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RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE
– AN OVERVIEW[*]

The authors dedicate this article to Elena Mel'nikova.

Abstract

Runic inscriptions in the older *futhark* on various objects, found in the western part of Eastern Europe, ranging from the third to the sixth century C.E. Forty Scandinavian runic inscriptions in younger *futhark* from Eastern Europe (Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Ukraine), from the area of the former Byzantium and from the former West Slavic area (Oldenburg/Starigard) dating from the 8th–12th c., have been discussed and some new interpretations suggested (cf. the inscription on the spindle from Staraya Ladoga II and runic graffiti on oriental coins).

Key words: runology, runes, epigraphy, archaeology (Germanic), history of Germanic languages.
Słowa kluczowe: nauka o runach, runy, archeologia (niemiecka), historia języków germańskich.

Older runic inscriptions in Eastern Europe (K. Düwel)

The runic script came into being in the first or the early second century A.D. It spread from a central place in the region of the Danish isles and surrounding areas. The model was a Mediterranean alphabet (probably the Latin one) that was transformed into the runes of the new futhark order.[1] The first attested runic row (fig. 1a) that was found is on a stone from 1 Kylver[2] (Gotland) and is dated

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[1] K. Düwel, *Altes und Neues zur Entstehung der Runenschrift*, [in:] *Die Kunde. Zeitschrift für niedersächsische Archäologie*, Neue Folge 61, 2010 [2012], pp. 229–258.

[2] The number before a find place refers to the still valid edition of the older runic inscriptions by Krause/Jankuhn 1966.

to the early fifth century. The row of older runes is called futhark after the first six runes. Each rune represents a phoneme and also has a name and can be used as ideographs (Begriffsrunen). The 24 runes are arranged in three groups (ON *ættir*), containing eight runes each. To produce the secret runes, you can take one of the groups and mark the position of the intended rune therein: e.g. 1:2 which means first group second position = **u**, visualised in this way ⤵ – which is documented in the inscription of the now lost finger-ring from 46 Körlin (550–600, fig. 2, BRF II, 48–50). On the ring, the secret rune **u** has to be combined with the bind-rune **a͡l** to the sequence *alu,* an apotropaic formula with the meaning 'defence, protection'.[3]
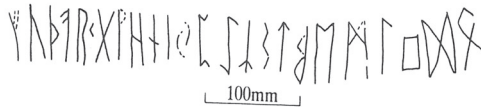

Fig. 1: Rune rows (all taken from Düwel 2008, 2, 89, 91)
a – the older futhark and the epigraphical presentation (Kylver/Gotland)
b – Younger futhark (long-branch runes), Gørlev rune stone
c – Younger futhark (short-twig runes), Rök rune stone

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[3]   Another potential *alu*-inscription on a bronze weight from Odžaci (Hodschag), Vojvodina/ Serbia was introduced by Oehrl 2011, p. 63ff, fig. 2.
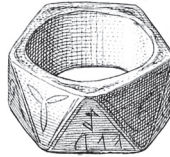
Fig.10.

Fig. 2: Körlin, finger-ring (Henning 1889, pl. 4, fig. 10)
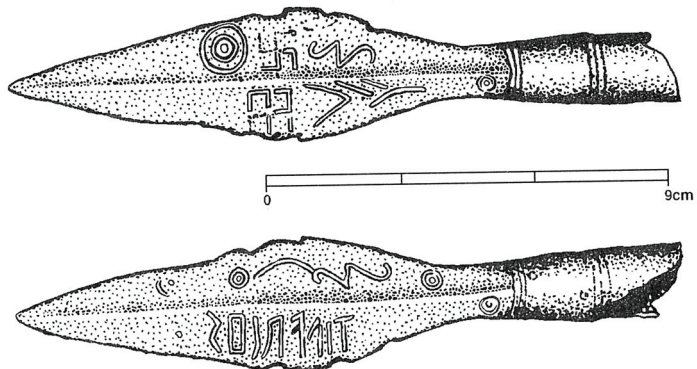

0   9cm.

Fig. 3: Kovel', lancehead (Grünzweig 2004, 28)

The oldest inscription is found on a bone comb from 26 Vimose on the Danish island of Fyn and dates to ca. 150/160 C.E. (Düwel 2008, 24). The inscription **harja**, a masculine personal name, probably denotes the owner of the comb. Already less than one hundred years later the first runic inscription in Eastern Europe is recorded: The lance head found near 33 Kovel' (also spelled Kowel) while ploughing in the fields of Suszyczno (Volhynia, Ukraine) and is dated to the beginning of the third century. The symbols and runes are incrusted in silver wire on the iron blade. The runes run from right to left to the point of the blade and read **tilarids** (fig. 3). Due to the ending -*s,* this word linguistically belongs to the East Germanic dialects, probably Gothic. The Goths were at that time moving from the region round the mouth of the Vistula to areas north of the Black Sea. The incrusted symbols are typical of East Germanic lance heads and probably they originate in the Pontus region (Black Sea). The inscription on Kovel' represents a compound comprising *tila* 'target' and *rīds* 'rider'. It denotes the lancehead as a 'rider to (the) target', i.e., the defending weapons of the enemy

or the enemy himself (BRF II, 50–53; Mel'nikova 1977, 134–139; 2001, 88–95 [the following spearheads are mentioned there].; Nedoma 2010, 14 sq.).

A similar lancehead came from a cremation grave in 32 Dahmsdorf (Müncheberg, Brandenburg), further west. There are symbols and runes on it, incrusted in the same way as on Kovel'. The five runes (right to left) form the word **ranja** (fig. 4), East Germanic *ran(n)ja*[4] and mean 'runner (against), charger', something which runs – i.e., the lancehead – against the defensive arms of the enemy or against the enemy himself (BRF II, 27–30; Nedoma 2010, 20sq.). It is the same meaning of the weapon's name and the same function as we noted on Kovel'. The rich inlay of silver wire in the shape of different symbols (RGA 28, 2005, 467–469), ornaments and runic characters is most remarkable. Krause (1937, 19) called this type of inscription "magic-poetic spear-name". The lance-names given to the weapons indicating their function could have had a magical significance (RGA 33, 2006, 18–20). The spear head from a cremation grave in (Stalowa Wola-) 35 Rozwadów (Poland) shows the same type of decoration. Unfortunately the inscription – from approximately the same time – is fragmentary, the beginning is missing: **---ḳrlus** (fig. 5).[5] The ending -*s* points to an East Germanic dialect, but any attempts to reconstruct the inscription seem to be in vain. Therefore a connection with the ethnonym *(H)Eruli* is not convincing (BRF II, 74; Nedoma 2010, 21 sq.).
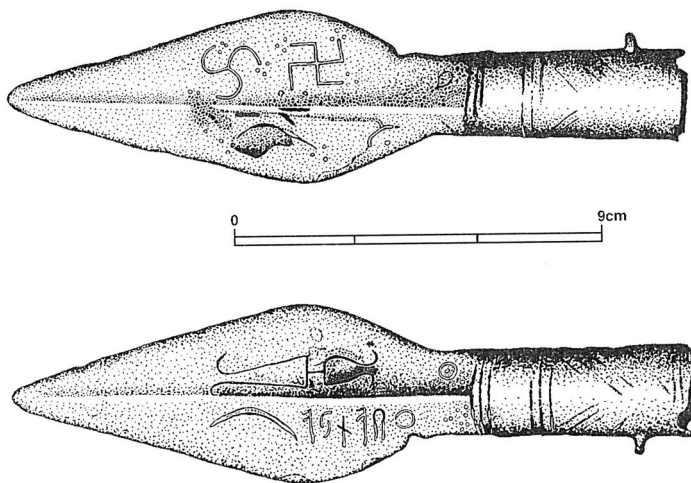

Fig. 4: Dahmsdorf, lancehead (Grünzweig 2004, 34)

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[4]   Double sounds are written only with one rune.

[5]   A dot under a letter in the transliteration of an inscription marks an uncertain reading.
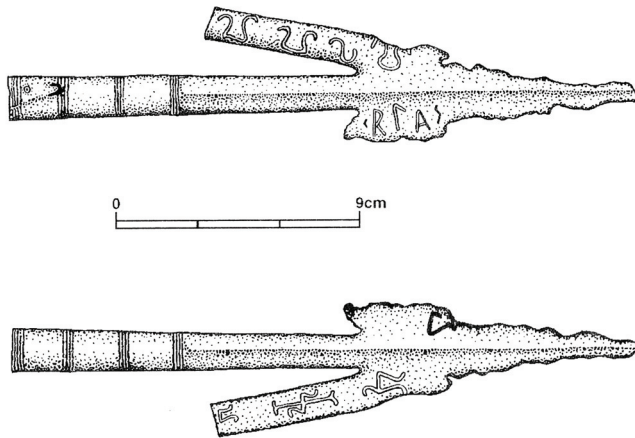
Fig. 5: Rozwadów spearhead (Grünzweig 2004, 32)

Other runic inscriptions from the eastern part of Europe are found on some bracteates. These are small round golden plates that are stamped and show pictures on one side. They consist of a man's head (type A), a human full-length portrait (type B) and very often a man's head over or beside a horse (type C), partly together with other animals (birds) and various symbols. The pictures of a fourth type (D) depict dismembered animals. There are more than 1000 golden pendants of this kind. On about 200 of them you can find inscriptions of Roman capital letters, partly mixed with runes, and later on only inscriptions written in runes, some of them degenerated by processes of copying other bracteates. In spite of this, the inscriptions are in most cases readable, but very often they cannot be understood from a linguistic point of view. Probably they were intended to communicate with gods and demons in their own language – so to speak – which was not understandable for humans (Düwel 2011). The Roman capital letters found on some of the bracteates confirm the theory that their models were Roman gold medallions and solidi of the fourth century. As amulets with an apotropaic function, they were looped and worn as pendants. The gold bracteates are typical of the Migration Period and circulated from ca. 450–550 mainly in the northern regions of Europe, but some were scattered in the middle and (south) Eastern parts of Europe, too (Axboe 2007).

