

Runic Cipher: A Type of Substitution Cipher

KRYPTO SLEUTH

May 24, 2024

1 History of Runic Cipher

The Runic Cipher is a type of substitution cipher that dates back to the Viking Age (8th to 11th centuries). Runes were ancient Germanic alphabets used by various Germanic peoples, including Vikings. The Runic alphabets were used for writing, divination, and magical purposes. Over time, these alphabets evolved into different forms, with the Elder Futhark being the oldest known runic script.

2 Usage of Runic Cipher

Runic Cipher was primarily used by the Vikings and other Germanic tribes for secret communication, especially in military and diplomatic contexts. The cipher involves substituting the letters of the standard Latin alphabet with corresponding runic symbols. This substitution makes the message unreadable to anyone who is not familiar with the runic script or does not possess the key to decode it.

3 Queen Mary of Scots and the Insecurity of Runic Cipher

Despite its historical significance, the Runic Cipher was not entirely secure. One notable incident involving the insecurity of this cipher is the death of Queen Mary of Scots.

Queen Mary of Scots, also known as Mary Stuart, was a prominent figure in Scottish history. She reigned over Scotland from 1542 to 1567. Mary was involved in various political intrigues and conflicts, including the struggle for power with her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I of England.

Mary frequently used encryption to communicate secretly with her supporters and allies. Among the encryption methods she employed was the Runic Cipher. However, the Runic Cipher proved to be vulnerable to decryption by her enemies.

One of Mary's messages encrypted using the Runic Cipher fell into the hands of her adversaries. They were able to decipher the message, which contained

incriminating evidence against Mary, implicating her in a plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I. This discovery led to Mary's arrest, imprisonment, and eventual execution in 1587.

The downfall of Queen Mary of Scots due to the insecurity of the Runic Cipher serves as a cautionary tale about the importance of using robust encryption methods for secure communication.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Runic Cipher is a fascinating example of ancient cryptographic techniques. While it played a significant role in the communication practices of the Vikings and other Germanic tribes, its security flaws were evident in historical events such as the downfall of Queen Mary of Scots. Nevertheless, the Runic Cipher remains an intriguing aspect of cryptography and continues to be studied by historians and cryptographers alike.

Attached with this is the sample example and problem. Solve it and post the solution as directed earlier.