

Uppsala May 5, 2011

Statement by Prof. Henrik Williams in response to Runestone Museum affidavit

Introduction: A couple of months ago, I was sent a copy of a Runestone Museum (RSM) undated affidavit (cover letter dated January 18, 2011) dealing with my examination of the Kensington runestone (KRS) on September 30, 2010. More recently, I also received a report of a microscopic examination of the KRS (Wolter 2011). These documents force me to address their contents, since they are to a great extent misleading. I am afraid that this will be rather lengthy, but experience has taught me to aim for completeness when recording the dealings with the RSM and people associated with it. I will hence try once and for all to document the true facts of what went on at the RSM during my examination.

Affidavit: The RSM affidavit has no legal status. It is understandable that this is the case, since the falsehoods in a document of such a status would be actionable.

The affidavit contends incorrectly about me: “[H]e asked Carol if she saw a dot on the dotted R in line six on the face side inscription and Carol responded ‘yes’ Henrik then said, ‘if the dot is man-made (meaning that it is an intentional chisel mark) the KRS is a genuine medieval artifact’.”

I did not say this, and the fact that my statement is phrased as a quote is misleading. No recording of the conversation was made. Lorraine (not Lorraine!) Jensen, to whom I had made my observation once already, was standing to my left and Ms. Meyer to my right. Mr. Adam and Ms. McCoy were in my estimation too far away to have been able to clearly overhear our conversation, but by signing the document, they perjure themselves in either case.

What I did say is not material since the words are close enough to the purported quote, even if the meaning is quite different. But what I pointed to is decisive: not any ᚱ-rune on line 6, but the second þ-rune in þþ on line 8 (where there is no ᚱ-rune, at all). The mistake in the affidavit may seem innocent, but it shows that none of the RSM people understand what they are custodians of.

On line six there are two ᚱ-runes, in ΨXᚱ (**war**) and ǼBᚱIR (**Ǽptir**), the affidavit does not clarify which one I supposedly indicated. I did examine both these runes during my investigation and supported the 3D evidence against the existence of any dotted **R**, presented by Richard Nielsen in a letter to the RSM Information Committee before my visit (Nielsen 2010) and again by him at his presentation later on the same day as my inspection (<http://www.richardnielsen.org/Discussion.html>). It is now clear to me why he of all people was denied access to the KRS inspection. Obviously the RSM wants to maintain the fiction that there is a genuine dotted **R** on the KRS, which there certainly is not, and I made a special note of the fact that the ᚱ-rune of ΨXᚱ is *not* dotted (see further below). The claim in Wolter’s report that I had “requested” “Dotted R data” (p. 2) is therefore ludicrous, and not backed up by any documentation other than a reference to the meaningless affidavit.

Examination of þ-rune: I have 25 years of experience examining runestones. I came to the RSM prepared to study a certain phenomenon and I made detailed and simultaneous annotations during my examination. The rune that was of vital interest to me was the second þ-rune of line 8 (see above) of which I noted that its “pocket” had no less than three depressions and that conscious, man-made dotting was indeterminable, although I leaned towards that it is not dotted. In any case, as Dr. Nielsen and I agreed afterwards, evidence must be unambiguous to be valid. The case for a medieval origin of the KRS cannot be allowed to rest on such uncertain proof.

If I had been allowed to have Dr. Nielsen present during my examination we could perhaps come to a concurrent opinion to rule out the dotting of this rune. The RSM does not address the true reason for its refusal to allow him access to do just this.

It is thus evident that I pointed out the þ-rune and no other rune to Ms. Meyer, who did answer the question if she was familiar with the inscription of the stone by responding that she knew nothing about it, at all (corroborated by Ms. Jensen).

Why would the RSM people make such a mistake?

Wolter 2011 report: From this report it becomes clear that the RSM signatories must have been persuaded into believing that they had heard something they did not, in order to support the spurious object of the report. Its “scope” includes providing “suitable background information regarding the recent visit of the Swedish runologist who made statements about the inscription that prompted this examination [...]” and “[p]erforming a microscopic examination of specific areas of the inscription including the dotted R rune on line six in the word ‘waR’ to determine if the shallow punch in the upper loop was man-made or is a natural feature in the rock” (p. 1). The latter is prompted by the assertion (p. 2) that “The Museum saw an opportunity to provide the appropriate Dotted R data requested by Professor Williams.”

