Understanding English Grammar

Linguistic Problem of the Month, October 2011: Gothic Names

by Tom Payne.

Gothic is an extinct language spoken by the Goths, a group of Germanic peoples living throughout Europe between about 300 and 1700 of the Common Era. Much of what is known about Gothic, and closely related languages such as Burgundian and Vandalic, comes from inscriptions on gravestones, as well as an early translation of the Bible.

The earliest attestations of the Gothic language are in a Runic alphabet known as "Elder Futhark." Later a specifically Gothic alphabet was designed in order to promote Romanization and Christianization of the Goths. This alphabet was a combination of the Runes, the Greek and the Latin alphabets.

In this problem, you are given several traditional Gothic names, derived from gravestone inscriptions. Some are written in the Elder Futhark runes, and/or the Gothic alphabet. The last one is given in English translation only. Your task is to fill in the blanks, with the Elder Futhark, Gothic or English translations. This kind of work is very similar to what linguistic archeologists do when they attempt to decipher unknown writing systems (Note: In order to submit your solution, you will have to print this page, fill it out carefully, and send me a scan of it, or figure out some way to cut and paste the Elder Futhark and Gothic characters into a word processing document. The font I used is called "Alphabetum Unicode").

Elder Futhark Runes	Gothic Alphabet	Meaning
ᚦᚨᚾᛞᛁᛚᚨᛒᚨᛚᛞᛊ	ᚷᚨᚾᛞᛁᛚᛚᛒᚨᛚᛞᛋ (Vandalbalds)	"Bold Vandal"
ᚦᚢᛚᚠᚨᛒᚨᛁᚱᚺᛏᛊ	ᚷᚢᛚᚠᚨᛒᚨᛁᚺᛏᛋ (Wulfabairhts)	"Bright wolf"
ᛊᛁᚷᛁᛊᚨᚦᚢᛚᚠᛊ	ᛊᛁᛚᛁᛊᚨᚷᚢᛚᚠᛋ (Sigisawulfs)	"Wolf victory"
_____	ᚦᚱᚨᛊᚨᚾᚨᚾᛞᛊ (Thrasanands)	"Daring confidence"
_____	ᚲᛖᛁᚲᚨᚠᚱᛁᛞᛊ (Keikafrids)	"Peaceful ruler"
_____	ᚲᛖᛁᚲᚨᛊᚷᛁᚾᛞᛊ (Keikasginds)	"Strong ruler"
_____	ᚷᚨᚾᛞᛁᛚᛚᚨᚠᚱᛁᛞᛊ (Vandilafrids)	"Peaceful Vandal"
_____	ᚷᚨᚾᛞᛁᛚᛚᚨᛊᛁᛚᛁᛊᛞᛊ (Vandilasigisds)	"_____"
ᚦᚱᚨᛊᚨᛒᚨᛁᚱᚾᛏᛊ	ᚦᚱᚨᛊᚨᛒᚨᛁᚺᛏᛋ (Thrasabairhts)	"_____"
ᚱᛖᛁᚲᚨᛒᚨᛚᛞᛊ	ᚲᛖᛁᚲᚨᛒᚨᛚᛞᛋ (Keikabalds)	"_____"
ᛊᛁᚷᛁᛊᚨᚷᛁᚾᛞᛊ	ᛊᛁᛚᛁᛊᚨᛊᚷᛁᚾᛞᛋ (Sigisasginds)	"_____"
_____	_____	"Confident ruler"