CHAPTER «HISTORICAL SCIENCES»

SOMETHING ABOUT THE MENTAL MAP OF THE VIKING AGE: UKRAINIAN LANDSCAPE IN THE SCANDINAVIAN RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS (OVERVIEW OF THE PILGÅRDS AND THE BEREZAN' RUNESTONES)

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Abstract. The main aim of the article is to investigate the text of the Pilgård's runestone concerning the place name which are connected with Ukrainian landscape, and at the same time, understanding the role of Berezan' Island in the trade communication is shaped by researching its rune inscription. The main purpose of research is to understand how fellows-in-trade in the Viking Age have perceived places and how they reflected their mental map in the inscriptions of runestones. The content analysis method became the principal idea of the research methodology. The research was carried out in two stages. The first stage involved the grouping of conceptual components into logical categories recorded in the runic inscriptions. The second stage involved examining the text on different contextual levels. The scientific novelty of the article is to investigate the geography information of runestones as the mental maps, which were connected with long-distance trade networks on the Eastern way, combining knowledge of travel routes extended to Ukrainian landscape, and how traders encountered and experienced it. The runestones show us something what the people have been pondering about before. The text on the stones are perceived as a common place for the development of the cultural experience, it attracts attention to the life of people and the cultural environment that made impact on the stone and where it was formed due to the trade activity of human beings. Understand-

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ing the scale of Scandinavian activities beyond the island Berezan' fosters the increasingly necessary knowledge to explain such term as felagi that is found on runestone. The inscriptions on runestones were fused the physical, humans and the cultural landscape into the mental map, which was comprehensible to a certain group of the Swedish fellows-in-trade. The Pilgårds and the Berezan' runestones structured information about Ukrainian landscape and gave the evaluation of the purpose of a place.

1. Introduction

The islands Gotland (Sweden) and Berezan' (Ukraine) had a strategic situation along the major Eastern trade route. The evidence for the use of a runestones (rune inscriptions from Pilgårds (G 280)[1] and Berezan' (X UaFv1914)[2]) seem to indicate a lingering Viking mindset [13]. Trade and trade networks presented a vital context to impact to the Swedish trade community to the Eastern landscape.

According to Frog, Kendra Willson, and Maths Bertell in pre-modern environme geography would most often be construed from an anthropocentric perspective in dialectic with circulating discourse. The result is what can be described as a mental map, an imaginal understanding of situated relations of places and spaces [1, p. 13].

The runic inscriptions reflect the mental map of Viking surroundings which they as a group as fellows-in-trade created that to understand and experience Eastern landscape. It was the special way to organize the world, creating space and social relations.

The construction and communication of mental maps were most likely connected with long-distance trade networks, combining knowledge of travel routes and lands encountered there [1, p. 14].

Relations between the Swedish and Ukrainian landscape were encoded with the runic inscriptions. The named places (logical categories recorded in the runic inscriptions: *Ru[f]stæini* ['Rofstein'], *Æifur* ['Aifor']) are sites to which runic knowledge is moored in discourse, which reciprocally constructs those landscapes, their significance and relationships to one another.

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[1] G 280. Samnordisk runtextdatabas, Uppsala universitet, accessed February 20, 2021, https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php?id=18719&if=srdb&table=mss
[2] X UaFv1914;47. Samnordisk runtextdatabas, Uppsala universitet, accessed February 20, 2021, https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php?id=21575&if=srdb&table=mss

In recent years, the understanding of runic inscriptions as an important source of information on pooling together knowledge of different places in the context of Viking trading networks been brought to the fore [5, p. 173–176].

A more and more careful approach to runic stones as an instrument of communication, a carrier of the historical memory should be taken at present. The project by Professor M. Hansson at the Department of Archeology and Ancient History, Lund University "Memory, Memorials and Monuments" offered to conduct the study of sites for the establishment of runic stones and their perception in the landscape [5, p. 173–176].

Back Danielsson, Ing-Marie pointes out understand how rune-stones worked as mnemonic agents. She emphasized that it is important that the stone's relation to other stones is considered. The stones together structured the landscape in a certain way, and also regulated how the body was to enter, encounter and experience this index, nexus, or gate to other lands.

