Same script, different rules? On the alleged different spelling of names compared to other words in runic inscriptions

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The article deals with the question of whether words with different communicative weight are spelled differently in Viking-Age Swedish runic inscriptions and more specifically with the supposedly more careful spelling of personal names compared to formulaic words. The hypothesis that names appear less frequently in a deviant form than formulaic words is tested empirically in three investigations: 1) A quantitative study of the amount of spelling mistakes in a selection of words from the two aforementioned categories; 2) An analysis of a selection of deviant spellings in the context of the inscriptions where they occur; 3) A study of the inscriptions signed by the rune carver Øpiʀ.

The results of the quantitative study reveal a small but statistically significant difference in the proportion of deviant spellings of personal names and appellatives. On average, names are in fact spelled correctly 3 % more often than formulaic words. The contextualised analysis of deviant spellings show that misspelled names and misspelled formulaic words often occur together, which indicates that in such cases misspellings depend more on the carver's skill, than on whether words belong to different categories. The investigation of Øpiʀ's inscriptions reveals that miscarvings and his typical practice of abbreviating words can be found both in very frequent words and in names, suggesting that the treatment of these two categories is similar as far as their spelling is concerned. A general result regards the overall low occurrence of deviant forms, which calls for a scrutiny of interpretations which presuppose carving mistakes.

KEYWORDS: Runic orthography, Viking Age, personal names, spellings variation, spelling mistakes

1. Introduction

Similarly to many non-standardised written languages of the past, runic Swedish as represented in the Viking-Age runic inscriptions shows a great variation in spelling. A long-lasting dispute in the field of runology regards the nature of this variation and the question about the extent to which researchers can rely on the rune carvers' spelling to draw conclusions on the spoken language during the Viking-Age.

On the one hand, this dispute has revolved around the question whether rune carvers performed some kind of phonetic analysis, thus adopting a

more or less orthophonic spelling, or if traditional spellings existed which followed writing norms rather than reflect the carvers' pronunciation. On the other hand, this debate has also regarded how frequently Viking-Age rune carvers made spelling mistakes.

The answer to these questions is of central importance, as it affects our chances of carrying out phonological analyses based on this written variation. Moreover, runologists' convictions on the reliability of rune carvers' spelling, and hence especially the aforementioned issue of miscarvings, influence the interpretations that researchers are comfortable putting forward. If one departs from the hypothesis that misspellings are in fact the rule in runic inscriptions, one might be more inclined to assume the existence of some mistakes in order to justify a problematic reading or interpretation of a difficult inscription.

The present paper focuses on a particular problem within the bigger theme outlined above, namely the different status of names compared to that of other words, and more specifically on the question of whether personal names were spelled more carefully, with fewer mistakes, than other words.[1] At times, personal names have been given a different standing compared to the rest of the corpus in view of their non-formulaic nature and greater communicative weight. If this difference could be expected to show in the way words are spelled, it probably had repercussions for the way contemporary readers of runic inscriptions understood them, and it surely should be taken into account by runologists in their interpretative work.

In sections 2–3, I will expand on the issue of traditional contra orthophonic spelling, on the status of personal names, as well as on the question of how to separate misspellings from expected written variants. In the subsequent sections, 4–6, the status difference between personal names and formulaic words will be investigated with regard to the occurrence of carving mistakes. Three different approaches will be used. 1) A quantitative study where the amount of misspellings in some of the most common personal names in Swedish runic inscriptions are compared to the misspelling rate in the attestations of other words. 2) A qualitative study where a selection of carving mistakes are analysed in their context, i.e. with regard

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1   The term "spelling" refers in this paper to the way words are carved in Viking-Age runic inscriptions. In the same general, descriptive sense is the term "orthography" used. Neither terms are thus used in a normative sense, i.e. to imply the existence of ways of writing words according to standardised rules.

to the rest of the inscription where they occur. 3) A closer study of one specific carver, namely Øpiʀ.

2. Orthophonic versus traditional spelling and the status of personal names

The idea that runic inscriptions are not suitable sources for phonological analyses, either due to so-called traditional spellings or to their supposedly high number of misspellings, is quite common in older runological literature (see Williams 1990:13 with literature). Especially in the last decades, however, there have been a number of studies within a different paradigm, according to which rune carvers' spelling can, in fact, be taken to reflect their pronunciation, and that the reason behind seemingly deviant linguistic forms should first be sought in phonological or phonetic features, before being explained away as mistakes. A seminal work in this regard is a study by Svante Lagman (1989) aptly titled "Till försvar för runristarnas ortografi" ('In defence of rune carvers' orthography'). Lagman formulated the aforementioned approach as a principle that he believed regulated the work of rune carvers, namely "write what you hear". To prove that this was the case, that carvers performed – more or less consciously – a phonetic analysis of their own spoken language and followed their own pronunciation when spelling, he quantified and analysed the occurrences of misspellings in Swedish Viking-Age stone inscriptions. He came to the conclusion, to which I will return later together with some methodological considerations (section 3), that actual mistakes amounted to a negligible share of the whole corpus (see e.g. Lagman 1989:32). While acknowledging that mistakes do occur and that some specific carvers are in fact poor spellers, he presents a strong case that the assumption of mistakes should be runologists' last resort in their interpretative work, and that other possibilities, above all phonetic explanations, should be tested first.

The principle above was subsequently applied, for instance, in Lagman's doctoral thesis (1990), where written variation was chiefly interpreted as orthophonic. A similar approach is advocated by Henrik Williams (1990), who strongly criticised the assumption of the existence of traditional spellings in the runic material. Building on Lagman's principle behind the rune carvers' way of spelling, "write what you hear", Williams also worded a complementary principle that should inform the runologists' work, namely "to read what's there" (Williams 1990:14; 2010; cf. Lagman 1989:36). It

implies that a runologist should, as far as possible, depart from the actually carved sequences of runes and trust that carvers tried to reproduce their spoken language as faithfully as possible, as well as that interpretations which do not presuppose misspellings should be preferred to the ones that do.

