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**Runic and Latin Written Culture:
Co-Existence and Interaction of Two Script Cultures
in the Norwegian Middle Ages**

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1 INTRODUCTION

When Latin writing finally reached Scandinavia sometime in the 11th century, it was met by a strong and well established runic writing tradition which had been in permanent use for over 800 years.¹ Latin script culture came in the wake of Christianity and church organisation, and the Latin alphabet was by this point of time already deeply rooted in social, political, and religious institutions in which it served as a pragmatic writing system. However, in spite of the powerful apparatus in the service of which Latin writing stood, the native script culture was not immediately superseded by the newly arrived script system. Instead, there evolved for a period of some 300 years a vibrant two-script culture which was characterised by the peaceful coexistence of runic and Latin writing. Runic tradition not only survived by the side of Latin script culture. It rather appears to have experienced an enormous upswing after the introduction of Latin writing, and the use of runes continued to flourish well into the 14th century.² This development proved to be unique in the European context in which runes had otherwise become negligible after the Latin alphabet had been implemented.

The important role which runic writing played in the Nordic Middle Ages and “the extent to which runes were used for everyday communications” in the same period was recognised not before large amounts of runic inscriptions were excavated from the soil of medieval Scandinavian trading towns from the mid-1950s onwards.³ The majority of medieval (i.e. after 1050) runic inscriptions known until then originated from an ecclesiastical setting: Of about 500 medieval runic inscriptions, some 370 were cut into the walls or woodworks of churches or found on church fixtures and gravestones; only some twenty-five came from medieval town centres.⁴ Therefore, the extensive finds of urban and secular runic inscriptions changed our picture of runic writing in the Middle Ages completely and led to a re-evaluation of written culture in medieval Scandinavia. In Bergen alone, some 660 runic inscriptions were gradually unearthed after the disastrous conflagration of 1955 had destroyed four medieval *bygårder* (manors) at Bryggen.⁵ These inscriptions date from the period circa 1150–1350, with their main concentration being from about 1250–1330; some are as late as the early

¹ Spurkland 2001a: 213; Spurkland 2001b: 121; cf. Knirk 1994: 170f.

² Spurkland 2001a: 3.

³ Knirk et al. 1993: 554.

⁴ Seim 1988a: 10; Knirk 1994: 172. The urban inscriptions stemmed from Bergen, Oslo, Tønsberg, and Trondheim, disregarding the circa forty inscriptions scratched into the walls of NIDAROS cathedral (N469–N506).

⁵ Hagland 1998a: 620. For an overview over the number of inscriptions found in other Norwegian trading towns, in the rest of the Scandinavia, and in its medieval catchment area, cf. Hagland 1998a: 619f. The *bygårder* destroyed were: Gullskoen, Bugården, Engelgården and Søstergården; each of them embraced several smaller buildings. For a detailed description and a map over the area, NIyR VI: 245–248.

1400s.⁶ In contrast to those inscriptions known until then, most of the new discoveries occur on rune-sticks (so called *rúnakefli*) which had no other function than that of a neutral writing material. In addition, inscriptions have been found on “bone, antler, leather (shoes), and pottery”.⁷ Also the subject matter of these urban inscriptions differs considerably from the earlier known material. They give insight into a broad spectrum of everyday communication, and almost anything conceivable of being put into writing is represented: There are private and business correspondences, ownership labels, religious and secular texts, poetry, writing exercises, and magical sequences.⁸ A considerable proportion of these runic inscriptions comprise runic texts in Latin.⁹ The finds from medieval town centres more than doubled the Norwegian corpus of later runes, and “[w]ith its present total of about 1400, Norway has as many registered medieval runic inscriptions as all other countries together.”¹⁰

The large amounts of runic inscriptions with a mundane and communicative function provide evidence that the Scandinavian Middle Ages (ca. 1100–1500) were marked by the contemporaneous presence not only of two languages, i.e. Latin and the vernacular, but also of two distinctive script cultures. Obviously, runes lived on throughout the Middle Ages not only as antiquarian pastime among clergy but as a convenient means of communication among commoners and merchants. Although the two script cultures represented entirely different traditions and mentalities, they came into close contact and mutually inspired and influenced each other. In a society with a steadily increasing number of people acquainted with native as well as Latin writing traditions, particularly in the context of the religious and administrative activities of the Church, there emerged among Scandinavians some bilingual and digraphic competence.¹¹ This proficiency inevitably led to overlapping and interference between the two traditions and, thus, found expression in the runic epigraphic corpus and to a degree also in literate manuscripts.

The present paper deals with the nature of the coexistence of the two script cultures. My main concern is to explore the medieval runic corpus with regard to the manner in which runic tradition dealt with the many stimuli coming to Scandinavia with the Latin alphabet and Latin script culture. I intend to pursue a slightly different approach than has been done in previous research. My objective is not to reconfirm the influence which Latin script culture undeniably exerted on runic writing. Consequently, I am neither interested in repeating the

⁶ Knirk et al. 1993: 553; Spurkland 2001a: 187.

⁷ Seim 1988a: 11; Knirk 1994: 172.

⁸ Spurkland 2001a: 187.

⁹ Cf., for instance, Knirk 1998.

¹⁰ Knirk 1994: 172; Knirk et al. 1993: 553. Cf. Hagland 1998a: 620: “The major portion of discovered medieval runes originates in Norway. At the present stage a total of ca. 1500 inscriptions are known from that area, [...]”

¹¹ Gustavson 1995: 205f.; Spurkland 2004: 334.

diachronic ‘success story’ of Latin writing becoming the sole system of notation in the North. I shall, on the contrary, adopt a synchronic perspective and analyse how runic tradition took advantage of the presence of another script system. I seek to demonstrate that runic writing neither passively yielded to nor slavishly copied from the new script culture which from the 11th century onwards gained permanent foothold in Scandinavia. Rather, runic tradition responded to and sovereignly dealt with the impulses springing from Latin writing: Rune-carvers took up particular elements and exploited them for their own benefit and, what is even more important, on the basis of the runic tradition’s own premises. Thus, although runic tradition allowed for interference with the newly arrived script culture, it by and large maintained its characteristic features and independent status in the comparatively long period of its coexistence with Latin script culture.

Hence, my point is not to show that and how Latin written culture exerted influence on or even dominantly replaced runic writing. I rather try to show that and how runic tradition handled the stimuli creatively and developed them in due consideration of its own historic character and its prerequisites inherited from the Viking and older runic tradition. My approach is of a systematic and cultural-historical nature. I aim to illustrate that the contact of the two script cultures occurred and found expression on three different levels of runic tradition: First, modifications are visible on the level of the script system, i.e. rune-row, itself. Second, interferences can be identified on the level of orthographical and other writing standards. And third, the meeting of the two script cultures is clearly reflected on the level of media and content, i.e. in the material employed for runic inscriptions and the subject matter communicated in them. I shall expose the independent and confident way in which runic tradition treated Latin script influence on these different levels and document my findings on the basis of comprehensive case studies. As already indicated, the period of investigation is the Scandinavian Middle Ages, i.e. the post-Viking period. My focus lies on the epigraphic runic material from medieval Norway, particularly from Bryggen and other urban centres. In order to allow for comparison, I shall also consider several Swedish and Danish medieval runic inscriptions. For obvious reasons, the manuscript corpus cannot be taken into account in detail in this paper. I shall, however, in due course refer to the manuscript tradition and point out particular practices of the scriptoria where necessary for my own argumentation.

The paper is arranged according to the following structure: In the first main chapter (ch. 2), I shall give an overview of the history of runological research from early modern times until the present day. This survey also comprises an illustration of the earliest attempts of a scholarly

treatment of runes in the Middle Ages. My intention here is to expose the varying foci and changing perspectives and paradigms of runological studies over the course of time. The chapter ends with a synopsis of the most recent status of runological research.

In chapter 3, I shall deal with methodological and terminological considerations. The first part concerns methodology in runology in general and the status of runology in the context of academic disciplines. I shall then discuss questions concerning transliteration and identification of runic inscriptions followed by definitions of particular terms and concepts used in this paper. The last part of this chapter considers the relationship of runic and Latin written culture in the Middle Ages from a theoretical viewpoint. I shall for this purpose depart from and analyse the concept of complementary distribution suggested by Terje Spurkland as a descriptive model for the relation between the two script cultures.¹² I intend to define the relationship between the two systems more adequately and embed the two traditions in the context of medieval Scandinavian script culture in general. The discussion, thus, also provides the conceptual and historical background for my investigation.

In chapter 4, I shall analyse the various levels of impact as outlined above: In chapter 4.1, I shall explore the modifications with regard to the rune-row and the inventory of runic characters in the late Viking and early Middle Ages. To begin with, I shall expose the different strategies which were employed to increase the number of runic characters to a theoretical total of about twenty-three signs. Then, I shall consider the various theories and propose my own interpretations concerning probable motivations behind the differentiation of runic characters. These reflections include an appraisal of the relationship between the two sets of characters. I shall also consider the probable function as a role model of the Latin alphabet and reassess the deficiency allegedly felt on the part of the rune-carvers in the presence of Latin script, especially when attempting to render Latin in runes.

The discussion in chapter 4.2 investigates orthographical and other writing standards in the medieval runic corpus. I am concerned to demonstrate that orthographical conventions experienced an intensification rather than reformation under the influence of Latin writing. Most of these practices had occurred in runic writing already in earlier periods, even if they had not been employed on a regular basis. Only a very small number of instances can be clearly attributed to the influence of Latin conventions. I attempt to find possible explanations for the presence of particular practices before the arrival of Latin writing. Furthermore, I attempt to define their dependence on the conventions of the newly arrived script system. Another aspect relates to the transference of typical runorthographical practices to runic

¹² Spurkland 2001b, specifically p. 123.

inscriptions in Latin. In addition to other evidence, these substantiate my assertion of an independent medieval runic tradition which was strong enough to exert influence on Latin orthography, at least within the runic corpus.

In chapter 4.3, I shall address the variety of writing material employed in medieval runic writing and the wide spectrum of subject matter communicated among rune-carvers. I have chosen to discuss these two aspects under one heading because they in at least some instances form a unity and can then not be treated separately; this pertains, for instance, to grave monuments and memorial formulae. The level of what I have called “Form and Content” is clearly the one on which influence from Latin script culture as well as Christian contexts becomes most evident. The rune-sticks will be discussed as representing a dimension of runic writing for which there is hardly any evidence from previous runic periods. For that reason, their analysis is followed by some reflections on conceptual changes in the perception of writing among rune-carvers. After a short introduction, each of these subchapters comprises a survey of the state of affairs concerning the particular aspect in question – script system, orthography, media and content – in the earlier runic and Viking period, and ends with a preliminary conclusion. The paper closes with a summary conclusion and perspectives for future research.

2 CHANGING PERSPECTIVES IN RUNOLOGICAL RESEARCH: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The study of runes as a full-value and functional writing system and a convenient everyday script represents a relatively recent subject matter in runology. Thinking about runes in that specific way did in fact not start on a broader scale before the mid-1950s when extraordinarily rich finds of runic inscriptions came to light during archaeological excavations in the centres of medieval Scandinavian trading towns.

Previously, and partly up to the present day, runic research had been dominated by various preconceptions and false assumptions concerning runes and their function. The most persistent of these was probably the attribution of an ultimately magical character to runes and runic script. Another one consisted in the belief that runic writing was superseded by Latin script within a short period after its introduction in Scandinavia and, eventually, confined to the realm of antiquarian pastime. The huge corpus of medieval inscriptions recovered in several excavations, however, witnessed not only a practical use of runes in workaday communication. It also revealed that runic script flourished in the Scandinavian Middle Ages side by side with the Latin alphabet and entered into a dialogue with the newly arrived script culture.

In the following section, I shall give a summary overview of the altering positions and perspectives in runological research from its beginnings until today. The object of this synopsis is twofold: First, I shall chronologically outline the most significant issues pursued in runology over the course of time. I shall point out how these approaches greatly oscillated between preconceived assumptions about runic script and prevalent scholarly discourses of the time. Naturally, the lines of reasoning were also highly dependent on the runic data available at different periods. Second, I aim to highlight those subject matters which are of particular relevance for the objective of the present paper. In order to prepare the ground for my following investigation, I shall therefore be more detailed in my analysis of these. I shall include in my discussion an account of medieval learned discourses on runes; these evince a treatment of runes which is of special interest with regard to the way scholars dealt with runic script at the same time when it was still in practical use in some places.

2.1 Prelude: Medieval Theoretical Treatments of Runes

As early as the 14th century, the first theoretical treatments of runes in Icelandic manuscripts appeared. These discourses cannot be equalised with runological research in a modern sense. Yet, they testify to a markedly scholarly concern to analyse and systemise their subject matter in a way that distinguishes them from the practice of rune-carving which was still alive in some regions of Scandinavia at this time. On the other hand, they also reflect contemporary conceptions of runes for which there otherwise is no explicit evidence. In their approach, they reveal an ultimate awareness of runic script as a phonetic writing system.

In the *Third Grammatical Treatise*, Óláfr Þórðarson Hvítaskáld discusses *inter alia* the runes and their relationship to the Old Norse phonetic system.¹³ In a section entitled “Málfræðinnar grundvöllr”, the “Foundation of Grammar”, he describes the runes with their characteristic sound values and rune-names. The runes are here presented not in fuþark order, but classified into vowels, consonants (discerning from them the half-vowels), and diphthongs. Within this system of classification they are catalogued according to their place of articulation in the speech apparatus. In the course of his account, Óláfr compares the possibilities to render particular phonemes in runes to the potential of the Latin alphabet; he also refers to the relationship of individual runes to Latin (and Greek) letters.¹⁴ Moreover, he lists not only the sixteen primary runes of the fuþark but discusses some of the additional ones (as, for example, Ƙ Ƣ) and points to the practice of dotting runes (as with † e). Thus, the *Treatise* documents that the knowledge of runes as an efficient phonetic (writing) system was not only present among rune-carvers but also in scholarly circles in the early 14th century. The phonetic approach was even recognised as a mode of classification.

The Norwegian and Icelandic Rune Poems may as well be reminiscent of this knowledge.¹⁵ In addition to listing the sixteen runes of the younger rune-row in fuþark order, the poems also provide each rune with an explanatory stanza. These stanzas refer to the runes’

¹³ The *Third Grammatical Treatise* is extant in four medieval manuscripts, two of them being only fragmentary. The two main manuscripts are AM 748 I b 4^o (ca. 1300–1325; with the section on runes on ll. 7r–9r) and AM 242 fol., *Codex Wormianus* (ca. 1350; with the section on runes on ll. 42v–43r), cf. Heizmann 1998: 515; Krömmelbein 1998: 31–34.

¹⁴ Cf. Krömmelbein 1998: 60–73.

¹⁵ The Norwegian Rune Poem has been tentatively dated to the late 12th/early 13th century. It survives, however, only in two late 17th-century paper transcripts (one of them by Árni Magnússon) and as a reprint in Ole Worm’s *Runic seu Danica literatura antiquissima etc.* from 1636. The Icelandic Rune Poem probably derives from the 13th century and is extant in numerous manuscripts from the 15th century onwards, cf. Düwel 2008: 193f. The manuscript texts deviate considerably. Thus, we cannot safely speak of one Icelandic Rune Poem but rather of a whole tradition concerned with the circumscription of the rune-names, Bauer 2003b: 58; cf. also Page 1998. On the Norwegian Rune Poem, cf. Page 2003. On the Rune Poems in general, cf. Derolez 1954: xxvi and Düwel 2008: 191–196.

names and they probably served as mnemonic devices to memorise the runes' basic sound values; these were revealed by the rune-names on the basis of the acrophonic principle.¹⁶ In contrast to the *Third Grammatical Treatise*, the presentation of runes in the Rune Poems might be regarded as a mere recital of runic knowledge. They lack a deliberate reflection on the runes as a phonetic writing system.

As is documented by the extant literary material, runic knowledge continued to be passed on in manuscripts and the general acquaintance with runes never got lost as a whole. In addition to the texts treated above, numerous manuscripts (mostly law codes) with runes or alphabetic rune-rows in the margins survive from the early 14th century onwards.¹⁷ The particular concept of runes as a phonetic writing system and practical everyday script, though, seems to have perished in the course of time. Runes were increasingly ascribed the character of a secret script and there is evidence that they indeed were sporadically used as such in the 1500s.¹⁸ On the whole, runes became the subject matter of an antiquarian interest in alphabets and secret writing. This is certainly the context for numerous systematic compilations of rune-rows, alphabets, and secret scripts in later paper manuscripts.¹⁹

2.2 Early Modern Runological Research

Profound attempts in runology on an academic level were launched in the 17th century. The pioneers of runological research were Johan(nes) Bure(us) (1568–1652) in Sweden and Ole Worm (1588–1654) in Denmark, which then included Norway. At this early stage, runology was strongly influenced by the then current Biblical views on history and culture on the one hand, and patriotic efforts to establish cultural supremacy on the other.²⁰ In this search for cultural identity also known as the Nordic renaissance, scholars claimed a Biblical age for the inscriptions and tried to locate the place of origin of runic script on national Swedish or Danish territory respectively.²¹

¹⁶ Cf., for instance, Knirk et al. 1993: 546.

¹⁷ Heizmann 1998: 521 emphasises that the functions of these rune-rows are difficult to assess.

¹⁸ Cf. Hagland 2006.

¹⁹ Heizmann 1998: 522.

²⁰ Looijenga 2003: 3.

²¹ Hunger 1984: 297f.; Looijenga 2003: 2; Düwel 2008: 217.

Following a royal edict, Ole Worm collected reports on runic monuments submitted by parish priests.²² These endeavours climaxed in his *Danicorum monumentorum libri sex etc.* from 1643. In this monumental work, Worm described and depicted all 144 then known runic inscriptions from Denmark, Norway, and Gotland.²³ Both this edition and Worm's earlier book *Runic sea Danica Literatura antiquissima, vulgo Gothica dicta* from 1636 were crucial in arousing a broader public's interest in runic inscriptions.²⁴ The *Danica monumenta* have, like Johan Göransson's *Bautil* from 1750 and other contemporary reproductions, been useful up to the present day since they provide descriptions of many now lost runic monuments.²⁵

From the 17th century onwards, attempts were undertaken to relate the origin of the runes to other ancient alphabets. Runes were then believed to have been modelled on the Hebrew alphabet. Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans were thought to have borrowed their letters from the Nordic sixteen-rune futhork which in turn was interpreted to be older than the futhork based on twenty-four characters.²⁶ It was Johan Gustaf Liljegren (1791–1837) who in his *Runlära* (1832) first proposed that the runes had been influenced by the Latin alphabet. Liljegren, though, was still convinced that runes (in the Hälsinge variant) were originally Scandinavian and that Latin influence was of a younger date.²⁷ It was the Dane Jakob Hornemann Bredsdorff who in 1822 first recognised that the twenty-four-character futhork was older than the rune-row consisting of sixteen characters.

Scholarly attention was not only drawn to epigraphical runic material. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Humanists began to recover an increasing number of manuscripts preserving miscellaneous runic evidence. These runic entries in medieval manuscripts termed *runica manuscripta* were subsequently described and edited in printed reproductions.²⁸

Runes were used in otherwise Latin-lettered manuscripts predominantly as additional signs which served editorial purposes. They occur as supplementary letters, reference marks,

²² Moltke 1985: 504.

²³ These descriptions comprised transliterations, Latin translations, comments on the language, and further details. A supplement to the *Danica monumenta* followed seven years later. Cf. Düwel 2008: 218; Moltke 1985: 504.

²⁴ Spurkland 2001a: 212.

²⁵ Düwel 2008: 218. A famous example are the Golden Horns of GALLEHUS, one of which had a runic inscription (DR12 †U). Found in 1639 and 1734 respectively, the horns were stolen from the Royal Chamber of Art (*Det kungelige Kunstskammer*) in Copenhagen in 1802 and melted down immediately. In the same year, they gave rise to Adam Oehlenschläger's famous poem 'Guldhornene' which is generally accepted as the starting point of romanticism in Denmark, cf. Düwel 2008: 219f.; Spurkland 2001a: 32–36.

²⁶ Düwel 2008: 217; Looijenga 2003: 2.

²⁷ Cf. Looijenga 2003: 3; Krause 1970: 11.

²⁸ Düwel 2008: 219 discusses the most prominent examples of these early modern editions. For a review of the history of the study of *runica manuscripta* and a description of the gradual collection of the material, cf. Derolez 1954: xxxiii–lv. Although Derolez is primarily concerned with the "English tradition", he refers as well to research in Scandinavia and the Scandinavian *runica manuscripta* tradition (specifically pp. xxxvi and xlii).

and abbreviations or ‘ideograms’; they were also employed for short notes, fuparks, and runic alphabets in the margins.²⁹ Furthermore, runes were treated in manuscripts on the level of subject matter, mostly in the context of alphabet history and secret scripts. Naturally, also the Rune Poems mentioned above form a part of this tradition. Apart from two outstanding instances surviving from Scandinavia, runes occurred in manuscripts not as a regular book script. The more prominent of these cases is the so called *Codex Runicus* (AM 28, 8°). This early 14th century manuscript from Denmark preserves *inter alia* the text of the Scanian Law written entirely in runes.³⁰

Primarily fuparks and alphabetical rune-rows became the concern of scholars dealing with alphabets in general. At this early stage, letters or characters of a different origin were frequently mistaken for runes, or alien names were borrowed for both individual runes and runic alphabets, often without recognising the runes as such.³¹ While early researchers of *runica manuscripta* like Ole Worm made no “distinction between manuscript and epigraphical runes”³², an evaluation of manuscript runes as secondary began to take hold in the 19th century and prevailed well into the 20th century.³³

2.3 The 19th Century: The Beginnings of Modern Runology

Notwithstanding all previous painstaking attempts in runological studies, one cannot speak of academic research in runology in a modern sense before the 19th century. As for many other academic disciplines, this century represented the epoch in which extensive endeavours were undertaken to compile ample material collections. These efforts culminated in the initiation of the first national corpus editions of runic inscriptions. Otherwise, runological research was for the most part still dedicated to solve the question of the origin of the runes.

²⁹ Derolez 1954: xxiv–xxvi summarises and describes the various types of occurrences of runes in manuscripts that justify a classification as *runica manuscripta*.

³⁰ *Codex Runicus* contains also the oldest recorded Danish melody (l. 100r), cf. Thorsen 1877. The other text written entirely in runes is a religious one, *Planctus Mariae/Mariaklagen* (Cod.Holm.A120; ca. 1325), cf. Brøndum-Nielsen/Rohmann 1929.

³¹ Derolez 1954: xxxivf.

³² Derolez 1954: xxxvii and xli.

³³ Runes within literary contexts seem to have received major attention only in recent times, at any rate as regards the Scandinavian manuscript tradition. *Runica manuscripta* in Icelandic parchment manuscripts were first treated comprehensively by Bæksted 1942. Heizmann 1998 predominantly discusses Icelandic paper manuscripts; he also adds some occurrences of *runica manuscripta* on parchment which have been discovered only after Bæksted published his book. Bauer 2003a and 2003b discuss the Rune Poems. Cf. also Bauer 2006; Seebold 2006; and Düwel 2008: 189–196. For the “English tradition”, cf. Derolez 1954, 1964, and 1991; Page 1994; Parsons 1994.

The task to collect as much runic data as possible has, as I have indicated earlier in this paper, been one aim of runological research from the 17th century onwards. Although the earliest works like Worm's *Danica Monumenta* attempted a comprehensive description of their subject matter, most of the 18th and 19th century collections merely accumulated the material available without subjecting it to critical investigation and systematic classification.³⁴ A change in attitude towards the material can be observed in the emergence of the first national corpus editions of runic inscriptions in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark in the last decade of the 19th century.³⁵ Of course, these as well were the results of the collective efforts of the 19th and earlier centuries. In contrast to those previous attempts, though, they are characterised by the determination to describe the already abundant material in detail and systemise it according to consistent principles. I shall return to the corpus editions, their structure, and their principles of classification in chapter 3.³⁶

As far as the subject matter of scholarly debate is concerned, runology in the 19th century concentrated, as has been mentioned above, mostly on the issue of genesis. The genetic approach tried to identify the alphabet on which the runes had been modelled and to answer the question of geographical provenance. Naturally, the acceptance of one or another model alphabet has consequences as to the place of origin and the tribes who might have been responsible for the development of the runes.

An evaluation of these issues necessitates a chronological classification based on the oldest artefacts commonly accepted to bear runic inscriptions. These are the VIMOSE comb (DR207, ca. 160 AD) from the Danish island of Fyn and the spear-head from ØVRE STABU (KJ31, ca. 180–200 AD) from Toten in Oppland, Norway.³⁷ As writing systems are assumed to take a period of formation of about 100 to 200 years before the first surviving instances,³⁸ an origination around the birth of Christ has been generally agreed upon. This chronological classification may be regarded valid as long as no inscriptions turn up which can be ascribed to an earlier date.³⁹

³⁴ In this context, George Stephens' four-volume publication *The Old-Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England*, London/Copenhagen 1866–1901, is often cited, cf. Düwel 2008: 220; and Looijenga 2003: 3f.

³⁵ Düwel 2008: 221.

³⁶ Cf. pp. 24–27.

³⁷ Cf. Seim 2004: 125f.

³⁸ Rix 1992: 439.

³⁹ The German MELDORF fibula, dated to ca. 50 AD, has caused much debate. It contains what might be runic or Latin characters and no consensus could be accomplished so far, cf. Düwel/Gebühr 1981; Düwel 2008: 23f. If the inscription on the MELDORF fibula indeed is runic, a new *terminus ante quem* for the invention of runic script has to be taken into consideration.

Three major positions can be distinguished concerning a probable model alphabet. All of these relate the older futhork to one or another Mediterranean alphabet: Latin, Greek, or Etruscan.⁴⁰ In addition, derivations from a combination of two or even all three of them have been suggested. The criteria on which assumptions were (and still are) based comprise both formal resemblances and phonetic correspondences between runic characters and letters from the proposed model alphabet.⁴¹ All three theories have found their supporters up to the present day. Even though general consensus has not yet been accomplished, the Latin theory still seems to be the most widely recognised.⁴²

Another area under discussion pertains to the circumstances under which runes might have come into existence. Theories of the 19th and early 20th centuries mostly associated the origin of the runes with what has often been called a *magico-religious* background.⁴³ This line of interpretation has never entirely lost its charm, although it is not sustainable undisputedly on the basis of the oldest runic inscriptions.⁴⁴ Most of the earliest inscriptions are too short to allow for any far-reaching conclusions. For the most part, they seem to represent memorial inscriptions and profane statements of ownership, or references to manufacturers.⁴⁵ While individual words may possibly be ascribed to a magical or cultic context, the inscriptions do not support the notion of an ultimately magical nature or cultic function of runic script.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ The first well-grounded theory claiming that runic characters were derived from Latin capitals (namely those of the Roman Imperial Era) was put forward by the Danish scholar Ludvig F.A. Wimmer in 1874. Occasionally, also a Celtic intermediate was taken into consideration. The Greek hypothesis was offered by the Norwegian Sophus Bugge in 1899 and was further developed by the Swede Otto von Friesen in 1904. Von Friesen regarded the Greek cursive minuscule script of the 3rd century AD as the model for the runes. A third theory, first tentatively proposed in Germany in 1856 by Karl Weinhold, claimed an origin in Venetian writing which is a North-Italic variant of the Etruscan alphabet. It was the Norwegian linguist Carl J. Marstrand who again proposed a North-Italic origin of the runes in 1928. This theory was based upon the fact that around the birth of Christ several archaic Etruscan alphabets still existed in northern Italy and the Alps which resembled the runes graphically. Cf. Düwel 2008: 176f.; Williams 1996: 212; Looijenga 2003: 3f.

⁴¹ Cf., for instance, Krause 1966: 7.

⁴² Düwel 2008: 175–177 summarises the theories put forward in their various specifications from the 19th century and up to the present day and discusses the prominent problems in current research. See also Knirk et al. 1993: 545; and Derolez 1954: xxvii–xxxii.

⁴³ These assumptions were to a great extent based on the *notae* ('signs') mentioned by Tacitus in *Germania* X, cf. Fuhrmann 1971: 9, which were interpreted to designate runes, cf. Düwel 2008: 178. Another line of argumentation refers to the **ek erilar**-inscriptions as, for example, the BRATSBERG fibula from Telemark in Norway (KJ16). The meaning of the word *erilar/lirilar* could not be decoded conclusively so far, but has often been translated with "runemaster" in a magical sense of the word. The word has been associated both with the Old Norse title *jarl*, which was supposed to have changed meaning from a religious to a secular sphere, and the Germanic Herule tribe. None of these derivations is etymologically convincing, cf. Spurkland 2001a: 60–62.

⁴⁴ Recent representatives of *magico-religious* interpretations are, for instance, Höfler 1986 and Forster 1988: 60. The latter stresses the mnemonic function of early writing systems, including early runic script, within a context in which writing was regarded as "a religious act". Nielsen KM 1985 presents a survey of the history of research in this field of study.

⁴⁵ Cf. Spurkland 2001a: 32. Examples of secular inscriptions are, for instance, the finds from VIMOSE or ILLERUP, cf. Düwel 2008: 27.

⁴⁶ It might be argued that inscriptions like the one from ØVRE STABU which reads **raunijar** can be associated with some sort of magical belief. The name translates "trier, examiner, the one who causes strain" (cf. Hagland 1998a: 625)

2.4 Runological Research in the 20th Century

The first half of the 20th century was characterised not only by the continuation of the corpus editions but also by the persistence of magical interpretations, both of runic script in general and single runic inscriptions in particular.⁴⁷ Time had not yet come for runes to be fully recognised as a functional writing system. Instead, they continued largely to be conceived of as a cultic script designed exclusively to express magic formulae and the like.⁴⁸ Each rune was thought to have an intrinsic magical power which allegedly derived from its rune-name.⁴⁹ This was held to be especially true for fupark inscriptions which were believed to effectively bundle the magic power of all the runes. The assertion of a magical character and a possible religious background of the runes has repeatedly been founded on the etymology of the word ‘rune’ itself (ON *rún* (f), pl. *rúnar*; OE *rún* (f), pl. *rúna*) which *inter alia* had the meanings ‘secret’ and ‘whisper’.⁵⁰ A related issue was the interpretation of runes in terms of number magic. The main purpose behind this line of reasoning was to prove that almost every runic inscription could, by means of a complicated system of numbering the individual runes, be broken down to the number 8 or multiples of 8.⁵¹

The main predicament with magical interpretations of runes is, however, that they are predominantly based on the *a priori* conviction that runes were indeed originally invented for magical purposes. The runic material itself is not that explicit on that point. Especially with regard to older fupark inscriptions, the lack of a non-epigraphical frame of reference poses additional problems; when it comes to runic inscriptions from the Middle Ages, ecclesiastical

and refers probably to the spear-head rather than to the owner of the item. In this context, the name may have been incised into the spear-head in order to enforce its efficiency. Still, such examples do not prove a purely magic intent behind the invention of the runes.

⁴⁷ Cf. fn. 44.

⁴⁸ Cf., for example, Olsen 1917.

⁴⁹ Olsen 1916: 228.

⁵⁰ Heggstad et al. 2004: 349; Toller 1954: 804; cf. Haugen E 1984: 151. In his translation of the Bible into Gothic, the missionary bishop Wulfila in the 3rd century translated the Greek *mysterion* with Gothic *rúna*, cf. Spurkland 2001a: 13. The word ‘rune’ is possibly used in this meaning also in Eddic poetry (cf. *Hávamál* 139), although the concept of script seems to be present in these poems as well (cf. *Hávamál* 142 and 144); in *Sigrdrífumál* 5–19, different runes are mentioned in the context of magic, cf. *Edda*: 40 and 191–194; Spurkland 2001a: 24–26. Since there is no general agreement about the time of origin of Eddic poetry, it can neither be resolved whether the poems promote original or later views of runic script and writing.

⁵¹ The system as a whole is based on the fact that the older fupark consisted of twenty-four runes in total and could, thus, be divided into three families (*ættir*) of eight runes respectively. An early example of this division can be found on the VADSTENA bracteate (G178). The division into *ættir* was maintained in the younger fupark which was divided into one family of six and two families of five runes respectively. Although various inscriptions including cryptic ones exhibit this division into *ættir*, the term itself is known from Icelandic manuscripts not before the 17th century, cf. Spurkland 2001a: 92 and 191; Düwel 2008: 9. A prominent example of an interpretation of a runic inscription in terms of number magic, namely the Golden horn of GALLEHUS (DR12 †U), is Klingenberg 1973.

benedictions and incantations are often available. On the whole, magical interpretations are not to be discarded completely but have to be proven individually for particular inscriptions.⁵²

It was Anders Bæksted who in 1952 opposed the “magical school” represented by Magnus Olsen and others. In contrast to their interpretations, Bæksted rejected the postulation of an essentially magical nature of the runes of all runic periods.⁵³ Nonetheless, he accepted a magical background for medieval fuþark inscriptions which he in turn took as “nordiske gøtteluser af fælleseuropeiske fænomener”, such as alphabet magic.⁵⁴ Medieval runology was quite in its beginnings when Bæksted offered his analysis. The greater part of medieval inscriptions known today had not been excavated by then; those inscriptions available were for the most part interpreted as relics of a declining tradition “artificially maintained” by antiquarian interests.⁵⁵ Although it was claimed that runes had originally been designed to be cut in wood and therefore represented a convenient everyday writing system,⁵⁶ the extant runic material from the Viking and earlier periods seemed to point in a different direction. The majority were memorial inscriptions carved into stone. Even those medieval inscriptions that were actually scored into wood, primarily into the woodwork of churches, were dismissed as evidence of a flourishing script community. Due to their ecclesiastical background, they were submitted to the above mentioned interpretations, i.e. attributed to either magical or antiquarian contexts.

2.5 Paradigmatic Change: From Magic Script to Functional Writing System

From the mid-1950s onwards, large numbers of medieval runic inscriptions from about the 12th to the 14th centuries were excavated at Bryggen in Bergen.⁵⁷ Similar finds, though less abundant, were eventually made in Trondheim, Oslo, and Tønsberg, as well as in Swedish and

⁵² Knirk 1994b: 180; Düwel 2008: 210f.

⁵³ Bæksted 1952 *passim*.

⁵⁴ Bæksted 1952: 172, cf. also 168; Knirk 1994b: 180.

⁵⁵ Bæksted 1952: 171 (“kunstigt vedligeholdt”); Knirk 1994b: 171 and 180.

⁵⁶ Runes generally consist of vertical staves from which sloping lines (branches) depart. It has been maintained that rounded lines were hardly ever employed in early runic writing and that these rounded forms were secondary to the angular ones, cf. Odenstedt 1984: 93. These formal characteristics have been interpreted as an indication that runes had initially been aimed to be cut in wood. This interpretation is mainly based on the assertion that rounded lines were not easy to be carved in wood and that especially horizontal lines would disappear when cut along the grain. Cf. Derolez 1954: xvii; Liestøl 1969a: 75f. This theory has in the meantime been criticised sharply for mainly two reasons: The circular reasoning when explaining the cut-in-wood theory on the one hand, and the existence of clear counter-examples to the no-rounded-lines hypothesis, cf. Barnes 1994: 17f.

⁵⁷ Spurkland 2001a: 187. For an account of the excavations at Bryggen, cf. Herteig 1969.

Danish medieval town centres, like Old Lödöse, Sigtuna, Lund, and Schleswig.⁵⁸ These inscriptions differed essentially from most of the material known until then, both with regard to the types of inscriptions and their subject matter.⁵⁹ Moreover, the Bryggen inscriptions were recovered from a context of seven or eight historically datable fire layers which (in contrast to dating runic data otherwise) allowed for a fairly precise dating of the inscriptions.⁶⁰ This situation opened up novel perspectives both on runic script and the conditions of written culture in the Scandinavian Middle Ages. Thus, these runic inscriptions helped to pave the way for a paradigmatic change in runological research which finally recognised runes as a functional and pragmatic writing system.

A major proportion of the Bryggen finds consists of wooden slips, so called *rúnakefli*, which had obviously served exclusively as neutral writing material.⁶¹ With the artefact having no other purpose than bearing script, these rune-sticks are evidence that runes actually functioned within a context of daily written communication on a regular basis. This assertion is further sustained by the often situational and ephemeral content of the inscriptions which refer to almost all conceivable circumstances of human life.⁶² A large category of inscriptions relates to trade and business transactions.⁶³ Apart from rune-sticks, this group comprises tally sticks and a great number of wooden labels of the type “NN owns” used by merchants to tag their commodities.⁶⁴ In contrast to earlier known ownership statements which were cut directly into the object in question, these tags are neutral items which could be tied or fixed to articles of trade; as such, they were reusable.⁶⁵

In addition, there cropped up a substantial number of runic inscriptions with Latin texts or containing Latin to some degree.⁶⁶ Runic inscriptions in Latin did not represent a

⁵⁸ Surveys of the medieval Norwegian material found in the latter half of the 20th century are provided by Liestøl 1964a, 1968, 1974, and 1977; Seim 1988a and 1988b; and Gosling 1989, cf. also NIyR VI–VII. Svärdström 1972 gives the first comprehensive review of medieval Swedish runes; this essay was pivotal in turning attention to medieval runology which until then had been neglected in comparison to the study of older and Viking runes, cf. Haugen E 1976: 83. Moltke 1985: 398–500 presents an overview over Danish runic material from the Middle Ages.

⁵⁹ Liestøl 1964a preliminarily discusses “dei viktigaste innskriftene” (p. 5) of the Bryggen material. Musset 1965: 338f. gives one of the first summaries of the types of inscriptions found at Bryggen.

⁶⁰ Cf. Liestøl 1980.

⁶¹ Seim 1988a: 11. Runic inscriptions were also found on wooden articles of daily use (bowls etc.), bone, antler, bricks, leather, and pottery. Cf. also Liestøl 1964a: 6.

⁶² Cf. Spurkland 2001a: 187.

⁶³ Most inscriptions referring to trade and commerce are published in NIyR VI.2 by Ingrid Sanness Johnsen; cf. also Johnsen 1987 and 1994. Grandell 1988 draws special attention to inscriptions indicating business transactions. Hagland 1990 discusses the material from Trondheim, cf. also Hagland 1994.

⁶⁴ Cf. Grandell 1988; Seim 1988a: 12.

⁶⁵ Cf. Seim 1988a: 12.

