Rebuttal of Elements in the Article “Science, Archaeology and the Human Condition” by Scott Wolter.

By Dr. Richard Nielsen

A. Introduction: Scott Wolter reacted in the May 2010 MES Newsletter to letters sent on his Venus Alignment and Hooked X articles, both in ESOP Vol. 26 (2008) to the editor of Epigraphic Society Occasional Papers (ESOP), which were printed in Vol. 27 (2009). See Correspondence www.richardnielsen.org. Quoting Wolter (2010:13), “The responses by Richard Nielsen and Mr. Frankki are nothing more than carefully crafted personal attacks hidden beneath the veil of an ‘academic response.’….I intend to support my claim of a personal agenda behind these rebuttals.” However, the Editor, Don Buchanan, does not allow personal attacks in letters or articles in ESOP as Wolter alleges.

Wolter covers many topics in his essay, but I will respond first to incorrect comments made about Dr. Runo Löfvendahl. The report, Löfvendahl (2004), disagrees with Wolter’s results on KRS (Kensington Rune Stone) geology and Wolter creates an imaginary scenario that Runo actually told Wolter he agreed with him. Secondly, the claim by Wolter that his geology report on the KRS has received peer-review by geologists is roundly disputed. Thirdly, presented is some of the lack of evidence in Wolter’s reports that would not even allow a proper review.


C. Anecdotes about Dr. Löfvendahl: Quoting Wolter (2010: 14), “When I returned to Sweden four months later...Runo [Löfvendahl] took the train 2 ½ hours north of Stockholm, to the Hudiksvall Museum and away from his colleagues. Runo and I spent seven hours alone looking at the Rune Stone and discussing the various geological aspects. When we were finished, he verbally agreed with all of my findings. We then sat down in the lobby and wrote down only the findings of fact that we agreed on. We made no interpretations and drew no conclusions. I then signed and dated the paper and then slid it across the table to Runo and said, ‘Sign it.’ With moistening eyes, he pushed the paper back and said, ‘I can’t.’ Why couldn’t he sign it? Is there some type of directive in Sweden that doesn’t allow a scientist to conduct honest research on controversial American runestones?”

In Nielsen and Wolter (2006: 344-5), Wolter has a different story about this meeting in Hudiksvall, Sweden on February 10, 2004, “...When we discussed our work on relative age dating of mica using tombstones, I agreed with his point that it is a new method that needs further study for full acceptance. ...It was nearly 6:00 p.m. when we finally felt like we had covered everything. I asked Runo if we could write down some [of] the points we had agreed on, which left us little time before his 7:00 train left for Stockholm. We felt good about the highly productive time we spent together...but [Runo] also said that he would issue a final report.” Martin (2007) quotes Löfvendahl’s final views on the impossibility of dating the KRS by geology, “... Neither his [Wolter] investigations nor our own impressions can date the inscription. As you can see, we don’t have enough material or results to write a reasonable paper. The runological content is still more important to the dating issue than any available natural-science criteria. I’m sure the last word hasn’t been said yet: sooner or later someone will figure out a better method to pinpoint the date. But a method for direct dating of rock-carvings is hard to conceive! ...I have no problem with confessing my uncertainty in this case. I do, however, feel that it is suspect”.

D. Where are the peer reviews? Quoting Powell (2010): “Wolter doesn’t see the necessity of publishing his work in a peer-reviewed journal.” Quoting Wolter (2010: 13), “…both archaeologist Larry Zimmerman and runologist Henrik Williams imply that my work has not been properly peer-reviewed [...] which is completely false. My work, in fact, was peer reviewed, in writing, by several senior geologists and material scientists.” This is hardly credible. If the peer reviews are in writing why have they not been produced to Eric Powell and others?

Quoting Wolter (2010: 14), “When asked, I gave Mr. Powell four of those names [of those who gave a peer review] and to my knowledge he only interviewed one person. He did speak with Professor Emeritus of Geology at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, Richard Ojakangas, yet he is not mentioned in the article, presumably because he had positive things to say about my work. Apparently the opinion of archaeologist Larry
Nielsen's Rebuttal

Continued

Zimmerman is more important than Dr. Ojakangas' scientific peer-review of my work?"