As mentioned previously, a special section of this problem regards the spelling of names. They often are the most problematic sequences to interpret in otherwise normally quite standardised texts as the Viking-Age stone inscriptions. Precisely their non-formulaic character lies behind the idea that they have a different status compared to more frequently recurring words. As regards the existence of traditional spellings, for instance, Marit Åhlén (1997:17) differentiates between frequent words and personal names, assuming that the former might appear in such traditional spellings, whereas the latter can be expected to reflect the carvers' or the name bearers' pronunciation. Also Evert Salberger (1992:75, 80–81; 2001:84) advanced the idea that one should distinguish between names and other words when it comes to their spelling and to the assumption of miscarvings in runic inscriptions. While formulaic words, when seen in their context, can be understood even if they contain some mistakes, the correct interpretation of names requires them to be more transparent, as the context in this case is not of much help. One should therefore trust that the carver has strived for a correct spelling of each personal name and avoided omissions which can be difficult to see through ("Man får sätta sin lit till att [...] ristaren har eftersträvat en korrekt skrivform av varje personnamn och undvikit utelämningar av runor, vilka kan vara svåra att genomskåda", Salberger 2001:84).

In an article from 2010, Henrik Williams underlined that Salberger's remark is indeed a valuable one: "This explains why even runic inscriptions with seemingly substandard writing may be decoded and interpreted with confidence – as long as the deviant orthography is restricted to words we understand anyway" (ibid.:36). Furthermore, he is highly critical of the widespread tendency to assume the occurrence of carving mistakes independently of the type of runestone, carver or textual position (ibid.:35). Likewise, he criticises the practice of justifying the assumption of miscarvings by referring to mistakes in other parts of the same inscription or on other runestones altogether, when the words being compared do not have the same communicative weight or functional load (ibid.:37).

The concept of functional load is important here, as it entails that Salberger's distinction between names and non-names should actually be

expanded to encompass all non-formulaic words compared to formulaic words (ibid.:36). Formulas, that is memorial formulas, obituaries, prayers and signatures, are of outmost importance for the understanding of runic inscriptions by contemporary Viking-Age readers (and modern runologists as well). Williams explains their central role in the following passage:

> The formulas were standardised to an amazing extent, allowing for little variation, and much of that restricted to the sequence of the elements included. It was by mastering and anticipating various elements in the formulas that the reader of a runestone text was able to crack its code. This is also what constitutes Viking Age literacy. Since every literate person knew what the text was going to say, it was mostly a matter of orientation: Where am I now, what is this word likely to be? Almost all elements could be predicted and the writing of the standardised ones only had to be explicit enough to enable you to distinguish between, say, "stone" and "staff". But non-standardised words were quite a different matter. In dealing with names, at least you knew your solution had to reflect the established or possible stock of names. In the case of other words, however, you probably only had a general idea of what type of lexical item to expect. As to exactly which name and which unpredictable lexical item, you had to rely on the runic orthography alone. That is why the writing of these words is so important and why we have to trust what is there. There is simply no other way of determining what the text says. (Williams 2010:36)

Naturally, Williams does not claim that mistakes do not occur in names and non-formulaic words, or that these words never occur in such deviant spellings that they cannot be decoded, but only that, as a rule, "unexpected words need more clues to enable the reader to decipher them" (loc. cit.). Even words such as personal names can be understood despite containing some mistakes. However, these mistakes should in general be less serious than those occurring in formulaic words, if the possibility to interpret unexpected words is not to be compromised.

The role played by different words' communicative weight for how they are spelled is a complex issue that encompasses different factors and requires answers to several questions in order to be investigated fully. The present study aims at contributing to our understanding of it by addressing

one of these questions, namely about the occurrence of carving mistakes in personal names compared to formulaic words. As is known, monumental runic inscriptions are most often clearly commemorative texts which start with a memorial formula of the kind "X let this stone be raised in memory of Y, his/her *type of kinship*", where "X" and "Y" are personal names. Names are thus the heart of such texts. It is therefore reasonable to think that the effort to spell them accurately might be greater than for words that are more common. The following is therefore an attempt to verify – or falsify – this hypothesis.

3. What is a spelling mistake in runic inscriptions?

A central problem with quantifying the amount of misspellings is that one has to distinguish between actual mistakes and other types of spellings which only at first sight might appear deviant. Seemingly deviant spellings might in reality reflect different variants of the same name, for instance due to certain phonological developments having taken place or not, or have other phonetic reasons. What complicates matters further is the ambiguous nature of the Viking-Age runic writing system, an alphabetic script consisting of sixteen runes with a relatively low approximation to the phonological system they represented (see e.g. Knirk 2002:640, 642). The expansion of the runic alphabet with three more characters, i.e. the so-called dotted runes, certainly contributed to bring the graphemic system closer to the phonological system. However, their use was still largely inconsistent during the 11th century, both because their employment was not compulsory, and because the presence of these diacritics, the dots on the runes, "simply marked something the rune carver felt it was important to mark" (Barnes 1997:17), which was not necessarily the same thing for all carvers (Lagman 1990:128–133).

An attempt to grapple with the issue of differentiating between spelling mistakes and orthophonic or conventionalised spellings was undertaken by Lagman in his aforementioned article (Lagman 1989). He presented the following classification of so-called deviant spellings (ibid.:35):[2]

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2   The following list is closely based on Lagman's article without being a direct translation of his classification. Two Swedish terms used by Lagman are given in cursive between parentheses.