⁶⁶ Most of the Latin inscriptions from Bryggen are published by Aslak Liestøl in NIyR VI.1; cf. also the summary of Liestøl’s fascicle in Seim 1988b; cf. also Dyvik 1988. Ertl 1994 has compiled a catalogue of Latin inscriptions from all of Scandinavia in which she has classified the inscriptions according to their material. Knirk 1998 presents a detailed

novel category of runic inscriptions *per se*. The innovation, though, was that they lacked the ecclesiastical context of the earlier finds.⁶⁷ The latter had been considered mostly the results of antiquarian interests and had, therefore, been regarded as a breach in the ‘original’ runic tradition. As such, they had been dismissed as authentic evidence of a flourishing runic culture in the Middle Ages and neglected as a secondary phenomenon.⁶⁸ The finds from Scandinavian medieval town centres, by contrast, confirm a certain degree of knowledge and importance of the Latin language and Latin texts also among commoners in a non-clerical, secular environment. The urban Latin inscriptions, as well as further evidence of influence from Latin literary tradition in the runic material, once again brought up the questions of the status of runic and Latin writing in medieval Scandinavia on the one hand, and the modalities of their interrelation and coexistence on the other.⁶⁹

As far as subject matter is concerned, the material grants multifaceted insights into spheres of medieval life and social strata of which usually no data at all is available.⁷⁰ In contrast to earlier known inscriptions, which for the most part display memorial and religious texts or ownership formulae and the like, the urban inscriptions give unique first-hand accounts of varied aspects of human life.⁷¹ In addition to the types of texts already known from previous finds, those from Bryggen and other medieval town centres tell about trade and commerce, about personal relationships and private sentiments. They even reflect economical pinches of individuals and negotiations undertaken during the civil wars which in the 12th and 13th centuries upset Norway.⁷²

Prior to the Bryggen finds, it had been assumed that Latin writing superseded runic culture within a few decades after its introduction into Scandinavia. Runes were widely believed to have been marginalised in the Christianisation process, and the extant material conveyed the impression that the native writing system remained in existence only in confined social strata and limited fields of application.⁷³ At any rate, this had been the case on the

discussion of the Norwegian corpus including some corrections and suggestions of new readings for some of the already published inscriptions. Gustavson 1994 and 1995 concentrate mostly on the Swedish material but include also inscriptions from other Scandinavian regions.

⁶⁷ Cf. Seim 1988a.

⁶⁸ Cf., for instance, Musset 1947: 369 who recognises a “latinité runique” (here in the Danish runic material), but declares it a marginal and neglectable phenomenon. In Musset 1965: 335f., he even writes of a “dérisoire annexion” and concludes that “[t]out cela ne présente pas un grand intérêt.”

⁶⁹ Cf., for instance, Spurkland 2004; Gustavson 1995. For a comprehensive overview of runic writing in the Scandinavian Middle Ages and its place within medieval written culture in general, cf. the articles in Benneth et al. 1994.

⁷⁰ Cf. Page 1987: 13.

⁷¹ Spurkland 2001a: 212.

⁷² Liestøl 1968: 18–22; Spurkland 2001a: 185 and 212; Sigurðsson 1999: 109–124.

⁷³ Cf., for instance, Musset 1947.

Continent and eventually also in Anglo-Saxon England.⁷⁴ The great numbers of urban inscriptions, however, prove that in Norway the introduction of Latin script and book-culture was followed by a period of about 300 years in which runic writing flourished alongside the Latin alphabet.⁷⁵ The new types of inscriptions, the various textual genres recorded, and the diverse topics communicated illustrate that runic script actually served as a functional and pragmatic writing system in urban centres. Although runic inscriptions with a magical content are among the recently found material, the notion of medieval runes as a magical script or a mere antiquarian pastime had to be revised completely. Runic competence was clearly far more wide-spread in the Middle Ages than had been previously assumed.⁷⁶ In fact, runic knowledge survived not only among clerics with a special interest in ancient writing systems. Runes were also regularly employed by merchants and citizens who used them in their daily affairs of both a public and a more private character.⁷⁷

The runic material from medieval trading towns unequivocally documents that runes existed beside the Latin alphabet not merely as a declining residue from olden times. On the contrary, medieval Norway developed into a two-script culture in which two distinct writing systems not only coincided temporarily but even influenced each other. In some cases, the two script traditions overlapped; this happened on different levels of the script traditions and to a varying extent.⁷⁸ The impact of Latin literary culture on runic writing was undeniably much more sustainable than the effect of the runic tradition on book-culture. The finds from medieval urban town centres have, however, opened up the field of investigation to a much broader range of perspectives. The novel types of inscriptions and the mere abundance of medieval runic material now available allow for new questions concerning, for instance, the status of runic script in medieval society, its functions, and its relation to Latin written culture. The present paper intends to make a contribution to this field of research.

⁷⁴ Cf. Page 1987: 13; Looijenga 2003: 11–13.

⁷⁵ A similar situation can be attested for Sweden and Denmark. In the following paragraph, as otherwise in my paper, I shall focus on the circumstances in medieval Norway, even if some of the historical and runological developments may be common to Sweden as well as to Denmark.

⁷⁶ Cf. Musset 1965: 338; Knirk 1998: 477.

⁷⁷ Cf. Seim 1988a: 12f. The rune-sticks from HEDEBY in Denmark (DR EM85;371A and DR EM85;371B) and from STARAJA LADOGA in present-day Russia (X RyNLT2004;5) dating from the 8th to 9th centuries may provide evidence that the custom of using rune-sticks in daily written communication was already established as early as the Viking Age. The extremely small number of Viking Age or earlier rune-sticks or other wooden artefacts has often been explained by poor preservation conditions, cf. Liestøl 1969a. For my detailed discussion of these rune-sticks and reference to a new interpretation of the STARAJA LADOGA ‘rune-stick’, cf. pp. 111f. and fnn. 458 and 462.

⁷⁸ Cf., for instance, Knirk 1998: 477.

3 METHOD AND CLASSIFICATION

The following chapter deals with runology in the context of academic research and presents some formal conventions and problems in the study of runes, including terminology. I shall outline the implications of certain practices and usages for runological research in general and the present paper in particular; in addition, I shall expose the specific intricacies of the issue under discussion. Subsequently, I shall address the specific focus of my paper and attempt a reappraisal of the status of and relationship between runic and Latin written culture in the Norwegian Middle Ages.

3.1 Some Preliminary Remarks on Runology and Method

Runology has never been an academic discipline of its own. This implies that a consistent definition of this field of historical, linguistical, and philological research has never been formulated. Accordingly, common methodological principles forming a universal framework for runological studies have not been developed either.⁷⁹ From the first scholarly investigations into runes until the present day, most runologists have been autodidacts originally educated in related fields. The virtual absence of a common methodology has provoked much critique in runological circles. For Michael Barnes, this state of affairs has led to what he has called the “runological cowboy”, i.e. anybody venturing into the interpretation of runic inscriptions without following “accepted ways of testing the validity of arguments”.⁸⁰

Moreover, runological data is often too deficient and fragmentary to provide sufficient evidence for reliable conclusions. Textual and interpretational lacunae are, for that reason, often inevitable.⁸¹ Nevertheless, runic enthusiasts and even some runologists are not infrequently tempted to conjure up interpretations motivated by their own preconceptions and expectations. Instead of an unbiased analysis on the basis of what actually can be deciphered, evidence is often looked for in order to support *a priori* assumptions.

⁷⁹ For a critical discussion of this state of affairs in runological studies and the conduct of research resulting from the lack of a common methodological framework, cf. Barnes 1990. Cf. also Barnes 2010.

⁸⁰ Barnes 1990: 11f.

⁸¹ Cf. Barnes 1990: 12.

3.2 Basic Methodological Procedures

Despite the lack of an overall methodology for runology as a whole, some standards apply concerning the way in which runic inscriptions are dealt with.⁸² As will become obvious, the interpretation of runic inscriptions has its pitfalls and methodological obstacles right from the beginning of a survey.

Starting with the inscription, a reading has to be established, i.e. each runic character has to be identified with regard to its graphic form. The inscription may then be rendered with standardised rune-forms. On this basis, a transliteration into Latin letters can be attempted.⁸³ Since transliterations substitute each rune with a ‘corresponding’ Latin letter, they naturally maintain the idiosyncrasies of runic orthography as, for instance, the non-representation of nasal before homorganic consonants.⁸⁴ In a next step, the established text is normalised into the language in question. Normalisation entails interpretation since not only the language of the runic text but also the actual sound value of each rune has to be identified.⁸⁵ Optionally, the text may be translated into a modern language. Each of these steps is highly dependent on personal decisions and exterior factors, such as the artefact the inscription is carved into, or its find context.⁸⁶ As a result, each choice may lead to a different interpretation of the inscription as a whole.

Transliteration as a methodological implement is a double-edged device. On the one hand, transliterations may be helpful for those not capable of reading runes. Then again, they

⁸² Spurkland 2001a: 27–29, 45f. and 66 gives a detailed description of the basic steps in the interpretation of runic inscriptions discussed in the following paragraphs.

⁸³ The practice of transliteration is often regarded as highly problematic, not least because it frequently confounds the substitution of graphic forms with a substitution of their potential sound values, cf. Barnes 2010. For further approaches towards transliteration, cf. Spurkland 1991: 19–21; and Seim 1998a: 20–30.

⁸⁴ Spurkland 1991: 20.

⁸⁵ This implies a preliminary dating on account of rune-forms and, if possible, the artefact bearing the inscription. The latter is, of course, only practicable if one is dealing with a man-made artefact (e.g. brooches, weapons, etc.), and not with an artefact in the sense of an object having been worked *on* by human beings as is the case with, for example, rune-stones and rock-carvings. Despite the ambiguity of many runic characters in the Viking fuþark and partly also in medieval runic inscriptions, there arise typically no problems with identifying the language of an inscription. It is mostly with the older and transitional inscriptions that diverging interpretations about the language underlying the runic texts are put forward, cf. also fn. 169. For an exhaustive discussion of transitional inscriptions and diagnostic runes and rune-forms, cf. Barnes 1998: 448–461.

⁸⁶ Seim 2004: 122 emphasises that reading and interpretation of a runic inscription should ideally be kept separate. Different readings and interpretations are, though, not only determined by individual anticipations toward a runic inscription but have to do also with the nature of the data itself. Especially with inscriptions carved in stone it can be difficult to decide whether one has to do with a man-made runic character or a natural formation in the surface of the rock. For the same reason, the modern re-painting of runic inscriptions on stone in Sweden and Denmark entails some problems. Although there is evidence that many runic inscriptions were originally coloured, it is quite a different thing if this is done on the basis of what we today think the original text was, cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 550. The presetting of a painted, allegedly secure reading obscures re-interpretations considerably.

handicap the understanding of runes as a script system of its own right.⁸⁷ Moreover, they imply a fixed one-to-one correlation between runic and Latin characters.⁸⁸ As far as the Viking Age fupark is concerned, transliterations are likely to give the impression of a deficient or even degenerated writing system.⁸⁹ In my opinion, the parallelisation and virtual equalisation of runes and Latin letters is even more misleading with regard to Scandinavian medieval written culture. In this period, both runic and Latin writing operated side by side, but they were by no means mere transliterations of each other. They represented different script cultures and exhibited their distinct appearances and conventions such as divergent spelling principles in runic writing and contemporary book-hand.⁹⁰ By rendering a runic inscription with Latin letters, the idiosyncratic nature and appearance of runic writing become invisible. Thus, these aspects get lost at the same time as an alleged superiority of the Latin alphabet is tacitly accepted. Inscriptions which feature both runes and Latin letters are deprived of this unique characteristic when they are displayed in Latin letters only. Furthermore, there is no option to render particular rune-types in transliterations; it may, for instance, be disadvantageous if long-branch and short-twig variants cannot be differentiated. For all these reasons, it is favourable to parallel the runic text with a transliteration so that advantage can be taken of both respectively. Another issue gains importance here, namely our own focus of attention and way of understanding written texts. It is certainly much more likely that our modern attitudes towards and experiences with script are transferred to medieval runic culture when we are dealing with the text of a runic inscription presented in our own system of writing, i.e. Latin letters. Yet, rune-carvers as well as rune-readers undoubtedly had a different approach to written texts and script than we have today.⁹¹ For these reasons, it has to be kept in mind that transliterations are no originals but working aids and have to be recognised as such.⁹²

Despite all these intricacies, I had for the present paper to rely on the texts established by proficient runologists rather than drawing on the material myself. This decision is mostly due to practical reasons. On the other hand, the use of already established texts presents no problem here, since particular readings will not be decisive for my overall argumentation. I shall for the sake of reading convenience add transliterations, but shall also reproduce the

⁸⁷ Liestøl 1980: IV.

⁸⁸ Page 1999: 39.

⁸⁹ Haugen E 1976: 51f. presents a survey of various such standpoints. I shall be more detailed on the question of the alleged deficiency of the younger fupark, cf. pp. 49–51.

⁹⁰ Page 1999: 39.

⁹¹ Cf. Liestøl 1981: 250.

⁹² Page 1999: 39.

inscriptions discussed in (normalised) runes in order to sustain their unique character in contrast to texts executed in Latin letters. The necessity to do so is especially vital in those instances where an inscription contains both runes and Latin letters. Being digraphic, these inscriptions represent outstanding products and evidence of the Norwegian medieval two-script culture.

3.3 Principles for Transliteration

There exist some standard modes of transliteration including various editorial signs which are widely used to transliterate and normalise runic inscriptions.⁹³ Still, transliteration principles may vary slightly from publication to publication.

Runes are generally reproduced in standardised forms.⁹⁴ Runic fonts are available for both Windows and Mac with which these standardised forms can be rendered. The two most common fonts are *Gullhornet* for the older and most of the Anglo-Saxon and Frisian runes, and *Gullskoen* for the younger Viking Age and medieval runes.⁹⁵ Specific rune-forms are as a rule not reproduced unless they provide characteristics which may be important with regard to dating and localising a particular inscription.⁹⁶

With regard to the transference of runes to Latin letters, the following standards apply. Transliterations are rendered in bold types; normalisations are given in italics. Translations into a modern language are as a rule set in inverted commas. Sides and lines of an inscription are usually marked by letters and numbers (e.g. (A) or (B1)). Further specifications in transliterations can be made by the following editorial signs:⁹⁷

⁹³ These principles apply first and foremost to Scandinavian and Continental runic inscriptions. Since 1980, there has been some discussion going on whether the transliteration and representation of Anglo-Saxon runes demand principles for transliteration of their own. For a summary of this discussion and further references, cf. Derolez 1998: 103–116.

⁹⁴ Seim 1998a: 31–33 exposes the problems relating to the use of what she has termed *idealruner*.

⁹⁵ These fonts have been designed by Odd Einar Haugen; free download from <http://gandalf.aksis.uib.no/Runefonter/> (last access 2010-03-20). See <http://www.khm.uio.no/forskning/publikasjoner/runenews/comp-net.htm> for links to additional runic fonts (last access 2011-06-11).

⁹⁶ Cf. Liestøl 1980: III.

⁹⁷ I follow the comments on transliteration principles and various editorial characters in Liestøl 1980: IV and the description and presentation of principles for transliteration in Knirk 1994b: 173 and Knirk 1998: 479f.

<i>Editorial sign</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
ˆ	bow above two or more runes / Roman letters	bind-rune (ligature)
(.)	round brackets around a transliterated character	uncertain reading
?	question mark	uncertain remnants of runes, with one question mark for each unreadable rune
[.]	square brackets	editorial conjecture
-	dash	lacuna, with one dash for each allegedly missing rune
[<]	less-than sign in square brackets	correction carried out by the carver, with < signifying “corrected from”
˘ ˙	insertion signs around a rune	improvement carried out by the carver by squeezing in an omitted rune
/	slash	change of line, or: edge in, for example, an inscription on a folded sheet of lead
...	three dots	ellipsis: the inscription continues but the particular representation is incomplete
:	colon	word separator: regardless of the number of dots in the runic inscription (mainly single or double dots, occasionally up to five dots)
⋈ / ⋉	four or five dots	ingress sign, usually in the shape of a cross

To medieval runes some additional standard transliterations apply and are used in this paper.⁹⁸ Generally, transliteration distinguishes between short-twig **s** (ʀ / ʁ) which is represented with lower case **s**, and long-branch **s** (ʁ) which is transcribed as **c**. From time to time, though, long-branch **s** can function as a variant of *s* in which case it is transliterated with capital **S**. The rune ʁ is represented by **ø**, variants of ʁ (with varying positions of the branches) appear as **q** in transliterations. Runes with mirror-image shape (ʀ **t** and ʁ **l**, or ʁ **a** and ʀ **n**) are in some inscriptions interchanged, either inadvertently or consistently. In these cases they may be corrected and rendered in bold italics. When the standard runic ʁ **h** is used for Latin *x*, it will nonetheless be transliterated as **h**. Only when a special runic variant for *x* is employed, it will be marked as **x** (this applies especially to the few cases in which runic **h** with dots at the end of the cross-bars is used, cf. ʁ). The same rule is applied to **q** which may be expressed by runic **k** or some variant of reversed runic **k**. Usually, *z* is expressed by long-branch **s** and is then rendered **z** in transliterations; in some cases a “dotted” or “crossed” variant of long-branch (i.e. ʁ) may be used for *z*. There may appear dotted variants of runes which typically are not dotted; these are transliterated with capitals (e.g. dotted **n** as **N** in B100). Occasionally, Latin letters are used together with runes in the same inscription; these Latin letters are then rendered in Roman, not boldface, with majuscules in upper case and minuscules in lower case letters (e.g. N405 HOPPERSTAD XVI **eXultent**).

There seem to be no universal rules concerning the rendering of different variants of crosses (single, double, or on a stand) and cross-shaped ingress signs (usually four or five pricks made with a knife). The same applies to word separators. The corpus edition *Norges Innskrifter med de yngre Runer*, for instance, reproduces word separators only in the runic reproduction of the inscriptions, but not in transliterations.⁹⁹ I shall represent crosses with a simple + or ✚ (depending on the shape of the cross in the inscription), the cross-shaped ingress signs as listed in the table above, and word separators will be rendered by a colon.

⁹⁸ For the following, cf. Knirk 1998: 479.

⁹⁹ Cf. NIyR I–VI.

3.4 Identification of Runic Inscriptions: The Corpus Editions

Runic inscriptions from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark are registered at *Runearkivet* (Oslo), *Runverket* (Stockholm) and *Runologisk-epigrafisk laboratorium* (Copenhagen) respectively.¹⁰⁰ The corpus editions initiated in the last decade of the 19th century have until today remained the standard works of reference.

In contrast to the Danish and Swedish publications, Norwegian runic inscriptions have been released in two separate series containing the inscriptions executed in older and younger runes respectively. Sophus Bugge (1833–1907) and Magnus Olsen (1878–1963) edited *Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer* in three volumes (NIæR, 1891–1924). In the 1940s, Magnus Olsen embarked upon the edition of the Norwegian runic inscriptions in the younger fupark; from 1954 onwards, he was assisted by Aslak Liestøl (1920–1983). *Norges Innskrifter med de yngre Runer* (NIyR, 1941–1960) was intended to comprise five volumes in total, and the fifth closes with a register and appendix for all five volumes. However, after the abundant finds of runic inscriptions from Norwegian medieval town centres in the second half of the 20th century, the corpus edition required continuation. Two further volumes (1980 and 1990) edited by James E. Knirk have so far been published. Aslak Liestøl was responsible for volume VI.1 containing most of the Latin runic inscriptions from Bergen.¹⁰¹ Ingrid Sanness Johnsen accounts for volume VI.2 which comprises the Bryggen inscriptions related to trade and commerce.¹⁰² An unprinted manuscript for a seventh volume of NIyR by Jan Ragnar Hagland covering the finds from medieval Trondheim is accessible online.¹⁰³ Finds from other medieval towns in Norway have been published preliminarily in a number of articles.¹⁰⁴

Runic inscriptions published in NIyR are identified by their publication numbers (N+#) in the corpus edition, e.g. N306. Additionally, the place of origin and type of artefact may be declared, e.g. N306 FORTUN stave church IV or N135 HØYJORD rosary. Principally, Norwegian runic inscriptions follow consecutive numbering and are organised according to

¹⁰⁰ Knirk et al. 1993: 551.

¹⁰¹ Seim 1988b summarises Liestøl's fascicle (NIyR VI.1), and Dyvik 1988 discusses those runic inscriptions in Latin which came to light after the publication of this volume.

¹⁰² Grandell 1988 analyses the "Finds from Bryggen Indicating Business Transactions". Hagland 1990 elaborates on inscriptions related to trade from Trondheim.

¹⁰³ NIyR VII. A separate volume on the Norwegian runic inscriptions found on the British Isles is obviously being planned, cf. NoR 7: 14 and Magnus Olsen's preface to NIyR V (no pagination). Some of these inscriptions have already been included in a separate chapter "Norrøne innskrifter utenfor Norge" in NIyR V: 220–237 (Olsen refers to modern national borders). This volume also comprises the runic coins (N598–602), NIyR: 213–219.

¹⁰⁴ Liestøl 1977 covers inscriptions from Oslo, whereas Gosling 1989 treats those from Tønsberg.

counties (*fylker*).¹⁰⁵ This applies also to NIæR, but since this edition is now outdated and lacks more recent finds, reference to inscriptions in the older fuþark is by default made to Wolfgang Krause's *Die Runeninschriften im älteren Futhark* using the abbreviation KJ+#, e.g. KJ31.¹⁰⁶ For Norwegian runic inscriptions found subsequent to the 1950s and not yet published in the corpus edition, preliminary registration numbers at the Runic Archives in Oslo are used. The Runic Archives file these inscriptions in two separate series, a B-series (B+#) for inscriptions found at Bryggen in Bergen, e.g. B611, and an A-series (A+#) for inscriptions from elsewhere in Norway, e.g. A72 LOM stave church. Inscriptions which are now lost are marked by a cross after the registration number, e.g. N547†.

The numerous runic inscriptions from Sweden are published in *Sveriges Runinskrifter* (SR) which was initiated in 1900 and has not been completed so far.¹⁰⁷ The edition comprises sixteen printed volumes as well as one volume published digitally on Runantikvarieämbetet's homepage.¹⁰⁸ Elias Wessén, Sven B.F. Jansson, Hugo Jungner, and Elisabeth Svärdström hold primary responsibility for the publication of the edition. Also Swedish runic inscriptions are arranged with reference to provinces (*landskap*). In contrast to the Norwegian mode of registration, which employs N+# for inscriptions from the whole of Norway, every *landskap* has its own province code followed by a catalogue number, e.g. Ög136 or Sm145.¹⁰⁹

In Denmark, Ludvig F.A. Wimmer (1839–1920) accounts for the four volumes of *De danske Runemindesmærker* (1893–1908); these were in 1914 summarised in a handbook by Lis Jacobsen (1882–1961). A revision was published in 1941/1942 under the title *Danmarks*

¹⁰⁵ NIyR I: Østfold, Akershus, Oslo, Hedmark, Oppland (1941; ed. Magnus Olsen); NIyR II: Buskerud, Vestfold, Telemark (1951; ed. Magnus Olsen); NIyR III: Aust-Agder, Vest-Agder, Rogaland (1954; eds. Magnus Olsen and Aslak Liestøl); NIyR IV: Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane, Møre og Romsdal (1957; eds. Magnus Olsen and Aslak Liestøl); NIyR V: Sør-Trøndelag, Nord-Trøndelag, Nordland, Troms, Ukjent sted i Norge, Senere fund og annet, Norrøne innskrifter utenfor Norge (1960; eds. Magnus Olsen and Aslak Liestøl); NIyR VI.1: Bryggen i Bergen (1980; eds. Aslak Liestøl and James E. Knirk); NIyR VI.2: Bryggen i Bergen, I (1990; eds. Ingrid Sanness Johnsen and James E. Knirk).

¹⁰⁶ Krause 1966.

¹⁰⁷ Still missing is *Norrlands Runinskrifter* (SR XV: 2) which is also meant to contain inscriptions from Hälsingland.

¹⁰⁸ No information is available about volume X, not even on Riksantikvarieämbetet's official publication list on http://www.raa.se/cms/extern/kulturarv/arkeologi_och_fornlamningar/litteratur.html (last access 2011-06-11); it possibly never existed. The volume published digitally is the third and last volume of *Gotlands Runinskrifter* (SR XII: 2; G222–391). Supplements to *Gotlands runinskrifter* parts 1 and 2 (SR XI and XII: 1) are available on the internet as well, see http://www.raa.se/cms/extern/kulturarv/arkeologi_och_fornlamningar/runstenar/gotlands_runinskrifter.html (last access 2011-06-11; last update 2009-07-20).

¹⁰⁹ Öl = Öland (1900–1906; eds. Erik Brate and Sven Söderberg); Ög = Östergötland (1911–1918; ed. Erik Brate); Sö = Södermanland (1924–1936; eds. Erik Brate and Elias Wessén); Sm = Småland (1935–1961; ed. Ragnar Kinander); Vg = Västergötland (1940; eds. Elisabeth Svärdström and Hugo Jungner); U = Uppland (1940–1958; eds. Elias Wessén and Sven B.F. Jansson); G = Gotland (1962–1978; eds. Elias Wessén, Sven B.F. Jansson, Elisabeth Svärdström, and Thorgunn Snædal); Vs = Västmanland (1964; ed. Sven B.F. Jansson); Nä = Närke (1975; ed. Sven B.F. Jansson); Vr = Värmland (1978; ed. Sven B.F. Jansson); Gs = Gästrikland (1981; ed. Sven B.F. Jansson). The last volume *Norrlands runinskrifter* (SR XV: 2) is (still?) missing, cf. fn. 108. The Swedish province codes relevant for this paper are listed once more separately in the table of “Abbreviations and References” on p. 147 of this paper.

Runeindskrifter (DR) by Lis Jacobsen and Erik Moltke (1901–1984); the edition came about in cooperation with Anders Bæksted (1906–1968) and Karl Martin Nielsen (1907–1987).¹¹⁰ It also comprises four parts (*Atlas, Text, Register*, and a German *Zusammenfassung*). Moltke gave an update and a summary of Danish runic history in his *Runerne i Danmark og deres oprindelse* (1976) which came in an English translation in 1985.¹¹¹ Danish inscriptions are referred to by their registration numbers in *Danmarks Runeindskrifter* (DR+#) which is employed for all Danish inscriptions, e.g. DR42. Also this corpus edition is organised regionally; in addition, it has separate sections on bracteates and runic coins.¹¹² More recent finds are listed in Moltke's *Runerne i Danmark*.

In addition to the printed editions, there is the *Samnordisk Runtextdatabas* which is accessible for download on the internet.¹¹³ The database provides the inscriptions' texts in transliterated and normalised forms as well as English translations. As far as available, information concerning dating, location, type of object, and so on, is also given. The project was started in 1993 at Uppsala University with the aim to establish a complete computerised catalogue of all runic inscriptions from the whole of Scandinavia and elsewhere. The latest version is from December 2008 and comprises more than 6000 inscriptions so far.

There also exist several online catalogues. A catalogue and searchable database of all inscriptions from Bryggen up to 1996, including those not yet registered with a N-number, i.e. B-numbers or preliminary numbers of the Bryggen Museum (BRM-numbers), is provided by the National Library of Norway.¹¹⁴ The material is based on the results of the project *Databehandling av runeinnskifter ved Historisk museum i Bergen* at the Norwegian Computing Centre for the Humanities (NCCH) at the University of Bergen.¹¹⁵ Each inscription is presented with transliteration, normalisation, short description, and sometimes photographs.

¹¹⁰ Bæksted published also *Islands Runeindskrifter* in 1942.

¹¹¹ *Runes and Their Origin. Denmark and Elsewhere*, Copenhagen.

¹¹² Inscriptions are organised as follows: Sønderjylland, Nørrejylland, Øerne, Skåne/Halland/Blekinge, Bornholm, Indskrifter Utenlands M.M., Brakteater, Mønter, cf. Jacobsen/Moltke 1941/1942.

¹¹³ <http://www.nordiska.uu.se/forskn/samnord.htm>. Free download of the latest (2008-12-09) and earlier (1987, 2001, 2004) versions for Windows on <http://www.nordiska.uu.se/forskning/projekt/rundata> (last access 2011-06-11; last update 2010-08-27).

¹¹⁴ <http://www.nb.no/baser/runer/index.html>, with an English version on <http://www.nb.no/baser/runer/eindex.html> (last access 2011-06-11).

¹¹⁵ For a description of the project and the proceeding when establishing the database, cf. Haavaldsen/Ore 1998. A preliminary report of the project is available on <http://www.nb.no/baser/runer/ribwww/norsk/ribindex.html> (last access 2011-06-11).

3.5 Latin Runic Inscriptions

A discussion of runic inscriptions in Latin or containing Latin to a degree requires a definition of “Latin”.¹¹⁶ This is primarily due to the fact that not all inscriptions which may qualify to be classified as “Latin” consist of whole sentences with grammatically correct constructions.¹¹⁷

The corpus of Latin runic inscriptions ranges from individual words and phrases such as **gl̄oria** in N399 HOPPERSTAD X to rather long texts including, for instance, the entire *Pater Noster* followed by the names of the four evangelists as on the N53 ULSTAD lead sheet. In addition, there appear a number of individual names having Latin declensional endings in an otherwise Old Norse context (such as on A35 OSLO **(b)in̄it̄iktuSa**, *Benedikt(us) á*).¹¹⁸

James E. Knirk states that in the context of Latin-language inscriptions in the runic corpus “Latin” has to be equated with “Church Latin”. Accordingly, individual words and expressions which are employed in Roman Catholic liturgy but originally derive from Greek or Hebrew are also subsumed under this definition.¹¹⁹ This pertains to N627 BRYGGEN which is the only inscription executed entirely in Greek reading **kirial̄æisun:kristal̄æ[æ<a]ison** *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*. It also applies to, for instance, names of Christ and God such as *Messias, Jesus, Adonai, Soter*, and so forth, and the acronym *AGLA* deriving from Hebrew ‘*atta gibbôr le ‘ôlam ’adônay* (all of these examples occur jointly on N348 BORGUND stave church, amulet I). However, the runic corpus features not only inscriptions which may be characterised as Church Latin. We also find a wide range of examples featuring secular Latin like the fragments of two love poems from the *Carmina Burana* (N603 BRYGGEN) or parts of the Vergilian verse *Omnia vincit Amor, et nos cedamus Amori* (as in N605 BRYGGEN or B145, the latter of which has the whole line).

Since I shall explore the treatment by runic tradition of Latin script conventions as well as the interaction between the two systems of writing, inscriptions executed in Old Norse but exhibiting characteristics of Latin written culture (e.g. particular spelling conventions)

¹¹⁶ Cf. Gustavson 1994: 316.

¹¹⁷ Ertl 1994: 332. According to Knirk 1998: 478f., about 8% of the Norwegian medieval runic material is executed in Latin, an additional 3% is basically Old Norse but contains Latin expressions: “The Norwegian corpus of runic inscriptions containing Latin [...] encompasses some seventy inscriptions published in the first five volumes of *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* [...] and around forty-five from Bryggen [...] published in volume VI. There are an additional twenty or so from Bryggen, most of them published in Dyvik 1988, and some thirty from the rest of Norway, many of them published preliminarily in excavation reports or incidental articles.” (p. 479)

¹¹⁸ There occur also individual words without further textual context which may be added to the Latin corpus, such as the name *Jesus* on the N134† NYKIRKE monstrel, cf. Knirk 1998: 478. It is, however, not the concern of this paper to decide whether these represent Latin or Old Norse, and neither decision does on the whole affect the conclusions of the present paper.

¹¹⁹ Knirk 1998: 478.

will also be relevant for my argumentation. I do, of course, not define these inscriptions as “Latin”. Still, I consider it worth drawing attention to the fact that also these, at first glance less obvious instances, give evidence of the entry of Latin literary culture into the indigenous script tradition. As regards personal names featuring Latin inflectional endings, Helmer Gustavson has rightly pointed out that “if we want to study the interaction between the two systems of writing, then **erikus** [cf. Vg 240 **erikus amik**, *Erikus á mik*] is of interest and should be available in the Latin corpus.”¹²⁰

3.6 Definition of Terms

The above survey illustrates that runic inscriptions in the corpus editions are classified according to geographical criteria rather than, for instance, their content or the physical material or artefact the inscriptions are found on. Diverging opinions appear to prevail, though, whether the origin of runic inscriptions should be denoted with regard to medieval or modern national borders. Karin Ertl maintains that there has been a tendency in recent runological research to refer to modern frontiers.¹²¹ As far as I can see, both approaches can be recognised in current runological studies.¹²² Whereas reference to modern borders may be more convenient for those not acquainted with medieval Scandinavia, it can easily lead to a distorted picture of regional conditions and traditions in the period in question. For that reason, I consider the application of medieval boundaries to be more expedient and promising for a historical reconstruction. By Scandinavia, I refer to mainland Scandinavia, i.e. medieval Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, excluding their oversea colonies; where necessary, these will be addressed separately. Even though runes were in use also in Iceland, the situation there deviated from that in mainland Scandinavia.¹²³

In modern terminology, the repertoire of runic characters in their characteristic order is referred to as the *fupark*, named after the first six runes in the row. From the beginning of runic script onwards, the rune-row and individual runes repeatedly altered their appearances and sound values. One reason for this development were probably phonological changes in the

¹²⁰ Gustavson 1994: 316f.

¹²¹ Ertl 1994: 332.

¹²² NIyR, for instance, refers to modern circumstances according to which Bohuslen, for example, is treated in a section “Norrøne innskrifter utenfor Norge”, cf. NIyR V: 220–229. *Danmarks Runeindskrifter*, on the other hand, treats the now Swedish provinces of Skåne, Halland, and Blekinge as Danish, cf. Jacobsen/Moltke 1941: 237–344.

¹²³ Cf. Bæksted 1942.

language and, accordingly, in the rune-names.¹²⁴ Therefore, the medieval rune-row should correctly be referred to as *fupork*, since the original **ansur*-rune changed its sound value (as well as its graphic form) from /a/ in the older *fupark* to /ã/ sometime in the early 11th century until it represented /o/ in the Middle Ages.¹²⁵ To simplify matters, though, I shall use the term *fupark* for the rune-rows of all periods, a *modus operandi* quite common in runological studies.

There is, however, one important differentiation I wish to uphold, namely that between the expressions *rune-row* versus *runic alphabet*. As a matter of fact, I shall speak of *runic alphabet* only when talking about runes in alphabetical order, whereas *rune-row* and *fupark* will be used for runes in *fupark* order. Like the term *fupark*, *alphabet* is as well derived from the names of the first letters, *alpha* and *beta*, of this particular set of characters. Therefore, the concept of a *runic alphabet*, although widely applied synonymously with *rune-row* by many runologists, is in my opinion ultimately misleading if the implication is not that of runes in alphabetical order.¹²⁶ This last argument proves true especially for a study which is primarily concerned with the idiosyncrasies and similarities of the runic and Latin script systems. The issue becomes even more vital since there actually exist runic inscriptions which list the runes in alphabetical order, although this is not particularly frequent in the epigraphic corpus.¹²⁷ Derolez does not discuss the implications of such usage, but has also reserved the term *runic alphabet* for lists of runes in alphabetical order; in view of the alphabetical rune-rows of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, also Düwel suggests using the term “Runenreihe” rather than “Runenalphabet”.¹²⁸

Runic epigraphic corpus refers not only to runic inscriptions carved in stone but to any runic inscription found on material other than parchment as, for instance, wood, pottery, or bone. This is to terminologically differentiate runic *inscriptions* from occurrences of runes written in manuscripts. Latin script culture is used for literary or manuscript culture and refers not only to texts written in Latin but also to those in the vernacular. Likewise, runic culture embraces everything in the runic epigraphic corpus irrespective of the language carved; the

¹²⁴ Cf. Spurkland 2001a: 15 and 90–94.

¹²⁵ Cf. Liestøl 1981: 252.

¹²⁶ Spurkland 2001a: 15 has pointed out that the rune-row may be regarded an ‘alphabet’ in the sense that it represents “et sett av skriftegn eller symboler som gjengir lydene i et språk.”

¹²⁷ Bæksted 1942 and Heizmann 1998 discuss runic alphabets in Icelandic manuscripts.

¹²⁸ Derolez 1954: xxvi. Düwel 2008: 7. Also Seim 1998a: 52, fn. 40 aims to avoid ambiguities by employing two different terms. On the one hand, she uses “(rune)alfabet i allmenn betydning, uansett rekkefølgen på alfabetenheterne” and bases this usage on the dictionary entry for “alfabet” in *Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske leksikon* (1978: 144), “den vedtektsmessig ordnede rekke av de bokstaver som brukes i et skriftsystem”. For rune-rows in alphabetical order, on the other hand, she employs “(rune)abc-rekke”.

term is, therefore, used for runic inscriptions in the vernacular as well as for runic inscriptions in Latin.

3.7 The Two-Script Culture of the Norwegian Middle Ages: Establishing the Cultural Background

The previous preliminary remarks on methodology pertained to technical terms and general procedures and problems of runology. More importantly, they presented modifications and definitions of terms concerning the *modus operandi* of the present paper on the other. In the following section, my methodological reflection will bring into focus the subject matter of this paper. In the course of this discussion, I shall thoroughly explore the relation between runic and Latin script culture in medieval Norway. I shall not only set forth some pivotal thoughts concerning my understanding of the conditions of their coexistence, but also attempt an assessment and re-definition of previous descriptions of the nature of this relationship. For this purpose, I shall adopt a theoretical perspective. I shall analyse one of the concepts which has been put forward in runological research as a descriptive model for the condition of written culture in the Norwegian Middle Ages. I am here referring to the concept of complementary distribution employed by Terje Spurkland in his article “Scandinavian Medieval Runic Inscriptions – an Interface between Literacy and Orality?”¹²⁹ It is with his line of reasoning in mind that I shall review the validity and potential of this linguistic notion for the description of written culture in medieval Norway. This reassessment will give me the opportunity to appreciate an even wider range of aspects and, in consequence, present a more particularised portrait of Norwegian medieval script culture. I hereby intend to establish the

¹²⁹ Spurkland 2001b, specifically p. 123. Some other concepts have been employed to describe the relation between runic and Latin writing in the Scandinavian Middle Ages. In a later article, Terje Spurkland has added Latin and runic script as another pair in a list of binary oppositions which he derives from Anthony Faulkes’ introduction to *Snorra Edda*. Faulkes, however, does not use the term ‘binary oppositions’ himself, cf. Spurkland 2004: 335; Faulkes 1995: xiif. For reasons which I shall briefly outline, I shall not go into detail about this classification of Latin and runic written culture in terms of socio-cultural dichotomies. For my approach it offers no sustainable delineation of the conditions of written culture in the Norwegian Middle Ages. In fact, I find the concept of binary oppositions highly problematic, since it is inextricably linked with ethnocentric standpoints on the cultural supremacy of one of the opposites (i.e., in cultural theory, Western thought), cf. Goody 1977: 36. I am, however, not concerned with tracing the eventual triumph of Latin over runic tradition, but with the nature of their co-existence. Gustavson 1995 uses the Neoplatonic term *coincidentia oppositorum* in the title of his article, but does unfortunately not return to this concept and its implications for the relation between runic and Latin script culture. It would have been interesting to know in what respect Gustavson considers the two script cultures to form a whole and why he regards them as opposites. In my opinion, runic and Latin writing of course represent different traditions and mentalities; they are, however, neither opposites nor contradictions. This will arise from my following discussion; it will also become clear that the two writing traditions may be seen as forming a unity in the sense that they together provided for all situations in which script may have been needed.

conceptual and cultural background and the preconditions on which I shall base my analysis in the next chapter. For obvious reasons, the following discussion has to be considered as a tentative reconstruction of a historical situation. Therefore, it cannot fully render actual realities, but attempts a theoretical characterisation of the two script cultures in their relation to each other. Moreover, it tries to define the two writing systems' position within medieval Norwegian script culture in general.

