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The Manx Runes and the Supposed Jæren Connection

Michael P. Barnes

Abstract

It has been argued that there is a connection between the Scandinavian runic inscriptions of the Isle of Man and a group from the district of Jæren in south-western Norway. The Manx inscriptions are dated on art-historical grounds to c. 930–1020, the Jæren group to around the year 1000—partly because they seem to span the period of the conversion of Norway to Christianity, partly on the basis of their rune forms and language. There are problems with these datings, not least for those who have considered Manx runic tradition influenced by that of Jæren. There is also a mismatch between the 930–1020 period assigned to the Manx inscriptions on art-historical grounds and the testimony of their rune forms and language, which suggests that many of them at least may come closer in time to the Jæren group. This article examines previous contributions to the debate and analyses the data from both Man and Jæren. It has two main aims: to inject clarity into the discussion and to distinguish fact from assertion and uncertain hypothesis.

Keywords: Isle of Man, Jæren, Manx crosses, runes, short-twig runes, runic inscriptions, rune-stones, Scandinavian language history

Introductory remarks

The year 1998 saw the publication of an article by Katherine Holman entitled “The Dating of Scandinavian Runic Inscriptions from the Isle of Man”. The article was based on a seminar paper given the year before at the Senter for middelalderstudier, Trondheim. The topic was apt, for the aim of the seminar was to throw light on various problems involved in dating inscriptions—runic inscriptions in particular.

The Isle of Man seems to have been a hive of runic activity in the mid- to

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late Viking Age. Over thirty stone inscriptions from that period, complete or fragmentary, have been found on the island. Comparison of this number with the approximately fifty rune-stones known from Viking Age Norway has over the years caused surprise and even astonishment in runological circles. The Isle of Man is after all only some 570 km² in area, insignificant when measured against Norway's roughly 324,000 km². And although thinly populated, Norway must have had vastly greater numbers of inhabitants than Man.

Traditionally almost all of the Manx runic inscriptions have been dated to the period c. 930–1020. The basis for this dating is chiefly art-historical, though runological features have been offered in support. Holman detects a conflict between the art-historical and runological evidence and suggests a later time-span for what she calls the “mainstream” of the Manx runic corpus. Her preferred dating, however, is not radically different from the traditional one: for the 930–1020 period she substitutes the slightly later 950–1025 (1998, 51). The reasons Holman adduces in support of her proposal can in summary be reduced to two. First: there is some evidence that the Borre art style found on certain of the Manx rune-stones remained in favour in the western Scandinavian colonies longer than the 850/75–925/950 period to which it is usually assigned. Second: there are a number of Norwegian rune-stones, dated on various grounds to shortly before or after the year 1000, which exhibit rune forms and orthographical practices seemingly identical to those found in the majority of the Manx inscriptions.

This line of reasoning runs up against various difficulties and uncertainties. David Wilson, one of the leading experts on Viking Age art forms, and on the Viking Age in the Isle of Man in particular, re-affirms the traditional dating of the Borre style ornament in the Manx corpus, on the basis not only of parallels from Scandinavia but also from north-west England (Holman 1998, 52). But even were we for the sake of argument to accept a slightly later art-historical dating, it is unclear where the Norwegian group of rune-stones referred to by Holman comes into the picture. If the Manx and the Norwegian stones concerned are indeed related, the re-dating of the Manx “mainstream” to 950–1025 is hardly a big enough leap forward in time. For Holman seems to assume that any influence there may have been from the one tradition on the other went from Norway to the colonies. But it is hard to claim that runic practices documented in Norway around the turn of the millennium underlie a Manx corpus dated 950–1025. Of course, the relevant practices may have existed in Norway for some time before they are first attested in that country, but that is no more than uncertain hypothesis. Possibly the influence went not from Norway to Man but in

the opposite direction, as suggested long ago by such luminaries as Sophus Bugge and Magnus Olsen (see below). Holman appears reluctant to think in those terms, but in the absence of other straws to clutch at does ultimately express willingness to reconsider arguments in favour of Manx influence on Norwegian runic writing (1998, 52). Yet even if we countenance a scenario in which Man becomes the *primus motor* in runic innovation, it is hard to see the relevance of Holman's revised dating. Do Manx runic practices become better suited to influence Norwegian rune-carvers if documented in the period 950–1025 rather than the slightly earlier 930–1020?

I am not an art historian, and therefore in no position to engage in serious debate about the dating of the Borre, Jelling, Mammen and Ringerike styles. I want instead to examine a question Holman's article rather begs: is there a demonstrable connection between runic writing in Man and any part of Norway in the tenth and/or eleventh centuries? And what is the nature of the connection, if any? Which leads on to the wider question: what place does Man occupy in Scandinavian runic tradition as a whole? Consideration of these matters is overdue, involving as it does areas of runological endeavour that have seen much in the way of casual suggestion or assertion but relatively little sifting of evidence.

Previous scholarship

Many of the conflicting views that have been expressed about Scandinavian runic writing in Man are bald claims rather than evidence-based conclusions, and as such hardly merit detailed scrutiny. It is, however, worth summarising the principal contributions, both to give a flavour of the debate and to establish a starting point for a more critical examination of the data.

P. A. Munch was the first scholar seriously to get to grips with parts of the Manx corpus (see, e.g., Munch 1850). His efforts were mostly directed towards the reading and interpretation of individual inscriptions. He did, however, assign the bulk of the material he tackled to a particular class, which he called “den *sudrøiske*” (‘the Hebridean’). The basis for this classification was the occurrence of **b** in the form **ḁ**, and the reason for the designation ‘Hebridean’ the use of a **b** of that shape in the Hunterston brooch inscription (SC 2), discovered in West Kilbride, Strathclyde, in 1826 or 1830.

