The Runic Script and its Characters in Old English and Middle English Texts

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The Runic Script and its Characters in Old English and Middle English Texts

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Summary

The aim of this work is, primarily, to introduce and describe the topic of the runes as found in the development of the English language. A true value of the runes lies actually in some of the preserved texts which were vastly created during the Old and Middle English period. According to historical evidence, the runes were used by various people since prehistoric times, but the traces were probably lost.

The early inscriptions chiselled into the stone or wood were the results of extraordinary master work. Marvellous ornaments, animal images and prolific decorations, were just a few of significant characteristics, which made rune stones look tremendous and unique. One needed to be very skilful and of capable hand in order to make tiny and precise movements in order to carve a message, a magical charm, spell, or just a mere text, that served for individual purpose. The pagan tribes associated the runes with something magnificent and divine. The runic symbols are the representatives of the metaphoric interpretations, as was seen in the old Germanic mythology. This explains perfectly the mighty world of pagan gods and numerous other mystical creatures.

It is important to say that the knowledge about the Old and Middle English period is in close relationship to the understanding of the runic system, because certain characteristics from an overall historical flow influenced the development of the runic signs.

Key words: runes, runic script, futhark, inscriptions, carve, stone, English language

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1. Introduction

Talking from a historical point of view, it has been speculated that the British Isles were first settled by the humans, meaning Homo sapiens, from the time immemorial. Looking back in the pre-Christian era, it was presumed that the first settlers arrived to the British Isles during the Ice Age (35 000 – 10 000 years ago), when the sea levels were lower than the land, so the Britain was connected to the rest of the European continent. It is thought that these people built up the megalithic, ancient Stonehenge and Avebury, which remained as awesome pieces of perhaps Druid, architecture even today.

Below we shall draw upon the major points of this work. The very first part deals with the history of several Germanic tribes, settling down the area of the British Isles. The roots of these tribal groups are being examined, as well as their reasons for settling around. According to scientific facts, there were thousands of reasons, why ancient Germanic people acted sometimes violently. Some tribes triggered massive riots, by brutally terrorising the native inhabitants, in order to subdue the poor folk under their control, and invade the land of an enormous potential. Some invaders just calmly integrated with the natives. Their impact on the overall development of the history is observed, as well as, some minor features of their cultural lifestyle.

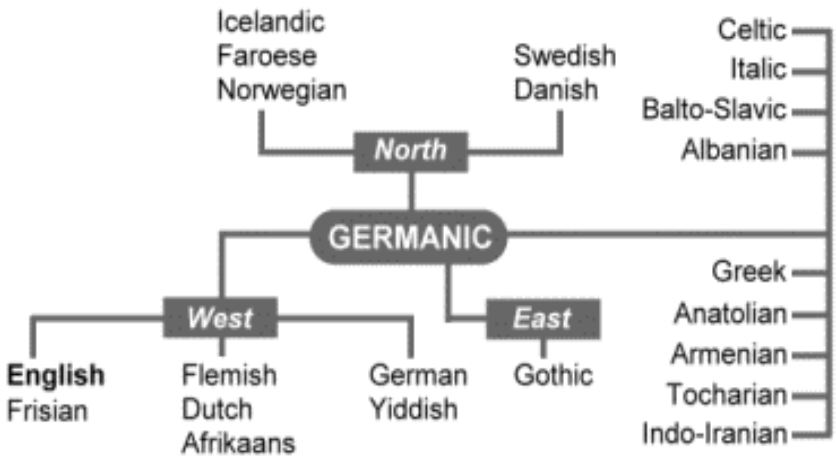
The second part of this paper explicitly concerns the topic, which is thought to be the major one. The mysterious world of the runes is being discussed, explored and analyzed to perfect details. At the very beginning of that section, the runic alphabet is introduced. The origins and related history of the runes are closely questioned, as well as their function, which is of primary significance. What is really interesting and charming is the concurrent use of these letters as purely textual signs, used as a writing system, and on the other hand, the magical and divine properties assigned to them as symbolic tools for distinctive rituals and spells. The final section is designed in order to show remarkable and prolific texts written in different forms of runes, appearing as inscriptions or manuscripts carved in many forms of stones. The runes described in this paper reflect the Old and the Middle English period.

Due to the recent 'boom' in the research of runes, the majority of sources used in this thesis are from the Internet, where some major research projects and findings with illustrations could be found. We relied on those in order to provide the most exhaustive overview of the runic systems.

2. Historical overview and development of Germanic tribes settling the British Isles in Old and Middle English period

In this section, the history of the British Isles and folk would be discussed. First of all, the prehistory of Germanic people would be introduced. According to the historical data that we have today, the first inhabitants of the British Isles were the Celts, who arrived at the time of Bronze Age (2000 – 500 B.C.). Domestic people spoke a Celtic language, which was a part of the of the Indo-European family of languages to which also belongs the Germanic branch and English as one member of its Western sub branches (Diagram 1). The Christian era welcomes the historical events of numerous attacks, triggered by several distinct Germanic tribes. The historical background is accompanied by short descriptions of several major invasions, which are of vital importance due to the Old and Middle English periods.

Diagram[1] 1: The Germanic Family of Languages



2.1. The spread of the Celts from 5th century BC

In the earliest times, which are called prehistoric (the 5th BC), some tribes spread from their original homeland east of the Rhine. These were the Celts[2]. They were a group of

[1]http://www.englishclub.com/english-language-history.htm

people, tied by similar language, religion and culture. They were warriors, living for wars, battles and plunder. With the help of iron weapons, they were able to press to the Balkans and west to France and Spain. It was believed that they managed to cross La Manche in about 300BC. The Celts pushed south the Alps, and in 390 BC two migrations of Celts took place in Rome. The Romans called them Gaels, and distinguished two territories: Cisalpine Gaul (from Rome "this side of the Alps") and Transalpine Gaul ("across the Alps"). The first were the Gaelic or Goidelic Celts, who were the ancestors of the present inhabitants of the Scotch Highlands, the Isle of Man, and the western part of Ireland. The second migrants were the Brythonic or Gallic Celts, who were pushed to Cornwall, Wales and Brittany lending a name to the tribes of Britons and future geographic landmark.

2.2. Roman Invasion

During Caesar's reign, some alliances were made between Caesar and independent Celtic tribal chiefs. In 55 BC Caesar[3] tried an invasion on Britain. The Roman army fought in Gaul (France). Caesar was defeated, and tried to attack the Britons again, within the same year. It was in August 55 BC, near Dover. The Romans were forced to fight in the water, because the Britons gathered and hid behind the cliffs. The Romans were defeated again.

The next year, 54 BC, Caesar returned and tried to invade Britain again. With his powerful army of 30 000 soldiers, Caesar managed to establish a military troops in Britain. By the time of fight, Caesar neglected Gaul. Therefore he left Britain, and together with the army went to Gaul in order to oppose the rebellion. The Romans did not return to Britain for almost 90 years. The only connection between the Romans and Britons was productive in trade. The Romans traded with the tribes, realizing that Britain was a wealthy place, out of which the Romans could gain a lot, but under their occupation.

