

IDENTIFICATION OF THE SÖRLA ÞÁTTTR IN ONE OF THE STORIES OF THE RÖK RUNESTONE ÖG 136 (BRATE)

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Resumen

En este artículo se analizará el texto rúnico de la *Piedra de Rök*, un monumento funerario fechado en el siglo IX, y el relato contenido en el *Tato de Sorli*, un texto medieval islandés del siglo XIV. Se enumerarán los mitemas o elementos constitutivos de ambos relatos con el objetivo de señalar los pasajes del *tato* que revelan un paralelismo con los elementos del texto de la *Piedra de Rök*, mostrando de esta manera que el relato del siglo XIV es en gran parte la versión en prosa del texto rúnico.

Palabras clave: piedra rúnica, mitema, literatura nórdica medieval

Abstract

This article will analyse the runic text of the Rök runestone, a funerary monument dating from the ninth century, and the story contained in the *Sörli þátttr*, an Icelandic medieval fourteenth-century text. The mythemes or constitutive elements of both stories will be enumerated in order to observe the parallelism between the passages in the *þátttr* and certain elements in the text of the Rök runestone, revealing that the fourteenth-century story is the prose version of the runic text.

Key Words: runestone, mytheme, Nordic medieval literature

1. The Rök runestone

The so-called *Rök runestone* is a mortuary stele¹ erected by a man named Varinn for his son Vémóðr. However, the menhir does not say that Vémóðr is dead, but that he is going to die.² And the use of this adjective is key if we are to understand the text of the menhir for what it is: a set of incantations intended to revive the son killed in battle so that, in an endless succession of life and death, he may live until the arrival of the Ragna røkk. That is why I claim that the menhir is only apparently mortuary. It is not written to honour the memory of Vémóðr, but to resurrect him again and again and again until the end of time.

The *Rök runestone* takes its name from its location: it is on display next to the cemetery of Rök Church in the parish of Rök (Lysing district, Lysing härad) in the village of Ödeshög in western Östergötland (East Götland), Sweden.

The word *rök* (Old Western Norse *hraukr* ← Common Germanic **xraukaz*³) belongs to agricultural terminology: It designates (or rather, it used to designate) a conical pile of hay, peat, leaves etc. as well as rows of sheaves, joined in pairs and placed upright to dry. In the language of the island of Gotland, *rauk* means a lonely rock by the sea. It is therefore suspected that, metonymically, *rök* may also have meant a relatively large isolated rock in the Östergötland dialect. If so, the menhir of Rök would have been a *rök*, the one that stood imposing and enigmatic in those fields, probably not far from the site where it stands today –given its weight and the difficulties involved in moving it from one place to another. This *rök* would have characterised and thus bestowed its name on the site and the church that was built there in the early 12th century and named after him (Rök church) and not the other way around. This is the view expressed by GUSTAVSON 1991: 3 (CARSTENS 2017: 68). If my interpretation is correct, the Rök menhir would not have been erected in a necropolis (“grave field, Gräberfeld”), but, as Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri detail when they refer to the myth of the battle of the Heodenings, in the place where a battle would have been fought. It is therefore not surprising that nothing has been found around the menhir that seems to indicate the existence of a necropolis.

¹ Actually, we should call it a mortuary menhir, since this stone in its upright position is crudely worked.

² The runic text makes it clear that the son is not yet dead (*aft faigian sunu*). The germanic adjective **faǵjaz* was used to describe a person who was about to die, but not a person who had already died (**daǰðaz*, *daǰðaz*). However, CARSTENS 2017:70 claims that «Anord. *feigr* “todgeweiht”, vermutlich genutzt als Euphemismus für “tot”». I am personally opposed to this interpretation. In the context of the identification of the history of the Rök stone with the *Hjaðningavíg* or battle of the Heodenings from the *Sörla þáttur*, I believe that Varinn is telling us that his son is or will be in a perpetual state of **faǵjaz*, i.e. “a dead man who revives and will revive to die again to revive again to die again” and so on and so forth. Therefore, when Varinn has this funerary menhir erected, Vémóðr’s is already dead, but given that the purpose of the menhir –of the stone of Rök– is to perpetuate his life –and his death– in a never-ending cycle, until the end of time, until the Ragna røkk, he will soon be alive again only to die again shortly afterwards. Seen in this light, his son is perpetually **faǵjaz*.

³ Celtic-Germanic word: Cf. Anglo-Saxon *hréac*, [*corn*-] *Jhrycce* (Bosworth-Toller), English *rick*, Frisian *reak* (*Frysk Hânwurdbboek*) Middle and Modern Dutch *rook* (*Etymologiebank*) as well as Middle Irish *crúach* “stack of corn, rick; mountain, hill” (*eDIL*). The word is continued in all Modern Nordic Languages: Danish *røg*, Swedish *rök*, Modern Norwegian and Dano-Norwegian *rauk*, Icelandic *hraukur*.

