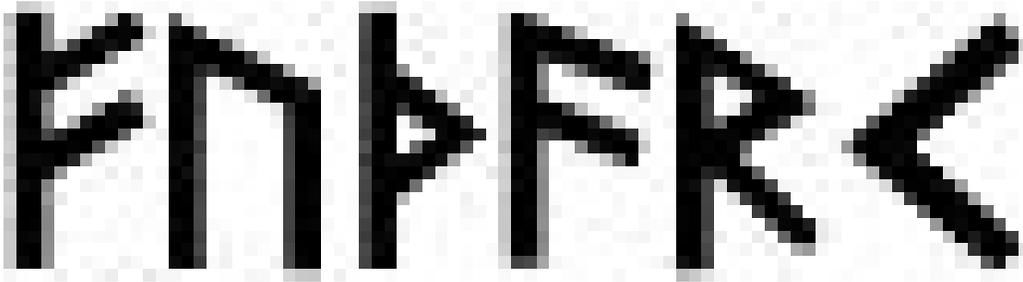


# **FUTHARK:**

## **An Introduction to the 1st Six**



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# Darmok and Jalad at Tenagra: Cultural Context

## Historical Rune Origins “Quickie”:

North-Italic/Etruscan Theory by C.S.J. Marstrander (1928), strengthened & modified by Wolfgang Krause (1937) is the strongest. With alterations to the original theory, the Raetic (Bolzano) seems most likely according to Bernard Mees (2000). It theorizes that Germanic peoples living in the Alps region adopted North-Italic scripts as early as 300BC when Cimbri came in contact with the writing system, adopted it to a degree, and then passed onto the Suebi which then in turn spread it up through the Rhineland, to the North Sea, into Jutland, and thus into Scandinavia. No finds of runic script that early (earliest is Meldorf Brooch 50 CE) occur, but the Helm of Negu inscription uses North-Italic to write in a Germanic language! It is believed to be a combination of North-Italic script with indigenous symbols that has existed since the Bronze Age. Some of these ideographic symbols show similarities to the various runestaves, but were probably used to convey ideas and concepts rather than an actual form of writing. \*\*Note: The “notae” of Tacitus (Ch. 10, *Germania*) on the carved strips of wood would have occurred around 98 CE.

\*\*\*Only examples of FULL Elder Futhark rows are on the Kylver Stone (400 CE), the Vadstena and Motala bracteates (450-550 CE), the Grumpan bracteate (450-550 CE), the marble column of Breza (500 CE). Particals include the Beuchte Fibula (450-550 CE), the Charnay fibula (550-600 CE), and the Aquincum fibula (550 CE).

## Mythic Rune Origins “Quickie”:

According to various myths, legends, and specifically to the *Elder (or Poetic) Edda*, the god, Oðinn hangs himself on Yggdrasil (the cosmic world tree) for 9 nights in a form of (and almost shamanic) runic initiatory self-sacrifice where on the edge of death he is able to recognize, codify, and communicate the concepts in which the rune staves represent. \*\*Note: Oðinn did not “create” them, they were already in existence.

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Veit ek, at ek hekk vindgameiði á  
nætr allar níu,  
geiri undaðr ok gefinn Óðni,  
sjalfur sjalfum mér,  
á þeim meiði er manngi veit  
hvers af rótum renn.

139.

Við hleifi mik sældu né við hornigi,  
nýsta ek niðr,  
nam ek upp rúnar, æpandi nam,  
fell ek aftr þaðan.

I know that I hung, on a windswept tree  
for all of nine nights,  
wounded by spear, and given to Odin,  
myself to myself,  
on that tree of which no man knows  
from what root it rises.

139.

They dealt me no bread, nor drinking  
horn.

I looked down, I drew up the runes,  
screaming I took them up,  
and fell back from there.

--Havamal, Chisholm transl.

## Fehu/Fé/Feoh

# F

“Wealth causes strife amongst kinsmen; the wolf grows up in the woods.”-Old Norwegian

“Wealth causes strife amongst kinsmen, it is the fire of the flood-tide, and the path of the wyrm.”--Old Icelandic

“Wealth is a comfort to any man, yet each person must share it out well, if he wants to win a good name before his lord.” --Old English

*The Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer*, Transl. Jesse L Byock

“The Otter’s Ransom” & “Sigmund and Sinfjolti Don the Skins”

*Poetic Edda; Reginsmál, Fáfnismál, Sigrdrifamál, etc.*

Voluspa: Gullveig/”Gold Intoxication” 3x killed, 3x lived first war of the worlds

PIE \*peku-

Funnel Beaker Culture, 4000 BCE

Mobile wealth = Cattle

*Prose Edda-Skaldskaparmal* kennings for gold = strife metal; Aegir gold instead of fire to light the hall.

