

On the Transliteration of English Runes

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FOR PRACTICAL REASONS it is convenient to transliterate runic inscriptions into some form of the Latin alphabet. Anglo-Saxon scholars have often followed the system put forward by Bruce Dickins in Leeds Studies in English, 1 (1932), 15–19. Recently there has been criticism of the Dickins system, and the argument adduced that it is desirable to use, for the English version of the runic script, one closer to that commonly employed for Scandinavian runes. The present article puts the case for differentiating between English and non-English runes by using distinctive transcription methods for each, and suggests some modifications to the Dickins system for English use. The matter is of some immediate importance in view of the publication of the British Academy's Corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture, which requires transliterations of English runic texts.

VARIETIES OF RUNIC TRANSCRIPTION

Runologists have long recognized the difficulties involved in presenting runic texts to the world; in particular in presenting them to interested readers who are not themselves runic scholars. There is the specific problem of how to transliterate runic symbols into non-runic letters, usually some form of the Roman alphabet. Ideally, perhaps, there should be no such transcription, since transcription may lead to careless thinking and that to inaccurate conclusion.¹ Ideally scholars should be encouraged to approach these texts in runic terms, without seeking the easy way out of transliterating them into more familiar characters. Unfortunately this is not practicable since the material of the inscriptions is relevant to a range of external studies, philological, archaeological and historical, and the practitioners of those disciplines deserve some consideration. They can hardly be expected to control the complexities and confusions of the various runic alphabets in addition to taking note of the content of the inscriptions themselves. They want a more easily accessible text, one that is presented clearly, precisely and without ambiguity. They wish to be sure how much is certainty, how much reasonable conjecture and how much guesswork.

It is inconvenient that over the years scholars of different countries and traditions have created different transcription systems for their runes. Even within the same tradition there can be individual variation, depending perhaps upon personal preference or upon typographical feasibility. These variations were pointed

out in a discussion held at the First International Symposium on Runes and Runic Inscriptions, held at Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1980. In his paper introducing the topic C. W. Thompson made a plea for a standard 'set of conventional symbols with which an editor reproduces a runic inscription so that the reader is reliably and consistently informed of its condition and of the limits to reading and interpreting it'.² He added that such a system should 'not become overly complicated by trying to indicate too much. The finer the distinctions it tries to make, the more graphically complex the reproduced text becomes, increasing the reader's burden. Since it is clear that a system of notation can never reproduce all the details of the original (often it merely serves to alert the reader to uncertainties and send the serious student back to the original), it is best to keep it relatively simple'.

As it happens Thompson's paper is more concerned with the accidentals than with the essentials of runic inscriptions. Thus, he deliberately avoids such a basic and thorny question as 'agreeing on appropriate Latin letter equivalents for the runic symbols themselves'. So he sidesteps such problems as how to deal with different forms of the same runic letter, and — one which will present major difficulties later in this paper — what to do with those runes whose significance changes over the centuries they are in use. On the first of these points Thompson shows himself rather imperceptive by a comment he adds in an endnote: 'I can see no point in printing the inscription first in runic symbols, as is done in *NlyR*. The rune forms are normalized and tell us little more about the actual shapes than a transliteration would do'.³ These are the words of a man who has limited experience of runes. Anyone who has worked within, say, the Norwegian field will know that in Viking Age Norway there existed variant patterns of rune form — rune-masters made different choices from the distinctive letter forms available in the different *fuparks*, the Danish/normal runes (*danske runer*), the short-twig runes (*kortkvistruner*, *stultruner*), and mixtures of the two (*blandingsruner*) as well as the Man-Jær runes. Here it is convenient to have even a normalized representation of the rune forms of an inscription printed above the transcript; it shows at a glance what selection of letter forms an inscription employs, and whether it is consistent throughout in its usage. To say this tells us 'little more about the actual shapes than a transliteration would do' is nonsense.

The difficulty transliteration has in coping with sound-changes affecting the values of runes is highlighted by the treatment of the fourth rune, *ǫss*, in the standard Norwegian corpus, *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer*. This rune-name, in its PrON form, is **ansuR*, and in the course of development to medieval Norwegian the initial vowel underwent lengthening and nasalization, and then rounding. In the *fuparks* listed in the summary 'Norsk runeskrift i middelalderen',⁴ *ǫss* is given the value **ǫ** in the 10th century series, it varies between **ǫ** and **o** in the first half of the 11th century, and thereafter appears as **o**. To transliterate by **o** in the 10th century, or to continue to use **ǫ** in the late 11th would be phonologically misleading or tendentious, and here editors prefer phonetic approximation to consistency of representation. On the other hand, for the earlier period when the Norwegian rune-series has no specific symbol for *o*, the rune-masters often use **u** instead, as in the Manx forms **utr** (*Oddr*) Braddan III, **fustra kuþan** (*fóstra góðan*) Kirk Michael III.⁵ Here runologists retain the

transliteration **u**, preferring consistency of representation to phonetic approximation. In cases like this the editor is in a dilemma and has to make an arbitrary choice of what to do. The decision is pragmatic rather than logical, and in such circumstances it might be a help if the rune form were printed above the transcript.

However, Thompson deliberately refrains from discussing such major points of transcription. Instead he considers what type-face should be used to represent runic text in transliteration (he suggests bold-face or, for typewritten material, spaced text); how to represent linguistic normalization (by italic); reconstructions or conjectural restorations (between square brackets); bind-runes, that is, two runes ligatured as one (by a superscript curve joining the two letters); the end of a line of inscriptions (a single vertical stroke); damaged letters (subscript dots); missing beginnings, middles, ends (square brackets); countable missing letters (dots). All this is sensible enough, though by no means unexceptionable. For instance, if a text indicates word-division consistently or irregularly by a single dot (as German (Peel) I, Isle of Man), it will be misleading to use dots for missing letters. Thompson's system (which he suggests calling 'Ann Arbor') presents practical problems, as anyone who has tried using some of its conventions for printed work will confirm. Not all printers have bold-face with the full range of runic equivalents — a bold-face *thorn/thurs* is a particular case. Subscript dots are a difficulty. They have to be inserted into the original typescript, and they are easy to miss out or put under the wrong letters. Typesetters — or whoever is responsible for camera-ready copy — do not like them. When they are faced with a text occasional letters of which have subscripts, they tend to scatter the subscripts arbitrarily about, and proof-reading becomes tedious, correction expensive and error likely.⁶ Damaged letters and conjectural restorations are always something of a problem, for the personal element enters extensively into them. No two scholars, probably, will agree as to how damaged a letter has to be before the damage is signalled in the transcript; no two scholars, probably, will agree as to when a badly damaged letter can be signalled as damaged, when it must be regarded as conjectural restoration.⁷ Obviously in many of these cases the transcript should 'send the serious student back to the original', but that only helps if the serious student is an epigrapher. Should he be a medieval philologist or an archaeologist or an art historian, his reluctant return to the original may not prove fruitful.

Thompson chose bold-face for runic transcriptions because that convention is already widely established. Indeed, it is the common form for transliterating Scandinavian runic texts, as in the great corpora of Norwegian, Swedish and Danish (but not Icelandic) inscriptions. Even then it is not universal even among Scandinavian runologists. The veteran Danish epigrapher, Erik Moltke, has turned away from it in his recent work, since he regards bold-face as intrusive and unattractive on the page. Instead he uses Roman, not distinctive from the rest of his text.⁸ In her *Stuttruner i Vikingtidens innskrifter* (Oslo, 1968), the Norwegian Ingrid Sanness Johnsen used spaced Roman, presumably for typographical reasons since her book is composed on the typewriter; transcripts of single runes are underlined. Bold-face has also often been used for Continental German inscriptions and for Frisian ones.⁹ For his seminal work on Anglo-Saxon manuscript runes René Derolez transcribed into

bold-face.¹⁰ Despite this, bold-face has not been commonly used in the English tradition.¹¹ Thompson argued for a ‘unified system of notation’, hoping that this would include the use of bold-face for transcripts or, if that were not possible because of printing requirements, spaced Roman. I would like to challenge the desirability of a unified system, one that would link more closely the English and Scandinavian methods of notation.

DICKINS’S SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATING ENGLISH RUNES

In 1931 Bruce Dickins, the leading English runic scholar, published his system of transliteration for English inscriptions.¹² It was one he had tried out over the years for classroom use, to present English runic texts to his students in philology. It was designed for the only method of cheap reproduction then available, cyclostyling from stencils cut on a standard (though slightly adapted) typewriter. It could use only one type-face, and that for convenience was Roman. In later publications Dickins confirmed the convention of placing runic transcripts within single inverted commas to distinguish them clearly from other textual matter.¹³ Damaged characters were given in italic (underlined in typescript); italic/underlined within square brackets represented lost letters ‘which can reasonably be inferred’. (Dickins did not say on

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8:	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16:
ƿ	ᵿ	þ	ƿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ		*	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ
f	u	p	o	r	c	g	w:	h	n	i	j	3	p	(x)	s:
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24:	25	26	27	28	29	30	31.	
ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	
t	b	e	m	l	ŋ	œ	d:	a	æ	y	êa	k	k̄	ḡ.	