It seems to have been Sophus Bugge who first proposed a close connection between runic writing in Man and south-west Norway. He expressed this and associated views in a number of publications, but the main plot is succinctly summarised in his 1902 monograph on the Hønen inscription from Ringerike (N 102). This contribution appeared under the general title *Norges Indskrifter*

med de yngre Runer and is thus a harbinger of the corpus edition whose first full volume finally came out in 1941. Bugge conjectured that the “short-twig” type of the younger rune-row was brought to Man and other western colonies by people from eastern Sweden, more specifically from Gotland and Östergötland. In Scotland they encountered Norwegians, especially groups from the south-west. These Norwegians then took the Manx variant of the “short-twig” rune-row back home to Rogaland—Jæren in particular—from where it spread further inland (Bugge 1902, 20). In support of the Gotland and Östergötland origins of runic usage in the western colonies and Norway, Bugge stresses (in another work) that the most prolific Manx rune-carver was called *Gautr*: “Es ist bemerkenswert, dass der Mann, der die meisten Inschriften dieser Art auf Isle of Man eingeritzt hat, *Gautr* heisst” (1910, 158).

Bugge’s ideas were refined by his pupil, Magnus Olsen (e.g. 1933, 89–92). Unlike Bugge, Olsen did not believe that the “short-twig” type of the younger rune-row had been exported directly from the Baltic to the Scandinavian colonies in the west. Instead he identified an area corresponding roughly to modern Vestfold as the birthplace of the “short-twig” runes, from where they spread to the west of Norway and beyond to the lands across the sea. Bugge had at least in part been influenced by chronological considerations. He and others were convinced that the bulk of the Manx inscriptions pre-dated those from Jæren, and therefore it seemed natural that the influence had flowed from west to east rather than in the opposite direction. Olsen drew attention to the “short-twig” runes from the ninth-century Oseberg and Gokstad ship burials, and to other “short-twig” inscriptions from Norway older than those found on the Isle of Man. On a crucial point Olsen did however agree with Bugge. He envisaged a special relationship between the Manx rune-stones and those from Jæren—so much so that he established a sub-group of the short-twig type, which he dubbed “Man-Jær-runes” (‘Man-Jæren runes’). This group is characterised primarily by the occurrence of ᚠ **b**, to which Munch had attached particular importance, and of ᚿ **m** (as opposed to earlier “short-twig” ᚠ **m**). However, detailed examination of Olsen’s work reveals that the boundaries between “Man-Jæren” and other “short-twig” varieties can be quite elastic (see further below).

Several decades later Ingrid Sanness Johnsen scrutinised runic usage on Man in connection with her study of the “short-twig” runes, which, following Carl Marstrander, she called “stuttruner” (‘short runes’; 1968, 1). Sanness Johnsen places greater emphasis than her predecessors on the historical background, which she tries to reconstruct on the basis of archaeological finds, place-names, and Snorri Sturluson’s history of the kings of Norway. And in the tradition of Magnus Olsen she seeks to identify

personal names in runic inscriptions with historical characters (1968, 100–08). This is a highly speculative foray, and the conclusions Sanness Johnsen draws correspondingly uncertain. She finds that in the ninth century there was Danish influence in Vestfold and other parts of eastern and southern Norway. Swedish influence also made itself felt in parts of Vestfold, in Agder, and more widely in the south-west. Sanness Johnsen seeks support for this interpretation of ninth-century Norwegian history in runic usage. “Short-twig” runes she associates with Sweden, “long-branch” with Denmark, and in the first two younger-futhark centuries, roughly the ninth and tenth by Sanness Johnsen’s reckoning, both types are attested in south-east Norway, whereas elsewhere in the country “short-twig” runes dominate. In trying to follow her line of argument from inception to conclusion I find it hard to decide whether this distribution of rune types really is an additional piece of evidence supporting the general findings, or whether the archaeological, place-name and literary evidence has been marshalled to account for the runic distribution map.

Sanness Johnsen goes on to note that there are very few Viking Age rune-stones from Norway and to make the following proposal: “Når bautastener med innskrift likevel forekommer i større antall enn tidligere, skyldes dette heller en sterkere innflytelse fra Vesterhavslandene med Isle of Man” (“The fact that raised stones with an inscription nevertheless occur in greater numbers than before is more likely to be due to increased influence from the western colonies with the Isle of Man”; 1968, 107). This proposal is based partly on a perceived coalescence of runic usage between Man and south-west Norway, partly on the appearance of rune-stones in Norway which “har korsform eller korsornament i vestlig kristen stil” (‘are in the form of a cross or decorated with a cross in western Christian style’; 1968, 107).

Thus, in Sanness Johnsen’s scenario, as I understand it, “short-twig” runes as a type most probably came to Norway from Sweden, arriving there in the early 800s. The type was then taken by Viking invaders, most likely hailing from eastern Norway, to the British Isles (1968, 106). Somewhere there perhaps, if not already in (eastern?) Norway, a particular “short-twig” variety arose, which was later exported back to south-west Norway, Jæren in particular. That variety is what certain runologists have called “Man-Jæren runes”. When these runes were first adopted cannot be established with any certainty, but they occur on the Kaupang hanging bowl (N 579) dated to c. 900 and regularly on the Isle of Man after c. 930. Equally unclear is when they made their triumphant journey back to Norway from the west, but their use in rune-stone inscriptions from Jæren generally dated to around the year 1000 provides a *terminus ante quem*.

