Dating the Swedish Viking-Age rune stones on stylistic grounds

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Living as I do in Uppland, the province richest in rune stones in Scandinavia, for many years I have every day passed a number of beautifully carved rune stones. Of course, questions about them have arisen in my mind, as I am an archaeologist, specializing in the Viking Age: who ordered them, who carved them, for what purpose were they raised and in which connections?

During the first half of the 90s I was taking part in an interdisciplinary research project on the Christianization of Sweden. The rune stones are extremely important as source material for research on the course of the mission and I felt strongly a need for a closer dating than just to the 11th century, which was the traditional opinion. So, the question of chronology was added to the questions mentioned above and for me it became the most important thing to start with, as I regard a chronological stratification as a necessary basis for the historical interpretation.

Earlier, the inscriptions were mainly dated on linguistic grounds. However, the results of Henrik Williams’ research on the ås-rune and Svante Lagman’s on the dotted runes, both presented as doctoral theses in 1990, showed that these runes are not suitable for dating purposes as there are not so much chronological but rather regional factors behind the variations in their use (Lagman 1990; Williams 1990). In the beginning of the 90s the Rune Section at the National Heritage Board in Stockholm arranged a seminar for runologists and archaeologists about dating problems. Many pessimistic voices were heard on the prospect of closer dating of the rune stones than generally to the 11th century. Without exaggeration you could say that there was an atmosphere of total resignation concerning such possibilities.

In my opinion, in such an insecure situation we have to turn to the ornamentation. Through comparisons with well-dated archaeological material with
corresponding ornamentation we have the best opportunities to establish a
chronology. Of course, one can discuss why a rune stone has a specific
ornamentation – is it due to the carver, to the person who ordered it or to the
fashion of the period? Certainly, the rune carvers had their personal way of
modelling the ornamentation, but on the whole I am convinced that in this case,
as in the case of all art and handicrafts, different periods have different stylistic
ideals. This can be followed from artefacts and rock carvings typical of the vari-
ous periods of the Bronze Age (Almgren 1987) and up to the present time, in the
design of, for example, household utensils or cars. With the aid of the so-called
curvature method, a study of the curves of the lines and the rhythm introduced
by Bertil Almgren (1955), Hans Christiansson in 1959 distinguished a Southern
Scandinavian style and a Central Scandinavian style in the Swedish rune stones
(Christiansson 1959). These two styles correspond largely to the Mammen-
Ringerike style and the Urnes style respectively. The former is characterised by
close, hard lines and additive elements, the latter by softly sweeping, continuous
lines. Christiansson interpreted this difference between the styles as a regional
not a chronological one. His work is very important regarding how to analyse
the ornamentation, but I do not agree with his interpretation. Instead I am
convinced that the difference is chronological.

Already in 1913, the grand old man of Swedish runology, Otto von Friesen,
made an analysis of the ornamentation of the rune stones of Uppland, which,
based on his linguistic knowledge and the information obtained from the so-
called historical inscriptions, led to the following chronological grouping (von
Friesen 1913):

a. unornamented stones
b. the carvings of Åsmund Kåreson c. 1025–1050
c. the Ingvar stones c. 1040
d. the Fot-Balle group c. 1050–1070
e. the carvings of Visäte and of the Frisian guild c. 1060–1075
f. the carvings of Öpir c. 1070–1100
On the whole, this chronology was accepted until the above-mentioned deep pessimism during the 80s.

In this connection mention should be made of the British archaeologist David Wilson and the Norwegian art historian Signe Horn Fuglesang, both working with the problems of dating by stylistic means (Wilson 1978, pp. 135 ff.; Fuglesang 1978, pp. 205 ff.). The American runologist Claiborne Thompson has studied the Asmund stones of Uppland and used many variables, some of them from the field of ornamentation: the lay-out, the shape of the crosses as well as of the heads and tails of the rune animals (Thompson 1975).

Convinced that the ornamentation is the key to a chronology of the rune carvings and with dog-breeding as my hobby, which means analysing the exterior of the dogs both with respect to their type and in details, it was an obvious way for me to progress by looking at the rune animals in the same way as the judge looks at the dogs at a dog show: overall impression, shape of head, shape and set of eyes and ears, shape of muzzle, topline, shape of legs and paws, shape and set of tail etc. I chose the following elements: the overall impression, the design of the rune animal’s head, feet and tail (figs. 1–2), the loops of the snake(s), the lay-out of the pattern. A rough sorting of all photographically depicted zoomorphic carvings of Uppland in the corpus Upplands Runinskrifter soon gave as a result six distinct, as to type different groups – and, of course, also a lot of overlappings. Through comparisons between these groups and archaeologically well-dated material and by checking against the genealogically connected rune stones, the chronological order of the groups was established (Gräslund 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998).

