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The Skovgårde rosette clasp. Printed with the permission of the National Museum of Denmark/Danske Runeindskrifter.

1 Issue no. 1: *talgida* as a weak preterite 3.sg.

We know of no other instance of the weak preterite 3.sg. ending being attested in the form of **-da**. From the earliest sources (approximately 160–550 CE) we know only the variants **-de** and **-dai**, the former of which can be accounted for as harking back to PG **-dēT*, while some regard the latter as a hypercorrection of the former, cf. e.g. Krause (1971: 158) and Antonsen (1975: 5, 12, 16) on this form as well as on the *a*-stem dative singular ending where identical conditions prevail. We cannot exclude the possibility, however, that the lack of space between the final **a** of *talgida* and the separation mark would have forced the runecarver to omit an **i** of the originally intended representation of the ending, i.e. **-dai** *-dē*, cf. Stoklund (1991: 97).

Also, I remain unconvinced by the claim put forth by Syrett (1994: 253–254) that **-da** may just be a third way of trying to render the weak preterite 3.sg. ending that should, in his view, be interpreted as PN *-dē*, cf. also Nielsen's (2000: 160) first objection to this idea, viz. that only **-ai** and **-e** (but not **-a**) are known ways of representing the phonologically similar masculine dative singular *a*-stem ending *-ē* (< PG **-ai*).²

In following indirectly Hollifield (1980: 145, 149–150, 160–162) and

² In my view, Syrett's mere assumption of the vowel of the ending **-e** *-ē* being actually PG/PN *-ē* is problematic; rather I would assert it as PG/PN *-ē*, i.e. a more closed variant, as indicated by the possible development of PIE **-ēi/-ēu* > **-ei/-eu* > PG/PN **-ī/-iu* opposed to PIE **-ei/-eu* > **-əi/-əu* > PG **-ai/-au*, cf. Hansen (2014: 160–162). In fact, only with certainty in Gothic (and maybe elsewhere too in front of *r* where it is cross-linguistically to be expected, cf. e.g. Boutkan 1995: 271–273) do we find any reliable indication of lowering of unstressed PG **ē*.

Grønvik (1987: 180–181), Nielsen (1993: 87–88; 2000: 160–163) raises a second objection to Syrett’s claim, viz. that he believes **-da** to be the only way of rendering the Proto-Norse reflex of PG **-dēT* with the competing endings **-de** and **-dai** rather continuing a medio-passive PG **-dai* < PIE **-toǵ* that had penetrated into the weak preterite. However well it may fit formally, though, this analogical extension is semantically unmotivated, as noted also by Lühr (1984: 50–51).

Lühr finds support in her criticism from Schuhmann (2016: 412–413), who also presents a recent and most valuable outline and criticism of all the previous proposals regarding this ending (2016: 408–413). He further revives and improves Moltke’s (1985: 89) hypothesis by suggesting both **-dai** and **-da** to be scribal errors for **-de** on the grounds that at least the Skovgårde rosette clasp with its quasi-boustrophedon reading direction should be copied from a truly boustrophedonic original (2016: 413–415). While I certainly do remain sympathetic towards this solution, I find it more profitable to search for an explanation that does not involve the assumption of scribal errors.

2 Issue no. 2: the reading direction

Not only is the boustrophedon-like mix of reading directions within the text almost unparalleled;³ also the overall starting point of the inscription is unexpected. If interpreted as **lamo talgida lamō talgidē**, the inscription commences by the pin-end of the catch plate and ends by the bow.

With clasps of this type, however, we would, in my view, expect the opposite to be true as witnessed by the fact that, on four of the five remaining clasps, the inscriptions commence by the bow: Værløse (**alugod**, DK Sj 21, KJ 11), Nøvling (**bidawarijaztalgidai**, DK NJy 48, KJ 13a), Næsbjerg (**warafnisā**, DK SJy 46, KJ 13) and Gårdlösa (**ekunwodz**, DK Sk 41, KJ 12). Only on the partially damaged Himlingøje clasp (**widuhudaz**; DK Sj 74, KJ 10) do we find a situation comparable to what is claimed for the Skovgårde clasp, i.e. of an inscription commencing by the pin-end of the catch plate and not by the bow, cf. e.g. Stoklund (1991: 91–92) who adds – and with good reason, one might argue, seeing that we do still have one inscription to be read the opposite way – that we should not lend too much weight to the reading direction.

