

Rethinking the Kensington Rune Stone
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Introduction

Many theories as to the origin and meaning of the Kensington Rune Stone (hereafter KRS) have been offered since its discovery in 1898. Historically these diverse theories have generally followed one of two paths. One path states that the KRS is an authentic artifact from 1362 and the story that it tells, while somewhat perplexing, should be taken at face value. The second path states the KRS is a fabrication or hoax which was probably executed close to the time of its discovery and was created as a way to promote someone's then current agenda, such as expressing ethnic pride.

In recent times Scott Wolter^{2,3} has been the primary champion for the theory that the KRS is an authentic artifact created in 1362. The core elements of his theory have been that 1) the KRS was created by a party that included Knights Templars and at least one Cistercian monk and 2) the primary purpose in creating the stone was to execute a land claim, ostensibly on behalf of their disrupted, but still ideologically intact order.

Wolter has just announced that he has made additional discoveries, which he terms the "Ritual Code", that relate to the authenticity and meaning of the stone. While these discoveries leave much of Wolter's original thesis intact, in many ways this presents us with a new path for re-thinking the KRS. If accepted, these discoveries should dramatically alter the debate as to the authenticity and meaning of the stone.

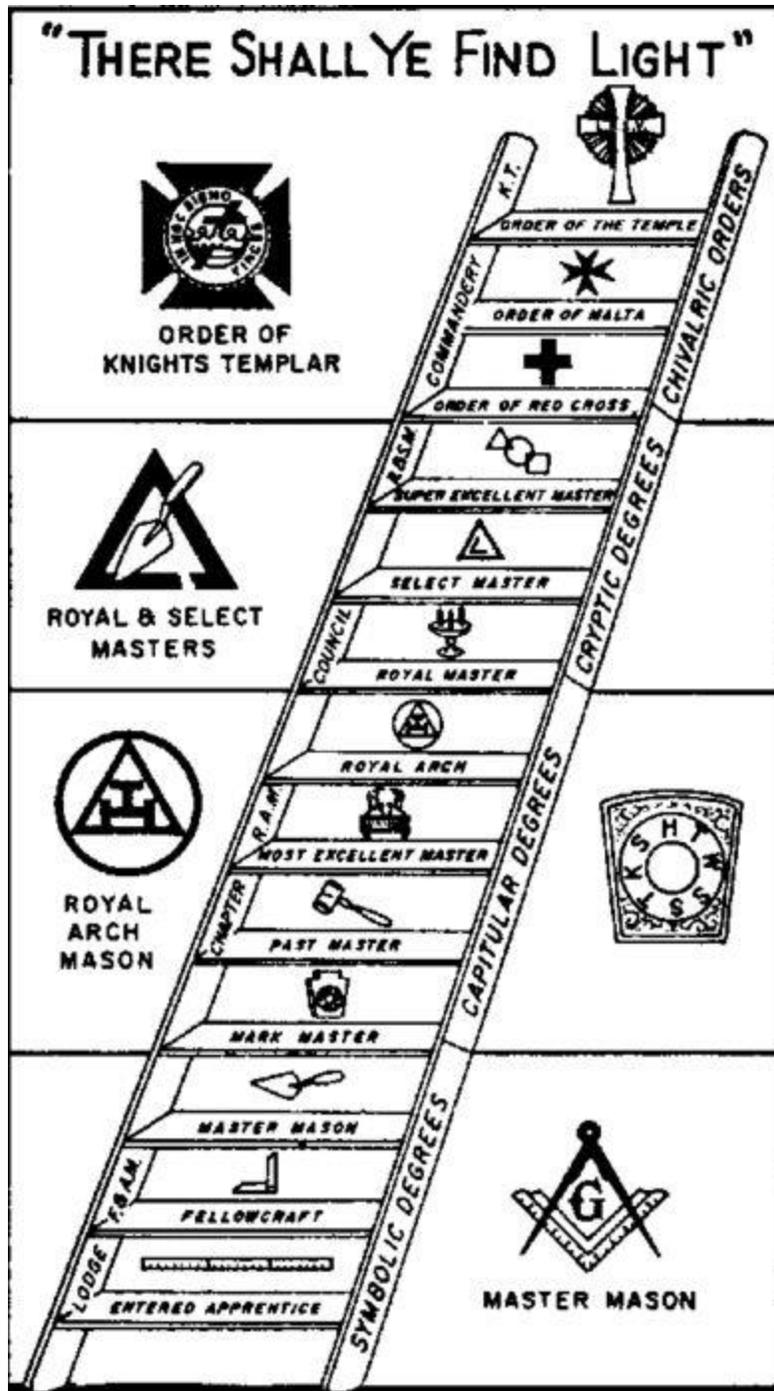
The purpose of this paper is to summarize Wolter's discovery and to offer some thoughts about where this might lead us. It is not the purpose of this paper to evaluate Wolter's discovery or to draw any new conclusions regarding the authenticity and meaning of the KRS.