The *Rök runestone* is perhaps the most famous extant runic monument. Dating from the early 9th century, it was used in the construction of the wall of the tithe house (*tiondebod*, *tíundabúð*) of the Rök church (*Röks kyrka*, *kyrka i Rök*), which was built at the beginning of the 12th century. This fact undoubtedly helped the preservation of this runestone. In the 19th century, in 1862, the stone was removed from the wall of the tithe house, next to the church, and placed inside the churchyard under a wooden shed in the “Neo-Viking” style. Finally, in 1933 it was moved to its current location, outside the wall of the church cemetery, although at a very short distance from it.



Fig. 1 Front surface of the Rök runestone © Bengt Olof Åradsson.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rökstenen_1.JPG

The stone contains about 770 runes written in three different types of fuþarks: the ancient fuþark made up of 24 runes, the scandinavian fuþark, the fuþark of short-twig runes (*Kurzzweigrunen*) and two encryption systems (at least): a cryptic or encrypted fuþark system and, finally, the so-called windmill runes (*Windmühlenrunen*).⁴ This is not a random use of the different types of runes, but an attempt to ensure, through the use of all the runic alphabets available to Varinn, or known to him, to add up or pool all the power that the runes could deploy in order to increase the efficiency of the revivifying spell that is the Rök runestone. Furthermore, we must bear in mind the circular nature of the layout of the text (HOLMBERG 2015) which reminds us that some, if not

⁴ GUSTAVSON 1991:3: «På 1100-talet byggdes en kyrka i Rök som troligen har fått sitt namn efter runstenen. Ordet “rök” användes förr i östgötadialekten om sädesskyllar, en samling av i rader parvis uppresta kärvar. Det är samma ord som i gotländskan “rauk” (en fristående klippa vid havet) och kan i äldre östgötska ha betecknat en större rest sten».

all, incantations were performed by declaiming the incantation aloud around the person to be enchanted.⁵ The inscription also contains an acrostic.

For a detailed description of the *Rök runestone*, I refer to BRATE 1918: 231-255, along with GUSTAVSON 1991.



Fig. 2 The rauk Kaffepannan (The coffeepot) in Gotland (Fårö). ©Jürgen Howaldt. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gotland-Fårö_Raukar-Gamlehamn.jpg

