BERNARD MEES

# The North Etruscan Thesis of the Origin of the Runes

The North Etruscan thesis has its foundation in a seminal article in-
cluded by Carl Marstrander in the first issue of his *Norsk tidskrift for
sprogvidenskap*. Earlier authors including Karl Müllenhoff, Karl Wein-
hold, Sophus Bugge, Hugo Gering, George Hempl and Sigmund Feist
had already promoted similar origins for the runes, but it was the
Norwegian Marstrander whose name has come to be linked most
prominently with this thesis in runology. The Finno-Swedish classicist
Magnus Hammarström critiqued and refined the thesis of Marstrander
and contributed further orthographic evidence to the graphemic
similarities noted by the Norwegian. Yet he also sought to pare this
theory somewhat of the emphasis on Celtic orthography promoted by
Marstrander. Marstrander in part echoing similar observations made
by Holger Pedersen some years before found important connections
between runic and Celtic writing practice especially as continued in
the Irish Ogham tradition. (This tradition is described in *In Lebor
Ogaim*, a tract on Ogham writing preserved in the *Book of Ballymote*, a
new edition of which had appeared in 1917.)[1]

[1] K. Weinhold, *Altnordisches Leben*, Berlin 1856, pp. 407–8 = 2nd ed., Stuttgart 1938,
pp. 280–81; S. Bugge, 'Om runeskriftens oprindelse', *Christiania Videnskabs Selskabet,
Forhandlingar* 1873 (monograph, Christiania 1873), p. 485; H. Gering, 'Die germanische
Runenschrift', *Mitteilungen des Anthropologischen Vereins in Schleswig-Holstein* 16, 1903,
pp. 9–22 (monograph, Kiel 1903); G. Hempl, 'The Linguistic and Ethnografic Status of
the Burgundians', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*
39, 1908, pp. 105–19; K. Müllenhoff, Brief an Adolf Kirchhoff (12. Feb. 1852), *Anzeiger
für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Litteratur* 33, 1909, p. 110; S. Feist, 'Eine neue Theo-
rie über die Herkunft der deutschen Runendenkmäler', *Zeitschrift für den deutchen
Unterricht* 24, 1910, pp. 246–49; *idem*, 'Zum Ursprung der germanischen Runenschrift',
*Acta philologica scandinavica* 4, 1929, pp. 1–25; G. Calder (ed.), *Auraicept na n-Éces, The
Scholars' Primer*, Edinburgh 1917; H. Pedersen, 'L'Origine des runes', *Mémoires de la
Société Royale des Antiquités du Nord*, Copenhague 1920–24, pp. 88–136 = *idem*,
'Runernes oprindelse', *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 13, 1923, pp. 37–82;
C. J. S. Marstrander, 'Om runene og runenavnenes oprindelse', *Norsk tidskrift for*

From the time of Johannes Magnus, Scandinavian antiquarians influenced by the Gothic ethnogenesis recorded by Jordanes promoted Biblical figures such as Magog or Gomer, the sons of Japheth, as the originators of the runic script.[2] Wilhelm Grimm in his otherwise groundbreaking study expressed only an ambivalent position, and so it was his contemporary Jakob Bredsdorff who first made explicit the empirical connection between the Germanic and the Mediterranean scripts. And although some nineteenth century grammarians and alphabet historians were still to promote a Semitic origin for the runes, Bredsdorff's judgement represented the point of departure for most subsequent assessments of from which orthographical tradition the runes derive.[3] Now although Adolf Kirchoff had come to a similar conclusion some years earlier, the name of Ludvig Wimmer has become connected with the first formal derivation of the runic script from the Latin alphabet. He was later supported by Theodor von Grienberger, Pedersen and for a time by Gustav Neckel.[4] Yet Wimmer's Latin thesis was to be undermined by the successful arguments

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*sprogvidenskap* 1, 1928, pp. 85–188; *idem*, 'Små bemerkinger i runestriden', *Norsk tidskrift for sprogvidenskap* 3, 1929, pp. 264–68; M. Hammarström, 'Om runeskriftens härkomst', *Studier i nordisk filologi* 20, 1929 (1930), pp. 1–65.

[2] Josephus, *Ant. Iud.* 1, 6, 1; Jordanes, *Get.* 1, 9; 3, 16–4, 25; Isidor, *Goth. laud.* 66; *idem*, *Etym.* 9, 2, 27 & 89; J. Magnus (Store), *Historia ... de omnibus Gothorum Sueonumque regibus*, Rome 1554, 1, 7; J. Cochlaeus (Dobneck) with J. F. Peringskiöld, *Vita Theoderici, regis quondam Ostrogothorum et Italiae*, 2nd ed., Stockholm 1699, p. 355; J. Göransson, *Is Atlinga*, Stockholm 1747, § 7.

[3] O. Worm, ᚱᚢᚾᛁᚱ, *Seu Danica Literatura antiqvissima*, 2nd ed., Hafnia 1651; W. Grimm, *Ueber deutsche Runen*, Göttingen 1821, pp. 11, 25–26; *idem*, review of Bredsdorff, *Om Runeskriftens Oprindelse*, *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* 2, 103, 1824, pp. 1017–32 [= *idem*, *Kleinere Schriften*, ed. G. Hinrichs, 4 vols, Berlin and Gütersloh 1881–87, II, pp. 324–37]; J. H. Bredsdorff, *Om Runeskriftens Oprindelse*, Kjøbenhavn 1822; *idem*, 'Om de saakaldte tydske Runer, eller Bemærkninger ved Hr. W. C. Grimms Skrift: "Ueber deutsche Runen"', *Nordisk Tidskrift* 2, 1828, pp. 394–403 [both contributions are reprinted in *idem*, *Udvalgte Afhandlinger inden for Sprogvidenskab og Runologi*, ed. J. Glahder, København 1933, pp. 101–19, 121–34]; U. W. Dieterich, *Enträthselung des Odinischen* ᚠᚢᚦᚨᚱᚲ *durch das semitische Alphabet*, Stockholm 1864; E. M. Olde, *Om de skandinaviska runornas omedelbara ursprung från det äldsta feniciska alfabetet*, Lund 1871; F. Lenormant, *Essai sur la propagation de l'alphabet phénicien dans l'ancien monde*, 2 vols, Paris 1872–73, I, tab. v & p. 112; J. Peile, 'Alphabet', in J. S. Baynes (ed.), *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 24 vols, 9th ed., Edinburgh 1875–89, I, pp. 612–13.

[4] A. Kirchhoff, *Das gothische Runenalphabet*, 2nd ed., Berlin 1854, preface; L. F. A. Wimmer, 'Runeskriftens Oprindelse og Udvikling i Norden', *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 1874, pp. 1–270 (monograph, Kjøbenhavn 1874); *idem*, *Die Runenschrift*, trans. F. Holthausen, Berlin 1887; T. v. Grienberger, 'Neue Beiträge zur Runenlehre', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 32, 1900, pp. 289–304; G. Neckel, 'Zur Einführung in die Runenforschung', *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 1, 1909, pp. 7–19, 81–95; Pedersen, *art. cit.* n. 1.

of Bugge (who had initially entertained a North Etruscan thesis) and
Otto von Friesen who resurrected the case for a Greek origin first
propounded by Erik Benzelius the younger. Bugge and von Friesen
promoted a third century borrowing of a classical Greek script by the
Goths in southeastern Europe rejecting the contemporary contention
of Wilhelm Luft who preferred a Gaulish use of Greek characters as a
prototype for the runes. Bugge adduced that the near correspondence
of an Armenian word (*p'ut'a-tark'* 'cursive writing') to the name of
the runic script was evidence for a southeastern connection, and even
chose to bring a Georgian character and letter name into his deriva-
tion.[5] The thesis of Marstrander and Hammarström seemed to repre-
sent an advancement upon the Latin or Greek theses that had pre-
ceded it. The new thesis appeared in its most developed form in the
second edition of Helmut Arntz's *Handbuch der Runenkunde*, pre-
pared by the German runologist while serving with occupying axis
forces in the early 1940s.[6]

This thesis as represented by Hammarström after Marstrander had
gained widespread acceptance in Germany. Yet in Sweden von Friesen
continued to promote the Greek cursive thesis he had developed from
suggestions made by the archaeologist Bernhard Salin. Owing to arti-
cles he contributed to influential works such as Johannes Hoops'
*Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, the *Enciclopedia italiana*,
the revised *Salmonsens Konversations-lexikon* and the 14th edition of
the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, some scholars from related disciplines
still upheld his Greek cursive thesis well into the 1950s.[7] Now von

[5] E. Benzelius, *Periculum runicum*, Upsala 1724; W. Luft, *Studien zu den ältesten germanischen Alphabeten*, Gütersloh 1898; S. Bugge, 'Om runeskriftens Begyndelser', *Beretning om Forhandlingerne paa det 5. nordiske Filologimøde*, Kjøbenhavn 1899, pp. 5–6; *idem*, *Runeskriftens Oprindelse og ældste Historie* (*Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer. I. Inledning*), Christiania 1905–13; O. v. Friesen, 'Om Runeskriftens härkomst', *Språkvetenskapliga Sällskapets i Uppsala förhandlingar* 2, 1904–6, pp. 1–55 (monograph, Uppsala 1906).

[6] A. Nordling, 'Runeskriftens ursprung', *ANF* 53, 1937, pp. 233–84; H. Arntz, *Handbuch der Runenkunde*, 2nd ed., Halle an der Saale 1944, pp. 30–64; *idem*, 'Runenkunde', in W. Stammler (ed.), *Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß*, 3 vols, Berlin 1957, III, pp. 1547–50.

[7] B. Salin, *Die altgermanische Thierornamentik*, trans. J. Mestorf, Stockholm 1904; G. Knudsen, 'Nogle Bemaerkningar i Anledning af Otto von Friesen "Om runenskrftens härkomst"', *Nordisk tidskrift for filologi* (serie 4) 1, 1912, pp. 97–103; O. v. Friesen, 'Runeskriftens härkomst: ett svar', *Nordisk tidskrift for filologi* (serie 4) 1, 1913, pp. 161–80 (monograph, Uppsala 1913); *idem*, 'Till frågan om runskriftens härkomst', in *Minnesskrift tillägnad Axel Erdmann*, Uppsala 1913, pp. 231–36; *idem*, 'Die Runenschrift', in J. Hoops (ed.), *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, 4 vols, Straßburg 1911–19, IV, pp. 5–51; *idem*, 'Runer', in C. Blangstrup (ed.), *Salmonsens Konversations-lexikon*, 26 vols, 2nd ed., København 1915–30, XX, pp. 516–529; *idem*, 'Runes', in W. Yust (ed.),

Friesen's thesis had arrived just as the flaws in Wimmer's derivation of the runes from Latin were gaining widespread notice. The American philologist Hempl had written a scathing attack on Wimmer's theory published in a collection of papers dedicated to Eduard Sievers in 1896, and had himself put forward new evidence in favour of the theory of the English alphabet historian and contemporary of Wimmer's, Isaac Taylor. Of course Wimmer's derivation had enjoyed almost unanimous acceptance among the philologists of his own generation, and Sievers himself had used Wimmer's derivation in his entry on runes that he contributed to Hermann Paul's *Grundriß der germanischen Philologie*. Yet Taylor had sought an origin for the runes in a variant archaic Greek tradition, and despite an acquaintance with the thesis of Wimmer had included his own theory in his history of the world's scripts. The American developed it further, showing that some staves seemed to derive from archaic characters that had been lost to Latin from an early date. The classicist Gotthold Gundermann agreed with Hempl, and together their arguments cleared the way for the rejection of the thesis of Wimmer by Bugge, and with the appearance of Salin's study of Greek influences on Gothic material culture, the appearance of the cursive Greek theory of von Friesen.[8]

Von Friesen had clearly been influenced, not just by Bugge and Salin, but also by theories promoted for the origin of Wulfila's Gothic script. Ever since Grimm theorised that evidence for a continental runic tradition could be seen in Wulfila's script (36 years before runic inscriptions were first found on the Continent), the authors of most

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*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 24 vols, 14th ed., London 1929, XVII, pp. 659–64; *idem*, 'De senast framställda meningarna i frågan om runornas härkomst', *ANF* 47, 1931, pp. 80–133; *idem*, 'De germanska, anglofrisiska och tyska runorna', in *idem* (ed.), *Runorna* (*Nordisk kultur VI*), Stockholm 1933, pp. 6–15; *idem*, 'Rune', in G. Treccani (ed.), *Enciclopedia italiana*, 35 vols, Roma 1929–1936, XXX, pp. 241–43; G. Ekholm, 'Runologi och arkeologi', *Nordisk tidskrift för vetenskap, konst och industri* 34, 1958, pp. 455–62; *idem*, 'Kragehulplattan. Ett obeaktat rundokument', *ANF* 57, 1959, pp. 112–14.

[8] M. Rieger, 'Zum Runenalphabet', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 6, 1875, pp. 330–41; I. Taylor, *Greeks and Goths*, London 1879; *idem*, *The Alphabet*, 2 vols, London 1883, II, pp. 210–24; F. Jónsson, review of Wimmer, *Die Runenschrift*, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 21, 1889, pp. 492–98; E. Sievers, 'Runen und Runeninschriften', in H. Paul (ed.), *Grundriß der germanischen Philologie*, 2 vols, Straßburg 1891–93, I, pp. 238–51; G. Hempl, 'Wimmers Runenlehre', in O. Schrader (ed.), *Philologische Studien, Festgabe für Eduard Sievers*, Halle an der Saale 1896, pp. 12–20; *idem*, 'The Origin of the Runes', *Journal of Germanic Philology* 2, 1898–99, pp. 370–74; *idem*, 'The Variant Runes on the Franks Casket', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 32, 1901, pp. 186–95; *idem*, 'The Runes and the Germanic Shift', *Journal of Germanic Philology* 4, 1902, pp. 70–75; G. Gundermann, ['Über die Entstehung des Runenalphabets'], *Literaturblatt für germanische und römanische Philologie* 18, 1897, pp. 429–30.

Gothic grammars have accepted that although most seem to be best derived from Greek, Gothic letters such as ⟨o⟩ and ⟨u⟩ must have been modelled upon runic staves. Thus if Wulfila had derived his Gothic from a Greek prototype, with some intrusions from runic and perhaps Latin, might not the runes themselves have come about from a similar admixture? Von Friesen, as had Bugge and Bredsdorff before him, in direct contradiction to Wimmer's claim that an origin for the runic script must be sought only in one Mediterranean forebear, chose a basis of (cursive) Greek, in his opinion the script most similar to runic, and supplemented it with some Latin signs. Indeed a number of the derivations proposed by earlier authors for individual Gothic letters appear in a somewhat transformed manner in von Friesen's thesis on the origin of the runes. Most importantly, however, this classical Greek theory seemed to be supported by the archaeological evidence gathered by Salin and the distribution of finds from southeastern Europe to Scandinavia. This theory of admixture was also adopted by Marstrander and Hammarström, though only after indicating that a penetration of Latin letters into otherwise orthographically North Etruscan inscriptions does seem apparent in those that clearly stem from the last centuries B.C.[9]

On the Continent another theory had been gaining in popularity since the 1890s. In a climate of a growing awareness of the substantial flaws in Wimmer's Latin thesis, Friedrich Losch, Ludwig Wilser and Richard Meyer argued that the runes represented an autochthonous development of indigenous pre-runic symbols into a fully fledged alphabetic script. This thesis owes its origin to comments made in earlier works by Johan Liljegren, Rochus von Liliencron and Franz Dietrich. German philologists such as Feist and alphabet historians such as Taylor and Hans Jensen, however, scorned the notion that such a development was possible. Yet under the influence of a growth in *völkisch* nationalism, by the late 1920s and 30s many amateurs and even some German academics such as Neckel had begun to accept this most peculiar of origin theories.[10] Meanwhile the palaeographer

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[9] Grimm, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–47; O. von Friesen, 'Gotische Schrift', in J. Hoops (ed.), *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, 4 vols, Straßburg 1911–19, II, pp. 306–10.