Two bracteates are from Poland: a) one was found in 137 Körlin – already mentioned – (IK 367 unknown find place-C) and shows the 5 runes (left to right) **waiga** (fig. 6). This may be the name of the rune- and bracteate master who designed the model for this copy. But looking at the meaning of ON *veig* f. 'power' and 'beverage for drunkenness', it may also be the case that the male name was a byname for a god, and that god should be Odin, who can be characterised by power and might and ritual drinking (BRF II, 47 sq. missing since 1945).

367 b

Fig. 6: Körlin, bracteates (IK 367)

b) 138 Wapno, Woj. Wiekopolskie (IK 386 Wapno-C) is the find place of the second Polish bracteate. There are two copies with five runes (right to left) each, reading **sabar** (fig. 7). The meaning is not clear. It might be an abbreviated writing of a dithematic name (cf. *saba-ricus*) (BRF II, 81 sq.; one copy is in the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte Berlin, the other has been missing since 1945).

Three bracteates are said to have been found in Hungary. They are stamped from the same model and are named: IK 181, 1 and 2 Szatmár-C (Komitat Sza-bolcs-Szatmár) and IK 182, 3 Debrecen-C (Komitat Hajdú-Bihar). They comprise two sequences of runes (left to right), both near the rim I (in front of the face of the human head) **tualewtl**, and (behind the tail of the horse) II **lnl/u** (fig. 8, the reading in IK 1, Text, p. 313 is corrected in IK 3, Text, p. 293 sq.). The runes have no meaning; maybe they are intended to communicate with gods or demons. Methodologically, it is not possible to take **ual** out of the sequence and interpret this as an anagram of the formula *alu* 'defence, protection'.

Two East Germanic runic inscriptions come from Romania. There is the famous golden neck-ring from 41 Pietroassa (Pietroasele, District of Buzău,Wa-lachia; 400-500), part of an enormous gold treasure hoard, which is ascribed to an Ostro-Gothic leader. It was stolen and broken into pieces. Two of the pieces are preserved and contain the runes (left to right) **gutanio**[6]**wihailag** (fig. 9), in

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[6]   Only this rune was damaged when the ring was pinched off.

the Gothic language *Gutanī ō[þal][7] wī(h) hailag* 'the Goths property [which is] consecrated and invulnerable'. The purpose of the ring has been debated; probably it was a symbol of power of a king or leader of a retinue. The inscription was possibly intended to protect the gold treasure (BRF II, 66–71; RGA 23, 2003, 147–158; Nedoma 2010, 29–31).

386 b

Fig. 7: Wapno, bracteate (IK 386)

The second inscription from Romania was found in a woman's grave (4th c.) at Leţcani (District of Iasị): a spindle whorl with a disputed runic sequence **raŋgo adonsuf ××ę**, which may contain personal names, but in an unclear context (BRF II, 54; Nedoma 2010, 24–29).

Last, four runic inscriptions found in Hungary are connected with the Langobards before they came to Italy in 568. They are also part of the corpus of South Germanic runic inscriptions beside the oldest one, namely the belt buckle from 167 Szabadbattyán (Komitat Fejér; 450–475). The inscription (left to right) reads **marŋsđ**[8] (fig. 10) which is either South Germanic *Māring s(egun) d(eda)* 'Maring d(id) [the] b(enediction)' or only *Mārings*, a Gothic name accompanied by an unknown symbol (BRF II, 79 sq.; Nedoma 2004, LNr. 63).

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[7] **o** is taken to be a 'Begriffsrune' (RGA 2, 1976, pp. 150–153).

[8] **ŋ** designates a consonant cluster *(i)ng*.

182,1 b

Fig. 8: Szatmár, bracteate (IK 182, 1.2)

Fig. 9: Pietroassa, neck-ring (Krause/Jankuhn 1966, 93)

Fig. 10: Szabadbattyán, beltbuckle (Kiss/Düwel 1980, pl. 9,2)

The other three objects are fibulae.

a) A pair of fibulae found in a woman's grave in 166 Bezenye (Komitat Kyör-Moson-Sopron; 550–570). The runes (left to right) are scratched on the reverse of each of the fibulae (fig. 11):
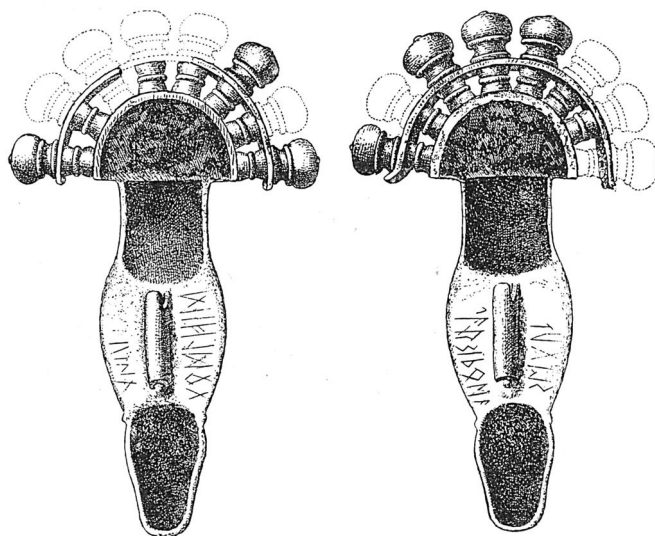

Fig. 11: Bezenye, bow fibulae (von Friesen 1933, 72)

A **unja**[?] **godahid**; Langobardic: *[w]un(n)ja Godahi[l]d* 'joy [wishes] Goda-hi[l]d' and

B **?arsiboda segun**, *Arsiboda segun*, 'the sign of Arsibod', namely the runes of the inscription (BRF II, 18–20; Nedoma 2004, LNr. 16 and 42).

b) The fibula from 7 Aquincum (near Budapest; ca. 530) bears two lines of runes: A **fuþarkgw**, the first group (*ætt*) of runes in the older futhark and B **klain : kŋia**, Langobardic *klain kingia,* giving the denomination of the object: 'beautiful fibula' (fig. 12, BRF II, 11, Nedoma 2011, 34 sq.).

c) Szentendre (Komitat Pest): the runic character of some signs is uncertain (Nedoma 2011, 42).

Fig. 12: Aquincum, bow fibula (Grønvik 1985, 178)

The last runic inscription in this overview is a rune row on a stone column (limestone), which was found in 5 Breza (near Sarajevo, Bosnia) in the ruins of a Byzantine church. The runes run from left to right and cover the rune row from **f** to **ḷ**, the following runes are not preserved because of damage to the column. The purpose of this inscription is not clear, alphabet magic might play a role.

These are the 17 runic inscriptions in the older futhark which are known to have been found in Eastern Europe, taking this geographic term in a broad sense, ranging from the Eastern part of Germany, via Poland and Ukraine to Hungary, Romania and Bosnia. The time span stretches from the early third to the second half of the sixth century. On the whole, there are no runic inscriptions written with older runes dating later than the seventh century.

In the 7th and 8th centuries, the transition from the older to the younger futhark took place. The characteristic feature is that the number of runes was reduced from 24 to 16 signs, albeit the number of phonemes increased, so that a single rune represented two or even more sound values. The younger futhark was used in two variants, the long-branch runes (fig. 1b) and the short-twig runes (fig. 1c).

During the Viking Age and the Middle Ages, these rune rows were partly mixed, although their usage differs depending on time and geographical region (Düwel 2008, 88–94).

Younger runic inscriptions in Eastern Europe (Y. Kuzmenko)

Contact of Scandinavians with Eastern Europe in the Viking Age was very intensive. The traces of this contact can be seen both in the contacting languages, cf. Scandinavian borrowings in Russian (eg. the name of *Rus'*, the proper names *Igor'*, *Oleg*, *Olga* and many appellatives) and Slavic loan words in the Scandinavian languages (eg. Sw., Norw., Icel. *torg*, Dan. *torv* < Old Russian *търгъ* "market, square", Sw., Nor. Dan. *tolk*, Icel. *tulkr* < Old Russian *тълкъ* "interpreter"); and in the material culture (cf. Scandinavian objects from the excavations in Staraya Ladoga, Novgorod, Gnezdovo, Daugmale, Wolin etc.). Moreover, there are runic inscriptions in Scandinavia that refer to places where the Scandinavians died or got killed on the Eastern Way (*austrvegr*), eg. Semgallen (in Lettland), Eystland, Virland (in Estland), Garðar (Ancient Rus'), Holmgarðr (Novgorod) etc. (see below). It comes as no surprise that Scandinavian runic inscriptions have also been found in Eastern Europe. But in contrast to the runic inscriptions on the British Isles on the Western Way (*vestrvegr*), where we can find Scandinavian runic inscriptions in the younger futhark[9] on memorial stones, there is only one runic inscription on a memorial stone in Eastern Europe. This is a little stone (47 × 48 × 12 cm, literature in Mel'nikova 2001, 200), excavated in 1905 on the island of Berezan' in the mouth of Dnieper on what was known as the Varangian Way "from the Varangians to the Greeks". The runes, which are bordered with a frame, reading: **krani : kerþi : half : þisi : iftir : kal : fi: laka : sin** OI *Grani gerði hválf þessi eftir Karl félaga sín* "Grani made this monument after his partner (companion) Karl". The inscription (fig. 13) is written in short-twig runes (the rune **a** has a short-twig variant). The dotted **i**, which designates /e/, testifies that the inscription cannot have been written earlier than in the late 10th – early 11th centuries. The inscription is traditionally dated to the end of the 11th c. (about 1070). The word **half** (*hválf*) is often interpreted as burial mound or grave vault, but Mel'nikova proposed that Grani had not only erected the stone with the runic inscription, but even had made the mound, too (Mel'nikova 2001, 201). This assumption is, however, not necessary because the word *hválf* could simply mean stone grave or sometimes also rune stone (cf. **stainhualf** in

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[9]   The so-called younger futhark, the alphabet of sixteen runes, which emerged in Scandinavia in the Viking Age as a further development of the older futhark, has two closely related variants, called Danish or normal futhark (long-branch runes) and Swedish-Norwegian or short-twig runes. However as far as the names "Danish" or "normal" and "Swedish-Norwegian" can be misleading, I will use the terms "long-branch runes" and "short-twig runes".

