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The Noleby inscription and Germanic **rehaną*

1 Introduction

The text on the runestone that was discovered in 1894 at the farm of Stora Noleby, Fyrunga parish, in Västergötland (Vg 63), begins with an expression which appears to be reflected in other early North Germanic sources, but the rest of the inscription has long been considered otherwise to be mostly inscrutable (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 67, Antonson 1975: no. 46). One of the longer of the older runic texts (i.e. inscriptions written in the 24-letter futhork), the Noleby inscription has been interpreted variously – as a religious inscription (Grønvik 1987:99–113), a funerary memorial (Bugge 1897, Brate 1898) or some sort of a curse (Nordén 1934:99–101, Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 67). Not only is there little agreement over what the epigraph means and represents, the inscription is often proposed to preserve an expression of a kind that has no obvious parallel elsewhere in early North Germanic epigraphy. Even the most fundamental matters concerning the older runic Noleby monument have not been resolved in the previous historiography.

Yet the Noleby inscription can be made sense of in light of the development of the inherited strong verb **rehaną* (< IE **rek-* ‘set in order, advise’) in Germanic. The Noleby text features collocations reflected in much later sources, but it also preserves archaic features only paralleled

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Abstract: One of the most difficult of the early runic inscriptions is that which appears on the Noleby stone. First published in the late nineteenth century, the early Swedish text has been subjected to a wide range of interpretations and accounts. The opening line of the Noleby inscription seems clear enough, featuring a collocation reflected later in Old Norse, but the meaning of most of the rest of its text has long remained obscure. The runestone’s early Swedish seems to include two reflections of a Proto-Germanic verb **rehaną*, but even the proper interpretation of this form has proved controversial. A broader assessment of the comparative evidence, however, sheds new light on the morphology and semantics of this otherwise lost Old Germanic strong verb.

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elsewhere in early runic epigraphy. Most runestone inscriptions record stereotypical memorial expressions, reflections of a common North Germanic memorial “epigraphic habit” (MacMullen 1982). Instead of memorial texts, however, the Noleby inscription seems best approached in terms of implorations and other prayer-like texts of both North Germanic and Roman tradition.

After an introductory methodological section, this paper presents an overview of the previous historiography on the Noleby inscription, its reading and interpretation. Reflexes of the verb **rehaną* are then analysed in terms of other early texts including the Vimose wood-plane, followed by a consideration of the key features of a Germanic religious dedication. The Noleby text is demonstrably unlike a memorial inscription and bears no features characteristic of curses. It is concluded that it features religious language of a type comparable to that found on the Old Germanic bracteates and that **rehaną* was lost from later Germanic because of its specialised use in pre-Christian religious discourse.

2 Methodological background

Syrett (1994:112, n. 85) asserts that “lack of knowing what to expect is without doubt the greatest drawback in interpreting the early inscriptions”. Runic inscriptions carved on stone monuments, however, are usually funerary memorials and come in two basic types: an older-runic possessive style that typically features the name of the memorialised in the genitive and a reference to the stone or associated grave; and a more patently benefactive type which usually indicates explicitly that the monument was raised ‘after’ or ‘in memory’ of the deceased (Schulte 2010:49–50). If the Noleby inscription were a memorial, it would be expected to accord to one of these two types. Variations on the main two forms of the commemorative or memorial genre are known from among the earliest runic finds, with some texts merely featuring names or indications that the associated stones are linked with burials. Very little of the vocabulary that can clearly be made out on the Noleby stone is paralleled in comparable monumental inscriptions, however, and no mention of the stone or a grave, or any kind of benefactive expression is obvious in its text.

Other than funerary memorials, three other types of runestone text are represented among the early runic inscriptions. The older and more obvious type is the form of epigraph described as amuletic by MacLeod and

Mees (2006:81–82) – i.e. those which feature characteristic terms such as **alu** (such as the Elgesem stone; Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 57) or other sequences of the kind that are most obviously to be linked with the texts on the migration-age bracteates. These include the inscription on the Kylver stone (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 1), discovered inside a grave of fourth or fifth-century date, that features only a sequence **sueus** (which has usually been interpreted as a magico-religious palindrome), an enumeration of the runic letters in their tradition futhark ordering and a paratextual symbol of a tree or herring-bone form.

A second is represented by the long texts that appear on the Eggja, Björketorp and Stentoften stones (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: nos 96–97 and 101). Found covering a grave (with the inscription facing inside), the difficult and controversial Eggja inscription has been subject to various interpretations, and although difficult to make out in some parts, it has long been thought to feature some kind of poetic narrative, perhaps referring to a memorial ritual associated with a boat (Grønvik 1985). The alliterating Eggja expression that has traditionally been taken as *ni's sólu sót(t) ok ni sakse stæin(n) skorin(n)*, ‘the stone has not been struck by the sun and it has not been scored by a sax’ seems to represent a line of *fornyrðislag* and has usually been accepted to refer to a ritual of some kind. Very little of the rest of the Eggja inscription is interpretatively clear, but the Noleby text also alliterates and hence looks best to be taken in the light of the similarly stylised Eggja inscription.

On the other hand, the Björketorp and Stentoften inscriptions both feature an alliterating curse. Including vocabulary and phraseology also found in later imprecations, their curses are recorded in slightly different forms on each of the stones. The wordier Björketorp curse seems best to be understood as *ærægiu hæramælausR ūti æR; wēlædaufē, sār þat bær(i)uTR*, ‘Restless are you outside because of (your) perversion; with an insidious death, the one that breaks this’ (Schulte 2006a). There has been some disagreement as to how to translate *hæramælausR* and the verb *æR*, but the oblique nominal *ærægiu* is usually taken to be an earlier form of the description *ergi* ‘unmanliness, perversion’ which appears in younger Nordic curses, both epigraphic and literary (Sørensen 1983, MacLeod and Mees 2006:225, Jakobsson 2008). The two inscriptions are both usually taken to feature an alliterating curse on any who would break the stones up and reuse them for another purpose.