FIG. 1

The Anglo-Saxon *fuþork* with the Dickins system of transliteration. Reproduced with the permission of the editor of *Leeds Studies in English* from the plate used in vol. 1 (1932)

what he based his inference — whether on the space available, the fragmentary marks remaining, the likely content of the inscription, or early drawings.) All these, then, could be readily produced by an adapted typewriter, as could two other conventions that he suggested, one controversial, one not. Uncontroversial was the use of a vertical stroke to indicate line-end. Less acceptable was the slash that showed a bind-rune, as ‘d/d’ to give two *d*-runes bound together in ‘gebid/dap’ Thornhill III. Finally Dickins implied conventions for material completely lost from inscriptions. These are not defined, nor are they clearly thought out. For instance, at the end of the [Great] Urswick inscription (Great Urswick ii in my edition)¹⁴ Dickins transcribed the sequence ‘lylþi | swo . . .’. This text must be a maker’s signature *Lyl þis wo[rhta]*, ‘Lyl made this’, but it lost its ending when the Great Urswick slab was trimmed to fit a window-splay. Presumably Dickins did not want

to commit himself to the end of this text — he may have been worried about the exact form of the verb, *worhtæ* or *worhtæ*, or even remembered the Pershore censer-cover where the word was not completed at all¹⁵ — so he left it open. His text of the Lancaster cross inscription is ‘gibidæþfo | ræcunibal | þcupberek . . .’ (‘cunibalþ’ should read ‘cynibalþ’). On this stone the end of the third line is worn away and it is not clear whether or not there was space for many more runes than can now be read. Here the dots must represent sheer uncertainty as to how the inscription went on. In the case of the Overchurch stone Dickins reads: ‘fōlcæarærdonbec[. . . | . . .]bidd-
apforeæpelmun[. . .]’. Presumably the dots within brackets show how many runes Dickins thinks were lost, though it is hard to see how he judged that there were just two missing at the end of each of the lines. For the Ruthwell cross Dickins worked in a rather different manner, for he divided the text into its individual words (as also with inscriptions on the Franks casket), presumably to make the poetry more accessible to the student. Thus he produces a verse line ‘[m]odig f[.] men’ where he must assume seven letters missing; there are in fact two lines of runes destroyed here, and the carver was fitting in three runes to the line. Later in this text he transcribes ‘gistoddun him licæs [hêa]f[du]m’ where the five dots, this time without brackets, also represent the loss of two lines of letters. One corner of the east face of the Ruthwell cross was knocked away, and with it the opening of two sections of the text, so that Dickins reads ‘. . . geredæ hinæ’ and ‘. . . ic riicnæ k̄yniŋc’, where again the unbracketed dots seem to represent Dickins’s calculation of the number of runes lost.¹⁶ Finally, a red herring. In one line of the Thornhill III stone (= Dickins Thornhill II) is the sequence ‘berhtsuiþe.bekun’, where the dot simply represents a punctuation point on the stone. These examples do not exhaust the Dickins system of transliteration, but they are enough to be going on with. They seem to show that, though much of the system suits its purpose excellently, it is defective in minor and accidental details. Indeed, Dickins must have been aware of this himself for, when a couple of years later he published with A. S. C. Ross his edition of *The Dream of the Rood*, he modified his system: ‘A missing letter for which there is quite certainly a space on the stone is indicated by [a small open point]; when there is a break but it is impossible to decide from the stone how many letters are missing, dots are placed in the text’.¹⁷

Clearly Dickins’s system of transliteration is not so perfect that, in piety, we need to retain it for all time. In my own work I have ventured to challenge some of its details, making minor changes and, I hope, improvements, while keeping its main characteristics.¹⁸ In this paper I want to discuss more drastic change: whether, in the interests of a single system of runic notation for all texts, it is desirable to approach Thompson’s, even for Old English purposes. Particularly, in view of Derolez’s example, whether to use bold-face for English runes. Dickins’s system, occasionally modified, has lasted for some decades and achieved a degree of recognition, so it should not be changed without good cause. There are, as I have suggested, several objections to the use of bold-face, primarily practical ones. Moltke’s, that the type is ugly and obtrusive, is sound enough, although I doubt if an aesthetic judgement should prevail in a scholarly matter. Certainly there is likely to be confusion, as Thompson ably demonstrated in discussion, if Moltke’s alternative

should prevail — that runic transcripts use the same type-face, without differentiation, as the rest of a book or article. At present, however, printers do not always make a good job of mixing bold-face into a work that is for the most part in plain Roman. Their bold-face types may be limited and may lack some of the special letter forms that runic transcripts require. At present many typewriters cannot produce bold-face. But these must be temporary objections. Daisy-wheel or golfball typewriters can, I assume, be fitted with bold-face, while new techniques of printing will make a fuller range of bold-face types generally available.

There is, however, an objection of a different nature to producing a unified system of transliteration of runes. It is partly a chauvinistic one, but it depends also on what Thompson calls the ‘otherness’ of English runes. Nearly 150 years ago the great J. M. Kemble spoke of this in an article whose good sense and ironic detachment can still raise pleasure:

The [runic] characters of the Norwegians, Swedes, Danes and Icelanders are not less distinct from those of the Goths, High and Low Germans, and Anglo-Saxons, than the languages of the several nations which they represented. Unquestionably both the alphabets and the languages are, in the widest philosophical generalization, identical: but exclusive knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon or German Runes would as little enable us to decypher Old Norse inscriptions, as exclusive knowledge of the language of the Edda would enable us to read the Old German *Krist*, the Old Saxon *Hêljand*, or the Anglo-Saxon *Beôwulf* . . . These preliminary remarks will not be without service in assisting to explain why my interpretations of certain Anglo-Saxon Runic monuments differ *toto cælo* from those of the learned Danes, who have been so obliging as to attempt to decypher them for us; and to save them this trouble in future, is partly the intention of this paper; especially as there seems to have been a sort of tacit understanding in this country, that the labour and the honour might just as well be left to them; in the propriety of which view it is difficult to concur.¹⁹

Kemble’s argument — then needed even more than now — that there was nothing Scandinavian about Old English runes so that Scandinavians had no privileged insight into them, is significant to the present discussion. Of course, Scandinavian runic inscriptions outnumber English ones many times over; inevitably runic studies will flourish more freely there than here so that bold-face transcripts of runes will be more familiar to the general scholar. Yet if we accept the ‘otherness’ of English runes, it is surely sensible to signal that ‘otherness’ by a distinctive system of transliteration. It warns the Norse scholar against taking too lightly the differences between these writing systems and languages. In turn it warns the Anglo-Saxon student not to take liberties in using parallel material from Scandinavia.²⁰

THE ‘OTHERNESS’ OF ENGLISH RUNES

To justify the case it becomes important to define the ‘otherness’ of English runes. This lies in:

(i) a distinctive expansion of the Germanic *fupark*. In large part this is connected with sound developments variously known as Anglo-Frisian, Inguaeonic and *Nordseegermanisch*. The most important of these developments is that which affects the **ansuz* rune (no. 4 of the Germanic rune-row, Fig. 2). Gmc **ans-* became, via nasalization

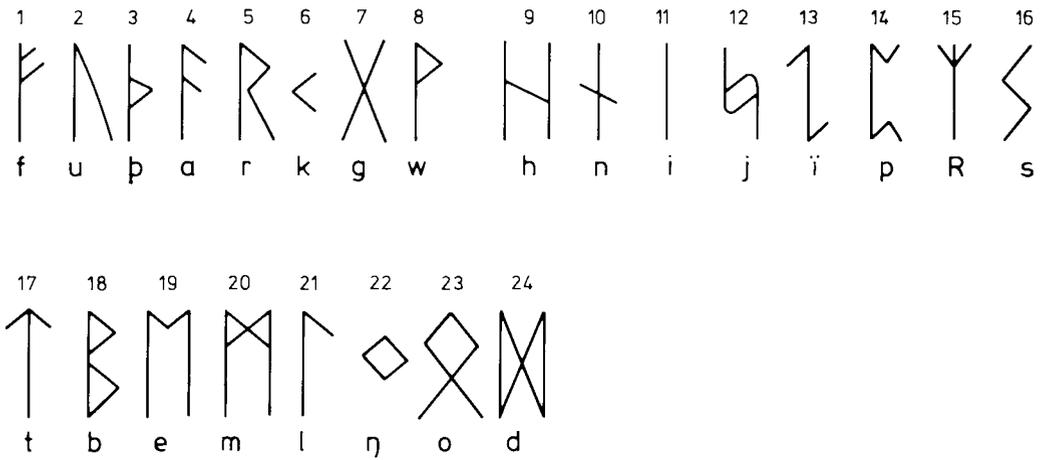


FIG. 2

The Germanic *futhorc*. There is no standard form of this *futhorc* and the version given is conflated from several sources

and lengthening of the initial vowel, OE *ōs*; *a* sounds remain in other contexts; in yet other contexts *a* became fronted to varying degrees represented in English dialects by the graphs *e*, and *ɛ*, *æ*.²¹ Thus three runic symbols were needed where one was adequate before, and this resulted in the Anglo-Frisian development of new forms and rune-names, *os*, *ac* and *æsc* (nos. 4, 25, 26 of the English rune-row, Fig. 1). A second group of changes, whose full importance will be dealt with in a later section, affected the stops *k*, *g* in palatal contexts; palatal allophones developed, which in Old English eventually became distinctive enough to be represented separately in the rune-row. Hence the appearance, side by side with the runes *cen* and *gyfu* (nos. 6, 7, which represent the Germanic runes), of the new formations *calc* and *gar* (nos. 29, 31). The palatalization of *g* also allows the *j*-rune (no. 12) to be used instead of *g* in such a context as ‘*j3slhêard*’ (= *Gisl-*) on the Dover stone or ‘*j3lsuip*’ on Thornhill III. Finally — as far as our evidence goes at present — there are the distinctively Anglo-Saxon runes *yr* and *ear* (nos. 27, 28) which represent English sound developments.

