

:FNL·FRY·XPH·HT·LCY·STB·MNF·XHX:

The Runic Alphabet

On
Why it is Ordered
the Way it is

A millennial mystery unravelled

By Philippe Baise

:FNL·FRY·XPH·HT·LCY·STB·MNF·XHX:

How Runes and Letters Graphically do Match¹

Latin	Greek		Etruscan	Runes	Lord of the Runes ²
A		alpha	Α	ᚠ	ᚦ
B		beta	Β	ᚢ	ᚷ
C	Γ	gamma	ϸ	ᚨ	ᚨ
D	Δ	delta	Δ	ᚫ	ᚫ
E		epsilon	Ε	ᚱ	ᚱ
F		digamma	Ϝ	ᚦ	ᚨ
Z		zeta	Ζ	ᚨ	ᚦ
H		eta	Η	ᚨ	ᚨᚨ
G	Θ	theta	⊗	ᚨ	ᚫ
I		iota	Ι	ᚨ	ᚨ
K		kappa	Κ	ᚨ	ᚨ
L	Λ	lambda	Λ	ᚨ	ᚦ
M		mu	Μ	ᚨ	

Latin	Greek		Etruscan	Runes	Lord of the Runes ²
N		nu	𐌒	ᚱ	
Ð/J	Ξ	xi	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
O		omicron	𐌐	ᚦ	
P	Π	pi	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
		san	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
Q		koppa	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
R	Ρ	rho	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
S	Σ	sigma	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
T		tau	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
U	Υ	upsilon	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
V	Φ	phi	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
X		chi	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
Y	Ψ	psi	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ
W	Ω	omega	𐌒	ᚦ	ᚦ

Runic Numeration

Decimal	Latin	Etruscan	Runes	Lord of the Runes ²
1	I			
5	V	^	^	^
10	X	X	X	X
50	L	T	↑	1
100	C	>	<	>
500	D			◊
1000	M		‡	

Numbers from 1 to 100³

I	II	II^	I^	^	^	^II	II^	I^	X
XI	XII	XII^	XI^	X^	X^I	X^II	IIXX	IXX	XX
XXI	XXII	XXII^	XXI^	XX^	XX^I	XX^II	IIXX1	IXX1	XX1
XXI1	XXII1	II^X1	I^X1	X^1	^IX1	^II^X1	II^X1	I^X1	X1
XI1	XII1	II^I1	I^I1	^I1	^I1	^II1	II1	I1	1
1I	1II	1II^	1I^	1^	1^I	1^II	1II^	1I^	1X
1XI	1XII	1XII^	1XI^	1X^	1X^I	1X^II	1IIXX	1IXX	1XX
1XXI	1XXII	1XXII^	1XXI^	1XX^	1XX^I	1XX^II	IIXX>	IXX>	XX>
XXI>	XXII>	XXII^>	XI^>	X^>	X^I>	X^II>	II^>	I^>	X>
XI>	XII>	II^>	I^>	^>	^I>	^II>	II>	I>	>

Ordering the Runic Alphabet

Below, runes are first considered in the classical order of the archaic Greek alphabet (Etruscan being the same.)

Groups of runes are then defined and dots temporarily placed between them. The last group is first set aside.⁴

:FBYÞMF·LHMIF·GMH·P·CYRST·N·XXΛQ:

From step 1 to 3, all other groups are each further divided in two. In each couple of pairs so defined, the groups from one pair are then swapped while those of the other aren't, thus featuring all the different possible combinations of doing iteratively so.

Step 1

As they form a single pair, groups 1 and 2 aren't swapped.

:FBYÞMF·LHMIF·GMH·P·CYRST·N·XXΛQ:

Step 2

Groups 1.1 and 1.2 aren't swapped. Group 2.1 is moved to the right of group 2.2.

:FBYÞMF·LHMIF·P·CYRST·GMH·N·XXΛQ:

Step 3

Groups 1.1.2 and 2.1.2 are moved respectively to the left of group 1.1.1 and to that of group 2.1.1. Groups 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 aren't swapped.

:ÞMF·FBY·LHMIF·P·CY·RST·H·GMH·N·XXΛQ:

And guess what?... That's the classical runic alphabet in all the glory of its traditional order, unambiguously discriminated in just a few simple steps out of more than half a quadrillion possible alternates.⁷

The table overleaf visually summarizes all the above steps.

Notes

1. In the table, most runes and letters do match phonetically too, though none are intently made to as tradition would have them.
2. Those runes are a subset of J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy Angerthas Moria, selected to be consistent with the real runic alphabet.
3. Albeit slightly differing from the classic Roman one, the runic numeration system showcased here is merely extrapolated from the same basic principles.
4. This is not arbitrary and does make sense, as there was a time when the alphabet our Latin one derives from counted fewer letters than it now does.
5. Omicron though must have something to do with the phonetic value of omega (Ϟ), and epsilon with that of nu (M). Psi was later used as the last rune of the shorter alphabet.
6. When put literally, the detailing of this last step may seem a bit tedious to read, but the underlying logic of it proves quite simple and consistent when studied under closer scrutiny. It is somehow intermeshed with step 1 to 3, and may in fact derive from how runes were used in oracles, such as with cards in some game of patience.
7. The Roman numeration system is obviously valid testimony in itself to the fact a process based on identical premisses such as the one described above may well have actually been applied to the alphabet.

Now, given that all of the alphabet letters can be attributed distinct numerical values and may be used to generate words instead of numbers in the same way, it might be interesting to determine whether any known language has ever actually been so created.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
F	F	▷	▷	ƒ
		⋈	⋈	⋈
B	B	ƒ	ƒ	▷
		F	F	.
Y	Y	B	R	F
		Y	Y	R
▷	▷			Y
⋈	⋈			.
ƒ	ƒ			X
⋈	⋈	⋈	▷	▷
H	H	H	H	H
⋈	⋈	⋈	X	.
			†	†
l	l	l	l	l
†	†	†	†	†
⌈				.
⋈				
M				
†				
◇				

