

Thomas Karlsson
Uthark
Nightside of the Runes

Thomas Karlsson



UTHARK

Nightside of the Runes



INTRODUCTION

During nine days, the Nordic god Odin hangs in the world tree Yggdrasil. He hangs there sacrificed by himself, to himself. Without food or water, deeply wounded by his own spear, he endures the long nights in the tree. Odin's sacrifice in the tree is not an attempt to save man from his sins. He is not sacrificing himself to redeem a sinful world. Odin hangs in the tree by his own free Will. The Nordic world picture does not include belief in an original sin from which man and his world must be saved. The Nordic tradition does not emphasize any messiah. There are other reasons behind Odin's sacrifice. He hangs there for his own sake. He hangs there to gain wisdom and power. Odin hangs in the world tree in his quest for the outmost secrets of the universe, the secrets that he picks up from the depths in a scream of ecstasy.

Odin is not a messiah. He is in many ways a dark and demonic god, feared by most men. But he is a role model. Through his uncompromizing search for knowledge and power we can learn the secrets known only by him. Odin can become our teacher and initiator. He will not save us from any sins. But the path of Odin will reveal a magical initiation of knowledge and power. He can teach us to save ourselves from weakness and uncertainty. Odin can teach us the secrets of the runes.

This book is an introduction to runosophy, the wisdom of the runes, and to practical rune magic. The runes are dynamical symbols that characterize hidden forces. The outer shapes of the runes have changed through history, but the principles that they symbolize are today almost the same as during old Norse times. This book does not claim to include a historical description of runes or rune magic. It is an introduction to a rune magic that is constructed around practical work with the runes in modern time. The ambition, however, has been that the runosophy in this book shall be deeply

rooted in historical Nordic magic. Even if some of the runosophical knowledge in this book can not be recognized from archeological findings, the aim has been to describe keys to the same hidden reality that unites modern man with our ancestors in the past. Time has passed, but man is the same now and then. Just as the hidden reality.

To many people the spiritual quest is associated with heavenly spheres and a striving up towards the light. This reflects the great influence from religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In these religions the divine world exists somewhere in a distant heaven and God is a masculine sky god of light. In the older Pagan traditions the divine could also be found on earth and inside it, in the underworld. There was not only a male god but also as powerful goddesses. Man sought not only the light. The wise also entered the dark in their spiritual quest. The night sky with all its stars was as important as the daylight sky. The underworld was as important to visit as the heavenly spheres. This is reflected in the old Norse tradition. In the Nordic tradition the darkness is a prerequisite of illumination. When Odin hangs in the world tree he gazes into the depth to find the runes. The secrets of existence are hidden in the underworld.

The runes consist of a light outer form and a dark inner dimension. Rune magicians during all times have sought the inner secrets of the runes, striving with an ironwill like Odin to discover the hidden meanings of the runes. The runosophy of this book is based on a disputed thought that the rune row is written in a cipher to hide its secret meaning from uninitiates. The hidden and dark side of the rune row has been called the Uthark. This has been viewed as the inner esoteric rune row which is hidden behind the more common rune row, called the Futhark. When discussing this type of occult thoughts there are no actual right or wrong, true or false. Many have doubted the historical anchorage of the Uthark and many deep and advanced magical books based on the Futhark have been written. But the Uthark has revealed itself as a very powerful tool for entering the secrets of the runes and for exploring their night side.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Introduction

CHAPTER 1:	The Secret Wisdom of the North	13
CHAPTER 2:	The Uthark and the Runes	25
CHAPTER 3:	Runosophy	45
CHAPTER 4:	Man and His Souls	60
CHAPTER 5:	Northern Sorcery and Practical Runemagic	67
CHAPTER 6:	Rune Yoga	98
CHAPTER 7:	Runic Divination	104
CHAPTER 8:	Runosophy and Qabalah	114
CHAPTER 9:	The Uthark and the Nightside of Runes	121
	Postscript	
	Bibliography	

