Suspicions of Ogham found in Colorado were raised in 1975 by the Chief Historian for the Bureau of Land Management, Dr. Don Rickey. He discovered grooved marks while investigating a September 1868 military engagement involving the U.S. 7th Cavalry, L Company and a Cheyenne raiding party at Hackberry Springs, a site designated by the Office of the State Archaeologist Colorado (OSAC) as 5LA1115. 4 Cheyenne and 2 soldiers including Sam Rickey, an ancestor of Dr. Rickey's, had died in the battle.

At the behest of Dr. Rickey and led by Colorado Staff Archaeologist Dave Stuart, a team of 10 Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS) volunteers surveyed 5LA1115 on 7 & 8 July 1977. This expedition convinced OSAC of the site's significance and led to its nomination as A Colorado Millennial Source and to a more intensive examination of its features a year later, 1-4 July, 1978. After the first survey, State Archaeologist Bruce Rippeteau, PhD., in 1977 ruled out Ogham at 5LA1115 in his Publication Series: #9,

Celtiberians Influences

The possibility of a script resembling one of the many versions of Ogham used in the several centuries B.C. by the very Westernmost European Iron Age cultures, was first raised by Dr. Rickey when he transcribed a series of linear markings from Hackberry Springs and had Dr. Barry Fell, a marine biologist at Harvard, subsequently claim these were Ogam script.

Our 7-8 July survey in part attempted to record these particular manifestations and Mr. Stuart is preparing a representative copy for general comment (Exhibit __).

The author, in regard to this matter, has the following observations and does not subscribe to the theory that this is Ogam script, or in any way represents the utilization of an alphabetic system in the sense used by the Ogam advocates. The rock art in general is remarkable for its quantity and variety and contains the usual representations of Plains and Southwest cultures.

On at least 80% of the apparently pertinent surfaces are literally thousands of short, linear scratches and slots. These have a facile resemblance to script but do not usually show the organization and precision expectable from an intent to convey a message. Many are various depths, superimposed (thus appearing to show crossed marks resembling letters), and often trailing off on the right end. I speculate that many are intelligible as counting markers, possibly from prehistory or history (as in the counting of cattle or game killed).

At any rate, we did recover a tool which herenow speculate is a specialized tool for cutting slots. This is a 6 x 3.5 x 1 cm flint biface whose large edge serrations are worn to a polish—as if they had been ground lengthwise along a quartz or harder surface. Indeed the rock art et al sandstone is the Purgatoire Formation and soft enough to cut rapidly with such a tool as I experimentally did.
I do not believe that there is any easy way to identify the lineal scratches done by the homesteaders from those of prehistoric times. The homesteaders may indeed have contributed miscellaneous lines in association with the cattle walls (immediately adjacent to pertinent panels) and have been for counting cows, or idle work.

Exhibit ___ is a selection of letters generated by my colleague Dr. Wilfred Logan, of the U.S. National Park Service in Denver, in regard to the Celti-Iberian question. Exhibit ___ is a further study by Mr. Stuart, of this Office, confirming, with actual accurate data, most of our previous feelings.

After the later, intensive survey Staff Archaeologist Dave Stuart in 1978 confirmed his supervisor’s opinion, noting in his Recording the Hackberry Springs Site (5LA1115),

Stylistically, the rock art of 5LA1115 most closely resembles that of the Gobernador Canyon Navajo area in northern New Mexico (Schaafsma 1966, 1975), especially the eagles or thunderbirds (Features H and F), circle (Feature G), masks (Feature H), and shield figures (Feature A).

Nevertheless, at least three stylistic periods can be defined based upon superimposition and differential patination (especially at Feature H). Earliest is a stipple-pecked style dominated by zoomorphs and curvilinear abstractions. Next is a style characterized by solid-pecked zoomorphs. Most recent are the abundant incised linear elements. (It is not clear how this evidence jibes with Campbell’s (1969a) attempt to formulate a rock art chronology.)

Most enigmatic are the rows upon rows of parallel, vertical incised lines. It has been suggested by Barry Fell (1976) that these lines constitute a form of Ogam writing similar to that used by the Celtiberians in Europe. Several recognized linguistic experts have disagreed. I presently must conclude that the petroglyphs are not Ogam writing. The possibility that these lines are related to the "winter counts" of the historic Plains Indians (Howard 1960) will be investigated.