G 119). Among 14 inscriptions with **hualf** (12)**, hual** (1) and **half** (1) only one makes a differentiation between a rune stone and a mound or a grave (U170).

Fig. 13: Berezan', rune stone (RGA 5, 1984, 539)

Traditionally, the Scandinavian memorial rune stones were raised at the home estate of the deceased by his relatives. They were not only memorial in character, but they also could serve as a kind of a juridical document testifying the right of the relatives to inherit the estate. Only four of approximately 2800 memorial stones in Scandinavia were raised for partners (companions), all of them in Sweden (Vg 112, 122, 182; U 391). The rune stone of Berezan' was not erected at the home estate and it was not raised by a relative, but by a *fé-lagi* (partner), with whom he shared a movable property (*fé*) on his travel to or from Byzantium. The absence of Scandinavian memorial rune stones in Balticum and Ancient Rus' and their presence on the British Isles indicate the difference in the history of Scandinavians in these regions and probably a faster assimilation of the Scandinavians remaining on the "Eastern Way".[10]

The second runic inscription on stone in Eastern Europe was found in 1939 at the excavation in Daugmale (Lettland) (Literature in BRF II, 8; Mel'nikova 2001, 249). This is a fragment of a stone object (4,6 cm × 8cm) with uncertain origin (upper part of a mace or a cudgel or a stone ring). The runic inscription

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[10] Only the first four princes ruling Ancient Rus' had Scandinavian names: Riurik †879 (*Hrørikr*), Oleg †912 (*Helgi*), Igor´ †945 (*Ingvarr*), Olga †969 (*Helga*). From the second part of the tenth century (from the son of Igor' and Olga Svyatoslav) the Russian princes had either Slavic or later Christian names.

reads **: runar : þisar : o** (*rúnar þessar o*) "these runes o…" (fig. 14). The stone is broken off and the inscription is not complete. The traditional assumption is that the lacking runes should indicate the name of the rune master and the verb with the meaning "to inscribe", a formula typical of inscriptions in the younger futhark ("N. wrote these runes"). The form of the runes **n**, **a** and **s** indicates that the inscription is written in long-branch runes. If the last rune follows this tradition it can be interpreted as /o/ as e.g. in the futhark on a bone from Schleswig (12th c.) (Moltke 1985, 399).
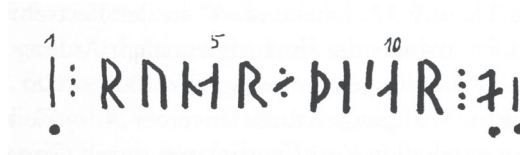
Fig. 14: Daugmale, stone ring (Schnall 1987, 248 sq.)

The stone ring was found among other objects of Scandinavian origin, which indicate the presence of the Scandinavian population in this region during a long period (9th–11th centuries). The layer where the object was found was dated to the 9th c. However, the usage of the rune **r** instead of etymologically correct **R** in **runar** may testify to a later date. The later date is also indicated by the form of the last rune corresponding to the form of the rune **o**. Thus, the runological dating of the Daugmale inscription contradicts the assumed archaeological dating.

Inscriptions on amulets

The number of the Scandinavian runic inscriptions from the Viking Age (8th-12th centuries) on memorial stones (more than 2500 only in Sweden) cannot be compared with the number of inscriptions on amulets, even if we treat coins with runic graffiti as amulets (see below). In Scandinavia (exclusively in Sweden), only a dozen runic amulets from the Viking Age have been found. The earliest runic amulets from the Viking Age date from the 9th c. (Ulvsunda, Birka), the latest to the 12th c. (Högstena). Three pendant amulets found on the territory of Ancient Rus' (in Novgorod and Staraya Ladoga) testify that Scandinavian presence in the Staraya Ladoga (*Aldeigjuborg*) and Novgorod (*Hólmgarðr*) in the Viking Age was very strong. But whereas the runic inscription on the Berezan' stone was carved on the Eastern Way, we do not know where the inscriptions on the amulets were inscribed. It is possible that the amulets came to Staraya Ladoga or Novgorod together with the Scandinavians. The same applies to the coins with runic graffiti. However, the archaeological data, which show us the presence of Scandinavians in these regions during at least two centuries, can testify that runic amulets could have been fabricated in Ancient Rus'.

Ladoga I, **The runic amulet from Staraya Ladoga** (Museum Staraya Ladoga N САЭ-75, ЛП-I/1303). (Literature in Kusmenko 1997, 199-201; Mel'nikova 2001, 189; RGA 29, 2005, 521sq.)

A copper pendant with a runic inscription (fig. 15) was found in 1975 during the excavations in Staraya Ladoga in the ruins of a "big building" that had existed between the middle of the 9th and the end of the 10th c. in the street that, even now, is called "Variazhskaya ulitsa" (Varangian street). The archaeological layer has been dated to the late 10th c. This dating is confirmed by two Samanid silver dirhams minted in 944–945 and 950–951 which were found in the ruins of the same building and in the same layer as the pendant (Petrenko, Kuzmenko 1979, 79). The pendant has the form of a trapezium and is 48 mm high, 1 mm thick and 14,2 mm, respectively 18 mm, bright. The original loop of the pendant had been broken off and a new one was soldered to the pendant. On each side of the pendant two rows of runes separated by a line are inscribed. The height of the runes is 10 mm (except for a special form of **R**, which is much shorter). The exact number of the runes is not clear in so far as the new loop may conceal the last runes in the row. The number of visible runes in the inscription is 46 or 47 (side 12:11 (or 12), side B 11:12), but in so far as the new loop may conceal one or two runes it is possible that the original number of the runes was 48 (12:12 on each side).

Fig. 15: Staraya Ladoga I, amulet (Petrenko/Kuz'menko 1979, 78)

Most of the runes have a peculiar form and can be interpreted as mirror runes.[11] These are: four runes **u**, four runes **þ**, one rune **r**, one younger rune **m**; one older **m** and probably three older **w**, which, however, can also be interpreted as mirror **þ**. The mirror rune principle can also be used when interpreting signs that look like usual runes or runic ligatures (bind-runes). Two runes which look like a long-branch **h** may be interpreted either as a long-branch mirror rune **a** or a long-branch mirror rune **n**. Respectively, we can find three mirror variants of the short-twig **n** and six short-twig mirror runes **a**. There are some other peculiarities in this inscription, namely a form of the rune **R** which has the size of a short-twig **R**, but the form of the lower part of a long-branch **R**, runes with the double number of strokes, older runes not only as mirror runes **w** and **m,** but also as a normal older rune **d** (which may also be interpreted as an older mirror **h**). The older runes were not forgotten even on the territory of Ancient Rus'. Older **g** was found in the inscription on the amulet from Novgorod I and in the inscription on a whorl from the early 12th c. (see below). Older **g** and **d** are found in the runic graffiti **gud** "god(s)" on coins from the 8th–10th c., which served as charms (see below).

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[11] The term has been introduced by the German runologist Peter Pieper (1987), who showed that the tradition of mirror runes goes back to the time of the older futhark.

Though the inscription was published in 1977 (cf. Petrenko / Kuzmenko 1977, 1979), the first interpretation of the inscription was offered in 1995 (Kuzmenko 1995, see also Kusmenko 1997). The usage of the principle of the mirror runes allows us to read and interpret some parts of the text, but the greater part of the text remains obscure. The preliminary reading of the text suggested in Kusmenko 1997: }**þuRamuþrunaRa**? / (**ą**,**t** or **n)muwaþwaMkfa** / **unþRuþinþat** / **DaþaRnakifak**[12]**,** that is *Þórr á móðrúnar (áss?) / má váðva mik(ki) fá / unnr Óðin þat / dáð er Nakki (or Naggi) fékk* "Thor has the runes of wrath (or of courage), *áss* / do not let me to be captured by the great woe / Oden will do the deed that Nagge has got". However, the weak points of this reading and interpretation were clear (cf. Kusmenko 1997, 197). We can only be sure of the interpretation of the first line *Þórr ámóðrúnar (áss?),* but even here the reading of the last two runes is not clear.

