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Edited by Howard Williams, Joanne Kirton and Meggen Gondek
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3 WALKING DOWN MEMORY LANE: RUNE-STONES AS MNEMONIC AGENTS IN THE LANDSCAPES OF LATE VIKING-AGE SCANDINAVIA

ING-MARIE BACK DANIELSSON

INTRODUCTION

A rune-stone is defined as a runic inscription found on a worked, raised and/or transported stone or carved onto \textit{in situ} boulders or rock outcrops. While the tradition of inscribing stones with runes has pre-Christian origins back to the Migration Period, the efflorescence in rune-stones dates to the Late Viking Age (tenth to twelfth centuries). Hence, rune-stones are largely considered Christian monuments (e.g. Gräslund 1991; 1992; Johansen 1997, 159; Lager 2002). After c. AD 1120 they were no longer erected and so rune-stones are widely regarded as restricted to a phase of Christian conversion and kingdom formation in which Viking-Age society – including patterns of inheritance and identity expression – was in flux (Gräslund 1991; 1992; Zachrisson 1998, 161).

The earlier rune-stones of the tenth and early eleventh centuries tend to carry text only, whereas late eleventh- and twelfth-century rune-stones were given ornaments and more elaborate zoomorphic images. A Christian faith is expressed through the common symbol of the cross on many rune-stones as well as the contents of some inscriptions expressing formulae and deeds in relation to Christian teaching (Lager 2002). Some rune-stones contain a Christian blessing for the soul of a deceased. Rune-stones are generally described as memory stones: that is, stones raised in memory of someone who died (e.g. Jesch 2005; Stoklund 2005; Figs 3.1–3.2).

From the borders of modern Sweden almost 4000 rune-stones are known (e.g. Samnordisk Runtextdatabas; Klos 2009, 41). Of these, some 1500 rune-stones are found in the county of Uppland, and more than 400
have been raised in each of the counties of Södermanland, Östergötland and Gotland. A large number of rune-stones in Uppland were erected during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries (Gräsland 1991; 1992; Zachrisson 1998, 130). These stones belong to the second wave of raising rune-stones, when professional rock carvers arrived on the scene. It has been assumed that the second wave of rune-stone erection is more closely connected to Christianization, perhaps being strongly under the influence of Christian missionaries from Britain and Ireland (Lager 2002, 180–82).

Rune-stones are studied by a number of academic disciplines (for instance, Scandinavian languages, archaeology, cultural heritage management and history of religion), each with its preferred focus, methods and modes of interpretation. Consequently, research questions and interpretations from one specialism are often perceived as inadequate and even unscientific by another academic field. One case in point is the work of Andrén (2000); while he emphasized that text and image upon rune-stones must be understood visually in relation to one another, runologists have disagreed with many of his suggestions (e.g. Bianchi 2010, 39, 52ff). Another example is Birgit Sawyer’s (2000, 92; 2002) interpretation
of rune-stones as a sign of a higher economic and social status; linguistic scholars have been sceptical and prefer to view the main function of rune-stones as commemorative (Jesch 2005, 95; 2011, 31; Stoklund 2005, 37).

