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## Runes around the North Sea and on the Continent AD 150-700; texts & contexts

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## IV. SUMMARY AND SOME MORE CONCLUSIONS

### 1. Classification of contents

1.1. In this study I have discussed over 200 items with runic inscriptions from five Corpora. Apart from the Bracteates, I have divided each Corpus into a legible and (partly) interpretable part and an illegible, c.q. uninterpretable part. For 50 inscriptions new or additional readings and/or interpretations out of a total of about 170 legible inscriptions are provided. For summaries and conclusions of each separate corpus, see the Catalogue. At the end of each checklist there is a paragraph called Summary & Conclusions. A survey of deviating and so-called diagnostic runeforms has been included in this chapter, together with two separate studies on the **j** rune and the yew rune.

Continental: 65 items, 50 legible and 15 illegible/uninterpretable.

Danish and South-East European: 43 items, 33 legible and 9 illegible/uninterpretable.

Bracteates: 48, totally or partly legible.

England: 23 items, 16 legible, 7 illegible/uninterpretable.

The Netherlands: 22 items, 19 legible and (partly) interpretable, 3 legible, but not interpretable.

Besides 47 gold bracteates and 1 silver one, and some 40 gold coins and several silver ones, there were 96 objects made of metal, largely silver or gilt-silver (together 55 pieces), 11 objects were made of gold, 12 of bronze, 9 of iron, there were 7 copper-alloy objects and 2 objects were made of gilt-bronze. Further there were 17 objects made of wood, 13 of bone, 6 of antler, 2 of ivory, 2 amber objects and 1 made of jet, and 5 stones. In some cases the material tallies with its provenance; such as jet from Whitby; bone, whale-bone, antler and wooden objects from the Frisian *terp*-area; earthenware with runic stamps in England; stones in Blekinge and England. The provenance of the metal objects is more difficult to establish.

1.2. The table<sup>43</sup> below gives a random classification of the contents of early runic inscriptions of Period I. There is a separate table for the bracteates, but one must keep in mind that here the results may give a biased picture, since the legends have been selected on legibility and intelligibility. The sentences contain a verbform and a subject, occasionally also an object. The names in the sentences, such as 'Boso wrote (the) runes, Dapina greeted you', have not been listed separately under PNs, although the sentences contain many proper names. The category 'dedications and well-wishes' contains many names, as does the category 'makers' and writers' formulae'; both categories have been listed as sentences, too, unless they are not recognizable as 'sentences'. Such is, for instance, the case with the text on the woman's brooch of Bulach: **frifridil du afd**, which can be regarded as some sort of dedication: 'husband, you ....', but which cannot be regarded as a real sentence. The occurrence of two personal names, plus the word 'love' may be regarded as a well-wish or as a dedication, but not as a sentence. The category of PNs can contain one PN or more PNs, and, generally speaking, they can be regarded as denoting ownership or as makers' signatures. The category

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Odenstedt 1990:171f.

‘**ek** + PN etc.’ has been listed separately, but also under the heading ‘sentences’ if a verb(form) is present.

In the table of bracteates, a separate category is ‘invitations’, e.g. texts that either contain the word **lapu** or, if not, can still be interpreted as an invitation. The number of the so-called ‘magical’ words is striking, which can be interpreted as dedications or well-wishes, bracteates being regarded as amulets. One must keep in mind though, that the bracteates treated in this study, are also selected on the occurrence of ‘magical’ words (like **alu** etc.). In the first table, these words occur in a variety of combinations.

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Number of inscriptions</i>
1. one or more PNs	45
2. sentences	37
3. dedications & well-wishes	18
4. naming of object	18
5. makers’ & writers’ formulae	16
6. <b>ek</b> + PN or adj. etc.	7
7. ‘magical words’ etc.	5
8. <i>fupark</i> inscriptions	3
 <i>Bracteates:</i>	
1. ‘magical’ words	30
2. sentences	10
3. invitations (with <b>lapu</b> or likewise)	10
4. <i>fupark</i> inscriptions	6
5. makers’ & writers’ formulae	6
6. <b>ek</b> + PN or adj. etc.	4
7. dedications	2
8. naming of object	2

The Danish Corpus and the Bracteates Corpus contain relatively many words and expressions that might have a magical, mythological and/or ritual connotation. The Danish Corpus shows names that are derived from tribal names. Verbforms derived from the infinitive Gmc *\*taujan*, (to do, make), Gmc *\*faihjan* (to draw, to paint) and Gmc *\*talgjan* (to carve, to cut) only occur in the Danish Corpus and the Bracteates Corpus. Apparently, runes were drawn and painted, next to being carved and cut. The Danish and Gothic Corpora do not contain any well-wishes and dedications, which is very surprising. The Danish corpus contains relatively many makers’ formulae (which may not always be identical with writers’ formulae). The Continental Corpus contains relatively many verbforms, and a lot of dedications and well-wishes and hardly any names of objects. The Continental and the English Corpora contain some writers’ & makers’ formulae. Here the verbforms expressing the carving of the runes, are derived from Gmc *\*wrīan*. In the Dutch and Continental Corpora we find verbforms expressing either writing or making (runes or object); the forms used are **dedun**, **ded** and **deda** (West Gmc *\*dō-*). In the Continental Corpus also *worgt(e)* ‘worked, made’ is found, referring to the carving of runes (Arlon, nr. 3). A form of the same verb (Gmc *\*wurkjan*) occurs in a bracteate legend, **wurte** (Tjurkö-I, nr. 44). As concerns reading runes, **rada** (read) and **upfnpai** (find out) are worth mentioning here (both Continental, resp. Soest, nr. 40, and Charnay, nr. 11). Britsum (The Netherlands, nr. 14) contains **bæræd** which may refer to the

carving (preparing) or the reading of the runes. The English and Dutch Corpora contain relatively many names of objects. The Dutch Corpus contains a relatively high number of sentences: 9 on a total of 22 inscriptions. The Danish Corpus contains 10 sentences on a total of 36 inscriptions.

It appears that runic writing gradually evolved through the centuries, from short inscriptions (one or a few words) to longer texts, and the changes were not very substantial at first. This might at least be partly due to the size of the objects. Some graphic variation can already be observed in the earliest known attestations, but on a small scale and in a restricted area only. Actually, it is more striking that runic script and the contents of the texts should have remained so uniform over a vast area for such a long time. In my opinion this can only be explained by assuming that the use of runes was spread by individuals or groups that had contacts over a large area.

## 2. Some backgrounds of early runic writing

2.1. The inscriptions from the first few centuries of recorded runic writing are found on:

- a.) objects that were excavated from former bogs or lakes, and were deposited on purpose.
- b.) objects found in graves, also purposely deposited.
- c.) objects that belonged to hoards, deposited either for religious purposes or to be regained afterwards. In these cases, too, the deposition was deliberate.
- d.) casual finds without a find-context.

We have here four categories of find circumstances or contexts of runic objects. However, we do not know whether we have categorised herewith all possibilities where we might expect to find runic objects. Runic finds are generally chance hits, mostly found by modern archaeologists. However, the objects were certainly not intended to be excavated by later generations in the 19th or 20th century. Therefore, it remains an open question whether we have now a reliable picture of the aim and use of runic script in the days of yore. Objects with painted runes have never been found.

Judging from the oldest attestations, we must conclude that nothing points to an extensive use of runic writing, such as letters, charters or records. At least one whole category is hardly represented: objects from settlements, on which one might expect to find script for every-day use. This category may have contained a type of information that has not survived and is therefore unknown. I am not sure that any such elaborate communicative writing existed at all in the oldest runic period. Bæksted (1952:134) pointed out that lost inscriptions cannot be expected to have had contents that were quite different from those that have been preserved. I would plead some caution with regard to this statement. The number of finds has been accumulating since the use of metal detectors, and I think we may expect some unusual and surprising finds in the future.

As regards the actual state of affairs, there is still not much that points to a communicative function of writing in Iron Age and Early Medieval Germanic society. The possibility to express oneself by inscribing an object was limited, for the size of the objects restricted the runographer to the use of short texts. Among these are many names, of owners, makers, writers, commissioners, givers and receivers. Sometimes the writer or maker stresses his or her activity, often by using phrases like: *Boso wrote the runes; Feha writes; Lamo carved; I, Fakaz painted; Aib made the comb for Habuke*. It is unclear whether someone who wrote:

**hagiradaz tawide** ‘H. made’ meant that he carved the runes or that he made the object (or did both these things). This problem of ambiguity especially concerns the Danish corpus, which contains forms of the Gmc verbs *\*taujan* ‘to do, to make’, and the Frisian and Continental Corpus, which contains forms from West Gmc *\*dō-* (Kluge/Seebold 1989:744).