A third type of runestone inscription (other than a memorial) appears to be represented by a text from Strängnäs, Sweden, discovered in 1962 (Gustavson and Swantesson 2011:307–11). It appears on a 21 cm long

piece of red sandstone and features the legend [e]rila^z·wodin^z. The Strängnäs find was not properly published earlier, presumably on the grounds that runic inscriptions which feature reflections of the theonym Wodinaz have usually turned out to be fakes. Surface structure analysis of the find by Kitzler Åhfeldt (2007) suggests that the find is genuine, however, and as Düwel (2016:277–80) observes its text seems to indicate that Wodinaz was considered in early Nordic times to have been an **erilaz**. The Strängnäs inscription appears to represent an invocation of an early runic form of the later figure Oðinn.

As Foucault (1969) explains, texts are best interpreted in terms of broader discursive traditions or “formations”. If the Noleby inscription is not a memorial expression, then it should be analysed in terms of texts that it is discursively related to – that is, in light of the discursive formation of which it is most obviously a part. Most of the studies of the Noleby inscription agree that it is a magico-religious text (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 67, Antonsen 1975: no. 46) and several different magico-religious discursive formations are evident in the early and transitional runic tradition. The early runic inscription on the Vimose buckle, for example, represents a typical magico-religious “giving” text with its use of the consecratory verb **wījan* indicating that it is dedicatory (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 24, Mees 2015), whereas the inscriptions found on the Old Germanic bracteates often seem to be more invocatory, as if they represent highly abbreviated (or snippets from) implorations or prayers (Mees 2014a). The Strängnäs inscription similarly has the form of a dedication or invocation and the Björketorp and Stentoften inscriptions clearly feature curses, a third type of early runic magico-religious expression. Consequently, the first issue to be resolved when interpreting the Noleby inscription would seem to be whether it represents a dedicatory, imploratory or imprecatory text, the three major magico-religious textual types clearly preserved in early runic epigraphy.

3 Diplomatic and etymological interpretation

Held today in the National Historical Museum in Stockholm, the Noleby stone bears an inscription that has long been assumed to stem from about AD 600 as it features the use of the relatively young “star” form of the *j*-rune. Imer (2014:191) dates the inscription to the c. AD 375/400–560/570 period, but a late-sixth-century provenance for the inscription has usually been favoured on graphematic and phonological grounds

(Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 67). The irregularly shaped 84 x 60 cm slab of grey and red gneiss that bears the difficult text was found in a field wall, its original context unknown. Its inscription is reasonably clear in most respects, only a few sections being disputable at the graphematic level. Following Brate (1898:331), the Noleby text is read, largely uncontroversially, by Krause and Jankuhn (1966: no. 67) as:

runofahiraginakudotojēka
unapou:suhurah:susi×hwatin
hakuþo

The only significant query regarding this reading is the sequence ×**hwatin** which is often transcribed less presumptively as **h---tin** (Vg 63, Gustavson 2002, Imer 2014:191). The bind-rune in **tojēka** is generally accepted (ligatures of **e** + **k** being fairly common otherwise), but unlike the *e*-rune the mooted **k** is quite uncertain.

The Noleby stone was interpreted by its earliest philological describers as a typical (albeit somewhat smallish) runestone memorial (Bugge 1897, Brate 1898). Its text features what was taken by Antonsen (1975: no. 46, 2002:180–82) to represent a magico-religious expression (of unexplained purpose), however, and by Nordén (1934:99–101) and others who followed him (such as Krause) a ghost-warding funerary imprecation. The first line has also usually (since Brate 1898:331 and 351) been thought to contain a line of verse, the alliteration evident in the forms on the second and third lines (**suhurah:susi** and ×**hwatin/h---tin hakuþo**) also “tilsigtet” (Bugge 1906:20). Yet precisely what was meant by the difficult Noleby epigraph (and what it represents thematically, let alone stylistically) remains far from settled today.

As Brate (1898:331–33) was first to note, the opening line of the Noleby inscription seems to include an expression which (*pace* Marstrand 1954:526 and Grønvik 2001:249–51) is usually held to be repeated on the similarly difficult younger-runic (i.e. 16-character futhark) memorial stone from Sparlösa (Vg 119) as well as in a key passage in *Hávamál* (80) (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 67, Antonsen 1975: no. 46). Each time much the same collocation is featured, each time with the noun separated from the alliterating adjective by at least one other term. The three attestations read:

<i>rūno fāhi raginaku(n)do</i>	(Noleby, c. AD 600)
<i>rāð rūnar þār rægi[n]uku(n)du</i>	(Sparlösa, c. AD 800)
<i>Ðat er þá reynt, er þú at rúnnum spyrr</i>	
<i>inom reginkunnom</i>	(<i>Hávamál</i> , thirteenth century)

