Re: Poster presentation of the research project "Runische Schriftlichkeit in den germanischen Sprachen – Runic writing in the Germanic languages (RuneS)"

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This project, funded by the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and based at the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen, deals with the runic script as a writing system within its historico-cultural context in a comprehensive way, focusing in particular on phonematic, graphematic and text-pragmatic aspects. The poster will present this new long-term project (2010-2025) conducted by the universities of Kiel, Göttingen, Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, and Munich.

Apart from editorial work, research on runic monuments has hitherto concentrated predominantly on understanding the text of the individual inscriptions and their historico-cultural interpretation. The runes as a writing system or a group of writing systems with different socio-cultural functions have rarely been in focus. Our project, in contrast, explicitly regards the runic script as a system evolved in various ways over the centuries, fulfilling different communicative functions within the historical societies it was used in. It is thus the aim of the project to describe and analyse runic writing in a comprehensive way, transcending the boundaries of the three groups of runic writing systems (older *fuþark*, younger *fuþqrk* and Anglo-Frisian *fuþorc*) traditionally adhered to in runological research and subjecting all three systems to uniform methods of investigation. In pursuing this perspective, the theoretical insights and categories of current writing research will be drawn upon.

There will be two principal domains of investigation. The first domain deals with the transfer of sounds into graphic characters. We will look at the system of sounds (phonematic system) in its relation to the system of graphic signs (graphematic system). Was the system of runic characters fitted "perfectly" to the sound system(s) of the Germanic languages? Did this apply in all cases and in all places? Were there any developments in the system of the graphic characters over the long period of its use, and if so, what were the causes? What were the effects of the changes in the phonemic systems of the different languages? A point that is still controversial concerns the existence of orthographic traditions and the influence from manuscript tradition.

The second domain deals with the relation of oral speech to written utterances. What kinds of utterances were written down? Previous interpretations of individual texts, and likewise editions, have attempted to classify inscriptions according to content, without this always being done consistently. Attempts at determining the functions of the script itself have for a long time revolved mostly around the opposition of magic/ritual vs. profane. Our aim is to develop a system that will allow for the description of the inscriptions as text types. This means that the complete runic monument – the inscription-bearing object itself, the text written on it, extra-runic accompanying characters, iconographic elements and ornaments, the order of the signs on the sign-bearing object as well as the historical circumstances of the find – need to be regarded in a synopsis, providing a basis for determining the function of each individual written document in the society it was produced in. In this way, a history of runic writing will emerge that presents a clear picture of the function of this script within the different cultures it was employed in.

These two domains may be related in different ways to the distinction between *Verschriftung* and *Verschriftlichung* introduced by P. Koch and W. Oesterreicher (1985). In both domains, the relationship between runic and Latin script will be of central importance. What were the effects of the long period of their co-existence? Were the two writing systems linked to specific cultural spheres or to different communicative domains? Was the nature of contact one of dialogue or one of demarcation? Did the use of the two scripts have a social basis – e.g., with regard to the hypothesis of two cultures (native vs. Latin)? Is it possible to trace any changes during their long co-existence?

The project is divided into three modules: Module I (2010-2013) forms the basis in that it

is devoted to the creation of a corpus that is as uniform as possible a) by complementing the existing editions and b) by designing a database structure that is founded on theoretical preliminary considerations with regard to Modules II and III: Module II (2014-2019) concentrates on the medial aspect, focusing on the relation of sound and written representation (here termed *Verschriftung*). Module III (2020-2025) is devoted to the text-pragmatic and functional aspects of writing (here termed *Verschriftlichung*).

In the following, a short overview of the work programme in the individual modules will be presented.