Another important category is formed by the substantives that name the object itself, such as **kobu, kabu** ‘comb’ (Oostum, Toornwerd), **katae** ‘knucklebone’ (Hamwic) and **sigila** ‘brooch’ (München-Aubing and Harford Farm). A related category is naming the material the object was made of: **walhakurne** ‘foreign, Welsh gold’ (bracteate Tjurkö I), **raihan** ‘of a roe’, **hronæs ban** ‘whale bone’ (Franks Casket) and **horn hiartaR** ‘deer's antler’ (Dublin).

In a few cases more information is given, e.g. about the origin of the object: **wagagastiz sikijaz** ‘flameguest, coming from a bog’ depicting the axe made of melted bog-iron<sup>44</sup> (Nydam I). The purpose of the writer or commissioner is expressed in: **uþf[i]ndai iddan liano** ‘may Liano get to know Idda’ (Charnay). Texts such as **ek unwodz** and **ek ungandiz** (Danish Corpus; see also Odenstedt 1990:173) and **ek u[n]mædit oka** (Rasquert, Dutch Corpus) appear to render someone's epithet. The custom of using an epithet may be connected with Roman onomastic principles. Germanic soldiers in the Roman army usually had only one name. When becoming civilians, they often took on a patronymic and/or a cognomen (Bang 1906:17ff.). They liked the use of nicknames, such as *Rufus*, *Flavus* (Red-head and Blonde-head), according to Bang (1906:20). The names **swarta** ‘Blacky’ and **laguþewa** ‘Seaservant = Sailor’ (Illerup I and III) probably fall into the same category.

2.2. Objects with runes have survived in surprisingly small numbers, but they were probably not made in huge quantities. This may be illustrated by the Illerup bog finds. Only nine items out of hundreds of deposited objects bore runes. Apparently, inscribed objects were extremely scarce and this in itself points to one of the specific functions of runic inscriptions: it gave extra value to the object, it added to the object's uniqueness. This impression is strengthened in those cases in which the inscriptions seem to contain no legible or comprehensible text. The custom of writing names, dedications and makers’/writers’ formulae has a twofold aim: it increases the value of already prestigious objects, and it makes the object special for both the giver and the receiver. The receiver will always be reminded of the person who gave the object to him and he will thus be aware of the special relationship between them. An inscribed object has a distinct function in the gift and exchange policy and the client system of leader and comitatus. This practice corresponds with the use of writing in ancient civilizations, such as the Etruscan and the early Italic cultures of the middle of the first millennium BC. There the art of writing in its initial phase appears to be closely related to the possession of precious objects and prestige goods. It is remarkable that this phenomenon should have occurred in the Germanic world, too.

The possession of runic objects and their commissioning appears to have been reserved to an elite. The oldest known objects are related to a high military elite that controlled the weapon trade and weapon production. The runic texts themselves, though, reveal next to nothing about status (unless the expression **ek erilaz** points to some rank or status). The bracteates, as high-value commodities, would serve quite well in an exchange network of an elite.

In a predominantly illiterate society, the art of writing is of little use. Hence writing, as is shown by the oldest runic monuments, remained restricted to short texts, mostly names,

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<sup>44</sup> Ore for the production of bog iron was found in huge quantities in Iron Age Jutland. The ore was melted in field furnace and the fluid iron could be moulded into an axe, for instance.

during the first five centuries (!). If only a few people were literate, elaborate, informative texts would be rather useless, which largely explains the curious fact that especially names, dedications and formulaic expressions have been found.

2.3. One cannot claim that runic writing was in everyday use from the beginning, since such a statement lacks evidence. The assertion that runes were preferably used on wood, because of the properties of wood that determined the angular forms of the runes, is also an empty argument, since all archaic alphabets show angular-formed characters. This is a characteristic feature of e.g. ancient Greek, Etruscan, ancient Latin, Raetian and Venetian writing, which was certainly not restricted to wood, but, as in the case with runes, was executed on all sorts of material.

During the whole runic era, runic writers were limited in expressing themselves due to the technique of painstakingly carving or cutting runes one by one in all kinds of material, apparently first in metal, bone, wood and antler, and later mostly in stone. The instruments and tools for cutting runes in stone may at first not have been adequate enough for this purpose. And everybody possessed a knife, hence cutting runes in wood and soft metal, such as silver and gold, was no problem. As far as is known, no italic variety for a quicker, easier way of writing, e.g. on birch bark, was developed. A problem that still remains unsolved - concerns the curious order of the runic alphabet. Since the oldest *fupark* inscriptions we know date from the fifth century (some bracteates, the Kylver stone), this order may have emerged later (and for unknown reasons)<sup>45</sup>.

However, within these boundaries of epigraphic use, runewriters were apparently inclined to adapt their script to their needs. Curiously enough, in one part of the runic world this attitude is shown by increasing the number of runic characters, whereas in an other part the writers decreased the number of runes. Both complicated and less complicated forms were designed. This probably had to do with an effort to ensure the proper rendering of the sounds of the language and it had to do with the target group one had in mind. It may be that the very purpose of writing underwent changes, presumably caused by influences from the Latin-writing world, and by political and religious developments. Literacy among larger groups of people spread slowly. From the 7th and 8th centuries onwards the number of more or less rune-literate people increased, in England as well as in Scandinavia.

2.4. During the first few centuries of runic writing, the practice was approximately the same in all rune-using societies. The propagation of the runic script was linked to the migrations of Germanic tribes in the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries. Some runic traditions remained conservative, as can be seen in the Continental Corpus; sometimes there were rather spectacular developments, such as in England and Scandinavia, both from about the 7th c. onwards, although of a quite different character. Suddenly, texts with literary qualities appear. In England texts get a Christian purport; in Scandinavia the Blekinge stones show elaborate texts containing heavy curses and warnings. Memorial texts also appear. This type of text is found very rarely in the archaic period. In the course of time, runes appear to be used for writing all sort of texts, just like any other alphabet.

2.5. Although there is very little material to go by, I am convinced that runes were designed to write meaningful texts, albeit that *we* may not always understand their meaning. Actually, I

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<sup>45</sup> A proposition about the curious *fupark*-order has been put forward by Seebold 1986.

have reached this conclusion because of the bracteate-legends. Many of these are notorious for their difficult or incomprehensible runic sequences, but since there are also quite a lot of bracteates that bear fully legible and understandable texts, I suppose that *this* was basically the general intention of the runewriters, the only problem being the fact that they did not always succeed. This may be due to the circumstance that some, or many of them, were illiterate to some degree. The less literate they were, the more their inscriptions will look like script-imitation.

### 3. Runes and rituals

3.1. The objects that were offered and buried may have been inscribed to serve some ritual function, but this is difficult to prove, since we do not have any unambiguous texts that would confirm such a function. It is impossible to identify, beyond any doubt, texts that are undisputedly religious, or that refer to the supernatural. Some scholars believe that at least part of the runic texts are magical, simply because in their opinion runes were basically be a magical script. Runes were certainly used in texts that had magical purposes, such as is perhaps shown by seemingly meaningless sequences like **aaaaaaaaazzznnn?bmuttt** on the Lindholm bone piece. Magic? But of what nature? Sometimes it is possible to see the light through a blur of runic signs, as is the case in **bwseeekkkaaa** on the Chessel Down bronze pail. Remembering the **þþþmmmkkkistil** = *þistil, mistil, kistil* formula, known from for instance the Gørlev stone, we may solve the Chessel Down mystery by applying the same principle, and thus read: *bekka, wekka, sekka*, all recorded names (see Chapter VIII: Early Runic Inscriptions in England).

An instance of an offering may be the text of the Vimose sword-chape, if I have interpreted this correctly as ‘may the lake have all sword(s)’ **mari ha aala makija**, referring to the object's destination: to be deposited as war-booty. Texts such as ‘I consecrate the runes’ **uüu r[u]n[o]z** (Nebenstedt bracteate) and **wihgu** (‘I fight’ or ‘I consecrate’) on the Nydam axe handle suggest some sacred act, but it is unclear what sort of act is alluded to.

One category of objects that may have had a ritual or religious function were the bracteates. They are considered amulets, since their models, Roman medallions and coins had that function. That they were special is expressed by the context in which they were found: in bogs, peat-layers, hoards, post-holes and graves. On the basis of (a) the material they were made of, gold, (b) their Roman connection and (c) their inscriptions that often contain either Roman lettering or runes, or a combination of both, one is inclined to regard them as symbols of wealth and power. A possible relation to either Germanic mythology or symbolic leadership may be deduced from their iconography.

