriors. He was a captain and a very brave warrior**³⁰



Fig 17: Ålum stone 1 (DRAt. 245)

This stone is particularly unusual among Danish rune stones because the sponsor, Thorulv, also has his own title: he is described as a 'retainer' (*hemingi*). He was probably granted this title because his master, Swein, may well have been the king of Denmark himself, known as "Forkbeard".³¹ Let us examine the case of the deceased Erik. First, Erik had a relationship, expressed in through the epithet 'companion' (*felagi*). Second, Erik had two titles, 'captain' (*stýrmaðr*) and 'warrior' (*dreng*), the latter of which also carries the epithet 'very brave'. The connections between these complicated expressions alone render this stone exceptional, but in addition to these descriptions there is mentioned an event which caused: he (Erik) **died when Hedeby was occupied by warriors**. There are no historical sources that can testify to such an event occurring in Hedeby (which was an emporium situated near the boundary between Denmark and Germany) was occupied.³² This inscription is thus the only extant testimony to these events, the only place in which these things are inscribed for later generations.

Why were Erik's deeds inscribed in this way? One of the reasons is that through the inscriptions both the literate and illiterate of his community could easily have identified Erik through his association with such a cataclysmic event. It is likely that the occupation of Hedeby, one of the largest and most lively emporiums in Denmark

30 DR1: Side A: þurlf risþi stin þansi himþigi suins eftiR erik filaga sin ias uarþ Side B: tauþr þa trekiaR satu um haiþa bu ian : han : uas : sturi : matr : tregR harþa : kuþr

31 Four Hedeby stones are left to us. Each stone is very important because each of them provides historical information through the runic inscriptions. The Hedeby 1 and 3 stones are connected with Danish king Swein Forkbeard whereas the Hedeby 2 and 4 stones are with 'the Hedeby kingdom' before the Jelling dynasty was created in central Jutland. See Jacobsen & Moltke, *DR. Text*, col. 1–10 and E. Moltke, *Runes and their Origin. Denmark and Elsewhere*. København 1985, pp. 194–201. Regarding Swein Forkbeard, see in general I. Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions and the Danish Conquest of England 991–1017*. Woodbridge 2003.

32 Concerning the emporium of Hedeby, see H. Jankuhn, *Haithabu. Ein Stadt im Wikingerzeit*. 6th ed. Neumünster 1986; K. Brandt, M. Müller-Wille & Ch. Radtke (eds.), *Haithabu und die frühe Stadtentwicklung im nördlichen Europa*. Neumünster 2002. For a discussion of Hedeby from the viewpoint of the political situation, see W. Schlesinger, "Unkonventionelle Gedanken zur Geschichte von Schleswig/Haithabu", in: *Aus Reichsgeschichte und Nordischer Geschichte: Festschrift für Karl Jordan*. Kiel 1972, pp. 70–91; and E. Wamers, "König im Grenzland. Neue Analyse des Bootkammergrabes von Haiþaby", *Acta Archaeologica* 65 (1994), pp. 1–56.



Fig 18a: Hedeby stone 1 side A (DRAt. 2)



Fig 18b: Hedeby stone 1 side B (DRAt. 4)

at that time (it is now in Germany), forged a very impressive memory in Erik's community, and anyone belonging to the community would have remembered the occupation—Erik would therefore have been remembered by association with the occupation. The second reason why Erik's deeds were recorded in this way was to commemorate Erik for his bravery, and, in addition, to celebrate his companion, Thorulv, for raising a rune stone in memory of the deceased hero. According to the inscription, Erik fought in a battle for Hedeby against unnamed warriors, and ultimately died; the death of Erik was thus a heroic memory to the community to which he belonged. Finally, the third reason why Erik's deeds were commemorated in this way was to preserve this important communal memory for ensuing generations. Although this event was not recorded in Danish medieval historiography, it would nevertheless retain its place in the collective memory of the Hedeby community and continue to be circulated among its members as long as the literate of the runes remain in the community.

6. Different types of stones

In this section I examine the differences between various types of stones on which runic text was inscribed.