The Romans invaded Britain for the third time in the year 43 AD under Roman emperor Claudius[4]. He sent an army of 40 000 soldiers. They succeeded in conquering of one part of Britain, until the year 84 AD. Numerous fights and attacks were led under the Roman emperor Agricola and several times he defeated the Britons. A great area of the British Isles was then, under the Roman influence, until the 410, when the Romans were forced to withdrawal.

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[2] http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~cpercy/courses/6361Lovis.htm
[3] http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/questions_01.shtml
[4]http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/romans_in_britain.htm

2.3. Anglo-Saxon Invasion

At the beginning of the 5th century there were some new tribes set on the scene. Several groups of barbarians represented a new threat for Britons: Visigoths, Franks, Huns[5]and Burgundies. Archaeological evidence claims that the first barbarian arrivals made the Romans go back to Rome in order to defend the capital and Saxon Shore from attacks and plunder against barbarian sea-raiders in 410. As a result, Romano-Britons remained alone in Britain and had to use own means to defend.

Anglo-Saxon[6] is a collective name given to various Germanic tribes, who inhabited and ruled in the south and east of the Roman Britain from the 5th century AD to the time of the Norman Conquest 1066. According to the Venerable Bede, a learned monk from the monastery of Jarrow, the author of *The History of the English Church and People*, the Anglo-Saxons were the descendants of three different Germanic people: *the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes.* They originally migrated from the north of Germany to England, in the 5th century, at the invitation of the British chieftain Vortigern (King of the Britons) to defend his country against the Pictish and Irish invaders. In return for their military assistance, Anglo-Saxons were promised lands in the south and east of Britain. To Vortigern's great pleasure, the expected newcomers arrived as Germanic pagans, independent of Roman control. The picture 1 below shows and visually explains Anglo-Saxon migrations.

[5]http:/
[6]http:/

Picture[7] 1: Germanic invaders entered Britain on the east and south coast in the 5th century

The Angles (led by brothers Hengest and Horsa) came from the province Angeln inAngulus, the country, which lied between the provinces of the Jutes and Saxons, and settled an area of the eastern coast of Britain, the river Humber (Northumbria), the Kingdom of Mercia (meaning the *Marche – Frontier*).

The Saxons (under king Aelle leadership) came from the northern Germany on the North Sea (German kingdom of Saxony). Being the dominant tribe they took place in the south (Sussex), south west (Wessex, today Devon), Middlesex, and up the valley of the Thames (Essex).

Finally, **the Jutes** came from the peninsula of Jutland (Jylland today Denmark) and invaded Kent, the Isle of Wight, and the West Saxon (Wessex).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is a collection that contains information about the Anglo-Saxon invasion, and records about the later establishment of seven kingdoms, known as the *Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy*: *Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Kent, Essex, Sussex and Wessex.*

The Britons struggled to stop the Anglo-Saxon riots, and managed to stop them in the battle at Baddon Hill[8] 500. The leader of the Britons was perhaps the legendary King Arthur, but this fact remained obscure, because it had never been scientifically proved. The Britons were divided from the Anglo-Saxons by a barrier, known as Offa's Dyke[9] (Picture 2).

The Celts in Britain (Scottish Gaels) were pressed into the west of England, Wales and Cornwall. The Celts and the Anglo-Saxons fought for the next 100 years till Anglo-Saxons killed all the Celts.

Picture 2: Offa's Dyke in Wales

[7] http://www.englishclub.com/english-language-history.htm
[8]http://www.badonhill.com/BattleofBadonHill.html
[9]Offa's Dyke – traditional boundary between England and Wales, 240 km long, 2,5 m high; from the Dee estuary

2.3.1. The Christianization of England

The Angles were formally christianised in 597 when Augustine (Picture 3), who was sent by Pope Gregory I with a group of missionaries, arrived in England. He was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 601, establishing this town as the centre of British bishops. The king Ethelbert of Kent was baptized.

By the end of the 7th century, most of Germanic tribes had become Christian. While St. Augustine christianised people in the south of England, the north of England had been vastly christianised by Irish and Scottish monks.

Picture 3: St. Augustine

2.3. The Scandinavian Invasion

Peace did not last long among Germanic people. The newcomers, named Vikings or Northman raided Britain in the 8th century. The term *Viking* is probably derived from Frisian "wic*"* (meaning *settlement*) or Old Norse (meaning *pirate raid*). The earliest target attacks[10] were on Lindisfarne and Jarrow in 793. The monasteries with ornamental riches were the great attraction to the raiders. They plundered indiscriminately (precious silver and gold chalices, plates, bowls, crucifixes) and killed everywhere, on the island of Iona, for instance. They were great sailors, but actually seen as a mixture of barbarian warriors and tradesmen. They came from Scandinavia and travelled westwards across the Atlantic.

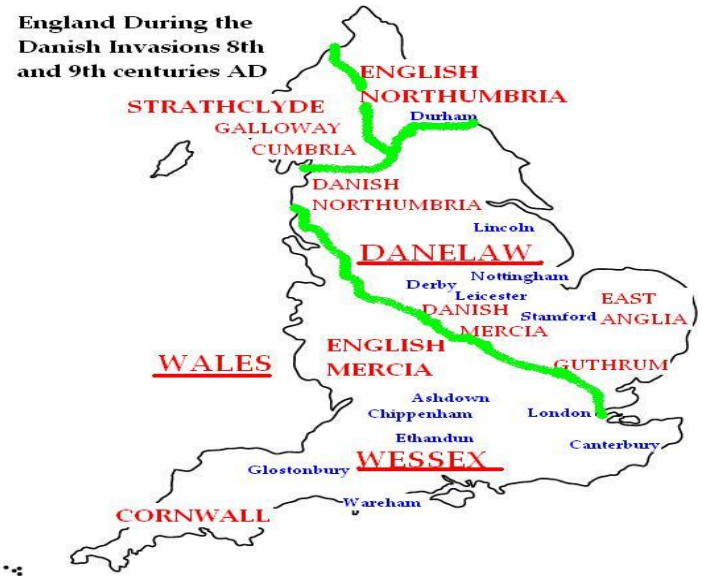
[10] http://www.heritage-history.com/www/heritage.php?Dir=wars&FileName=wars_danebritain.php

The Vikings[11] discovered Iceland and Greenland, even Labrador Peninsula in North America. The reasons of their invasion of Britain might be overpopulation in poor land with harsh climatic condition. Gradually, waves of the Danes joined in 9th century and captured Northumbria and its capital York (Jorvik). They settled from Northumbria to East Anglia.

Later, English King Alfred the Great showed resistance to the Danes in the war against them. The war lasted fifteen years (871-886), and he defeated the Vikings at the *Battle of Edington* in 878. Successfully, the victory resulted in maintaining Wessex free from the Viking influence. Therefore, a legendary King Alfred the Great became known as King Alfred of Wessex. These and other struggles with the Danes were described in details in the section of *Parker's Manuscript*[12].

