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## Major Archeological Sites

## Tourism and heritage management of Jelling Mounds, Runic Stones and Church, World Heritage Site, Denmark

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### Abstract

This paper gives a brief account of the history of the Jelling Mounds, Runic Stones and Church, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1994, presenting different stages of archaeological research, interpretation, management and presentation of the site from its role as a burial place of the royal family in the Viking Age up to its World Heritage listing in 1994. As an introduction to the site presentation, the paper provides an overview of the emerging trends in managing cultural heritage as reflected in recent UNESCO declarations.

## Introduction to the *World Heritage Convention*

After more than 30 years of operation, the *World Heritage Convention*<sup>1</sup> has become an important instrument for international cooperation. Looking at the number of signatories totalling 181, the *Convention* is the most successful intergovernmental UNESCO agreement ever. Most importantly, the agreement has reached a definition that the cultural heritage belongs to all people and that nations have a responsibility to protect and care for the natural and cultural heritage on their territory.

The World Heritage List has become an important instrument of the *Convention*, and much effort has been invested to ensure the protection of these outstanding monuments and sites of outstanding universal value. Less consideration has been made to the stipulation that each State Party has the duty to ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of heritage properties within its own territory (art. 5).

By signing the *Convention* a country pledges to protect the whole of its national heritage, whether or not it is recognized as World Heritage. However, the identification of the national heritage often concentrates on the monumental structures, drawing attention towards the exceptional at the expense of the ordinary.

It should be noted that the *Operational Guidelines*<sup>2</sup> stipulates specifically the responsibility to:

- a) ensure the identification, nomination, protection, conservation, presentation, and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage found within their territory, and give help in these tasks to other State Parties that request it;
- b) adopt general policies to give the heritage a function in the life of the community;
- c) integrate heritage protection into comprehensive planning programmes;

Often people are not aware of the heritage that forms part of their immediate environment. Whatever the reason, irreplaceable cultural assets are disappearing before people even become aware what they are about to lose. It is important to bear in mind that not all of these cultural heritage values are known in advance or appreciated as environmental assets that enhance the quality of life. It may serve the purpose, if the perception of the *World Heritage Convention* moves away from the elitist approach often associated with the outstanding monuments included in the World Heritage List to focus on the preservation of heritage assets at large, including the need to establish national inventories and to report on the adoption of policies that aim to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community.

We are used to dealing with the physical aspects of cultural heritage preservation, which are continuously debated on the basis of the ICOMOS Venice Charter and the subsequent amendments suggested by the Nara Document on Authenticity and other international normative documents on cultural heritage preservation. In past decades, focus and concepts have shifted towards management of the heritage resources, partly because we realize that the cultural heritage is a limited resource in line with energy, water and other non-renewable natural resources, but also because cultural traditions have gained new meaning and importance for the creation of cultural identity as a means of social cohesion in a globalized world. As value judgements become more complex, heritage management is becoming a philosophical and ethical issue as well as technical one.

In reference to the changes decided at Cairns 2000, Mr Mounir Bouchenaki, then Assistant Director-General of Culture, stated that, 'the laws and management regimes applied for World Heritage sites is intended to serve as models of good practice to enhance the protection of cultural and natural heritage of national and of local importance and the current reform of the *Convention* enables the Committee to focus more on strategic issues to guide and reinforce the implementation'<sup>3</sup>.

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1. See [www.whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/](http://www.whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/)

2. The latest revision of the *Operational Guidelines* was in January 2008

3. Speech at the opening of the 26th session of the World Heritage Bureau, Report of the Rapporteur of the twenty-sixth session of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, Paris, 8-13 April 2002. For further details see: 26 BUR, WHC-02/CONF.201/15; <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2002/whc-02-conf202-2e.pdf>

The general trend in heritage conservation over the past 30 years (simultaneously with the lifetime of the *Convention*) has thus been characterized by a shift of focus from the conservation of monumental heritage towards an inclusive community-based local conservation. The role of the local people with their indigenous skills to save, maintain and revitalize their cultural properties is now acknowledged as a basis of sustainable development requiring a democratic process of public consultations and involvement of all stakeholders.

In recent years, cultural diversity and intangible heritage values have been introduced as new concepts of the international agenda by UNESCO through a long process of discussions and deliberations<sup>4</sup>.

These considerations are reflected in the revised Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention* and supported by ICOMOS charters and doctrinal texts, especially the ICOMOS Cultural Tourism Charter of 1999.