(1) Script and layout

With regard to runic script, the problem of stut-runes is the most important issue.³³ Stut-runes are also known as 'short-twig' or 'short-branch' runes, and they did not originate from Denmark. For this reason, the presence in Denmark of rune stones

³³ Concerning stut-runes, see Moltke, *Runes and their Origines*, pp. 367–380; I. Sannes Johnsen, *Stutruner*. Oslo 1968.



Fig 19: Hedeby stone 2 (DRAt. 8)



Fig 20: Hedeby stone 4 (DRAt. 19)

inscribed with stut-runes is remarkable.³⁴ The most famous examples of stut-runes are the Hedeby stones 2 and 4, standing in South Jutland (DR2 & 4; Fig 19 & 20).³⁵ The fact that these stones are inscribed with stut-runes has encouraged Erik Moltke to suggest that Hedeby was occupied by Swedes, as Adam of Bremen also relates.³⁶ However, Moltke's suggestion has been opposed by a historian, Niels Lund, who insists—drawing upon historical evidence—that a rune-carver from Sweden inscribed the Hedeby stone.³⁷ What is important for our concerns is not which scholar is correct, but whether or not we can ascertain the function of stut-runes in Danish society in the late Viking Age. This is a difficult problem, but we are aided in our investigations by the fact that some other large famous stones—for example, the Bække stone 2 in

34 See the articles found in the footnote 31 in this article.

35 Interestingly DR2 and DR4 have nearly the same inscription on them. DR4: Side A: *asfriþr karþi kubl þausi tutiR upinkaur's aft siktriuk k* Top face: *unu* Side B: *k sun sin auk knubu* Side C: *kurmR raist run(aR)*

36 Moltke, *Runes and their Origins*, p. 374. Adam of Bremen recorded some information on the so-called Hedeby kingdom (Hedebyrige) in two sections of his book. B. Schmiedler (ed.), *Adam von Bremen, Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte (MGH SRG)*. 3. Aufl., Hannover 1917: I–48 (p. 48); *Audivi autem ex ore veracissimi regis Danorum Suein, cum nobis stipulantibus numeraret atavos suos: 'Post cladem', inquit, 'Nortmannicam Heiligonem regnasse comperi, virum populis amabilem propter iusticiam et sanctitatem suam. Successit illi Olaph, qui veniens a Sueonia regnum optinuit Danicum vi et armis, habuitque filios multos, ex quibus Chnob et Gurd regnum optinuerunt post obitum patris'; I–52 (pp. 52–53); Aliqua vero recitavit nobis clarissimus rex Danorum ita rogantibus: 'Post Olaph', inquit, 'Sueonum principem, qui regnavit in Dania cum filiis suis, ponitur in locum eius Sigerich. Cumque parvo tempore regnasset, eum Hardegon, filius Suein, veniens a Nortmannia privavit regno'. Tanti autem reges, immo tyranni Danorum, utrum simul aliqui regnaverint, an alter post alterum brevi tempore vixerit, incertum est.*

37 N. Lund, "Svenskevældet i Hedeby", *Årbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 1980 (1982), pp. 114–125. Moltke defended his thesis against Lund's article. E. Moltke, "Det svenske Hedebyrige og Danmarks samling", *Årbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 1985 (1986), pp. 16–28. As a starting point of this problem, see also L. Jacobsen, *Svenskevældets Fald. Studier til Danmarks Oldhistorie i filologisk og runologisk Lys*. København 1929.



Fig 21: Bække stone 2
(DRA. 87)



Fig 22: Tillitse stone side A-D
(DRA. 606–608)

North Jutland (DR29; Fig 21)³⁸ and the Tillitse stone in Lolland (DR212; Fig 22)³⁹—are also inscribed with stut-runes. This fact is important, because it may suggest that stut-runes were worth using instead of the more usual runic script in Denmark; if this hypothesis is accepted, then it would seem that use of stut-runes symbolized the higher status of the sponsors of a stone adorned in this way.