In the Noleby inscription, the alliterating **runo ... raginakudo** collocation at first seems to be linked with the typical runestone memorial genre by the use of the denominative verb **fahi** ‘I draw, I colour, I decorate’ (< PG **faihjō*); cf. ON *fá* ‘paint, draw’ and OHG *fēhan* ‘colour, decorate, adorn’ to **faihō* ‘colour’, Goth. *filu-faihō* ‘variegated, much coloured’. Antonsen (1975: no. 46, 2002:180–82) questioned this traditional interpretation (which is due to Brate 1898:331 and 333; cf. Bugge 1899:144 and 1906:4), however, declaring **fahi** an otherwise unattested adjective comparable to Goth. *fahēps* ‘joy’, *faginōn* ‘rejoice’, *fagrs* ‘suitable’ etc. despite his relinquishing of his similar (1975: no. 107) interpretation of the clearly verbal **fahi** on the Åsum bracteate (which by 2002 he had come instead to see as orthographically incomplete; see Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 131). But not only is the use of **fāhjan* characteristic of both runestone and bracteate finds, *Hávamál* 80 also includes a line *ok fáði fimbulpulr*, much as if both sequences are linked by an association with (divine) runic lore. As Jackson (1995) stresses, the runic lore of *Hávamál* is often presented as what seem best to be interpreted as poetic lists, presumably as *Hávamál* recounts traditional gnomic information. The spelling **fahi** looks more like forms such as the Straum whetstone’s **skapi** and **ligi** than it does a typical early runic 1st person singular present (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 50, Antonsen 1975: no. 45). Given the relatively late date of the Noleby inscription, however, **fahi** may well represent a relatively young development of **fāhju* > *fāhi*, an indication that final vowels in heavy forms had been shortened by the end of the sixth century (i.e. *raginaku(n)do* not *raginaku(n)dō* etc.). The first line of the Noleby inscription appears to have more of the character of a religious (or gnomic) rather than a magical text and its grammatical mood seems most regularly to be understood as indicative, rather than subjunctive or imperative (the expected moods for an imploration).

The correct translation of *raginaku(n)do* has also been a matter of some dispute. The Eddic dative plural *reginkunnum* has long been connected with Goth. *himinakunda*, OE *heofoncund* ‘heavenly’ and other comparable forms such as OE *godcund*, OHG *gotkund* and OS *godkund* ‘divine’ (cf. Brate 1898:331–32, Bugge 1898:145, Cahen 1924:80–84, Grønvik 1987:98, Meid 1996). And **-kund-* ‘born, derived, belonging to, pertaining to’ is a Common Germanic suffixoid (Hofstetter 1992). Yet given ON *kuðr*, *kunnr* ‘known’, ON *reginkunnum* is most obviously to be translated as ‘famous’; cf. Larrington’s (1996:25) translation of *inom reginkunnum* as ‘of the potent famous ones’. Old Norse *regin* (ntr.pl.) means ‘the gods, the powers’ when it is used as a noun, but it is typically

employed as an intensive ‘mighty, great’ when it appears in compounds; e.g. ON *regindóma* ‘great events’, *regingrióti* ‘great grindstone’ and *reginþinga* ‘great assembly’. A similar (exclusively) intensive usage applies in West Germanic to descendants of **ragina-*; e.g. OE *regnþeof* and OS *regintheobas* ‘arch-thief’ (and clearly not ‘divine-thief’ vel sim.). An older meaning ‘divine’ has evidently been reduced merely to ‘great’ whenever this modifier is used in Germanic compounds in the usual manner in which superlatives are semantically generalised or bleached of their original meaning (Sturtevant 1916). The Eddic context suggests a more specific, mythological meaning, but given ON *reginkunnum* continues **ragina-kunþ-*, not **ragina-kund-*, it does not seem likely to have meant ‘of the gods derived’ as has often been asserted previously.

Early runic **raginakudo** might more reasonably be translated as ‘gods-derived’. The Eddic parallel, however, suggests that the form could also reasonably be taken to merely mean ‘famous’, if not an older semantic ‘divinely known’, ‘of the gods beknownst’ or the like (MacLeod and Mees 2006:181–82, Markey 2012:97–100, Mees 2013:342). As Hamp (1973:160–63, 1982:76) observes, the homophony of ON *kuðr*, *kunnr* ‘known’ and the suffixoid *-*kund-* ‘born, derived, belonging to, pertaining to’ may have already led to a certain amount of semantic conflation at the Proto-Germanic level where IE **ǵnh₂-tó-* ‘begotten’ and **ǵnh₃-tó-* ‘known’ both develop to **knhá-* and then to **kunþ-*, *kund-*. Nonetheless if a suffixoid is to be understood at Noleby, presumably the compound is best to be translated (only) as (a grammaticalised) ‘divine’, not (more) literally as ‘gods-derived’ as **raginakudo** has usually been by runic scholars in the past; cf. Goth. *himinakundins* (1 Cor. 15:49) gen. sg. ‘*epouranios*, heavenly’, not ‘heaven-derived’. Yet if Noleby’s **runo ... raginakudo** is to be understood as an early Vernerised equivalent of Eddic *rúnom ... reginkunnum* (as has usually been presumed) then the early runic collocation is most regularly to be translated as ‘divinely known runes’ if not more prosaically (and in accord with the similar West Germanic semantic development of **ragina-* in compounds) merely as ‘famous runes’.

Yet it is the inscription’s mention of **ragina-** that has usually been taken as most strongly marking out the Noleby text as magico-religious. The inscriptions that appear on the Eggja, Björketorp, Stentoften, Kylver, Elgesem and Strängnäs stones are similarly quite different than those of the usual ‘NN’s stone’ or ‘X raised in memory of Y’ type so common in older runic epigraphy, and the opening lines of the Noleby text seem best to be taken as featuring a ritual rather than a commemorative expression.

Noleby **ragina-** appears most cogently to be taken in terms of the use of Old Norse *regin* to refer to the gods, and as a gnomic expression, the act of **ragina-* would seem most obviously to be interpreted as another indication of what benefit the gods may provide to pious mortals – i.e. divine advice. Indeed Noleby's use of **ragina-** might be compared with the appearance of the form **regu** on the Vimose plane (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 25) which looks much as if it represents the otherwise unattested strong form of Gothic *rahnjan* 'reckon, consider, count' and OE *regnian* 'set in order, arrange, regulate' (< IE **rok-no-*) that is also the root of *regin* 'gods' and *ragina-* 'mighty, great, divine' (Krause 1971:107–8, Seebold 1994:66–67, Rix 2001:506 and MacLeod and Mees 2006:76–77).