3.2. As regards a possible ritual function, one may think of the coming of age of both boys and girls, or of initiation ceremonies of a cultic association, such as a warrior league. This would especially concern bracteates with the text **frohila** and **niujila, niuwila**, resp. ‘Young Lord’ and ‘Little Newcomer’. The very act of inscribing an object might imply that some magic was aimed at, in the sense that adding lettering to an object would increase its intrinsic power. This mainly concerns amulets, but this is also implied by some texts on weapons found in bogs, such as on the Nydam axe: ‘Flameguest, coming from a bog, **alu**, I, Oathsayer, consecrate/fight’; and the Kragehul spear-shaft: ‘I, Eril of Asugisalaz, I am called Muha **gagaginuga**’. These texts do not create the impression of being simply everyday messages,

but they seem to have some supernatural connotation. Some bracteates seem to bear the right sort of words for magic, such as charms or spells, **luwatuwa, salusalu, tanulu, hagela ala asulo, gibu auja, gagoga** (see also Page 1995:154). Apart from the fact that it is awkward to establish, with any certainty, the magic load in runic legends, it seems to me that if any runemagic were involved, it would especially be found in the early inscriptions. In the later Middle Ages several 'magical' texts do occur, but in a context of Christianity and alphabet-magic.

As regards burial gifts, it is not easy to distinguish between a dedication made for a burial and a similar sort of inscription made for a living person. Perhaps objects with inscriptions that still look 'fresh', were made for depositing or for the 'afterlife' of a deceased person, such as seems to be the case with the Beuchte and Bulach brooches (Continental Corpus), the Chessel Down scabbard mount (Early English Corpus) and the Leţcani spindle whorl (Danish and Gothic Corpus). However, many of the objects that were found in hoards, sacred deposits and graves show traces of wear. Bracteates and gravefinds mostly show abraded legends; these objects had been used for rather a long time before they were deposited or buried with their owners and thus seem to have no relation with the burial as such. However, grave rituals mirror a social structure, but also a wished-for imaginary reality. The grave inventory may be regarded as a metaphor to express certain changes in society.

#### 4. Comparing the corpora<sup>46</sup>

4.1. Page (1995:304f.) gloomily observes: "From all this it is clear that runic inscriptions can comprise (a) texts meaningless to us, (b) unpronounceable sequences, or those unlikely to be plain language, (c) texts containing errors, (d) texts with apparent errors, (e) groups of pseudo-runes, characters that appear to be runes but aren't. There are also, rarely, texts that are comprehensible".

Does this sad depiction of the runic state of affairs hold good for all Dark Age runic legends from Denmark, the Continent, Frisia and England? Apart from the fact that Page is absolutely right in his observation concerning the early English runes, I intend to show that the study of runes is not so hopeless as might be concluded from the above statement, that there is a lot that is comprehensible and, moreover, that it is possible to draw general and more specific conclusions from "this incoherent mass of material", albeit at the risk of being called a "rash scholar" (Page, *ibid.*).

4.2. Compared with the early English and Frisian traditions, the Continental tradition appears to have been much more productive and much more substantial. The early period, Period I (see Chapter I: General Introduction), was also quite productive in Denmark, if only as regards the many runic bracteates. Period II is the heyday of the English tradition; in Denmark Period II starts with a transitional stage, during which substantial changes take place in the *fupark*. Long, substantial texts appear in both England and Denmark. Stone, which probably had already been in use in Norway and Sweden for some time, was introduced as inscription-bearing material. These bolders were covered with monumental texts, also previously unusual. In Period II, a runic revival took place in England, strangely enough within an

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<sup>46</sup> Note that some data concerning comparison between several corpora are given at the end of each separate Checklist in the Catalogue, under the heading: Conclusions.



ecclesiastical context. Clerics introduced a profound change in runic writing, which touches upon the purport and contents of the texts. The fact, that runic writing ‘came out of the closet’ e.g. the intimacy of personal statements, may have something to do with a different view on writing, which emerged in monastic circles in the 7th c. Books became important. What was committed to the parchment was transferred from the memory of an individual to the realm of the written word, thus escaping transitoriness. What was written down could be read by other people, it became public, it could be passed on, copied, translated, propagated; in a sense the text was saved. Books were meant to support the memory and to stimulate associations. Anglo-Saxon runic writing became part of this intellectual development and runic texts acquired a different character. Parchment and styli served as writing equipment for runes. Large stone monuments with runic texts were erected. Even the runic alphabet underwent adaptations and extensions. The phenomenon of manuscript runes is specifically Anglo-Saxon, in contrast with the purely epigraphical traditions elsewhere.

In Denmark there was also a new impulse, which resulted in an adaptation of the futhork to a simpler, easier and eventually more popular usage. The causes and results of these changes were not the same in the two regions. In Denmark runic writing appears to have become ‘democratic’, but not so in England, where monastic use predominated. One may conclude, though, that in both regions there was an increase in the number of people who could read runes and also used them.

4.3. In 7th century England and Frisia, especially the coins with runic legends appear to bridge the gap between a diffuse use of runes with or without specific purposes and a manifestation of public use in daily life and commerce. The English use of runic coins, according to Page (1996:142) was a real contrast with the Frisian way of handling the material. This may be so, but one has to keep in mind that an extensive use of runes is in contrast with the early English material as well! The numerous ‘Frisian’ *sceattas* seem to point to a widespread use of runic coins. However, it is not yet clear if there was a numismatic context for the four gold solidi in the Frisian *terp*-area. Perhaps investigations concerning the leading political role Westergoo seems to have played, may throw some light onto this matter. Page opines that the use of runic script on coins was more common in England, especially in southern and eastern England (Page 1996:138f.). One might even plead for a Merovingian influence, both on English and Frisian coinage. But the question which of the two first started the addition of runes to the coins is difficult to answer. The **hada** and **weladu** coins are cast, which may point to their not being used as money but as jewellery (cf. Page 1996:136).

4.5. From the evidence we have, we may conclude that analogous runic traditions emerged in 6th c. Frisia and England. Runic writing remained on a modest scale and on a basic level. The contents and syntax of the texts, as well as the nature of the inscriptions, are comparable with the earliest attestations of runic writing anywhere else. A puzzling exception is Westeremden B, which might qualify as a Period II inscription. Remarkable, though, is the total of 9 sentences in the Dutch Corpus, whereas, for instance, the Early English Corpus has only 3 (until 700 AD). After all, two Periods might be represented in the Dutch Corpus, an archaic one and one more sophisticated (see Summary and Conclusions of Chapter IX: Runic Inscriptions in The Netherlands).

Frisians carved runes on material they found nearby their dwelling-places, they used yew-wood, antler, bone, whalebone. This would point to an indigenous tradition.

Nevertheless, my observation from the runes on the Bernsterburen staff (Looijenga

1990:231): "as so often with Frisian runic inscriptions ... the runes on the Bernsterburen staff may be derived from several *fupark's*" has led Page (1996:147) to exclaim "we must wonder whether there *was* a Frisian runic tradition, or only a confused scatter of different, mixed and hazy traditions". It is useful to look at some more features Page mentions in his bewilderment with regard to the Frisian runes: (a) there is only a small number of inscriptions, (b) they show a remarkable range of unusual forms, which makes him wonder if runes were ever a serious and useful script at all in Frisia. As to (a), I would think that the small numbers of surviving inscriptions impede runic studies everywhere. As to (b), some runic forms on objects from the area of the *terpen* are indeed anomalous. These may look mixed and hazy, but they may also be relicts of a rich and old tradition.

Page's cautious remarks on the Frisian corpus has inspired me to look more critically at delineations of definite runic traditions based on nationalities and to reckon with mixed traditions and influences that are more dependent on individual contacts and on travellers with runic knowledge. The purpose of inscribing objects with runes may be different in the separate regions. As regards the Continental tradition this may be true; it differs from the Frisian, English and Danish traditions in that it contains more dedications, well-wishes and writers' signatures. On the whole the Continental, or South Germanic, inscriptions create the impression of being aimed at strictly private, profane, purposes, a communication between some people who knew each other intimately. There seem to be no sacral or ritual functions, such as can be found in the early Danish corpus. The Continental runic legacy shows a clear picture, which is more difficult to detect in the English and Frisian corpora. However, both in the English and Frisian corpora plain messages, apparently made by craftsmen, occur such as: 'Luda repaired the brooch' and 'Aib made the comb for Habuke'. The Danish corpus contains weaponsmiths' and jewellers' signatures, as well as inscriptions expressing ownership, next to inscriptions that may have had a purely symbolic or magical purpose. Here especially personal names derived from tribal names turn up, a feature that is missing in other corpora.

4.6. Nielsen (1996:127) raised serious objections against the interpretation of several items as 'Frisian'. Especially in cases where no typical Anglo-Frisian features, such as the  $\bar{a}c$  and  $\bar{o}s$  runes, are present, he questioned the provenance of the inscriptions. The criterium 'findspot' is, according to him, not enough to establish a specific 'Frisian' provenance. He (1996:124) pointed to the fact that Wijnaldum A and Britsum show close connections to the Lindholm amulet and the Kragehul spearshaft, because they all exhibit multiple-line runes. The linguistic criterium of assigning the ending *-u* as typical for Runic Frisian has also been discarded (Nielsen 1996:129). He suggested that there are no decisive factors for accepting the existence of a runic Frisian corpus at all, if I have understood him well. He illustrated this startling observation by pointing out that there is a "hotchpotch of geographical, archaeological, numismatic, runological and linguistic criteria underlying the purported Frisian runic corpus" (Nielsen 1996:128). But this serious criticism also applies to all other early runic corpora, with an exception of the Continental Corpus.