After the battle, the Viking leader Guthrum converted to Christianity. Alfred took London from the Vikings, and together with Guthrum signed a treaty at Wedmore in 890. The treaty divided England between the Vikings and the English. The Viking territory became known as the Danelaw (Picture 4). The boundary of the Danelaw defined an area north-east from London to Cheshire. Five towns became of vital importance in the Danelaw: Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby and Stamford. In the 10th century they permanently settled in the province of France, which was named Normandy.

Picture 4: The boundary of the Danelaw



[11] http://wwwglobalpractice-laura.blogspot.com/2011/02/1.html
[12] Parker Manuskript – a section of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which deals with the Scandinavian influences in Britain, named after a bishop in whose possession the manuscript was

2.3. Norman Invasion

By the early 11th century, the Norman people came to England and invaded the land. From the point of Norman invasion (Picture 5), the beginning of the Middle English period is marked.

Picture 5: Norman Invasion of Britain

After King Alfred's death, the King Ethelred came to throne. After a futile confrontation with the Danes, he raised taxes, in order to pay them to go away. After his death, the Danish leader Knut[13], was pleased to be the King of England, Denmark and Norway. One of his relatives was married to Earl Godwin, and he was married to Ethelred's wife, who was a daughter of the Duke of Normandy. After Knut's death, his sons could not rule, so Edward, Ethelred's son Edward, came from Normandy to be the English King. He was of the English origin, but since he had spent all his life in Normandy, he behaved as a Norman. Because of the official aristocracy, he was married to Earl Godwin's daughter, by force. They did not have any children. It was believed, that he had left England to his Norman

[13] http://www.regia.org/history/history.htm

cousin. Edward died at Christmas 1065, and Harold Godwinson seized the throne. He was Edward's brother- in law.

Tostig[14], Harold's younger brother, claimed, that he was promised the throne by Edward. On the other side, the Danish king, Harald Hardraada, also claimed the English crown, because of the connections of the previous generations. Under strange circumstances, Tostig and Hardraada allied. The third person, to whom Edward promised the crown, was William Duke of Normandy. The country was to be grabbed.

Harald Hardraada and Tostig invaded in the North, first. But they were defeated by Harold Godwinson at Stamford Bridge, in September 1066. Hardraada was killed. Harold marched to the South Coast to attack William's forces. Harold's army was quite exhausted from previous attacks. At the Battle of Hastings in 1066 (October 14) Harold Godwin was defeated by William of Normandy, and therefore committed a suicide. This year was a turning point in the whole English history, what enormously influenced the English regime.

William was crowned in Westminster on Christmas 1066. In the next few years, William had to face many rivals, who triggered attacks. Luckily, he opposed all of the rebellions. William's capable leadership and rational skills always prevailed.

The period of Middle English from the 11th to the 16th century was under French control with French language officially prevailing.

[14] *www.uni-due.de/SHE/SHE_**Norman_Invasion**.htm*

3. The World of runes

3.1. Introduction to the system of runes

Picture 6: The Runes[15]

Before today's alphabets, even before the Roman and Greek alphabetical systems, there was a language and alphabet of the ancient world, used among the people of pre-historical and historical times in some parts of the Europe. This was the alphabet of the runes, followed by the Germanic European cultures, which was used mainly from 150 to 1500 AD. According to scientific evidence, the first written inscriptions date from that point of time.

The runes are alphabetical scripts used by different people of Northern Europe. All runic alphabets are, generally speaking, called *futharks* after the first letters of the first six runes (Fehu, Uruz, Thurisaz, Anzus, Raidho, Kenaz), similarly as the word alphabet comes from the names of the first two Hebrew letters (Aleph, Beth). Futhark[16] served as the first writing system used by the ancient Germanic people, where each rune represented one letter. The runes could be read in whatever direction; from left to right and vice versa, as well as, upwards, diagonally... A string of words were tied up together, without any single space. Occasionally, one or more dots were used to separate the words.

Functioning as letters[17], the runes were more significant than just mere letters. Each rune represented a kind of an iconic symbol, a picture or any other abstract image of a certain universal principle of power. Writing in runes had not only been referred to as bare literacy communication or transmitting a message, chiselled on some hard surface. On the contrary, it represented magic, prophecy, divination and witchcraft spells. To be more precise, writing in runes in the sense of magical rituals, meant to call forth a particular force, and energize it for something, what this particular rune referred to. This is also understood in etymology of the word itself. Although it is still debatable what the word *rune* exactly means, it is supposed that the word originally embarked from the Proto-Germanic[18] (Gothic) word *runo* that

[15] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%A1vam%C3%A1l
[16] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runes
[17] http://norse-mythology.org/runes/
[18] http://norse-mythology.org/runes/

actually means s*ecret*, *whisper*, or *mystery*. So, the correspondence of the magical or mystical rituals of these symbols is quite vivid. It is not very likely, that these symbols were used to predict the future; they were rather regarded as a way of seeking advice from the gods and served as oracles.

The primary characteristic which distinguished a runic futhark from other alphabets was that each rune had its own name and meaning, and a God to whom this particular rune was honoured. For example, the first rune *fehu* is referred to as *cattle* or *wealth*, and is honoured to God Frey, the god of fertility and unselfish abundance. Another example is the *T-rune*, named after the God Tiwaz (known as Tyr). The form of the T-rune is an arrow pointed upward to the sky and god. It was believed that in magical rituals this rune, symbolized the victory in battles.

Table 1: The runic characters and their names

Fehu	Uruz	Thurisaz	Ansuz	Raido
Kenaz	Gebo	Wunjo	Hagalaz	Nauthiz
Isa	Jera	Eihwaz	Pertho	Algiz
Sowulo	Teiwaz	Berkana	Ehwaz	Mannuz
Laguz	Inguz	Othila	Dagaz	The Blank Rune

The runes were eventually dropped out from the formal use with the Roman influence and Christianization of the Britons (Section 2.2.1.). The Roman alphabet became a preferred script over the British Isles.

Nevertheless, the runic characters and meanings were preserved in forms of, either shorter inscriptions or manuscripts.

Traditionally[19], the rune characters were mostly carved into stones and wood, but can be also found in bones, metal, coins, medals, jewellery, walls of caves, swords, knives or on other similar hard surfaces. Of course, it was impossible for one to use an ink or pen and draw the symbols on parchment. According to online encyclopaedia (Omniglot), there is a short typology of what the runic inscriptions usually included and what they were aimed for.

1. Inscriptions on cliff walls, large rocks and buildings
2. Grave stone monuments (names of who carved the runes, who was buried)
3. Religious or magic inscriptions: prayers, curses, amulets, magic formulas
4. Trade inscriptions: stock exchange, excuses for not having paid on time, trade name tags (wood)
5. Political inscriptions: the scripts of the law, secret messages
6. Personal letters: love letters, greetings, invitations, proposals
7. graffiti Art and craft signatures: goldsmiths, blacksmiths, wood carvers, church builders

There are numerous runic alphabets to be distinguished, of which only three are of significant importance:

1. Elder Futhark: 150 AD – 800 AD (Common or Teutonic)
2. Anglo-Saxon Futhork: 400 AD – 1100 AD (Anglian)
3. Younger Futhark: 800 AD – 1100 AD (Nordic or Scandinavian)

1. Elder Futhark

This version of the runic alphabet is thought to be the oldest version, used by the Germanic people from Scandinavia and other parts of the Europe. This was the first fully-formed runic alphabet. It contained 24 runic characters. Traditionally, this futhark was divided into three parts called *aetts*. However, the principles of how the runes were grouped remained a mystery. The formation of this futhark was formed by the 5th century, with the first evidence of its inscription in Kylver Stone[20].