Module I: Editorial basics, theoretical-methodological preliminaries and creation of the corpus (2010 – 2013)

The aim of Module I is the creation of a sound, uniform corpus for all three writing systems, forming the foundation for the research on runic writing in Modules II and III. To this end, it will be necessary, for one, to bring together runological data from different editorial projects, both completed and in progress, and for another, to edit certain runic monuments for the first time, such as the Old English epigraphic inscriptions as a whole. In creating this corpus basis, a distinction will be made between epigraphic runic tradition (including inscriptions on bracteates) on the one hand, and non-epigraphic runic tradition (*Runica Manuscripta*) on the other, in order to account for the fundamentally different nature of these two main groups of runological tradition.

The new editions of the Old English epigraphic inscriptions and the inscriptions in the older *fuþark* will follow common guidelines, based on the structure of an editorial article designed by K. Düwel and H. Roth in a contribution in *Nytt om runer* (1986: 18ff.). The first part of the editorial texts contains information and data on the inscription-bearing object itself: This includes the description of the object, and the archaeological context and/or history of the find. Where possible, these data are complemented by information on the distribution, function and dating of the object. The subsequent runological part comprises the description of the inscription on the basis of an autopsy (where possible), as well as its reading and interpretation, a linguistic commentary, a typological classification and a functional categorization of the inscription. The two parts of the edition will ideally lead to an overall interpretation of the runic object. However, in some cases it will not be possible to decide on, much less bring together competing readings and the resulting interpretations into, a final overall interpretation; in these cases, the variant readings and interpretations will have to remain as such.

The corpus of the other type of runic tradition, the *Runica Manuscripta*, differs in kind from the epigraphic runic corpus. It is a large and manifold corpus. While there are hardly any examples of running text, manuscripts contain numerous lists of the complete rune row, sometimes furnished with Latin letters indicating the sound value and the rune names. The signs are not always identifiable runes, but sometimes invented (graphic) signs of rune-like shape. The names of scribes, commissioners or owners are also represented in runes or in the form of runic monograms. In some manuscripts, individual runic signs are used as abbreviations. The edition of the *Runica Manuscripta* will compile, describe and categorise the diversity of the entries, while at the same time identifying the "genuine" runic tradition.

The work programme in Module I also includes theoretical-methodological preliminaries in the domains graphematics and pragmatics, the aim of which is the development of a homogeneous model of description and classification for the study of the runic monuments. This will form the basis for the design of a database structure into which all the results of the subsequent research will be entered. After the completion of the editorial work, the first basic data on the individual runic texts forming the corpus of investigation in the Modules II and III will be fed into this database. The corpus will contain all runic texts in the older *fuþark*, the Anglo-Frisian inscriptions and the non-epigraphic *Runica Manuscripta*. Due to the large number of inscriptions in the younger *fuþark*, it will not be possible to include them all; instead, a selection will be made within Module I, based on the focus of the study, taking into account chronological, areal, functional and tradition-related criteria.

Module II: Runic Graphematics (2014 – 2019)

The aim of Module II is to document, describe and explain the process of runic writing and the development of the runic script, adapting and modifying the concept of *Verschriftung* introduced by Koch and Oesterreicher (1985), in the Germanic languages. (The origin of the runic script is, however, excluded from the investigation). This implies a complete, systematic and functional analysis of all signs recorded on the monuments of the different sub-corpora, as well as the connections between the runic writing systems and their relationship to the Latin writing system.

For each sign, i.e., for each intentional mark on a runic monument, we will attempt to identify a function, distinguishing first between extra-runic signs and runic signs proper. When the extra-runic signs have been identified, the runic signs proper will be analysed as to their place within the writing system. In a second step, the development of the writing systems as well as the system-internal and system-external reasons and triggers for this development will move into the focus of our research. For these steps, we will proceed from a distinction between older *fuþark*, younger *fuþqrk* and Anglo-Frisian *fuþorc*, based on insights from earlier research regarding the fundamental differences between these systems.

