

Corpus Editions of Norwegian Runic Inscriptions

James E. Knirk (University of Oslo)

Abstract

The first corpus edition of Norwegian runic inscriptions appeared as part of Ole Worm's *Monumenta Danica* and contained only fifty items. In 1864, Sophus Bugge began working with runes and later conceived the idea of producing a modern corpus edition. Norway's inscriptions with older runes (*NIæR*) appeared under his name and that of his successor, Magnus Olsen, from 1891–1924; the work is outdated and has been supplanted by supranational editions of the older futhark corpus. Magnus Olsen began publication of Norway's inscriptions with younger runes (*NIyR*) in 1937–41 and was assisted after 1948 by Aslak Liestøl, who was responsible for the Norwegian Runic Archives. The five volumes published by 1960 were initially intended to be a complete corpus publication. However, archaeological excavations after the fire at Bryggen ('the [Hanseatic] Wharf') in Bergen in 1955 ultimately produced almost as many new inscriptions as had been published in the first five volumes and since then there have been many more new Norwegian finds. At least six further volumes will be needed to accommodate this additional material; one has appeared and another is nearing completion. The series is well illustrated, extensively indexed and in general restrained, although in the first five volumes Magnus Olsen could on occasion indulge in speculation and even flights of fantasy.

Keywords: Runic inscriptions, Norway, corpus editions, *Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer*, *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer*, Sophus Bugge, Magnus Olsen, Aslak Liestøl

Early attempts and preparatory work

The first corpus edition of Norwegian runic inscriptions appeared in 1643 as the sixth "book" in Ole Worm's, or Olaus Wormius's, *Monu-*

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menta Danica (*Danicorum monumentorum libri sex*, ‘Six books of Danish monuments’; cf. Lerche Nielsen forthcoming): “Liber sextus Norvagica continens” (pp. 457–525). For Norway’s part the work was based on responses to a communication from the Dano-Norwegian chancellor in 1622 and subsequent letters from Worm to bishops in the realm requesting them to expedite to Copenhagen information about runic antiquities (Moltke 1956–58, 2: 18, 106). Manuscript contributions from Norway (cf. Lerche Nielsen forthcoming) were forwarded in the 1620s and ’30s by the bishops of Stavanger, Bergen and Nidaros/Trondheim, and by a canon at the cathedral in Christiania (Oslo). Worm’s edition encompassed forty-nine inscriptions in younger runes, over half of them from the bishopric of Stavanger, and one with older runes, KJ 72 Tune. (Two of the stones described, Hoga on Orust in Bohuslän [Bo Peterson 1992], and Frösö in Jämtland [J RS1928;66], are on what is now Swedish territory and the latter is definitely Swedish in type and language.) Although Magnus Olsen in the Norwegian corpus edition of younger runes from the mid-1900s (*NlyR*, see below) is critical of the arbitrary alterations made by Worm to the manuscript drawings in his printed illustrations, and also of his interpretations, it must be remembered that runology was still in its infancy and Worm was attempting as best he could to make sense of the material he had received.

A questionnaire with forty-three specific questions, sent from the Danish chancellery in 1743 to clergymen and other civil servants in the Dano-Norwegian realm, included a request for information about items of antiquarian interest, but elicited little fresh runic material from Norway (the responses were published only recently, in Røgeberg et al. 2003–08). The rune-related material that did appear there was heavily dependent on Worm 1643, including, for example, two separate presentations of the N 62 Granavollen stone’s supposedly lost top with direct reference to Worm (cf. Knirk 2005). This was appropriate since one particular question (no. 41) requested information about any authors ‘e.g. Olaus Wormius’ who had written about local antiquities and for confirmation of or corrections to such presentations. In the first decades of the 1800s, the burgeoning national spirit and desire to build a nation led to an intense preoccupation with everything Norwegian, and an appeal by Selskabet for Norges Vel (‘the Society for the good of Norway’) in 1809 resulted in a new collection of information about runes but no new edition. The universal corpus of runic inscriptions by the Swede Johan Gustaf Liljegren (1833; cf. Källström 2022, 8 f.), effectively a checklist with basic transcriptions and references to sources, contains some ninety Norwegian items spread throughout the work. Even though Liljegren was up to date, having had access to impor-

tant contributions from earlier in the century, this represents an increase of only forty or so on Worm's total.