1. Conventionalised variation (*normerad variation*) depending on phonetic reasons and/or varying phonetic analysis by the carvers, for instance the different representations of diphthongs or the use of epenthetic vowels between consonants.
2. Conventionalised spelling (*normerat skrivsätt*) which do not have phonetic but rather orthographic reasons, for instance abbreviations.
3. Individual spellings which cannot be considered conventionalised, but nevertheless can be explained with peculiarities in the carver's pronunciation, for instances speech defects.
4. Deviant spellings that do not fall in the categories above, for instance omitted runes which do not reflect any phonetic reality or depend on abbreviations, as in **sain** for *stæinn* 'stone'.
5. Graphic confusion of similar runes, for example the use of an **a**-rune ᛏ instead of an **n**-rune ᛐ, or the omission of certain graphic traits, for instance the carving of a **k**-rune ᚤ instead of an **f**-rune ᚠ.
6. Changes in the order of the runes in words, which Lagman considers as errors in copying from an original, rather than mistakes that follow a phonetic analysis.

Whereas spellings in the categories 1 and 2 fall under what is acceptable variation in runic writing, according to Lagman, those in the groups 4–6 are to be considered as actual mistakes. Group 3 contains borderline examples, on which he does not take a clear stance.

One of Lagman's main results is that actual misspellings amount to a very low percentage. For instance, the omission of consonants which cannot be given phonetic explanations makes up less than 1% of all occurrences of the relevant consonantal phonemes (Lagman 1989:32).

This insight as well as Lagman's overview represent a valuable starting point for the present investigation, where I follow the same principle that spellings which can be regarded as orthophonic do not count as mistakes. Consequently, I have divided my attestations into three groups, namely expected spellings, variants that could be linguistically motivated, and deviant spellings. For example, a few instances where [ð] lacks written representation in the word *faður* 'father' and *brōður* 'brother', thus resulting in spellings as **faur** and **brour** have been categorised as possibly linguistically motivated variants (cf. ibid.:31), as have forms which show the insertion of an epenthetic vowel, such as **boroþur** or **buroþur**. Also sequences that have different competing interpretations, one of which

does not presuppose the presence of miscarvings, have been included in the same group. This is more common among the attestations of personal names. For example, the sequences **saen**, **sain**, **san**, **sen** or **sin** could all be deviant spellings of the name *Svæinn*, or rather expected forms of *Sæinn*. A similar example of an appellative is found on a runestone in Söderby (U 341), where the sequence **mu** can be an aberrant form of *mōður* 'mother', or rather the expected spelling of *møy* 'maid'.

It is important to point out that Lagman's classification – as well as mine – nevertheless entails some degree of subjectivity. For example, it can be difficult to draw a clear line between conventionalised abbreviations, which he does not count as mistakes, and forgotten runes. He rightly points out that in cases where highly frequent words in a number of instances are spelled without a certain rune (often a vowel; see e.g. the inscription Ög 32 Å church yard cited in section 5) there is reason to believe that these were more or less conventionalised ways of writing some words (ibid.:31). This might have been true at least for some carvers, since abbreviations in fact do not seem to have been a standardised practice in runic writing, as they were in the later manuscript tradition. However, other instances can be more problematic. Particularly relevant for my study is how personal names with omitted runes should be considered, i.e. as mistakes or abbreviations? Since they are not formulaic, according to Lagman's reasoning above they should not be seen as abbreviated forms. Nevertheless, following different classification principles for names and appellatives that show the same phenomenon would defeat the purpose of the following analyses, which is exactly to compare the spelling of these two groups of words. Therefore, all such cases of omitted runes have been grouped together with the deviant spellings. Notwithstanding the fact that possible abbreviations are not actually spelling mistakes, they are however non-orthophonic and partly unexpected spellings which can be considered less accurate than non-abbreviated forms.

My classification of the material differs from Lagman's on some other points where he adopts a more "liberal" stance than I think is reasonable. For instance, regarding the addition of extra runes, he considers spellings such as **istin** for *stæinn* 'stone' (but also **istain**, **isten** etc., i.e. with an additional **i**-rune at the beginning) as the result of an emphatic pronunciation of the word when the carver uttered it in connection with his phonetic analysis of what he had to carve (ibid.:29). My problem with this interpretation

is that there is no way to actually verify or falsify it. Another problematic instance is the spelling **sþten** for *stæinn*, which is explained with a possible speech defect, i.e. lisping, of the carver, but which I have regarded as a deviant spelling. Not all spellings for which there might be a conceivable phonological explanation need in fact be orthophonic spellings.

There are other aspects of Lagman's work worth discussing, but they will not be treated here because they have no bearing on the present analysis, since they regard words which are not included in my study (see section 4). Also the two aforementioned spellings of *stæinn* have been discussed more as a matter of principle, as they stand for an irrelevant part of the analysed deviant spellings (sixteen cases of the **istin**-type of spelling and one **sþten** out of 104 attestations of deviant spellings and 1263 total occurrences of *stæinn*).

4. The spelling of personal names compared to other words'

In order to test the hypothesis that personal names are spelled more carefully than other words, the amount of misspellings which appear in the attestations of a selection of frequent personal names has been compared to the amount of misspellings found in some common formulaic words occurring in Viking-Age Swedish inscriptions. As regards the formulaic words, I have selected a group of highly frequent words from the memorial formula which opens most monumental runic inscriptions, namely *stæinn* 'stone', *faðiʀ* 'father', *mōðiʀ* 'mother' and *brōðiʀ* 'brother' (Table 1). As for the names, the ten most common male names registered by Peterson (2007:272) have been selected for this study (Table 2). The spelling forms of each name and appellative have been excerpted from Peterson 2007 and 2006 respectively, and the number of their occurrences has been established through a search in the Scandinavian Runic-text Database (Samnordisk runtextdatabas version 2014). For the following quantitative study, I have excluded spellings which are only attested in lost inscriptions. Sequences whose fragmentary state of preservation makes it impossible to assess their correctness have also been excluded.

