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TWO NORICUM INSCRIPTIONS

Abstract

In the internet site of the Institutsteil des Instituts für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Wien two Noricum inscriptions are shown. The first, the inscription of Grafenstein near Klagenfurt is engraved in Latin Cursive on a fragment of brick about 27 x 13 cm and is dated at the 2nd century AD. The second, the inscription of Ptuj is engraved on a small vase found by Mr. Vnuk in 1894 in a grave number 8 at Spodnja Hajdina near Ptuj and contains 15 characters, written in “Catena Literarum” using the alphabet of Poetovio. Because no unanimity has been reached about the deciphering of the inscriptions, the alternative decipherments are offered for stimulating possible further studies.

Although the present decipherments are somewhat different, the inscriptions appear to preserve much more similarities with Slavic languages than with Latin. Thus, from said inscriptions appears clear that, although Romanised to a certain degree, the Noricum society at least till 2nd century AD kept basically its language as a part of its original culture.

Introduction

In the search for possible Venetic or Slavic inscriptions found in the area of the ancient Noricum, P Serafimov visited the internet site of the Institutsteil des Instituts für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Wien [1], in which are shown two Norican inscriptions: the inscription of Grafenstein about 15 km east from Celovec – Klagenfurt and the inscription of Spodnja Hajdina near Ptuj. Both the inscriptions are reported as Old-Keltic (Norrish). Because no unanimity has been reached about the deciphering, the alternative decipherments of both inscriptions are offered for stimulating possible further studies.

The inscription of Grafenstein

The inscription in Fig. 1 is engraved on a fragment of brick about 27 x 13 cm and is dated at the 2nd century AD. It is composed of two groups of lines, comprising respectively, five lines and two lines of characters separated by a relatively large space.

The inscription, described in an unpublished note of Dr. F. Glaser of the Landesmuseum für Kärnten, is written in Latin cursive and contains dots apparently indicating separation between the words. The transliteration provided in the site [1] is the following:

Figure 1: Layout of the inscription of Grafenstein



MOGE · ES + [- - -]
 PET (?) LAU · EX [- - -]
 NE · SAMES [- - -]
 OLLO · SO · VILO · [- - -]
 ONA O (?) + ++

OLLO · SO · +
 + LUGNI · SI

Serafimov – Tomezzoli's deciphering

We accept the transliteration of Dr. Glaser and concerning the deciphering we observe the following.

- Line 1: MOGE · ES + [- - -]

MOGE: corresponds to **MOGE** – Sl. Vocative case of **MOG** – *mighty one*, corresponding to G. Sl. **MOGUČI**, **MOGĀŠT** – *the mightiest one*, O. Blg. **MOGONŠT** – *mighty one*. **MOGE** is perhaps related to the Celtic theonym **MOGONS** – *the mighty one*, [2] page 152, 153. Related are also the Gaelic **MOIGRE** – *robust, handsome*, Old Irish **MOA** – *greater*, Old Welsh **MUI** – *greater*, [3] Section M, but Sl. languages offer closer match and more related words: Blg. **MOGA** – *I can*, O. Blg. **MOGONŠT** – *mighty one*, Blg. **MOGĀŠTES-TVO** – *power*, Blg. **MOGILA** – *great hill*, in Russian it kept only the meaning – *grave*.

ES: corresponds to O. Ch. Sl. **ESI** – *you are*, Gaulish **ESI** – *you are*, or it could represent Latin **ES** – *be*.

- Line 2: PET(?) LAU · EX [- - -]

PET LAU: personal name in Dat. case, coming from G. Sl. **PET** – *five, the fifth one*, **LA** diminutive particle, **U** ending for Dat. and meaning: *to the fifth little one*. The Latin name Quintilius is semantically built in the same way. Personal Sl. and Blg. names closest to this Norican one are Petko, Petjo, Petkan. Blg. preserves also the diminutive particles **UL**, **IL**: **Dragul**, **Momchil**. In the antiquity many male names ended on A: Zvinitsa, Ivanitsa, Enravota, thus a name like **PETLA** would not sound strange. However, names like Quintus Petilus – tribune, Petilii – two tribunes, who accused Scipio Africanus of extortion, Petilius – praetor, Petilius – high officer of the British legions, Petilius – judge, Petilius – praetorian, were not uncommon [4] p. 506.