1. Steps of the analysis of the signs

Step 1: Distinction between different groups of signs

The following criteria will help to identify the runic signs: formal characteristics, spatial and chronological dimensions, interpretation of the text. This analysis will lead to four groups of signs: 1) runic signs (graphs), which will be treated in more detail below, 2) signs which formally correspond to runic signs, but in a given inscription are not assigned a function in the sense of a graph; instead, they seem to be used for a different purpose (possibly as abbreviations or *Begriffsrunen*); 3) the extra-runic signs, and 4) signs that are not unequivocally identifiable as runic or extra-runic, or whose reading is not clearly assignable to a specific rune.

The first group, the graphs, thus forms the basis of investigation for the analysis in Step 2.

Step 2: Compilation of a list of graphs

The graphs will first be described from a formal perspective on the basis of a specially designed descriptive model. Then they will be assigned a specific sound value.

The following example, taken from the habilitation thesis of G. Waxenberger (forthcoming) on the Old English *fuþorc*, may illustrate the method:

On the Chessell Down inscription (Isle of Wight, England, ca. 525-550) ᚠᚪᚠ : ᚠᛉᚱᛁ, rune no. 4 has been read as **s, f, w** and **l**. However, these readings are neither plausible from a runological perspective (**f** = ᚠ; **w** = ᚠ, **l** = ᚠ) nor from a linguistic standpoint. The variant of **s** would be the so-called *bookhand-*s. Page (1973: 50, fn. 6) has already pointed out that the sixth century is too early for this type of **s**. It is not until the **s**-graphs are charted according to allographs on a map that a clear picture emerges: With the exception of Chessell Down, the **s**-allographs of the 5th and 6th centuries belong to the so-called *diagonal* type (Waxenberger 2000) with three, four or more staves (ᛉ; ᛉ; ᛋ). It is only in the 7th – 9th centuries that the **s**-allograph ᛚ was used. For this reason, rune no. 4 should be classified as an allograph of **k** (inverted rune). This would also lead to a plausible reading, namely **ako : cœri** 'Ako : sword', *Ako* being interpreted as the name of the sword.

The result of this second analytical step in Module II will be a systematic compilation of the runic graphs (as determined in Step 1) in the database developed in Module I, and possibly also their charting on maps, both of which will form the basis for the analysis of the grapheme-phoneme-relationship in Step 3.

Step 3: Structural analysis of the runic sign systems

The purpose of a grapheme analysis is to investigate the relation of sign and sound with regard to the system as well as with respect to historical and regional variance. The assumption is that we are not dealing with a simple assignment of an individual sound to a sign, but rather that the two entities each belong to their own system, the graphematic and the phonematic system, respectively. The two systems are designed analogically in that they

distinguish, in the structuralist sense, between the realised sign or sound (graph or phone, respectively), on the one hand, and the abstract functional items of the two systems (grapheme or phoneme, respectively), on the other. Proceeding from our material, the starting-point for our analysis is the level of the concrete realisation, i.e., the assignment of signs (graphs) to sounds (phones).

The first step will thus be to examine the structure of the sound-sign-correspondences observed; four possible constellations are conceivable:

1. One graph corresponds to a single phone: 1:1-relation
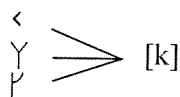   E.g., older *fuþark*: ↑ = [t] (dental, voiceless occlusive).

2. One graph corresponds to several phones: 1:n-relation
   E.g., younger *fuþqrk* (cf. Peterson 1996, sign-sound-correspondence of the Swedish Viking Age runic inscriptions)
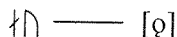
ᚠ ⟨ [u]
    [o]
    [y]
    [ø]
    [w]
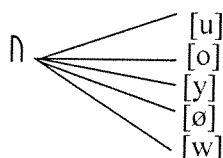
3. Several graphs correspond to one phone: n:1-relation
   E.g., older *fuþark* (this is merely a selection of the possible graphs)

⟨
ᚣ ⟩ [k]
ᚡ

4. A group of graphs corresponds to a phone (cf. digraphic spelling): multigraph relation
   E.g., younger *fuþqrk*

ᚼᚾ —— [ǫ]