If we accept that rune-stones can be approached with a range of disciplinary perspectives and questions, thus inviting and engendering new and different knowledge production, the archaeological approach adopted here wishes to explore the mnemonic agency of the stones through highlighting some of the myriad rhizomatic relations that were generated through the embodied processes of making, staging and encountering rune-stones. It equally emphasises that memory work is practical, performative and therefore necessarily embodied in its constitution (e.g. Merleau-Ponty 1962; see also Mauss 1992 [1934]). This approach also takes inspiration from feminist theory, which aspires to avoid reducing ambiguity and complexity in interpretations, in this instance regarding how rune-stones were experienced and understood in the Viking Age (Wylie 2007, 212–13 with references). Hence it strives to avoid the impulse to seek interpretative closure regarding what rune-stones ‘meant’ to Viking-Age ‘society’. Thereby, the lived present is seen as an open-ended and generative process (Harding 1987; 1993; Longino 1994, 483). As such, the work is associated to more-than-representational theories that focus on practices and events, which aspires to explore ‘new potentialities for being, doing and thinking’ in the human past (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 10). It also involves understanding the rune-stones in terms of affect. Affect has been described as ‘[t]he pre-personal capacity for bodies to be affected (by other bodies) and, in turn, affect (other bodies). The capacity for affecting and being affected defines what a body is and can do’ (Cadman 2009, 456), and in more explicit archaeological works ‘affect is understood to be the changes and variations that occur when bodies or forces intersect or come into contact’ (Jones 2012, 77). Thus, if rune-stones can indeed be convincingly interpreted as memory stones (Jesch 2005; Stoklund 2005), I want to go ‘beyond interpretation’ (cf. Alberti et al. 2013). By this I mean that I wish to move beyond decoding runic texts, and further still beyond the study of texts in combination with their ornamentation (following Andrén 2000). Instead I wish to delve deeper into questions concerning the practices and events through which material culture and people were continuously and mutually engaged in the creation and use of rune-stones. Moreover, I wish to consider how the inclusion of rune-stones in
the landscape affected human bodies and hence how memory work took place through embodied interaction with rune-stones.

It must be emphasized that the surrounding landscape often constitutes the backbone of the myths of origins that are told or recounted in prehistory, and events in the past are often woven together with the landscape and its different places and features. The narrated past is embodied in the landscape, claiming various monuments and other features as narrative evidence (Chapman 1997; Williams 2006). The landscape therefore has mnemonic qualities and might be regarded as the largest memory prompt of all (Gosden and Lock 1998, 5). Inhabiting the landscape, and performing activities and tasks, is an embodied activity that is constitutive of place (Jones 2006, 212). Therefore, there is a temporality to the landscape; it is processual, ongoing and non-static (Ingold 1993; Bender 2002; Jones 2006, 212). With such foci it is also necessary to recognize that encountering and engaging with rune-stones was not only a process of visual interaction; rather, it involved the entire body, as you perhaps unwittingly were forced to engage with rune-stones in a variety of ways and a variety of locales. In this context it is likewise pertinent to note that it is not a neutral body that experiences and engages with rune-stones. It is necessary to discuss a situated, relational and already oriented body: that is, a body that is situated in, related to and oriented within a number of subject and identity positions tied to, for example, age, ethnicity, sexuality, social position, special position, geographical region and the acknowledgement or rejection of certain mythological and religious ideas (Young 1980; Haraway 1996; Conkey and Gero 1997; cf. Ahmed 2006, 181, note 1). This body is further the subject of sensations (Ingold 2000), and the experiences of these sensations also depend on the body’s abilities and disabilities (impaired hearing, blindness, etc.) (e.g. Arwill-Nordbladh 2011). Only the experiencing body remembers and is able to render objects or places meaningful, and repeated encounters with places or objects invokes memories (Van Dyke 2011, 41). Such recognition of memory, emphasizing a sensing, relational and oriented body and person, gives further depths to understanding how and why rune-stones worked as mnemonic agents in the Viking-Age landscape.

To explore this theoretical perspective, my study will focus on case studies from an area with the highest concentration of rune-stones: the eastern part of the Mälar Valley in Sweden (Fig. 3.3). The interpretations of the runic texts discussed below follow the Samnordisk runtext Fornminnesregistret tabas, unless otherwise stated.

RUNE-STONE ENVIRONMENTS AND ORIENTATIONS

A century ago the professor and runologist Otto von Friesen (1913, 13) remarked that many rune-stones had been moved from their original position. This was undertaken for a number of reasons, he claims, primary among
Fig. 3.3 The rune-stones in the eastern part of the Mälar Valley (including Södermanland, Uppland and parts of Västmanland, Östergötland and Gästrikland).
them being that rune-stones were considered useful as building materials. The removal and reorientation of the rune-stones may have started as early as fifty years after the raising of the stones and it continued throughout the centuries until modern times. The earliest reorientation of rune-stones is known from those medieval churches which, still standing today, have had rune-stones inserted in specific places during their construction from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In fact, the majority of the removed stones can today be found in churches (von Friesen 1913, 12).