[10] J. Liljegren, *Run-Lära*, Stockholm 1832 (= *idem, Die nordischen Runen*, ed. & trans. C. Oberleitner, Wien 1848); R. v. Liliencron and K. Müllenhof, *Zur Runenlehre*, Halle an der Saale 1852, p. 58; F. E. C. Dietrich, *Über die Aussprache des Gothischen während der Zeit seines Bestehens*, Marburg 1862, p. 6; Taylor, *Greeks and Goths*, pp. 1–2; F. Losch, 'Zur Runenlehre', *Germania: Vierteljahrschrift für deutsche Alterthums-Kunde* 34, 1889, pp. 397–405; L. Wilser, 'Alter und Ursprung der Runenschrift', *Korre-*

Georg Baesecke became the first to connect the North Etruscan thesis with the Cimbric invasions of the end of the second century B.C. And the next year, Heinrich Hempel after rejecting the chauvinistic *Ur-schrift* thesis proselytised by Neckel and the astrological theory of Ferdinand Bork expanded on Baesecke's Cimbrian thesis, introducing the *Alpengermanen* theory of the Viennese Nordicist Rudolf Much to runology. Although Much's Alpine Germans were the product of his Germanomania, this connection along with the presence of the Cimbri and Teutones in this region suggested a plausible course of transmission of the forebear of runic from south to north. Thus, after some further refinement in the collaborative works of Franz Altheim and Erika Trautmann (-Nehring), the North Etruscan thesis appeared in connection with *Alpengermanen* in the second edition of Arntz's *Handbuch* in 1944. Arntz had previously sought to explain the simi-larities between Ogham and runic (which Baesecke had called *schwes-terlich*) as evidence for a runic origin for Ogham. Yet the Prussian philologist Wolfgang Krause had also come to accept the thesis of Marstrander and Hammarström, and as a trained Celticist, accepted at least some of Marstrander's evidence for a Celtic tradition continued in runic. Konstantin Reichardt who had replaced Feist as reviewer of runological works for the *Jahresbericht* of the Berlin-based Gesellschaft für deutsche Philologie also accepted Marstrander's Celtic North Etruscan theory in his *Runenkunde* of 1936.[11] The main difficulty with

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*spondenzblatt der Deutsche Geschichte- und Altertumsvereine* 43, 1895, pp. 137–43; *idem, Die Germanen*, 2 vols, 3rd ed., Leipzig 1920, II, pp. 192–215; R. M. Meyer, 'Runenstudien. I. Die urgermanischen Runen', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 21, 1896, pp. 162–84; S. Feist, 'Runen und Zauberwesen im germanischen Altertum', *ANF* 35, 1919, pp. 243–45; H. Jensen, *Geschichte der Schrift*, Hannover 1925, pp. 180–81; G. Neckel, 'Zur Frage nach der Ursprung der Runen', in *Studier tillägnade Axel Kock*, Lund 1929, pp. 371–75; *idem*, review of Hammarström, 'Om runeskriftens härkomst', *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 50, 1929, pp. 1237–39; *idem*, 'Die Herkunft der Runenschrift', *Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung* 9, 1933, pp. 406–17 = *idem*, in L. Roselius (ed.), *Erstes Nordisches Thing*, Bremen 1933, pp. 60–76.

   [11] F. Bork, 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Fuþarks', *Mannus* 16, 1924, pp. 127–37; R. Much, *Der Eintritt der Germanen in die Weltgeschichte*, Wien 1925; G. Baesecke, 'Die Herkunft der Runen', *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 22, 1934, pp. 413–17; H. Hempel, 'Der Ursprung der Runenschrift', *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 23, 1935, pp. 401–26; H. Arntz, 'Das Ogam', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 59, 1935, pp. 321–413; *idem, Handbuch der Runenkunde*, 1st ed., Halle an der Saale 1935, pp. 277–98; K. Reichardt, *Runenkunde*, Jena 1936, p. 56; W. Krause, 'Wesen und Werden der Runen', *Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde* 51, 1937, pp. 281–93; F. Altheim and E. Trautmann, *Vom Ursprung der Runen*, Frankfurt am Main 1939; F. Altheim and E. Trautmann-Nehring, *Kimbern und Runen*, 2nd ed., Berlin 1942; H. Schmeja, *Der Mythos der Alpengermanen*, Wien 1968.

von Friesen's thesis had not just been the implausible contention that the Goths had borrowed the Greek characters twice, it was because the archaeological datings that he accepted at the turn of the century had since been superseded. Indeed, not only were the southeastern inscriptions clearly later than the earliest from Scandinavia, the earliest Scandinavian inscription pre-dated the earliest attested contacts of the Goths with the Bosporan Greeks. And so, with the death of von Friesen in 1942, and when the German *Urschrift* theories had equally been put to rest after the war, the North Etruscan thesis alone survived to appear in the runological handbooks of Ralph Elliot, Lucien Musset, Ènver Makaev, Krause and Klaus Düwel, and in the updated alphabet histories of Jensen and David Diringer. Moreover, since the war philologists such as Fernand Mossé, Otto Haas and more recently Helmut Rix have continued to offer modifications of, and improvements to the North Etruscan thesis of Marstrander and Hammarström.[12]

Yet today most Scandinavian scholars would have none of the North Etruscan thesis. In the U.S., the archaic Greek thesis of Taylor and Hempl has garnered renewed popularity. And equally, a number of prominent continental philologists have recently supported in print a modified form of the thesis of Wimmer. This reversion to a thesis that had lost most of its adherents well before the death of its author in 1920 began in a reaction against the growing German monopoly of runology during the years of National Socialism. Clearly, Hitler chose the swastika as the symbol for his party after an acquaintance with the theories of the Austrian mystic Guido List. The runes had been promoted by some German philologists as developed from the same symbols from the Bronze Age that were also found in ancient India. Now Aryan India had been seen as the font of Aryan wisdom since the days of Friedrich von Schlegel, and this identity was clearly the reason

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[12] F. Mossé, 'L'Origine de l'écriture runique: état présent de la question', *Conférences de l'Institut de Linguistique de l'Université de Paris* 10, 1951, pp. 43–76; O. Haas, 'Die Entstehung der Runenschrift', *Lingua Posnaniensis* 5, 1955, pp. 40–58; *idem*, 'Die Herkunft der Runenschrift', *Orbis* 14, 1965, pp. 216–36; R. W. V. Elliot, *Runes, An Introduction*, Manchester 1959, pp. 3–13; L. Musset, *Introduction à la runologie*, Paris 1965, pp. 42–55; D. Diringer, *The Alphabet*, 2 vols, 3rd ed., London 1968, I, pp. 402–4; H. Jensen, *Sign, Symbol and Script*, trans. G. Unwin, 3rd ed., London 1970, pp. 567–79; W. Krause, *Runen*, Berlin 1970, pp. 35–45; K. Düwel, *Runenkunde*, 2nd ed., Stuttgart 1983, pp. 90–95; H. Rix, 'Thesen zur Ursprung der Runenschrift', in L. Aigner-Foresti (ed.), *Etrusker nördlich von Etrurien*, Wien 1992, pp. 411–41; È. A. Makaev, *The Language of the Oldest Runic Inscriptions* (1965), trans. J. Meredig, Stockholm 1996, pp. 31–34.

for the adoption of the swastika by Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society. Thus the swastika and the runes seemed to symbolise the Aryan-German identity promoted by the Compte de Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, List and the Ariosophists of his party. The National Socialists saw runes as the ultimate expression of Aryan-German *völkisch* propaganda, and particular runic signs came to be associated with various organs of the Nazi behemoth, from the SS to the Hitler Youth. When the war ended, and runology in Germany fell into disrepute, only the Scandinavian tradition continued in any substantial form with the noted exception of the works of Krause, now ensconced in Göttingen.[13]

Fritz Askeberg's archaeologically-based revival of the thesis of Wimmer appeared in the same year as Arntz's fully-blown treatment of the North Etruscan thesis. It garnered little support initially, yet nor were his criticisms rebuffed. Indeed the opportunity to respond to Askeberg's contribution was not taken by the main supporters of a North Etruscan thesis. Arntz only briefly re-entered academic life after his discharge from the German army in 1945, and although Krause's conviction began to waver somewhat after the war, he clearly still favoured the theory of Marstrander up until the time of his death in 1970. Now although Askeberg's work remains flawed by an attempt to reconcile the geographical spread of the runic finds in an early Gothic culture on the lower Vistula, his arguments for the derivation of each individual staff were eventually to be judged a marked improvement upon those of Wimmer. The early fifties also saw the attempt of the Danish runologist Erik Moltke to ascribe the creation of the runes to an adaptation of Latin letters on Danish soil, but without employing the improvements that Askeberg had achieved in the derivation of each individual staff. Moltke based his argument, just as had Askeberg, in the evidence of the geographical spread of the earliest finds. Yet these treatments seem to reflect Swedish-Gothic and Danish patriot-

[13] F. von Schlegel, *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, Heidelberg 1808; A. Compte de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 4 vols, Paris 1853–54; H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, 2 vols, London 1888; H. S. Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols, München 1899; G. (von) List, *Das Geheimnis der Runen*, Gross-Lichterfelde 1908; *idem*, *Die Bilderschrift der Ario-Germanen*, Wien 1910; L. Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, trans. E. Howard, London 1974, pp. 183 ff.; U. Hunger, *Die Runenkunde im Dritten Reich*, Frankfurt am Main 1984; N. Goodrick-Clark, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, Wellingborough 1985; K. Weißmann, *Schwarze Fahnen, Runenzeichen*, Düsseldorf 1991; D. Rose, *Die Thule-Gesellschaft*, Tübingen 1994, pp. 100–103.

ism respectively rather than a proper analysis of evidence. Askeberg decried the appropriation of the southern Germanic tribes by the German historiography of the time, a practice he saw epitomised in the notion that one of these tribes had inaugurated the use of runic writing when there was no archaeological foundation for such a claim. On the other hand Moltke's argument suggested that a large number of the runes were autochthonous creations, almost as had Losch, Wilser and Meyer more than half a century before him. Equally, Askeberg's archaeological arguments were clearly rather forced and seemed to be framed mainly as a rejection of the theories prominent in German runology at the time and a support for the Gothic involvement suggested by Bugge and von Friesen that perhaps belongs better to the Gothicist tradition of Olof Rudbeck the elder and the brothers Magnus. Yet Moltke was slowly to refine his views, and eventually a new generation of philologists came to accept a Latin thesis for the origin of the runes. Indeed in the two most recent Swedish contributions to the subject, the treatments of Moltke and Askeberg are combined. Bengt Odenstedt and Henrik Williams although they seem to agree on little else do agree on the subject of the origin of the runes. Both combine the graphical strengths of the thesis of Askeberg with the historical-cultural strengths of the expositions of Moltke in their assessments of this question.[14]

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Although some scholars have suggested otherwise, the acceptance of a North Etruscan thesis in Germany in the 1930s and 40s was not inspired by a nationalistic discourse. In fact if anything it fought against

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[14] F. Askeberg, *Norden och kontinenten i gammal tid*, Uppsala 1944; W. Krause, 'Runen', in *Der große Brockhaus*, 15 vols, 16th ed., Wiesbaden 1952–60, X, p. 156; E. Moltke, 'Er runeskriften opstået i Danmark?', *Fra Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* 1951, pp. 47–56; *idem*, *Runerne i Danmark og deres oprindelse*, København 1976; *idem*, 'The Origins of the Runes', *Michigan Germanic Studies* 7, 1981, pp. 3–7; *idem*, *Runes and their Origin, Denmark and Elsewhere*, trans. P. G. Foote, 2nd ed., Copenhagen 1985; B. Odenstedt, *On the Origin and Early History of the Runic Script*, Uppsala 1990; *idem*, *On Graphic Variation in the Older Futhark: Reply to a Review by Henrik Williams of My Book* On the Origin and Early History of the Runic Script, (Umeå Papers in English 13) Umeå 1993; H. Williams, 'Which Came First, ᛘ or ᚾ?', *ANF* 107, 1992, pp. 192–205; *idem*, 'The Origin of the Runes', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 45, 1996, pp. 211–18; *idem*, 'The Romans and the Runes — Uses of Writing in Germania', in S. Nyström (ed.), *Runor och ABC*, Stockholm 1997, pp. 177–92; cf. R. Derolez, 'The Origin of the Runes: an Alternative Approach', *Academiae Analecta* 60, 1998, no. 1, pp. 1–34.

one. To maintain that the runes were not an inheritance of the Aryan-Germanic past but only a borrowing from ancient Alpine tribes some-time in the last few centuries B.C. was to support a theory with de-cidedly unpatriotic overtones. Feist, following Hempl, had been the first German author to link the runes with the Venetic script. Yet he had increasingly come to be vilified by the late 1920s. The leading Nordicists Much and Neckel at Vienna and Berlin respectively attacked his views wherever they encountered them. And although Neckel could cite the opinions of other Jews such as Julius Pokorny in his attacks on Feist, it is clear that Feist came to be hounded mainly because of his Jewishness. Arntz too felt the approbation that came with such a tainted ancestry in the 1930s, and pressure was applied on his publishers. The young runologist had been attacked by some German reviewers for his acceptance of the North Etruscan thesis. And indeed, his developed exposition of the thesis of Marstrander and Hammarström in the second edition of his *Handbuch* seems to have been provoked by a criticism of his more servile treatment of this question in the first edition by Krause.[15] Furthermore, a number of the enthusiasts who delighted in the *Urschrift* theory had come to hold senior positions within the historical-cultural division of the SS, the Ahnenerbe. Altheim, who reported on Arntz for his Ahnenerbe masters, seems to have sought acceptance from senior Ahnenerbe officers such as Herman Wirth and Walter Wüst by accommodating their speculative theories within his ill-founded North Etruscan-*Urschrift* thesis. Krause too, although critical of the theories of Wirth and the Ahnenerbe researcher Karl Theodor Weigel, came to recognise the value in maintaining a relationship with the Ahnenerbe. Not so Arntz whose works were scoured for evidence of the pernicious influence of Feist. Yet this former pupil of Herman Hirt (and editor of his *Fest-schrift*) had not restrained from criticising the theories of Altheim, Weigel and Wirth, and had published Arthur Nordén's telling critique of Altheim's theories in his *Runenberichte*. Although the notion that some staves such as the problematic thirteenth rune were based in

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[15] R. Much, 'Sigmund Feist und das germanische Altertum', *Wiener prähistorische Zeitschrift* 15, 1928, pp. 1–19; G. Neckel, review of Hammarström, p. 1237; *idem*, *Germanen und Kelten*, Heidelberg 1929, pp. 7 *et seq.*; W. Krause, review of Arntz, *Hand-buch der Runenkunde* (1st ed.), *Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 55, 1936, pp. 1–6; E. Weber, 'Ein Handbuch der Runenkunde', *Germanien* 8, 1936, pp. 257–61; R. Römer, 'Sigmund Feist: Deuscher — Germanist — Jude', *Muttersprache* 91, 1981, pp. 249–308; *idem*, 'Sigmund Feist und die Gesellschaft für Deutsche Philologie in Berlin', *Muttersprache* 103, 1993, pp. 28–40; Hunger, pp. 43–70, 220–37.

pre-runic signs became part of the most developed North Etruscan derivations, the North Etruscan thesis in fact reacted against the most extreme elements of German runology of the period. It might justifiably be criticised for accomodating some aspects of the *Urschrift* thesis; but if anything the North Etruscan thesis came to represent a middle ground between the by then seemingly superseded derivations that appeared to indicate an *ex Oriente lux* and those that promoted the more patriotic and clearly *völkisch* notion of indigeneity.[16]

The Latin thesis as it has come to be accepted by runologists since the 1980s, however, is based in a rejection of the North Etruscan. The dismissal by Askeberg and Moltke of Marstrander's theory clearly became the basis of similar rejections by the Danish philologist Aage Kabell, the American linguist Elmer Antonsen and his student Richard Morris, as well as those of Odenstedt and Williams. The English runologist Ray Page has also come to look favourably upon the judgement of Moltke, as have the German and Dutch philologists Alfred Bammesberger and Arend Quak. Of the Germanists, only Thomas Markey, has supported a North Etruscan thesis in print since the appearance of Moltke's influential 1976 dismissal of Marstrander, Hammarström and Arntz. And thus when the inscription on the Meldorf fibula was discovered in 1979, the only interpretations other than runic that were promoted for it were as Latin or some late form of archaic Greek, although it could clearly be orthographically North Etruscan.[17]

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[16] H. Wirth, *Der Aufgang der Menschheit*, Jena 1928; *idem, Die heilige Urschrift der Menschheit*, 2 vols, Leipzig 1931–36; K. T. Weigel, *Runen und Sinnbilder*, Berlin 1935; W. Krause, review of Weigel, *Runen und Sinnbilder, Historische Zeitschrift* 152, 1935, pp. 552–56; F. Altheim, 'Runen als Schildzeichen', *Klio* 31, 1938, pp. 51–59; Altheim and Trautmann, *op. cit.*; A. Nordén, 'Die Frage nach den Urpsrung der Runen im Lichte der Val Camonica-Funde', *Berichte zur Runenforschung* 1, 1939, pp. 25–34; *idem,* 'Felszeichnungen und Runenschrift', *Runenberichte* 1, 1941, pp. 51–75; W. Wüst, 'Arisches zur Sinnbildforschung', *Germanien* 12, 1940, pp. 212–19; H. Arntz, 'Vom Weltbild der Felsritzer und vom Weltbild Herman Wirths', *Runenberichte* 1, 1941, pp. 91–102; *idem,* 'Die Runen: Urschrift der Menschheit?', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 67, 1942, pp. 121–36; M. H. Kater, *Das „Ahnenerbe" der SS 1935–45*, Stuttgart 1974; Hunger, pp. 83, n. 50; 171–289; G. Lixfeld, 'Das "Ahnenerbe" Heinrich Himmlers und die ideologisch-politische Funktion seiner Volkskunde', in W. Jacobeit, H. Lixfeld and O. Bockhorn (eds), *Völkische Wissenschaft*, Wien 1994, pp. 217–55.