[19] http://www.omniglot.com/writing/runic.htm
[20] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runes

2. Anglo-Saxon Futhork

The Anglo-Saxon Futhork emerged from the Elder Futhark, at about 400 AD, with the Anglo-Saxon invasion. Gradually, it developed into 33 runic characters, and it was thought to be the only runic alphabet of the English origin.

3. Younger Futhark

It is believed that the Younger Futhark gradually diverged from the Elder Futhark at the beginning of the Viking Age, 800 AD. It comprised only 16 runic characters, and it replaced the original alphabet in Scandinavia. Later Younger Futhark developed further in the Marcomannic runes, the medieval runes (100 – 1500), and the Dalecarlian runes (1500 – 1800).

3.2. Origins of the Runes

This section deals shortly, with the origins of the runic alphabet. There are certain theories, that suggest, where possibly the runes came from.

First of all, the science of runology would be introduced. It is the study that deals with runic alphabets, runic inscriptions, rune stones, and their history. Runology is a branch of

Germanic linguistics. Speaking of the roots of the futhark, there are some theories provided as suggestions of their possible origin[21]:

1. The alphabet was created independently
2. The alphabet was probably originally used in southern Europe and transmitted to the North by Germanic tribes
3. The runic alphabet was designed after the pattern of the Etruscan or Latin alphabet

Today, the process of how the runic script was transmitted[22] is still unknown. The oldest inscriptions are found in Denmark and Northern Germany, and not near Italy, at all. There are two possible theories of how the runic alphabets were transferred to the British Isles:

1. West Germanic hypothesis – transmission from the northern areas
2. Gothic hypothesis – transmission from the Greco-Roman areas (the Black Sea)

Historically observed, the runic alphabet is believed to derive from the Old Italic alphabets. However, it is still uncertain which variant of the Old Italic family suited to be used for the runes. There are a few options that satisfy this theory e.g. *Raetic*, *Etruscan* or *Old Latin*. All these scripts had the same angular shapes of letters, later found in epigraphic monuments. The runic alphabet contained similar shapes of the letters.

Scholars believe that the real origins date back from the Greek or Latin alphabets, from the period of the 6th century BC to the 5th century AD. They think that the futhark was developed by the Goths, a Germanic people, from the Etruscan alphabet of the northern Italy, and therefore also influenced by the Latin. There are two inscriptions written in Etruscan script, such as the Negau and the Maria Saalerberg inscriptions from the 2nd century BC. The angular form of the runes was shared with other alphabets of the period, in which writing functioned as carving in the stone or wood. At first, early runic alphabets had no horizontal strokes, which were also the case of other alphabets, such as the early form of the Latin alphabet used for Duenos inscription. The historical context of the script's origin was the result of the cultural and linguistic contact between the Germanic peoples.

[21] http://www.omniglot.com/writing/runic.htm
[22] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runes

Going further, there is one additional source that possibly explains the origin of the runic alphabet. It is based on an interesting story, which is believed to be a legend about the god Odin. According to that legend, Odin[23], who was one of the Old Norse gods, hung for nine nights on *Yggdrasil*, the *Tree of the World*, and grabbed the runes just before he fell from the tree. He made an honourable sacrifice, and in this way brought the runes to humankind on the Earth. According to *Odin's Rune Poem*[24] (from *Havamal – Sayings from the High One*):

Hung I was on the windswept tree;
Full nights I hung,
Pierced by a spear, a pledge to the god,
To Odin, myself to myself,
On that tree which none can know the source.

From whence its root has run.
None gave me bread, none brought a horn.
Then low to earth I looked.
Caught up the runes, roaring I took them,
And, fainting, back I fell.
(Stanzas 138-146)

The whole scene[25] of Odin's sacrifice to a god by hanging himself on the tree, and then his wound inflicted by a spear, is compared to the crucifixion of Christ. Certain parallels are drawn between Odin and Christ, what would indicate the existence of Christianity and transition from paganism to Christianity.

There are a lot of runic inscriptions, which date back in pre-historic times, but there are no traces of these. The first known inscriptions date from the first century AD.

[23]Odin – hanged for nine days; there is the picture of Odin, who is hanged, and it exists in today Tarot Deck. That is the card of " Hanged Man " which embarked from that legend
[24] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%A1vam%C3%A1l
[25] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%A1vam%C3%A1l

3.3. The Meaning of the Runes

In this entire section, the meaning of the runic characters would be enlightened. Different definitions would be discussed, but on the basis of two distinct levels: the meaning of the runic characters as text types in writing systems and the meaning of the runic characters used for metaphorical interpretation.

3.3.1. The meaning of the runic characters as text types in writing systems

The research project *Runic Writing in the Germanic Languages*[26], established by the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and based at the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen, is conducted in research centres at universities of Kiel, Göttingen, Munich (Institute for English Philology), and Munich (Scandinavian Department).

Based on the data found in the documents published by the project group, this section aims to examine briefly the runic script as a purely writing system within the historical and cultural context. The focus will be on phonemic, graphemic and text-pragmatic aspects. The research on runic monuments predominantly focuses on understanding the text of the individual inscriptions and their historical and cultural interpretation. The aim of the research was to describe and analyse the function of the runes as a runic writing system. This research mainly describes the steps of how the primary sources should be gathered, and how accordingly, the whole process flows. It gives some advice on how to approach this scientifically, and how to organize similar investigations in different linguistic branches.

Following this perspective, there are two principal domains of investigation:

1. Within this domain, the transfer of sounds into graphic characters is being observed. The phonemic (sounds) and graphemic (letters) systems are compared.
2. This domain deals with the relation of oral speech to written characters. Previous attempts of determining the functions of the script itself were occupied with magical or ritual interpretations. The aim of this research is to develop a system that would decode the inscriptions as text types. To analyse the inscriptions certain elements

[26]http://www.anglistik.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/forsch_projekte/runes_project/runes_description.pdf

come into consideration: the inscription-bearing object itself, the text written on it, extra-runic characters, iconographic elements and ornaments, the order of the signs, and the historical circumstances.

The steps in analysing the runic signs according to the project researchers are (ibid.):

1. Distinction between different groups of signs – identifying runic signs; formal characteristics, spatial and chronological dimensions, interpretation of the text.
2. Systematic compilation of the runic graphs – graph description of the basis of designed descriptive model, to which would be assigned a sound value
3. Structural analysis of the runic sign systems – investigation of sign and sound relation due to historical and regional variance (one graph corresponds either to a single or several phone(s), several graphs correspond to a phone due to regional variance)
4. Analysis of non-phonic functions of runic signs – a representation of abbreviatory signs (Begriffsrunen)
5. Analysing the function of extra-runic signs - registration of all other non – runic characters and cooperation with archaeology, art history (pictures, images...)
6. Interrelationships between the Latin and the runic script – presumption of the Latin origin of the runic script (shape of Latin letters on runic script) and vice versa (Rhine-Franconian script). Consideration of monuments in runic and Latin (Ruthwell Cross, Franks Casket, The Lindisfarne Stones).