The older form **regu**, however, appears in a no less difficult inscription. Unearthed in 1860 from the Vimose bog, the Vimose plane (or rather plane stock) was discovered broken into three pieces, only two of which survive, and many of its letterforms are difficult to make out with much confidence today. Made of ash, the plane was deposited in the sacrificial moor as part of an Iron Age votive ritual which saw a great number of military accoutrements similarly broken and then cast into the Vimose bog, the woodworking tool belonging to one of several ritual military depositions evidenced at the site (Engelhardt 1866, 1867, 1869, Pauli Jensen 2003, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011). The difficult bog find seems to have been used to make spear-shafts and appears to date to the third century (Ilkjær 1996:73, Christensen 2005:75).

The correct reading of some of the runes on the Vimose plane is disputed because of the fragmentary preservation of the stock. The cutting iron which formerly sat in a hollowed-out section in the centre of the stock has not been recovered and the inscription sits partly to the left of the centre, but mostly to the right and on one side of the stock. Stoklund (1995:331–33) has transcribed the text as:

**talijo gisaioj:wilir??lao???...
t??is:hleuno:an?:regu**

The form **regu** is preceded by what has usually been accepted to be the preposition or preverb **an**[a] 'at, upon' (with the reconstructed *a*-rune obscured by a break in the stock) and **hleuno**, a term which Bugge (1905:160–61) first linked to the root **blewa-* 'protection'. Bugge took **hleuno** to be verbal, an otherwise unparalleled *-na-* formation comparable to Old Norse *hlyja* 'to shelter', and Seebold (1994:66–68) explains **regu** as a first-person singular present indicative (main) verb *regu* (to IE **rek-*

‘set in order, advise’), comparing Old Church Slavonic *rešti* ‘say’ and Goth. *rahnjan* ‘reckon, consider, count’. The *-nō*-ending of *bleunō*, however, suggests that it may represent an agentive form ‘protector’ (Markey 2012:104–105) and Seebold (1994:67–68) translates **hleuno-an?:regu** as ‘Ich bestimme (= übergebe, widme) ... dem geschützten ...’.

The meaning of the rest of the Vimose text remains disputed, with only the subjunctive form *wilīz* ‘you may want’ unambiguous. The opening term of the spear-plane’s inscription has traditionally been taken as *tal(g)ijō* ‘plane’ – that is, a form with a *g*-rune accidentally omitted. But it was interpreted by Antonsen (1975: no. 10), following Marstrand (1952:44–59), less presumptively as *taljō* ‘telling, (re)counting’ with a hypercorrect *i*-rune added before the *j*. Nonetheless as Stoklund (1995:333) notes, agentive constructions in *-ijō* (e.g. *Nīþijō* and *Wagnijō*) are fairly common in early North Germanic onomastics and **talijo** may more regularly be understood as an agentive name (related to ON *tæla* ‘entice, betray’ rather than *tela* ‘tell, tally’). The inscription on the Vimose plane seems to have something to do with protection, its subjunctive verb suggests it records an imploration and it appears to be another magico-religious text that features a reflex of the Proto-Germanic verb **rehana*.

The Vimose text seems most immediately comparable to contemporary Roman religious inscriptions such as that which appears on a baldric mount discovered in the Illerup Ådal bog. Circular in shape and featuring an openwork imperial eagle in its centre, the text is wrought in bronze and reads (von Carnap-Bornheim and Ilkjær 1996:49):

Optime Maxime con

‘The Best (and) the Greatest ...’

This is clearly an abbreviation of a well-known Latin prayer, its fuller form being preserved on several comparable Roman items as *Iuppiter Optime Maxime conserva numerum omnium militantium*, ‘May Jupiter, the Best and the Greatest, protect all the soldiers of the troop’ (Ruhlmann 1935; Bishop and Coulston 2006:183 and 192). Three early medals mounted on a baldric discovered in the Illerup bog similarly feature the text *IOM*, the usual abbreviation of ‘Jupiter the Best and the Greatest’ (Grane 2007:236–37). Given the obvious etymological relationship between *erilaz* and the Odinic *heiti Jormunr* ‘great’ (< **er-*), the Strängnäs inscription seems likely to represent a comparable divine invocation (*Óðins nöfn* 8; Mees 2003). Imploring and invocatory expressions of this type are attested in other forms of contemporary Roman military epigra-

phy, and reflect the cults of figures such as Iuppiter Conservator, the protector of the Roman army and the Roman state. The Vimose sequence **hleuno:an[a]:regu** appears to be expressed in a first-person indicative rather than subjunctive form, but similarly seems to reflect some sort of protective imploration.

The Noleby inscription features a form **rah**, however, that may also be taken as a reflection of **rehaną*. Typically, the Noleby sequence **suhurah** has been left uninterpreted, connected (irregularly) with OSw. *sver*, *svær*, OE *swehor*, *swēor*, OHG *swehur* < PG **swehuraz* ‘stepfather’ (von Grienberger 1901:570, Bugge 1906:7–9 and 22–23, and Grønvik 1987: 99–113) or assumed (with Jungner 1924:240–42) to reflect a euphonic expression comparable to Sw. *surra* ‘hum, buzz, whir’ or *sorla* ‘gurgle, murmur’. But second syntactic position is the expected place to find a verb in a Germanic sentence and **rah** looks to be related to **ragina-**, seemingly a derivative of a past participle to a Proto-Germanic class-VI verb **rahaną* ‘advise’ (**rōh*, *rōgun*, *raganaz*). Gothic *garēhsns* ‘plan, decision, determination’ is most clearly comparable morphologically to (lengthened-grade) Lithuanian *rėksnys* ‘bawler’ (to *rėkti* ‘cry out’). The Vimose form **regu**, however, suggests that a Proto-Germanic class-V **rehaną* (**rah*, *rēgun*, *reganaz*) ultimately underlies most of these forms (Krause 1971:107–8, Rix 2001:506, Markey 2012:103–5), with the orthography **regu** (for expected *rehu*) either reflecting analogical spread of voice to the originally voiceless stem or merely the early runic ambiguity in representation of voice also seen in the Hogganvik form **erafaz** (for expected **er(a)baz*; cf. ON *ierfe* ‘wolverine’) and the By stone’s (-)laif- vs. Myklebostad’s -[la]ib- (cf. ON *leif* ‘inheritance’) that seems to be a sign of intervocalic fricative voicing; cf. Krause and Jankuhn (1966: nos 71 and 77), Schulte (2010:59–60). The Vimose form **regu** more faithfully reflects the vocalism attested in Old Church Slavonic *reko* ‘I say’, the nominal reflections such as *regin* and *gerēhsns* those of Old Church Slavonic *rokb* ‘time’ and *rěčb* ‘speech, accusation’ respectively (cf. Lindeman 2004).