Back Danielsson, Ing-Marie maintaines that not only places but also families were tied together in the landscape through the rune-stones. They resulted in shared experiences of landscape, life and death – that is, commemoration. In this way, individuals, collective memory and rune-stones were seamlessly interwoven [4, p. 81].

The scientific attention of Christoph Kilger, Senior lecturer in Archaeology at Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University directs on investigating of runes, trade and silver, that were deeply interconnected within the context of Viking trading networks that were intellectually stimulating environments pooling together knowledge and ideas from different places [8, p. 49–63].

Christoph Kilger highlighting that from a social perspective, island societies like Gotland were not backwaters, but at the forefront of trade and communication across the Viking world [8, p. 61].

As Kilger demonstrates, the trading communities of the Baltic may have provided the social and intellectual environment needed for the development of the short-twig runic system [8, p. 61].

According to Swedish archaeologist and runologist Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt a contextual approach towards runes is key to understanding their social significance, the circumstances in which they were used, and by whom [9, p. 151–161].

Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt discusses the runic research in a wider perspective, such as identity, networks and the role that islands play as nodes of interaction and communication, and to examine change and continuity from a long-term perspective.

In addition, the author emphasizes that the Eastern Route affected lives at the level of individuals, processes connected with it also operated at the level of geopolitics, of which mobility is a significant factor.

An increase of research interest in the study of the geographical conceptions as revealed in Old Norse and in classical texts through place names, terms of direction and geographical descriptions is evident from the latest developments of Frog, Kendra Willson, and Maths Bertell [1, p. 11–25].

The strategic purpose of the article is to review two runestones (Pilgårds (G 280) and Berezan' (X UaFv1914)) referring to Viking trading networks which were pooling together geography knowledge about Ukrainian landscape in the eyes of the Swedish trade community.

The main task of the research is to study runic texts from the Samnordisk runtextdatabas[3], as well as their logical categories that link runic meaning to an understanding of the mental map in the eyes of Scandinavians, which they as fellows-in-trade created [13].

In general, in terms, the text of Pilgård's runestone analyzed concerning the place names, which are connected with Ukrainian landscape, and at the same time, understanding the role of Berezan' island in the trade communication is shaped by researching its rune inscription.

2. Methods and procedures

The electronic database Samnordisk runtextdatabas (Uppsala University)[4] has been used to reagard Berezan's runic inscription from a textual perspective. Providing the quotation of the runic inscription in the article should be performed through transliterations in the informal way, far from the standard according to the electronic database.

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[3] The aim of Scandinavian Runic-text Database is to collect all Scandinavian runic inscriptions digitally. It has been to collect all Nordic rune-texts, including those found outside the Nordic countries, in a machine-readable format for the benefit of a number of disciplines.
[4] "Samnordisk runtextdatabas", Uppsala universitet, https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php?if=srd-b&table=srdb

The Scandinavian runic inscriptions are supplied with normalisations in the Old Norse, and in the case of the Swedish inscriptions, there are also norms in the Runic Swedish respectively. The content analysis method became the principal idea of the research.

The research demands the following steps in studying Berezan's and Pilgård's Scandinavian rune inscription:

1. Examining Berezan's and Pilgård's rune text within different levels of contextuality.

2. Determining a meaning for the text as a mini-narrative about the landscape, understanding of situated relations of places and spaces.

3. Establishing a group of signs as a text, identifying its basic components.

Gaining a deeper understanding of the Berezan's and Pilgård's texts and its historical runic commemorative tradition by combining knowledge from various connected inscriptions from Swedish landscape.

Application of the method of the content analysis to the given study provides deeper understanding of the text and its historical information about Berezan's and Pilgård's runic inscriptions and the Viking trade.

Then the paper dwell upon the limits of modern understanding of the rune information, which leads to further modifications.

The Scandinavian runic inscriptions are a unique, authentic and reliable historical source. The runic monuments are considered an example of the material embodiment of the Viking Age, the public art and the Historical Memory.

The Berezan's and Pilgård's Scandinavian runestones are the evidence of the Viking trade, the mini-narrative about the landscape. The Scandinavian runic inscriptions usually have strong and weak points.

The benefits include universality of human experience as well as originality and uniqueness of documents. Fragmentary and laconic nature; as well as homogeneous words in the text belong to the shortcomings.

Runes have surpassed time, geography, language and culture. Through centuries inscription provides the historical information that is not available in other sources.

