

Pavel Serafimov

STEINBERG INSCRIPTION

Abstract

A new translation of Steinberg inscription, based on Old Bulgarian and other Slavic languages is presented. The inscription consists of seven lines with different direction of reading. Its translation into English is as follows:

*Kastri, you are dead at this rock, you, little one
 You are mourned Kastri my love
 You are so little Kastri
 You are obedient to God in your destiny
 Me, (the) sad father
 Wrote this
 Become cripple on the spot, if you desecrate (this grave)!*

The word *Kastri* is personal name, resembling Bulgarian names *Kostur*, *Kosara* and also Gaulish and Etruscan name *Castor*. Some grammar peculiarities as the presence of Old Bulgarian Locative and Vocative case (Czech, Serbo-Croat, etc. also retain Vocative to this day), aorist tense and the Slavic ethymology of the words indicate that the inscription was made by ancient Slavs inhabiting Rhaetia in 5th ct. BC.

Introduction

While searching for information about Rhaetian language and culture, I became aware of the existence of the Steinberg inscription. After a good examination I noticed the amazing resemblance of some its words with Old Church Slavonic. Knowing that Rhaetians were kin of Veneti - the ancestors of Slovenians, I decided that there was a great likelihood that not only few words, but **the** whole text is an example of an ancient Slavic language, perhaps early form of Slovenian, or at least very closely related to it. The further analysis of the runic text proved that it was indeed written in an old Slavic language.

History and description

The Steinberg inscription was found accidentally by mountaineers in 1957 in the mountains (Alps) in the vicinity of town of Steinberg on river Rofan, Austria [1]. It was classified as a pre Roman one. Few scientists have studied it: Vetter [2], Mayr [3], and Schumacher [1]. Two lines of the inscription were found later and published under ST-8 by Mayr in 1962 [4] and ST-9 by Prosdocimi [5] in 1971. Under line 3 there are carved figures, most probably solar signs. The alphabet of the inscription resembles those of Etruscans, Rhaetians and Veneti from 5th ct. BC. The inscription is in a small cavity 2,5 m broad, 4 m high and about 3 m deep. The lines of the inscription (line 1, 2, and 3) are approx. 2 m long. The height of the signs varies between 5 and 10 cm. The inscription is presented in Figure 1.

Vetter [2] and Prosdocimi [5] offered the following transcription, Table 1.

Nr. 9 of Joppich seems to be only a part of Nr. 4 of Prosdocimi: ATIPEXATIX.NLAPE
Mayr [4], p. 287, offered for line Nr 8 (Nr 6 in present reading) the following transcrip-
tion: →ACKVER. KI

In the work of Schumacher [1], p. 235, is offered the following partial decipherment:

ESI, KASTRI, MLAPET - part of dedicatory formula

MLAPET – verbal form

KASTRI is considered to be a name of some deity

ESI is considered to be a demonstrative pronoun

ETUNI, RITALI, MNESI (ESNESI) USIPE are considered to be names of worshipers

Decipherment

My numeration of the lines, reading, and translation are different than those of Vetter [2], Joppich [6], and Schumacher [1]. The lines of the inscription form a figure, which is U-shaped and rotated clockwise by 90°, Figure 1. The upper side of it consists of one line, enumerated by me as Nr 4. Its left side (the bottom of U-shape) consists of one line, enumerated by me as Nr 5. The bottom side consists of 4 lines, three one above another, numbered by me consequently as Nr 1, 2, 3, and another ‘welded’ to line Nr 3, and enumerated as Nr 7; this one has smaller letters. The two connected lines Nr 3 and Nr 7 have different direction of reading. There is another short line between Nr 4 and the group Nr 1, 2, 3, 7, inside the U-shape; this one I have enumerated as Nr 6.

It is easy to notice that there are few letters, which have different form in the different lines. It concerns A in line 1 KASTRI and in line 5 AZI, letter K in line 1 KASTRI and in line 3 KASTRI, letter P in line 1 APET and in line 4 PANU, letter T in line 1 ETU and in line 2 APET, letter S in line 1 KASTRI and in line 6 ARISA. There could be few reasons for that peculiarity.

Stone cutting is a very hard job, so it is highly probable that few workers were hired to make the inscription. Some of these people might have come from other regions, which had similar, but not identical alphabet. If the text wasn’t given in written form, but only with verbal instructions, the workers had performed the assignment each one in the style known to him (with letters used in his region). That concerns letters A, K and T. Different form of S in KASTRI – line 1 and S in ARISA - line 6 could have other explanation. The second S, in line 6 may represent stronger S, or even the sound SH (as in English word **SHARP**).