The following Noleby sequence **susi** presumably represents a similarly regular early North Germanic lexical expression, the younger-runic emphatic demonstrative pronoun **susi** ‘this one, she’ found on the Sandby III stone being the most obvious comparandum (Bugge 1897:344, 1899:146, Noreen 1923:315, Moltke 1985:388). Demonstrative forms in *-si* are otherwise attested only at a relatively late stage in North Germanic, but pronominal “stacking” of this kind (cf. Gaulish *sosin* ‘this’ < **so* + *-sin*) is common to most Indo-European languages and hence was presumably an inherited feature of Germanic. The preceding form **suhu**

looks to be a similarly feminine noun appearing in the expected position for a subject: presumably an onomastic ‘Sugu advised’. Given the widespread runic confusion in the representation of voice intervocalically, **suhu** is most obviously comparable lexically to Swedish *sugga* and Norwegian *sugge* ‘sow’, nominals which are reflected in OE *sugu* ‘sow’ and OS *suga* ‘id.’ (Kroonen 2011:152–56); cf. the similar *heiti* Sýr for Freyja attested in *Skáldskaparmál* 435. As Kroonen (2011:152–56) points out, the distribution of forms with -gg- in North Germanic suggests they continue an unattested Old Norse form (**suggu* or the like), even if Swedish *sugga* and Norwegian *sugge* ‘sow’ are only attested at relatively recent dates. The appearance of nom. sg. feminine **susi** in third syntactic position also suggests that an early form of pronominal “doubling” of the subject **suhu** is to be recognised here: ‘Sugu, this one/she advised’.

Yet Proto-Germanic **rehaną* evidently conveyed a determinative semantic; compare Gothic *ragin* (ntr.) ‘opinion, law, responsibility’, particularly in the expression *bi ragina gudis* ‘according to the dispensation of God’ (Col. 1:25), as well as *ragineis* ‘advisor’ and *raginondin* ‘being governed’, as well as Vedic Sanskrit *racana* ‘direction, rule’, Tocharian *reki*, *rake* ‘word’, the Old Church Slavonic past pass. part. *rečēnъ* ‘said’ (to *rešti* ‘to say’) and Old Russian *rokъ* ‘fate’ (i.e. what has been determined). Hence advice may be too weak a description for what divine **ragina-* may have been thought to constitute at the time of the execution of the Noleby inscription. A sense of divine judgement (or doom) may be a more appropriate translation for a nominal used in a ritual context that etymologically means ‘determination, advice’ (cf. OS *regano giscapu* ‘fate of the gods’). The Latvian and Lithuanian cognate *ragana* ‘witch, sorceress’ (which Markey 2012:104, n. 42 contends is a loan from Germanic) points to a similarly agentive meaning and Middle Welsh *rheg-* ‘curse’ and Old Norse *ragn* ‘curse, swear’ also suggest that the Noleby inscription may represent an expression comparable to the Björketorp and Stentoften imprecations.

4 Religious context

What the rest of the Noleby epigraph represents precisely has long proved even more problematic – indeed the 6–7 cm high characters of the inscription were executed within horizontal guide marks which, given they allow room for more text than is actually present on the stone, make

the epigraph look as if it was never completed (if not just poorly planned). Yet Markey (2012:98–100; and cf. MacLeod and Mees 2006:181, Mees 2013:343–44) interprets the form **tojeḱa** as reflecting a grammatical *apo koinou* or pivot construction (much as the text is actually set out physically on the stone), linking **tojeḱa** with ON *tæja* ‘grant, bestow, help, assist’ – i.e. as a *verbum donandi* (as does Grønvik 1987:96) < IE **deh*₃- ‘give’ rather than the *verbum faciendi* (cf. Goth. *taujan* ‘make, do’) that the form is often (after Brate 1898:334 and Bugge 1906:5) assumed to represent (cf. Pokorny 1959–69:218, Grønvik 1999:15–16, 2005:17–18, Lindeman 2000, Lühr 2000:307–8, Beck and Hauck 2002:58–59, Beck 2011:307–8 and Mees 2013). Bugge (1906:6) had interpreted the expression in a syntactically similar way, claiming that the “Objekt for **tojeḱa** paa Fyrunga-Stenen er det same som Objekt for **fahi**, nemlig de forud-gaaende Ord **runo ... raginakudo**”. But the key interpretative point remains how best to interpret **tojeḱa**.

The Noleby form **tojeḱa** was claimed by Krause (1971:16) to represent a monophthongised development of the early North Germanic verb **taujan* which is now attested on the Gallehus horn, two of the bog depositions (a shield grip from Illerup and the Garbølle box) and is presumably also reflected in the bracteate spellings **tawo**, **tau** and in the iterated nominal **tuwatuwa** from Vadstena (Mees 2013:335–36). There is a tendency for runic texts from the sixth and later centuries to represent inherited diphthongs with monophthongal spellings, and such a development might explain the lack of reflexes of **taujan* later in Old Norse (cf. Schulte 2006b:19). But **taujan* has long been considered to have an unclear etymology, as has ON *tæja*, and most assessments of this key verb in the first line of the Noleby text were presented before the etymology of **taujan* and *tæja* was first formally demonstrated.

