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Öpir's Teacher

Perhaps the most productive and least problematical of the rune-carvers we know from eleventh-century Uppland is Öpir. More than forty runic monuments have been preserved which bear his name (**ubiR, ybiR, ybir**, now normalized as Rune-Swedish *ØpiR*), and a study of Öpir's distinctive style as exhibited in these signed works permits scholars to attribute to him about forty additional (unsigned) monuments. Chronologically Öpir's production seems to occupy a position near the end of Upplands' great runic development; this appears evident both on stylistic-typological grounds and from a study of the internal relationships of the Upplandic runic monuments and the families that erected them. (It was, for example, Öpir who executed the memorial to Jarlabanki, to whose family pride and personal egotism runology owes so much.) Erik Brate dated Öpir's activity ca. 1070-85 and Otto von Friesen from about 1070 to the end of the century.¹

According to von Friesen, the name Öpir was originally a nickname ("skrikhals", cf. *ōpa* 'cry, shout') which the carver adopted and preferred to his given name *OfæigR*. Evidence of this is found, argued von Friesen, on the stone at Marma in Lagga parish (U 485) which bears the signature **in ofaigr ybiR risti** *En OfæigR ØpiR risti*. This knowledge in turn allowed von Friesen to link Öpir with another Upplandic rune-carver by the name of *Viseti*, since both names occur in the signature on a rune-stone (now lost) at Kålsta in Häggeby parish (U 669): **uisti nuk · ufaih · þeiR hieku** *Viseti ok OfæigR þeiR hioggu*. The relationship between the two, maintained von Friesen, is one of teacher and pupil; *Viseti* is the master ("läromästare, lärare") and Öpir his apprentice ("lärjunge").²

Such a theory is impressive by virtue of its neatness and ingeniousness, and is a tribute to von Friesen's brilliant if speculative treatment of the Upplandic runes. What is troubling is the relative absence of any similarity in the styles of *Viseti* and Öpir, despite von Friesen's claims to the contrary. Both carvers have highly distinctive styles, and yet very few traits in common. The connection between the two would therefore seem to depend solely on the assumption that the *OfæigR* and *ØpiR* on U 485 are one and the same person and that this person is identical with the *OfæigR* on U 669. Even if one discounts the objections raised by Erik Brate (pp. 98-99), these assumptions are not without risk, as may be illustrated by citing a presumably unrelated inscription from Ramsjö, Björklinge parish (U 1056): *Viseti ok Jofurr letu ræisa stæin æftiR Ofæig, faður sim*. Who are the *Viseti* and *OfæigR* of this inscription? It would be bold indeed

¹ Brate, *Svenska runristare* (Stockholm, 1925), pp. 111-12; von Friesen, *Runorna*, *Nordisk Kultur* 6 (1933), pp. 223-24.

² *Upplands runstenar* (Uppsala, 1913), pp. 64, 69; *Runorna* pp. 221-24.

to identify them with our two carvers (always assuming that Öpir's given name was *OfæigR*), and in fact one would hesitate to identify even the two persons bearing the relatively rare name *Viseti*.³ It may therefore be permissible to search elsewhere for Öpir's teacher.

Although runologists have long employed the concepts of "master and apprentice" or "teacher and pupil" and spoken of "schools" or "workshops" of carvers, it is fair to say that we have very little specific information on these matters from the eleventh-century runic monuments themselves. Carvers are generally grouped together under the notion of a "school" on the basis of stylistic similarity; it is assumed, for example, that the carver Thorfast learned his art under the influence of Asmund Karasun, since he shares many of Asmund's characteristic features of design and orthography. In a few cases supporting evidence can be gained from the inscriptions: on U 308 a carver named Thorgaut calls himself *Fots arfi*, indicating that he is the son of the well-known master Fot, from whom he no doubt learned his trade and whose stylistic influence is apparent.