This paper is largely based on a presentation⁴ made by Wolter in April of 2016 at the Masonic lodge in Anoka Minnesota as well as some personal correspondence between the Wolter and this author.

Freemasonry – Background

Before we dive into Wolter's discovery it will be useful to review a few key background points about Freemasonry. Admittedly this review will be abbreviated and somewhat oversimplified.

As a person progresses in Freemasonry they advance through several levels or degrees. They would begin this progression by joining a "Blue Lodge". As part of the "Blue Lodge" they would work to achieve the 3rd level of Freemasonry called the "Master Mason". They could then pursue further advancement in one or both of the York Rite or the Scottish Rite. While these two rites have a great deal in common they emphasize and organize some material differently, while also having a different structure of degrees through which a person progresses. The diagram below shows the structure of the 13 degrees of the York Rite.



As candidates seek higher degrees within their rite they are taken through symbolic and allegorical material that teaches them important Masonic concepts. In the higher degrees of the Scottish and York Rites, stories of legendary events from Old Testament times are presented both theatrically and through lectures. Essentially, the same biblical stories are told in both branches of Freemasonry, but neither presents the stories in chronological order which creates confusion at times. Keep in mind that it is not clear whether these stories are historically accurate, simply allegorical or contains elements of both. That debate has raged within Masonic academic circles for centuries, but for the purpose of this paper it really doesn't matter.

What is important to understand is that these stories did not just emerge out of the ether when Freemasonry came into being. Wolter makes the point that the intellectual and historical foundations of Freemasonry can be traced back through the Knights Templar/Cistercians, Jewish Mysticism/Kabbalah and the Egyptian Mysteries of Isis and Osiris. There are some who will object to including the Knights Templars/Cistercians on this list. They will insist that there is no documented organizational connection between the historic Knights Templar and Freemasonry. However, the lack of a documented organizational connection is not really the point. This is mostly about the history of ideas.

Wolter's Discovery

Within the last year Wolter has joined a Masonic lodge and undertaken the task of progressing through both the York Rite and Scottish Rite degrees. He is currently a 32nd degree Scottish Rite mason. While he was going through the 9th of the 13 York Rite degrees, called the "Select Mason" degree Wolter observed something profound.

The story in this degree takes place shortly before the First Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was completed around 1000 B.C. The main characters in the degree are the "Supreme Council of Grand Masters" comprised of King Solomon, Hiram-King of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff

Amazingly, the first eight numbers chronicled within the Kensington Rune Stone (KRS) inscription are connected to the Masonic legend of Hiram Abiff; the Grand Architect who oversaw the construction of King Solomon's Temple. These eight numbers are highlighted in the KRS translation shown below:

Face Side

1. **8** Götalanders and **22** Northmen on
2. (this) acquisition journey/taking up land from
3. Vinland far to the west. We
4. had a camp by 2 shelter? **one**
5. day's journey north from this stone.
6. We were fishing **one** day. After
7. we came home we found **10** men red
8. from blood and death. AVM
9. Save from evil.

Split Side

10. There are **10** men by the inland sea to look
11. after our ships **14** days journey
12. from this island/peninsula/hill. Year 1362

Wolter observed that when this story is reassembled in chronological order that there are eight numbers in the Hiram Abiff story that appear in exactly the same sequence as they appear on the KRS. Wolter reasons that this eight number sequential match cannot possibly be a coincidence and it is proof that there is a deep connection between the KRS and this Masonic ritual material.