Brate (1898:334) had assumed that Goth. *taujan* ‘make, do’ preserved an older semantic than its Old Norse (apophonic) cognate *tæja*, but as Lindeman (2000), Lühr (2000:307–8), Markey (2012:94–100) and Mees (2013:335–37) have made quite clear, the correct relationship is the other way around. Instead, IE **deh*₃- ‘give’ (cf. Lat. *dō* ‘give’, Skt. *dūvas* ‘offerings’, Latv. *davināt* ‘present, offer’ etc.) represents the (*donandi*) root of both forms, an insight that has particular ramifications for interpretations of the Noleby inscription. Ringe’s (1988–90:74, n. 41) etymology of **taujana* which links it to Greek *dúnamai* ‘be able, be strong enough’ and Tocharian B *tsuwa* ‘join, adjust’ (< IE **deyh*₂- ‘join’) is supported by Nedoma (in Rau and Nedoma 2012/13:71, n. 15), but it does not explain the semantics of the younger Norse forms *tæja* ‘grant, bestow, help,

assist' and *týja* 'help, avail, be of use, assist' which may more regularly be derived from IE **deh*₃*u-* 'give'. Kümmel (in Rix 2001:123) questions Ringe's etymology on morphological grounds, noting that the expected Gothic reflex of IE **doǵh*₂*-éie-* is **taggwjan* not *taujan*. Ringe's explanation also seems irregular on semantic grounds.

As Markey (2012:94–97) stresses, the most important consideration in the etymology of **taujan* is the Old Norse apophonic variants *tæja* 'grant, bestow, help, assist' and *týja* 'help, avail, be of use, assist' which seem to have replaced **taujan* in later North Germanic. The East and West Germanic cognates of *tæja* and *týja* are routinely connected with a Proto-Germanic **taujana* 'make, do', but as morphological variants, ON *tæja* < **tōwjan* and *týja* < **tewjan* (cf. the similar vocalic variation represented in Gothic *ubil-tojis* 'evil-doer' and *ga-tewiþs* 'arranged') should be expected to be semantically archaic. Or as Kuryłowicz (1945–49 = 1960:79) put it in his fourth law of analogy: "Quand à la suite d'une transformation morphologique une forme subit la différenciation, la forme nouvelle correspond à sa fonction primaire (de foundation), la forme ancienne est réservée pour la fonction secondaire (fondée)." The *formes nouvelles* are the linguistically secondary vřddhi variant *tæja* 'grant, bestow, help, assist' and the (remodeled) full-grade form *týja* 'help, avail, be of use, assist', while the *forme ancienne* with the *fonction secondaire* is the morphologically original East and West Germanic form reflected in Gothic as *taujan* 'make, do'.

Kuryłowicz's fourth law has been the subject of some controversy, but Germanic is replete with illustrations of his law. Perhaps the closest example is to be seen in the etymology of Old Norse *tela* 'tell, tally' (< **teljan*) which is usually linked with Indo-European cognates such as Greek *dólos* 'wile, bait, cunning' and Latin *dolus* 'guile, deceit'. The original semantics are preserved in the Old Norse vřddhi *tæla* 'entice, betray' (< **tēljan*), precisely as would be expected under Kuryłowicz's fourth law.

Markey (2012:95, n. 18) also points out that similar evidence for semantic archaism can be seen in the use of the perfective *gataujan* in Gothic in the biblical passage *hwo allis þaurfte gataujiþ sis manna, gageigands þo manased alla, iþ sis silbin fraqistjands aiþþau gasleipjands?*, 'For what is a man **advantaged**, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself to be cast away?' (Luke 9.25). The presumed underlying biblical Greek verb *ōphelēō* 'help, aid, assist' has been translated in this passage as if Gothic *gataujan* were a synonym of its Old Norse morphological variants *tæja* and *týja*. In contrast, Ringe's etymology of West Germanic

taujan assumes a development which ignores the obvious morphological parallel between the early runic deverbative **tuwa** and Sanskrit *duvas* ‘offerings’ (Lindeman 2000, Grønvik 2005:17–18). The only question regarding early runic reflexes of **taujan* from an etymological perspective should be whether the innovation in meaning attested in Gothic *taujan* should also be allowed for the early North Germanic cognate. The examples of early runic **taujan* were all found in religious contexts – the Gallehus horn is clearly a ritual object and the Garbølle box and Nydam shield mount are both items that were sacrificed into votive bogs as part of religious rituals. Nedoma’s assertion that early North Germanic **taujan* could not have a votive meaning such as ‘dedicate, give’ is predicated on rejecting the clear evidence which supports the etymological connection with IE **deh₃-* ‘give’ independently proposed by Lindeman (2000), Lühr (2000:307–8) and Markey (2012:94–100).

Instead, the preservation of a form **toj-** in the Noleby inscription may be taken as evidence for the morphological occlusion of inherited **taujan* at the hands of the vǫddhi **tōwjan*. An East Nordic monophthongisation of **/au/* could be seen as the trigger for the loss of the older form, the only one recorded in early inscriptions, at the hand of **tōwjan*. Yet if so, this occlusion would also represent evidence that **taujan* remained a *verbum donandi* in North Germanic – i.e. the morphological occlusion presumes semantic equivalence. Much of the literature concerning **taujan* and the Noleby inscription has been proposed without considering that the underlying etymological meaning of both forms points to North Germanic **taujan* being a *verbum donandi*. A more cautious interpretation of both forms, however, would be to admit that a *donandi* semantic was retained by both **taujan* and **tōwjan* in early North Germanic, even if some evidence of semantic bleaching of the former is to be admitted – i.e. to translate early runic **taujan* as ‘dedicate, make’. And given the likely etymological connection of **taujan* and **tōwjan* with IE **deh₃-*, a more considered translation of the Noleby form **toj-** would similarly be ‘dedicate, grant, help, make’.