As befits a sober and sceptical scholar, the next major contributor to the debate, R. I. Page, fails to produce such wide-ranging and exciting conclusions. Indeed, he offers little in the way of conclusions at all, often asking questions rather than suggesting answers. He queries the concept of “Man-Jæren” runes, pointing out: “This is less a type than a particular selection of items from the total number of rune forms available, a particular choice of the forms for **b**, **h**, **m** and **q**.” He goes on to stress the difficulty of identifying “a specific selection of rune forms in short or damaged inscriptions which may retain no examples of certain significant letters” (1983, 134f.). Earlier workers in the field, not least Sanness Johnsen, were often happy to assign the runes of an inscription to the “Man-Jæren” category on the basis of a single form. Page details some of the variety in Manx runic usage, without offering dogmatic explanations for its occurrence. He identifies the Manx carvers’ use of the word ‘cross’ rather than ‘stone’ to describe the monuments they erected as a factor that “encourages us to treat them as a coherent group” (1983, 135). He observes that the Manx runic crosses exhibit two fundamentally different kinds of lay-out: the runes are either cut along the narrow edge of the slab, or set on the broad face, on one side of the stem of a relief cross. In both cases the normal direction of writing is upwards. The second type, he notes, is not found in Norway, or for that matter Denmark, in the Viking Age.

Page considers there to have been different strands of runic usage on Man from the start. He also shows how up to the early part of the eleventh century the rune forms found on the island mirror the main lines of development known from Scandinavia (certain of the apparently later inscriptions incorporating dotted runes, for example). Thereafter runic activity among the Manx appears to tail off, and when a certain ‘Iuan the priest’ employs the script as late as the twelfth century, he copies the forms found in the earliest inscriptions. A degree of isolation seems to have set in. On the question of the relationship between the several Manx runic traditions Page identifies and those of Scandinavia, he is circumspect. He agrees that the earliest of the Manx inscriptions show a clear connection with Norway, but also emphasises the Celtic element. He is cautious about the direction of travel taken by runic innovations: “here I have assumed that new runic styles developed in Scandinavia and moved then to Man, but it may have been the other way round” (1983, 139). In a later contribution Page suggests that Iuan the priest’s two twelfth-century inscriptions (MM 144, MM 145) do not represent the end point of an ancient tradition at all but are antiquarian constructs, “the work of a man not well acquainted with runes, and perhaps not even with the Norse language” (1992, 136).

In her book on the historical context of the Scandinavian runic inscriptions of the British Isles, Katherine Holman examines different aspects of the Manx runic crosses, offering a number of suggestions but drawing few conclusions (1996, 86–172). She does however strongly urge reconsideration of the dating of the crosses in the light of the rune forms, orthography and language they exhibit, and their connection with the Norwegian stone inscriptions of Jæren, dated somewhat later than the bulk of the Manx corpus. She notes Olsen’s view that runic activity in Man provided the inspiration for “the early Norwegian inscriptions”—indeed that the Manx memorial formula formed the basis of the ubiquitous Scandinavian: ‘NN raised this stone in memory of MM’. She herself thinks Manx influence on the Jæren stones possible, but baulks at the wider implications: “... it is more difficult to see a small island like Man as the source of a custom of inscribing stones with Scandinavian runes in a formula which spread out across the whole of Scandinavia, rather than the other way round” (1996, 169). Furthermore, she notes, there are no inscriptions in Man that suggest experimentation with the basic memorial formula, as one might expect in a developing tradition; the formula appears to be fixed from the start, though with ‘cross’ substituting for ‘stone’. This is in contrast to Norway, where, according to Holman, there are “early rune-inscribed monuments that suggest the experimental beginnings of the memorial inscription”. She also draws attention to the Kilbar cross-slab from Barra in the Hebrides (SC 8), an artefact of disputed age, which rather than ‘NN raised this cross after MM’ seems to record ‘After NN is this cross raised’. A further pointer to dating, she thinks, is the Manx Andreas V inscription (MM 111), written in cryptic runes that have so far defied reading and interpretation. Holman notes that these have been compared with the cryptic runes of the mid-twelfth century Maeshowe No. 15 carving, and finds that they “suggest a degree of sophistication and experimentation that fits better with a later date” (1996, 169). In many ways Holman’s 1996 consideration of the Manx corpus foreshadows the sentiments expressed in her 1998 article, with which I began the discussion.

An examination of the material

This is then a suitable place to begin my own examination of the material. What does it consist of, and what, if anything, can it tell us about the position of Man in Scandinavian runic tradition? I will look at evidence to be derived from nine different areas of possible relevance: written sources; archaeology; onomastics; runography (rune forms in particular);

orthography; language; content (what inscriptions say and how they say it); lay-out (how inscriptions are placed on the stones); art. (Andersen 1995 provides a critical up-to-date summary of the debate about the Norse settlement in Man and its consequences.)

Written sources

A recent account notes that “written sources for the history of the Viking Age in the Isle of Man are mostly brief, tenuous, sometimes corrupt, and difficult to use” and finds that “no coherent story can be built up from them” (Wilson 2008a, 385). This appears to reflect the general view, and it is one in which I concur. There is no hint in these sources of a concentration of immigrants of south-west Norwegian descent, and nothing that might shed light on the origin or origins of runic writing in Man.

Archaeology

Archaeological evidence indicates that Scandinavian settlement of Man began in the late 800s. Grave-goods suggest that some of the earliest settlers may have come from north-west England or Scotland, but later waves appear to have included Scandinavians from Ireland. From what we otherwise know of patterns of Viking emigration, we would expect the bulk of the ninth and tenth-century settlers to have been of Norwegian descent, but there must also have been some of Danish extraction. How far the new arrivals overwhelmed the indigenous population is a question that cannot be answered by archaeology. However, the fact that the incomers seem to have adopted Christianity as early as the first quarter of the tenth century points to a significant native presence. And the inscriptional evidence (see below) speaks strongly of a mingling of Scandinavians and Celts. This meagre outline does not assist greatly in determining the inspiration behind runic writing in Man, but it would perhaps be strange if there were not a Norwegian element. There are however no positive indications that that element is to be associated with the south-west of the country. (For the latest survey of the archaeology of the Isle of Man, see Wilson 2008b.)