In this respect, runes are not only one of the roots of the modern Northern European culture, but also they find their embodiment in the Eastern European culture, including Ukrainian.

3. The inscription on the Pilgård's runestone: there are something about the mental map of Vikings and Ukrainian landscape

Each Scandinavian runic stone tells a story. It's rather the history that accompanies every stone. The runic inscription on a stone spurs on the desire for presence, involvement, experience of customers marked instead of impressions.

According to Åhfeldt Kitzler the runestones show relations between sites and regions on several levels, i.e. the runic inscription, the artefact and the context – i.e. where and in what circumstances it was produced used and found – united into the same object [9, p. 151].

The material offered to the historian by runic inscriptions includes original data on geographical names, which were connected with the Viking trade. They contain data on medieval social and economic history that points to journeys to the east helps to establish the mental map where people had travelled, and indicates the function of the trade route to the Dnipro and further to the south.

Place names represented on runestones represent the destination: only the large water routes to the east were important.

According to Christoph Kilger, Viking trading networks were intellectually stimulating environments pooling together knowledge and ideas from different places. Runic inscriptions represent an important source of information on aspects of Gotland's long distance trading networks [8, p. 50].

The famous Pilgårds stone from north-eastern Gotland, provide direct evidence for the people who were participating in these expeditions. The original location of the runestone is not known, but it was probably situated not far from a Viking Age harbour in Boge bay. Pilgårds is dated to the 9th or 10th century [8, p. 50].

The runestone from *Pilgårds* (Gotland, Sweden, G 280) refers to the southern trade route along the Dnipro River. The monument was found in 1870. The stone is 60 cm long and 36 cm wide.

The text is executed on six longitudinal strips divided by limiting lines:

biarfaa : statu : sis[o] stain ¶ hakbiarn :bruþr¶ ruþuisl : austain : imuar ¶ is af[a] : st[ai]n[a] : stata : aft : raf[a] ¶ su[þ] furi : ru[f]staini : kuamu ¶ uit i aifur : uifil ¶ [ba]uþ [u=m] [13]

The inscription mentions an unsuccessful expedition into the interior of Rus', which tragically ended near the rapids of Aifur on the Dnipro River. The inscription says:

Brightly painted, this stone was raised by Hegbjarn and his brothers Rodvisl, Austain and Emund. They have raised stones in memory of Ravn south of Rufstain. They penetrated far into the Aifur. Vivil was in command [14, p. 128].

The inscription commemorates a man who must have died south of *Ru[f]stæini* ['Rofstein'] while travelling in *Æifur* ['Aifor']. The latter indicates one of the dangerous Dnipro cataracts, whereas the former has been identified as a cliff located close to the cataract.

The place names *Æifur* ['Aifor'] and *Ru[f]stæini* ['Rofstein'] are of the greatest interest in the inscription. The name *Ever fierce* ['Aifor'] occurs in a text drafted for Constantine VII around 950.

Chapter Nine of Constantine's *De administrando imperio* ['On How to Manage an Empire'] depicts the Rus' as based on the Middle Dnipro and points north, and 'all the Rus' constitute an elite preoccupied with tribute-collection and trade. The boats are fitted out and laden, and the Rus' set forth in convoy as far as the Dnipro Rapids.

"At the fourth great rapid, which in Rus' is called *Airfor,* everyone brings their ship to land and those who are in it stand watch after they disembark. These sentinels are necessary because of the *Petchenegs* who lie constantly in ambush. The rest take their belongings out of the dugouts and lead the slaves, fettered in chains, across the land for six miles, until they are past the rapids. After that they transport their vessels, sometimes by hauling them, sometimes by carrying them on their shoulders, past the rapids" [3, p. 58–59].

The toponym *Ru[f]stæini* ['Rofstein'] is not known from other sources; therefore, its interpretation is hypothetical. It is connected with the first of thrust of the *Neiasytetskyi* threshold, which was called *Rvanyi kamin* [2, p. 271–273].

On the Pilgårds stone six male persons of the expedition are mentioned, out of which four were addressed as brothers. As contemporary sources the runestones allow us to get glimpses of the organization of long-distance enterprises [8, p. 52].

One feature of island societies as suggests Christoph Kilger is the formation of collective identities through in-group identification and its maintenance through intra-group interaction [8, p. 52].