When two or more carvers have appended their names to a runic inscription, one is probably justified in assuming the existence of a school or a teacher-pupil relationship, though it is not always clear who is to be deemed the master and who the apprentice. In general, scholars are in the habit of designating the least familiar one an assistant; thus the *Ingiald* whose name appears with Asmund's on U 932 is called a "biträdande ristare" (assistant carver) by Erik Brate (p. 33), and the *Svæinn* who signed U 1149 with Asmund is "en medhjälpare till honom" (his collaborator) according to Elias Wessén.

Explicit testimony concerning the actual division of labor among the carvers of a single monument is rare indeed; an example is the Eskilstuna sarcophagus (Sö 356): *Toft risti runaR a; Næsiörn hiogg stæina*. Nevertheless, the trained runologist can occasionally distinguish between the efforts of co-carvers by virtue of differences in style, technique, or form. Thus a careful examination of the rune-forms on the above-mentioned U 1149 (Fleräng, Älvkarleby parish) reveals that Svæinn has carved the runes on the left and Asmund those on the right side of the stone.⁴

It is possible that in the runic tradition of eleventh-century Uppland the notion of a school was designated by the term *lið* 'troop, retinue, body of men'. Such appears to be the meaning of *liþ* on the interesting rune-stone at Altuna Church (U 1161), which bears a somewhat damaged signature, presumably reading: *En (þæiR) Balli, Frøystæinn, lið Lifstæin (s ristu)*. In this inscription, then, the carver Balli (as well as the otherwise unknown *Frøystæinn*) would be bearing witness to an association with the master *Lifstæin*.⁵

³ An attractive speculation might be that the *Viseti* on U 1056 is identical with the carver of U 669, and that the *Ofæig* of U 669 is *Viseti*'s son and therefore the grandson and namesake of the *Ofæig* on U 1056.

⁴ That Svæinn's name appears first in this signature (as well as in the one on the Söderby-stone, L 1049) could indicate that he was Asmund's teacher, though less well-known than his famous pupil.

⁵ See also von Friesen in *UFT* h. 39 (1924), pp. 339 f. There is a similar occurrence of the word *lið* on a rune-stone at the parsonage (Prästgården) of Alsike parish (U 479), in the signature *Ulfkell hiogg ru(naR), Lofa liði*. Nothing prevents us from maintaining here that the carver

A far more interesting term which appears in the runic inscriptions and which bears enormously on the question of teacher-pupil relationships among the carvers is the verb *raða*. It is to Elias Wessén that we owe the most insightful terminological discussion of the occurrence of this word in the Swedish inscriptions. Wessén notes that the signature *reð runaR ÖpiR* on U 940 can scarcely be equivalent to *ÖpiR risti runaR*, since it is out of the question that Öpir himself carved the rather poorly-executed U 940. It is more fruitful, says Wessén, to interpret the verb *raða* here in the sense 'compose, formulate, supervise'. Öpir was then responsible for the general conception of the monument and the formulation of the inscription; the actual carving, however, was carried out by another, less experienced man.

The notion that the verb *raða* can indicate the activity of the master not only clarifies some lexical difficulties of Old Scandinavian poetry (see Wessén under U 940, Genzmer in *ANF* 67 (1952), 39 f.) but also explains the signatures *reð runaR ÖpiR* on U 896 and *Svæinn reð þetta* on U 913. It is surprising, therefore, to observe that Wessén neglects to interpret a further occurrence of this word, on a stone at Vaksala Church, in the same manner. The inscription in question (U 961) reads, in its entirety:

hul-a + lit + raisa stæin + þina at kitilbiarn + faður + sin + auk runfriþ + at + bonta + auk ihulfastr + riþ + in + ubiR

hul-a let ræisa stæin þenna at Kættilbiorn, faður sinn, ok Runfrið at bonda, ok Igulfastr reð, en ÖpiR.

Although Wessén is of course aware of the relevance of his discussion of *raða* under U 940, he declares that the expression *Igulfastr reð* "i detta sammanhang måste innebära, att Igulfast har ombesörjt arbetet å de båda kvinnornas vägnar" (in this context must imply that Ingulf caused the work to be done on behalf of the two women). It is assumed that the name concealed in the damaged runic series **hul-a** is a feminine one. Wessén goes on to note that "det omtalas icke, huruvida Igulfast stod i något släktskapsförhållande till dem eller till den döde. Vad man närmast skulle kunna tänka är att han har varit Kättilbjörns måg, gift med hans dotter **hul-a**" (it is not revealed whether Igulfast was related by kinship to them or to the deceased. He may have been married to Kättilbjörns daughter **hul-a**).

