Old English Runes and Runic Objects in Great Britain

Cramond
Lindisfarne
Alnmouth
Coquet Island
Falstone
Monkwearmouth
Ruthwell
Bewcastle
Chester-le-street
Mote of Mark
Durham
Wheatley Hill
St. Ninian's Cave
Kirkmoor
Hartlepool
Whithorn
Whitby
F
Hackness
Maughold
Great Urswick
West Hestlerton
Malton
Lancaster
Collingham
Bingley
Bramham Moor
Leeds
Crowle
Kirkheaton
Welbeck Hill
Thornhill
Cleatham
Manchester

Gayton Thorpe
Spong Hill
Keswick
Brandon
Caistor-by-Norwich
Undley
Shrophan

Watchfield
London
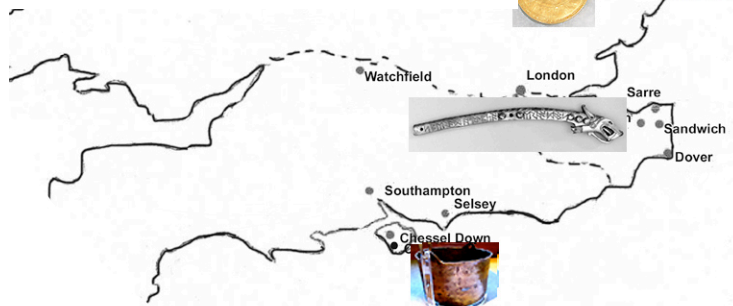Sarre
Sandwich
Dover
Southampton
Selsey
Chessel Down

Long-term research project (16 years) under the umbrella of the *Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*
Runische Schriftlichkeit in den germanischen Sprachen – Runic writing in the Germanic languages (*RuneS*)

This project, funded by the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and based at the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen, is conducted in research units at the universities of Kiel, Göttingen, Eichstätt-Munich (Institute for English Philology), and Munich (Scandinavian Department). It deals with the runic script as a writing system within its historico-cultural context in a comprehensive way, focusing in particular on phonemic, graphematic and text-pragmatic aspects.

Apart from editorial work, research on runic monuments has hitherto concentrated predominantly on understanding the text of the individual inscriptions and their historico-cultural interpretation. The runes as a writing system (respectively a group of writing systems) with different socio-cultural functions have rarely been in focus. Our project, in contrast, explicitly regards the runic script as a system evolved in various ways over the centuries, fulfilling various communicative functions within the different historical societies it was used in. It is thus the aim of the project to describe and analyze runic writing in a comprehensive way, transcending the boundaries of the three groups of runic writing systems (Common Germanic (= Older) *fuþark*, Younger *fuþąrk* and Anglo-Frisian *fuþorc*) traditionally adhered to in runological research and subjecting all three systems to uniform methods of investigation. In pursuing this perspective, the theoretical insights and categories of current writing research will be drawn on.

There will be two principal domains of investigation:

The first domain deals with the transfer of sounds into graphic characters. We will look at the system of sounds (phonematic system) in its relation to the system of graphic signs (graphematic system). We will focus on the following questions:

Was the system of runic characters fitted "perfectly" to the sound systems of the Germanic languages?

Did this apply in all cases and in all places?

Were there any developments in the system of the graphic characters over the long period of its use, and if so, what were the causes?

What were the effects of the changes in the phonemic systems of the different languages? A point that is still controversial concerns the existence of orthographic traditions and the influence from non-runic manuscript tradition (for the Old English inscriptions see Waxenberger 2017[1]).

The second domain deals with the relation of oral speech to written utterances. What kinds of utterances were written down? Previous interpretations of individual texts have attempted to classify inscriptions according to content, without this always being done consistently. Attempts at determining the functions of the script itself have for a long time revolved mostly around the opposition of magic/ritual vs. profane. Our aim is to develop a system that will allow for the description of the inscriptions as text types (such a catalogue of text types has already been established for the Old English runic inscriptions: Waxenberger forthcoming[2]).

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[1]Waxenberger, G. (2017), "The Development of the Old English Rune Row", *From Hieroglyphs to Netspeak: on the Relation of Script and Sound*, LautSchriftSprache / ScriptandSound 2, eds. G. Waxenberger & H. Sauer & K. Kazzazi, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 209–247.
[2]Waxenberger, G. (forthcoming), *A Phonology of Old English Runic Inscriptions with a Concise Edition of the Pre-Old English Inscriptions and a Concise Edition of the Old English*

However, this is only a preliminary step. For an overall analysis the complete runic monument – the inscription-bearing object itself, the text written on it, extra-runic accompanying characters, iconographic elements and ornaments, the order of the signs on the sign-bearing object as well as the historical circumstances of the find – need to be viewed in a synopsis, providing a basis for determining the function of each individual written document in the society it was produced in. In this way, a history of runic writing will emerge that presents a clear picture of the function of this script within the different cultures it was employed in.