According to Christoph Kilger, the brothers mentioned on the Pilgårds stone might not necessarily be relatives in a biological sense, but they might

have rather considered themselves as brothers, companions, or fellows engaging in common enterprises abroad.

Perhaps, these fellowships were the basic elements of the networks operating from Gotland, recruiting male members of big families originating from different farms on the island [8, p. 52].

In his discussion on the Pilgård stone, its origins and the intellectual environment behind the inscription, Magnus Källström suggests that northeastern Gotland and especially the area of Bogeviken could have been a center for the use of runic inscriptions during the early Viking period [8, p. 127].

From a social perspective, island societies like Gotland were not backwaters, but at the forefront of trade and communication across the Viking world [8, p. 61].

4. The Berezan' runestone about the collective memory of the Swedish trade community

The only find of a runestone in the east came to light on the island of *Berezan'* near the mouth of the Dnipro (Ukraine). Travelling across water was nothing new for Scandinavians. During the Viking Age, people, trade goods, and ideas flowed into its waters from regions as far removed as, for example, Rus'.

The runestone reflects especial knowledge that was driven by extensive contact with the outside world. It is obvious example of unique tradition of raising stone that occured on Berezan' island during the Viking Age.

The island is mentioned in *De administrando imperio* as the island of *St. Aitherios*, where the Rus' usually rested on their way between Kyiv and Byzantium. Information about *St. Aitherios Island* is found in chapter 9 of the treatise "On How to Manage an Empire," describing movement towards Rus' on "the way from the Varangians to the Greeks."

Thus, from the text of *Constantine Porphyrogenitus* it can be seen that the Rus' reequipped their *monoksily* for sea travel on *St. Aitherios* Island, and perhaps such a staging post on the island was not uncommon. Byzantine emperors were concerned about the presence of the Rus' on the Lower Dnipro and near the island of *St. Aitherios*, as reflected in the agreement between Byzantium and Rus', signed by Prince Ihor in 944, which stipulated that the Rus' did not have the right to winter at the mouth of the Dnipro on *St. Aitherios Island*.

Most likely, the settlement on Berezan' Island in the 10th through 12th centuries occupied a very small territory. The island was of too great strategic value to the Byzantine Empire to allow the Rus' to inhabit it during winter, as it could lead to colonization of the area by the Rus'. On the return trip, the island served as the last resting place before facing rapids, portages, and the backbreaking oar work of fighting the river's currents [13, p. 231].

In the Viking Age in the Gulf of Finland there were several islands and places named Birkala, a place name similar to *Berezan*' Island. These places were located on "the way from the Varangians to the Greeks."

Perhaps, local involvement and the importance of *Berezan*' Island in trade contacts in the Viking Age were especially notable.

The Berezan' runestone memorialized merchants with enough information to reconstruct at least some of the routes they took.

The stone excavated in 1905 on the island of Berezan' in the mouth of Dnipro on what was known as the Varangian Way "from the Varangians to the Greeks"".

The stone was found in a later grave and the original place is unknown. The stone lay in the tomb under the head and the runic inscription turned down. It is 48 cm wide, 47 cm high and 12 cm thick, and it is presently located in the Odessa archaeological museum[5].

What makes the Berezan' runestone more interesting is that the Vikings trade campaigns from the Swedish lands to Byzantium proceeded along the Dnipro, which is pointed out in Eastern European toponymy and recorded in the runic inscription from the Pilgårds.

The inscription indicates the commercial interest of the Vikings in the Eastern route, therefore the inscription on the Berezan' stone should be understood in connection with the function of the Dnipro trade way.

The monument is dated to the second half of the eleventh century:

krani : kerþi : (h)alf : þisi : iftir : kal : fi:laka : si(n)[6].

['Grani made this vault in memory of Karl, his partner'] [X UaFv1914] [13].

A slab was raised by *Grani* in memory of his companion *Karl* together with whom he made a trip, probably to Byzantium.

The memorial runic monument was established not by relatives of the dead, but by his companion, the partner.

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[5] Registration number 50378
[6] XUaFv1914;47. Samnordisk runtextdatabas, Uppsala universitet. https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php?id=21575&if=srdb&table=mss

Therefore, it is unique for Eastern Europe. The stone is testimony to the wide-ranging activities of Scandinavians in the east.