A new interpretation was suggested by Mel'nikova in 2001 (Mel'nikova 2001, 190-195), who accepted the mirror rune principle and the reading of some other runes (**a muþrunaRMkfaunþRuþiþat aþarnakifak**) and even some interpretations (*móþrúnaR* "the runes of wrath"). She assumed a partly new reading and almost completely new (though sometimes very obscure) interpretation: **þamuþrunaRis / omuw(þ)alw(þ)mkfa / unþRuþiow(þ)at / HaþaRnaMkifak** *þá móðrúnaR es / á móðöld m(aðr)* **kfa** / **unþr** *úþióð at haðar* **nakifak** "I (or he) obtained the runes of wrath which / in the wrath time (man) … Unn (Oden or sword) … after battles …". Mel'nikova left some places without interpretation. A partly new reading and a new interpretation was suggested by S.I. Steblin-Kamenskaya in 2009 in her paper presented at *Kollokviet för historisk språkforskning* held in May 2009 in Stockholm. She accepts in part the reading of Kuzmenko and in part the reading of Mel'nikova and proposes some new readings: (**þramuþrunaRs** / **omuþataþ(D?)kfa** / **unþRuþioþal** / **HaþaRna** ??? *þrá móþrúnaR sem (m)óð at dáð (at?)g(e)fa /unn þ(é)r óð í óðal haðar ???* "strive after the runes of courage, which give courage in heroic deed, wish to yourself reason in the estate…". She leaves the last runes in the last line without interpretation. Though her interpretation seems semantically better than the former ones, her reading of some runes and some grammatical problems (cf. accusative after *þrá*, which usually has prepositional government (*efter*)), do not allow us to accept her interpretation without reserve.

Though only the interpretation of the sequence **muþrunaR** *móðrúnaR* "the runes of wrath or of courage", written in mirror runes (**muþruna**) with a peculiar form of **R,** can be accepted without reserve. It cannot be doubted that the rune master of the inscription on the pendant from Staraya Ladoga used all possible means to strengthen the spell on the charm: mirror runes, runes with the doubling

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[12] Majuscules, except R, indicate older runes used in the inscriptions in younger futhark, if they have different forms in the older and the younger futhark.

of strokes, older runes as well as numeric magic. Other runic inscriptions adhere to this tradition as well, cf. two other pendant amulets found in Ancient Rus' (Novgorod I and Novgorod II).

Novgorod amulet I (Historical museum of Novgorod, N 1650/8) (Literature Mel'nikova 1987, 1998, 2001, 180).

A bronze pendant with a hole in the form of a trapezium with a runic inscription (fig. 16) was found in 1983 at the archaeological excavation in *Ryurikovo Goro-dishche* in Novgorod. Its width is 1. 6 cm – 2.15 cm, length 5.8 cm. The find is archaeologically dated to the late 10th–early 11th c. Both sides of the pendant are covered with runes of peculiar forms (mirror runes, older runes, unusual forms of younger runes). Side A shows 12 runes. Only three of them have regular forms (older **g**, older **w**, older **m**, and the rune **i**). Two runes can be interpreted as mirror runes (mirror **R** or **m** and mirror older **m** (or **d**), the younger rune **a** has a peculiar form which is found only in the inscription on the Rök stone. The last sign, which also has a peculiar form, is interpreted by Mel'nikova as the cryptographic sign 1:3, which she reads as **t** (Mel'nikova 2001, 183); howe-ver, she mentions that the other interpretations are also possible (**m** or **f**). The form of this rune corresponds completely to the form of a rune on the Hovgård amulet (Rundatabas UNOR1994:26AM)[13]. However, the vertical strokes of this rune on the Hovgård amulet are repeated only two times and not three times as on the amulet from Novgorod I. Some runes on the pendant are partly damaged. Mel'nikova assumes the following reading: **gwarifarladt,** with the two older runes **g** and **w**. She interprets the inscription as **g** *varr í fárland* **t** "protected (on the way) to the dangerous land" or **g** *varr í farland* **t** "protected on a sea voyage". The accusative of the word *farla(n)d* in combination with the prepo-sition *í* indicates direction. The runes **g** and **t** are interpreted by Mel'nikova as runes which are used in the meaning of their names, **g** "gift" and **t** "god Týr" (the rune of victory, cf. *Sigrdrífumál* 6).

    On the other side of the pendant, the same number of runes are carved (12). Most of them have peculiar forms (mirror runes **r**, long-branch **h,** short-twig **a**), mirror runes with the doubling of strokes **tþ** or **taþ**, **is**, **ik** or **þiu**, mirror bind-ru-nes)**aR**, (**fa**, bind-runes with doubling of strokes (**ta,** common bind-runes (**þą**, (**tn**, }**tan**. The last rune looks like a cryptographic sign 2:3 (**u** or **i**). If we read all strokes of the runic ligatures and mirror runes as belonging to the inscription, we obtain a runic sequence that for the present cannot be interpreted. Mel'nikova, however, assumes that most of the strokes do not have any linguistic meaning and suggests the reading: **þarn{isk(þąRakiu** *þarnisk þær eigi ú,* "you must

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[13] The inscription on the amulet from Hovgård has much in common with the inscription on the Ladoga and Novgorod amulets, in particular in the usage of mirror runes. To our knowledge, the inscription on the amulet from Hovgård has not yet been interpreted.

not be deprived of virility!". The last rune **u** is interpreted as a symbol meaning virility, according to the name of this rune in the older futhark **uruz* "aurochs" (Mel'nikova 2001, 188)[14]. Although Mel'nikova's interpretation is very clever, it requires too many assumptions and leaves too many questions to be accepted without reserve.
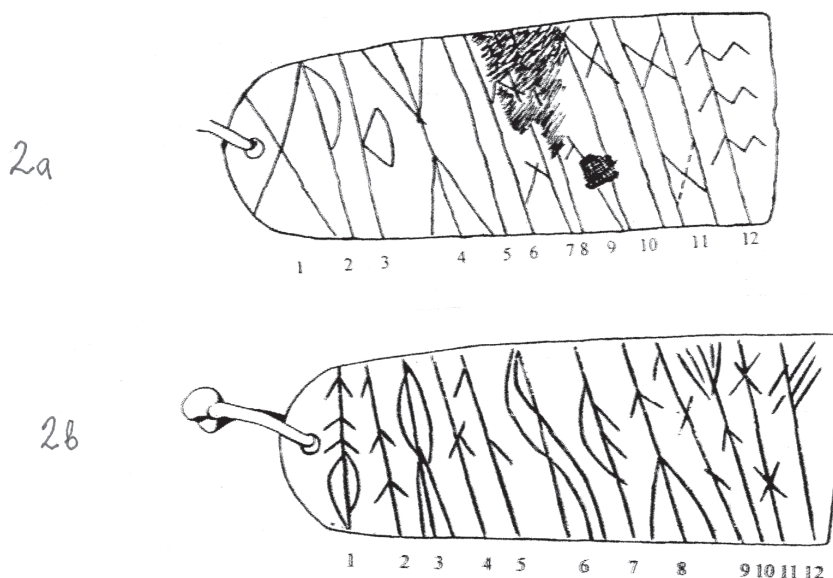

Fig. 16: Novgorod I, amulet (Mel'nikova 2001, 181, 184)

Novgorod amulet II (Historical museum of Novgorod N 1643/3) (Literature Mel'nikova 1987, 1998, 2001, 188)

The second runic amulet was found at the same time (in 1983) and in the same place (*Ryurikovo Gorodishche*) as Novgorod I. It is a bronze pendant (breadth 1.2-1.3 cm, length 4.8 cm) with a hole. The archaeological layer where the pendant was found is dated to the late 10th - early 11th centuries. The inscription repeats the inscription on the B side of Novgorod I with some insignificant changes (an additional semicircle on the left side of the mirrored **þ** in the first rune and a more careless carving of the runes).

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[14] In the Scandinavian runic poems **u** is never called "aurochs". In the Norwegian runic acrostic it is called "cinders", in the Icelandic "drizzle".

Runic graffiti on Oriental coins (Literature Dobrovol'skiy et al. 1991; Mel'nikova 2001, 115–174)

Coins with graffiti could also be treated as talismans. Some of them have one or two holes. But though some coins with graffiti have no holes, they could also be amulets. The Scandinavian amulets in the Viking Age could be carried in a kind of a purse, which was attached to the belt (Dobrovol'skiy et al. 1991, 109–110, with literature)[15]. In the hoards from the Viking Age found in Eastern Europe, we can find many coins with graffiti, with pictures of various kinds of arms, ships, banners that correspond to the real objects found in the excavations in Eastern Europe, as well as pictures of thorshammers, swastikas and symbols of *Riurikovichi* (Dobrovol'skiy et al. 1991). Some coins have graffiti in different languages (Arabic, Greek and even Georgian). In many cases, when only one or two signs are carved on the coin, it is not possible to determine the origin of the signs. But some inscriptions have clear features of a runic inscription.

"God" - inscriptions

The most common runic inscription both in Eastern Europe and in Scandinavia is the inscription "god", inscribed either in older runes **gud** or in younger runes **kuþ**, sometimes as a mixture of the older and the younger runes **guþ**, **kud** etc.
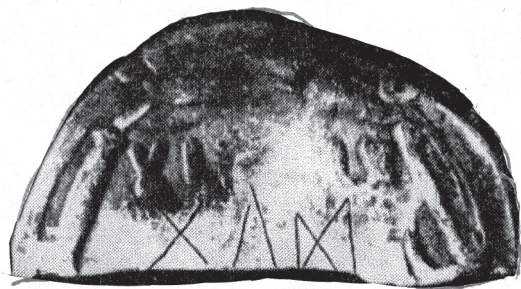

Fig. 17: Temerevo, half of a coin (D 24) (Dobrovol'skiy et al. 1991, 39)

The inscription **gud** in older runes[16] on one half of an Abbasid dirhem (late 8th, early 9th c.) (D 24[17], fig. 17) was found in a hoard in Temerevo (near

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[15] On one Oriental coin from a Swedish hoard we can read runic graffiti **lutir** (cf. OI *hlutir* pl. of *hlutr*), which may mean "talismans" (Dobrovol'skiy et al. 1991, 109–110).