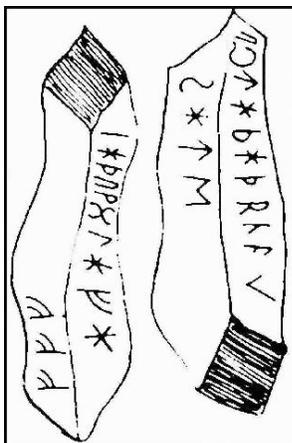
*Prose Edda-Gylfaginning* = Auðumla “wealth without horns”

Ulf, vargr, skogarmadr, “wolf in hallowed places”= Outlaw.

Greed/Ravenous Geri/Freki; Skoll/Hati = Mockery/Hater

Sigmund & Sinfjotli-wolfskins/ulfhednar-”food of wolves”/vargamat/corpses

Greed to Dragon/wyrm = Fafnir, *Beowulf*, Saxo=King Frothi, *Saga Ragnar Lothbrok*=snake in a box (chieftains daughter), *Jomsvikinga Saga*= Bui becomes the Ormi of Hjorunga Bay, etc The Gummarp Runestone, designated as DR 358, was a runestone from the Vendel era and which was located in the former village of Gummarp in the province of Blekinge, Sweden. 500-700 AD



HapuwulfR/HapuwulfaR satte staba þria fff.=Hapuwulfar placed three staves fff.

## Uruz/Úr/Ur



“Slag is from bad iron; often the reindeer runs on the hard snow.” --Old Norwegian

“Drizzle is the weeping of clouds, and the diminisher of the rim of ice, and the object of the herdman’s hate.”--Old Icelandic

“Aurochs is fearless and greatly horned a very fierce beast, it fights with its horns, a famous roamer of the moor it is a courageous animal.”--Old English

Aurochs-->Drizzle/rain/mist-->Slag

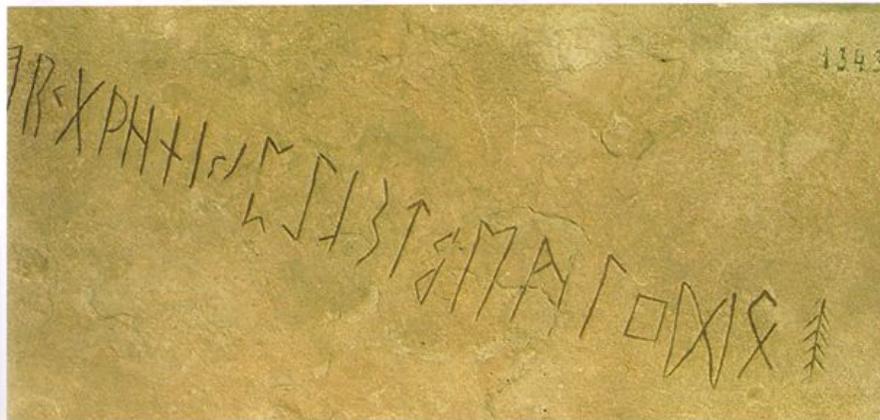
Aurochs= giant wild cattle, went extinct Bronze Age England 1300 BCE, Denmark/Scandinavia 1 BCE, forests of central Europe until last died in Poland 1627; Caesar (55 BCE) described as big as the (now also extinct) North African Elephant. Withers 5’3” to 5’11” (Sutton Hoo Horns)

Wild beasts of the marshes; potency and danger. Aurochs-Algis (Moose-*Hrólf Kraka Saga*-Elg-Fróði=moose-wise)

OE *dêor* = ON *dýr* stem from PIE root \**dheu-* Watkins Roots “to rise from cloud, mists”  
dust/vapor/mists/breath

Drizzle, wet mists, and rain. Under the cover when herds are in danger from the wilds. Perilous travel *Svipdag*, *Skírmismál*, etc

Slag is a by product of metal smelting. The glittering, like mists in the ore. Glass byproduct.



## Þurisaz/Þúrs/Ðorn



“Thurs causes the sickness of women; few are cheerful from misfortune/ill/evil..” --Old Norwegian

“Thurs is the torment of women, and the dweller in the rocks, and the husband of Varðrúna.”-- Old Icelandic

“Thorn is very sharp; for every thane who grasps it; it is harmful and exceedingly cruel to every man who lies/rests upon them.” --Old English

Nothing to do with Þórr (except just a language phonic)!

*Skírnismál; Poetic Edda:*(Galdralag, instead of ljóðaháttur)

“Þurs rísta ek þér, ok þriá stafi, ergi ok æði ok óþola.” → Thurs I rist you and three staves-lust and raving and unbearable need.”

Svefnþorn- sleepthorn (*Fáfnismál, Sigrdrifumál, Völsung Saga*) Sigurd/Sigrdrifa; (*Egil's Saga*) Egil/Helga; “*Brier Rose*” Grimm’s

illu= “ill-will” or “ill-gotten”, rather than physical illness.

“Kvenna kvöl”= kvöl→ very harsh. Later Christian writers used to describe Hell; *Atlamál* to describe Högni/Hagan’s agony when his heart is cut out; Guthrun applies it to her marriage to Atli.