One of the stylistic groups is characterised by the rune animal’s head seen from above and is therefore called “Bird’s-eye-view”. The other five groups show the rune animal’s head seen in profile and are called Pr 1–Pr 5. Below a brief description of each group is presented.

**Bird’s-eye-view, B-e-v** (fig. 3):

*Overall impression:* Rather unresilient; the rune animals are often slightly angular and the bow line pressed together.

*Head:* a snake’s head seen in bird’s-eye-view.
**Eye**: two round, sometimes almost rhomboid pop-eyes, normally to a certain degree outside the contour of the head. The eyes may be connected by two parallel transverse lines.

**Ear**: is missing.

**Mouth**: often suggested by a line, sometimes continuing into a sting.

**Feet**: are missing.

**Tail**: lightly rolled up, sometimes solely thickened at the end. Real roll-ups occur, but only half a round.

**Additional snakes**: are missing.

**Layout**: For layout, Thompson’s classification is useful (Thompson 1975, 22 ff.). B-e-v carvings usually have one rune animal along the edge (Thompson A1) with union knot. Two rune animals also occur (Thompson B1), sometimes with overcrossing (Thompson B2).

**Cross**: very frequent, remarkably often of type Thompson B7, with elongated lower cross arm.

**Good examples**: U 444, U 644, U 654, U 726, U 786, U 792, U 857, U 1155, U 1165, U 1172.

The numbers refer to *Upplands Runinskrifter* (UR).

**Pr 1** (fig. 4):

**Overall impression**: compact, close and blunted. The curves of the rune animals are often a little angular and the bow line pressed together.

**Head**: normally with a very snub nose with a thick upper lip and a strong, steeply cut-off lip lappet.

**Eye**: round.

**Ears**: high set, rounded and erect. The ears and one or more scrolls often form a “crown”.

**Mouth**: normally open, with a rather short lower lip.

**Feet**: do not occur.

**Tail**: rolled up, sometimes with a thumb-like protuberance downwards, or consisting of several scrolls of similar length.

**Additional snakes**: do not occur.
Layout: one rune animal along the edge of the carved area is the most common, but two rune animals also occur. Normally there is no over-crossing (i.e. the head cutting over the tail or vice versa). The carvings of Pr 1 mostly show Thompson A 1 and B 1.
Union knot: occur generally.
Cross: very frequent.
Good examples: U 32, U 160, U 201, U 276, U 324, U 430, U 611, U 785, U 964, U 1066.

Pr 2 (fig. 5):
Overall impression: most often unresiliant and angular, although less so than in Pr 1. The rune animals are rather substantial, but there are also some thinner examples.
Head: characterised by a concave line from ear to nose tip.
Eye: round or drop formed, sometimes with a point in it.
Ears: high set, erect or slightly bent forward.
Mouth: normally open, sometimes with a tongue, the upper lip and the nose tip strongly bent upwards. There is often a balance between the upward line of the ear and that of the nose. Distinct, round lip lappet. Marked lower lip in a semi-circular bow.
Feet: occur only seldom, slightly rounded on short legs.
Tail: rolled up, often with a thickened end and a thumb-like protuberance downwards. The rolled tail and the protuberance generally correspond to the shape of the head.
Snakes: occur seldom, a neck crest or a union knot is sometimes transformed into long tendrils, giving the same decorative impression as a snake.
Layout: one (sometimes two) rune animal(s) along the edge (Thompson A1, B1) is the most typical layout.
Union knot: occur generally.
Cross: very frequent.
Good examples: U 30, U 136, U 375, U 483, U 524, U 686, U 891, U 998, U 1016, U 1149.
Pr 3 (fig. 6):

*Overall impression:* firmly rounded with moderately sweeping lines, neither too thick and unresiliant nor too sweeping.

*Head:* characterised by a convex line from ear to nose tip.

*Eye:* almond shaped, not too large in proportion to the head.

*Ear:* low set, rounded and slightly bent backwards.

*Mouth:* normally open. The lower lip, usually smaller than in Pr 2, slightly bent downwards. The lip lappet forms an S-line, starting at the somewhat turned-up nose tip. There is a balance between the curve of the ear and that of the nose.