[17] A. Kabell, 'Periculum runicum', *Norsk tidskrift for sprogvidenskap* 21, 1967, pp. 64–126; *idem,* 'Zur Meldorf Inschrift', *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 12, 1988, pp. 201–212; K. Düwel, 'The Meldorf Fibula and the Origin of Runic Writing', *Michigan Germanic Studies* 7, 1981, pp. 8–14; K. Düwel and M. Gebühr, 'Die Fibel von Meldorf und die Anfänge der Runenschrift', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 110, 1981, pp. 159–75; E. H. Antonsen, 'Die Herkunft der Runenschrift', in E. S. Dick and

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The rejection of the North Etruscan thesis has been argued on a series of points; yet all of them are either specious or based in misinformation. Moltke exclaims that the whole disgraceful thesis was based on the evidence of a forgery, but if this is not a simplistic misrepresentation it is at least ill considered. Marstrander clearly received inspiration for his North Etruscan thesis after visiting the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna to view the famous helmets from Negau, Styria (or actually Ženjak, in Slovenian Negova). As a Celticist with an interest in runology the inscriptions on these helmets were sure to have a profound influence on his thinking. The legends on the Negau A helmet he interpreted as Celtic, and they were clearly inscribed in North Etruscan characters. More famously, however, he was the first to note that the Negau B helmet inscription was indubitably Germanic. The runic forgery on the bone fragment from the Maria-Saalerberg which had just recently come to light had been dated by the Austrian archaeologist Rudolf Egger to the late La Tène period, a date so early that it seemed to represent evidence that could not well be ignored. The forgery may have influenced Marstrander to consider the possibility of an Alpine thesis for the origin of the runes, but it was his decipherment of the inscription on the Negau B helmet that indicated a North Etruscan origin to him so clearly. Indeed that very year the Norwegian archaeologist Haakon Shetelig, arguing from evidence for technological and cultural diffusion much as had Salin before him, had pointed to the Marcomannic kingdom as the likely

K. R. Jankowsky (eds), *Festschrift für Karl Schneider*, Amsterdam 1982, pp. 3–15; B. Odenstedt, 'The Inscription on the Meldorf Fibula', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 112, 1983, pp. 153–61; *idem*, 'Om ursprunget till den äldre futharken. En granskning av några teorier om runskriftens ursprung, speciellt E. Moltkes (1976), och E. H. Antonsens (1982), jämte ett förslag till ny teori', *Saga och Sed* 1984 [1986], pp. 77–110; R. L. Morris, *Umbilicus Runicus*, dissertation, Urbana 1983 (= *Runic and Mediterranean Epigraphy*, Odense 1988); R. I. Page, *Runes*, London 1987, p. 4; A. Bammesberger, 'The Development of the Runic Script and its Relationship to Germanic Phonological History', in T. Swan, E. Mørck and O. Jansen Westvik (eds), *Language Change and Language Structure: Older Germanic Languages in a Comparative Perspective*, Berlin 1994, pp. 1–2; A. Quak, 'Nochmal Einmal die Latein-These', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 45, 1996, pp. 171–79; B. Mees, 'A New Interpretation of the Meldorf Fibula Inscription', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 126, 1997, pp. 131–39; T. L. Markey, 'Studies in Runic Origins 1: Germanic *\*maþl-/\*mahl-* and Etruscan meθlum' *American Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Literature* 10, 1998, pp. 153–200.

birthplace of the runes. Of course Wimmer had previously considered
and rejected the possibility as mooted by Bugge of a North Etruscan
prototype for the runic script. Yet the inscription on the Negau B
helmet was proof that at least one Germanic speaker was acquainted
with North Etruscan letters at a time that immediately pre-dated the
earliest use of runic writing. The Maria-Saalerberg forgery was only
evidence for a cross-Alpine transmission of the runes, a transmission
that had already been thought likely well before it was discovered.
The dating of the forgery spoke against von Friesen's Gothic theory,
but the inscription could well have been interpreted as evidence for
Wimmer's South Germanic thesis of transmission, or even for a
western Greek origin as Roman and Greek colonists are known in the
upper Adriatic from very early times. Marstrander's presentation
clearly contains a number of flaws, and though he does stress that he
saw the Maria-Saalerberg inscription as evidence supportive of his
thesis, like his theories on the origin of the rune names, his acceptance
of the forgery as genuine is not of critical importance for a North
Etruscan thesis of the origin of the runes.[18]

Others have argued that there is too great a temporal gap between
the time of the provenance of the oldest runic inscriptions and the
youngest North Etruscan finds. Indeed, although the only compre-
hensive archaeologically based dating for the Negau finds has their
depostion belong to the decades about the birth of Christ, philologists
have tended to argue for a much earlier provenance for the inscrip-
tions on the helmets based on the datings usually accepted for the
North Etruscan testimonies from Switzerland, Austria and Italy. Yet in
the late 1950s North Etruscan inscriptions were found on the Mag-
dalensberg in Carinthia that clearly can only date to the early decades
A.D. These finds not only justify a recent date for the inscriptions on
the Negau helmets, they close the temporal gap between the earliest
runic testaments and their putative North Etruscan prototypes to the

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[18] C. J. S. Marstrander, 'Les Inscriptions des casques de Negau, Styrie', *Symbolae
Osloenses* 3, 1925, pp. 37–64; *idem*, 'Remarques sur les inscriptions des casques en
bronze de Negau et de Watsch', *Avhandlinger utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps Akadami
i Oslo, II. Hist.-filos. Klasse*, 1926, no. 2; H. Shetelig, *Norges forhistorie*, Oslo 1925, p.
138; H. Shetelig and H. Falk, *Scandinavian Archaeology*, ed. M. Olsen, trans. E. V.
Gordon, Oxford 1937, pp. 212–29; R. Pittioni, 'Zur Frage der Echtheit des Knochen-
pfriemens von Maria-Saaler-Berg', *Norsk tidskrift for sprogvidenskap* 8, 1937, pp. 460–66;
C. F. C. Hawkes, 'Runes and the *Caput Adriae*', in V. Mirosavljević, D. Rendić-
Miočević and M. Suić (eds), *Adriatica praehistorica et antiqua. Miscellanea Gregorio
Novak dicata*, Zagreb 1970, pp. 399–408; Moltke, *Runes and Their Origin*, p. 61 (and cf.
p. 61, n. 33).

timeframe required by Moltke, and after him Odenstedt. Indeed, since the appearance of the Meldorf fibula inscription which is contemporary with, or only a few decades later than the inscriptions from the Magdalensberg, a North Etruscan thesis assumes no chronological gap whatsoever. Furthermore, North Etruscan graffiti were found at Manching in Bavaria during excavations in the early 1970s, confirming the evidence for a transalpine use of North Etruscan letters suggested by the discovery of rock inscriptions at Steinberg in Northern Tyrolia in 1957. Although the Bavarian finds have been interpreted by some archaeologists as possibly representing imports, archaeology has continued to add credibility to a North Etruscan thesis with every decade that has transpired since the appearance of Moltke's first and posthumously published last pronouncement on the subject.[19]

A further argument raised by Askeberg and Moltke against a North Etruscan thesis is the mixture of scripts in the derivations of Marstrander, Hammarström and Arntz. This is in part due to the manner in which the sources employed by Marstrander, Hammarström, Arntz and Moltke handle their subject matter. Marstrander and Hammarström relied on the edition of these inscriptions published by Carl Pauli (replacing the earlier collection by Theodor Mommsen), with the additions and commentaries of Paul Kretschmer, Gustav Herbig and Olaf Danielsson. These works were superseded by the volumes published under the auspices of Seymour Conway, Joshua Whatmough and Sarah Johnson in 1933. Conway, the editor of a corpus of (non-Latin) Italic inscriptions, produced only part of the first volume of this work, with Johnson's contribution restricted to an edition of the onomastic data found in classical sources. Instead, the contribution of Conway's student Whatmough dominates the work. Now despite Whatmough, clearly the leading expert on North Etruscan inscriptions, explaining that he was convinced of a North Etruscan origin for the runic script, Askeberg and Moltke doubted his judgement. The
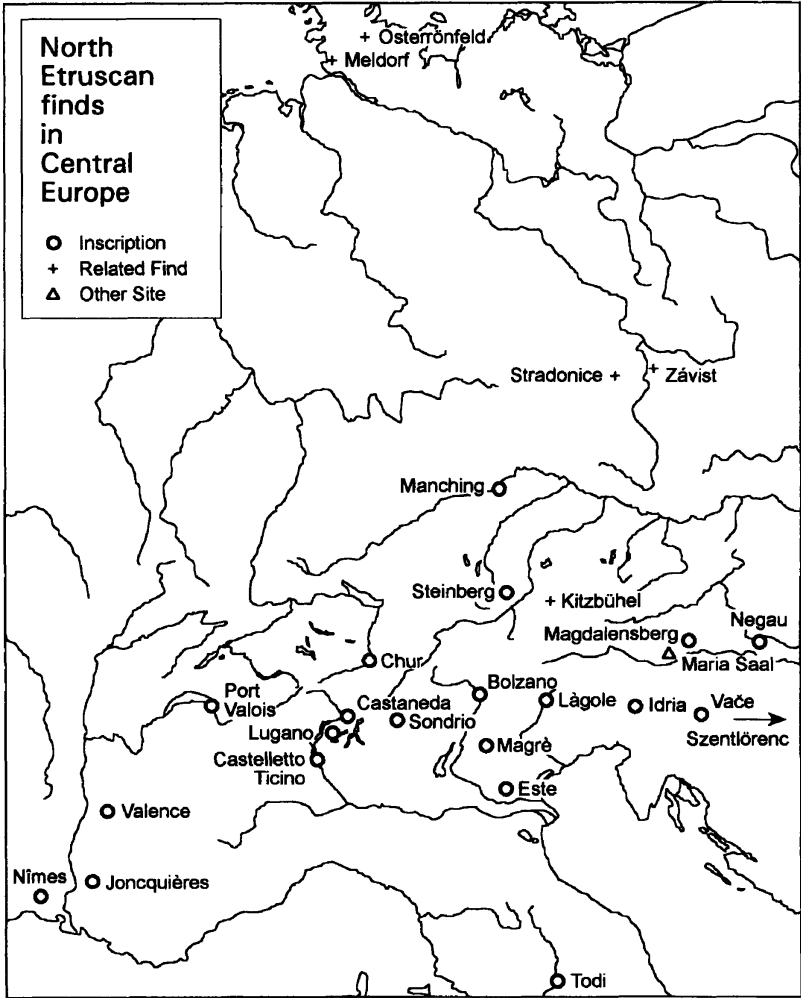
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[19] P. Reinecke, 'Der Negauer Helmfund', 32. *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Komission* 1942 [1950], pp. 117–98; K. Reichhardt, 'The Inscription on Helmet B of Negau', *Language* 29, 1953, pp. 306–16; E. Vetter, 'Die vorrömischen Felsinschriften von Steinberg in Nordtirol', *Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akadamie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse* 94, 1957, pp. 354–98; R. Egger, 'Die Ausgrabung auf dem Magdalensberg 1956 und 1957, mit Beiträgen der Mitarbeiter', *Carinthia* I, 149, 1959 (= monograph Klagenfurt 1959), pp. 135–38, nos 65–66; M. Egg, 'Einige Bemerkungen zum Helmdepot von Negau (Südsteiermark)', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 6, 1976, pp. 299–303; W. Krämer, 'Graffiti auf Spätlatènekeramik aus Manching', *Germania: Korrespondenzblatt der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts* 60, 1982, pp. 489–99.

derivation of each staff as presented by Marstrander, Hammarström and Arntz relied on an amalgam of the five attested North Italic scripts. The Scandinavians would not countenance such an origin when a monogenetic theory from Latin was available. Yet in truth a North Etruscan thesis requires no such thing.[20]

The North Etruscan inscriptions as they were termed by Mommsen represent a number of languages and traditions. Pauli separated these inscriptions by the major sites of their provenance: Lugano in the Lepontine Alps; Sondrio and Bolzano between the Rhaetian Alps and the Dolomites; and Este (ancient Ateste) in the Veneto. More inscriptions were discovered centred about Magrè south of Bolzano in 1912, and a further tradition was discovered on the Magdalensberg in Carinthia in 1956-57 in what are probably the ruins of Noreia, the capital of the Noric kingdom. Indeed the rock inscriptions from Steinberg also appear to represent a further tradition related to but distinct from that of Bolzano. The inscriptions from Lugano are Celtic in language, initially in an archaic dialect known as Lepontic, and later in the Cisalpine dialect of Gaulish. The Cisalpine Gaulish inscriptions, often termed Gallo-Etruscan or sub-Lepontic, are found on stones and ceramics found as far south as Todi. Similarly, inscriptions in late Lepontic letters also appear on coins found as far west as Nîmes (and which seem to have been minted in Transalpine Gaul), spreading north to Port Vallois and Chur in Switzerland, and east to Noricum. The language of the inscriptions of Sondrio, Bolzano, Magrè and Steinberg is termed Raetic, for the ancient inhabitants of the region, though their language is only poorly understood. The inscriptions from Este are Venetic in language, and like the Lepontic and Gallo-Etruscan testaments enjoy a wider distribution than the Raetic inscriptions spreading as far north as the Carnic Alps, east to Istria and

[20] T. Mommsen, *Die nordetruskischen Alphabete auf Inschriften und Münzen*, Zürich 1853; C. Pauli, *Altitalische Forschungen I: Die Inschriften nord-etruskischen Alphabets*, Leipzig 1885; R. S. Conway, *The Italic Dialects*, 2 vols, Cambridge 1897; P. Kretschmer, 'Die Inschriften von Ornavasso und die ligurische Sprache', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 37, 1905, pp. 97–128; G. Herbig, '„Keltoligurische" Inschriften aus Giubiasco', *Anzeiger für schweizerische Altertumskunde* 7, 1905–6, pp. 187–205; *idem*, 'Neue etruskische Funde auf Grotte S. Stefano und Montagno', *Glotta* 4, 1913, pp. 165–87; O. A. Danielsson, *Zu den venetischen und lepontischen Inschriften*, Uppsala 1909; R. S. Conway, J. Whatmough and S. E. Johnson, *The Prae-Italic Dialects of Italy*, 3 vols, London 1933, II, p. 505, n. 1; Askeberg, pp. 60–61; J. Whatmough, 'Κελτικά: Being Prolegomena to the Study of *The Dialects of Ancient Gaul*', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 55, 1944, p. 33 [reprinted in *The Dialects of Ancient Gaul*, Cambridge, Mass. 1970]; Moltke, discussion of *idem*, 'The Origins of the Runes', *Michigan Germanic Studies* 7, 1981, p. 16.

North
Etruscan
finds
in
Central
Europe

○  Inscription
+  Related Find
△  Other Site

+ Osterrönfeld
+ Meldorf

Stradonice +    + Závist

Manching ○

Steinberg ○    + Kitzbühel

Magdalensberg ○    Negau ○
Chur ○    △ Maria Saal

Port    Castaneda    Bolzano
Valois ○    ○    ○ Sondrio    ○ Làgole    ○ Idria    Vače
Lugano ○    ○ Magrè    Szentlörenc
Castelletto ○
Ticino    ○ Este

○ Valence

Nîmes ○ Joncquières

○ Todi

as evidenced by finds in the 1980s even as far afield as Szentlörenc in southern Hungary.[21]

There are many variant forms (allographs) for each character in each North Etruscan tradition as is clear from the charts compiled by Marstrander and Whatmough. Now although it is usually possible to separate a Raetic from a Venetic inscription by language, the four Raetic traditions are not so simply to be distinguished by such a criterion. And despite the ambitious assessments of some authors, Raetic remains as opaque today as it was to Kretschmer and Whatmough. The language of the western (Sondrio) inscriptions probably represents a language typical of the traditional reconstruction of Indo-European (and is consequently often considered a separate language), but the eastern testimonies show more Etruscan-like features (most notably in the use of the verb TINAΨE,[22] cf. Etruscan *zinace* '*elaboravit, fecit*'), and hence possibly represent a non-Indo-European language.[23] Thus often individual allographs are assessed in order to categorise an inscription, especially when their linguistic content is unclear. Yet allographs often thought to be typical of one geographical area frequently appear in other areas. The two seemingly archaic sigmas represented in the Lugano finds, for example, appear as unique allographs among the Venetic inscriptions from Este and nearby Padua. And moreover, even rare, apparently innovative forms are sometimes found in other regions. So although the singular appear-

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[21] G. Pellegrini, 'Trace di un abitato e di un santuario, corna di cervo iscritte ed altre relique di una stipe votiva preromana, scoperte sul colle del Castello (Magrè, Vicenza)', *Notizie degli scavi* 15, 1918, pp. 169–207; M. Lejeune, 'Vénètes de Pannonie', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 1990, pp. 629–53; A. L. Prosdocimi with P. Solinas, 'The Language and Writing of the Early Celts', in S. Moscati *et al.* (eds), *The Celts*, London 1991, p. 56.