Even before the first survey, Dr. Wilfred Logan, the Chief of the Branch of Archaeology for the National Park Service (Department of Interior) wrote the Department of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh soliciting a scholarly refutation of Dr. Don Rickey’s radical postulation of possible Ogham in Colorado. Dr. Stuart Piggott replied,
Dear Dr. Logan,

Thank you for your letter about the book **America B.C.** I have heard of this and have absolutely no doubt that it is not just the fringe but hard-core lunacy. I am astonished that anyone, particularly a historian, should have fallen for it.

If Dr. Fell does want to get in touch with an authority on Ogham inscriptions the obvious person is my colleague Professor Kenneth Jackson of the Department of Celtic in this University. I may as well warn you however that any reply he may vouchsafe will be explosive!*

I am sure you are right in saying that at so many of these sites which have been claimed to represent intrusive colonists to the New World there may well be some genuine American Indian indigenous material, but nothing else.

Yours sincerely,

*"I have just seen him, and I'm right!"

Professor Stuart Piggott

So, Dr. Logan seized this opportunity, candidly sharing his bias with Dr. Jackson,
Professor Kenneth Jackson  
Department of Celtic  
University of Edinburgh  
Edinburgh, Scotland EH8 9JZ

Dear Professor Jackson:

Professor Stuart Piggott has suggested your name in connection with an effort I am making to dampen the enthusiasm of a historian friend of mine, Dr. Don Rickey, over the recently published book, *America, B. C.*, by Barry Fell of Harvard University. There are several reasons why I view with some alarm the interest Dr. Rickey has developed in these improbable theories, not the least of which is the fact that he has used my name in connection with his activities with results professionally embarrassing to me. This, of course, can be remedied; of more serious concern is the potential danger to the integrity of one particular prehistoric site in southeastern Colorado if the sensationalized claims concerning certain grooves in the sandstone cliffs at this station go unrefuted, and if further publicity appears in the popular press.

I am enclosing a xerox reproduction of a montage I made from photographs of some of the grooves. A pencil drawing of these was submitted to Fell by Dr. Rickey. According to Fell, these are Ogham, and are therefore further evidence in support of his theory of extensive Celtic occupation of North America in the pre-Christian era. Grooves such as these are common in the softer rocks all over the continental United States. They are generally referred to as awl or axe sharpening grooves by prehistorians in this country. While I am skeptical of this as an explanation of the origin of all such features, the improbability of Fell's explanation, and of his translation, leaves me equally skeptical. I am also enclosing a copy of the pencil drawing Dr. Rickey provided Fell. After inspecting this drawing this morning and comparing it with my photographs of the same panel, I find the translation, at least, even more preposterous, for there are marked differences between the drawing and what is actually on the cliff-wall, as you will readily note. Spacing has been introduced between lines in the groups; groups have been inaccurately

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Save Energy and You Serve America!
transcribed; whole groups were left out of the drawing, and lines have been left out of the groups.

Beyond this, while I am a New World archeologist with little conversance with ancient alphabets of Europe and Africa, I do have some general reading knowledge, and I was under the impression that Ogham was an invention of the early Christian era. Fell asserts B. C. dates for his alphabets. Similarly, although my knowledge is not detailed, I was under the impression that the Celts entered western Europe somewhat later than the 1000 to 1500 B. C. dates that Fell assigns them.

I would appreciate it if you would examine the xeroxes I am enclosing from the standpoint of the Ogham claims, and would appreciate, also, any other observations you could make on this matter. To me these Grooves could be anything. I will be most interested in your opinion.

Sincerely yours,

Wilfred D. Logan

Chief, Branch of Archeology


Received by Dan Pickley, Historian, BLM and Wilfred D. Logan, Archeologist, National Park Serv.
1984 video - Tunnel Shelter marks transcribed by Dr. Rickey & photographed by OCAS
Only 2 days after soliciting Dr. Jackson’s comments, Chief Archaeologist of the National Park Service Dr. Wilfred Logan sent this document to his Colorado counterpart Dr. Bruce Rippeteau with a hand-written note.

Unquestionably, Dr. Rickey’s transcriptions of the marks sent to Dr. Fell were not as accurate as they should have been. Therefore, the resulting translation efforts by Dr. Fell legitimately deserved to be dismissed.

