

Runic Magic



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Abstract

This thesis seeks to illustrate that runes were considered magical even if also utilized as an alphabetic script. This argument will be achieved by first looking at scholarly arguments concerning the characters' origins. However, though runes may be compared to other scripts, there existed a belief among the Old Norse people that the runes contained more and that even their true origins could be found in the divine. These divine connections are not without problems as they seem to fall into two categories involving male and female divinities. In addition, it will be shown that the practice of runic magic can be separated into three major categories: curse, cure/protection, and prophecy. More mundane, but equally important subjects such as memorials and inheritance will also be explored. Finally, lingering traces of runes continuing until today will be viewed to gauge lasting effects of the runes even after their primary time period.

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Runic Philosophy and Magic. The Möjbro Runestone. This page is the third part of a five-part article on the runes. In the verses from the Völuspá quoted above, we see that the carving of runes is one of the primary means by which the Norns establish the fate of all beings (the other most often-noted method being weaving). Runic magic and magical powers. Most of the runic inscriptions we find are for everyday use. Runic magic. The Glavendrup stone displays a warning to anyone who damages or moves the stone. Runic letters. Photo: Nick Fraser. According to the sagas, runic inscriptions held magical powers. With the aid of inscriptions, you could predict the future, protect a person against misfortune, imbue objects with different qualities, or you could write down conjurations, curses, and spells. There is some evidence that, in addition to being a writing system, runes historically served purposes of magic. This is the case from earliest epigraphic evidence of the Roman to Germanic Iron Age, with non-linguistic inscriptions and the alu word. An erilaz appears to have been a person versed in runes, including their magic applications. In medieval sources, notably the Poetic Edda, the Sigdrífumál mentions "victory runes" to be carved on a sword, "some on the grasp and some on the inlay, and name