

Piri's Tale

Part One: 2004

Wireservice Reports of The Discovery of the "Monk's Papyrus"

ESPANA WORLD NEWS SERVICE WIRE REPORT:

MEDIEVAL TALE UNEARTHED

6 April, 2004: Several days ago a discovery was made during reconstruction taking place inside the Piedra Monastery south of Calatayud, Spain. Workers noted a small depression in an otherwise solid and even Medieval stone floor. Stones were dug up to be replaced, and an expected cavity was found under the third layer of stones, ones laid down to conform to the native stone base of that part of the building. The cavity was expected, because the depression was a relatively recent phenomenon, likely caused by a stone placed over an open space giving way at depth. What was not expected, however, was the finding of a very thick set of papers, sheets of papyrus from Egypt to be exact, fragile but whole, with Medieval Latin writing on them.

Spanish archaeological, linguistic, and Catholic Church history experts were brought in yesterday to decide how to handle the find. After coming to agreement a press conference was called for today. All agreed that a translation was needed, and it was agreed that a team from the University of Zaragoza, under the leadership of Professor Umberto Calamari, would handle, copy,

translate and preserve the find. A Church spokesman said that the papyrus was the property of the Church, and the original would be preserved in the Vatican library if it was found to be of extraordinary value. But if it was what it was suspected to be, some personal writings of a monk from several centuries ago, they would be donated to the university for preservation, and the translation would be studied and published in scholarly journals.

ESPANA WORLD NEWS SERVICE WIRE REPORT:

VIOLENCE ON ZARAGOZA CAMPUS!

10 June, 2004: 1 dead, 1 arrested but subsequently released.

Violence occurred at a press conference regarding progress of work on the now famous "Monk's papyrus." A protestor was fatally shot by police as he appeared to be striking a sword-blow with the intent of killing a priest.

Extended news report:

The University professor in charge of translation for the Monk's papyrus stated that it is a fanciful account of native Iberians during the time of the Romanisation of Spain. The Church's spokesman at the conference said it was the product of unauthorized fiction-writing activity by a monk, a monk who admits multiple acts of disobedience at the start of the story. The story's historical content poorly reflects Latin historical manuscripts available during the monk's lifetime. As fiction, it is a poor piece of work.

Professor Calamari, head of the translating team, seemingly

irritated by this dismissal, countered that "this is irrelevant and personal opinion. It is damn good fiction. It was written by a monk pretending to receive this story from the main character's lips in dreams. If he were alive today he would claim this to be a channeled book and would become a darling of the New Age. During his time, however, what he was doing was frowned upon by the Church and downright dangerous to his well-being. If anything, the story shows it is very difficult for an external entity, no matter how powerful, to suppress a creative gift." The exasperated Church spokesman regained the podium and accused: "He is marketing! He is obviously defaming the Church and building up this disobedient monk to create demand for the story's release as a novel! He has thrown scholarship away for personal fame and gain. The Church does not appreciate this type of crass materialism and may have to intervene legally to take back control of its property."

A University spokesman came forward and said that neither the University nor Professor Calamari and his team will profit from this find except in terms of scholarly recognition. Non-pious fiction written during the time of the life of this Monk is a very rare thing and provides an important new avenue for historical research. During this statement a man approached the podium dressed in an Iberian warrior's costume, perhaps obtained from a re-enactment drama. His approach stopped the conference proceedings, and the press took its attention off the podium and began to film and record as this man and his sign approached the podium. The sign said "Rome must be destroyed." A history professor slated to also address the conference on the issue of what Latin historical sources were available at Piedra, and when, later said it was an obvious parody on what a famous Roman general once said about Carthage, the capitol of the Romans' arch-rivals in the Mediterranean.

The man, unidentified, gained the podium, roughly pushing away the Church and University spokesmen. He was asked by a press-corps member if he is an Iberian ultranationalist. He answered: "No, I am anti-Roman-and-anti-Catholic. Rome killed us physically to drive fear into us to civilize us. All this bloodshed was for our good, they said. Catholicism then followed to kill us spiritually by driving fear into us. All to save us, all for for our own good, they still say. Iberia was a happier place before Roman soldiers and priests."

A University history professor who is also a Priest and prefers to remain unnamed came up to the podium and said to the man: "Iberians killed members of neighboring tribes in battle, regularly, to gain a better afterlife and rebirth because the gods loved heroes and heroes were born on battlefields. They made captured heroes slaves, to save them for special occasions of need when they would become a bloody sacrifice to their gods and goddesses. The slave felt honored to be thus sacrificed and knew he would receive a better rebirth for it. Don't you think the peaceful religion of 'love thy neighbor' brought by Christ is a vast improvement over that sort of violent and bloody society?"