If we start by looking at the formulaic words, Table 1 contains the number and the percentage of attestations which have been classified as expected spellings, possibly linguistically motivated spellings and deviant spellings. The results show that the amount of deviant spellings is between 5% and 13%. The word *brōðiʀ* has the highest percentage of deviant spell-

ings in this group of words, and it is interesting to notice that it also has the highest amount of possibly linguistically motivated variants, which is due to the many examples of insertion of an epenthetic vowel in the initial consonantal cluster.

TABLE 1. *Number and percentages of the analysed appellatives divided into expected spellings, possibly linguistically motivated spellings and deviant spellings.*

Appellative	Expected spellings		Linguistically motivated spellings		Deviant spellings		Total
stæinn	1159	92%	0	0%	104	8%	1263
faðiʀ	650	94%	8	1%	37	5%	695
brōðiʀ	298	81%	22	6%	46	13%	366
mōðiʀ	88	91%	1	1%	8	8%	97

An equivalent analysis of the most often occurring male names reveals that the percentage of deviant spellings in this group is, with the exception of *Ōlafʀ/-læifʀ*, between 2% and 9% (Table 2). These results show that the amount of misspellings in names is on a similar level as that of formulaic words, but that there is nevertheless a difference between them. In fact, the average percentage of deviant spellings is 8.6% for the appellatives and 5.6% for the names. Therefore, there seems indeed to be a tendency of the personal names to be spelled correctly slightly more often than formulaic words. In order to assess the statistical significance of the difference between the observed patterns, a χ^2 test was performed on the basis of the material presented in the two tables, from which, however, those instances that are possibly linguistically motivated were excluded. The test's results show that this difference is in fact significant (p=0.03).

TABLE 2. *Number and percentages of the analysed personal names divided into expected spellings, possibly linguistically motivated spellings and deviant spellings.*

Personal name	Expected spellings		Linguistically motivated spellings		Deviant spellings		Total
Svæinn	116	90%	10	8%	3	2%	129
Biǫrn	89	90%	5	5%	5	5%	99
Þōrstæinn	67	88%	2	3%	7	9%	76
UlfR	63	89%	3	4%	5	7%	71
Anundr/Qnundr	51	85%	4	7%	5	8%	60
Þōrbiǫrn	47	90%	1	2%	4	8%	52
Gunnarr	47	94%	0	0%	3	6%	50
ÞōriR/ÞūriR	37	95%	0	0%	2	5%	39
ŌlafR/-læifR	38	97%	1	3%	0	0%	39
Øystæinn/Æistæinn	31	88%	2	6%	2	6%	35

As is the case for the formulaic words, there is also some variation within the category of personal names. For instance, both the most common and the next least common male name included in this study, *Svæinn* and *ŌlafR/-læifR* respectively, show a very low degree of deviant spellings, which as regards the latter name are only to be found in a couple of lost inscriptions, which are therefore not taken into account in Table 2. When it comes to *Svæinn*, it can be worth noticing, however, that ten occurrences have been classified as potentially linguistically motivated, not because of possible phonetic explanations but as they could be given other interpretations altogether, *Sæinn* in nine cases and *Svællr* in one, which would explain the apparently deviant forms. If all these attestations would in fact be miscarvings, the amount of deviant spellings for this name would reach 10%, which would still be pretty close to the results for both the other names and the formulaic words.

How this variation within the group of names should be explained is not evident by these results. A reasonable assumption might be for example that the length or structure of the names might play a role. However, the small differences between the percentages of deviant spellings, the difference in the number of the names' tokens as well as several factors that are not taken into account here, such as geographic, chronological or individual variation, make it impossible at this time to draw conclusions on this matter, which will have to be the object of future inquiry. The two follow-

ing qualitative studies will, however, provide some preliminary results on the role played by the individual variation.

5. Deviant spellings in their context

From a quantitative perspective, a small but statistically significant difference in the amount of deviant spellings of personal names and formulaic words could be observed. However, it is a known fact that rune carvers' orthography differed and that individual carvers had their own singular traits (see e.g. Thompson 1975:80, 99–101; Åhlén 1997:83–108; Stille 1999:119–120, 153–154; Källström 2010b). It is therefore important to investigate the deviant spellings in their context, that is together with the rest of the inscription where they are found, in order to see whether aberrant spellings of names and formulaic words appear together in the same text, or if one can see a prevalence of errors in one or the other category. To this end, I have looked more closely at a selection of deviant spellings of *Svæinn*, *Biǫrn*, *Þōrstæinn* and *Ulfʀ* as well as of *stæinn* from the group of formulaic words, of which some examples will be given below.

A situated analysis of some deviant forms reveals, as is often the case in the runic writing tradition, a significant variation. A general observation is that, in many instances, deviant spellings of names and of formulaic words occur together in the same inscriptions. In the selected material, this is the most common scenario. Examples of this can be found in the following inscriptions:

Vg 9, Leksberg church yard (Figure 1)
× kunur : a̲r̲s̲t̲i̲ : s̲l̲t̲n̲ : þina : iftiʀ × a-(i)b × naka × foþur ÷ þrkls ×
Gunnur ræisti stæin þenna æftiʀ Ā[l]æif Hnakka/Nakka, faður Þōrkæls.
'Gunnvǫr raised this stone in memory of Áleifr the Neck, Þorkell's father.'