[22] In this paper transcriptions of North Etruscan characters will all correspond to their forms not apparent phonological values as is sometimes the practice in the editions of these inscriptions. This is necessary principally because the phonological values vary over time and by language so represented. Thus Ψ is used in the transcription here rather than X.

[23] *CIE* 8413; Marstrander, 'Om runene og runenavnenes oprindelse', p. 99; R. Thurneysen, 'Italisches. I. Die etruskischen Raeter', *Glotta* 21, 1932, pp. 1–7; Conway, Whatmough and Johnson, II [hereafter Whatmough, *vol. cit.*], between pp. 502–3; J. Whatmough, '"Tusca Origo Raetis"', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 48, 1937, pp. 181–202; P. Kretschmer, 'Die vorgriechischen Sprach- und Volkerschichten', *Glotta* 30, 1943, pp. 168–218; V. I. Georgiev, 'Raetisch oder Nordetruskisch', *Orbis* 22, 1973, pp. 232–47; G. B. Pellegrini, 'Reti e retico', in A. Quattuardio Moreschini (ed.), *L'etrusco e le lingue dell'Italia antica*, Pisa 1985, pp. 95–128 (= *idem, Dal venetico al veneto*, Padova 1991, pp. 101–32); T. Hirunuma, 'The Dialects of Ancient Northern Italy: Their Positioning and Significance', *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 14, 1986, pp. 205–17.

| MARSILIANA ABECEDARIUM | NORTH ETRUSCAN | | | | | | | | RUNIC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | LUGANO | SONDRIO | BOLZANO | MAGRÈ | ESTE | STEINBERG | M'BERG | NEGAU | |
| A | | | | | | | | | |
| B | | | | | | | | | |
| C/Γ | | | | | | | | | |
| D | | | | | | | | | |
| E | | | | | | | | | |
| V/F | | | | | | | | | |
| Z | | | | | | | | | |
| H | | | | | | | | | |
| Θ | | | | | | | | | |
| I | | | | | | | | | |
| K | | | | | | | | | |
| L | | | | | | | | | |
| M | | | | | | | | | |
| N | | | | | | | | | |
| Ś/Ξ | | | | | | | | | |
| O | | | | | | | | | |
| P | | | | | | | | | |
| Ś | | | | | | | | | |
| Q | | | | | | | | | |
| R | | | | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | | | | |
| T | | | | | | | | | |
| Y | | | | | | | | | |
| Ś/X | | | | | | | | | |
| Φ | | | | | | | | | |
| Ψ | | | | | | | | | |
| H/J | | | | | | | | | |

Figure 1: The northern developments of the Etruscan script.

Notes:

(1) All graphs are represented in dextroverse (progressive) form.
(2) Inverted and reversed forms are not represented.
(3) A question mark indicates that the categorisation or reading of the graph is not clear.
(4) Formal normalisation of graphs has been kept to a minimum. Exceptions have been necessary for the many allographs of North Etruscan A, M and S where a broad range of graphic variation is attested.
(5) The order in which the North Etruscan graphs within each tradition are presented shows the likely chronological development.
(6) The sources used in this representation include the charts of J. Whatmough, *The Prae-Italic Dialects of Italy II*, London 1933, p. 515; M. Lejeune, 'Venetica XIX. L'écriture vénète à la lumière des documents pannoniens', *Latomus* 50, 1991, p. 789; and R. C. de Marinos, 'Golasecca Culture and Its Links with Celts Beyond the Alps', in S. Moscati *et al.* (eds), *The Celts*, London 1991, p. 94; with reference to the reproductions of G. Herbig, '„Keltoligurische" Inschriften aus Giubiasco', *Anzeiger für schweizerische Altertumskunde* 7, 1905–6, pp. 187–205; J. Rhŷs, 'The Celtic Inscriptions of Cisalpine Gaul', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 1913–14 (plates after p. 112); idem, 'Gleanings in the Field of Celtic Epigraphy', *vol. cit.* (plates after p. 369); G. Pellegrini, 'Trace di un abitato e di un santuario, corna di cervo iscritte ed altre relique di una stipe votiva preromana, scoperte sul collo del Castello', *Notizie degli scavi* 15, 1918, pp. 178–89; W. Burkart, 'Die Schnabelkanne von Castaneda', *Anzeiger für schweizerische Altertumskunde* 40, 1938, p. 121; E. Vetter, 'Die vorrömischen Felsinschriften von Steinberg in Nordtirol', *Anzeiger der Österreichicher Akadamie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse* 94, 1957, pp. 384–98; A. L. Prosdocimi, 'Per una edizione delle iscrizioni della Val Camonica', *Studi etruschi* 33, 1965, pp. 575–99; G. B. Pellegrini and A. L. Prosdocimi, *La lingua venetica I*, Padova 1967; R. Egger, 'Zum vorlateinischen Alphabet der Noriker', *Arheološki vestnik* 19, 1968, pp. 38–40; M. Lejeune, *Lepontica*, Paris 1971; A. Mancini, 'Iscrizioni retiche', *Studi etruschi* 43, 1975, pp. 249–306; F. M. Gambari and G. Colonna, 'Il bicchiere con iscrizioni arcaica da Castelletto Ticino e l'adozione della scrittura nell'Italia nordoccidentale', *Studi etruschi* 54, 1986, pp. 119–64; G. Fogolari and A. L. Prosdocimi, *I Veneti antichi*, Padova 1988; S. Schumacher, *Die rätischen Inschriften*, Innsbruck 1992, pp. 267–74; and the charts in C. J. S. Marstrander, 'Om runene og runenavnenes oprindelse', *Norsk tidskrift for sprogvidenskap* 1, 1928, p. 99; G. Buonamici, *Epigraphia etrusca*, Firenze 1932, p. 123; G. B. Pellegrini, 'Origine e diffusione degli alfabeti preromani nell'Italia superiore', in *Spina e l'Etruria padana*, Firenze 1959 (plate after p. 192); V. Pisani, *Le lingue dell'Italia antica oltre il latino*, 2nd ed., Torino 1964, p. xix; M. G. Tibiletti Bruno, 'Ligure, leponzio e gallico', in A. L. Prosdocimi (ed.), *Lingue e dialetti dell'Italia antica*, Roma 1978, pp. 132–33; eadem, 'Camuno retico e pararetico', in Prosdocimi, *op. cit.*, pp. 212–13; D. F. Allen, *The Coins of the Ancient Celts*, Edinburgh 1980, p. 113; and E. Molke, *Runes and Their Origin, Denmark and Elsewhere*, trans. P. G. Foote, 2nd ed., Copenhagen 1985, p. 50.

All charts, diagrams and maps by the author or the author/K. Alexander.

ance of an allograph identical to the form of Z characteristic of the
Sondrio inscriptions in both the neighbouring Lugano and Bolzano
traditions can easily be explained by proximity, the appearance of the
strikingly characteristic variant of mu from Sondrio in a Venetic
inscription from Cadore cannot.[24] The extant inscriptions surely only
represent a small fraction of the total orthographical output of these
Alpine peoples, and so it is hard to be categorical as to which tradition
an allograph is totally foreign. Indeed the only sure indication that
divides the separate traditions seems to be the vertical orientation of
letters such as L and U, both of which in their commonest North
Etruscan realisations are identical to runic forms. Nevertheless, there
are notable exceptions even to this scheme.[25] In order to aid the inter-
pretation of these inscriptions Whatmough sought to absolutely cate-
gorise each inscription under one of the geographical labels that de-
rived from those of Pauli. He was even sceptical of the existence of
some letters clearly indicated by Pauli, though he was later to admit
them upon the appearance of more finds. Yet the more northerly
inscriptions such as those from Steinberg, the Magdalensberg, Negau
and indeed the Celtic *oppidum* of Manching are extremely difficult to
assign to one of the five more southerly traditions. Consequently,
Askeberg writing a decade before the appearance of the finds from
Steinberg and the Magdalensberg might have felt justified in merely
perusing the allograph table prepared by Whatmough for the Alpine
inscriptions. But as Moltke, Morris and Odenstedt would have recog-
nised if they had considered their evidence more thoroughly, the finds
from Steinberg and the Magdalensberg, as do those of Negau, all seem
to represent a mixture of two or more of the more southerly tradi-
tions; exactly as do the runes.

Connected to this over-interpretation of the North Etruscan evi-
dence is the claim that some characters represented in runic are totally
lacking from these inscriptions. Moltke asserts the absence of the
grapheme O in the Alpine inscriptions, as such a character is foreign
to contemporary Etruscan inscriptions. In fact it is clear that O is
absent from the eastern Raetic testaments. Yet it is equally clear that
the letter does appear in the Noric, Venetic, western Raetic and
Lepontic traditions. Indeed such a character appears in the earliest of
the assuredly Celtic finds, the sixth century B.C. inscription from

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[24] Whatmough, *vol. cit.*, p. 58; G. B. Pellegrini and A. L. Prosdocimi, *La lingua
venetica*, 2 vols, Padova 1967, I, pp. 520–21 (Ca 33).
[25] Whatmough, *vol. cit.*, pp. 88, 115, 512, 544.

Castelletto Ticino, ΨOSIOISO.[26] Moltke, and following him Oden-
stedt, and especially Morris, seem instead to have confused North
Etruscan with Etruscan. The North Etruscan inscriptions mostly rep-
resent languages with quite different phonological inventories to that
of Etruscan. And characters which otherwise only appear in early
Etruscan abecedaria are clearly represented in the North Etruscan
traditions. This is of course the case with O, and the Sondrio inscrip-
tions patently do employ B and C. Moreover, the Etruscan abecedaria
which retain B, D and O, are contemporary with these early testa-
ments. (In fact O appears in some early Etruscan inscriptions, and D is
clearly used in the Greek-Etruscan bilingue from Delphi to represent
/d/ in an Etruscanised form of a Greek toponym.) The North Etruscan
scripts, just as did Latin, quite clearly received characters which were
phonologically redundant to Etruscan and lost to the later Etruscan
abecedaria. Indeed the antiquity of the transmission of the Etruscan
letters into the northern tradition is attested by the use of the
perigram VH to represent /f/ at Este, a spelling that was rendered
redundant in Etruscan as the letter 8 increasingly came to be used for
this phone from the seventh century onwards.[27]

The theory that the Etruscan script was borrowed by these Alpine
peoples from the sixth-century Apadene Etruscan colonies promoted
by Rhys Carpenter and Giovan Pellegrini may hold for Venetic and
even for the script of Magrè. Yet it cannot be equally true for the
western tradition of Lugano as it is clearly evidenced at least a century
earlier than the more easterly ones. And as it is in the western tradi-
tions that Marstrander and Hammarström saw the closest connection
to runic, any analyses based in comparisons with middle or late Etrus-
can are obviously invalid. Moreover, despite the assertion of Morris to
the contrary, in the scripts such as Venetic for whom the language is
well enough understood, it is clear that such inscriptions are well able
to distinguish the contrast of voice or fortition recognised by the runic
staves, but not by Etruscan. As was first shown by Rudolf Thurneysen
in 1892, Venetic has evolved quite characteristic methods in order to
differentiate occlusives by voice or fortition. Indeed, these characters

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[26] F. M. Gambari and G. Colonna, 'Il bicchiere con iscrizione arcaica da Castelletto
Ticino e l'adozione della scrittura nell'Italia nordoccidentale', *Studi etruschi* 54, 1988,
pp. 130–50.
[27] G. Fogolari and A L. Prosdocimi, *I Veneti antichi, lingua e cultura*, Padova 1988, p.
329; Rix, p. 420; F. C. Woudhuizen, *The Language of the Sea Peoples*, Amsterdam 1992,
pp. 157, n. 9, 172, 176.

also appear employed in a similar manner in Lepontic inscriptions and on the Negau helmets.[28]

Another problem with these rejections of a North Etruscan origin is the reliance in the monographs of Moltke, Odenstedt and Morris, all published in the 1980s, on the treatment of these inscriptions by Whatmough, with only a brief mention by Moltke of a preliminary treatment of the Noric inscriptions by Egger and an alphabet chart of the Venetic characters prepared by Pellegrini for an exhibition in 1963. This flaw is most difficult to fathom as the editions of Conway and Whatmough had been superseded by more recent, albeit less broadly focussed assessments of these epigraphs by scholars such as Michel Lejeune, Pellegrini and Aldo Prosdocimi in the 1960s and early 1970s. These treatments include many new finds important for the North Etruscan thesis. The discovery of the Lepontic Prestino inscription in 1966, for example, confirmed the early form of North Etruscan Z postulated by Whatmough in 1934 and employed by Arntz in his derivation of runic ʀ. Moreover, Egger had substantially recast his interpretations of the Noric inscriptions some years later after a proper consideration of Whatmough's work. A considerable number of new Raetic inscriptions had also surfaced by the 1960s and are considered in the second edition of Vittore Pisani's survey of the ancient non-Latin epigraphs of Italy and her Alpine neighbours, Prosdocimi's edition of the inscriptions of the Val Camonica, and Alberto Mancini's new East Raetic corpus of 1975. Moltke's allograph tables are clearly flawed, and he even shows a tendency to ignore the evidence that they contain when he refers to them. Indeed Odenstedt reproduces Moltke's table in an attempt to discredit the evidence of the North Etruscan letters when a cursory glance shows as he and Morris admit that they obviously resemble runic forms more so than does the Latin of the same period.[29]

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[28] R. Thurneysen, review of Pauli, *Altitalischer Forschungen III: Die Veneter und ihrer Schriftdenkmäler* (Leipzig 1891), *Wochenschrift für klassiche Philologie* 9, 1892, pp. 285–92; R. Carpenter, 'The Alphabet in Italy', *American Journal of Archaeology* 49, 1945, p. 462; G. B. Pellegrini, 'Origine e diffusione degli alfabeti preromani nell'Italia superiore', in *Spina e l'Etruria padana*, Firenze 1959, pp. 181–96; Morris, pp. 6–7, 151; Gambari and Colonna, pp. 150–59; Prosdocimi and Solinas, p. 53.

[29] V. Pisani, *Le lingue dell'Italia antica oltre il latino*, 2nd ed., Torino 1964, pp. 251–72, 317–33; A. L. Prosdocimi, 'Per una edizione delle iscrizioni della Val Camonica', *Studi etruschi* 33, 1965, pp. 575–99; Pellegrini and Prosdocimi, *op. cit.*; R. Egger, 'Zum vorlateinischen Alphabet der Noriker', *Arheološki vestnik* 19, 1968, pp. 37–42; M. Lejeune, 'Documents gaulois et para-gauloise de Cisalpine', *Etudes celtiques* 12, 1970, pp. 337–500 (= *Lepontica*, Paris 1971); *idem*, *Manuel de la langue vénète*, Heidelberg 1974; A.

Moltke's assessment seems to be guided by a predisposition for a Latin thesis without much concern for the evidence of the North Etruscan epigraphs. He even notes that the Frøyhov statuette inscription seems to be more orthographically North Etruscan (and indeed Venetic) than runic without considering what the presence of a North Etruscan inscription in Norway deposited in a grave from the third century A.D. would immediately suggest to someone who had not ruled out a North Etruscan thesis on some other grounds. Indeed, his criticism of the usage made by Krause and Arntz of the allograph of T found on the Castaneda flagon treated by Whatmough after the publication of his corpus edition (and evidently not even considered by Odenstedt) is quite misguided. The plate accompanying Whatmough's article shows that, as confirmed by Krause's own autopsy, his transcription emphasises the form of one of the allographs of T over that of the other two in order to show a connection with similar allographs from Novilara. Whatmough had already connected the T from Novilara with runic **t** in his corpus and saw no need to do so again in his short treatment of this new inscription. The find from Castaneda clearly supports a North Etruscan derivation of this rune. Moreover, the same allograph was subsequently found among the inscriptions unearthed in Sanzeno from 1947–49 where it obviously has a dental value, and similar characters found at Bolzano and on the Negau A helmet, previously considered to be allographs of Ψ, are similarly now recognised instead to be variants of T that mirror the **t** rune.[30]

Mancini, 'Iscrizioni retiche', *Studi etruschi* 43, 1975, pp. 249–306; cf. also E. Vetter, 'Literaturbericht 1934–38: Italische Sprachen', *Glotta* 30, 1943, pp. 66–81, *idem*, 'Literaturbericht: Italische Sprachen', *Glotta* 33, 1954, pp. 65–78; R. J. Kispert, 'Recent Venetic Inscriptions: A Supplement to *The Prae-Italic Dialects of Italy*, Part One, "The Venetic Inscriptions"', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 102, 1971, pp. 217–63; A. Mancini, 'Retico', *Studi etruschi* 40, 1973, pp. 364–71; *idem*, 'L'iscrizioni della Valcamonica', *Studi Urbinati di storia, filosofia e letteratura, supplemento linguistica* 2, 1980, pp. 75–166; F. Granucci, 'Leponzio', *Studi etruschi* 43, 1975, pp. 224–48; A. L. Prosdocimi (ed.), *Lingue e dialetti dell'Italia antica*, Roma 1978; M. G. Tibiletti Bruno, 'Le iscrizioni celtiche d'Italia', in E. Campanile (ed.), *I Celti d'Italia*, Pisa 1981, pp. 157–207; Fogolari and Prosdocimi, pp. 213–440; and S. Schumacher, *Die rätische Inschriften*, Innsbruck 1992.