The growth of international tourism gives reason for special concern. On the one hand, tourism is a positive factor of development providing the possibility to enjoy other cultures and to learn about other people as well as to generate income and ensure a continued maintenance of the heritage. On the other hand, the sheer number of tourists creates unprecedented wear and tear and degrades the visitor experience from overuse. Tour operators may prioritize profit at the expense of sustainable development, choosing visitor destinations simply because they are known, without paying any specific concern to the inherent cultural heritage qualities. It is however a responsibility to ensure that these values are being preserved and maintained over time and that the *World Heritage Convention* has developed to become an important instrument to serve this purpose.

### Presentation and interpretation of values

Coming from a small country with only five million inhabitants and boasting only monuments and landscape features at a modest scale as compared to the grandiose heritage found elsewhere, I believe that the Danes appreciate the idiom 'small is beautiful'. The highest point in the country is Himmelbjerget, literally meaning 'The Sky Mountain'. Reaching a total height of only 147 m above sea level, the very name can be considered as an expression of a certain ironic twist in the Danish national character.

One of our best known international tourist attractions is The Little Mermaid, marketed worldwide by the Danish Tourist Organization as an icon of Danish tourist destinations and visited by a majority of foreign tourists to Copenhagen. The 1½ m high bronze sculpture is sitting on a granite boulder at the seashore in the northern part of the Copenhagen harbour<sup>5</sup>. The sculpture is not very spectacular to see and represents no outstanding artistic quality. The visitor may indeed be very disappointed. Only the association to the famous fairy tale of the same name by Hans Christian Andersen<sup>6</sup> gives this small figurine significance and meaning:

*...Far out at sea the water's as blue as the petals of the loveliest cornflower, and as clear as the purest glass; but it's very deep, deeper than any anchor can reach. Many church steeples would have to be piled up one above the other to reach from the bottom of the sea to the surface. Right down there live the sea people... in the deepest spot of all lies the Sea King's castle: the walls are of coral and the tall gothic windows are of the clearest amber, shells form the roof, and they open and shut according as the water flows. It looks lovely, for in each shell lie gleaming pearls, a single one of which would have great value in a Queen's diadem.*

The Nightingale<sup>7</sup> is another fairytale read worldwide and perhaps expresses a general scepticism of the Danish character against any authority, stressing social equality and the authentic versus the artificial.

4. UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* was adopted unanimously by the General Conference in 2001, and The *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* has developed on basis of the *1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* as a response to the growing globalization. The *Convention* was adopted at the General Conference in 2003 as a new international normative instrument for the safeguarding of intangible heritage.

5. The figure was sculpted by Edvard Eriksen in 1913 and donated by Carl Jacobsen, founder of the Carlsberg Brewery.

6. H.C. Andersen (1805-1875) was a Danish author and poet, world famous for his fairy tales. The Little Mermaid is about a young mermaid willing to give up her and her identity and life in the sea to gain a human soul and the love of a human prince. The tale was first published in 1837.

7. 'The Nightingale', first published in 1843, is about an emperor in China, who prefers the tinkling of a music box to the song of a nightingale.

The scene of the tale is the palace and gardens of the Chinese Emperor, explaining perhaps the reason why especially many Chinese tourists are attracted to H.C. Andersen and the Little Mermaid as a tourist destination, which is indeed different in scale and value from The Forbidden City, a World Heritage site, representing the imperial power of the Ming Dynasty.

These tales have many layers both for children and adults, and the sculpture embodies the intangible knowledge and rich imaginary world presented to us by H.C. Andersen. But it gives little meaning to travel halfway around the globe to look at a small sculpture on the shore if the visitor does not know the underlying values and appreciates all the associations, which may be recalled by the visit.

I am referring to these examples to emphasize the importance of communicating the significance of the site and to make the different values known to visitors, so that they can enjoy and appreciate the visit. The same is very true for the Danish World Heritage site at Jelling.

### **Jelling Mounds, Runic Stones and Church, World Heritage Site, Denmark**

At first sight this World Heritage site will not impress by scale, but the burial mounds with the runic stones and the church has a very specific importance for the identity of Denmark as a sovereign state, and the site needs a thorough interpretation and presentation in order to make the heritage values understandable to the visitors, both at the domestic and international levels.

The application for nomination of Jelling was prepared in 1993. The site was subsequently included in the World Heritage List in 1994 as the first Danish cultural heritage site according to criteria (iii): 'bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared'.