As I have already illustrated in my preface, medieval Norway (as well as other parts of medieval Scandinavia) was for a period of about 300 years characterised by the coexistence and contemporaneous use of two distinctive and well established writing traditions. In an attempt to illustrate the nature and preconditions of the Norwegian two-script culture, Terje Spurkland has resorted to linguistic terminology. In his article, he describes the relationship between Latin and runic writing as one of a complementary distribution.¹³⁰ Regrettably, the term is introduced without further explanation and no attempt is undertaken to make the concept effective for the context. The term as it is conventionally used in linguistics implies that the environments in which the two script systems occurred mutually excluded each other. Numerous examples in the runic material and manuscripts, however, demonstrate that matters were not that simple, and also Terje Spurkland acknowledges that “the two script systems mutually excluded each other [...] not completely”.¹³¹ For notwithstanding their utterly different character and diverging historical and social backgrounds, the two script traditions did not remain unaffected by each other. On the contrary, even though Latin as well as runic writing principally maintained their distinctive features in the comparatively long period of their co-existence, the two writing systems intercommunicated on various levels. They responded to and impinged upon each other and expanded into the traditional fields of use of the other system respectively. Therefore, the application of the linguistic concept of complementary distribution to the relationship of runic and Latin written culture cannot be done by implication, i.e. without explicitly testing both its potentials and deficiencies for the given context. In order to develop a model which proves productive for the situation and conditions of written culture in the Norwegian Middle Ages, the notion requires further specification. A closer examination of both the concept of distribution in linguistics and written culture in medieval Norway suggests some terminological adjustments.

¹³⁰ Spurkland 2001b: 123; cf. also Spurkland 2004: 334.

¹³¹ Spurkland 2004: 342.

The term distribution is, as indicated above, derived from linguistics; it is applied to all levels of language as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.¹³² Distribution refers to the occurrence of linguistic elements in particular contexts or environments relative to the occurrence of other elements in a system. It designates the sum of environments in which an element may occur in contrast to those in which it may not occur; all environments taken together ideally cover every legitimate potential context for the elements.¹³³ The term *complementary* distribution describes a syntagmatic relationship between two (or more) elements (such as allophones or allomorphs) in a system, i.e. language.¹³⁴ The relation between elements in complementary distribution is therefore essentially such that one element occurs in environments in which the other one may never occur and vice versa.¹³⁵ Consequently, the term implies a dichotomy: The environments in which the elements in question may occur mutually exclude each other, i.e. none of the elements may ever belong to the environments occupied by the other element. Moreover, the environments are jointly exhaustive, i.e. all elements have to belong to one of the potential environments.

Employed as a paradigm for the relation between runic and Latin written culture in medieval Norway, a classification along the lines of the linguistic concept of complementary distribution, in my opinion, ultimately turns out to be deficient. The application of this notion is without question valid from a superordinate point of view and in a diachronic and long-term perspective. The course of time has, for instance, shown that runic script never pervaded social institutions in a way comparable to the position occupied by the Latin alphabet. In the long run, runes could not compete with Latin script and they had to yield at the latest with the introduction of the printing press.¹³⁶ From a more particularised and synchronic perspective, however, the concept of complementary distribution falls short of covering the entire spectrum of the two script cultures' coexistence as it is revealed by the evidence. In the time of their coexistence, there occurred numerous overlappings, both on the levels of the script systems and their conventions and with regard to the content and media of the inscriptions. As my following discussion will show, the notion certainly provides a descriptive model for the relation of the two script cultures *in general*; it also acknowledges the contemporaneousness of the two systems. It fails, though, to account for precisely those phenomena and inscriptions which are of particular interest for a socio-cultural approach and the study of cultural contacts

¹³² Bunting 1996: 41f.

¹³³ Harris 1966: 15f.; Bunting 1996: 41 and 78.

¹³⁴ Cf. Bunting 1996: 42, 77 and 82.

¹³⁵ Harris 1966: 16; Ulrich 2002: 69f.

¹³⁶ Spurkland 2001a: 212.

and exchange. Nevertheless, the linguistic concept of *distribution* offers a practical basis for a detailed analysis and may still prove fruitful for a description of medieval written culture.

It is undeniably debatable to what extent carving runes in the Middle Ages represented a genuinely literate activity and it is not the purpose of this paper to finally decide on this matter. From my point of view, however, it is beyond question that both Latin *and* runic writing added to the realm of written culture in medieval Scandinavia, even though the implications have been of an utterly different character.¹³⁷ Obviously, runic as well as Latin script were functional and pragmatic writing systems.¹³⁸ They both served the purpose of written communication in medieval society and, thus, formed integral parts of Norwegian medieval script culture. Still, Latin and runic writing stood for two distinctive script cultures. Each of the two writing systems had its customary contexts (environments) of application in which it had developed and achieved its formal characteristics; both traditionally employed different contents and media and pursued different purposes.¹³⁹ Terje Spurkland has rightly pointed out that the differences between (or: distribution of) the two script cultures involved not only material but also conceptual aspects:

Texts “were not produced in the same communicative contexts. The medium was different, [...]; roman manuscripts were primarily written in scriptoria, while rune-carving was an activity that took place far away from the scriptorium. This distance from any learned and literate setting was not only geographical but also conceptual. The literate mentality [...] was more or less absent in the rune-carver’s surroundings [...]”¹⁴⁰

From this point of view, Latin and runic written culture together theoretically covered a wide range of, if not all, potential contexts (or: environments) in which script may have been required or used in medieval Scandinavia. They jointly provided for all situations of written communication which might have arisen in (different strata of) medieval society. In this sense

¹³⁷ Cf. fn. 217.

¹³⁸ Cf. Spurkland 2004: 341.

¹³⁹ Knirk 1994b: 171 has called attention to functional differences between Latin and runic writing in the High Middle Ages: “Latin letters were used for recording important texts [...] for posterity”, i.e. as a tool to record and preserve collective memory. Runes, on the other hand, “were used for messages which had a limited or topical interest”, i.e. for *ad hoc* communication. Spurkland 2001a: 213 further elaborates on that matter by stating that while Latin writing was addressed to the collective, medieval runic texts were generally directed towards individuals. Spurkland 2001a: 209 emphasises that runes perfectly matched this sort of “akutt behov for kommunikasjon. Runer var som skapt til å ristes i tre, de latinske bokstavene med sine runde og horisontale linjer var mindre egnet til treskjæring. Latinske bokstaver forutsatte penn, blekk og pergament, og det var ikke noe man gikk rundt med til daglig.” For more details about the (challenged) hypothesis that runes had originally been designed to be cut in wood, cf. p. 14 and fn. 56.

¹⁴⁰ Spurkland 2004: 342.

and from a long-term perspective, the two script systems may therefore indeed be regarded as complementary.

“The relationship between the two systems was characterized less by competition than by their complementary nature. Each had its own functions and its own areas, and they coexisted peacefully for several centuries.”¹⁴¹

Beyond that, the concept of *complementarity* is inadequate for a description of the relation between the two script traditions. For, although both writing traditions principally belonged to different spheres of communication and society, there is nothing in their nature which *a priori* contradicts or even interdicts transference from one context to the other or makes mutual influence impossible. A characterisation of their distribution as complementary, on the contrary, evokes some problematic associations: The term actually conjures up the picture of two script cultures which, albeit in contemporaneous use, could *by definition* not be employed simultaneously or within common contexts. This is because complementarity implies a syntagmatic rather than a paradigmatic relationship of the elements. Moreover, a designation of the two script cultures’ relation as complementary entails not only the postulation that they mutually excluded each other, but also that they conditioned each other. Neither of these assertions is supported by the evidence. Both script cultures had demonstrated their capability to function on their own terms long before the two systems met. And numerous cases of interaction, overlapping, and simultaneous use have already been discussed in runological research.¹⁴²

Accordingly, it can be stated that the idiosyncrasies of the two script traditions and their affiliation to mainly different spheres of communication should not be mistaken as an indication that they in themselves were mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the two systems *could* actually function within identical contexts theoretically, and they obviously *did* so also in practice. It may be added that throughout the Middle Ages more and more Scandinavians probably became acquainted with both script systems, at least to some degree. With an increasing number of people familiar with both traditions, overlappings and reciprocal impact of the two script systems became all the more likely.¹⁴³ In order to account for those circumstances of overlapping and, in a next step, also of mutual influence revealed by the evidence, I suggest modifying the initial concept of complementary distribution. The situation

¹⁴¹ Knirk 1994b: 206.

¹⁴² Cf. Benneth et al. 1994; Ertl 1994; Gustavson 1994 and 1995; Knirk 1994b and 1998; Spurkland 2004.

¹⁴³ Cf. Knirk 1998: 477; Spurkland 2004: 334.

calls for a descriptive model which enables us to consider the distinctive and unique character of each of the two traditions with their particular conventions and contexts of application while at the same time allowing for an acknowledgement of those instances in which they occurred in one and the same context, either simultaneously or in that one system was used instead of the other. The concept of overlapping distribution, which is also derived from linguistics, proves here to be more adequate for a description of the conditions of Norwegian medieval script culture and the relation between runic and Latin writing. The term implies that two elements generally occur in mutually exclusive environments, but share at least some contexts in which either of them may appear.¹⁴⁴ The concept thus gives due consideration to two important aspects: The uniqueness of each of the script traditions on the one hand, and their appearance in shared contexts on the other. Also Terje Spurkland mentions “instances of overlapping, where the two writing systems operate side by side”, but unfortunately he does not relate this observation to his categorisation of the relation between runic and Latin script as complementary.¹⁴⁵

As I have already stated above, reality may not easily be pressed into rigid patterns. For, although the concept of overlapping distribution may render actual facts more adequately than the original concept of complementary distribution, it can nonetheless not fully reconstruct the conditions of medieval script culture and the relation between runic and Latin writing tradition. On the one hand, it has to be admitted that the common contexts of Latin and runic writing were by no means as strictly defined as they are with the linguistic notion of overlapping distribution. On the other hand, the two script systems did not become arbitrarily interchangeable on a regular basis with the result that any text could have been written either in Latin letters or in runes depending on the personal choice of the writer or carver. Moreover, there still remain several other aspects which exceed the definition of the linguistic model: First, the two systems were not only interchangeable in some contexts, but even appeared within the very same contexts simultaneously. Second, and even more important, the two systems mutually influenced each other; the concept of overlapping distribution can neither account for this exchange nor can it reveal something about the manner in which this happened. Yet, almost all aspects of script culture, from the script systems themselves through to orthography, genre, and media, were receptive in one way or other to impulses from the other tradition. Interestingly enough, it is not only the allegedly stronger one of the two

¹⁴⁴ Ulrich 2002: 70.

¹⁴⁵ Spurkland 2004: 334; cf. Spurkland 2001b: 123.

traditions, namely Latin script culture, which becomes visible in the runic epigraphic tradition. Also runic conventions and traditions in many cases influenced the way in which Latin was rendered in runes. Moreover, runic writing also left its marks in book-culture, as with the use of runic abbreviations in otherwise Latin script manuscripts.

In conclusion, neither runic nor Latin script culture were self-contained systems in the sense that they did not allow for interaction with the surrounding world; they were not mutually exclusive as such and only from a superordinate and long-term perspective did they stand in complementary distribution. A more particularised and synchronic view reveals a comprehensive corpus in which the two writing traditions overlap. Especially in the runic epigraphic tradition there occurred some sort of amalgamation of the two script systems. This implies that the two systems intermingled in a manner which gives the impression that this happened frequently on an unintentional and inconsistent basis rather than with purpose and as a wilful act of adoption. One example to be mentioned here is the intrusion of single Latin letters into runic inscriptions, as in N405 HOPPERSTAD XVI **eXultent**; this latter case may be accounted for by the fact that runic tradition originally did not have an own character for *x* and, therefore, drew on the Latin alphabet when rendering this Latin word. Inscriptions executed in Latin, on the other hand, reveal some active adoption of Latin models for the carving of runes. It would lead too far for the present paper to explore the entire spectrum of mutual influence and exchange between the two script traditions, since that would *inter alia* involve covering the manuscript corpus as well. For that reason, this paper is dedicated to investigating instances of (probable) Latin script influence in runic inscriptions, primarily those of medieval Norway. It is, however, worth mentioning that the way in which the two writing traditions merge in the runic epigraphic material appears to stand in contrast to the use of runes in manuscripts. In the manuscripts, runes seem not so much to have been interspersed unintentionally, but rather been ascribed particular functions: By virtue of their deviating appearance with regard to Latin letters, runes were predominantly utilised in manuscripts as editorial signs as, for instance, abbreviations and reference marks.¹⁴⁶ The overlapping of runic and Latin writing in the Norwegian Middle Ages testifies the meeting of two script cultures and their capability to deal with the impulses from a changing world. Although we know little about either the ways in which Latin writing and literary culture were communicated in medieval Scandinavia or the extent to which such proficiency prevailed among lay people,

¹⁴⁶ For a short discussion of *runica manuscripta*, cf. pp. 106f.

reflections of such an education become visible in the runic epigraphic corpus.¹⁴⁷ As has already become clear in my preface, I am not so much interested in re-stating that Latin learning and script conventions manifest themselves in runic writing. I am rather concerned with illustrating the sovereign way in which rune-carvers handled these new impulses and even imposed runic conventions on Latin when rendering it in runes. In order to be able to conduct this study it is therefore in the first instance vital to recognise that the two script cultures actually represented two strong and distinctive traditions. Runic writing not only continued to exist, but for about 300 years competed with Latin script. The two script traditions were in fact mutually independent, but by no means mutually exclusive.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ NIyR VI.1: 41f.; Seim 1988: 12; Gustavson 1994: 315–321; Knirk 1998, specifically pp. 486 and 489–491; Spurkland 2004, esp. pp. 337–339.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Spurkland 2001b: 123, where he uses the notion of “Mutually independent textual communities”.

4 TWO SCRIPT SYSTEMS IN CONTACT: LEVELS OF IMPACT

It is without question that the runic tradition remained not unaffected after the introduction of Latin written culture in the Nordic countries sometime in the early 11th century. As a matter of fact, the adoption of features and practices from the newly arrived script culture, i.e. of both the Latin alphabet and Latin literary culture in general, into the indigenous writing system has been discussed repeatedly in runology. Multiple examples from the runic material have been used and discussed in which contact with Latin script culture becomes evident.¹⁵¹ No account has been given, though, which attempts to systematically distinguish the different levels on which the runic tradition was affected. There has also been an imbalance in the evaluation of medieval written culture. In my opinion, too much emphasis has been put on the influence of Latin written culture on runic writing rather than appraising the co-existence of the two script cultures and the unique way in which the runic tradition faced the influence of the recently introduced script system. This one-way view seems to reveal that runological research to a great extent has adopted a retrospective position from which the course of history with the eventual triumph of the Latin alphabet is tacitly accepted as a natural and inevitable development. However, I expect little gain from treating medieval runic culture from a perspective that regards its replacement by Latin script tradition predominantly as a question of time. On the contrary, prominence should be given to runic culture as a script tradition of its own right which proved fairly sovereign in dealing with the novel impulses it was confronted with. Instead of slavishly copying from the new script tradition and thereby losing its historic qualities, runic writing took advantage of particular aspects and adapted these on the basis of its own resources and conventions. For that reason, I shall focus not on Latin script culture exerting influence on a passive and susceptible runic tradition, but rather on the strong character and ultimate ability of runic culture to appropriate and integrate elements of the foreign script system into its own tradition.

My approach in the following chapter is two-fold: On the one hand, I aim to discern the different levels of impact which can be distinguished in the interrelation between runic and Latin written culture. In my systematic overview I shall concentrate on three major aspects. First, I shall study the effects of the encounter of the two writing systems on the level of the script system itself, i.e. I shall analyse changes in the rune-row which most probably

¹⁵¹ Cf. NIyR VI.1 and, for instance, Olsen 1969; Seim 1988a; Dyvik 1988; Gustavson 1994 and 1995; Knirk 1994b; Spurkland 2004.

can be attributed to contact with the Latin alphabet. Second, I shall explore the adoption of particular writing conventions such as orthographical standards and the like. Third, I shall have a look at what I have called form and content. I here intend to study medial and substantial adaptations, i.e. innovations on the levels of medium and content. In view of the fact that the provenance of particular developments often cannot be determined unequivocally, I shall in each section ponder the arguments which speak for or against a probable influence of Latin writing tradition on runic writing. On the other hand, the following chapter wants to illustrate how these innovations were accomplished through strategies which exploited the unique potentialities of the runic tradition and thereby helped maintain its distinct character.

4.1 Script System: Changes in the Fupark

The contact of the Scandinavian runic tradition with Latin literary culture has been regarded one contributing factor in the development of medieval runes.¹⁵² Moltke even claims that “the influence of the Latin alphabet [...] *caused* the creation of [...] many new characters.”¹⁵³ The increasing diversification of the rune-row coincides temporally with the Latin alphabet taking hold in Scandinavia in connection with Christianisation and church organisation.¹⁵⁴ From about the beginning of the 11th century onwards, the Viking Age fupark which had consisted of sixteen runes altogether experienced a gradual graphemic extension.¹⁵⁵ In accordance with the number of letters in the Latin alphabet as it was in use in the Scandinavian Middle Ages, the rune-row came to comprise up to twenty-three signs.¹⁵⁶ This extension of the rune-row was accomplished by principally three strategies to obtain novel runic characters: The practice called dotting, the separation of short-kvist and long-branch variants, and the creation of new signs, chiefly to denote sounds which were not part of the Old Norse phoneme system.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, there occurred sporadic changes in the traditional order of the runes. In some later cases, the runes were even listed in alphabetical order.

The modifications in the rune-row in the late Viking and early Middle Ages can admittedly not be ascribed to the influence of the Latin alphabet in the sense that the newly

¹⁵² Cf., for instance, Gustavson 1995: 206.

¹⁵³ Moltke 1985: 30f. [Emphasis added].

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Spurkland 2001a: 166f.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Olsen 1960: 240–245.

¹⁵⁶ Spurkland 2001a: 168.

¹⁵⁷ Knirk 1994b: 174.

arrived system of writing provided the sole incentive for this development. Undoubtedly, several factors, of both a foreign and an inner-Scandinavian provenance, contributed to the repeated changing of the rune-row. A close relationship between the expansion of the rune-row and the arrival of a new script system in the North can, however, not be denied. The following analysis has, for that reason, mainly two aims: On the one hand, I shall describe the modifications in the rune-row and bring up some of the theories put forward in runological research to explain their possible origins. Another aspect will be the evaluation of the circumstances which might have led to the desire to expand the customary inventory of graphemes on the verge to the Scandinavian Middle Ages. On the other hand, I intend to show how rune-carvers in their proceeding made use of the resources they had at hand with their traditional inventory of runes. For a better understanding and appreciation of the changes which produced the extended medieval rune-row, I shall begin my analysis with a short description of the system of Viking Age runes and its characteristics.¹⁵⁸

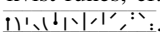
4.1.1 Preliminaries: The Concept behind the Viking Age Runes

The Viking Age runes had developed from the older common Germanic futhorc sometime in the 7th to 8th centuries.¹⁵⁹ In this process, the number of runes had been reduced from originally twenty-four to sixteen characters. Additionally, the graphic forms of the symbols were simplified so that each rune finally consisted of only one stave plus one or more slanting lines or bows.¹⁶⁰ In contrast to the older rune-row, the Viking Age futhorc came to exist in basically two variants which in modern terminology have been designated long-branch and short-kvist runes.¹⁶¹ The order of the runes within the rune-row was unique in the history of ‘alphabets’ from its earliest beginnings onwards.¹⁶² It remained more or less the same also after the

¹⁵⁸ I am concerned here only with those aspects which are relevant for my discussion of the development of medieval runes on the basis of the Viking Age futhorc. For that reason, my presentation cannot be considered a comprehensive account of Viking Age runes.

¹⁵⁹ The oldest inscription exhibiting the development from older to younger runes being practically accomplished is extant on the RIBE cranium (DR EM85;151B); the inscription has been dated on archaeological grounds to ca. 720 AD, Stoklund 1996.

¹⁶⁰ Moltke 1985: 29f.; Seim 2004: 140f.

¹⁶¹ The GØRLEV stone (DR 239; ca. 750–800 AD) is the first example of a futhorc inscription executed in the so called long-branch runes, whereas one of the HEDEBY rune-sticks (DR EM85;371A; ca. 800 AD) has the first known futhorc inscription in so called short-kvist runes, cf. Liestøl 1981: 247f. There also developed a third variant, the so called staveless or Hälsinge runes: . These, however, occurred exclusively in some Swedish regions, apart from one medieval inscription found at BRYGGEN (B41), cf. Knirk 1994b: 202; Seim 2004: 147.

¹⁶² Cf. Seim 2004: 127f.

development of the younger futhork, except from ʀ which moved to the end of the rune-row.¹⁶³ Since about half of the characters coincide between short-kvist and long-branch runes, it is difficult to assess whether rune-carvers actually conceived of these variants as two separate rune-rows. There are at any rate numerous inscriptions which contain runes of both variants.¹⁶⁴ One of these rune-rows consisting of a mixture of short-kvist and long-branch runes became so common, especially in Norway, that mainly Norwegian runologists have distinguished it as a separate rune-row, the so called *blandingsrekken* or ‘older Norwegian’ runes.¹⁶⁵ This rune-row came to form the basis for the system of medieval runes and it is the one we again encounter in medieval futhork inscriptions.¹⁶⁶

ƿ	ᚠ	ᚢ	ᚦ	ᚷ	ᚹ	ᚰ	ᚱ	ᚲ	ᚳ	ᚴ	ᚵ	ᚶ	ᚷ	ᚸ	ᚹ	ᚰ	ᚱ
f	u	þ	a	r	k	h	n	i	a	s	t	b	m	l	y		

In contrast to the development of medieval runes, neither the transition from older to younger runes nor the way it was accomplished seem to have been instigated by external influence. Actually, the evolution of the younger futhork can generally be regarded as a reaction to intrinsic demands and needs. One reason for the reduction and graphic simplification of runic characters has been seen in the wish to economise the writing system and create “a stenography for that time”.¹⁶⁷ It has now been generally accepted, though, that economisation cannot have been the only decisive factor in this process.¹⁶⁸ The development of the younger futhork has, in fact, primarily to be seen in the context of the radical reshaping of the phonemic system at the transition from Proto-Norse to Old-Norse between about AD 500 and 800, such as syncope and mutation.¹⁶⁹

Naturally, also the rune-names were affected by these linguistic innovations. Since the runes’ sound values were derived from the rune-names by the acrophonic principle, changes

¹⁶³ Seim 2004: 141 and 144.

¹⁶⁴ Seim 2004: 145f.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Olsen 1960: 242; Seim 2004: 144; and Barnes 2006: 21. In his article, Barnes discusses the classification of runes and the usefulness of standardised futhorks.

¹⁶⁶ Seim 2004: 144; cf. also Spurkland 2001a: 166.

¹⁶⁷ Andersen 1947/48: 220; cf. Haugen E 1969: 52. Liestøl 1969a: 74f. has called attention to the coincidence of the economisation of the rune-row and the expansion of Viking trade. In this context, he refers to the short-kvist-runes as “a cursive variant of the normal runes” and calls them “the writing of the merchants”. This description is particularly true for the Hälsinge runes which according to Liestøl can be regarded “a kind of shorthand”.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Liestøl 1981: 248f.

¹⁶⁹ Haugen E 1969: 52ff. Different opinions prevail about the language in the earliest Scandinavian runic inscriptions, although it is commonly regarded as Proto-Norse-/Scandinavian, cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 549. A detailed discussion of the two main standpoints, i.e. Proto-Norse (Krause 1971) versus North-West Germanic (Antonsen 1975), is given by Nielsen HF 1998.

in the initial sounds brought about either the alteration of the sound values or the elimination from the rune-row of the corresponding runes.¹⁷⁰ After the reform, the rune-row had available only four signs to denote vowel phonemes which, however, had to represent twelve sounds.¹⁷¹ In view of the consonants, the system lost the potential to differentiate between voiced and unvoiced plosives; there remained only one rune for each of these oppositional pairs respectively.¹⁷² While on the one hand the number of phonemes in the language was increased considerably through the emergence of the new umlaut vowels /æ/, /y/, /ø/, and /ɔ/, the inventory of graphemes was cut down by one third. The older fuþark had been characterised by its virtual one-to-one correlation between signs and sounds.¹⁷³ With the development of the younger fuþark, this relationship was fully shattered and individual runes had not only become ambivalent but plurivalent since one rune had to denote two or even more sounds.¹⁷⁴

The new distribution of graphemes and phonemes has been described as a system of primary and secondary sound values of the runes.¹⁷⁵ Those sixteen runes which came to form the younger rune-row continued to denote the sounds indicated by their rune-names respectively. In addition, they took on the task of standing for those sounds for which no distinct signs existed any longer.¹⁷⁶ Due to this enormous discrepancy with respect to the number of signs in relation to the number of sounds in the language, the transition from the older to the younger fuþark has been a constant problem in runology.¹⁷⁷ Whereas the economisation of the script system is considered a comprehensible and natural process, the potential of the Viking runes to render the sounds in the language properly and without ambiguities has been

¹⁷⁰ The **j**-rune is here often taken as an example. It changed its name from **jāra* to **āra*, and the rune's sound value altered accordingly from /j/ to /a/. Since the original **a**-rune also changed its name (**ansuR* > **āsuR*) and therefore came to denote nasal /ã/, the old **jāra*-rune could remain in the fuþark and hereafter stand for oral /a/. The name of the **w**-rune, on the other hand, changed from **wun-* to **un-*. As there already existed a rune for /u/, the initial sound of which stayed the same, the old **w**-rune was removed from the rune-row to the benefit of the **u**-rune. For a more detailed discussion of the reasons for the reduction, the changing of the rune-names, and its consequences for the rune-row, cf. Liestøl 1981: 250–253; and Barnes 1985: 37f.

¹⁷¹ Spurkland 2001a: 91: “Man hadde eksempelvis kun fire tegn for vokaler, þ **q**, † **a**, † **i**, † **u**, og de skulle markere nasal /ã/, oral /a/, /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/, /æ/, /y/, /ø/, /ɔ/, pluss /w/ og /j/. Det blir fire tegn på 12 lyder det.”

¹⁷² The **b**-rune came to denote both /b/ and /p/, the **k**-rune was responsible for both /k/ and /g/, and the **t**-rune became the sign for both /t/ and /d/, cf. Haugen E 1969: 53.

¹⁷³ Spurkland 2001a: 17 and 90.

¹⁷⁴ This radical reduction in the inventory of runes appears even more conspicuous in comparison with the development of the Anglo-Saxon rune-row. Also in Anglo-Saxon England, language experienced a reshaping and the innovations resembled those in Scandinavia (e.g. mutation). Anglo-Saxon rune-carvers, however, reacted to the increased phoneme system of Old English just as one would have expected: They provided for the new sounds by devising novel runes so that the Anglo-Saxon rune-row finally comprised 31 distinct runic characters altogether. The new signs were derived from already existing runes, such as the old **a**-rune (ǣ) which came to denote the mutation vowel /æ/; a modification of the **a**-rune (ǣ), on the other hand, became the sign for the ‘old’ sound /a/, cf. Spurkland 2001a: 91. A detailed discussion of the Anglo-Saxon runes is presented by Page 1999: 38–48.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Seim 2004: 141.

¹⁷⁶ Transliteration follows primary values.

¹⁷⁷ Cf., for instance, Haugen E 1969; Liestøl 1981; Barnes 1985; and Spurkland 2001a: 84–98.

regarded highly deficient and, thus, linguistically inadequate.¹⁷⁸ Still, this system of writing was in continuous use throughout the Viking Age and appears to have accompanied Nordic merchants and colonists wherever they chose to trade or settle.¹⁷⁹ It seems to have been challenged not before the direct confrontation with Latin script around the year 1000. In any case, it became the basis for the system of medieval runes, and in this form it continued to exist for another 300 years.

4.1.2 Expansion of the Fupark: Strategies and Motivation

The transition from the Viking Age fupark to the system of medieval runes took place at a time which once more was characterised by linguistic developments which affected not only the native language but also the indigenous writing system. Rune-names and the sound values of the corresponding runes altered yet again. And so did the inventory of phonemes which was influenced by, for instance, the disappearing of the nasal vowel phonemes.¹⁸⁰ These linguistic changes encouraged further alterations in the rune-row and they certainly contributed to pave the way for the innovations which made possible the emergence of the medieval rune-row.¹⁸¹ As matters stand, though, these appear not to have been the only contributing factor for the extension of the rune-row. It appears, in fact, that the contact with and knowledge of the newly arrived Latin alphabet occupied a central position for the desire to have available a greater number of runes. On the other hand, although both the language and the sound values of particular runes underwent one more reform, the rune-row as such seems not to have lost its functionality in the eyes of rune-carvers. In contrast, runic writing experienced another upturn in parallel with the establishment of Latin script culture in Scandinavia.¹⁸² Before I shall delve into a discussion of possible motivations for the extension of the rune-row, I shall present the different strategies which were employed to augment the

¹⁷⁸ Haugen E 1969: 51f. summarises the broad range of standpoints “[o]n the Parsimony of the Younger Futhark”: While Otto von Friesen speaks of “reine Entartung” (Hoops 1918/19: 20) and Elias Wessén claims that “the reading and interpretation was made [...] more difficult” (Wessén 1957: 5–6), others were more positive about the creation of the younger fupark. Musset 1965: 218 and 224, for instance, states that the “nouveau *fupark* présente incontestablement des avantages graphiques sur l’ancien. [...] Tous deux ont pris leur essor en des périodes de haute civilisation pour l’Europe du Nord.”

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Liestøl 1969a: 75.

¹⁸⁰ Seim 2004: 153.

¹⁸¹ The coalescence of /r/ and /R/, for instance, brought about that the *l*-rune was no longer needed to denote /R/ but could then be employed for /y/ in accordance with its name *ýr*, cf. Haugen E 1976: 85.

¹⁸² Spurkland 2001a: 167.

inventory of runic characters. By illustrating these strategies, I intend to document the autonomous way in which the runic tradition dealt with the new impulses.

Strategies to Increase the Inventory of Runic Characters

The diversification of the Viking Age sixteen-character rune-row first manifested itself in Danish runic inscriptions from around the year 1000 onwards and diffused rapidly over the rest of Scandinavia.¹⁸³ Although this development—as has already been stated above—coincided markedly with the arrival of the Latin alphabet in Scandinavia, the new characters were for the most part obtained by exploiting the already existing inventory of runes. In my opinion, this circumstance corroborates my conviction that the rune-row retained its autonomous status—also *after* the arrival of Latin script culture. One might possibly have expected that once influence of the newly arrived script system on the native tradition had been accepted, rune-carvers also proceeded to borrow characters from the Latin alphabet in order to gain additional characters for their system of writing. Instead, they looked for practical solutions within their own tradition. Three different strategies were employed to increase the number of runic characters: Dotting, the separation of runic variants, and the invention of new characters along the lines of the typical features of runes.¹⁸⁴ Obviously, the intention behind these measures was to dissolve the ambiguities of the Viking Age runes and restore a virtual one-to-one correlation between graphemes and phonemes. By around 1200, the rune-row comprised about as many characters as the contemporary Latin alphabet and the native writing system had become a phonemic script again – in theory at least.¹⁸⁵

Of the three procedures applied, both the practice of dotting and the separation of runic variants drew directly on the inventory of the Viking Age fuþark. Dotting was the practice to add one or two diacritic dots to an already available runic character. This pertains principally to the ambivalent runes denoting consonants (ᚠ **t**, ᚢ **b**, ᚦ **k** → ʀ/ᚠ **d**, ᚦ **p**, ᚦ **g**), which was common in Norway from the late 1100s onwards; but it also applies to the **i**-rune (ᚦ **i** → ᚦ **e**), which can be found already in the 11th century.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, dotted **u** (ᚱ) as sign for /y/ occurred particularly in Danish inscriptions from around the turn of the millennium.¹⁸⁷ Thus,

¹⁸³ Olsen 1960: 243.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Seim 1988a: 18.

¹⁸⁵ Spurkland 2001a: 163f.; Seim 2004: 156.

¹⁸⁶ Knirk 1998: 492; Seim 2004: 156.

¹⁸⁷ Olsen 1960: 243; Liestøl 1969c: col. 475. Also other runes could at times be dotted, such as dotted **N** in B100 or B41 BRYGGEN. There occurs also dotted **L** in *Codex Runicus* (AM 28 8°), probably to denote deviation from the usual pronunciation, cf. Seim 2004: 156. For further examples, cf. Olsen 1960: 245.

denote /s/; it is then transliterated **S**.¹⁹² Consequently, the implications appear to be somewhat divergent regarding the splitting of variants of the **a**- and **o**-runes on the one hand, and of the **s**-rune on the other. Whereas the former differentiation may or may not have been instigated by the acquaintance with Latin script and served to cover the phonetic system of Old Norse more adequately, the latter was obviously directed at devising runic characters for sounds needed to write Latin language texts. As to the **a**- and **o**-runes, I tend to suggest that the splitting of variants was due primarily to native needs to differentiate between /a/ versus /æ/ and /o/ versus /ø/. Stimulation by the newly arrived alphabet may, though, also have played a role since it provided the model for a phonemic script system. The argument that the splitting of variants served some intrinsic purpose may be supported by the fact that the separated runic variants on the whole seem to have been employed fairly consistently.¹⁹³ The use of dotted runes, on the contrary, remained optional.¹⁹⁴

A third alternative to increase the inventory of characters was to create new symbols. These were for the most part intended as runic equivalents for specific Latin letters such as *q*, *c*, *z*, and *x*.¹⁹⁵ These letters were strictly speaking not necessary to render Old Norse (although they were in use in the manuscripts) but were primarily employed in Latin inscriptions.¹⁹⁶ In contrast to the dotting of runes and the splitting of runic variants, the purpose of this strategy evidently was not to solve ambiguities in the rune-row—although this, naturally, was a side effect. The invention of new symbols rather aimed at rendering the newly arrived language in runes. Both already existing runes and Latin letters appear to have served as models for the new signs. The structural principles of runic characters, namely that they consisted of a stave with one or more slanting lines or bows, however, were generally recognised.¹⁹⁷ This practice of designing and employing runic counterparts for particular Latin letters was made use of

¹⁹² Long-branch *s* was normally employed for *c* only before front vowels where *c* had developed a pronunciation similar to /s/. In other positions the **k**-rune was used, indicating that the pronunciation of *c* in different positions was taken into consideration, Seim 1988a: 19; Knirk 1998: 490. Regarding the allocation of *s*, *z* and *c* to short-kvist and long-branch variants, the distribution was reversed in Danish inscriptions, in which **ʀ** denoted *s* and **ʀ** stood for *z* and *c*. In my opinion, this circumstance might indicate that rune-carvers were concerned to exploit the possibilities the Viking Age rune-row held ready; the way in which this was accomplished, however, seems to have been optional to some extent. Only one Norwegian inscription (N632) features the ‘Danish distribution’, Seim 1988a: 19.

¹⁹³ Cf. Seim 1988a: 18f. Various inscriptions indicate that rune-carvers did not necessarily have to go beyond the sixteen runes of the fuþark in order to have at hand graphemes to denote sounds such as /o/. In N614 from BRYGGEN, for instance, /o/ is represented by the **u**-rune which in the Viking Age had served not only to denote /u/ but also /o/. Some ownership labels from Bryggen employ the long-branch **a**-rune (†) to represent /a/, Seim 1988a: 18f.

¹⁹⁴ Seim 1988a: 18.

¹⁹⁵ Knirk 1998: 492. A special rune for Latin *w* seems to occur primarily in Danish medieval runic inscriptions and only once in the Bryggen material. This inscription (N632), however, exhibits also other features typical for Danish runic script in the Middle Ages (cf. fn. 192), cf. Seim 1988a: 20. It is therefore not representative for the Norwegian corpus.

¹⁹⁶ Seim 2004: 157; cf. Knirk 1998: 492.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Knirk 1994b: 174.

only to a minor degree. Moreover, “there has clearly been very little agreement either on the need for special signs [n]or on the content and form of the sign.”¹⁹⁸

The Latin letter *q*, for example, is very rarely represented by a special **q**-rune; usually, and even in inscriptions in Latin, the **k**-rune is applied.¹⁹⁹ As I have already argued above, no new symbols were invented for *c* and *z*; instead the long-branch **s**-rune (𐌺 **c**) was taken into service, probably due to the phonological proximity of /s/ and /c/, /z/, but maybe also because of the rune’s graphic similarity to Latin *Z*.²⁰⁰ I shall not discuss manuscript writing conventions here, but it may be of some interest mentioning that the manner in which sounds such as /s/, /z/, /ts/, /c/, and /k/ are rendered in Old Norse manuscripts and in runic inscriptions – both Old Norse and in Latin – are remarkably consistent.²⁰¹ Whether this can be accounted for by a similar phonetic analysis or by direct influence of Latin script culture is not easy to say. The way in which Latin *x* is rendered seems to follow the pronunciation in the specific context in which it is employed. Runic **h**, **c**, and **s** can be found, but also combinations of these runic characters with runic **s**, such as **hs**, **cs**, **ks**, and **gs**, are common.²⁰² A special **x**-rune which is a modified or dotted **h**-rune with cross bars at the end of the branches (✱) seems to occur not more than twice in the Norwegian runic material. At least B582 from BRYGGEN seems to underscore that this rune did not belong to the runic tradition proper but was owed to efforts which actually aimed at correlating the rune-row with the Latin alphabet: The special **x**-rune appears in one of the very few lists of runic characters in alphabetical order.²⁰³ When the **h**-rune or a modification of the same rune is used, this may be accounted for by either phonetic considerations (especially when it occurs in combination with **s**) or by the similarity of the **h**-rune (✱) to the Latin letter *X*.²⁰⁴ A number of occurrences of *x* in runic inscriptions witness an interesting reciprocal influence between Latin and runic script since they actually employ Latin letters. N405 HOPPERSTAD XVI has the majuscule *X* in 𐌹𐌰𐌶𐌰𐌹𐌺𐌰 **eXultent**, A215 OSLO employs the minuscule *h* for *x* in *pax* in 𐌿𐌰𐌶𐌰𐌹𐌺𐌰 **maksnaksbah**.²⁰⁵ The latter incident is a

¹⁹⁸ Seim 1988a: 19.

¹⁹⁹ Seim 1988a: 19. In the Bryggen material, two or three modifications of the **k**-rune for *q* can be found.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Knirk 1998: 493.

²⁰¹ For a more detailed discussion, cf. Seim 1988a: 19.

²⁰² Knirk 1998: 492f.; in this context, Knirk points to the fact “that *s* was one of the medieval pronunciations of *x*”.

²⁰³ The other inscription featuring the special **x**-rune is A77 LOM **pax**. Cf. Seim 1988a: 19; Knirk 1998: 493.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Dyvik 1988: 1; Seim 1988a: 19. As I have mentioned above, the new creations adhered to the structural principles of runic characters; the **h**-rune would, therefore, conform perfectly to this pattern in that it looks like Latin *X* to which a vertical stave has been added.