Onomastics

Man boasts a great many Scandinavian place-names. Just as the archaeological evidence, however, they fail to deliver a clear message about Scandinavian settlement patterns. Gillian Fellows-Jensen, one of the foremost

experts on Scandinavian place-names in the British Isles, observes: “the onomastic material is in general agreement with the view that the settlement was basically Norwegian” (1983, 45), but she goes on to suggest that the many Manx place-names in *-by* reflect immigration “ultimately from the Danelaw” (1983, 46). By this she means that the inspiration for names in *-by* is Danelaw nomenclature, but that the people giving the names in Man may have come there by circuitous routes, some from east to west across the Pennines, some perhaps via Ireland “after the expulsion of the Vikings from Dublin in 902” (1983, 48). As far as runic writing in Man is concerned, the onomastic evidence thus underlines the likelihood of Norwegian involvement, but does not exclude influence from other areas. As with the literary and archaeological sources, there are no pointers to a strong input from south-west Norway. (For a thorough examination of Manx place-names, see Broderick 1994–2005.)

Runography

Rune forms offer first-hand testimony of runic usage, so it is as well here to go into a little detail. Many of the Manx rune-writers are thought to have operated with a futhark containing the following forms:

ƿ ᆞ ᆡ ᆢ ᆣ ᆤ ᆥ ᆦ ᆧ ᆨ ᆩ ᆪ ᆫ ᆬ ᆭ ᆮ ᆯ (i)

f u þ ã r k h n i a s t b m l r

(The rune **r** is found in only one inscription, the sound it denoted having apparently gone out of use in the whole of western Scandinavia by the early or mid-tenth century.) It is, however, worth recalling Page’s warning about identifying “a specific selection of rune forms in short or damaged inscriptions which may retain no examples of certain significant letters” (1983, 134 f.). Thus, it has sometimes been assumed that a carver using, say, **ᆡ h**, **ᆫ b**, or **ᆮ m** would have employed the whole range just illustrated even though several of the diagnostic forms may be lacking. Magnus Olsen, for example, felt able to conclude: “With few exceptions the Manx inscriptions can be referred to script-group III [i.e. the one given above]” (1954, 156). He does acknowledge that “we are far from having characteristic material for an absolutely certain decision in all cases”, but nevertheless considers “there is every probability that here in Man, within a small and sharply defined geographical area, we have a collection of runic memorials which compose a homogeneous series by themselves”.

The rune-row portrayed above can be equated in all respects bar one with

the “short-twig” row as identified by various handbooks. The exception is Υ **m**, which runologists have been inclined to assign to the competing “long-branch” type. Certain early, probably largely ninth-century, rune-writers, used a “short-twig” row in which **a** took the form \uparrow , and **b** \uparrow , while others had a predilection for crossing branches, making $\tilde{\alpha}$ \uparrow , **h** \uparrow , **n** \uparrow , **a** \uparrow , **t** \uparrow , **b** \uparrow , and **l** \uparrow . In the Manx inscriptions, we find \uparrow once, but **b** is always \uparrow . Runes with crossing branches are uncommon in Man, and where they do occur it is in company with forms such as \uparrow **s**, \uparrow **t**, and they are accordingly assigned to the “long-branch” type. Of runes diagnostic of the row thought to be favoured by Manx writers, \uparrow **h** occurs in four inscriptions, \uparrow **b** in seven (excluding the twelfth-century Maughold I and II by Iuan the priest—MM 145 and 144), and Υ **m** in slightly less than half. Although the evidence is thus only partial, the likelihood does seem to be that most of the carvers of runic crosses in Man learnt and used a row more or less identical with the one above. At least, positive evidence that they did not is absent. All other things being equal modern runologists would perhaps be inclined to assign the set of rune forms concerned to the tenth or very early eleventh century, although dating by runic form can be a hazardous undertaking.

The term “Man-Jæren runes” leads us to expect the occurrence of the same set of forms in Jæren, south-west Norway. As in the case of the Manx crosses, the evidence is only partial in that most of the inscriptions concerned lack one or more of the diagnostic shapes. The form \uparrow $\tilde{\alpha}$ occurs on Njærheim II (N 224), though apparently with the value /ɔ/ (see below), Klepp I (N 225), Stangeland (N 239), and Helland III (N 245); \uparrow **h** is to be found on Klepp I and perhaps also II (N 226); \uparrow **b** appears on Njærheim I (N 223) and II, Klepp I and probably also II, and perhaps Stangeland; Υ **m** is a possibility on Stangeland, is fairly certainly documented on Helland II (N 244), and clearly documented on Helland III. On Helland II, on the other hand, we have a possible \uparrow **h** and \uparrow **b**, and on the Stavanger III cross (N 252) \uparrow $\tilde{\alpha}$ (denoting /o/; since the primary focus is on sound values, I have here and in the following dispensed with marking length in phonetic and phonemic notation). The Tu inscription (N 228) exhibits a rather different set of “short-twig” runes: it has \uparrow **h**, but crossing branches in place of the one-sided variety, as, for example, \uparrow $\tilde{\alpha}$, \uparrow **a**, \uparrow **t**, \uparrow **b**. The diagnostic forms associated with the Manx crosses and the south-west Norwegian stones are not limited to these two groups by any means. Three early Swedish inscriptions have \uparrow for **b** (cf. Sanness Johnsen 1968, 112–16, 120 f., 136–38), though one, Kälvesten from Östergötland (Ög 8), uses \uparrow , the supposedly older “short-twig” variant of **m**. Inscriptions from other parts of Norway than the south-west also exhibit

relevant forms, while the Eikeland stone from Hordaland (N 300), perhaps a little too far north to be part of the south-west group, has \uparrow for **m** as on Kälvesten. Other regions of the British Isles than Man show examples of the forms that characterise the “mainstream” Manx corpus: the Hunterston brooch (SC 2), found in Strathclyde, Scotland, has \uparrow **b** and Ψ **m**, while the Penrith brooch (E 15), found in Cumbria, north-west England, parallels the Manx diagnostic forms exactly: its almost complete futhark records, *inter alia*, \uparrow **ã**, \uparrow **h**, \uparrow **b**, Ψ **m**. But of course we have no idea who carved the runes on either brooch, or where.