    [30] Whatmough, *vol. cit.*, pp. 512, 521; *idem*, 'A New Raetic Inscription of the Sondrio Group', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 47, 1936, pp. 205–7 = *idem*, 'Eine neue rätische Inschrift der Sondrio-Gruppe', *apud* W. Burkart, 'Die Schnabelkanne von Castaneda', *Anzeiger für schweizerische Altertumskunde* 40, 1938, pp. 121–23; W. Krause, 'Zum Stand der Runenforschung', *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* 202, 1940, pp. 184–85; *idem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39; Arntz, *Handbuch*, 2nd ed., p. 42; Vetter, 'Literaturbericht (1954)', pp. 69; 69, n. 1; 74; Carpenter, p. 462; Moltke, *Runes and Their Origin*, p. 72, n. 35; p. 131; Odenstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 152; Fogolari and Prosdocimi, p. 317; Rix, pp. 419–20.

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The idiosyncratic Danish runologist can only have favoured a Latin origin because of the political and economic reconstructions that are usually proffered for the Danish Islands and Jutland in the early centuries A.D. It has become increasingly clear from archaological finds that Denmark had reached a position of some economic and possibly political pre-eminence at the transition from the Early Roman to the Late Roman Iron Ages (i.e. c. A.D. 200). This development seems to be evidenced by the abundance of finds from this region, not just of prestige items of local manufacture, but also by rich Roman wares. Hence most archaeologists agree that trade between the Empire and northern Scandinavia must have followed routes through modern-day Denmark at this time. Faced with this archaeological reconstruction, and given that the earliest inscriptions were mostly found within the borders of the medieval Danish kingdom, it seems reasonable to suppose that the runes were developed in Denmark from the only script likely to have been known to traders who came to or were based there.[31]

Of course given that a significant proportion of the prestige finds of Germanic manufacture also stems from this area, and given that most runic finds are found on such prestige goods (fibulas, arms and armour), this concentration should not be seen as representative of the extent of the knowledge of runic writing unless the runes were adopted only to be employed by an economic elite. Archaeologists have seen the adoption of writing as evidence for the increasing stratification of Iron Age society owing to increased economic ties with the south. If this archaeological construction were valid, however, the elite that accumulated prestige goods to indicate status would also have been expected to employ their script for other purposes. Yet as Odenstedt makes clear we have no evidence of an administrative or a mercantile employment of runic. All we have in the earliest finds are anthroponyms and short identifying inscriptions on weapons, armour and jewellery. Many runologists suppose that the

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[31] K. Randsborg, 'Römische Gläser und Bronzegefässe im Norden: Ein Kommentar', trans. T. Capelle, *Acta Archaeologica* 57, 1986, pp. 211–28; L. Hedeager, 'Empire, Frontier and the Barbarian Hinterland: Rome and Northern Europe from AD 1–400', in M. Rowlands, M. T. Larsen and K. Kristiansen (eds), *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 125–40.

runes must have been used in contexts other than just anthroponymy and the designation of ownership. But the lack of evidence for an administrative or mercantile usage of the runes remains a major flaw in this archaeological reconstruction. Moreover, considering the time-frame usually assumed for the beginning of this hierarchicisation, the inscription on the first century Meldorf fibula also seems too early (and too southerly) for such a reconstruction.[32]

An alternative or perhaps supplementary explanation proposed by other supporters of a Latin thesis is even less capable of demonstration. The notion that runic was brought back to Denmark by Germanic soldiers in Roman military service, as developed by Odenstedt, Gad Rausing and supported by Quak, is not correlated by evidence from classical sources. Most Germanic soldiers in the service of Rome at this period are clearly from tribes such as the Frisii, Batavi and Marcomanni. Soldiers from more northerly areas are not mentioned in Roman sources until a much later period, by which time of course we already have evidence for the use of runic writing. Still the concentration of early inscriptions at c. A.D. 200 does coincide with the first appearance of Roman coins in similar contexts. And the concentration of the items upon which they are found in warrior graves and military hoards does suggest a connection with a military elite. Yet this connection implies that the Germanic script was adopted at the time of the very first attestation of clearly runic inscriptions. The inscription on the Meldorf fibula and the distribution of, and graphic variation attested in, the early finds instead point to a runic tradition that pre-dates the first signs of economic contact with the Empire in the material remains of Iron Age Denmark. The inscriptions can hardly be seen, then, as many archaeologists suggest, as further evidence for the growth of Roman influence in Scandinavian society. The contents and the contexts of the extant early inscriptions do suggest a connection with a military elite. Yet the inscriptions from Denmark, Schleswig, Norway and Sweden seem to be evidence only of the use of runic writing as an expression of prestige. The fact that the items so inscribed are always of Germanic manufacture points away from any association with imported Roman goods. And indeed the scarcity of runic inscriptions on pottery marks this particular connection between prestige and writing as peculiar to Northern society. A similar associa-

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[32] J. Jensen, *The Prehistory of Denmark*, London 1982, pp. 232 ff.; Odenstedt, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–73; U. L. Hansen, *Römischer Import im Norden*, København 1987, pp. 233–34; L. Hedeager, *Iron Age Societies*, trans. J. Hines, Oxford 1992, p. 249.

tion between writing and prestige is also quite evident from the geographical distribution of Scandinavian runestones, most of which are concentrated in areas of economic prominence. Thus the distribution of the earliest inscriptions, although good evidence for the extent of the use of writing as a form of prestige, may well be of less consequence for the question of their origin. And granted that inscriptions in similar contexts are found in the Greek and North Etruscan orthographical traditions as well as the Roman (though not on such a restricted range of items), even evidence garnered from a typological survey of media that typically bear runic inscriptions unfortunately remains ambivalent. At the very least such a typological analysis does not rule out a North Etruscan origin for the runes.[33]

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Yet there is clear evidence that the runes cannot derive from a Latin or Greek tradition. Morris has claimed that runic does not show evidence for a confusion in the representation in the distinction of voice or fortition that one might expect in a script derived from an Etruscan source. As we have already seen, however, the American is not well informed on this subject. Now the runes do bear some signs for occlusives that clearly are based in Mediterranean forebears. Runic **b**, **t** and **k** quite clearly ultimately derive from representatives of archaic Greek beta, tau and gamma, or in Latin, B, T and C. Yet it is equally as apparent that runic **p**, **d** and **g** do not derive from the Greek and Latin counterparts that usually distinguish contrasts in voice or fortition from those that are clearly parallelled in runic.

In Venetic and Lepontic it is evident that a new practice developed in order to represent such a distinction. As Etruscan maintained a graphemic distinction only between plain and aspirated stops, these scripts came to employ the characters which represented a distinction of aspiration in Etruscan for the distinction of voice or fortition in the stops of Venetic and Lepontic. Indeed the Etruscan aspirates may well also have been lenes. Admittedly, this practice is rather irregular in

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[33] M. Waas, *Germanen im römischen Dienst*, 2nd ed., Bonn 1971, pp. 1–3; K. Düwel, 'Runes, Weapons and Jewellery: a Survey of Some of the Oldest Runic Inscriptions', *The Mankind Quarterly* 22, 1981, pp. 69–91; Hedeager, *op. cit.*, pp. 234–37, 249; G. Rausing, 'On the Origin of the Runes', *Fornvännen* 87, 1992, pp. 200–5; K. Randsborg, 'Ole Worm: An Essay on the Modernization of Antiquity', *Acta Archaeologica* 65, 1994, pp. 137–38; Quak, *art. cit.*

Lepontic. But the representation of this distinction is irregular even in Gallo-Greek and Gallo-Latin. This irregularity is probably to be ascribed to a distinction only in fortition, not in voice, between the Old Celtic occlusives. Nevertheless, it is clearly a practice of the earliest Lepontic inscriptions and follows the same pattern as does Venetic. We are not able, however, to assess with much confidence whether the alternations of graphs for plain plosives with those for aspirates represents a similar distinction in the Raetic testaments (although granted the apparent linguistic connection of East Raetic with Etruscan, most occasions may well represent only a distinction in aspiration). Yet in Venetic this practice is always quite evident. Now although Z often replaces Θ in this role among the Venetic inscriptions, the Venetic form of archaic Greek theta is usually a crossed square. As Hempl suggested almost a century ago, such a crossed theta is surely continued by runic **d**. It is this North Etruscan character for /d/ that Moltke admits is preserved in the inscription on the Frøyhov statuette.[34]



| Etruscan | NE (Este) | runic |

Figure 2: The development of theta to runic **d**.

Similarly, runic **g** clearly derives from a like use of an archaic Greek chi. For the Germanic labials, however, a reverse process seems to have occurred. The usual form of North Etruscan P appears to have been lost to runic. Yet as it probably would have been of an identical form (a homograph) to runic **l**, this is scarcely surprising. As the Sondrio inscriptions preserve B (despite Whatmough's scepticism) the derivation for the voiced lenis labial needs not be the same as for the velar and dental equivalents. Indeed the use of North Etruscan C (again clearly represented in the Sondrio inscriptions and initially treated as doubtful by Whatmough) for /k/ shows that the North

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[34] C. Watkins, 'The Phonemics of Gaulish: the Dialect of Narbonensis', *Language* 31, 1955, pp. 18–19; Lejeune, 'Documents gaulois et para-gaulois de Cisalpine', pp. 376–78; *idem*, 'Venetica XIX. L'écriture vénète à la lumière des documents pannoniens', *Latomus* 50, 1991, pp. 785–97; A. M. Devine, 'Etruscan Language Studies and Modern Phonology: The Problem of the Aspirates', *Studi etruschi* 42, 1974, pp. 131–32; Rix, pp. 419–21.

Etruscan scripts could not have inherited a graph for /g/ at all and had to find a new way to represent this value. As Rex Wallace has commented, runic has inherited two graphs for the voiced lenis counterparts of the dental and velar voiceless fortis stops produced in a manner 'at home' in another tradition; a North Etruscan tradition. This tradition does not display D or C representing the values customarily ascribed to delta and gamma in archaic Greek, and although C also represents a phoneme which is clearly voiceless and fortis in Latin, the retention of a form of theta, a letter lost to Latin in the third century B.C. speaks against a Latin derivation for the runes.[35]

Yet the runic form of **p**, although somewhat similar to the Noric form of this character, shows somewhat better formal approximation to the letter that follows P in the archaic Greek abecedarium. North Etruscan Š (sade or san), sometimes transcribed as Ś, is a common graph in the North Etruscan inscriptions. In Lepontic it represented sibilants such as affricatives distinct enough from [s] to warrant separate representation, whereas in Venetic it seems to come only to represent a distinction in fortition from the phone represented by S, as is typical of Etruscan inscriptions. It would be redundant in the representation of early Germanic and so appears to have come to represent /p/ instead. Indeed Pisani notes that sade seems to have been employed to represent some sort of labial in the East Italic inscriptions of Piceneum. Moreover, there are East Italic allographs of Š that are identical in form to the staff **p**. As some Lepontic allographs indicate how the East Italic allograph was formed from the usual Etruscan form of Š, it is probable that a similar development has occurred to produce runic **p**. In fact the graphic variation attested for **p** in the continental rune-rows seems to mirror that typical of the North Etruscan Š.[36]
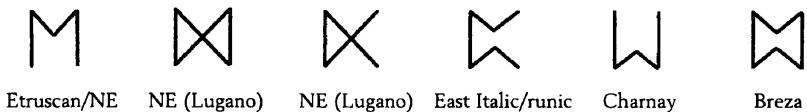


| Etruscan/NE | NE (Lugano) | NE (Lugano) | East Italic/runic | Charnay | Breza |

Figure 3: The variants of sade and **p**.

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[35] Whatmough, 'A New Raetic Inscription of the Sondrio Group'; R. E. Wallace *apud* D. G. Miller, *Ancient Scripts and Phonological Knowledge*, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 63–64, n. 4.

[36] M. Lejeune, 'Problèmes de philologie vénète: XII, Les deux sifflantes', *Revue de philologie* 40, 1966, pp. 7–20; *idem*, 'Documents gaulois et para-gaulois de Cisalpine', pp, 373–75; V. Pisani, 'Italische Alphabete und germanische Runen', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 80, 1966, p. 209.

The other signs for sibilants have clearly produced similar runic characters. The staff **s** shows the three allographs typical of North Etruscan variation. And runic **ʀ** also has a clear parallel in North Etruscan Z, except that as suspected by Bugge and others, the allograph on the Charnay and Balingen fibulae appears to represent the original form. The variation in orientation of Scandinavian **ʀ** has always been difficult to explain otherwise as this practice is not parallelled in the execution of similarly shaped runes such as **a**, **t** or **l**. And indeed a reduction to an allograph akin to the more usual runic form seems to have occurred in some of the inscriptions in the Sondrio alphabet from the Val Camonica, even where this has led to confusion with the usual form of North Etruscan Ψ.[37]



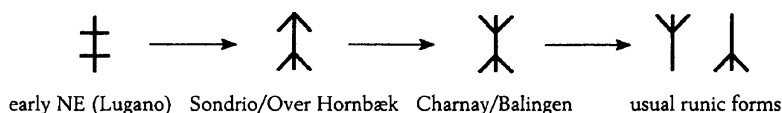early NE (Lugano)  Sondrio/Over Hornbæk  Charnay/Balingen      usual runic forms

Figure 4: The variation in graphs for /z/.

The graphs representing velars can be treated in a similar way. The North Etruscan tradition inherited three graphs with which to represent /k/. In early Etruscan practice these characters had been distributed depending on the quality of the following vowel: C for non-low front vowels, Q for non-low back vowels, and K for low vowels. Similarly, Etruscan abecedaria show the retention of the two archaic Greek letters both developed from Phoenician kaf that represented the velar aspirate /kʰ/. It now appears likely that the Etruscan alphabet derives from a forebear that predates the separation of Greek scripts into the eastern (Euboean or blue) and western (Corinthian or red) distinctions, and consequently the assignation of the value /ps/ or /ks/ to Ψ or X respectively. Etruscan X, however, later came to represent a sibilant, usually transcribed as Ṡ in some inscriptions from southern Etruria (functionally replacing Š), an identification that may be reflected in the Latin values /ks/ and /gs/. Yet in North Etruscan chi would be a homograph of some allographs of T and Θ and so its presence is often doubted. But not only was chi clearly maintained in the North Etruscan tradition as a numerical symbol, there is evidence from the East Raetic tradition that the two aspirate characters merged,

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[37] Prosdocimi, 'Per una edizione delle iscrizioni della Val Camonica', p. 580.

or at least that their forms became confused. Whatmough indicates
the appearance of such a character at Magrè, and this occurrence was
supplemented by similar allographs in the Sanzeno finds of the late
1940s and the Steinberg rock inscriptions discovered in 1957. Though
the evidence for North Etruscan X is fragmentary, it can scarcely be
doubted that the staff **g** ultimately derives from X, and indeed most
proponents of a Latin thesis have made a similar connection with the
Roman reflex of this character.[38]

As North Etruscan C is continued in runic **k**, and as X is probably
continued as **g**, it is no surprise to find the similarly rare Q continued
as runic **ŋ**. The rarity of C and Q in North Etruscan can be explained
by a process occurring further south. In later Etruscan practice C came
to be favoured over K and Q in the south of Etruria, and K over C and
Q in the north. It is difficult to ascertain the value of Q in the North
Etruscan tradition as it seems to have become a homograph of Φ as
also occurred in Messapic.[39] In runic, however, Gerhard Alexander
maintains that **ŋ** probably originally represented plosive [g], whereas **g**
represented the more common fricative allophones reconstructed for
PG /g/. Such a distinction may have been made necessary by the
acrophonic nature of most of the rune names: Of the mediae, only /g/
is usually reconstructed as a fricative initially, and it is only recon-
structed as a plosive in PG after /n/ (which in this environment was
realised as [ŋ]). The staff seems to have become associated with the
cluster [ŋg] after initial /g/ came to de-spirantise in the majority of
attested Germanic languages (save, of course, in Gothic, Low Franco-
nian and in some dialects of Low German).[40] One might also note that

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[38] Whatmough, *vol. cit.*, pp. 50, 509; Vetter, 'Literaturbericht (1954)', p. 74; *idem*,
'Die vorrömischen Felsinschriften von Steinberg', p. 391; A. J. Pfiffig, *Die etruskische
Sprache*, Graz 1969, p. 17; Lejeune, 'Documents gaulois et para-gaulois de Cisalpine', p.
369, n. 42; *idem*, 'Le vase de Latumaros (Discussions sur l'alphabet de Lugano)',
*Latomus* 46, 1987, pp. 493–509; Miller, pp. 43, 54; Woudhuizen, pp. 155, 197.