Karl and Grani, mentioned on the stone of Berezan' island can be identified as fellows-in-trade from Gotland, Upland, or Västergötland, as suggested by the use of the term "*felagi*" (Figure 1).
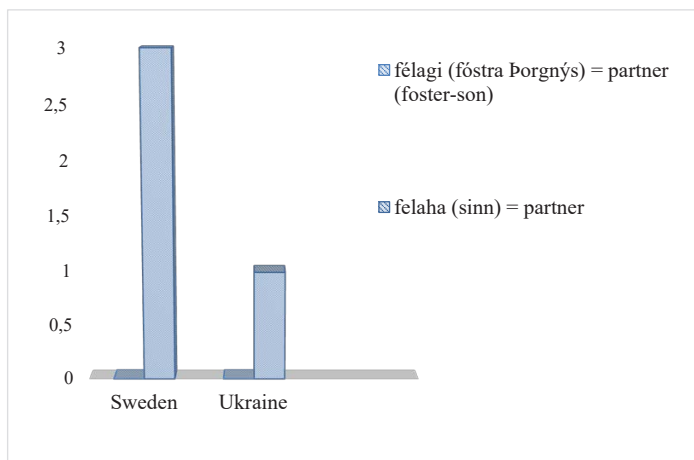

**Figure 1. The distribution of the word *"felagi"*
in Swedish runic inscriptions**

The study shows that the term "*felagi*" occurs in Swedish runic inscriptions, the term "*felagi*" has often been generalized to fellow-in-trade, meaning "joint property" (felaha = partner: Vg 112, Vg 122, Vg 182, U 391, G 280) [13].

According to Judith Jesch term such as *félag* (a fellowship or partnership) suggests close-knit groups [6, p. 184].

Etymologically, the word appears to suggest trade, or at least some activity based on common property. This contractual implication of the term is illuminated by the loan word *feolaga* in Old English ('fellow') [6, p. 235].

The term "*felagi"* has often been generalized to friend/comrade but the actual meaning is rather "joint property".

Thus, the term has been interpreted as fellow-in-trade, the exact meaning conditioned by each individual inscription.

Karl and Grani, mentioned on the stone of Berezan' island, cannot be clearly identified, although they may be from Gotland as suggested by the use of the term "*hvalf*" (coffin/vault)) found only in this region.

This word was borrowed into English where it become fellow. Its primary meaning is shown by its etymology. The first element is Old Norse *fe*, "money" the second is related to the verb to the *leggia* to "lay".

Thus "*fellow*" is someone who laid down money in a common enterprise, a business partner. This sense is certainly recorded in runes. Presumably this is a relic of two partners in trade one of whom died on their travels [10, p. 51].

Figure 2. The map with the place names mentioned in the Swedish rune inscriptions marked out along the Eastern trade route

So, a rare piece of evidence from the end of the 10th to the beginning of the 11th centuries is a runic inscription carved into a stone on Berezan island, which testifies that a considerable part of the travelers on the Dnipro route came from the Swedish community.

So, either the merchants travelled in felag with Scandinavians, or used people in as intermediaries.

Crossing along the Dnipro and further was the step towards exploring into the uncharted territories, including the Ukrainian landscape that connected the Viking Age Scandinavians trade community with established Eastern trade route into their mental map.

It is important that Berezan' stone structured the landscape in a certain way and regulated how traders encountered and experienced it.

Not only places, but also evidence of fellows-in-trade were brought together in the landscape through runestones (not only the one on Berezan' island, but also those in Gotland, Upland, and Västergötland).

Finally, that resulted in a common understanding of the landscape where the runestone was erected as well as creation of the mental map in the eyes of Scandinavians.

5. The runestones as mnemonic agents

The Scandinavian runic inscriptions constitute unique and reliable historical sources. Each Scandinavian runic stone tells a story. When someone encounters a runestone, they don't just observe it. The runic inscription on the stone makes them feel part of the life experience of the deceased.

The stones are examples of multi-media, demanding the evoking and engaging of an array of bodily senses. The rune-stones as images worked as focal points that transformed the place and affected the directionality in the landscape [4, p. 76]. A single runestone may have affected, and in some instances perhaps controlled, movement in the landscape.

The stones signal the destination of the path through islands Pilgårds and Berezan' making they an integral part of the general concept of movement. It is here that the layering of the past with a human dimension takes place.

