

## Senatorius Sacerdos Harpyiae



Note: This article is written by Tanith (Nemesis) High Priestess of the 'Order of the Sword of Damocles' a LHP warrior coven formerly of Pahiatua New Zealand. Regrettably I have been unable to contact Tanith for permission. However I don't believe she would object to us using this article here - Ed

# RUNES... and the magic of writing

by Nemesis



### WHAT IS A RUNE ?

Traditionally, a rune is accepted as a letter of an alphabet attributed to the Teutonic and Norse peoples.

Runes have a far greater significance than this though.

The word 'rune' comes to us from the Germanic language and is common in all its dialects. It is also common in all the dialects of the Gaelic language. It is most likely that the Gaelic people adopted both the word and a system of runic symbols from the invading Germanic tribes in the 7th century.

In all languages, the word *rune* means *secret* or *hidden* in much the same way as the word *occult*. With this in mind, we can begin to see some of the more esoteric aspects of the runes in a clearer light.

The legend of Odin is an excellent example. Odin went through an ordeal of suffering to obtain the Runes. Apparently, this was more than just the secret of writing - it implies that he obtained secret or hidden knowledge. Which is quite appropriate when we remember that Odin is considered

to be the keeper of wisdom and the master of magic.

Writing was considered to have been taught to humankind by the gods. Legends from all over the world tell us this. As such it was almost exclusively the privilege of the priestly castes initially. This close association with religious and magical people, the incomprehensible nature of the marks and its extensive use in magical inscriptions meant that writing very quickly became synonymous with magic.

Even today, small coloured marks on sheets of wood pulp hold tremendous sway over nations and people. The unconscious acceptance of the power of writing can still be seen in such common quotes as "The pen is mightier than the sword."

### Five rune systems

Illustrated on page 3 are five rune systems. As can be seen, three of the systems, the Norse, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic, are all variations of the first rune system, the Elder Futhark or 'older alphabet.' Futhark is the runic equivalent of our word 'Alphabet', which comes from Alpha Beta,



the first two letters of the Greek alphabet. The word FUTHARK consists of the first six runes.

The fifth system pictured, the Ogham alphabet, was the original Celtic system used before the Germanic runes were adopted. As with the Futhark system, Ogham was given by a god, was used almost exclusively for religious or magical purposes, and was divided into sets or families.

#### **Tent-runes and branch-runes**

As the runes began to be understood and used by more and more of the common people, other ways of obscuring the messages and inscriptions came into being. Probably the best known of these are the tent-rune and branch-rune methods.

These systems are codes, based on the division of the Elder Futhark into three rows or families, each containing eight runes.

In the tent-rune method, each cross is read in a clockwise direction, starting from the top left. Thus, in the examples given, the coding is as follows: 3/3; 1/7; 1/5; 2/5; 2/8; 2/8; 1/4; 1/7; 1/4. The first number is the row or family; the second is the position of the rune within the family.

The branch-rune is similar; the differences are that each 'tree' represents only one rune, and each new word in the inscription is indicated by a change of direction of the left branches.

#### **Sources**

- The drawings at the bottom of each column on the first page are taken from two gilt-silver pendants from a hoard at Varby, Sweden, c. 940 c.e.
- The picture at the bottom of this page is taken from a silver cup excavated from the burial chamber of the Danish king Gormr, c. 958 c.e.
- Elder Futhark, Norse and Anglo-Saxon rune systems are from Futhark by Edred Thorsson.
- The Celtic and Ogham systems are from a 19th century Welsh alphabet wall-chart.
- The Danish and Swedish rune systems, which are not discussed in the article, come from *The Viking World* by James Graham-Campbell.
- Tent-runes and Branch-runes are from Thorsson's Futhark.



The Elder Futhark

F R Þ F F < X P : H H I E J K Y S : T B M M I O M Q

The Norse Futhark

F R Þ F F Y : \* T I T Y : T B Y T A

The Anglo-Saxon Futhark

F R Þ F F < X P : N H I E J K Y S : T B M M I O M Q

The Danish Futhark

F R Þ F F Y : \* T I T Y : T B Y T A

The Swedish Futhark

F R Þ F F Y : T I I A : T F I T I

The Celtic Futhark

A L < K > D J B F C O H I K N T U H O T N P D Y T T Y V G Y  
(a b c d d d e f f f g g h i l l m n n h o p p h r h s t t h u u w y)

The Ogham alphabet

Tent-runes (using E.F.) - word is 'Eglissaga'

Branch-runes (using E.F.) - phrase 'ek vitki'