In both domains, the relationship between runic and Latin script will be of central importance. What were the effects of the long period of their co-existence? Were the two writing systems linked to specific cultural spheres or to different communicative domains? Was the nature of contact one of dialogue or one of demarcation? Did the use of the two scripts have a social basis – e.g., with regard to the hypothesis of two cultures (native vs. Latin)? Is it possible to trace any changes during their long co-existence? (for the Old English inscriptions, cf. Waxenberger forthcoming[3]).
Corresponding to this programme, there will be three modules:

EDITORIAL BASICS forms the preparatory basis in that it is devoted to the creation of a corpus that is as uniform as possible
a) by complementing the existing editions and
b) by designing a database structure that is based on theoretical preliminary considerations with regard to Modules II and III.
Hence, it will be necessary to bring together runological data from different editorial projects. In creating this corpus basis, a distinction will be made between epigraphic runic tradition (including inscriptions on bracteates) on the one hand, and non-epigraphic runic tradition (*Runica Manuscripta*) on the other, in order to account for the fundamentally different nature of these two main groups of runological tradition.

RUNIC GRAPHEMICS, concentrates on the medial aspect, focusing on the relation of sound and written representation. The aim of this module is to document, describe and explain the process of runic writing and the development of the runic script, adapting and modifying the concept of *Verschriftung* 'scripting' (cf. Koch & Oesterreicher (1985)[4], in the Germanic languages. This implies a complete, systematic and functional analysis of all signs recorded on the monuments of the different sub-corpora, as well as the connections between the runic writing systems and their relationship to the Latin writing system. For each sign, i.e., for each intentional mark on a runic monument, we will attempt to identify a function, distinguishing first between extra-runic signs and runes proper. When the extra-runic signs have thus been identified, the runes proper will be analysed as to their place in the writing system. In a

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Inscriptions and an Analysis of Graphemes, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.
[3]Waxenberger, G. (forthcoming), *A Phonology of Old English Runic Inscriptions with a Concise Edition of the Pre-Old English Inscriptions and a Concise Edition of the Old English Inscriptions and an Analysis of Graphemes*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.
[4]Koch, P. & W. Oesterreicher (1985), "Sprache der Nähe – Sprache der Distanz. Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Spannungsfeld von Sprachtheorie und Sprachgeschichte". *Romanisches Jahrbuch* 36, 15–43. Oesterreicher, W. (1993), "Verschriftung und Verschriftlichung im Kontext medialer und konzeptioneller Schriftlichkeit", ed. U. Schäfer, *Schriftlichkeit im frühen Mittelalter*, ScriptOralia 53. Tübingen, 267–292.

second step, the development of the writing systems as well as the system-internal and system-external reasons and triggers for this development will move into the focus of our research: such an analysis has already been provided for the Old English corpus (Waxenberger 2017; forthcoming). For these steps, we will proceed from a distinction between Common Germanic (= Older *fuþark*), Younger *fuþqrk* and Anglo-Frisian *fuþorc*, based on insights from earlier research regarding the fundamental differences between these systems.

TEXT-PRAGMATIC AND FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF WRITING: it is the aim of the last module to determine the conceptual features of the runic texts, to find out their communicative function and to describe the changes in the use of the runic script from the perspective of social and cultural history.

This module will concentrate on the aspect of *Verschriftlichung* 'textualization'*,* adapting and modifying the second term introduced by Koch and Oesterreicher. 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 utterance features and their possible contribution in determining the function of the inscription, the interconnection of the individual texts through the formulaic structure of the inscriptions, affinity with certain text types and communicative domains, intertextual relations and references to text traditions in the Latin script. What historico-cultural facts may be correlated with the choice of the means employed?

The influence of the Latin writing tradition in the different phases of contact of the two scripts will form an important aspect of the study. The analysis comprises all intentional marks on runic monuments: Besides the runic and extra-runic signs differentiated in the Module GRAPHEMICS, these also include the accompanying Latin graphs. Runic and Latin graphs are both characterized by their linguistic function, commonly seen as forming the text of the runic monument. Extra-runic signs are used for the purpose of structuring or accompanying the text in different functions. In addition, the analysis will also focus on the spatial distribution of these groups of signs on the monument, as well as on the special characteristics and functions of the monument itself. This seemingly broad approach of a "text" grammar/pragmatics is the result of the project's declared aim, i.e., the identification of the communicative-pragmatic functions of the runic monuments. It also follows from realizing that all the data mentioned are communicatively relevant. This is due to the fact that certain features of oral communication, e.g., paralinguistic and nonverbal signs, are lacking in written communication. This lack may be compensated for by the special conceptual design of the written utterance, the order of the signs and the choice of the sign-bearing object. The steps of analysis relate to: the runic text, the accompanying extra-runic signs, the placement of the signs on the inscription-bearing object, the object itself. In addition, the relation to the Latin writing traditions in the different phases of contact will be taken into consideration.

As the different phases of runic writing were linked in manifold ways, only a comprehensive research project based on a systematic investigation of runic graphematics as well as runic text grammar and pragmatics will be able to provide deeper insights into fundamental questions regarding the earliest history and development of writing as a medium of communication.