Disregarding such potentially disorienting practices (cf. Ahmed 2006), of all the thousands of rune-stones, the original placing of c. 730 stones can be estimated with some certainty (Klos 2009, 56). By investigating the surroundings and orientations of these monuments, it is possible to get an idea of what kind of place was chosen, and subsequently created, by the rune-stone, and how the rune-stones were meant to affect and direct your body in the landscape. In other words, we need to study what the rune-stones – as images and as agents – ‘wanted’ or ‘required’ of the individual(s) engaging with the monuments in order for the rune-stones to have the desired commemorative affect, or change in relations, upon those encountering them (Mitchell 1996, 76; cf. Langer 1984; Jesch 1998, 462).

Before presenting statistics it is worth mentioning that, early on in the study of rune-stones, researchers observed that rune-stones were raised in connection with historically attested routes over land and water (e.g. Jacobsen and Moltke 1942, 910–11; Ekholm 1950, 140). It was also noted that rune-stones were not constructed in isolation, and equally that they were often raised by cemeteries. Since routes would pass burial grounds, the categories at times overlap. The rune-stones placed by cemeteries would commonly have the carved surface turned towards the routes of travel (Ekholm 1950, 138–9).

Turning to quantitative data, Lydia Klos (2009) has recently investigated the immediate environment of the 730 locatable rune-stones (Tables 3.1 and 3.2). The two tables account for what kind of features are to be found within, respectively, a 25 m and a 100 m circumference of the rune-stones. It must be emphasized that the data presented in the Tables and Figures below does not convey the possible experiences a person may have had of the chosen place, nor indeed the multiple qualities of individual locales where rune-stones were situated. This of course includes perceptions of the rune-stone itself, its immediate surroundings and whether both nearby and far-away culturally significant features could, for instance, be seen, heard or in other senses felt when approaching, passing or standing by the stone. Such perceptions could include, for example, a splendid view of a distant mountain, long-range views owing to a prominent geographical location (for instance by a lake, or on a hill), the sound of a rushing stream or the smell of a marshy bog.

From Tables 3.1 and 3.2 it is clear that the most common feature in the vicinity of rune-stones is burials. Other stones are the second most
Categories within a 25-metre circumference of the 730 rune stones with known original placing. (Source: Klos 2009, 114, author’s translation from German)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>-25 m</th>
<th>% of 730</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burials</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other stones</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No known ancient features</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creek</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of worship (Bronze Age)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collapsed dry stonewall</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bog</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single find</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of worship (Iron Age [IA], pagan)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of worship (IA/medieval, Christian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith/Craft</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoard</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rune-Stones on Burial Grounds**

Pre-Christian cemeteries were important arenas for funerals and funeral drama, gathering a great number of people (e.g. Price 2010). The construction of the pyre and the subsequent conflagration formed a major spectacle (Williams 2004), and could involve a display of an array of material culture, with, for example, the corpse dressed up in special clothing. In some instances, the ritualized killing of individuals took place; these were...
sometimes cremated with the deceased or disposed of in other ways (Back Danielsson forthcoming). Consequently, memories associated with cemeteries would have been strong and dramatic as well as cumulative. However, since ordinary roads and routes were commonly associated with cemeteries (e.g. Engesveen 2005), the burial grounds were also passed on a regular – perhaps daily or weekly – basis despite a frequent absence of funerals.

Equally important, burial grounds were places that people would visit even though no funeral or burial was imminent or taking place. Within Late Iron Age Scandinavian contexts there are several indicators that the deceased or created being/ancestor that dwelled in the burial mound had agency and was considered capable of communication. This is supported by the opening of burial mounds, but also by medieval sagas, Edda poems and laws, since they frequently refer to communication between living and dead beings (Brendalsmo and Røthe 1992, 102; Gansum 2004a and b). Furthermore, the Christian Gulating Law from the mid-thirteenth century AD strictly forbade (heathen) activities such as grave-digging.