(ii) Anglo-Saxon rune forms (sometimes found elsewhere in Continental Germania) which contrast with Norse ones. Examples are the two-barred *h*-rune (no. 9) as against the single-barred rune of the North, and the distinctive *cen*-rune (no. 6). Less commonly evidenced but possibly also significant is the English form of the *η*-rune (no. 22).

(iii) the Anglo-Saxons became Christian several centuries before the Scandinavians; and earlier than some (? all) of the Continental Germanic peoples who used runes.²² From the 7th century there are Christian runic inscriptions in England, as on St Cuthbert’s coffin, a monument that also uses the Roman character. In consequence there is likely to be influence from Roman-Christian on Anglo-Saxon runic. The same pattern of memorial formulae can be found on both runic and non-runic stones. There are some clear cases where runic spelling seems affected by non-runic/Roman usage, as when the two runes ‘*oe*’ rather than the single ‘*œ*’, appear for the reflex of

o...i in 'roe[.]tæ' (HROETHBERHTÆ in the parallel Roman text) on the Falstone stone. The re-use of the rune *eolhx* (no. 15) with the value 'x' is another case in point. This symbol originally represented the *z*-sound found in inflexional endings, but as this did not survive in Old English, the rune was left free to be used for another purpose, giving *x* (not generally needed in Old English) in Latin texts, as the royal 'beonnarex' on some coins of Beonna of East Anglia.²³ Two other practices may reflect influence from non-runic tradition. It is usually said that early runic texts outside England — and this is certainly true of Viking Age Scandinavian inscriptions — (a) avoid using double consonants, and (b) omit a nasal before a homorganic stop. England has no such inhibitions, and produces such forms as (a) 'setto/n' Bewcastle cross, 'had/da' Derbyshire bone plate, 'afæddæ', 'unneg' Franks casket,²⁴ and (b) EADmVnD Chester-le-Street stone (contrast **kupumut** Helnæs, Denmark, stone), and 'kyningc' Ruthwell cross (contrast the common **kunukr**, **kunukR** in Scandinavian inscriptions). Finally, the not infrequent mixing of runic and Roman scripts in England is perhaps relevant here: as EADmVnD Chester-le-Street stone, +æDRED MEC AH EAnRED MEC agROf Lancashire (? Manchester) ring, +BEONnaREX on coins of the East Anglian king Beonna.

(iv) much written Old English is from the same date range as the bulk of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions, say 700–1100. At least two runic monuments, the Franks casket and the Ruthwell cross, contain important literary material, while many others illuminate philological developments of Old English dialects.²⁵ Any system of transliterating Anglo-Saxon runes should make this material as readily available as possible to the literary or linguistic scholar who is not a runologist. Old English had certain clear conventions of orthography, and runic transcripts should, if possible, coincide with them. An obvious case in point is the treatment of the *cen*-rune (contrasting here with the Norse *kaun*). In most Old English manuscript texts the graph *c* covered a group of sounds which included palatal and velar variants; the group *sc* represents the earlier [sk] palatalized and assibilated. Since the *cen*-rune has the same range of uses, Dickins rightly transliterated it 'c'. For Old Norse, where no such phonemic distinctions developed, the *kaun*-rune is transcribed **k**. To use parallel systems of transliteration for the two rune-rows would produce Old English forms like *kynibalþ* Lancaster cross, *likbækun* Crowle stone, *fisk* Franks casket, repellent to the reader of non-runic Old English. For that part of the Old English area where a new rune *calc* was invented to mark the distinction between velar and palatal *c*, a new transcription symbol would be needed to accommodate, for instance, both 'krist' and 'riicnæ' in Dickins's transliteration of the Ruthwell cross.

The 'otherness' of the English runic tradition as I define it here is particularly significant in its contradistinction to the Scandinavian. Of course, the majority of Norse inscriptions are from the Viking Age or later, and so use either one of the restricted 16-letter *fuparks* or one of the expanded runic alphabets that developed from them. These inscriptions are markedly different from the English in script and usage as well as language. Even in the earlier period, however, there are important differences between the two traditions, some of which I have implied above, while others depend on early developments within Norse — as, for example, the change in

values of the **jāra*- and **ansuR*-runes.²⁶ The English tradition diverges from that of central Germania partly because of distinctive Anglo-Frisian changes, and partly because, as far as present evidence goes, the English used runes more extensively, for a wider range of texts, than did the Continentals. From its closest neighbour, the Frisian, the English tradition divides by its greater elaboration of the *futhorc* which requires more symbols to represent it, while the Frisian runic material is slighter in content and more restricted in range than the English.

Because of this distinctive nature of the Anglo-Saxon runic tradition it is unnecessary to use for it a system of transliteration that closely parallels those used for Old Norse, early Frisian and Continental Germanic. Indeed, there is a certain absurdity in the idea. It is no more sensible to insist on the same transliteration system for Norse and English than it would be to require the same pattern of editing for an Old English text and a piece of 13th-century Old Norse, with its own script, spelling tradition, extensive use of abbreviation and accepted practices of normalization. Further, as I have argued above, there is much to be said for stressing the differences of the traditions by employing different transcription methods. For Old English the Dickins system has been in use for over fifty years, and has been popularized in many publications, notably in the Methuen's Old English Library edition of *The Dream of the Rood* which generations of students have toiled over. Insofar as the Dickins system works, it seems pointless to change it. But it has a few weaknesses.

DICKINS'S SYSTEM MODIFIED

A system of transliteration for Old English runes should have the following characteristics, as far as is possible: (a) it should be precise in its indication of what is visible, what is damaged but legible, what conjectured or restored; (b) it should produce one-to-one transcription, one rune represented by one transcription symbol; (c) it should be able to accommodate the range of symbols, other than runes, that occur in runic texts; for instance, punctuation symbols like + opening an inscription, or numbers of points, single or in vertical line, used as word dividers; (d) transcription should not be phonetically misleading, even if it cannot be precise; (e) it should not confuse the unpractised reader; it should not employ symbols in ways that conflict with their use in other well-known writing systems; (f) it should produce texts that look like Old English to the Anglo-Saxonist who is not a runologist.

Dickins's system (Fig. 1) is successful in some, not all, of these. Misleading is Dickins's use of brackets in his transcription, '(x)', of the rune *eolhx* (no. 15, cf. also his presentation of the *futhorc* of the Thames scramasax), since brackets suggest some sort of hesitation of reading, or perhaps imply that the letter supplements a lacuna in the text, makes a correction or expands an abbreviation. Presumably Dickins put the transcription of *eolhx* in brackets because he did not really believe in the rune. It was, he thought, 'a fossil in Old English. In runic alphabets, it is sometimes used for *x* for which a separate character was not provided in the *futhorc*'.²⁷ It is an odd statement, since *x* appears as the value of this rune in the written *futhorcs* of British Library,

Cotton Domitian ix and Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 795, as Derolez has shown.²⁸ Moreover, the rune occurs at least twice in inscriptions. One is as a symbol only, in the sacred monogram 'xps' on St Cuthbert's coffin, where it is a direct transliteration, with no phonetic value, of Latin *x* (ultimately Greek χ). The second is in the royal title 'rex' on the interlace reverse coins of the East Anglian king Beonna. It therefore seems absurd to pretend that the rune did not exist; we should simply transliterate it 'x', as indeed Dickins himself did in his publication of the St Cuthbert's coffin runes.²⁹

Also liable to mislead, in my opinion, is the use of the slash for bind-runes, as 'd/d'. In common English practice the slash tends to divide rather than to combine, as in such a usage as and/or. I prefer to follow Thompson's advice (and common Scandinavian convention) here and use the superscript curve, 'dd̄', even though this has the disadvantage of having to be added by hand to a typescript. It is to be remembered that the Anglo-Saxon rune-masters sometimes bound more than two letters together, as on the Whitby comb where 'h', 'e' and 'l' are combined. Here we must presumably write 'hel̄' rather than 'hel'.

Dickins sustains the principle of one-to-one transliteration save in one case, that of the rune *ear*, a character which is used epigraphically to represent the reflex of Gmc *au*, together with fracture and *u*-mutation diphthongs that roughly fall in with it.³⁰ Dickins renders *ear* as 'êa', the circumflex indicating that the two letters represent one rune. I find this unsatisfactory, and have experimented with the superscript curve, 'eâ'.³¹ This certainly makes it clearer that the two letters of the transcript are intimately linked. Now, however, I want to reserve this convention for bind-runes, and an alternative must be found. Two occur to me. One is to use a superscript horizontal over both letters, as 'eā' (but this might lead to confusion in rare cases like the St Cuthbert's coffin 'ihs xps' where the superscript horizontal is in the inscription itself). The other is to space the transcript, save for these two letters, so that, for instance, the Thornhill II stone has the name 'ea d r e d' and the Ruthwell cross evidences such forms as 'h ea f u n æ s' and 'f ea r r a n'. On the whole I think the latter more attractive. The lack of a space in 'ea' shows that these represent a single graph, and so satisfies condition (b) above. This method has the further advantage that the unusual spacing draws immediate attention to the fact that the text is a transcript, rather as the Scandinavian use of bold-face does. There may, however, be typographical disadvantages — as, for instance, the problem of dividing a word at a line-end. Clearly experiment is needed here.