Dr. Rickey had just succeeded in securing OCAS’ help for a July 1977 preliminary survey and apparently allowed his eagerness to trump his scholarship by prematurely sending early scribblings to Dr. Fell, before the subsequent authoritative photo record was made by OCAS.

Here’s Don Rickey’s report on the field trip with Dr. Rippeteau’s hand written remarks included,
To: Director, OSC

From: Historian Don Rickey and Historian Leslie Hart

Subject: Field Trip Report

Covering Travel To: Hackberry Spring Historic and Prehistoric District, Colorado

Dates: July 7-9, 1977

PLEASE number paragraphs in accordance with subjects listed below; if one or more items is not applicable, so state.

1. Purpose/Objectives of Trip
2. Persons Contacted/Interviewed
3. Subjects Discussed
4. Facts Gathered
5. Other Observations Made
6. Accomplishments or Results of the Trip

1. Purpose of Trip:
The purpose of this trip was to guide an archaeological-historical group, led by Colorado State Archeologist Bruce Rippeteau, to Hackberry Spring, about 30 miles south of Las Animas, Colorado, and systematically record all its component features. Documented historic activities at the spring site include the September 8, 1868 Army-Indian Action, 1886 use by open range cattleman, and the 1911 homestead ruins. Pre-historic use is dated to about 5,000 B.C., as evidenced by diagnostic artifacts, petroglyphs, stone circles, and other features. Of particular interest are several petroglyphs that have been identified as American versions of ancient Ogam writing as used in Spain and Portugal by Celt-Iberians, 800 to 200 B.C. As many features and petroglyphs as possible were recorded during the 1-1/2 days at the site. DLM has considerable involvement in cultural resources inventory for this area of the Canon City District.

2. Persons Contacted/Interviewed:
Bruce Rippeteau, Colorado State Archeologist
David Stuart, Staff Archeologist (Colorado)
John Bockley, Archeologist, DLM, Canon City District Office
Ivel Hagar, President, Colorado Archeological Society and ten members of the Society
Bill Kellar, Manager, Chusum 4-C Ranch (Hackberry Spring Area)

3. Subjects Discussed:
The 7,000 year spectrum of human use and occupation, evidenced and/or documented at this site was the main subject of discussion; as this relates to the history of the entire southeastern Colorado Area (Canon City District). Methods of documenting, protecting, and further researching the cultural resources in the area were also major areas of discussion.

4. Facts Gathered:
The facts gathered included evidences of prehistoric occupations by several peoples, from 5,000 B.C. in currently accepted dating to continued use as a ranch and water source (at the spring site). Many previously unknown prehistoric petroglyphs were found in the spring area, including some appearing to be similar to 800 B.C. Celt-Iberian Ogam inscriptions, pecked animal figures, and incised human figures. Numerous artifacts were located related to the 1910-30's homestead period, and one .50 caliber 1888 Army shell case definitely locating a soldier

Use additional pages, if necessary
Clearly, Dr. Rickey was just as enthusiastic about the possibility of confirming Ogham marks in Colorado as his detractors were determined to derail any appearance of endorsement of such a radical idea by federal or state governmental institutions. Concurrent with Rickey’s memo (above), the predictable letter of refutation from The University of Edinburgh’s Department of Celtic Professor Kenneth Jackson (next page) arrived on the desk of National Park Service Chief Archaeologist Dr. Wilfred Logan. The warning, “any reply he may vouchsafe will be explosive!” telegraphed by Stuart Piggott in his 22 April 1977 letter from Edinburgh proved quite accurate.

Note: Dr. Jackson’s assertion (underlined in red) that Ogam inscriptions never lack vowels. This disputes the documented historical evidence in the 14th century “Ogham tract” of the Book of Ballymote where examples of consonantal Ogham are found. Indeed, the matter of how far back Ogham’s roots can be traced is debatable even today. The history of the Celtic Ogham alphabet may date to as early as 2200 BCE, as suggested by Dr. Fell, who cites in the documentary an ancient good-luck charm, the Windmill Hill amulet begging the protection of the Mother Goddess Byanu, found near Stonehenge.
Dear Dr. Logan,

Your letter comes as a breath of fresh air, as they say. For a couple of years now I have been pestered by these people with their "ogams", with drawings and colour photographs and slides and "interpretations" of the "inscriptions"; and I have been wondering whatever is happening to scholarship in the U.S.A. Their theories are of course totally untenable and, in your own word, "preposterous", and I have written every time to tell them so; but without effect, it seems. I am far too busy a man to send them a reasoned and detailed refutation, and it would be wasted anyway; as I should simply be dismissed as one of the "hidebound professors" (a common reaction of the amateur with a theory). They must either take my opinion as a Celtic philologist, historian, epigrapher, and Ogamist of some repute, or leave it.

