



The Three Aettir of the Runes

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Some time between 250 and 150 b.c.e., among the Germanic tribes north of the Rhine, letters from the old northern Italic alphabet were adapted to form the Runes.

The oldest Rune alphabet consists of 24 characters, each with a name and a value. The number of runes later varied from as low as 16 in Scandinavia to as high as 33 in some Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions.

The Three Aettir or Eights

The Elder Futhark, as the basic set of 24 runes was called, was divided into three Aettir or families of eight. The numbers 3 and 8 were of particular importance in rune lore. Each Aett [pronounced Att] was named after the first rune in the Aett; and the whole Aett is said to be tinged with the nature of the first rune.

Thus, the first Aett, called Feoh or Cattle was believed to be concerned mainly with the needs of the user.

The second Aett was called Hagal or Hail. The eight runes in Hagal were said to be concerned with disruptions to the normal course of events, sometimes unfortunate, sometimes good.

The first rune of the third Aett was named after the God Tyr and the whole Aett conveyed the idea of Honour. It was concerned with those matters which bring honour and fulfilment to the user.

Although the Runes are an alphabet, that is, they are characters or letters symbolising sounds which can be assembled to make words, their earliest use was primarily for magical purposes.

Later, they were also used for inscriptions, and in this form that most

runes have survived. They were used on coins and to write down some legends, but any use for writing messages or recording sagas has been secondary throughout the whole of their history. They were often inscribed on weapons, armour, jewellery and even domestic utensils, presumably to imbue them with magical powers.

There is a story which tells of an enemy inscribing runes on slips of wood and concealing them beneath a young woman's bed to make her ill. A healer was called in to cure the sick girl. He discovered the bad runes and removed them. He first burned the bad runes and then went on to effect a cure by placing runes of healing and well-being beneath the bed.

In more modern times, their principal use seems to have been for divination, and this article deals with one method of using the runes as an oracle and their meanings for this purpose.

Making your runes

Many people nowadays use the sets of runestones which can be bought in most occult bookshops. Very beautiful sets are also available from occult craftworkers. If you are one of those magicians who prefer to make your own implements, you can carve or paint runes on small, flat stones of the kind you find in streams. My own personal set of runes are circular pieces of wood made by cutting up a privet branch and inscribing a rune on each.

From the use of an extra, blank rune, it can be deduced that the system of divination presented here belongs to a late period of runecraft, probably post renaissance, after Arabic and Qabalistic

Casting the Runes

notions of the importance of the Nothing had percolated through to Europe.

The method as fully preserved makes much use of the numerological values of the runes and often considers them in pairs and sets. There is not room to include all the material here. The meanings of the individual runes are set out on following pages. The first line for each rune includes its number, name, translation of the name, pronunciation, and its key significance.

Casting the Runes

The runes are cast while facing towards the east. You should have a clear space on the ground in front of you, at least half a metre square. It is best to cover it with a reading mat, such as a piece of hide or cloth. The Runes should be emptied from the bag in which you usually keep them into a bowl or deep chalice. The wooden goblet that I use has a bowl 12 cms in diameter and 6 cms deep. Without looking, stir the runes with your hand and then cover the bowl during your invocation and any other preparatory rituals and meditations you feel necessary to aid your intuitive powers.

Before casting the runes, the enquirer should invoke the help of the gods or other higher beings, particularly Odin, who was the master of runecraft.

In this method, the runes have the same meaning no matter which way up they fall; there are no 'reversed' meanings here. Without looking at the runes, take a handful from the bowl and gently cast them on to the reading mat. Then, turn face up any runes which are face down, being careful to keep them in the same position as they fell. If one rune overlaps or is on top of another, leave them thus, but face up.

Examine the runes, to see if the blank rune is among them. If not, then the cast

has nothing to say to you. It is permissible to return them to the bowl, once again stir them about without looking. After further invocation and preparation, cast again.

If the blank rune does not appear in three successive casts, take that as a total rejection for that day. It is considered very unwise to try to force a message from the higher worlds. Never consult the runes more than once in any 24-hour period. The gods will not tolerate foolish human beings who pester them. If they do not answer to your satisfaction, you should re-think the question, before you approach them again.

Examining the cast

When the blank rune is present, see where the other runes are placed in relation to it. Imagine a line drawn from north to south through the blank. If most of the runes are to the east of the line, the answer concerns the future. If most of them are to its west, then it deals with the past, i.e. the causes of the present situation.

The closer any rune is to the line drawn from east to west through the blank, the more directly it is involved in the reading.