The justification as presented by the State Party is as follows:

*The complex of Jelling Mounds, Runic Stones, and Church is a unique illustration of the transition between the old Nordic religion and Christianity. Allied with this is the creation of the National State of Denmark. One of the two large grave-mounds lying on either side of the church was probably the burial place of King Gorm the Old, however, his body was removed, most likely by Gorm's son, Harald, for Christian reburial in the church. The two runic stones by the church are connected with the burial mounds. The smaller was erected by Gorm as a memorial to his queen, Thyra. The larger depicts a Nordic dragon on the one side and on the other has the earliest image of Christ in Scandinavia entwined by pagan animal ornamentation. The runic text describes how Harald brought Denmark and Norway together and Christianized the Danes.*

The inscription was recommended by ICOMOS on the basis of criterion (iii): 'The Jelling complex, and especially the pagan burial mounds and the two runic stones are outstanding examples of the pagan Nordic culture'.



1. Aerial photograph of Jelling World Heritage site around 1980. Original in Antiquarian-topographical Archive, The National Museum of Denmark.  
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## Statement of Significance

Since the inscription in 1994, changes to the Operational Guidelines have placed greater emphasis on the Statement of Significance as a basis for evaluation of the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage site. The recent UNESCO International Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) further emphasizes the immaterial value judgements. In view of these changes it may be relevant to reconsider the original justification for inscription and put more emphasis on the intangible heritage values associated with the site. It may also be relevant to include criteria (ii), that the Jelling Mounds, the Runic Stones and the Church exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time within a cultural area of the world as expressed by the transition from a pagan to a Christian society<sup>8</sup>.

## The archaeological research history

Throughout history it was a general belief that the two large barrows are irrefutably connected with the burial of King Gorm and Queen Thyra. The first chronicle written after a time lag of about 200 years indicates that King Harald buried his parents in two mounds of equal size at the royal manor in Jelling. However historical source criticism has established that there is no reason to believe that this record is based on factual information, but simply relates to a personal interpretation of the existence of two mounds. The King's residence in Jelling has not been identified and the meaning and importance of the burial mounds, the runic stones and the church gradually sank into oblivion after the centre of the royal power moved to Roskilde by the end of the Viking Age.

After several hundred years, the investigations started in 1586 by King Fredrik II's provincial governor, who had the large runic stone erected to its former glory and a sign board was put up inside the church. In 1591 a copper plate engraving was made depicting the site with the two large mounds to each site and the church building in the middle with the large runic stone taking up a prominent position in front. This effort can be considered the very start of more than 400 years of continuous research. The first description of the monuments with a full record of the runic inscription was published by Ole Worm in 1643<sup>9</sup>.

The first investigations of the north mound were done in 1704 at the initiative of King Frederik IV. Further excavations were carried out in 1820 after local peasants had found a timber built burial cham-

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8. Adoption of a methodology and an agreed format for Statements of Outstanding Universal Value for inscribed properties is currently being prepared for presentation at the 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the WH Committee (2009).
  9. Ole Worm (1588-1654) was a personal physician to King Christian IV and founded the Museum Wormianum, the King's Cabinet of Curiosities. He is considered to be the first antiquarian in Denmark. *Danicorum Monumentorum* (Danish Monuments) was published in 1643 as the first written study of runic stones with depictions of numerous stones and inscriptions from Denmark, some of which are now lost.

2. Rantzeu's prospectus of the Jelling monuments showing the large runic stone in a prominent position in the centre. The engraving was first published in *Commentarii rerum memorabilium in Europa, Hamburg, 1591*.  
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ber in the north mound. The newly-established Commission for National Antiquities of 1807 showed great interest in the finds and three concerned members of the committee set out on a fact finding tour to investigate the case in the then remote parts of Jutland. The instructions issued on this occasion is a remarkable step in the advancement of Danish field archaeology stating specifically that a protocol of all the finds should be prepared with details of all that will be revealed from the investigations. The result however proved disappointing, as it became evident that the burial chamber had already been opened at an earlier time and only a small silver cup with intricate ornaments of Viking origin and some minor finds indicated that in fact the grave related to the burial of someone of high rank.

King Fredrik VII initiated further excavations in 1861 under the supervision of the first inspector of antique monuments in Denmark, Asmussen Worsaae. After the disappointing excavations of the north mound, high expectations were centred on the south mound, but all was in vain. More extensive excavations were subsequently carried out from 1941-42, 1951, 1965 and 1976-79.

