

## *Abstract*

### **The Runes of Rogsta and Rome**

The church in the parish of Rogsta 10 km east of Hudiksvall in the county of Hälsingland at the Baltic Sea is one of the best preserved churches in Sweden from the 19th century. The church is situated a few kilometers from a field with the runestone called “Malstastenen”. In the church there is a painting from the 18<sup>th</sup> century with a signature in runes by Jonas Åkerström, born in a farmstead in Rogsta and dead in Rome as a neoclassical painter 1795. Why did he sign his masterpiece with runes? We believe that he was inspired by the local priest Olof Broman who described the nature, culture and population of Hälsingland in an impressing book called Gylsisvallur. The 18<sup>th</sup> century brought a great interest for antiquities and the cultural history as a resource for the future of Sweden. Åkerström and Broman lived in the same optimistic era as Carl von Linné. Locals have been proud of “Malstastenen”. It has been considered as a locally important historical monument. Malstastenen can be related to a local as well as national context explaining why Åkerström used runes. That is not the case concerning a painting by Nils Blommér from 1852 with Freja seeking her husband surrounded by angels in a carriage drawn by cats. Freja holds a staff decorated with runes. In 1852 Blommér was in Rome. Why runes in Rome? Is there a connection between the runes of Åkerström in Rogsta in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the runes of Blommér in Rome in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? In this study we try to solve the enigma of these particular runes of Rogsta and Rome in their cultural and historical landscape.