

One of the criteria treated as important is the occurrence of elite or “princely” graves in the immediate or wider environment of possible chiefly farmsteads. Consequently, since the settlement of Hitzacker-Marwedel is located in the vicinity of two early Roman Iron Age elite burials, it is classified as a chiefly site right from the start. However, finds and structures from Hitzacker-Marwedel hardly deviate from the average spectrum of contemporary settlements – a fact that cannot be concealed by exchanging the term chiefly farmstead with the term princely site. The thematically very heterogeneous chapter ends with an outlook on the conditions in the later Roman Iron Age without, unfortunately, answering the fundamental question regarding the suitability of the concept of chiefly farmsteads or princely sites in the given context.

Regrettably, the author does not provide the data for many of his evaluations (house lengths, sizes of farmstead, number of pit houses, etc.), so his results cannot be reproduced. The maps showing the distribution of house types in different phases are also impossible to verify, since no overview of the temporal allocation of the individual house plans is given. Furthermore, in future publications the image of the magnetic survey from Hitzacker-Marwedel should be provided with a scale of nanotesla values, so that the picture can be compared with data from other sites.

Given the outlined shortcomings, the conclusion of this discussion is ambiguous. Shortfalls like the missing review of the state of research in Danish settlement archaeology or the largely unpublished database reduce the value of the study. The last chapter on the so-called chiefly farmsteads seems thematically overloaded and with little reference to the rest of the work. Moreover, the a priori classification of the settlement of Hitzacker-Marwedel as a chiefly farmstead impedes an appropriate discussion of the site. However, the study is of great importance as similar comprehensive works are already several decades old. The book provides quick and up-to-date access to house plans, farmsteads, and settlement types of the Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. Hence, the work will be an important reference for anyone involved in settlement archaeology in the period under study.

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ARNULF KRAUSE, Runen. Geschichte – Gebrauch – Bedeutung. Marix, Wiesbaden 2017. € 6.00.
ISBN 978-3-7374-1056-4. 223 pages, 18 illustrations.

The first question many readers of Arnulf Krause’s new book about runes might ask is: Do we really need another introduction to runology? As a matter of fact, some relevant books on runes written by well-known runologists do already exist. The fourth edition of “Runenkunde”, a brilliant and well-known introduction written by one of the most famous experts, Klaus DÜWEL, was published in 2008 (Stuttgart, Weimar; 278 pages), a fifth edition is planned by the author. For countless students and scholars of German / Scandinavian Philology and disciplines like History and Archaeology, this introduction has been an essential guide and a basis for getting into runological research. It provides insight into all relevant runic traditions from the beginning to the High Middle Ages and beyond, discussing the main problems of research, offering an extensive bibliography which represents the current stage of research and other useful information like the addresses of runic research institutions or information about places where runic finds are kept today. K. Düwel’s book is written in a way that makes it useable for students and scholars as well. Mention

should also be made of Michael BARNES's book (*Runes. A Handbook* [Woodbridge 2012] 256 pages) which in part is based on courses in runology the author gave in the Department of Scandinavian Studies, University College London. Without doubt, Barnes is an expert on runes as well, best known as editor of runic inscriptions from the British Isles and for his articles about linguistic and methodological aspects. His handbook addresses undergraduate students in particular. Unfortunately, Barnes's book is rather selective, important aspects like the Migration Period gold bracteates, the Franks Casket and the southern Germanic (Alamannic and Frankish) material are more or less only mentioned in passing. The book is written in English and it focuses on English research literature, which is problematic (for criticism see K. DÜWEL's review in *Linguistica e Filologia* 33, 2013, 163–168).

An introduction to runology, explicitly written for “laymen” but at the same time well-founded and based upon professional academic standards, does not exist so far. This is regrettable, as runes are getting more and more popular – films, comic books, metal bands and other media refer to them. However, most of the literature about runes available in internet bookshops is not written by professionals but by esoteric and ideological authors. A vast amount of highly obscure publications is waiting for the interested layman searching for information.