²⁰⁵ Cf. NIyR IV: 214 for N405 HOPPERSTAD XVI, and Knirk 1998: 493 for A215 OSLO. Note that the latter inscription has **ks** in the other two instances of *x*.

behind the development of this new rune is difficult to assess. In any case, the K-rune appears not to have been designed at first to denote /k/; otherwise it would probably never have assumed the sound value /p/. One might wonder whether rune-carvers conceived of the dotted **b**-rune (ᚷ) as being somewhat inferior because it was a mere derivation of the B-rune and not an independent runic character, and whether they, therefore, felt some desire to create an autonomous symbol for /p/. Maybe the K-rune actually reflects an attempt among rune-carvers to design separate characters for each sound in their language and restore a virtual one-to-one correlation between signs and sounds inspired by the model of the Latin alphabet. However, no attempts seem to have been made to develop independent signs for /d/ and /g/ in order to substitute the dotted **t**- and **k**-runes (ᚠ, ᚦ). Moreover, the K-rune never came to fully replace neither dotted **b** (ᚷ) for /p/ nor the traditional **k**-rune for /k/.

Motivations behind the Expansion of the Rune-Row

Runological research has repeatedly ascribed the progression from Viking Age to medieval runes to the alleged deficiency of the Viking Age fuþark. I am not convinced that Viking Age rune-carvers, and not least rune-readers, actually conceived of their system as being deficient. The reduction of runes in the transition from the older to the younger fuþark had, after all, not been accomplished arbitrarily. Unquestionably, only four runes remained to denote vowel phonemes. Their primary values, however, coincided with those vowels which occurred in the inflectional endings of Old Norse. Thus, it was provided for that important grammatical information did not get lost in the system of ambiguous runes. Those vowels which could be represented via secondary values only were not crucial for the recognition of a particular word since they were not part of the inflectional system.²¹² As Einar Haugen has put it

“[t]he information conveyed by the unstressed syllables was clearly more important than that of various vocalic shades in the stressed vowel, which were to a considerable extent predictable even after syncope. [...] as long as the minimum system of the unstressed syllables was clearly marked, most of the stressed qualities were obvious to the native reader.”²¹³

Consequently, a native speaker who was acquainted with the principles behind the system of Viking runes would in all probability have been able to derive the information of the stressed

²¹² Haugen E 1969: 55.

²¹³ Haugen E 1969: 55f.

syllables from the context and decode a runic text without hesitation.²¹⁴ Moreover, although overlappings could occur, the allocation of secondary sound values to one of the four runes designating vowel phonemes seems to have suggested itself due to phonological coherences.²¹⁵ According to Karl Martin Nielsen, inscriptions in the younger futhork are fairly consistent with regard to the spelling of individual sounds. Nielsen assumes that rune-carvers wrote etymologically which implies that they were entirely aware of, for instance, the linguistic provenance of the mutation vowels.²¹⁶

The virtual one-to-one correlation between graphemes and phonemes which once had existed in the older futhork testifies to an ultimate ability among rune-carvers to differentiate between individual sounds and to render them in script separately. Even so, I believe we have to be careful with applying our own attitudes toward and perception of written texts on Viking society. Although it made use of script and produced written texts, no one would possibly deny that this society on the whole was still an oral culture which doubtlessly conceived of language as an oral and aural rather than a markedly visual means of communication.²¹⁷ In his monograph on the growth of a literate mentality in Anglo-Saxon England in connection with an increasing proliferation of written documents, Michael Clanchy has stated that

“[a]lthough writing had the potential, in medieval England as elsewhere, to change the perception of language by making it visual as well as auditory, [...] preliterate habits of mind persisted long after documents became common.”²¹⁸

The conditions in medieval Anglo-Saxon England were undeniably very different from those in Viking Age Scandinavia. Clanchy's observation illustrates, though, that even after the introduction of a writing system on a broader scale mentalities and modes of thought changed

²¹⁴ Cf. Moltke 1985: 43 who claims that a consonantal writing system, i.e. a writing system which employs no vowels at all, would be easily decipherable for “anyone who had grown up speaking the language”. Forster 1988: 59 writes to similar effect: “The early Semitic and Egyptian scripts only recorded consonants, not vowels. The reader supplied the vowels from previous knowledge. [...] the context determines what vowels are supplied in a given case.” The same would probably have applied for runic writing: A system which at least indicates the quality of the vowel in question, should present no problem for a native speaker.

²¹⁵ Cf. Diderichsen 1945: 321 who argues that the reduction in the number of runes was “based on an intuitive insight into the characteristics of the sound system”.

²¹⁶ Nielsen KM 1960: 1 and 28.

²¹⁷ Derolez 1990: 400 makes a useful distinction here in that he differentiates between literacy in the sense of having and using script on the one hand, and literacy in the sense that “society and its institutions could [not] operate without the support of written texts”. Spurkland 2004 has also attempted to describe the different implications of a fully literate society in contrast to Viking society using runic script in some social contexts by opposing the term ‘literacy’ to his own neologism ‘runacy’. Furthermore, a number of articles are concerned with the question whether runic inscriptions were intended to be read out loud or for silent scrutinising, cf. Gustavson 1994: 323; Jesch 1998: 470f.; and Spurkland 2001b: 127.

²¹⁸ Clanchy 1993: 278.

rather reluctantly. I am for that reason apt to assume that members of (late) Viking Age society also after the acquaintance with Latin script still possessed the capability to think in terms of groups of sounds, rather than of discrete sounds which necessarily had to be represented by individual graphemes. Helmer Gustavson has in this context underlined “att runtecknen snarare betecknar samhöriga klasser av fonem än individuella fonem”.²¹⁹ I would consequently argue that the consideration of the Viking Age runes as defect with regard to their aptitude to render the sounds of the language properly is largely based on our own understanding of the Latin alphabet. With its virtual one-to-one-correlation between graphemes and phonemes, it is often regarded as an ideal representation of the relationship between written and spoken language. In my opinion, however, such an assessment of the younger runes strikingly demonstrates the deficiency of transliterations rather than that of the Viking Age fupark.²²⁰

As Aslak Liestøl has pointed out, the system of Viking Age runes seems, in fact, “to have served the needs of the Vikings well.”²²¹ Had the rune-row actually been as inconvenient as (our own) transliterations make us believe, it would hardly have survived all the way through the Viking Age and produced the numerous rune-stones of Sweden, the majority of which originate from the last part of the Viking period.²²² Taking the above mentioned arguments into consideration, I tend toward a different interpretation of the extension of the rune-row towards the end of the Viking Age and in the early Middle Ages. In fact, I would suggest that the alleged deficiency of the native writing system made itself felt for rune-carvers not before the arrival of Latin script tradition in Scandinavia. In the context of a growing approximation of runic and Latin written culture and with an increasing number of persons proficient in both script systems, there seems to have arisen the wish to render not only Old Norse, but also Latin texts with runes. Still, Old Norse remained the language in which most runic texts were composed also throughout the Middle Ages. In addition, the acquaintance with a phonemic script system may have instigated rune-users to catch up and make their own system of writing more competitive in this respect. James E. Knirk concludes that the extension

²¹⁹ Cf. Gustavson 1995: 205.

²²⁰ Cf. Liestøl 1981: 250 who in this context has pointed to our understanding of the older fupark in contrast to the discomfort we feel with regard to the younger fupark: “The old twenty-four-letter *fupark* seems to us a very useful set of graphemes – when we look at the Roman equivalents. But the Vikings did not have the same associations [...]” Seim 1988a: 17 has rightly pointed out that the transliteration of the sixteen-rune fupark “*conceals* the fact that as long as only these sixteen symbols existed, several runes had more than one sound-value.” [Emphasis added].

²²¹ Liestøl 1981: 249.

²²² Sawyer 2003: 7.

“of the *fupark* must partially have received its impetus from the knowledge that the Roman alphabet was more adequate for representing the sounds of the Old Norse language than the sixteen basic runes.”²²³

Nevertheless, the expansion of the rune-row was achieved not as a conscious assimilation or systematic restructuring along the lines of the Latin alphabet. It rather came about gradually and over a considerable span of time.²²⁴ In fact, the process to increase the number of runes stretched over a period of about 200 years. In my opinion, the coincidence of the extension of the rune-row with the consolidation of Latin script in Scandinavia indicates that the modification of the rune-row was indeed induced by the contact of both script cultures. There may also have been felt some deficiency of the runic inventory when compared with the set of Latin letters available; the realisation of the extension of the rune-row, however, was initially meant not as a conscious reform geared towards making the rune-row a one-to-one ‘transliteration’ of the Latin alphabet.

Moreover, although rune-carvers by about 1200 disposed of as many runic characters as there were letters in the contemporary Latin alphabet, the new graphemes apparently never achieved the same status as the original sixteen runes of the Viking Age *fupark*. The new runes were definitely employed abundantly in medieval runic inscriptions. Nonetheless, the postulated one-to-one correlation between graphemes and phonemes reflects a highly idealised system.²²⁵ The evidence reveals that throughout the Middle Ages the traditional 16-character *fupark* continued to be the basis for runic writing, whereas the use of the novel characters never became compulsory but remained optional.²²⁶ The runic material confirms that both ‘old’ and ‘new’ spellings were accepted as concerns dotting. This is exemplarily illustrated by the spelling of the name *Gunnarr* in N701 BRYGGEN ᚢᚋᚋᚋᚋᚋ **kunnar** versus N700 BRYGGEN ᚢᚋᚋᚋᚋ **gunar**.²²⁷ Inconsistencies occurred even within one and the same inscription as, for instance, in N236 SELE I which employs both ᚢ **g** and ᚦ **k** for /g/ (**aign eign**

²²³ Knirk 1994b: 206f.

²²⁴ Cf. Seim 1988a: 18.

²²⁵ Spurkland 2001a: 164.

²²⁶ Haugen E 1976: 85; Seim 1988a: 18; cf. also Liestøl 1969c: col. 476. As I have already demonstrated above, the separated variants of the **a**- and **o**-runes represent an exception in this respect as they came to be used quite consistently.

²²⁷ Naturally, preservation conditions have also to be taken into account regarding the presence or non-presence of dots. Still, the material is abundant enough to draw reliable conclusions. Both N701 and N700 date from the 13th century; dotting can, thus, not be drawn on as a criterion for dating runic inscriptions, cf. Spurkland 2001a: 163f.

fuparks has all the extra signs. As a rule there are never more than two or three of them, generally those for the vowels **e**, **æ**, or **ø**; **ʀ** for **c** is also common.²³³ As mentioned above, these are not arranged as part of the conventional order of the runes. Instead, they are added as supplements at the end of the rune-row, but not in any set order.²³⁴ Karin Fjellhammer Seim summarises:

“I middelalderen ble skriftsystemet todelt, med futharken på 16 runer som et grunnalfabet og de nye entydiggjorte runene som dels obligatoriske, dels fakultative enheter in en ustrukturert gruppe ved siden av.”²³⁵

Only one inscription, found on a table top from BRØRS in Nord-Trøndelag (A24), incorporates both dotted and other variants into the traditional fupark order. This example is fairly late, though, probably from the 1300s or 1400s, and derives from a context which indicates a learning situation. Even so, this inscription represents an interesting case since it might reflect an attempt to display the entire set of symbols used in writing by interspersing the additional signs at appropriate positions in the rune-row, i.e. usually after the rune from which the extra character is derived (**e** after **i**, **p** after **b**, and so on).²³⁶ Another singular piece is B100 BRYGGEN which “appears to consist of the last part of a ‘dotted’ *fupark*, i.e. dotted or other variants [...] of runes listed in the order of the rune to which they correspond in the *fupark*.”²³⁷

-] (ø) r g N i æ z d p Y ...
 cf.: - o r k n i a s t b - - y

Moreover, although by around 1200 there were as many runic characters as Latin letters, hardly any attempts were undertaken to rearrange the order of the runes according to the sequence of letters in the Latin alphabet. Instead of becoming a *runic alphabet*, a list of runes in alphabetical order, the rune-row continued to be a *fupark* in the literal sense, i.e. a list of

²³³ Knirk 1998: 478; Spurkland 2001a: 189. The fupark inscription which has most extra runes added to the rune-row is B35 BRYGGEN: **fuporkhniastblmeycØæø**. Note that **e** has intruded the traditional row before **y**.

²³⁴ Knirk 1994b: 175.

²³⁵ Seim 2004: 157.

²³⁶ Knirk 1994b: 195 and 203f. The inscription is, however, not only atypical because of the deviating order of the runes, but also because “[s]everal runic forms are [...] unique, whereas others are nonstandard”.

²³⁷ Knirk 1994b: 193, “In the transliteration **N** is dotted **n**, **Y** is the standard Icelandic form for **y**, and **i** is perhaps dotted and thus actually **e** [...]” Cf. also Liestøl’s photograph on <http://www.nb.no/baser/runer/runebilder/b100x.jpg> (last access 2011-06-11).

runic characters in their unchanged traditional order.²³⁸ The traditional order of the runes which had been inherited from the earliest times was actually preserved until the end of the runic period. Only four runic inscriptions are known from Norway which actually list the runes in alphabetical order, but these stem all from a rather late date.²³⁹ There occurred, however, sporadic changes in the customary futhork order. Indeed, the positions of **m** and **l** could from time to time be changed to **lm** in rune-rows which otherwise followed the traditional order as in B129 BRYGGEN:²⁴⁰

futhorkhniastblmy / kunar (*Gunnarr*)

This deviation in the futhork order is generally ascribed to influence of the Latin alphabet in which *l* and *m* follow behind one another, in contrast to **ml** in the traditional futhork.²⁴¹ That this came to be the only common variation in medieval futhork inscriptions with regard to their order is probably due to the fact that the two letters are the only ones which come directly after each in both the rune-row and the Latin alphabet.

4.1.3 Preliminary Conclusion

For the present it can be summarised that the extension of the inventory of runes at the end of the Viking Age and in the early Scandinavian Middle Ages generally can be related to the introduction of Latin written culture in the North. There is, however, no evidence that the rune-row was deliberately equated with the Latin alphabet in a comprehensive reform. Even though impulses from the newly arrived script system were seized and implemented, rune-carvers seem at no point of time to have conceived of their writing system as being deficient or inferior to Latin script. They did not wish to create a mere ‘transliteration’ of the Latin alphabet or, in other words, to produce another ‘alphabet’ executed in runes. Evidently, additional signs were employed in runic writing abundantly. At times, rune-carvers were even inspired to experiment with their set of characters as with the ‘dotted’ futhork or the rune-rows in alphabetical order. Attempts to integrate the novel characters into the futhork may reflect a

²³⁸ It has to be kept in mind, however, that the term *futhork* was coined only in modern times.

²³⁹ Knirk 1998: 478. The runic inscriptions in alphabetical order are N539 NORDLAND, N547† (the provenance of which is unknown), B582, and A126 TRONDHEIM; cf. also Dyvik 1988: 1.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Knirk 1994b: 175 and 188; and Knirk 1998: 478.

²⁴¹ Knirk 1998: 478.

changed attitude towards the indigenous writing system and a substantial concern with the new script culture. On the whole, though, the rune-row retained its characteristic features, which it had inherited from the Viking Age, throughout the Middle Ages. This pertains not only to the traditional order of the runes but also to the strong emphasis on the original sixteen runes. It may be interesting to note that the new runes achieved full-value status not even in the learned milieu of the scriptoria: Neither rune-names nor mnemonic verses were created for dotted and other novel runes which had not been part of the traditional rune-row.²⁴² Moreover, there obviously existed some awareness that runes and Latin letters were representatives of two different writing traditions with differing premises. This may explain the limited number of rune-rows in alphabetical order as compared to the copious fupark inscriptions.²⁴³ An exceptional but still remarkable example is N338 URNES stave church; this inscription consists of both a runic fupark in standard order and Latin minuscules in alphabetical order on adjacent sides of a wooden stick.²⁴⁴ The immediate juxtaposition of the two different sets of symbols in their traditional orders may underline my argument that the two script traditions were actually acknowledged as being distinct and independent from each other. Thus, their sets of characters could be rendered side by side without producing redundancy. In my opinion, the extant runic material clearly demonstrates that impulses from the newly arrived script system were treated by rune-carvers very confidently and without abandoning their indigenous tradition. They definitely allowed for innovations. These, however, were not accomplished by slavishly copying from the Latin alphabet, but almost exclusively on the basis of the resources inherent in the Viking Age fupark.

²⁴² Haugen E 1976: 87.

²⁴³ Cf. Spurkland 2001a: 190.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Olsen 1960: 245; Knirk 1998: 478.

4.2 Writing Conventions: Consequences for Runic Orthography and Punctuation

The meeting and interaction of runic and Latin written culture in the Scandinavian Middle Ages found expression also on the level of writing conventions. Ramifications of this process manifested themselves within both orthographical practices and other formal standards of writing. The task of identifying the *immediate* effects of this contact and co-existence, though, poses some difficulties, methodically as well as chronologically. This is because most of those features of medieval runic writing often ascribed to the influence of Latin writing conventions have occurred time and again in runic inscriptions already prior to the advent of Latin script culture in the North. This pertains, for instance, to the application of word dividers or double writing of long vowels or consonants.²⁴⁵ Accordingly, these practices were not entirely new to runic tradition when Latin script culture and its writing conventions finally gained a permanent foothold in medieval Scandinavia. Evidently, we are here dealing neither with strictly linear developments nor with an indubitable influence of Latin writing traditions on runic writing in the Middle Ages.

Therefore, several and partly related aspects deserve consideration here. These may be part of the explanation for the occurrence of particular writing practices in runic writing before the Middle Ages, i.e. in older fuþark or Viking Age inscriptions. First, runic writing was no longer in its beginnings when it was met by Latin script culture. On the contrary, it was by then a well-established writing tradition which had been in continuous use for at least 800 years.²⁴⁶ This again implies that there had been a sufficiently long span of time for runic writing to progress; the development of the younger fuþark is certainly the most evident example of the continual evolution of runic writing. Consequently, it is highly probable that also spelling practices and the like did not remain totally static and that rune-carvers experimented with the potential of their native system of writing.²⁴⁷ Second, Scandinavia had in this long period by no means been culturally isolated. Although such a cultural isolation

²⁴⁵ A more detailed presentation of relevant writing conventions in the older and Viking runic period follows in the next subchapter (4.2.1).

²⁴⁶ Cf., for instance, Spurkland 2001a: 213.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 546: “[...] the transitional period (ca. 600–750) was characterized by orthographic experimentation.” Forster 1988 discusses the transition of early writing systems from originally being “mnemonic, memorial and commemorative” to them being used as means of communication (cf. pp. 62f.). In his opinion, “[t]he object of ancient systems of writing was not to *transmit* information but to *record* it” (p. 59). In his short article, Forster deals *inter alia* with the formal requirements and characteristics of such mnemonic devices and applies his general findings also on runic writing. Future research might profit from elaborating further on that matter: A closer examination of the development of writing conventions throughout the different runic periods might reveal valuable information about the function of runic script in its beginnings. In addition, it will probably also cast new light on those civilisations which made use of runes at different times and for changing purposes.

and an ensuing cultural decline of the North, especially in the time of the transition from older to younger runes, has once been postulated in runological research,²⁴⁸ there is enough evidence to the contrary of this assertion.²⁴⁹ In fact, Scandinavia had in this period entertained extensive cultural, mercantile, and hostile contacts with the Christianised Continent and Anglo-Saxon England.²⁵⁰

“The dramatic emergence in the 9th century of Nordic people on the stage of world history brought them in close contact with the Continent and the British Isles. These early raids and invasions did not mean any immediate dramatic cultural or linguistic change in the native countries. But the consequences it brought for the following period were far-reaching. [...] This [later] part of the Viking period also meant a closer contact with advanced societies and Christianity.”²⁵¹

At the latest in the context of this setting, Scandinavians would have made the acquaintance of users of Latin script and probably learned about its conventions. But also long before the expansive efforts of the Vikings, Germanic tribes had encountered Romans, either when they were defending their territory against Roman invasion and overlordship, as mercenaries in the Roman army, or in connection with trade. For our perspective, mainly two regions come into consideration: On the one hand, the areas along the Limes Germanicus which bordered the Roman provinces Germania Inferior, Germania Superior, and Raetia from the not subjected Germanic tribes and, on the other hand, Roman Britain, especially along the northern frontiers marked by Hadrian’s Wall and the Antonine Wall.²⁵²

The arguments put forward in the preceding paragraph suggest primarily two possible lines of reasoning. First, impulses and innovations may have found their way into runic writing from the outside both at earlier occasions, i.e. before the establishment of Latin written culture in Scandinavia, and by taking a series of detours. Especially the Viking settlement in the British Isles and in particular the Danelag provided an adequate scenery for a closer contact of Scandinavians with Latin writing and its practices.²⁵³ The first efforts to

²⁴⁸ Cf. von Friesen 1918/19: 20; Barnes 1985: 29–31.

²⁴⁹ Archaeological excavations in Viking trading centres like Ribe, Hedeby, Kaupang, and Birka revealed evidence of far-reaching cultural contacts, both with the East and the West, cf., for instance, Frandsen/Jensen 1987.

²⁵⁰ Hines 1984; Hunter Blair 1997: 116–193.

²⁵¹ Gustavson 1994: 314f.

²⁵² Cf. Holm-Olsen 1990: 61f.

²⁵³ The earliest examples of Scandinavians actually employing Latin letters for their native language originate from the British Isles. These are coins from the period 939–954, minted for Norwegian Viking chieftains in Northumbria, cf. Spurkland 1998: 593, and 2001a: 167. In addition to using Latin letters for Old Norse, these coins show another interesting feature: The Old Norse word *konungr* has on some of them been spelled according to runic orthography in that the *n* has been omitted before the *c* (*k*). Thus, the word is rendered *cunuc*, Holm-Olsen 1990: 73f. Terje Spurkland

Christianise Norway were, moreover, undertaken from the British Isles, and it was probably in the context of Christianisation that Scandinavians were more directly introduced to Latin writing.²⁵⁴ Second, several writing practices frequently regarded as having been adopted from Latin usage, can be found in some of the earliest runic inscriptions. It is, therefore, likely that the potential or predisposition for these developments was latently present already in early runic writing and evolved as a part of the natural process in which a writing system becomes consolidated over time. A third possibility may lie in taking together the two alternatives just put forward. For, with the acceptance of the Latin alphabet as the model for the older rune-row, one might even argue that some writing practices found entry into runic writing already in the phase of its earliest development.²⁵⁵ This would imply that the inventors of the older futhork not only borrowed from the script system itself, but recognised also some of the model alphabet's writing practices. These would then have been available as an option for producing runic inscriptions, although they were clearly not employed consistently at first. In a paper presented at the Sixth International Symposium on Runes and Runic Inscription held at the University of Lancaster on August 12th 2005, Terje Spurkland has addressed the subject of "The Older Futhork and Roman script literacy".²⁵⁶ In his argumentation, he takes for granted that Latin literacy was the impetus for the Germani to create their own system of writing. On this basis, Spurkland explores the contexts in which Germanic people would have had the opportunity to come across Roman literacy; he identifies these contexts mostly as trade and warfare in the Northern Roman provinces. He argues that the inventors of runic script must have been bilingual; otherwise it would pose some difficulties to explain, for instance, their deep understanding of linguistic coherencies evident in the older rune-row. Furthermore, he discusses miscellaneous evidence for a close contact of Romans and Germani which might have promoted influence of Latin writing on the development and use of runes. This survey comprises a thorough look at probable Roman models (as the Vindolanda tablets), archaeological and textual data, as well as Roman (and Athenian) epigraphical customs. It cannot finally be decided here, whether Spurkland is right in his assuming an origination of the older futhork in close contact with Latin literacy and writing, but this seems to be the most probable

points also to the possibility that Scandinavians in the British Isles early made acquaintance with Latin script on parchment, namely when Óláfr Tryggvason and other Norwegian Vikings entered into a peace treaty with the Anglo-Saxon king Æthelred II in 991. Already in the first half of the 10th century, Hákon Góði had been sent to England by his father Haraldr Hárfagri to be fostered at the court of King Æthelstan; there he received a distinctly Christian education which might entail that he also came into contact with Latin script and/or writing, cf. Sawyer et al. 1987: 70f.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Spurkland 1998: 594, and 2001a: 166. On the Anglo-Saxon missions to Scandinavia, cf. Abrams 1995.

²⁵⁵ The use of bindrunes, i.e. ligatures, in older futhork inscriptions may point in that direction.

²⁵⁶ For the following, cf. Spurkland 2005.

context. Interestingly enough, though, Spurkland arrives at a conclusion with regard to the interdependence between the older futhork and Latin literacy, which is very similar to what I assume for the relation of runic and Latin writing in the Middle Ages: Rune-carvers readily grasped what Latin literacy had to offer, but they emancipated themselves quickly and took advantage of their model on their own premises.

Considering all factors presented above, my working assumption is the following: The introduction of Latin script and its traditions in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages did not so much initially instigate particular writing practices in runic writing but did rather intensify tendencies which had been there already before the arrival of Latin script culture. As with the modifications of the rune-row, the whole development resembled more a response to impulses from Latin written culture than an active assimilation to Latin script standards. Whether the occurrence of certain orthographical or related features in older and Viking Age inscriptions resulted from a direct derivation of runic script from Latin literacy, from ever-increasing contacts with cultures employing Latin writing, or if runic writing was predisposed to develop them from within, is only of minor importance here. The situation in the Scandinavian Middle Ages was different from preceding periods in several respects. Runic and Latin writing for the first time existed side by side permanently and on what was native runic territory. This meant that the two script systems had to deal with each other much more directly than had been the case previously, when rune-carvers exploited foreign impulses probably far away from where they had learned about them. In the Middle Ages, however, with Latin script culture directly at hand, particular usages which optionally existed in the runic tradition but had a much higher status in Latin writing certainly gained additional importance. Even so, runic writing continued to be independent from Latin writing and maintained its distinct character, not only with regard to the rune-row but also in connection with writing conventions.

This is suggested by mainly two observations. First, although some practices which were associated with Latin written culture were apparently applied more regularly than before the introduction of Latin script, none of these seem to have been adopted on a comprehensive and obligatory basis. Instead, they appear to have remained optional as was the case with the innovations within the rune-row. In my opinion, the increased occurrence of such practices in medieval runic inscriptions may be seen as a reflection of the likewise increasing number of people trained in, or at least acquainted with, both writing systems. These people would inevitably, even if unintentionally, have contributed to the transference of conventions from one system to the other. Judging from the evidence in the medieval runic corpus, the adoption

of certain writing conventions resulted from this digraphic (and bilingual) competence rather than from a systematic attempt to entirely adjust runic to Latin script conventions. Second, runic writing in the Middle Ages did not only withstand undue assimilation to Latin writing traditions. On the contrary, runorthographical practices seem to have had such a strong status that they came to be applied frequently when Latin texts were executed in runes. This concerns, for example, the “orthophonic” character of runic writing and the omission of nasals before homorganic consonants. I shall come back to both aspects later in this chapter.²⁵⁷ These instances of orthographical features typical of runic inscriptions with Latin texts reveal one aspect which in my view may deepen an understanding of the medieval Norwegian two-script culture: In many cases, it seems, it was primarily the script system employed, i.e. runes instead of Latin letters, rather than the language underlying the text which was decisive when it came to the application of orthographical standards and writing conventions. If I am right, this would represent another argument for runic writing retaining its independent character in the Middle Ages, instead of becoming a mere ‘transliteration’ of Latin letters which might be a natural assumption particularly with Latin texts.

In order to provide a basis for my analysis of the interplay of runic and Latin writing conventions in the Scandinavian Middle Ages, I shall again begin my discussion with a synopsis of the most important characteristics of runic orthography, punctuation, and related aspects in the periods of the older and Viking runes. This overview will on the one hand illustrate the state of affairs in runorthographical practices before the introduction of Latin script in Scandinavia. It will, thus, facilitate to expose those features of medieval runic orthography and related features which apparently were employed more consistently in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, these orthographical conventions of runic writing will become important once more later in my analysis, namely when I shall explore the application of runic standards to the writing of Latin texts in runes.

4.2.1 Preliminaries: Writing Conventions in the Older and Viking Runic Tradition

Orthographic conventions and other standards of writing are not easy to identify in the oldest runic inscriptions, and it is even more problematic to draw secure conclusions concerning their provenance. This is due to the relatively scarce corpus, which allows for hardly any

²⁵⁷ Cf. pp. 88–100.

comparative investigations, and the brevity of most older fuþark inscriptions. Moreover, the insecurities concerning the actual status of their language play their part. Even so, it has repeatedly been pointed to the phonemic character of the older fuþark with its virtual one-to-one correspondence between speech sounds and runic characters:

“Den eldre fuþarken er hva vi kaller fonemisk, det vil si at det er et en-til-en-forhold mellom bokstav og lyd, [...] mellom grafem og fonem.”²⁵⁸

Viking Age inscriptions, by contrast, are more readily accessible. On the one hand, the corpus to draw on is much larger than with older fuþark inscriptions. On the other hand, there is no doubt about the inscriptions’ language being Old Norse which in turn facilitates to learn more about their orthographic practices. The former one-to-one-correspondence between signs and sounds has admittedly gone lost in the transition from older to younger runes. However, inscriptions in the younger fuþark appear to be quite consistent concerning the spelling of individual sounds; I have already been into this in my discussion of the alleged deficiency of the younger fuþark. According to Aslak Liestøl, rune-carvers evidently had “acquired some kind of recognised orthography, especially in frequent words and phrases”. He concedes, though, that “[i]t is difficult to say to what degree he [i.e. the rune-carver] would have used traditional spelling.”²⁵⁹ Leonard Forster advocates a mnemonic and commemorative rather than a communicative function of early writing systems.²⁶⁰ Following this line of reasoning, one could argue that Liestøl’s “recognised orthography” reflects the mnemonic character of early runic writing. This would correspond with the formulaic character of many early and

²⁵⁸ Spurkland 2001a: 17; only two runes deviate from this rule: \diamond η which appears to be superfluous, since obviously \ddot{X} ng were used alternately in runic inscriptions, and \ddot{J} which is commonly transliterated with \ddot{e} or \ddot{i} , although its actual sound value is uncertain. Forster 1988 points out that early writing systems were not so much concerned with recording actual speech sounds, since their function was predominantly mnemonic (p. 61); they did not serve “to convey fresh information but to *remind* people of what they already knew.” (p. 59) This supports two possible conclusions: Either runes adopted their phonemic quality from their model alphabet (e.g. the Latin) which disallows drawing conclusions about the original function of runic writing. Or this quality may be interpreted as pointing in the direction that runes had initially been created as an everyday script; this, in turn, would have made necessary that not only familiar but also *new* information could be conveyed. There is, however, nothing in the oldest runic material which could sustain this theory, cf. my discussion on p. 12. Also Looijenga 2003: 107f. considers early runic writing to be formulaic rather than communicative: “The texts point to the use of a standard stock of words and patterns, reminiscent of the way stories and poems were recited in an oral society [...] we must conclude that nothing points to extensive use of runic writing, i.e. for letters, charters or records.”

²⁵⁹ Liestøl 1981: 250. Elsewhere, Liestøl has expressed himself to the opposite of a commonly accepted orthography: “R[une]skrifta er til vanleg ortofon, ofte inkonsekvent og som regel utan sikre spor av normalisering el[ler] tradisjonell skrivemåte, bortsett frå dei ortogr[afiske] særdrag som er karakteristiske for r[une]skrifta og som delvis held seg utover mellomalderen.”, Liestøl 1969c: col. 477. In my opinion, this does not necessarily represent a mere contradiction, but may rather help to effectively illustrate the delicacy of drawing far-reaching conclusions about orthographical conventions in runic writing.

²⁶⁰ Forster 1988: 59. Cf. fnn. 214 and 247.

rence is TØRVIKA A (KJ91/NIæR 20) from Hardanger which has ᚠᚦᚱᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦ **ladawarijaR** for *landawarijar*.²⁶⁷ With regard to runic writing in the Viking Age, the matter becomes even more complicated. As I have illustrated above, Viking Age rune-carvers had at their disposal no distinct runic characters to differentiate between voiced and unvoiced consonants. In theory, the **b**-rune could in addition to representing /b/ and /p/ also stand for /mb/. The **t**- and **k**-runes, on the other hand, took on the tasks to denote not only /t/, /d/ and /k/, /g/, but also /nt/, /nd/, and /nk/, /ng/.²⁶⁸ On the GALTELAND stone from Aust-Agder (N184), the word ᚠᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦ **iklæt** *England* exhibits **k** for /ng/. The inscription is, though, interesting also for the sequence **æt** for /ænd/: The rune-carver followed the traditional pattern in that he has omitted **n** before the **t**-rune; in addition, a special **ᚦ**-rune (ᚦ) has been used which has taken over the function of indicating the nasal quality of the omitted **n**.²⁶⁹ Using a runic character which marked the nasal quality of a left out **n** certainly helped to avoid confusion in an already multivalent system.²⁷⁰ On the whole, Viking Age rune-carvers appear to have marked nasals rather often, also in names which probably were easier to identify than other words.²⁷¹

Third, runic orthography has been described by Liestøl as being “orthophonic”.²⁷² He thereby attempts to account for the fact that runic writing reflects pronunciation and spoken language to a greater degree than was usually the case when Latin script was used. As with all orthographic features, instances of “orthophonic” spelling are difficult to identify in the older runic tradition. This is owed to the same factors which I have already mentioned above: Little is known about the language and its pronunciation at that time and the corpus is too limited to draw comprehensive conclusions. Viking Age inscriptions, in contrast, appear to reveal regional deviations in pronunciation. The N140 VALBY stone from Vestfold, for example, renders what most probably is the name *Hávarðr* without initial /h/, ᚠᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦ **auarþr**. Other inscriptions show a contrary tendency to add /h/ before the initial sound of a word where there

²⁶⁷ NIæR I: 278–283; Krause 1966: 199f.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Liestøl 1969c: cols. 471, and 477.

²⁶⁹ Cf. NIyR III: 25; Spurkland 2001a: 111.

²⁷⁰ Such a usage appears not to have been compulsory, though, or at least seems to have been regarded necessary particularly when the **n** was actually missing. This is suggested by a comparison of N184 GALTELAND (ca. 1020, cf. Spurkland 2001a: 111) with N68 DYNNA (ca. 1025–1050, cf. Samnordisk runtextdatabas). Both inscriptions contain the word *land*, but whereas N184 GALTELAND features omitted **n** plus the nasal **ᚦ**-rune in **iklæt** *England*, N68 DYNNA has the oral **a**-rune before the **n** in **hapalanti** *Haðalandi*; the latter can probably be accounted for by the fact that with the **n** being present, no need was felt to mark the nasal quality in the **a**. Another example, N540 SENJA (ca. 1000–1100, cf. Samnordisk runtextdatabas), illustrates that even if the nasal was missing, the nasalised pronunciation of the preceding vowel did not need to be marked. With regard to the omitted nasal, N540 SENJA follows the same pattern as N184 GALTELAND and reads **frislats** for *Frislands*; on the other hand, it features oral **a** instead of nasal **ᚦ**.

²⁷¹ Examples of Norwegian Viking Age inscriptions which feature marked nasals are N210 ODDERNES (**ayintr** for *Eyvindr*), N163 SKAFSÅ (**koþmontr** for *Gudmundr*), and N213 SKOLLEVOLL (**akmunt** for *Qgmund*).

²⁷² Liestøl 1969c: col. 477; for the quotation, cf. fn. 259.

should not be one, as on the STAVANGER II rune-stone (N251, Mariakirken) which renders *eftir* as *††11R **haftir**.²⁷³

As far as formal standards of writing are concerned, one of the most obvious features of the earliest runic inscriptions is possibly their general lack or inconsistent use of word separators.²⁷⁴ Both aspects, the irregular application of division marks and the phenomenon of *scriptio continua*, are considered typical traits of primitive writing systems, i.e. of writing systems in their beginnings.²⁷⁵ *Scriptio continua* is known also from manuscripts in Latin script and language from as late as around AD 500.²⁷⁶ If word boundaries were marked in older fupark inscriptions, they were usually indicated not by space but by means of specific word dividers, such as dots, colons, three or more pricks placed one above the other (e.g. ÷ or ÷), or small cross-shaped symbols.²⁷⁷ The latter were also often used as *incipit*-signs or in order to terminate the runic text with, in particular in Viking Age inscriptions.²⁷⁸ Word separators could actually be employed not only between individual words but also between groups of words or syllables.²⁷⁹ All of these possibilities could occur in one and the same inscription, but many of the earliest inscriptions feature no division marks at all.²⁸⁰ Word dividers appear to have been employed fairly consistently in Viking Age inscriptions. Nevertheless, lack of word division could occur also into the Middle Ages which I shall return to later.²⁸¹

²⁷³ Cf. NIyR III: 242–245; another example with **haftir** for *eftir* is the N222 EIGERSUND stone from Rogaland.

²⁷⁴ In a paragraph about “Syntaxis and division marks”, Looijenga 2003: 134f. lists all possible combinations of phrases of a sentence being written together or separated by division marks: subject and verb written together separated from the object, verb and object written together separated from the subject, two names of a subject written together separated from the rest of the sentence, and subject, verb, object separated by division marks.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Spurkland 2001a: 19; Haugen OE 2004: 183; Seim 2004: 135. Gustavson 1994: 323 assumes that runic inscriptions were intended to be read aloud and that *scriptio continua* reflects this oral approach: “The runic inscription was so to say empty of meaning to the reader until it was vocalized. [...] This type of decoding might explain certain characteristics in runic orthography and the phenomenon of *scriptio continua*.” Spurkland 2001b: 128, on the other hand, does not believe that runic inscriptions were addressed to the public and, consequently, read aloud as was the case with medieval charters and the like: “What was carved in runes, was not primarily intended for reading aloud, but for silent scrutinizing by the eye.”; cf. Spurkland 2004: 342. Spurkland’s assessment appears, at any rate, to apply to runic inscriptions on rune-sticks. The situation may have been a different one with the rune-stones and, not least, with the rune-serpents. Jesch 1998: 471 identifies both an oral and a literate dimension in the ornamentation, arrangement, location, etc. of Viking Age runic monuments. Quoting Camille 1985: 38, Jesch 1998: 467 summarises the oral quality of the rune-bands as follows: “The rune-band itself, not yet tied down by the conventions of manuscript culture, in which ‘script is ordered in a systematic way’, can be seen as a ‘depiction of verbal sound [which] is dynamic and free-floating’ [...] and thus the immediate successor to the oral act of commemoration.”

²⁷⁶ Cf. Haugen OE 2004: 178, illus. 4:2.

²⁷⁷ Liestøl 1969c: col. 477; Seim 2004: 128; Düwel 2008: 9.

²⁷⁸ N68 DYNNA, for instance, employs a small cross at the beginning of the inscription, whereas N225 KLEPP has a small cross as final sign.

²⁷⁹ Cf. Liestøl 1969c: col. 477; Seim 2004: 135.

²⁸⁰ Cf., for instance, Seim 2004: 135. The above mentioned TUNE stone (KJ72), for example, features several coherent sequences without word dividers as well as single words set apart by the use of division marks. The STRØM whetstone (KJ50/NIæR 52) may serve as an illustration for inscriptions employing no word separators whatsoever.

²⁸¹ Cf. Seim 2004: 135.

