



The Yarmouth Runic Stone RUNIC WRITINGS IN THE NEW WORLD Susan Tomory

The Yarmouth Runic Stone

Upon inquiry I obtained the following information from the Yarmouth County Museum and Historical Research Library on December 14, 1996 concerning the Yarmouth Runic Stone: “I have included some information which I hope will be helpful to you. Our stone was found in 1812, but there is a lot of controversy surrounding it. There are several translations — none of which have been successfully proven — or disputed. It is one of Yarmouth’s greatest mysteries.”

1. The December 29, 1953 issue of the Herald reports that the Historic Sites Advisory Council of Nova Scotia (Will R. Bird, chairman) convenes in January of the next year. The subject was to settle the question and origins of the runic stone.

The stone weighs about 400 pounds, with a flat side across the top which holds an inscription containing 13 clearly cut letters. The scientists at this conference attempted to prove a connection between this stone and the presence of the Vikings in this region. The stone was found about six miles from the ancient “Norse masonry” work, which is believed to have been Lief’s „great house”. One plausible translation of the runic inscription was made in 1934 by Olaf Strandwold of Prosser, Washington, a former county superintendent of schools and a student of runeology. He found the Yarmouth characters similar to the Norse Runes of the 9-12th centuries. His translation reads as follows: “Laeifr Eriku Risr—Laeifr”.

2. The February 4, 1957 copy of *The Light* gives a short summation of theories concerning the discovery of Canada. Fournier’s *Traite Hydrographic*, published in Paris in 1657 mentions the presence of Basque fishermen, the namegivers of Cape Breton a hundred and fifty years before Columbus.

3. The August 13, 1975 issue of the *Vanguard* cites different opinions which defute the “Norse-Course” of the stone. Another opinion believes the inscription was done by the natural forces of nature (Olsen and Liestol, *Vanguard* Dec.7, 1966). Other very reputable scholars believe the characters are letters of the ancient European

or Near Eastern characters, including the Nordic, Anglican and Teutonic runics. Phillips comparing the characters came up with the following results:

Letters 1 and 10 are Picemian, 2. Phrygian 3. Early Aramaic 4 and 11 North Etruscan, 5, 6 and 12 Oscan, 7 Pompeian, 8 and 9 Latin early monumental, 13 Messapian origin.

Some other experts believe the stone was carved as a scholarly joke by the “discoverer” of the stone: Dr. Richard Fletcher, a retired army surgeon.

4. The October 24, 1967 issue of the Herald mentions in favor of the Norse theory an Indian pictograph at Kedgemakoogee depicting a Norse ship.

5. A letter by A. Gordon Wickens to the Vanguard and published in the February 1967 issue states that the first character resembles a Latin “l” without the dot and the fifth character is obviously a compounded character and that “runes were never, but never compounded.” He mentions some similarity of characters with the Kensington stone

6. A summation gives translations in the following languages: Norse, Japanese, based on old Japanese, done by John Campbell; he also believed that the language of the Choctaw, the Maskoki or the Chicasa tribes in North America spoke a variant of the Japanese. Basque solution was found by Dr. Barry Fell of the Museum of Comparative Zoology Harvard University in 1976. An Early Greek translation was proposed by Mr. Esmiol in 1974. He claimed that the characters of the Fletcher stone are from the royal Mycenaean alphabet.

7. A letter to the Editor of the Yarmouth Herald (January 21, 1936) gives a fair summation of the translation efforts of the runic stone. Among them he states the following: “Hungarian Origin. My undertaking of the research necessitated me to order special books from Budapest in history as well as books on the etymology of the Hungarian language and during the four years research I have found plenty of evidence to convince anyone, but a dogged hypocrite, that most of the North American Indians are of Hungarian origin and their relatives the Uigurs and Scithians.”