### Table 3.2. The Different Natural and Cultural Categories within a 100-Metre Circumference of the 730 Rune-Stones with Known Original Placing. (Source: Klos 2009, 117, author’s translation from German)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>-100 m</th>
<th>% (of 730)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burials</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other stones</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creek</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of worship (Bronze Age)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collapsed dry stonewall</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single find</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bog</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No known ancient features</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of worship (IA/medieval, Christian)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoard</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of worship (IA, heathen)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith/Craft</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sitting on mounds and asking questions about the future or reasons for mishaps (e.g. Breisch 1994). The cemetery was thus a significant place for various exchanges, communicative acts and reciprocal engagements on both an individual and social level that involved the past, the present and the future. It is at such mnemonic multi-dimensional hot-spots that rune-stones were situated or runic inscriptions were added to a boulder or outcrop. It has been suggested that equipping such a place with a rune-stone bearing a cross was a way to give the heathen burial ground a Christian inauguration (Gräslund 2001, 42). Be that as it may, of interest here is how the relationship to the place, and by extension memory work, was altered through the rune-stone or runic inscription, and how it enabled a reconfiguration of existing uses and meanings. Therefore, we must recognize that rune-stones with carved and painted texts, images and ornamentation are evocative and demand attention, forcing one's body to behave, and be oriented, perhaps even disoriented, in certain ways. As images, rune-stones affect and engage the beholder, and they are actively entangled in social structuration (Mitchell 2005; Jones 2007; Back Danielsson et al. 2012, 5–7). As such, the rune-stones introduce phenomenological registers that exceed the thought of rune-stones as encoded statements or representative of Christian inaugurations.

FIG. 3.4 THE RUNIC INSRIPTION SÖDERMANLAND 41 FROM BJÖRKE, VÄSTERLJUNG PARISH, PHOTOGRAPHED IN LATE APRIL, 2004. The rune text reads: ‘tati + iök + efir + fapur + sin × skaka × mirki| |it + mikla + man + (i)aurn. In English: Tät/Tatti cut the great landmark in memory of his father Skakki/Skagi; may..’
Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.4 and 3.5 are examples of runic inscriptions in cemeteries, where the burial grounds have been in use for a considerable amount of time prior to the inscriptions. While the runic inscription Södermanland 41 (Figs 3.4–3.5) follows the elongated stretch of the boulder by being inscribed at an oblique angle, the tall rune-stone Södermanland 106 (Figs 3.1–3.2) seemingly echoes the size of the large mound by which it was raised. Its large size (more than 3 m tall) must have required a tip-toe position (to say the least), or perhaps being mounted on a horse, in order to be able to read or study the runic ribbon. However, both runic inscriptions, as indeed every other writing, require that you have to twist and turn your body to follow and read the inscription of the snake loop. Such bodily acts prolonged your stay by the monument – they promoted embodied engagement with it, and consequently facilitated the memory process.

OTHER STONES IN THE VICINITY OF RUNE-STONES

Early on, researchers remarked that rune-stones were not made to stand in isolation (Jacobsen and Moltke 1942, 998–9). From Tables 3.1 and 3.2 we can see that the category ‘Other stones’ is the second most frequent category associated with rune-stones. In fact, rune-stones themselves at times
declare that they are part of a monument comprising several stones. This is, amongst other things, evident through the usage of the word *kuml*, which can refer to the rune-stone itself and, when written in the plural, to other stones that were erected at the same time. Importantly, the word *kuml* on rune-stones could also refer to a burial mound: that is, the tenement of the dead mentioned in the runic inscription (Back Danielsson 2007, 152).