In 1811, Selskabet for Norges Vel appointed a committee to assemble and preserve objects of antiquity and the resulting collection, Oldsaksamlingen ('the Collection of antiquities'), was donated in 1823 to the newly established university in Christiania and for the rest of the century functioned as the national archaeological repository. Important Norwegian scholarly contributions to runology were made in the mid-1800s by the historian and philologist P. A. Munch (cf. Barnes 2012). In 1864, the year after Munch's death, Sophus Bugge became a lecturer at the university and two years later was appointed professor in comparative linguistics and Old Norwegian. He immediately began work on Norwegian runic inscriptions, and from 1864 kept a notebook entitled "Norske Runeindskrifter", with the motto: *fár er fullrýninn* 'few are thoroughly skilled in runes'. In order to facilitate Bugge's endeavours, the professor of archaeology, Oluf Rygh, decided in 1887 to transfer information about runic objects from Oldsaksamlingen's main topographic archive and, assisted by Ingvald Undset, to create a scholarly collection of runic archivalia: Runearkivet ('the Runic Archives'). Bugge is now considered to be the most outstanding Norwegian philologist active in the last decades of the 1800s (cf. Holm-Olsen 1981, 112–24); his vast Indo-European comparative background, extensive knowledge of older Germanic, especially Scandinavian, languages, and exacting editorial practices as exemplified in his edition of the Codex Regius of Eddic poetry, made him supremely qualified to undertake the task of editing the corpus editions of the Norwegian runic inscriptions.

Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer

The national edition of Norwegian inscriptions with older runes is entitled *Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer*, usually abbreviated *NIæR*. The first volume, written by Bugge, appeared in fascicles over the period 1891–1903. In this tome, thirty-three inscriptions are published in geographical order from the south-east to the north, followed by eight later finds, again in geographical order, and one of unknown origin. The articles, one for each inscription, are prefaced with a presentation of all the relevant literature (some in manuscript form), a statement of the basis for the presentation (e.g. repeated examination of the original, examination of plaster casts, paper squeezes and photographs), and information concerning the illustrations (frequently excellent drawings, many by Ludvig Wimmer's Dan-

ish draftsman, Magnus Petersen [cf. Lerche Nielsen forthcoming; Moltke 1956–58, 2: 241–50], but particularly in the later articles also photographic reproductions). The entries themselves commence with information about the findplace (including place-name elucidations) and find circumstances and continue with a detailed description of the object bearing the runes, the inscription and the individual graphs. This is followed by a transrunicification, i.e. a reproduction with slightly normalised runic characters (lacking in the earliest articles, where drawings serve the same purpose), and a transliteration of the inscription. The next section provides a word-for-word discussion of the editor’s understanding of each runic sequence thought to constitute an entity, including comments on phonological, grammatical and syntactic phenomena and their parallels, and references to relevant scholarly literature. Thereafter the inscription is, if necessary, transcribed into words which are then translated into Norwegian. Possible versification or the like, general considerations concerning the interpretation, and the probable dating of the inscription are then reviewed. Four excursuses are inserted where relevant.

Volume two appeared as two half-volumes, the first written by Bugge, who was assisted by Magnus Olsen, in 1903–04, the second in 1916–17 by Olsen, who in 1908, one year after Bugge’s death, succeeded him as professor of Old Norwegian and Icelandic. The first half-volume contains three additional inscriptions, all of somewhat dubious nature and age (Bugge himself was undecided about their possible authenticity), seven reports of lost inscriptions whose putative runes were never recorded, and ten inscriptions which were not included in the corpus due to their uncertain runic status. There follow copious corrections and additions to nearly all the inscriptions published in the first volume and the work concludes with one later find and one additional doubtful inscription. The second half-volume contains seven new finds, one problematic lost inscription and a further two inscriptions not included in the corpus due to their questionable nature. There is, incidentally, continuous numbering of pages for volumes one (pp. 1–458) and two (pp. 459–747).

Half of Bugge’s introduction to the series, entitled “Runeskriftens Oprindelse og ældste Historie” (‘The origin and earliest history of the runic script’, dictated by Bugge due to his failing sight), had already been typeset when he died; the rest, existing in manuscript form, was edited and published by Olsen in 1912–13. The introduction constitutes a separate volume in the series.

Volume three was written and published by Olsen over the period 1914–24. It includes a long chapter by Haakon Schetelig about the archae-

ological dating of the older Norwegian runic inscriptions, followed first by three new finds (including the Eggja stone, KJ 101, discovered in 1917), and then corrections and additions to nearly all of the fifty-seven inscriptions published in the complete corpus. A postscript and copious indices and schematic overviews complete the work.