No other heritage site in Denmark has been subject to archaeological research to the same extent as Jelling, but no final conclusion on the understanding of the history was drawn up until 1979, when excavations within the church revealed a grave chamber with the scattered bones of a man, presumably King Gorm. It is now a generally accepted theory based on very circumstantial evidence that the Jelling monument originally consisted of a Bronze Age barrow, which became incorporated into a 170 m long ship setting, erected as a memorial to Queen Thyra with the runic stone positioned as the head stone. This layout was a well-established tradition in the Nordic realm during the Viking Age. Work on the mounds started in 958 according to dendrochronological investigations, partly incorporating the original stone setting within the new scheme. King Gorm was buried in the northern mound, while the southern mound apparently remained empty. Shortly after, King Harald officially introduced Christianity and moved the remains of his father to consecrated ground within a new church which he had constructed between the two mounds. Altogether three wooden churches have been standing on the same place before the present stone building was constructed in the Middle Ages.

It is now verified that the large runic stone is standing in its original position, erected by King Harald as a memorial stone to his parents Gorm and Thyra, as well as commemorating his own achievements gathering the Danish realm and christianizing the Danes. The smaller stone is King Gorm's memorial stone to Queen Thyra: 'King Gorm did these ruins after Thyra his wife, Denmark's grace'. The small stone has the runic scripture made horizontal in the traditional pagan way, whereas the large runic stone has horizontal lettering according to the new Latin scripture. The figure of the crucified Jesus is intertwined with animal ornamentation in the traditional pagan dragon style of the Viking Age. The two runic stones are a testimony to the transition from paganism to Christianity and for the first time in history the name of Denmark occurs. From the time of Gorm the Old, the list of Danish kings becomes coherent with an unbroken familiar lineage of all subsequent rulers, including the present Queen Margarethe II.



**3.** The small and the large runic stone measuring 1.40 m and 2.45 m above ground respectively.  
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### Urban encroachment and restitution of the integrity of the place

By the end of the 19th century a new railway connection boosted the economic development of the sleepy village and Jelling quickly expanded to become a provincial town. Without a shared understanding of the unique archaeological and historic importance of the place, the new technology and economic opportunities resulted in urban encroachment during the following decades seriously diminishing the integrity of the cultural heritage site. Fortunately the headmaster of the local Teachers Training College was an enlightened person who subsequently formed an Improvement Society in 1913, which in turn led to the formation of 'The Committee for Clearing the King's South Mound in Jelling' in 1917.

This initiative established a precedent to the creation of similar ad hoc committees during the subsequent decades whenever the need for an extraordinary effort was required. The history of reshaping the dignity and integrity of the Jelling Mounds and the Runic Stones embodies the history of a maturing awareness of cultural heritage values in Denmark. The local initiatives took place simultaneously with a national revival of cultural heritage values all over Denmark. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was founded in 1907 and the first Conservation of Nature Act, including the protection of archaeological sites and ancient monuments, was enacted in 1917 to be followed by the Preservation of Buildings Act in 1918.

The new enlightenment was inspired by similar movements all over Europe, starting in England by the creation of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877 under the chairmanship of William Morris<sup>10</sup>. The Statement of Principles formulated in the famous Manifesto of the Society can be considered as an inspiration to all the succeeding formative documents, charters and conventions that have inspired and guided the preservation movement, gradually extending to a global consciousness formulated in the *World Heritage Convention* of 1972.

Altogether five committees have been formed with the explicit purpose to make restitution for all the damage done to site during the years. The second committee was active during the interwar period in the 1930s with such prominent members as Johs. V. Jensen, a Danish Nobel Prize winning author, who scorned the mistreatment of the monument. Deeply convinced about the importance of the national duties of preserving and maintaining its historic monuments as a source of pride and national identity, he defended the demolition of the houses build close to the mounds against the fierce attacks from the cultural leftists represented by Poul Henningsen, a functionalist designer, newspaper polemist and provocateur, who argued that the demolition was a regrettable sign that attributed more value to dead monuments than to contemporary housing and the real lives of living people.

10. The first meeting of the SPAB, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, was held on the evening of 22 March 1877. The ten people in attendance voted William Morris honorary secretary and treasurer. Chris Miele (ed.) (1996) *William Morris on Architecture*, Sheffield Academic Press Ltd.