In a similar way one could explain the two different P forms, one in line 1 - LAPE, and the other P in line 4 - in PANU, APEKER. The sign P in line 4 was perhaps aspirative, as in Sanskrit word PHENA - foam.

There is one more peculiarity, the sign resembling Latin letter I with two points on the sides - begin of line 4. It could represent sound as in Slovene word JAZ – **I** (and in English word **YARD**), or perhaps it had a function of a sentence separator. Without examination of more text examples of the same language, we can’t reach a definitive conclusion.

Transliteration of the Steinberg inscription is given in Figure 2.

My decipherment follows below. The following abbreviations are used:

Bulg	Bulgarian
M Bulg	Modern Bulgarian
O Bulg	Old Bulgarian
OChS	Old Church Slavonic,
Rus	Russian
Sln	Slovenian

Numeration by Schumacher [1]	My numeration
1	1. KASTRI ESI ETU MNI LAPE
2	2. RITALI ESI KASTRI MI APET
5	3. ESI MNESI KASTRI MALI
4	5. AZI PESHA TIAN LAPE
5	4. ESI TU PANU APEKER A KVE
8	6. ARISA EKI
6	7. SAKAT ESTA NU ATE FAKATE

Figure 2. Transliteration of the Steinberg inscription

LINE 1: → KASTRI ESI ETU MNI LAPE

The translation of line 1 is: *Kastri you are (dead) at this stone, you little one.*

KASTRI – personal name

ESI '(you) are' 2 pers.sing. ESI = *you are*-2 pers. singular (OChS) (Czech is JSI, Sln is SI)
ETU 'this' ETO *this* (OChS), ETU = *this* (Rus), TO (Sln)

MNI 'stone' KAMEN = *stone* (OChS); MAEN = *stone* (Cymraec) but MAEN 'stone' is Slavic loan word in Celtic languages, it comes from the common Slavic KAMEN 'stone' where the root is KAM with primal meaning 'hard, steady'; KAM corresponds to Tokharian word KEM 'earth', Avestanic ZAM 'earth', Sanskrit words KSAMA 'earth, base' and ASMAN 'stone'. All these words are related to common Slavic words ZEMLJA 'earth'

and KAMEN 'stone'. MNI 'stone' is here in Locative case: KAMEN 'stone' KAMNI 'at the stone' Locative case of O Bulg. The endings in this case are I and E, cf. [7] p. 26
 LAPE 'little one, little child' LAPE, HLAPE = little child (M Bulg) Russian word **HLOPOK** 'young man' is also related. LAPE 'little one' is in Vocative case: LAPE! = you little one!(M Bulg) The ending in this case is E: Ivan (personal name), Vocative case: Ivane = hey Ivan!

All the words have Sanskrit cognates:

KASTRI is personal name with meaning 'sharp' ASHRI means sharp in Sanskrit

ESI: ASI 'you are' 2 pers. Singular in Sanskrit

ETU: ETATH 'this' + ITA – this – in Sanskrit

MNI: ASMAN 'stone' in Sanskrit

LAPE: ALAPA 'little' in Sanskrit, LAVA 'fragment ,piece, particle' (Sanskrit)

LINE 2: → RITALI ESI KASTRI MI APET

Translation: *You are mourned Kastri, my love*

RITALI comes from OChS verb **RIDATI** 'to cry, to weep, to mourn'. RITALI is very close to past tense of 1 person plural of the verb RIDATI: RIDALI – RIDALI SME 'we have mourned' (M Bulg). However, here we have something else: RITALI could be an ancient form of passive voice of verb RIDATI 'to cry, mourn' So, RITALI may represent 'mourned'.

ESI = ESI (you) are, 2 pers. singular (OChS)

KASTRI - personal name

MI = MOI 'my' (OChS)

APET = OBIČ 'love' (M Bulg)

Again, all the words have Sanskrit cognates:

RITALI- RUDHATI 'to cry, weep'

ESI- ASI 'you are' 2 pers. singular

MI – MAMA 'mine, my'

APET – ABASHTA 'wished'

LINE 3: → ESI MNESI KASTRI MALI

Translation: *You are so small Kastri*

ESI = ESI 'you are' 2 pers.sing. (OChS)

MNESI = MNOZI, MNOGO 'a lot, much' (OChS)

KASTRI - personal name

MALI = MAL 'small, little, juvenile' (OChS), MALI 'the small one' (Slovenian)

Sanskrit cognates:

ESI = ASI 'you are', 2 pers. sing.