³ Antonsen (2002: 143–144) lists the poorly understood inscription on the Darum bracteate 3 (**liliz aiwui dai t uha**, DR BR11) as the sole other example of this type that we may label hidden boustrophedon (Antonsen 2002: 142–144) or, as I prefer, quasi-boustrophedon (Grønvik 1994: 46).

3 Establishing the need for an alternative interpretation

Even if the second issue may have turned out to be a non-issue, the first one still calls for a solution in the form of an alternative interpretation. One way of providing such one is to try reading the inscription in the more common direction, i.e. **talgida lamo**. Obviously, this may not do much of a difference to the final interpretation: we could still interpret the inscription as *talgidē lamō* ‘Lamō carved (this)’, only with the opposite word order.

However, the word order VS is far less common in the Proto-Norse corpus than that of SV. Of the 29 readable inscriptions containing an expressed subject and a finite verb, only one follows the VS word order with the remaining 28 inscriptions following the standard SV pattern, cf. Antonsen (1975: 24).⁴ We may cautiously question, therefore, if **lamo** and **talgida** are really to be interpreted as a nominative singular of a personal name and a preterite form of PN **talgijan* ‘to cut, to carve’, respectively, or if we might not benefit from considering alternative grammatical forms.

Again, since we cannot be absolutely certain as to the reading direction, this argument is clearly of limited strength, but as we have seen, that of the unexpected ending of **talgida** is not.

4 Possible alternative interpretations of *talgida*

Taking **talgida** first, we may straightforwardly understand it as a preterite participle *talgida* of the verb **talgijan*, either in the strong neuter nominative/accusative singular or in the strong masculine accusative singular. In fact, this is only one of two options that, unlike Stoklund’s traditional interpretation of **talgida** as *talgidē*, do not require any addi-

⁴ Obviously, Antonsen’s study does not include inscriptions unearthed within the last four decades. It is doubtful, however, if the inclusion of these newer findings would seriously challenge his results. Actually, though conducted with a slightly different focus, viz. on the placement of the verb in the entire sentence and not only in relation to the subject, Eythórsson’s (2011: 32–40) very recent study of Proto-Norse syntax reaches the same conclusion in this particular regard: in the verb-second framework claimed by Eythórsson to be valid for Proto-Norse, SV is the default word order whenever nothing precedes; only when a phrase precedes the subject and the verb do we find inversion.

tional interpretation of the **-a** as representing anything else than face value. The ending *-a* harks back to PG **-aⁿ* < PIE **-om*, i.e. the ending that we find also in e.g. *borna* ‘horn’ on the Golden Horn of Gallehus (DK SJy 60, DR 12, KJ 43).

One issue for us to consider here, though, is the circumstance that, if *talgida* be taken as a neuter rather than a masculine form of the participle, we might have expected it to display the form PN **talgidat(V)* seeing that, while in the Gothic adjectival paradigm both the nominal (Goth. *-Ø* < PG **-aⁿ*) and the pronominal (Goth. *-ata* < PG **-at-V*) neuter nominative/accusative singular endings prevail, the pronominal variant dominates in its North Germanic counterpart (ON *-t*). However, this dominance of the pronominal variant in the North Germanic adjectival paradigm constitutes a problem only if one believes Proto-Norse to be the direct ancestor of North Germanic exclusively and not also of West Germanic, and even so the attestation of residual nominal forms in Old Norse such as *lang* ‘long’ (n.nom./acc.sg.) < PN **lang-a* < PG **lang-aⁿ*, cf. e.g. Noreen (1923: 290) and Boutkan (1995: 300), conclusively invalidates any objection to the claim that *talgida* may, at least on the formal level, straightforwardly represent a neuter form of the participle with the nominal variant of the ending.