EX: could be a good match for Latin **EX** – *from, out of*, Gaulish **EX** – *from, out of*, and G. Sl. **IZ** – *from, out of*.

- Line 3: NE · SAMES [- - -]; edit is letter A

NE · SAMAES: corresponds to a variant of Sl., O. Blg. **NI JE SAM(I) SĀ** – *this one is not alone*, **NE · SAMAES** is also very close to Latin **NOS SUMUS** – *we are*.

- Line 4: OLLO · SO · VILO ·

OLLO: is rather obscure, it resembles the Gaulish **CIALOS** – *whole, complete, total* and the Welsh **OLL** – *all, whole* and if the Welsh word is the right equivalent, the related Sl. word is **CJAL**, **CEL** – *whole*. However, in some Sl. languages sometime the initial **K** is omitted: Blg. **KAK** – *how*, corresponds to Pol. **JAK** – *how*, and the K and G in some Sl. languages sometime is turned to H: Blg. **GORA** – *mountain, forest* correspond to Cz. **HORA** – *mountain*, Blg. **KRUSHA** – *peer* correspond to Slov. **HRUSKA**. Perhaps, if the Norican word for *whole, complete, a lot*, was originally **HALA**” (**A**” representing a sound similar to EA in the Engl. word **EARTH** and to the ending of many Sl. words in the past), with the time the initial H disappeared under the Latin influence, and **HALA** became **ALA**”, later evolved in **OLA**”. Because the Latin had no sound, nor letter for **A**”, it was represented by O because of the similarity of the sounds **EA**” and O. The double L in **OLLO** served, perhaps, as reminder that the final O should be pronounced as A”.

SO: could be the G. Sl. conjugation **S**, **SA** – *with*.

VILO: corresponds to a variant of G. Sl. **BOL** – *pain, suffering* (V and B could exchange in O. Blg. – **VOI** = **BOI** – *soldiers*, also **O** can be transferred in I – O. Blg. and Kurt. **BIG** – *God*, corresponds to G. Sl. **BOG**, so **VILO** could correspond to **BOL** in O. Blg. or. Ukr. Dial..

Line 5: ONA · O (?) + ++

ONA: G. Sl. word **ONA** – *she*.

Line 6: OLLO · SO · ?

OLLO SO...: as explained above – probably: *whole with pain*.

Line 7: + LUGNI · SI

LUGNI SI: corresponds to Blg. dial, imperative verbal form **LUGNI SI** – *lay quite down (in peace)*.

Consequently, a translation of the inscription, with explanations in parentheses and absent portions added in Italics, is:

Mighty one, be (you are)... *merciful* ?

to Petl from ... *Noreia = Noricum* ?

he is not alone

mourned whole with pain (with great pain)

she (*his beloved wife*)

mourned whole with pain (with great pain)

lay down with peace (*you the deceased* !)

which can be interpreted in modern words as:

Mighty one, *please be merciful*

to Petl from *Noreia*

he is not *buried* alone

mourned with great pain

his beloved wife lays next to him

mourned with great pain

sleep in piece *our beloved ones* !

Although written in Latin cursive, most words in the inscription: MOGE, ESI, ONA, SO, VILO, LUGNI SI have clear Sl. counterparts, although EX, ES(I) are most probably Latin loanwords and OLLO resembles strong Welsh OLL – *all*. This is not completely surprising if we remind that according to the Nestor's chronicle [5] p. 3, “От зтих же 70 и 2 язык произошел и народ славянский, от племени Иафета – так называемые **норики** которые и есть славяне” - From these 72 languages/nations sprang also the nations of Slavs, from the stock of Japhet, the so called Noricans, who are called also Slavs. According to Tertullian [6] p. 98, Belin/Belenus (Gen. Sl. : BEL = white, EN : adjective suffix) was a Norican god.

The inscription appears to preserve signs that probably represented indications of possible pronunciation rules: see the two possible dots like a German umlaut on the vowel O in line 4, and the two underlined O of the words OLLO · SO in line 6, but the same words OLLO · SO in line 4 have no underlined O.

The relative large separation between lines 1-5 and lines 6-7 is obscure. It could indicate the possible presence of either a protective sacred symbol, or a family symbol engraved or painted, unfortunately it could be lost.

The presence of Sl. Vocative case as in MOGE, Dat. case as in PETLAU, imperative as in LUGNI, Sl. personal pronoun as ONA and Sl. conjugation as SO allow us to define the ancient Noricans, or at least their language, in 2nd century AD, as Slavic with Latin admixtures.