4. The entrance to the North Mound after excavation in 1861. The burial chamber remained open to the public from 1862 to 1873. Contemporary drawing by Jacob Kornerup. Antiquarian-topographical Archive, The National Museum of Denmark.

5. Excavation of the South Mound in 1941. The monoliths are part of the ship setting erected in commemoration of Queen Thyra and later incorporated in the new monuments. Antiquarian-topographical Archive, The National Museum of Denmark.

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Two committees were established at a governmental level in 1950 and 1970 respectively, resulting in the formulation of a Master Plan and adoption of a local preservation plan by the municipality in 1989. The whole process of recreating the dignity and the integrity of the place has indeed been a long evolving and heated debate among all stakeholders.

### Site protection and management

The shared ownership of the property - and related administration and management - rests with different stakeholders, including a hierarchy of central, regional and local institutions:

The overall State responsibility relating to the *World Heritage Convention* rests with the National Cultural Heritage Agency (*Kulturarvsstyrelsen*) in the Ministry of Culture after the transfer of competence in 2002 from the National Forest and Nature Agency (*Skov-og Naturstyrelsen*) of the Ministry of the Environment. The National Cultural Heritage Agency is also the appropriate department for the protection of the mounds and the runic stones under the provision of the Protection of Nature Act 1992, stipulating a 100 m buffer zone around any ancient monument pursuant to the Protection of Nature Act<sup>11</sup>.

The church and the churchyard with the runic stones is owned and administered by the Evangelian Lutheran Danish Church. The congregational council of Jelling Church under the supervision of the Haderslev diocesan authority carries out the day-to-day administration of the site. The church and the churchyard, including the runic stones, are protected under the Churches and Churchyard Consolidated Act of 1992, which requires any alteration to be approved by the diocesan authorities after consulting the National Museum<sup>12</sup>.

The church, the monuments and the surrounding area come within the provisions of the Local Plan no. 104 of 1989, which have mandatory status under the Planning Act 1991. The parking area for buses and cars is located within this area, including a visitor amenity building. Jelling Municipality has the overall responsibility under this Act, including all matters of urban development and building activity<sup>13</sup>.

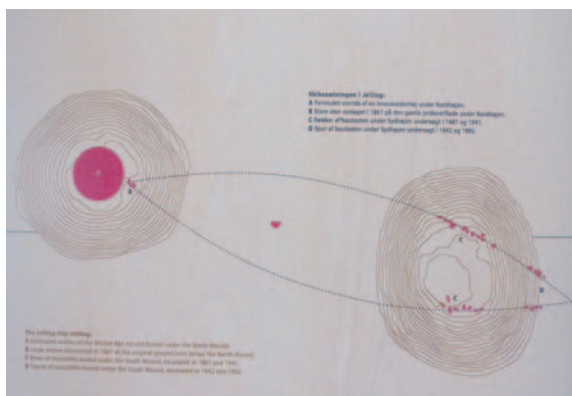
The view to the rural landscape located to the north of the property is protected by a special Preservation Order from 1947, which is recorded on the respective title numbers in the Land Register. The mounds and surrounding area are designated as an environment of special cultural interest in the Regional Plan of Vejle County, but this survey has no legal obligation<sup>14</sup>.

11. For further details see: [www.kuas.dk](http://www.kuas.dk)

12. For further details see: [www.jellingkirke.dk](http://www.jellingkirke.dk)

13. After a municipal reform in Denmark in 2007 Jelling Municipality has merged with the larger Vejle Municipality. For further details see [www.vejle.dk](http://www.vejle.dk)

14. After a municipal reform in Denmark in 2007 the counties have been abolished and responsibilities have been transferred to the enlarged municipalities. For further details see [www.vejle.dk](http://www.vejle.dk)



6. The changes to the monuments in Jelling including a Bronze Age barrow, the memorial ship setting commemorating Queen Thyra, the two mounds (constructed around 959) and the church with the large runic stone positioned in the centre axis. Drawing from an exhibition in the visitor centre 'The King's Jelling'.

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Presentation and dissemination of knowledge about the history of the site is delegated to the new museum and visitor centre named 'The Kings' Jelling'. The building and the exhibition was inaugurated in 2000. The construction of the visitor centre was initiated by a committee established at the initiative of the Mayor of Jelling Municipality with a broad representation of bodies who have vested interests in the development of Jelling. This committee is now dissolved and from 2007 the responsibilities of the visitor centre has been transferred to the National Museum of Denmark<sup>15</sup>.

