

Runes

As early as the second century the Goths learnt to recognize Greek culture, and designed a series of signs derived from Greek and Latin cursive script. These signs we call Runes.

Following the example of the Greeks they gave to each sign a sonorous name. The shapes of the letters conformed to their mode of writing and the uses to which they put it. Most of their inscriptions were either scratched or carved; Runes are therefore almost entirely rectilinear in form, vertical lines predominating.

In the fourth century the knowledge of Runes was spread to Germany and other Teutonic countries. In Scandinavia Runes were still partly in use in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Rune magic was peculiar to North Germany, and we have only very fragmentary information about it. There the Rune represented the object after which it was named; the Runic character became the object itself, and with it good and evil

could be worked. The magic properties of each Rune were only known to very few.

Thus † should bring victory, X protected one against the poisoned cup, P induced madness. Runes scratched on a drinking vessel brought oblivion to whomever drank from it. A cup filled with poisoned drink upset itself if the Runes scratched upon it were benign. A good example of Runic magician was the Scandinavian bard Egill. He divined Runes beneath the couch of a sick damsel as being the origin of her illness; he dug them up and carved benificent Runes in their place.

As late as the fourteenth century Episcopal ordinances were disseminated against Rune magic.

For purposes of soothsaying, Runes were only used indirectly: it was believed that the dead could be awakened by means of Rune magic, and that they could foretell the future.

The first rune, Feu, consists of a vertical stem on the left and two diagonal strokes on the right that meet at the top and extend downwards.

Feu : Cattle

The second rune, Rad, features a vertical stem on the left and a diagonal stroke on the right that curves at the top and extends downwards.

Rad : Cartwheel

The third rune, Hagall, is composed of two vertical stems, one on the left and one on the right, connected by a diagonal stroke that runs from the top of the left stem to the middle of the right stem.

Hagall : Hail

The fourth rune, Ur, has a vertical stem on the left and a diagonal stroke on the right that curves at the top and extends downwards.

Ur : Bison

The fifth rune, Ren, consists of a vertical stem on the left and a diagonal stroke on the right that curves at the top and extends downwards.

Ren : Torch

The sixth rune, Níed, is a vertical stem with a diagonal stroke crossing it from the right side.

Níed : Necessity, thraldom

The seventh rune, Thurs, has a vertical stem on the left and a diagonal stroke on the right that curves at the top and extends downwards.

Thurs : Giant

The eighth rune, Geofu, is a simple X-shape formed by two diagonal strokes crossing at the center.

Geofu : Gift

The ninth rune, Is, is a single vertical stem.

Is : Ice

The tenth rune, Ansur, has a vertical stem on the left and two diagonal strokes on the right that meet at the top and extend downwards.

Ansur : Asa, God

The eleventh rune, Wynn, has a vertical stem on the left and a diagonal stroke on the right that curves at the top and extends downwards.

Wynn : Comfort

The twelfth rune, Fara, consists of a vertical stem on the left and a diagonal stroke on the right that curves at the top and extends downwards.

Fara : Year



Peorth



Tir : Honour, the god Tyr



Lagu : Water, Sea



Yr : Yew, Death



Biarkan : Birch



Ing : the god Ing



Ilhs : Elk



Eoh : Horse



Dag : Day



Sggil : Sun



Man : Mankind, Man

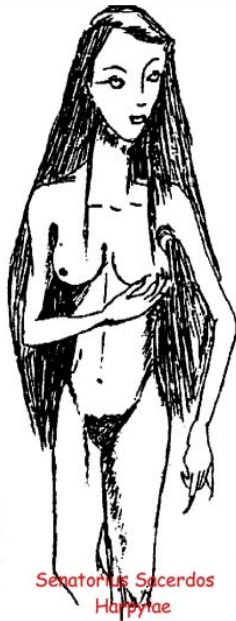


Ogal : Possession

The Runes were frequently used turned back to front, and their angles were occasionally rounded into curves.

Great endeavours have recently been made to show that Runes were much more extensively used by the old Germans, and they have been given a more prominent place in the history of that nation than they appear to deserve.

In many of the signs illustrated in this book the Nordic influence can be clearly traced; but the basic forms, with their wealth of significance and symbolism, undoubtedly take us back to the dim, remote and unfathomed ages of Mankind.



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+ The Book of Signs +

The article on the following pages has been reprinted from *The Book of Signs*, by the famous German calligrapher and typographer Rudolf Koch [1876-1934], first printed in English in 1930, translated from a German edition published during the early 1920s.

The order of the Runes is slightly different from that used in the Scandinavian countries and reflects that used by some Teutonic occultists in the 19th century. The Rune letters that illustrate the article were cut in wood by Fritz Kredel, of Offenbach-am-Main. They are presented here as among the most beautiful Rune designs ever published, so that readers may use them when drawing or carving their own Rune pieces.

The comments by Professor Koch were written at a time when early Nazis and other proponents of Teutonic supremacy were claiming that the Runes were the original letters from which all other alphabets were derived. The article was set in the *Magere Deutsche* type designed by Koch. The English translation was done by Vyvyan Holland, the son of Oscar Wilde.

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