Vodopivec's deciphering

This inscription is in younger Venetic characters, which partly traverse into Latin characters, so an acceptable transliteration of this inscription is:

MOGE ESI / PEILAU EX / NE SARAES / OLLO SOVILO / ONA(I) O(T)A(K)(O)
 OLLO SO T / ILU GNI SI

The first *I* could be also *A*, the second *I* could be a stressed *I* but also could be *T*, *X* could be *T* as in older Venetic inscriptions, *R* is a consonant between two vowels and by shape could be *B*, *R* or *D*, the third *I* is surely a stressed *I*. In the 5th row there are four less visible characters which could be better identified on the basis of the understanding of the inscription. Summarising, 49 characters are reliable characters, only 4 characters are questionable, so there is a good base for a reliable deciphering.

Concerning the deciphering of the words in this inscription the following dictionaries were used [7], [8], [9].

Original	Explanation	Slovene	English
Line 1: MOGE ESI			
MOGE	corresponds to okr, SN, SK	MOGEL	could
ESI	corresponds to stressed SN, SK	SI	you are
Line 2: PEILAU E T			
PEILAU	corresponds to prem, SN, SK	PEJLAU, PELJAV	drive, lead
E	corresponds to okr, SN, SK	JE	is
T	corresponds to okr, SN, SK	TU	here
Line 3: NE SARAES			
NE	corresponds to SK	NE	not
SARAES	corresponds to preg, SK	ZARES	really
Line 4: OLLO SOVILO			
OLLO	corresponds to SN, SK In Venetic inscriptions Ca58 "OL" and in Ca19, Ca50 and Ca64 „OLL“ appear with meaning ulcer [10].	ULJ, ULJE	ulcer
SOVILO	corresponds to preg, SN, SK	SOVILO, ZAVILO	wrap up
Line 5: ONA(I) O(T)A(K)(O)			
ONAI	corresponds to HK, SN, SK	ONAJ, ON	that
OTAKO	corresponds to preg, SN, SK	OTAKO, OTEČI	swell up
Line 6: OLLO SO T			
SO	corresponds to SK	SO	they are
T	corresponds to okr, SN, SK	TI	you
Line 7: ILU GNI SI			
ILU	corresponds to SN, SK	ILU, ILOVICI	clay
GNI	corresponds to okr, SN, SK	GINI	pine
SI	corresponds to SK	SI	you are

Thus, adding one row after the other the inscription reads:

MOGE ESI PEILAU E T NE SARAES OLLO SOVILO ONAI OTAKO OLLO SO T
ILU GNI SI

which can be translated in word by word sequence in Slovene as:

Mogel si pejlau je tu ne zares ulje zavil onaj oteko ulji so tu ilu ginil si.

and in English as:

Could you lead here not really ulcer wrapped that swelled ulcer are here clay pine you.

In a free translation:

Mogel si peljati tu, ne zares, ulje si zavil a je ulje oteklo, ulji so tu, zato si ilu ginil ti.

You could lead here, not really, ulcer you wrap up but ulcer swelled up, ulcer are here, so you pine to clay.

The inscription has also in meaning two parts: in the first part it express the hope to get health although unsuccessfully and in the second part, pragmatically, it announces that the ulcer remains and caused an early death.

The inscription of Ptuj

According to [11], the small vase on which the inscription of Ptuj is engraved was found by Mr. Vnuk in 1894 in a grave 8 at Spodnja Hajdina near Ptuj together with an oil lamp recognized of type Loeschcke X or Buchi Xa, Xa/b. The vase is 8.3 cm high, 8.1 cm wide, 6 cm at the top, 4.7 cm at the bottom and its use is unknown. Because said type of lamps was produced in the 2nd and 3rd century AD the grave was dated at that period. The inscription contains 15 characters written by using an alphabet named alphabet of Poetovio. It is written in “Catena Literarum”, i.e. in continuo, and oriented to the left. The transliteration provided by [1] is: artebudz brogdui or artebuths brogdui.