Norges Indskriffter med de ældre Runer is both difficult to use and outdated. The additional discoveries of new inscriptions over the course of the thirty-five years of publication make it hard to locate individual articles, and the corrections and additions found in the latter two volumes to almost all of the previously published inscriptions make it cumbersome to use. It is clear that the first volume in particular suffers from the fact that Bugge and his contemporaries were still struggling to interpret the older runes. In addition, Bugge could venture into flights of fantasy, as in his interpretation of the Ågedal bracteate (IK 1). The most curious mistake, however, is the publication of the runes on two stone fragments found at different times on the farm Myklebostad as separate inscriptions in spite of the fact that the same type of stone is involved and that the width and breadth measurements correspond almost exactly (the error most probably arose because the second fragment was more worn and partially unreadable, having been used as a doorstep). It was not until 1929 that Carl Marstrand recognized the fragments to be two conjoining pieces of the same rune-stone (KJ 77). Basically the authenticity of none of the questionable inscriptions has stood the test of time and even some of those included in the corpus (e.g. no. 38 Nordgaarden and no. 43 Belgu) are no longer accepted. Note that no. 33 Gimsøy (now N A11), which in fact contains runes from the Viking Age, was not republished in the corpus of younger runic inscriptions. The archaeological dating is for the most part now obsolete (cf. Imer 2015; Haavaldsen 1991), and reinterpretations have been offered of several of the inscriptions, notably by the Germanic philologist Ottar Grønvik (1981, 1985, 1987, 1996). Some of Grønvik's new interpretations are, however, drastic and unfounded (e.g. of the Ågedal bracteate, Grønvik 1987, 61–91). All new finds of older futhark inscriptions in Norway since 1924 have been published separately in periodicals, e.g. recent finds of rune-stones from Hogganvik (Knirk 2011) and Øverby/Rakkestad (Iversen et al. 2019). Notwithstanding its drawbacks, the corpus edition remains useful for its specific and often extensive information about the finds and the objects themselves. In addition, several illustrations, in particular drawings, retain their interest. Sometimes interpretations by Bugge or Olsen that are generally considered to be obsolete are revived (cf. Thórhallur Eythórsson 2013).

Since Wolfgang Krause’s publication in 1937 of an international edition of the great majority of the older runic inscriptions, and especially since his greatly expanded full corpus edition of 1966 (with contributions by Herbert Jankuhn), there has no longer been much need for national publications of subcorpora from the older period. Gerd Høst produced a handy but slim and popular presentation of the Norwegian older runic corpus in 1976, which included a few glimpses of Grønvik’s at that time unpublished new interpretations. Concerning Grønvik’s own many publications, the Kiel database project, and the German “RuneS” project, see Zimmermann 2022, 70–73, and Zimmermann in Williams et al. 2022, 128–31. There are at present no plans in Norway for any new publication of a national corpus of older runic inscriptions.

Norges innskifter med de yngre runer

Work on a national publication of the Norwegian inscriptions with younger runes, i.e. those from the Viking Age and medieval period, started simultaneously with that on the older runes. Bugge’s notebook, begun in 1864 and used continuously until his death in 1907, includes copious annotations in preparation for an edition, and he produced a variety of comments, accounts and articles concerning younger runic inscriptions (*NlyR*, 2: v). A number of preliminary presentations were also written by Oluf Rygh and further preparatory work was undertaken by the archaeologist Ingvald Undset (used or published verbatim in the first volumes of the actual corpus edition, see below). Two trial fascicles of a corpus edition were published in 1902 (by Bugge, concerning the lost Hønen stone, N 102) and 1906 (by Bugge and Olsen, concerning the Senja silver neckring, N 540). At about the time Olsen finished publication of the inscriptions in older runes, financial support for further publication, now of the younger runes, was withdrawn and did not materialise again for over a decade. In the meantime, Olsen published an overview of the West Norse runic inscriptions in younger runes in the volume *Runorna* (ed. von Friesen, 1933) in the series *Nordisk kultur*.

Publication of *Norges innskifter med de yngre runer*, usually abbreviated *NlyR*, began in 1937 with the fascicular printing of quires of the first volume, which was completed in 1941. Olsen wrote in his introduction that the volume comprised about a quarter of the Norwegian corpus (which was indeed the case at the time). The ordering of inscriptions resembles the system employed in *Norges Indskifter med de ældre Runer*: it progresses geographically around the country, from south-east to

north, according to the official numbering of the counties of Norway. This is also how the main topographic archive in Oldsaksamlingen (now part of the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo), and thus basically the Runic Archives, is ordered. Each separate inscription is given an individual number even if more than one occurs on a single object. Thus the two inscriptions from different times on the Alstad stone, for example, are N 61 and N 62, and the same logic applies to each separate inscription in the fabric or on the furnishings of a church, as with N 85–89 in Høre [Hurum] stave-church. Rune-stones and small finds such as runic amulets discovered in churches precede runes on church furnishings, which are presented before inscriptions carved into the walls and other parts of the building. The latter are generally catalogued as they proceed around the outside of the church clockwise from the main doorway, and then as they occur inside, first those in the nave again clockwise from the entrance and thereafter those in the chancel. Divergence from this ordering occurred when new inscriptions were found after Olsen had already numbered the ones known to him.