Inscriptions in the older fuþark display neither any fixed writing direction, which is as well regarded as a quality of primitive writing.²⁸² Accordingly, the earliest inscriptions could be executed from left to right, right to left, or in so called boustrophedon.²⁸³ From the Viking Age onwards, runic inscriptions are as a rule written from left to right, and deviations from this pattern are rare.²⁸⁴ Inscriptions on raised stones were predominantly carved vertically, rather than horizontally, and this custom continued in the Viking Age.²⁸⁵ Writing direction was thus fixed in runic script long before the permanent arrival of Latin writing in the North. This development did, however, not entail that runic writing simultaneously became a linear writing system. Although the term *linearity* can be understood in various ways, I use it here to describe the spatial arrangement of texts. However, in my understanding, *linearity* is not restricted to *horizontality*, i.e. the horizontal layout of written lines. The term also embraces the underlying concept of a text being organised ‘like a page in a book’. The latter has, of course, consequences for the order of reading (including reading direction) and the perception of texts in general. As I have just said, inscriptions from the Viking period were often executed vertically, frequently on the narrow sides of the rune-stones as, for instance, in N84 VANG church or in N68 DYNNA. Or they could be organised in artistically fashioned rune-bands as is the case with the majority of Swedish and also Danish Viking Age rune-stones.²⁸⁶ While those instances with a vertical inscription may in some measure be regarded as conforming to the above understanding of a linearly arranged text, the entwined rune-bands display a completely different approach to the perception of texts in general.²⁸⁷ The inscriptions do not only meander over the broad sides of the stones as they follow the rune-bands in curves and loops. The rune-bands even intersect at times, letting one word of the text cut into the other. Occasionally, the framing lines of the rune-bands or the decoration are integrated into the very inscription so that they could, for instance, serve as staves for other runes.²⁸⁸ Thus, these inscriptions (in contrast to reading a book) demand some sort of physical activity on the part of the rune-reader in the sense that one has to follow the line not only with the eyes but also by turning one’s head (sometimes even upside down).²⁸⁹

²⁸² Moltke 1985: 32f.; Seim 2004: 134.

²⁸³ Cf. Knirk 1991: 2.

²⁸⁴ Seim 2004: 134. Cf. Moltke 1985: 33 for some late (about AD 1000) examples of a deviating writing direction.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 550.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 550.

²⁸⁷ Cf. fn. 275.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Jesch 1998: 469, including fn. 22 with examples from the Swedish corpus (e.g. Sö151, or U431).

²⁸⁹ Cf. Jesch 1998: 464, fn. 7.

Framing lines are already present in the earliest runic inscriptions. Yet, they occur not as meandering rune-bands but mostly as parallel lines between which the runic texts have been incised. The BRATSBERG fibula (KJ16/NIæR 30) is one example, but also the TJURKÖ I bracteate (KJ136/DR Br. 75) which has a framed inscription running along the outer edge of the pendant. Aslak Liestøl assumes that framing lines are evidence that runes from the outset were meant as a means of communication to be carved on *rúnakefli*, whereas the use of runes in memorial inscriptions was secondary. According to Liestøl's theory, the framing lines imitate on stone the shape of a wooden rune-stick:

“[...] the writer carved artificial facets. He hewed parallel framing lines corresponding to the edges of the stick, and thus the inscription on stone looks like a spread-out *rúnakefli*. [...] Later, the rune-carvers freed themselves from their model, and exploited the decorative possibilities of the stone they were working on.”²⁹⁰

Whether there is a true core in Liestøl's assertion or not, rune-carvers at any rate appear to have looked for, and created if not already existent, some kind of predefined panel into which they could fit their runic text. This might also be part of the explanation why many runic inscriptions are carved on the narrow rather than the broad sides of rune-stones: Rune-carvers took advantage of the facets offered by the natural shape of the stone. Thus, they could elude the additional task of preparing the frames for their inscriptions. That framing lines were a feature inherent in runic writing is possibly best illustrated by the so called Hälsinge runes. As they consist of branches only framing lines are absolutely necessary for the reading of these runes.²⁹¹ A clearly different background can be attested for the framing lines on the famous JELLING II stone (DR42) commissioned by the Danish king Haraldr Blátönn Gormsson in the 10th century. In fact, the entire layout of this huge monument reveals influence of literary book-culture. The runic text is executed horizontally, and the reading direction follows the three sides of the stone, beginning in the upper left-hand corner and continuing downwards from left to right to the lower right-hand corner, thus giving the impression of pages in a book. In addition, all sides of the monument are decorated with a picture which directly refers to the content of the text on each side respectively.²⁹² In this context, the framing lines are reminiscent of the ruling in literary manuscripts rather than of imitating the native *rúnakefli*.

²⁹⁰ Liestøl 1969a: 76.

²⁹¹ Cf. fn. 161.

²⁹² The text on the A-side is surrounded by a pattern of elaborated loops and knots; it commemorates Haraldr's father Gorm and his mother Thyra and states that the monument was commissioned by “that Haraldr who won for himself all

Apart from the non-compulsory direction of writing in older fuþark inscriptions, the orientation of the runes themselves could vary.²⁹³ On the one hand, all runes of an inscription could be mirrored if the text was carved from right to left. On the other hand, individual runes could occasionally occur contrary to the general writing direction (reversed runes or *venderuner*) or upside down (inverted runes or *stupruner*).²⁹⁴ Bindrunes (ligatures or *binderuner*) represent another type of runes which occur already in older fuþark inscriptions, but are rare in the Viking Age.²⁹⁵ They are characteristically composed of two (occasionally three) runes which could be placed on either side of a common stave as, for instance, 𐌺 ǣ or 𐌺 ǣ on the TUNE stone. Very seldom, bindrunes could be constructed by two runes which employed a common branch. The practice to merge two letters into one formal entity or glyph is also known from other script systems including Latin writing in which, for instance, *æ* represents an amalgamation of *a* and *e*, or *o* and *e*.²⁹⁶ The orientation of the individual runes with respect to the general writing direction appears to have been established in inscriptions in the younger fuþark.

4.2.2 Runic Orthography and Writing Conventions in the Middle Ages

In the following section I shall explore writing conventions in medieval runic material and how these may relate to practices common in Latin written culture. As I have already pointed out above, many practices were present in runic writing already before the advent of Latin script in the North; moreover, I have sketched how they may have found their way into runic tradition. It is, therefore, somewhat difficult to decide whether certain conventions were ultimately applied by rune-carvers due to some direct impact from Latin writing in the Middle Ages, or if these practices may be seen rather as an intensified continuation of earlier, though sporadic and unsystematic, usages. For obvious reasons, general statements about the original provenance of particular conventions can hardly be made. Arguments have to be put forward for individual inscriptions and balanced against other evidence speaking for or against Latin

of Denmark” The B-side adds that Haraldr also won Norway; it has the impressive picture of a dragon or lion. The C-side featuring the crucified Christ in an ornate loops-and-knots decoration claims that Haraldr “made the Danes Christian”, cf. Samnordisk Runtextdatabas for English translations. Whereas Düwel 2008: 105 allows for a connection of text and image representation on the C-side, he doubts that such a relation is present on the B-side. One could, however, argue that while the image of Christ refers directly to the Christianisation of the Danes, was the dragon/lion motive on the B-side intended to express kingly power and Danish overlordship over Norway.

²⁹³ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 546.

²⁹⁴ Spurkland 2001a: 18f.; Meijer 2001: 52.

²⁹⁵ Moltke 1985: 34.

²⁹⁶ Cf. Spurkland 2001a: 19; cf. Seim 2004: 131.

script influence. Occasionally, the content of an inscription or the circumstances of its finding may provide an indication as regards the conceptional background against which a particular procedure has to be viewed. In such instances, I shall briefly anticipate thoughts that are discussed extensively in the following section of this chapter (4.3) which deals with changes in content and media. As will also arise from my discussion, there actually exist some outstanding examples in the runic material which reveal a derivation of manuscript usages, such as the use of typical manuscript abbreviations. Of course, these do not occur on a regular basis. But in contrast to those conventions which existed in runic writing already before the Middle Ages, they are certainly of particular interest with regard to filtering out practices which were obtained *directly* from Latin written culture. Moreover, they are unique evidence of a digraphic competence among a few rune-carvers which exceeds mere basic knowledge of Latin writing but reflects acquaintance with text production in the scriptoria.

In the subsequent analysis of orthography and other writing conventions in medieval runic inscriptions, I shall first examine those practices already discussed for the older and Viking Age runic material, before I shall turn to genuinely Latin script usages. Although I cannot present comprehensive discussions of each inscription when exploring particular writing conventions, I shall still cross-reference to other practices as most inscriptions usually exhibit more than one of these aspects. Moreover, argumentation in favour of or against possible influence of Latin script conventions can never be done on the basis of one aspect only but has to take into account other indicators as well. This procedure implies that most of the inscriptions which I shall discuss will be addressed at different points of my discussion.

Bindrunes (ligatures)

As I have indicated above, bindrunes appear in the oldest runic material, but are rare in Viking Age inscriptions. They re-occur, however, frequently in medieval runic material.²⁹⁷ It is conceivable that this revival was instigated by the increasing contact with Latin written culture where ligatures were employed in manuscripts regularly.²⁹⁸ Whether there actually existed some connection is, though, hard to tell as there is no universally reliable method to determine the provenance of such usage, especially since bindrunes had occurred in runic tradition previously. Evidence can probably be provided only by the content and context of individual inscriptions. However, bindrunes can be found both in inscriptions clearly related

²⁹⁷ Liestøl 1969c: col. 477.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Liestøl 1969c: col. 477.

case, it is more likely to assume that he drew on the (still existing) native tradition of using bindrunes. On the other hand, Þórolfr need not have been identical with the rune-carver.

Other runic inscriptions in churches are clearly commissioned by those ultimately responsible for the erection of the church, rather than by someone who was involved in the very process of building. This applies to N446 TINGVOLL church from Nordmøre which shows evidence of an entirely literate background.³⁰³ I shall for that reason return to this inscription more than once in my following discussion.

¹ 5 ¹⁰ ¹⁵ ²⁰ ²⁵ ³⁰
 †ꝥ: BİÐ: ƿIRI: ƿNÐR†: †ƿƿR: ʌÐR: ƿƿRþ: ƿ†: ƿR
†ek: biþ: firi: guþrs: sakar: yþr: lærþa: menn: er
³⁵ ⁴⁰ ⁴⁵ ⁵⁰ ⁵⁵ ⁶⁰
 NIRþNþI†I†: ††þ: þ†††: †ƿ: †††: þ†: ƿR: R†þ†: ƿNþ
uarþuæita: staþ: þænna: ok: alla: þa: er: rapa: kunnu
⁶⁵ ⁷⁰ ⁷⁵ ⁸⁰ ⁸⁵ ⁹⁰ ⁹⁵
 B††: ƿI††: ƿI††ƿƿ: †††: ƿI††R: ††††††††: B†††††: ††
bøn: mina: minnizk: salo: minnar: ihælgum: bønóm: en
¹⁰⁰ ¹⁰⁵ ¹¹⁰ ¹¹⁵ ¹²⁰ ¹²⁵
 †ƿ: ††: ƿN††R: †ƿ: ƿƿRþI: †ƿ: †N†: þ††††† † N†††††
ek: et: gunnar: ok: gærþi: ek: hus: þætta † ualete

Normalised into Old Norse, the inscription reads: *Ek bið fyrir Guðs sakar yðr lærða menn, er varðveita stað þenna, ok alla þá, er ráða kunnu bæn mína: minnizk sálu minnar í helgum bænum. En ek hét Gunnarr, ok gerða ek hús þetta. Valete!*³⁰⁴ The inscription contains in all 13 bindrunes; one of them is a triple-rune, binding together not two but three runes (r. 63, **unn**). The first bindrune (r. 25, **ƿƿRþ**) is somewhat peculiar because the two runes share no common staff. Of the other bindrunes employed, two are of a frequent type (cf. above), i.e. **† aġ** and **R ar** (both used twice in the inscription). So far, the inscription is not conspicuous. However, its utterly literate and elaborate character becomes *inter alia* evident in the consistent marking of double consonants with bindrunes: Double **n** appears six times in the form of †, double **t** occurs once in the form of what looks like a mirrored older fuþark †-rune. Traditional runic orthography would not have demanded such a procedure as one rune could be read twice.

³⁰³ Cf. NIyR IV: 274f.

³⁰⁴ NIyR IV: 275. Since the inscription is of some length, I add the English translation provided by Samnordisk Runtexdatabas: “I pray for God’s guilt to you learned men who are in charge of this place, and all of you, who can interpret my prayer: remember my soul in holy prayers. And I was called Gunnarr and I made this house. Farewell!”

Regarding the impact of Latin script conventions on runic writing, bindrunes in runic inscriptions with Latin texts are of particular interest. For, whereas the mere association of a runic inscription with an ecclesiastical context does not automatically imply that its use of bindrunes had been inspired by Latin usage, such a connection is much more likely in inscriptions with Latin texts. In that these inscriptions are executed in Latin and runes, they represent visible interfaces between runic and Latin script tradition. They are unique evidence of a lived two-script culture and they reveal at least some knowledge of Latin literary culture on the part of the rune-carver. This applies at any rate if the Latin text is not garbled in a way which discloses unlearned imitation rather than authentic acquaintance with Latin traditions. B598 quotes a Latin hexameter which is known from at least four (English) manuscripts. The fairly short inscription on a rune-stick from about 1300 features five bindrunes (with \widehat{ar} and \widehat{er} used twice respectively): $\widehat{dum}.d\widehat{as}:k\widehat{arus}:\widehat{eris}:\widehat{dare}:\widehat{des}?-/\widehat{eris}:$. In normalisation (with the text restored in line with the Cotton MS) the inscription reads: *Dum das, carus eris; dare des[eris], [despici]eris.*³⁰⁵ The inscription was obviously produced by someone who was well embedded in Latin traditions. This assumption is supported not only by the grammatically as well as orthographically correct Latin text; the carver has also consequently applied word dividers.

Bindrunes were also employed in runic inscriptions executed in Old Norse and from a secular and more down-to-earth environment. Often, their contents and other features suggest that they were produced by common men (or women) who probably had no literate education, rather than by a person with a distinctly learned background. This may support the notion that the use of bindrunes had survived among ordinary rune-carvers as part of the native writing tradition. Two examples from BRYGGEN may serve as illustrations here. B308, which is carved into the handle of a mug and expresses a rather worldly wish: *Mynda ek miklu optar mjǫð-ranni koma náliga.*³⁰⁶

Y A T T I : F : Y A F T T B 1 R Y I F : R T H I F A Y I T T I
(m)ynta:(e)k:mykluopdarmiöþ:rancikomanāla

³⁰⁵ Dyvik 1988: 6. Knirk 1998: 485f. The earliest manuscript is London, British Library, Cotton Julius A.vii (from the 1300s). The other three manuscripts all stem from the 1400s; these are London, British Library, Harley 3362; Oxford, Trinity College 7; Manchester, John Rylands Library 394, the latter with a slight variation in the text, cf. Walther 1963: 806. Knirk 1998: 485 also provides an English translation: “As long as you give, you will be held dear; if you abandon giving, you will be despised.”

³⁰⁶ Samnordisk Runtextdatabas; translated into English, the text reads: “If (only) I might come nearer the mead-house much more often.” Cf. Liestøl 1964a: 22f., and Spurkland 2005: 190.

The inscription also appears to reflect pronunciation in that the **t**-rune in **ôpðar** is dotted; this might be due to the fact that “risteren uttalte sekvensen /st/ som /sd/ og ristet der etter”.³⁰⁷ From the realm of personal sentiments stems B118 which is a short rhyming and rhythmic verse: *Unn þú mér, ann ek þér, Gunnhildr. Kyss mik, kann ek þik.*³⁰⁸

ᚱᚦᚦᚱ: ᚾᚦᚦᚦ: ᚦᚦᚦ: ᚦᚱᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦ: ᚦᚦ'ᚾᚾᚾ / ᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦᚦ
unþu: mæ:r:ânk: þær: gunnildr: kysmik / kanekþik

The inconsistent use of word-dividers may hint at a non-literate background. The double **n** in the name *Gunnhildr*, though, deserves attention; this duplication may reflect influence from the Latin usage to render double consonants, although this has not been done consequently here (cf. **kys** *kyss* which is executed with one **s** only).

Direction of Writing

As far as direction of writing in medieval runic inscriptions is concerned, nothing genuinely new happened after the arrival of Latin script in Scandinavia. This is not unexpected, since writing from left to right had been established as early as the Viking Age, and Latin script culture added no innovations in this respect. Still, individual inscriptions could at times occur also throughout the Middle Ages which run counter to the recognised writing direction. This may indicate that runic tradition, although direction of writing had generally been fixed, had latently retained some of its archaic patterns which could come to light once in a while. On the site of the medieval Maria Church in Oslo a grave slab with a runic inscription, N19 OSLO V (Mariakirken), was excavated in 1904. The grave slab is of a typical medieval type, and the inscription runs along the narrow side to the right of the slab (A) and continues over the whole foot end side (B). In normalised Old Norse, the text reads: *Stein þenna lét Qgmundr Skjalgi leggja yfir Gunnu Guðulfsdóttur, en ártið hennar Lúkasmessu.*³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ Spurkland 2001a: 202. Spurkland points to another such instance, namely N297 HAMRE church I which has **nosder** for *noster*, cf. Spurkland 2001a: 178f.

³⁰⁸ Liestøl 1964a: 22.

³⁰⁹ Cf. NIyR I: 45f. Magnus Olsen remarks that the right hand narrow side with the first part of the inscription is “avglattet i motsetning til venstre langside”. This, in addition to some other aspects discussed by Olsen, underlines that the slab was deliberately prepared for adding the inscription on these particular sides.

- (A) +𐌹𐌺𐌰𐌸: 𐌱𐌰𐌸: 𐌺(1): 𐌶𐌺𐌽𐌶𐌺𐌶𐌶𐌺𐌶𐌺: 𐌶𐌶𐌶: 𐌱𐌺𐌺: 𐌶𐌺𐌶: 𐌶𐌺𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌶 𐌶𐌶 𐌶𐌺(1)𐌱𐌶𐌶
- +stæin:þena:le(t): auhmuntrskialhe: lækia:ifir: kunu:kupustotor æn ar(t)ip he
- (B) 𐌶𐌺 𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌶
- narlykasmeso**

For our context, the inscription is noteworthy because of two aspects which do not become visible in the transliteration: First, the inscription is executed contrary to the common writing direction and is, thus, running from right to left. Second, the runes themselves are mirrored in accordance with this reading direction which is, as pointed out above, a feature of early runic writing. The monument as a whole provides an illustrative example for my central assertion that runic tradition indeed accepted influence from Latin script culture, but did not allow for total assimilation. The latter would have entailed giving up completely the own tradition. Being carved into a grave slab, N19 OSLO V (Mariakirken) demonstrates that rune-carvers opened up to runic writing the new media which had reached Scandinavia in the wake of Latin script culture which, in turn, stood in the service of the Church and Christianisation. However, rune-carvers did not hesitate to draw on native customs if the situation called for it; maybe the slab was originally placed in the church in a way which naturally suggested reading from right to left rather than from left to right.

More frequent than entirely mirrored inscriptions are single runes which are inverted with regard to the rest of the inscription. However, these result mostly from a confusion of runes which are mirror-images of each other, such as 1 t and 𐌶 l, or long-branch n 𐌶 and 𐌺 æ. Such usage demonstrates insecurities on the part of the rune-carver as regards particular runic characters, rather than a desire to employ reversed runes proper. A fine example is the *Ave Maria* inscription N307 FORTUN stave church V from Sogn og Fjordane:

1 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45
 𐌶𐌺 𐌶𐌺𐌺𐌺 𐌶𐌺𐌺𐌺 𐌶𐌺𐌺 𐌶𐌺𐌺𐌺𐌶 𐌶𐌺𐌺𐌺 𐌶𐌺𐌺𐌺𐌺𐌺 𐌶𐌺 𐌶𐌺 / 𐌶𐌺𐌺𐌺
ave maria gracia btēna Lominus lecum benelicla lu in / mutie

The text should read *Ave Maria gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulie(eribus)*, yet the t- and l-runes have obviously been interchanged (cf. runes 16, 27, 39, 41, and 47). The mix-up is so consistent that it has even led to dotted l for d (cf. runes 20 and 36), transliterated

with capital L, where there should be dotted t.³¹⁰ Apparently, the rune-carver actually thought that † I was t and that † t was I. Other inscriptions are less uniform in their application of mirror-image runes in that they use both variants alternately. N179 RAULAND from Telemark, for instance, employs both † and † for æ.³¹¹ In this context, Karin Fjellhammer Seim remarks that the occurrence of mirror-image signs “skyldes vel manglende skrivetrening, slik som de speilvendte bokstavene småbarn i vår tid presterer i startfasen av skriveopplæringen.”³¹² The inscription offers arguments both in favour and against lack of training in writing runes. On the one hand, the inscription was executed very carefully and regularly; on the other, several runes had been forgotten and squeezed in afterwards.³¹³ James E. Knirk points to another possible context of mirrored runes: In some medieval fupark inscriptions the f-rune has a reversed or inverted form.³¹⁴ It would be interesting to know whether this phenomenon has some practical reasons (maybe similar to those discussed above, although there is no character in the runic inventory which is the mirror-image of ƿ), or whether it may be attributed to a (not yet resolved) function of fupark inscriptions.³¹⁵

Linearity

It is worthwhile having a look also at the issue of linearity or, more precisely, the spatial arrangement of runic texts; as already said, this concept implies not only horizontality but also the organisation of a text as common in literary book-culture. One could have surmised that the immediate presence of a linear writing system such as Latin script should have had an effect on the spatial structuring of runic texts. Although instances of such an influence can be found in the medieval runic corpus, this impact was far from being sustainable. I shall for my evaluation draw on ecclesiastical inscriptions in a stricter sense as church fixtures and the like. This has two reasons: On the one hand, I wish to guarantee comparability. On the other hand, there seems to be a connection between linearity in runic writing and the adoption of new media in the wake of Christianity and Church organisation. I shall deal with the matter of novel media separately (cf. chapter 4.3), but as I have pointed out previously, overlappings between the various foci of my investigation cannot be avoided without making up artificial categories. Moreover, Latin script and its conventions were in the Middle Ages closely linked

³¹⁰ NIyR IV: 85f.

³¹¹ NIyR II: 341; Seim 2004: 170f.

³¹² Seim 2004: 171.

³¹³ Cf. NIyR II: 340f.

³¹⁴ Knirk 1994b: 177f.

³¹⁵ On possible functions of fupark inscriptions cf., for instance, Stoklund/Moltke 1981.

to and promoted by Christianity and the Church; Latin was the language of the Church, and the Church was the major source for the proliferation of Latin script text. Due to this proximity to Latin script culture, inscriptions from an ecclesiastical context can to some degree be regarded as seismographs for the extent to which Latin script practices and concepts were adopted by runic tradition.³¹⁶ Inscriptions from churches are, therefore, also of special interest with regard to the non-adoption of practices in a context where they would have fitted in well. In the following, I shall first discuss instances which illustrate a typically ‘runic approach’ to the organisation of texts; then, I shall turn to inscriptions which reveal a literate background.

With runes being carved or incised into whatever material or object available, and wherever there was space to add a runic text to the item, the overall impression concerning the organisation of runic texts is basically the same with medieval inscriptions as with those of previous runic periods. This applies principally to any type of inscription and irrespective of its or the object’s particular function; it is, thus, valid not only for runic inscriptions which suggest a non-literate background, but also for those from a potentially learned context which might have affected the use of runic script. Since virtually anything belonging to the medieval live-in world could serve as writing material, it was predominantly the shape and composition of the item which decided on the actual spot and direction of application of the runic text. Thus, runic inscriptions in the Middle Ages still display an approach towards script and a perception of texts which differed decidedly from Latin script concepts of text organisation. As with runic artefacts and rune-stones from earlier periods, one often has to turn either the object bearing the inscription or one’s head in order to be able to read the text; this is also a quality of the rune-sticks which I shall discuss in detail later.³¹⁷

On the baptismal font N25 NANNESTAD church in Romerike (ca. 1140) the following inscription can be found: †|†|†|†| **æinriþi** / †|†|†|†| **kæirþi** / †(†)R†(†)† **kærvæi**, *Einriði gerði ker vel*.³¹⁸ The text is not applied horizontally and in one continuous line, as one would possibly expect in this context and which is the case with, for instance, the Swedish baptismal

³¹⁶ Casual scribbles linked to churches such as graffiti on church walls are, consequently, exempted from this classification. They could have been made by virtually anyone visiting the church and do not necessarily require any knowledge of or proximity to Latin script conventions. The latter is, of course, valid for the majority of runic inscriptions, since facts about the identity of rune-carvers are hardly ever available. However, a connection to Latin script culture and conventions is undoubtedly more likely with inscriptions serving some sort of ‘official’ function within churches than with workaday or personal communication.

³¹⁷ Cf. pp. 111f. and 120–122. With regard to runic texts being executed horizontally, the JELLING II monument (DR42) represents an early and atypical counter-example. As I have illustrated above, the whole layout of this inscription features more than one aspect linking it directly to manuscript culture.

³¹⁸ Cf. NIyR I: 57–60.

font (Vg252; ca. 1170) which Magnus Olsen draws on for comparison. Instead, the text is carved vertically into three triangular fields which are part of the ornamentation of the basin; the inscription is, thus, divided into three parts. The intention seems to have been to make the runic text part of the decoration rather than singling it out as a separate element as in Vg252 (which apart from the personal name features the same statement).³¹⁹

Even more remarkable is the inscription on the N108 LUNDER church crucifix from Buskerud (ca. 1240/50). It is particularly interesting since the placing of the runic text has clearly been determined by the form or outward appearance of the medium. The text reads in normalised Old Norse: *Ek heiti Jesus Nazarenus. Ek þolða harðan dauð. Tómas.* The inscription is, however, not carved into some additional panel which is common with, for instance, the *titulus cruci* I.N.R.I. (cf. John 19,19). Instead, the three parts of the inscription are carved directly into the limbs of the figure of Christ. The first line (A) is incised into the right leg and continues upwards, with the second line (B) running over the garment covering the thigh; the third line (C) is inscribed into the right forearm:³²⁰

- (A) 𐌺𐌰𐌿𐌹𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰
ekhæititeSuSnaparenum
- (B) 𐌺𐌰𐌿𐌺𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰
ekþoldeharþandaup
- (C) 𐌲𐌰:𐌿:𐌿:𐌲:
to:mas:

In spite of this ‘runic approach’ to the application of the text, the inscription has at least some features which reveal a connection to Latin writing and its conventions. On the one hand, the rune-carver knew some Latin, although he did not master it perfectly: He carved **naparenum** instead of **naparenum**. Magnus Olsen points also to the use of **p** for *z* and cross-references this spelling to the usage in the *Ágrip*-manuscript (AM 325 II 4°) which is roughly contemporaneous and features the same orthography.³²¹ Whether our rune-carver was actually acquainted with manuscript-orthography or if his spelling springs from pronunciation, cannot be decided.

³¹⁹ Cf. NIyR I: 59.

³²⁰ NIyR II: 102–107; Knirk 1998: 493, and 496; Spurkland 2001a: 173f. reads 𐌺𐌰𐌿𐌹𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰𐌺𐌰 **ekhæitkiesus**, i.e. he interprets one sequence as **ki** (probably as a bind-rune) where NIyR II and Knirk 1998 read **it** (with **t** as a carving mistake in *Jesus* (**tesus**)).

³²¹ NIyR II: 104.

The examples discussed illustrate that runic writing retained its traditional non-linear nature not only in contexts more or less remote from those milieus in which Latin script would typically have been used. Principally, the same applies to the majority of inscriptions from an ecclesiastical environment in which some impact of Latin writing conventions could be expected. The general structural differences between runic and Latin writing were by and large preserved. Nonetheless, a tendency towards a more linear character of runic writing can be noticed in precisely those contexts which either suggest some book-learned background or at any rate allow for the assumption of a probable influence from learned milieus. Inscriptions in this category include *inter alia* those on grave slabs and dedicatory inscriptions; runic texts on lead amulets and church bells certainly also fit into this group.

The dedicatory inscription N446 TINGVOLL church is probably the most remarkable example of a comprehensive adoption of elements borrowed from Latin script culture. I have already illustrated above that the use of bindrunes in this inscription follows a markedly literate pattern in that double consonants are consistently rendered. Moreover, the inscription is carved into a rectangular marble top which is attached to the church wall behind the altar. The text is regularly organised in four rows which are arranged on neatly drawn double-lines.³²² In fact, the whole layout of the inscription, i.e. the organisation and formal structure of the text, bears more resemblance to any text executed in Latin letters than what is known from runic tradition. The lines appear to have more in common with the ruling in manuscripts than with the native framing lines. So, although it was carved in runes, the entire inscription is much more rooted in Latin written culture than in runic tradition. In my judgement, the use of runes is actually rather secondary here.³²³

It can be concluded that the development towards a more linear appearance of runic writing was closely related to the adoption by runic tradition of novel media and the opening of new fields of application for runic script. Naturally, this concerned primarily ecclesiastical contexts since Latin script, at any rate when it first came to Scandinavia, was closely linked to the Church and church organisation. The new media taken into service, which for obvious reasons stemmed from a more or less religious background, to some extent even prescribed a linear use of runes by virtue of their very shape; this becomes most obvious in the case of the marble top from TINGVOLL church (N446).

³²² NIyR IV: 272–246.

³²³ This assessment arises not only from the elaborate bindrunes and the outer appearance of this inscription, but also in anticipation of several other features yet to be discussed. For now, I shall leave it at pointing to the overall appearance of the inscription as an indication of Latin script influence.

Framing lines

Discussing N446 TINGVOLL church has not only brought up the subject of linearity but also that of framing lines. The primary function of framing lines seems always to have been to define the field into which the inscription was to be slotted. This pertains not only to the Hälsinge runes which are utterly dependent on a specification of the labelling field, but also to those runes which employ a stave. In form of the rune-bands (snakes), framing lines even have an additional decorative function. In the Middle Ages, the use of framing lines appears in some instances to have been instigated by the ruling in Latin manuscript culture which I have already indicated for N446 TINGVOLL church, and also for the Viking Age JELLING II stone DR42. Generally, however, framing lines seem to have been conceived of as an intrinsic part of runic tradition in the Middle Ages as well as in earlier runic periods. The snakes have, undoubtedly, disappeared from medieval runic writing, but they had never been common in Norway anyway and will, therefore, be of no further interest here. Otherwise, though, framing lines continued to be utilised throughout the Middle Ages as an orientation in writing, and in some cases they also served the purpose of ornamentation. Framing lines could be prepared artificially as in N307 FORTUN stave church V where the first line of the *Ave Maria* inscription was carved between two lines which had been incised into the wooden plank with a knife; this was most probably done because the inscription runs across the grain so that the latter could not be taken into service as framing lines. Then again, rune-carvers could exploit the structure of the material they worked on, i.e. mainly wood. This is the case with N393 HOPPERSTAD stave church IV. The inscription was carved into the wall of the stave church and the rune-carver has clearly taken advantage of the grain running horizontally along which he has incised the four lines of his inscription.³²⁴ While the inscription's content clearly reveals a Christian background, there is no evidence of any connection to Latin script culture; rather, it exhibits several features which are typical of runic writing as, for instance, the avoidance of double-runes (cf. **trotten** for *dróttinn*).³²⁵

The *rúnakefli* represent an outstanding category of writing material in that their shape already prefigures the runic text's alignment. The rune-sticks were prepared exclusively to bear a runic message, and for that purpose branches or the like were whittled on four or sometimes five sides. By carving the runic text on these sides so that it filled the full height of the writing material, the edges of the rune-stick could serve as framing lines. Rune-carvers

³²⁴ Cf. NIyR IV: 208–210. That the rune-carver actually was male arises from the inscription itself which in Old Norse reads: *Nú er palmsunnuaptann. Dróttinn hjalpi þeim manni, er þessar rúnar reist, svá þeim, er þær ræðr.*

³²⁵ Cf. NIyR IV: 210.

thus escaped the task to specially prepare lines to write on. Several indicators suggest that some sort of framing for the runic text was indeed regarded not only as belonging to runic writing, but also as being fairly favourable (though not indispensable). On the one hand, there is the extensive use of rune-sticks in the Middle Ages; on the other, lines were actually also sketched when a runic text was incised into an outspread and flattened surface (as with, for instance, lead amulets such as the N248 MADLA lead cross or the N53 ULSTAD lead sheet).

Word division

When Latin script culture reached Northern Europe, word division was already an integral part of literate writing.³²⁶ Medieval runic writing, in contrast, was not that settled on this matter: As in earlier periods, it did not necessarily require word division, and if word division was marked, this was achieved by punctuation rather than by using space.³²⁷ Since word dividers were frequently employed already during the Viking Age, the contribution of Latin script usage on runic tradition cannot be stated in general terms. A closer look at the medieval runic corpus reveals that there was a broad scope of possibilities for rune-carvers ranging from a general lack of word separators to the acceptance of space as division mark.

Quite a number of runic inscriptions from the Middle Ages either lack word dividers completely or employ them rather sparsely. The absence (or virtual lack) of division marks appears, however, to have been a feature not only of inscriptions executed by unlearned rune-carvers, i.e. carvers without any knowledge of or schooling in Latin writing. Word dividers can also be absent from inscriptions which might have some learned background. This can be concluded from the inscriptions' greatly diverging contents: On the one hand, there are inscriptions expressing private sentiments, religious utterances, and poetry in Old Norse. These include, for instance, B390 stating that *Ingibjörg unni mér þá er ek var í Stafangri*, N396 HOPPERSTAD stave church VII calling upon God and Mary (*Guð minn ok hin helga María*), and the fragmentary rune-stick rendering part of a strophe in *dróttkvætt* (... [o]f síðir. Alinn var ek þar er alma upplendingar bendu. Nú verð ek ...).³²⁸ The latter is also known from *Morkinskinna* (GKS 1009 fol.) which puts these words into the mouth of Haraldr Harðráði.³²⁹ Although there is no indication that the rune-carver was particularly learned, this coincidence

³²⁶ Haugen OE 2004: 183.

³²⁷ Cf. Knirk 1998: 493.

³²⁸ Cf. NlyR IV: 211; cf. Seim 1988a: 15; and Spurkland 2001a: 181 and 206. Samnordisk Runtexdatabas gives the following translations: “Ingibjörg loved me when I was in Stavanger” (B390); “My God and the holy Mary” (N396); “... om sider. Født ble jeg der opplendinger spente buene. Nå blir jeg ...” (B88). For the latter, cf. Seim 1988a: 15: “I was born where the men of the Uplands tautened their bowstrings ...”.

³²⁹ Seim 2004: 165.

suggests at least some overlapping between urban milieus and those traditions passed on in the scriptoria.³³⁰ On the other hand, there are prayers in Latin which by virtue of their correct orthography imply some learned background on the part of the rune-carver. As with the Old Norse inscriptions, though, no definite assignment of these inscriptions to a particular background is possible. They come from ecclesiastical contexts (as N307 FORTUN stave church V) as well as from urban environments (as A63 TØNSBERG with another *Ave Maria*).³³¹

On the other end of the scale there are inscriptions with consistent, or at least virtually consistent, word division. It seems that most of these exhibit also other features which indicate some influence from Latin script conventions. N446 TINGVOLL church (cf. above) is the most prominent case, but also N297 HAMRE church I from Hordaland fits in here.³³²

1 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55
 *R:†R:I:ÞIRIR:†NINIR:INYPRN:YRFR†111:BIIR:KIR:††IR:ÞIRIR:††R:††I:
her:nidri:firir:huilir:iumfru:margretta:bidir:pater:nosder:firir:hennar:saal:

In Old Norse, the inscription on the grave slab reads: *Hér niðri fyrir hvíllir jumfrú Margréta. Biðið Pater noster fyrir hennar sál*. The rune-carver has in addition to word division not only used several bindrunes (including one triple rune, cf. r. 45), but he or she has also dotted the runes consequently.³³³ The two examples just discussed can be classified as inscriptions which served some direct function within the church building (dedication and grave slab) which may suggest some proximity to Latin script culture.³³⁴

Also the rune-carver may him- or herself provide an indication concerning his or her learned background. N170 VINJE I from Telemark was carved into the door frame of the former stave church in Vinje (torn down in 1796):³³⁵

+†IYNRBR:I††N†:R††I:RN†R:††R:††R:††R:††R:††R:††R:††R:††R:††R:
+sigurþr:ialssun:ræist:runar:þesar:lougar:dagen:aftir:botolfs:mæso:er:

³³⁰ This assumption is further sustained by another inscription from BRYGGEN, N606, which has the beginning of the line *Alin(n) var ek* in addition to a fragmentary line in Latin, cf. NIyR VI.1: 13f.; Seim 1988b: 28f.

³³¹ Cf. NIyR IV: 85f.; Gosling 1989: 177.

³³² Cf. NIyR: IV: 64f.

³³³ The dotted **d** in **nosder** is probably no mistake or instance of overzealous dotting, but certainly reflects the pronunciation /nd/ in this sequence, cf. NIyR IV: 64.

³³⁴ The use of the word **iumfru** *jumfrú* in N297 HAMRE church indicates that the woman Margréta was of higher standing, cf. NIyR IV: 65. It is possible that the family due to their higher rank in society had some knowledge of Latin script and writing which found expression in this inscription.

³³⁵ NIyR II: 264–268.

began with (cf. above), there are medieval instances in which double-writing is avoided also across word boundaries. One example is the already mentioned N392 HOPPERSTAD stave church IV in which **þæimāne** stands for *þeim manni*.³⁵⁴

If runes were doubled in order to mark long vowels or consonants, this procedure seems in many cases indeed to be adopted from Latin writing practice. Gemination of runes occurs, accordingly, mostly in those inscriptions which also otherwise reflect influence of Latin script culture. But even in inscriptions with some sort of literate background, runes were executed double only on an irregular basis, i.e. both ways of spelling can be found in one and the same inscription. This pertains, for instance, to Sigurður Jarlsson's statement in VINJE stave church (N170): On the one hand, he carved double **s** in **ialssun** and double **r** in **suærri**. On the other hand, he incised only one **n** and **s** respectively for *daginn* and *messu* (**dagen, mæso**).³⁵⁵ In N297 HAMRE church I (*Hér niðri fyrir hvíllir ...*), the word *sál* is carved **saal** to indicate that the vowel was long. This *modus operandi* was certainly inspired by Latin script usage:

“[...] det er mye som tyder på at vedkommende [the rune-carver] også behersket bokskriften. Vi har flere tilfelle av dobbelkonsonant og *sál*, som har lang rotvokal, ristes **saal**. Dette er trekk som kan skyldes overføring fra gammelnorsk skrevet med latinske bokstaver på pergament.”³⁵⁶

The Latin model may here even have led to some overzealousness on part of the rune-carver, since the name *Margréta* is actually executed with double **t** where we would expect only one **t** (**mārgretta**). An interesting case of coincidence of Latin writing practice and pronunciation may be found on the N53 ULSTAD lead sheet. The text contains the entire *Pater Noster* and the names of the four Evangelists. Noticeable is “den [...] udstrakte Brug af Konsonantfordobling”, and James E. Knirk surmises that “[t]he doubling of **n** and **s** in [...], e.g. **inndukass**, might reflect an effort to signify that the preceding vowel is short [...]”.³⁵⁷

Only very few of these, one could say ‘literate’, inscriptions mark double consonants consistently. N446 TINGVOLL church (*Ek bið fyrir Guðs sakar ...*) is one of them, but as I have already pointed out, this inscription (albeit executed in runes) seems to be a product of Latin script culture rather than of runic tradition. Another, though fairly short, inscription in

³⁵⁴ For the full text, cf. fn. 324.