A single rune-stone may have affected, and in some instances perhaps controlled, movement in the landscape. Moreover, by arranging several stones in certain patterns the way one’s body approached a rune-stone and/or a border, a destination, a resting place, was even more controlled and perhaps perceived as predestined. This force of regularity in combination with repeated performances builds memory. Accompanying stones could be standing in one or two rows (e.g. Da 30 Bække 2), in circles (e.g. Da 282–6 Hunnestad, Da 334–5 Västra Strö, Da 357 Stentoften) or in the shape of a ship (e.g. Da 209 Glavendrup, Da 230 Tryggevælde). Other examples from the county of Södermanland are the rune-stones Södermanland 34 and 35, which frame a road in immediate connection to a river (Brate and Wessén 1936). Another example is the well-known Jarlabanke monument (Fig. 3.6), from the county of Uppland, where several stones, both inscribed (for instance, Uppland 164 and Uppland 165) and uninscribed, are aligned on both sides of a path or a road (Snædal Brink 1981, 129). Yet another illuminating example is the rune-stone at Ängby in Lunda, Uppland, carved by Asmund Karesson (Ekholm 1950, 138–9). Ängby had one of the biggest cemeteries in the county and close by the rune-stone and cemetery were land routes and waterways. During excavation it was discovered that this stone constituted the centre of fourteen flanking *bautas* (*bautas* are large uninscribed standing stones) and that one end touched an ancient ford. At Anundshög, in the county of Västmanland, a line of raised stones follows a prehistoric road and ends at an ancient ford. In front of the big mound...
called Anundshög, which served as an assembly place well into the Middle Ages, the line of vertical uncarved stones is interrupted by a carved rune-stone (Antiquarian Topographical Archive).

RUNE-STONES BY BORDERS AND BY LAND AND WATER ROADS

Rune-stones were often sited by borders. Such borders or cross-roads were points of intersection that were given significance throughout the Iron Age in Scandinavia. This is demonstrated by, for instance, the deposition of hoards of gold (Wiker 2000), silver (Zachrisson 1998) and currency bars of iron (Lindeberg 2009) at these junctions. Placements of weapons and other items have also been retrieved in the vicinity of bridges (Lund 2005). These bridges were built before later Christian bridges, whose constructions were considered to be examples of good deeds executed, enabling people to travel in the landscape more easily (Lund 2005). By placing rune-stones at, or by, cross-roads, memory work would be facilitated. Meanwhile, accompanying aligned stones controlled movements, forcing individuals or groups to move in certain directions.

I have already mentioned that paths or roads, whether by land or water, often passed burial grounds (e.g. Fig. 3.1). Yet, of course, there are also examples of roads or paths that do not pass cemeteries and yet have been considered appropriate places for runic memorials. One such is the runic
Fig. 3.8 Uppland 112: The rune inscription on the west side of the boulder photographed in late July, 1986. The text reads in English: Ragnvaldr had the runes carved; (he) was in Greece, was commander of the retinue.

Fig. 3.9 Uppland 112: The runic inscription facing south. Note the narrow passage of the path/road just by the boulder and the runic inscription, forcing you to close encounters. The text reads in English: Ragnvaldr had the runes carved in memory of Fastvé, his mother, Ónæmr’s daughter, (who) died in Eið. May God help her spirit.
inscription Uppland 112 in the parish of Ed, Uppland. Uppland 112 really consists of two separate inscriptions made on opposing faces of the same boulder (Figs 3.8–3.10) located on a path or a road that more or less follows the western stretch of Lake Edssjön (Fig. 3.7). This path or road allegedly connected the harbour of Edsbacka with the northern area of Lake Edssjön that in medieval times also received a church (Eriksson 1982, 41–5).

It is pertinent to note that each inscription is seemingly executed in such a fashion that it follows and fits the form of the boulder. Coming from the north – thus heading south – you would encounter the monument as shown in Figure 3.8. This part of the boulder is fairly low, and therefore, I argue, the inscription’s snake/animal/beast appears to lie down and seemingly follows the pathway. On the other hand, if you came from the south, you would meet the more typical, seemingly portal-like, inscription (Fig. 3.9; cf. Andrén (1993) who interprets Gotlandic picture stones as symbolic doors to other worlds). This portal-like execution of the inscription is apparently allowed or dictated by the boulder’s particular shape or form facing south.
The two inscribed sides face different directions and can thus therefore not be seen simultaneously by a person travelling on the path. When you have passed one inscription the path narrows owing to the fact that the space between the inscriptions is somewhat rounded or pointed (the boulder almost has a gable), and opposite this ‘gable’ another stone or smaller boulder is found on the surface of the ground. These features turn the pathway into a veritable threshold, or indeed a very narrow passage, as seen in Figure 3.10. This narrowing of the path forces your body to come very close to the boulder and its inscriptions.

