

Texts and Contexts of the Oldest Runic Inscriptions



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17. FALLWARD (Niedersachsen, Germany). In the Museum Bederkesa. A wooden footstool, richly decorated in *Kerbschnitt* after Mediterranean fashion. Dated ca. 425. It was found in 1994 during excavations of a grave field in the Fallward *Warft*, near Wremen, 4 km. south of the well-known Feddersen Wierde (Düwel 1994²:14ff.).

The stool has on the bottom a sketch of a dog chasing a deer or elk, and on the front a runic inscription: **ksamella lguskapi**. The runes run left.

𐌰𐌿𐌰𐌶𐌰𐌸𐌰 𐌰𐌿𐌰𐌶𐌰𐌸𐌰

The first **a** in **ksamella** has three sidetwigs, which reminds one of the so-called ornamental forms of the OOSTUM inscription (chapter nine, nr. 3), showing a **b** with three loops 𐌶 and an **h** with three bars 𐌿. The **s** runes are in three strokes. The **k** rune has been rendered as a little hook, such as in BALINGEN, CHARNAY, AQUINCUM and KENT I.

ksamella is a misspelling for *skamella*, cf. Latin *scamellus*, German *Schemel* ‘footstool’.

lguskapi can be read either *l(a)guskapi* (cf. ILLERUP **lagupewa**), or *(a)lguskapi*, borrowing its initial **a** from the preceding ultimate rune of *skamella*. It happens more often that one rune should be read twice.

Presumably, *Alguskapi* is a name. The second element *-skapi* may be 2 sg. imp. of **skapjan* ‘to hurt, to damage’ (Antonsen 1975:54), cf. **hahaskapi** on the STRØM whetstone, see Appendix, Norway, nr. 44. (Krause 1966:112 transliterates and interprets *hāhā skapi*, as a 3 sg. opt. ‘damage the growth’).

Other possibilities are a nomen actionis ‘hurt’, or a nomen agentis ‘hurter’, either male or female, *i*-stem (compare the Dutch name *Tesselschade*, daughter of a ship-owner who lost part of his fleet in a terrible storm near the island of Texel). *Skaði* is also known as the name of the giantess whom *Njorðr*, god of the sea, married.

algu- means ‘elk’, ON *elgr*. If there is a connection between the drawing and the inscription, *Alguskapi* may be the buried man’s name ‘Elkhurter = Elkhunter’. If a nomen agentis, the language may be West Gmc, masculine nom. with loss of the nominative marker *-z* < **skapiz*.

The footstool was a part of the rare and precious grave gifts in a rich ship burial. Among these was a wooden chair, also richly decorated in *Kerbschnitt* with meanders and swastikas, after Mediterranean fashion. The deceased was buried with his Roman military equipment. He himself, clearly a veteran from the Roman army, might have made the inscription, since ‘scamella’ is Latin. The elk was not yet extinct in North Germany in the early Middle Ages and there

existed a special breed of dogs for chasing elks. The text can be interpreted as: 'footstool of Alguskapi'.