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Runic insignia of the *Schutzstaffel*

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The **runic insignia of the *Schutzstaffel*** (known in German as the *SS-Runen*) were used from the 1920s to 1945 on *Schutzstaffel* flags, uniforms and other items as symbols of various aspects of **Nazi** ideology and **Germanic mysticism**. They also represented virtues seen as desirable in SS members, and were based on *völkisch* mystic Guido von List's **Armanen runes**, which he loosely based on the historical **runic alphabets**.

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Runes used by the SS [[edit](#)]

Rune	Name	Meaning	Comments
	<i>Sig</i>	"Victory" or "Schutzstaffel"	<p>The <i>sig</i> rune (or <i>Siegrune</i>) symbolised victory (<i>sieg</i>). In its original form as the 4-rune of the Younger Futhark, it represented the sun; however, von List reinterpreted it as a victory sign when he compiled his list of "Armanen runes".^[1]</p> <p>It was adapted into the emblem of the SS in 1933 by Walter Heck, an SS <i>Sturmhauptführer</i> who worked as a graphic designer for Ferdinand Hoffstatter, a producer of emblems and insignia in Bonn.^[1] Heck's simple but striking device consisted of two <i>sig</i> runes drawn side by side like lightning bolts, and was soon adopted by all branches of the SS – though Heck himself received only a token payment of 2.5 Reichsmarks for his work.^[2] The device had a double meaning; as well as standing for the initials of the SS, it could be read as a rallying cry of "Victory, Victory!".^[1] The symbol became so ubiquitous that it was frequently typeset using runes rather than letters; during the Nazi period, an extra key was added to German typewriters to enable them to type the double-<i>sig</i> logo with a single keystroke.^[3]</p> <p>Internationally-renowned American rock band, Kiss, uses a different logo in Germany than it does for the rest of the world, due to the two 'S's in their logo (which spells out 'KISS') resembling the double-<i>sig</i> rune.^[4]</p> <p>In February 2012, it was reported that United States Marine Corps scout snipers had been using the double-<i>sig</i> rune to symbolize their function since at least the 1980s.^{[5][6]} The disclosure led to strong public criticism due to the link with the SS. The Commandant of the Marine Corps gave orders to stop the practice, issued an apology and ordered an investigation into the prevalence of the practice.^[6]</p>
	<i>Eif</i>	Zeal / enthusiasm	The <i>Eif</i> rune is a rotated version of the J or <i>Eihwaz</i> rune. During the early years of the SS it was used by Hitler's personal adjutants, such as Rudolf Hess . ^[2]
	<i>Ger</i>	Communal spirit	The <i>Ger</i> rune was used to symbolise the communitarian ideal of the SS. The 11th SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Division Nordland , a Waffen-SS unit, adopted the rune as a variant of its divisional insignia. ^[2]
	<i>Hagall</i>	Faith in Nazism	The <i>Hagall</i> rune was widely used in the SS for its symbolic representation of "unshakeable faith" in Nazi philosophy, as Himmler put it. ^[7] It was used in SS weddings as well as on the SS-Ehrenring (death's head ring) worn by members of the SS. It is roughly similar to the * or <i>Haglaz</i> rune of the Younger Futhark, which stood for "hail", but it was modified by von List for his Armanen runes. List considered it to be the "mother rune" of his runic alphabet and envisaged it as a representation of a hexagonal crystal. ^[8]
	<i>Leben</i>	Life	The <i>Lebensrune</i> or "life rune" was used by the Lebensborn e. V., the SS body responsible for the Lebensborn programme which supported the "racially, biologically, and hereditarily valuable families" of SS members and other "Aryans". ^{[2][9]} This interpretation of the "man" rune is not based on List, but it occurs as early as the 1920s in the literature of Germanic mysticism , ^[10] and it came to be widely used within the NSDAP and Nazi Germany , e.g. in official prescriptions for the various uniforms of the <i>Sturmabteilung</i> . ^[11] The <i>Yr</i> rune came to be seen as the "life rune" inverted and interpreted as "death rune" (<i>Todesrune</i>) During the World War II era, these two runes (Y for "born", ʌ for "died") came to be used in obituaries and on tomb stones as marking birth and death dates, replacing asterisk and cross symbols (* for "born", † for "died") conventionally used in this context in Germany.
	<i>Odal</i>	Kinship, family and blood unity	The <i>Odal</i> rune symbolised several values of which were of central importance to Nazi ideology. It was adopted from the Elder Futhark ʰ-rune. During the Second World War it was used by the 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division Prinz Eugen , as well as the SS-Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt , which was responsible for maintaining the racial purity of the SS. ^[12]
	<i>Opfer</i>	Self-sacrifice	The use of the <i>Opfer</i> rune – which, like the <i>Eif</i> rune, is a rotated version of the J or <i>Eihwaz</i> rune – preceded the Nazis, as it was first adopted after 1918 by the Stahlhelm war veterans' movement that eventually merged with the Nazi <i>Sturmabteilung</i> (SA). The symbol was adopted by the Nazis after 1923 to commemorate the party members who died in Hitler's failed Beer Hall Putsch . ^[2]
	<i>Tod</i>	Death	The <i>Todesrune</i> is the inverted version of the <i>Lebensrune</i> or "life rune". It was based on the ʌ or <i>Yr</i> rune, which originally meant "yew". ^[9] It was used by the SS to represent death on documents and grave markers in place of the more conventional † symbol used for such purposes. ^[2]

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	Tyr	Leadership in battle	The Tyr rune followed the design of the † or Tiwaz rune , named after Tyr, the god of single combat, victory and heroic glory in Norse mythology. Its association with war meant that the SS thought of it as the "Kampf" or battle rune, symbolising military leadership. The SS commonly used it in place of the Christian cross on the grave markers of its members. It was also used by graduates of the SA <i>Reichsführerschule</i> , which trained SS officers until 1934; they wore it on their upper left arms. It was adopted as an emblem by the 32nd SS Volunteer Grenadier Division 30 Januar , which was assembled from the members of SS schools in January 1945, as well as by the SS Recruitment and Training Department ^[12]
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Other esoteric symbols used by the SS [edit]

As well as List's Armanen runes, the SS used a number of other esoteric symbols. These included:

Symbol	Name	Meaning	Comments
	<i>Wolfsangel</i>	Liberty and independence	The <i>Wolfsangel</i> ('wolf hook') was used as a heraldic symbol alluding to a wolf trap, and is still found on the municipal arms of a number of German towns and cities. It was adopted by a fifteenth-century peasants' uprising, thus acquiring an association with liberty and independence. The Nazi Party adopted the symbol during its early years and it was subsequently widely used by the SS, including by units such as the 2nd SS Division Das Reich . A variant of the <i>Wolfsangel</i> was used by the Weer Afdeelingen, the paramilitary wing of the National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands and the 34th SS Volunteer Grenadier Division Landstorm Nederland , which was raised from Dutch Nazis. ^[12]
	<i>Heilszeichen</i>	Prosperity	The <i>Heilszeichen</i> symbols appeared on the SS "death's head" ring and were used to symbolise good fortune and success. ^[12]

See also [edit]

- Nazi symbolism
- Uniforms and insignia of the *Schutzstaffel*
- Germanic mysticism
- Nazism and occultism

References [edit]

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- ↑ ^{*a b c d e f*} Lumsden, p. 18
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- ↑ http://www.feelnumb.com/2011/09/14/kiss-changed-their-logo-for-german-market/
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Categories: Military insignia | Nazi SS | Runes in Germanic mysticism

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