2. The text in the Rök runestone

Rundata 3.1 (*Samnordisk runtextdatabas* Ög136), the online runic reference corpus, offers the following transliteration of the text of the Rök Stone, which I reproduce below:

```
aft uamuþ stonta runaR þaR + (i)n uarin faþi faþiR aft faikion sunu sakum|
|mukmini þat huariaR ualraubaR uaRin tuaR þaR suaþ tualf sinum uaRin|
|numnaR t ualraubu baþaR somon o umisum| |monum ‘ þat sakum onart huaR
fur niu altum on urþi fiaru miR hraiþkutum auk tu miR on ub sakaR raiþ|
|þiaurikR hin þurmuþi stiliR flutna strontu hraiþmaraR sitiR nu karuR o kuta
sinum skialti ub fatlaþR skati marika þat sakum tualfta huar histR si kunaR
itu| |uituoki on kunukaR tuaiR tikiR suaþ o likia + þat sakum þritaunta huariR
tuaiR tikiR kunukaR satin t siulunti fiakura uintur at fiakurum nabnum burn(i)R
fiakurum bruþrum + ualkaR fim raþulfs | |suniR hraiþulfaR fim rukulfs| |suniR
hoislaR fim haruþs suniR kunmuntar fim (b)irnaR suniR * nuk m--- (m)-- alu
--(k)(i) ainhuaR -þ... ..þ ... ftiR fra saGwM| |MOGMEni (þ)aD HOaR iGOID
(i)Ga OaRi GOIDin D GOonaR HOSli airfb <sakum>| |<mukmini>bfrbnhn
finb<uaim> an<si> tfbnh<burin>| |<niþ>hnuR troki uilin is þat + rhfþ<knuo>
rhis<knat>i| |iatun uilin is + þat <(n)(i)(t)> <-akum| |mukmini þur> <si>bi
<ui>a<ua>ri <ul niru>þR
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⁵ This is what the verb *mæla um e-n* reveals to us with the meaning of casting a spell or an incantation on someone. Cf. *Grims saga loðinkinna*, chapter 2: «Læt ek þat verða um mælt, at þú verðir at...».

According to Rundata 3.1 (*Samnordisk runtextdatabas* Ög136), this transliteration would correspond to the following transcription into Old Norse:

Aft Væmoð/Vamoð standa runaR þaR. Æn Varinn faði, faðiR, aft faigian sunu. Sagum mogminni/ungmænni þat, hværiaR valraufaR vaRin tvaR þaR, svað tvalf sinnum vaRin numnaR at valraufu, baðaR saman a ymissum mannum. Þat sagum annart, hvaR fur niu aldum an urði fiaru meðr Hraiðgutum, auk do meðr hann umb sakaR. Reð ÞioðrikR hinn þurmoði, stilliR flutna, strandu HraiðmaraR. SitiR nu garuR a guta sinum, skialdi umb fatlaðR, skati Mæringa. Þat sagum tvalfta, hvar hæstR se GunnaR etu vettvangi a, kunungaR tvaiR tigiR svað a liggia. Þat sagum þrettaunda, hvaiR tvaiR tigiR kunungaR satin at Siolundi fiagura vintur at fiagurum nampnum, burniR fiagurum brøðrum. ValkaR fim, Raðulfs syniR, HraiðulfaR fim, Rugulfs syniR, HaislaR fim, Haruðs syniR, GunnmundaR/KynmundaR fim, BiarnaR syniR. Nu'k m[inni] m[eðr] allu [sa]gi. AinhvaRR ... [sva]ð ... æftiR fra. Sagum mogminni/ungmænni þat, hvaR Inguldinga vaRi guldinn at kvanaR husli. Sagum mogminni/ungmænni, hvaim se burinn niðR drængi. Vilinn es þat. Knua/knyia knatti iatun. Vilinn es þat ... Sagum mogminni/ungmænni: Þorr. Sibbi viaværi ol nirøðR.

and to the following transcription into normalized Old East Norse:

Ept Vémóð/Vámóð standa rúnar þær. En Varinn fáði, faðir, ept feigjan son. Sogum múgminni/ungmenni þat, hverjar valraufar væri tvær þær, svát tolf sinnum væri numnar at valraufu, báðar saman á ýmissum mönnum. Þat sogum annat, hverr fyrir níu öldum án yrði fjör með Hreiðgotum, auk dæmir enn um sakar? Réð Þjóðríkr hinn þormóði, stillir flotna, ströndu Hreiðmarar. Sitr nú gorr á gota sínum, skildi um fatlaðr, skati Mæringa. Þat sogum tolftra, hvar hestr sé Gunnar ætu vettvangi á, konungar tveir tigr svát á liggja. Þat sogum þrettánda, hverir tveir tigr konungar sæti at Sjólundu fjóra vetr at fjórum nofnum, bornir fjórum brøðrum. Valkar fimm, Ráðulfs synir, Hreiðulfar fimm, Rugulfs synir, Háislar fimm, Hørðs synir, Gunnmundar/Kynmundar fimm, Bjarnar synir. Nú'k m[inni] m[eð] öllu [se]gi. Einhverr ... [svá]t ... eptir frá. Sogum múgminni/ungmenni þat, hvar Inguldinga væri goldinn at kvánar húsli. Sogum múgminni/ungmenni, hveim sé borinn niðr drengi. Vilinn er þat. Knúa/knýja knátti jötun. Vilinn er þat ... [S]ogum múgminni/ungmenni: Þórr. Sibbi véaveri ól níreðr.

CARSTENS 2017 provides the following translation of the runic text into German:

- 1) Nach Væmoð stehen diese Runen
- 2) aber Varin schrieb sie, der Vater, nach dem todgeweihten <...> Sohn.
- 3) Wir sagen auch zur Erinnerung folgendes <...>: welche die zwei Beutestücke waren,
- 4) die zwölfmal als Kriegsbeute genommen wurden,

⁶ I am translating *Hreiðgotar* as “godos del nido”, for lack of a better option. In my opinion, all attempts to explain this ethnonym, as well as the thalassonym *Hreiðmarr* –which could have designated the Kattegat or the Baltic– are unsatisfactory.

⁷ Assuming that the reconstruction *Mæringar* is correct, we know nothing about these people. We know that the toponym *Mæringaburg* is mentioned in *Deor's Lament*, but it has not been satisfactorily identified: “Theodric ruled for thirty winters the city of the *Mærings* (¿Rome? ¿Meran?); that was known to many. That was overcome, so may this be”. [Deodric ahte / þritig wintra / Mæringa burg; / þæt wæs monegum cup./ Þæs ofereode, / þisses swa mæg]

