

## The Multiple Symbolic of the Futharc

**Jørgen Chr. Bang**  
**University of Southern Denmark, Odense**

Institute for Language and Communication  
 University of Southern Denmark  
 DK-5230 Odense M  
[bang@language.sdu.dk](mailto:bang@language.sdu.dk)

The elder Futharc comprises an interesting coordination of the symbolic relations of the runes, both in relation to former writing systems and in relation to contemporary phonetics, phonemics, morphemics and semantics.

Some examples of the multiple symbolic will be demonstrated by reference to graphic form, names, mutual system correspondence, alphabetic order, and cultural value of the runes.

Furthermore three very similar sequences of younger Futharc runes on the Glavendrup stone and the two Jelling stones will be compared and discussed in relation to the traditional, very different interpretations, respectively a protective formula 'Thor vie' ('Thor hallow these runes') and a mere proprium 'Thyra'.

### References

- Bang, J. Chr. 1996: "Runernes Genealogi og Grammatologi" i *Rapport fra 6. Møde om Udforskningen af Dansk Sprog. Århus Universitet, oktober 1996*.
- Bang, J. Chr. 1997a: *Runes : Genealogy and Grammatology*. [www.jcbang.dk](http://www.jcbang.dk)
- Bang, J. Chr. 1997b: "Runernes herkomst og medbyrd" i *IN Selskab for Nordisk Filologi. Årsberetning 1996-1997*. (red. Kjeld Kristensen) (pp 146-162).
- Daniels & Bright (eds) 1996: *The world's writing systems*. Oxford U.P.
- Moltke, Erik 1985: *Runes and their origin – Denmark and Elsewhere*. The National Museum of Denmark: Copenhagen

**Fig 1: The old Futharc (24 Runes)**

<b>Runes 1-8</b>	ƿ	ᚢ	ᚦ	ᚨ	ᚱ	ᚷ	ᚸ	ᚹ
Lat.translit.	f	u	† (th)	a	r	k	g	w
Reconstr. names	fehu	uruz	thuriaz	ansuz	raido	kaunan	gebo	wunjo
<b>Runes 9-16</b>	ᚨ	ᚱ	ᚲ	ᚴ	ᚵ	ᚷ	ᚸ	ᚹ
Lat.translit.	h	n	i	j	ï	p	z (R)	s
Reconstr. names	haglaz	naudiz	isaz	jeran	iwaz	pertho	algiz	sowilo
<b>Runes 17-24</b>	ᚺ	ᚫ	ᚬ	ᚭ	ᚮ	ᚯ	ᚰ	ᚱ
Lat.translit.	t	b	e	m	l	N (ng)	d	o
Reconstr. names	tiwaz	berkanan	ehwaz	mannaz	laukaz	ingwaz	dagaz	othalan

**Fig. 2: Glavendrup Stone (c. 860) Face B**

Glavendrup Face B	transliteration	nydansk identifikation
†††·hN†Iλ·Y†RþN	ala . suniR . karþu	Alles sønner gjorde
YNB†·þ†NHI·†Y†·Y†þNR	kubl . bausi . aft . faþur	kumbler disse efter fader
HI†·†NY·*††H·YN††·†NY†	sin . auk . hAns . kuna . auft	sin og hans kone efter
N†R·HI†·I†·hN†I·R†IH†·RN†	uar . sin . in . suti . raist . run	mand sin og Sote ristede run-
†λ·þ†HI·†Y†·†RN†I†·HI†	aR . þasi . aft . trutin . sin	er disse efter drot sin
þNR·N†Y†·þ†HI·RN††λ	þur . uiki . þasi . runaR	Thor vie disse runer
<b>Face C</b>		
††·R†††·H†·N†R†I·IH·H††I†††††	at . rita . sa . uarþi . is . stainþansi	ad rite den vorde som sten denne
†††I·I††·†Y†·†††·†R†††	ailti . iþa . aft . AnAn . traki	ælte eller efter anden drage

**Fig 3: Jelling Stones (c. 940-960)**

Jelling 1	transliteration
YNRYλ:YN†NYλ	kurmR kunukR
Y†RþI:YNB†:þNH†	karþi kubl þusi
†Y†:þNRN†:YN†N	aft þurui kunu
HI††:†††Y†RY†λ:BN†	sina tanmarkaR but
<b>Jelling 2</b>	
*†R†††R:YN†NYλ:þ†þ:Y†NRN†	haraltr kunukR baþ kaurua
YNB†:þ†NH†:†Y†:YNRY:Y†þNR:HI†	kubl þausi aft kurm faþur sin
†NY:†Y†:þ†NRN†:YNþNR:HI††:H†	auk aft þAurui muþur sina sa
*†R†††R:I†H:HFλ:N††:†††Y†NR†	haraltr ias sAR uan tanmaurk
†††:†NY:†NRN†††	ala auk nuruiak
†NY:†††I:Y†RþI:Y†RIH†††	auk tAni karþi kristna

Younger Futhark (16 Runes)	
Y N þ F R Y * † I † H	† B Y † λ
f u þ A r k h n i a s	t b m l R