Eric Powell tells me that of the four only Prof. Ojakangas returned the call, albeit after the deadline for the article. In the History Channel Film, "The Holy Grail in America", no geologist endorsed Wolter’s geological results. Prof. Ojakangas told me he was interviewed for the film, but not on the subject of peer review. Prof. Ojakangas confirmed to me recently, "Obviously I am not eligible to be a peer reviewer, and do not recall saying anything about his work in writing." Zimmerman (2006) simply confirms the fact that no scientific paper has been written on the KRS geology by Wolter and it was not an opinion about quality of Wolter’s work, as Wolter avers.

The Maine State Museum (MSM) received Wolter’s e-mail on 23 January 2006 as part of his request to examine the Spirit Pond Rune Stones in his office. Quoting Wolter (2006b), "The first point is relative [The MSM geologist] comment about an apparent lack of peer review of the geologic work we performed and reported in our book. The fact of the matter is that my report has been peer reviewed, in writing, by eight senior geologists and geological engineers. These individuals are Professor Emeritus John Green, Professor Emeritus Charles L. Matsch, Professor Richard Ojakangas [all three are debarred from giving a former student a review], Professor Emeritus G.B. Morey, Professor Emeritus Paul Weiblen [Neither Professor Morey nor Weiblen received any report], Dr. Bryant Mather (now deceased), geological engineer Terrance Swor P.E. and Senior ACI [American Concrete Institute] International Fellow, Richard Stehly P.E."

E. Geological Reports: Quoting Wolter (2010: 15), “The fact is my geological work is published in two reports and two books, and anyone in the world is free to review that work and comment on it.” There should only be a single scientific paper with opposing evidence to the theories advanced with the backup data from Ames-Iowa fully incorporated. This must be published in a geological journal with blind peer-review. Popular books and unpublished reports cannot suffice. In Nielsen and Wolter (2006) and Wolter (2003 and 2004 a & b) the results given in Weiblen (2001) and in Löfvendahl (2004) (both these latter two references are found on www.richardnielsen.org) that both show an absence of biotite in the thin sections were ignored. Weiblen (2001:10) has shown that the potassium layered silicate encountered in the electron microprobe transverse of 127 analyses is the clay, illite, rather than muscovite mica. The X-Ray diffraction in Weiblen (2001: Fig. 15) confirmed this. Löfvendahl’s investigation on the same thin sections by point count found no biotite either, which confirmed Weiblen’s results. Prof. Ojakangas (2002) did find biotite in an undocumented KRS thin section (Nielsen and Wolter 2006: 33), but this does not guarantee biotite is part of the initial KRS chip mineral components. The EDX results were claimed on Figure one to have proven the presence of biotite in the KRS chip (Nielsen and Wolter 2006: 37). Obviously, no age of weathering determination on the chip can be made without first proving the presence of biotite.

After the RSM regained custody of the core research material in late 2008, it was later discovered by Prof. Emeritus Paul Weiblen and I that the core research records were lacking the claimed EDX records that would prove that muscovite and biotite existed in the chip’s fresh fracture. Fig. 1 is now unsupported without the published data on EDX and the important accompanying technical data to allow replication. Replication requires exact location of the biotite and muscovite mica minerals sampled, biotite and muscovite comparison standards, instrument settings used in the process, and chain of custody on the samples to name a few of the deficiencies prohibiting replication at present. This required data was entirely absent from the record submitted to the RSM.