ICOMOS Denmark is currently concerned that the General Plan for the property of 1983 and the subsequent Local Preservation Plan of 1989 requires revision to reflect the current situation. In view of the complexity of the management structure there seems to be a need for the establishment of a permanent coordinating committee to overlook the implementation of a new management planning for the property.

### World Heritage Listing 1994

Knowledge about Jelling possessing one the most important historical monument in Denmark is now widely communicated and associated with the shaping of a national identity. The large runic stone has become a national symbol with the crucified figure of Christ intertwined by animal ornamentation even being used at the front page of the Danish passport. The nomination to the World Heritage List in 1994 of the Jelling Mounds, the Runic Stones and the Church can be seen as a culmination of the efforts in preserving and transmitting this heritage to future generations.

After inclusion on the World Heritage List, further initiatives have been taken to enhance the quality of the place and improve the presentation and communication of the heritage values to visitors. These initiatives include general maintenance and improvement schemes such as the construction of a new stone wall around the churchyard to the south and east, demolition of one of the remaining houses and replacement of the tile roofing on the church porch in favour of lead. Furthermore, a road improvement has been completed, including speed restrictions of motor traffic and improved security for pedestrians. Additionally, a new signboard scheme is under preparation that will enhance interpretation of the site.

In 2000 the interior of the church was completely refurbished according to a design by the Danish sculptor and artist, Jørn Larsen. The comprehensive restoration was paid for by the Danish Parliament in celebration of the new millennium. As a result the church interior has got a purified and artistic appearance of very high quality in material and craftsmanship, representing a contemporary artistic interpretation of the spiritual feeling of the place. The local parish church has been turned into a royal chapel of the 21st century with the perfection of the red granite flooring and the inlay silver ornaments contrasting with the medieval lime washed masonry, which also exposes an imminent conflict between a simple church and an exclusive museum. In many ways the work is controversial due to its radical approach, which may give reason to a long debate about theoretical restoration principles of authenticity based on the more conservative criteria established in the *Operational Guidelines of the Convention*.

15. For further details see: [www.kongernesjelling.dk](http://www.kongernesjelling.dk)

7. Interior of Jelling Church after refurbishment in 2000.  
© Flemming Aalund



### A new interpretation centre and museum

An ambitious plan for the construction of a large experimental Viking Centre in the immediate vicinity of the monument was propagated in the 1980s as a means to attract international attention and generate economic development based on the growing demand for event oriented experiences. The realization of this idea was designed to take advantage of the close affiliation to the Jelling monuments and to serve a dual objective as an interpretation visitor centre and a vehicle for the economic development of Jelling. Inspiration might have been drawn from the Lejre Experimental Centre, where 106 acres of nature and cultural settings have been turned into an Iron Age village providing hands-on prehistoric experiences based on research<sup>16</sup>. This centre is very successful in providing enjoyable experiences to families and school classes, and forms part of a network of similar experimental museum initiatives in Denmark presenting different epochs ranging from the Iron Age to medieval history.

Four different planning proposals finally convinced more sensible people that this grand vision eventually would have a disastrous influence on the authenticity of the historic monument and that the feeling of the place would be destroyed by the number of tourists that were expected to visit this new commercial attraction.

Finally these ideas were abandoned in favour of a new visitor centre and museum named 'The Kings' Jelling', which was inaugurated in 2000. This new information facility is located close to the site with large windows where the mounds and the church can be viewed at a glance. The location has been disputed and alternative locations have been in play for over about 20 years until a final agreement was reached. And still the public inquiry resulted in several modifications of the architectural proposal before the building licence was granted. The location strikes a balance between the wish of providing the interpretation as close to the site as possible and still maintaining the integrity of the site.

The exhibition areas covers a total of 2000 m<sup>2</sup> providing for a display of the history and archaeology as well as relating the place to the contemporary development elsewhere in Denmark during the Viking Age. However, there seems to be a discrepancy between the estimated yearly number of about 150,000 visitors to the mounds and the relatively small number of entries of about 20,000 to the visitors centre. Probably the entrance fee is discouraging to many potential visitors, who unfortunately have less opportunity to acquire an understanding of the complexity of the site. It is a public responsibility to provide adequate and relevant information about the site and communicate its historic values to the visitors. Considering that only a limited number of visitors to Jelling actually enter the centre, it seems necessary that relevant and consistent information is provided on-site in both Danish and English languages. As a very basic service to foreign tourists, it might also be expected that comprehensive information is readily available on the Internet in several languages.