The domains for further investigation that emerge from this classification include:
- Are the sounds represented by the graphs phonemes or allophones?
- If they are phonemes, does the relation correspond to the relation one grapheme : one phoneme termed the *perfect fit* by Derolez (1987, 1998)? To what degree do the different writing systems correspond to this ideal? What diachronic developments are observable?
- For the expected case that one sign (= rune) represents two or more allophones, in what way may our knowledge of the history of the represented language (stage) be of help in determining these allophones that are not written and therefore not discernible on the written surface level?
- If, on the other hand, we are confronted with the rare case of the representation of an allophone by a graph of its own, what are the historical reasons and conditions for this linguistically highly interesting development (e.g., for the Old English *fuþorc* possibly Old English-Celtic bilingual speakers or Scandinavian influence)?
- If a sound is represented by different signs: Are these actually different runes, as is the case, e.g., on the Franks Casket **gisl** with the rune *giefu* ᚷ, as opposed to the inscription on the Dover Stone + ᚸ ᛋ **slheard** *Gislheard* with the rune no. 12 ᚸ, both representing the sound [j]. Or are they variants of the same rune, here termed *allograph* (e.g., the different s-graphs mentioned above)? The reasons for such variation may be of an intra-linguistic or an extra-linguistic nature, e.g. regional or chronological variation or possibly a religious context (as is the case for the *star*-rune in Old English): Such factors have always played a crucial role in the dating and placing of runic inscriptions, e.g., the distribution over time and space of single-barred vs. double-barred h-rune. The communicative domain (religious vs. profane; public vs. private) is an important external factor, too; thus, it has been discussed for the short-twig and long-branch runes

of the younger *fuþqrk* that their distribution may be connected to the difference between official vs. everyday use (cf. Sanness Johnsen 1968).

Possibly this approach will lead to a more critical appraisal of the three runic "systems" older *fuþark*, younger *fuþqrk* and Anglo-Frisian *fuþorc*, as it may be necessary to postulate a more differentiated picture of the kind and number of "writing sytems" in use, depending on the communicative situation. Thus, for Old English, the rune row with 31 runes seems only to belong to a small geographical area, North-Western Northumbria, and a limited time period, the 8th-9th century.

Step 4: Analysis of non-phonic functions of runic signs
This phase is devoted to the function of runic signs other than the representation of sounds, e.g., the so-called abbreviatory signs or *Begriffsrunen*.

Step 5: Analysing the function of extra-runic signs
An important feature of our project is the systematic registration of all extra-runic signs on the runic monuments. The analysis of these signs will not only pave the way to the study of early writing traditions in the area of the Germanic languages, but will also require close cooperation with archaeology, art history and various historical disciplines.

Step 6: Interrelationships between the Latin and the runic script
In the context of the hypothesis of a Latin origin of the runic script, the influence of the shape of Latin letters on the design of the runes plays an important part. Conversely, an influence of the runic script on Latin letters, e.g., of the so-called Rhine-Franconian script type, has been postulated for funerary inscriptions of the Merovingian period of the 7th century (Düwel 1994). In England, the considerable number of monuments with both runic and Latin inscriptions (e.g., Ruthwell Cross, Franks Casket, the Lindisfarne Stones) points to a co-existence of both traditions. In Scandinavia, the Bergen inscriptions show that both Latin and Nordic texts were written in runes (cf. Marold 2000).

2. A comparative study of the runic writing systems

The comparison of the analysis of the writing systems and principles of writing found in the first section forms the basis for making statements on the chronological and spatial development of the runic writing of the Germanic languages and the interrelationships with the Latin script.

Questions in this section include: Have any new signs been added? Are any signs of the preceding system no longer in use? Have any signs been changed or substituted? Has the relation of the existing signs to the sounds represented by them changed? Have any new relations to sounds been added? Have existing relations to sounds been eliminated? Again, there may be system-internal as well as system-external reasons for changes: The use of parchment may have made it easier to vary and refine the rune forms.