Explaining the Discovery

When Wolter presents this discovery he goes to great lengths to explain how the KRS numbers are connected in an exact sequence with the numbers in the Masonic story. Most of the connections made by Wolter are clear and straightforward. For example, at the beginning of the lecture portion of the degree the lecturer says, "There were employed on the other **eight** arches, **twenty-two** men from Gebal, a city of Phoenicia..."

To strengthen his argument Wolter points out other connections between the KRS and the Masonic story. For example he notes that the structure of the KRS with nine lines on the face side and 3 lines on the split side for a total of 12 lines mirrors the language of the Masonic story which says "'Their hours of labor were from nine at night until twelve, the time when all prying eyes are closed in sleep."

Perhaps the most important connection that Wolter makes is between the Masonic story, the KRS and the concept called the Secret Vault. This concept is developed by William Mann in his book, "Templar Sanctuaries in North America: Sacred Bloodlines and Secret Treasures"⁵

The Masonic story says that a "true copy of all the holy vessels and sacred treasures" from the Temple, like the Ark of the Covenant, were actually kept in a secret vault, below the Temple in the event of a catastrophe, like an invasion. Not only does Wolter find a connection between the numbers on the KRS and the numbers in this part of the ritual story, he also suggests, following the lead of Mann, that the KRS numbers can be interpreted in such a way that they could actually point to the approximate location of a replacement "Secret Vault" in America, which could hold these lost ancient artifacts legend says were taken from Jerusalem by the Templar's at the time of the First Crusade. Obviously, some independent confirmation of this aspect of the KRS would be most welcome.

To be fair, certain readers will find that for a few of these numbers the connection between the KRS and the Masonic story requires some level of speculation. For example, when the story gives the names of two people together, does that connect with the number 2 on the KRS, as Wolter suggests? How much of a problem is it if it turns out that the KRS numbers do not exactly match the numbers in the Masonic story?

To answer that question we must keep in mind that Wolter is NOT stating that the numbers from the KRS are taken directly from the Masonic story. It is not known to this author when these Masonic stories became fixed at their current level of detail, but it could be as recent as the late 19th century. Importantly, Wolter is claiming that the inscription was made in 1362 by a Cistercian monk traveling in company with Knights Templar. The reader will recall that the Knights Templar were essentially the military arm of the Cistercians and that they were in ideological harmony with the Cistercians. Therefore, he is claiming that both the KRS and the Masonic stories are actually derived from material available to a 14th century Cistercian monk.

Wolter does not specify the path that this material would have taken from the 14th century all the way in to modern Masonic stories. With the possible exception of the KRS itself, there is no chain of

documentation which demonstrates the complete, exact transfer of this material from the 14th century through to modern Masonry. Regardless of how this would have happened it would not be surprising if some elements of the story morphed through time. This makes the idea that eight numbers from the KRS would match eight numbers in sequence from the Masonic story even more incredible.

Connecting More Dots

So, what evidence do we have that the KRS and the Masonic stories could actually be based on information available to a 14th century Cistercian monk and furthermore that this 14th century monk was using material taken from legendary events in Old Testament times. This short report cannot do justice to answering this question. Suffice it to say that Wolter cites several compelling examples of written material, artifacts and architecture which demonstrate his point that there was a numerical thread which connects Freemasonry, the Knights Templar/Cistercians, Hebrew Mysticism/Kabbalah and the Egyptian Mysteries of Isis and Osiris.

For example when he discusses the Masonic connection to the Kabbalah “Tree of Life” he notes that “The Tree” is composed of 10 spheres called sephiroth, along with 22 paths that connect these spheres; each representing one of the 22 Hebrew letters, and they rest on three pillars. This creates a total of 32 emanations of Deity, with a possible 33rd hidden emanation⁶.

Could the KRS be the Work of a Freemason?