I should like to do you the courtesy of giving detailed reasons, since your scepticism shows you are obviously a sound scholar and a man of common sense, but as I say, I am afraid I should need to write a small book. May I simply say that (a), the "inscriptions" are not a bit like genuine ogams (some are obviously what we call "plough ogams", and others look very much like Indian script); (b) it is possible to make this sort of thing say almost anything one likes with a little ingenuity, particularly if one makes inaccurate drawings to bolster a theory, as you indicate; and (c) amateurs of this sort always forget that languages have a history, that they change over the centuries, and therefore that it is quite useless to date an inscription to, say, 800 BC and "interpret" it by means of linguistic forms not older than, say, about 600 AD. Note that Fell conveniently makes his inscriptions lack vowels, something that Ogams never do.

You are quite right that Ogam is probably an invention of the Christian era — somewhere around the 4th century AD., probably: you might look at my book "Language and History in Early Britain" (Edinburgh, 1953), specially chapters 2 and 3, on this.

I had never heard of Mr. Fell till I was first approached about this matter (though I was once Professor of Celtic at Harvard myself), but I do know that the backers of his theory make play with the name of Harvard. They also do the same with that of a certain Swiss who, according to them, is a highly distinguished philologist, though I am sorry to say that I (something of a philologist myself, most scholars would say) had never heard of him before — indeed I have already forgotten the name.
Dr. Logan presumably shared Dr. Jackson's reply with his archaeological colleague Dr. Rippeteau. A seemingly innocuous OCAS inquiry from subordinate Dave Stuart was dispatched within 2 months and, on the very same day, Stuart wrote to Dr. Fell. As Dr. Jackson urged above, Dr. Calvert Watkins was apparently contacted by Stuart, too.
September 1, 1977

Dr. Kenneth Jackson
University of Edinburgh
Department of Celtic
David Hume Tower
George Square
Edinburgh, England EH8 9JX

Dear Dr. Jackson:

The Office of the State Archaeologist of Colorado has recently become involved—along with the Bureau of Land Management and the Colorado Archaeological Society—in the recording of an extensive archaeological site, 5LA1115, in Southeastern Colorado. In addition to possible Paleo-Indian hearths, Archaic lithic debris, Athabaskan-looking stone circles, typical Plains Indian tipi rings, artifacts from a historically documented U.S. Army/Indian confrontation, and remains of a recent homestead, the area abounds in petroglyphs incised (primarily) into the soft Purgatoire sandstone.

I have studied aboriginal rock art throughout the Western U.S., and can detect several stylistic ties between 5LA1115 and adjacent Plains, Southwestern, and even Great Basin aboriginal rock art styles. Dr. Don Rickey, BLM Historian, has urged us to also thoroughly consider the hypothesis that portions of this rock art may be a variant of Ogam (a la Barry Fell's America, B.C., 1976, Quadrangle, N.Y.).

The Colorado State Archaeologist, Dr. Bruce Rippeteau, and I are extremely skeptical. We are attempting to be open-minded in spite of our biases. Therefore, I am asking for your expert assistance. Would you be kind enough to examine the enclosed photographs and comment: Do you concur with Fell that portions are Ogam? If so, can you offer a translation for "comparative" purposes?

Your comments—together with several of your colleagues'—will be carefully considered. Several other hypotheses—e.g., that the petroglyphs are merely an American Indian style; that they are historic sheep or cattle tallies, section markers, or forgeries—are being concurrently investigated.

Our Office has nick-named 5LA1115 the "Colorado Millennial Source" because of its time span and significance. We are presently
nominating the site to the National Register of Historic Places. We certainly appreciate your efforts to aid our investigation of this valuable cultural resource.