*Feet:* occur sometimes, rounded with two toes on relatively short legs.

*Tail:* rolled up, often with a thickened end and a thumb-like protuberance downwards.

*Snakes:* occur.

*Layout:* one (sometimes two) rune animal(s) along the edge, without or occasionally with over-crossing (Thompson A1, A2, B1, B2, B3) and in exceptional cases there is a figure-of-eight loop (Thompson C).

*Union knots:* very frequent.

*Crosses:* are frequent, although not to the same degree as in Pr 1 and Pr 2.

*Good examples:* U 62, U 167, U 240, U 331, U 480, U 614, U 703, U 860, U 937, U 1142.

Pr 4 (fig 7):

*Overall impression:* elegant and graceful through the elongated sweeping bow lines. Straight lines almost never occur. Pr 4 introduces the feeling of classical Urnes style.

*Head:* strongly elongated, often softly bent and with a pronounced step down in the line from head to neck.

*Eye:* elongated, almond shaped, very large in proportion to the head, almost filling up the head and following its outline. Parallelism between the line of the head and that of the eye was obviously desirable. However, in some few cases the Pr 4 head lacks an eye.
Ear: very low-set and markedly bent backwards, sometimes in the shape of a slightly bent, pointed flap. Neck crests occur frequently, often long and thin in big loops, sometimes transformed into figure-of-eight shapes.

Mouth: normally closed. The lower lip is short and straight, ending in a slight roll downwards, corresponding to the lip lappet. The nose tip is straight or only slightly rolled up, lip lappet only downwards.

Feet: set at the end of long, angulated legs with a distinct hock, normally rather tight with two straight toes and a rounded spur. The angle between leg and foot has the form of a hook.

Tail: the roll is not symmetrical but consists of a large thick circle and a thin tail, sometimes split up with a downward tendril elongated into an elegant loop. The tail often has a “hock” typical for the Urnes style. The rune animal ends either in a rolled up tail or in a foot.

Snakes: frequent in large, loose loops, often figure-of-eight shaped.

Layout: Generally, one rune animal along the edge with over-crossing (Thompson A2, A3). Angles or “knees” occur in the lower part of the carving where head piece and tail piece meet. Figure-of-eight-shaped layout is also common, sometimes with an extra loop added to the side at the bottom (Thompson C).

Crosses: occur.

Good examples: U 36, U 130, U 210, U 360, U 497, U 687, U 840, U 996, U 1006, U 1168.

Pr 5 (fig. 8):

Overall impression: the characteristic, tight check pattern, formed by parallel lines crossing each other at right angles, usually horizontally and vertically on the carved area, lines that are parts of the loops of the rune animal and the snake. Head: Two types occur, a) one triangular with clear roots in Pr 4, Pr 3 etc., which ends at the back in the typical hook shape, constituting the step down to the neck. and b) one with a rounded skull and stop of the same kind as in Irish metalwork from the beginning of the 12th century.

Eye: a) can be thin, straight or almond shaped but is generally lacking. b) round or reverse almond shaped.
**Ear:** a) very low set and strongly bent backwards, often only faintly outlined. b) either leaning backwards or lacking. Neck crests occur sometimes.

**Mouth:** a) straight underline, straight, closed mouth with a small lip lappet downwards, nose tip slightly bent upwards. b) often half open (occasionally closed) with a lower lip thickened downwards. Upper lip rolled in downwards.

**Feet:** normally with two straight toes and a pointed spur, which may continue in a loop-shaped tendril. The hook shape is found at the angle between the long leg with knee and the foot.

**Tail:** normally replaced by a foot.

**Snakes:** essential, occur always, without them there would be no Pr 5 pattern (see above under “Overall impression”).

**Layout:** one rune animal along the edge with over-crossing (Thompson A3 b-c). Angles or “knees” at the lower part of the carving where the head piece and tail piece meet are frequent, giving symmetry to the composition and creating the typical hook shape that recurs in the form of heads and feet.

**Crosses:** occur sometimes, usually simple crosses of A-type.

**Good examples:** U 78, U 179, U 252, U 311, U 485, U 544, U 618, U 914, U 974, U 1084.

Of course, it may be objected that, in my analysis, I place too much weight on details. However, it is obvious that a certain shape of tail or feet is always connected to a certain shape of head and that the shape of heads, feet and tails in their turn is connected to a certain line play of the rune animal’s body. Thus, the details are not arbitrarily formed but instead modelled in a certain style in its turn making up the totality. This is of great importance for the practical use of this chronological method, as many rune stones are only preserved as fragments. If, with a reasonable degree of certainty, we are able to classify a fragment with just a tail in one of the stylistic groups, for example to Pr 4 owing to the unsymmetrical roll and thereby to the last quarter of the 11th century, I think that we have got a very useful chronological tool, which was my aim when I started this work.