³⁵⁵ Cf. pp. 81f.

³⁵⁶ Spurkland 2001a: 179.

³⁵⁷ NIyR I: 103; Knirk 1998: 490.

which double consonants are indicated consequently is the one sent by Síra Jón to Gunnarr Hvít (B333). What seems interesting to me is that although double consonants are marked in these inscriptions this is frequently achieved not by executing the runes in question twice but by using bindrunes (cf., for instance, 𐌺 \widehat{nn} in both N446 and B333, or 𐌺 \widehat{ll} in N446). One may conclude from this that rune-carvers once again allowed for influence from Latin script culture but at the same time avoided the doubling of runes in accordance with standard runic orthography. On the whole, the gemination of consonants did not win through in runic writing after the establishment of Latin writing in Scandinavia.

Non-Representation of Nasal before Homorganic Consonants

The runorthographical practice to omit nasals before homorganic consonants was particularly frequent in Viking Age inscriptions, but can be observed in runic writing well into the Middle Ages. One such instance has already come up in my discussion, namely N170 VINJE stave church I in which *hingat* is rendered **higat**, and *ganga* appears as **gāga**.³⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that Sigurðr Jarlsson who in his inscription reveals knowledge of Latin writing and followed some of its conventions (cf. doubling of consonants) chose to draw on runic tradition with regard to the non-representation of nasals. Another inscription which I have mentioned previously is B88. In the sequence 𐌺𐌳𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹 **uplindkærbito**, which can be normalised into Old Norse *upp-lendingar bendu*, the nasal has been left out twice while it has actually been marked in **-lind-**. Also other features in this inscription point towards traditional runic orthography. Take, for example, the fact that “[I]ang konsonant er enkeltskrevet, og i-runen opptrer upunkttert for /e/”.³⁵⁹ As a third example, B390 may be cited in which the place name *Stavanger* is rendered without **n** (𐌺𐌹𐌶𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹 **spafakri**).³⁶⁰

The cases presented so far were all executed in Old Norse. The latter two provide no indication of the rune-carver being literate; the example of Sigurðr Jarlsson, in contrast, shows that also rune-carvers capable of writing Latin would still apply runic standards when writing the vernacular in runes. For the focus of the present paper, runic inscriptions in Latin gain particular importance. They may reveal what happened when a language other than the native was rendered in runes and whether this language would impose its own writing conventions on runic orthography or vice versa. To begin with it may be stated that nasal seems mostly to

³⁵⁸ Cf. pp. 81f.

³⁵⁹ Seim 2004: 166.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Liestøl 1964a: 21.

sequence *Amor vincit omnia* has been rendered without **n** (**u/icip**) on an embroidered shoe from BRYGGEN (B605).³⁶⁷

It is conceivable that the omission of nasal before certain consonants in Latin runic inscriptions had its origin in the practice to use nasal stroke in the manuscripts. Helmer Gustavson takes this possibility into consideration too:

“[U]telämmandet av <m> och <n> framför vissa konsonanter [...] kan också ha sin förklaring i grafematiska förhållanden i medeltida handskrifter, till exempel bruket av nasalstreck.”³⁶⁸

In my opinion, however, it is more likely that we are dealing with a genuine runorthographical practice. For one thing, nasal stroke is actually used in order to indicate that something has been left out; runic writing, on the other, simply omitted the nasal leaving it to the reader to decide whether something was missing or not. For another thing, there need not be any connection with Latin writing at all. Most often, missing nasal seems to occur in the word *sanctus* and its diverse forms. This originally Latin word, though, had early found its way into the various vernacular vocabularies which arises also from my first two examples (N11 HVALER church bell, and N172 NESLAND stave church). The word may, thus, have no longer been regarded by rune-carvers as being definitely Latin, at least not when occurring in an otherwise Old Norse context.

Nevertheless, the previous examples show that the convention to omit nasal before homorganic consonants was still rooted in medieval runic writing and that the tradition was stable enough to be transferred to Latin texts in runes. This substantiates my assumption that runic writing also in the presence of Latin script culture maintained its idiosyncrasies. Runes were not used to merely transcribe in the native script system popular Latin prayers and the like. Rune-carvers were not infrequently guided by the principles of their own writing tradition even when directly confronted with Latin literary culture in form of Latin texts.

Oral Character of Runic Writing and Orthophonic spelling

Runic writing reflected spoken language and pronunciation to a greater degree than was the case with writing in Latin script, both as regards Old Norse and Latin texts.³⁶⁹ This quality of

³⁶⁷ NIyR VI.2: 228; Knirk 1998: 492. The form ᚱᚱᚱᚱ **uicit** for *vicit* in the inscription on the N248 MADLA lead cross, on the other hand, represents a genuine present perfect form and is, therefore, spelled correctly (*Vicit leo de tribu Juda, radix David*), cf. NIyR III: 232f.

³⁶⁸ Gustavson 1995: 214.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Knirk 1998: 491; Spurkland 2004: 337.

he or she remembered from hearing under service in church. Another typical runorthographical feature is that *g*, which in certain contexts was pronounced fricative (/ɣ/), was due to this articulation often rendered by runic **h** (✱).³⁷⁶ Evidence of this spelling can be found in, for example, N793 TRONDHEIM with 𐌺𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌺 **iluhia** for *Illugi á*, N151 ATRÅ stave church IV with 𐌺𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌺 **sutah** for *sunnudag*, or in N633 BRYGGEN with **auhum** for *augum*.³⁷⁷ Some remarkable echo of runic orthography in an inscription in Latin letters occurs on a grave slab from UGGLUM in Västergötland (Vg95) which has the same text in runes and Latin majuscules:³⁷⁸

- (A) 𐌺𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺:
rehinmop:læt:gera:hvalf:ifir:gunnar:æsbeornār:sôn:
- (B) HARALDUS:ME:FECIT:MAHISTER
- (C) REGINMOT:LET:GERA:HVALF:IFIR:GVNNAR:ESBEORNAR:SON:

As will arise from the further discussion of runorthographical idiosyncrasies, this inscription exhibits several typical runic versus Latin script spellings. By virtue of the parallel texts, a direct comparison of the diverging conventions can be undertaken. The words which are of particular interest at this point are the Old Norse name *Reginmóð* and the Latin noun *magister*. In the former, *g* has in the runic variant of the text obviously been identified with the fricative allophone of /g/ (i.e. /ɣ/) and, therefore, been rendered with runic **h** (✱); this is not surprising as it is in accordance with runorthographical practice. In Latin letters, the name has in the same inscription been carved in line with the customary spelling in Latin script culture, cf. 𐌺𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺 **rehinmop** versus REGINMOT. The word *magister*, however, deserves special attention since it reveals some outstanding and direct influence of runorthographical practice on Latin script spelling: Although Latin letters have been used, the carver followed runic orthography in that he has substituted *G* by *H* (cf. MAHISTER).³⁷⁹ The same spelling with **h** instead of **g** in the word *magister* seemingly occurs on a rune-stick from TRONDHEIM (A162): (Ÿ)𐌺(𐌹)𐌺(𐌹)𐌺(𐌹)𐌺(𐌹)1 (R) **(m)ah(i)(i)t(r)**.³⁸⁰ The Latin word has here intruded into an otherwise Old Norse inscription. Other instances reflecting pronunciation which have already been pointed to above

³⁷⁶ Spurkland 2001b: 125.

³⁷⁷ Hagland 1996: 38; NIyR II: 200–203; NIyR VI.1: 63.

³⁷⁸ Cf. Spurkland 1998: 596; Spurkland 2001b: 125f.

³⁷⁹ Seim 2004: 168 points out that this understanding of *g* as the fricative allophone of /g/ is not completely absent from the manuscripts. In a fragment from one of the oldest Old Norse manuscripts, i.e. *Munkelivs jordebok* (GKS 1347, 4°, l. 62v.) from ca. 1175, the same spelling can be found in, for instance, *Bærhe* for *Bergi* and *Sohn* for *Sogn*. Cf. Spurkland 1998: 595.

³⁸⁰ Cf. Hagland 1996: 92–94, where the inscription is listed under the final registration number N825.

are B308 on the handle of a ladle, which has **ōpdar** for *oftar*, and N297 HAMRE church I, which has **nosder** for *(Pater) noster*.³⁸¹

Apart from illiterate inscriptions as the one from TØNJUM stave church (N347), the corpus of runic inscriptions in Latin encompasses a wide spectrum with regard to the degree of literacy on the part of the rune-carver. The spectrum ranges from inscriptions exhibiting what James E. Knirk has called a “literate norm” to such displaying a “runic” or “phonic norm”.³⁸² Whereas the former group features spellings close to those found in contemporary manuscripts, the latter to a varying extent reflect medieval (Scandinavian) pronunciation of Latin. However, even in inscriptions which are grammatically correct and generally employ correct literate spellings, such as N307 FORTUN stave church V (*Ave Maria...*) and N631 from BRYGGEN (*Maria peperit...*), both discussed above, deviations from the literate norm are frequently found.³⁸³ Moreover, these divergences from book-writing are so systematic that they hardly can be ascribed to rune-carvers who exclusively carved from hearing and lacked some minimal knowledge of Latin. It is not the task of this paper to decide upon the degree to which the carvers of Latin runic inscriptions were familiar with Latin and literary culture. Yet, if they had been completely unaware of Latin grammar and spelling, the result would have been much more arbitrary. In fact, those instances of evidently corrupt inscriptions exhibit no regularities regarding their spellings whatsoever.³⁸⁴ Otherwise, there actually developed a distinct orthography for Latin texts rendered in runes as opposed to those texts written in the manuscripts. The “almost systematic grapho-phonological distinctions” as regards literary spellings clearly show that rune-carvers methodically took into account medieval pronunciation.³⁸⁵ Terje Spurkland summarises:

“[...] the deviations from manuscript Latin are so regular that it would be correct to talk about a special runic Latin tradition or a particular runic orthography for Latin. The same holds true for runic inscriptions in the vernacular. The deviations from the language found in Scandinavian manuscripts are very consistent, and the reason might be that the carvers felt free to adapt spelling to their pronunciation. Runic writing is therefore, to a certain extent, more orthophonic than manuscript writing.”³⁸⁶

³⁸¹ For B308, cf. p. 72; for N297 HAMRE church I, cf. p. 81.

³⁸² Knirk 1998: 489f.

³⁸³ Knirk 1998: 489; Spurkland 2004: 337. For N307 FORTUN stave church V, cf. pp. 74f; for N631 BRYGGEN, cf. p. 86.

³⁸⁴ Cf. Spurkland 2004: 337 where he *inter alia* reflects upon the identity of the carvers of Latin runic inscriptions and their probable backgrounds (clergy vs. common people); cf. Spurkland 2001b: 123.

³⁸⁵ Spurkland 2001b: 124; cf. Spurkland 1998: 595.

³⁸⁶ Spurkland 2004: 337; cf. Spurkland 2001b: 124.

instance confirms that both spellings were at the rune-carvers' disposal.³⁹⁷ In my opinion, such cases of direct overlapping on the level of orthography once more impressively illustrate the meeting not only of two script systems but also of their diverging conventions. And from time to time, rune-carvers apparently were somewhat ambivalent as to which tradition they should adhere to. On the one hand, they had inherited their traditional runic orthography. When they, on the other hand, began to carve runic inscriptions in Latin, they had to make a decision on whether they would produce mere 'transliterations' of Latin texts in runes (which would actually have been possible after the extension of the rune-row), or whether they would adjust the spelling of the new language to the customs of their own writing system. This ambivalence manifests itself even more evidently in inscriptions in which both spellings, runic **þ** and runic **t**, appear side by side for final post-vocalic *t*. These cases demonstrate that rune-carvers were perfectly conscious of the literate norm but still attempted to do justice their own (or even both) tradition(s). Examples of this kind of double-writing can be found on, for instance, the A123 lead cross from OSEN in Sogn og Fjordane. The inscription contains part of the *Pater Noster* in which both *adveniat* and *sicut* have, actually, **þ** for final *t* (cf. **aduenia/þ** and **-kutþ**).³⁹⁸ Moreover, the orthographical conventions of the two writing systems were not only diverging, but could occasionally even come into conflict with each other. Runic orthography appears in some cases to have been rooted so firmly in the minds of rune-carvers that they at times would deliberately abandon the meaning or function of the Latin text in favour of their traditional orthography. This phenomenon occurs in connection with the *sator-arepo* palindrome which may fulfil its 'purpose' only when each word is spelled correctly so that the text can be arranged in a square and read in every direction:

S	A	T	O	R
A	R	E	P	O
T	E	N	E	T
O	P	E	R	A
R	O	T	A	S

Despite this basic prerequisite of correct spelling, rune-carvers also in this context repeatedly decided to carve **þ** for post-vocalic *t*. They, thus, destroyed the intrinsic meaning of the

³⁹⁷ Cf. Knirk 1998: 491; NIyR I: 102f.

³⁹⁸ Knudsen/Dyvik 1980; Knirk 1998: 491 and 504.

Middle Ages. However, as **B b** has been consistently substituted for *p*, this alteration has no consequences when the palindrome is read backwards (or upwards, if arranged in square).⁴⁰⁵ The formula also occurs fragmentarily on a rune-stick from TRONDHEIM (A153): ... **po tñpt opera rotas**.⁴⁰⁶ The missing vowels in **tñpt** for *tenet* are somewhat peculiar, but otherwise the text appears to be correct. Moreover, since the palindrome is here arranged in a line rather than in a square, the missing vowels do not affect the formula when it is read backwards. The rendering of post-vocalic *t* with both **þ** and **t** “kan vera eit slags kompromiss mellom eit kjent skriftbilete og gjengs uttale av dette elementet i palindromen.”⁴⁰⁷

From the numerous instances of phonic spelling in Latin runic inscriptions, James E. Knirk draws the following conclusions concerning the diverging orthographic traditions on the one hand, and the background of the carvers of these inscriptions on the other:

“It appears that the written norm was so strong that certain deviations were simply not tolerated in the manuscript tradition. By contrast, the phonic ‘norm’ was employed in the majority of runic inscriptions with Latin text. The greater degree of phonic spelling in runic inscriptions containing Latin [...] seems to indicate that, as a rule, those who employed phonic spelling when writing Latin texts with runes had had little or no schooling in Latin, since one would otherwise expect a much greater degree of interference from the literate norm.”⁴⁰⁸

That runic writing had a more phonic approach with regard to orthography and in this respect deviated from Latin script tradition, arises from the material discussed above. From my point of view, however, not all cases of orthophonic spelling do necessarily prove that rune-carvers lacked understanding of what they were carving. As is substantiated by several practices which were common already in the older and Viking Age tradition (cf., for instance, the omission or addition of initial **h**), traditional runic orthography rather had as strong a position in the native writing system as Latin script orthography had in Latin script culture. Consequently, rune-carvers were, by virtue of their tradition, “more accustomed to adapt [their] spelling to [their] pronunciation.”⁴⁰⁹ This probably entailed that they, just like the scribes in the scriptoria who “carried the weight of classical literary tradition on [their] shoulders”,⁴¹⁰ were obliged to their tradition. This obligation was obviously also felt when they were carving Latin texts in runes,

⁴⁰⁵ Since the five lines appear to have been carved by at least two, possibly three, hands (cf. NIyR VI.1: 85; Seim 1988b: 58), I shall not draw on the rest of the inscription on this rune-stick in order to look for arguments speaking for or against my interpretation.

⁴⁰⁶ The inscription is listed as N820 in Jan Ragnar Hagland’s manuscript for NIyR VII, cf. Hagland 1996: 82f.

⁴⁰⁷ Hagland 1996: 83.

⁴⁰⁸ Knirk 1998: 490f.

⁴⁰⁹ Spurkland 2001b: 124.

⁴¹⁰ Spurkland 2001b: 124; cf. Spurkland 1998: 595.

on a text which they did not understand at all. For another thing, the transference of ortho-
phonic spelling to Latin texts in runes proves that rune-carvers were precisely *not* just
reproducing something they did not comprehend; it rather bears witness to the rune-carvers'
ultimate ability to integrate the newly arrived language into their repertoire at the same time
as they sovereignly adjusted its spelling to their own conventions. It appears that rune-carvers,
like scribes in their own realm, did not arbitrarily carve from hearing but also followed an
established, albeit different, tradition. Obviously, it was the script system rather than the
language carved which was ultimately decisive when it came to the application of ortho-
graphical standards. Therefore, carvers of Latin runic inscriptions would turn to runortho-
graphical conventions even if they knew the literate spelling. That rune-carvers were aware of
the literate norm arises from those instances in which both **t** and **þ** are represented in order to
meet the requirements of both traditions. They did, consequently, not spell Latin wrongly, but
simply applied different standards. And even though the example of the Swedish grave slab
from UGGLUM (Vg95) is a singular case, it still illustrates that runic orthography was so
deeply rooted in the minds of rune-carvers that it could even spread to a Latin text carved in
Latin letters.

Direct Adoptions From Manuscript Culture

As the inscriptions just discussed illustrate, there must have been rune-carvers who, though to
varying degrees, were proficient in runic *and* Latin script and their diverging orthographical
traditions. The most evident representative is possibly *Haraldus Magister* from the UGGLUM
grave slab (Vg95). In addition to manifestations of this bilingual and digraphic competence
among rune-carvers there is also sporadic evidence in the medieval runic corpus of writing
conventions of the scriptoria which, partly, exceed the level of bilingualism and orthography.

The inscription carved into the door frame of VINJE stave church (N170) by Sigurðr
Jarlsson demonstrates that this member of medieval Norwegian aristocracy mastered runes
expertly and was acquainted with writing in Latin letters. I have already remarked that
Sigurðr's proficiency in Latin writing is most evidently revealed by the way in which he has
inserted an inadvertently left out rune. The common procedure in runic writing would have
been to squeeze in the missing rune at the appropriate spot in the inscription as has been done
in, for instance, N307 FORTUN stave church V, cf. r. 10 (ᚱ) in **grasia**.⁴¹² Sigurðr Jarlsson, by

⁴¹² NIyR IV: 85f.; cf. p. 74f. for the entire inscription.

contrast, has marked the position of the omitted rune by an insertion sign as it was in use in manuscript culture and added the very rune above the line:⁴¹³

†
 ʀˆ ʁ ʁ | f1ʀþi

This inscription is, however, to my knowledge the only occurrence of a literate insertion sign in the runic material.

Sporadically, there occur typical manuscript abbreviations in runic writing. Sometime in the last decade of the 12th century, in the time of the Norwegian civil war, Sigurðr Lávarðr sent a runic letter to Bergen in which he requested forgings for arms and, presumably, spears (B448). Again, we are in the highest stratum of Norwegian society. This man “was the oldest son of King Sverrir Sigurðarson, and as such [...] the Crown Prince of the realm.”⁴¹⁴ Sigurðr Lávarðr was most certainly educated at the cathedral school at Nidaros; there, he obviously “learnt the arts of writing and of diplomacy”.⁴¹⁵ This becomes *inter alia* evident from his use of the usual manuscript abbreviation for the word *konungr*, i.e. *k*, which can be found in the first part of his letter:

sigurþr:láuár(þ)r.sændir:kuæþi[o-..]gupsöksina:s(m)ip:(þ)ina:uildi:k:håua:um ...

*Sigurðr Lávarðr sendir kveðju ... Guðs ok sína. Smíð þína vildi k(onungr) hafa*⁴¹⁶ It has also been suggested that the solitary **k**-rune should be interpreted as a bindrune **ik̆**. This reading, however, conflicts with the verb form which actually is a third person singular (*vildi*) rather than a first person singular (*vil*).⁴¹⁷ It is, therefore, more likely to assume that we here have to do with the abbreviated form for *konungr*. This interpretation would also be much more consistent with Sigurðr Lávarðr’s royal rank and educational background.

⁴¹³ NIyR II: 268; cf. my own discussion, pp. 81f.

⁴¹⁴ Liestøl 1968: 18. Like Sigurðr Jarlsson (cf. p. 82), also Sigurðr Lávarðr is mentioned in, for instance, *Sverris saga*, cf. ch. 62, 100, 119, 130, 163f.

⁴¹⁵ Liestøl 1968: 19.

⁴¹⁶ Liestøl 1974: 30; “Sigurðr Lávarðr sends God’s and his greetings to ... The King (or I) would like to have your forgings for arms” Liestøl 1968b: 1f. had originally proposed a different reading: ... :skip:þina:uildi:k:håua ..., “Skeida di vil kongen gjerne ha.” Cf. Liestøl 1968: 18: “... The King would like the use of your long ship. ...” This has, however, no consequences for my interpretation.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Spurkland 2001a: 201.

An even more obvious instance of the use of a manuscript abbreviation in the runic corpus is the inscription on the psalter from KVIKNE church (N553).⁴¹⁸ It appears that this runic inscription represents one of those cases in which the rune-carver came into some conflict as to which writing tradition to adhere to. There are four occurrences of the Latin minuscule *k* in the runic text, and the abbreviation is, in fact, also among those characters rendered in Latin letters:

$k\bar{N}|k\bar{t}:\overline{k\bar{k}\bar{t}}:t[\gamma]|f$
kuikna:kka:a[m]ik

In normalised Old Norse the ownership statement reads: *Kvikna kirkja á mik*. The noun *kirkja* has, in accordance with manuscript tradition, been abbreviated by two *k*'s with a superscript stroke to indicate the omission ($\overline{k\bar{k}\bar{t}}$). Obviously, this manner of abbreviating words was so closely associated with literate writing that the carver drew on the Latin alphabet to carry through the abbreviation. With the abbreviation occurring in the upper outer board of a psalterium, the connection to a literate environment is directly given.

The inscription on the lead band from LEIULSTAD in Aust-Agder (A2) seems to have been copied from an abbreviated Latin text without the carver being aware of what he or she was carving.⁴¹⁹ The only abbreviation which can be identified with certainty is the sequence **sta** in **stamaria** for *Sancta Maria*. It is also possible that “**bna** could [...] stand for *Pater Noster, Amen*, as most likely does the **pna** at the end of A284 ‘Florida’.” The sequence **krc** has tentatively been interpreted as either *Christus* or *crux*.⁴²⁰ Although these latter cases most likely represent abbreviated Latin words, they can still not be included in the group of typical manuscript abbreviations. Apart from that, abbreviated Latin words occur repeatedly in the Norwegian medieval runic corpus. One such example could be found on the now lost N142† GJERPEN church bell I from Telemark which featured both an *Ave Maria* in runes and a Latin majuscule concluding the inscription.

$\begin{matrix} & 5 & 10 & 15 & 20 & 25 & 30 & 35 & 40 & 45 & 50 & 55 & 60 \\ \text{†} & \text{A} & \text{N} & \text{:} & \text{Y} & \text{A} & \text{R} & \text{I} & \text{:} & \text{P} & \text{R} & \text{A} & \text{H} & \text{:} & \text{B} & \text{N} & \text{A} & \text{:} & \text{A} & \text{Y} & \text{I} & \text{N} & \text{:} & \text{A} & \text{B} & \text{H} & \text{N} & \text{Y} & \text{:} & \text{B} & \text{H} & \text{I} & \text{H} & \text{I} & \text{:} & \text{N} & \text{:} & \text{I} & \text{:} & \text{Y} & \text{N} & \text{I} & \text{R} & \text{I} & \text{B} & \text{N} & \text{:} & \text{A} & \text{P} & \text{:} & \text{B} & \text{:} & \text{P} & \text{:} & \text{N} & \text{:} & \text{N} & \text{:} & \text{A} \end{matrix}$
†aue:maria:gracia:plena:dominus:tecum:benedicta:tu:in:mulieribus:æp:b:f:u:tui:A

⁴¹⁸ For the following paragraph, cf. Knirk 1998: 477f.

⁴¹⁹ For the following paragraph, cf. Knirk 1998: 493f.

⁴²⁰ Knirk 1998: 494 and 503.

practices from manuscript culture can be identified is quite manageable. In most cases it is rather difficult to verify an immediate influence of Latin writing conventions. This has mainly to do with the fact that most features of medieval runic writing occurred in runic tradition more or less frequently already before the arrival of Latin script culture in the North. This pertains as well to those writing conventions which in the medieval runic corpus are often ascribed to the influence of Latin script writing as, for instance, the doubling of runes or the application of word dividers. Whether this was due to Latin script influence on runic writing on earlier occasions or whether particular practices were from the earliest beginnings of runic writing (latently) inherent in the tradition, could not be decided here.

As a result, the various writing practices which can be traced in medieval runic writing may have had their origin in both different periods and backgrounds. Most of them cannot be attributed to the usage in either runic *or* Latin script culture, not least because the two writing traditions definitely met long before the permanent arrival of the Latin alphabet in the North. Moreover, the increasing bilingual and digraphic competence among Scandinavians definitely lead to an inadvertent intersection of the diverging conventions of both writing traditions. No universally valid statements about the development of runorthographical standards in the presence of Latin script culture can, therefore, be made. Instead, each inscription has to be examined separately. In most cases, it is not sufficient to refer to one particular practice in order to argue in favour of Latin script influence; instead, various evidence has to be drawn on which in concert are indicative of such an influence.

On the whole, runic tradition maintained its historic and idiosyncratic character also on the level of orthography and writing standards. Particular conventions appear generally to have belonged to either of the two script *systems*; they could, therefore, not easily be detached from them. This concerns, for instance, the transference of certain runorthographical practices (as the omission of nasals) to runic inscriptions in Latin; it pertains also to the observation that the carver of N553 KVIKNE church switched the code (i.e. from runes to Latin script and to runes again) when he or she decided to include a manuscript abbreviation in the inscription. In the first case, it was clearly the script system, rather than the language, which decided on the application of orthographical standards; in the second case, the wish to use a manuscript abbreviation made necessary to switch to the script system the abbreviation originated from.

4.3 Form and Content: Adaptions on the Level of Media and Subject Matter

A third perspective to explore ramifications of the meeting of runic and Latin written culture focuses on the level of media and content. This approach, on the one hand, aims at a thorough investigation into the types of inscription bearers taken into service in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, it surveys the spectrum of subject matter in runic writing in the same period. In order to have a basis for comparison, such a point of view naturally makes necessary an examination of the state of affairs before the arrival of Latin script in Scandinavia. My analysis shall, therefore, again begin with a synoptic discussion of the relevant aspects in the Viking and older runic period. Subject matter in runic writing before the Scandinavian Middle Ages appears to have been confined by the seemingly limited contexts of application. For the most part, runic script served for memorial inscriptions or shorter statements as, for instance, declarations of ownership. Their media was, accordingly, characterised by their function being primarily other than that of bearing script. The discussion will show that there is so far not sufficient evidence to substantiate Aslak Liestøl's assumption that runic writing before the Middle Ages had been used extensively in daily affairs and as a convenient means of communication.

With the beginning of the Scandinavian Middle Ages and the arrival of Latin script culture in the North, alterations can be observed concerning content as well as media in runic writing. Since Latin writing came in the wake and service of Christianity, it is only natural that most impulses with regard to the two aspects came from this direction. With the advent of both Christianity and Latin script culture, profound cultural changes were initiated. These found manifold expression on diverse levels of medieval Scandinavian society and culture, and the native writing tradition was not exempted from this development. Runic script was, for example, used on Christian grave stones, and Christian prayers and liturgical texts found their way into runic writing. Apart from this adoption of Christian elements, runic tradition was also responsive to medial and substantial conventions of secular Latin script culture and the scriptoria. Furthermore, there survive from the Scandinavian Middle Ages hundreds of rune-sticks which, in contrast to writing material employed in earlier runic periods, solely served the function of bearing a written message. These rune-sticks were used for all kinds of business and private communication. Both the intrinsic function of the rune-sticks and their multifaceted contents may indicate that the perception of runic script and its intended purpose as a functional writing system experienced some change after the arrival of Latin script culture. Latin writing had long been established as an indispensable means of communication

and documentation in social and official institutions. Thus, it certainly served as a model for the diversification of the functional spectrum of runic script.

Although the Latin alphabet had always been employed in epigraphy, it had during the European Middle Ages acquired the status of a distinct book-script. Hence, there could have been a possibility that Latin writing could have influenced runic tradition also to that effect. As I have pointed out earlier in my discussion, however, this did not happen, at least not on a broad scale. Despite the undisputed influence of Latin written culture on runic writing, runic script never developed into a regular book-script. The two singular exceptions from this rule have already been mentioned. Still, runes were used in manuscripts for various purposes as, for instance, abbreviations, pagination of quires, marginal notes, and so on; runes in manuscripts were also the subject matter of antiquarian interests in (cryptic) scripts and alphabets (cf., for example, the Rune Poems). In his *Runica manuscripta*, René Derolez seems to depreciate manuscript runes in stating that they “are secondary; they imply a ‘break’ in the tradition, an adoption by a different world.”⁴²³ Undoubtedly, the function of runes in manuscripts differed greatly from their use in epigraphy, and they were undeniably adopted by “a different world”. However, especially the application of runes as editorial signs illustrates that the influence between the two writing systems was not of “a one-way character” as Helmer Gustavson has claimed.⁴²⁴ Evidently, scribes in search for new signs not already invested with particular meanings or purposes, intentionally took advantage of the presence of runic symbols to which they could attribute new functions within manuscript writing.⁴²⁵ Runes were in this context indeed isolated from their primary tradition; but it is certainly more appropriate to regard manuscript runes as a novel development rather than considering them as being inferior to runes in epigraphy. They are secondary only in the sense that epigraphical runes came first and manuscript runes emerged only after the arrival of manuscript culture.

“[T]he *runica manuscripta* developed their own runic traditions, divorced and in some ways different from the epigraphical ones. [...] manuscript and epigraphical materials [...] are in fact not supplementary but alternative.”⁴²⁶

⁴²³ Derolez 1954: xxxi.

⁴²⁴ Gustavson 1994: 322.

⁴²⁵ “Their [i.e. the runic forms’] general effect is epigraphical and monumental. This quality [...] scribes sometimes profited by when they wanted to make individual letters stand out from the surrounding text for some reason or other.” Page 1999: 187. Adoptions of runic characters into manuscript writing (as, for instance, the acceptance of þ, *þorn*, and ƿ, *wynn*, into the Latin alphabet) did, certainly, take place already before the Scandinavian Middle Ages and on Anglo-Saxon territory, cf. Page 1999: 87f. and 186f.

⁴²⁶ Page 1999: 62.

Nevertheless, a detailed analysis of occurrences of runes in manuscripts would definitely fit in well in a discussion of the diversified contents and media of medieval runic writing. It might as well add to the understanding of use of runes and the differentiation of the runic tradition in the Scandinavian Middle Ages. Such an investigation would, however, exceed the scope of the present paper and I shall, therefore, confine myself to the epigraphical runic corpus.

4.3.1 Preliminaries: Media and Content in the Older and Viking Runic Tradition

The corpus of runic inscriptions from the older runic period (ca. AD 200–600) is manageable. From the whole of Scandinavia, there survive about 200 inscriptions in the older fuþark; about 55 of these originate from Norway. Of the Norwegian older fuþark inscriptions, some 34 are carved into stone; a small number of them are, in addition, endowed with some pictorial ornamentation.⁴²⁷ The rest can be found on articles of daily use, tools, utensils, weapons, and jewellery; their material is chiefly metal or bone.⁴²⁸ James E. Knirk assumes that “poor conditions for preservation probably [are] responsible for the dearth of wooden objects.”⁴²⁹ The common denominator of older fuþark inscriptions consists in their being carved into objects the (primary) function of which was beyond that of carrying script. Although, for instance, the inscription on the EIKELAND brooch (KJ17a) is dedicatory and may, therefore, have been incised in the production process of the item, it has still to be considered secondary. The brooch was first of all a piece of jewellery and not primarily a bearer of script.

Apart from very few exceptions, inscriptions in the older fuþark are rather short.⁴³⁰ Loose finds, such as tools and weapons, are most often endowed with a name which refers to either the owner or the craftsman. Occasionally, the name might as well be that of the object itself; the latter has been suggested for KJ31/NIÆR34 ØVRE-STABU from Oppland (**raunijar** “the tester”). Some inscriptions on jewellery may possibly allude to cult or magic.⁴³¹ Runic inscriptions on stone occur on both natural rock and on raised stones. Of stone inscriptions, the latter constitute the majority; their character is mainly memorial and the commemorated

⁴²⁷ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 546; Seim 2004: 121.

⁴²⁸ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 546; Spurkland 2001a: 32.

⁴²⁹ Knirk et al. 1993: 546.

⁴³⁰ The longest inscription in older runes (with about 190 characters) can be found on the KJ101/NIÆR 55 EGGJA stone from Sogn og Fjordane; the stone is, in addition to the inscription, endowed with the picture of a horse, cf. Grønvik 1985.

⁴³¹ Spurkland 2001a: 32.

as well as the sponsor are mostly mentioned by name. Frequently, inscriptions simply state who made the runes.⁴³² Both elements, the memorial formula and the declaration about the rune-carver, can be found on the already mentioned KJ72/NIæR1 TUNE inscription from Østfold:

<p>(A1) Ṁ<P P̄FYF̄TMR̄·P̄X̄M̄NR̄I ekwiwarafter.woduri</p> <p>(B1) [...]H̄:P̄X̄M̄NR̄IṀM̄:S̄T̄F̄ĪF̄· [...]h:woduride:staina.</p> <p>(B3) FR̄B̄ĪS̄F̄S̄ĪS̄X̄S̄T̄M̄ȲFR̄B̄ĪS̄F̄ĪX̄ arbijasijosterarbijano</p>	<p>(A2) ṀMP̄IT̄F̄M̄F̄F̄F̄ĪB̄F̄Ī:P̄X̄R̄F̄N̄T̄X̄.[.] dewitadahalaiban:worahto.[.]</p> <p>(B2) Þ̄RĪS̄X̄ȲM̄X̄HT̄RĪȲ M̄F̄ĪM̄N̄Ī prijordohtirid̄alidun</p>
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Various interpretations have been proposed for this important runic monument. Ottar Grønvik has read the TUNE inscription as follows: “Jeg Wiw etter Wodurid, han som sørget for brødet, virket run(er), overdro stein til Wodrid. Tre døtre gjorde gravølet hyggelig som de elskeligste av arvinger.”⁴³³ Sporadically, inscriptions plainly list the runic characters in their traditional order as on the KJ1/G88 KYLVER stone from Gotland. In addition to the types of inscriptions and inscription bearers discussed thus far, there are preserved several hundred bracteates from the period between ca. 450 and 550. These single-sided gold medallions had their main distribution in Denmark, but have also been found in Norway and Sweden. Although the bracteates represent a substantial proportion of runic inscriptions in the older runes, they have to be regarded as a separate category: Their texts are often garbled or consist of rune-like signs rather than runes.⁴³⁴

Viking Age runic inscriptions are much more numerous in comparison to those from the older runic period. Most of them stem from the period after about AD 950.⁴³⁵ Although inscriptions on loose objects such as jewellery still occur, erected rune-stones constitute the largest part of inscriptions from the Viking Age.⁴³⁶ This circumstance has led James E. Knirk to call rune-stones “a hallmark of the Viking Age”.⁴³⁷ The great majority of rune-stones are from Sweden; Uppland alone has some 1000, as many as the rest of Sweden together. From

⁴³² Knirk et al. 1993: 546; Spurkland 2001a: 32.

⁴³³ Grønvik 1998; cf. Grønvik 1981; Knirk 1991.

⁴³⁴ Knirk et al. 1993: 546; Spurkland 2001a: 38f.

⁴³⁵ Spurkland 2001a: 99; Seim 2004: 147.

⁴³⁶ Seim 2004: 147.

⁴³⁷ Knirk et al. 1993: 550.

The text reads in normalised Old Norse: *Eyvindr gerði kirkju þessa, goðsonr Ólafs hins hala, á óðali sínu.*⁴⁴⁶ Inscriptions on standing stones repeatedly refer to bridges; these could be either real built bridges or bridges intended for the soul of the deceased. On the N68 DYNNA stone from Oppland a mother commemorates her daughter, for the sake of whom she had had a bridge built:

*YNTNDR*PIRPI*BRN*BRARIPYTNTR*PTIRIRIPI*1N1NR*YIT*1N1HYIR*1IRYI*1*1*1*1*1*1*1*1
 *kunuur*kirpi*bru*bryrikstutir*iftirašripi*tutur*sina*suuasmarhanarst*ahapalanti

This is in normalised Old Norse: *Gunnvǫr gerði brú, Þryðríks dóttir, eptir Ástriði, dóttur sína. Sú var mæðr hönnurst á Haðalandi.*⁴⁴⁷ In addition to the runic inscription with the memorial formula mentioning the bridge, the stone is endowed with an engraved picture, showing the magi coming to the Christ child under the Christmas star.⁴⁴⁸ One of the most famous Norwegian rune-stones is the N449 KULI stone from Møre og Romsdal.⁴⁴⁹ This monument has often been called the baptismal certificate of Norway, since it is here that the name *Norway* (**nuriki**) first appears in Old Norse on Norwegian territory.⁴⁵⁰ The inscription furthermore makes reference to the introduction of Christianity in Norway:

(A) +ÞNRIR:YNP:*1TNIRBR:RI'1N.'111:ÞIT'.1P1N[1]P[1]1N[1]
 +purir:auk:haluarpr:raistu.stain:þinsi:aftu[1]f[1]iu[t]
 (B) +1N1P.1111R.*1[1]ÞI:[1]R[1]111.1N1YR:11R[1].11NRIP1
 +tulf.uintr.ha[f]þi:[k]ris[tin.t]umr:uiri[t].inuriki

The text has been interpreted as: *þórir ok Hallvarðr reistu stein eptir Ulfljótt ... Tolf vetr hafði kristindómur verit i Noregi.*⁴⁵¹ There is also a cross incised into one of the broad sides of the stone. Despite the examples just discussed, pictorial representations on rune-stones are rare in the Norwegian corpus. In Sweden and Denmark, on the contrary, they are the rule rather than

⁴⁴⁶ NIyR III: 80f.

⁴⁴⁷ NIyR I: 198. Samnordisk Runtextdatabas provides the following English translation: "Gunnvǫr, Þryðríks's daughter, made the bridge in memory of her daughter Ástriðr. She was the handiest maiden in Haðaland."

⁴⁴⁸ NIyR I: 192–202, specifically 195f.

⁴⁴⁹ NIyR IV: 280–268.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Spurkland 2001a: 121. Another, somewhat earlier rune-stone naming Norway (**nuruiaik**) is the great DR42 JELLING II stone erected by Haraldr Blátönn Gormsson in the 10th century.

⁴⁵¹ NIyR IV: 283; cf. Jan Ragnar Hagland's reading which slightly deviates from the one presented by Aslak Liestøl in NIyR IV, Hagland 1998b.

the exception. Many of the Swedish rune-stones are, in addition to the rune-bands or snakes, decorated with crosses.