- 5) beide zusammen von jeweils anderen Männern. Das sage ich als zweites,
 6) wer vor neun Altern (Menschenaltern) ums Leben kam <...>
 [p. 71]
- 7) bei den Hreiðgoten,⁶
 8) und er entscheidet noch immer über Kämpfe/Streitfälle?
 9) Es herrschte/ritt Theoderich der Kühne, Fürst der Krieger,
 10) über den Strand des Hreiðmeeres. Jetzt sitzt er gerüstet
 11) auf seinem (gotischen) Pferd, den Schild auf der Schulter, der Held der Märinge.⁷
 <...>
 [p. 72]
- 12) Das sage ich als zwölftes, wo das Ross der Gunn
 13) Speise erblickt/erblickt wird auf dem Schlachtfeld, zwanzig Könige,
 14) die da liegen/liegen werden. Das sage ich als Dreizehntes, welche
 15) zwanzig Könige auf Seeland saßen, vier
 16) Winter lang mit vier Namen, Söhne
 17) von vier Brüdern + fünf mit Namen Valke, Ráðulfs Söh
 18) ne, fünf mit Namen Hreiðulf, Rugulfs Söhne, fünf mit Namen Haisl, Hörðs Söhne,
 19) fünf mit Namen Gunmund, Björns Söhne
 <...>
 [pp. 72-73]
- 20) *stark beschädigt*
 [p. 73]
- 21) Ich erzähle die Geschichte, wer von den Ingoldingern
 22) gerächt/geweigt wurde durch das Opfer einer Frau.
 23) Ich erzähle die Geschichte, wem/welchem Helden ein Sohn
 24) geboren ist: Das ist noch jetzt unser Wille/Vilin ist es. Er konnte erschlagen
 25) einen Riesen. Vilin ist das/der Wille ist das + **nit**⁸

⁸ 1) Estas runas están por Vémoðr, 2) y las ha escrito Varinn, su padre, por el hijo que va a morir. 3) Nosotras también decimos, en su memoria, lo siguiente <...>: quiénes fueron los dos espolios de batalla, 4) que fueron cogidos doce veces como espolio de batalla, 5) cada uno de los dos por diversos otros hombres. Lo segundo que digo es, 6) quién, hace nueve generaciones, llegó a la orilla [del mar] / llegó a la vida / murió 7) en el país de los *Hreiðgotar* (*los godos del nido*, that is, the Geats) 8) y que continúa decidiendo el resultado de los combates / de los litigios. 9) Teodorico, el valeroso como Tor, príncipe de guerreros, reinaba / cabalgaba 10) sobre la orilla del mar de Hreið (*Hreiðmarr*). Ahora está sentado, armado y listo, 11) en su caballo (goth), con el escudo en el hombro, el héroe de los Märingar. <...> 12) Lo duodécimo que digo es dónde el caballo de Gunnr 13) ve / verá su comida en el campo de batalla, veinte reyes 14) que yacen/yacerán allí. Lo décimo tercio que digo es qué 15) veinte reyes estuvieron en la isla de Sælland, durante cuatro 16) años con [the following names:] cuatro nombres (*four were namesakes, they were nafnar*), hijos 17) de cuatro hermanos + cinco [by name] Valkr, los hijos de Ráðulfr, 18) cinco de Hreiðulfr, los hijos de Rugulfr, los cinco de Háisl, los hijos de Hqrðr, 19) los cinco de Gunnmundr/Kynmundr, los cinco de Björn. 20) *line seriously damaged, illegible*. 21) Cuento la historia del ingoldingo que 22) fue vengado / consagrado por el sacrificio de una mujer casada. 23) Cuento la historia a qué / héroe le nació 24) un hijo: Todavía ahora esta es nuestra voluntad / es Vilinn. Pudo matar 25) a un gigante. Es Vilinn/es la voluntad + nit.

3. Mythemes or constituent elements of the runic text

1. *faigjaR sunuR “the son that is dying, the moribund son”. As I understand it, this syntagma refers to a son, killed in combat, whom his father integrates into a cycle of death and resuscitation in combat. It is an eternal moribund: the dead who will live to die again to be resurrected,...
2. Two kings go ashore on an island, Sælland, and they fight in it. They both die: both become *valraufar* “war-booties”, in the sense that the corpses of the fallen are plundered by the victors. Thus, *valraufar* does not designate objects, but, metonymically, the possessors of those objects.
3. However, the two *valraufar* come back to life and thus enter a death and resurrection cycle, within the setting of a great [endless] battle, which has been repeated twelve times at the time of the composition of the runic poem.
4. This great battle is past, present and future (it has no end because it constantly renews itself with the same warriors who die and rise again in an endless cycle).
4. Each one of these two *valraufar* is assisted by twenty kings and their men who die and rise with them. The twenty kings are mentioned by name.
5. A married woman is sacrificed
6. Þjóðríkr inn þormóði, Theodoric, brave as Thor, plays a role in the Rök story, provided that the reading of the *passus* is correct (HOLMBERG 2015: 88). His role is the same as that of Sörla in the *þáttr*. There is a lack of data to prove it.

4. The Mythemes in the *Sörla þáttr*

Is there a text in which these constituent elements appear together? Is there a text that portrays, for example, the sacrifice of a married woman and in which two kings fight each other in battle, each with twenty allied kings, a text in which the corpses of two kings and their allies become plunderable, “war-booties” on the battlefield day after day? Yes, there is. We can find the same topoi in the *Sörla þáttr*.