MNESI = MAHA 'much, great'

MALI = MRDU 'gentle, soft'

LINE 4: → ESI TU PANU APEKER A KVE

Translation: *You are obedient to the Lord in your destiny*

ESI = ESI 'you are' 2 pers. sing (OChS)

TU = TĀI *you*(OChS) - TĀI ESI = *you are* (OChS) (Ā read as in English word EARTH)

PANU = PAN 'sir, master' (Polish, Czech, Slovak) + BAN – master (O Bulg). PANU is in Dative case, the ending is U: PAN – Lord, master, PANU – to the Lord, master [7] p. 25.

APEKER = **POKOREN** 'obedient' (O Bulg), **POKOI** 'peace' (OChS)

A = U 'in' (O Bulg)

KVE = KOBĀ 'destiny', **OKOP** 'ditch, grave' (O Bulg). KVE is in Locative case; the ending is E [7] p. 25, KOBĀ – destiny, KOBĒ – in the destiny.

Sanskrit cognates:

ESI = ASI 'you are' 2 pers. sing.

TU = TU 'you'

PANU = PANAYATE 'to praise, to respect', BANĀ 'light' UPĀNYA - master

APEKER = PASHA 'tie, band'

A =UPA 'near'

KVE = KUPĀĀ 'ditch'

LINE 5: → AZI PESHA TIAN LAPE

Translation: *Me (the) sad father, you little one*

AZI = JAZ 'I, me' (Slovenian) + AZ 'I, me' (Bulg)

PESHA = BASHTA 'father' (Bulg) + PESHTI SJA 'to care' (O Bulg). Other related words are OPEKA 'care' OPEKUN 'care taker' POPECHITEL 'care taker'. (PĚČĚ is Czech caregiving)

TIAN = TĀZEN 'sad' (Bulg) (Ā read as in English word EARTH)

LAPE = LAPE 'little one' (Bulg) (here again in Vocative case)

Sanskrit cognates:

AZI = AH – 'I'

PESHA = BAHUSHTA 'eldest, strongest, greatest', POSYA – 'to be taken care'

TIAN = DUKHIN 'sorrowful'

LAPE = ALAPA 'little'

LINE 6: → ARISA EKI

Translation: *Wrote here (this)*

ARISA = REZA 'he carved', RISUVA 'he drew' (Bulg)

EKI = ETO 'here' (Bulg)

Sanskrit cognates:

ARISA = REKHATI 'to draw', REKHA 'line, notch, mark'

EKI = IHA 'here', ETATH 'this'

LINE 7: → SAKAT ESTA NU ATE FACATE

Translation: *Become cripple on the spot, if you desecrate (this grave)*

SAKAT = SAKAT 'cripple' (Bulg)

ESTA = ESTA (you two) are (OChS)

NU = NUNE 'now' (OChS)

ATE = AŽE 'if' (OChS)

FACATE = FASHKATE 'you defecate, make dirty' + FĀSHKIA 'excrement' (Bulg)

Sanskrit cognates:

SAKAT – SIKHIRA 'sharp' (Bulg word SAKAT 'cripple' is connected with Thracian word SKAEVUS 'left' and SKAPSIS 'axe'. The primal meaning of left is: *weak, cripple, disabled – with cut limb*, Sanskrit word SIKHIRA 'sharp' corresponds to Bulg. SEKIRA 'axe' and the verb SEKA 'hew, cut')

ESTA = STHA 'you are', 2 pers. plural + STA – 2 pers. plural, Imperative [8] p.240

NU = NANUN 'now'

ATE = YATH 'if'

FAKATE = VIS, VISTHA 'excrement'

The complete translation of Steinberg inscriptions is as follows:

- 1) KASTRI YOU ARE (dead) HERE AT THIS ROCK, YOU LITTLE ONE
- 2) YOU ARE MOURNED KASTRI, MY LOVE
- 3) YOU ARE SO LITTLE KASTRI
- 4) YOU ARE OBEDIENT TO GOD IN YOUR DESTENY
- 5) ME (the) SAD FATHER, YOU LITTLE ONE
- 6) WROTE THIS
- 7) BECOME CRIPPLE ON THE SPOT IF YOU DESECRATE

Conclusion

Steinberg inscription is a funerary stele of a small child. The language of inscription belongs to ancient Slavic nation, inhabiting Old Rhaetia. Vocabulary and grammar are prove of this, some words are same today: LAPE; MALI; SAKAT. The cases Vocative, Dative, Locative are clearly present, and the case endings correspond to those of Old Church Slavonic. This inscription is one more confirmation that Slavic people were ancient inhabitants not only of Eastern, but also of Central Europe.