There may be those who accept that the KRS is closely connected to Freemasonry along the lines posited by Wolter, but who will insist that it is much more likely that the KRS was simply created in the latter half of the 19th century by a high level York Rite Mason. They might argue that the match that Wolter finds is just too incredible for this not to be true. It is not the purpose of this paper to resolve this challenge. However, the reader will be reminded that Wolter and others have presented extensive epigraphic, linguistic, historical and geologic evidence to support the contention that the KRS is a 14th century artifact. Wolter states that the geological evidence alone makes it a logical impossibility that the stone could have been created by a 19th century Freemason. Of course, much of this evidence has been heavily debated. Regarding the geological/weathering evidence for the stone, the author is aware that some geologists have pointed out that making a precise estimate for the age of this kind of stone surface can be very difficult. Even so, it is the case that every published report from a professional geologist known to the author places the KRS creation at least 50-100 years prior to its discovery.

Which Freemason?

If one is still of the mind that the KRS was created by a 19th century Freemason, it is reasonable to ask if it is possible to identify the Mason who did the deed. Interestingly, in his book “The Enigmatist”¹ Paul Stewart names a specific 19th century Mason as the person who fabricated the KRS. He states that this person embedded into the KRS a coded Masonic message that is rooted in the Kabbalah and that this person was motivated to create the KRS as a result of internal Masonic political in-fighting.

Undoubtedly, some readers will ask if there is any relationship between the Wolter discovery and the work of Stewart? The answer is that there appears to be surprising little overlap between their views of how the KRS connects numerically to Freemasonry. Even though both Stewart and Wolter identify a Masonic connection to the KRS and both draw on the Kabbalah to explain their discoveries, this author does not see any way to reconcile how they each interpret the coded information on the KRS. Also,

there is no readily apparent way to reconcile Stewart's view that the KRS was created by a specific 19th century Mason with Wolters view, as discussed above, that the KRS was created by a 14th century Cistercian monk.

Conclusion

In summary, how does Wolter think his discoveries should impact our understanding of the KRS?

1. The Ritual Code on the Kensington Rune Stone completely eliminates the idea that a late 19th Century Swedish immigrant farmer created the inscription to express ethnic pride.
2. The "Ritual Code" discovery is consistent with the idea that many aspects of modern Masonic ritual are part of a long-standing symbolic and allegorical tradition that goes back through medieval Templarism, the Kabbalah and the ancient Egyptian Mysteries. This idea is reinforced *by* weathering studies, along with linguistic, epigraphic and historical evidence that points to a creation date of 1362 and a Cistercian monk as the creator.
3. The "Ritual Code" discovery eliminates the need to investigate the allegorical aspects of the inscription that many have believed were actual historical events (e.g. searching for the human remains of "10 men red from blood and death.")
4. The "Ritual Code" discovery does not change the following previous conclusions reached by Wolter and other researchers while still introducing new conclusions about the artifact:
 - a. The KRS was created by a group of post-putdown (in 1307) Cistercians/Knights Templar
 - b. The KRS was created in 1362.
 - c. The "Dating Code" of a second date of 1362 that was encoded within the inscription using the medieval Easter Table dating tradition as proposed by the author in 2006, is still valid.
 - d. The presence of the word, "Gral" ("Grail") as singled out in sequence by the carver using punch marks and short lines after the inscription was carved.
 - e. The idea the KRS is a 14th Century land claim as proposed by the author in 2006, is still valid. The KRS land claim is linked, through the agency of Freemasonry, to the founding of what would become the United States of America.
5. The new discovery explains why it has been so difficult for scholars and independent researchers to develop a comprehensive "solution" as to the authenticity and meaning of the KRS. Without the knowledge base and understanding of the allegorical and symbolic aspects of the Hebrew mysticism and the Egyptian mysteries they naturally have struggled for over a century to understand and appreciate these aspects of the inscription.
6. The new discovery can also be argued provides a direct connection between the Cistercians/Knights Templar to modern Freemasonry.

The purpose of this paper was to summarize the recent new KRS related discoveries made by Scott Wolter which he terms the "Ritual Code". It was not the purpose of this paper to evaluate the correctness or completeness of these discoveries as summarized above. However, it is the author's opinion that Wolter has made a strong case for his recent discovery that the KRS is deeply connected to modern Masonic ritual. Therefore, anyone who puts forward a "solution" for the KRS will need to show how that solution either incorporates or supersedes the recent discoveries made by Wolter.

References:

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