Yet, these considerations might set us thinking. It might be that the survival of runic objects has depended to a large extent on accidental, geological and cultural circumstances. Waterlogged soil in the *terpen*, bogs in Denmark, Merovingian row-graves in Germany, graves in England, all offer relatively favourable conditions for the preservation and excavation of runic objects. But the overall picture of the surviving runic objects is distorted and unbalanced. Except perhaps for some of the Frisian ones, no known early runic objects emerged from settlements, apart from some bracteates at Gudme. But the *terpen* were settlement sites, because the elevated platforms were the only places fit for habitation in the

coastal area. If people made deposits outside their *terp*, these may have disappeared under layers of clay. There were grave fields on *terpen*, such as at Hoogeteintum, and the only certain runic find from a grave in the *terp*-area is the Hoogeteintum comb. Of all other objects the find-context is uncertain or lost.

One may wonder to what extent the Frisian objects that are assumed a rather mysterious lot ("baffling" is the word Page uses) represent a type of runic practice not known from other sites. This is contrary to the assumption made by Baeksted (1952:134), who thinks that any lost inscriptions will not have had contents that were different from those that have been preserved. The inscriptions on combs, the antler, wooden and bone objects perhaps reveal something of an otherwise unknown runic practice. An instance of an until 1955 unknown practice is expressed on the hundreds of wooden chips from Bergen and Trondheim, showing colloquial texts. Surprisingly, the tiny Frisian Corpus contains relatively many full-fledged sentences, as compared to the contemporaneous Continental and English Corpora, which excel in the use of single words and names, wordgroups, namegroups and the like.

4.7. Compared to the Danish and Continental runic objects, most Frisian inscribed objects are simple, i.e. not made of precious material, except for the four gold coins. This needs some consideration. Does this mean that the occurrence of objects of wood, bone, antler and whalebone in Frisia is evidence of the general custom of using simple material to write runes on, a custom which apparently has not been recorded from elsewhere? Or is the Frisian tradition simply quite different from anywhere else? The Frisian *terp*-area seems, from an archaeological point of view, to have been rather rich. But the rune-finds do not witness any sumptuousness, except for the gold coins (which, by the way, did not emerge from any *terp*). It may be that writing in itself was important. The coins, of which only one is said to have been found in Frisia, may perhaps be English, an assumption that has also been forwarded by Page (1996). In Frisia itself only 16 objects from a period of probably three centuries are attested. The other five 'Frisian' objects were found outside Frisia (in England and Ostfriesland in Germany), which is remarkable in itself. This may be due to the following facts: (1) the Frisian *terp*-area is the smallest runic area of all and (2) the Frisian trade covered a large area. This makes it understandable that runic objects became shattered outside their homeland. The only Dutch find from outside the *terp*-area is the Bergakker object. It is rather reminiscent of the Continental and English tradition, which both contain rune-inscribed silver scabbard mounts.

4.8. The English material is a little more precious than the Frisian objects and in this respect it resembles the Danish and Continental attestations. But also humble objects, such as earthenware urns with runes are recorded from England: Spong Hill and Loveden Hill. The only other known earthenware object with runes is the spindle whorl from Lețcani (Rumania). The quantity of recorded items is notable: from a period of more than two centuries about 25 runic objects are attested, whereas on the Continent, from a period of less than two centuries about 70 objects have survived.

4.9. The Charnay brooch and the Arlon box should be reconsidered in the light of the Bergakker find, which may indicate that the Franks, too, knew and used runes. On the other hand, Charnay can be linked, runologically, with Griesheim, and, linguistically, with an East-Germanic dialect. (The Bergakker inscription may have been written in an East-Germanic dialect, too). The Arlon box belongs to a series of similar boxes in the Middle-Rhine area. The other find from present-day Belgium, Chéhery, is difficult to classify because of its

problematic legend. It exhibits a combination of Roman lettering and runes. The part DEOS may point to Christianity. The inscription on the Merovingian ‘Kent’ brooch may have been made either on the Continent or in England. The Watchfield purse mount also has a Merovingian connotation, but the inscription seems to have been made in England. This illustrates a general problem: inscriptions may be added anywhere; they do not have to have the same origin as the object. Moreover, runographers may have travelled around, thus leaving their dialectal and typological traces in foreign regions.

## 5. The Early English and Frisian corpora

5.1. Whenever a new inscription turns up in England or The Netherlands, the first thing one has to do is to see whether  $\bar{a}c$  or  $\bar{o}s$  occurs in the inscription. Unfortunately, not all English and Frisian runic inscriptions contain the vowels *a* or *o* represented by the new runes  $\bar{a}$  and  $\bar{o}$ , in which case we are not only faced with the impossibility of establishing the sound value of the rune  $\bar{a}$ , but also with the question of the provenance of the object. As to provenance in general, not only the Frisian objects are portable, but those of other corpora as well. Provenance will always be problematic in any of the early runic objects (except perhaps for the runic stones).

The so-called Anglo-Frisian innovations in runic writing, especially the development of two new runes  $\bar{a}c$  and  $\bar{o}s$ , may have taken place on the Continent, in the homelands of Angles and Saxons, probably somewhere in the 5th c. The runes may have been introduced to Frisia from there, or perhaps from England, either by Frisians or Anglo-Saxons or by both. One can think of other scenarios; at this moment there is no certainty about the place of origin of Anglo-Frisian runic writing.

The new runes are recorded from Frisia and England at various points in time - possibly due to scanty evidence from a disturbed tradition. Another reason may be that the occurrence of phonetic and phonemic developments in both regions did not coincide.

In the Frisian inscriptions  $\bar{a}c$  is present around 600 and denotes both long and short *a*. The oldest Frisian  $\bar{a}c$  runes are found on the runic solidi and the Amay comb (6th c.). In England the oldest attestation of  $\bar{a}c$  may be Loveden Hill **hlaw**, 5th or 6th c.; the second oldest is Caistor-by-Norwich II: **luda** 610-650 (Hines 1991<sup>b</sup>:6-7), followed by the coins: **desaiona** and **pada** 660-670.

The  $\bar{o}d\bar{a}lan$  rune is attested in **skanomodu** (575-610), denoting  $\bar{o}$ , and in Westeremden B (no date) for  $\bar{a}$ , both in the same name-element:  $m\bar{o}d-/m\bar{a}d$ . The  $\bar{o}s$  rune is attested late in OFris, in the 8th c., in Toornwerd, Westeremden B, Rasquert and Arum.

In Britain, the earliest  $\bar{o}s$  rune has been found in Suffolk, on the Undley bracteate (ca. 475). The second-oldest  $\bar{o}s$  is in the Chessel Down I inscription, found on the Isle of Wight, dated to the 6th century. So England has a lead in the attestations of  $\bar{o}s$  runes, starting as early as the 5th c. The  $\bar{a}c$  runes appear in both England and Frisia at approximately the same time, the 6th c. Tentatively, it may be assumed that the runes  $\bar{a}c$ ,  $\bar{o}s$  and  $\bar{a}sc$  emerged in England in the fifth century and came from there to Frisia, but again, there is no ultimate certainty, as one of the sound-changes (monophthongization of Gmc  $*au$  and  $*ai$ ) that made the creation of new runes necessary, also occurred in Runic Frisian, from the 6th c. onwards, that is: from the earliest known inscriptions onwards.

5.2. Until the Bergakker find, it was considered strange that runic writing in The Netherlands was only recorded from the *terp*-region and not from the 7th/8th century Frisian/Frankish centre of power: the important trading town of Dorestad and the royal residence at Utrecht in the central river-area. The fact that the *terpen* presented so many finds may be due to the water-logged *terp*-soil that was sufficiently fit to preserve runic objects. Perhaps Frisians living in Frisia citerior (roughly Utrecht and the river estuary of the Rhine) from the 7th century onwards, did not use runes, because the region and culture had become more Frankish, e.g. Romanized, in character. Runes, at that time, may have been regarded as a kind of regional folklore, of a lower status than writing in Latin and the use of the Latin alphabet.

5.3. Eventually, the English and Frisian languages developed in different ways. No further Anglo-Saxon runic innovations seem to have been adopted by the Frisians. But there are indications that the Frisians adopted Scandinavian runes from the younger *futhork*, possibly through their trade-contacts with places like Haithabu and Ribe in Denmark and Birka in Sweden. Instances of mixed Frisian and Scandinavian use of runes are Westeremden B and Bernsterburen. Scandinavian influences can be traced in Wijnaldum A, Britsum and the Hitsum bracteate.