An examination of the genealogically connected rune stones with reference to style show that the inscriptions which may be regarded as contemporaneous
throughout have the same style, while combinations in which two or more generations are involved give clear indications about the order in time between different styles (Gräslund 1992, pp. 192 ff.). There are examples of combinations in which two, three or four generations of the same family are mentioned.

The Jarlabanke family is a special one, in which six generations are mentioned on about 20 stones (Williams 1990, p. 186; Gustavson & Selinge 1988, pp. 19 ff., 69), showing stylistic variants from Pr 2 to Pr 5. The stones commemorating Jarlabanke’s grandfather are carved in Pr 2 (fig. 5), the stones carved by Jarlabanke in memory of himself in Pr 2–3, 3, 3–4 and the stone raised by Jarlabanke’s son in memory of his father is carved in Pr 4 (fig. 7) and a stone probably raised in memory of Jarlabanke’s grand-son is carved in Pr 5. Mats G. Larsson has pointed out that a stronger stress on the chronological factor implies new interpretations concerning land owning and the family structure of the Jarlabanke family (Larsson 1996, pp. 144 ff.). He argues that, from the ornamentation of the stones according to the stylistic groups, Jarlabanke must have owned Täby long before his father Ingefast died in Hagby. Ingefast seems to have had one wife, Ragnfrid of Hagby, and one established concubine (or divorced wife?), Jorun, the mother of Jarlabanke. He may have given his inherited property Täby to Jarlabanke, so that he could live there together with his mother, when Ingefast married Ragnfrid. Larsson regards this as a good explanation also of the fact that Jarlabanke was so eager to demonstrate his ownership by a number of runic inscriptions.

Of course we should not think of the five stylistic groups Pr 1 to Pr 5 as a strictly chronological sequence in such a way that one group begins immediately after the previous one ends; instead, we must expect large overlaps. Reservations must also be made for the possibility of conscious imitations of earlier stones, as well as the problem that in exceptional cases stones may have been raised many years after the death of the person commemorated. However, the general tendency is clear and the order of the groups is distinct on the basis of both the stylistic analysis and the examination of the genealogically related stones. So, I suggest the following chronology:
Unornamented stones:  c. 980? – 1015  
Bird’s-eye-view:  c. 1010 – 1050  
Pr 1:  c. 1010 – 1040  
Pr 2:  c. 1020 – 1050  
Pr 3:  c. 1045 – 1075  
Pr 4:  c. 1070 – 1100  
Pr 5:  c. 1100 – 1130  

Concerning the distribution, the Pr 1 and Pr 2 stones have about the same distribution in south-eastern Uppland, while the contemporary B-e-v stones have a more western distribution. The more frequent Pr 3 stones cover with their distribution both the area of Pr 1 and 2 and that of the B-e-v stones and they also go further to the north, to central Uppland. Pr 4 carvings are found in the same large area as Pr 3 but show a stronger density in central Uppland. The Pr 5 stones are fewer, and their main area is central and eastern Uppland (see Gräslund 1994, pp. 126 ff. for distribution maps).

In my opinion this suggested chronology is not contradicted by the so-called historical inscriptions. The B-e-v group starts c. 1010 or 1020 to judge from the fact that this ornamentation in some cases occurs on the same stones as ornamentation of type Pr 1 and Pr 2 (i.e. U 802) with clear connection to the Ringerike style (for examples of this style, see Fuglesang 1980). Besides, the curvature (the line-play) corresponds to these stylistic groups. The B-e-v style must have been used up to the 1040s, as Ingvar’s expedition probably took place c. 1040 and most of the Ingvar stones are decorated in this style (fig. 3). Signe Horn Fuglesang has criticised this dating (Fuglesang 1998, pp. 197 ff., p. 206, n. 25), but in my opinion Mats G. Larsson has convincingly argued for keeping that date of Ingvar’s expedition, using evidence from the Georgian Chronicle (Larsson 1987). He points to the information given in the Georgian annals about Varangians taking part in the war c. 1040 between the Georgian king Bagrat IV and his vassal Liparit. There are many similarities between the geographical information in the Icelandic saga of Ingvar the Far-travelled and the landscape in Georgia and the Caspian Sea. This strengthens the Icelandic tradition that the Ingvar expedition really took place c. 1040. I agree with Fuglesang that several
B-e-v stones are probably earlier. However, on the basis of the carvings about the Ingvar expedition I consider that the final time limit for the B-e-v group must be several years into the 1040s. In my chronological table the time span of B-e-v comprises c. 1010–1050.