Vg 33, Stommen
k̲ʀ̲r̲u̲a̲ : r̲þ̲i̲ : s̲t̲i̲ : f̲t̲i̲ : t̲u̲s̲a̲ : sun : s-n : þua : hiti : s̲t̲i̲
Gæiʀvarr(?)/Gæiʀvar(?)/Grōa(?) ræisti stæin æftiʀ Tosta(?), sun s[i]nn. Þōra(?) hæmti(?) stæin.
'Geirvarr(?)/Geirvǫr(?)/Gróa(?) raised the stone in memory of Tosti(?), his son. Þóra fetched(?) the stone.'
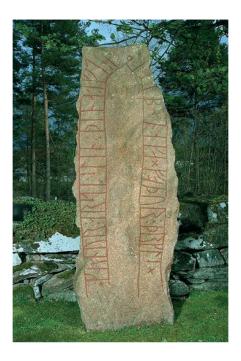
Ög 32, Å church yard

sin · uk (:) þurburn : uk : satar : þʀ **: ritu : stin : þina ift**ʀ **· þurkl · br**þ**r · sin · su(n) (·) s(i)--m**[3]

*Svæinn/Stæinn/Sæinn ok Þōrbiǫrn ok Sandarr þæi*ʀ *rēttu stæin þenna æfti*ʀ *Þōrkæl, brōður sinn, sun <si--m>*

'Sveinn/Steinn/Seinn and Þorbjǫrn and Sandarr, they erected this stone in memory of Þorkell, his/their brother, son of <si--m>.'

In the cases above, several peculiar spellings can be found. On the Leksberg stone, two runes have been transposed in the word *ræisti*, rendered

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3 Erik Brate (SRI 2:31) reads the last runes as **sistm** which he takes to stand for **sist**ʀ, i.e. with an inverted rune, and interprets them as a genitive form of *systi*ʀ. His interpretation has been criticised by Evert Salberger (1990:21–25) who instead wants to emend this sequence to **si<k>(s)(t)**ʀ and interpret it as genitive of *Sigstæinn*. Salberger's interpretation has, in turn, been criticised strongly by Peterson (1991:163–164).

ɑrsti, and the word *stæin* has been miscarved as **sltn**. Instances of omitted runes occur both in the inscription from Å church yard and from Stommen. In the former, the pronoun *þæiʀ* and the appellative *brōður* are spelled **þʀ** and **brþʀ** respectively. Another possible case is **iftʀ** for *æftiʀ*, although the lack of representation of unstressed /i/ might be phonologically motivated (cf. Salberger 1990:20). On the Stommen stone, the words for *ræisti*, *stæin* (attested twice here) and *æftiʀ* are spelled **rþi**, **sti** and **fti**.[4] None of these anomalous spellings actually causes any problems for the interpretation of the text. All the mentioned words are highly frequent and appear in the expected places in the well-known formulaic structure of the late Viking-Age monumental inscriptions.[5]

Not only formulaic words are misspelled, however, as also the personal names show atypical forms which, contrarily to the aforementioned examples, can entail uncertainty as to how they should be interpreted. No such problems are encountered as regards the stones from Leksberg and Å, where some runes have been omitted in the genitive and accusative forms of the widespread name *Þōrkæll*, namely **þrkls** and **þurkl**.[6] Lastly, it can be added that the sequence **sin** in the same inscription might be interpreted as a misspelling of either *Svæinn* or *Stæinn*, or as an expected form of *Sæinn* (see section 4). In this particular case, it might indeed be a mistake for *Svæinn*. Erik Brate (SRI 2:31–32) argues in fact for such an interpretation, as he connects this inscription to another one, Ög 147 Furningstad, which shares the name *Sandarr* with Ög 32 and also mentions his brother *Svæinn* who, together with *Sandarr*, made foot-bridges

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4   In the sequence **fti** for *æftiʀ*, the lack of representation of /ʀ/ could be linguistically motivated by the loss of the phoneme, and not depend on the omission of an **ʀ**-rune (see Larsson 2002:202).

5   In this context, it is interesting to notice that Salberger (1990:19; 1992:64) regards this kind of word forms with omitted runes not as mistakes, but as conscious abbreviations, both in formulaic words and in personal names.

6   Salberger (1990:18) mentions another possible case of an omitted rune in Ög 32, namely **þurburn** for *Þōrbiǫrn*, and criticises Brate (in SRI 2:31) who explains the spelling **burn** as a rendering of a *u*-mutated unbroken /e/. Salberger rejects this phonological explanation by pointing to the other cases of omitted runes in Ög 32. As Lena Peterson (1991:162–163) notices in her review of Salberger's book, the spelling **burn** appears, however, also in inscriptions where no runes are omitted, and possible phonological explanations have been discussed e.g. by Kock (1911:381, 400–401), Brøndum-Nielsen (1950, §96) and Lagman (1990:31–33).

in memory of their brother's son *Fugli*. The same two brothers might thus be mentioned on Ög 32.

Two of the three names on the Stommen stone, **tusɑ** and **þuɑ**, are slightly more obscure, but previous researchers nevertheless have reached a consensus (Svärdström in SRI 5:51; Salberger 1992:64–65) and emended them to **tus**<**t**>**ɑ** and **þu**<**r**>**ɑ**, which consequently should stand for the male name acc. *Tosta* and the female name nom. *Þōra*.[7] The opening rune sequence **kʀruɑ**, on the other hand, has caused more difficulties. Several possible solutions have been suggested (Svärdström in SRI 5:51; Salberger 1992), almost all of them entailing some carving mistake. Elisabeth Svärdström (loc. cit.) has suggested that the **r**-rune in the following sequence **rþi** should be read twice, which results in *Gæiʀvarr* or *Gæiʀvar*. Furthermore, she adduces two other possibilities, namely *Gæiʀvarðr* and *Gæiʀ(h)vatr*. A fourth possible solution has been proposed by Jungner (referred to by Svärdström in SRI 5:51), that is *Gyrva*, which does not entail any misspelling but is previously unattested.[8] Evert Salberger, who criticised all the aforementioned solutions (1992:65–74), proposed yet another solution which however does not contain any mistakes, namely the female name *Grōa*, assuming that the **ʀ**-rune represents an epenthetic vowel (ibid.:75–76).