The structure of individual articles in the corpus edition of younger runic inscriptions follows that of the older runic inscriptions (see above). Each inscription is presented in an independent article which begins with a list of the pertinent published and archival material on which it is based. The discussion then proceeds from find to object, thence to inscription, particularly reading, interpretation and understanding, and finally to dating. There has been only minor facultative variation in this structure over the years. Transrunification, with runic forms placed directly above the transliteration, has been used from the very first article.

The first volume contains the runic inscriptions from the eastern counties: Østfold, Akerhus and Oslo, Hedmark, and Oppland. Seventeen of the eighty-nine articles give Oluf Rygh's presentation, almost invariably followed by a separate section with comments, modifications, and additions by Olsen; one is by Sophus Bugge, with Olsen's additions. Unfortunately, although this volume appeared long after the Swedes had begun publishing good photographic documentation of inscriptions in the early 1900s (in *Sveriges runinskrifter*), and while the Danes were preparing excellent photographs for their new corpus edition (*Danmarks Runeindskrifter*), Olsen was content to provide drawings alone for several of the entries, e.g. all five inscriptions from Høre stave-church (N 85–89). Photographic documentation of several inscriptions is thus lacking. Individual interpretations also attracted criticism, the most extensive of which appeared in a thirty-three-page review in 1949 by the linguist and

professor of Celtic languages in Oslo, Carl J. S. Marstrander. In 1948, Aslak Liestøl was hired by Oldsaksamlingen with responsibility for the Runic Archives amongst his other duties. As a philologically trained museum curator, he immediately began examining and photographing runic inscriptions, entering quickly into an informal scholarly cooperation with Olsen. Thus better descriptions based on personal examination as well as excellent modern photographs were made available for future volumes.

After his retirement in 1949, Olsen intensified his work on the corpus edition. Subsequent volumes appeared every third year: vol. 2 (counties of Buskerud, Vestfold, and Telemark; ninety inscriptions: N 90–179; 1951), vol. 3 (counties of Aust-Agder, Vest-Agder, and Rogaland; ninety-one inscriptions: N 180–270; 1954), vol. 4 (counties of Hordaland, Sogn and Fjordane, and Møre and Romsdal; 179 inscriptions: N 271–449; 1957), and vol. 5 (counties of Sør-Trøndelag, Nord-Trøndelag, Nordland, and Troms, plus unknown findplaces, later finds, and miscellaneous items; 153 inscriptions: N 450–602; 1960). From volume three, the informal cooperation with Liestøl was formalised; thereafter almost all descriptions of objects and runes became his responsibility and were often presented as quotations of his examination and reading protocols. His exacting personal examinations, thorough descriptions and excellent documentation enhanced the quality of the later volumes (cf. Halvorsen 1986). He also wrote some articles and among his most important contributions are those on the Stavanger stone cross (N 252), the Kuli stone (N 449) and the inscriptions in Hedal stave-church (N 554–59).

Following the articles in volume five that detail all later finds and miscellaneous material, particularly the runic coins from the time of Óláfr kyrri 1065–80 (N 598–602), comes an overview of Old Norwegian inscriptions found outside present-day Norway. This comprises concise presentations of seven from Båhuslen/Bohuslän, a Norwegian province until 1658 (missing are the Hoga stone from Orust [Bo Peterson 1992] and the two strange Valla stone fragments in Tossene parish [Bo Boije 5]); general information and bibliographical references for inscriptions from the Hebrides (Holy Island), the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland; as well as a probable Norwegian inscription found in Denmark (DR 169 Tornby) and one from Florence that is possibly Norwegian (“Göngu-Hrólf’s” ivory horn, cf. Liestøl 1979). Olsen also lists six inscriptions published in the Norwegian corpus edition that are probably Swedish, Danish or Icelandic.

Relatively short lists of errata and addenda are provided at the end of volumes 1–4 to articles published in the respective volume, of which the ones with extensive additional information in vol. 2 about N 122 Ål church 2

(by Aslak Liestøl) and in vol. 3 about the N 248 Madla lead cross are the most important. At the end of volume 5 is a twenty-eight page section of ‘Additions and corrections’ to all five volumes, half of them to volume 1, many of which discuss Marstrander’s observations and suggestions in his review from 1949. (Unfortunately, however, no additional photographs were published to compensate for the poor documentation in that first volume.) The importance of the corrections and additions should be noted since at times these lead to revised interpretations. Regrettably, some of them take readings and interpretations in a more imaginative and speculative direction.