The *Sörla þáttr* is included in the Codex Flateyensis or *Flateyjarbók*,⁹ which means that the *Sörla þáttr* must date from before 1387-1395, which is the period when the codex was written. Here the *Sörla þáttr* is integrated within the *Greatest Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason*.

The *Sörla þáttr* is therefore a very late text, which, judging by the vocabulary, arose in the context of the Nordic feudalism. Despite this, its mythological content is very ancient: it preserves a

⁹ This Icelandic manuscript known under the call number GkS 1005 fol. is kept in the library of the Institute Árni Magnússon de Reykjavík. The manuscript was written between 1387 and 1394 and contains 225 folios with precious illustrations. It was probably written in the Benedictine nunnery of Reynistaðaklaustur, in the north of Iceland. The manuscript is named after the island of Flatey, where Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson acquired the manuscript in the 17th century.

pagan myth connected with the *Ragna røkkr*, the myth of the perpetual battle or *Hjaðningavíg* (battle of the Heodenings).

This myth must have been very popular, judging by the fact that it is also told by Snorri in chapter 50 of his *Skáldskaparmál*,¹⁰ by Saxo Grammaticus in the book V, chapters VII-IX, of his *Gesta Danorum*,¹¹ and in stanzas 45 and 46 of the *Háttalykill inn forni* by jarl Rognvaldr and Hallr Þórarinsson.

The theme of the *Sörla þáttr* is that Freyja, in order to recover her *men*, stolen by Loki on Odin's orders, agrees to the condition of enchanting two kings that were served in turn by twenty kings each. These two kings, with their respective allies, must fight a perpetual battle in an eternal cycle of death and resurrection until a Christian redeems them. Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* make the two contending sides fight until the arrival of the *Ragna røkkr*. Therefore, the pagan element is dismissed in the *Sörla þáttr* due to the Christianization of the story. The redemption of the enchanted warriors does not take place here in the framework of the *Ragna røkkr*, as in Snorri's version, but thanks to the intervention of a *hirðmaðr* (Ívarr Ljómi or Ivar Gleam-bright) of the first Christian king of Norway, Olaf Tryggvason. This is an element that, by its very nature, could not possibly have been part of the original text, the ending of which must have been in line with the ending of the myth described by Snorri.

I now turn to the passages of the *Sörla þáttr* that best reveal the parallelism with the elements of the text of the *Rök runestone*.

¹⁰ Snorri gets his information from the five stanzas of the *Ragnarsdrápa loðbrókar* by Bragi "the Old" Boddason, in which an account is given of the eternal combat between Heðinn and Høgni. Snorri quotes twenty verses of this *drápa*, thus saving them for posterity.

¹¹ It is worth noting that in both Snorri's version and Saxo Grammaticus' version the fighting is triggered by the abduction of the Hildir/Hilda. Furthermore, in both versions it is Hildir/Hilda who makes Heðinn and Høgni, or Hithinus and Høginus, resume the fight every night. In Snorri's version, Hildir achieves that *með fjólkyngi* (Snorri): "En Hildir gekk of nóttina til valsins ok vakði upp með fjólkyngi alla þá er dauðir váru", that is "But Hildir went at night to the battlefield and woke up with magic all those who were dead". On the other hand, in Saxo's version Hilda makes use of *carmina* to conjure the *manes interfectorum*: "[16] Ferunt Hildam tanta mariti cupiditate flagrasse, ut noctu interfectorum manes redintegrandi belli gratia carminibus excitasse credatur" (Book V, chapter IX), that is "It is said that Hilda burned with such a strong desire for her husband that it is believed that, at night, she awoke the souls of the two deceased with magical chants (*carmina*) so that they would resume their battle".

Chapter 2, pages 305-306:¹²

1. *Óðinn segir; at hon skal þat aldri fá, svá at eins hefir hon at því komizk, — «nema þú orkir því, at þeir konungar tveir, at tutugu konungar þjóna hvarum, verði missáttir ok berisk með þeim álogum ok atkvæðum,¹ at þeir skulu jafnskjótt upp standa ok berjask sem þeir áðr falla, utan nokkurr maðr kristinn verði svá roskr ok honum fylgi svá mikil gipta² síns lánardrottins,³ at hann þori at ganga til bardaga þessa ok vega með vápnum þessa menn. Þá hit fyrsta skal þeirra þraut lyktask, hverjum höfðingja⁴ sem þat verðr [p. 306] lagit at leysa þá svá ór ánauð ok erfði sinna fárligra framferða».⁵*

Odín le dijo que no lo recuperaría jamás, visto el modo cómo lo había conseguido — «a no ser que obres que los dos reyes a cada uno de los que sirvan veinte reyes, se peleen y se batan bajo el efecto de un encantamiento y un hechizo que hagan que se alcen y vuelvan a combatir tan pronto como caigan en el combate hasta que haya un cristiano que sea tan valeroso y al que acompañe tamaña suerte de su señor, que se atreva a entrar en esta batalla y mate a estos hombre con sus armas. Sólo entonces terminará su tarea -trabajo-, sea quien sea el príncipe (*höfðingi*) al que le sea impuesto liberarlos de su maleficio y de las fatigas de sus aciagos actos».