Sincerely,

David R. Stuart
Staff Archaeologist

DRS:ng
Enclosures
September 1, 1977

Dr. Barry Fell
Epigraphic Society
6 Woodland Street
Arlington, Massachusetts 02174

Dear Dr. Fell:

Early this year Dr. Don Rickey, BLM Historian, sent you some data from 5LAL115 (Hackberry Springs) in Southeastern Colorado. The Office of the State Archaeologist of Colorado has volunteered to assist the BLM in recording and evaluating the site.

Preliminary surface recording of the area has revealed possible Paleo-Indian hearths, Archaic lithic debris, Athabaskan-looking stone circles, typical Plains Indian tipi rings, evidence of a U.S. Army/Indian engagement (which brought Don to the site), an historic homestead, and, of course, the abundant rock art.

The rock art is predominantly incised into the soft Purgaroite sandstone, although stipple-pecked and painted designs also occur infrequently.

Based on my considerable experience recording and studying Western aboriginal rock art, I can preliminarily postulate stylistic relationships with the Plains, the Southwest, and even the Great Basin. The State Archaeologist, Dr. Bruce Rippetoe, and I remain highly skeptical regarding your earlier (19 Feb. 1977) identification and translation of some of the "Tunnel Rock" designs as Ogam.

The inaccuracies of your sketches are most disconcerting; hopefully the enclosed set of photographs from 5LAL115 will provide a more reliable data base. (My "Panel" B is Tunnel Rock.)

Would you be kind enough to examine the photos and comment upon any possible Ogam? Translations would be greatly appreciated.

I have provided several other recognized Ogam experts an identical set of photos, and I will carefully synthesize all the
There is no indication in the OSAC records for site 5LA1115 that Dr. Fell ever replied to Dave Stuart’s letter.

But the desired and predictable responses from both Dr. Kenneth Jackson and Dr. Calvert Watkins were received.
Whether Professor Jackson was aware of the scholarly works of Robert Armstrong Stewart Macalister is unknown, but had he been, he might not have expressed such intolerance for real deviations among the more than 100 variations of Ogham listed in the *Book of Ballymote*. Macalister, Professor of Celtic Archaeology at University College Dublin from 1909 until 1943, published extensively on that resource, the key Rosetta Stone for scholarly investigation into the nature of this ancient Celtic alphabet. Indeed, a consonantal style of Ogham is among those varieties mentioned in the "Ogham Tract," contrary to Dr. Jackson's assertion in his preceding letter to Dr. Logan that there are never Ogham inscriptions that lack vowels.

Below, is the reply to OCAS' Dave Stuart by Dr. Calvert Watkins, a like-minded professor at a prestigious Ivy League university in the US. It is Watkins' letter Colorado Highway Department archaeologist John Gooding cited in the "History or Mystery" excerpt early in the documentary "Old News." Dr. Watkins carelessly addressed Dave Stuart as a PhD., but even more carelessly failed to note in his diagram that the Ogham letter D is comprised of 2 strokes, not 1. Both of his claims, underlined in red, 1) that Ogham is never written along an incised line, and 2) that the absence of vowel strokes precludes any conclusion the Colorado marks are Ogham, are contradicted by the *Book of Ballymote* and Professor of Celtic at Catholic University of America, Dr. Robert Meyer.
Dr. David R. Stuart  
Office of the State Archaeologist  
1300 Broadway  
Denver, Co. 80203  

Dear Dr. Stuart:  

I have examined the photographs of Colorado petroglyphs at 51A115 which you sent me on September 1. I can state categorically that they are NOT a variant of ogam, "à la Barry Fell" as you put it in your letter. 

Ogam inscriptions (in Irish) on standing stones are written from bottom to top along a vertical edge (more or less a right angle), never along an incised line as appears in the Colorado petroglyphs. The alphabetic symbols (a sort of cipher based on the Latin alphabet) involve three basic strokes, which can be repeated up to five times: 

1) an incised dot on the edge itself, e.g.  

2) an incised line at right angles to the edge, either a) to the right, e.g.  

or b) to the left, e.g.  

3) an incised line traversing the edge at a (more or less) 45 angle, e.g. 

The ogam inscriptions present a characteristic bilateral asymmetry, resulting from 2a) and 2b), which is the reverse of the characteristic bilateral symmetry of the Colorado petroglyphs, their "fishbone" appearance. Since in the latter the strokes most frequently traverse the incised horizontal line at the right angles, and the number of strokes exceeds five, both of which features are systematically excluded from ogam, we may conclude that the petroglyphs cannot be ogam. The same conclusion is warranted by the complete absence of strokes of types 1) and 3) in the Colorado petroglyphs, as well as by the difference of locus of the written line, as discussed at the beginning of this paragraph.
What can be deduced from this chain of events and sequence of correspondence?