The volumes close with a list of abbreviations, a short index, and plates with high resolution photographs on glossy paper of a limited number of inscriptions. Extensive indices are provided at the end of volume five covering all the volumes and dealing with: (1) inscriptions (all those referred to, not just the Norwegian ones, grouped according to both type of object and place of find), (2) words occurring in inscriptions, (3) aspects of the script, (4) aspects of the language, (5) references to ancillary literature, (6) scholars mentioned or cited, and (7) miscellanea.

It is not always clear which inscriptions were excluded from the corpus edition and why; in the preface to volume five, Olsen mentions that the sixth and final volume was intended to contain presentations of dubious inscriptions, among other material. One of these, from Skollerud in Ytre Ådal (Ringerike), had already been mentioned in the preface to volume two; the two lines of Old Norse text on the stone read **olemyhreræistrunarþesar | skoller** ‘olemyhre** carved these runes | Skoller[ud]’. Olsen had published this inscription in a newspaper article in 1926 where he interpreted the name as *Áli *mygri/*migri* ‘Áli the intricate worker’. In fact, this is clearly the modern name Ole Myhre, perhaps a local agronomist born in 1877. Olsen explains that he did not include the inscription because it was “vanskelig å bedømme og tidfeste” (‘difficult to evaluate and date’). Most of the material Olsen referred to as having uncertain runic status has since been re-examined and much of it dismissed; the definitely or most likely post-Reformation material was published in Jonas Nordby’s Oslo master’s thesis (2001).

There are various problems with Olsen’s readings, especially in volume one. For example, in N 20 Oslo 6, he reads **anfinir**, remarking that the penultimate rune ‘should no doubt be read | i, not † e’; he describes a dot on the stave as a point where the knife had cut more deeply in the middle of the vertical line, but claims (baselessly) that it was scarcely the carver’s intention to make a dot. He also states, concerning the

partially unreadable N 54 Vågå, that the first runes that can be read with any certainty are ‘R̥Y11 r̥kto (scarcely R̥Y11 r̥fio)’; the correct reading is **r̥fio**, or rather **r̥afio** (in **ser̥afion** ‘Serapion’, the name of one of the Seven Sleepers; cf. Knirk 1998a, 19). There are also recurrent problems with his identification of putative Maria monograms, the most glaring of which is N 87 Høre stave-church 3, where a Maria monogram is discerned in a combination of one section of a very long vertical crack in a post in the choir, an intersecting line randomly cut with a knife, and a thin arching line of splattered modern paint (cf. Knirk 1991, 20 f.). There are several somewhat similar instances among the inscriptions in Lom stave-church (N 30–52) where apparent scratches and random cuts are deemed to be runic. Questionable readings occur in later volumes too, but less frequently, e.g. when the probable knife or nail scratches on the Oseberg bucket, only two of which are reasonably runiform, are considered to be runes and published as an ownership inscription, N 138, even though the resulting syntax with initial placement of *á* ‘owns’, although not unique, defies the rules of unmarked Old Norse syntax.

Magnus Olsen demonstrated great learning (cf. Jørgensen 2010) and at times even greater imagination; he was a master of producing ideas and combining disparate elements into a homogeneous construct but the final results cannot always be trusted. His readings, documentation and linguistic presentation of runic texts as individual words were generally acceptable (especially after Liestøl joined the project) but too often he advanced speculative interpretations. By way of example can be mentioned the spinning whorl N 246 Byberg where the four-rune inscription **hans** is interpreted by assuming the long-branch *s*-rune as standing for its “name” or rather designation, *sól*; the result is presented as *handsól* pl. ‘hand-shakes’ or ‘giving hands’ to confirm an oral agreement. The deductive chain is itself highly suspect and combining this interpretation with customs connected to spinning leads to wide-ranging speculation. In a rare criticism of Bugge, Olsen wrote that he ‘did not dare to publish’ the former’s article on the N 2 Bjørneby stone (presumably because it was overly speculative). On the other hand, he largely accepted Bugge’s reconstruction of the inscription on the lost N 102 Hønen stone and indeed plunged even further than his older colleague had into the realms of speculation: this aspect of the sixty-five-page article dominates the material and thus illustrates the voluminous nature of many of the extra-linguistic commentaries. Olsen frequently attempted to identify personal names on rune-stones with historical figures, and although such identifications may initially seem as suspect as many of his other speculations,

they are by no means always inconceivable. See, for example, Knirk's (1993, 180–83) cautious acceptance of the possibility that Eyvindr úrarhorn mentioned in the sagas of St. Óláfr could be identical with the *Eyvindr* in N 210 Oddernes 2, and perhaps also the one in N 211 Søgne, but compare on the other hand Spurkland's (2005, 114 f.) doubts about the identification of the godfather named in N 210 as *Óláfr helgi* 'St. Óláfr'.