The text-pragmatic and functional aspects of writing determine the conceptual features of the runic texts, to find their communicative function and to describe changes in the use of the runic script from history and culture. The following features and characteristics of runic writing will be included in the study: the type of the inscription-bearing object and its function in the social context, the location of the text on the object and the design of the text space, structural, lexical and pragmatic features.

1. Analysis of the text - linguistic descriptions of the signs (syntactic-semantic (comparison), morpho-syntactic (stylistically marked))

2. Analysis of the following extra-runic signs - text structuring (separators, signs with a referential function and ornamental signs); the role of separators lies in that the different stages can be isolated and followed in historical and cultural context
3. Iconographic elements -the relation between the text and image
4. Analysis of the inscription- bearing object - the runic texts written on objects of socio-cultural meaning (found on personal objects, bracelets, bracteates, brooches, swords...; object-bearing text examples in the Section 2.3)

As the research points out, the corpus of the runic tradition, the Runica Manuscripta differs at some extent from the epigraphic runic corpus. It is a large and manifold corpus. Manuscripts contain lists of the complete rune rows, sometimes ending up in Latin signs just to mark a formal name and sound of the rune. The names of scribes are represented in form of a monogram. The inventory corpus contains all the runic texts in elder futhark and non-epigraphic Runica Manuscripta. To conclude, the progress of Runica Manuscripta is only possible if the runic signs are individually and more carefully observed, if the form or shape, as well as the value of the rune, is studied, and not only the rune name, if the runic signs are observed and judged from the socio-cultural level.

3.3.2. The meaning of the runic characters used for metaphorical interpretation.

In ancient times of the Old English period, people used to give names to different runic characters. In this section the symbolic meanings[27] of the names of the runic futhark would be interpreted. Old Germanic peoples used to respect divine creatures. They prayed to their gods and for that reasons, they dealt sometimes with magical rituals. They had several gods, all of which one was on the top of the hierarchy, and that was Odin. Each runic sign has its own god that stands for him, as commented below. In addition to the literal content of the rune its symbolic image will be illustrated; the phonetic equivalent of the runic sign would be given, as well as the metaphorical interpretation or meaning for all of the 24 runes that

[27] http://norse-mythology.org/runes/the-meanings-of-the-runes/

comprises the Elder Futhark. The interpretations of the runic meanings are primarily based on the textual evidence of the Rune Poems.[28]

Traditionally, the futhark is uniquely ordered into three aetts[29], with eight runes[30] in each of them.

Fehu: 'cattle' or 'wealth': *Phonetic equivalent* **f**

Fehu is a rune of “luck“. The universe is not made up by chance, as by luck. Fehu orders to hold this luck, which is the mixture of the wealth and power. It is the best to think of wealth as food, water, shelter, clothing, rather than needless luxury.

Uruz: 'Aurochs'; *Phonetic equivalent* **u;**

Uruz is the rune of the God of the sacred hunt and his shaman priest. It represents a wild animal, praised in power and strength. It is a masculine rune, according to the story of the boy, who killed the ‘aurochs’ (animal similar to a bull) and so entered manhood.

Thurisaz: 'giant'; *Phonetic equivalent* ***th****:*

This is the first obstacle rune, not necessarily destructive. One needs to suffer, in order to learn

[28] http://www.ragweedforge.com/poems.html
[29] Aett – a word meaning 'families' or 'groups'
[30] http://www.runestones.com/RuneMeaning.htm

a true happiness. What at first appears to be negative, may well turn out to contain an important lesson.

Ansuz : 'Odin'; *Phonetic equivalent* **a :**

This is the rune of balance. It represents the inner, instincts, the power of secular and magical. There is a lack of compassion and perspective. These comes from Odin, who sits above the world, looks down and makes decisions, but he does not understand his people and their feelings. So, to be a real and true leader, he needs to possess an emotional connection.

Raiđo: 'jurney': *Phonetic equivalent* ***r***

This is the rune of a journey. One can travel over roads and streets and one's life can take many twists and turns, as well as, different directions. Raiđo refers to a journey of life, and how one's decisions can change the way of life.

Kenaz: 'torch'; *Phonetic equivalent* ***c*** *as in 'candle'*

This is the rune of burning light, heat, and warmth physically and mentally. This rune represents opening a mind to new ideas, being creative and exploring different types of knowledge.

Gebo: 'gift'; *Phonetic equivalent* ***g***

This is the rune of connection between people. Until now, the journey was mainly solitary,

and from here on the life paths intersect with other people. These relationships are strengthen by the exchange of gifts.

wunjo: 'glory': *Phonetic equivalent* ***w***

This rune is the last one in this Aett, and represents the end of one cycle and the beginning of another one. It also represents emotions and feelings over materialistic. The spirit of happiness, love, pleasure and harmony with partners, family, and friends are crucial.

Hagalaz: 'hail': *Phonetic equivalent* ***h***

This rune represents a harsh weather. In abstract sense a kind of disturbing force, which would seriously affect someone's life. This particularly concerns the area of work, but only temporarily. Then peace and calm will prevail finally.

Naudiz: 'need' or 'necessity': *Phonetic equivalent* ***n***

This rune stands for need. It can describe a want, wish or necessity, which must be addressed. Need can also mean desperate conditions, hard life, which one has to solve. This rune makes one realize, what true values and needs are, in order to survive, and learn what is really important and primary for living, and what is optional.

Isaz: 'ice': *Phonetic equivalent **i***

This rune presents the thin and fragile form of ice, inactivity or blockage, patience, withdrawal and rest for some time. It is also followed by the coldness and frigidity of ice, so one needs to be careful when crossing across in such areas. It refers to a certain lack in dynamic activities, and suspension and stagnation of plans, until better times come, when they might be more prolific.

Jera: ' year' or 'harvest': *Phonetic equivalent **y***

This rune stands for change, reward and productivity. Metaphorically, it refers to the fruit of labour or reward for effort. It the rune of success and further development, after hard work. After well planned steps of work, one may expect a suitable harvest.

Eihwaz: 'yew': *Phonetic equivalent **ei***

This rune stands for transformation, change, confrontation of fears. It is a symbol of the strength towards something that could make harm. It refers to a protection and defence, and being rational helps one face the harsh reality. The spirit, strong will and mind will endure even the worst.

Perth: 'dice-cup': *Phonetic equivalent **p***

The rune of mystery and chance, speaks for the future, the future is ambiguous, mysterious and unknown. This symbol refers to hidden matters and secrets, which need to be dealt with and resolved. Since, everything in the life presents a mysterious puzzle, one actually gambles within the life trying to with unpredictable results.

Algiz: 'protection': *Phonetic equivalent **x,z***

This rune stands for support, protection and warning. It symbolises the elk, an animal, always aware of its surroundings, looking out for danger. It means that one always needs to be careful and immediately ready to defence against harm and attack.