The Scandinavian runic stones of the Age of Vikings are eyewitnesses of existence of Viking trade, mini-narratives about landscape of the Age of Vikings.

The Pilgårds and the Berezan' Scandinavian runic stones from the Viking Age are evidence of the Viking trade and a mini-narrative about the Viking age landscape. The text on the stone is understood as commonplace for the development of cultural experience. It highlights the human lives, activities, and cultural environment that influenced the existence of the stone.

The runestones were placed where people repeatedly walked, met, and travelled. Commemorative practices are performative and recurring in nature, which is why it is important to point out that it was not only the rune stone carvers that travelled in the landscape.

Back Danielsson, Ing-Marie pointes out that different classes and genders inhabiting the landscape, perhaps transporting things, goods, people and information from one place to another [4, p. 79–80].

This is an obvious statement, since the power relations expressed by rune-stones must be implemented where they can have an impact on people, in this case on roads and routes where people commonly travelled [4, p. 80].

The runestones are striking monuments in the landscape. Understanding the landscape and analyzing the potential connection of a runestone with other monuments within the same area are important in its general analysis.

The meaning of landscape is connected to people, territorial factors, and the importance of social connotations through connections to a wider world [14, p. 138].

In order to understand a monument it is necessary to analyze its geographical factors. Trade routes are commonly found near a runestone.

Connections to runestones, in turn, entail a broad historical scope, in which the monuments are seen not only as products of their time, but also as testaments of the past.

The Pilgårds and the Berezan' runestones held a general mnemonic function part of social memory. The runestones were an individual expression in the sense that they reiterated the deeds of a deceased person.

However, it should be emphasized that individual memories would not exist were it not for a social memory that provides the foundation and context for them. Social memory here refers to the selective preservation, construction, and obliteration of ideas about the way things were in the past in favor of interest in the present [15, p. 234–39].

It is important that runestones were erected in past places of importance, such as along the Eastern way. Due to such usage, a runestone both reminds

people of the past and, at the same time, brings something new to the equation. A runestones can be regarded as a memory object, i.e. a mnemonic citation.

In this paper, it has been shown that the Pilgårds and the Berezan' runestones structured the landscape in a certain way and also regulated how traders encountered and experienced they. Not only places, but also evidence of fellows-in-trade were brought together in the landscape through runestones.

This resulted in a common understanding of the landscape where the runestone was erected as well as the life and death of the deceased, in other words, honoring their memory.

Runestones were seamlessly interwoven in both individual and collective memory. The work of memory is a practical performativity based on experience, a profoundly material and strongly embodied process.

Commemorative practices are performative and recurring in nature, which is why it is important to point out that it was not only the runestone raiser that traveled through the landscape [4, p. 79].

The Berezan' runestone had an impact on people, in this case of the commonly traveled Eastern trade route.

Such a practice-based approach serves to create a more dynamic perspective on the runestone as a monument and how it actually linked people together and is thereby connected to the Swedish trade community. Those forces of regularity in combination with repeated performances have built memory.

6. Conclusions

In the process of long-distance Vikings trade networks on the Eastern way Ukrainian geographical space turned into social and was reflected in the inscriptions of the Pilgårds and the Berezan' runestones.

The inscriptions on runestones were fused the physical, humans and the cultural landscape into the mental map, which was comprehensible to a certain group of the Swedish fellows-in-trade.

The Pilgårds and the Berezan' runestones produced memorable situations: the Vikings imagined space from their anthropocentric perspective. They structured information about Ukrainian landscape and gave the evaluation of the purpose of a place.

An interest in the landscape settings of monuments has been growing over the past few decades and it has been demonstrated that landscape is not just a neutral backdrop but an integral part of Pilgårds and the Berezan' runestones.

As Johnson suggests: "people in the past did not simply live, discard items, and build on sites, but they also interacted with the landscape beyond".

The role of memory had been crucial to both the initial creation and subsequent use of rune inscription and its information.

Runestones may essentially be fragments of memory in the sense that they serve to activate memories of distant places and trade activity.

Finally, runestones were seamlessly interwoven in both individual and collective memory. Such circulating knowledge of landscape was an integral part of rune inscriptions. We can assume that a single runestone on Berezan' island may have affected and, in some instances, perhaps controlled movement in the Eastern landscape.

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