[16] The formula **gud** in graffiti on Oriental coins may contribute to a better understanding of the older runic inscription on the fibula from 11 Værløse (**alugod**), which is usually interpreted as the vocative of a proper name. This inscription can, however, be interpreted as two formulaic words **alu** and **god** (Dobrovol'skiy et al. 1991, 41).

[17] The figure after D indicates the number of the coin in the catalogue of the coins with graffiti in Dobrovol'skiy et al. 1991, 134–184, where detailed information about the coins is given.

Yaroslavl', Russia). There is no evidence which could prove which god is meant. The original form of the word for "god" (West Scandinavian *goð*/ East Scandinavian *guð*) was neuter and plurale tantum ("gods"). In the late pagan time we find graffiti with the name Thor (**þur**) side by side with the word "god" in older runes (**gud**), cf. graffiti on a coin from a Swedish hoard minted in 911 in Samarqand (Hammarberg / Rispling 1985, 72–73, D 239), which may indicate that the word **gud** can refer to Thor.

The runic inscription **guþ** with the older rune **g** can be read in the graffiti inscription on the other coin (late 9th c.) from Timerevo (D 41). On the reverse side of the same coin a small cross is carved. The runic inscription **guþ** on each side of the coin (849/850) found in a hoard near Vinnitsa (Ukraine) is also combined with a small cross. Mel'nikova supposes that the crosses indicate the Christian attribution of the word "god" (Mel'nikova 2001, 151). However, cross as well as swastika in pagan times may be a symbolic picture of a thorshammer (Dobrovol'skiy et al. 1991, 44). On the coin (910–930; D 422) from the museum of the University of Lund the inscription **kuþ** is followed by a thorshammer and a cross.

The graffito **kuþ** is carved on the coin (751–752) from Kiev Historical museum (AR-5246 N 6522-29). Above the inscription **kuþ** a small cross and a rune **s** are carved. Mel'nikova interprets the cross as a long-branch **a,** and treats the inscription as **as** "god". However, the use of **a** instead of **ą** in the word, designating "the god *áss*" (the name of the rune **ą**) was hardly possible in the 8th c. A cross side by side with the inscription **kuþ** may be a symbolic picture of a thorshammer. A combination of the rune **s**, a thorshammer and a runic inscription is characteristic of the inscription on the knife hilt from Ladoga (see below).

It is probable that graffiti on the Oriental coin (912/913, D 50) from the hoard in Kozyanki (Belorussia) and on two Oriental coins (895/896 and 897/898, D 164, 165) from the hoard in Klukowiczi (Poland) can be treated as a runic ligature }**kuþ**.

The graffito "god(s)" was a very popular formula on the Oriental coins found in Scandinavia. Hammarberg and Rispling have found runic graffiti **gud** in older runes on 147 and **kuþ** in younger runes on 408 Oriental coins from the Swedish hoards from the Viking Age. On 6 coins, the older runes are combined with the younger ones (Hammarberg, Rispling 1985, 66, 72–73).

Other runic graffiti on Oriental coins

Two runic graffiti on the coins (D 94, 786/787 and D 109, 701/702) are interpreted by Mel'nikova as **kiltR** and **kiltr.** On the coin D 109, two separate runes, **þ** and **t**, are carved under the inscription. Mel'nikova compares the inscriptions **kiltR** and **kiltr** with Icelandic *gildr* "of full worth", a word which may designate

that a coin is not false (Mel'nikova 2001, 116). However, both the reading and the interpretation of the graffiti on D 109 may evoke objections. The reading of the last rune as a staveless **r** is not probable so far as the coincidence of **R** and **r** was not possible in the early 8th c. The possible reading of the second sign as **u** and the last rune as a long-branch **s** in D 109 can lead to the reading **kuts**, which is interpretable as *guts* (genitive of *guþ* with the regular east Scandinavian dissimilation *þs > ts*)[18]. In this case the inscription can be compared with the other inscriptions with "god(s)".

The runic graffito **ubi** on the coin (D 86) can be interpreted as a male proper name *Ubbi* (Mel'nikova 2001, 116–117). A very interesting runic graffito **þmkr** with a short-twig **m** can be read on the coin from Klukowiczi (Poland, D 163, 895/896), which may be interpreted as the first runes of the runic invocation known from some runic inscriptions with the words **þ(istil)**, **m(istil)**, **k(istil)**, **r(istil))**[19], cf. the inscriptions on Gørlev stone (Denmark, 8th-9th c., DR 239), on the stone from Ledberg (Ög 181) and in one manuscript of the Bósa saga, where this formula is written in runes.

The palindrome **isi** (D 77) with the archaic form of **s** on a coin from the early 11th c. found in a hoard in Eesmäe (Estonia) may be compared with the runic inscriptions with the formulaic word **is** (*íss*) which was the name of the rune **i**, cf. the runic graffiti **is** on a coin minted in 764 in Al Kufa found in a hoard in Sweden (Hammarberg, Rispling 1985, 70–71) and with the palindrome **sis** in the inscription on the Gørlev stone, if we accept the assumption that runic palindromes can be read from the middle (that is **sis** = **is**+**is**).[20] The runic inscription **is** is also carved on a knife hilt from Staraya Ladoga (Ladoga III), see below.

Individual signs on many coins from the hoards in Eastern Europe look like runes, cf. **k** (D 16, 84, 93), long-branch **s** (D 6, 95, 96, 97, 100, 129, 130, 142), **s** and **k** together (D 21, 136), **k iii** (D 44), long-branch **m** or **R** (D 80), **u** (D 146, 148, 150), long-branch **t** (D 99, 160), **b** (D 159). However, most of these signs cannot be treated as runes without reserve. They may also be interpreted as Arabic figures, Latin, Greek or Cyrillic letters or as various marks (RGA 12, 1998, 568), the meaning of which remains unknown to us.

A particular group of runic inscriptions on coins, which are not graffiti but belong to the coin's legend, is formed by the names of kings and moneyers on the coins minted in Scandinavia (first of all in Denmark). Two of these coins from the 11th c. with runic inscriptions were found in Latvia near Daugmale (not far from the place where the inscription on a stone ring was found, see above).

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[18] Other possibilities of the reading of the graffito see in Dobrovo'skiy et al. 1991, 41–43.

[19] **þistil** (OI *þistill*) "thistle", **mistil** "(*mistill*) mistletoe", **kistil** (*kistill*) "little box", **ristil** (*rístill*?) "an instrument to carve (*rísta*) runes?". The exact meaning of this invocation is, however, not clear (cf. Düwel 2008, 89sq.).

[20] Marstrander interpreted the palindrome **sueus** in the inscription on the 1 Kylver stone (G 88) as **eus**+**eus** (Marstrander 1952, 163–164).

M. Stoklund reads the two names of the moneyers as *Asgeir* and *Ailmer* (Berga 2001, 8; Jensen 2006, 168). The many Danish coins found in Pomerania are mentioned by Eggers (1968, 10sq.), cf. BRF II, 73.

The runic inscription on a wooden stick from Staraya Ladoga (Staraya Ladoga II) (Hermitage, St.-Petersburg, Russia, Literature Kuz'menko 2012a; Düwel 2008, 125f,).

A wooden stick with a runic inscription was found in Staraya Ladoga during the excavations in 1950. The layer is dated to the early 9th c. It has the form of a fork with four bright teeth on the one end and a flat cut on the other. It is 42 cm long and round in section (1.5–2.6 cm in diameter). The runic inscription, which takes up only 12 cm of the whole length of the stick, has been carved in the middle of the stick on its brightest facet. The runes are 0.8–1 cm high, except for the first one, which is much shorter. On the reverse side of the stick, three signs in the form of hooks are carved. The runes are common short-twig runes (fig. 18). The number of runes is considered to be 52, or 48 if the stem of the rune **r** is formed by the stem of the preceding rune. Though the forms of most of the runes are common short-twig runes, runologists were not able to reach a commonly accepted interpretation. Admoni and Sil'man in the first publication of the inscription (1957) have proposed a reading of the whole inscription and the interpretation of its second part: they read the first part of the inscription as **u(k)ufis(r)ufuaRiþRialtualiRs(r)iis,** but do not interpret it. In the second part **fr(s)ąnmąnafr(s)ątfibulsinibluka**[21] they read a spell written in *fornyrðislag* with alliteration **frąn mąnafr (fr)ąt fibul si nibluka** (ON *fránn mánaálfr, fránt fífl, sé niflunga*) "Shining moon demon (OI *álfr*) / shining monster / be of Niflungs (in the realm of Niflungs, under the earth)." They postulated that the magic character of the inscription was confirmed by the magic number of runes (48). Following the preliminary definition of the archaeologists, Admoni and Sil'man considered the stick to be a fragment of a bow, and treated the inscription on the bow as a spell against evil. However, the form of the stick as well as the material of which the stick was made (fir) contradicts this definition.

The first interpretation of the whole inscription was proposed by G. Høst initially in a short article in Aftenposten (13.12.1957) and then in the article in *Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap* (NTS) in 1960. In NTS Høst treats the stick as a *rúnakefli* and the inscription as a fragment of an Old Swedish shield-poem describing three figures of the Scandinavian mythology pictured on a shield. The reading and interpretation of Høst (1960):

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[21] Alternative readings proposed by Admoni and Sil'man are given in brackets.