For phonetic correspondence the Dickins system is, with perhaps one exception, satisfactory. Of course, any close phonetic representation is out of the question, and there will be the same sort of inexactitudes as are encountered in Anglo-Saxon manuscript spelling. For instance, Dickins uses 'êa' to give two fracture diphthongs, the reflexes of Gmc *a + r + consonant* ('j3slhêard' on the Dover stone) and Gmc *e + r + consonant* ('fêarran' on the Ruthwell cross). Whether either element of these diphthongs is precisely rendered by 'êa' is doubtful, but the transcription is not seriously misleading. The real problem in this section is the rune whose name is *eo*h or *ih* (no. 13). Dickins renders this 'z', but that is admittedly a compromise. I have discussed this problematic rune elsewhere;³² here all that is important is its range of

uses in English epigraphy. It represents (i) a pair of spirants in ‘almeʒttig’ on the Ruthwell cross and ‘torʒtredæ’ on the Great Urswick stone, (ii) a sound perhaps the second element of a diphthong in ‘êateʒne’ (= *Eadþegne*) on the Thornhill II stone, where it corresponds to palatalized *g*, (iii) the vowel *i* in ‘jʒslhêard’ on the Dover stone, (iv) apparently the second element of a diphthong in ‘ræʒhæn’ on the Caistor-by-Norwich astragalus, where ‘æʒ’ may give the reflex of Gmc *ai*, (v) apparently a vowel in the unclear sequence ‘sʒþæbæd’/‘sʒþæbld’ on the Loveden Hill urn. No single symbol can cover this range, and it is inevitable that, whatever is chosen, there will be a difficulty with this rune. Most of the English uses suggest a vowel, and non-English runologists confirm this in their various transcription attempts at this rune, **é**, **ï**, **E**.³³ It may well be that the consonantal examples of Ruthwell and Great Urswick represent a late recasting of the rune akin to the development that led to the invention of new runes *calc* and *gar*. On this line of thinking I would prefer to represent *eoh*, *ih* by a vowel symbol. Since Dickins has already borrowed the character ‘ŋ’ from the International Phonetic Alphabet to indicate the rune *Ing*, the same alphabet could be plundered to produce a vowel symbol in the high front range to render *eoh*. I would suggest ‘i̇’, which has the advantage that it can be created on the typewriter.

Before leaving the essentials of Dickins’s system, I would draw attention to inconsistencies in his presentation. The first is in his treatment of variant rune forms. In the main his transcriptions do not distinguish between different forms of a rune, between, say, the mirror image variants of the letter ‘s’ (both of which occur on the Great Urswick stone) or the similar pairs of ‘n’ and ‘ʒ’; nor does he have special symbols for the rare variants of ‘j’, ‘d’, ‘æ’ and ‘y’ of the Thames scramasax.³⁴ Moreover, this scramasax has a variant *s*-rune ʒ. In the publication of his system in 1932 Dickins transliterated this variant simply as ‘s’. When in 1956 he published his texts of the St Cuthbert’s coffin inscriptions where the same variant *s*-rune occurs, he used a special transcription symbol ‘f’, arguing that on the coffin ‘the Runic “s” is uniformly replaced by “f”, which is in origin an insular minuscule’,³⁵ and comparing the Thames scramasax example. Thus he reads such texts as ‘ih xp f’, ‘m/atheu f’, ‘m/arcu f’ and ‘iohann[i] f’. I think this is a mistake, partly because it is too ambitious to try to represent variants in a transcript, partly because I am doubtful about Dickins’s derivation of the St Cuthbert’s coffin ‘s’ from a manuscript minuscule form — it is just as possible to derive it from the common *s*-rune (as in Fig. 3).

Dickins’s second inconsistency lies in his treatment of mixed runic and Roman texts. This was not part of the 1932 article, but when, in 1940, Dickins and A. S. C.

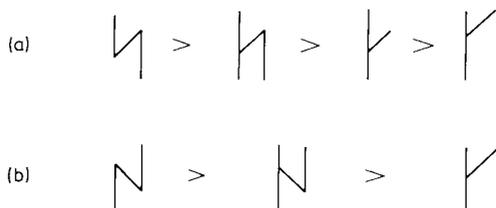


FIG. 3

Possible stages of development of the Thames scramasax *s*-rune

Ross published the material of the Alnmouth cross, they had to come to terms with mixed inscriptions. They decided to use capitals for Roman/Latin letters, lower case for runes, putting the latter between single inverted commas 'save in inscriptions with mixed runic and Latin characters where this convention would be inconvenient'.³⁶ This was eminently sensible, and led to such a transcribed name form as MYREDaH, where only 'a' was a rune. In 1956, however, Dickins again revoked a decision and put single inverted commas in the middle of a word to indicate the change from Roman to runic and back; the result is the absurd looking legend SCS [R]V'm'IA[EL] on St Cuthbert's coffin.³⁷

To turn now to the accidentals of the system of transliteration, by which I mean those conventions which, rather than identifying the runes used, define their condition, indicate damage or lacunae, show how the inscription is divided among several lines of text or is subdivided by bands of ornament or structural features of the object inscribed, point to letters omitted by the carver or put in by mistake, etc. Though I call them 'accidentals', they are nevertheless of great importance in any system of transliteration since it is through them that 'the reader is reliably and consistently informed of [an inscription's] condition and of the limits to reading and interpreting it'.³⁸ They present problems since they often call upon an editor's discretion — how much damage should be signalled, can we be sure that a letter is put in by mistake? Dickins, as I have shown, was not clear about his practices.³⁹

For the accidentals Thompson derived great comfort from the Leiden system of transliteration, one originally developed for other languages and scripts.⁴⁰ He suggested that runologists should employ conventions closely allied to those of Leiden, and there is a lot to be said for this idea since much that is true about epigraphical texts elsewhere will apply to the runic. Not all, however. For instance, the Leiden system allows for the expansion of abbreviations, added letters being enclosed within round brackets (). Classical inscriptions, and, as for that, Christian Latin texts in Roman characters from the Anglo-Saxon period, need this convention, but I can think of no Anglo-Saxon runic text that uses a clear abbreviation system. For English runes the convention is unnecessary, and these useful brackets can be reserved for some other function.⁴¹ The Leiden system of using a dot to represent a lost letter is, as I have shown, confusing for inscriptions that use the dot as an occasional word divider. Clearly the Leiden system needs some adaptation before it can be applied to Anglo-Saxon runes.

English runic texts need the following conventions;

1. For damaged runes which nevertheless can be certainly identified. In the Leiden system this is shown by a dot beneath the transcription symbol, but I have given reasons for objecting to this practice. I see no objection to Dickins's convention here of representing a damaged rune in italic (underlined in typescript).⁴²
2. For a completely lost rune that can be supplied with certainty, either from the context (though given the vagaries of the Anglo-Saxon spelling system and our ignorance of many dialectal details, this will rarely be possible) or from reliable early drawings of the inscription. 'Ann Arbor' and Dickins put such reconstructions

within square brackets, Dickins further italicizing the letter(s) supplied. I follow Dickins here.⁴³

3. For a damaged rune whose position is certain, but where the remaining fragments are ambiguous and the context cannot guarantee identification. ‘Ann Arbor’ puts a dot for such a rune, but this will not work for English runic inscriptions. Dickins experimented, ultimately using the small open point within square brackets. The objection to this is typographical — the typewriter does not have the symbol, which also confuses the typesetter who finds it hard to distinguish from the point. I suggest here a point between square brackets, following on from 2 above.

4. For lost runes where it is impossible to say exactly how many are missing. Leiden uses square brackets here, a sensible convention to follow.] can be used alone for the loss of the beginning of an inscription, and [alone for the loss of the end;⁴⁴ for an indeterminate number of runes missing within a text, []. There may be a refinement if it is possible to calculate roughly the number of characters lost: this number can be put within the brackets, as [-5-].⁴⁵ There may be cases where convention 4 should be combined with 3 above; for example, the Great Urswick ii text which Dickins gave as ‘lylþi|swo’ In fact the last fragmentary rune is uncertain: it is either ‘o’ or ‘a’, but too little of the lower arm remains to show which. Presumably Dickins read ‘o’ because of the common verbal form *worhte*. However, we know practically nothing about the Old English dialect of north Lancashire/Cumbria, and the Mortain casket has the (?)Anglian verb ‘gewarahtæ’. Possibly, therefore, the Great Urswick fragment ended ‘a’. Since this damaged rune had a clear place on the stone, it should be rendered ‘[.]’; it is followed by an unknown loss, ‘[]’. I would therefore transcribe Great Urswick ii ‘lylþi|swo [.]’.

5. A letter added by the editor because the rune-master either (a) omitted it in error, or (b) put in the wrong rune. Leiden has the convention of angled brackets, <>, here, and it is reasonable to follow this well established tradition. This sort of emendation will be rare in Old English runic texts since we know too little about them to dare to emend freely. A clear example is on the Overchurch stone, where the preposition ‘f o t e’ must surely be ‘f o <r> e’. Surprisingly Dickins makes a silent emendation at this point.

6. It may be desirable to have a convention to show when a rune-master put in a superfluous character: the Leiden hooked brackets, {}, would suit here. The only case I can think of — and we cannot be sure even of that — is again on the Overchurch stone whose first word should perhaps read ‘f o l c {æ}’.⁴⁶

7. I would also suggest a convention to show where a rune-master supplied a letter he had previously omitted in error. Here it might be convenient (and not confusing) to use the round brackets () which are still available. A clear case is the Hartlepool II stone where the name form reads ‘h i l d || d i (g) y þ’.