The special chronological and spatial design of the project will allow us to identify and determine more precisely the reasons for the various reactions of the scribes to system-internal and system-external changes and to compare the different runic traditions with regard to such changes.

Module III: Runic text grammar and pragmatics (2020 – 2025)

It is the aim of Module III to determine the conceptual features of the runic texts, to find out their communicative function and to describe the changes in the use of the runic script from the perspective of social and cultural history. Extending and complementing the investigations of the medial side of runic writing in Module II, Module III will concentrate on the aspect we have termed *Verschriftlichung* (adapting the term introduced by Koch and Oesterreicher 1985, cf. also Oesterreicher 1993: 271f.).

This means that the following features and characteristics of runic writing will be included in the study:
* the type of the inscription-bearing object and its function in the social context,

- the location of the text on the object and the design of the text space,
- structural, lexical and pragmatic utterance features and their possible contribution in determining the function of the inscription,
- the interconnection of the individual texts through the formulaic structure of the inscriptions,
- affinity to certain text types and communicative domains,
- intertextual relations and references to text traditions in the Latin script and the Latin language.

The question is: What historico-cultural facts may be correlated with the choice of the means employed? The influence of the Latin writing tradition in the different phases of contact of the two scripts will form an important aspect of the study.

The analysis comprises all intentional marks on runic monuments: Besides the runic and extra-runic signs differentiated in Module II, these also include the accompanying Latin graphs. Runic and Latin graphs are both characterized by their linguistic function, commonly seen as forming the text of the runic monument. Extra-runic signs are used for the purpose of structuring or accompanying the text in different functions. In addition, the analysis will also focus on the spatial distribution of these groups of signs on the monument, as well as on the special characteristics and functions of the monument itself. All these data and their interplay are termed the *communicate* (cf. the term *Kommunikat* by Adamzik 2002 and 2004: esp. 41ff.).

This seemingly broad approach of a "text" grammar/pragmatics is the result of the project's declared aim − the identification of the communicative-pragmatic functions of the runic monuments − and of the realisation of the communicative relevance of all the data mentioned. This is due to the characteristics of written communication, which lacks certain data relevant to communication (e.g., paralinguistic and nonverbal signals). This lack may be compensated for by the special conceptual design of the linguistic utterance, the order of the signs and the choice of the sign-bearing object (cf. Ehlich 1994).

1. Steps of the text-grammatical and pragmatic analysis

The individual sections of analysis are oriented along the lines of the constitutive elements of the communicate mentioned above. The data form the basis for the determination of the communicative functions and for the assignment of the individual runic texts to text types. The first steps of analysis will be undertaken separately for the older *fuþark*, the younger *fuþąrk* and the Anglo-Frisian *fuþorc*. Subsequently, however, a homogeneous, comprehensive system of analysis specifically geared to all runic texts will be developed, based on communicative-pragmatic text functions (cf. Brinker 1983; [6]2005: 88ff.), further differentiated by, *inter alia*, communicative domains and text topics. The contemporaneous and adjacent Latin script will always be included in the investigation in order to determine the degrees of dialogue and/or demarcation of the two writing cultures.

The first section of analysis thus comprises four steps.

Step 1: Analysis of the text

The analysis here proceeds from the purely runic and the runic-Latin hybrid texts. The investigation is based on a wide definition of the concept *text*. Following Dressler (1972: 1), this is understood as "a complete linguistic utterance". The analysis of the texts will proceed from the extant readings and interpretations, possibly complemented by alternative readings and interpretations. The analysis of the linguistic form for each text comprises 1) the description of the syntactic-semantic structure, in order to make the inscriptions comparable, e.g., by isolating formulaic expressions; 2) the morpho-syntactic analysis of central lexical items or syntactic structures marking the text stylistically; 3) pragmatic characteristics (e.g., illocution types); 4) the textuality of the runic monuments, applying and modifying the concept of the language of proximity and the language of distance developed by Koch and Oesterreicher (1985: 27ff.).