The next matter for consideration regards the styles of layout found on the rune stones. Birgit Sawyer, for her part, has identified ten styles of layout:⁴⁰ in Denmark, almost every stone belongs to either category 2 (vertical band, 53.8%) and or 3 (arch band, 38.1%) (See Table 4). It is worth noting here that there are very few stones that have a serpent type layout (category 6), a layout which is found in many stones in neighboring Sweden. Clearly Swedish rune stones are more complex in terms of layout than Danish ones.⁴¹ The reason for this is a challenging problem, but I would like to suggest one factor here, and that is that rune-carvers with the ability to design such layouts developed more commonly in Sweden than in Denmark. It is probable that the Danes were anxious to gain skills in rune-carving comparable to those of the Swedish, for reasons of prestige. In the previous paragraph, I pointed that stut-runes may well have been privileged in Denmark, and if we consider runic form and layout together it would appear to suggest that the Otherness (or maybe Swedishness) of runes was esteemed in Denmark.

(2) Ornament and color

As noted above, rune stones all had different amounts of ornamentation, and would

38 DR29: hribna : ktubi : kriukubþi aft : uibrukmbusin

39 DR212: Side A: eskil : sulka : sun : let : res [a] sten : þena : eft : sialfan sik emun stanta meþ sten lifiR uitrint su iaR uan eskil Side B: kristr hialbi siol hans apl santa migael Side C with top face: toki risti runaR e(ftiR) þ(o)ru stiubmoþur sina kunu koþa. It is remarkable that this stone is a Christian rune stone.

40 Sawyer, *Viking-Age Rune-Stones*, p. 193.

41 Regarding the layout of Swedish rune stones, see A.-S. Gräslund, "Dating the Swedish Viking-Age rune stones on stylistic grounds", in: M. Stoklund et al. (eds.), *Runes and their Secrets. Studies in Runology*. København 2006, pp. 117–139. The most important work on this issue is by H. Christiansson, *Sydskandinavias stil. Studier i ornamentiken på de senvikingatida runstenarna*. Uppsala 1959.

Table 4: Styles of layout of runic text

category of layout	Number in <i>DR</i>	% in total
1 horizontal band	42, 227 (total 2)	1.3
2 vertical band	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 26, 29, 30, 36, 37, 40, 41, 53, 55, 56, 62, 63, 65, 67, 77, 78, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 90, 91, 94, 98, 99, N2, N3, 108, 109, 110, 116, 117, N5, 124, 125, 129, 130, 133, 134, 143, 144, 145, 149, 150, 160, 189, 190, 192, 202, 209, 212, 213, 220, 216, 217, 218, 219, 228, 230, 238, 239, N8, 259, 260, 264, 266, 269, 295, 296, 298, 314, 321, 323, 324, 331, N9, 356, 359, 411 (total 85)	53.8
3 'arch' band	34, 58, 66, 68, 69, 79, 81, 96, 97, 107, 114, 115, N4, 120, 121, 123, N6, N7, 131, 132, 135, 138, 154, 155, 161, 201, 221, 229, 237, 262, 265, 268, 270, 275, 277, 279b, 280, 282, 283, 287, 288, 289, 291, 294, 339, 297, 316, 317, 318, 325, 328, 329, 330, 334, 335, 337, 338, 343, 351, 363 (total 60)	38.1
4 'frame' band	122, 127, 276, 278, 279a, 293, 354 (total 7)	4.4
5 band / serpent	N1, 272 (total 2)	1.3
6 single serpernt	344, 345 (total 2)	1.3
Total	158	100.0

Based on B. Sawyer, *The Viking-Age Rune-Stones*. Oxford 2000, pp. 200–205.

have been colorfully painted. Some stones had relatively minor amounts of decoration, whereas others, like the larger Jelling stone, were elaborately decorated.⁴² For the stones examined for this study, it would seem that the runic inscriptions would originally have been marked out in red. Other than this, the amount of ornamentation would have depended upon the size of the stone: compare, for example, the Jelling stone 2 (DR42; Fig 13) with the Tirsted stone in Lolland (DR216; Fig 23). The Jelling stone 2 stands 243 cm high and the Tirsted stone stands 254 cm high, and so they are relatively similar both in height and volume; nevertheless, the Tirsted stone is unornamented whereas the Jelling stone 2 was inscribed with colorfully painted beast and the figure of Christ (Fig 14 & 15). Which one would have struck those Danes who saw both stones more powerfully? Almost every contemporary viewer would have remembered the Jelling stone 2.