In the opinion of those who advocate the idea of diffusionism which may have led to the exploration of America by Ogham-writers in the distant past, authority figures whose life work is to preserve things tend to prefer the status quo and reject radical new concepts.

Dr. Rickey and Dr. Fell were targeted and soon isolated as Dr. Rippeteau teamed with Dr. Logan to solicit letters of refutation. Ironically, the site Dr. Rickey brought to their attention was nonetheless quickly embraced by OCAS in a bid for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Staffer Dave Stuart seems to have done a very balanced job of researching the material, but was it his task to support an agenda?

As for the “recruited” experts Dr. Logan, Dr. Rippeteau and John Gooding relied upon (i.e. Drs. Kenneth Jackson and Calvert Watkins), both were misinformed about Ogham and couched their views with intolerant authoritarianism. Scientific progress is never assured when experts collaborate to quash new ideas even though Drs. Rickey and Fell were not without fault perhaps. As the Hackberry Springs issue faded, OSAC Research Associate Dr. Albert Hahn wrote to Dr. Rippeteau about some of his troubling concerns,

Dr. David R. Stuart
Page 2.

We know from literary texts in Old Irish that ogam messages could also be written on sticks, though none have survived (given the perishable nature of the material and the climate of the Irish isles). The presumption is that an edge was likewise carved; one can for example scratch or carve with a pocket knife a quite extensive message in ogam on an ordinary hexagonal pencil.

None of the defining features of ogam are thus present in the Colorado petroglyphs, and the latter present many features which are systematically excluded from ogam. (Another is the presence of more than one orientation line, as on "panel" B, photos 9 and 10, which creates a "grid" effect unthinkable in ogam writing.)

I conclude that the Colorado petroglyphs cannot represent any form of ogam writing. This conclusion is independent of any consideration or evaluation of the inherent plausibility of such a hypothesis.

I am returning herewith your (excellent) photographs, since your office will surely have further use for them.

Sincerely yours,

Calvert Watkins
Professor of Linguistics and the Classics
Honorary Member, Royal Irish Academy
Dear Bruce,

I wish we'd had time to discuss the matter of the Vinland Map more thoroughly. But let me footnote my abrupt remarks concerning the relevancy of that apparently disqualifying chemical test of the ink used on the Vinland Map, especially my remarks about "irrelevance." I'm going to stick out my neck and you may want to chop off my head. The upshot of that recent history was, first of all — after the early 1974 tests reported in various media including the New York Times of January 26, 1974 — that the ink was hardly more than 50 years old. In the first place, it is inconclusive to establish the age of ink on any document, so far as we know, both methodologically and practically. Whatever the method, such a chemical measurement was necessarily based on a minute scraping from the original parchment. Accuracy drops extremely low in such micro-chemical analyses. Furthermore, there is a significant question about the purity of the inksample taken. How sure can we be that the sample was exclusively of the ink and that it did not contain contaminants of all sorts — dust, and other suspended chemicals or dissolved pollutants in the air to which the parchment was exposed over the centuries of exposure? Such stuff varies in place and time, no doubt. Their effects on ink over five hundred years cannot be known, nor predicted. What is the validity of an analysis of a minute sample of ink; or, for that matter, how sure can we be of the age of that batch of ink itself? For an example, what effect does air pollution have on even more substantial materials in Denver — like window screens and roofing made of aluminum — or the marble carvings in Greece surviving for not much longer from ancient times. In Los Angeles, for instance, aluminum screens for windows have been known to corrode and to be largely dissolved in five years by air contamination.

By "irrelevance" I meant that such chemical analysis has nothing at all to do with the concept, construction, and decipherment of cryptography imbedded in the text, language and script used in the Vinland Map and other so-called "runestones." The text is still there. Moreover, how many people would know Old Norse that well, and use it as a means to encipher cryptography at several levels in either semi-meaningful or absolutely meaningless text written in medieval runic script for meaningful or meaningless Old-Norse-language vocabulary, even during the most recent half-century?