In the preface to volume five, which appeared three years before his death in 1963, Olsen took his leave of the corpus edition, observing that Liestøl would continue the publication, either in a new series or in a sixth volume containing inscriptions whose runic status was uncertain (cf. above), those from Maeshowe (cf. Barnes 2022, 101 f.), and new finds from Bryggen ('the [Hanseatic] Wharf') in Bergen. At that time the new finds from Bergen alone consisted of over 200 inscriptions.

Volume six, containing almost a third of the new inscriptions from Bryggen, appeared in two fascicles in 1980 and 1990: Liestøl published most of the inscriptions with Latin language texts (N 603–47, with an excursus on *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* inscriptions) and the independent scholar Ingrid Sanness Johnsen a great number of those concerned with commerce and trade (letters and ownership tags, N 648–773 [the last one compiled by Liestøl], followed by a short 'summary'). Liestøl introduced several changes to the system of transliteration, particularly concerning the editorial signs for indicating uncertain readings and lacunae where he in part followed the Leiden Conventions for editing ancient Greek and Latin inscriptions. These included employing a dot under a letter rather than parentheses around it to specify an uncertain reading and using en-dashes enclosed by square brackets rather than a plain em-dash to signal a lacuna, with unidentifiable remnants of a rune marked with a period on the line rather than an asterisk. In addition, he imposed a rather more systematic structure and concise form on the articles. Among other things, the introductory list of material on which the article is based is drastically shortened and consists mainly of bibliographic reference to published works. James Knirk, who succeeded Liestøl (†1983) as head of the Norwegian Runic Archives in 1985, became editor of the series in 1987/88 and extensively revised the content in Sanness Johnsen's fascicle. In addition, he contributed eighteen pages of 'additions and corrections' to Liestøl's publication, a short bibliographic supplement to Sanness Johnsen's work, a concise description of the archaeological excavation at Bryggen, and a substantial index for the entire volume following the structure of indices in volume five. New readings of inscriptions in the first fascicle were facilitated by the fact that the objects were no longer

preserved in water but had undergone conservation. Archaeological dates were revised by Asbjørn Herteig, the leader of the excavation, who correlated the find-layers, and by James Knirk who, using Herteig's correlations and checking original archival material for each of the runic items, was able to correct archaeological datings in the database of finds from Bryggen. No plates on glossy paper were included.

Volume seven will contain 120 inscriptions found after 1960 in Trondheim, in particular from the area excavated for the new Trondheim Public Library (Folkebibliotekstomta) during the years 1971–94, but also some earlier finds from other sites in the city and later finds in the walls and columns of the Nidaros Cathedral and the Archbishop's Palace. This volume, with articles written by the professor of Old Norse in Trondheim, Jan Ragnar Hagland, and James Knirk (co-author since 2012), and edited by the latter, is scheduled to appear in 2024. It is based mainly on Hagland's many presentations of individual finds or groups of finds which together cover the majority of the inscriptions from the Trondheim Public Library site (particularly Hagland 1986, rev. ed. 1990). Knirk has added much material from the Runic Archives, particularly from Liestøl's notes and photographs made before conservation. Both have repeatedly examined the inscriptions in Trondheim and Knirk has photographed them analogue and later digitally; in addition, professional photographers at the museum in Trondheim photographed the objects and their inscriptions digitally and in colour in 2016. Hagland's preliminary version from 1997 of the manuscript for the corpus edition has, incidentally, been available on the Internet at various addresses since it was submitted, with some short revisions from the next six years. Many runologists have employed and cited that version.

At the present time, at least two more volumes will be needed to accommodate the remaining material from Bryggen, and a further two or three for inscriptions from the rest of Norway found after 1960. Several new finds appear each year and of particular note during the past decade are those made by private metal detectorists of lead tablets or strips. Additional runic graffiti have been registered in the walls of medieval churches and secular buildings and archaeological excavations continue to unearth runic objects, for instance in recent years the Follo Line (rail-track) project in Oslo (cf. Ødeby 2020 regarding thirteen such new finds).