F. Summation: As a co-author of Nielsen and Wolter (2006) and with a stake in the geologic results I have an obligation to state the research record as I know it today and not remain silent. The current evidence shows that the geology section in Nielsen and Wolter (2006: Chapter 2) regrettably has no scientific support. The only written review, Löfvendahl (2004) (See: www.richardnielsen.org), rejects outright Wolter’s age of weathering theories due to the lack of required tests for muscovite weathering time required under the agreed protocol, Popper’s Falsification Principle (Criterion), during the Swedish examination in the winter of 2003-4 in Stockholm. I agree with the Swedish assessment that is no test evidence to support muscovite mica disappearing from the KRS chip in 500 years (Nielsen 2009b: part III).
Appendix D) (See www.richardnielsen.org). When compared to the geological report by Prof. Emeritis Paul Weiblen (2001) (See www.richardnielsen.org) of the University of Minnesota, Wolter’s work lacks the detailed scientific data and information required for replication in a scientific article, in which he be the first one claiming to have determined the age of weathering of minerals in rock. For this to stand scrutiny the evidence must be totally unambiguous. Prof. Weiblen (2001) has written the best article on KRS geology written to date and his report content ought to be fully emulated by Wolter in my opinion.

Unfortunately, Wolter has consistently made unsupported claims related to his studies, including that they have been peer-reviewed by no less than five professors of geology, but he refuses to produce any documentation to prove this to me or anyone else. He appears to believe that repeated assertions will prevent the facts from surfacing, but eventually his inadequate approach on these issues will be revealed to all who are willing to look for the facts. Of course this type of behavior can be a big setback for the credibility of KRS research, both here and abroad. I personally can spend no more time on correcting the record on KRS research. Several years of work has already been wasted. I have done this now to clear the way for others to take up new geological research on the KRS along the lines recommended by Weiblen (2001) and Löfvendahl (2004), but unfortunately ignored these many years.

Wolter ought to produce now in writing his additional geological research data and the reviews of his work he claims he has in order to put these matters to rest. He should then write the required scientific paper with a full discussion of the geological evidence brought forth in Löfvendahl (2004) and Weiblen (2001). Until this is done Wolter has no credence for his oft repeated claim to have demonstrated that the KRS is at least 200 years old.

I regret it has been incumbent on me to respond to Wolter’s article in the May 2010 newsletter of MES on behalf of Runo Löfvendahl. Correction of the misinformation given about Löfvendahl in Wolter (2010b:14) (MES May Newsletter) should be Wolter’s first priority.

Publication of the identified missing KRS core proof material should be his only other priority. I sincerely hope that Wolter now takes upon himself to address these very formidable tasks. He has the opportunity to make a sincere attempt to “right the ship” that is riding on his geological studies. It is better that he rights it, rather than leave the task to others to carry out.

References
Nielsen's Rebuttal

Continued


-------- (2008b) "The Hooked X."


Inscription Stones Found in Montreal

by Jim Leslie, FMES, Gahanna, Ohio

This is the second in a series of articles on artifacts that people have emailed for opinions on whether they have inscriptions or what the heck they are.

1. They both look much too neat and tidy to have any credibility as antiquities; nor does the writing look like anything to be taken seriously. It utterly lacks internal consistency. From a traffic analysis standpoint, i.e. external factors, it makes no sense for such a finely crafted specimen to be mapped on to any of the cultures known to inhabit the Americas. They flunk a basic sanity check on all criteria. Let the gullible puzzle over them. These are recent productions.

David Stewart Grant, Sr.

2. The presence of the heart shape is very disturbing. I doubt these are more than 100 years old.

Rich Moats

3. I noticed a few Egyptian characters on this. Are we talking about some kind of reformed Egyptian or bastardization of the same?

Steve Shaffer

4. Hi you all,
It all looks quite crafty indeed. There are a hell of a lot of good Art students in Montreal and many other bright youths not knowing how to spend their free time. Don't forget that there are five recognised Universities in the metropolitan area: McGill (http://www.mcgill.ca/); U of Montreal (http://www.umontreal.ca/); Concordia (http://www.concordia.ca/); U of Quebec (http://www.uqam.ca/) and U of Sherbrooke (http://www.usherbrooke.ca/) at Longueil (with an access to the Metro subway system leading downtown Montreal). There is no other city in North-America with so much brain potential. If any one wanted to send this kid for good and cheap studies in North-America, it would have have to have been to Montreal. Sorry folks, looks like a HOAX!

Michel Boutet

5. From - John White: I think it is man made. Is it modern?