It is hard to know what conclusions to draw from this rather haphazard collection of material. Clearly the rune forms associated with the Manx crosses and the Norwegian stones of the south-west are not the only ones found in these areas; equally clearly, the relevant forms also occur elsewhere. Nevertheless, the idea of a Man-Jæren connection has persisted. What has inspired the belief is perhaps above all the unusually high number of inscriptions from the two areas, coupled with the fact that many exhibit, or are deemed to exhibit, the same selection of “short-twig” forms.

Deviations from this selection include the more complex “long branch” variants and a small number of runes marked with the diacritic dot that became a regular part of runic writing as the Viking Age gave way to the Middle Ages. It should be noted, however, that the designation “long-branch” does not refer to shape alone, but can depend on what company the relevant rune or runes keep. For example, \uparrow in an inscription that also contains \uparrow , \uparrow , \uparrow will normally be deemed “long-branch”, as distinct from its “short-twig” counterpart \uparrow , but \uparrow in company with, say, \uparrow **t**, \uparrow **b**, \uparrow **l** is happily designated “short-twig” (see the Tu stone, discussed above). With that reservation in mind two of the Manx inscriptions exhibit “long-branch” types: Michael III (MM 130), which has \uparrow , \uparrow , \uparrow , \uparrow , Ψ , and Maughold IV (MM 142) with \uparrow , \uparrow , \uparrow , \uparrow . Four Manx crosses include dotted runes: Michael III and Maughold IV again, the former with both \uparrow and \uparrow , the latter with \uparrow alone, and German II and Onchan (MM 140, 141) with one or more examples of \uparrow (on the sound values to be assigned to these forms, see “Orthography” below). “Long-branch” and dotted runes are also attested in south-west Norway, but the inscriptions that exhibit these forms are excluded from the Man-Jæren group. The line of reasoning that leads to their exclusion seems to be the rather circular one that they lack the forms that would admit them as part of the group, though I do not think this is explicitly stated anywhere. It is also the case, however, that many originate outside the district of Jæren.

Orthography

The Manx runic crosses display several noteworthy orthographical features. In three of the inscriptions the fourth rune, 𐌛, stands for /o/ rather than /ā/. This innovation, commonly dated to the first half of the eleventh century, is also, if sparsely, documented among the stones categorised as belonging to the Jæren group. On Njærheim II (N 224) 𐌛 stands for /ɔ/, and on the Stavanger III cross (N 252) its left-facing variant 𐌛 represents /o/.

The use of **b** to denote the voiced spirant [β] is encountered twice on both the Ballaugh and Braddan IV crosses (MM 106, 135). This is an uncommon spelling (cf. Barnes 2004), and does not seem to occur on any of the Jæren stones. It is, however, documented in Scotland, and can be found in places as far apart as Greenland, Gotland and Denmark. It also occurs in a handful of Swedish inscriptions, and occasionally in Norway, as on the Alstad stone (N 61).

There is vacillation in the denotation of the /ei/ diphthong and certain monophthongs both in the Manx and the Jæren corpus. Thus, expected /reisti/ ‘raised’ is written **risti** on several of the Manx crosses, while conversely expected /re:tti/ ‘raised up’ appears as **raiti** on the Jurby cross (MM 127), and /pān:a/ as **paina** on Andreas IV (MM 113). Various of the Jæren stones have, or in some cases appear to have, **risti stin** for expected /reisti stein/, Njærheim I (N 223) has **stan** for /stein/, while the Tu (N 228) carver spells /helgi/ **hailki** and /ketil/ **kaitil**. Such vacillation is by no means unknown elsewhere, but is quite a prominent feature of both the Manx and Jæren corpora. The use of **au** for /ɔ/, on the other hand, found in both Man and Jæren, is a runic commonplace of the mid- and late Viking Age.

On the Braddan II cross (MM 138) the semi-vowel [w] is written **o** in the word **aiþsoara eiðsvara** ‘sworn ally’. The only parallel I can find in Rogaland is on the Sørbo II stone (N 260) from north of Stavanger, where the assumed personal name Sveinki is rendered **soinki**. Not only is this inscription not from Jæren, however, it also contains orthographical features that seem to mark it out as somewhat younger than the group that has been associated with the Manx crosses. On the other hand, the carver of the Greenmount bronze strap-end (IR 1) from Co. Louth, Ireland, renders *sverð* **soirþ**. Greenmount is hard to date; somewhen in the eleventh century seems to be the closest we can get. (Dotted runes are transliterated in accordance with the system set out and justified in Barnes 2012, 6f.; cf. Barnes 2011.)

Where 𐌛, the dotted form of **i**, occurs in the Manx corpus, it seems always to denote some realisation of /e/ (perhaps also of /æ/, to the extent this was a separate phoneme), though the precise shade of sound may be uncertain.

The value of \mathfrak{H} , the dotted form of **u**, is harder to determine. This rune form occurs twice in Kirk Michael III (MM 130), both times in personal names of Gaelic origin. In **mal:ümkun** it might stand for /o/, since it is possible the name means ‘servant of Lomchu’; in **mal:murü** *Maelmuire* ‘servant of Mary’ it denotes perhaps a more indeterminate end vowel. The use of \mathfrak{H} for /o/ has parallels, most notably in the present context in IR 12, an inscription from Dublin on a red deer’s antler, archaeologically dated to around 1000.