The man drew his modern version of an Iberian short-sword, which was real enough, and roughly hit the professor-priest on the side of the head with the broad side of it, surprising him and knocking him down. Then he stood over him and said: "Because I want you to have a better life next time you return, I will cut your throat and make you a martyr-hero for your faith. Don't screw up your next life or you will get into another habit!" Several in the press corps laughed, thinking it was a joke, an act, despite the roughness used on the professor-priest.

As he raised his sword, apparently to strike a death-blow, a civil

guard member standing very close was taking aim with a service revolver. He explained later he was aiming at his sword-arm, and taking time to aim to make sure he would not hit a bystander. But someone slapped his hand down as he squeezed the trigger, allegedly to stop him from shooting at all, causing his shot to go lower and kill the man instantly. The man who tried to prevent the shot being fired was arrested for interfering with an officer carrying out his duties under the law.

The Church spokesman returned to the podium and declared "This may have been a publicity stunt gone terribly wrong. We hereby call for a full investigation at the highest appropriate level of government." Asked for comment after the fact, the civil guard office spokesman said there would of course be a full investigation. The University spokesman similarly pledged there would be a full inquiry. In the meantime the dead man has not been identified, the man who knocked the policeman's gun-hand down has been released on his own recognizance, and the civil guard member who shot the protestor is not going to be charged with any wrongdoing. He attempted to take appropriate action, and interference caused an unintended result. It was neither his intent nor his fault, said his superior officer.

ESPANA WORLD NEWS SERVICE WIRE REPORT:

MONK'S POPYRUS LEAKED!

6 October, 2004: Controversial "Monk's papyrus" translation published on the Internet after Church regains legal possession of document and control over its content. Member of translation team suspected of sending electronic photos of every page to a well-known former criminal hacker (now working in government

computer security) who allegedly sent thousands of copies to history and literature scholars around the world. Both deny involvement. Investigation continues, but may be called off due to further developments.

Extended news story:

The list of recipients reads like a who's who in ancient and Medieval history. The photos of the pages were changed to Portable Document Format files that are numerous but take up comparatively little space, making emailing possible. Several recipients declared they will study the materials despite legal claims by the Vatican, according to local media. They said that the Vatican will have to obtain court orders in their country to cause them to cease and desist.

In a surprise response, in terms of both tone and timing, the Vatican says today it will not do any such thing in any country. Now that it has been freely distributed, the original Church objection to a particular professor's obvious attempt to personally enrich himself by publishing the Church's property has been made moot. A Catholic scholar in Spain, a recipient of the PDF files by email, has been asked by the Vatican to post the Spanish translation on a web site to make it truly and freely available to all. Catholic scholars in several key nations have been asked to provide translations and similarly post them.

The Vatican news release said it is an interesting piece of semi-historical fiction by a disobedient monk, nothing more, and it is silly, given current developments, to not make it available to both scholars and interested lay persons. The Spanish Catholic scholar who was asked to post the Spanish version for open access said today he also received Vatican pledges of

monetary support for several several graduate students to write theses and dissertations analyzing the document from a historical perspective. He said the Vatican has an interest in obtaining and sharing a deeper understanding of the document in both its Medieval and its second century BC historical contexts.

Asked if this did not contradict the Vatican's declaration of its being a simple attempt at historical fiction he replied: "all history is partly fiction, especially history celebrating the winning side of a conflict; all fiction has a historical context, sometimes accurate to a surprising degree."

In related developments, investigators obtained confessions from several University of Zaragoza employees that the confrontation between the professor-priest and protestor that led to the latter's death was indeed a publicity stunt. The professor-priest says he was slapped down with the broad edge of the sword much harder than they had practiced it and actually feared for his life because the "protestor" was over-acting. The university has fired him and his accomplices for endangering the public by staging what appeared to be a violent crime. No criminal charges will be brought, however.

The dead man was a graduate student in history who had been recruited from another university to make sure he would not be recognized. Apparently he had traveled in his costume, using cash for train and bus fare, without any identification. Next of kin has not yet been reached, and appear to be on extended trip out of country. Interpol has been asked to locate them. His name will not be released until their notification by authorities.

The man who tried to stop the civil guardsman from shooting the protestor was part of the hoax and was trying to save his

accomplice's life. State prosecutors are researching the law that can be brought to bear in this case, and reserve the right to make arrests.