For this reason, A. Krause's new book, written by an Old Norse Philologist and explicitly addressed to interested laymen without any academic knowledge, is highly welcome. A. Krause is honorary professor for *Ältere Skandinavische Sprache und Literatur* and lecturer at the *Institut für Germanistik, vergleichende Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft* at the University of Bonn. He has published several books, specially aimed at lay readership, on topics such as the Vikings, the Celts, the crusades, Germanic and Old Norse Mythology, and others. His translations of the “Poetic Edda” and Snorri Sturluson's “Prose Edda” are well established.

The current book gives insight into all relevant fields of runological research – in a concise and lively manner. A. Krause devotes the first pages to the occurrence of runes in modern literature (like J. R. R. Tolkien and Jules Verne), to an overview of the history of the Germanic tribes, to the term “Germanisch” and to an outline of the different runic traditions. In the second chapter, the basics of runic script are explained, and the important question who used it – the problem of the “Runenmeister” – is considered. The third chapter deals with the divine origin of the runes (an idea which is shared by many ancient cultures), their relation to the gods Óðinn and Þórr and the magical use of runes – which is indeed well documented but not the only possible one, as A. Krause correctly points out. Chapter 4 presents the main theories about the origin, the age and the inventors of the runic script and concludes that it was created in a cultic context, which is a plausible, if highly debated, position. The fifth chapter deals with the inscriptions in the Elder Futhark – objects from South Scandinavian sacrificial sites such as the bogs of Nydam and Thorsberg, the golden horns of Gallehus, early rune stones, gold bracteates, its use in Alamannic tradition and some extraordinary examples like the inscription on the golden necklace of Pietroassa (Romania), mentioning also the tribe of the Goths, the belt buckle from Pforzen (Bavaria), presumably presenting the beginning of a heroic poem, and the bones from the river Weser with Saxon inscription, probably containing a kind of curse. These examples are well chosen.

Chapters 6 and 7 introduce the reader to Viking runic tradition, the inscriptions in the Younger Futhark. A. Krause starts with a catchy summary of Viking history, illustrating the enormous geographic scope of Scandinavian culture in the Early Medieval Period. This is the background of runic inscriptions found on the British Isles, Greenland, Iceland, Poland, Russia, Ukraine and Turkey. Prominent and important examples like the skull fragment from Ribe, the early Viking rune stones from Rök, Sparlösa, Hedeby, Jelling and others are highlighted. The entire chapter 7 is dedicated to the numerous late Viking rune stones of Middle Sweden. This is very complex mate-

rial, skillfully summarised by the author. Particular attention is paid to inscriptions referring to the building of bridges, the position of women, the great expedition into the East led by the Viking chief Ingvar and to rune stones with depictions of Sigurðr the dragon-slayer.

In chapter 8 the author talks about the Anglo-Saxon inscriptions of England, with detailed paragraphs about two of the most relevant monuments: the Northumbrian Franks Casket – a chest made of whale’s bone, decorated with depictions of Roman, Christian and indigenous pagan narratives as well as runic inscriptions – and the stone cross from Ruthwell with its unique inscription, referring to the poem “Dream of the Rood”, which is preserved in written sources more than two centuries later. Chapter 9 deals with the use of runes during the Middle Ages – in manuscripts (*runica manuscripta*), as graffiti in churches, on inscribed wooden pieces (*kefli*) found in the Hanseatic city of Bergen, giving insight into medieval everyday life, and in form of runic charms and prayers on amulets.

The tenth and eleventh chapters are dedicated to the perception, reception and misuse of runes in modern times – which is a very important topic in an introduction for laymen –, retelling the history of Scandinavian and German research comprehensibly and making understandable why the runes fell into lasting disrepute. In Scandinavia, scholars “rediscovered”, documented and fancifully interpreted the runic heritage as early as in the 16th and 17th centuries. A. Krause points out that ideological points of view influenced runology since its very beginnings, when Swedish scholars like Olof Rudbeck (1630–1702) aimed to prove that their country was the oldest nation of the world and the runes the first writing system. In Germany, where no inscriptions were known at that time, the topic arose during the period of Romanticism, when interest in Germanic culture and Ancient Scandinavia grew, and Wilhelm GRIMM – with his work “Ueber deutsche Runen” (Göttingen 1821) – established the academic subject of runology.