RUNE-STONES AS MATERIALS OF AFFECT

Leaving the surroundings of rune-stones and turning our attention more intensely to the rune-stones themselves, I argue that the stones are examples of multi-media, demanding the evoking and engaging of an array of bodily senses. The size of the rune-stone – whether life-size or at times in more gigantic (Fig. 3.1) or miniscule form – is of course important when discussing affect. Equally affective is the choice of stone material, the stone’s surface, contour and colour. The rune-stones as images worked as focal points that transformed the place and affected your directionality in the landscape. At times such qualities were aided by the narrowing of a path or a road, for instance through the building of a bridge or an embankment, or by making runic inscriptions at places with threshold qualities (for example, mentioned earlier, Uppland 112), by which you would be forced into close encounters. As remarked earlier, in order to engage with them properly – to read the runes, for instance – one would have to twist and turn one’s head/body to be able to follow the runic ribbon. This is very different from continental Christian monuments carrying texts written horizontally in Latin with imagery inspired by the Bible (Lager 2002). The words are equally interpreted as being placed in specific relations to the imagery/ornamentation of the stone, thus demanding that text and image must be understood visually in relation to one another (Andrén 2000; cf. Lund 2005; Bindberg 2006).

It is generally assumed that rune-stones were painted in different colours (Jansson 1984, 167). Deleuze (1986, 118) has argued that colour is an affect itself and Jones (2012, 76) has demonstrated how colour has an affect that goes beyond the material. The most common shades used on rune-stones were black and red, but brown and white are also known to have been employed (Jansson 1984, 167; Tronner et al. 2002). It must be remembered, however, that these colours, owing to their chemical composition, may have been the ones best preserved (Tronner et al. 2002); that is, other colours may have been common, but have left no traces. Even so, it would not be surprising if red and black were most commonly used since they, together with white, have been found present as primary colours in many cultures (e.g. Douglas 1966; 1970). The rune-stones themselves also occasionally
declare that they have been painted (Södermanland 205, 347, 213 and Öland 43 (Peterson 1994)). The rune-stone (Gotland 203) from Höggrän church, Gotland, likewise declares that it has been painted, or, rather, it is described as ‘illuminated’ (Johansen 1997, 6; Lindqvist 1941; 1942). More specifically, the rune signs are at times declared to be painted red, as is stated on the inscription Södermanland 206 (Jansson 1984, 161–2). The colours were used to aid reading and deciphering the text and images in equal measure.

The colours made rune-stones eye-catching, but what memories could have been evoked by red and black? It has been suggested that the colour red was associated with blood, struggle and sacrifice in the Viking Age (Gansum 1999, 456). Through its association with blood, red was also related to family. It is worth pointing out that the concept of the family was used to connote and structure Viking-Age society. The ancient Swedish word ätt stands for family/kinship (Hellquist 1980), and it is commonly family relations that are expressed on the rune-stones. The concept of ätt can be traced to at least the beginning of the ninth century, and is also linked to the German aht and the Gothic word ahts, meaning property (Hellquist 1980). The ätt functioned as the social foundation of society through systems of loyalty and cult practice (Lamm 1995; cf. Hafström 1982; Fenger 1982; Hamre 1982; Lindal 1982). The same word was also used for the three groups of letters that made up the futhark, the runic alphabet, where each ätt consisted of eight (ätt) letters (Gustavson 1995). Importantly, the word ätt also stood for the cardinal points of the compass (Hellquist 1980). Consequently, through the colour red, the runic signs, and by extension the word ätt, there is a linkage between bodies and their orientation in the landscape. As a result, an ‘ancestral geography’ (cf. Edmonds 1999) was conveyed through the runic inscription.

The colour black, in contrast, has been argued to be associated with Ragnarok, Utgard, night, travel, knowledge and sejd (prophesy making) (Gansum 1999). The interpretations of colours presented here are all taken from analyses of Norse literature. Of course, they need to be complemented by other possible interpretations, but nonetheless, they indicate how colours as affects were important in the work of memory.