8. Lination. It is important to report how a monument divides its text into individual lines. For runic, as in Leiden, two methods can be used:

(i) The original lination can be reproduced in the transcription. If this is done, the single inverted commas that indicate runes can be omitted from the transcript, since it is clearly runic. Using this system, the Thornhill III stone text reads:

+ j i l s u (i) þ : a r æ r d e : æ f t [.]
 b e r h t s u i þ e . b e k u n
 o n b e r g i g e b i d d a þ
 þ æ r : s a u l e

It has the disadvantage of wasting space and making the general content of the inscription less accessible. Its advantage is to show at a glance how the text is laid out, and the general shape of the monument. Both qualities would be manifest if the main texts of the Ruthwell cross were transcribed in this way. Those of the west face, for instance, would begin:

+ k r i s t w æ s o n	
[m] i	r o
þ s	d i
t r e	h w
[l] u	e þ
m g	r æ
i w	þ e
u n	r f
d a d	u s [.]

This is certainly useful in showing how inefficiently the runes are set out on the cross and how hard it must always have been to understand the texts.⁴⁷ It is unhelpful to the reader interested in the material or the language of the inscriptions.

(ii) A more convenient method is to write out the text continuously, each line end indicated by a vertical stroke. By this method these Ruthwell cross lines would appear: ‘+ k r i s t w æ s o n | r o | d i | h w | e þ | r æ | þ e | r f | u s [.] |’ and ‘[m] i | þ s | t r e | [l] u | m g | i w | u n | d a d |’, which is marginally easier to follow.

9. The British Academy’s corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture introduces a further convention which could be useful for runic inscriptions. Where an inscription is divided by, say, a band of ornamental carving, or a structural feature, the division is shown by the double vertical stroke ||. Leiden uses this symbol to mark the beginning of each fifth line of an inscription, but that is unnecessary for English runes where the texts are seldom that long. An example of the convention in runic use is Hartlepool I, ‘h i l d i || þ r y þ’, where the shaft of the incised cross divides the name significantly into its two elements. Another example is the mysterious legend on the Thames silver mount. This reads ‘|| s b e r æ d h t i b c a i || e r h a d æ b s’. The runes were split into groups by the rivets that held the mount to whatever it was

fitted to. Whether the division into groups of characters has any significance or not I do not know, since I do not know the meaning of this inscription. But the transcript gives the reader the opportunity to consider the possibility.

10. I have found it useful to have a symbol for a character whose form can be clearly seen, but whose signification is unknown. These mysterious characters appear from time to time in runic texts (Leiden does not seem to find them), and it is convenient to represent them by an asterisk: thus, the Chessell Down scabbard mount has the text 'æ c o : * æ r i'. The asterisk warns the student that there is something amiss; he should return to the object, or to photographs or drawings, to find out what it is.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8:	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16:
ƿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ƿ	ƿ	ᵿ	ƿ	ƿ	ᵿ	ᵿ		*	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ
f	u	þ	o	r	c	g	w:	h	n	i	j	±	p	x	s:
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24:	25	26	27	28	29	30	31.	
ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	ᵿ	
t	b	e	m	l	ŋ	œ	d:	a	æ	y	ea	k	k̄	ḡ.	

FIG. 4

Suggested modification of the Dickins system of transliteration (cf. Fig. 1)

The Leiden system, adapted as it is to Classical epigraphy, has a few more conventions which are probably too sophisticated for Anglo-Saxon purposes. To take two cases. Leiden envisages a more elegant lay-out of legend than the Anglo-Saxons achieved or even attempted; so it provides a convention to show when part of a line is left vacant. Many of the Anglo-Saxon inscriptions are execrably set out on their objects, so it would be hard to know how to use such a convention for them, or even to know if it were worth while.⁴⁸ The Great Urswick i text overran the panel that was cut to hold it, and had to be finished off in the spaces left by the sculpture beneath it. The Hartlepool II stone has its personal name divided in two by the shaft of the incised cross, but the halves are not symmetrically placed. The Kirkheaton stone has an inscription casually divided into two grossly unequal parts. Again, I suspect that Classical Greek inscriptions use a more secure set of spelling conventions, or at least provide a much larger body of linguistic material to base an opinion about spelling on. This means that for them conjectural restoration or emendation is more securely based. English runic inscriptions, perhaps inevitably, will be transcribed with less detail and precision, and the scholar will have to go back the more readily to the original. There are, of course, some English examples where no transcription will be satisfactory. An example is the Hackness stone with its variety of scripts and its cryptic texts. Another is the Dover brooch where it is hard to tell which way up to hold the inscriptions and in which direction to read them. A third is the Ash/Gilton sword pommel where there are uncertainties about which are runes

and which arbitrary marks in the metal surface. For these the student needs photographs and careful drawings. In more conventional cases I have no doubt it would be salutary — despite Thompson's demurrer here — to print the inscription in runic symbols as well as in transcription, though there will be practical and financial objections. But it would help the scholar to think in runic terms rather than in Roman, and might save him from false argument.

Lastly there are two adjuncts to transliteration over which there need be little disagreement. Thompson asks (a) that linguistic normalizations of runic inscriptions be put in italics, and (b) that translations of them be set between double inverted commas. Of course, (a) is a requirement more suited to Norse than English needs, for there is a fairly standard system of writing Old Norse (usually Icelandic) which looks little like a runic transcript with its bizarre spelling, the result of the inadequacy of the 16-letter *fupark*. Save for the specialist, **kurmR:kunukR** needs to be converted to *Gormr kunungr*, and **þurliþr:nhaki** to *Þorleifr hnakki*.⁴⁹ With Old English this hardly applies, perhaps because there is no standard to convert the runic spelling to. However, a normalization is sometimes useful, if only to mark proper names by capitals and divide a text into its individual words, and it is customary to put it in italics. Translations of English runic texts (as indeed of other Old English texts) I have hitherto put between single inverted commas. This worries Einar Haugen who complains that it is confusing to use 'single quotation marks to indicate both transcriptions and translations'.⁵⁰ Apparently he cannot readily distinguish between the Ruthwell cross transcript 'k r i s t w æ s o n | r o | d i' and its modern equivalent 'Christ was on the cross'. To save him embarrassment I am happy to begin putting translations between double inverted commas, though editors of learned journals may object that this conflicts with their conventions.

FURTHER PROBLEMS

Thompson has stressed that a system of transliteration can only be an elementary guide. Its required qualities are accuracy, consistency and simplicity. I think the Dickins system, as I have emended it, has these qualities, though of course individual scholars may interpret differently the conventions affecting damaged or lost letters. In my opinion it is an advantage to distance the English runic texts from those of Scandinavia, as does the Dickins use of Roman letters within single quotes. Yet I must admit a major difficulty in using Dickins. It requires the runologist to identify a text as Old English and this cannot always be done. Obviously one cannot assume that every runic text found in England is Anglo-Saxon — there are several Norse runic monuments in the country.⁵¹ Nor are all runic texts in English necessarily in Old English — the Bridekirk font with its Norse runes and its (?) early Middle English inscription warns us otherwise.

On the other hand, if a runic text is found in England and includes distinctive Anglo-Frisian runes, it is natural to accept it as Anglo-Saxon. For instance, the newly-found Undley, Suffolk, bracteate has the retrograde legend 'g̃a g̃o g̃a . m æ g æ . m e d u'; 'g̃o' shows the Anglo-Frisian 'o'. This is presumably English even

though the art historian links the bracteate design firmly to Denmark/Schleswig-Holstein. I would regard the find-spot as decisive here.⁵² What, however, does the runologist do with the Caistor-by-Norwich inscription? In my transcript this reads ‘r æ i h æ n’, though a Norse runologist might give it as **raihan**. The provenance is English but the context is more ambiguous since archaeologists have suggested links between the Caistor-by-Norwich cemetery and South Jutland/Fyn, while the inscription’s *h*-rune shows the single-barred form typical of North Germanic. If in fact the inscription is North Germanic, it follows that any transcription which gives the fronted vowel, as ‘r æ i h æ n’, is misleading. Hence a Dickins-type transliteration should not be given, even for this find from an Anglo-Saxon cemetery. More problematic still is a famous solidus, a copy of one of Honorius, with a runic inscription usually rendered *skanomodu* (‘s c a n æ m æ d u’ in my present system). The piece is unprovenanced, first recorded in the collection of George III. The most recent survey of Anglo-Saxon gold coins regards it as English, though there is a slight philological preference for Frisia.⁵³ On numismatic grounds it is placed in the last quarter of the 6th century. A difficulty is the significance of the rune ‘æ’ (*œpil*). By virtue of its name this should represent *o . . . i*, yet on the runic solidus it appears as *o* not susceptible to *i*-mutation. Since the inscription uses the Anglo-Frisian ‘a’, it should also have ‘o’ (*os*). That it does not implies that, at this date, ‘o’ and ‘æ’ had not been conventionally distinguished. In contrast, the Chessell Down scabbard mount, which S. C. Hawkes dates to the mid 6th century,⁵⁴ shows conventional distinction in its inscription ‘æ c o : * æ r i’.