Sowulo: 'sun': *Phonetic equivalent **s***

This rune stands for power and strength, symbolising the rising spirit or awakening from the spheres of darkness. It indicates one's rebirth, new goals that would be reached. It is a revitalizing energy and power that positively constructs one's life force, providing vitality, wisdom, increase and fertility.

Teiwaz: 'Tyr': *Phonetic equivalent **t***

This rune represents the ON god of war, Tyr. It is believed that he protects those who fight, whether in physical battle or in the battle of mind. It also symbolizes triumph and victory in any competition.

Berkana: 'birch': *Phonetic equivalent **b***

This rune is the rune of fertility, rebirth, plenty. It symbolizes the chance of a new bright in terms of either a fresh start or of something old being reconstructed. It is thou a female rune, which recovers and renews old and damaged, giving a positive note.

Ehwaz: 'horse': *Phonetic equivalent **e***

This rune represents the animal horse. It refers to means of transportation. Metaphorically, it symbolizes being on the right track to prosperity and abundance.

Mannaz: 'man' or 'mankind': *Phonetic equivalent **m***

This rune stands for the spirit of humanity, from being an introvert to becoming an extrovert. This includes perfectly inner and private emotions, which then, gradually open to the outside of the world, and lead to social bounds. It reflects the relationships of how you treat others and vice versa.

Laguz: 'Water': *Phonetic equivalent **l***

This is the rune of water, in all its forms, from a tiny pond to the mighty ocean. The water has tides, flows and ebbs. It cleans from the damage. It symbolizes purity and tranquillity as well as calmness of the spirit. It focuses primarily on emotions such as love, compassion. The

water has a certain depth. It metaphorically impacts everything that occurs in one's mind, consciously and subconsciously. The water hides many secrets and mysteries, to the people, unknown, or not yet understandable. The intonation here is put on wisdom, inner vision, and intuition. One needs to be a spiritual counsellor to solve the mystical riddles. Contrarily, it sometimes refers to inner fears, darkness, and drastic measures.

Ingwaz, Inguz: 'Ing; *Phonetic equivalent **ng***

This rune symbolizes peace and unity. There is a kind of support among the people and relationships are strengthened by love and respect. Once when people are united, a life cycle is complete, as united in one.

Dagaz: 'day'; *Phonetic equivalent **d** (pronounced as '**th**')*

This rune expects and welcomes a new day, or turning the night into day. This is linked to a fresh start, turning to new directions in life, and hope, which should lead to a better satisfaction. A transition from the darkness into the light is conveyed.

Otila: 'property'; *Phonetic equivalent **o***

This rune refers to property, which had been inherited. It may not only be indicated in material affluence, but in broader sense, it refers to family bounds and features, one has.

3.4. The most important runic texts

The aim of this section is to observe several texts in the form of inscriptions and manuscripts, written in old and medieval runes. But before the same are listed, a few words would be said about, seemingly, “runic literature“.

In the period of Old English, we cannot actually speak about OE literature until the period of Scandinavian influences. It is believed that the first and significant literature in OE appears in Old Norse language in 8th century. Most of the runic texts explicitly refer to Old Norse literature.

The earliest runic inscriptions were mostly shorter texts that appeared as messages cites, casting spells, religious gospels... All these inscriptions maintained the owner's name, which was chiselled into the stone. There are a vast number of monuments that acted as gravestones and memorials, which served as declarations of inheritance, acknowledgements... (Jelling stones). They were sometimes, partly written in runic, and partly in Latin alphabet.

As for poetry[31], many important poems were written in the 10th century. Runic poems have a verse for each rune, each of which begins with the rune itself and its name. Some of these poems were more pagan, because Christianity was not yet widespread. (Iceland). They were the result of the oral tradition, and until they were somewhere recorded, they “survived“by the oral repetition from one generation to another. The poems were witty, humorous, religious (such as gospels and psalms), nostalgic, obscene, respectful and victorious.

Since poetry was the main entertainment of the Old Norse people, some runic texts are well preserved in Norse poetry, mythology and sagas. Some of the poems are typically *skaldic*, which tend to favour notable people (kings, leaders) or their works. Although, the most of the skaldic poetry originates from the medieval period, a few of them belong to Old

[31]http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/literature/text/literature.htm

Norse period (The Rök rune stone and 55th chapter of Egil's saga have a skaldic stanza[32]; the Karlevi rune stone uses the drottkvoett meter[33]). Skaldic poems have complicated meter, strict schema of alliteration and metaphoric language.

In this respect, several historical texts of Old and Middle English period, written in runic alphabet, would be represented. First of all, the OE poetry would be introduced.

Rune Poems

In terms of poetry, there are three significant surviving rune poems. These are Icelandic and Norwegian rune poems in ON language, and younger futhark, and Anglo-Saxon rune poem, naturally written in Anglo-Saxon runes. Particularly this poem is considered to be the real English poem, because it originated from the area of Anglia.

Below is an excerpt of *Anglo-Saxon Rune Poem*[34], provided by the author Bruce Dickins, and translated in modern English by Raegweed Forge.

Feohbyþfrofurfiragehwylcum;

Scealðeah manna gehwylcmiclunhytdælan

Gif he wile for drihtne domes hleotan. (1-4)

Wealth is a comfort to all men;

Yet must every man bestow it freely,

If he wish to gain honour in the sight of Lord. [Forge]

Further on, several historical runic inscriptions are to be found chiselled on different objects or gadgets such as swords, stones, bronze pendants, brooches. The first one, out of several, would be illustrated and described.

[32]Stanca – contains 8 lines, each linehas 6 syllables; 3 syllableswithin one line need to be stressed, and the last syllable remains unstressed
[33] Drottkvoett meter – a heroic meter
[34] http://www.ragweedforge.com/poems.html

Seax of Beagnoth

This inscription is the only one, of the complete Anglo-Saxon alphabet. The name of the inscription comes from OE *seax* and means 'knife'[35]. It was the only completed epigraphic object from the 10th century. Today, this expression refers to the description of large Anglo-Saxon single-edged knives made of iron. This *seax* knife was found in the River Thames at Battersea. It was a prestigious weapon.

Picture 7: Seax of Beagnoth

Seax is decorated with a narrow panel that stretches along the back edge on each side of the blade. These panels are outlined by strips of twisted copper and brass, and separated from the blade by a groove. Along this panel there are two inscriptions on one side.

Picture 8: the two inscriptions of the knife Seax of Beagnoth

One inscription represents 28-letters of the futhorc. The other inscription, was carved in Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet, and reads the word "Beagnoth", which is the name of the person, who owned or made a knife. The two inscriptions are divided by a lace of pattern, made of silver and copper.

[35] http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_mla/s/seax_of_beagnoth.aspx

Gold bracteate

This early and unique, with Anglo-Saxon runes inscribed bracteate[36](a flat, single-sided, gold medal, worn as a piece of jewellery, which was sewn onto the clothing) was made by a farmer in Suffolk. The figures and images were adopted from the Roman Urb coin, issued by Constantine the Great between 330 AD and 335 AD. The coins have a helmeted head of the emperor upwards the coin, and figures of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf on the reverse. These coins were widely circulated, what meant eternity and divine.