## 6. North Sea coastal links: ornamental runes, rune-crosses, double runes and mirror-runes<sup>47</sup>

6.1. There may be some specific runic links connecting the Danish, Frisian and English traditions, along and across the North-Sea coast. Links can be observed in special runic forms (see also Page 1985). The tiny coastal group of Frisia has always been notorious for its unusual runeforms, especially in the inscriptions from Britsum and Westeremden B. Westeremden B deserves a price for the most curious collection of exotic runeforms: mirror-runes, Anglo-Frisian runes, a rune from the younger *futhork* and the *Sternrune*. This rune occurs also in Westeremden A and in English inscriptions, where it forms an integral part of syllables beginning with *ji-*, denoting the sequence of palatalised *g + i*. This characteristic, together with the presence of *āc* and *ōs*, confirms that, basically, Westeremden B belongs to the Anglo-Frisian tradition. The presence of younger *futhork*-runes may indicate a connection with Denmark.

Britsum and its variation between single and multi-lined runes is often compared to the Lindholm amulet (Skåne) and the Kragehul spearshaft (Funen). The Kragehul knifeshaft may have a parallel in Wijnaldum B: **hiwi**, the first hasta of the **h** being doubled, like **b** in Kragehul: **bera**.

Another connection along the North-Sea coast is the parallel between Fallward and Oostum in the use of 'ornamental' runes: the **a** with three sidetwigs of Fallward and the **h** and **b** with three bars and three hooks in Oostum. These are varieties that are unique (so far).

The rune-cross appears to be typical of connections between Denmark, England and Germany. The basis is a **g** rune  $\times$  which has extra runes attached to the ends of the cross. It

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<sup>47</sup> Mirror-runes have equal side-twigs on either side of the headstaff, or, if there are two headstaffs, equal bars run between the tops and the bases. The existence of mirror-runes, or "Spiegelrunen", has convincingly been demonstrated by Pieper 1987.

occurs on the Undley bracteate, the Kragehul spearshaft, the Soest (Westfalen) brooch, the Schretzheim sax and the Kirchheim Teck brooch (both Baden-Württemberg). It is questionable whether a 5th c. earthenware pot from Liebenau (photo in Genrich 1981), showing an ornament that resembles a rune-cross, also belongs to this tradition.

6.2. The Gallehus (Jutland) inscription (5th or 6th c.) has runes in double and single lines. The Wijnaldum A antler piece (no date) contains single and double runes. Together with Britsum (see above), it has often been compared to the Lindholm bonepiece and the Kragehul spearshaft, that both contain double- or triple-lined runes. The Bergakker inscription has single runes<sup>48</sup> and four double **s** runes and a single-barred **h**. The double **s** in Bergakker has a parallel in bracteate Svarteborg-M (4th c.), reading **sigaduz**. Here, the double **s** at the beginning is usually transliterated as **ss**, but now we can be fairly certain that the double form is only a variety, and should be transliterated as one single **s**.

Double-lined runes may have arisen from the technique of inlaying runes with silverthread or niello, such as can be gathered from the now empty impressions of once inlaid runes of the Steindorf, the Wurlingen and the Schretzheim saxes and the Dahmsdorf, Kowel and Rozwadów spearheads. The outlines are still visible, but the silver inlay is gone. These contours may have been the source of inspiration for the creation of double-lined runes and thus go back to a technique used by (weapon)smiths.

6.3. Mirror-runeforms are e.g. known of: **a**, **æ**, **w**, **þ**, **d**, **e**, **p**, **m**. The double-barred **h** might be considered a mirror-rune, but it is equally possible to regard it as a double form. Mirror-runes may be fossils from the boustrophedon way of writing (which does not apply for the **h** rune). Eye-openers were the famous mirror-runes representing **w** and **þ** on the lanceheads found in Illerup (Jutland) and Vimose (Funen), dated *circa* 200 AD<sup>49</sup>. At any rate the Illerup II and III inscriptions (**wagnijo** and **nþijo tawide**) must belong to the same runographers' 'school'. The Spong Hill urns (East Anglia, 5th or 6th century) have stamped mirror-runes (discovered by Pieper 1987). The Boarley brooch has a mirror-rune **æ**. A fair number of bracteates (2nd half 5th - beginning of the 6th centuries) bear ornamental and mirror-runes.

Westeremden B has mirror-runes for **b**, **d**, and **p**, which may be compared to the bracteate Fünen (I)-C, which has mirror-runes for **a** and **e**. Detecting the value of mirror-runes often depends on the context of those runes in the rest of the text.

The fact that double runes, mirror-runes and ornamental runes occur relatively often in Denmark, North Germany, The Netherlands and England may point to a North-Sea runic tradition (cf. also Barnes 1984:67). If ornamental runeforms and rune-crosses are also taken into account, 'West Germanic' runic tradition might be a suitable term.

If mirror-runes are characteristic of the West Germanic runic tradition, one must assume that the 'lantern-shaped' runes  $\uparrow$  in Szabadbattyán and Leţcani are no mirror-runes, but instead denote the sequence (i)ng in **marings** and **rango**.

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<sup>48</sup> The deviating rune representing **e** in Bergakker is neither a double rune nor a mirror-rune. It is a runic variety that has become known only recently (Bosman/Looijenga 1996). This peculiar **e** rune may have a parallel on a brooch with the inscription **leub**, found at Engers (Rhineland), dated 6th c.

<sup>49</sup> At first the runes were not recognised as mirror-runes, but thought to represent single rune forms.

## 7. The influence of Latin

A direct influence of the Latin or the Roman alphabet on runic writing in the initial period is hard to establish. Attestations are scarce and sometimes arbitrary. From the 5th c. onwards the rune **u** is regularly used instead of **w**, which may be due to Latin influence. Seebold (1991:-462) sees the loss of the **w** rune as a result of the loss of initial *w* before back vowels in Proto-Norse, as is shown by the rune name *\*wunjō* > *unja*. This is supposed to have happened before the bracteate period, i.e. before the end of the 5th c. The **w** rune, however, does occur in bracteate legends and it was further retained in Frisia, England and on the Continent.

Among the earliest group of inscriptions (200-650) Latin-influenced words seem to appear in Denmark, the Betuwe, Germany and England, e.g. **asula** (Vimose bronze buckle, 3rd c., Overhornbæk III-C, 5th c.), **ksamella** (Fallward footstool, 5th c.), perhaps **kesjam:logens** on the Bergakker scabbard mount (5th c.), **sigila** (München-Aubing, 6th c.) and **sigilæ** (Harford Farm, 7th c.). In some texts of the bracteates Latin words and personal names may be hidden, e.g. the emperor's name *Aurelius Carus* in **aeraalius horaz** on bracteate Fünen-C I (see Bracteates nr. 11). In the Early English Corpus, I have included two instances of the influence of a partly Latinized society on runes ([**dæ**]us **mæus** on the 7th c. Whitby comb, and the Saints' and apostles' names on St. Cuthbert's coffin). In Continental runic writing, too, some Latin influence might be detected; for instance in Kirchheim Teck (6th c.) **badagihiali d[o]mi[n]u[s]**. This influence is exclusively due to the introduction of Christianity and can be noticed from the 7th c. onwards.

A quite different aspect of Latinity can be observed in the fact that in England runes were used in manuscripts, whilst epigraphic rune-carving was continued, too, which is the opposite of the situation in Germany, where an epigraphic use of runes is not known to have been adopted by the Latin writing clergy. Because of the many early medieval manuscripts containing (Anglo-Saxon) runerows and mnemonical rune-poems such as the *Abecedarium Nordmannicum*, individual signatures, and texts, which are sometimes carved in the parchment with a stylus, runic writing as such appears to have been preserved in Germany. In one or two cases a runic *Vorlage* seems to trickle through Old German vernacular texts (the enigmatic *duoder* in the Merseburg charm must probably be read: *muoder*; the runic **d** and **m** bearing great resemblance (Hofstra, personal communication).

## 8. Syntaxis and division marks.

In a few cases some interesting observations can be made as to the relation of syntaxis (if deliberately meant as such by the old runographers) and division marks. Sometimes the verb and the object are written together, in: **boso:wraitruna** (Freilaubersheim), **lu-da:gibœtæsigilæ** (Harford Farm) and **blipgu[n]þ:uraitruna** (Neudingen Baar II). A variation is **da?ina:golida** (Freilaubersheim), **hagiradaz:tawide** (Garbølle) and **feha:writ** (Weingarten I). In **alagu[n]þleuba:dedun** (Schretzheim I) we find two names of the subject written together. In all these cases the subject is separated from the verb form by division marks. The 1 sg. pres. ind. 'I give' and object *auja* are separated in **gibu:auja** (Raum Køge-C). Furthermore there are instances of subject and verb written together as one word; in Raum Køge **hariuhahaitika** and Nydam I **wighusikijaz**. In Aquincum we find subject and verb written together, separated from the object by marks **xlaig:k(i)ngia**. In Charnay we find a

verb, object and subject, all separated by division marks, **uþf[i]nþai:id dan:liano**. The same division can be noticed in Gallehus **ekhlewagastiz:holtijaz:horna:tawido** and in Bergakker **halepewas:ann:kesjam:logens:**.