Inscriptions on loose finds are generally of the same type as in the older runic period. They occur on articles of daily use as well as on jewellery and weapons. The objects are often endowed with ownership or manufacturer statements, mostly in the form “N.N. (owns)” or “N.N. made”.⁴⁵² In some cases, the object itself is mentioned; one such example is the N188 HOFTUFT spindle-whorl from Aust-Agder which is made of soapstone and reads in Old Norse: *Gunnhildr gerði snáld* (𐌴𐌺𐌰𐌱𐌰𐌹𐌺:𐌹𐌴𐌹𐌱𐌰𐌹𐌺𐌰: **kunitr:kerþsnalt**:).⁴⁵³ An ownership statement has, for instance, been carved into the N138 OSEBERG bucket from Vestfold which was found in connection with the Oseberg ship-burial; the inscription reads in normalised Old Norse: *á Sigríðr* (𐌰𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺 **asikrīr**).⁴⁵⁴

Runic coins make up a separate category in the late Viking and early medieval runic corpus. They are known from Denmark, Norway, and to a minor degree also from Sweden.⁴⁵⁵ Norwegian runic coins were minted in the period between ca. 1065 and 1080 in the reign of Óláfr Kyrri (1067–1093). They are roughly contemporary with those from Denmark which were minted under Sven Estridsson. Runes appear on coins side by side with Latin letters and Erik Moltke concludes from these legends “at runeskripten ved midten og i slutn[ingen] af 1000-årene har været i fuldt flor ved siden af den lat[inske] uncial- og versalskrift.”⁴⁵⁶ Runic coins, though, represent a short-lived phenomenon which did not gain lasting acceptance. They have generally been interpreted as “et utslag af nationalisme”.⁴⁵⁷

Particular attention in the Viking Age corpus certainly deserve the rune-sticks which came to light in the Viking trading town of HEDEBY in Denmark (DR EM85;371A and DR EM85;371B).⁴⁵⁸ They date from the 9th century and belong to the rather few runic artefacts from this period surviving on wood. Furthermore, in contrast to all other runic objects from this and earlier periods, these items seem to have had no other function than that of bearing a runic message. Thus, they represent the earliest and only examples of runic writing material being used in such an exclusive manner. Their texts have not been interpreted satisfactorily and it is, therefore, still unclear what their actual purpose may have been. It seems clear,

⁴⁵² Spurkland 2001a: 134.

⁴⁵³ NlyR III: 40–42.

⁴⁵⁴ NlyR II: 165–167.

⁴⁵⁵ For the following paragraph, cf. Moltke/Skaare/Rasmusson 1969.

⁴⁵⁶ Moltke/Skaare/Rasmusson 1969: col. 468.

⁴⁵⁷ Moltke/Skaare/Rasmusson 1969: col. 468.

⁴⁵⁸ For this paragraph, cf. Liestøl 1969a; cf. also fn. 77.

however, that at least the HEDEBY I rune-stick (DR EM85;371B) was some sort of letter.⁴⁵⁹ In view of the hundreds of rune-sticks excavated from medieval Scandinavian towns, the Viking Age rune-sticks might suggest that runic writing also before the Scandinavian Middle Ages had served as a means of (daily) communication. From the evidence of the Viking Age *rúnakefli*, Aslak Liestøl draws as far-reaching a conclusion as that the use of runes “in memorial inscriptions is secondary – first and foremost they were employed in practical everyday life.”⁴⁶⁰ Liestøl’s reasoning is based on argumentation from silence: He attributes the scarcity of data which could substantiate his interpretation mainly to unfortunate preservation conditions for inscriptions on wood. Whereas Liestøl’s notion of the “literate Vikings”, i.e. of the Vikings using runes in their daily affairs, does not necessarily suggest itself from the extant material, we certainly can agree with Liestøl in that “the practice of writing rune letters existed in Hedeby in the ninth century” – at least to some extent.⁴⁶¹

Until lately, also the ‘rune-stick’ from STARAJA LADOGA in present-day Russia dating from the beginning of the 9th century (X RyNLT2004;5) was assumed to present evidence of this early Viking Age use of runic letters. However, Jurij Kusmenko has recently pointed out that the form of this stick suggested a function other than that of a rune-stick, namely that of a distaff used for spinning.⁴⁶² Consequently, this runic object can no longer be counted among the evidence supporting the notion the Viking Age custom of carving rune-letters.

4.3.2 Diversification of Media and Content in the Scandinavian Middle Ages

The Scandinavian Middle Ages were, as has been pointed out above, a period of far-reaching cultural changes. These changes manifested themselves in practically all sectors of medieval society, and runic writing was naturally also involved in this process. The development from Viking to medieval runic tradition coincided temporally with the introduction, establishment, and consolidation of Christianity and the Church. The new religion was accompanied by an administrative apparatus which made use of and to a large degree depended on Latin writing. The adoption of a new faith and the introduction of a new script system in Scandinavia had a

⁴⁵⁹ As regards the two rune-sticks from HEDEBY, DR EM85;371A features the oldest preserved short-kvist fupark; the rest of the inscription is, however, unintelligible. DR EM85;371B may be an instance of *nīð*, although parts of the text are not definitely interpreted, Liestøl 1969a: 70–73.

⁴⁶⁰ Liestøl 1969a: 75.

⁴⁶¹ Liestøl 1969a: 78 and 74.

⁴⁶² Kusmenko 2010.

lasting effect not only on belief systems, mentality, and political structures, but also on material culture. Consequently, these comprehensive alterations opened up new subject matter and fields of application for runic script. Impulses came from both Christian contexts and the realm of Latin written culture itself. In the following, I shall give a survey of media as well as subject matter in medieval runic writing. Generally, I shall first take up the issue of media and then proceed to explore subject matter. However, both aspects are so closely related that it is impossible to keep them strictly separate in their analysis; sometimes, media and content are, as a matter of fact, inextricably linked as is the case with my first point of discussion.

From Standing Stones to Recumbent Grave Slabs – From ‘reisti stein’ to ‘hér hvíllir’

As a result of the changing religious, cultural, and political conditions, the custom of erecting rune-stones, which on a broad scale had begun to spread from about the late 10th century onwards, came to an end towards the end of the 11th century. The fashion seems to have flourished longest in Eastern Sweden; of Norwegian rune-stones, few seem to be later than 1050. Prior to the advent of Christianity, the dead had been commemorated in burial mounds or stone settings.⁴⁶³ In her comprehensive study of *The Viking-Age Rune-Stones*, Birgit Sawyer advocates that the many rune-stones of the late Viking period should be interpreted as a symptom of crisis, i.e. as a reflection of the unstable religious and political situation before the Church was firmly established.⁴⁶⁴

“In the transition period, before churches and churchyards were easily accessible, converted families could commemorate their dead and display their status by runic monuments placed in traditional cemeteries, by roads or bridges, in places of assembly, or near the homes of the dead. [...] In eastern Sweden it appears that one of the main functions of the rune-stones was to declare the acceptance of Christianity by individuals or families.”⁴⁶⁵

The disappearing of standing rune-stones can be accounted for not so much by a prohibition on part of the Church, but rather by the changing of burial customs in the transition from Old Norse religion to Christianity.⁴⁶⁶ The deceased were then no longer cremated but buried in inhumation graves in the consecrated soil of Christian grave yards. According to Sawyer, the age of erected rune-stones was over with the religious and political consolidation of the

⁴⁶³ Sawyer 2003: 146.

⁴⁶⁴ Sawyer 2003: 147 and 151.

⁴⁶⁵ Sawyer 2003: 147f.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 550.

various Northern regions: “When the transitional period was over, and churches and churchyards began to be widespread, such monuments were no longer needed.”⁴⁶⁷

With the acceptance of Christianity, medieval runic culture adapted to the new cultural conditions and took into service the novel media which came along with the new faith. The traditional erected rune-stones had to yield to recumbent slabs which were placed directly on the graves.⁴⁶⁸ Like the rune-stones, the horizontal slabs were endowed with runic inscriptions. From Norway, some forty Christian grave stones with a runic inscription survive.⁴⁶⁹ Of course, also the inscriptions’ contents had to be adjusted to the new religious situation.⁴⁷⁰ The customary commemoration formula ‘X reisti stein þenna eftir Y’ gave way to the Christian wording ‘Hic iacet’, often in the vernacular translation ‘Hér hvílir’.⁴⁷¹ In addition, they often encompassed prayers and pious wishes for the deceased. The formula and an implicit request to pray a *Pater Noster* for the deceased can, for instance, be found on the grave slab N79 ØYE church I from Vang in Valdres:⁴⁷²

✚*ΦR:✚N|N|R:ÞR1:Y11ΦR:Φ|R|✚:KRΦ1:K11ΦR:Þ11ΦR:
✚her:huilir:þora:móðir:Eirih:prest:pater:noster:

The inscription reads in normalised form: *Hér hvílir Þóra, móðir Eiriks prests. Pater Noster.* Another such example is the already discussed N297 HAMRE church I which begins with the words “*Hér niðri fyrir hvílir jumfrú Margréta*” and then continues to invite the passers-by to pray a *Pater noster fyrir hennar sál*.⁴⁷³

As regards the conception of the commemoration formula, another development can be observed in the wake of the spreading of Christian burial customs: Those responsible for the monument, who in earlier periods had traditionally been named first, gradually become less important until they at last disappear entirely from the text.⁴⁷⁴ Instead, the deceased gain centre stage in the inscriptions. The runic inscription on the N161 VEUM church grave slab

⁴⁶⁷ Sawyer 2003: 152.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 552. “Although a number of the Christian runic tombstones were erected monuments, especially the earlier ones, the majority were horizontal slabs.” Knirk et al. 1993: 553.

⁴⁶⁹ Knirk et al. 1993: 553.

⁴⁷⁰ Spurkland 2001a: 168.

⁴⁷¹ Knirk et al. 1993: 553.

⁴⁷² Cf. NIyR I: 222–224.

⁴⁷³ Cf. p. 81.

⁴⁷⁴ Spurkland 2001a: 170.

The text has been interpreted as: *Qgmundr reist rúnar þessar, ok biðr þess almátkan Guð, at hann taki viðr sál Gamals, er þessi steinn liggr yfir.*⁴⁷⁸ On the whole, the inscription seems to be a personal prayer uttered by Qgmundr rather than an epitaph for Gamall. A similar case in which traditional and Christian elements co-occur is N21 AURSKOG church.

✚†N†††:†YIF†††PRI†††R†††NIF / IR:†††IR:†††

✚**suæin:amikaiaprienherhuil / ir:untir:asa**

This reads in normalised Old Norse: *Sveinn á mik á Jaðri, en hér hvíllir undir Ása.* The first part of the text consists of an ownership statement, which appears somewhat peculiar on a grave slab. It is only in the latter part that the name of the deceased is revealed in the *hér hvíllir* formula. Apparently, the grave slab is here talking in the first person singular.⁴⁷⁹

Runic Inscriptions on Church Buildings and Ecclesiastical Inventory

Apart from runic texts on Christian grave monuments, numerous runic inscriptions exist which in one way or another are associated with church buildings. They are either carved into the constructional components of the buildings themselves or into their inventory. In addition, there are loose finds from church premises or with some relation to Christian faith. Graffiti incised into the walls of wooden and stone churches constitute the majority of ecclesiastical inscriptions in the broadest sense.⁴⁸⁰ These scribblings consist of mainly prayers, personal wishes, magical formulae, fuþarks, names, and statements on who carved the runes. Unlike those inscriptions mentioned above which make reference to the church building itself (cf. N110 TORPO stave church and N121 ÅL stave church), the graffiti were made by visitors of the churches; they, therefore, “are not generally contemporary with the construction.”⁴⁸¹ More than thirty-five runic scribblings have been carved into the walls of BORGUND stave church (N350–383, A307–309, A297); NIDAROS cathedral has circa forty graffiti inscriptions (N469–N506).⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁸ NIyR II: 214–219. Samnordisk Runtextdatabas translates: “Qgmundr carved these runes, and prays to the almighty God that he receive the soul of Gamall, whom this stone lies over.” The short-kvist s-runes in line (B) departing from the ‘bottom line’ are dotted; the cross at the end of line (A) has a circle around.

⁴⁷⁹ NIyR I: 48–50.

⁴⁸⁰ According to Knirk et al. 1993: 553, “over two thirds are in stave churches, the rest in stone churches.”

⁴⁸¹ Knirk et al. 1993: 553. For N110 TORPO stave church and N121 ÅL stave church, cf. pp. 70f.

⁴⁸² NIyR IV: 144–188; NIyR V: 35–66; Knirk et al. 1993: 553; NoR 1989: 6f.

Of runic artefacts belonging to the church inventory, bells, “baptismal fonts, wooden chests, an altar cloth, a psalterium, and several keys, rings, and mounting irons for doors” can be named.⁴⁸³ The psalterium from KVIKNE church (N553) has come up for discussion in connection with manuscript abbreviations in runic inscriptions; also the N108 LUNDER crucifix has been discussed.⁴⁸⁴ Like the grave slab from AURSKOG church (N21), the LUNDER crucifix can be classed among what could be called “speaking objects” as it seems to be the artefact itself uttering the text of the inscription. A further example was the N92† BØNSNES church bell:⁴⁸⁵

✚þǫrǫrǫr:krϕʁ1ϕr:†ϕ1:Ƴϕr†:ƳlƳ:l†:Ƴϕrϕϕ:ƳlƳ:Ƴϕϕ:ƳnƳ:Ƴlʁn
✚þorgeir:prester:let:gera:mik:ion:gerðe:mik:með:guz:miskun

The inscription reads in normalised Old Norse: *Þorgeirr prestr lét gera mik, Jón gerði mik, með Guðs miskunn*. On the whole, prayers, especially the *Ave Maria*, represent the most common type of inscription on church bells.⁴⁸⁶ A particularly interesting inscription is the one on the N15 AKERSHUS church bell. It consists of an extended fuþark (amounting to 19 runes in total) plus the the first seven signs of the rune-row, most of them carved twice, in slightly deviating order.⁴⁸⁷

Ƴnþǫrǫrǫr*†††1BƳYλ†††† / RƳƳnþǫrǫrǫr*Ƴn
fuþorkhniastblmyøæc† / rkfuþoorkhfu

James E. Knirk assumes “that the eternal calendar with the nineteen runes describing the lunar cycle and the seven dominical letters is the immediate background” here.⁴⁸⁸ Anders Bæksted interprets runic inscriptions on church bells in the light of the European tradition of endowing church bells with protective formulae, including alphabet inscriptions on bells.⁴⁸⁹ Fuþark inscriptions are known from the earliest beginnings of runic writing; the inscription on the

⁴⁸³ Knirk et al. 1993: 553.

⁴⁸⁴ For the N553 psalter from KVIKNE church, cf. p. 102; for the N108 LUNDER crucifix, cf. p. 77.

⁴⁸⁵ NIyR II: 5.

⁴⁸⁶ Knirk 1994b: 182.

⁴⁸⁷ NIyR I: 41; Knirk 1994b: 182f.

⁴⁸⁸ Knirk 1994b: 183. Cf. also Magnus Olsen’s interpretation with some further comments in NIyR I: 42. For further information on runes and the medieval eternal calendar, cf. Jacobsen/Moltke 1942a: 812. Jansson 1987: 173f. discusses calendar sticks in which the first seven runes of the fuþark were used to denote the seven days of the week.

⁴⁸⁹ Bæksted 1952: 155–159 and 166–168.

N15 AKERSHUS church bell could, therefore, be evidence of the intermingling of native and pan-European customs.⁴⁹⁰

Among loose finds, amulets both of wood and lead make up the largest group. They have been found in connection with churches as well as in medieval trading towns. Their texts are most often in Latin or what appears to be Latin; quite a number are garbled or consist of meaningless sequences of runes or rune-like signs.⁴⁹¹ If their texts are identifiable, these are predominantly Christian names or liturgical words and prayers. The N53 ULSTAD lead sheet with its entire *Pater Noster* in addition to the names of the four Evangelists may serve as an example here.⁴⁹²

Runic Inscriptions on Secular Portable Objects

As in earlier periods, Scandinavians continued to carve runes and runic texts into all kinds of utensils and everyday objects; almost any item or tool playing a role in daily life could be endowed with a runic text.

“Dei aller fleste innskrifter finst på tre-saker, men dei slumpar òg til å stå på andre ting som sko, knivskaft, skeier og tilfeldige suppebein [...]; til og med på keramikkrucker finn vi runer. [...] Runene kan òg stå på matkopper, drikkekar og borddiskar.”⁴⁹³

As a rule, these inscriptions are of a non-communicative nature. They encompass ownership statements including names in general, prayers, *fupark* inscriptions, and the like. Prayers and *fuparks*, or parts of them, can chiefly be found on the bottom of vessels and jars; these were probably meant to protect the contents against spoilage or influence from evil forces.⁴⁹⁴ An example for an ownership statement in addition to some decorative carvings can be found on the B04 walrus cranium from BRYGGEN (|††† **ioāna** *Jóhann á*).⁴⁹⁵ Several wooden tubs from BRYGGEN feature the words *Maria* or *Ave Maria* (or fragments of these words), probably in a *pars pro toto* function for the whole prayer, e.g. N626 with Ʒᚱ |† **māria**, and N622 with Ʒ

⁴⁹⁰ A related case may be the complete *fupark* which has been carved into the central stave of UVDAL stave church (A287). In the European Middle Ages, alphabets (primarily the Latin, but also the Greek and the Hebrew alphabets) were used in the consecration of churches and this practice is also known from Scandinavia, Knirk 1994b: 184. Knirk surmises that “the *fupark* [...] in Uvdal was a local response to” this liturgical practice.

⁴⁹¹ Knirk et al. 1993: 553.

⁴⁹² Knirk et al. 1993: 553. For the reproduction and detailed discussion of N53 ULSTAD, cf. p. 128f.

⁴⁹³ Liestøl 1964a: 6.

⁴⁹⁴ NIyR VI.1: 42; Liestøl 1964a: 6; Knirk 1994b: 182.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. Liestøl 1964a: 6.

ϕΥᚱ ᚠ ᚦ *auemāria*.⁴⁹⁶ The first three characters of the fuþark have, for instance, been incised into to bottom of the B521 wooden cup.⁴⁹⁷

Naturally, rune-carvers left their marks also on those types of objects which were alien to the native tradition but came to the North in the wake of Christianity and script culture. Objects belonging to the ecclesiastical sphere have been treated above. In addition, runes occur on some secular items which are typically linked to written culture, namely diptychs (wax tablets) and styluses. Wax tablets had been in regular use for a wide range of textual genres since Antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages. They reached Scandinavia in the wake of Latin script culture. Wax tablets consisted of rectangular plates, mostly of wood although ivory and metal were also employed; at times, they were rounded at one end. Two or more plates could be bound together by means of a hinge so that they formed a kind of book; their hollowed out inner faces were filled with wax. A message could then be scratched into the wax with the point of a stylus and deleted after reading with its blunt end. By way of folding several plates against each other, their wax layers together with their texts were protected against damage.

Several wax tablets and styluses with runes carved into them have been excavated from medieval Scandinavian towns, and it appears that the intentions behind these inscriptions were quite heterogeneous.⁴⁹⁸ On the A35 wax tablet from OSLO, there is a runic inscription which has been incised not into the wax side, but into the outside of the plate.⁴⁹⁹ The owner of the tablet has here simply marked his property by stating *Benediktus á*. Another diptych of which actually both original plates are preserved (A253 and A254 TRONDHEIM) is particularly interesting as regards the adoption of Latin script writing conventions by runic tradition. This diptych clearly evinces that wax tablets were used by rune-carvers not only secondarily as, for instance, to make statements of ownership, but also in their primary function, i.e. to scratch runic messages into the wax. Both plates have been found with remains of wax in them and there are “mengdevis av snitt [...] bevarte etter skrivereiskap i treet under voksflatene.”⁵⁰⁰ It is difficult to obtain any meaning out of these cuts, not least because they do not necessarily constitute a coherent text, but may rather stem from different occasions when the plates were

⁴⁹⁶ NIyR VI.1: 38f. and 41; Knirk 1994b: 182.

⁴⁹⁷ Knirk 1994b: 182.

⁴⁹⁸ Wax tablets with runes have been found in Trondheim, Bergen, Oslo, Lödöse, and also in Iceland; cf. Hagland 1996: 189 for references.

⁴⁹⁹ Knirk 1994b: 207.

⁵⁰⁰ Hagland 1996: 188. Hagland also points out that the two plates of the diptych were found along with an iron stylus.

used.⁵⁰¹ However, even if the texts communicated via this wax tablets cannot be restored from the residual cuts, the diptych is significant evidence of the way in which runic tradition eclectically took advantage of the new impulses coming with Latin script culture. Whereas parchment did not serve well for the purposes of rune-carvers, the wax tablets represented practical devices for communication. In fact, their functional principle conformed perfectly with the essential nature of runic writing or, more precisely, rune-carving and not least with the functionality of the rune-sticks. In contrast to runic texts carved in wood, though, those on wax tablets could be erased more easily afterwards, and the plate could be recycled.

The B368 wax tablet is remarkable for yet another reason. The beginning of a runic letter has here been carved into the hollowed out field so that it would be hidden when the wax was filled in. Both this fact and the content of the letter suggest that this was a secret message which could be covered with a layer of wax into which again another, though trivial, text could be incised.⁵⁰² The letter reads in normalised Old Norse: *Þess vil ek biðja þik, at þú far ór þeima flokki. Sníð rit til systur Ólafs Hettusveins. Hon er í Björgvini at nunnusetri, ok leita ráðs við hana ok við frændr þína, er þú vildir sættask. Eigi átt þú synsemi jarls*⁵⁰³ Probably, the message continued on another plate. Several important conclusions can be drawn from this runic artefact. First, this letter (like the one from Sigurðr Jarlsson) seems to stem from one of the parties involved in the Norwegian civil war around the year 1200. Aslak Liestøl provides some suggestions as to the identities of the persons mentioned.⁵⁰⁴ Second, women were obviously not only involved in the civil war, but were also capable of reading (and most likely also writing) runes; obviously, this applied even to nuns in the convent in Bergen. Third, and most important for our context, this secret runic message in the wooden part of a wax tablet helps to substantiate the notion that the use of wax tablets “har vore ein vesentleg del av mellomalderens skriftkultur i Norden.”⁵⁰⁵ If this had not been the case, it would have been rather dangerous to use precisely this medium (which would then have been quite suspicious) to transmit such a politically charged message. Furthermore, the fact that the

⁵⁰¹ Hagland 1996: 188. On the reverse of A253 (listed in Hagland 1996 under the final registration number N875), runes have been carved into the wood, but although these for the most part can be identified, they can still not be interpreted. Cf. also Knirk 1994b: 207f.

⁵⁰² Liestøl 1968: 21; cf. Knirk 1994b: 207. Liestøl 1964a: 12 points out that the same strategy was applied already in Antiquity.

⁵⁰³ Liestøl 1968: 21. In English, the message reads: “I would ask you this: that you leave your party. Cut a letter in runes to Ólafr Hettusveinn’s sister. She is in the convent in Bergen. Ask her and your kin for advice when you want to come to terms. You, surely, are less stubborn than the Earl....” Cf. Samnordisk Runtexdatabas.

⁵⁰⁴ Liestøl 1964a: 11f.; Liestøl 1968: 22.

⁵⁰⁵ Hagland 1996: 189. In this context, Hagland refers to the mention of wax tablets in *Sturlunga saga* and *Laurentius saga byskups*.

runic inscription had to be hidden under the wax layer might also indicate that the knowledge of reading runes indeed was fairly wide-spread. Thus, the message had to be concealed not only due to the delicacy of the matter communicated but also because virtually anybody would have been able to read its text.

Wooden Rune-Sticks as a Neutral Material of Writing

Instances such as the acceptance of Christian grave monuments or church fixtures into the repertoire of media employed by runic tradition can be accounted for by changes reaching the North from the outside rather than by developments within runic writing. The rune-sticks, on the contrary, represent an innovation of writing material which emerged from within runic tradition. In my historical overview, I have discussed that the *rúnakefli* were widely used in the Scandinavian Middle Ages to communicate all kinds of topics and messages: They comprise private and business correspondences, love letters and sheer obscenities, Old Norse and Latin poetry. They convey popular Latin prayers and liturgical words and texts, but also all kinds of nonsense inscriptions. At this point of my discussion, though, I am not so much interested in their actual contents and subject matter, but rather in their sheer materiality. Unlike all types of media used by rune-carvers for their inscriptions in earlier periods, the rune-sticks for the first time in runic history represent a writing material which had no other function than to bear a runic message.⁵⁰⁶ In order to provide a convenient runic writing material, they were whittled flat on several sides before the inscription was carved.⁵⁰⁷ As a matter of fact, the Viking Age rune-sticks from Hedeby and Staraja Ladoga are exceptions to this rule. However, the number of pre-medieval rune-sticks is far too small to draw any far-reaching conclusions on their basis as to when Scandinavians first used rune-sticks on a broad scale in their daily affairs. Even if rune-sticks were to some extent employed in the Viking Age and maybe even in earlier periods, the available data attests the extensive use of *rúnakefli* not before the Middle Ages. Therefore, the following considerations will rest upon the factual evidence only. I shall proceed on the assumption that this material is roughly representative of the way runic script was used in the different periods.

Runic writing obviously experienced an enormous upswing in the Middle Ages.⁵⁰⁸ Moreover, it appears that the functional focus of runic writing was shifted to a degree from a basically official character (as on memorial monuments) towards a more pragmatic use of

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. Seim 2004: 121.

⁵⁰⁷ Knirk et al. 1993: 553.

⁵⁰⁸ Spurkland 2001a: 167.

runic script.⁵⁰⁹ With the introduction of Latin script culture, Scandinavians were faced with a script system which served for a much wider range of texts and genres than was the case with runic writing. As has become evident so far, Latin written culture indeed impinged on runic tradition, be it on the rune-row, on runic writing standards, or on content and media. In this context, it is highly probable that Latin script culture also instigated some modification concerning the manner in which Scandinavians perceived both their own script system and the function of writing in general.⁵¹⁰ When Latin writing reached the North, it had long been firmly established in political, social, and cultural institutions. Its presence may, thus, have encouraged users of runic script to extend the functional radius of runic writing and make written communication an integral part of their daily life. Moreover, rune-carvers may have felt challenged to keep their own writing system competitive. The inspiration to introduce a writing material which had no other function beyond that of bearing script may well have been provided by the usage in Latin script culture. However, by taking into service rune-sticks (rather than parchment) as a neutral means and material of writing, Scandinavians once more succeeded in improving their native writing tradition from within and on the basis of its own premises. Carving into wood was not new *per se* but perpetuated the indigenous approach to writing. The innovation lay in detaching script and writing from a specific item to which an inscription belonged or referred. Instead, communication could take place on a level which was independent of any particular context which again was, to a lesser or greater degree, prescribed by the writing material involved. The need for an autonomous writing material and the possibility of independent communication may have been felt by rune-users of course also without Latin script influence; the Viking Age rune-sticks might point into this direction.⁵¹¹ As an alternative to the wooden rune-sticks, bone was occasionally used as a more or less neutral writing material (e.g. B190).

⁵⁰⁹ On the concepts of pragmatic, cultural, and institutional usages of script, cf. Spurkland 2004: 342.

⁵¹⁰ Seim 2004: 121. Cf. also Spurkland 2004 for a discussion of the different mentalities underlying the concepts of 'literacy' on the one hand and what Spurkland has termed 'runacy' on the other; cf. fn. 217.

⁵¹¹ Of course, here also applies what I have expounded in connection with the preconditions for the development of orthographic and other writing traditions in runic writing: Due to the Scandinavians' early contacts with the Continent and Anglo-Saxon England, which probably implied that they in one or another context stumbled upon Latin writing, there is a possibility that they already at an earlier stage got the inspiration from Latin script culture to employ a material for writing/carving which did not serve some other purpose in the first place. This might be one explanation for the rune-sticks from Hedeby and Staraja Ladoga; another might be that runic writing already in the Viking Age began to adopt a new course towards a more pragmatic use of runic script. Cf. Liestøl 1969a: 75 with his interpretation of the short-kvist runes as "the writing of the merchants" who would employ rune-sticks in their everyday business.

shifted conceptualisation and function of runic writing. A change in the approach towards writing and written texts arises to some extent also from the terminology employed in runic tradition to describe the activities of ‘reading’ and ‘writing/carving’ runes. Throughout most of the runic period, *ráða* is used in runic inscriptions to describe the act of decoding a runic text. In the first instance, Terje Spurkland translates this verb as ‘to read’, ‘to interpret’ or ‘to decipher’; in a more comprehensive sense, it may “have a meaning ‘master’, ‘be proficient in handling’ runic script.”⁵¹⁵ The latter two emphasise the importance of carving, rather than interpreting, the runes correctly.⁵¹⁶ For the procedure of carving runes, Spurkland specifies three verbs commonly used well into the Middle Ages: “the strong verb *rísta* [...], the weak verb *rista* and the strong verb *ríta*”.⁵¹⁷ Particularly in inscriptions in the older fupark, *fá* is often found in this context; the verb means ‘to paint’ and, thus, certainly refers to the fact that runic inscriptions were often coloured.⁵¹⁸ These terms deviate from those usually employed in Latin written culture. For literate writing in manuscripts, charters, or diplomas, the weak verb *rita* is principally used. The reception of a text written in Latin letters is mostly referred to as *lesa* which actually means ‘reading aloud’ in contrast to *yfirlesa* or *fyrirlesa* which both denote silent reading.⁵¹⁹ Another term which occurs primarily in medieval diplomas, charters, and other official documents is *sjá*.⁵²⁰ The customary introductory formula is: *Qllum monnum þeim sem þetta bref sjá eða heyra*.⁵²¹ Occasionally, these technical terms from Latin literary culture found their way into runic writing.⁵²² A fairly late runic inscription from ÖLAND (Ö34; ca. 1550) witnesses the entry of the literate understanding of producing and receiving written texts into runic tradition:

⁵¹⁵ Spurkland 2001b: 126; cf. also Gustavson 1994: 323.

⁵¹⁶ Spurkland 2001b: 126. Reference is also made to the famous stanza 48 which is recited by Egill Skallagrímson in *Egils saga*: 230:

*Skalat maðr rúnar rísta,
nema ráða vel kunni,
þat verðr mǫrgum manni,
es of myrkvan staf villisk.*

A variant of this stanza can also be found in the runic material, namely in an inscription from TRONDHEIM (N829). Knirk 1994c: 419 provides the following interpretation (cf. also NIyR VII: 14, and Hagland 1998a: 626):

*Sá skyli rúnar rísta,
er ráða (?) vel kunni;
þat verðr mǫrgum manni,
at ...*

⁵¹⁷ Spurkland 2001b: 125.

⁵¹⁸ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 550.

⁵¹⁹ Spurkland 2001b: 125f.

⁵²⁰ Cf. Gustavson 1994: 323.

⁵²¹ Cf. Spurkland 2001b: 127; Clanchy 1993: 253.

⁵²² Gustavson 1994: 323.

*N̥R̥:ŋ̥Y:1*111t:1t1 / 11t1:P1R11:1*11R̥:R̥N̥1111t:11t:β̥R̥:411t1:
hu̇ør:ṡøm:tḣætṫæ:l̇æs / taṅæ:kirkia:ḣæṫar:ruṅasṫæn:tal̇:ḃør:ṡocna:
 *1R̥1ṫ:ṖṄ1ṫ:ṘṄ1ṫṘ:1ṫ4ṫ:11:41R1ṖṄṫ:1*11 / 1ṫ:1ṫ:11Y1Ṙ1ṫ
haṙæn:kunṅæ:ruṅær:l̇æṡæ:oc:scri̇fu̇æ:ḣæc / io:ola:calṁarn

In normalised form the text reads: *Hverr sem þetta less: Penna kirkja heitir Rúnasteinn. Þat byrjar sóknarherra kunna, rúnar lesa ok skrifa. Hæc Jo[hannes] Ola[i] Calmarn[ensis].*⁵²³ Without hesitation, the rune-carver has here combined the literate concepts *lesa* and *skrifa* with the activities of reading and carving or writing runes. As already pointed out, this inscription originates from a very late date and, thus, belongs to a period when runic tradition already was on the wane, at least as regards the use of runes on a large scale in daily affairs. Yet, it testifies that the two script systems in the time of their coexistence at an increasing rate converged so that they met not only on a material but also on a conceptual level. Terje Spurkland summarises:

“By the end of the Middle Ages the literate mentality seems to have made a breakthrough in both scripts, expressed by the modern Scandinavian verbs *skrive* and *lese*, with the generalized meaning of ‘write’ and ‘read’.”⁵²⁴

Another aspect of this inscription from Öland deserves attention: Although it has been carved as late as the mid-16th century, it insists that a parish priest was expected to be proficient in reading and writing runes. Thus, the inscription gives evidence of how important a role runic tradition at this late date still played in the minds of people and obviously also in some official and social institutions. This is all the more remarkable since Latin script had by this time long been firmly established in the Scandinavian countries and the printing press which notably contributed to displace runic writing had already been taken into service.

Scope of Subject Matter in Medieval Runic Inscriptions

From this excursus into the realm of mentality and technical terms for the production and decoding of runic inscriptions, I shall now turn to analysing subject matter in medieval runic writing. In its entirety, this chapter has so far dealt with a wide range of aspects regarding the

⁵²³ This is in English: “Whosoever reads this: this church is called Rúnasteinn. This the parish rector ought to know, to read and write runes. Jo(hannes) Ola(i) Calmarn(ensis) [wrote] this.” Cf. Samnordisk Runtextdatabas.

⁵²⁴ Spurkland 2001b: 128.

relationship between runic and Latin written culture. In addition and as a welcome side effect, the analysis of these diverse contexts has provided a good impression of the broad spectrum of subject matter communicated in medieval runic inscriptions. The following investigation aims at presenting the different types of texts and textual additions in a more systematic way. As I have pointed out in the introduction to this subchapter, it is somewhat difficult, if not impossible in some instances, to keep separate particular media from the types of inscriptions occurring in connection with them. This goes, for example, for grave slabs and memorial inscriptions which for this reason have been reviewed above. I shall, therefore, not revisit those categories of inscriptions which have been treated in detail already in the discussion of medial changes and adaptations. Rather, I shall now explore into subject matter present in runic inscriptions which has not yet been addressed explicitly.

As with the diversification of runic media, influence on the level of content came from both the religious and the secular sphere. That is to say that traditions and conventions of the Church and its apparatus as well as those of written culture and the scriptoria found their way into runic tradition. Here, too, native and foreign elements often merged to form visible interfaces of the medieval Norwegian two-script culture. The transition from standing to recumbent stones together with the adjustment of the memorial formula and the merger of native and Christian memorial elements on horizontal slabs illustrate this development impressively. Also the use of fuparks on church bells exemplifies the convergence of the two traditions. Besides the novel foreign aspects and the overlapping of new and old components, a number of old and new native types of inscriptions and genres occurred. The ownership tags as an important constituent of the daily routine of the merchants certainly fit into this category; this holds true even if their emergence was related to and maybe even inspired by the conceptual approach towards writing in Latin script culture.

Christian Prayers, Pater Noster, and Ave Maria Inscriptions

The number of Christian prayers in runic inscriptions, naturally, increased steadily with the consolidation of the Church and the Christian faith in the North. Many of these prayers reflect the words of individuals and are, as a result, often quite informal. They give utterance to personal wishes to the benefit of the rune-carver, close relatives, or deceased persons. As can be expected, this type of inscription often occurs in ecclesiastical contexts as in the case of N42 LOM stave church XIII:

ƿRl'1R'x11BI'þ1R'1111'þ1R1''111'
kristr'hialbi'þorstæini'þores'syni'
 *N1R*1'Y*11'þ1R
huarhesimhanfær

This reads in normalised Old Norse: *Kristr hjalpi Þorsteini Þórissyni, hvargi sem hann ferr*.⁵²⁵
 It is possible that Þorsteinn himself cut this prayer into one post of Lom stave church (maybe before setting out on a journey); but Magnus Olsen suggests that the inscription was made by a woman (perhaps Þorsteinn's wife) since it can be found "på kvinnesiden i kirkens skib".⁵²⁶
 This inscription is not the only one requesting God's protection for one's life and travels. In Borgund stave church, someone apparently preparing either for a journey to the Western Isles or for pilgrimage left behind a pious appeal to God (N358 BORGUND stave church XI).⁵²⁷

ƿNþ'1111'1111'1111'1111'1111'1111'1111'
guþstyþihuærnermikstyþertilutfærþar

Guð styði hvern er mik styðr til útferðar. And also the carver of N393 HOPPERSTAD stave church IV asks for God's help which he hopes to receive for himself and anybody reading his request.⁵²⁸

1N.1R.B11'Y.'N1N11'11' / 1R1111'.*111B1.þ11Y11'1.
nu.er.balm.sunuafþan / troten.hiabe.þæimane
 1R.þ11'1R.RN11R.R11'1.'N1þ11Y. / 1R.þ1R.R1þR+
er.þesar.runar.ræist.suapæim. / er.þær.ræþr

The text reads in normalised form: *Nú er palmsunnuaptann. Dróttinn hjalpi þeim manni, er þessar rúnar reist, svá þeim, er þær ræðr.* In addition to his pious wish, the rune-carver has specified the day by making reference to the liturgical year. The anonymous rune-carver of

⁵²⁵ NIyR I: 88f.
⁵²⁶ NIyR I: 89.
⁵²⁷ NIyR IV: 165.
⁵²⁸ NIyR IV: 208–210.

Whereas the occurrence of *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* in the medieval runic corpus for the above named reasons is not surprising at all, the virtual absence of the *Credo* from runic inscriptions is remarkable. To my knowledge, only two of the known runic inscriptions relate directly to the *Credo*, namely the A122 KAUPANGER lead sheet from Sogn and Fjordane and the N262 BRU lead cross from Rogaland. The inscription on the lead sheet (A122) cannot be interpreted entirely since the sheet has not yet been unfolded and about “70% of the text is still hidden”.⁵⁴² At any rate, the runic inscription contains a sequence **kredo**, and according to James E. Knirk, those parts of the text which are accessible include “religious names and words, especially names for God” which he tentatively reads as “*Jacob?, Credo, Hely, Soter, Agios, Eia, Deus*, as well as three times *AGLA* [...]”.⁵⁴³ On the lead cross from BRU (N262), we *inter alia* read **krtto** which Magnus Olsen interprets as a rendering of “den folkelige uttale k r e d d o”.⁵⁴⁴ Another possible candidate here is N388 KAUPANGER stave church which apparently quotes the first four words from the *Credo*: *Ek trúi á Guð*. In addition, there are a number of inscriptions with quite garbled texts which Aslak Liestøl suggested to read as a passage from the *Credo*: *sub Pontio Pilato passus, crucifixus*. The inscriptions in question are N637–N639 BRYGGEN and A71 LOM stave church which has **suspepisuskurusifihsusam**. With reference to Egil Kragerud, however, James E. Knirk argues that “especially the least distorted [inscription] in A71 [...] would in fact seem closer to, for instance, *suspensus pius Jesus crucifixus, Amen*”.⁵⁴⁵ Consequently, the status of the *Credo* in the medieval runic corpus remains somewhat uncertain.

Religious Texts, Names for God, and Christian Words and Additions

Apart from *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* inscriptions, a wide range of religiously motivated runic texts have been found. The following discussion can, of course, not be comprehensive but will provide a representative overview of the types of texts involved. Often, religious texts, words, and additions occur on amulets next to charms against all kinds of diseases. Among religious texts there are passages from the *Ecce crucem* antiphon (N248 MADLA, B646†), the *Deus Pater piissime* (as well on N248 MADLA), and the *Alma chorus domini* (N263 BRU lead cross II, N348 BORGUND stave church amulet I, B619 amulet).⁵⁴⁶ Fragments of the *Five gaude* antiphon, although distorted, appear on the N629 rune-stick from BRYGGEN.

