Summary

The runic sequence uilinisþpat on the Rök Stone

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The sequence of runes considered here, from the long and much-discussed inscription on the Rök Stone in Östergötland, Sweden’s most remarkable runic monument, has been read and interpreted in a number of ways. Two main suggestions have been put forward. One, and the one which most commentators on the passage in question have judged most likely, is that uilin reflects a man’s name, OWScand. *Vilinn, OSw. *Vilin, formed from the noun OWScand., OSw. vili m. ‘will’ or from the verb vilia ‘want, wish’. According to the other, uilin is a form of the stated verb vilia and is is a personal pronoun in the 2nd person plural, a variant of OWScand. ér, OSw. i(r), giving the sense ‘do you wish it’. The present author subscribes to the view that concealed behind uilin is a man’s name, which he interprets as containing an adjective meaning ‘skilled in magic’, identical to OWScand. vélinn ‘treacherous, false’ (in Modern Icelandic with the sense ‘cunning, crafty’), OSw. *vēlin, or to an adjective OSw. *vīlin, cognate and synonymous with vélinn. According to the author, the phrase uilin … knuð knati iatun in the inscription is to be understood as meaning that what is being recounted here is that the bearer of the name uilin, by virtue of his skill in magic, was able to overcome a giant.