The Runes and Language of the Spirit Pond Stones and the Narragansett Inscription Can be Found in Modern Books

by

Richard Nielsen

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I. Introduction

The author has written about the Spirit Pond Runes Stones in Nielsen (1993 and 1994). In 2007 he sent the Maine State Museum, located in the State Capitol of Augusta, Maine, a preliminary draft of his conclusions to that point regarding the outstanding problems with the Spirit Pond Rune Stone. This subject has been much debated in the literature, with the earlier scholarship declaring it a fake and the more recent research tending towards an acceptance of its connection to medieval Scandinavia. The following have written that the Spirit Pond is a forgery: Haugen (1972, 1974), and Wahlgren (1982, 1986). Others have attempted to show its authenticity, with limited success: Buchannan (1974), Whittal (1974), Gordon (1974), Mongé, edited by Landsverk (1974), Hahn (1989, 1990), Nielsen (1992, 1993, 1994), Chapman (1981, 1992, 1993), Buchanan (1993), and Carlson (1994). The probability that the stone’s carvings originate in modern times has recently increased due to that fact that all runes found on the stone can be attributed to only two sources, namely, the Kensington Rune Row (KRS) and the rune-row found on the Ukna Church Inscription in Småland, Sweden. Both of these inscriptions could have been known to any would-be forger with access to a good library.

The discussion to follow will explore why the evidence on the Spirit Pond leads to the conclusion that the inscription is a modern product from the period after 1957 and before 1971 by an individual familiar with the Swedish language.

In 1985 the short and unreadable Narragansett Inscription was investigated in the shallows of Narragansett Bay near East Ipswich, Rhode Island. Linguistic and runic evidence will be presented supporting the thesis that the runes on this inscription were copied from the Spirit Pond rune stone.

In this century Nielsen and Wolter (2006), and Nielsen (2007) have submitted their preliminary reports to the Maine State Museum, containing the caveat that the language was under review by a runologist. Nielsen sent a report to the Maine State Museum (2009) on February 10, 2009, with the statement that both Prof. Henrik Williams of Uppsala and he had concluded that the Spirit Pond rune stones had to be viewed as modern artifacts.

All authors have noted the use of the hooked X for “a” in the KRS, Spirit Pond and the Narragansett inscription.
Language of the Spirit Pond

Quoting Nielsen and Wolter (2006b) in a preliminary report to Joseph Phillips of the Maine State Museum, “The current translation presented in this preliminary report is provisional.” The senior author is currently engaged with a runologist in Europe over the proper translation of this Scandinavian runic inscription. The language exhibits both Western Scandinavian traits as well as traits of Scandinavian found in the Southern Baltic, namely Småland and Gotland in Sweden. Until this work is completed, no serious conclusions can be drawn. This work is expected to take until 2008 to complete.

Prof. Henrik Williams stated in an e-mail communication on February, 18, 2009, “As you know I never believed much in the Spirit Pond. It was too obviously influenced by the KRS and the Vinland Map. I am glad we are on the same page on this issue now. Of course this does not mean that the SPS inscription should not be studied further. Who made it and why. What is the thinking behind its inscription?”

Runes of the Spirit Pond

The Spirit Pond can be derived solely from the Ukna inscription, which can be dated from ca. 1300 from Kinander’s publication on the runes of Småland, Sweden (1957) and from Wahlgren’s discussion of the KRS (1958). See Table 1 below. The many publications of Hjalmar Holand on the topic of the KRS beginning in 1932 are also a possible source for “a” would-be copy-cat.

II. The Ukna Grave Slab in Småland, Sweden
III. The Kensington Rune Stone

The KRS Inscription in Wahlgren (1958) has been readily available since 1958 in used book stores. The Inscription in Holand’s books published in 1940, 1956, and 1962, containing the inscription, are still readily available in libraries. The same is true for Pohl’s (1966: 208) KRS rune-row.