⁵⁴² Knirk 1998: 482.

⁵⁴³ Knirk 1998: 482 and 504.

⁵⁴⁴ NIyR III: 266.

⁵⁴⁵ Liestøl 1978: 185; NIyR VI.1: 75f.; Knirk 1998: 488.

⁵⁴⁶ NIyR III: 227–237 and 282–288; NIyR IV: 140–143; Knirk 1998: 486.

James E. Knirk assumes that N609 BRYGGEN “might similarly be a quotation of a liturgical text, although the source has not yet been identified.”⁵⁴⁷ There are also two instances with quotations from the Psalms (N143† GJERPEN church bell II, N628 BRYGGEN rune-stick).⁵⁴⁸

Particularly frequent are names for God, of the Evangelists, other Apostles, saints, and archangels. James E. Knirk has listed those names for God which occur most often: *Alpha et O*, *Tetragrammaton*, *Agios*, *Pantocrator/Pantocraton*, and *Arreton*.⁵⁴⁹ The names of the four Evangelists can, for instance, be found on the just discussed N53 ULSTAD lead sheet, the N173 NESLAND II crucifix, or the N634 wooden amulet from BRYGGEN.⁵⁵⁰ The archangels Raphael and Gabriel are referred to on the N636 BRYGGEN and A284 “FLORIDA” rune-sticks where they are mentioned with Michael and Raguel respectively.⁵⁵¹ In a few inscriptions, we encounter the names of the Seven Sleepers, the *septem dormientes*, of Ephesus (N54 VÅGÅ, N637 BRYGGEN, B596, and possibly B593).⁵⁵² Occasionally, the names of Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago who (according to Dan. 3,7–3,97 in the Vulgate) were cast into the fire by Nebuchadnezzar can be identified in runic inscription. Definite instances are A292 TØNSBERG and N633 BRYGGEN; the latter contains charms against eye-disease and bleeding. Since the three young men are said to have walked through the fire without being harmed, they were called upon as protection against inflammatory infections as well as against fire.⁵⁵³ At least two runic inscriptions feature the last words of Christ on the cross: *consummatum est* (N640 and B596, both from BRYGGEN).⁵⁵⁴

In addition, there come a number of individual words or phrases which obviously were regarded as extremely powerful. The most frequent is the acronym *AGLA* which stands for Hebrew *'atta gibbôr le 'ôlam 'adônay*, i.e. “you are strong in eternity, Lord”.⁵⁵⁵ Other examples are N643 BRYGGEN, A8 TØNSBERG, or N157 TRONDHEIM. The divine name *Adonai* reoccurs in the runic material, for instance on the N262 BRU lead cross I, or on the N348 amulet I from BORGUND stave church. Several inscriptions feature “[v]ocalic variations of the

⁵⁴⁷ Knirk 1998: 486. For the reproduction of the runic text in addition to its transliteration and translation, cf. p. 91.

⁵⁴⁸ N143† GJERPEN features a passage from Psalm 117:16 (Vulgate), whereas N628 BRYGGEN quotes from Psalm 109:1 (Vulgate), Knirk 1998: 487; NIyR II: 180f.; NIyR VI.1: 44–47; Seim 1988b: 43f.

⁵⁴⁹ Knirk 1998: 486: “*Alpha et O* (N248 MADLA, N306 FORTUN IV, N634 BRYGGEN, A1 ÅL), *Tetragrammaton* (N248 MADLA, A1 ÅL, A5 BORGUND market-place, A32 OSLO), *Agios* (N216† TØNSTAD, N348 BORGUND stave church I, A157 TRONDHEIM), *Pantocrator/Pantocraton* ([...] N641 BRYGGEN and [...] A248 “FLORIDA”), *Arreton* (in N638 BRYGGEN in addition to N263 BRU II).”

⁵⁵⁰ NIyR II: 328–330; Knirk 1998: 496 and 500. For the reproduction and transliteration of N634, cf. p. 85.

⁵⁵¹ NIyR VI.1: 70; Knirk 1998: 487; the names of Raphael and Gabriel may also be present in a passage of A71 LOM: **rafelesen [...] gafelesgabeles**.

⁵⁵² NIyR I: 106–109; NIyR VI.1: 73–77; Dyvik 1988: 4; Seim 1988b: 54–56; Knirk 1998: 487, 500, and 502.

⁵⁵³ Dyvik 1988: 4; Gosling 1989: 178f. and 187; NIyR VI.2: 240; Knirk 1998: 486f.; Seim 1988b: 50f.

⁵⁵⁴ Knirk 1998: 487.

⁵⁵⁵ Knirk 1998: 478 and 486.

syllable *fau*” which as well have been read as a name for God; the interpretation is based on the assumption that the syllable represents “the Hebrew letter-name *vau* (which in some texts is claimed to signify ‘life’, *vita*”.⁵⁵⁶ Variations of *fau* in addition to *AGLA* occur on, for instance, B646†. The word *aia* may be another name for God (cf. B38 **aia** and B646 **aea**).⁵⁵⁷ The *sator-arepo* palindrome which has been discussed in connection with runorthographic peculiarities undoubtedly also belongs into this category of protective or magical formulae. Christian elements may, of course, also occur on a non-verbal level, namely in the form of diverse crosses. These can be used as ingress signs, word dividers, or to conclude an inscription. Some of the lead amulets are even shaped like a cross (cf. N248 MADLA).

Parallel Texts in Manuscripts

In addition to religious and liturgical texts, the runic material comprises also some few secular texts which have their parallels in the manuscripts. The Latin hexameter verse in B598, of which similar versions can be found in English manuscripts, has already been discussed. Furthermore, there is one inscription on a rune-stick from BRYGGEN (N603) which contains fragments from the *Carmina Burana*; the passages in question stem from the two poems *Amor habet superos* (CB 88) and *Axe Phebus aureo* (CB 71).⁵⁵⁸

- (A) --.]ƿRt:ƿt:|ƿt:|Bn+:ƿt|t|t|<|]ƿt:|t|n+:ƿt|t|:|t|t|:|t|YƿRt:ƿRt+:ƿt|[- -
 --.]**gre:gie:igni:bus:kale**[e<a]sko:æius:koti:die:inamöre:græs:ko[- -
- (B) --..]t:|ƿt|Y:|t|t|R|:|N|R|ƿt:|ƿt:|ƿt|Y|N+:|Y|B|t+:|t|<|]N|Y|N|[- -
 --..]**s:agam:teneri:uirgo:sik:agamus:ambos:s[s<i]umus**[- -
- (C) --.]t[..]t:|t|n+:|ƿt|t|:|N|N|Y:|t|t:|ƿt|t|R|N|:|t|R|t|R|[- -
 --.]**n[..]a:lusis:agone:filum:ena:kuærule:tæriar**[- -

The text reads in normalised Latin: [*Virginis e*]griegie ignibus calesco eius cotidie in amore cresco .../... agam teneri virgo sic agamus ambos sumus .../... lucis agone. *Philomena querule Terea r[etractat ...]*.⁵⁵⁹ Aslak Liestøl and Karin Fjellhammer Seim discuss in detail the

⁵⁵⁶ Knirk 1994b: 196; Knirk 1998: 486; cf. Seim 1988b: 51.

⁵⁵⁷ Knirk 1994b: 191.

⁵⁵⁸ NIyR VI.1: 1f.; Knirk 1998: 485.

⁵⁵⁹ NIyR VI: 1. The text reads in English: “I am becoming inflamed with the fires (of love) for the exquisite maiden, and grow daily (more) in love with her. -- -- -. ...with life’s (?) despondency. Philomena lamenting struggles with

relation between the text in N603 and the manuscript versions along with the historical background for these poems.⁵⁶⁰ The discovery of this broken rune-stick featuring Goliardic poetry is particularly interesting since it reveals close contacts between learned traditions on the Continent and Scandinavia which, then, found expression in the runic tradition:

“Goliardic verse was popular among students and scholars who were used to using Latin as their common language, and it has always been assumed that Scandinavia lay outside the area where this poetry was read or sung in the Middle Ages. [...] versions of many of the poems [...] were [...] known in French and English university society, and Norwegians may have become acquainted with them while they were students there.”⁵⁶¹

Another text which repeatedly occurs in the runic corpus is the Vergilian verse *Omnia vincit amor, et nos cedamus Amori* which is in English: “Love conquers all; let us yield to love!”⁵⁶² The line originates from Vergil’s *Eclogues*, namely from *Eclogue X*, verse 69.⁵⁶³ While N605 (𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌹𐌹𐌹 **amoruin**) as well as B605 (**amoru/iciþomniap**) have a “more prosaic word order” in that they begin the line with *amor* rather than *omnia*, B145 features the original wording (**omnia.uincip.amor.æþ.nos.c(e)damus.amori**).⁵⁶⁴ All three inscriptions are from BRYGGEN; the runic text of B605 had been embroidered on a left shoe.⁵⁶⁵ Of Old Norse texts transmitted with parallel texts in the manuscripts, I have already discussed B88 which contains part of a *dróttkvætt* strophe attributed to Haraldr Harðráði; the line is found in *Morkinskinna*.

Rune-Letters and Literary Writing Conventions

Not only literary texts known from written culture can be found in medieval runic material. Runic inscriptions also exhibit a number of phrases and formulae which were typically used in medieval charters and diplomas. These include introductory and terminational formulae employed in runic letters which frequently served some commercial or official function. One of them is Þórir Fagr’s letter to Hafgrímr which I have rendered and discussed in the context of word division (N648 BRYGGEN). Þórir was evidently well acquainted with letter writing in Latin script culture. This arises from his applying of the conventional introductory formula

Tereus.” Lines (A) and (B) on the rune-stick correspond to passages from *Amor habet superos*, whereas line (C) is taken from *Axe Phebus aureo*, Seim 1988b: 24.

⁵⁶⁰ NIyR VI.1: 1–9; Seim 1988b: 24–27.

⁵⁶¹ Seim 1988b: 26f.

⁵⁶² Seim 1988b: 28.

⁵⁶³ NIyR VI.1: 11–12; Fairclough 2001: 94.

⁵⁶⁴ Knirk 1998: 485; cf. Seim 1988b: 27f.; cf. Samnordisk Runtexdatabas for B145.

⁵⁶⁵ NIyR VI.2: 228.

(... *sendir* ... *kveðju Guðs ok sína*) in addition to another standard phrase regularly found in charters (*vil ek at þú vitir*):

∴**hau:grimi:felag:sinum:sen:dir:þorer:fagr:kæiþ:iu:guþs:ok:si:nān:san:nān:**

Hafgrími, féлага sínum, sendir Þórir fagr kveðju Guðs ok sína, sannan

flaskap:okuinato ... / ... uil:ek:at:þu.uitir: ...

félagskap ok vináttu. ... / ... Vil ek at þú vitir, ...

Síra Jón used the same greeting in his letter to Gunnarr Hvít (B333): *Síra Jón sendir Gunnari Hvít kveðju Guðs ok / sína ...*⁵⁶⁶ In opposition to Þórir Fagr and contrary to customary usage, Síra Jón names himself, rather than the addressee, first in the *salutation*. Aslak Liestøl has pointed to the fact “that is unusual, normally only kings and bishops began their letters in this way.”⁵⁶⁷ Sigurðr Lávarðr, then again, as a member of the royal family indeed introduced his request for equipment with his own name: **sigurþr:láuár(þ)r.sændir:kuæþi[o-..]guþsòksina;** he then concludes his letter with **nu:ok:iannan nú ok jamnan** (B448).⁵⁶⁸ In addition, *valete* can be found as closing word in runic inscriptions as, for instance, in N446 TINGVOLL church and N583 HESBY church II. The word occurs frequently in early charters giving the impression that “the donor had just finished speaking with his audience.”⁵⁶⁹ The inscription on the N446 TINGVOLL church marble top is addressed directly to its readers; thus, the concluding *valete* fits in well here.

Aslak Liestøl remarked that the lacuna in B448 after *kveðju* is a bit peculiar since “the salutation is complete as it stands”. If an addressee was to be named in a royal letter, this would customarily be before, rather than after, *kveðju*.⁵⁷⁰ Liestøl explains this discrepancy by assuming a distinct tradition of letter writing at the Cathedral School at Nidaros.⁵⁷¹ In this context, Liestøl points to two edicts which originated from the same royal milieu; they were actually sent by close relatives of Sigurðr Lávarðr: One by his brother King Hákon Sverrisson (in 1202 or 1203), the other by his nephew King Hákon Hákonarson (in ca. 1220). Both letters feature the same phrasing with regard to the position of the addressee’s name in the formula. The *salutatio* in King Hákon Sverrisson’s letter reads: *Hakon konongr sendir quediu*

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. p. 85.

⁵⁶⁷ Liestøl 1968: 25.

⁵⁶⁸ Liestøl 1968: 24f.

⁵⁶⁹ Clanchy 1993: 253.

⁵⁷⁰ Liestøl 1968: 18.

⁵⁷¹ For the following, see Liestøl 1968: 18f.

*HAKI:BEANAR:~SUN:~AMIK:~SUÆN:~OSMUNDAR:~SUN:~SLO:~MIK:~OSOFAR:~RÆS:T:~MIK:

hake:beanar:sun:amik:suæn:osmundar:sun:slo:mik:osofar:ræs:t:mik:

~HAFR:~REIST:~MIK:~OK:~LÆSTI:~ÓÐINS:~DAGINN:~NÆSTA:~EPTIR:~ÓLAFS:~VÖKU:~Á:~SÉTTA:~ÁRI:~RÍKIS:~VÁRS:~VIRÐULEGS:

auk:læiste:opesndhen:nesta:eptir:olafs:foku:aseta:are:rikes:fos:firpulhs:

*HÆRA:~MAHNUSAR:~NORIHS:~KONOHS

hæra:mahnusar:norihs:konohs

The text reads in normalised Old Norse: *Haki Bjarnason á mik. Svein Ásmundarson sló mik. Ásolfr reist mik ok læsti óðinsdaginn næsta eptir Ólafsvöku á séttá ári ríkis várs virðulegs herra Magnúsar, Noregs konungs.*⁵⁷⁹ The rune-carver was obviously well acquainted with the conventions of letter writing in literary culture. By his referring to both the liturgical calendar (*óðinsdaginn næsta eptir Ólafsvöku*) and the year in office of the Norwegian king, namely King Magnús Eriksson (*á séttá ári ríkis várs virðulegs herra Magnúsar, Noregs konungs*), the inscription can be dated precisely to 31st July 1325.⁵⁸⁰

Mixed Languages and Writing Systems

Palpable interfaces of Latin and runic script culture are, of course, also those instances in which either both sets of characters or Latin and the vernacular occur side by side in the same inscription. Especially church bells often have inscriptions in runes as well as Latin letters. The two (now lost) bells from GJERPEN may be adduced here. In addition to the runic *Ave Maria* inscription which concludes with the majuscule *A* for *Amen*, the N142† church bell I features the following text in majuscules: CAMPANA ISTA A CHRISTO SIT BENEDICTA. On the N143† church bell II was an Old Norse runic quotation from Psalm 117:16 (Vulgate) plus an inscription which was executed in majuscules: SANCTUS PETRUS APOSTOLUS BLECI OS.⁵⁸¹ The latter is conspicuous also for its mixing up the Latin name form with the Old Norse verb and pronoun.

Also medieval grave slabs frequently have inscriptions in both script systems. The Vg95 UGGLUM grave slab discussed above represents an outstanding example. It features the same Old Norse text in runes and Latin letters as well as a Latin manufacturer's formula

⁵⁷⁹ Samnordisk Runtexdatabas translates into English: "Haki Björn's son owns me, Sveinn Ásmundr's son hammered me, Ásulfr carved and read me on the first Wednesday after Ólafr's-vigil in the sixth year of the reign of our worthy Sire Magnús, King of Norway."

⁵⁸⁰ Seim 2004: 171.

⁵⁸¹ Knirk 1998: 496. The text on N142† reads in English: "May this bell be blessed by Christ." [My translation].

traditional ownership statement (*Þórir á*); the second part consists of Latin *miserere* (*have mercy*) and the Old Norse possessive pronoun *minn* in the genitive (*mín*).⁵⁹² Another candidate here might be the DR410 BORNHOLM amulet. In fact, it seems as if an Old Norse element has slipped into the otherwise Latin inscription:

- (A) e(i)(e)asususkristusfiluist(e)ififiinominablatriseþfilliusinsleþsbirituls
 (B) kristus(b)(i)lbiusankuisfifip|fitamitirna|mkustotapit

Marie Stoklund has normalised the text into: (A) *i .. Jesus Christus filius dei vivi. In nomine Patris et Filii ... et Spiritus* (B) *Christus. Pius sanguis vivit vitam æternam custodiat.*⁵⁹³ The correct wording of this liturgical formula indeed contains the words *pater*, *filius*, and *spiritus* in their respective genitive forms, i.e. *patris*, *fili*, and *spiritus*. The formula occurs correctly on the N632 rune-stick from BRYGGEN (**in.nomne(p)atriSæþfi(l)iaþ[æþ]SprituSanti**).⁵⁹⁴ The inscription in line (A) on the BORNHOLM amulet, however, features **filius** which is the nominative. The word is followed by an at first uninterpretable sequence **ins**. The creator of this inscription appears not to have been extraordinarily proficient in Latin. At any rate, the carver seems to have had enough knowledge of Latin that he or she began to feel awkward with the nominative form **filius** and recognised that there actually should be a genitive. Latin does not employ any articles, and in retranslating the Latin text into Old Norse, the rune-carver may also have hesitated because of the seemingly missing article. Therefore, I am tempted to propose that he or she, after having performed but also identified the mistake, tried to compensate for this lapsus by adding the Old Norse definite article in the genitive (*-ins*, m. sg.) to the Latin word. This procedure then resulted in the bizarre bilingual form **filiusins**.

4.3.3 Preliminary Conclusion

On the level of media and content, it is much easier to detect direct innovations and adoptions from Latin script and Christian culture than has been possible with inventions in the rune-row or changes in orthographical or writing standards. This is mainly because we have here to do

⁵⁹² NIyR VI.2: 232; Knirk 1998: 505.

⁵⁹³ Stoklund 2003: 860.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. NIyR VI.1: 55.

with much more concrete and unambiguous data. The introduction of a new script culture and a new faith initiated comprehensive changes on the levels of culture and mentality. Both Latin written culture and Christianity brought in their wake a great number of characteristic artefacts and ideas which found entrance into the native writing tradition; they were adopted either as a new material of writing or on a conceptual level. These novel media and literate models were entirely new to and differed greatly from native Scandinavian culture. Therefore, they are for the most part clearly ascertainable in the runic material. Rune-carvers acknowledged the change of religion and burial customs in that they abandoned their traditional standing stones in favour of Christian grave monuments and rephrased the memorial formulae accordingly. They carved runes into all kinds of ecclesiastical and profane items and employed typical literate wordings in their runic letters. Prayers and liturgical texts as well as passages known from secular manuscripts are represented in medieval runic inscriptions.

In spite of this acknowledgement of the new cultural, political, and religious realities, traditional patterns in many ways remain visible in the runic material. As with the changes regarding the runic inventory and runorthographical conventions, runic writing retained many of its typical traits. This relates to both the fact that virtually anything belonging to the live-in world could be furnished with a runic inscription and also that customary runic formulations could show through in any given context. Moreover, runic writing not only incorporated novel impulses into its repertoire but also experienced some renewal from within. This becomes obvious from the extensive use of rune-sticks in communicative contexts. Even if this development had been inspired by the functionality of Latin script, it still illustrates how rune-carvers not only copied from their model but made impulses serviceable for their own needs and purposes. They accommodated to the new conditions and the same time as they on the basis of their own premises developed particular aspects of the newly arrived script culture which they thought practical for runic communication. Accordingly, the arrival of Latin script culture and Christian faith did not supersede the native writing tradition but, on the contrary, led to a diversification of runic writing which continued to exist for some more 300 years. In her abstract for her presentation at the 7th International Symposium on Runes and Runic Inscriptions in Oslo (9th–15th August 2010), Lisbeth Imer has emphasised this aspect of cultural contacts: “Cultural shifts may lead to shifts in the use of writing, or [they] may lead to a different use of materials and objects.”⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁵ Imer 2010.

5 CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES

In one of his articles, Terje Spurkland has rightly pointed out that “[t]he key question [...] is [...] not why the runic script died out in the Middle Ages, but why it did not die out immediately after the introduction of the roman script to Scandinavia.”⁶⁰³ The present paper seeks to contribute to the solution of this important issue. It does so by illustrating how the native writing tradition responded to the impulses which emanated from Latin script culture. I am convinced that the sovereign and independent way in which runic tradition dealt with the novel impulses it was confronted with, is part of the explanation for the relatively long period of the two script systems’ coexistence. Runic writing seems to have been so firmly established in the minds and daily routine of medieval society, that it could not easily be replaced by an entirely different script culture. Runic writing experienced a noticeable strengthening in the presence of Latin written culture and profited from these impulses. Still, it principally maintained its historic qualities and unique characteristics throughout the Scandinavian Middle Ages.

My analysis of the extent and nature of interference and exchange between runic and Latin written culture focussed on three different levels of runic writing: the script system, orthography and related issues as well as content and media. It has proven very useful to structure runic written culture according to these three different aspects. It could be shown that the native writing tradition indeed allowed for influence from Latin script conventions; the degree as well as the probability of Latin script influence were, however, rather different on these different levels. The diversification of the rune-row was certainly influenced by the presence of the Latin alphabet. Immediate interferences, however, are not easily demonstrated and have to be ascertained individually for each element to consider. It is primarily with those runes which were devised as signs for distinctly Latin letters that a direct relation can be stated. In spite of some singular alphabetical rune-rows or attempts to integrate additional runic characters into the fupark order, no efforts were undertaken on the whole to equate the rune-row with the Latin alphabet or to make runes a mere ‘transliteration’ or substitute for Latin letters. The fupark order was preserved throughout the Middle Ages, and the sixteen primary runes of the fupark retained their supremacy compared to the extra signs which were added to the inventory of runes in the late Viking and early Middle Ages. Moreover, even though new characters were developed, these did not become obligatory for rune-carvers.

⁶⁰³ Spurkland 2004: 335.

Despite the medieval additions to the rune-row, the Viking Age fuþark did not lose its functionality and remained efficient also without the extra characters. All in all, these observations confirm that the rune-row indeed was so stable in its structural and functional principle that it did not yield in the face of the Latin alphabet but maintained its historic nature throughout the Middle Ages.

On the level of orthography, it is even more difficult to filter out modifications and changes which occurred due to *direct* interference from Latin script usage. The retrospect to the earlier and Viking runic period reconfirmed that almost all practices of medieval runic orthography and writing standards had been there already prior to the permanent arrival of Latin script culture in the North. The Latin writing tradition appears to have intensified, rather than initially introduced, the use of particular conventions. Its presence probably sharpened the awareness for individual practices such as the application of word dividers; the increased occurrence of bindrunes in medieval inscriptions, after their virtual absence in the Viking Age, can probably also be explained by the model provided by Latin writing.⁶⁰⁴ Only some singular phenomena such as the occurrence of typical manuscript abbreviations in runic inscriptions document direct influence from Latin written culture. The use of manuscript abbreviations definitely required a more comprehensive knowledge of the conventions of the scriptoria than would have been necessary for a more consistent use of, for instance, word dividers. It would, for that reason, seem that such inscriptions were made by someone well acquainted with both traditions. Thus, they represent unique evidence of a digraphic competence among medieval Scandinavians. On the whole, runic tradition proved to have been fairly independent from the model of Latin writing also on the level of orthography and writing standards. The transference of runorthographical practices to the rendering of Latin texts with runes shows that Latin texts were not merely copied blindly. The evidence of such a procedure allows for at least three important observations: First, rune-carvers dealt with the conventions of their own tradition in a very conscious and reflective manner. Second, runic orthography was so closely linked to the script system that it repeatedly asserted itself against Latin orthography when Latin texts were executed in runes. Moreover, it reveals that users of runic writing were ultimately aware of their operating on the verge between two utterly distinct script cultures.

The level of media and content is definitely the one on which adoptions from Latin script culture become most evident. Both with regard to the media employed and the textual

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Gustavson 1995: 213.

genres represented, this level features a broad variety of innovations as compared to the Viking and earlier runic periods. Latin script culture was introduced into Scandinavia in the service of the Church and Latin script texts were for the most part produced in religious institutions.⁶⁰⁵ Consequently, also many of the new artefacts and texts or textual genres were closely linked to a Christian context and are, thus, easily discernible from pre-Christian usage. The material discussed above is by no means exhaustive and the list of overlappings on this level of runic script culture could still be extended. James E. Knirk, for instance, has pointed to the use of syllabaries as the “clearest example of the transference of techniques for learning Latin letters to learning runes.”⁶⁰⁶ And Aslak Liestøl has surmised whether the runic **uihi** on a rune-stick from BRYGGEN (N655) may be interpreted as “noko misforstått latin *vidi*, ‘eg har sett’”.⁶⁰⁷ The inscription appears to be some sort of calculation or financial settlement and the *vihi* could imply that each sum listed had been checked and approved. The rune-sticks represent a typical medium of runic communication in the Middle Ages. In their function as neutral material of writing they may witness a changed approach to script and writing in general. Regardless of whether rune-sticks were taken into use in the Viking or the early Middle Ages, rune-carvers did at any rate not turn to parchment for their communication, but devised a writing material which built upon the traditional usage of *carving* runes. Interestingly enough, one of the rune-sticks from Bergen (B625) makes direct reference to book-culture and the use of parchment: ... *at ek gaf [yðr] þrjú skinn af bókfelli. Ok rít til mín hversu þér ...*⁶⁰⁸ Thus, this inscription affirms the close contact between the two writing traditions, the exchange (both material and intellectual) between users of the two scripts and their knowledge of the conventions of the other system respectively.

In summary it can be said that on the whole two aspects have become apparent in the course of my investigation of the different levels of runic script culture: First, runic writing obviously was so well established, both with regard to its inner structure and its integration in everyday life, that it did not lose ground in the presence of the powerful Latin script culture. On the contrary, runic writing experienced an enormous upturn. It continued to exist as a writing system of its own right which served for a broad variety of everyday activities and businesses. Second, most modifications and changes occurred on the basis of what had been there already before the arrival of Latin script culture. This implies that rune-carvers indeed

⁶⁰⁵ Cf. Knirk et al. 1993: 551.

⁶⁰⁶ Knirk 1994: 193.; cf. also Seim 1998b which is entirely dedicated to syllabaries in runic inscriptions.

⁶⁰⁷ Liestøl 1964a: 8.

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Samnordisk Runtexdatabas; the text reads in Norwegian: “... at jeg gav Dem tre skinn av pergament. Og skriv til meg hvordan De ...”.

took advantage of the inspirations provided by Latin script culture. They exploited and developed these ideas in due consideration of their own tradition which they had inherited from the Viking and earlier periods. Einar Haugen has once claimed that the younger fupark “became the layman’s alphabet, favoured for all daily and festive uses not associated with the clergy, – the Scandinavian answer to the Latin alphabet.”⁶⁰⁹ This statement is, of course, particularly true for medieval circumstances. Haugen’s characterisation of runic script as an “answer” may, in my opinion, reveal much of the condition of written culture in the Scandinavian Middle Ages. Runic writing, as an equal partner and strong opponent, responded to the new script culture, which took hold in the North, and entered into some sort of dialogue with it. Runic tradition did, however, not dissolve under this foreign influence nor did it lose its unique character. Rather, it profited and emerged strengthened from this meeting with Latin script culture.

At the time of the arrival of the Latin alphabet, runic writing could look back on an over 800 year-old history of permanent use. This, undoubtedly, was one prerequisite for the comparatively long period of coexistence of runic alongside Latin script culture. In contrast to the Continent and Anglo-Saxon England, Norway and the rest of Scandinavia were Christianised at a rather late date; thus, also Latin writing reached the North late.⁶¹⁰ Consequently, runic writing could develop relatively undisturbed over a fairly long span of time. This circumstance certainly implied that the runic script system was firmly consolidated, in its structure as well as in its functionality, when Latin writing was introduced into the North. By this time, it had become an integral and important part of the Scandinavian identity which was not readily abandoned, not least as it served medieval society as a convenient means of communication. Runic script was clearly conceived of as an independent and functional writing system which had its users in the various strata of medieval society. Another aspect which might have added to the long continued existence of runic writing may be closely linked to the use of runes in trade and business transactions. It has been pointed out that the invention of the runes is often related to growing cultural and commercial contacts of the Germanic tribes in the first centuries AD. With the increasing Europeanisation of the North and its integration in the catchment area of the Hanseatic League, the situation for Norwegian and other Scandinavian merchants became more and more difficult in the Middle Ages.⁶¹¹ In this context, I would like to remind of what Seth Lerer has expounded on the various meanings of

⁶⁰⁹ Haugen E 1969: 51.

⁶¹⁰ Knirk et al. 1993: 545.

⁶¹¹ Liestøl 1968: 23–25.

literacy. He stated *inter alia* that “[t]he power of the literate [...] is the power to include and exclude: to distinguish the self from the other [...].”⁶¹² Taking into account the hard times for Scandinavians under the rising power of German (Saxon) merchants, in particular at *Tyske Bryggen* in Bergen, it is imaginable that the Nordic merchants cultivated their indigenous system of notation in order to mark off their territory. By using a writing system which was unknown in regions outside of Scandinavia, Scandinavian merchants were able to keep the Germans, who were outstripping the native trading milieu, at some distance. Further research would profit from an investigation into how the growing urbanisation in the North from the 11th century onwards contributed to the strengthening to the use of runes. Jan Ragnar Hagland has raised the subject with regard to the medieval town of Nidaros (Trondheim), and the discussion should certainly be extended to other medieval trading centres, both in Norway and in Sweden and Denmark.⁶¹³

⁶¹² Lerer 1991: 22.

⁶¹³ Hagland 1998.

6 APPENDIX

6.1 Abbreviations and References / List of Abbreviations

A (+ number)	Preliminary registration number in the Runic Archives in Oslo for inscriptions from the whole of Norway (excluding those from Bergen, cf. B-numbers) not yet published in the corpus edition
AM	<i>Den arnamagnæanske håndskriftsamling</i> (Det arnamagnæanske institut), København and <i>Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi</i> , Reykjavík
B (+ number)	Preliminary registration number in the Runic Archives in Oslo for inscriptions from Bryggen in Bergen not yet published in NIyR
BRM (+ number)	Preliminary registration number of the Bryggen Museum, Bergen
DR (+ number)	Reference number for Danish runic inscriptions published in <i>Danmarks Runeindskrifter</i> , vols. 1–4, ed. Lis Jacobsen and Erik Moltke, Copenhagen 1941 – 42.
G	<i>Gotlands runinskrifter</i> (SR XI–XII), ed. Sven B.F. Jansson, Elias Wessén and Elisabeth Svärdström, Stockholm 1962–1978.
KJ (+ number)	Reference number for runic inscriptions in the older fuþark in Krause/Jankuhn: <i>Die Runeninschriften im älteren Futhark</i> , Göttingen 1966.
N (+ number)	Registration number in the Runic Archives in Oslo for inscriptions published in <i>Norges Innskrifter med de yngre Runer</i>
NIyR	<i>Norges Innskrifter med de yngre Runer</i> , vols. 1–7, ed. Magnus Olsen et al., Oslo 1941–1990.
NIÆR	<i>Norges Indskrifter med de ældre Runer</i> , vols. 1–3, ed. Sophus Bugge and Magnus Olsen, Kristiania/Christiania (Oslo) 1891–1919.
NOR	<i>Nytt om Runer. Meldingsblad om runeforskning</i> , ed. James E. Knirk, Oslo 1986–.
SM (+ number)	<i>Smålands runinskrifter</i> (SR IV), ed. Ragnar Kinander, Stockholm 1935–1961.
SR	<i>Sveriges runinskrifter</i> , vols. 1–, ed. Erik Brate et al., Stockholm 1900–.
SÖ (+ number)	<i>Södermanlands runinskrifter</i> (SR III), ed. Erik Brate and Elias Wessén, Stockholm 1924–1936.
U (+ number)	<i>Upplands runinskrifter</i> (SR VI–IX), ed. Elias Wessén and Sven B.F. Jansson, Stockholm 1940–1958.
VG	<i>Västergötlands runinskrifter</i> (SV V), ed. Hugo Jungner and Elisabeth Svärdström, Stockholm 1940–1971.
Ö	<i>Ölands runinskrifter</i> (SR I), ed. Sven Söderberg and Erik Brate, Stockholm 1900–1906.
ÖG (+ number)	<i>Östergötlands runinskrifter</i> (SR II), ed. Erik Brate, Stockholm 1911–1918.

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- DR *Danmarks Runeindskrifter*, vols. 1–4 (I. Atlas, II. Text, III. Registre, IV. Zusammenfassung), ed. Lis Jacobsen and Erik Moltke, Copenhagen 1941–1942.
- SR *Sveriges runinskrifter*, vols. 1–, ed. Erik Brate et al., Stockholm 1900–.

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6.3 Zusammenfassung in deutscher Sprache

Als die lateinische Schriftkultur ab dem 11. Jahrhundert im Kontext von Christianisierung und Kirchenorganisation in Skandinavien Einzug hielt und in der Folgezeit dauerhaft Fuß fasste, traf sie dort auf keine schriftlose Kultur. Stattdessen begegnete sie einer Gesellschaft, in welcher Runen als funktionales Schriftsystem seit über 800 Jahren in Verwendung waren. Beide Schriftkulturen blickten somit auf eine lange Tradition zurück. Die mit dem jeweiligen Schriftgebrauch verbundenen Implikationen waren jedoch grundsätzlich verschieden. Auf dem Kontinent und im angelsächsischen England waren Runen nach der Einführung des lateinischen Alphabets entweder ganz verdrängt worden oder spielten eine eher marginale Rolle. In Skandinavien hingegen folgte eine Periode von rund 300 Jahren, in welcher lateinische und runische Schriftkultur nebeneinander existierten. Die Runentradition blieb jedoch nicht lediglich neben der neu eingeführten lateinischen Schrifttradition fortbestehen, sondern erlebte einen enormen Aufschwung. So entwickelte sich eine lebendige *two-script culture*, eine Kultur, in der die beiden Schriftkulturen gleichzeitig florierten, und Runen blieben als funktionales und pragmatisches Schriftsystem bis ins 14. Jahrhundert in aktivem Gebrauch.

Die vorliegende Arbeit ist kulturhistorisch ausgerichtet. Sie geht der Frage nach, wie das Zusammentreffen und die Ko-Existenz runischer und lateinischer Schriftkultur im skandinavischen Mittelalter (ca. 1100–1500) vonstattengingen und welche Konsequenzen sich daraus für die Runentradition ergaben. Den Schwerpunkt bilden der norwegische Raum und die mittelalterliche Runenkultur Norwegens. Bei dieser Untersuchung handelt es sich jedoch nicht um eine diachrone Betrachtung, welche die lateinische Schriftkultur (und mit ihr das lateinische Alphabet) von vornherein als die langfristig überlegene ansieht. Folglich wird auch nicht vordergründig der Einfluss der lateinischen Schriftkultur auf die runische Tradition erforscht. Vielmehr wird eine synchrone Perspektive eingenommen, welche den souveränen und selbständigen Umgang der Runentradition mit den Impulsen vonseiten der neuen Schriftkultur in den Fokus rückt. Es soll gezeigt werden, dass sich mit der runischen und der lateinischen Schriftkultur zwei starke und selbständige Traditionen gegenüber standen. Zweifelsohne lässt sich in einigen Bereichen ein direkter Einfluss der lateinischen Schrifttradition auf die runische Kultur konstatieren. Dies betrifft unter anderem die Erweiterung des Zeicheninventars auf insgesamt 23 Runen. Jedoch ließ sich die Runentradition von der neuen Schriftkultur keineswegs blind vereinnahmen. In den meisten Fällen lassen sich keine eindeutigen Aussagen über eine direkte Beeinflussung durch die lateinische Schriftkultur machen. Viel-

mehr fällt auf, dass für viele Entwicklungen in der spätwikingerzeitlichen und mittelalterlichen Runentradition eher eine Intensivierung von Tendenzen angenommen werden muss, welche bereits vereinzelt in früheren Runenperioden zu beobachten sind. Letzteres betrifft beispielsweise Fragen der Interpunktion. Am deutlichsten zeichnet sich der Einfluss der lateinischen und christlichen Schriftkultur auf inhaltlicher Ebene ab.

Die Arbeit gliedert sich in drei Hauptkapitel. Nach einer kurzen Einleitung wird in Kapitel 2 (*Changing Perspectives in Runological Research*) zunächst ein Überblick über die Runenforschung seit der frühen Neuzeit bis heute gegeben. Diese Darstellung soll vor allem die wechselnden Perspektiven erhellen, welche im Laufe der Zeit auf die (u.a. ursprüngliche) Funktion von Runen eingenommen wurden. Daran schließt sich eine Zusammenfassung des aktuellen Forschungsstands zur mittelalterlichen runischen Schriftkultur. Kapitel 3 (*Methods and Classification*) stellt zunächst runologische Arbeitsmethoden vor und klärt terminologische Fragen. Außerdem wird der kulturhistorische Hintergrund etabliert, indem die beiden Schriftkulturen hinsichtlich ihrer Funktionen und gesellschaftlichen wie medialen Kontexte methodisch erörtert werden. In Kapitel 4 (*Two Script Systems in Contact: Levels of Impact*) wird eine ausführliche analytische Untersuchung des Runenmaterials vorgenommen. Das Kapitel selbst gliedert sich in drei Unterkapitel, welche sich mit jeweils verschiedenen Aspekten der runischen Schriftkultur befassen. So untersucht Kapitel 4.1 das Schriftsystem als solches, d.h. es wird Veränderungen auf der Ebene der Runenreihe und ihres Inventars nachgegangen. Kapitel 4.2 analysiert Veränderungen in Hinblick auf Orthographie und andere Schreibkonventionen und Kapitel 4.3 erforscht Adaptionen in Bezug auf die inhaltliche und mediale Gestaltung von Runentexten. Jedem dieser Unterkapitel ist ein kurzer Abschnitt vorangestellt, welcher die relevanten Konventionen und Eigenschaften runischer Schriftkultur in der älteren und wikingerzeitlichen Runentradition zusammenfasst. Dies soll eine direkte Vergleichsmöglichkeit für die mittelalterlichen Gegebenheiten bereitstellen. Außerdem führt jedes dieser Unterkapitel die Ergebnisse des Abschnitts in einem vorläufigen Resümee zusammen. Die Arbeit schließt mit einer Zusammenfassung und weiterführenden Überlegungen, welche den Grund für die lange Fortexistenz der Runen neben der lateinischen Schrifttradition betreffen.

6.4 Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Hiermit versichere ich, dass die vorliegende Arbeit

*Runic and Latin Written Culture:
Co-Existence and Interaction of Two Script Cultures in the Norwegian Middle Ages*

in allen Teilen selbständig und nur mit den angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmitteln einschließlich des WWW und anderer elektronischer Quellen angefertigt habe. Alle Stellen der Arbeit, die ich anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinne nach entnommen habe, sind kenntlich gemacht.

Tübingen, den 14. Juni 2011

Stephanie Elisabeth Baur