¹ I understand *álog* as *encantamiento* (echantment) and *atkvæði* as “hechizo o maleficio” (spell).

² The concept of a *gipta* or *hamingja* (“luck”) that can be lent or left as an inheritance does not exist in those areas marked by Roman culture.

³ The term *lánardröttinn* shows that the date of composition of this *þátr* is a very late one, as it implies that the social environment is that of feudalism. In the Scandinavian society in which the *þátr*'s action is supposed to be based there was no such concept as a *lánardröttinn*, a term that in all likelihood derives from Middle Low German *lênhêre* (Latin: *dominus feodi*. cf. Lasch, *Mittelniederdeutsches Handwörterbuch* II: 785, LÜBBEN 203a). Subsequently, the word was replaced by *lénsdrottinn* or *lénsherra*. Thus, Ívarr Ljómi or Ivar Gleam-bright is implicitly introduced as a *lánarmaðr* (b.a.m. *lénman*) of Ólaf Tryggvason, although the *þátr* makes use of the Norwegian term *hirðmaðr*.

Lánardröttinn is not the only word from feudal culture that appears in the text. Thus, in chapter VI we are told that Högni and Heðinn organised a *burtreið*, a tournament, a type of “sporting” combat totally alien to the Viking culture.

⁴ The translation of the word *höfðingi* is really difficult. I believe that the word “príncipe” is the best fitted to this term in the present context, although this does not mean that it is the fairest translation.

⁵ The word *framferðir* designates the “forma o manera de actuar o de proceder, [los actos de] conducta, comportamiento” [way or manner of acting or proceeding, the demeanour or behaviour] of a person. I understand the word in this context to refer to the actions of the two bewitched kings, i.e. their deeds, and I translate accordingly.

¹² I am quoting the *Sörla þátr* according to the edition of Sigurður Nordal I (1944). The pagination corresponds to this work. Chapters, however, correspond to the online edition of the *Sörla þátr* available at www.snerpa.is.

Chapter 7, page 310:

2. [P. 310] *Síðan gekk Heðinn til strandar. Var þá settr fram drekin. Skaut hann þá dróttningu¹ niðr fyrir barðit.² lét hon þar líf sitt, en Heðinn gengr út á drekan.*
- Heðinn, después, fue a la orilla del mar. Allí se botó el *dreki* al mar. Justo en ese momento arrojó a la reina bajo el codillo de proa. Así dejó ella su vida y Heðinn se hizo a la mar a bordo del *dreki*.

¹ *dróttning*: the wife of King Hogni, the Queen Hervor Hjörvarðsdóttir.

² *barð*: BAETKE 1987⁴: 40 “Mittelteil eines Schiffsstevens, (Vorder-) Steven”, that is, he dragged her under the keel from bow to stern..

Chapter 7, page 310:

3. *Ok er hann er alþúinn, fýsir hann at ganga á land einn sinna manna ok í þann sama skóg, sem fyrr hafði hann gengit. Ok er hann kom fram í rjóðrit, sá hann þar Gøndul sitja á stóli. Þau kvøddusk kunnliga.¹ Heðinn sagði henni frá framferðum² sínum; hún lét vel yfir. Hún hafði þar hornit þat, er hún fór fyrr með, ok bauð honum at drekka af Hann tók við ok drakk, en er hann hafði drukkit, seig at honum svefn, ok hallaði hann sér í kné henni.*
- Y cuando estuvo completamente aparejado, sintió el deseo de bajar a tierra solo, sin sus hombres, y entrar en el mismo bosque en el que había entrado anteriormente. Y cuando llegó al claro, vio allí a Gøndul sentada en su trono. Se saludaron como buenos conocidos. Heðinn le contó sus acciones. Ella expresó su satisfacción sobre las mismas. Freyja tenía allí el cuerno que ya había llevado consigo la otra vez y se lo ofreció para que bebiera de él. Él lo cogió y bebió y cuando hubo bebido, el sueño se apoderó de él y al hacerlo, él reclinó su cabeza sobre el regazo de ella.

¹ *kunnliga*: BAETKE 1987⁴: 346 “auf e. Weise, die Bekanntschaft, Vertrautheit verrät, wie e. guter Bekannter”.

² *framferðir*: see note 1.5.

Chapter 7, page 310:

4. *En er hann var sofnaðr, fór hon undan hōfði honum ok mælti: «Nú vígi ek þik undir øll þau atkvæði ok skildaga,¹ sem Óðinn fyrir mælti, ok ykkir Høgna báða ok allt lið ykkart.»*
- Y cuando estuvo dormido, ella se zafó de debajo de su cabeza y le dijo: «Ahora te pongo (lit.: consagro) bajo [el poder de] todos los hechizos y condiciones que Odín me prescribió, a ti y a Høgni y a toda vuestra hueste».

¹ *vígja e-n undir atkvæði (ákvæði) ok skildaga*: BAETKE 1987⁴ devotes no entry to this phrase.

Chapter 8, page 311:

5. *Ganga þeir nú á land ok berjask* bajan entonces a tierra y luchan.

Chapter 8, page 311:

6. *Er Hogni allæfr,¹ en Heðinn bæði vǫpnfímr ok stórhöggr. Þat er með sannendum sagt, at svá mikil atkvæði ok illska² fylgdi þessum álogum, at þó at þeir klyfisk í herðar niðr,³ þá stóðu þeir upp sem áðr ok þorðusk. Hildir sat í einum lundi ok sá upp á þenna leik.* Hogni estaba completamente arrebatado de ira, mientras que Heðinn era hábil con las armas a la par que asestaba recios golpes con su espada. Es decir la verdad que este encantamiento conllevaba un tan gran hechizo y maleficio que, aunque se hendieran [mutuamente desde la cabeza] hasta los hombros, volvían a levantarse como antes y retomaban la batalla. Hildir permanecía sentada en un bosquecillo mirando este combate.

¹ I understand *æfr* as “furioso, arrebatado de ira” [furious, blinded with rage] (ólmr, ofsareiðr).

² I understand the sequence *álog–atkvæði–illska* as “encantamiento–hechizo–maleficio” [enchantment–spell–curse]. *Illska* means “maldad, malicia” [evilness, malice] (*vánzka*). The word may also mean “furor, saña” [rage, brutality] (*reiði, ofsi*) and “infortunio, daño” [misfortune, damage] (*tjón*), but in this context the word can hardly have one of these meanings, and instead seems to be used as a quasi-synonym for *álog* and *atkvæði*.

³ *kljúfask í herðar niðr*: the combatants thrust their swords at each other and the swords enter their heads and penetrate their bodies up to their shoulders. This fact is confirmed, as I understand it, by paragraph 9. which specifies that the sword stroke with which Ívarr kills Hogni pierces his head and cuts him up to the shoulders.

Chapter 8, pages 311-312:

7. *Þessi armæða ok ánauð¹ gekk alla stund frá því, at þeir tóku til at berjask, ok framan til þess, er Óláfr Tryggvason varð konungr at Noregi. Segja menn, at þat væri [p. 312] fjórtán tigir ára ok þrjú ár, áðr en þessum ágæta manni, Óláfi konungi, yrði þat lagit, at hans hirðmaðr leysti þá frá þessu aumliga áfelli² ok skaðligum skapraunum.³* Esta miseria y tribulación duraron sin interrupción desde el momento en que se pusieron a combatir hasta el momento en que Olao Tryggvason se convirtió en rey de Noruega. Cuentan que pasaron ciento cuarenta y tres años antes de que se impusiera a este magnífico varón que su *hirðmaðr* librara [a los dos reyes] de esta lastimosa maldición y de estos nocivos rencores.

¹ I understand the word *ánauð* as “tribulación” [tribulation]. However, it is also a synonym of *álog*.

² I am interpreting *áfelli* as “imposición del hechizo, condena a realizar los mismos actos una y otra vez como efecto del hechizo” [the imposing of the spell, a condemnation to perform the same acts over and over again as a spell effect]. A looser translation would be “atolladero” [predicament, plight].

³ *skapraun* means “irritación, exasperación” [irritation, exasperation] (*gremja, leiði*). However, I understand that, in this passage, the semantic connotation of the word is close to that of “rencor” [grievance].

Chapter 9, page 312:

8. [p. 312] *En er hann er upp kominn á eyrna,¹ sá hann mann ganga í mót sér. Sá var mikill vexti ok allr blóðugr; með miklum áhyggjusvip.² Ívarr spurði þenna mann at nafni. Hann kvazk Heðinn heita ok vera Hjarrandason, kynjaðr utan ór Serklandi.³ «Er þér þat satt at segja, at þó at hér hafi horfit vöfumenn, at þat er mér at kenna ok okkr Høgna Hálfðanarsyni, því at vit erum orðnir fyrir svá miklum atkvæðum ok ánauðum ok okkrir menn, at vér berjumsk bæði nætr ok daga, ok hefir þessu gengit marga mannsaldra, en Hildir Høgnadóttir sitr ok sér upp á, en Óðinn hefir þetta lagit á oss ok ekki annat til undanlausnar en nokkurr kristinn maðr berisk við oss. Þá skal sá engi upp standa, er hann drepr, ok þá er hverr sá leystr frá sinni ánauð.⁴ Nú vilda ek biðja þik, at þú færir til bardaga með oss, því at ek veit, at þú ert vel kristinn, svá ok, at konungr sá, er þú þjónar, er mikillar hamingju. Segir mér ok svá hugr um, at vér munum⁵ af honum ok hans mōnnum nokkut⁶ gott hljóta».*

Y cuando [Ívarr Resplandor] hubo desembarcado en la isla, vio a un hombre que le salía al encuentro. Este hombre era de gran estatura estaba completamente ensangrentado y su semblante expresaba un gran pesar. Ívarr le preguntó a aquel hombre cómo se llamaba. Él le dijo que se llamaba Heðinn y que era hijo de Hjarrandi y que provenía del país de los sarracenos: «Debe decirse sin faltar a la verdad que el que aquí hayan desaparecidos unos centinelas tiene que imputarse a mí y a Høgni Hálfðanarson, porque nosotros dos, y nuestros hombres, hemos sufrido tan grandes encantamientos y hechizos, que luchamos tanto de día como de noche, algo que venimos haciendo desde hace muchas generaciones humanas, mientras que Hildir, la hija de Høgni, permanece sentada mirándonos. Y fue Odín quien nos impuso [esta maldición] y que nada más pudiera rescatarnos de la misma que un cristiano que luche contra nosotros: sólo entonces aquel a quien él mate, no volverá a levantarse, de modo que entonces cada uno quedará liberado de su encantamiento. Ahora querría pedirte que entres en la batalla con nosotros porque sé que eres bien un cristiano y que el rey al que sirves posee una gran suerte. Tengo también la razonada de que de él y de sus hombres nos vendrá un gran bien».