IV. The Spirit Pond Inscription Stone Front and Back

Fig. 4: Spirit Pond Inscription Stone (Obverse).
Graphic by D. Buchanan (1972)
Some of the problems with the Spirit Pond Inscription Stone are:

- **Halaphir** on the 2nd line shows the þh combination for either “þ,” “ð,” or “dh” reported by Rydqvist (1868:290) with the rare name *Hallador* by Lund (Vol.3 p.452-3). It seems this name was picked to make the inscription look old. See Appendix B.

- The form **þiþ** on the 3rd line could be copied from the KRS **þeþ** dhedh (death) since the i-rune could stand here for either “i” or “e”.

- The form **ahr** (year) on the 4th could be copied as Ahr ahr (year) on the KRS.

- The form **risi** on the 5th line could be either risi (the subjunctive “would build”) or rese (journey).

- The form **uist** on the 5th and 7th lines could be either vist (hut) or vest (west).

- The form **shibi** (ship) in dative has a “sh” for “sk” in ship on the tenth line. This is English and not Scandinavian. In any case the form **shipi** (to sail ship) on the 10th line should be **sigla : ship** (to sail ship) in accusative.

- The form **þiþ** on the 3rd line could be either **vip** (by) or **veþ** (with, wood) and there are many examples over this confusion owing to the lack of the use of the e-rune (”) which is used only once (on the first line).

- The form **shib** (ship) has a “sh” for “sk” in ship on the third line. This is English and not Scandinavian.

The carver produced a number of runes, particularly to mark voicing, and then did not consistently use them. As a result the translation is approximate and subject to a variety of interpretations. The fact that many times a string of words are connected without word dividers causes additional problems for translators.
Numbers: Nielsen (1992 and 1993) proposed that ahr ꜟ (year 10 10) and ahr ꜛ.GetInstanceText() (year 10 11) stood for the column and row of the Perpetual Calendar yielding the years 1401 and 1402. This interpretation was bolstered in 2007 by a similar discovery that the Kingigtorsuaq Inscription has two seven rune counts, which yields the date 1314 in the perpetual calendar. Critics have pointed out that a saga date of year 1010 and year 1011 would be a more probable explanation if the inscription was modern.

In Table 4 above, the rare gh digraph (ʼgh) in dagh on the KRS appears to have been copied on the Map Stone as takh (tagh = day). In this Table the red backgrounds indicate agreement between the KRS and the Spirit Pond runes and the blue backgrounds indicate agreement between the Spirit Pond and Ukna runes.
V. VI. The Spirit Pond Map Stone, Picture Side

The once-thought rare Moorish-Spanish sign for 40 (\( \text{X} \)) under the face and boat in Figure 7 could have been obtained from Gunter (1932) *Astrolabes of the World*, Oxford; Oxford University Press. It is available in the many libraries listed in Appendix A. Since it is known from modern times it cannot be used as proof that the Spirit picture stone is a medieval artifact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin of the Picture Stone Runes and Signs</th>
<th>Rune Forms</th>
<th>Letter Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KRS</td>
<td>( \text{X}, \text{T} )</td>
<td>( \alpha, \iota )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukna</td>
<td>( \gamma )</td>
<td>( \kappa )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common to both KRS and Ukna</td>
<td>( \iota, \gamma, \psi )</td>
<td>( \iota, \iota, \mu )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the origin of this special sign for 40, ( \text{X} ), see Appendix A.</td>
<td>( \text{X} )</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ladder like sign \( \text{E} \) seems to be a pentadic number form and is found only on the Spirit Pond. This 44 seems to have been created to match the latitude of the Spirit Pond site in Maine, which is 43.75N. \( \text{E} \) (23) is the largest pentadic number found in Scandinavia (Lithberg 1953: Hg. 79). This belongs to the series for the day in April that Easter occurs. In the Julian Calendar this was between 1 and 25 April.
VII. The Spirit Pond Map Stone, Map Side

![Image of the Map Stone, Map Side]