Misinterpretations of runes (or what people thought to be runes), which are often influenced ideologically, and even fakes of inscriptions are quite common since the early periods of runic interest. One of the earliest cases is the Runamo rock in Blekinge (Sweden), covered with linear cracks and scratches, which were interpreted as runes in 1841. Especially well-known are the inscription on a piece of bone found in Maria Saal (Austria) in 1924, which in fact was faked by one of the excavation helpers, and the rune stone from Kensington in Minnesota (USA), which was probably made by a Swedish immigrant in the late 19th century. The inscription on the Externsteine (Germany), another good example given by A. Krause, is definitely not genuinely runic but rather based on the publications of the occultist Guido (von) List (1848–1919).

List was an important figure of the late 19th and early 20th century “völkisch” movement, with its neo-pagan and racist ideas, which provided the basis of pseudo-academic runology and misuse of runes during the Nazi period. A. Krause introduces relevant authors and influential publications like Guido LIST’s “Das Geheimnis der Runen”² (Leipzig, Wien 1912), Rudolf John GORSLEBEN’s “Hoch-Zeit der Menschheit” (Leipzig 1930) and Alfred ROSENBERG’s “Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts” (München 1930). He also mentions the role of the National Socialist SS and the “Forschungsgemeinschaft Ahnenerbe”, in particular Herman WIRTH’s work about the so called Ura-Linda-Chronik (“Die Ura Linda Chronik”, Leipzig 1933; for a recent publication on H. Wirth and the transnational “völkisch” network of the 1930s see Luitgard Löw, Gottessoehn und Mutter Erde auf bronzezeitlichen Felsbildern. Herman Wirth und die völkische Symbolforschung [Frankfurt am Main 2016]). I would like to mention that regrettably all these terrible publications are available again in several cheap reprints and still have great impact, particularly on the current neo-pagan scene. As a matter of fact, the absurd ideas of yesterday are still very present and widespread on the internet. I will return to this issue later on.

Chapter 12 is about runological practice, describing the examination and interpretation of runic finds step by step. This brief, instruction-like outline gives the reader an idea of what the actual work of a runologist looks like and how it is closely linked with – and in a way dependent on – archaeological knowledge and archaeological methods.

To sum up: A. Krause's recent book is a very good overview of the topic suitable for interested laymen, informative and entertaining at the same time, telling the history of runes and runological research like an exciting story. The author has chosen the most fascinating and most important runic objects and incorporated them into a conclusive overall picture. He has succeeded in summarising all relevant aspects of runology on just about 200 pages, on the basis of remarkably profound knowledge – even though he is not a runologist himself. Although A. Krause had to be very brief and to simplify complex issues, he brings up different scholarly opinions and current discussions, and no serious errors are to be found in this little book. In a way, it appears like a kind of “light version” of K. Düwel's *Runenkunde*. There are obvious parallels and it seems evident that the author was inspired by the runologist's successful introduction. However that may be, A. Krause's book has some shortcomings to be mentioned:

1. A. Krause does not transliterate the inscriptions in the established way. Instead, he reproduces them with idealised runic characters. This gives a very misleading impression of the carvings in question. It would have been much more sensible if he had presented the inscriptions in conventional notation and explained how transliterations are to be understood and why runologists use them.

2. The book contains only 14 small black-and-white illustrations of runic items, many of them of inadequate quality. In my opinion, this is not enough for a book about archaeological objects written for a lay readership. A. Krause could have made more of it. However, this point of criticism might rather be addressed to the publisher than to the author. As a side note, I want to mention a very short but brilliantly illustrated introduction to runes, focusing on English material, published by the British Museum: Martin FINDELL, *Runes* (London 2014).