Prehistoric sound-changes are, by definition, impossible to date,⁵⁵ nor is it feasible to say precisely when, in a transitional period, a rune developed a new form or a new value. The distinctive Anglo-Saxon runic developments are the effect of sound-changes spread over several centuries, so there could have been no sudden change from Germanic to English runic systems. Consequently there will always be a problem about how to transliterate early or transitional runic inscriptions: a single system will not suffice to represent accurately both early and late texts. It might be more convenient, faced with the legend of the Honorius solidus, to transcribe it **skanomodu**, stressing thereby that the rune *œpil* had its early value of *o*. Such a transliteration would underline the difference between this piece and, say, the later Anglo-Saxon rune-stones (whose legends would be transliterated in a Dickins-style system), and might predispose the reader to think the solidus was non-English. The differences of the system imply a difference of runic traditions, which may not be true. I confess I do not know the solution to this dilemma. For my part I prefer — and it is only a personal preference — to signal the distinctive tradition of the later English runes by a distinctive transliteration system, rather than to stress the common nature of the later English and the non-English runes by using a common bold-face for both. Difficulties remain. From Southampton comes an inscribed bone, with no associated finds that would help precise dating. The text is clear to read, and I have transcribed it ‘c a t æ’, suggesting that it may be a personal name or nickname.⁵⁶ In a private communication Professor D. Hoffmann has given an alternative suggestion that looks convincing, although it leaves some philological points to be disposed of. Southampton was a trading port with contacts with Frisia.

One of the runes on the bone, the *a*-rune, might show a minor variant form diagnostic of Frisian. In early Frisian written texts appears the word *kāte* in a not very clear context but apparently with the meaning *Fingerknochen*.⁵⁷ Since the Southampton bone is the proximal phalange of an ox or cow, it could perhaps be called a *Fingerknochen*. Hoffmann therefore suggests that the Southampton inscription could be a Frisian one. A casual visitor simply cut on the bone the word for what it was. In that case we should, I suppose, transcribe the text **kataē**. A Dickins-style transcription might be misleading in such a case.

A further problem is that the use of the two different transcription systems disguises similarities between English and non-English texts. One example is the Welbeck Hill bracteate legend, perhaps from the later 6th century. Its runes, set radially and retrograde, are 'l æ w'. I have suggested that this is a copy made, without understanding, of the well-known bracteate text **lapu**.⁵⁸ A copyist could easily have confused 'w' (*wynn*) and 'þ' (*thorn/thurs*). The similarity between 'l æ w' and **lapu**, is, however, disguised by the different symbols, 'æ' and **a**, in the two transcripts. This is inevitable since any system suitable for English runes has to admit the fronting of *a* to *æ/e*; but the use of contrasting type-faces does not help. Another case is that of the newly-found runes on a Byzantine pail from the Chessell Down cemetery.⁵⁹ The inscription is partly eroded but the ending is clear, '] e c c c æ æ æ': indeed, from what remains two *e*-runes could have preceded this, giving 'e c æ' in triplicate. The *c*-rune is not quite the usual form, but matches that of the Chessell Down scabbard mount, so it may be a local variant. The tripling of the letters shows that this is not a plain language text. A group of Scandinavian pieces, amulets, bracteates, stones, has texts containing the sequence **eka/ika** which may have magical implications.⁶⁰ It is natural to compare the roughly contemporary Chessell Down II text with these, but again the differences in transcription systems, 'e c æ'/**eka**, conceal what may be a significant similarity.

Yet another objection to the use of a distinctive system for English runes has been put to me by Professor R. Derolez, in a private communication. He argues for contacts between rune-masters east and west of the North Sea after the Anglo-Saxon settlement, and fears that 'the distinction would only serve to project back the modern idea of national (political and linguistic) unity to a period where it just did not exist'. The objection is a cogent one and the only reply to it is pragmatic. Are there not equal, indeed I suggest greater, dangers in using the same system for English and non-English? There can be no completely satisfactory answer, and I present this modified version of the Dickins system only as one that will usefully serve the later Old English runic texts with their distinctive characteristics and their particular importance for early dialectal history in England. The problem raises again the point that Thompson dismissed so cursorily, whether it is helpful to print an inscription in normalized runic type as well as in transcript. In the cases I have adduced, there are good reasons for it. Such normalized types could include the coarse variants, the mirror image 's', 'n' and 'i' forms, the variant 's' of St Cuthbert's coffin and the Thames scramasax. Whether it should include the finer variants like the Chessell Down *c*-rune (also found on the Honorius solidus) or the Thames scramasax 'y' (also recorded in a graffito in the Leningrad Gospels) is less sure. For

single variants — which may be rune-master's errors — the reader needs a photograph and drawing.

Finally, are there any more conventions to be added to the system, bearing in mind Thompson's caution that it should 'not become overly complicated by trying to indicate too much'? I can think of two, though I do not know if they are really desirable, or if they add unnecessary complication to the transliteration system:

(1) the direction of writing. In English texts this is overwhelmingly left to right, but there are reversed legends, particularly on coins. It might be worth signalling, as Leiden does by an arrow, when a complete line is retrograde: as in the sceat legend ← 'e p a'. Parallel is the case of inverted runes, rare but sometimes found. A similar arrow ↑ could indicate a completely inverted line, though this convention could cause complications in, for instance, one of the *Æpiliræd* coin types⁶¹ whose legend is in two lines, each retrograde but the second one also inverted.

(2) an alteration or correction on the stone or other object. This happens occasionally, a very clear example being on the Ruthwell cross where the 'œ' of the sequence 'l i m w | œ r i g | n æ' was first cut as 'g' and then emended, presumably by the original carver. For this the Leiden double square bracket [] (which in Greek epigraphy denotes letters intentionally erased) could be adapted to alert the reader to the correction: 'l i m w | [] œ r i g | n æ'. There may not be enough examples to make this worth providing for, but future finds may change the situation.

There remain some untidinesses in the system. For instance, the use of the superscript to distinguish 'k', 'g̃' from 'k', 'g' strikes me as clumsy, and perhaps an improvement might be devised. However, there are difficulties in this particular rune range, partly in consequence of the difficulties Anglo-Saxon rune-masters themselves found in representing the various reflexes of PrOE *k*, *g* and *ȝ*. For convenience it is as well to retain the well-known Dickins graphs here.

I present this paper as a contribution to the discussion of the problems of transliterating English runes, not as a solution to them. The example of Leiden should be kept in mind. Though Thompson sets it out as a single, agreed system of transliteration, in fact it is not that: it is adapted to different purposes, and there is some element of personal interpretation in the way it is used. Moreover, it is worth remembering that the Leiden system is not thought suitable for rendering all early Greek epigraphical texts. To take a special case, those of the Cypro-Minoan syllabaries need a completely different system, one that is in some ways closer to those used for runes, since the original characters are transliterated into Roman or italic forms of the Latin alphabet.⁶² I see no reason why there should not also be different systems in use for the wide range of scripts that we call by the one term 'runic'. On the other hand it is certainly desirable that Anglo-Saxon runes have some consistent principle of transliteration. This article points out the problems: I hope it goes some way towards solving them.

I have several times implied — and I end by making the point explicit — that a system of transliteration is to be used with discretion. Different degrees of rigour are appropriate to different purposes. The epigrapher presenting a corpus of inscriptions must be rigorous, but the Anglo-Saxonist who wants to refer in passing to a

runic spelling may be less so. An obvious example affects the matter of lineation. For a corpus of inscriptions it would be desirable to lay out the text of the Ruthwell cross *Dream of the Rood* in short lines, as the rune-master did. For referring to a possible early locative form on Ruthwell a writer might be content with ‘on rodi’ or at the strictest ‘on|ro|di’ if he wanted to stress it was a runic spelling he was quoting; otherwise he might put *on rodi*. Again, in the matter of corrections, the epigrapher presenting his text formally in a corpus would presumably give it, errors and all — thus the second line of the Overchurch stone would read ‘] b i d d a þ f o t e æ þ e l m u n [’. Later in his discussion he might prefer to emend and perhaps to divide it into individual words, ‘] b i d d a þ f o <r> e æ þ e l m u n [’, particularly if he wanted to compare this rune-stone’s (*ge*)*biddan* formula with those of other memorials. Such freedom would not be misleading within its context, since the brackets would warn a forgetful reader what the editor was up to. In this paper I have tried to define a precise system of transliteration which can be used with some flexibility. In the last instance any system of transliteration falls down if it is too complex for the printer. Only experience will show whether the average British printer can cope with this one. The appendix shows the system in operation, with varying degrees of rigour.

APPENDIX: specimens of runic transliteration

1. Auzon (Franks) casket, left side:

‘rom walus and reum walustwægen || gibroþær || afæddæhiæwylifinromæcæstri:
ri: || oþlæunneġ’, *Romwalus and Reumwalus, twægen gibroþær, afæddæhiæwylifin Romæcæstri, oþlæunneġ*, “Romulus and Remus, two brothers, a she-wolf nourished them in Rome, far from (their) native land”.

2. Auzon (Franks) casket, front:

‘fisc.flodu. || ahofonferg || enberig || ← warþga: sricgrornþærheongreut
giswom || → hronæsban’, *fisc flodu ahofon fergenberig; warþ gasric grorn þær he on greut giswom; hronæs ban*, “The fish beat up the sea(s) on to the mountainous cliff. The king of ? terror became sad when he swam on to the shingle. Whale’s bone.”⁶³

3. Bramham Moor/Harewood/Sherburn-in-Elmet amulet ring:

‘ærkriufli || kriuriþon || glæstæpontol’

4. Chester-le-Street stone;

EADm | VnD

5. Dover stone:

‘+jislihard:’, *Gisheard*, masculine personal name.