Fig. 8. The Map Stone, Map Side.
Drawing by D. Buchanan (1972)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin of the Map Stone</th>
<th>Rune Forms</th>
<th>Letter Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From the KRS</td>
<td>X, ꞌ, Ɥ, Ꞓ, ꞏ, ꞕ</td>
<td>a, e, o, t, 10, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Ukna Inscription</td>
<td>Ꞟ, ꞝ, ꞟ</td>
<td>k, n, u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common to both KRS and Ukna</td>
<td>ꞣ, ꞃ, Ꞃ, ꞁ</td>
<td>b, h, i, l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Spirit Pond forms have longer cross-arms than normal.</td>
<td>Ꞝ</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: The Map Stone Runes and Their Origin

VIII. The Spirit Pond Norway Stone

![Image of the Norway Stone]

Fig. 8: The Norway Stone.
Drawing by D. Buchanan (1972)
Runes and Language of Spirit Pond

The runes and bindrunes on the so-called Norway Stone have been corrected by the author as follows: ʀ (፪ + ṅ) ṅ ʀ = ṅ (Norway’s people). ṅ ʀ : ʀ = ṅ (Sel owns K) on the second line is the same sequence as the last three runes on line 1 of the face of the Inscription Stone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Norway Stone</th>
<th>Rune Forms</th>
<th>Letter Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From KRS</td>
<td>ṅ, ṅ, ṅ, ṅ</td>
<td>a, i, ṅ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Ukna</td>
<td>ṅ, ṅ, ṅ, ṅ</td>
<td>k, n, o, u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common to both KRS and Ukna</td>
<td>ṅ, ṅ, ṅ, ṅ</td>
<td>i, l, s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This SP form bind-rune form ʀ (or) could have been readily obtainable from the Kingitgortssuaq inscription’s ʀ (or). See Fig 9.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: The Norway Stone Runes and their Origin.

Fig. 9: Kingitgortssuaq inscription found in 1824 in Greenland. Photo after Wahlgren (1986; probably from the National Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark; it is shown approximately full size). The red ovals were added by the author. They surround runes that also exist in the Narragansett and/or the Spirit Pond inscriptions.

VIII. The Narragansett Inscription

In 1985 the short and unreadable Narragansett Inscription was investigated in the shallows of Narragansett Bay near East Ipswich, Rhode Island. Carlson reports that it was known before 1972 (1986: 80). Buchanan (1885), regarded it as probably non-Runic and treated it as a Pan-Mediterranean (possibly Iberic) inscription, while Chapman (1985), Carlson (1987) and Nielsen (1994, 1998) treated it as an Old Norse Inscription. All have attempted to translate the inscription with varying degrees of unanimity. All agree that the hooked X creates problems, since it is on both the Spirit Pond and Kensington inscriptions.

The following photographs show the Narragansett Stone at low tide and an early photograph of the Narragansett Stone taken by Malcolm Pearson. In 2007 Mr. Rick Lynch, a former officer of NEARA, was taking steps with the State Agencies in Rhode Island to remove the stone from the tide water and the author supported him in this effort. However, it is always difficult to get state permission to remove objects in tidewater and the project is apparently still pending. There may well be other runes on this heavy rock on either the sides or on the back and it is certainly worth a look.
The Narragansett inscription has a mishmash of strange runes. One approach may be to assume a missing runic vowel following the first rune to eliminate the “sh” problem. This could yield many solutions for $\text{sh}$ as in Nielsen (1994, 1998). One of these solutions by selecting “e” would be: $\text{sggr m(an)}z \text{ all …}$ (A messenger, 4 men all …) on the first line. Here the m-rune ($\Upsilon$) could be the oft used symbol for “man.”

The combination “sh” that is to say the combination $\text{sh}$ could have been copied from the Spirit Pond $\text{shib}$ (ship). There is no “sh” combination in Scandinavian and this makes it likely that both inscriptions are modern artifacts. Carlson (1987:80) addresses this problem very well with the statement, “The same usage appears on the Spirit Pond, which casts doubt on this usage and requires tracking down some more authentic prototypes.” On the other hand the h-rune could stand for either “g,” or “gh.” [Essentially a “harsh h” as seen in other scripts, including Iberic. —Ed.]
In addition: Where does the English word “ship” come from? Presumably it came from the Danes. This suggests that the pronunciation of the “k” in “skib” in those early days was softer than it is today - more akin to the “k” in “Københavns” as pronounced a hundred years ago before the great spelling rationalisation in Denmark. It is an interesting anomaly that the master of a ship, i.e. the “skipper”, is still pronounced with a hard “k” by the English.

