

**ICHL 2007 Montréal**  
**Plenary Sessions / Conférences plénières**

**Rome, Etruria, Carthage? Origins of the Germanic runes**  
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The ultimate origin of the Germanic runic writing system in the Canaanite consonantal alphabet is obvious, but the immediate source of the system is less clear. While variants of a theory of a Greek source alphabet continue appearing and will find attention in this lecture, three theories, two old (the "Latin thesis" and the "Etruscan thesis") and one new (the "Phoenician thesis"), will be most directly expounded and evaluated. A catalog of explananda will be presented as a basis for evaluating the different theses, among them:

- the shape and value of the runes
- the naming and order of the runes
- the writing rules
- the time and location of the earliest finds

It will be shown on this basis that while no theory so far is able to account for all the properties of runic writing, there exist among them considerable differences of explanatory power.

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