(3) The form of the stones

Each stone differed from the others in form as well as degree of ornamentation. We will examine three different forms: rectangular (the Jelling stone 1); long rectangular; and prism (the Jelling stone 2). How did the form of each stone influence the viewer? First, the height and volume of the stone would have determined the extent to which it commanded the view of the community in which it was raised. A rune stone was a

42 OZAWA, "Rune stones Part 1", pp. 61–62. In terms of the relationship between the Jelling images and the Ottonian ones, E. Wamers, "Der grosse Jellingstein im Spiegel ottonischer Kunst", *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 34 (2000), pp. 132–158.



Fig 23: Tirsted stone
(DRAt. 515)



Fig 24: Tryggevælde stone
(DRAt. 560)



Fig 25: Lund stone 1
(DRAt. 726)

monument raised in a particular landscape, and it was intended to draw the attention of all who saw it. The long rectangular type, exemplified by the Tryggevælde stone in Zealand (DR230; 325cm; Fig 24)⁴³ and the Lund stone 1 in Scania (DR314; 396cm; Fig 25),⁴⁴ would have been landmarks that stood out from other man-made structures⁴⁵ simply on account of their sheer mass, because of the practical difficulty of obtaining a stone of such shape and size.

What standards did the sponsor apply to the selection of the stone to be raised? It is obvious that the taller and larger stones would have had a greater impact on the viewer, reflecting favorably on the sponsor and/or the deceased person commemorated on the stone. However, it is also worth considering one other point. As I have mentioned, the Danes seemingly preferred natural stones to artificial (i.e. quarried and cut) ones. I have already suggested that the reason for this originates in the Danish attitudes, which were based on their religious practice and aesthetic sensibilities, which encouraged them to admire the natural form.⁴⁶ What were these religious attitudes? In order to provide an answer to this question we need to adopt a religious and psychological viewpoint—not one drawn from Jungian psychology, but from a contextual approach—to our analysis of the stones. Regrettably, such an analysis remains beyond the scope of the current study, but remains a fruitful area for future research.

43 DR230: Side A: raknhiltr sustiR ulfs sati stain þnnsi auk karþi hauk þansi auft aukskaip þaisi kunulf uarsin klamulanman (s)un nairbis faiR uar þa nufutiR þaibatri Side B: sayarþi at rita isailtistain þansi Side C: ipahippantraki

44 DR314: Side A : þu(r) [kisl sun i] sgis biarnaR sunaR risþi sti [na þisi] (uf)tiR bruþr Side B : sina baþa ulaf uk utar lanmitr kuþa

45 From the viewpoint of art history, we have an interesting and stimulating book. M. Warnke, *Politische Landschaft. Zur Kunstgeschichte der Natur*. München 1992.

46 OZAWA, "Rune stones Part 1", p. 58.

7. Differences between the sites

Rune stones were raised on specifically determined sites, and where to raise a stone was of crucial importance to sponsors. Unlike Norway and Sweden, Denmark consists mostly of level plains: the highest point in Denmark is only 173m. The very levelness of the terrain means that rune stones can be seen from far and wide, and rune stones (like any monument) seemed to act as a kind of landmark in the late Viking Age. For this reason a richer and more powerful sponsor would have aimed to raise his stone in a better site than his rivals.⁴⁷

Despite the importance of the siting of rune stones, however, it is actually extremely difficult to determine the original sites on which they were raised in the Viking Age. The reason for this is clear; as mentioned above, most Danish rune stones are no longer found in the original sites where they were raised; they have either been moved to other sites or been re-used in the construction of churches.⁴⁸ Instead of determining the specific original location of the stone, we can refer to what is known as the ‘find spot’—that is, the place where the stone was discovered.⁴⁹ The find spot is not the original site in which a rune stone was raised, obviously, but, assuming that rune stones were never brought too far away from their original site, the information that the find spot provides is to some degree suggestive.