- **X²ª all (all) on the second line: The double “L” (û) is found on the Kingigtorssuaq Inscription. Quoting Carlson (1887: 81), “X = a. Here comes the big problem. This so-called “stang” [hook] appears on the Kensington Stone as well as the Spirit Pond Stone and has been the subject of fierce debate. The detractors consider it an anomaly on the Kensington Stone and therefore sure proof of copy-cat forgery on the Spirit Pond Stones. The defenders have dug and delved to prove it authentic, but the burden of proof remains with the defenders.”

- **ΨL = m(αn)z (of men), if this is the correct interpretation, harks back to the same form on the KRS [Ed. note: Neither of these forms are Runic. The 5th rune in the Narragansett inscription is here seen as an error for Ψ, a normal Runic M. The 6th ]

- **Χ = O could have been copied from Pohl’s (1966: 198) very popular book, which was well known in New England. This is from the Old Germanic alphabet from before 850. On the other hand it could stand for a medieval Arabic number four. Schröder (1993:50) gives Χ the value â standing for ä, with the cap over X denoting the diacritic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narragansett Stone</th>
<th>Rune Forms</th>
<th>Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Pohl (1966: 198). Perhaps the cap over the X in Χ stands for the circumflex in Æ, yielding “ä,” as per Schröder (1993). Carlson (1991: 80-1) accepted Χ as the Elder Rune-Row letter for o, thereby yielding skromli ao [screaming river]. This would have to date the inscription at the latest to 900, the end of the 8th century.</td>
<td>Χ -----</td>
<td>Æ = Æ, a manuscript form by 1300. o, elder rune 4, Arabic number known by 1250 in Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Spirit Pond Map Stone</td>
<td>Χ</td>
<td>h, g, gh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common to both KRS and Spirit Pond</td>
<td>Χ, l, Ï</td>
<td>α, i, s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Narragansett bindi-rune form and the closed R. RP could be readily obtainable from books on the well known and available Kingigtorssuaq inscription as seen circled above in red in the first word.</td>
<td>ΡR</td>
<td>l, r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: The Narragansett Runes and their suspected origin.
IX. Conclusions

The author of the Spirit Pond texts would have known Swedish and been familiar with Icelandic-English Dictionaries. There is no evidence that he knew Old Icelandic well. The fact that two different Swedish rune-rows were mixed with an Icelandic language is in itself enough to cast doubt on the medieval origin of the Spirit Pond Rune Stone. There are, however, a host of other problems with the Spirit Pond which prevent us from confirming it as a medieval artifact.

- The Icelandic-English Dictionaries would have been sufficient to produce the Scandinavian language found on the inscription with the addition of Rydqvist’s discussion of Old Swedish texts (1868).
- The Old Icelandic name Haladher is likely taken from Lund (vol. 3, p.453-4).
- The Map Stone’s symbol (X) is likely taken from Gunther (1932).
- The word ahr (year) is likely taken directly from the KRS.
- The special pentadic numbers (with the upper unilateral bar at the top of the staff must have been copied from the KRS.
- The symbol for 10 (†) is likely taken from modern book renditions of the KRS. The circular form at the top of the stem of the actual KRS 10 is shaped like an oval on its side rather than a circle.
- Runes on the Narragansett Stone are likely partially copied from the Spirit Pond and Kingigtorssuaq Inscriptions.
- The use of the macron R ( Resistance) on the Spirit Pond for the Ukna dotted R (R), unless it is an abbreviation for “er” is not representative of Old Norse after the 11th century. The sound had already disappeared.
- It has been noted elsewhere (in discussion of the KRS) that young monks from Eastern Götaland filling vacancies left by the Black Death and travelling to the New World via Norway and Iceland, with sojourns in each, could well be expected to have been influenced by various different regional runic traditions. However, this speculation remains only as a possibility without any evidence to support this theory.