As a parish church for the local congregation there is a potential conflict between the interest of the church with a legitimate claim of spirituality and the visitors' expectations. In several cases, expectations

16. Lejre Experimental Centre is an open air park with reconstructions of ancient living environments, like an Iron Age village, a Stone Age camp, a Viking market and 19th century farm cottages. For more details see: [www.Lejre-center.dk](http://www.Lejre-center.dk)



8. The visitor centre 'The Kings' Jelling' situated to the west of the monuments.  
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of the visitors are frustrated when the church is closed because of religious services, and the entrance fee to the visiting centre is considered too high, especially to families<sup>17</sup>.

### Shared understanding of value

Several recommendations set out by the then Board of Heritage Planning in a general conservation plan of 1983 have not as yet materialized. One proposal refers to the removal of a memorial of a former head of the Teachers Training College to another and more appropriate place, arguing that these memorials relate specifically to the history of the Teachers Training College and should be removed to another place in an effort to clear the site of disturbing elements. This proposal was met with a strong local opposition, and the continued discussions about a possible decision is a healthy sign of attempting to reach to a thorough shared understanding of the property through the involvement of all partners and shareholders in full agreement with the stipulations set out in para.111 of the Operational Guidelines. In view of the personal efforts invested in the preservation of heritage values in Jelling by several headmasters of this local educational institution, the memorial can be considered part of the history of the place, as well as a memorial of the search for a national identity.

Now at the beginning of the 21st century, we are on guard against increasing nationalism after the horrifying consequences of extreme nationalism witnessed during the 20th century. However, throughout the 19th century the austere political, economic and social situation in Denmark made the question of what it meant to be Danish a burning issue.

By the start of the century, Denmark was defeated in the wars with England, which resulted in the loss of the Danish fleet in 1802 and the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807. The miserable times culminated in bankruptcy in 1813 and the loss of Norway in 1814. The smouldering controversies with Germany since the beginning of the century furthermore resulted in the war of 1864 when the southern part of Jutland was lost to Germany. These traumatic defeats created an imminent identity crisis, calling for a redefinition of human and cultural resources.

The end of the absolute monarchy and the achievement of constitutional democracy in 1849, as well as the ongoing land reforms, combined to boost a cultural revitalization of the society during the remaining part of the 19th century. The institution of the Folk High School was an essential element in this successful transformation towards a new enlightenment. The rural culture was transformed during these years through the establishment of agricultural schools and the formation of the cooperative movement that radically transformed the Danish agriculture in the 1980s, further supported by a movement for creation of community halls throughout the country. The ideological founder of the Danish folk high school, N.F.S. Grundtvig, was a central figure, who greatly inspired the new-found interest in history at all levels in society. The improved agricultural methods and reclamation of new arable land brought thousands of stone axes and bronze artefacts to light as a tangible proof of a rich prehistory. King Frederik VII, who signed the Constitution on 5 June 1849, embodied the interest in Danish antiquity and took a special and keen interest in Jelling. He personally inspected the archaeological excavations of the Jelling Mounds in 1861 and urged the publication of the results, which were finally published by the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries in 1875.

A proposition for removal of the flagpoles at the top of the mounds is another controversial issue. A special royal permission has granted Jelling the privilege of flagging with the swallow-tailed flag otherwise only authorized for use by governmental and public institutions. This should not necessarily mean that the flagpoles be located on top of the burial mounds. Another more appropriate location is being proposed that may eliminate any inappropriate confusion of the historic monument as a patriotic symbol.

The interpretation of a heathen sanctuary, as proposed by Ejnar Døggve, head of the archaeological excavations in the 1940s, has been abandoned. At that time he did not have the ICOMOS Venice Charter as a guiding rule for the treatment and presentation of the archaeological site and these stones are still standing erect as an example of an unfounded reconstruction of which only few visitors have a

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17. The responsibility of the visiting centre was transferred to The National Museum of Denmark in 2007 and no entrance fees are collected anymore.

clue. It is now generally accepted that the misplaced stones are a falsification, but any decision about their removal will eventually pose new problems as where to dispose of these stones. It might perhaps be more convenient to leave them in place and consider them as part of the archaeological history.