In this context the play of light on monuments must also be discussed. Both shadow and light create dynamic and interactive experiences, as recently highlighted and demonstrated by Jones on rock art images in the region of Kilmartin, Argyll, Scotland (2012). Consider Figures 3.8, 3.9 and 3.11, which depict two runic inscriptions on the boulder by Lake Edssjön. When the boulder was photographed, the western inscriptions – the seemingly coiled up snake – rests in the shadow, the southern inscription bathes in sun-light. There is thus an ongoing performance, a play of light and shadow making the runic inscriptions visually stronger and weaker depending on season, time of day, weather conditions and the direction from which they are seen. These properties also create pace and rhythm to travels within the landscape.
Not only were rune-stones connected to colours, shadow and light but also, I argue, to sounds: they were meant to echo into the future. This is really self-evident, since the runic letters were not simply meant to be read but were probably also situated so as to be read out loud. One example, the aforementioned Södermanland 41 from Björke (Figs 3.4–3.5), has a runic inscription at the end that expresses that ‘it should always be heard’ (Brate and Wessén 1936, 31, my translation). In Gotland, Hogrän (Gotland 203), the runic ribbon is described as ‘Ormalur’ (translated to snake-loop by the Samnordisk runtextdatabas), where lur in Ormalur corresponds to the horn or lure of the snake – thus the medium for written and oral messages (Johansen 1997). Perhaps the rune-stone Södermanland 175 from Lagnö, Aspö parish (Fig. 3.11), demonstrates through its imagery the idea that the signs in the snake’s bodies correspond to sounds or words, since the two lures are held close to the depicted person’s ears.

FIG. 3.11 SÖDERMANLAND 175, LAGNÖ, ASPÖ PARISH. The figure is seemingly holding two snake/lizards’ heads in each hand, close to his/her ears, perhaps implying that the runic letters, the carvings, in fact are to be uttered as sounds. The text reads in English: Gíslaug had these landmarks made in memory of Thórðr, also Slóði had (them) made. It is true that which was said and which was intended. (Brate and Wissén 1936, 139, Samnordisk runtextdatabas).

THE MATERIALITY OF STONE AND IMAGES

What relations were there with the material stone during the Viking Age? Needless to say, stones, rocks, boulders and mountains were given significance far earlier in Scandinavian prehistory. Occasional Iron Age mounds had an uncarved stone erected on their tops. Furthermore, during the Iron
Age a common idea was that dead kinfolks were believed to dwell and live in stone/mountains. In fact, both the mound and the mountain were considered tenements of the dead (Johansen 1997), contributing to the fluid biographies of the rune-stones (cf. Jones 2007, 216). I have already mentioned how the word *kuml*, used on rune-stones, could signify both a mound and a (rune-) stone. Indeed, *kuml*, as signs, thus could be said to direct both living and dead bodies to their designated destinations (Back Danielsson 2007, 163–4).

Mitchell (2005) has described pictures as animated beings, and I believe that rune-stones, as images, were/are equally so. Rune-stones were often of comparable stature to people, and their silhouettes could have reminded the viewer of a person waiting for them, imbued with stories or something to behold. The stone itself, whether chipped from rock or a natural boulder, demanded certain actions from the carvers, and later from the readers or those engaging with them. Returning to the Södermanland 41 inscription (Figs 3.4–3.5), it was made on a boulder, and it follows the elongated stretch of the boulder. Otherwise, most runic inscriptions stand up, as in Figure 3.1. However, that is not because such a position was considered the right one, but rather because the stone or boulder onto which the inscriptions were made were considered endowed with such material properties or characteristics that it demanded the inscription to be executed in such a way. Subsequently, the runic ribbon seemingly always follows the contours of the stone, whether chipped from rock or free-standing small or large boulders (see, for instance, Figs 3.1, 3.4 and 3.5). To paraphrase (and answer) both Mitchell (2005) and Gosden (2005), it was what the stone wanted, what it demanded through its materiality.