6. Kirkheaton stone:

‘eoh: woro | htæ’

7. Llysfaen ring:

+A || LH || ST || An ||

8. Mortain casket:

+ goodhelpe:æadan
 þiiosneciismeelgewar
 ahtæ⁶⁴

+ *Good helpe Æadan þiiosne ciismeel gewarahtæ*, “+ God help Æada (who) made this ? reliquary”.

9. Mote of Mark stone:

’]aþili’ or ’]aþili[’

10. Overchurch stone:

f o l c { æ } a r æ r d o n b e c [
] b i d d a þ f o < r > e æ þ e l m u n [

11. Ruthwell cross, part of east face:

‘[+ . n d] g e r e | d æ | h i | n æ | g o | d a | l m | e i | t t i | g þ | a h | e w | a l | d e | o n | g ā | l g̃ | u g |
 i s t | i g̃ a | m o d | i g f | [o r e] | [- 3 -] | m e n | [b u g] | [’

+ *Andgeredæ hinæ God Almehttig þa he walde on galgu gistiga, modig fore . . . men, bug . . .*, “Almighty God bared his body as he prepared to climb the gallows, valiant in men’s sight . . . bow . . .”⁶⁵

12. Thames scramasax:

i. ‘f u þ o r c g w h n i j i p x (s) t b e ŋ d l m æ a æ y e a ’

ii. ‘b e a g n o þ ’

13. Thornhill II stone:

+ e a d r e d
 * s e t e æ f t e
 e a t e i n n e

14. Whitby comb:

‘d̄[æ] u s m̄æ u s || g o d a l u w a l u || d̄o h̄e l i p æ c y || [’,

Deus meus, God Aluwaludo helipæ Cy . . ., “My God, may God Almighty help Cy . . .”.

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NOTES

¹ For examples of this see my ‘A note on the transliteration of Old English runic inscriptions’, *English Studies*, XLIII (1962), 1–6.

² C. W. Thompson, ‘On transcribing runic inscriptions’, *Michigan Germanic Studies*, VII (1981), 90.

³ *Ibid.*, 95, note 6. *NlyR* = M. Olsen *et al.*, *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* (Oslo, 1941–).

⁴ Olsen *et al.*, *op. cit.* in note 3, v, 238–45.

⁵ The Manx runic corpus is published in M. Olsen, ‘Runic inscriptions in Great Britain, Ireland and the Isle of Man’, 153–233 in H. Shetelig (ed.), *Viking antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, VI (Oslo, 1954), corrected and brought up-to-date in R. I. Page, ‘The Manx rune-stones’, 133–46 in C. E. Fell *et al.* (ed.) *The Viking Age in the Isle of*

Man (London, 1983). For this form of naming and numbering the Manx stones see R. I. Page, 'Some thoughts on Manx runes', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, xx, part 3 (1980), 189–91.

⁶ I speak here after the bitter experience of correcting proofs of an article where Norse inscriptions were quoted in 'Ann Arbor', but I note that E. Moltke, in the discussion that followed Thompson's paper, *op. cit.* in note 2, 97, also found difficulties with subscript dots. The objection raised by A. G. Woodhead, *The study of Greek inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1959), 121, note 7, and repeated as late as 2nd ed. (1981), 126 ('Unless cast in one piece with the letter below which they stand, they must be set in separately, and the centrifugal force of the rotary printing process may cause them to fly out of place') is presumably irrelevant to new work as virtually all printing is now done from lithographic plates. However, even modern printing methods do not render subscript dots generally acceptable: in most cases someone who is not the author has to add them correctly to camera-ready copy. Not all founts are so designed as to allow tidy subscripts to be added: in one recent case, the standard letter *thorn* (þ) has a lowered bow which makes it impossible to add a subscript dot which is in line with dots under other letters.

⁷ Note, for example, the differences between Bruce Dickins's transcriptions of the Dover and Thornhill II stone inscriptions and mine: B. Dickins, 'A system of transliteration for Old English runic inscriptions', *Leeds Studies in English*, I (1932), 18–19, and R. I. Page, *An introduction to English runes* (London, 1973), 141, 156. I number the Thornhill II and III stones differently from Dickins, giving them in order of finding rather than arbitrarily. My *Introduction* gives details of the various runic texts from England discussed in this article, and should also be consulted for the meanings of the various technical runic terms used.

⁸ E. Moltke, *Runerne i Danmark og deres oprindelse* (København, 1976); see also *op. cit.* in note 2, 97.

⁹ As in W. Krause and H. Jankuhn, *Die Runeninschriften im älteren Futhark* (Göttingen, 1966); W. Krause, *Runen* (Berlin, 1970); K. Düwel and W.-D. Tempel, 'Knochenkämme mit Runeninschriften aus Friesland. Mit einer Zusammenstellung aller bekannten Runenkämme und einem Beitrag zu den friesischen Runeninschriften', *Palaeohistoria*, xiv (1968), 353–91. Interestingly enough, bold-face was avoided in H. Arntz and H. Zeiss, *Die einheimischen Runendeknmäler des Festlandes* (Leipzig, 1939) which was to form the first volume of a prestigious *Gesamtausgabe der älteren Runendeknmäler*. Arntz and Zeiss use italic, supported by a lavish use of runic type.

¹⁰ R. Deroloz, *Runica manuscripta: the English tradition* (Brugge, 1954).

¹¹ In the case of my *Introduction to English runes*, the printers simply changed all my bold-face texts (used for Norse and occasional other non-English inscriptions) into italic, presumably on aesthetic grounds; to save expense and reduce risk of error I left the italic stand, to the generous indignation of reviewers. For my corpus of Manx runic inscriptions, 'The Manx rune-stones', *op. cit.* in note 5, 140–41, the editor replaced bold-face by Roman. English printers' and editors' obvious reluctance to use bold-face is a good pragmatic reason for having an alternative transliteration system.

¹² Dickins, *op. cit.* in note 7.

¹³ This is not formally stated in Dickins's 'System of transliteration', but is used there in continuous prose, and also used in A. S. C. Ross, 'The linguistic evidence for the date of the "Ruthwell Cross"', *Modern Language Review*, xxviii (1933), 145–55, for whose benefit Dickins published his system, and popularized in B. Dickins and A. S. C. Ross, *The dream of the rood* (London, 1934).

¹⁴ Page, *op. cit.* in note 7, 37, 153.

¹⁵ D. M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon ornamental metalwork 700–1100 in the British Museum* (London, 1964), 84; cf. also the Alnmouth cross, Page, *op. cit.* in note 7, 153, where the formula MYREDaH.MEH.wO may have been finished elsewhere on the stone or may have been left unfinished.

¹⁶ We now know that the group 'gereda' was preceded by a cross and three runes, though Dickins was unaware of the early drawing that showed this: see R. I. Page, 'An early drawing of the Ruthwell Cross', *Medieval Archaeol.*, III (1959), 288 and pl. xxvi.

¹⁷ Dickins and Ross, *op. cit.* in note 13, 8.

¹⁸ As in my *Introduction*, particularly chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁹ J. M. Kemble, 'On Anglo-Saxon runes', *Archaeologia*, xxviii (1840), 327.

²⁰ As I point out in 'The Manx rune-stones', *op. cit.* in note 5, 133. My objection is not strictly chauvinistic. English scholars who are experts on Scandinavian runes are no more competent thereby to judge Anglo-Saxon ones than their Scandinavian colleagues; cf. the review by M. Barnes of my *Introduction* (*Medieval Scandinavia*, ix (1976), 246–54).

²¹ I do not attempt here any detailed or precise description of these sound changes. My account is incomplete since it takes no note of vowel length nor does it allow for such a change as that of *a* to *a/o* before nasals, since that is not reflected in runic developments. Moreover, I avoid phonetic or phonemic description, which would present problems in matters of dating and dialect. Instead, I give a rather old-fashioned philological account, which is not, I hope, misleading in the context of this article.

²² A recent interpretation of the 6th-century Nordendorf I brooch inscriptions suggests that runes were used for Christian purposes in southern Germany at that date: K. Düwel, 'Runen und interpretatio christiana. Zur religionsgeschichtlichen Stellung der Bügelfibel von Nordendorf I', 78–86 in N. Kamp and J. Wollasch (eds), *Tradition als historische Kraft. Interdisziplinäre Forschungen zur Geschichte des früheren Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1982).

²³ M. Archibald, 'The coinage of Beonna in the light of the Middle Harling hoard', *British Numism. J.*, forthcoming.

²⁴ R. I. Page, 'The use of double runes in Old English inscriptions', *J. of English and Germanic Philol.*, LXI (1962), 897–907.

²⁵ Hence the inclusion of the Ruthwell cross and Franks casket poems in the Anglo-Saxon poetic records, E. V. K. Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon minor poems* (New York, 1942), 115–16, and of several runic texts in H. Sweet, *A second Anglo-Saxon reader: archaic and dialectal*, 2nd ed. rev. T. F. Hoad (Oxford, 1978), 102–04.