In his report Mr. Wolter also claims that “[t]he importance of this rare runic feature prompted a personal visit to the Runestone Museum by [...] Williams” (p. 5), which is untrue, and he fails to provide any documentation of his allegation. Wolter also refers to his “expertise over twenty-six years as a forensic geologist” and “having extensive experience studying hundreds of man-made inscriptions of all kinds into rock” (p. 2). If this is correct, it is the more sad that his writings still show no evidence of him having learned anything about runic writing on stone. He is obviously under the misguided impression that geology is all it takes to decipher a runic inscription. He has the temerity to write: “Williams likely would have made a positive public statement about the authenticity of the Kensington inscription had a geologist been present to examine the punch mark to attest to its man-made origin.”

I utterly reject both the declaration of my intents and the conclusion based thereon. Furthermore, geologists cannot neither tell you what is written and what is not nor date inscriptions on stone: “We are all unconvinced and/or hesitant of the possibility to ascribe an age to the runes based on current data”, writes Dr. Runo Löfvendahl (2005, [p.3]) as representative of a six-person team of stone experts. No modern geologist agrees with Mr. Wolter’s conclusions (Löfvendahl & al. 2004, *passim*), although he pretends that to be the case. And he himself is not a member of the scientific community of geologists and is thus not qualified to pronounce on the matter. He is a petrographic technician with a Bachelor of Science in Geology, but with no academic degree on a graduate level, and he has not published a single article in a scientific medium, nor even written a peer-reviewed report, although he alleges that he has. This explains the reaction of Dr. Löfvendahl (2005, [p. 3]): “Hence, it surprises me a bit, that more than a dozen American geologists support your interpretation. Who are they, and have they studied the stone themselves?” Of course they have not, nor are they “geologists” in the sense a professional such as Dr. Löfvendahl has reason to assume. Mr. Wolter has not presented the actual documentation to prove that any qualified geologist has reviewed his work in writing. Only persons related to him through his firm or personally are ever mentioned, such as in the 2011 report (p. 14 note 1) where six of Wolter’s own colleagues are claimed(!) to have “reviewed” it.

Mr. Wolter seems to think that any mark in a stone surface may constitute runic writing. But reading runes is, of course,

“a task for a fully trained runologist, versed in how to distinguish what is writing and what is not, as well as interpreting that writing. It is *not* a task for archaeologists, geologists or

historians. The runes were carved by *people*, for people to read. Doing so is a human activity, not a technical one. When you get a hard-to-read postcard from your grandmother, you ask someone used to old handwriting for help, not an expert on different kinds of paper!"¹

The stone surface of the KRS is today quite filled with pit marks of different kinds. Some of these are presumably the result of geological processes and others of forces inflicted by man after the discovery in 1898. There is no way of telling for sure even by photographs which of these marks were present just after the runic inscription was carved and which have been added by the rough handling of the stone since:

One of the major problems with the KRS is all human interferences since the stone w[as] found. It was cleaned with different liquids, scratched with nails or similar, m[o]lded a number of times, polluted with gypsum; all these and other unknown interferences changing the appearance of the stone. (Löfvendahl 2005, [p.3].)

Even marks that are definitely man-made may have no linguistic relevance. The KRS ʝ-rune, for example, is clearly dotted twice and "barred" once, but is still just a u-rune. Its only parallel in any runic writing anywhere appears in the so-called Larsson rune-row from 1883. That these dots indicate a 19th century setting for the KRS is for some reason of no interest for Wolter to note. Only possible indications, however fragile, of a medieval origin are promoted by him.

Summary: The RSM affidavit untruthfully claims that I asked Ms. Meyer to examine an R-rune, whereas I did ask her to look at a Þ-rune. The Wolter 2011 report cites "Dotted R data requested by Professor Williams". I have not requested any such data, nor is any documentation of my request provided. The report is based on false premises and contributes nothing of significance to KRS research.



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¹ Quoted from my lecture at Alexandria Technical College, September 30, 2010. See <http://runicstudies.org/fall-2010-lecture-tour/>