## Ansuz/Óss/Ōs



“Estuary/river mouth is the way of most journeys; but the sheath is the one for swords.” --Old Norwegian

“Áss/Óss is the olden-father/ancient ancestor, and Asgarð’s chieftain, and the ruler of Valhöll.”--Old Icelandic

“Mouth/god is the chieftain of all speech, the mainstay of wisdom and a comfort to the wise ones, for every noble warrior hope and happiness.”--Old English

PIE= \*ansu- means “spirit” and eventually in Proto-Germanic shifted to “god/deity” Ansu-Áss (Old Norse)-Óss (ON) to “mouth”

Old Norwegian probably is not the original. Poetics, alliteration, etc do not match the others in the manuscript. 1st line=name+2 alliterating words, 2nd line alliterates w/1st new meaning,+1st & 2nd linked by end-rhyme.

Óðinn name itself means “wild/furious inspiration”. He is the giver of Önd=“breath-of-life/spirit” to Ask and Embla. Obtains Óðrœrir, Són, and Boðn Gives own eye for a drink of Mimir’s Well. Hangs on the World Tree as a self-sacrifice to see the runes and take them back. *Völuspá, Ynglinga Saga, Grímnismál, Vafþrúðnismál*, etc.

Ancestor of many royal lines, tribes, and clans. Gautr, Geat, Gausus, & Gapt= all the various Goth tribes and clans. Even the Amail clan (Ostrogoths) and Albion (Lombards).Anglo-Saxon claims Woden and Geat. Families like the Völsungs= Sigi (son of Odin). Saeming, ancestor of Jarl Hakon the Powerful. Jordanes, Bede, *Ynglinga Saga, Saxo*, etc

“Valhallar rísi” - “Hall of the slain”, “guide/leader” (ON Valhöll/Valhǫll)--> *Grímnismál, Vafþrúðnismál, Gylfaginning*. 540 doors/gates; (Mention:Heart of the Slain/Valknot interpretation) Or “rock/mountain of the slain” Höll vs Hallr



## Raiðo/Reið/Rād

R

“Riding is said to be the worst for horses; Regin forged the best sword.” --Old Norwegian

“Riding is a blessed sitting, and a swift/whirling journey, and the toil of the horse.” --Old Icelandic

“Riding is in the hall to every warrior easy, but very hard for the one who sits up on a powerful horse over miles of road.”--Old English

PIE \*reidh-, “to ride” Reið is an action “riding”. Though more commonly used in regards to horseback, could mean ship or wagon. Especially, when used as poetic metaphor/kenning for “mystical” or “otherworldly riding”.

Kenning examples: reiðarduna, reiðarslag “riding noise”, “riding thunder”...for the sound of Thor’s Chariot. Oðinn and Hermoð ride Sleipnir to the underworld (Hel). i.e *Baldrs Draumar*

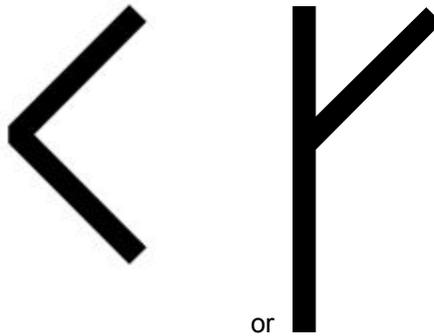
Or “riding” without a vehicle mentioned. i.e. Sigrun meets Helgi in the burial mound in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*.

In stories, sagas, legends, and myth the emphasis is always on the journey as action. In the physical realm, action/movement is valued more than stasis/inaction. (*The Well and the Tree*, by Bauschatz)

Even in death for the spirit/soul (*The Road to Hel*, by H.R. Ellis), there is still journeying for the dead. Note that even memorial stones often depict vehicles (horse, chariot, ship) for “riding”.



## Kennaz/Kaun/Cēn



“Sore/ulcer is the curse of children; bale makes a corpse pale.”--Old Norwegian

“Sore is the bale of children, and a scourge, and a house of rotten flesh.”--Old Icelandic

“Torch(Cēn) is to every living man known by its fire, it is clear and pale it usually burns where the athelings rest within.”--Old English

Cēn (torch) seems to only be found in the Rune Poem manuscript itself and a few Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, but only as the name indicator that includes the rune itself. And there are more common words for an actual “torch”. Could this be a “special” instance?

Holfúna hús-”house of flesh-rot” literal, and/or kenning for the burial mound (Haugr). Buried wooden chamber, mounded up. Famous examples include Uppsala, Osberg, Borre, Sutton-Hoo, Taplow, etc.

OE; pale=blāc (not “shining!”), and rest=restap “to rest at ease” -->death in other places, author uses sittan (not restap) to clearly mean “to sit” in other poems. Gives a more similar meaning as the others.

Haugbúi, draugr, trylla→ dangers of the burial mounds.

This also gives a clear description of the “haug-fire” described in tales that hover/glow a burial mound when haunted. i.e. *Grettir’s Saga*, *Gull-Þóris Saga* (black, pale flame)

*Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks*, *Harðar saga og Hólmverja*, *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar*, *Grettir’s Saga*, etc



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