For the sake of exhaustion, we must not be oblivious to the second option that does not require any additional interpretation of the **-a** as representing another sound value than *-a*, viz. Grønvik’s (1994: 46–47, 51–53) claim that **talgida** represents a weak masculine nominative singular of an agent noun (*n*-stem) ‘carver’. Grønvik sees no problem in asserting an agentive function for the Proto-Norse suffix and an abstract function for its later North and West Germanic comparanda (for which cf. e.g. Krahe & Meid 1967: 146–147), since transition from agentive to abstract semantics may be a far from unparalleled development. This type is reportedly (Grønvik 1994: 51–53) found only in a few fossilised forms where it was soon to be ousted by the productive *-jan*-type.⁵ While I do not disagree on that, I cannot escape dwelling on the more serious circumstance that Grønvik’s analysis of this form and his interpretation of the inscription as *talgida lamō* ‘the carver (is) Lamō’ entail the presence of two variants of the same ending in a single inscription, viz. weak

⁵ Grønvik’s statement as to the distribution, frequency and productivity obviously concerns only the specific type in PG **-idan-*. It may be worth noting here that *n*-stem agent nouns as such are not rare in the Germanic languages, only the widespread type is a primary formation made with radical zero grade, if applicable, as in OE *lida*, ON *līði* ‘traveler’, cf. e.g. Krahe & Meid (1967: 93).

m.nom.sg. *-a* and *-ō*;⁶ whereas we may indeed find both versions present in different inscriptions from the same period, e.g. **nīþijo** and **swarta** in the Illerup findings, we seem not to find variation *within* an inscription. For that reason alone, I clearly favour the participial analysis suggested above.⁷

5 Possible alternative interpretations of *lamo*

Turning now our attention towards **lamo**, we are faced with multiple options, cf. e.g. Boutkan (1995: 449–453) and Nielsen (2000: 85–86). Granted the assumption that it represents a nominal rather than a verbal form, we could choose to follow the proponents of the traditional analysis and claim it to represent the PG **-ōⁿ* ending of the *n*-stem nominative singular, cf. e.g. the personal names *wagnijō*, *harisō* and *leþrō*. However, seeing that we may already have established *talgida* as another nominative (or accusative) form of this two-word inscription, that claim would turn out to be highly unlikely, cf. my argument above. If *talgida* is, indeed, a nominative of the participle, we would expect it to concord in gender and number with other nominatives, but as already noted, whereas *talgida* is in the neuter singular, *lamō* would as an *n*-stem nominative singular be either masculine or feminine.⁸ Also, if *talgida* is a masculine or neuter accusative singular form, we would expect it to represent the direct object of a finite transitive verb, but with the interpretation of *lamō* as the nominative singular of a weak (*n*-stem) adjective, no such verbs are present in the inscription.

A different but equally unattractive interpretation is that of **lamo lamō** as an accusative singular of a feminine *ō*-stem, cf. e.g. *rūnō* ‘rune’, *-kundō*

⁶ If, of course, *lamō* is not the nominative singular of a feminine *n*-stem. For the vigorous and ongoing discussion on the gender of the *n*-stem nominative singular forms ending in PN *-ō* as well as of the impact of the existence of *n*-stem nominative singular forms in both *-a* and *-ō* see e.g. Krause (1968: 166), Johnsen (1969: 46), Krause (1971: 50–51), Antonsen (1975: 21), Jasanoff (1980: 377, on the Indo-European precursor of PN *-a* < PG **-ēn*), Grønvik (1981: 65–67; 1987: 180), Nielsen (1993: 85–93), Syrett (1994: 134–152), Andersson (1995: 30–33), Stoklund (1995: 216), Nedoma (1997: 112–113), Grønvik (1998: 129–132), Nielsen (2000: 153–155, 199), Antonsen (2002: 261–273) and Peterson (2004: 3).

⁷ For the same reason, we may disregard the theoretical possibility of interpreting **talgida** as a weak masculine nominative singular of a preterite participle.

⁸ On the gender of this specific form *lamō* see e.g. Brylla (1993: 34), Nielsen (1993: 87–88), Syrett (1994: 144), Seebold (1995: 163), Stoklund (1995: 213; 1995a: 322–323), Nielsen (2000: 86, 154, 199), Antonsen (2002: 268–269) and Peterson (2004: 13).