[39] See especially the inscription VAL.TEΦNU (or VAL.TEQNU) where
Whatmough considers the Φ to be a mistake for the velar graph Ψ! The inscription
probably represents an anthroponym in *-g(e)n-*; J. Whatmough, 'Inscriptions from
Magrè and the Raetic Dialect', *The Classical Quarterly* 17, 1923, p. 62, n. 2; *idem*, *vol.
cit.*, pp. 45–46; Pisani, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

[40] W. G. Moulton, 'The Stops and Spirants of Early Germanic', *Language* 30, 1954,
pp. 31–32, 42; *idem*, 'The Proto-Germanic Non-Syllabics (Consonants)', in F. van
Coetsem and H. L. Kufner (eds), *Toward a Grammar of Proto-Germanic*, Tübingen
1972, p. 173; G. Alexander, 'Die Herkunft der Ing-Rune', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alter-
tum und deutsche Literatur* 104, 1975, pp. 1–11. Note that Alexander also tentatively
links the **ŋ** rune with qoppa, citing the form on the Frøyhov figurine. William Moulton
also claims that PG */g/ was realised as a plosive in gemination, but he does not con-
sider the fact that gemination of the mediae is extremely rare in PG; L. L. Hammerich,

the form of this rune with a *hasta*, contrary to Antonsen, Morris, Odenstedt and Ottar Grønvik, cannot be a ligature of **i** + **ŋ**. Not only does such a form appear in the Grumpan rune-row, but Etruscan forms of qoppa clearly show this very variation between forms with and without *hastae* (a variation possibly mirrored in allographs of Φ/Q from Magrè). Moreover, in the instances where it is attested as part of a recognised lexeme this rune always represents either [iŋ] (Opedal; no *hasta*) or [iŋg] (Aquincum, Slemminge, Szabadbattyán, Tanem, and possibly Leṭcani and the Vimose sheath mount; all with *hastae*). The only exception was considered to be in the Årstad inscription, but Gerd Høst has recently shown that the reading that produced the supposed example of **ŋ** (without a *hasta*) in this case is no longer tenable.[41]

The last remaining characters representing velars were K and Ψ. Now the latter character may have merged with the similarly sounded X in North Etruscan, but the apparent absence of K from runic appears perplexing as, except in West Raetic, it is the character most commonly employed for /k/. Instead, it appears to have come to represent a different velar sound. Grønvik and after him Moltke and Elmar Seebold maintain that the later English value [ç] was the original value of the rune transcribed by Krause as ï. Its attestation as /i(ː)/ in an number of inscriptions may have derived from its non-acrophonic rune name in a similar manner as **ŋ** has come to stand in most cases for [iŋg]. Thus North Etruscan K has probably produced the staff ï. And although no allograph of K is graphically identical to ï, there are some that suggest that such a development was under way in the late Lepontic and Noric testaments.[42]

A further formerly difficult derivation is rather more clearly best explained by a North Etruscan thesis. The development of a separate

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'Die germanische und die hochdeutsche Lautverschiebung. II. Worin besteht die hochdeutsche Lautverschiebung?', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* (Tübingen) 77, 1955, pp. 171–94.

[41] Alexander, *art. cit.*; E. H. Antonsen, *Concise Grammar of the Oldest Runic Inscriptions*, Tübingen 1975, p. 12; K.-E. Westergaard, *Skrifttegn og symboler*, Oslo 1981, pp. 136–79; Morris, pp. 120–121; B. Odenstedt, 'Om typologi och grafisk variation i den äldre futharken', *ANF* 100, 1985, pp. 1–15; O. Grønvik, 'Über den Lautwert der Ing-Rune und die Auslassung von Vokal in den älteren Runeninschriften', *Indogermanische Forschungen* 90, 1985, pp. 168–95; G. Høst, 'Die Årstad-Inschrift — eine Neuwertung', in *Runor och runinskrifter*, Stockhom 1987, pp. 155–61.

[42] O. Grønvik, *Runene på Tunesteinen*, Oslo 1981, pp. 29–32; Moltke, *Runes and Their Origin*, p. 64; E. Seebold, 'Die Stellung der englischen Runen im Rahmen der Überlieferung des älteren Fuþark', in A. Bammesberger (ed.), *Old English Runes and their Continental Background*, Heidelberg 1991, pp. 469–70.

staff for /j/ in the Germanic script is not parallelled in Greek or Latin. Indeed, derivations proffered for runic j from Latin G neglect the fact that the development of /g/ > [j] in Latin before front vowels did not occur until after the earliest runic inscriptions are found. Such a development is, however, parallelled in North Etruscan. In the Venetic tradition, /j/ came to be represented by a perigram of two iotas. In later inscriptions first one, then both of the iotas developed into a bent form similar to that of North Etruscan C. These forms are sometimes transcribed in recognition of their shapes as II, IC and CC. And as has been noted by Haas and more recently by Rix and Gary Miller, this is clearly how the j rune came to be formed.[43]



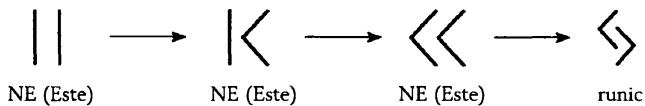| NE (Este) | NE (Este) | NE (Este) | runic |

Figure 5: The development of the j rune.

A character with a similar function is the North Etruscan V. This sign continues the archaic Greek character vau or digamma which was lost to Greek in the fifth century B.C. In Latin it has clearly produced F, a development which is often cited as good evidence for a Latin prototype for runic f. This development in Latin, however, has long been known to derive from the early Etruscan practice of spelling /w/ with V, but /f/ with VH.[44] And just as did early Latin, the North Etruscan scripts continued this tradition. It is also evident in late Etruscan that V had come to represent /v/ or even /f/ as it sometimes alternates with 8 (which had replaced the use of the perigram VH) and Φ which are otherwise thought to represent /f/ (the latter after Etruscan /pʰ/ > /f/) at this date. A development of /w/ > /v/ also seems to have occurred in late Venetic. In fact a similar practice may have occurred in the Lepontic inscriptions as in this tradition /w/ is usually represented by U, and although it is not clear what phonological value V represents in its only (and very early) attestation, it

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[43] E. H. Sturtevant, *The Pronunciation of Greek and Latin*, 2nd ed., Philadelphia 1940, p. 168; M. Lejeune, 'La Consonne yod en vénète', *Word* 8, 1952, pp. 51–64; O. Haas, 'Die Herkunft der Runenschrift', pp. 227–28; Rix, p. 419; Miller, p. 66.

[44] In archaic Greek, VH represented voiceless /w/, i.e. /w̥/; and in Etruscan, /f/ seems to have developed from Proto-Anatolian */w/ in some positions, e.g. before /a/ (cf. Etruscan *quthefa-*, Luwian, Hittite *kattawa-* 'revenge'); Sturtevant, p. 146; Woudhuizen, p. 175.

appears where the IE reconstructions indicate */p/ (i.e. UVAMO- <
IE *$upṃmo$-). Now although IE */p/ is lost to Celtic in most positions
from an early stage, it clearly passed through a form as a fricative as it
weakened in articulation, for in places where a vestige of this phone is
retained, when it did not assimilate to other labials such as /w/ or /b/,
it merged with Old Celtic /x/. Moreover, in the Venetic inscriptions
of Làgole, after the phoneme /h/ was lost from Venetic, a similar
simplification of the perigram VH is apparent as the otherwise redun-
dant North Etruscan H has come to represent /f/ here. Thus runic **f**
clearly can be derived from a North Etruscan source.[45]



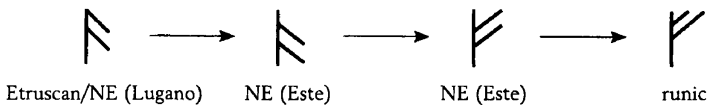| Etruscan/NE (Lugano) | NE (Este) | NE (Este) | runic |

Figure 6: The variation in vau.

Other staves have long been seen to be afforded superior deriva-
tions from a North Etruscan tradition as the variation that they repre-
sent from the typical Mediterranean letters are clearly in evidence in
the Alpine inscriptions. Both Alpine M and O exhibit forms with the
lengthenings that must have occurred in order to develop into runic **m**
and **o**. Similarly, North Etruscan E appears on the Negau A helmet
and in the Magdalensberg inscriptions turned on its side, a rotation
that has always seemed likely to be the most plausible explanation for
the two main early forms of runic **e**. The late development of North
Etruscan A as typically found in the more westerly traditions is identi-
cal to runic **a** which clearly must ultimately derive from one of the
archaic forms as preserved in the Alpine inscriptions but which were
lost to Greek and became rare in Latin from the third century B.C.
Moreover, North Etruscan H shows a reduction from three to two
arms, a development which seems to be continued in runic. And
again, as in the case of **R** and the various forms of **p** found in the con-
tinental rune-rows, the appearance of the more archaic form of **h** only

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[45] H. Pedersen, *Vergleichende Grammatik der keltischen Sprachen*, 2 vols, Göttingen
1901–13, I, pp. 90, 93 A. L. Prosdocimi, 'L'iscrizione di Prestino', *Studi etruschi* 35,
1967, pp. 202–3, 213; *idem*, 'L'iscrizione leponzia di Prestino: vent'anni dopo', *Zeitschrift
für celtische Philologie* 41, 1986, pp. 240–42; Pfiffig, pp. 41–45; Lejeune, 'Documents
gaulois et para-gaulois de Cisalpine', pp. 416–17, 458, 472–74; *idem, Manuel*, pp. 30,
134–35; *idem*, 'Vues présent sur le celtique ancien', *Bulletin de l'Academie Royale de
Belgique, classe de lettres* 64, 1978, p. 111.

in the South Germanic tradition shows that this tradition, although attested later than that of the north, was conservative and remained closer to its North Etruscan forebear. The angular **b** of runic is also clearly found in the Sondrio tradition, and similar characters are found at Bolzano and Magrè though what phonological value they may have represented is unclear. The staves **l** and **u** which continue the Italic principle that their vertical orientation is always the same are obviously best derived from North Etruscan L and U. Runic **t** also mirrors an admittedly uncommon allograph of North Etruscan T; yet its development is parallelled by a similar development of North Etruscan Z found in runic as Whatmough explains quite clearly. And North Etruscan N with its single *hasta* and single crooked arm is at the very least as likely a source for the unparallelled form that archaic Greek nu has assumed in its incarnation as runic **n** as any other Mediterranean script.



| Etruscan/NE (Lugano) | NE (Lugano) | NE (Lugano)/runic |

Figure 7: The development of runic **a**.



| Etruscan/NE (Este) | NE (Este)/runic (Continental/English) | runic (Scandinavian) |

Figure 8: The reduction of heta.

The remaining Etruscan letters to pass into the north are D, R and Φ. Now the letter D in Etruscan was phonologically redundant, and seems only to appear sporadically in North Etruscan inscriptions in places where its phonological value cannot be ascertained. Yet it only appears with its *hasta* extended in a manner that suggests that it has assumed the value /w/ in runic after V came to represent /f/ exclusively.[46] North Etruscan R, however, typically bears the same shape as

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[46] The editors of the inscriptions transcribe these letters as P even though North Etruscan P looks nothing like these forms which are otherwise strikingly similar to allographs of delta known from other Italic traditions. Similarly, unlike the similar allographs from Magrè, they cannot be the variant of R which bears an extended *hasta* as the usual form of R appears in both of these inscriptions. Conway, Whatmough and Johnston, I, p. 181; Pellegrini and Prosdocimi, I, p. 626 (Gt 19); G. Fogolari and G. B. Pellegrini, 'I rinvenimenti preistorici di Lothen', *Cultura atesina* 5, 1951 (monograph

Latin D. Nevertheless, the process whereby Etruscan R developed the distinguishing arm of Latin R is by no means unparalleled in the other scripts derived from Etruscan. This development occurs in order to distinguish R from similarly shaped characters such as D and P. And among the Lugano finds, as Arntz points out, there are at least two such allographs of R that are suggestive of the formation of the **r** rune. Indeed, granted the existence of the alternative form of **r** suggested by Antonsen (as represented in the Charnay, Aquincum, Fyn I, Neben-stedt I, the recent Nydam ashen staff and perhaps even Meldorf in-scriptions), a more typically North Etruscan R seems to have lasted into runic, although clearly in a more marginal usage than in the tradition from which it no doubt stems.[47]

The twenty-fourth and last North Etruscan character represented in the futhark is North Etruscan Φ. Although used in Venetic and on the Negau A helmet to represent /b/, the value represented by this graph in the Raetic tradition is unsure. Indeed, as in other Etruscan-based scripts it may have become a homograph of Q. In the Magrè script it seems that B has come to represent some sort of dental, and thus Whatmough uses the transcription Þ for this character. And as B also develops a three-pronged form in this tradition, he even proposed it as the prototype of runic **þ**. Yet as the Raetic language remains unde-ciphered, his assignation of a dental value to the Magrè graph B/Þ based on apparent alternation with T (i.e. TINAΨE, ÞINAΨE) cannot be confirmed.[48] Furthermore, the Magrè inscriptions otherwise lack a descendent of P (as does runic) and clearly preserve forms of Φ/Q in positions that suggest a velar value. Nonetheless it is now evident that an early allograph of **þ** in the runic tradition is a homograph of North Etruscan Φ. Indeed the Gothic script retains a letter for /þ/ with such a mirror-rune form, although many Gothicists prefer to derive this letter from a cursive development of Greek θ. As a labial value for Φ would clearly be redundant in the Germanic script, the Germanic fricative that is typologically rarest among the world's languages seems

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Bolzano 1952), pp. 11–15; Pellegrini, 'Reti e retico', pp. 116–17; Schumacher, pp. 113–14 & 186 (PU-1).

[47] Arntz, *Handbuch*, 2nd ed., pp. 41–42; E. H. Antonsen, 'The Graphemic System of the Germanic Fuþark', in I. Rauch and G. F. Carr (eds), *Linguistic Method: Essays in Honor of Herbert Penzl*, The Hague 1979, pp. 294–95.

[48] It may well represent /tˢ/ if the identity with Etruscan *zinace* is correct; Pellegrini, 'Trace di un abitato', p. 200, n. 4; Whatmough, 'Inscriptions from Magrè', pp. 63–64; *idem, vol. cit.*, pp. 14, 37–42, 507–8, 510, 547; *idem*, 'The Raeti and their Language', *Glotta* 22, 1934, pp. 27–28; Pisani, *op. cit.*, pp. 324–26; Rix, p. 422.

to have been the value adopted for the Etruscan descendant of archaic Greek phi.[49]

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Of course a few of these derivations are still somewhat problematic. But the evidence for the typically North Etruscan representation of a distinction in voice or fortition and the appearance of separate graphs for the semivowels in runic points away from the Greek and Latin orthographical traditions. Clearly such features typical of late Venetic inscriptions such as the use of syllabic puncts adopted from middle Etruscan practice are not continued in the runic tradition.[50] And the number of allowable allographs also seems to have been reduced as the North Etruscan characters made their way north. Yet a North Etruscan derivation, as noted by Hammarström, also agrees with epigraphical comparisons with more southerly scripts that show that runic continues typically archaic orthographical practices. One of these is the retention of such allographs: Greek and Latin had come to be quite normalised by the third century B.C. Indeed this is the major contention of the thesis of Morris, later supported by Antonsen: the Germanic script exhibits practices that are usually associated with scripts of the archaic period (i.e. before 500 B.C.).

Although reversed and inverted runes have their parallels in the retrograde and inverted characters of archaic Greek and North Etruscan practice, such features have been viewed as evidence for the primitive nature of runic epigraphy, not a continuation of a characteristically archaic practice. And the Venetic inscriptions, much as do the runic, occasionally exhibit both true and false or serpentine boustrophedon, a characteristic also explained by Whatmough as archaic, but might equally instead be seen as primitive. Similarly, the apparently archaic angular shapes of runic are often explained away as if they are a necessary corollary of the practice of inscribing letters in wood. The lack of orthographic differentiation in runic inscriptions between geminate and simplex consonants is clearly also mirrored by typically archaic spellings in the Raetic and Lepontic traditions. Yet this orthographic practice has been explained away in a similar manner, as a sign

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[49] J. W. Marchand, 'Der Ursprung des gotischen þorn-Zeichens', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 77, 1955, pp. 490–94.