Although the two runic series were envisaged as elements of a three-part work "Norges Indskrifter indtil Reformationen" ('Norway's inscriptions up to the Reformation'), the third subseries, to be entitled "Norges Indskrifter med latinske Bogstaver (Majuskler og Minuskler)" ('Norway's inscriptions with Latin letters (majuscules and minuscules)'), was never

begun. Ingvald Undset's publication (1888) of the inscriptions with runes and Latin letters from Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim was conceived as preparation for both the second and third series. A more recent attempt to resuscitate plans for the third series (Syrett 2002) has foundered. In 2017, however, Associate Professor Elise Kleivane at the University of Oslo initiated a project entitled "Between Runes and Manuscripts". Although intended ultimately as a comprehensive study of the roman alphabet inscriptions in Norway during the Viking Age and the Middle Ages, its first stage consists of constructing an extensive database of Norwegian roman alphabet inscriptions from those periods. This registration will be made available on the Internet and will thus comprise an important step toward a corpus edition.

The series *Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer* and *Norges innskifter med de yngre runer* were published with funding provided by the Norwegian Historical Source Fund (Kildeskrikkfondet/Kjeldeskrikkfondet), which was established in 1857 and is now administered by the Norwegian National Archives. The form of future publication in the latter series is presently under discussion.

Supplementary material, databases, popular editions, new finds, post-Reformation inscriptions

Among the important material supplementary to the corpus publication of the Norwegian inscriptions—with implications for other subcorpora, such as Swedish inscriptions and those from the Isle of Man—is Ingrid Sanness Johnsen's dissertation from 1968 on *Stuttruner*, a term for short-twig runes coined by Carl Marstrand which she adopted. It contains the entire corpus of over one hundred early and mid-Viking Age inscriptions with this variant form of younger runes, thirty-seven of them from Norway. The work presents *inter alia* the various forms of these runes and their chronological development, the linguistic and epigraphic characteristics of the inscriptions, the uses of short-twig runes, and the author's understanding of their spread. In her corpus can be found a more complete reading and interpretation of N 2 Bjørneby than is presented in *NIyR*, vol. 1. Sanness Johnsen was a solid contributor to runology in Norway and on occasion introduced a valuable feminist perspective.

A number of the most interesting new finds of runic inscriptions from the initial years of the Bryggen excavations were presented by Aslak Liestøl in a long article in the periodical *Viking* in 1964. This was the

first time most of this exciting material was made available to a larger audience. An offprint of the article appeared separately, with a short postscript (pp. 54–56) presenting a long runic letter composed on behalf of King Sverrir by his oldest son, Sigurðr lavarðr. The offprint, long out of print, served for years as a popular introduction and partial presentation of the most fascinating items in the extensive subcorpus of medieval inscriptions from Bryggen.

Karin Fjellhammer Seim's unpublished Bergen thesis from 1982 and Terje Spurkland's unpublished Oslo dissertation from 1991 are important contributions to the understanding of the graphemes and of the relationship between phonemes and graphemes in the Bryggen material respectively. Seim's work analyses the graphemes in 208 inscriptions while Spurkland's investigation is based on just over 310 inscriptions that can be linguistically interpreted at least to the extent that any phonographic analysis is possible. Seim's dissertation on the West Norse futhark (rune-row) inscriptions (1998, Trondheim) contributes to the understanding of rune-row and alphabet inscriptions. Her corpus contains mainly Norwegian items (150 in all: 37 from *NlyR*, vols. 1–5, 34 from the A = addenda series of preliminary registrations, and 79 from the B = Bryggen series), but also 16 from Ireland, Britain, Greenland, the Faroes, and Iceland. The dissertation evolved from her preparatory work on futhark (rune-row) inscriptions from Bryggen, a task intended to result in articles for publication in *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer*.

An interesting subcorpus of the Norwegian material is examined in a published symposium contribution by James Knirk (1998c). After a discussion of the use of Latin language in Norwegian runic inscriptions, including not only those written in Latin or containing at least one Latin word but also those possibly representing abbreviations in Latin or probably based on distorted or misunderstood Latin, the entire group, some 195 in number, is presented in an appendix (pp. 496–505). Several new readings (the existence of which is marked by an asterisk before the signum) and some novel interpretations can be found in the concise entries in this article.