Language

The language of many of the Manx inscriptions differs in one way or another from that found in the Jæren group—and the generality of Scandinavian runic inscriptions for that matter. Prolonged and intimate contact with Gaelic, as evidenced not least by the many Gaelic personal names on the Manx crosses, seems to have led to language interference. Such interference has been identified in (a) the Norse inflectional system, (b) the word-order.

In several cases expected inflectional endings are missing from the Manx inscriptions. This affects in particular nominative masculine singular *-r* (a phenomenon occasionally documented in Scandinavia as well), while on Kirk Michael II (MM 101), ostensibly one of the oldest of the Manx series, there is a fairly clear example of a genitive masculine singular minus its *-s*. In Maughold V (MM 175) **kuinasina** rather than the normal accusative *kvinnu sína* ‘his wife’ follows the preposition **iftir** ‘after’. And then there is Kirk Michael III (MM 130), whose language has been described as “rotten Old Norse” (Page 1983, 137), a reference to the impossibility of construing certain endings in such a way that obvious sense emerges. In the matter of word-order attention has been drawn to the common occurrence of ‘son/daughter of X’ on the Manx crosses, rather than ‘X’s son/daughter’. While it is true that ‘Y son of X’ is the regular formulation in commemorative ogams (and standard patronymic usage in the insular Celtic languages), apparent parallels can be found in Scandinavia, as **sun:nairbis** ‘son of Nærfir’ on the Tryggevælde stone (DR 230), **tutur:kunars** ‘daughter of Gunnarr’ on Klepp I (N 225—one of the Jæren group), and **mupir:alriks:tutir:urms** ‘mother of Alrikr, daughter of Ormr’ on the Ramsund rock (Sö 101). A distinction needs to be made, however, between true patro-/metronymics and appositional phrases, the latter simply supplying additional information about a person. Unfortunately the difference is by no means always obvious. The Scandinavian examples just given are most plausibly considered appositional phrases, the Klepp I and Ramsund rock examples clearly so. With Gaelic in the background, the Manx cases hover

uncertainly between the two interpretations. The Bride cross (MM 118) offers the most persuasive example of a patronymic. There is nothing in its opening — **truian:surtufkals:raistikrþina:** ‘Druian, son of Dufgall, raised this cross’ — to suggest additional information is being offered about Druian; in addition the punctuation seems to favour the patronymic interpretation.

Other noteworthy language forms in the Manx inscriptions include *kvinna/kvinnu* for the more usual *kona/konu* ‘woman, wife’, which may have been a local variant (*kvinna/kvinnu* and *kona/konu* appear three times each); further **þínsi** ‘this [acc. m.]’ (German II, MM 140), which has been identified as East Norse, although *þensi* is also found on two probably early eleventh-century Norwegian stones: Kuli from Møre og Romsdal (N 449) and Vang from Oppland (N 84); the form also occurs on Sele II (N 237), one of the Jæren group (this cross-shaped monument is known only from a drawing, however), and is further documented on the Iona cross-slab (SC 14). Kirk Michael III (MM 130) has been deemed an East Norse inscription through and through: not only does it have “long-branch” rune forms, it also sports the form **þan** ‘than’ (as opposed to more usual *en*) and the personal name **apisl** *Aðisl*. Bugge considered it Swedish (1899, 243f.), while Olsen (1954, 216f.) declared it Danish. It is true that *þan* ‘than’ is documented in the Swedish and Danish runic corpora, and not apparently in the Norwegian, but the word ‘than’ is in fact not much used in Norwegian inscriptions at all. The name *Aðisl* or *Aðils* is not uncommon in West Norse sources, but seems to go out of favour in the West towards the end of the Viking Age.

The varying forms of the word for ‘after’ have regularly been used in evidence of an inscription’s age. The most recent general treatment of this question of which I am aware concludes that the short form *aft/æft* was in common use until about the beginning of the eleventh century, whereafter it fades away, though persisting perhaps longer in Norway than in Denmark or Sweden (Peterson 1996, 242–44). The author is less specific about the age of the long form *aftir/aftir/æftir/æftir*, but reading between the lines, it seems we should expect it to occur only sporadically in the latter half of the tenth century. It is thus something of a surprise to find that a slim majority of the Manx inscriptions have the long form, given that the conventional dating of the corpus is c. 930–1020. Of course the long form may be a feature of the stones to be dated in the later part of this period, but it is found on several that are otherwise deemed to belong the “mainstream” of Manx runic tradition (Holman 1998, 47). Of the Jæren collection about half have the short form, half the long, though in one or two cases the reading is uncertain, and there can also be occasional doubt about whether a particular stone is to be assigned to the group. This result is, however, more in keeping

with the late tenth to early eleventh-century dating traditionally bestowed on the Jæren corpus.

Content

Content-wise the big difference between the Manx and Jæren inscriptions lies in the term used to describe the monuments whose existence they proclaim. In Man people raised ‘crosses’, in Jæren, as elsewhere in Scandinavia, they raised ‘stones’. The term ‘cross’ is not, however, restricted to the Isle of Man. It is attested from other parts of the British Isles where Gaelic traditions were strong — Ireland (IR 2 Killaloe) and the Hebrides (SC 8 Kilbar, SC 10 Inchmarnock). It is seemingly even found once in Norway, but in Sogn og Fjordane rather than Jæren (N 417 Svanøy). Jæren boasts three stone crosses inscribed with runes: Njærheim I (N 223), Sele II (N 237) and Stavanger III (N 252; the first two known only from drawings), but they are all identified by the term ‘stone’ rather than ‘cross’.