Find spots can be divided into ten distinct types (not including 4 dump and 9 thing-places recognizable in Denmark), and these can be further arranged into three distinct spaces (Table 5). The first space is a private space, relating to the sponsor himself, and can be sub-divided into 1 countryside, 2 field or meadow and 3 farm. The second space is a public space that would have been accessible to every member of the community, and can be sub-divided into 5 bodies of water (river, lake or sea), 6 bridges and 7 roadsides. The third and last space was sacred or otherwise significant places where the community would have gathered at times of great importance; this space can be sub-divided into, 8 ancient grave and 10 churches/ churchyards/ vicarages.⁵⁰ The number of stones found in these latter locations is quite high, but of course that is partly because many rune stones were re-used for church buildings and were rediscovered in later years. This is not the only reason for the high incidence of stones on these sites, however: we should remember that the sites on which the churches were placed had originally had great significance to pre-Christian communities.⁵¹ Thus the fact that rune stones were discovered around churches

47 The fact that there were only about 50 rune stones in Norway is suggestive because the Norwegian mountainous landscape might delete the will of the sponsor to raise a rune stone. Regard as Norwegian rune stones, see in general T. Spurkland, *Norwegian Runes and Runic Inscriptions*. Woodbridge 2005, pp. 86–130.

48 OZAWA, “Rune stones Part 1”, pp. 52–54.

49 Sawyer, *Viking-Age Rune-Stones*, p. 196.

50 There are no Danish rune stones seen in find spots 4 dump or 9 thing-place.

51 Places of church building are not always juxtaposed by older worship places of gods or thing places, which had important meaning for the Scandinavians. See O. Olsen, *Hørg, hov og kirke. Historiske og arkæologiske vikingetidsstudier*. København 1966.

Table 5: Type of find spot of rune stones

Type of find spot	Number in <i>DR</i>
Private space	
1. countryside	36
2. field or meadow	78, 218, 264, 269, 277, 279, 282, 288, 289, 317, 323, 325
3. farm / messuage	4, 53, 65, 81, 115, 116, 118, 160, 221, 230, 258, 260, 262, 265, 276, 293, 337
Public space	
4. dump	–
5. river, lake or sea	2, 66, 82, 84, 85, 86, N2, 120, 135, 217, 291, 363, 411
6. bridge	58, 120, 202, 213, 258, 268, 298
7. roadside	2, 3, 26, 40, 82, 117, 124, 217, 268, 321
Sacred space	
8. ancient grave	1, 3, 30, 69, 77, 106, 107?, 114, 118, 121, 122, 135, 143, 149?, 188, 190, 202, 209, 213, 219, 259, 260, 280, 288, 329, 330, 331, 334, 335, 411
9. thing-place	–
10. church, churchyard or vicarage	6, 26, 29, 34, 37, 41, 42, 44, 55, 56, 62, 63, 65, 67, 68, N1, 79, 80, 83, 87, 90, 91, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, N3, 108, 109, 110, 114, N4, N5, 122, 123, 125, 127, N6, 129, N7, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 138, 144, 145, 150, 154, 155, 161, 189, 192, 201, 212, 220, 216, 219, 2217, 228, 229, 237, 238, 239, N8, 259, 270, 271, 272, 278, 281, 287, 294, 339, 295, 296, 297, 314, 316, 318, 324, 328, 338, 343, 344, 345, N9, 354, 356, 365

Based on B. Sawyer, *The Viking-Age Rune-Stones*. Oxford 2000, pp. 200–205.

might be because they were raised near places of importance to communities in the late Viking Age.

8. How rune stones created a political landscape

How, then, can we apply the above material to our understanding of Scandinavian political history? The importance is that the value of a rune stone is decided in relation to other stones. As we have seen, some stones were raised singly, whereas others were connected to other stones to form a monument.⁵² Even single stones need to be understood in relation to other stones, however, because each rune stone was raised by a sponsor who would certainly have been acutely conscious that others were raising rune stones. In 10th century Denmark, a lot of rune stones were created in competitive circumstances, and at an increasing pace.⁵³ Sponsors competed with each other, a power struggle played out through the raising of rune stones. Accordingly, we can

52 OZAWA, “Rune stones Part 1”, pp. 54–56.

53 As regards Danish society in the 10th century, I. Skovgaard-Petersen, “The making of the Danish kingdom”, in: K. Helle (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia, vol.1: Prehistory to 1520*. Cambridge 2003, pp. 168–183; N. Lund, “Vikingetiden”, in: N. Lund & K. Hørby, *Samfundet i vikingetid og middelalder 800–1500* (Dansk social historie 2). København 1980, pp. 33–75.

conclude that rune stones reflect the political landscape of Viking Age Denmark because they helped to create that landscape.