Above the two images is a double spiral followed by a runic inscription that can be transcribed as ‘gæ go gæ – mægæ medu', what could be read as ‘howling she – wolf’ (referred to a wolf image), and it was probably a kind of reward to a relative.

The runes originate from the Anglo-Frisian alphabet, and it is presumed that the bracteate was made in Schleswig-Holstein (province of old Anglia) or southern Scandinavia. It was perhaps brought to England by an Anglian settler. This runic inscription and others, following the same sample, are typical scripts used for writing in pre-literate Germanic societies.

Picture 9: A Gold Bracteate

[36]http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_mla/g/gold_bracteate.aspx

The Franks Casket

This representation (Picture 10) of the runic inscriptions, is an object, a mere box[37], made of whale's bone, richly carved on the sides and lid with a pool of scenes from Roman Jewish, Christian and Germanic tradition, with the following text in the runic, as well as Roman alphabets.

The box was originally decorated with silver attachments, handles, locks and hinges, which were occasionally removed from their positions. The front side of the box is divided into two scenes: the scene on the left derives from the Germanic legend, whiles the one on the right side, and depicts the Adoration of the Magi (when three wise men visited the newborn Christ, they labelled the word 'maegi' in runes).

The left side of the box shows the founders of Rome (Romulus and Remus, from the legend of twin brothers brought up by a wolf). The back side shows the capture of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Roman emperor Titus. The correlated inscription, is therefore, written in mixed languages and scripts. (OE and Latin). The right side of the box, a cast, shows a person Hos sitting upon the 'sorrow-mound'. This includes a text, partly in encoded runes.

However, the main runic inscription on the front of the box does not refer to the scene it surrounds. It is a mystery or a riddle in OE which is related to the origin of the Casket. The translation varies from e.g. "The fish beat up the seas on to the mountainous cliff" or "the King of terror became sad when he swam onto the shingle". These translations offered then, the connection of the casket and the whale's bone, pointing that the casket was made of the beached whale's bone.

There are assumptions that the casket was made in Northern England, according to the style of carving and dialect of inscription. It was made for a learned patron in a monastery. Since it was made at a time, when Christianity had not been established yet, therefore it shows a great interest of the pagans referred to Christ, and history of Rome and Jerusalem.

[37] http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_mla/t/the_franks_casket.aspx

Today, this casket appears in the British Museum, possibly brought there by Sir Augustus Franks, after whom the casket actually got the name.

Picture 10: The Frank's Casket

Silver disc brooch of Ædwin

This brooch[38] has its place in the British Museum, as well. It is believed that it was discovered during the pillage of a field near Ely in 1694. The brooch carries an inscription in OE around the edge in the back. The possible translation may be as "Ædwin owns me, may the Lord own her. May the Lord curse him who takes me from her, unless she gives me of her own free will".

The back of the brooch was also decorated and has a silver strip with engraved seven imitations of Anglo-Saxon runes, which could not been read. The damage of the brooch indicates that it was torn quickly, by force, from clothing and then buried. It is presumed that the brooch was owned by a woman of a rich status.

[38] http://www.britishmuseum.org /s/silver_disc_brooch.aspx

Picture 11: Silver disc brooch of Ædwin

Runes can also be found on large stone monuments, like churches. It is evident that, there are at least 37 known Anglo-Saxon runic monuments, associated with the Church. There are some of the famous runic crosses. The picture perfectly illustrates one of these crosses, which is the Bewcastle Cross.

Bewcastle Cross

Together with Ruthwell Cross[39], Bewcastle is an enormous, Northumbrian monument (Picture 12), which dates from the 8th century. There are traces of OE and Latin languages, as well as runic and Latin scripts. The meaning is not certain, because the Cross was damaged over the years. There are speculations that this monument was erected as the memorial to commemorate King Alchfrith of Deira.

There are three crucial figures. On the top is John the Baptist, holding the Lamb of God, walking on the desert hills, proclaiming Christ in the wilderness. Below is Christ himself as King. There are animals of the wilderness at his feet. A long inscription stretches, followed by the controversial figure of a man with a falcon or eagle on a perch. This figure is expected to be St. John Evangelist (the symbol of an eagle). If this fact is true, in his arm there may have been a relic of the true Cross, and an altar would be set up. John the Evangelist calls the congregation to hear the good news of the victory of Christ. This can be explained by the long inscription, where is a "victory beacon" mentioned. People are invited to worship Christ and call on His name, which is

[39]http://www.bewcastle.com/cross.html

also carved, be baptized, and have their sins taken from them.

Picture 12: Bewcastle Cross

The Ruthwell Cross

This monument dates back from the early 8th century. It contains the carvings that describe different scenes from the Bible, wine work, and well-known poem *The Dream of the Rood* that was carved in the cross in runic alphabet. It is believed that the cross was designed and erected with the function of, either to convert pagans to Christianity or to instruct Christians from a pagan belief. The Ruthwell Cross[40] is considered to be a powerful religious symbol, an overwhelming work of Anglo-Saxons, and a significant source of literary, historical and cultural evidence and is possibly the oldest surviving text of OE poetry. The cross stood in Ruthwell, Scotland. Later, the church was established, and the cross became part of the church grounds. After years of damage, the cross was reconstructed, and was outside the church until 1887, when it was declared an ancient monument. From 1882, the Ruthwell Cross was brought into the church, and can still be seen there to this day.

As mentioned earlier, there are splendid carvings of the biblical scenes (Picture 13 on the left shows Jesus Christ). More would be said about the poem *The Dream of the Rood*. The poem was written in Anglo-Saxon runes at 9th century. The poem consisted of 18 verses, until the complete poem was discovered in the 10th century in Vercelli Book in northern Italy.

In the poem *The Dream of the Rood*[41], an unknown poet dreams that he encounters a beautiful tree, referred to as “rood”, or the cross, in which Christ was crucified. It is graciously decorated with

[40]http://historymedren.about.com/od/medievalscotland/p/ruthwell_cross.htm

[41]http://historymedren.about.com/od/generalliterature1/p/dream_rood.htm

gold and gems, but the poet can discern ancient wounds. The rood tells the poet how it was forced to be the instrument of Christ's death, describing how it, too, experienced the nails and spear thrusts along with the saviour. Hence, the rood or the cross is now a religious sign of mankind's redemption. It was an attempt, a message to the poet in his dream, to tell all the men about this vision, so that they could be redeemed of sin, and saved. It should be his mission, for which the poet was meant to be.

The significance of this poem lies in its explicit interpretation in many ways. This poem tried to make people think about Christianity and adopt it and later keep certain values in accordance with it. The Anglo-Saxon people used to be warriors, vandals, raiders, and little did they valued humility. Therefore the dream vision uses powerful images of Christ, in order to convert pagans to Christianity. Runic script was used to make Christianity closer to native Germanic peoples. *The Dream of the Rood* remarkably embraces two distinct cultures. The poem offers a glimpse into the distant past of the England. It was a time when pagan rituals declined, and soon, a newer faith became popular.