Although cases like the aforementioned, where both names and formulaic words show deviant spellings in the same inscription, are the most common ones in the investigated corpus, the variation that characterises the material also includes cases where misspelled formulaic words occur together with more carefully written personal names. A few examples, where deviant spellings are underlined, are the following:

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7   At a conference organised at Gothenburg University, Henrik Williams (2019) recently suggested that the sequence **tusɑ** might be interpreted as *Tusi/Tūsi*, identical with *tusi/tūsi* 'crackling one', a poetic term for 'fire' attested in a *þula* (Gurevich 2017:922–923). Moreover, he interprets the sequence **þuɑ** as the name *Þōa*, identical with the verb *þúa* 'to press down' attested in the First Grammatical Treatise (Benediktsson 1972:218 with footnote 85:26). Both names are previously unattested in runic inscriptions.

8   To be noticed is the fact that the vocalic use of the **ʀ**-rune in VikingAge runic inscriptions is otherwise restricted to unrounded vowels (Larsson 2002:155), which contributes to the uncertainty with this interpretation.

Sm 124, Kumlaby church
: iskil : auk : kuna : (l)agþu : <u>setn</u> : …n : bunta sin : kuþ halb : se(l)u has :
Æskæll ok Gunna lagðu stæin … bōnda sinn. Guð hialpi[9] *sēlu hans.*
'Áskell and Gunna laid the stone … their husbandman. May God help his
soul.'

Sm 134, Sandshult
: kuþfastr : raisti : <u>sain</u> : þina : eftiʀ · kunar faþur sin
Guðfastr ræisti stæin þenna æftiʀ Gunnar, faður sinn.
'Guðfastr raised this stone in memory of Gunnarr, his father.'

Vs Fv1988;36, Jädra
taf : lit : risa : <u>estn</u> : þina : <u>hitiʀ</u> : kri(m)ut ÷ uas : farin : sun : (u)iþfast-- :
aust:arla ulfr : auk : uibiurn : -… kitilas : <u>krþi</u> : b-…(u) · (o) : s---
*Taf(?) lēt ræisa stæin þenna æftiʀ Grīmmund. Vaʀ farinn, sunn Viðfast[aʀ],
austarla. Ulfʀ ok Vībiǫrn … Kætilāss(?)/Kætilhǫss(?) gærði b[ryggi]u ā …*
'Taf(?) had this stone raised in memory of Grímmundr. The son of Við-
fastr travelled to the east. Ulfr and Vébjǫrn … Ketilas(?)/Ketilhǫss(?) made
the bridge at …'

Each of the three inscriptions above contains a few personal names. The
interpretation of some of them is not entirely ascertained, for instance *Taf*
on the stone from Jädra, since it seems to be the only runic attestation of this
name (Peterson 2007:218), and in the same inscription also the sequence
kitilas which could correspond to both *Kætilāss* and *Kætilhǫss*.[10] Despite
this, all names show spellings which are expected, considering the runic
writing system and practices. The only words in these inscriptions that
present deviant spellings are very frequent ones, such as **setn**, **sain** and
estn for *stæin* as well as **hitiʀ**[11] for *æftiʀ* and **krþi** for *gærði* (Vs Fv1988;36).

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9   The sequence **halb** on Sm 124 is implicitly regarded by Kinander (SRI 4:268) as a
    mistake for the subjunctive *hialpi*, but it is more probably an expected spelling of
    the imperative *hialp*, which is also used in other inscriptions (see Peterson 2006 s.v.).

10 For a discussion of the different possible interpretations of **kitilas**, see Strid 1988:14;
    Källström 1997:30–31; Andersson 1998:22.

11 A possible phonological explanation for the lack of an expected **f**-rune in *æftiʀ* has
    been put forward by Lagman (1990:67) who, with regard to the spelling **yti**, expla-
    ins this phenomenon with an assimilation [pt] > [tt] in unstressed syllables.

The inscriptions above seem thus to support the hypothesis that personal names were spelled more accurately than other more formulaic words. However, as previously mentioned, there are plenty of instances where both names and other words are misspelled, as well as a few direct counterexamples where mistakes are only found in names and not in more frequent words, such as **khiʀbiarn** for *Gæiʀbiǫrn* (Sm 69),[12] **biairn** and **binrn** for *Biarn* (Sö 226 and U 871 respectively), **hurstins** for *Þōrstæins* (Sm 85) and **þurtsain** for *Þōrstæinn* (U 209). None of these errors causes serious problems for the identification of the names, but nevertheless it is only the names here that contain these misspellings.

6. The rune carver Øpiʀ

To further explore the role of the individual carving practices in the spelling variation of personal names versus appellatives, I have carried out a study of one specific carver, namely Øpiʀ, and the around 50 inscriptions that bear his signature.

Øpiʀ was one of the most prolific carvers of the late Viking Age and is one of the most studied by runologists (see e.g. Åhlén 1997:25–27). He is often characterised as a skilful artist as regards the ornamentation on his stones, but as far as his spelling skills are concerned the opinions of previous researchers vary, describing him both as a careless and a systematic speller, or at least on par with other carvers (ibid.:26–27, 114–115). In general, he is actually remarkably careful in his orthography; several of the alleged deviant spellings that we encounter in the material can in fact be explained as orthophonic. Nevertheless, we do find some occasional slips of the chisel, both in frequent and in less frequent appellatives, and in some other formulaic words (see Table 3).[13]

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12   The use of an **h**-rune in **khiʀbiarn** is probably a correction **n > a**. Moreover, the same inscription contains the sequence **suil** which might be a mistake for *Svæin* but also an expected spelling of *Svæll* (Salberger 1993:41; see also section 4).