8. The Runic Collection # H-9 gives a short history of Hungarian presence in Canada: “According to historical records, the first Hungarian in this land was a poet and scholar, Stephen Parmenius Budai. He reached the shores of Newfoundland in 1583, with Sir Humphry Gilbert’s expedition which established the first British colony at St. Johns. Their ship, the Delight, sank in a grave of waves, but Budai’s poem written in Latin about the expedition, survived. One might go back even further, although as the years stretch the facts become less certain. To wit, one might look at the ancient rock inscriptions in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, the text of which is legible as Transylvanian runic letters, read from right to left. Scientific research verified that Lief Ericson and his Vikings reached Canada a thousand years ago in 992. Their chronicles recorded that one of them, a foreigner, was called Tyrkir (‘The Turk’), and the ancient rock inscriptions found in Yarmouth may be by his hand.”

The two extreme views which declare the writing as a work of nature, or it attempts to originate every letter from another people’s writing speak for themselves. The opinion under § 5 needs to be corrected. The „Latin l without a dot” is the letter „sz” (pronounce s) of the Siculo-Magyar rovás (runic) alphabet. The mentioned fifth character which is obviously a compounded character and that “runes were never, but never compounded.” is incorrect. The “compounded letters” called ligatures are an integral and significant part of the Siculo-Magyar rovás system from the earliest times on. Some other characters of the Yarmouth stone show significant resemblance with the Magyar rovás.

The photograph of the stone found in 1966 shows a letter which corresponds to a Magyar rovás letter; there is

also an obvious ligature.

We will bring the further attempts in translating the Yarmouth script.

The rovás (runic) letter of János Zakariás, a Jesuit missionary in South America, dated 1756.

dr. Ferenc Fodor

In the XII-XIV yearbook (page 155) of the Józsa A. Múzeum of Nyíregyháza Dezső Csallány has written an article concerning the Hungarian rovás (*"Rovásírásos emlékek a Kárpátmedencében"*, translation: *Rovás scripts in the Carpathian basin*). In this article he quotes the letters of missionaries János Zakariás and Dávid Fáy. These letters were dated between the years of 1749-56 and their copies were preserved in the Budapest University Library as part of the Kaprinai collection.

The Jesuit missionary János Zakariás wrote a letter from his mission in Peru on April 16, 1756 to the rev. József Bartakovics. His letter was written in the Hungarian and Latin languages, where he used rovás characters in the Latin text only. . Apparently he wanted to use the Hungarian rovás texts as a secret message. He also made a remark: "If you don't know the Siculo-Hunnic characters, go for advise to Vargyasi, Bél, and Otrókócsi."

He had ample reason for secrecy based upon the translation of the text, which was completed by prof. Csallány:

"...These (persons) usually place everyone whom they meet in workplaces like the mines or even seize them to do some other lowly work, and the old people are killed in order not to spread the news of these actions, and they cut off the four fingers of some others, the fingers which are necessary to span the bow; to make the mothers more suitable for travel they tear their babies from their bosoms and smash the babies to the first stake they can find. And in order to cast an even stronger snare for gullible people they send ahead a person from among themselves who according to his clothes and appearance can be mistaken as a missionary." "The yearbook also shows the photograph of this letter on Table XX."

All the "pagan" scripts were decreed to be burned by the first Christian kings of Hungary, and was carried out mostly by the Roman Catholic clergy. It is interesting to note that their Jesuit missionaries continued to use the outlawed Siculo-Hungarian script up to our modern days. During the Soviet occupation of Hungary and subsequent looting, some scripts written in the Siculo-Hungarian characters were found strewn over the streets of near the Jesuit monastery. Some of these were saved by passers by, some were used as fuel. The correspondence of János Zakariás occurred in the 18th century. There are records that the old pagan religion of the Hungarians persisted in spite of the strongest measures of suppression and missionaries were sent into the Hungarian heartland even in the 16th century.

The rovás style of writing was preserved in the mountainous regions of the Carpathians by its aboriginal Székely (Sicul) population. In isolation the most ancient form of this writing was preserved by them. It underwent some minor changes as it changed from the carved signs to written forms. The summation of these changes were presented in our second issue of 1996.

For further information please contact Klara Friedrich rovás expert in Budapest, Hungary.

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