‘birth, lineage’ and *lapō* ‘invitation’ (all f.acc.sg.). Here, too, we are faced with the problem of lacking a finite transitive verb.

From a semantic point of view, the most attractive interpretation would probably be ‘carved for Lamuz’, as made possible by the assumption that **lamo** would be a dative singular of a *u*-stem, i.e. PN *-ō* (< PG **-au* < PIE **-e_u*, cf. Hansen 2014: 160–162). Formally, however, we are faced with the obstacle that the Germanic adjective for ‘lame’ is everywhere to be found as a traditional *a*-/*ō*-stem in its strong form and an *n*-stem in its weak form. *U*-stem adjectives are, albeit relatively few in number, attested for Germanic in general, but we do not find any *u*-stem traces with this particular root in the other Germanic languages. Also, even if a *u*-stem dative singular form in PN *-ō* < PG **-au* may actually be attested, cf. e.g. the much-debated **hakuþo** *hakuþō* of the Noleby stone (KJ 67), we have much better evidence for the competing ending PN *-iu* *-iu* (< PG **-e_u* < PIE **-ē_u*), cf. e.g. **kunimudiu** *kunimundiu* (KJ 136) and further the Old Norse *i*-umlauting *u*-stem dative singular ending *-i*. The unlikelihood of the existence of a *u*-stem adjective PG/PN **lamuz* automatically also renders improbable the assumption, albeit formally irreproachable, of **lamo** being a *u*-stem vocative singular ending in PN **-ō* (< PG **-au* < PIE **-e_u*, cf. again Hansen 2014: 160–162).

Our chances of a successful alternative interpretation would therefore increase if we abide by the prerequisite that **lamo** must represent a form of an *a*-/*ō*-stem strong adjective or *n*-stem weak adjective. Besides the *n*-stem nominative singular and *ō*-stem accusative singular dealt with above, the only two options left are 1) the genitive plural PN *-ō* (< PG **-ōⁿ/-ōaⁿ*, cf. e.g. Boutkan 1995: 194–196 for discussions of this ending) of an *a*-, *ō*- or maybe even *n*-stem and 2) the ablative singular *-ō* (< PG **-ōt* < PIE **-ōd/-ād*) of an *a*-stem, i.e. the form found in fossilised adverbs such as PG **galikōt* ‘like’ > Goth. *galeiko*, ON *glíka*, OS *gilicō* and OHG *gilihho*, cf. e.g. Boutkan (1995: 181–182). In my view, we may easily discard the former solution for semantic reasons; no sensible interpretation can ever emerge from such a nominal phrase (‘carved of lame ones; the lame ones’ carved thing’ etc.).

The second option, i.e. an *a*-stem ablative singular PN *-ō* (< PG **-ōt*) makes much better sense provided that we may understand the ablative as a way of expressing agency, i.e. ‘carved by Lamaz’.⁹ This would, how-

⁹ Granted the transformation of the old *a*-stem ablative singular ending into a general, adverbial suffix in the Germanic languages, we might also try applying another possible interpretation, viz. ‘lamely carved; cut in a lame way’, but that would, in my view, seem a curious statement to write.

ever, not only be the only known attestation of an (adverbially fossilised or paradigmatic) ablative singular in Proto-Norse, cf. Boutkan (1995: 451), but also the only known attestation of a paradigmatic, i.e. not adverbially fossilised, ablative in *any* of the ancient Germanic languages, cf. e.g. Krause (1968: 139, 205). However, the general, wide-spread attestation of adverbs reflecting PG **-ōt* in all Germanic branches reveals that the assumption of this form having existed also in Proto-Norse might not be that far-fetched, after all. Also, seeing that Proto-Norse is the oldest attested Germanic language at all, predating even the Gothic corpus with at least one century, it is not unlikely, though admittedly still a very tentative suggestion, that a paradigmatic ablative could have existed at this time only to be lost both in the North and West Germanic descendants of Proto-Norse and in its East Germanic sister branch.