Finally we find texts consisting of names, separated by marks, such as **kolo: agilabrup** (Griesheim) and **ida:bigina:hahwar:** (Weimar I) and Neudingen Baar: **lbi:imuba:hama-le:blipgu[n]þ:uraitruna**. In a few cases we have an ‘I, so-and-so’ formula, written together, **ekhlewagastiz** (Gallehus), **ekunwodz** (Gårdlösa), **eku[n]mædit** (Rasquert). Kragehul and Lindholm have strikingly similar texts **ekerilazasugisalamuhahaite** and **ekerilazsawilag-azhateka**. The runic legend of Chessel Down II may be transliterated **æko:lori** *Æko -loss*, containing a name and an (indirect) object.

## 9. About the significance of runeforms

In my opinion, the compiling and cataloguing of all different runeforms in order to establish a presumed chronology, is deceptive. Any new find may alter a chronology. Notwithstanding this relatively value, I have made a list of so-called ‘diagnostic’ runes for reasons of convenience. There is still some sense in collecting all different forms of individual runes, since it may come in handy as a checklist when new inscriptions are found, if these show forms that at first sight look a bit out of the way. It also appears that in some cases the value of a rune can be identified by comparing its form to other occurrences in identified words. Any statements about a typological chronology of runeforms should only be made tentatively, because far-reaching conclusions might easily lead the investigator astray.

Runes on bracteates deserve a special, separate, study, since many runic forms on bracteates appear to be deformed and to have a deviating design. This is probably due to way they were manufactured, but, on the other hand, bracteates may show current runic varieties.

## 10. Diagnostic runeforms: k, j/g, s, h, l, e.

10.1. The forms are listed independent of their direction of writing. No reference has been made to hooked or rounded forms either. Rounded forms occur for instance with **o** runes: in Køng, Udby, Harford Farm, Illerup II and IV, Vimose IV. And also with **j** runes, e.g. in Skodborghus-B, Vadstena-C, Illerup II and IV (see above), Vimose III. A rounded **k** in the form of a C (!) is found in Vimose II.

**k** appears in 6 forms: roof  $\wedge$ , hook  $<$ , staff + twig upwards  $\Upsilon$ , staff + twig downwards  $\kappa$ , staff + hook below  $\lambda$ , staff + hook above  $\Upsilon$ .

**j/g** appears in 5 forms: bipartite, hooks vertical  $\sim$ , bipartite, hooks horizontal  $\diamond$ , bipartite closed  $\mathfrak{h}$ , three-strokes  $\mathfrak{h}$ , Sternrune  $\mathfrak{k}$ .

**s** appears in 4 forms: zig-zaglines of three strokes  $\mathfrak{h}$ , zig-zag of four strokes  $\mathfrak{z}$ , zigzag of five strokes or more  $\mathfrak{s}$ , staff + upper twig  $\Upsilon$ .

**h** appears in 2 forms: one bar  $\mathfrak{H}$ , double bar  $\mathfrak{H}$ .

**l** appears in six forms: staff + twig downwards from the top  $\lceil$  and  $\lceil$ , staff + twig from the middle downwards  $\lceil$ , staff + twig upwards  $\Upsilon$  and  $\Upsilon$ , staff + twig downwards  $\kappa$



**e** appears in 3 forms: two staves + straight bar  $\sqcap$ , two staves + hooked bar  $\sqcap$ , a hooked bar and two slanting staves  $\sphericalangle$ .

**k**  $\wedge$  : München-Aubing, Neudingen-Baar I, Pforzen, Watchfield, Raum Køge-C, Börringe-C, Dischingen.

$\lt$  : Gallehus, Fallward, Vimose II, Gårdlösa, Nydam I, Nydam II, Bergakker, Aquincum, Charnay, Balingen, Freilaubersheim, Loveden Hill, Grumpan-C, Hammenhög-C, Lyng Gyde-C, Maglemose (II)-C, Seeland (I)-C, Tjurkö (I)-C, Vadstena-C, Års (II)-C, Åsum-C, Dänemark (I)?-C, Halsskov Overdrev-C, Sønder Rind-B, Raum Sønderby-C, Heilbronn-Böckingen, 'Kent'.

$\Upsilon$  : Nordendorf II, Hailfingen, Griesheim.

$\lrcorner$  : Toornwerd, Oostum, Hamwic, Whitby, St. Cuthbert, Westeremden B.

$\lambda$  : Kragehul I, Lindholm, **skanomodu**, Hantum, Chessel Down I and II, Skrydstrup-B, UFO-B/Schonen (I)-B.

$\Upsilon$  : Björketorp, Stentofthen.

**j/g**  $\approx$  : Dahmsdorf, Thorsberg I, Nøvling, Vimose IV, Vimose III, Vimose II, Vimose V, Vimose I, Illerup II, Illerup IV, Nydam I, Grumpan-C, Stentofthen.

$\diamond$  : Gallehus, Øvre Stabu.

$\natural$  : Bergakker, Beuchte, Darum (V)-C, Skodborghus-B, Vadstena-C.

$\natural$  : Kragehul I, Charnay, Oettingen.

$\dagger$  : Westeremden A, Westeremden B, Trossingen II, Eichstetten, Hohenstedt.

**A** in Björketorp, Gummarp and Stentofthen has been rendered by  $\dagger$  whereas **A** in Istaby has been rendered by a three-stroked zigzag form  $\natural$ . Both types of runes that are transliterated **A** are linguistically and graphically related to the older digraph or bipartite form of *\*jāra j*.

**s**  $\uparrow$  : Gallehus, Lindholm, Björketorp, Fallward, Nydam I, Charnay, Weimar III, Beuchte, Bergakker, Schretzheim I, Watchfield, Steindorf, Pforzen, Loveden Hill, Westeremden A, Freilaubersheim, Chessel Down I, Whitby II, Overhornbæk (III)-C, Raum Køge-C, Lindkær-C, Halsskov Overdrev-C, Svarteborg-M, Vadstena-C, Stentofthen, Gummarp, Björketorp, Bezenye II.

$\zeta$  : Kragehul I, **skanomodu**, Leţcani, Nydam I, Thorsberg II, Næsbjerg, Schretzheim I I, Szabadbáttyan, Trossingen II, München-Aubing I, Ash Gilton, Boarley, Arlon, Næsbjerg, Illerup I, Bezenye II, Weimar II.

$\xi$  : Kragehul I, Møllegårdsmarken, Vimose III, Harford Farm, Vimose IV, Nieder stotzingen, Himlingøje II, Schretzheim I and II.

$\Upsilon$  : Westeremden B, Britsum?, Chessel Down II, **desaiona**, St. Cuthbert.

**h**  $\natural$  : Nydam I, Garbølle, Leţcani, Vimose IV, Vimose V, Himlingøje I, Himlingøje II, Thorsberg II, Vimose II, Illerup VI, Møllegårdsmarken, Loveden Hill, Caistor-by-Norwich, Watchfield, Wakerley, Cleatham, Pietroassa, Wijnaldum B, Bergakker, Peigen, Stentofthen, Björketorp, Gummarp, Istaby.

𐌺 : St. Cuthbert, Whitby, Weimar I, Weimar II, Weimar III, Weimar IV, Wurmelingen, Kirchheim Teck, Pforzen, Neudingen-Baar II, Weingarten I, Charnay, Harlingen, Hantum, Westeremden A, Westeremden B, Trossingen II.

**h** 𐌺 Oostum, **b** 𐌺 Oostum, **a** 𐌺 Fallward.

**I** general, common forms: 𐌺 𐌺, exceptions see below.

𐌺 𐌺 : Gurfiles (?) -C, Hesselagergårds Skov-C, Fünen (I)-C, Maglemose (III)-C, Overhornbæk (III)-C, Raum Trollhättan-A, Skonager (III)- C.

𐌺 𐌺 : Hammenhög-C, Lynge Gyde-C, Maglemose (II)-C, Seeland (I)-C, Chessel Down II.

𐌺 : Griesheim, Charnay.

**e** 𐌺 : Strårup, Westeremden A, Ferwerd, Hoogeteintum, Illerup II, Illerup III, Thorsberg I, Garbølle. Leţcani has a mixed form (see page 94).