Fuglesang has also objected to my dating of the so-called Knut stones to the middle of the 11th century (Fuglesang 1998, p. 201, n. 15, 16). They belong to the stylistic group Pr 3, clearly a kind of Urnes style (fig. 6). In my view, it would be very problematic to date them to the 1020s. The Knut stones are raised to commemorate men who did not die in England in 1018; if they had died there, this would certainly have been mentioned in the inscriptions. That they took danegelds in England in their youth must have been commemorated and talked about throughout their life. If they lived a long life (osteologists tell us today that many Viking-Age persons achieved an age of 60–70 years), it is reasonable that the stones were not raised until c. 1050. Fuglesang’s comment that the two first of Ulf’s three danegelds in the inscription of U 344 should “evidently be of the 990s” (p. 201) is difficult to accept. The identification of Toste with Skoglartoste of Snorri’s Heimskringla is just hypothetical (von Friesen 1909, pp. 71 ff.; Wessén 1960, pp. 14 ff.). Considering the fact that it is one and the same participant it seems much more probable to me that the three gelds in question were the three latest and greatest: 1007 (Toste?), 1012 (Torkel) and 1018 (Knut).

If we check other stones, where the text announces that the commemorated had died in England, most of them are carved in style Pr 1, Pr 2 or B-e-v. For example, U 616 (V. Ryd) in Pr 1, raised in memory of a brother who fell abroad, in England, U 812 (Hjälsta) in Pr 2: …He died in England, Vs 5 (Dingtuna) in B-e-v: …he had gone to England. He died …, Ög 111 (Landeryd) in B-e-v: Väring raised the stone in memory of Tjälve, his brother, the dreg who served with Knut. And when men who had been in England are mentioned as stone raisers, the style may be Pr 2 or B-e-v. For example U 978 (Old Uppsala) in Pr 2: Sigvid, the England traveller, raised this stone in memory of Vidjärv, his father and U 1181 (Lilla Runhällen) in B-e-v: …had the stone carved in memory of himself, the England traveller.
In her article Signe Horn Fuglesang has suggested another chronological grouping of the rune stones in six phases, here indicated with correspondances to my system, to judge from the examples of carvings for each phase given by her (Fuglesang 1998, pp. 205 ff.):

1. The Danish type – corresponds to von Friesen’s and my unornamented group.
2. The type of the Ingvar stones – corresponds to my B-e-v group and the so-called portal stones.
3. Ornamentation in Ringerike style – corresponds to my group Pr 1.
5. Ornamentation in middle Urnes style – corresponds to my group Pr 3.
6. Ornamentation in late Urnes style – comprises Pr 4 and Pr 5.

Especially her phase 4 is very heterogenous from a stylistic point of view and it is difficult to understand the grounds for this classification.

Let us return to my suggested chronology and consider the consequences. Firstly, we get a possibility to see a pattern in the course of raising rune stones. Secondly, some carvers have to be redated. For example Livsten, by von Friesen dated to 1025–1050 and by the authors of UR to 1030–1040, but he was certainly active during the last quarter of the 11th century as he works entirely in Pr 4. The same is true for Vigmund and Tidkume, by von Friesen dated to 1025–1050. The stones about the Frisian guilds belong to a special group, where the two ends of the rune band, following the edge of the stone, meet each other at the bottom of the stone surface and end up in a cross. Their curvature is clearly Pr 1-Pr 2, so von Friesen’s dating 1060–1075 must be wrong, instead they were certainly carved before the middle of the century.

The problem of Ásmund, by von Friesen dated to 1025–1050 but whose carvings belong to style groups Pr 2, Pr 3 and Pr 4, has been dealt with by Fuglesang, who suggests that there were two different Ásmunds, contemporary but with different personal styles (Fuglesang 1998, pp. 208 f.). The stones that she attributes to Ásmund number one are all typical of Pr 2, those attributed to
Åsmund number two belong to the stylistic groups Pr 3 and Pr 4. My interpretation is that it was either one artist/carver who followed the stylistic development of the time or two different carvers, one active prior to the middle of the century, the other in the second half of the century.