Picture 14: The Ruthwell Cross

Jelling stones

These stones refer to massively carved runic scripts from the 10th century. They are founded in the town Jelling[42] in Denmark. There are two Jelling stones. The first stone was raised by King Gorm the Old (Picture 15) in memory of his wife. Another larger stone (Picture 15) was erected by King's Gorm son, Harald Bluetooth, in memory of his parents. He also celebrated his conquest of Denmark and Norway. In addition to, he also made the Danes to convert to Christianity. Therefore, these stones are well-known in Denmark, written in runic script.

The Jelling stones stand in front of the church garden. The stones traditionally represent the process of Christianization in Denmark. Therefore, the larger stone is often called by its nickname Denmark's baptismal certificate. This stone contains a depiction of Christ. It is believed that these stones are highly responsible for the creation of the Denmark as a nation state.

Picture15 (left): The Jelling rune stone of King Gorm the Old

Picture 16 (right): The stone of King's Gorm son, Harald Bluetooth

[42]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jelling_stones

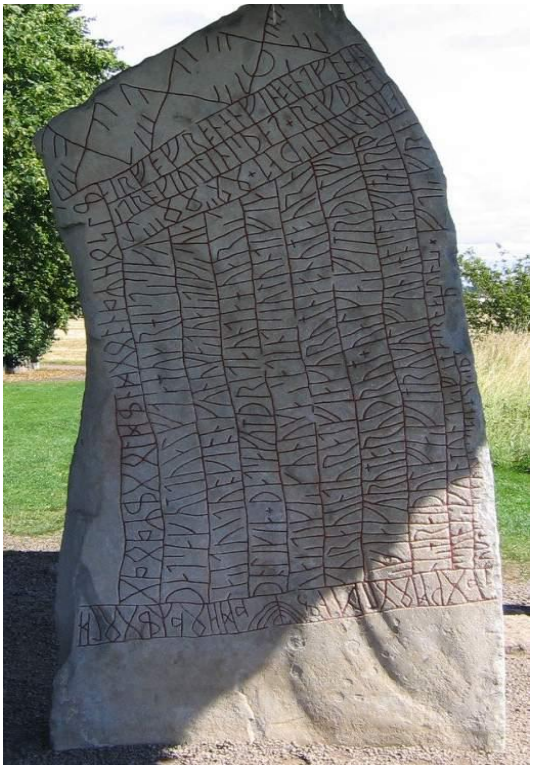
The Rök Rune stone

This rune stone[43] is an extraordinary piece of Swedish masterpiece. It is believed that this stone contains the longest known runic inscription in stone. It is not only considered to be a valuable source of culture because of the awesome features carved into it, but is also the first piece of written Swedish literature. This monument indicates the beginning of the history of Swedish literature (Picture17).

The stone was discovered in the church of the village Rök, after which the stone got the name. The stone was a part of the church wall, and after some time the stone was removed from the church. As the church dates from the 12th century, it is assumed that the stone was carved in the 9th century. For that period, it was common to use runic stones to build churches. All sides of the stone are carved in runes, what makes the stone unique. It contains the longest inscription of about 760 characters. It was decoded in two ways. The scholars used kennings[44]in order to read the message. They also displaced, shifted and added some of the characters. Properties of skaldic poetry are used in the stone. It was thought that the inscription served as a magical ritual.

[43]http://www.spottinghistory.com/view/808/rok-runestone/

[44] A kenning - a compressed form of metaphor, originally used in Anglo-Saxon and Norse poetry. In a kenning, an object is described by a compound (usually two-word phrases), such as 'whale-road' meaning 'sea'



Picture 17: The Rök rune stone

The Codex Runicus

The Codex Runicus[45] is a kind of a codex written in medieval runes in the period of Middle English, in the year 1300. It provides 202 pages about the oldest Nordic provincial law. This is one example of the runic text originally written on parchment.

The codex is initially written in Latin alphabet, but later the Scandinavian people suggested their own version of Scandinavian futhark. For each Latin letter, they provided a runic correspondence, what makes the codex remarkable. It is a unique, juridical document ever written in runic script. Some fundamental features or headings of a section are coloured red in the codex, in order to emphasize certain importance of the content.

[45]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Runicus

This manuscript contains three parts:

1. The Scanian Law, which covered the eastern part of the Danish kingdom;

2. The Scanian Ecclestical Law – a chronicle of the early Danish monarchs

3. A Description of the Danish-Swedish border

The text on leaf 27r, from the first rubric (line 3), from Codex:

> Særær man annær man mæþæn kunung ær innæn lændæs bøtæ fore sar sum loh æræ: ok kunungi firitiuhu mark ok hinum ær sar fik firitiuhu mark fore friþbrut.

> If a man wounds another man while the king is in the province he shall pay a fine for wound in accordance with the law, and 40 marks to the king and 40 marks for breach of the peace to the one who was wounded.

The Scanian Ecclestical Law describes a settlement of the administration of justice agreed by Scanians and the archbishop of Lund in the 12th century. On the last page there are two lines of a ballad, which was the oldest record of Scandinavian secular music.

Picture18: The Codex Runicus

4. Conclusion

This work deals mainly, with the central issue of the runes. Commenting this idea, starting from the very beginning of this paper, the historical overview employed a kind of an introduction that to some extent portrays the mainstream of events from pre-history to Old and Middle English. Invasions, settlements, wars and battles were significant, because they undoubtedly dictate a position of everything else in one land; from language and alphabet till cultural and social variances. The battles of the people, foreign influences, supervised and powerful control of one nation over another, directed the position and use of formal language and orthography. These factors are vital for every country and nation.

Initially, I wanted to explore the runes, in terms of their origin, all possible interpretations of the meaning, as well as, practical function and use of the runic inscriptions in different texts. Comparing them to other alphabets, the runes are specific for many reasons. For instance, a wide range of the runic carvings were chiselled into stones and wood, but ordinary objects like boxes, jewellery, knives were really overwhelming samples of Germanic culture. Up until this time, they have been found on everything from coins to coffins, and sometimes their use was banned by the Church. Common pagan tribes used runes as magic symbols, for simple spells. They referred to these angular-shaped signs, with a huge and marvellous admiration and respect. By using runes, ancient people could predict fortune, as well. This was simultaneously the reason for execution of the rune masters. In this respect, ancient mythology either died with them, or it was passed on in secret. The runes are important for the English language and history, because they are the first English alphabets, and therefore are considered to be the earliest beginnings of the English literacy.

While analysing the texts and other written records written in runic scripts, several interesting stories transpired in those ancient manuscripts. Old Norse mythology eloquently captures the world of pagan gods and other mystical creatures, associated with divination.

To sum up, it was quite interesting to dig into the past and explore linguistic, as well as, mystical paths of ancient people beliefs, myths, writing systems and all other aspects of life and culture. Finally, although runic signs do not exist today as types of letters used for common writing, they are persistently around us. After the Second World War, the new, refreshed view was given to the meaning of runes. Their revival regained the popularity in esoteric but also linguistic areas, which undoubtedly leads to the fact that the runes are still present in this time and age.

5. Literature

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