There is otherwise little in the content of either the Manx or the Jæren inscriptions that could be called in any way remarkable. Most detail only the essentials: who raised the monument, after whom, and their relationship. Occasionally something more is said, but no obvious patterns emerge in either region. A certain Gautr proudly identifies himself as the maker of Andreas I (MM 99) and Kirk Michael II (MM 101)—but whether we are dealing with a single rune-carver here as opposed to one and the same stone-mason is a moot point (cf. Page 1983, 136). No rune-carvers’ signatures are found in Jæren.

Lay-out

Fundamentally the Manx runic crosses display two types of lay-out: the inscription either runs up, or occasionally down, a narrow edge of the slab, or is placed on a broad face running up one side of a sculptured relief cross. The narrow edge type seems to be the norm in most parts of Norway, though there the direction of writing appears almost always to be upward. In Denmark and Sweden rune-carvers prefer broad faces for their inscriptions, but they deploy the runes in a quite different way from the broad-face carvers in the Isle of Man. The Jæren inscriptions exhibit a wide variety of lay-out, with runes running up, down, or up and down, or round, a broad face, or up a broad face and a narrow edge, and occasionally up a narrow edge alone as commonly elsewhere in Norway (e.g. N 228 Tu). It would be difficult on the basis of lay-out alone to postulate a connection between the runic monuments of Man and Jæren.

Art

The art of the Manx crosses has been exhaustively discussed (two convenient survey articles are Margeson 1983 and Wilson 1983), so there is no reason to plough this well-tilled field yet again. According to Wilson, “elements of style and form were drawn from the regions round the Irish Sea” (1983, 178). Reviewing the complete corpus of the Manx crosses—those both with and without runic inscriptions—he identifies Borre, Jellinge-Mammen, and traces of Ringerike style, giving a date range of roughly 850–1025. His conclusion, on the other hand, is that “there is little likelihood that any of the Viking crosses were made much earlier than the second quarter of the tenth century”, the reason being “that the Borre style represented here is associated with fairly developed motifs” (1983, 185). The iconography of the Manx crosses, which combines Christian motifs with heavy doses of imagery from Norse myth and heroic legend, points to a period in which Christianity was established, but perhaps not dominant—the tenth century rather than the eleventh.

The art of the Jæren rune-stones is more difficult to capture: truth to tell, there is not a great deal of it, when compared with what exists in Man. Njærheim II (N 224) places its runes on either side of a ring-headed cross; Klepp II (N 226), a mere fragment, has ornament that is difficult to identify; one of the broad faces of Tu (N 228) shows two figures that have been interpreted as a man and a woman; the Reve sinker (N 230) has decoration in Ringerike style, but this is separate from the runes and it has been suggested it was put on the stone before the inscription; Helland III (N 245) has Ringerike ornament placed between its two lines of writing. Only in the case of the female figure on the Tu stone does there seem to be a connection with the art of the Manx crosses. Michael VIII (MM 123) depicts what appears to be a woman in the same attitude as and with similar clothing to the Tu figure, though there are differences of detail. It has also been claimed that one of the figures on Michael VI (MM 129) has “samme drakttype” (‘the same type of dress’) as the woman on the Tu stone (Sanness Johnsen 1968, 83), but this is less obvious. Art, just as lay-out, it would seem, offers relatively little to those who would establish a connection between the runic monuments of Man and Jæren.

Conclusions

It is not easy to draw hard and fast conclusions from the disparate collection of material that has been presented here. There appears to be little appetite

on the part of art historians to revise the dating of the Manx crosses, and it is difficult for a mere runologist to challenge this opinion. If we accept the 930–1020 span the art historians offer, there are a number of problems that arise.

Certain runic innovations appear earlier in Man than in Norway, from where Manx runic tradition seems ultimately to derive. According to current opinion, dotted l (†) came into use in Norway in perhaps the second quarter of the eleventh century, and was a regular feature of runic writing there by about 1050. Other dotted runes were a little slower to catch on, though Ƿ is clearly if sparsely documented in the first half of the twelfth century, and there is the odd example of ƿ—never a common form in western Scandinavia since /y/ was normally denoted by ƿ. The use of the fourth rune, ƿ Ƿ, with the value /o/ rather than /ā/ is an innovation reckoned to have taken place in Norway in the 1020s or thereabouts. On the assumption that influence flowed from Scandinavia to Man and not the other way round, it is unexpected to find dotted runes and ƿ Ƿ for /o/ some fifty to a hundred years before these phenomena make their appearance in Norway. Of course Manx runic usage may not be derived solely from Norway. Dotted runes are documented in Denmark in the late 900s—but even that seems rather late to have influenced practice in Man. It could be that the Manx stones with dotted runes and ƿ Ƿ for /o/ are among the latest of the series, but that is far from assured. Borre style has been identified on Michael III (MM 130), for example, and that should place it among the earliest of the Manx crosses, yet it exhibits two examples of ƿ (with uncertain phonetic value) and six of † (denoting a vowel in the region of [æ–e]). To solve this conundrum it has been proposed that the runes were added to a pre-existing cross (e.g. Shetelig 1920–25, 270), which may, or may not, be the case. There remains the possibility that innovations such as dotting and the changed value of ƿ Ƿ arose in Man or elsewhere in the British Isles, and from there spread to Scandinavia, as suggested by Hagland and Page (1998; for a rebuttal of this view, see Knirk 2010). The Dublin runic inscriptions, it is worth noting, exhibit the odd dotted rune, including a clear example of ƿ (seemingly denoting /o/), dated to c. 1000. And in Anglo-Saxon runic writing the fourth rune (whose shape was altered to Ƿ) came by the seventh century to have the value /o/, and a name, *ōs* ‘river mouth’ to match (of less certain age). For what it is worth, several scholars have proposed that Manx use of the fourth rune to denote /o/ derives from Anglo-Saxon practice (cf., e.g., Olsen 1933, 89).