The runes immediately following **toj-** are typically taken to represent a clitic first person pronoun, early runic *-eka*, a syntactically unexpected form given the usual interpretation of preceding **fahi** as a verb (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 67, Antonsen 1975: no. 46). Brate (1898:336–37), who read **fahik̄** (rather than Bugge’s 1899:143 **fahi**) in the first line, proposed that the variation with **tojeķa** (i.e. not ***faheķa**) reflected a metrical necessity, citing the restrictions required of Sievers’s A-type half-lines for the absence of the expected **-a** in putative ***fahik̄(a)**. And certainly, the

oddest syntactic feature of the Noleby text is the pro-drop apparent in the opening part of the inscription, but the appearance of a pronoun cliticised to the verb (indeed along with what seems best to be understood to represent narrative inversion) which follows immediately thereafter (Eythórsson 2001:31–32, Mees 2013:343). Antonsen (2002:288) even cited the lack of pronominal marking on **fahi** as evidence that it could not be a verb: a more expected syntax would be **ek rūno raginaku(n)do fāhi*; (*ek*) *tōi* ... -- with pro-drop coming (if at all) only in the second sentence (i.e. what is usually characterised as “topic drop”; see Sigurðsson 1993, Faarlund 2004:221–23, Rosenkvist 2009, Mees 2013:343). Rejecting the reading **ek**, Grønvik (1987:96) instead interpreted the second verb as a third-person *tōje* with the following *a*-rune a preposition *ā* ‘to’. But the Noleby inscription alliterates and reads much as if it begins with a line taken originally from a longer piece of discourse. Its (apparent) use of a pronoun with the second verb (but not the first) may simply have been required on stylistic grounds.

The most important evidence for the correct semantic interpretation of **toj-**, however, is the form **unapou** which opens the second line. Krause interpreted it (after Nordén 1934:99–101) as *unapō* ‘happiness’ (cf. ON *unad(r)* ‘delight, happiness’, OE *wynn* ‘joy’, OS *wunni(a)*, OHG *wunna* ‘joy, delight’), suggesting that the collocation **tojeķa | unapou** indicates that the Noleby inscription records a funerary imprecation that “encouraged” the “happiness” of the ghost of the deceased so that it would remain in its grave (cf. Jacobsen 1935, Nedoma 1998:43–44). And the collocation with an abstract noun is more obviously reconcilable with a *verbum donandi* (‘give, grant happiness’) than a *verbum faciendi* (‘make, do happiness’).

Yet the form **unapou** might better be interpreted as a more regularly spelt oblique formation (cf. the Trollhättan bracteate’s **lapodu**; Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 130), perhaps, with Grønvik (1987:96–97), a neuter **unap** and another nominal **ou**. The verbal root **wun-* also clearly means ‘dwell, abide’ (cf. ON *una*, OE *wunian* ‘idem’) and ‘delight’ is a developed meaning: ‘dwell on, enjoy, be happy in, be content with a thing’. Grønvik (2001:258–59) later revised his original explanation of **ou** as *ōu* (< **junhō*) ‘young (woman)’, positing the presence of a *ō*-stem *vṛddhi* variant of Gothic *awon* (dat. sg.) ‘grandmother’ (cf. ON *afi* ‘grandfather’) – and despite its speculative nature, his benedictory translation ‘may help the young (woman) / grandmother to happiness’ could be an improvement on ‘I grant happiness to **ou**’.

The most obvious parallel to **tojeķa | unapou** preserved in an early

runestone text, however, is the expression **gafj** recorded in the Stenstofen inscription. Interpreted as ‘gave a good year’ by von Friesen (1916:48–49), this understanding is reliant on an ideographic reading of the letterform transcribed by Krause as **j** – i.e. as reflecting its name **(j)āra* ‘(fruitful) year, period of abundance’. Von Friesen’s ideographic reading remains generally accepted in the runic historiography (Barnes 2012:25, for example, claims that it is “certain”), but seems too tenuous an identification on which to base an interpretation that appears to conflict with the otherwise clear archaeological indications that the Stenstofen monument formerly served as a funerary memorial (Nerman 1953, Carstens and Grimm 2015). As Stoklund (1995:344) has observed of runology: “Merkwürdiger ist in zahlreichen Fällen eine Tendenz zu beobachten, den magischen oder religiösen Inhalt semantisch verständlich zu machen, indem man zu problematischen Ausfüllungen greift, z.B. mit Begriffsrunen...”. Indeed Grønvik’s (1990:287–89) connection of the later Stenstofen form **hle** to the early runic nominal **hlaiwa** ‘burial’ and the more commonly attested funerary verb **hlaiwido** ‘buried’ again suggests that the Stenstofen text is memorial in nature and primarily refers to the dedication of a burial ground. Instead, the semantically closest early runic expression to **tojeḱa | unapou** seems to be the bracteate sequence **gibu auja** ‘I give favour’ from Køge (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 127). And early runic **auja** appears to represent the sense of divine favour that the wearer of a pendant decorated with mythological scenes presumably expected to receive from the amulet (Mees 2013:330–31). Rather than a fabricatory expression, **tojeḱa | unapou** appears best to be taken as similarly featuring an indication of magico-religious giving.