Another possible, formal objection to the idea of **lamo** representing an *a*-stem ablative singular is constituted by the fact that, even though the Germanic languages certainly do know of compounded *a*-stem personal nouns, the hypocoristics of these tend to be formed as *n*-stems rather than *a*-stems, but the former type does occur, cf. e.g. Brylla (1993: 33) and Petersson (2004: 46–48). Also, as aptly pointed out by Boutkan (1995: 182), the PG **-ōt* suffix has been extended to other stem formations, too, at least in its adverbial function, cf. e.g. Goth. *sinteino* ‘always’ formed from the *i*-stem adjective *sinteins* ‘daily’. In that way, *lamō* may either straightforwardly reflex an *a*-stem ablative singular or represent an *n*-stem form to which the *a*-stem ablative singular ending has been secondarily transferred.

For the sake of completeness, we should also consider the possibility of **lamo** being a verb. In that case, it can only be indicative 1.sg. (PN *lamō* < PG **lamōjō*) ‘I lame something carved’, subjunctive 1./3.sg. (PN *lamō* < PG **lamōjaiⁿ/lamōjaiT*) ‘I/he shall lame something/someone carved; something carved shall lame’ or, though less likely on the basis of the resulting OV word order, imperative 2.sg. (PN *lamō* < PG **lamōje*) ‘lame something/someone carved!’ of a class II weak verb PN **lamōn* ‘to lame’ (< PG **lamōjanaⁿ*). On the intuitive level, none of these utterances make much sense. Also, even if a class II weak verb is attested in the later Germanic languages, cf. e.g. ME *lamed* ‘lamed’ (< PG **lamōd-*), we have much more substantial evidence for the reflects of a class I weak verb PG **lamjanaⁿ* ‘to beat up, to cripple, to lame’ constituting the factitive to PG **lama-* ‘lame’ in the ancient Germanic languages, cf. e.g. ON *lemja* ‘to flog, to beat (down), to suppress’, OE *lemian* ‘to lame, to cripple, to

strike’, OS *lemmian* ‘to cripple’ and OHG *lemjan* ‘to cripple, to lame’ (Kroonen 2013: 326). Thus, the class II variant would resemble a late innovation.

6 Ablatives marking the agent of a passive construction

Before accepting the claim of *lamō* being an ablative singular with agentive function, we need examine if agency is an expected, semantic function of that case. An initial scrutiny of the relevant passages of the seminal work by Brugmann & Delbrück (1893: 200–217, 268–269) leaves us with a negative answer to that question: nowhere do Brugmann & Delbrück describe agency of a passive construction as a function of the ablative. Basing their judgement on Indo-Iranian and Slavic evidence, they rather regard this semantic function as tied to the instrumental of means, cf. Ved. *śasyāse vācobhiḥ* ‘you are praised by/with words’ and *Uṣā ribhyate vasiṣṭhaiḥ* ‘Uṣas is praised by the Vasiṣṭhas (pl.)’ as well as OCS *trīstī li vĕtromĭ dvižema* ‘κάλαμος ὑπὸ ἀνέμου σαλευόμενος; a reed shaken by the wind?’ (Luk 7:24) and *iskušajemŭ sotoŋoŭq* ‘πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανᾶ being tempted by Satan’ (Mark 1:13). PN *-o* can in no means continue a PIE instrumental **-oh₁* > PG **-ō*, though, since that would most definitely have yielded PN **-u*, cf. the development of the formally identical endings of the present 1.sg. PIE **-ō* > PG **-ō* > PN *-u* (*gibu*, *writu*) and *ā*-stem nominative singular PIE **-eh₂* > PG **-ō* > PN **-u* (*laḥu*, *leubu*),¹⁰ cf. e.g. Boutkan (1995: 224, 308–309). We need therefore continue our search for languages rendering agency in a passive construction with the ablative.