How did magnates use their rune stones to match their competitors? It is true that raising a rune stone was in itself a competitive act, but there are many differences in the ways in which the stones were exhibited. Three examples of the competitive milieu created by the erection of rune stones will be analyzed in the following: 1 the Västra Stro monument 2 the two Jelling stones 3 the Jelling monument and the Bække monument.

(1) The meaning of a monument (the Västra Stro monument)

The Västra Stro monument has been already referred to in Section 2.3 (Fig 5 & 6).⁵⁴ This monument, which is of circular form, comprises seven stones in all, but only two of the stones (DR334 & 335; Fig 7–9) bear runic inscriptions—the remainder are unadorned stones. Here are the inscriptions:

Fader made these runes inscribed in memory of his brother Asser who went Viking in the north and died⁵⁵

Fader made this stone inscribed in memory of Bjørn who had a ship with him⁵⁶

We do not know why the monument was made, although it is probable that it was intended to be used in religious rites or for the purpose of a regional assembly. Irrespective of its original purpose, however, it is clear that by connecting two rune stones with 5 unadorned stones the sponsor had intended that the monument would seem larger and more noticeable in its situation. The fact that this monument was constructed in a Scanian field which could be seen from some distance all around only made the monument more prominent.

Why were the two rune stones made into a monument? Here we should remember the map displayed in the previous section 1.3 (Map 1). Scania has amongst the densest distribution of rune stones in Denmark, and so each stone placed in Scania would have needed to be even more noticeable than the last.

(2) Differences found within a monument (The Jelling stones)

I have already referred to the two Jelling rune stones, one of which stands 139 cm high and the other 243 cm high. As Else Roesdahl has correctly suggested, the stones comprising the Jelling monument are the two rune stones, along with two mounds and a church (which was built by Harald Bluetooth).⁵⁷ How this monument was made,

⁵⁴ OZAWA, “Rune stones Part 1”, p. 55.

⁵⁵ DR334: *fabiR* : lit : hukua : runaR : þisi : uftiR : asur : bruþur : sin : is : nur : uarþ : tuþr : i : uikiku :

⁵⁶ DR335: *fabiR* : lit : hukua : stin : þan(s)i : uftiR : biurn : is : skib : ati : miþ : anim :

⁵⁷ E. Roesdahl, “Cultural change—religious monuments in Denmark c. AD950–1100”, in: M. Müller-Wille (ed.), *Rom und Byzanz im Norden. Mission und Glaubenswechsel im Ostseeraum während des 8.–14. Jahrhunderts*. Band 1, Mainz 1997, pp. 229–240.

along with its meaning and function, cannot be determined easily,⁵⁸ but this is not a matter of concern here: what is at issue is the difference between the two stones, Gorm's and Harald's.

I have already discussed some of these differences. The point worth noting is this: although Gorm and Harald were successive Jelling kings, the rune stones that they sponsored were decidedly different from each other. To begin with, there are textual differences: as already mentioned, Gorm's stone has a comparatively simpler text, whereas Harald's stone bears one of the most complicated inscriptions in Denmark, and records a deed done by its sponsor.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Gorm's stone is of rectangular form, whereas Harald's stone is shaped like a large prism, and has decorative ornament on two of its faces. And the third difference between the two stones comes from the sites on which they were raised. We cannot know where Gorm's stone was originally raised, but it is probable that Harald moved his father's stone alongside his larger stone.