13   In the table, one example has been excluded, namely **sain** *sinn* (U 896 Håga). Although the inscription bears Øpiʀ's signature, it is in fact normally not considered to be the work of the same Øpiʀ treated here (se however note 14).

TABLE 3. *Examples of deviant spellings in appellatives and formulaic words from runic inscriptions signed by the carver Øpiʀ.*

Transliteration	Normalisation	Inscription
hustr	*austr*	U 898
fr	*fyr*	U 489
kriki	*kirkiu*	U 687
ru	*rūnaʀ*	U 687
ruɑn	*rūnaʀ*	U 229
run	*rūnaʀ*	U 181, U Fv1976;107
sin	*sīna*	U 687
sin	*sinnaʀ*	U 489
ftiʀ	*æftiʀ*	U 104 (twice)

From several of the examples given in Table 3, one of the characteristic traits of Øpiʀ's spelling becomes evident. He seems namely to abbreviate some words by not carving the last runes, for example in the possessive pronoun "his/her" and in the word "runes". Elias Wessén (in SRI 8:196) writes about this trait in connection with U 687 Sjusta (see e.g. also Peterson 1980:89–91; Salberger 1977:44–46). He remarks that such spellings are not compelled by lack of space, but rather constitute a writing convention used by Øpiʀ, which he calls "graphic abbreviations" (*grafiska förkortningar*). Marit Åhlén (1997:115) shares his view and doubts that these spellings reflect the carver's pronunciation.

The question of orthographic practice versus orthophonic spelling – as far as the formulaic words are concerned – regards first and foremost the many examples of **runɑ** for acc. pl. *rūnaʀ* (occurring e.g. in U 279 and U 287 among other inscriptions; see Åhlén 1997:114, 224 and 226). Källström (2007:56) remarks that **runɑ** might reflect a loss of /ʀ/ in final position. More generally, he observes that the omission of runes in Øpiʀ's inscriptions mostly occur in words ending in *-aʀ*, and that this fact must point to an uncertainty regarding /ʀ/ in final position. I find it improbable that this uncertainty could have led to spellings such as **ru** or **run** for *rūnaʀ*, but **runɑ** might nevertheless be phonologically motivated. Also in this latter case, as in **þisɑ** *þessaʀ* (U 544) as well, Åhlén (1997:114–115) maintains instead that the missing **ʀ** may very well depend on a writing convention, and refers to other instances where omitted runes cannot be explained phonologically. Finally, one might argue that, when Øpiʀ

abbreviated such words, he would omit the whole ending, as in **run** *rūnaʀ* and **sin** *sinnaʀ*, whereas it is in fact a trait of his pronunciation that shows in **runa** *rūnaʀ*. It remains true, however, that occasions where the omission of runes cannot be phonologically motivated make it difficult to give a confident answer to this issue (see also Larsson 2002:116).

An investigation of the spelling of personal names in Øpiʀ's production reveals that not only did he produce deviant spellings of some of them, but also that when it came to names, he applied at times the same practice of abbreviating words (Table 4).

TABLE 4. *Deviant spellings of names in inscriptions signed by Øpiʀ.*

Transliteration	Normalisation	Inscription
askiarþ	*Āsgærðaʀ*	U 1177
khulu	*Gullaug/Gulløy*	U 489
kulhu	*Gulløy*	U 462
girkha	*Grikkia*[14]	U 922
alfntan	*Halfdan*[15]	U 462
halfntan	*Halfdan*	U 229
ikimar	*Ingimaraʀ*	U 307
sihikfastr	*Sigfastr*[16]	U Fv1948;168
sihimuntr	*Sigmundr*	U Fv1948;168
þorbiarn	*Þōrbiarnaʀ*	U 229

14   Another attestation of this name is found on U 104 Ed, where it is also rendered by what seems to be a deviant spelling, even though part of the sequence is damaged, i.e. **k--ika**.

15   Regarding both attestations of *Halfdan* on U 229 and U 462, Åhlén (1997:116 and footnote 98) assumes that Øpiʀ's phonetic analysis of the name must have led to the use of an **n**-rune. Another possible example of this name is found in U 1022 Storvreta, where the sequence **althrn** has been interpreted as *Halfdan* or *Eldiarn*. This inscription, although bearing Øpiʀ's signature, is normally not seen as the work of the same Øpiʀ who is discussed here because of its deviant spelling, carving technique and untypical ornamentation (see e.g. Wessén in SRI 9:249–250; Åhlén 1997:59–60). However, Magnus Källström (2010a:150, 152) has argued that it might actually be one of his early inscriptions, as would two other monuments, namely U 896 Håga and U 940 Uppsala, which bear Øpiʀ's signature but are normally not regarded as the work of the "famous" Øpiʀ.

16   Åhlén (1997:116) wants to explain the deviant spellings **sihikfastr** and **sihimuntr** on U Fv1948;168 either with the two brothers' pronunciation of their names, or with Øpiʀ's phonetic analysis.

Among the occurrences listed in Table 4, there are several cases which are reminiscent of the abbreviated formulaic words treated above, namely when the genitive ending *-aʀ* is omitted. In personal names, this appears to be a practice which almost exclusively distinguishes Øpiʀ's work (Peterson 1981:72–73; 1983:207–208).[17] Another quite *Øpiʀesque* trait appears to be the use of a genitive ending in *-a* instead of *-aʀ* in personal names (Peterson loc. cit.), namely in **kilaua** *Gillaugaʀ* or *Gilløyar* (U 489) and [**io**]**runa** *Iōrunnaʀ* (U 142).[18] These cases might be phonologically motivated by the loss of /ʀ/ in final position, but given the rarity of these spellings, their (partial) specificity for Øpiʀ and his propensity to abbreviate *-aʀ*-endings, we cannot exclude the possibility that these cases too are to be explained as results of a written practice or, alternatively but perhaps less plausibly, of a mistake.