?ufir(u)ufuaRiþRhat(l,m)iualt(i)Rrii(m)sfrạnmạnakrạtfibulsinibluka =
ufir uf uaRiþR hati ualtR rims frạnmạna krạt fibulsini bluka
ON ? *yfir of variðr hati / valdr (h)ríms / fránmána grand/ fimbulsinni plóga.*
"Above, clad in his cowl the Master of the Hoar-frost, the Damage of the shining moon, the mighty journey of the plough-oxen." She proposed that here three personages are mentioned:
the master of the hoar-frost (the giant Thiazi), the damager of the shining moon (the giant Skati) and the goddess Gefjon, who turned her sons into oxen and ploughed Seeland from Sweden.
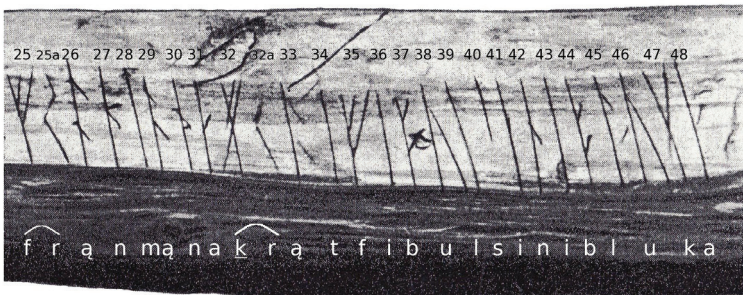

Fig. 18: Staraya Ladoga, stick (Kuz'menko 2012a, 254)

In the same volume of NTS, the interpretation of the inscription by the renowned German runologist Wolfgang Krause (1960) was published. He changed the readings of some of the runes and the word division proposed by Høst and assumed that the inscription is a song of praise in honour of a dead warrior:

(t)ufirufuaRiþRhaliualtRriasfrạnmạnakrạtfibulsinibluka =
(t)u (u)fir uf uaRiþR hali ualtR rias frạn mạna krạt fibul sin i bluka
ON (*d*)*ó yfir of variðr halli valdr (h)ræs / fránn, manna grand, fimbul sinn i plóga.*
"Died high clad in the stone owner of the corpse (= warrior), shining, ruiner of men (warrior), in the enormous way of the plough (the earth)."

Kiil (1964) proposed a partly new reading and a totally new interpretation of the inscription, suggesting it to be a spell on the staff of an arrow:

(s)ufi(u)fuaRiþRhaliualiRrimsfrąnmąnakrątfibulsinibluka =
s ufi uf uaRiþR hali ualiR rims frąn mąnakrąt fibulsini bluka
ON *(e)s úfi of variðr hali / vélir rims frán(n) mannagrant fimbulsinni plóga.*
"The tail is dressed in plumage, the sharp tip (or the serpent of the wooden stick) is attracting booty in great number for all."

Over the following 40 years there were no new interpretations of the inscription, but in 2004 Grønvik proposed a fresh one. The key word in his interpretation is **bluka** (ON *plóga* gen. pl. of *plógr* "plough"). Grønvik considers the inscription to be a heroization of a peasant chieftain who is praising the fruitful earth:

(t)ufirufuaRiþRhaliuali(t,a)R(i)rii(m,f)sfrąnmąnak(f)rątfibulsinibluka =
(hel)t ufir of uaRiþR hali ualaR riifs frąn mąna krąt fibul sini bluka
ON *(helt) yfir of vaRiþR / halle vallaR rífs / frąn manna grænd / fimbulþsinni plóga.*
"(and) steered – surrounded by hills / down into the fertile meadow – / to the brave men's farms / many ploughs."

Most interpreters either have not paid much attention to the function of the stick, considering it to be only a material for writing on, or treated it as an arrow or a bow. The form and the material of the stick (fir) contradicts this interpretation, however. But it does not look like a *rúnakefli* either. The stick has a peculiar form, it is cleft into four parts at the upper end and has a flat cut on the other end. The form of the Ladoga stick is very similar to the form of a distaff, which was widely used in Europe in the Viking Age and in the Middle Ages. Finds of objects connected with spinning in Staraya Ladoga are not rare. Here, two other distaffs, some spindles and more than 400 whorls have been excavated. The new interpretation suggested in Kuz'menko 2012a takes into account this function of the stick. Reading:

(t/þ?)uf(i)rufuaRiþRhaliualtRrils / frąnmąnakrątfibulsinibluka
Þófi (or *tó*) *er of variðr, hali veltr, hræls fránman á grannt fimbulsin(ni), (N)eflaug (or Iflaug) á*
"The tow is dressed above, the spindle is rotating. The flashing girl of the 'reel' will have a fine long thread. Neflaug (or Iflaug) possesses (this distaff)". Three hooks on the other side of the distaff are marks of an owner.
In the inscription we see a wish or a spell for a spinner to spin so that the weaver may get a fine long thread. This spell may have been considered to have a stronger effect when carved in runes. In the Scandinavian tradition, spinning was the most ritual occupation. The distaff possessed magical powers (the norns twinned the threads of fate) and could serve as *gandpinnar* or *seiðstafar*.

It seems that the number of runes on the amulets and on the spindle from Staraya Ladoga and Novgorod was important (see below the inscriptions on both sides of the Novgorod amulet A with twelve runes on each side of the pendant, twelve runes on the Novgorod amulet B, and 48 (4 × 12 or 2 × 24) runes on the wooden

stick (probably spindle) and probably 48 runes on the pendant from Staraya Ladoga I. In all these inscriptions, are we dealing with numerical magic (24 is the number of runes in the older futhark)?

Staraya Ladoga III (Literature in Petrenko, Kuzmenko 1979, Mel'nikova 2001). A bone hilt (length 139 mm) of a knife, archaeologically dated to the 9th c., with some runes on it was found in Staraya Ladoga in 1975. The hilt is covered with carvings of Scandinavian type, two horns, a triskele, a meander loop, a swastika, two ladders with 6 and 9 steps, respectively, and two thorshammers. On the same side as swastika and thorshammers a short runic inscription in long-branch runes **is** (height of the runes 0.8 cm) and a long-branch **s** are carved. The inscription **is** *iss* can be interpreted as "ice" (cf. **is** and **isi** inscriptions on oriental coins above), the name of the rune **i**, which is traditionally considered to be a rune which may bring harm (cf. Nordén 1937, 181). The inscription **is** with this meaning is quite appropriate on a knife hilt.

Novgorod III (Historical museum of Novgorod, N КП 39560-1 А 6-30, literature in Mel'nikova 2001, 251).

A bone fragment with a runic inscription was found in 1958 in the archaeological layer dated to the early 11th c. The inscription in long-branch runes is the second part of the younger futhark (long-branch runes) **k h n i a s t b l R.** The bone is broken off and the first runes of the younger futhark are missing.

Uglich (Russia), Mel'nikova 2001, 256.

During the excavation in Uglich Kremlin, a fragment of a bone (4 cm × 2,8 cm, early 11th c.) with five signs (height 1,4–1,7 cm), four of which can be interpreted as true runes, was found. The fifth sign has two horizontal strokes crossing the stem, which theoretically can be interpreted as a short-twig mirror **m**. According to the drawing in Mel'nikova 2001, 256, only the signs 1 and 3 have traditional runic forms (short-twig **t** and **þ**). Rune 2 can be read as mirror **ą** or doubled long-branch **t**, rune 4 as a mirror **k**, long-branch **a** or bind-rune $\widehat{\text{ku}}$.

Suzdal (Russia), Mel'nikova 2001, 253–256.

A fragment of a stone casting mould from the 11th c. (7,7 × 9,8 × 3,6 cm) for the fabrication of round pendants was found during the excavations in Suzdal (Russia) in 1976. The form has various ornamental pictures. Some of these pictures are interpreted as the runic inscription **saulofs** by Mel'nikova (2001, 253–255). But, judging from the photo given in Mel'nikova 2001, the identification of the signs as runes is highly problematic.

Later runic inscriptions: Smolensk (Russia, State Historical Museum Moscow, N 108840-2648, literature in Mel'nikova 2001, 207); **Polotsk** (literature in Mel'nikova 2001, 252) (12th–13th centuries)

The inscription on a fragment of a birch bark scroll was found in 1964–1976 at the excavations in Smolensk (Russia, fig. 19. Stratigraphically the layer is dated to the 12th c. Mel'nikova reads the inscription **uiskaRtokrimiþein** and interprets it as *Vískarr (Vísgeirr) tók rima þann...* "Visgeirr took (or bought) this strip of land (plot)."[22] The scroll may be part of a juridical document which confirmed the purchase of a plot of land in Smolensk. The Smolensk inscription is the only runic inscription on birch bark among more than a thousand Russian Cyrillic inscriptions on birch bark from the Old Russian towns (mostly from Novgorod).[23] The Scandinavian presence in Smolensk in the 12th c. is also testified by other archaeological finds.
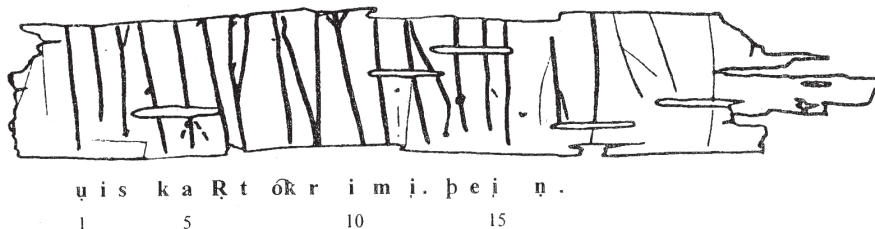

Fig. 19: Smolensk, birch bark scroll (Mel'nikova 2001, 207)

During the excavations in Polotsk, a dice (astragalos) with a runic inscription **kaþi** was found in the layer dated to the early 13th c., which was interpreted by Mel'nikova at first as a word corresponding to OI *gæði* "luck" (Mel'nikova 1977, 252). But later, she rejected her own interpretation on the grounds that in the Scandinavian medieval runic inscriptions the phonemes /a/ and /æ/ were designated by two different runes (Mel'nikova 2001, 252–253). However, this differentiation was not regular and the former interpretation of the runic inscription is quite possible. It is also possible to treat the inscription **kaþi** as a male nickname *Kaði* (or *Káði*), cf. accusative form **kaþu** of the male nickname *Kaða* in DR 83, meaning "hen".