Concerning Öpir’s carvings we have the same problem – was there one Öpir or two? Herschend has called in question that all Öpir’s carvings could be the work of one single artist (Herschend 1998), while Marit Åhlén argues that there was only one Öpir (Åhlén 1997). Herschend analyses the carvings with the three signatures ubir, ybir and ybir concerning distribution, stylistic and linguistic elements and he concludes that ubir is one person and ybir/ybir another. A detailed stylistic analysis using my stylistic groups demonstrates that the former mainly worked in Pr 3 and 4 (one example in Pr 2 and one in Pr 5) and the latter made his carvings in Pr 4 and Pr 5 (Herschend 1998, figs 2–4). In an interesting way, Herschend analyses the triangular and round heads respectively of Pr 5 using Lévi-Strauss’ concepts of inversion and transformation (1998, p.108 f. fig. 6). Fuglesang mentions the two style variants of Öpir and in her opinion they are impossible to separate chronologically (Fuglesang 1998, p. 207). However, Herschend’s work shows that, with my suggested classification, it is possible.

The idea that an artist has worked in two or three different styles always makes me think of Picasso with his paintings, enormously different from each other in different periods of his life. It is not surprising that, during a long life, an artist changes his style completely, sometimes in accordance with the fashion of the time, sometimes as an innovative pioneer. So, if there is no linguistic evidence for several Åsmunds or Öpirs, there could well be just one of each.

My purpose was that my chronological system should be a useful tool for research in cultural history. It has been tested with good results by settlement archaeologists such as Mats G. Larsson (1996, 1997) and Torun Zachrisson (1998) and also by the linguist Ulla Stroh-Wollin (1997). She has investigated the innovation var instead of vas in relation to the stylistic groups. Her conclusion is that the fashion of raising rune stones culminated earlier in Södermanland than in Uppland. The Ingvar stones, reasonably contemporary in Uppland and Södermanland indicate the same thing, that the r-form takes root earlier to
the south of lake Mälaren than to the north of it. In runology Per Stille has used the method in his thesis on the stones of Fjärdhundraland (Stille 1999).

Examples of implication concerning the Christianisation, a research field of great interest to me, can be taken from the so-called bridge stones, raised for somebody’s soul (Gräslund 1989; Sawyer 1991). The captions to figs 5 and 7 have already introduced such inscriptions. The first one (U 617, Bro, fig. 9) belongs to the group unornamented stones and it says: *Ginnlög, Holmer’s daughter, sister of Sigröd and of Göt, she had this bridge made and this stone raised in memory of Assur, her husband, son of Håkon Jarl. He kept watch against Vikings with Geter. May God now help his spirit and soul.* Number two is the famous carving of Ramsundsberget in Södermanland (Sö 101) and the text goes: *Sigrid made this bridge, Alrik’s mother, Orm’s daughter, for Holmer’s soul, her husband Sigröd’s father.* The style is Pr 1. Those two women, Ginnlög and Sigrid were obviously closely related, they were sisters-in-law, living on each side of the big Mälar lake. The carvings may well be roughly contemporary, as the time span of the unornamented group starts in the last quarter of the 10th century and lasts to c. 1010–1015, and Pr 1 probably starts c. 1010. The third example of a bridge stone comes from Lagga, south-east of Uppsala (U 489): *Gullög had the bridge made for her daughter Gillög’s soul, Ulf’s wife. And Öpir carved.* The style is Pr 4, which means the last quarter of the 11th century. So – the conclusion is that the phenomenon of building bridges for the deceased person’s soul started very early in the Mälar area, at the turn of the millennium or soon after and that it lasted throughout the century.

To conclude: my hope is that in the future more implications of this kind may demonstrate the validity of the presented method and I am very open to suggestions for improvement.

This stylistic and chronological classification is established on the basis of the Upplandic rune carvings but it can also be used for rune stones from other parts of Sweden. All Viking-Age rune carvings from the three provinces around Lake Mälaren, Södermanland, Uppland and Västmanland have been classified according to this system in the data base Mälsten (Uppsala University, Department of Archaeology and Ancient history, A-S. Gräslund & F. Herschend). It is applicable as well for Östergötland, Västergötland, Småland, Gotland, Gästrik-
land, Hälsingland etc., although the variation in ornamentation is not as great as in Uppland with its abundance of rune stones.

Note

After the completion of the manuscript in 2001 I have published a study of the ornamentation of the runestones of Småland (Gräslund 2002) as well as a brief summary of the present article in Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde (Gräslund 2003).
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