5 Semantic interpretation

The lack of a clear reference to the stone, the raiser of the monument or an obvious indication of commemoration are quite unexpected for an early runic monumental text. Yet the opening Noleby line appears best to be understood as a poetic reflection of a typical early runic fabricant expression such as the Einang stone’s ...*daz rünō faihidō*, ‘I, NN, drew a rune’ (Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 63). And the use of the singular **runo** has long been considered collective, the traditional etymology of *runne* suggesting that the description originally signified some sort of communication rather than an individual letterform (Grimm 1821:69,

Lieberman 2009:251–59, Mees 2014b); cf. the Indo-European collective-marker *-b₂ (Nussbaum 2014). But an expression ‘I grant happiness’ only otherwise seems clearly paralleled in early runic votive and amuletic rather than memorial inscriptions.

It seems, however, that the original strong verb *rehaną was occluded in later Germanic by *rēdaną ‘advise, determine, counsel’, a derivative of IE *reb₁dh- ‘carry out successfully’ (cf. Skt *rādhnóti* ‘succeed’). And its use in early runic inscriptions suggests that *rehaną had become restricted in early Northwest Germanic to a particular semantic sphere – a magico-religious one given the use of **regu** on the Vimose plane and **rah** in the Noleby inscription. The Proto-Germanic *o*-grade causative *rōdjaną ‘speak’ (< IE *roh₁dh-éje-) demonstrates how similar the two verbs must have been semantically, although the connection with fate and cursing suggests the reason why *rehaną may have been favoured in magico-religious contexts.

As with reflections of Proto-Germanic *rehaną, the appearance of early North Germanic *taujan and its derivatives otherwise only on religious finds (a votive horn, depositions in sacrificial bogs and on amulets) also suggests that the Noleby inscription is best to be understood as a religious text (Mees 2013:345). The Noleby inscription seems most closely paralleled by the discursive formation evidenced in the language of fabrication, invocation, offering and favour so widely (if laconically) attested on the Old Germanic bracteates (cf. Mees 2014a) – to the semantic sphere of **wija**, **alu**, **salu** and so on, rather than a clearly memorial vocabulary. The presence of what seems most reasonably to be taken as a *verbum donandi* at the end of its first line, suggests that the Noleby text represents some kind of magico-religious dedication, and that the most prosaic interpretation of the modifier **raginakudo** is not the most appropriate one for the difficult early Swedish expression.

The final alliterating forms ×**hwatin/h---tin** and **hakupo** were taken by Krause as a weak class-I third-person plural subjunctive verb ‘may they sharpen’ (cf. ON *hvetja* ‘whet, sharpen, make keen, urge, incite, encourage’) and an acc. sg. masculine name. Krause (following Jungner 1924:238–40) linked **hakupo** with the early runic Vånga stone’s **haukopuz** (putatively meaning ‘hawk-like’ according to Jungner; Krause and Jankuhn 1966: no. 66), a clearly onomastic form that Hoffman (in Hauck 1969:43) subsequently interpreted (even more inventively) as ‘knee-runner, shaman’. Antonsen (1975: no. 46) connected **hakupo** with OS *hacud* and OE *hacod* ‘pike (fish)’ (< **hakudaz*), however, criticising the ‘hawk’ etymology as fantastic (as ON *haukr*, OE *hafoc*, OS *habūk* and OHG *habuc*

‘hawk’ < **habukaz*; cf. Pol. *kobuz*, Russ. *kóbeta* ‘hawk, kite’). The West Germanic fish names OS *hacud* and OE *hacod* have no direct reflection in North Germanic, but they do seem to be derivations of the same root as is reflected in ON *haki* ‘hook’ and the Old Swedish king’s name *Haki*. Alternatively, Grønvik (1987:100) took **hakubo** to be an acc.sg. dvandva *hā-ku(n)þō* ‘high (and) known’ as if the final term was a poetic description for a distinguished acquaintance. Given that the second-last term is difficult to read and the proper interpretation of final **hakubo** is unclear, the best translation of the Noleby inscription is presumably:

*rūno fāhi, raginaku(n)do. tōjeka
unaþ(o)... Sugu rah susi ...*

‘A rune I draw, divinely known. I grant
happiness ... Sugu, this one/she advised ...’

Yet in some ways the text on the Noleby stone seems closest in form among the older runic monuments to that which appears on the Eggja stone. It does not feature any of the key terminologies that feature in later runestone curses (such as references to *ergi* ‘unmanliness’ which are already present in the Björketorp and Stentofen inscriptions), but in its use of **tōjan* and *unaþ(o)* appears most similar thematically to an imploratory text of the type best represented on the bracteates. The Elgesem and Kylver inscriptions are reminiscent of bracteate texts of Krause’s “magical word formula” type (Mees 2014a), but its alliteration makes the Noleby text discursively more similar to the much more expansive (but somewhat difficult to make out) Eggja inscription. The Noleby text seems more obviously gnomic (and pagan), however, with the reference to divine advice best understood as reflecting a gift granted by the gods to mortals who called on their aid. Rather than a memorial or curse inscription, the Noleby text seems best to be understood as recording a ritual expression only broadly paralleled elsewhere in early runic epigraphy.

6 Conclusion

The Noleby inscription has a very mixed historiography and its proper reading (let alone thematic and stylistic interpretation) must remain somewhat unclear. Yet it has long been thought to begin with a poetic formula and feature a reference to happiness. Characterised especially by its use of reflections of Proto-Germanic **rehana*, its lack of typical early

runic memorial expressions such as ‘NN’s stone’ or ‘in memory of NN’ is an indication that it features a typologically rarer kind of early Nordic epigraph. The early Germanic strong verb *rehaną was eventually lost from each of the Germanic languages, presumably at the hands of a less magico-religious *rēdaną. And instead of being a funerary or imprecatory expression, the closest parallels to the Noleby inscription similarly suggest that it represents a ritual text, its alliterative stylisation typical of curses, prayers, implorations and charms.

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