3. There are almost no references in A. Krause's text at all – which is quite alright for a non-academic publication, of course. Then again, giving just a few footnotes and references to the main literature would have offered the reader the opportunity to learn more about the topic independently and would have made the book usable for students, too. The bibliography given by A. Krause seems only a cosmetic addition – important authors like Lisbeth Imer, Sven F. B. Jansson, Tineke Looijenga, Erik Moltke, Robert Nedoma, Martin Opitz, Peter Pieper and others cannot be found. Uwe SCHNALL's “Bibliographie der Runeninschriften nach Fundorten 2: Die Runeninschriften des europäischen Kontinents” (Göttingen 1973) is missing. Sadly, the “Verzeichnis der besprochenen Runeninschriften” is incomplete as well (as examples: Hennøy, Hüfingen, Malt and Pietroasa are missing).

Ultimately, these shortcomings do not diminish the small book's great value as a comprehensive and well-founded guide to runology for non-academic readers, which should, with its price of only 6 Euro, be affordable even on a pupil's pocket money.

Finally, I would like to add a more general point of criticism and a future perspective, which is not directly related to A. Krause's book. His chapter about the ideological misuse of runes ends with Nazi Germany. Unfortunately, there is no paragraph about runes in *recent* extremist movements and other subcultures, which in fact have come to dominate the public perception of the runes. Runic inscriptions are a unique source for the study of ancient Germanic cultures, and working with them is exciting. Nevertheless, their continuing misuse and dubious reception still necessitate political education and make it still difficult for runology to get rid of negative associa-

tions. Many interested laymen are likely to be young people who are faced with runic symbolism in their everyday life – especially on the internet, where extremist and esoteric ideas are highly visible. This leads to the question if, in this case, a conventional book is the most suitable medium for educational work at all. Do young people interested in runes buy and read books? Would it be more sensible to aim for a kind of online platform conducted by experts of Old Norse and German Philology, Archaeology, Ancient History and other related disciplines, in order to impart knowledge about “Germanic” topics like runes, far beyond ideological and popular patterns? As long as Germanic history does not play any role in the curricula of our schools and thus this topic is surrendered to extremists, fantasists and popular culture, such an internet platform seems to be an important desideratum. In the meantime, A. Krause’s book will be helpful to educate and fascinate lay readers with its reliable and professional presentation.

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BARBARA HAUSMAIR, Am Rande des Grabes. Todeskonzepte und Bestattungsritual in der frühmittelalterlichen Alamannia. Sidestone Press, Leiden 2015. € 135.–. ISBN 978-90-8890-295-6. (Hardback). € 44.95. ISBN 978-90-8890-295-6. (Paperback). 367 pages with 117 figures, 14 tables, and a digital appendix with additional 232 tables.

This publication is the revised doctoral thesis of Barbara Hausmair, which she defended in 2013 at the University of Vienna. It is amended by a digital appendix available online in open access (<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:352-0-283673> [last access 17 October 2018]). In 2014, the doctoral thesis was awarded the Grete-Mostny-Dissertation-Prize of the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies of the University of Vienna.

The book is divided into eight chapters, preceded by a short introduction (pp. 9–11) in which Hausmair emphasises that a close scrutiny of the archaeological material, particularly with regards to typological and chronological indicators, has up until now formed the core of early medieval studies published in German, with a second focus placed on the reconstruction of social structure. Although matters of religion have been taken into account, especially in connection with the transition from paganism to Christianity, the relationship between Early Medieval people and death, as well as Early Medieval people’s ontology and social practices had rarely been discussed. The aim of the reviewed publication, therefore, is to contribute to this underrepresented aspect of research.

The first chapter (pp. 13–31), on “archaeology and death”, summarises the history of research in Early Medieval burial archaeology, focusing in particular on analyses and interpretive models created by German-speaking archaeologists. Starting with the first extensive works on Merovingian burial sites in the 19th century, Hausmair moves on to a discussion of the publications of important authors such as Joachim Werner, Rainer Christlein, and Heiko Steuer. The research history ends with the recent analyses of social structures which have mainly been shaped by the work of Sebastian Brather. This short overview of Merovingian burial research history might be especially useful for students and readers new to Early Medieval burial archaeology as it provides a well-informed introduction into Early Medieval burial research. This chapter also includes a historical