Why did Harald make such a different rune stone to his father's? Many reasons have been put forward, but I want to focus on two of them. First, and most obviously, Harald wanted to show the Danes that the new king had absolute power over all the magnates.⁶⁰ Second, and more importantly, Harald wanted to demonstrate that times had changed since the age of Gorm. Whereas Gorm's stone looked very like the stones erected by the other landed magnates, Harald's stone is unique. And by juxtaposing the two stones, Harald was able to establish the radical distance between the father and the son.

(3) A monument set against another monument (The Jelling monument and the Bække monument)

It should be clear by now that the making of a monument was very important for the landed magnates; in addition, the creation of a monument was an act of conspicuous consumption. A monument, even if it stands by itself, attracts the attention of many viewers, but it is even more significant if the monument stands next to another and can be compared to it.

Take the example of the Jelling and Bække monuments. We have seen that the Jelling monument consists of two rune stones, two mounds and a church, and it was erected quite late, after Harald was baptized around 960 CE.⁶¹ Originally it only consisted of Gorm's rune stone and two mounds, probably along with the so-called 'ship setting' (Fig 26). The Bække monument is situated near to the Jelling monument, and has the same basic form (i.e. a trilogy of rune stones, a two mounds and a ship setting) (Fig 27), and as Birgit Sawyer has suggested, it is probable that both

58 Concerning the Jelling problems, see K. M. Nielsen et al., "Jelling problems", *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 7 (1974), pp. 156–234.

59 See notes 3 and 4 in this article.

60 As a recent survey, R. Roesdahl, "The emergence of Denmark and the reign of Harald Bluetooth", in: S. Brink (ed.), *The Viking World*. London/New York 2008, pp. 652–664.

61 Regards as the conversion of Harald and the Christianization of Denmark, see M. Gelting, "The kingdom of Denmark", in: N. Berend (ed.), *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200*. Cambridge 2007, pp. 77–87.

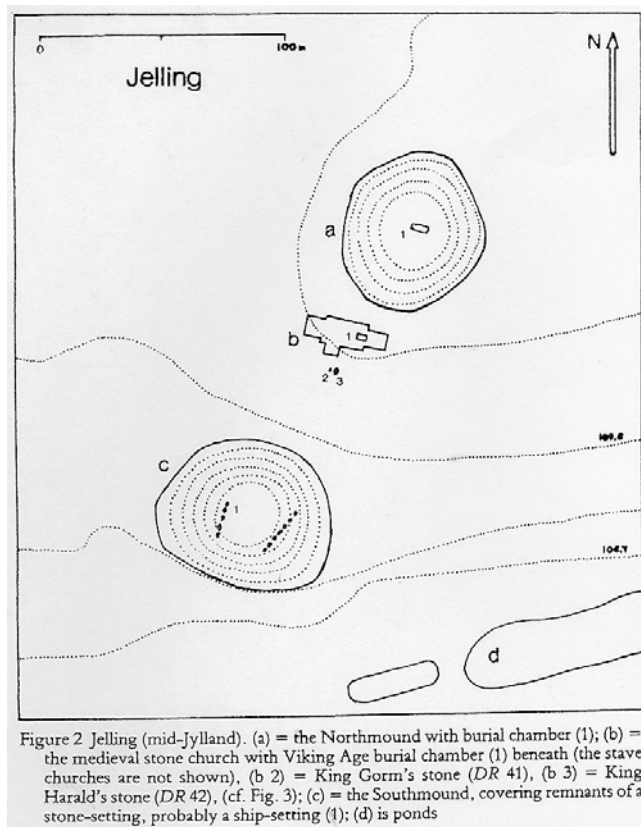


Fig 26: Plan of the Jelling monument (After E. Roesdahl (1997); See note 57)

monuments were created at nearly the same time.⁶² The inscriptions on the Bække stones are as follows.

Tue, offspring of Ravn, Funden and Gnyble made the mound of Thyre⁶³

Revne and Tobbe made this inscription in memory of their mother Vibrog⁶⁴

Why were these two monuments designed to be so similar to each other in form? Of course, we might assume that a trilogy of rune stones, two mounds and ship setting was one of the common types of monument at that time, and this argument should not be dismissed. However, it is also worth remembering the distance between these two monuments: 20 km, a distance that can be travelled in only a few hours on foot, and which can be traversed on horseback in even less time. Accordingly, it is reasonable to

62 For a stimulating but controversial article about this problem, see B. Sawyer & P. H. Sawyer, "A Gormless history?", pp. 689–706.