It is of course clear that U 961 is one of Öpir's works, and would doubtless be attributed to him even if his abbreviated signature *en ÖpiR* did not appear. (Öpir often abruptly terminates an inscription with little regard for missing syntactic units.) What I would like to suggest is that the sense of the expression *Igulfastr reð* on U 961 is completely analogous to the similar instances of *raða* on U 896, U 913, and U 940, and that we have in U 961 the name of Öpir's teacher.

Such an assertion appears on the surface to be merely a case of name-speculation similar to von Friesen's identification of Öpir as Viseti's pupil Ofæig. Although I am aware of this, I believe there is sufficient corroborative evidence to render my sugges-

Ulfkell was a pupil of the otherwise unknown *Lofi*; it is not necessary to assume with Wessén that Ulfkell "har tillhört Loves *lið*, ett krigarfölje vars anförare har varit en man vid namn Love."

* For the meaning of the word *reð* cf. U 940.

tion at least probable, and perhaps more plausible than von Friesen's. For while the alleged connection of Öpir with Viseti is unsupported by any stylistic similarities in their works, we know of a carver named Igulfast whose work bears an obvious affinity with Öpir's.

Until 1953 (and at the time Wessén was writing his treatment of U 961) the carver Igulfast was unknown. Only with the discovery of a rune-stone at Helenelund (Kummelby) in Sollentuna parish did explicit evidence of his authorship appear:

elka ' lit raisa stæin ' eftiR ' suártik ' b . . . -t ' eystain ' uk ' at ' emink ' suni ' sina ' in ' ikulfastr

Hælgæ let ræisa stæin æftiR Sværtung, b(oanda sin ok a)t Øystæin ok at Hæming, syni sina. En Igulfastr.

The resemblances to the work of Öpir which this monument reveals are evident in carving technique, artistic design, rune-forms, orthography, and formulation. Note for example the abbreviated signature *en Igulfastr*, as on Öpir's U 961 (*en ØpiR*). Indeed, Sven B. F. Jansson has noted in his report of the discovery of the Kummelby-stone⁷ that "Igulfast, som är en hittills okänd ristare, är som konstnär i släkt med Öpir" (Igulfast, a hitherto unknown carver is artistically related to Öpir).

Clearly the claim that the Igulfast on this stone is identical with the one on U 961, and that this Igulfast is therefore the master under whose direction Öpir learned to carve is subject to some uncertainties. The name Igulfast is not uncommon in the Upplandic inscriptions (cf. U 279, 378, 624, 665, 909, 939, 1019), and it would be more conventional to assume that the Igulfast who carved the Kummelby-stone is merely another late eleventh-century carver whose works attest to the widespread influence of the highly productive Öpir. Nevertheless, the suggestion that it was Igulfast who influenced Öpir, rather than the reverse, merits serious consideration.

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Helgeands i Visby — St Jakob?

Måndagen den 14 augusti 1967 på eftermiddagen befunno sig ett antal herrar i övre planet av Visby Helgeandskyrkas berömda oktogon. Det var deltagarna i Visby-symposiet för historiska vetenskaper, som under landsantikvarie Gunnar Svahnströms samt professorerna Sten Karlings och Armin Tuulses ledning voro stadda på rundvandring bland stadens medeltida minnesmärken. Symposiets tema var detta år »Kyrka och samhälle i Östersjöområdet och i Norden före mitten av det 13:de århundradet.»¹ Det är begripligt att kyrkorna tilldrogo sig

⁷ *Fornvännen* 48 (1953), p. 225.

¹ *Visby-symposiet för historiska vetenskaper 1967* (Acta Visbyensia III), Göteborg 1969, 6 (program), 8 (deltagarlista).