¹ If my interpretation of the text of the *Rök* runestone is correct, the island on which the confrontation was to take place would be *Sælland*.

The *Ragnarsdrápa loðbrókar* by Bragi the Old, does not mention the name of the island. Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* (chapter 50) geographically positions the island, indicating that the battle takes place on the island of Háey in the Orkney archipelago. The *Sörla þáttir* only states that the combat is taking place in the *eyin Há* "the high island" (chapter 9, p. 312), without indicating exactly where this island is located.

On the other hand, Saxo Grammaticus, reports that the fighting is taking place on the island of Hiddensee (island of Heðinn), in the Baltic Sea: «[14] Iidem septimo abinde anno apud insulam Hithinsø pugnam exorsi mutuis uulneribus consumpti sunt», that can be translated as "seven years later, they met again in combat on the island of Hithinsø, inflicting wounds on each other that killed them both".

² *áhyggjusvipr*: BAETKE 1987⁴:12 "nachdenkliches, bekümmertes Aussehen".

³ *Serkland* "Land or country of [the] Saracens". Therefore, in traditional Spanish narratives we would probably be dealing with a "Moorish" prince.

⁴ In this context I understand the term *ánauð* as a synonym of *álog*.

⁵ *Segir mér ok svá hugr um, at vér munum af honum ok hans mōnnum nokkut gott hljóta*. The use of the form *munum* instead of *munim*—this form has been adopted by some editors of the *þáttir* such as Valdimar Ásmundarson (1891) or Sir William Alexander Craigie (1924)— is a late one. *Hljóta* means "recibir, obtener" [receive, obtain].

⁶ *nokkut*: “algo, algún” [some, something]. However, I understand that we are dealing with a case of stylistic hypobole and I translate accordingly.

Chapter 9, pages 312-313:

9. *Síðan ganga þeir til bardaga, ok sér Ívarr, at þetta er allt satt, sem Heðinn hafði sagt honum. [p. 313] Gengr hann at baki Høgna ok hōggr í hōfuð honum ok klýfr hann í herðar niðr.¹ Fellr Høgni þá dauðr ok stóð aldri upp síðan. Síðan drap hann þar þá menn alla, er at bardaganum váru, en síðast Heðinn, ok varð honum lítit fyrir því². Síðan gekk hann til skipa, ok varð þá lýst af degi. Hann fór til konungs ok sagði honum. Konungr lét vel yfir verki³ hans ok sagði honum giptuliga tekizk hafa.⁴*

[Después, todos ellos] entraron en la batalla e Ívarr comprobó que todo lo que Heðinn le había contado era cierto. Se puso a la espalda de Høgni y le asestó un golpe de espada en la cabeza y le hendió hasta los hombros. Høgni entonces cayó muerto y ya no volvió a levantarse nunca más. A continuación mató a todos los hombres que participaban en la batalla y a lo último a Heðinn y hacerlo le costó poco. Tras ello regresó a los barcos. El día empezaba a clarear. Se presentó ante el rey y le informó de lo sucedido. El rey se mostró satisfecho por su hazaña y le dijo que la suerte le había sonreído.

¹ see note 6.3

² BAETKE 1987⁴: 387: «*er honum lítit fyrir (því)* es ist für ihn eine Kleinigkeit, ein Leichtes».

³ *verk*: I understand this term can be assimilated here to *afreksverk*.

⁴ BAETKE 1987⁴: 645: *takask* <...> «(in best. Weise) verlaufen, enden <...> *hefir þér gæfusamliga til tekizk* du hast Glück gehabt».

5. Conclusions

I share the idea put forward by CARSTENS 2017: 67 that «darüber hinaus haben die dreizehn Geschichten des Röksteines ein gemeinsames Thema, das den Stein in seiner Gesamtkomposition zu einem beeindruckenden literarischen Dokument der Totenmemoria macht».¹³

The text of the *Rök* runestone is unitary insofar as it is a utilitarian text with a single aim: to bring a man fallen in combat back to life. Therefore, the *Rök* runestone represents an incantation perpetuated in stone, shouted by the wind for a deceased, Vémóðr son of Varinn, to come back to life every day, every night, as long as the stone exists and as long as there is wind.

My hypothesis explains why Varinn says of his son Vémóðr that he is a *faj̥jaz “morituro” [moribund] and not a *daðaz “muerto” [dead], why there are no graves in the surroundings of the menhir, and why part of the runic text is so encrypted that it has not been possible to decipher it to

¹³ “Furthermore, the thirteen stories of the *Rök* runestone have a common theme that makes the stone, as a whole, an impressive literary document of the memory of the dead”.

this day. For the incantation to take full effect, only the initiates –in this case, Vémóðr’s father, the person or persons who performed the inscription, and a *völva* or priestess– had to know the words by which the resurrection of the dead was finally set in motion.

I think that my hypothesis about the parallelism between the *Sörla þáttr* and the *Rök* runestone is correct with regard to the mythemes raised in this article, even if conclusive evidence is unobtainable.

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