63 DR29: rafnuka : tufi : auk : futin : auk : knubli : þair : þriR : kaþu : hauk :

64 DR30: hribna : ktubi : kriukubþi aft : uibrukþusin

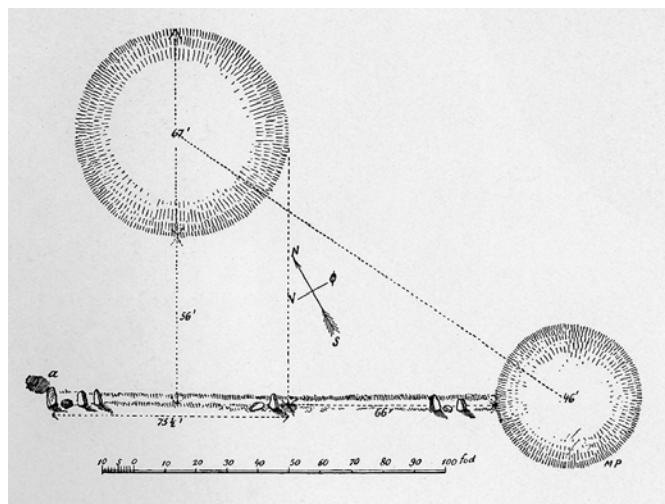


Fig 27: Plan of the Bække monument (DRAt. 89)

suggest that Gorm's monument and the Bække monument were consciously constructed in full awareness of each other, even if we do not know which one was constructed first.

Conclusion

For many years scholars have thought that Viking Age Scandinavians raised rune stones in order to commemorate the dead. Recently, however, Birgit Sawyer has suggested that in addition to this function rune stones were also raised as a kind of a testimony of inheritance and property rights. Her theory is very important in that she pays attention not only to the runic inscriptions, but also to the reasons why the rune stones themselves were raised. This change marks the transition from a textual approach to a contextual one. In this paper I have added another element to this contextual approach: advocating the idea that rune stones functioned as political signs.

In the late Viking Age there were a lot of landed magnates throughout Scandinavia, men who wanted to extend their power over the land in the vicinity of their territories. Rune stones were very popular and accessible ways of communicating with other Danes, and in particular the large, colorfully painted stones would have appealed to those magnates who could not read the runes themselves. Richer magnates could invest their money on more conspicuous stones, and arrange rune stones along with unadorned stones to form a monument. Rune stones were thus a form of political expression for Scandinavian magnates.

In this article I have limited my discussion to the medieval territory of Denmark. Of course, we can recognize this use of rune stones by landed magnates in their

continual struggle for power throughout the whole of Scandinavia. However, there were a lot of contextual differences between Denmark, Norway and Sweden in the late Viking Age: Denmark connected with the Continent,⁶⁵ Norway faced to the North Sea⁶⁶ and Sweden directed to the Baltic Sea.⁶⁷ So, if we wish to extend our discussion to Scandinavia, then we must consider the political, economic, social and cultural circumstances that pertained in each country. In any case, it is clear that rune stones created the unique political landscape of each country.

⁶⁵ See the notes 60 and 61 of this article.

⁶⁶ C. Krag, "The creation of Norway", in: S. Brink, *Viking World*, pp. 645–651; S. Bagge & S. W. Nordeide, "The kingdom of Norway", in: N. Berend, *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*, pp. 121–166; S. Bagge, "The making of a missionary king: the medieval accounts of Olaf Tryggvason and the conversion of Norway", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106 (2006), pp. 473–513.

⁶⁷ Th. Lindkvist, "The emergence of Sweden", in: S. Brink, *Viking World*, pp. 645–651; N. Blomkvist, S. Brink & Th. Lindkvist, "The kingdom of Sweden", in: N. Berend, *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*, pp. 167–213; P. H. Sawyer, *The Making of Sweden*. Alingsås 1989.