[50] E. Vetter, 'Die Herkunft des venetischen Punktiersystems', *Glotta* 24, 1936, pp. 114–33.

of a lack of orthographic sophistication, and indeed late and medieval Latin inscriptions are known to display such an inadequacy: One need only refer to the emphasis laid on such spellings by late Latin and medieval grammarians, including the first grammarian of Icelandic. The inconsistent usage of interpuncts displayed by both the North Etruscan and runic traditions has also been labelled a primitive orthographical feature by Odenstedt. On the other hand, ligatures are common in both the Latin and Etruscan traditions; but Latin ligatures such as those typical of the epigraphical record of the two Roman Germanies are not continued in runic practice. Indeed as Mindy MacLeod shows in her recent dissertation runic ligatures seem to represent an indigenous orthographical development. It may indeed be valid to dismiss many of these orthographical practices as only the expressions of an unsophisticated orthographical tradition. Yet although the reversal of individual characters might be expected in a primitive tradition, the reversal of whole lines is less simple to ascribe merely to a poorly developed set of orthographic norms. As the early inscriptions show ambivalent direction, and as dextroverse or a progressive direction (compared to Latin) becomes the norm throughout the runic tradition, it may well be that the runic tradition stems from one that also displays such an ambivalence. It is even possible that this process attests that the earliest runic inscriptions were in fact sinistroverse, and it is merely the gradual development of a dextroverse tradition that is evident in the runic testaments that have come down to us. Such a development is clearly to be seen in the North Etruscan epigraphs as the sinistroverse gradually gives way to a dextroverse norm probably under the influence of the growing dominance of the orthography of late Republican Rome.[51]

Another archaic practice propounded by Morris and suggested by an observation of the Russian linguist Makaev, is the lack or inconsistent orthographic representation of nasals in runic. Clearly this only occurs in the Latin tradition in limited circumstances, and in precisely the positions where reconstructions based in the evidence of the

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[51] Hammarström, pp. 53–57; Whatmough, *vol. cit.*, pp. 523–24; Lejeune, 'Documents gaulois et para-gaulois de Cisalpine', p. 372; *idem, Manuel*, pp. 180–81; Morris, pp. 127–36, 155; B. Odenstedt, 'A New Theory on the Origin of the Runes: Richard Morris' Little Book Umbilicus Runicus', in A. Bammesberger (ed.), *Old English Runes and the Continental Background*, 1991, pp. 383–84; E. H. Antonsen, 'Runes and Romans on the Rhine', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 45, 1996, pp. 5–13; M. J. MacLeod, *Runic Ligatures*, dissertation, Melbourne 1999.

modern Romance languages indicate the eventual loss of Latin nasals. In archaic Greek these nasals are not lost; instead it appears that they have simply been omitted, just as geminate stops are represented as if they were simplex. And while Makaev and more recently Williams have sought to show that these spellings can be explained by a nasal quality developed in a preceding vowel, the same practice is evidenced in the North Etruscan inscriptions. Although the less transparent Raetic inscriptions cannot confidently be assessed in such a manner, and this practice in Venetic is irregular, nasals are always omitted before homorganic obstruents in the Lepontic tradition.[52]

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Yet there is an even more telling piece of evidence that has recently come to light that can only support a North Etruscan origin for the runes. It is concomitant with an explanation for the previously baffling reorganisation of the Mediterranean abecedarium in the order of the Germanic rune-row.

The Swedish runologist Erik Brate was the first to recognise that the runes are grouped in pairs in the rune-row. He rejected Bugge's attempt to interpret the modern expression futhark as an Armenian term for cursive writing that the Norwegian claimed supported a southeastern origin for the runes. He was also critical of earlier scholars such as the English Anglo-Saxonist Walter Skeat who sought to see a magical charm in the order of the rune-row. Skeat noting the use of the letters of the Pater Noster in *Solomon and Saturn* suggested that an Anglo-Saxon translation of the Pater Noster might similarly be seen in the order of the futhark. Although criticised by Taylor and Henry Bradley, this theory was accepted by the archaeologist Karl von den Steinen, and even improved upon by the German philologist Friedrich Kluge. Skeat pointed out that the pagan Germani could well have employed a Christian charm in the early centuries A.D. Nevertheless, it was the type of solution suggested by Bradley and subsequently taken up by the American Hempl (and followed by Arntz) that was to prove more acceptable to most runologists. Bradley and Hempl noted

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[52] Lejeune, 'Documents gaulois et para-gaulois de Cisalpine', p. 381; *idem, Manuel,* pp. 139–40; Morris, pp. 68–69, 95–97, 125–27; H. Williams, 'The Non-Representation of Nasals before Obstruents: Spelling Convention or Phonetic Analysis?', in J. E. Knirk (ed.), *Proceedings of the Third International Symposium on Runes and Runic Inscriptions,* Uppsala 1994, pp. 217–22; Makaev, pp. 52–53.

a relationship between the order of the rune-row and the Mediterranean order which seemed to indicate the preservation of some sort of alphabetic fossil. Both then suggested that the usual order had been changed to meet some phonological or formal concerns. Yet both were equally as guilty of propounding as speculative an approach as were Skeat and Kluge.[53]

The next generation of theories can be represented by the uthark (*sic*) theory of Sigurd Agrell. As Bugge, Magnus Olsen and others had sought to find signs of numerological practices in some of the early inscriptions, Agrell undertook a study of Mediterranean numerology to search for the reason for the peculiar order of the futhark. He noted that some of the order of the futhark could be matched with the numerological principles of Mithraism. Yet in order to reconcile the order of the rune-row with his numerological theory he had to posit that runic **f** had once belonged to the end of the runic ordering. Indeed, he noted that the names of **f** and **o** could be seen to be semantically linked as both indicated economic principles: 'wealth' and 'inheritance'.[54]

The problem with the theory of Agrell, as in that of most of those that had gone before him, was a willingness to bend the evidence to fit the reconstruction. Thus Karl Schneider instead sought to determine if the order could be seen to represent the spiritual beliefs of the ancient Germans. Yet much of Schneider's interpretation was based on semantic and etymological assumptions that are at the very least debatable. Such an approach meets (and probably oversteps) its limit in Wolfgang Jungandreas' attempt to link the order with the cosmog-

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[53] *Solomon and Saturn* ll. 84–145; W. W. Skeat, 'The Order of the Letters in the Runic "Futhork"', *The Academy* vol. 38, no. 968, Nov. 22, 1890, p. 477; and vol. 38, no. 970, Dec. 6, 1890, pp. 530–31; I. Taylor, 'The Order of the Letters in the Runic Futhork', *The Academy* vol. 38, no. 969, Nov. 29, 1890, pp. 505–6; H. Bradley, 'The Order of the Runes in the Futharc', *The Academy* vol. 38, no. 971, Dec. 13, 1890, pp. 566–67; K. von den Steinen, 'Prähistorische Zeichen und Ornamente', in *Festschift für Adolf Bastian*, Berlin 1896, pp. 249–88; F. Kluge, 'Runenschrift und Christentum', *Germania: Korrespondenzblatt der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts* 3, 1919, pp. 43 ff; *idem*, *Deutsche Sprachgeschichte*, Leipzig 1920, p. 228; E. Brate, 'Runradens ordningsföljd', *ANF* 36, 1920, pp. 193–207; Arntz, *Handbuch*, 1st ed., pp. 130–31.

[54] M. Olsen, 'Om troldruner', *Edda* 5, 1916, pp. 225–54 (monograph, Uppsala 1917); S. Agrell, *Runornas talmystik och dess antika förebild*, Lund 1927; *idem*, 'Der Urprung der Runenschrift und die Magie', *ANF* 43, 1927, pp. 97–107; *idem*, 'Die spätantike Alphabetmystik und die Runenreihe', *Kungliga Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, Årsberättelse* 1931–32, no. 6, pp. 155–210; cf. B. Andersson, *Runor, magi, ideologi*, Umeå 1997, pp. 171 ff.

raphical principles of Germanic mythology. Clearly none of these approaches were anything other than speculative, and for a time, the more restrained semantic theory suggested by Brate, despite limited acceptance at first, was similarly consigned to the realm of fancy.[55]

Yet the linguistic approaches applied since the war have scarcely proved less tendentious. Kabell noted that some of the staves seemed to be grouped according to their shape and as von Grienberger had noted at the turn of the century even by their phonological value. Jens Jensen and more recently Miller have gone much further attempting to show that the ordering of the runes is the result of some hitherto unsuspected grammatical patterning. Their patterns cannot possibly derive from the antique grammatical tradition, however, as concepts such as distinctions in voice (especially in the separation of sibilants) and lip-rounding are not to be found in the Greek tradition represented by Dionysius Thrax and Dionysius Halicarnassensis or the Latin as represented by Varro.[56]

It was not until the German philologist Seebold, probably inspired by a posthumously published investigation by Agrell, first connected Brate's thesis to a scrambled Roman abecedarium in 1986 that a solution began to present itself. Seebold has since used his explanation as evidence for a Faliscan origin for the runes, noting the graphical similarities of Faliscan to runic and the proximity of the famous Praenestine oracle described by Cicero (in a passage often linked to Tacitus' description of a Germanic divination) to the Pompeiian abecedarium. Yet Faliscan bears the same graphical similarities to runic as do all of the scripts derived from Etruscan. Moreover, similar abecedaria are found further north than Pompeii. A number have been found in the ruins of Ateste, the site of the earliest Venetic inscriptions.[57]

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[55] F. von der Leyen, 'Die germanische Runenreihe und ihre Namen', *Zeitschrift für Völkerkunde* NF 2, 1930, pp. 170–82; K. Schneider, *Die germanische Runennamen*, Meisenheim an Glan 1956; W. Jungandreas, 'Die Namen der Runen: Futhark und Kosmologie', *Onoma* 18, 1974, pp. 365–90.

[56] D. Thr. 7; D. Hal., *Comp. verb.* 14; Varro, *L.L.*(ed. G. Goetz and F. Schoell, Lipsia 1910) frag. 43; Von Grienberger, p. 304; Kabell, 'Periculum runicum', pp. 105 ff.; J. J. Jensen, 'The Problem of the Runes in the Light of Some Other Alphabets', *Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap* 23, 1969, pp. 128–46; Miller, pp. 70–76.

[57] Cic., *De div.* 2, 85; Tac., *Germ.* 10; *CIL* 4, 2541 (*et seq.*): AXBVCTDSER; A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, 4 vols, Paris 1879–82, IV, pp. 147–53; S. Agrell, 'Die Herkunft der Runenschrift', *Kungliga Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, Årsberättelse* 1937–38, no. 4, pp. 65–116; E. Seebold, 'Was haben die Germanen mit den Runen gemacht? Und wieviel haben sie davon von ihren antiken Vorbildern gelernt?', in B. Brogyanyi and T. Krömmelbein (eds), *Germanic Dialects*, Amsterdam 1986, pp. 525–80; *idem*, 'Die Herkunft der Runenschrift', in J. O. Askedal,

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Brate noticed in 1920 that the names of the runes seem to be semantically grouped in the rune-row. Now theories based in the semantics of the names of the runes are usually hampered because some of the etymologies and meanings of the names are disputable. Yet for others they seem quite clear; and of these a number are semantically paired. This pairing is most obvious in the designations for þ and a, \**þurisaz* and \**ansuz*, which clearly represent the giants and the Æsir, the opponents of the ON religious cosmology. And similarly, the typical poetical pairing of 'man' and 'horse' appears in the third *ætt*. A number of other pairs also seem evident, e.g. \**fehu* 'cow (livestock, cattle, chattels, wealth)' and \**ūruz* 'aurochs'; \**gebō* 'give/gift' and \**wunjō* 'joy'; and \**īsaz* 'ice' (perhaps representing winter) and \**jēran* 'fruitful part of the year'. Consequently, as the mostly acrophonic rune names surely represent some sort of mnemonic, Williams suggests that this pairing of the names may have arisen to supplement this principle. Yet more evidence for the paired nature of the ordering is also betrayed by errors in rune-row inscriptions. Not only is there an ambivalence as to the order of the last pair, d and o, the Kylver stone bears a reversed ordering of ï and p (the seventh pair). Moreover, the Lindkær/Over Hornbæck runerow, although it has undergone a large amount of graphical modification, quite clearly has swapped not merely the order within a pair, but of two sequential pairs (the eighth and ninth). This sort of variation is best explained by the mechanical principle of these pairs as first theorised by Brate. And indeed, it appears likely that this pairing underlies the selection of characters lost during the transition to the younger futhark. The staves g and w (the fourth pair) have disappeared from the first *ætt*, ï and p (the seventh) from the second, and d and o (the last) from the third. Furthermore, as m has assumed the form of the older ŋ in the Gørlev rune-row, the loss of e and the form of the older m also probably represents the loss of a pair (i.e. the tenth). Although these losses may well have been informed by

phonological considerations, they all also seem to have been lost as pairs. (Subsequently, one of the staves from the second *ætt* was moved to the third *ætt* in what seems to have been an attempt to retain parity between the number of staves in each *ætt* of the younger tradition.)[58]

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Granted that the order of the rune-row represents pairs, Seebold's connection with a scrambled Latin abecedarium becomes of importance as it is clear that the Pompeiian inscription is a reorganisation of part of the Latin abecedarium in pairs. Abecedaria are known throughout the Roman and Greek worlds, and in Etruscan practice as well. But inscriptions showing paired reorganisations of the Mediterranean abecedarium are rare. Yet not only are paired reorderings of an abecedarium quite commonly found at Este, they appear along with messages that explain why they have been inscribed.

North Etruscan abecedaria are only found at Este. Now the only complete abecedarium seems merely to mimic the middle Etruscan order, with the Venetic graph O (as O had subsequently been lost to Etruscan) placed at the end. But as letters such as B and C (and indeed Venetic II or IC) found in other North Etruscan epigraphical sites are not represented in this lone abecedarium, it cannot represent the full North Etruscan ordering which must have been in use at other sites. Yet there are other abecedarium tablets found at Este that bear an even more reduced abecedarium. In this ordering all of the letters representing vowels are omitted from their usual positions, and in a manner rather reminiscent of the order of Ogham, are sometimes placed singularly or in groups at the end (as is also sometimes the case with II or IC). These examples of the consonantal Venetic abecedarium are also often accompanied by inscriptions that are quite transparent in their meaning. A typical inscription is VZA.N. ZONA.S.TO... Considering that VZ- (representing *wd-*) is unlikely to represent a Venetic lexeme formed from IE etyma, it is obvious instead that this sequence repre-

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[58] A. Liestøl, 'The Viking Runes: The Transition from the Older to the Younger *fuþark*', *Saga-Book* 20, 1981, pp. 247–66; M. P. Barnes, 'The Origins of the Younger Futhark — A Reappraisal', in *Runor och runinskrifter*, Stockholm 1987, pp. 29–45; M. Stocklund, 'The Ribe Cranium Inscription and the Scandinavian Transition to the Younger Reduced Futhark', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 45, 1996, pp. 199–209; Williams, 'The Origin of the Runes', p. 217.

sents the Venetic designation for these consonantal abecedaria which begin with the order VZHΘ... Thus VZA.N. ZONA.S.TO... translates as 'this consonantal abecedarium is dedicated ...'.

