

Midway between the mounds are the two runic stones. The larger stone bears what is probably the most significant inscription in the history of Denmark: 'King Harald bade this monument to be made in memory of Gorm his father and Thyra his mother, that Harald who won for himself all Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christian'. The message is carved on three sides of the large stone. On one of the sides there is also a carved image of Christ. The stone stands out in the open in its original position and was originally painted in strong colours.

The oldest monument is the small runic stone in front of the church. It was raised by King Gorm for his Queen Thyra. The inscription: 'King Gorm made this monument to his wife Thyra, Denmark's ornament', gives us the name of the first historical king and his wife.

The church between the two mounds is built of calcareous tufa (travertine) around 1080-1100. A tower was added in the 15th century. This church was preceded by three wooden churches. The first wooden church was 14 x 30 metres somewhat bigger than the present one. It was presumably built by Harald Bluetooth. It is believed that his father, King Gorm, was moved from the north mound and buried in a chambered tomb in the exact place where the nave and the chancel adjoin. Today, the 'royal tomb' is marked by a silver piece in the inlaid band ornamentation of the church floor.

Denmark's perhaps oldest frescos have been preserved in the choir of the present church. They were restored in 1875 according to the practice of the time.

The information centre 'Kongernes Jelling' situated west of the church has a permanent exhibition in Danish and English about the Jelling Monuments.

In Denmark, the Heritage Agency of Denmark is responsible for submitting new proposals for inclusion on the World Heritage List. A special committee under UNESCO decides whether to include the proposed candidates on the list. Being nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List does not in itself imply any new form of protection, but it does provide additional recognition and status.

A worldwide presentation of the cultural and natural heritage of mankind is given on UNESCO's website at [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org). The world heritage of Greenland is presented on the website of Greenland Home Rule at [www.nanoq.gl](http://www.nanoq.gl).

The Danish sites included on the World Heritage List can be found on the website of the Heritage Agency of Denmark at [www.kulturarv.dk](http://www.kulturarv.dk)

The North side of the Church



Frescos in the chapel



Ornamentation in the church floor



**KULTURARVSSTYRELSEN**

H.C. ANDERSENS BOULEVARD 2

DK-1553 KØBENHAVN K

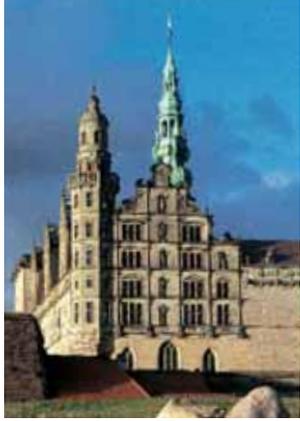
TELEFON +45 33 74 51 00

[post@kulturarv.dk](mailto:post@kulturarv.dk)

[www.kulturarv.dk](http://www.kulturarv.dk)



## The Jelling Monuments World Heritage in Denmark and Greenland



Kronborg Castle



Ilulissat Icefjord



Roskilde Cathedral



The Jelling Monuments

## UNESCO

UNESCO stands for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The objective of UNESCO is to contribute to international peace and universal respect by promoting collaboration among nations. The organisation was founded in 1945, and Denmark and Greenland have been members since 1946.

### Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

UNESCO adopted the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972 in light of the increasing threat of destruction to archaeological monuments and natural areas by war, natural disasters, pollution, tourism or simply decay.

The Convention calls on all nations to promote the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of local or national importance. The objective is to identify and seek to assure the conservation of the cultural and natural heritage that is important to all the peoples of the world. The cultural and natural heritage of mankind.

Cultural and natural heritage may include monuments, groups of separate or connected buildings, cultural landscapes or natural areas. It may be works of nature, works of man or the combined works of nature and man. It may be a structure that represents an important stage of development from the point of view of history or a natural phenomenon of outstanding value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view.

The international cultural heritage and natural heritage make up UNESCO's World Heritage List. The purpose of the list is to arouse global awareness of our common heritage, thus facilitating its protection and conservation. Furthermore, its purpose is also to strengthen international solidarity in this area with a view to increasing cross-frontier scientific and economic cooperation.

Denmark and Greenland ratified the 'World Heritage Convention' in 1979, and in 1994 the Jelling Mounds, Runic Stones and Church were added to the World Heritage List. The year after, Roskilde Cathedral was included. In 2000, Kronborg Castle was added to the list, and most recently, Ilulissat Icefjord was included in 2004.

## The Jelling Monuments

The first Danish site to be included on the World Heritage List was the Jelling monuments because of their outstanding historical value. Here we meet Gorm the Old, the 10th century Viking King, Queen Thyra and their son, King Harald Bluetooth (c. 958/59-986/87).

The monuments as a whole consist of two runic stones, a medieval church and the two largest mounds known from the Viking period. They reflect the transition from paganism to Christianity, but they can also be regarded as Denmark's birth certificate as one of the runic stones bears the oldest inscription mentioning the realm of Denmark and the Danes on Danish soil.

From the very first, a small bronze age mound stood to the north. In the winter of 958/59 a person of the highest rank was buried here in a burial chamber dug into the top of the small mound. Today, that person is thought to be Gorm the Old. Subsequently, an enormous turf mound was built on top of the original mound. The turf mound - about 60 metres in diameter and 8 metres high - is the current north mound at Jelling. The south mound, which is 70 metres in diameter, rises 11 metres above the surrounding landscape. Excavations have shown that this mound is empty.

## The North Turf

