

Texts and Contexts of the Oldest Runic Inscriptions



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43. THORSBERG II (Schleswig-Holstein, Germany). In the same museum as the above, nr. 42. A bronze shield boss. The inscription is on the inner side of the shield boss. The runes run left, and read: **aisgzh**

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aisgz may be emended to **ais[i]g[a/i]z**, and interpreted as a PN: *Aisigaz* or *Aisigiz*, nsm. *a-* or *i-* stem. Krause (1971:72) read *ais(i)g(a)z* “der Dahinstürmende”. If so, the stem vowel may be missing, though the nominative ending *-z* is present; cf. **gaupz** (ILLERUP V, chapter five, nr. 5). Another possibility may be to take the sequence as a compound, of *aus(i)-* ‘come storming in’, cf. ON *esa* ‘to rush forward’; and **g[aisa]z** = Gmc **g(aiza)z* ‘spear’, nsm. *a-* stem, cf. ON *geirr*. The meaning might be ‘come, storm in, spear’ (as a defiant device of the shield).

For **h** at least two possibilities may exist; it is either an ideographic rune **h** representing its name **hagala-* ‘hail’, or an abbreviation. Antonsen (1975:30 and 1995:131f.) takes **aisgz** to be representing *aisk-z* ‘seeker’, and **h** for **hagala-* ‘hail’, thus he gets: ‘seeker of hail’, an “eminently suitable designation for a shield when we realize that ‘hail’ is a metaphor for ‘shower of spears and arrows’” (Antonsen 1995:132). This is certainly true, but during my research I became more and more convinced that the ancient runographers were particularly precise in their orthography, and I cannot imagine why they would choose a **g** to render *k*. I take it that the object, the shield, with a shield boss made of *ais*, Lat. *aes* ‘bronze’, is addressed somehow, or that it is the signature of the maker, the weapon smith.