**Fig. 4: The Consonant Groups b, w/v, d, g, p, f, t, k**

Prominent features	translit.	non-aspirated	aspirated
bi-labial (two lips)	b : p	ᆢ	ᆣ
mono-labial (lip-teeth)	w/v : f	ᆤ	ᆥ
tip tongue-teeth	d : th : t	ᆦ ᆧ	ᆨ
back tongue	g : k	ᆩ	ᆪ

**Fig. 5: Vowel-Consonant-Analogies**

	vowels	consonants		vowels	consonants
a : f / l	ᆢ	ᆥ ᆧ	i : n	ᆨ	ᆩ
u : b	ᆪ	ᆢ	o : ng	ᆫ	ᆬ
e : m	ᆭ	ᆦ	ë : j	ᆨ	ᆩ

**Fig. 6: Runes-Greek-Latin-Analogies**

Name and 'meaning'	Runes	Greek	Latin
'fæ', 'Vieh', 'cattle', 'value' <i>fehu, alef / al-fa</i>	ᆥ	α	A
'house', 'hus', 'ur-mund', <i>ur-uz, bu, beth</i>	ᆪ	β	B
'door', 'dør', 'thor', 'Tor' (2.-3. pers: <i>du, thou, dem, them</i> ) <i>daleth / delta</i>	ᆧ	Δ	D
'water', 'source', 'man' (1.pers: <i>me, mek, ek</i> ) <i>mem</i>	ᆦ ᆭ	μ ε	M E

Fig. 7: Runes (Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, and Scandinavian) (DIRINGER 1962 : 163)

Phon. Value	Germanic Letters	Anglo-Saxon Letters	Scandinavian			
			Early Signs Letters	Danish	Swed. Norw.	Dotted Letters
				Late Signs Letters		
f	F	F ƿ	F ƿ ƿ ƿ	ƿ	ƿ	ƿ
u	ʌ ʀ	ʀ ʀ	ʀ ʀ	ʀ	ʀ	ʀ
b	Ƴ	Ƴ Ƴ	Ƴ Ƴ Ƴ Ƴ	Ƴ	Ƴ Ƴ	Ƴ
e	F	F ƿ	F ƿ	F ƿ ƿ ƿ	F ƿ	ƿ
r	R	R ʀ	R ʀ	R R	R	R
k	<	ʌ ʀ ʌ ʀ	< > ʌ ʀ ʀ	ƿ	ƿ	ƿ
g	X	X ʒ	X			ƿ ƿ
w	Ƴ	Ƴ Ƴ	Ƴ Ƴ Ƴ Ƴ			
h	H ʀ	H H	H H	*	+	*
n	†	† † ʒ ʒ	† †	†	† †	†
i	l	l	l	l	l	l
j	ʀ ʒ	† Ƴ Ƴ	ʒ ʒ ʒ ʒ ʒ ʀ ʀ *	†	ʀ ʀ † † †	†
e	ʒ	ʒ	ʒ ʒ			
p	ʒ	ʒ ʀ	ʒ ʒ ʀ			ʀ ʀ ʀ
r	ʒ	ʒ	ʒ ʒ	ʀ	l	ʀ ʀ ʒ
s	ʒ ʒ ʒ ʒ	ʒ ʀ ʀ ʀ ʀ	ʒ ʒ ʒ ʒ ʒ ʒ ʒ	ʀ ʀ	l ʒ ʒ	ʒ ʒ ʒ
t	T †	†	†	† †	† † † †	†
b	B	B ʀ	B ʀ B ʀ	B B	F ƿ ƿ	B
e	M	M	M ʀ ʀ	Ƴ ƿ	† †	† †
m	ʀ	ʀ ʀ	ʀ ʀ	ʀ ʀ	ʀ ʀ ʀ	ʀ
l	ʒ	ʒ	ʒ ʒ ʒ ʒ			ʒ
o	ʒ	ʒ Ƴ	ʒ			
q	ʒ ʒ ʒ	ʒ ʒ ʒ	ʒ ʒ			ʒ ʒ ʒ
a		ʀ ʀ				ʀ
g		ʀ ʀ ʀ ʀ				ʒ ʒ
u		ʀ				ʒ
g		ʀ ʀ ʒ				ʒ ʒ
o		ʀ ʀ ʒ				ʒ
u		ʀ				ʒ
g		ʀ ʀ ʒ				ʒ



**Fig. 9.: From Hieroglyphs to Roman Script** (ARNESEN 1987 : 35)

Hieroglyffer	Sinai-skrift	Hebraisk	Semittisk skrift	Gresk	Romersk
		Alef - okse			A
		Beth - hus			B
		Gimel - kamel			C
		Daleth - dør			D
		He - vindu			E
		Vav - krok			F
		Zajin - våpen			Z
		Heth - gjerde			H
		Jod - hånd			I
		Kaf - håndflate			K
		Lamed - stav			L
		Mem - vann			M
		Nun - fisk			N
		Ajin - øye			O
		Pe - munn			P
		Qof			Q
		Res - hode			R
		Sin - tann			S
		Tav - tegn			T
		Waw			V
		Samek			X

Oversikten viser utviklingen av Sinai-skriftens «bokstaver» fram til romersk monumentalskrift. De greske bokstavene er vist slik de forekom i bistrofedon (plogskrift), der skriftlinjene fram til ca. 500 f. Kr. ble skrevet hverannen linje fra høyre mot venstre, hverannen fra venstre mot høyre.