

A re-assessment of Early Runic Metrics

This paper on early runic metrics systematically excludes inscriptions of the transitional period and the Viking Age. Thus, the focus is on the metricity of the unsyncopated, linguistically archaic runic inscriptions of the older period AD 150-500/550. This has the advantage of systematically excluding syncopated or partially syncopated inscriptions such as the Eggja stone and the Blekinge inscriptions. Due to their linguistic status, these inscriptions will have to be subjected to a separate study.

The author takes a minimalist standpoint by first taking the position of the *Advocatus Diaboli*. This means that metrical criteria of the older runic inscriptions should speak for themselves without being directly derived from or equated with later language stages with their elaborated metrical systems. In other words, the present approach attempts to avoid constrictions and direct comparisons with the Old Germanic literary languages, especially Old Norse and Old High German. This is so because the language typology of Ancient Nordic cannot directly be equated with Old Norse in terms of syllabic metrics (cf. Pascual 2016 on Old English). Sievers' typology (Sievers 1893) is also rejected here as a straightforward tool for analysis, since it is oriented towards the Old Germanic literary languages. This raises the basic question of scientifically verifiable regularities of early runic metrics that meet criteria of validity and reliability.

The leitmotif of this analysis is the fusion and interaction of language, sentence rhythm and alliterative metrics. Not entirely unexpectedly, the Germanic long line emerges as the basic unit of Ancient Nordic metrics, since it can be relatively reliably verified in a small group of older runic inscriptions. Finally, this unit is identified as the proto-long line of North-West Germanic metrics.

Keywords

Early Runic metrics, Germanic long-line, proto-long-line, Germanic verse, older runic inscriptions, Sievers' s metrical types, formulaicity, resolution, heaviness requirement.