From 1994 until 1996, as part of the Documentation Project at Norwegian universities, HTML files were produced for the Runic Archives of all six volumes of *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer*, as well as lists of the contents of all folders in the archives concerning individual inscriptions (see Knirk 1998b). The major accomplishment of the Documentation Project—as far as the Runic Archives were concerned—was, however, the creation of a database containing all registrations of new runic finds

since the late 1950s in the archive's B series (Bryggen/Bergen) and A series (addenda from the rest of the country). Unfortunately, since 1996 the undertaking has lacked computer-programming support and never received priority in later cooperative projects for the development of information technology at the Norwegian university museums. Plans for making the database available to external users have thus never been realised. In addition, after 2007 Microsoft Windows no longer supported the platform of the original database program and it was not until 2013 that the database was converted to an Oracle version. Unfortunately, the definition in the Oracle database of the length of lines of transliteration was slightly short, such that the longest lines in some inscriptions have been truncated. The most important contents of the original database, i.e. readings, normalisations and translations, were, however, made available in the Scandinavian Runic Text Database (cf. Williams in Williams et al. 2022, 117–24). The transfer was not electronic, and the information in the Uppsala database has, regrettably, been neither systematically checked nor updated by employees in the Runic Archives; some mistakes and misunderstandings occur (e.g. concerning Hallvarðr grenski in N 171 Vinje 2: 'Grenland [lower Telemark]' was originally translated into English as 'Greenland', but this egregious error has since been corrected).

At about the time that the Documentation Project was computerising most of the material in the Runic Archives, the Bergen-based computer consultant for the project, in collaboration with a local runological consultant, constructed a database with concise entries entitled "Runeinnskrifter fra Bryggen i Bergen" ('Runic inscriptions from Bryggen in Bergen'). This was available to the public for years, hosted originally at the Norwegian Computing Centre for the Humanities in Bergen, and then until 2020 by the National Library of Norway; it has now been removed, but due to historical interest a copy will be kept at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. Unfortunately the information provided there derived mainly from copies kept at Bryggens Museum in Bergen of Liestøl's initial card-file registrations of the inscriptions made for the Runic Archives during the 1960s and '70s; some of the information on the cards was incorrect and much was even at the time obsolete.

A popular presentation of a large part of the Norwegian corpus appeared in Terje Spurkland's university textbook of 2001, which came out in English translation in 2005 as *Norwegian Runes and Runic Inscriptions*. Regrettably, there are some linguistic mistakes (e.g. the statement that the [weakly declined] "**halaiban** is a form of the [strongly declined] nominative **hlaibar*") and cases where epigraphic factors have not been

taken into consideration. The original Norwegian version in particular is marred by several incorrect runic forms, many of which are retained in the English version, and typographical errors (cf. Seim 2004, 190–97, esp. 197). Nevertheless, both the original and the translated version fill vacuums and offer fairly good, modern and lucid presentations.

New finds of Norwegian inscriptions from 1985 until 2003 were, like all other runic finds, published provisionally in the periodical *Nytt om runer*, 1–19 (1986–2004 [the last issue appeared in 2006]). Yearly publication of new Norwegian discoveries unfortunately ceased after the finds in 2003. This was due in part to the fact that the newly consolidated Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo had removed from the budget funding for travel by employees of the Runic Archives to examine and document new finds. Registration of new finds in the A (addenda) and B (Bryggen) series has been continued provisionally.

New runic material from specific geographical areas have also received short collective presentations. For example, those found during archaeological excavations in the Old City (Gamlebyen) in Oslo during the 1970s and '80s were discussed among the datable objects from various localities (Liestøl 1977; Liestøl and Nestor 1987), and those from Tønsberg that were known at the time were presented in an article by a Fellow at the Runic Archives (Gosling 1989). An unpublished Oslo master's thesis in archaeology on all the runic inscriptions known at the time from the Old City in Oslo contains an appendix with a tabular presentation of the corpus (Sand 2010, appendix C) and other valuable indices with archaeological information (findspot and dating) and determinations of material (type of wood or bone). When archaeological finds from excavations in 1985 under the floor of the old stone church at Bø in Telemark were published in a volume of the local history journal, runic inscriptions found fifteen years prior in the walls and repository cover were included (Knirk 1986). In addition, a probable Norwegian inscription from medieval Denmark, the Lund gaming piece, has been registered and published as part of the Danish corpus in the database *Danske Runeindskrifter* ('Danish runic inscriptions'; cf. Steenholt Olesen 2013).

All of the post-Reformation runic inscriptions in Norway registered in the Runic Archives, some 213 ranging in date from 1574 to 1998, were the subject of Jonas Nordby's unpublished Oslo master's thesis in 2001 and were published in short form (registration number, object identification, findplace, transliteration, translation or presentation in modern Norwegian) as a corpus appendix. This remains the only attempt from any country to publish a complete corpus of post-Reformation runic inscriptions.

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