The closer any rune is to the blank, the more important it is. Runes that are neither east nor west may contain deceptive or ambiguous messages. The meanings of runes which overlap should be blended. This might take some practice. In the beginning, at least, the uppermost of any overlapping runes should be regarded as the more important part of their combined meaning.

After you have concluded the reading, return the runes to their bag, and offer thanks to the gods who have advised you, even when the advice has been, "Think for yourself," because they have given no answer through the runes.

THE FIRST AETT: NOURISHMENT



- 1 FEOH f CATTLE NOURISHMENT
Needs supplied.
Prosperity and good fortune.
The rewards of work or service.
- 2 UR u WILD OXEN STRENGTH
Strength, to be used with discretion.
A sacrifice to be made.
An opportunity to be sought and taken.
- 3 THURS th GIANT SLOWNESS
Be slow to decide,
Problems with family and friends.
Delays from people,
perhaps to your disadvantage.
- 4 ANSUR a GODS ELDERS
Visits to or from the Elders
Gifts or advice,
which might or might not be welcome.
- 5 RAD r RIDING JOURNEYS
A long journey.
A change of residence.
Possessions retained despite all changes.
The other world.
- 6 KEN k TORCH ENERGY
Good relationships.
Physical love.
Happiness or love shared.
- 7 GYFU g GIFT EXCHANGES
Knowledge or love exchanged.
A fortunate partnership.
Gifts given and received.
A price to be paid.
- 8 WYN w COMFORT JOY
Ultimate good fortune.
Amelioration or improvement.
Benefit. Help from the gods.
The most fortunate rune.

THE SECOND AETT: DISRUPTION



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|----|--|---|---------|--------------|--------|
| 9 | HAGAL | h | HAIL | DISRUPTION | Summer |
| | Events or news which disrupt your plans
Destruction of what you have worked for.
The least fortunate rune. | | | | |
| 10 | NIED | n | NEED | THRALDOM | Autumn |
| | Constraint, servitude; restraint.
Complete dedication or absorption
Survival against all odds. | | | | |
| 11 | ISS | i | ICE | COLDNESS | Winter |
| | Emotional coolness.
Temporary separation.
Bickering among partners | | | | |
| 12 | JARA | y | YEAR | DELAY | Spring |
| | A long wait, but eventual achievement
Legal matters delay the case.
Wait for harvest. | | | | |
| 13 | YR | e | YEW-BOW | HELP | |
| | Someone comes to your aid in your need.
An active defence against trouble.
Strength and endurance.
The runes themselves. | | | | |
| 14 | PEORTH | p | PORTAL | SURPRISES | |
| | Unexpected news, either good or bad.
Small but pleasant surprises.
Male or female children.
Spring following Winter. | | | | |
| 15 | EOLH | z | ELK | PROTECTION | |
| | A passive defence against trouble.
An opportunity presents itself, but can easily be missed.
Events move very swiftly.
Promises or pledges. | | | | |
| 16 | SIGEL | s | SUN | VITAL ENERGY | |
| | Health: good or bad.
Physical, mental or spiritual health.
Let nature take its course. | | | | |



THE THIRD AETT: HONOUR

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| ↑ | 17 | TYR t [God-name] | HONOUR |
| | | Respect for the laws of nature.
The law will be observed.
Honour and self-respect.
Tyr is the Almighty God of Victory and of Honour | |
| 𐌚 | 18 | BEORC b BIRCH | FERTILITY |
| | | Fertility, conception and birth.
A successful harvest.
Children and dependents.
The family; and family gatherings. | |
| 𐌛 | 19 | EOH e HORSE | TRAVEL |
| | | Short journeys.
Changes for the better.
News by letter or by messenger. | |
| 𐌜 | 20 | MANN m MAN | HUMANKIND |
| | | People are involved in the situation.
Delays from people, perhaps to your advantage.
Legal matters resolved. | |
| 𐌝 | 21 | LAGU l LAKE | OCEAN |
| | | Travel overseas or across water.
Rapid, superficial changes.
Intuition, discrimination. | |
| 𐌞 | 22 | ING ng [God-name] | FULFILMENT |
| | | A successful harvest.
Achievement.
Fulfilment.
Spiritual enlightenment. | |
| 𐌟 | 23 | OTHAL o INHERITANCE | POSSESSIONS |
| | | Inherited possessions
Land, property and material goods.
Traditional wisdom or beliefs. | |
| 𐌠 | 24 | DAG d DAY | CYCLES OF LIFE |
| | | Complete change of life.
Transformation of body, mind or spirit.
Light, as opposed to darkness. | |