Another problem is the common occurrence of the long form *af̄tir* ‘after’ in the Manx corpus. As noted above, this form would not be expected to

appear much before the end of the tenth century, yet in Man it is a clear rival to short *aft*. That Manx usage gave rise to the adoption of *aftir/aftir/æftir/æftir* in Scandinavia is even harder to believe than that the British Isles is the cradle of the dotted runes. While runic writing practices might just spread from a small island to a wider area, it seems much less likely that a (spoken?) linguistic form would do so.

The proposed connection between the Manx crosses and the rune-stones of Jæren is a further factor that looks odd from a chronological perspective. The Jæren corpus is commonly dated to a period around the year 1000 — partly on the basis of its rune forms and language, partly on the grounds that it spans the period of the conversion. I see little reason to dissent from this conclusion. If it is correct, however, the Jæren rune-stones as we have them cannot have influenced Manx tradition, let alone inspired it: they are simply too late. Of course, the extant Jæren stones may represent the final flowering of an ancient tradition, but for that there is no evidence. Again, one wonders — if there is a connection between Man and Jæren — whether the influence went eastwards rather than westwards. Surveying the Jæren stones, however, I find it hard to identify many similarities with the Manx crosses, as the preceding account of the material will have made clear. The most striking connection is in the choice of rune forms, but these are in essence the “short-twig” variety with the not uncommon replacement of I by Y . That is a selection we might well expect to find in various parts of the Scandinavian world in the tenth century, and in Norway as late as the early eleventh. We should definitely dispense with the term “Man-Jæren runes”, which seems to owe its existence solely to the belief in a connection between the runic writing of Man and Jæren. Certainly, if the crossing-branch runes of the Tu stone (N 228) can be considered of “Man-Jæren” type (Olsen 1933, 91), the term is devoid of content.

In arguing for a slightly later dating of the Manx crosses and for the dependence of their runic component on Scandinavian and particularly Norwegian models, Holman stresses, as we have seen, the uniform wording in Man of what she called the “memorial formula”. It is as though it came ready-made to the island, and its place of origin, she clearly believes, was Scandinavia. The matter is not that straightforward, however. Some have toyed with the idea that the Manx carvers might have modelled their formula on Anglo-Saxon usage — that *arærde æfter* ‘raised after’ might have given rise to *reisti æftir* (cf. Olsen 1933, 89). Palm (1992, 250) goes further, attributing use in Scandinavia itself of what he terms the “raiser formula” to Anglo-Saxon influence. Neither of these suggestions is perhaps very likely. To entertain them one would require a more vibrant English tradition

of rune-stone raising, and heavier Anglo-Saxon involvement in Man and Scandinavia than seems to be the case. But they indicate the uncertain terrain through which we move. Holman also mentions the Kilbar cross from Barra in the Hebrides (SC 8). This appears to say: *Aftir Þorgerðu Steinars dóttur es kors sjá reistr*, though there are lacunae and some difficulties with the reading. If the general understanding is correct, Kilbar also shows the “experimental beginnings” with the “memorial formula” Holman finds in Norway (1996, 169). Of course, the crucial question is what relationship there might be between the Kilbar cross and the Manx corpus. Differing views have been expressed about this. Shetelig deemed Kilbar “the starting point of the remarkable series of Norse monuments in the Isle of Man” (1954, 125), a view echoed by Liestøl (1983, 92), who goes so far as to ask whether its carver may have been Bjørn, father of the Manx carver, Gautr. Wilson (1983, 183) offers the opposite point of view, noting that many have thought the Kilbar stone influenced by Manx tradition. In our edition of the Scandinavian runic inscriptions of Britain, Page and I conclude that Kilbar is probably slightly older than the Manx crosses, but that a connection between the two is hard to demonstrate with reference to specific features (Barnes and Page 2006, 231 f.).

The results of the foregoing survey of the Manx crosses and their relationship with runic tradition in Jæren and the wider Scandinavian world are of necessity inconclusive. The crosses overall show a mixture of Celtic and Norse influence, while their runic inscriptions demonstrate a clear connection with Norway. The language is of West Norse type, and the lay-out of many of the inscriptions similar to that commonly found in Norway. The runes are fundamentally of the “short-twig” variety, as we would expect of the majority of Norwegian inscriptions dated in the tenth century. It is inconceivable that Norwegian runic tradition as a whole stems from the Isle of Man, so Manx runic writing must in some way come from Norway or from Norwegian colonies in the British Isles. The immediate source or sources cannot unfortunately be identified in the current state of our knowledge. It is tolerably clear, however, that the extant rune-stones of Jæren were not the inspiration. These must be later than the bulk of the Manx inscriptions, and the points of contact between the two do not appear particularly strong. There are indications of East Scandinavian input into Manx runic writing, which may have come direct from Denmark, or conceivably Sweden, but more probably perhaps from Danish settlers in areas of the British Isles adjacent to Man. There remains a conflict between the art-historical dating of the Manx crosses and the runic and linguistic forms they display. If we accept the art-historians’ view, there are two

possibilities. The first is that certain runic innovations took place earlier in the British Isles, or Man at least, than in Scandinavia. The second: that these innovations happened first in one or more parts of Scandinavia (or perhaps simultaneously in Scandinavia and the western colonies)—earlier, then, than the evidence currently at our disposal would lead us to believe. Whatever the truth of the matter, if the Kilbar inscription opens with the word *aftir*, as seems probable, and is to be dated to the early 900s, as I believe, it can be no surprise that many of the Manx crosses also exhibit the long form of the preposition.

I did not start out on this article with the expectation of reaching exciting and innovative conclusions. Which is just as well, for by and large I seem to have confirmed the status quo. However, I hope to have distinguished what is more from what is less plausible, and to have injected a modicum of clarity into the debate.

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