𐌺 : Overhornbæk (III)-C, Lindkær-C, Fünen (I)-C, Gallehus, Kragehul II, Kragehul I, Åsum-C, Allesø-B, Lindholm, Björketorp, Eskatorp-F, Grumpan-C, Halsskov Overdrev-C, Hesselagergårds Skov-C, Raum Sønderby-C, Tirup Heide-C, Tjurkö (I)-C, Undley-A, Vadstena-C, Britsum, sceattas, Rasquert, Arum, Westeremden B, Amay, Oostum, Schweindorf, Charnay?, Osthofen, Freilaubersheim, München-Aubing I, Fallward, Schretzheim II, Donzdorf, Weingarten I, Schwangau, Neudingen Baar II, Nordendorf II, Nordendorf I, Schretzheim II, Neudingen Baar I, Niederstotzingen?, Cleatham, Whitby I, West Heslerton, Chessel Down I, Whitby II, Vimose IV, Björketorp, Stentofen, Istaby, Gummarp.

𐌺 Bergakker, Engers.

10.2. I also checked the form that may be either **r** or **u**: 𐌺, found in: Nebenstedt (I)-B, Fünen (I)-C, Grumpan-C, Eskatorp-F, Väsby-F, Dahmsdorf, Britsum, Bernsterburen, Balingen, Charnay, Osthofen, Aquincum, altogether in twelve inscriptions. In legible inscriptions this rune form mostly indicates **r**. Therefore, the reading **horaz** instead of **houaz** in the Fünen-I bracteate should be preferred.

It appears that the **e** with a straight bar and the rounded runeforms never occur in the Continental Corpus, but only in Denmark and around the North Sea.

## 11. The yew rune.

11.1. The question of the original sound value of the yew rune: 𐌿 is a most interesting one, and the problem has been treated by many scholars, although without finding a definite answer. According to Odenstedt (1990) there are no examples of 𐌿 in the oldest Scandinavian and Gothic inscriptions (175-400). After 400 AD, instances are found in several *fuþark* inscriptions, such as are carved on the Kylver stone and the Breza column, according to Odenstedt. But both cannot be dated accurately. There are instances of 𐌿 on several bracteates, which are dated to the late 5th c. and the early 6th c. A well-known inscription is bracteate Nebenstedt (I)-B (Niedersachsen), reading: **gġiaugiz uīu rnz**, showing two instances of the yew rune, both times transliterated **ī**. The legend is: *gġiaugiz wī(h)ju rīmōz* which is

interpreted as: 'Gliaugiz. I consecrate (the) runes'. The sound value represented by **ī** is uncertain. In *Gliaugiz* it may represent something like *-ī-*. **uiū** may reflect *wī(h)ju*, 3 sg. pres. ind. of the Gmc infinitive *\*wīhjan*, which may or may not have been pronounced with a velar fricative in the middle. I presume it may have been *-ī-*.

11.2. In at least two instances the yew rune is part of the runic sequence **ai**. Both inscriptions are from a rather early date. One is found in England, but probably originates from Scandinavia; the other is found in southern Bavaria (Pforzen).

The first is an astragalus from Caistor-by-Norwich, East Anglia, dated circa 425 - 475 (Hines 1990<sup>b</sup>:442); the runes read **raihan** 'roedeer', OE *rāha*. The astragalus was a roedeer's bone. This inscription may well be our oldest attestation of the yew rune in an interpretable text. The yew rune has probably been used here only as a variety of the **i** rune, since OE *ā* < Gmc *\*ai* (see Chapter VIII, nr. 12). Another Anglo-Saxon instance of the yew rune, transliterated **ī** is in the inscription **sīpæbæd** on the Loveden Hill urn, dated 5th or 6th c. (see Chapter VIII, nr. 7). Note that also in this inscription, the yew rune probably has been used as a variety of the **i** rune.

The second attestation of the sequence **ai** is on a buckle, found in 1991 near Pforzen in Bavaria, and dated to the second half of the 6th c. The inscription is transliterated **aigil andi ailrun l tahu gasokun**. Clearly two people, Aigil and Ailrun quarelled about something, which might be **l**. The names of the two persons, a man and a woman, are well-known, they appear in the ON *Vǫlundr* saga as Egill and Qlrun.

Another attestation from Germany (Freilaubersheim, 3rd th. 6th c.) shows the yew rune also as a variety of the **i** rune in **da?ina**. Uncertain, but possible, is an instance of **ǃ** on a square fitting with rivets, dated 3rd third 6th c., from Heilbronn-Böckingen. The initial rune has been perforated by the rivets, but I conjecture **ǃ** may have been carved, since some remains of the sidetwigs can be seen. I read **ik arwi** 'I, Arwi'.

A sixth instance of the yew rune is found on the Charnay fibula (2nd th. 6th c.), which has a nearly complete *fupark* containing a yew rune, and furthermore the legend: **upfnpai iddan liano ïia**. This part **ïia** has not been explained.

11.3. Apart from denoting a vowel, the yew rune could also denote a consonant, and it was used as such exclusively by Anglo-Saxon runewriters. The oldest known inscription that shows the yew rune denoting a consonant, (transliterated as **3** to avoid confusion with **ī** and **h**) is Ruthwell Cross, in the word **alme3ttig** 'almighty'. The inscription is dated 700-750 AD. Other instances are **eate3nne** 'Eategn' in Thornhill, and **toro3tredæ** in Great Urswick, North Lancashire, dated 750-850. The yew rune represents [ç] in all cases. It is interesting that [ç] in **alme3ttig** is rendered by the yew rune. The same inscription also contains a word **hlafard**, using the rune **h** to represent [ɣ]. It is remarkable how scrupulously the runographer was in his orthography.

Finally, the Brandon pin from the 9th c. should be mentioned. It exhibits **g, h, j, and ī (3)** in a *fuporc*-quotation: **fuporcghwnijipxs**. The **g** is rendered by the *Sternrune*: **ǃ**, the **j** has its so-called 'epigraphical form' **ϕ** (known from manuscripts only) and the **s** has the so-called 'bookhand' **ʃ** form. This would point to ecclesiastical influences (cf. Parsons 1994<sup>a</sup>). The **ǃ** is in its usual place in the *fuporc*. Its sound value cannot be deduced from this inscription.

11.4. The Pforzen legend **aīlrun** presents a baffling situation and severely troubles a solution. It appears that we run into etymological problems if we want to connect *Aīlrun* with the later -NHG *Alraun* ‘mandrake’, although *Alraun* may very well be the (linguistic) counterpart of the ON *Qlrun*, partner of Egill (**aigil** in the Pforzen inscription). Her name literally means ‘alerune’<sup>50</sup>. One should expect *\*Alurūn* as the forerunner of both *Alraun* and *Qlrun*, but this is simply not what was carved in the Pforzen inscription. I refer to Chapter VII, nr. 34, for further discussion of this inscription. I suggest it is either a scribal error, or **aī** denotes a sound that cannot be reconstructed (yet).

11.5. In my opinion the problem is connected with both the linguistic value and the graphic representation of the yew rune. It is commonly taken to represent a vowel, although Moltke (1985:64) postulates that it originally stood for [ç]. I transliterate it as **ī**, Antonsen prefers the transliteration **æ**, representing  $\bar{a} < \text{Gmc } \bar{e}^{\prime}$ , Krause transliterates **ī**, Arntz & Zeiss **é**, to mention just a few instances. Analysing the sparsely recorded runic texts containing the yew rune, I am inclined to assume that it may have been developed graphically from a bindrune, consisting of **i** and **j**: | and  $\text{ᚷ} = \text{ᚷ}^{\downarrow}$ <sup>51</sup>. The pronunciation might have been something like  $-\bar{j}$ - or  $-j\bar{}$ -. If so, the yew rune may be a later graphic development that was not yet present in the initial runic alphabet.

The two earliest inscriptions, from England (Caistor-by-Norwich) **raīhan**, and the Continent (Nebenstedt) **uīu**, show  $\text{ᚷ}^{\downarrow}$  probably used to render a sound such as long palatal *jj*: *ij* or *ji*( $\bar{i}$ ). I think that the value [ç] is secondary, used only at a rather late date, and in an ecclesiastical context, in Anglo-Saxon England<sup>52</sup>. The name of the rune in OE, *eoh*, represents both sounds, [e] and [ç]. On the other hand, in ON the name was *ýr* < Gmc *\*īhwaz*, *\*eihwaz*; the initial sound (cf. the acrophonic principle of the rune names) is that of a front vowel, which is followed by a labiovelar. On the whole it appears that *e* and *i* could and did interchange. But if the yew rune rendered a sound in between [ei] and [i:], which could not be represented by the runes  $\text{ᚱ}$  **e**, OE *e(o)h*, Gmc *\*ehwaz*: or | **i**, OE *īs*, ON *ís*, Gmc *\*īsa-*, it might have been [æ], like Antonsen argued. It is remarkable, though, how similar the rune names of **e** and **ī** are!