Chapter 1

THE SECRET WISDOM OF THE NORTH

The word rune in itself might give us a hint of what the runes really are. In the old Norse and Germanic languages, the word rune signifies "secret", "mystery" or "secret whisper". The runes were not used in normal writing at first, but were magical symbols or signs to describe different forces and principles in the universe and human existence. These signs are not only the runes that we can recognize from the rune rows. In a deeper sense the runes are hidden forces that are illustrated with certain writing signs, but also with gallders, songs and other magical practices. The runes and songs that Odin received after his initiation in the world tree are magical expressions of the hidden forces of the universe. Thus the runes can have many different meanings. In an outer aspect the word "rune" denotes the old Norse writing sign, on a deeper level it denotes the forces of the universe and the complete occult spirituality.

The runes and the Norse spirituality are edified after a classification that indicates a high intellectual ability and a profound understanding of existence. Today we can only acquire a fraction of the knowledge possessed by the wise of ancient times, but through whole-hearted studies we can hopefully achieve what is essential of the secrets of the runes.

Many modern scientists and scholars tend to underestimate the old cultures and are reducing their thoughts and religious beliefs to a plain and trivial level. One can easily get the impression that the main part of the old spirituality was concerned solely with harvest cults and burial ceremonies. The myths are interpreted as if they were naive and puerile descriptions of life. The majority of all

archeological findings are alleged as being grave artefacts. It seems here almost as if the interpretations are revealing more about the world picture of the scientists than about the ancient religion. This positivistic world picture that has deeply influenced modern science claims that man has progressed from simple and primitive levels to more and more advanced and sophisticated ways of thinking. This is a conception that logically arises through the meeting of the old monotheistic world picture and the materialism of industrialism. It is an unconscious analogy to how one experience that the self is progressing from a child-state to the more complex world of the adult.

There is no reason to believe that we are now on a higher intellectual or spiritual level than during ancient times. If an analogy is drawn to mankind, perhaps we are now as children and the peoples of ancient times were adults, but from the generation of a different cycle. Or we are now senile and confused elders! The reason why old findings are described as graves can be the fact that they are connected to the feeling of the past being dead and buried. The absence of corpses in many of the so-called graves is interesting. In any case, we must be prepared to accept that the ancient man was more progressed than us, intellectually and spiritually. In fact, the industrial society and the post-industrial information society are the type of societies in which man has been forced to focus most of his time on material work, and has thus had less time to develop the spiritual and intellectual side. One can draw the conclusion that the materially most advanced societies might be in danger of producing the intellectually and spiritually weakest persons. In the old societies life was often very hard, but there were also long periods where the inner work could take place; sophisticated religious practice, advanced philosophical views on existence and rich traditions of myths and stories. Thanks to Snorre Sturlasson and others, parts of this knowledge have been kept alive until today.

Our knowledge about the runes and the old Norse spirituality is derived from the Eddas and the Sagas, from archeological findings, from cave paintings, picture and rune stones and village names. Besides the Eddas, a book by the Danish historian Saxo

Grammaticus from the 13:th century also presented views on the old Norse world picture. We can also derive information from the Roman Tacitus (55-120) in his *Germania* and from Adam of Bremens descriptions. For those who wish to explore the secrets of the runes it is of great importance to investigate these sources. But one should not get stuck in archeological information. One must keep in mind that the runes and the old Norse tradition have gone through constant change. The knowledge have progressed and changed through the ages and with its practitioners. The runes and the myths are exoteric pictures of an esoteric reality that exists outside time. There is a profane time and there is a mythical time. We normally exist in profane time and here history occurs through death and return. Here we can reach knowledge through historical and archeological research. The mythical time is archetypal and lies beyond profane time and space. This is the time described by the myths. A shaman or magician can reach mythical time through extraordinary states of consciousness. The mythical time is, however, more easily accessed through knowledge on the profane level. Theory will enable practice, but one should not be too overly focused on archeological or historical details. The power that the runes are denoting is the same today as during the Viking age.