### The cultural landscape

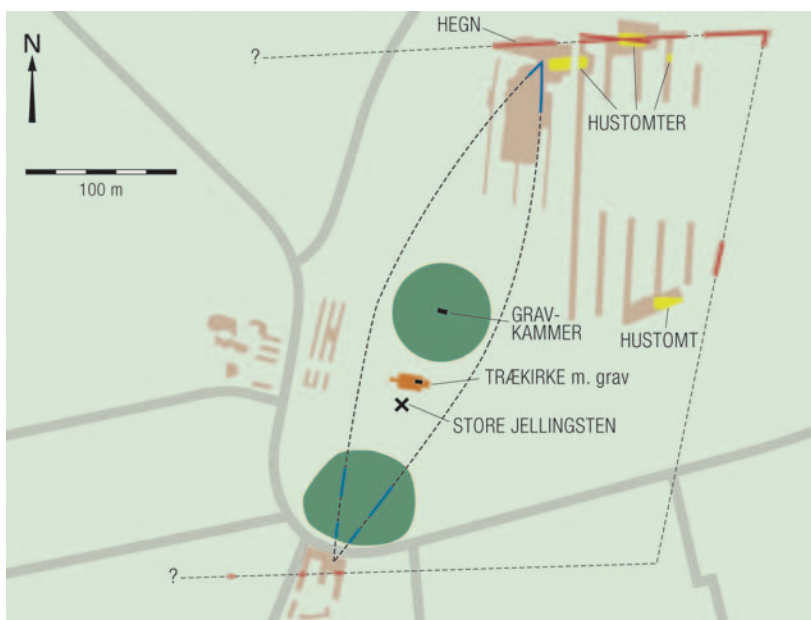
The *World Heritage Convention* emphasizes the interdependence of cultural and natural heritage, as symbolized by the World Heritage emblem. Heritage values in Jelling are dependent on the close relationship between the mounds and the surrounding cultural landscape, which is maintained by a free view to the north protected by a local preservation regulation.

The presence of a large number of Bronze Age burial barrows in this area named mangehøje, literally meaning 'many mounds', give reason for serious concern. Individually the barrows are listed and protected according to the Preservation of Nature Act, but many of these barrows have vanished over time and further destruction of archaeological evidence will inevitably result from intensive farming and deep ploughing. This concern was expressed by Vejle County in the inventory of cultural heritage sites, however, the relation between this necropolis and the Jelling Mounds and its secured preservation as a continuous cultural landscape was not clearly established, even less investigated. Extension of the borders of the World Heritage site to include this cultural landscape as part of the buffer zone would enhance the protection of the cultural heritage property and make the whole archaeological context of the site more easily understood and appreciated. An extended protection would possibly include restrictions to the farming and improved access to the area by the creation of walking itineraries through the cultural landscape. Modern people are looking for various opportunities to discover the past and alternative options may relieve tourist congestion and provide for active and direct experience of our shared cultural heritage.

### Conclusion

Four hundred years of continuous research and interpretation has revealed new secrets and still the full story of this enigmatic place is not known<sup>18</sup>. In this long process no single institution has made any final decisions according to a preconceived plan, but the management has evolved as a participatory, inclusive process with the involvement of many people and stakeholders. This is a cumbersome process

18. New archaeological excavations in Jelling 2007-2008 has revealed a considerable larger stone setting than previously imagined opening up for a new interpretation of the site and a new five-year programme for research, interpretation and presentation of the Jelling monuments has been initiated.



9. Map showing the results of archaeological excavations in Jelling from 2007 to 2008 revealing a considerable larger stone setting than previously imagined. The newly discovered ship setting is measuring a total length of circa 360 m and traces of a fence indicate that the whole site has been marked by an outer palisade.  
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which still includes many controversial issues such as hoisting the Danish flag on top of the burial mounds and the possible transfer of the Uffe Stone to a more suitable place. Small issues perhaps, but they are demonstrating the need for a continuous dialog about protection, interpretation and presentation of the site, including the surrounding cultural landscape and the many burial barrows (mangehøje) located immediately to the north of Jelling.

The formulation of an updated policy and the related management planning as stipulated in the Operational Guidelines is still pending. The mounds serve as a popular playing ground for the local children in the middle of the town, the church serves as the parish church for the local congregation and the graveyard is in continuous use. From the cradle to the grave heritage is directly present in the minds of the local population with the historic site forming an integrated part of daily life in the local community. So far, the dual function of the site as a parish church and a tourist destination seems to function well with priority to the religious life, which preferably should to take place undisturbed by visitors.

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