The name Rhaetia (where the inscription was found) is of clear Slavic origin. Rhaetia is mountain land and Slavic word RID means exactly the same: *high place, high rock*. The current theories define the name Rhaetia as coming from the Gaulish word ARDOS 'high' but a lot of the Gaulish people were Slavs, the burial types, title of nobles, vocabulary, and names of gods show clear connection with ancient Slavs. A very good prove that Gauls

were Slavic people was also provided by A. Ambrozic who showed in his books “Adieu to Britany” [9] and “Journey back to Garumna” [10] that hundreds of supposedly Gaulish toponyms and hydronyms have Slavic etymology.

The simplest explanation is by the “Ockham razor” the right one: the Rhaetians, kin of Veneti and Etruscans were Slavic people, who lived in Central Europe from deep antiquity. The affinity of the language of the inscription with Sanskrit [11] is one more prove of that. The ancient Slavs, inhabiting the Alpine region left many traces: artefacts, burials, inscriptions, and place names, which form a solid testimony for the early Slavic presence in these lands.

Acknowledgement

I express my thankfulness to Mr. G. Tomezzoli from Munich, whom I contacted during my search about the Rhaetian language and culture, and who very kindly provided me not only with samples of Rhaetian script, but also with materials about the Steinberg inscription.

I express also my thankfulness to Prof. Dr. Anton Perdih for his help, patience and excellent advices, without which that work would never reach good quality.

References

1. S Schumacher, *Die Rhaetischen Inschriften- Geschichte und Heutiger Stand der Forschung*, Verlag des Instituts für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 1992, p. 239
2. E Vetter, Die vorrömischen Felsinschriften von Steinbeg in Nordtirol, *Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Wien, **1957**, 24, 383-398
3. K M Mayr *Die rätische Felsinschriften von Steinberg in Nordtirol, Ein beitrag zu Ihrer Deutung*, Der Schlern, **1960**, 34, 309-312
4. K M Mayr, *Eine neue Steinberg-Inschrift*, in Der Schlern, **1962**, 36, 287
5. A L Prodocimi, Note di epigrafica retica, in: *Studien zur Namenkunde und Sprachgeographie*. Festschrift für Karl Finsterwalder, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, Bd. 16, eds. W Meid, H M Ölberg, H Schmeja, Innsbruck, 1971, 15-46
6. J Joppich, Tonabdruck und Korrektur zur Lesung der Felsinschriften nach Emil Vetter, bei: A L Prodocimi, Note di epigrafica retica, in *Studien zur Namenkunde und Sprachgeographie*. Festschrift für Karl Finsterwalder, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft Bd. 16, eds. W Meid, H M Ölberg, H Schmeja, Innsbruck, **1971**, 15-16, 41-44.
7. Д Иванова-Мирчева, А Давидов, *Малък Речник на Старобългарския Език*, СЛОВО, Велико Търново, 2001 (D Ivanova Mircheva, A Davidov, *Malak Rechnik na Starobulgarskija Ezik*, SLOVO, Veliko Tarnovo, 2001)
8. W D Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar*, Low price publishments, Delhi, 2003
9. A Ambrozic, *Adieu to Brittany*. Cythera Press, Toronto 1999.
10. A Ambrozic, *Journey back to Garumna*, Cythera Press, Toronto 2000.
11. V G Apte, *Sanskrit-English dictionary*, Hippocrene Books, New York, 1996

Povzetek

Napis z gore Steinberg

Podan je nov prevod napisa z gore Steinberg na podlagi starobolgarskega in drugih slovanskih jezikov. Napis ima 7 vrstic napisanih v različnih smereh. Prevod v slovenščino bi bil:

*Kastri, ti si tu ob skali, mali moj,
objokujem te, Kastri moj dragi,
tako si majhen Kastri,
Bogu služiš v jami.
Jaz, žalostni oče,
napisal to.
Ohromi naj takoj, kdor bi to oskrunil!*

Kastri je osebno ime, podobno bolgarskim imenom *Kostur*, *Kosara* in tudi galskemu in etruščanskemu *Castor*. Nekatere slovnične posebnosti kot npr. starobolgarski mestnik, zvalnik in aorist, pa tudi slovanska etimologija besed kaže na to, da so napis naredili Slovani, ki so živeli v Reciji v 5. stol. pr. Kr.