The Spirit Pond inscription stone is an amalgamation of two diverse rune-rows, one from 1362 and the other from circa 1300. This would suggest the work of a modern-day forger.

Adherents to the authenticity of the Spirit Pond stone as a medieval relic must address the above criticisms. To consider the possibility of a medieval dating, one must first provide specific linguistic or runic evidence, which could not have been known in modern times. Lacking this, it is the position of the current author that the inscriptions on the Spirit Pond Rune Stones are in all likelihood the work of a modern day rune forger.

X. References

Runes and Language of Spirit Pond


Runes and Language of Spirit Pond


XI. Appendices (See following pages)

- Appendix B: Rydqvist (1868: 290).
## Appendix A: Libraries holding *The Astrolabes of the World*... by Gunther (1932)

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Appendix B: Johann Rydqvist (1868: 290)

Halaphir (Halader), uipb (with, wood) and baþhum (we ask) are some examples of the "þh" combination. Now "a" is the same as "þ" in the above word forms. In Rydqvist (1868) above we have faþhurs (father's), broþher (brother), faþhurbroþher (father's brother), and ðôðhä (death) among many more examples.

This comes from the language of The Notes of the Priest of Vidhem of around 1325. See Benson (1950: 11-16) for additional examples from this document such as göððær (good), rððhe (red), máðhän (while, so long) and with preterit verbs álakððhi (loved), lifððhi (lived), and ðorððððhär (en-earthed, buried).
I 5284. Hkr 32i. Halli Ed2 3451. 641i,
540i, 609i. a. Halli Flb II 1368, Hkr 321.4.
En dansk sagokonung HVIS 1634 o. f., Ed 12
Umord, Hauwulfas an Istaby, ock Stenlofsstenname.
Hollu, -v, Hallu Lni 311. 67, 173i, 189,
mormor till Slettu-Born om norsk harkomst. Ac.
Hollu, Hallu Torundar d. halas
Inns LN 6341. 128i. Hanne broder Mar fa-
ârir Hollu LN 330i. Sondotter till en linn
AR H. Grettis d. Lni 1328. Från 900-t. är
och H. Lytings d. kona Brodd-Helga Vf 28
o. f., Ny 710i, skriver a. Hollu, Hallu Lni
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d. Vf 864i. Från första delen av 1000-t. b.
Gest d. Oddleifs sar LN 44. 1672. d. 212,
mor till Porgils Haunun, Hallu s. LN 150i.
Lnd 212, 216b, 222b, m. fl., Egb 104i, 124i, Hanb.
18i. Omkr. 1100. H. Eivelsifs d. Hallbiarar
sar LN 164i, kallad efter modern Iodisar d.
Sti 1, 69i. LN 354i. H. Polåks d. Lni 36i, mödornamn av Magnus biskups + 11484.
H. Lopta d. Póðarins sar Vf 721. LN 235i.
Lnd 361i o. f., mor till H. Steina (Steinara) d., mö-
dom. Loptås biskups hâns helga + 1193. Ln
61i, Vf 721, Egb 1, 8n, 96i, 264b och med
fekak skålta. Lnd 104i. H. Steinolfs d. Ln
170i, skriver g. Hollu, Haunun, Havlu
Lni 43i. 167b, 241b, mödornamn Hrafn og
Eyrir (+ 121b). After hâmen dotter H. 
Sveinbiarar d. Bg 1 640i, Sti 1, 111, Sti II
278b. Dottrots ej upptäckt till H. Oddz d. 
Ala sar LN 43i, Sti 218i. H. d. Iordvad.
att Kelliowm Hv 4441, 501i, Sti 1, 53i, 
skriver g. & a. Hollu, -v, Hallu Lni, Hallfl.
mi, Flb III 72i. LN 69i. 744i, 88i, 203b.
After hâmen s.YELLOWOMbiot H. d. Flosa 
prestar (+ 173i) LN 88i, 112i. Árt 29i, 116i.
H. Þáls d. biskups + 1207
Rb 1, 123i, 130b o. f., Árt 29b. Árt 1225 ac.
Hollv Biarnar d. Sti 3 382i och 1212 H. Snyr-
mis d. Þórsar Sti 41i. H., a. Hollu d. 
Póðar Sturúi sar (+ 1237) Sti 1, 480i, 51i,
Sti 11 94b, 23i. H. Lopta d. Árt VIII 12884. 
En H. från omkr. 1300 Rb 1 328b. H. Kristo-
forus lair. Árt 117i är s.YELLOWOMbiot till H. Flosa.
d. (se även). Omkr. 1340 H. Kolbeinsd. DI
1772i o. f. Omkr. 1370 H. Jonsd. DVI
76i. 1012. En H. vinnokuma år 1388 DIII
416i2 och a. Hollu Biarand. tänger sam-
tidig DIII 79i. Dat. Hollu Jonsd. DVI 816
(1333). H., a. Hollu Sigurdar. Biarns-
sonar DI VI 471i, 477i (1484). H. Magnusd.
DI VI 577 (1486). Gen. Hollu konu Ólaf-
sonssonar DI VI 583b (1486). En annan
H., g. & a. Hollu, Hallu Sigurdar. DI VII
300 o. f., 355 (1949-97). Dat. Hallu Gun-
nared. DI VIII 147i (1307). En yngre H.
Kolbeinsd. DI VIII 303b o. f. (1510). En
går Hallv-, Hallu- Hauflustad DI V
819 (1450), 502i (1467), VI 472i (1485).
I Norge först år 1519 en H. pa Akrom
(Karmen) NR/II 440i. Annars blott så-
som första ledd i ett par gårdsnamn: Hollu-
Hollaby EJ 518, 5192, nu Holbye i Tune.
Sml. skriver Holde Holbye. DNI V 477
(1438), 695i (1494) och Halloporn EJ 338i4,
nu Halltorp i Solbergsmun, Blh.

