

The Bergen Runes and the Kensington Inscription

MORE THAN twelve thousand runic signs have been found among the Bergen materials. They do not include a single one which could explain any of at least seven strange forms occurring in the Kensington alphabet. These Bergen runes are a type of writing which was seemingly in continuous use by nearly all social groups, in commerce, for private and public letters, and for sending messages. The symbols did not change. Someone living in Bergen around the year 1400 could easily have read an inscription from 1150. Nor would the language have presented any difficulties, though it had, of course, altered somewhat in the course of 250 years.

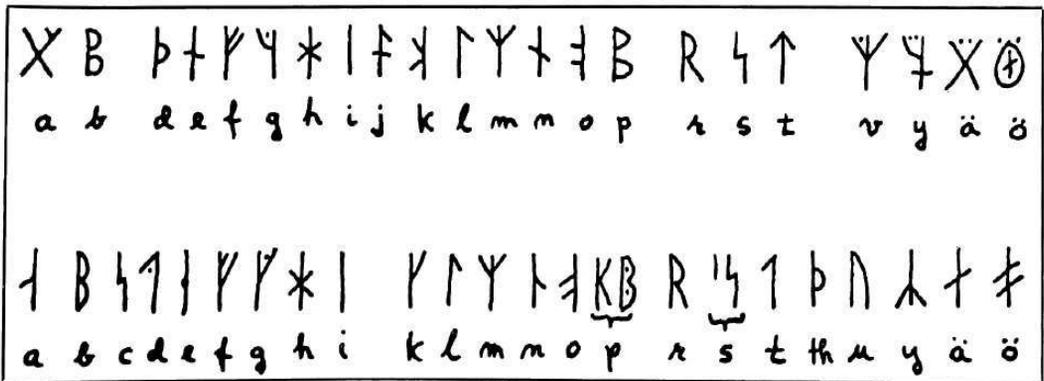
At the middle of the fourteenth century—the alleged time of the Kensington inscription—a lot of Scandinavian crews left Bergen for various ports, and I should think it a strange circumstance if any of these crews did not include someone who could write and read runes. Consequently, if there should exist any runic inscription in America that was cut at this time, it would surely

have been written with the runes which the people of those days were accustomed to using.

To Scandinavian scholars this will not be startling news, for they are agreed that the Kensington inscription is modern. The problem it presents is not one of its age; on the other hand the problem of its authorship very likely will never be solved. The real problem now is to get everybody to realize that it is not genuine.

The myth of the Kensington stone lives on, I am sorry to say, partly because scholarship has failed in making its views known in a form suitable to convince the public. It is in a way a question of public relations. Many scholars in different fields of science are now trying to bring the facts and the reasoning of scholarship before the public, but making science popular is a difficult and time-consuming task. Surely, however, if the task is faced squarely and the effort carried through, there will be all winners and no losers.

A diagram drawn by the author to illustrate the differences between the usual runic alphabet (bottom row) and the forms which appear in the Kensington inscription.





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