In Latin, the ablative may actually be used for marking agency in a passive construction. Usually, however, the ablative alone will not suffice; accompaniment of the semantically separative preposition *ā*, *ab* ‘from’ is often most required, as in e.g. Lat. *defici ā arte* ‘to be let down by science/the art’. More importantly, even though the preposition *ā*, *ab* designates the semantic function of the separative, this use of the ablative

¹⁰ Also, though formally yielding PN *-o*, cf. my comments on the formally identical genitive plural ending, an instrumental in PG **-ōn* < PIE **-ōm* is not an option, since such a form is no longer reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European, cf. e.g. Boutkan (1995: 181⁵⁵).

is generally regarded as inherently instrumental in perfect accordance with the fact that the Latin ablative constitutes an amalgamation of the Indo-European ablative, instrumental and locative cases, cf. e.g. Hofmann & Szantyr (1965: 101, 122) and Blake (2001: 157). For that reason, the Latin situation might not add much to our survey.

Almost the same goes for Hittite where the ablative becomes the default case for marking agency in a passive construction but where, however, that semantic function has clearly been taken over from the instrumental together with the inherently instrumental function of expressing the “means by which”, as is evident from the examples of Hitt. *kinuna ammuk* ^mNIR.GÁL LUGAL-*uš tuedaz* [IŠ]TU ^dU *piḫaššašši šallanuwanza arkuwēškemi* ‘now, I, King Muwatalli, who have been raised up by you, O Stormgod of P., am offering (this) prayer’ as against *zabḫiyaz katta dahḫun* ‘I captured (the cities) through battle’, cf. e.g. Hoffner & Melchert (2008: 76–77, 266–267).

We must not forget, however, that, even though agency in a passive construction was most likely expressed by means of the instrumental case in Proto-Indo-European, that situation by no means entails the impossibility of this semantic function to be taken over by another case in the descendants of Proto-Indo-European. The agent of a passive construction in modern Armenian actually serves as confirmation of just that scenario in that it is rendered by the ablative case as exemplified by Arm. *indznic^c mišt sirvum ēir* ‘you were always loved by me’ and *azatic^cneric^c azatvec^cink^c* ‘we were freed by the liberators’, the inflectional endings *-ic^c* and *-neric^c* marking the ablative singular and plural, respectively, cf. e.g. Gulian (1902: 72).¹¹ Contrary to the Latin ablative, its Armenian counterpart has not fused with other cases and has formally as well as functionally remained a distinctive category, for which reason its range of semantic functions roughly mirrors the Proto-Indo-European situation, cf. Gulian (1902: 9). As such, the Armenian evidence demonstrates that, though probably no direct continuation of the Proto-Indo-European situation, the use of ablative for marking the agent in a passive construction is indeed possible and, more importantly, can become a reality for the Indo-European daughter languages.

¹¹ Compared to Classical Armenian, this use of the ablative must be seen as an innovation, since in Classical Armenian there is no echo of the agentive function within the semantic sphere of the ablative, cf. e.g. Meillet (1913: 81–83). Also, the modern Armenian ablative in *-ic^c* cannot formally continue the Classical Armenian one, cf. Meillet (1913: 44–45). Rather, it must have had its origin in the *i*-stems where it functioned as genitive/dative/ablative plural; its origin in Proto-Indo-European terms is disputed.

Considering now the semantic functions of an ablative, we may hypothesise that the “source from which” may be as equally an attractive interpretation of the agent in a passive construction as the “means by which”, which is what is normally rendered by the instrumental. Finnish may actually provide us with an indirect, typological proof that such a hypothesis is not entirely far-fetched. In Finnish, the agent of a passive verb is normally rendered by the genitive with *toimesta* ‘on the part of’ as in *Vaasan Asevelikylä rakennettiin rintamamiesten toimesta vuosina 1946–55* ‘the Vaasa veteran village was built in 1946–55 by war veterans’, cf. e.g. Manninen & Nelson (2004: 245–246) and Fromm (1982: 234–235, 287–288). With passive constructions rendered in translation from Swedish, however, my Copenhagen colleague Pia-Maria Päiviö has pointed out to me (p.c.) that, in writing, some speakers of Finnish used to display a tendency of translating an overt agent, marked in Swedish by a prepositional phrase with *av* ‘of, from’, with a noun in the ablative but that the suitability of this type of construction was later disputed, the Finnish ablative being in essence more locative than agentive. We may see the old and now abandoned practice in e.g. *ia neliekymende peiue kiusatin Perchelelde* ‘diebus quadraginta et temptabatur a diabolo; for forty days he was tempted by the Devil’ (Agricola) and *hen Racastetan minun Iseldeni* ‘he is loved by my father’ (Agricola), cf. e.g. Häkkinen (1944: 360–361, 478) and Lehtikoinen & Kiuru (1993: 164). Albeit in disagreement with the standard practice of Finnish, this way of translating serves as proof that not only the instrumental but also the ablative may intuitively encompass the function of agency in passive constructions and, consequently, indicates at least the possibility of *lamō* being an ablative with the function of agent of the passive participle *talgida*.