Halla, Pár-

Hallaðar, -ar 1.-2. i. M. N. H., g.-ar, d.-i.Rogn-
valdís s. Móraliars om senare delen av 800-t.
Hkr 1 131i, 137i. Cfr 51i, 55i, Fms 1 1951,
193, II 1901, Vád 178, skriver Hallad, gr.
d.-e Flb 1 221b o. f., Ln 82i, 96i, 166b,
210i, 248b, a. Hallat Cfr 51i, Flb 1 221b.
Sedan först år 1293 en H. Skeggs s. från
Hard. DNI 941. Målligen är han samma man
som H. a ofre Loykuin (i Ulvik, Harald.) DNI
II 941b (1312). Poror Hallaða s. DNI XI 17.
(1316). Dat. Hallade killu DNI IV
941 (Bergen 1221) - BK 71a, H., g.-ar Val-
garðs s. DNI XV 15 (2145). Hallador 
Porgera s. DNI III 155 (Oslo 1331). 
Hallad Kroks s. DNI V 1024 (Bhl. 1338).
Peter Hallade, Halles s. DNI IV 21218 (Oslo
1344). 231b (1347), skriver lat. Petrus Hau-
leri Sig 475. Kjøder Hallædsun DNI V
135b (Lier 1345). H. Andre s. DNI 1864.
(Ovis ort 1353). Hallæbor Gunnulfis s. DNI
II 292i (Vid. 3106-61). Hallade, -or 
Birkson DNI III 272 (Raudal, Vid., 1353, V
393 i. f. (1367), skriver lat. Halladus Ormerti
Sigr. 796. Hallad, g. Halladjar, d.-e Þorsen
s. DNI IV 582 o. f. (Harald). 1377. Annan-
der Hallæðsdarson DNI VII 28318 (Lier
1378). Hallader Skåldulfsson DNI V 246 (Turk.

Fig c1. E. H. Lund’s pages 453-4.
Runes and Language of Spirit Pond

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Fig. C2. E. H. Lund E. H. Lund’s pages 455-6.