There are many theories regarding the origin of the runes. The four main theories are called the Latin theory, the Greek theory, the Etruscan theory and the Nordic theory. The Latin theory is most common today in academic circles. It is based on facts derived from findings and the similarities between certain runes and Latin letters. The Greek theory points out similarities between Greek letters and runes, like omega (Ω) and Odal (Œ). The Etruscan theory is based on the fact that certain findings of Etruscan origin were written with Etruscan letters but in old Norse language. The Nordic theory claims that the letters have their origin in the north and has influenced the other alphabets. There are also theories describing the runes as the letters used in Atlantis.

The Renaissance of the Runes

Rune magic, as we know it today, is derived from two main sources. One is from those who are researching old material and revitalizing the old tradition. We can call them the revivalists. The other source is from those who have kept patterns of ancient knowledge. We can call them the preservers. The first category often has its base in academic circles. The other is more commonly found in the country side. Among the revivalists, the theories are often revolving on a level of intellectual and philosophical patterns. The magic of the preservers on the other hand, is more down to earth and mixed with conceptions that have arisen through the years, for example certain aspects of Christianity. It can be found in the so called "black arts" books that were written in the Nordic countries, like the Icelandic "En Isländsk Svartkonstbok från 1500-talet". The revivalists can be divided into three epochs or generations. The Swedish, the German and the Anglo-Saxon.

The rebirth of Nordic spirituality begun during the "great power" epoch of Sweden (1611-1718) and the preceding decades. During these times many grandiose books were written, for example the "Atlantica" by Olof Rudbeck that describes Sweden's connections to Atlantis. The interest in the occult and the old Norse tradition was growing. The storgoticism (megleogothicism) was a current that connected Sweden with the Goths and explored hidden and occult aspects in a national romantic way. Johannes Bureus (1568-1652), a today underestimated writer, was part of this current and was the first great runic revivalist. He collected a vast material about runes and rune stones. He meant that the runes had an occult side that was similar to the letter-mysticism and numerology of the Qabalah. He called this system of hidden runes "Adulrunes" (noble runes).

The next generation of revivalists can be found in Germany between the Romanticism and the Second World War. During the Romanticism and the following epochs the interest for ancient Nordic and Germanic religion was great. The Grimm brothers collected folk-tales and the Nordic mythological operas of Richard Wagner were popular all over the world. In nationalistic circles,

the runes and Germanic spirituality was explored. The rune master of these circles was Guido von List (1848-1919). After a period of blindness caused by a surgical operation, he claimed to have been initiated into the mysteries of the runes. He wrote the very influential book "Das Geheimnis der Runen". List claimed, like Bureus, that there are hidden meanings in the runes. He describes the triple levels of the runes called "kalas". The first level is the outer exoteric level. The second is the inner esoteric and the third is the most secret "Armanen" level. The Armanen was according to List the secret initiated runic priests. Those who had been initiated by Odin. Guido von List created his own runic row called the "Armanen-Futhark" and it consists of eighteen runes which represent the eighteen runes or songs that Odin receives in the Havamal. List wanted to re-establish the old Germanic spirituality and the cult of Odin in an Odinistic (Wotanistic) movement. List had many followers and a Guido von List society and an Armanen society were created. The Edda society led by Rudolf Gorsleben and the Germanen order founded by Hermann Pohl were inspired by List. Many of these societies became increasingly political and were partly involved in the creation of the Nazi party NSDAP. The swastika and the use of the two Sieg runes in the SS are derived from List. Another follower of List, Siegfried Adolf Kummer included rune-yoga, rune-yodling, rune-mudras and magical circles connected to the Zodiac. He was forced to escape from Germany when the Nazis reached power. Friedrich Marby (1882-1966) was a rune magician who was more independent in his relation to List. He developed a runic gymnastics that might have inspired the rune-yoga of Kummer. Marby connected the runes to cosmic energies that could be channeled through the body. He was of Swedish origin and traveled to Sweden in 1928 to find the roots of the runes. In Germany he was imprisoned by the Nazis and sent to a concentration camp during the war.

The third generation of revivalists can be focused to the Anglo-Saxon and American parts of the world. From the seventies until today there has been a great activity in publishing books and starting societies. Some Odinistic societies are focusing on a race-mystical neo-Paganism, while others are purely occult groups.