Step 2: Analysis of the accompanying extra-runic signs

This step is concerned with the signs identified in Module II as extra-runic; these will now be further differentiated into signs with text-structuring function, the so-called separators,

signs with a referential function, and purely ornamental signs. For the analysis of the separators, a distinction will be made between: 1) signals for the beginning and end of the text, 2) signals for certain sections of the text, 3) signals for the unit sentence within the text, 4) signals for sentence sections within the text, 5) signals for individual syntagms, 6) signals between individual words, and 7) signals between segments of words. This classification may, however, be modified by the material. Seemingly "non-systematic" uses of separators will be investigated with regard to their significance for the determination of the topic and function of the text. The analysis of the separators will lead to a chronologically and spatially comprehensive overview over their uses. This makes it possible to isolate different stages in their development and to follow their evolvement in a historico-cultural context. Hypotheses regarding a general increase of the function as markers between individual words (on the background of the influence of Latin writing) (cf., e.g., Barnes and Page 2006: 64ff.) will be looked into, as will particular parallels between the use of runic separators and the way complex lexemes are written as one or two words in the Latin script (cf., e.g., Jörgensen 1973 and Seip 1954). Spaces merely interrupting the text marginally will also be taken into regard here, larger gaps between parts of a text being studied in Step 3.

Apart from text-related separators, the runic monuments also contain iconographic elements. The aim of this step of analysis will be to determine systematically the relation between text and image in the runic communicate. As a start, we will proceed from the following possible relations: a) the text is interpretable as a description or caption to the picture (e.g., the Wremen footstool), b) the picture takes up elements contained in the text (e.g., Jelling stone 2), c) the picture is a continuation of the text (e.g., bone 1 of the Weser rune bones), d) text and picture have no discernible relation to each other. Signs with a mainly ornamental function contributing to the topic, communicative domain or function of the communicate (e.g., cross ornaments or the snake ornaments typical of the Swedish Viking Age rune stones) or, *vice versa*, also those allowing for an ornamental interpretation of the graphemes are in the focus of the last section of this step of analysis. In the second case, the question arises as to a complementary, visual function of the text which does not or does not exclusively consist in its verbal message, but receives additional meaning or concealment by virtue of its ornamental effect.

Step 3: Analysis of the placement of the signs on the monument/within the text space

The runic text may appear on the runic monument in the form of its application as a structured text. This may happen, for one, if on the same side of the inscribed object, parts of the text are placed at larger intervals; it may, however, also be the case that different sides or segments of the same object are covered with text. As an example, we may again adduce Jelling stone 2, which presents three text sections on three sides; here, the spatial segmentation of the text mirrors its thematic structure and thus supports the results obtained on the basis of its linguistic form. In addition, the spatial design and the accompaniment of the text segments by succinct iconographic elements move two thematic sections (sides B and C) into the foreground, thus leading to a more differentiated appraisal of this communicate than would have been possible on the basis of the text alone. On the other hand, a pragmatic reading instruction, which could be interpreted as an indication of the text type of the inscription, may be understood from the text section **uþArAbAsbA** standing in isolation on one side of the Björketorp stone (Blekinge, Sweden), usually interpreted as meaning 'prophesy of harm' and functioning as a kind of heading to the inscription on the opposite side of the stone, where harm is threatened to befall anyone who damages the stone. Text sections are not only singled out by a special positioning on the runic monument, but also through its application in relation to accompanying extra-runic signs. Apart from the way aspects of textual content are emphasized through direct combination with referentially identical iconographic elements, the placement in relation to text-accompanying ornaments will also be taken into account. The position of the text with regard to its legibility is also an important factor: The fact that the inscriptions, e.g., on the Danish rosette fibulae of the 3rd century or on women's fibulae of the Merovingian period are to be found on the reverse side, whereas Latin inscriptions on fibulae of the same period are always to be found on the front, leads to a different interpretation of the function of the inscriptions: the runic inscriptions are interpreted as having a "contact function" (Brinker [6]2005: 127), whereas the Latin inscriptions were meant for the public (cf. Behrens 1950).