More importantly there is another form of the VZA that appears in a quite different order. As shown by Lejeune, a number of the VZA inscriptions bear repetitions of a mostly fixed sequence of paired letters. Of these the most striking example appears on a bilingual Latin and Venetic inscribed bronze. The Venetic paired VZA is accompanied by a damaged but still quite legible message: [vza.]N[.] VO.L.T.[iio.n.]mno.s. [zo]NA.S.TO KE LA.Ψ[.s.to |ša.i.]NATE.I. RE.I.TIIA.I[.] O.P. [vo.]L.TIIO. [l]EN[o], 'This consonantal abecedarium Voltionmnos (i.e. the well guided) dedicates to and made for Šainate (the healer) Reitia, willingly and deservedly'. Reitia is clearly a Venetic deity, and so this inscription is a religious expression. The accompanying Latin inscription confirms this interpretation as it represents a common Latin dedication: ...]O[...] DEDIT LIBENS MERITO, '... given willingly and deservedly'. More striking, however, is an accompanying scrambled Roman abecedarium inscription on the same bronze. The Roman abecedarium, ...]RFQGPHOINKM[..., consists of pairs grouped from the centre of the usual Roman ordering: F, G, H, I and K are paired with (R), Q, P, O, N and M. The method of this ordering is clearly of the same type as the Pompeiian inscription referred to by Seebold: it is part of a paired centripetal (so called boustrophedon) or *athbash* type of arrangement of the Latin abecedarium.[59]

Now the Venetic pairings are clearly not *athbash* pairs. (They consist mostly of a consonant paired with R, N or L, with the perigram VH treated as one letter.) Yet the principle of reordering the abecedarium in pairs evidently is a Venetic practice. Although Lejeune has sought to relate the Venetic pairs to the system of interpuncts, and the ordering may well originally derive from Venetic spelling lessons, it is unambiguously linked in this inscription to the Latin *athbash* type of pairing. Practising the abecedarium in an altered order is derided by Quintilian in his *Institutio oratoria*, and some have interpreted the

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[59] M. Lejeune, 'Les Plaques de bronze votives du sanctuaire vénète d'Este', *Revue des études anciennes* 55, 1953, pp. 75–78; *idem*, 'Sur l'enseignement de l'écriture et de l'orthographe vénètes à Este', *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 66, 1971, pp. 267–98; *idem*, *Manuel*, pp. 190–97; Pellegrini and Prosdocimi, I, pp. 113–25 (Es 27); Fogolari and Prosdocimi, pp. 271–74. The full *athbash* ordering of the Latin abecedarium AXBVCTDSERFQGPHOINKML is represented in other finds from Pompeii: *CIL* 4, 5472, 6905 & 6907.

scrambled abecedaria in light of this practice. But although they were clearly used in, and may originally have been produced by ancient writing exercises, *athbash* pairs are also known to have mystical power in Jewish belief, the earliest mention appearing in the sixth-eighth century Babylonian recension of the Talmud. (Indeed the description *athbash* derives from the Hebrew pairings: אתבש, i.e. ATBŠ.) And the Roman *athbash* inscriptions show that such pairs were sometimes inscribed as adjuncts to, or as dedications, possibly because of a super-stition as to the beneficent powers of alphabet magic. The pairings evident in the order of the rune-row probably also derive from such an ordering, although it is not clear whether the paired ordering of the Germanic script originally derived from some antique educative prac-tice or a somewhat less mundane orthographic tradition. Clearly, *athbash* pairings are described in late antiquity by St. Jerome merely as devices of learning. Yet St. Irenaeus describes their employment in a mystical expression in his second century attack upon the Gnostics; and a similar motivation probably lies behind the appearance of the paired orderings both on the votive bronzes from Este and in the Germanic rune-row. Nevertheless, it is not the Venetic evidence for similar letter sequences or the motivation behind the pairing of the rune-row that indicates the implausibility of a Latin or Greek thesis for the runic script: it is the actual mechanics of this ordering.[60]

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The mechanical principle of the runic ordering was first described by Seebold. Yet as he sought for the runic prototype in a Faliscan con-text, he could not see that this principle instead unmistakably pointed further north. Now for a number of the staves the derivations from Mediterranean characters, as most theorists happily accede, are quite clear. Thus **f** must stem ultimately from archaic Greek vau, **u** similarly from upsilon, **h** from heta, **n** from nu, **t** from tau, **b** from beta etc.

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[60] Quint., *Inst.* 1, 1, 25; Iren., *Adv. haer.* 1, 14, 3; Hieron., *In Jerem.* 25, 26; *idem., Epist. ad Laetam* 107, 4; *Talmud, Shab.* 104a; A. Dieterich, 'ABC Denkmäler', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 56, 1901, pp. 77–105 [= *idem, Kleine Schriften*, Leipzig 1911, pp. 203–28]; J. G. Milne, 'Relics of Graeco-Egyptian Schools', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 28, 1908, pp. 121–22; A. E. R. Boak, 'Greek and Coptic School Tablets at the University of Michigan', *Classical Philology* 16, 1921, pp. 189–94; F. Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, 2nd ed., Leipzig 1925, pp. 17–20, 126–33, 137–38; H.-I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité*, 2nd ed., Paris 1950, pp. 212, 364; S. F. Bonner, *Education in Acient Rome*, London 1977, pp. 165–68.

Consequently, it is evident from the pairs that contain staves which can clearly be identified with Mediterranean forebears that a simple principle underlies the grouping of the staves in pairs in the rune-row. The staves **a, b, k, w, e, f, ʀ, h, d, i, ï, l**, are paired with **þ, t, r, g, m, u, s, n, o, j, p, ŋ** (or in a modern Roman alphabetical order: **g, j, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u, þ, ŋ**). Of course as runic **g** is obviously not based on one of the usual Mediterranean graphs for /g/, and the forebear of runic **j** has no recognised position in the ancient alphabetical order, staves derived from letters from the first half of the usual Mediterranean order are clearly paired with staves derived from characters from the second half. This is strikingly similar to the *athbash* principle governing the order of the Latin pairs found in the ruins of Pompeii and Ateste. Yet more importantly, it provides quite categorical evidence for the identities of some of the runic staves. As the usual practice with the addition of new characters to an abecedarium order is to place them at the end, one graph from each pair must stem from the first twelve characters of the abecedarium of the prototype script. Consequently, the identity of the thirteenth letter of this order also becomes apparent. Runic **m** is paired with a staff from the first half of the Mediterranean abecedarium (i.e. **e**). It must, therefore, be derived from a Mediterranean character from the second half of the usual alphabetical ordering of the prototype for the runes; and this letter can only be at the least the thirteenth character in this order. Yet as Latin has lost theta and changed zeta to, or replaced it with G, and classical Greek has similarly lost digamma, M and mu have become the twelfth letter in the ordering of Latin and Greek respectively. Thus the runes cannot have derived from the Latin or classical Greek alphabets.
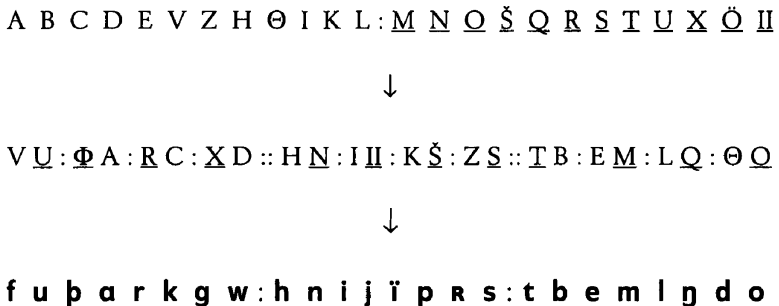
A  B  C  D  E  V  Z  H  Θ  I  K  L : M̲  N̲  O̲  Š̲  Q  R̲  S̲  T̲  U̲  X  Ö̲  II̲

↓

V  U̲ : Φ  A : R̲  C : X̲  D :: H  N̲ : I  II̲ : K  Š̲ : Z  S :: T̲  B : E  M̲ : L  Q : Θ  O̲

↓

**f u þ a r k g w : h n i j ï p ʀ s : t b e m l ŋ d o**

Figure 9: The paired ordering of the rune-row.

Φ A           E M̲*
T̲ B           F V̲
R̲ C           Z S̲
X̲ D           H N̲*
              Θ O̲*
              I I̲I̲(*)
              K Š̲*
              L Q̲*                    * sequential pairs

Figure 10: The ordering of the pairs.

This pairing also supports each of the derivations offered previously. The **d** rune, for example, paired with **o**, clearly stems from the first half of the abecedarium. And the staff **R**, paired with **s** must do the same. Yet the exact principle behind the grouping in pairs is not as readily evident as it is in the Latin sequences. Putative phonological and graphic pairings such as **i** and **j**, or **e** and **m** have been noted in past treatments. Nevertheless, the absence of a similar pairing of **w** with **u** or perhaps **f** with **ɑ** or **t** with **R** suggests that the phonological and graphic properties shared by these pairs are no more deliberate than are the orderings TD or OI in the Latin boustrophedon-pair sequences. An internal correlation to the pairing principle can be seen, however, if the pairs are assembled in alphabetical order: the pairs including A, B, C and D appear paired in the opposite order to the pairs formed with the subsequent letters from the the first half of the Mediterranean order. Indeed pairings such as Φ and A, T and B, and R and C suggest a method of coupling similar to that observed in the Latin examples: i.e. most of the letters from the very beginning of the Mediterranean ordering have been paired with those from the very end. Yet later pairings such as H and N, Θ and O, and K and Š instead suggest a system with a sequential ordering of the pairs derived from letters usually situated near the middle of the Mediterranean order; i.e. a type of *albam* (אלבם, ALBM) ordering, one also attested in antique alphabet mysticism. The sequential nature of these pairs may indicate that II (runic **j**) has replaced P in the original order. But given that the selection of pairs throughout the rune-row does not consistently follow a pairing system attested in another orthographical tradition, such an analysis must remain somewhat provisional. Sometimes pairs appear to be derived sequentially, others seem to show a variation of the centripetal principle of the Latin inscriptions. Un-

fortunately, apart from the emphasis on pairing, the exact mechanical principle behind the order of the rune-row remains obscure. Yet the evidence we have unmistakably points to a formation of the rune-row from the principle of pairing from alternate halves of the Mediterranean ordering known from *athbash* and *albam* sequences.

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The evidence from the pairs in the order of the rune-row, the characteristically North Etruscan method of the representation of the distinction in voice and fortition, and the separate representation of semivowels are incontrovertible evidence for the origin of the runes in a North Etruscan tradition. Of the twenty-six letters of the archaic Greek and Etruscan alphabetic traditions as represented on the tablet from Marsiliana d'Albegna, twenty-three have lasted into the Germanic script. Now the doubtful example of samekh or xi in the North Etruscan corpus of Whatmough was later shown to be a complete chimera upon the rediscovery of the spada di Verona, and so this letter must have been lost at a very early stage of the development of the Etruscan script in northern Italy.[61] And similarly, chi and psi, the two graphs for the velar aspirate of Greek and Etruscan appear to have merged in the North Italic tradition. North Etruscan P also seems to have been lost to runic, and it appears to have been replaced by the new letter for /j/. Yet as Makaev indicates, the direct North Etruscan ancestor of runic has yet to be isolated. Hammarström and after him Altheim favoured the West Raetic or Camunic alphabet of Sondrio, and the rock inscriptions from the Val Camonica which were first noted in the 1930s seemed to lend credence to such an origin. In recent years, however, given the Carnic inscriptions and the legends on the Negau helmets, Italian scholars such as Prosdocimi following Hempl, Feist and Haas have favoured a variety of the Venetic tradition as the most likely candidate.[62] But there is also evidence from

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[61] Schumacher, pp. 171–72 (VR-3).

[62] A. L. Prosdocimi, 'L'origine delle rune come trasmissione di alfabeti', in L. Agostiniani, V. Grazi and A. Nocentiri (eds), *Studi linguistici e filologici per Carlo Alberto Mastrelli*, Pisa 1985, pp. 387; G. Bonfante, 'The Spread of the Alphabet in Europe: Arezzo, Erz and Runes', in L. Bonfante, *Out of Etruria*, Oxford 1981, pp. 124–34; *idem*, 'Sull'origine delle rune', *Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rendiconti, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologie* 40, 1985, pp. 145–46 [both are reprinted in R. Gendri (ed.), *Scritti scelti di Giuliano Bonfante*, 4 vols, Alessandria 1986–94, IV, pp. 109–18, 129–30].

Steinberg and Manching of the more westerly traditions spreading beyond the Alps, and being employed by the inhabitants of central Europe in the late La Tène period. The characteristically Italic innovations such as the representation of /k/ by gamma and /f/ by vau rule out an archaic Greek source for the runes. Similarly, the typically North Etruscan innovations such as the use of the aspirate characters to represent a distinction in voice or fortition and the development of a character for /j/ preclude an origin in one of the southern Etruscan-based scripts such as Latin or Faliscan. The lack of early runic inscriptions from the south of Germania is surely only evidence that the runes made their way north before the establishment of the South Germanic polities at the end of the last century B.C. Faced with evidence for an orthographical-phonological fit superior to that of a Latin or Greek thesis, the maintenance of typically archaic practices in North Etruscan and runic, and moreover with evidence for specifically North Etruscan developments in the runic tradition, only a North Etruscan origin for the runes can possibly be correct.

As I have argued elsewhere, connections between Celtic and Germanic orthographical practice suggest a borrowing from a Celtic use of such characters. Now though this Celtic script does not seem likely to be that of the Lepontic tradition, archaeological finds from the 1970s indicate that Celtic peoples in Vindelicia and Bohemia quite probably did employ North Etruscan letters in the last two centuries B.C. Indeed it is quite clear from the German ethnography of Tacitus that the epigraphical remains from the border of Raetia and ancient Germany are not representative of what once existed, much as the record from Gaul does not correlate with the references to literacy found in Caesar and Diodorus Siculus. It seems likely that in a similar manner as they inherited many other technologies in the early Iron Age, invading Germani borrowed an Etruscan-based script in the employment of one of the Celtic peoples of central Europe that they conquered during the last two centuries B.C.[63]

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[63] Caesar, *B.G.* 1, 29; Diod. Sic. 5, 28; Tac., *Germ.* 3; O. Klindt-Jensen, 'Foreign Influences in Denmark's Early Iron Age', trans. W. E. Calvert, *Acta Archaeologica* 20, 1949, pp. 1–229 (monograph, Copenhagen 1950); G. Jacobi, 'Zum Schriftgebrauch in keltischen Oppida nördlich der Alpen', *Hamburger Beiträge zur Archäologie* 4, 1974, pp. 171–81; Krämer, *art. cit.*; V. Kruta, 'Celtic Writing', in S. Moscati *et al.* (eds), *The Celts*, London 1991, pp. 491–97; B. Mees, 'The Celts and the Origin of the Runic Script', *Studia Neophilologica* 71, 1999, pp. 143–55.

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The principal error in the recent works of runologists is either that after Moltke's groundless attack they have refused even to countenance a North Etruscan thesis, or have shown a lack of consideration of the cultural and historical realities of the period. Odenstedt's assertion that the Alpine peoples were backward or culturally stagnant betrays only his background as a specialist in the languages of the medieval period. And Morris' dismissal is based both in a reliance on Moltke and an ignorance derived from a lack of consideration of much of the scholarship on the North Etruscan testaments. Indeed the American's emphasis on the amber routes that made their way from north to south in the Bronze Age neglects the fact that the traffic of amber along most of the central European routes had dried up by the fifth century B.C., the date usually proffered as the *terminus post quem* for the occurrence of the Germanic sound shift given that the term *kánnabis* was first introduced to Greek at this time and thence was loaned to Germanic where it appears with shifted labials and velars (cf. OS *hanap*, ON *hampr*). Yet the runes must have been adopted from a southern tradition after the effecting of Grimm's Law as the appearance of staves such as **b** and **t** with the values /b/ and /t/ (and the names *\*berkanan* and *\*tīwaz*) attest. Moreover, it is not even clear whether Germanic intermediaries were involved in such trade at this early period as the amber clearly derived from the Pomeranian and Prussian coast, not the western more surely Germanic end of the Baltic.[64]

Treatments of this question in the last few decades may have manufactured a veritable *communis opinio Scandinavica* but it is one based in a rejection of the German runology of the Nazi period, and the convictions of a runologist whose consideration of the Mediterranean evidence was fundamentally compromised. The revival of Taylor's archaic Greek thesis derives from a similar discourse, and represents a historiographical regression similar to the recent Scandinavian recasting of the theory of Wimmer. (Indeed Hempl, the first American proponent of an archaic Greek thesis, had come to prefer a Venetic origin for the runes by 1908.)[65] Yet every argument that supports an archaic Greek thesis supports a North Etruscan thesis. As

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[64] Herodotus 4, 74; J. T. Waterman, *A History of the German Language*, 2nd ed., Seattle 1976, pp. 27–28; Jensen, pp. 236–37.

[65] G. Hempl, 'The Linguistic and Ethnografic Status of the Burgundians', pp. 105–6.

Hammarström had already shown in 1929, the runic inscriptions betray characteristically archaic features such as angular forms, an ambivalence to direction, a lack of distinction between the representation of geminate and simplex consonants, archaic and inconsistent methods of interpunction, and the tolerance of wide allographic variance.

Clearly, runology has for too long lacked dialogue with other traditions of epigraphical research. This is especially evident in the characteristic and sometimes imprecise terminologies employed by runologists. It also lacks the distinction between epigraphy proper and linguistic and textual analysis that has been established in the tradition of classical and pre-classical philological research. With the confirmation of Marstrander's thesis presented here, however, it is clear that runic epigraphy is a development of the North Etruscan tradition. The debt of runic to its southern precursors can best be seen in the characteristic features shared by both orthographies, many of which have in the past been incorrectly ascribed by runologists to incompetence, a lack of sophistication, or some poorly explained phonological development. Despite the limitations imposed by the obscure nature of the languages which they represent, many of the problems posed by the North Etruscan inscriptions have now been solved. And dialogue between runologists and experts in the more southerly traditions can surely only advance our knowledge of both runic and North Etruscan epigraphy. Indeed Arntz seems to have acknowledged this when he approached Whatmough to join the editorial board of his ill-fated *Runenberichte*. The availability of evidence from a related orthographical tradition offers the prospect that runologists will be able to discern more evidence for practices in runic continued from North Etruscan practice, and if the evidence is properly controlled deepen our understanding of the earliest inscriptions with their often baffling unexpected inflections and limited typological variation.