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[22] On the confusion of the accusative and nominative forms in the 12th c. (cf. **rimi** instead of **rima** in our inscription) see below the inscription on the whorl from Zvenigorod.

[23] A Karelian text in Cyrillic letters and a text in Latin letters have also been found on a birch bark scroll in Novgorod.

Runic inscription on a whorl from Zvenigorod (Ukraina, Lvov oblast', Lvov Historical Museum, literature in Mel'nikova 2001, 209–211)

A whorl (height – 0.9 cm, diameter 2.3–1.9 cm, diameter of the hole 0.8 cm) with a runic inscription (fig. 20) was found at the excavation in Zvenigorod (Ukraina) in 1990. The archaeological dating of the layer is 12th c. (1110–1137). The inscription reads **sigriþ** and can be interpreted as a female proper name *Sigríðr*. The inscription has two peculiarities, the usage of the older rune **g**, and the lack of inflexional *r*. The second peculiarity corresponds to the early loss of inflections in the other regions of contact in the Viking Age, that is, in the runic inscriptions from the British Isles and in the names of the moneyers (both in runes and in Latin alphabet) on the Danish coins – (cf. Kuz'menko 2012b). The Danish monetary tradition developed under a strong Anglo-Saxon influence.

Fig. 20: Zvenigorod I, whorl (Mel'nikova 2001, 210)

The runic inscription **sigriþ** on the whorl described above as well as a runic graffito on the other whorl found in Zvenigorod (diameter 2.6 cm, height 1.1 cv.), which is interpreted by Mel'nikova as **gud**[24] carved in the older runes (Mel'nikova 2001, 212–213), can testify that the older runes could be used in Zvenigorod in the 12th c. It is hardly possible to imagine that the whorls were brought from Scandinavia.

Runic inscriptions (?) in Maskovichi (Vitebsk obl., Belarus). (Literature in Mel'nikova 2001).

About 120 objects with inscriptions and pictures (mostly on bones and ribs) where found by the archaeologist L. Duchits during excavations in Maskovichi, near Vitebsk (Belarus). The archaeological dating is 12th–13th centuries. Many signs look like Latin or Cyrillic letters and even like Scandinavian runes (**k**, **i**, **u**, **f**, long-branch **m**, **R**, **t**, **o**, older **g** etc.) or like Scandinavian bind-runes (fig. 21).

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[24]   About the **gud** / **kuþ** inscriptions see above.

The signs, which look like Scandinavian runes, have been interpreted as such by Mel'nikova (Mel'nikova 2001, 151–250). However, since many signs have horizontal strokes and none of the inscriptions could be interpreted as a reliable Scandinavian word and since no other objects of Scandinavian origin have been found during the excavations in Maskovichi, the identification of the signs as
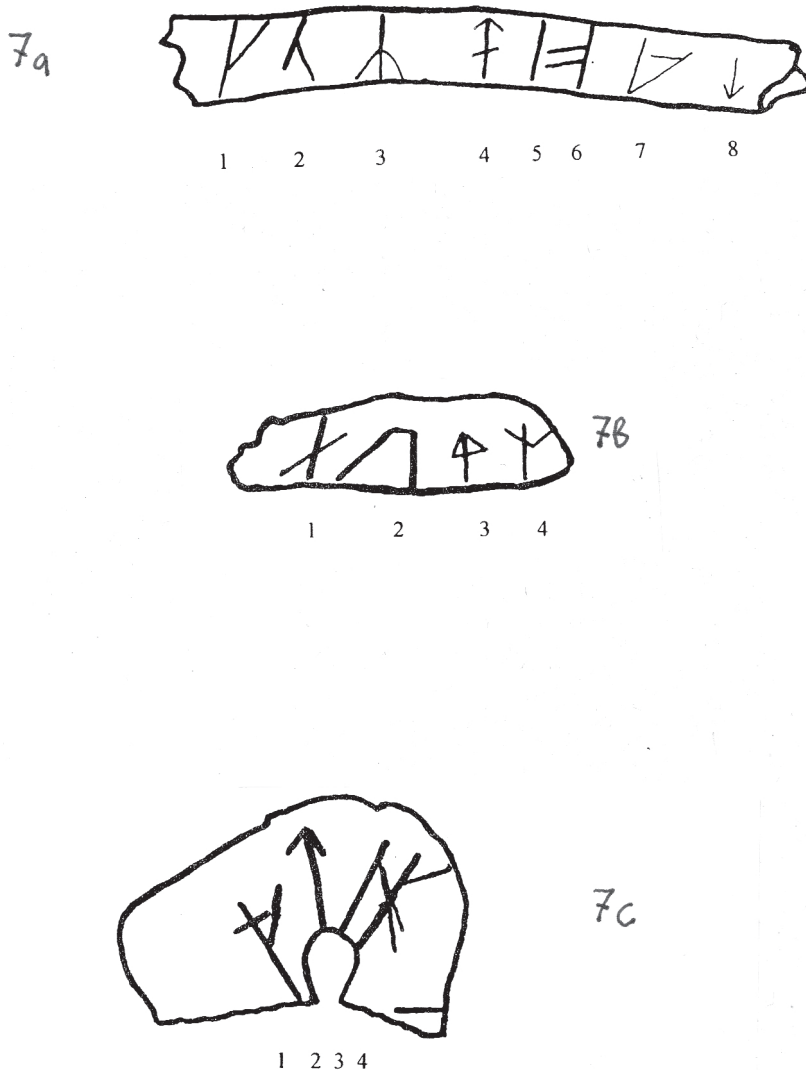

Fig. 21: Maskovichi, different objects (Mel'nikova 2001, 245–247)
a – fragment of a rib (8,6 × 0,9 cm)
b – fragment of a bone (4,8 × 1,3 cm)
c – fragment of a stone sinker (diameter 4,6 cm)

Scandinavian runes seems very problematic. It is possible that the signs are a kind of script, where some runic forms were used, but until present the Masko-vichi inscriptions remain undeciphered.

Scandinavian runic inscriptions in Byzantium (Literature in Mel'nikova 2001)

A Scandinavian runic inscription which dates to the late 11th c. was discovered on the shoulders and flanks of a marble lion, which is now in front of the Arse-nal in Venice, but originally was located in Pireus, the harbour of Athens. The runes are carved in a scroll shaped like a dragon or a snake, which completely corresponds to the Scandinavian runic tradition. Most of the runes are not legible anymore. However, some runes (long-branch and short-twig variants as well as some bind-runes) are clear. It is also clear that crosses served as a punctuation mark between the words. The most well-known reconstruction of the text was suggested by Brate (1914), who proposed that the runes were carved in the memory of a certain Horsi, "who won his gold in his travels" and that some men from Roslagen hewed the runes on the lion. The reading and some of the interpretations by Brate are quite plausible, but since a large number of runes is not legible, his interpretation remains problematic. Here is an example of Brate's analysis (runes in brackets indicate the runes reconstructed by Brate) (**þ) air** x **isk…rlif(r) li(tu a)uka ui(l)…(r)o(þ)r(s)** x **l(an)ti**x *þeirr Askell (ok N ok N-leifr.) létu hugga vel (þeirr eru frá) Róðslandi...* "They Askell and N, and N-leif let hew well (these runes), (they are) from Roslagen…"

Two runic graffiti were discovered on the marble parapets in the Hagia Sophia (Istanbul). In the first one, carved in short-twig runes, only the first word is distinguishable. The runic sequence **alftan** may be interpreted as the male proper name *Halfdan* (Svärdström 1970). The lack of **h** in this name can either reflect the loss of /h/ in onsets in central Sweden, characteristic of many runic inscriptions from Uppland in the Viking Age, or by the disappearance of **h** in the inscription due to later damage. The second graffito in Hagia Sophia is also inscribed in short-twig runes. It has two interpretations: **ari:k**, a male proper name *Ári* and *k* in the beginning of the next word, which could be a verb with the meaning "made" **k(arþi)** *gerði* (Larsson 1989) or **arni** (a male proper name *Árni*) (Knirk 1999).

The Scandinavian runic inscriptions in Byzantium may have been engraved either by the Scandinavians who were members of the well-known Varangian Gard of the Byzantine emperors or by the Scandinavian *druzhinniks* of Russian princes (almost all *druzhinniks* who undersigned the treaties of Oleg and Igor' with Byzantium had Scandinavian names) or by Scandinavian merchants visiting Byzantium.