**FIRST-CLASS TRAVELLING AND COMMON FOOT TRAFFIC**

Rune-stones, when seen as memory stones, were raised in memory of someone who died, and they frequently declare a person’s place of death. Such places are predominantly faraway places such as Greece, England, Denmark and Gotland (e.g. Larsson 1990). In fact, rune-stones often tell of journeys made afar, but also how certain people constructed bridges and owned villages, who inherited what, who died how, who had been where and whose souls were deserving of paradise (see examples in *Samnor-disk runtextdatabas*). These all seem like individual stories, but they were commemorative for society as a whole. Rune-stones with such stories were placed where people repeatedly walked, met, and travelled. Commemorative practices are performative and recurring in nature (Connerton 1989), which is why it is important to point out that it was not only the rune-stone carvers/erectors that travelled in the landscape. Rather, we must envision different classes and genders inhabiting the landscape, perhaps transporting things, goods, people and/or information or stories from one place to another (e.g. the aforementioned runic inscription Uppland
This is perhaps an obvious statement, since the power relations expressed by rune-stones must be implemented where they can have an impact on people, in this case on roads and routes where people commonly travelled; more specifically at junctions or cross-roads where people perhaps were ‘forced’ to rest, or slow down, on their journeys. Such a practice-based approach serves to create a more dynamic perspective on the rune-stones as monuments, and how these actually linked people together and thus are coupled not only to presumed elites or people who belonged to an upper-class stratum of society (Van Dyke 2011, 43).

CONCLUSIONS: RUNE-STONES AS MNEMONIC AGENTS

By raising stones, both carved and uncarved, long-term social memory was created. As Joyce (2003) has noted on monumental structures in Mesoamerica, this meant an evocation of timelessness and permanence. The same is true for rune-stones – they were oriented towards the future (Jesch 1998; 2005, 95) while at the same time their placing connected to, and echoed, past activities. Rune-stones thus held a general mnemonic function as fields of social memory. While at the same time expressing individual memories, these were inserted into social memory, gaining meaning and enabling renegotiations and hence change in general memory itself.

Rune-stones were individual expressions in the sense that they often reiterated the faiths and deeds of a deceased person and his/her relatives. However, it must be pointed out that individual memories would not exist were it not for social memory, which provides a foundation and context for them (Middleton and Edwards 1997). Social memory here refers to the ‘selective preservation, construction, and obliteration of ideas about the way things were in the past, in service of some interest in the present’ (Van Dyke 2011, 37). This definition demonstrates that social memory legitimizes current power relations, which is accomplished in a number of ways. Importantly, rune-stones are raised at past places of importance, such as at cemeteries. In some instances they have been situated also at new places that are cloaked or rearranged to be similar to, and remind people of, prominent past places (e.g. Norr and Sanmark 2008 on certain assembly places). Through such usage, a rune-stone both reminds people of the past while at the same time bringing something new to the equation. It is an index of memory; the rune-stone can evoke remembrance, but can equally be called a mnemonic citation (Jones 2007, 24, 26, 55).

In this paper I have shown that in order to understand how rune-stones worked as mnemonic agents it is useful to introduce the concept of affect. Memory work is practical, performative, experiential, profoundly material and very much an embodied process. Therefore, affect is an appropriate concept since it highlights the changes and variations human bodies may have experienced when rune-stones were created and/or encountered. The
sight of dazzling colours and the play of light and shadow and enticing sounds are some of the possible sensations evoked by the stones, perhaps forcing people into close encounters. I have also mentioned that the size of rune-stones had affective dimensions. Altogether a rune-stone can be seen as an animated being that wanted something from those who engaged with it (cf. Gosden 2005; Mitchell 2005). Furthermore, in order to read and engage with the interacting and meandering texts and images, the body had to twist and twirl, also prolonging the interpreter’s stay by the monument. I have equally emphasized that rune-stones rarely stood alone, and that it is important that the stone’s relation to other stones is considered. The stones together structured the landscape in a certain way, and also regulated how the body was to enter, encounter and experience this index, nexus, or gate to other worlds. I have also maintained that not only places but also families were tied together in the landscape through the rune-stones. They resulted in shared experiences of landscape, life and death – that is, commemoration. In this way, individuals, collective memory and rune-stones were seamlessly interwoven (cf. Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1993).

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