Step 4: Analysis of the inscription-bearing object

One of the characteristics of the runic texts (with the exception of the *Runica Manuscripta*) is that they are not written on "neutral" materials (such as parchment or paper), but rather on objects that have a material and socio-cultural meaning (cf. Herschend 2001: esp. 367), which is also taken into consideration in the analysis in order to include all documented signals of the communicative interaction. The analysis will concentrate on three aspects: 1) the material aspect (e.g., a text on a monumentally erected stone may have a different communicative relevance and belong to a different communicative domain than a text on a wooden stick); 2) the socio-cultural function (runic inscriptions are found on objects from the personal belongings of men and women, e.g., on fibulae, parts of belts, knives, etc., but also on objects such as bracteates, crosses etc., the cultural significance of which is included in the analysis of the communicate); 3) the date when the signs were inscribed: It makes a functional difference whether an object is inscribed in the process of its production or in the context of the burial of its owner.

2. History of the text types of runic inscriptions

The detailed analysis of the runic communicates and the development of a differentiated "text" type system will form the basis of studies with a historical and comparative orientation. The forms of the realisation of certain text types and types of communicates will be compared with regard to structural and formulaic similarities, so as to be able to demonstrate closer writing contact between different "runic regions". In doing so, the boundaries of analysis traditionally adhered to in research, i.e., between older *fuþark*, younger *fuþqrk* and Anglo-Frisian *fuþorc* as well as between the individual "national" runic corpora (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and English runic tradition), will be transcended. Contact with Latin writing will also be drawn on for developing an explanatory model of continuity and change within individual communicative functional groups, based on a three-phase model of assumed contact (to be modified as the investigation progresses):

Phase 1: Imitation or inspiration?: This contact phase is limited to the inscriptions in the older *fuþark*. Questions to be asked will include the following: What is the position of the earliest runic inscriptions in the context of contemporaneous Latin epigraphy? Is the Latin writing tradition copied or does it merely function as an inspiration for an autonomous, independent writing tradition fulfilling different functions in the social context?

Phase 2: Dialogue or demarcation?: In the second phase, runic and Latin writing exist alongside each other in the same linguistic and cultural sphere. In the regions with runic tradition, we find the following monuments: Germanic-language epigraphy in the runic script, Latin-language epigraphy in the Latin script, Germanic-language epigraphy in the Latin script, Latin-language epigraphy in the runic script, Latin-language manuscripts in the Latin script and Germanic-language manuscripts in the Latin script. This situation produces texts that are hybrid with regard to the medium and/or the language (e.g., the Ruthwell Cross), a special place being occupied by the *Runica Manuscripta*. Questions arising in the face of this parallel existence include: What were the aspects governing the scribes' choice of language and script? Was there a change in form and function of the runic texts? What was the role of the socio-communicative context (e.g., the different times and processes of Christianisation) in this phase of reconceptualisation and/or refunctionalisation?

Phase 3: Marginalisation and antiquarisation: In the third phase of the contact situation, finally, the use of the runic script gradually comes to an end. It is marginalised and reduced to an antiquarian context, before finally dropping out of use completely. As a consequence of the chronological graduation of the intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic changes in phase 2 of contact, these processes take place at different times in the individual regions of investigation.

As the different phases of runic writing were linked in manifold ways, only a comprehensive research project based on a systematic investigation of runic graphematics as well as runic text grammar and pragmatics will be able to provide deeper insights into fundamental questions regarding the earliest history and development of writing as a medium of communication.

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