- ²⁶ D. A. Seip, *Norwegische Sprachgeschichte*, 2nd ed. rev. L. Saltveit (Berlin, 1971), 19; E. Moltke, op. cit. in note 8, 108.
- ²⁷ Dickins, op. cit. in note 7, 17.
- ²⁸ Derolez, op. cit. in note 10, 9, 11, 59–60.
- ²⁹ B. Dickins, 'The inscriptions upon the coffin', 305–07 in C. F. Battiscombe (ed.), *The relics of Saint Cuthbert* (Durham, 1956).
- ³⁰ R. I. Page, 'The Old English rune ear', *Medium Ævum*, xxx (1961), 69.
- ³¹ Page, op. cit. in note 7, 40.
- ³² R. I. Page, 'The Old English rune eoh, ðh, "yew-tree"', *Medium Ævum*, xxxvii (1968), 125–36.
- ³³ See, for example, H. Arntz, *Handbuch der Runenkunde*, 2nd ed. (Halle/Saale, 1944), 65; L. Musset, *Introduction à la runologie* (Paris, 1965), 21; Krause and Jankuhn, op. cit. in note 9, 2.
- ³⁴ Dickins, op. cit. in note 7, 17, 19.
- ³⁵ Dickins, op. cit. in note 29, 306.
- ³⁶ B. Dickins and A. S. C. Ross, 'The Alnmouth cross', *J. of English and Germanic Philol.*, xxxix (1940), 171.
- ³⁷ Dickins, op. cit. in note 29, 305.
- ³⁸ See above, p. 23.
- ³⁹ See above, p. 26. There are other cases where Dickin's readings can be criticized in this respect. For instance, on the left side of the Franks casket several runes were shattered when the box was torn apart, but the transcript signals none of this damage. Nor is there indication that only the top halves remain of the runes on the bottom line of Thornhill III (II in Dickins's numbering). The same stone has a letter lost at the end of line 1, but there is no indication of this in Dickins's text; it was presumably 'e', giving the prepositional form *æfte*.
- ⁴⁰ Thompson, op. cit. in note 2, 92–93; for the Leiden system, see B. A. van Groningen, 'De signis criticis in edendo adhibendis', *Mnemosyne*, N.S. LIX (1932), 362–65; *Chronique d'Égypte*, xiii–xiv (1932), 285–87; and, adapted to Greek epigraphy, Woodhead, op. cit. in note 6, 6–11. However, Leiden is not such a 'unified system of editing' inscriptions as Thompson implies; there is a good deal of room for personal idiosyncrasy.
- ⁴¹ There are, of course, abbreviated forms in runic inscriptions, as **mkmrlawrta** (? *mik Mēri-la worta*) on the Etelhem brooch (Krause and Jankuhn, op. cit. in note 9, 39–40), but no consistent way of indicating abbreviations.
- ⁴² An objection raised at the Ann Arbor symposium but wisely suppressed in the discussion report is that it is confusing to represent both damaged letters and normalizations in italic. The two are, of course, easily distinguishable since representations of runes are in single quotes, normalizations not. I take it that in, say, Greek epigraphy it is not always feasible to employ a distinctive type-face for damaged letters, since not all printers have, for Greek, contrasting types like Roman and italic.
- ⁴³ Dickins is more liberal in his use of the italic between square brackets. He uses the convention for 'lost characters which can reasonably be inferred' (op. cit. in note 7, 19).
- ⁴⁴ The single inverted commas are useful here; otherwise it might be difficult to use [at the end of a sentence — the punctuation of the sentence might mislead the reader. A. G. Woodhead comments, in a private communication, that epigraphists should not 'leave square brackets unclosed . . . for the line came to an end *somewhere*'. However, there might be a case for a significant distinction here: closing the brackets where the inscribed surface survives though the inscription is lost, and leaving them open where the inscribed surface is broken away.
- ⁴⁵ Here is a case where Leiden does not produce a unified system. Some epigraphists will use [₅] where others use [₅].
- ⁴⁶ Dickins's treatment of this inscription (op. cit. in note 7, 19) is curious. Though he silently emends 'fote', he notes this anomalous 'æ' in a footnote. Whether 'folcæ' is anomalous or not is uncertain: see my article, op. cit. in note 1, 5.
- ⁴⁷ This lay-out helps to justify my suspicion that these runes, so clumsily arranged, are a later addition to the cross, not part of its original plan. However, U. Schwab has pointed to foreign models for this lay-out ('Das Traugesicht vom Kreuzesbaum', 161 in U. Schwab and E. Stutz (eds), *Philologische Studien. Gedenkschrift für Richard Kienast* (Heidelberg, 1978)).
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Pro | amp | hed | his | out | ien | ein | eei | sag |
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| .Cr | ats | nkt | ing | fic | llb | tos | der | r. |
- ⁴⁸ E. Okasha writes, in a private communication, 'In [Anglo-Saxon] non-runic texts, deliberate spaces are not infrequent and I like these to be marked'.
- ⁴⁹ K. M. Nielsen, 'Jelling problems. A discussion', *Medieval Scandinavia*, vii (1974), 156; Olsen, op. cit. in note 5, 193.
- ⁵⁰ Discussion after Thompson, op. cit. in note 2, 96.
- ⁵¹ R. I. Page, 'How long did the Scandinavian language survive in England? The epigraphical evidence', 165–75 in P. Clemons and K. Hughes (eds) *England before the Conquest. Studies . . . presented to Dorothy Whitelock* (Cambridge, 1971).
- ⁵² B. Odenstedt comes to a different conclusion, 'The inscription on the Undley bracteate and the beginnings of English runic writing', *Umeå Papers in English*, v (1983), 19. He argues that the bracteate must, on archaeological grounds, be attributed to southern Denmark or Schleswig-Holstein, and that the evidence for this is so strong that it outweighs both the presence of the Anglo-Frisian rune form 'o' and the provenance. I disagree, but I have not yet seen the full report of John Hines, on which Odenstedt relies.
- ⁵³ I. Stewart, 'Anglo-Saxon gold coins', 154 in R. A. G. Carson and C. M. Kraay (eds), *Scripta nummaria romana. Essays presented to Humphrey Sutherland* (London, 1978); R. I. Page, 'The runic solidus of Schweindorf, Ostfriesland, and related runic solidi', *Medieval Archaeol.* xii (1968), 21.
- ⁵⁴ S. C. Hawkes and R. I. Page, 'Swords and runes in south-east England', *Antiq. J.*, xlvi (1967), 17.

⁵⁵ This does not stop philologists from dating them. For instance, K. Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1914-), § 291, admitting *eine gewisse Unsicherheit*, puts the first stages of the development of *ans- to *ās/ōs* at 1. *Jahrh. vor und 1. Jahrh. nach Christi Geburt*, and *i*-mutation at 6. *Jahrh., wahrscheinlich erste Hälfte*. H. T. J. Miedema studied the relationship between some of these sound-changes and the Anglo-Frisian runic system, coming up with quite different dates, in 'Dialect en runen van Britsum en de oudste Anglofriesche Runeninscripties', *Taal en Tongval*, xxvi (1974), 101-28.

⁵⁶ Page, op. cit. in note 7, 170-71.

⁵⁷ On this word see J. and W. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1854-1954), under *kôte*, *kote*, and E. Verwijs and J. Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* ('s-Gravenhage, 1885-1941), under *cote*, *kote*.

⁵⁸ Page, op. cit. in note 7, 183.

⁵⁹ C. J. Arnold, *The Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of the Isle of Wight* (London, 1982), 27, 60 and fig. 10.

⁶⁰ As on the Danish Lindholm amulet and Sjælland 2 bracteate (L. Jacobsen and E. Moltke, *Danmarks Runeindskrifter* (København, 1941-42), *Text*, cols 315-17, 535-36): Noleby, Sweden, stone (Musset, op. cit. in note 33, 361-62); and elsewhere (Krause and Jankuhn, op. cit. in note 9, 210, 215).

⁶¹ Page, op. cit. in note 7, 126.

⁶² O. Masson, *Les inscriptions chypriotes syllabiques. Recueil critique et commenté. Études Chypriotes, I* (Paris, 1961), 91. That system of transcription is liable to infuriate the runologist, for it uses italic for undamaged letters and Roman for damaged ones. Greek characters are available for normalization. Runologists might benefit from the experience of students of these syllabaries, as, for instance, in the matter of variant rune forms which occasionally crop up (see above, p. 22). Cypro-Minoan scholars have devised a system of numbering graph forms, the common ones in arabic figures, archaic ones in roman. In this way individual graphs can be referred to by number: see E. Masson, *Cyprominoica: répertoires, documents de Ras Shamra, essais d'interprétation*, *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology*, xxxi, 2 (Göteborg, 1974), 11-17.

⁶³ Here the transcription, normalization and translation hide a number of problems: whether in the transcript the points should be given, since they may be (and in one case certainly are) only space-fillers; whether the normalization should present the text as two lines of alliterative verse, and what is the function of the additional phrase, *hronas ban*; what is the meaning of such compounds as *fergenberig*, *gasric*, and how should the first sentence be parsed.

⁶⁴ Here there is a decision to be made about the lay-out. The Mortain text is divided up by raised bands in the metal surface. Should they be represented in the transliteration? If so, the text should read:

+ goodh||e||lpe:æadan
þiiosneciis||m||eelgewar
ahtæ

The bands do not divide the text into significant groups. On the other hand, putting them in the transcript stresses how unsymmetrically the inscription is cut.

⁶⁵ It is difficult to know how to normalize this text. How much should the editor change the lettering of the original to produce a text that looks like the Old English that scholars are used to? I have normalized 'a l m e i t t i g' to *Almehtig*, but should I have put *Almehtig*? The double 't' is curious. On the general question of double runes in English inscriptions, see Page, op. cit. in note 24, particularly for the present case pp. 904-07.

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