Whatever the reason for these omissions may be, what is interesting in this context is that this practice is not only found in formulaic words, but also in personal names. The same can be said of the sporadic misspellings in Øpiʀ's work. Considering his treatment of names and formulaic words, it would thus seem like the spelling of these two categories of words does not differ very much.

7. Conclusions

In previous research, it has been observed that the different communicative weight carried by personal names and formulaic words might play a role in the way they are spelled in runic inscriptions, and in the possibilities that contemporary readers had to decipher them. The names' different status

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17 A couple of instances occur in inscriptions that have been attributed or otherwise put in connection to Øpiʀ. The relevant examples and inscriptions are: **hulmtis** *Holmdisaʀ* and **iufurfast** *Iufurfastaʀ* (U 312; Axelson 1993:27; Åhlén 1997:151 note 7), **kulaug** *Gullaugaʀ* (U 985; Axelson 1993:110; Åhlén 1997:198–199), **rahnfriþ** *Ragnfriðaʀ* (U 115; Axelson 1993:104–105; Åhlén 1997:170–171).

18 Two other examples have been connected to Øpiʀ, but the inscriptions' attribution has been criticised: **antuita** *Andvettaʀ* (U 1036; Axelson 1993:110–111; Åhlén 1997:146) and [**i**]**arunta** *Iarunda*[ʀ] (U 1085; Axelson 1993:111; Åhlén 1997:168–169). Another possible example not carved by Øpiʀ is **kuþabiarnao** *Guðbiarnaʀ* (U 579), where Jansson (SRI 7:464) assumes that the use of an **o**-rune is a mistake for **ʀ**, whereas Williams (1990:73) explains the last two runes **ao** as marking nasalisation after /n/.

could also be extended to encompass all infrequent words which lie outside the formulaic composition of most late Viking-Age monumental texts.

In the present study, I have investigated a part of this complex issue, by concentrating on the occurrence of misspellings in a selection of personal names and formulaic words. The hypothesis I set out to test was that personal names are spelled more accurately and appear less often in a deviant form than formulaic words. In order to verify or falsify this thesis, a quantitative study and two qualitative investigations have been carried out. The results obtained are to be considered as pieces of a complicated whole, which I hope will continue to be analysed in future studies.

In the quantitative investigation, the amount of deviant spellings in a selection of common personal names and appellatives has been compared in the whole Viking-Age Swedish material. The results show that, on average, names do seem to be spelled correctly more often than formulaic words. This is interesting as it reveals a general, although weak tendency to carve names more carefully, plausibly because of their more prominent role and less stardardised nature in runstone inscriptions. At the same time, this statistically significant difference in the proportions of deviant spelling in the two categories is very low, namely 3%. Whether this difference can be used as aid in the interpretation of single cases is, therefore, dubious.

Moreover, the general patterns observed here might be nuanced by taking other factors into account, which this study did not include. For instance, there could be differences in the spelling of names and formulaic words with regard to the type of mispellings which occur, and a comparison of this variable in the two categories of words might yield interesting results. Furthermore, a variation in the rate of mistakes has also been ascertained within each group of words. This suggests that factors other than belonging to one or the other group may have influenced the spelling. As regards the names, for instance, one might imagine that their length or structure, monothematic or dithematic, or their frequency could play a role. Furthermore, the presence of vocalic phonemes which do not find a direct representation in the limited runic graphemic system might conceivably have led to a higher degree of spelling variation, but also to a higher degree of misspellings. Other variables such as the inscriptions' dating or provenance, not taken into account at this time, could also prove relevant. At the same time, it is worth noticing that generally the differences between the percentages of deviant spellings of the names are quite small after all. Future inquiry will most certainly nuance the results presented here.

The role that individual variation might have played in the production of deviant spellings has been investigated in the two qualitative analyses. The first one is a contextual analysis of a selection of deviant forms. The question posed was whether deviant spellings of names and formulaic words co-occur in the same inscriptions, or if there is a tendency to spell more (or less) accurately in one or the other category. The most common scenario seems to be that misspelled names occur together with misspelled formulaic words. At the same time, several instances have been recorded of personal names being carved more carefully, thus supporting the original hypothesis under scrutiny. However, the material also offers counter-examples where deviant forms are only found in names.

What these observations suggest is that difficulties posed by some names, or their central role in the inscriptions, might in single cases have affected their spelling negatively or positively. Nevertheless, the fact that misspellings oftentimes occur independently of the type of word involved, gives the general impression that they in many cases depend more on the carver's skill, rather than on whether words belong to different categories. In this sense, when confronted with an unexpected spelling of a personal name, it would not be totally unreasonable to look at how the rest of the inscription is spelled, formulaic words included, although mistakes in the latter do not automatically imply mistakes in the former.

The last study is a closer look at the work of one of the most well-known and productive rune carvers of the Viking-Age in Sweden: Øpiʀ. Although he is generally thorough in his orthography, his inscriptions do occasionally present deviant spellings. Moreover, his work shows a few peculiar but recurring traits, such as the abbreviation of words by omitting their last runes. What is interesting is that deviant spellings and abbreviated forms can be found both in very frequent words and in names, suggesting that the treatment of these two categories, as far as their spelling is concerned, is very similar.

The results of the present study hence support the hypothesis that misspellings appear less often in names than in frequent, formulaic words, which is an interesting insight in Viking-Age literacy. However, the small difference between these two word categories, as well as the qualitative observations from single inscriptions and from Øpiʀ's work, make this tendency difficult to use as an interpretative guideline in single cases. What the analyses do offer clear evidence for, however, is the very low degree of misspellings present in the runic material in general. The case for the

defence of rune carvers' orthography is thus strengthened further. This has of course important implications for our interpretative work: Interpretations that presuppose misspellings should in fact be scrutinised, as chances are there is a better one.

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