

# Texts and Contexts of the Oldest Runic Inscriptions



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29. NIEDERSTOTZINGEN (Baden-Württemberg, Germany). In the Württembergisches Landesmuseum, Stuttgart. A silver strap end, part of an elaborate girdle-set, dated 1st h. 7th c. Found in 1963 in a man's grave in a row-grave field. The girdle set looks brand new. The strap end was made of a silver strip from a sheath mouth, which was inscribed before it was re-used. Thus, the runes may have nothing to do with the girdle set (cf. Düwel 1994<sup>b</sup>:264). There are runes on both sides of the strip; some of them show rare or unique forms.

One might read: **big?s: ?liub ?ud?d bre?u**

ᚸᚨ    ᚷᚷᚷ    ᚠᚠᚠᚠᚠ    ᚠᚸᚠᚠᚠ    ᚷᚠᚠᚠᚠ

The whole inscription appears to have been made by an unpractised runecarver; some signs barely escape the impression of being pseudo runes or script imitation. One can recognize the sequence **liub**, which might be an adj. nsm./f./n. *a-/ō*-stem, 'dear, beloved'; or a substantive, nsn. *a*-stem 'love', cf. **ENGERS**, nr. 16, **leub**, and **leob** in **WEIMAR I**, nr. 44. If so, the spelling of the diphthong is interesting, because it shows the development from Gmc *\*eu* > *iu* in Alamannic and Bavarian before labial; in Franconian the development would be either *eu* or *eo* (Braune/Eggers § 47, Anm. 1, the evidence is found in names from eighth-century charters).

The third 'word' **?ud?d** in the inscription might be guessed from right to left as *d(e)du(n)*, which would point to a maker's formula. Trying to make sense of the rest inevitably leads to speculation. (see also Düwel 1992<sup>a</sup>:55.)