True, it is a manuscript copy (the Vinland Map) as established both by R. Skelton of the British Museum, and the Landesarchiv/Norge pair of free-lancers here in America. So the cryptography antedates the mid-fifteenth century copy with which we are dealing by about three or four centuries. Even without the cryptographic approach, Skelton's (British Museum) argument is enough to convince me of the fact that the parchment's authenticity, and even to suggest an approach without venturing to guess how much earlier. On the whole, we of the 20th Century aren't willing to give medieval technologists much credit for their fundamental contributions to the so-called industrial revolution. Certainly the so-called heights of the middle ages' science and technology gave western civilization much more insight and much more applications of their chemical and mechanical know-how than we've credited to them. Have you read an extremely interesting little volume by Joan Humpel, "The Medieval Machine; The Industrial Revolution of The Middle Ages" (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York c1976) 274 pp incl. index? Anyway, it was during 1972 that Lucy McCrone of the Walter C. McCrone Associates, Inc. (consultants in particle analysis) lifted off a micro-sample of ink particles measuring a few nanograms — well, not just a few, but 29 to be exact. This material was put through "exhaustive" tests determining ion microprobe data, and electron data, from which she found the ink was composed of titanium rather than the usual iron gallantenate. After tests she determined it was titanium oxide (anatase), as a precipitate, and not as ground-up pigments. So what? She says this form of the material wasn't available in 1450. But when a local chemist lives in Switzerland, where the parchment map was copied, he probably uses the raw materials at hand and processes them as his skill permits. Titanium was often confused with iron before it was finally recognized as an element, anyway.
Copy or not, it's the cryptography that matters here. Consistent runology or even the integrity of Old Norse diction and grammar are immaterial to the construction of cryptograms, or even puzzles of the sort which many of these so-called inscriptions or "dodling," represent. The cryptography is independent of all the rest, and it provides information which does not rely on the visible text, nor on the materials on which or with which it is originally recorded. Somehow, much as I'd like to be able honestly to poke holes in the argument of Alf Hauge and O. C. Landsever, so far I've been unable to find any logically or analytically destructive "handles."

So the question remains one very similar to the differences between "old" archaeology and "new" archaeology. Is consistency possible among the basic assumptions underlying "new" archaeology, analytic positivism, and archeo-historiographic heresy? If no common ground exists in the form of commonly accepted presuppositions, there can't and won't ever be any serious discussion among schools of archaeology, but only unresolved, uncompromised argument, without any useful conclusions. Methodologies and differences like these among them contribute nothing to the progress of human knowledge in any field, as I've learned to my great chagrin in philosophy, theology, and geography. So, what common ground (basic assumptions, or underlying presuppositions) can we find to put on the table before we begin discussing differences in archaeology, social theory, anthropology, philosophy, religion? If there any such? Must the several branches of the humanities and social sciences remain forever separated and incog nizant of each other's assertions until they find some intellectual or methodological "common ground"?

There may well be a kernel, or even a body, of 12th Century data which was embroidered and otherwise modified in the course of oral and later edited-written transmission of Norse tradition, including the work of missionary-bishop Henricus and the 15th Century copyist who finally produced the Yale version of the Vinland Map. This is the lingering problem which, in the biblical field concerning both Old Testamental and New Testamental oral traditions, haunts the written documents with which all Christians are involved. This is what I meant about being open-minded about the documents of any and all historiography, and also the interpretation of archaeological data.

Much as philosophical methodology intrigues me, both professionally as a teacher of philosophy and religious history, and as a practitioner of remote sensing technology which is fraught with barbed philosophical (epistemological) problems, and as a hopeful, idealistic contributor to the reliable use of remote sensing in archeology and history, I find it difficult not to accept the goals of "new Archeology" and the new philosophy (in sense of new methodology) particularly with reference to increasingly broad and inclusive perspectives, rather than the mimetic or particular site-oriented concentration-in-depth analyses with which we've been accustomed in the long and venerable past.

Well, I wonder if I make sense of sorts. Not alone with reference to remote sensing of various types, but also to the philosophical integrity of our methods? At any rate, I don't desire to be any sort of militantly committed advocate of "old" or "new" archæology. I know too little about most of the whole field, except to encourage the technologies (as tools) with which I am most familiar and most reliably skilled.

Sincerely,

Al

Albert J. Hahn