Along the same lines, we may benefit from a brief survey of the ways in which some of the modern European languages render the agent of a passive construction. Like Latin, many of them use prepositional phrases for this purpose, and while in some cases this preposition is inherently instrumental in function (cf. e.g. English *by*, French *par*, Dutch *door*), its inherent function is certainly ablative or separative in others (cf. e.g. Danish *af*, Swedish, *av*, German *von*). It may be noteworthy here that, in modern times, the function of agency in a passive construction is paired with the ablative, or rather an inherently ablatival prepositional phrase, in exactly the area where Proto-Norse used to be spoken.

Attempting to expound the interpretation of *lamō* as an ablative, we may finally consider an alternative path of reasoning: the speakers of Proto-Norse, some of whom were undoubtedly influenced by the neigh-

borrowing Romans and their Latin language on many levels,¹² had come to know of the Latin practice of using the ablative and would thus copy that grammatical feature to their own language by way of using for this function their own ablative. Speaking in favour of such a grammatical borrowing is the circumstance that the functions and developmental history of the Germanic or Proto-Norse ablative must, to a great extent, have matched those of its Latin counterpart in that it had originally a truly ablative function (“source from which”) and would later also – and ultimately exclusively – be used for the derivation of manner adverbs (“in X way”), the semantic function of which largely overlaps with that of the instrumental (“by means of X”), which is incorporated also in the Latin ablative category as mentioned above. In other words, both manner adverbs and instrumentals can answer to a question of “how”.

7 Conclusion

To sum up, we are faced with three probable interpretations of the Skovgårde rosette clasp, viz. either ‘Lamō carved (this)’ as originally suggested by Stoklund (1991: 90–99; 1995: 213–214; 1995a: 322–323), ‘the carver (is) Lamō’ as suggested by Grønvik (1994: 46–47, 51–53), or the new interpretation ‘carved by Lamaz/Lamō’ suggested by me in this article.

Whereas the first interpretation presupposes an aberrant form of the weak preterite 3.sg. ending *-dē* as well as a reading direction different from the one that we would *a priori* expect and the second one operates with the presence of two different weak masculine nominative singular endings next to each other, the new one presented here may face the problems of *lamō* being, at least originally, an *a*-stem rather than an *n*-stem form and of assuming an otherwise unattested paradigmatic ablative for the rendering of the agent.

Hence follows that, with this article, I have wished merely to introduce a third interpretation to be tentatively considered. I will leave it to the scholarly community to decide which of the three options to prefer, if any.

¹² For a survey see e.g. Jensen (2013: 716–732, 735–736, 758–782) on the cultural affinities and Braunmüller (2004: 23–47) on different kinds of linguistic influence from Latin on Proto-Norse.

List of abbreviations

acc.	accusative
Arm.	Armenian
f.	feminine
Goth.	Gothic
Hitt.	Hittite
Lat.	Latin
m.	masculine
n.	neuter
nom.	nominative
O	object (syntactic function)
OCS	Old Church Slavonic
OE	Old English
OHG	Old High German
ON	Old Norse
OS	Old Saxon
PG	Proto-Germanic
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
pl.	plural
PN	Proto-Norse
S	subject (syntactic function)
sg.	singular
T	unspecified dental obstruent
V	unspecified vowel
V	verb (syntactic function)
Ved.	Vedic Sanskrit

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