Summary: In the oldest attests  $\text{ᚷ}^{\downarrow}$  should be transliterated **ī** and never **h** or **3**. One may conclude that the yew rune originally represented a vowel, or a combination of one vowel, *i*, and a semivowel *j*. The sequence *-ij-* is known from the oldest runic attestations, e.g. **talijo** and **wagnijo**. The following step might have been to combine **i** and **j** into one rune. Thus, **ī**

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<sup>50</sup> *Qlrun* appears in the Edda as a Swanmaiden or Walkyrie in the *Völundarqviða*. As far as ‘ale-runes’ are concerned, we find information in the Eddaic verse *Sigrdrífumál* 7: *Qlrunar scaltu kunna, ef þú vill, annars qvæn vélit þic í trygð, ef þú trúir; á horni scal þær rísta oc á handar baki oc merkia á nagli Nauð* “Learn ale runes eke, lest other man’s wife betray thee who trusted in her: on thy beer horn scratch it, and on the back of thy hand, and the Nauth rune on thy nails” (translation Hollander 1964:235).

<sup>51</sup> A bindrune consisting of the **i** rune and some other rune, commonly are *per definitionem* excluded, since in that case all runes with one staff might be considered a bindrune. Only in this case, and in the case of the Sternrune  $\text{ᚷ}^{\downarrow}$  one must assume that the development of these runes is based on a combination of **i** and  $\text{ᚷ}^{\circ}$  and **i** and  $\text{ᚷ}^{\times}$ . This agrees both graphically and phonologically.

<sup>52</sup> This may be connected with the manuscript-runes tradition. The problem is too complex to discuss the peculiarities here.

rendered a glide,  $\bar{j}$ , or  $j\bar{i}$ . A little later perhaps, the  $\bar{i}$  appears to have been used to denote just [i] and [i:]. In the cases that  $\bar{i}$  denotes the sound [ç], this occurs before nasal and dental. One may describe it as a sound that tends to a velar or palatal unvoiced  $j$ -like sound.

Both graphically and phonologically, it appears that  $\bar{i}$  combined the sounds  $j$  and  $i(\bar{i})$ .

## 12. The fate of the $j$ rune, Gmc $*j\bar{a}ra$ , OE $g\bar{e}r$ , $j\bar{a}r$

12.1 The later Scandinavian name of the  $j$  rune was  $\bar{a}r < *j\bar{a}ra < \text{Gmc } *j\bar{e}ra$ ; its name in the OE Rune Poem is *ior* or *iar*, rendering a sound which in Frisia and England completely coincides with palatalized  $g$  before front vowels. The Scandinavian rune name  $\bar{a}r$  is cognate with *iar*, both being derived from Gmc  $*j\bar{e}ra$  (Derolez 1987; Parsons 1994<sup>a</sup>:200ff.). The meaning of  $*j\bar{a}ra$  was 'harvest, (good) year', OE *gear*, OFris *jēr*, OS *gēr*, *jār*, OHG *jār*, ON *ár*. But the runeforms are rather different; the Scandinavian  $j$  shows a development that may have been like this:  $\text{𐌵} > \text{𐌶}$ ; whereas the Anglo-Frisian  $j$  is rendered  $\text{𐌶}$ , i.e. it is clearly a bindrune of  $\text{X}$   $g$  and  $|$   $i$  (cf. Derolez 1987:62), which is not surprising, since it is often used to represent the syllable  $gi-$ , with a palatal realisation of  $g$ . One may argue, however, that after palatalization took place, neither the Anglo-Saxons nor Frisians felt a special need for a  $j$  rune, since the standard  $g$  rune *gyfu* could be used to render the initial palatal sound value. But, of course, they still needed a  $g$  rune for rendering the voiced stop [g], for instance. The *iar* rune appears to have been given another function: that of an ornamental rune, also known as *Sternrune*, especially in the name-element  $j\bar{i}s(l)-$ , such as can be found in Dover **jislheard** and Thornhill III **jilsuip**; in Frisia Westeremden A **adujisl** and **jisuhldu** (cf. Parsons 1994<sup>a</sup>:203).

12.2. In later centuries  $\text{𐌶}$  came to stand for  $a$  in Scandinavia, usually transliterated **A** (to distinguish it from the nasal  $\bar{a}$ ). **A** is first attested in the inscriptions of the Blekinge stones, ca. 7th c. There is only one Scandinavian attestation of this rune denoting  $j$ : Noleby (Västergötland). All other recorded Scandinavian (including the Danish) *Sternrunen* denote **A** or **h**.

12.3. In England there existed another variety:  $\text{𐌶}$ , denoting palatalised  $g$ , attested especially in manuscript runerows and once, epigraphically, in the *fuforc* inscription on the Brandon pin (late 8th, early 9th c., cf. Parsons 1991:8). This inscription shows the *Sternrune*  $\text{𐌶}$  in the place of  $g$ , and  $\text{𐌶}$  in the place of  $j$ . The name of the latter is  $g\bar{e}r$ , *gear* and is derived from  $*j\bar{e}ra$ . Besides, the  $g$  in  $g\bar{e}r$  clearly shows its function in OE: that of an initial palatalised  $g$  (pronounced  $j$ ) before a front vowel, which is not the case with *iar*, the  $a$  being a back vowel and therefore not causing palatalization. In England the rune kept its sound value  $j$ , therefore the name was analogically extended to *iar*. The name *iar* or *ior* is known from manuscript runerows, the initial vowel is written in the Latin way: *i*, a solution which would naturally have been chosen by a Latin educated cleric (who was no rune-expert). It might be that *iar/ior* got a place outside the basic *fuforc* and was used on special occasions (Parsons 1994<sup>a</sup>:205). If the theory is correct that runes could be used for special occasions, this might tally with the occurrence of 'ornamental runes' in some Frisian inscriptions, such as triple-barred **h** and triple-barred **b** on the Toornwerd comb and **a** with three sidetwigs on the Fallward footstool (North Germany).

In Hickeys' edition of the OE rune poem<sup>53</sup> the *iar* rune is on place 28. The meaning of its name is described thus:

*(iar, ior) byþ eafix, and ðeah a bruceþ  
fodres on foldan, hafap fægerne eard,  
wætre beworpen, þær he wynnnum leofap*

"*Iar, ior* is a riverfish, and it always  
takes its food on land; it has a pleasant home  
surrounded by water, where it lives happily"

The text of the rune poem can be taken as an educated riddle. "*Iar, ior* is usually interpreted as 'eel' or 'newt'" (Halsall, 1981:157). Obviously the 'riverfish' was thought to represent some amphibious creature. Sorell (1990:111, note 35) speaks of "a late, non-epigraphic<sup>54</sup> rune, and in a learned context an exotic referent such as 'hippopotamus', would not be out of place". The meaning 'hippopotamus, Nilehorse', may be right, since the rune name *ior* seems to denote 'horse', cf. the Scandinavian rune name \**ehwaz* > *jór* 'horse'. A horse living in a river, like a 'riverfish' and above all in 'happy surroundings' points to Arabia. Thus, a meaning 'hippopotamus' cannot be excluded, although it seems farfetched for a rune name. Remarkably, the rune has two names, *iar* and *ior*. In my opinion, the 'riverfish' must be a boat, a sort of barge that takes on goods on land ('food') and which, of course, quite suitably has a 'dwelling place surrounded by water'.

I presume there existed a kind of ship that was called a *ior* or *iar*. It turns out that quite a few ship-kennings existed in ON that contained the word *jór* 'horse'; actually their number amounts to 49% of the basic words in the ship-kennings (Simek 1982:246). Simek has listed several ship-kennings containing *jór*, as for instance: *jór Glamma, jór hlyra, jór ifu, jór ísheims, jór landabands* etc. (Simek 1982:225f.). Therefore, it seems more than likely that the rune-name *ior* 'horse = (river)fish' was used symbolically to denote a ship. It is curious that *ior* has an alternative: *iar*. The Anglo-Saxons may have known that their *iar* rune had been given the name *ár* in Scandinavia, a homonym with OE *ār* 'oar, rudder'<sup>55</sup>. It may have been used as *pars pro toto* for the whole ship.

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<sup>53</sup> Rendered in J.M. Kemble: *Anglo-Saxon Runes*, an essay that was first published in the journal 'Archaeologia' in 1840.

<sup>54</sup> This is obviously a mistake, as the *Sternrune* appears fairly often appears in epigraphic rune inscriptions and not specifically 'late'. Anglo-Frisian instances are Westeremden A & B, Gandersheim, Dover, Brandon. In Scandinavia the rune is a common phenomenon. On the Continent the *Sternrune* occurs thrice: in Trossingen, Hohenstedt and Eichstetten, see Continental Corpus.

<sup>55</sup> ON *ár, ór* f. 'oar, rudder' < Gmc. \**airō* = OE *ár* 'oar, rudder'. A mix-up is not unlikely, since ON *ár* n. means 'year, fertility' < Gmc. \**jēra* = OE *gear*, OFris *jēr*.