The Scandinavian runic inscriptions in the West-Slavic area (Literature in M.L. Nielsen et al. 2001) [25]

There are 15 runic inscriptions from the West Slavic area, eight of them from Starigard/Oldenburg (Schleswig-Holstein), mostly on bones, dating to the second half of the 11th/first half of the 12th c. No. 8 bears a complete **futhork** (RGA 29, 2005, 535–538). Four runic inscriptions from Oldenburg/Starigard on ribs consist of longer sentences (cf. Starigard/Oldenburg 6 **bermin : erinde : þat ik : ei : hafa : skyrte** which is interpreted by M. L. Nielsen et al. as *bær mín ærindæ þat ek æi hafa skyrtæ* "convey my messages so that I do not suffer any loss". Starigard/Oldenburg 4 has an inscription on the both sides of a rib. The first one makes no linguistic sense: **abi:bataba:iestaba.** On the other side of the rib an obscene inscription is carved: **kukr : kus kutu kys**, "*penis kiss the vulva, kiss*". This inscription has parallels in the Norwegian runic inscriptions from Bryggen (Bergen). Starigard/Oldenburg 7 is an inscription which can be interpreted as a proverb: **...ak:eigi:ha:a:hafi:uti:heltr:tak:hu...** *[T]ak eigi há á hafi uti. Heldr tak hú[nn]* "Don't find the oarlock out at sea, better use the top of the mast (for hoisting the sail)."

Three inscriptions come from Alt-Lübeck (BRF II, 54 sq.), two of them are of the same date, one – a recent find – is inscribed with a complete **futhark** (Grabowski 2002, 53; Tank 2004). The bone inscription from Ralswiek (Pommerania), date and find place unknown, only reads **fu...** which remains uninterpreted. In addition there is a wooden stick from Wol(l)in (mostly rune-like characters), moreover a bone piece from Kamień Pomorski, the runes of which are **fuþ**, either the beginning of the younger rune row or the obscene word *fuð* 'vulva' on one side, a personal name (?) **kur** on the other (BRF II, 46), and finally a gaming piece from Kaldus with the inscription [**i**]**on a taf**[**l**] *Ión á tafl* 'Jon owns the game, game piece' (the last four items are mentioned in RGA 29, 357 with references).

Scandinavian Runic inscriptions found on the territory mostly occupied by the West Slavs in the 11th-12th centuries indicate close contact between the Western Slavs and Southern Scandinavians during that time. However, the language of the Scandinavian runic inscriptions in the West Slavic area shows no signs of Scandinavian-Slavic contact that corresponds to the features of the language of the Scandinavian runic inscriptions of the 8th–11th centuries in the Baltic and East Slavic area.

Besides the runic inscriptions found in Eastern Europe, there are some others in Scandinavia referring to events taking place in Eastern Europe and to persons

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[25] We wish to thank Michael for his kind help in giving us his manuscript and handout. All these inscriptions will be examined by Michael Lerche Nielsen in a forthcoming article, "Runic inscriptions reflecting linguistic contacts between West-Slavonia and Southern Scandinavia. Catalogue: Viking Age runic inscriptions found along the south-west coast of the Baltic Sea (Uppsala)".

who were involved. We only give some examples to illustrate this category. On the Alstad stone in Norway (Ringerike, N 62, 11th c.) the younger inscription says that a certain Torald died in Vitaholm (= Viticev, 40km south of Kiev) between Ustaholm and Garðar.

Spjallbuði was killed in St Olaf's church in Novgorod (*Hólmgarðr*). A stone (U 687) was erected in his memory in Susta, Skokloster parish, Uppland.

A rather small stone from Pilgårds (Gotland, G 280) commemorates, by an inscription, a very dangerous Viking expedition passing the rapids of the Dnieper. Hrafn, one of the crew, whom Vifill commanded, lost his life in this adventure: "Hegbjôrn raised this stone glaring (and his) brothers […], who have had stones raised in memory of Hrafn south of Rofstein. They came far and wide in Eifor [name of a rapid]. Vífill bid." The stone and its inscription was painted and originally erected on a hill so that the monument could be seen from far away.

Finally, a famous Swedish stone should be mentioned because of a Viking expedition far east to the River Volga and beyond. The chief of the Group was Ingvar. Most of his men lost their lives abroad. More than 20 memorial stones commemorate these men. The Gripsholm stone (Sö 179) was erected in memory of Harald, Ingvar's brother. Their mother commended this monument and in a verse, their expedition is described: "Tóla had this stone raised in memory of her son Haraldr, Ingvarr's brother. They travelled valiantly far for gold, and in the east gave (food) to the eagle. (They) died in the south in Serkland."

Conclusion

The Scandinavian runic inscriptions from the Viking Age found in Eastern Europe confirm the historical and archaeological data testifying to the presence of Scandinavians in this area. However, they may provide indications regarding their ethnicity to a far higher degree than the objects of Scandinavian origin or Scandinavian proper names. The objects with Scandinavian runic inscriptions were owned by people who spoke a Scandinavian language and belonged to the Scandinavian cultural tradition.

According to the type of the object and the inscription, we may distinguish two kinds of Scandinavian presence in Eastern Europe: a temporary stay either on the Way to the South or a sojourn as a mercenary or a merchant in Ancient Rus' or in Byzantium (cf. the inscriptions from Berezan', Pireus and Istanbul), or a permanent settlement first of all in the Ancient Rus'. The runic inscriptions on the spindle from Staraya Ladoga or on the two whorls from Zvenigorod testify the existence of permanent Scandinavian settlements. The same applies for the bone with an incomplete futhark in Novgorod. The runic inscription on a birch bark scroll from Smolensk shows that Scandinavians preserved their language in the Ancient Rus' even in the 12th c. The types and the texts in the Scandinavian

runic inscriptions in the West Slavic area in central Europe also indicate that they were carved where they were found.

As for the runic amulets (Staraya Ladoga I, Novgorod I, II) and the coins with runic graffiti, which may have served as amulets, found in hoards in Eastern Europe (D 24, 41, 77, 50, 164, 165, 239), these may also come from the Scandinavian settlements in the Ancient Rus', however, it is impossible to say where these inscriptions were made. They could have been carved in Scandinavia as well. The same concerns the runic inscriptions on the objects from Polotsk, Uglich and Staraya Ladoga III.

The Scandinavian settlements and quarters in Russia and in the Baltic region as a rule lay on the routes of the Varangians to the Greeks or to the Arabs (cf. Daugmale, Staraya Ladoga, Novgorod, Smolensk, Polotsk, Vinnitsa, Temerevo etc.). It is also no coincidence that the majority of the objects with runic inscriptions, and the most interesting ones at that, come from Staraya Ladoga (3) and Novgorod (3), places where the Scandinavian presence during the Viking Age was most obvious. However, we can see that the runic tradition was preserved in Ancient Rus' until the 12th c. (Smolensk, Polotsk, Zvenigorod (2)). Even the enigmatic script on the objects from Maskovichi from the 13th c. bears clear evidence of knowledge of the Scandinavian runic tradition.

The language of most Scandinavian runic inscriptions in Eastern Europe shows almost no traces of language contact with Baltic, Slavic or Greek. It preserves the features of Common Scandinavian used widely in Scandinavia in the Viking Age, with some local East Scandinavian features (cf. the possible assimilation *ps > ts* in the inscription on D 109 or the loss of /h/ in the runic graffito in the Hagia Sophia is characteristic of the Uppland dialects even now). But in two runic inscriptions from the 12th c. (the inscription on the birch-bark scroll from Smolensk and the inscription on the whorl from Zvenigorod), we can observe the confusion of accusative with nominative, which was possible neither in the runic inscriptions from the 12th and 13th centuries in the continental Scandinavian languages nor in the first Old Norwegian, Old Danish and Old Swedish texts in the Latin alphabet. The only parallel to this phenomenon can be found in the Scandinavian runic inscriptions on the British Isles (in particular on the Isle of Man) and in the names of Danish kings and moneyers stamped on the Danish coins in runes or (and) in Latin letters. We know that the Danish monetary tradition was strongly influenced by the Anglo-Saxon one. This parallel proves that the simplification of the Old Scandinavian case system started first in the areas of language contact both on the "Western Way" and on the "Eastern Way".

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S t r e s z c z e n i e

PRZEGLĄD INSKRYPCJI RUNICZNYCH W EUROPIE ZACHODNIEJ

Artykuł stanowi swoisty katalog napisów runicznych odnalezionych w Europie Wschodniej.

Pierwsze inskrypcje runiczne, które odnajdujemy na włóczniach, oznaczały funkcje danej broni. Niektóre brakteaty używane jako amulety miały komunikować poprzez runy swoje właściwości ponadnaturalne. Złoty pierścień z Pietroassy był zapewne własnością Gotów. Niektóre znaki odnalezione na kamiennych kolumnach to napisy: fibule lub piękne fibule. Znaki runiczne skandynawskiej proweniencji z czasów Wikingów potwierdzają ich obecność na tych terenach. Można wyróżnić dwa typy obecności Skandynawów na tych terenach: związane z tymczasową obecnością (inskrypcje z Berezania, Pireusu i Stambułu) oraz osadnictwem. Na przykład inskrypcje ze Starej Russy oraz Zwinogrodu są potwierdzeniem stałych skandynawskich osad. Podobnie wygląda kwestia obecności inskrypcji w Nowogrodzie. Inskrypcje na korze ze Smoleńska świadczą, że Skandynawowie używali swojego języka na Rusi nawet w XII wieku. Znaleziska z Europy Środkowej, z obszarów zamieszkanych przez Słowian Zachodnich potwierdzają, że znaleziono je tam, gdzie zostały wykonane. W przypadku runicznych amuletów (Stara Ładoga I, Nowogród I, II) oraz monet z runicznymi inskrypcjami, które mogły służyć jako amulety, trudno jest powiedzieć coś o ich pochodzeniu. Podobnie wygląda kwestia pochodzenia inskrypcji z Połocka, Uglicza oraz Starej Ładogi III. Napisy na kościach z XII–XIII wieku z Białorusi nie mogą jednak być interpretowane jako skandynawskie napisy runiczne.