Serafimov – Tomezzoli’s deciphering

Because Noricum was a region not far from the sub-alpine regions of Northern Italy and the inscription can presumably be ascribed too at the 2nd and 3rd century BC it is possible to postulate a kind of continuity or contiguity between the alphabet of Poetovio, the sub-alpine Rhaetian alphabets of Bolzano and Magré, the Venetic alphabet of Padua and Este [12] pp. 505-512, and the Roman square capital alphabet. This continuity can be recognised by the similar shapes of the characters in said alphabets. According to the similarities with the Bolzano, Magré and Este alphabets, it is possible to identify the 1st character as A, the 2nd and 10th characters as R, the 12th character as G, the 15th character as I. According to the similarities with the Roman square Capital letters it is possible to identify the 4th character as E, the 5th and the 9th character as B, the 11th character as O. Tentatively, the other characters can be identified as follows: the 3rd character is T, the 6th and the 14th characters are U, the 7th and the 13th characters are D, the 8th character is Z.

Thus, our transliteration, confirming that of [1], is that shown in Fig. 2.

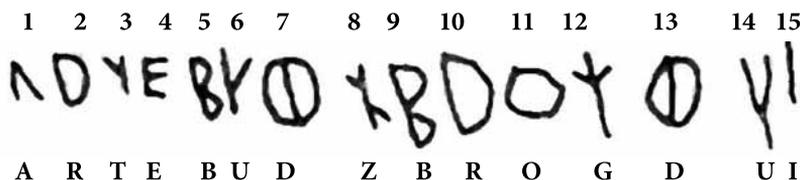


Figure 2: Inscription of Ptuj with numbers of letters and transliteration in Latin letters

The inscription can be subdivided in words as follows: Artebudz Brogdui.

ARTEBUDZ: first name, male personal name with meaning : *To be valuable*.

ARTE: Blg. Dial. art(āk) - *value, worth*.

BUDZ: O. Ch. Sl. BUDETI – *to be* (the sound **dz** can be found in Blg. dialects : **dzrja** – *I see*, **dzjapam** – *I gape*, **dzunkam** – *I ring*, **dzelo** – *a lot*).

BROGDUI: family name from **BROGD, BROGDA** in Gen. case. The ending **UI** in Brogdui is a Genitive suffix. Perhaps, the sound V (cf. the Sl. Gen. endings OV, EV, OVI, EVI) didn't existed in the Norican, thus, it was pronounced and written as U, so to the suffix (O)VI would correspond **UI** – Brogdui. Thus, the meaning of BROGDUI would be: of, son of, of the family of BROGD, BROGDA. The name BROGD, BROGDA would be linked to the G. Sl. verb **BEREGATI** – *to care*, see also Slov. **BRIGA** – *care*, and also to the Gen. Germ. verb **BERGEN** – *to care, to protect*.

Thus, the meaning of the inscription should be *Atrebudz son of Brogd(a)* and indicate just the name of the owner of the vase.

The sound DZ of Artebudz testifies that the Noricum was a Slavic language, or it was influenced by Slavic languages.

Vodopivec's deciphering

This vase was found in the grave dated at the 2nd and 3rd century AD, but the vase could be older, so the inscription could be dated also BC. Dating by archaeologists for this vase could be probable if there will be more such inscriptions with characters of the alphabet of Poetovio. So it is possible to postulate a kind of continuity or contiguity between the alphabet of Poetovio and the Venetic alphabet of Padua and Este [12] pp. 505-512. Thus, it is possible to identify the characters in the inscription as follows: 1st character could be A, 2nd and 10th characters is Venetic R, 3rd character is Venetic T, 4th character is E, 5th and 9th characters are B, 6th and 14th characters are Venetic U, 7th and 13th characters could be Venetic H, 8th character is Venetic Z, 11th and 13th characters are O, 12th character is Venetic G and the 15th last character is I.

Thus, a better transliteration is that shown in Fig. 3.



Figure 3: Different transliteration of inscription of Ptuj

In this inscription are visible wider distances between letters R and T, E and B, H and Z, O and G and between G and H. So there are 5 wider distances which correspond with division of continuous text into words. Only one wider distance between letters H and U has not such meaning. On such statements and according with understanding of the inscription it can be subdivided in words as follows:

(IAR) TE BUH ZBRO G HUI
 (I)ar te buh zbro g hui". or alternatively (D)ar te buh zbro g hui.

Original	Explanation	Slovene	English
(I)AR	corresponds to SN, SK	JAR, MLAD	young
(D)AR	corresponds to SK	DAR	gift
TE	corresponds to SK	TE, TEBE	you
BUH	corresponds to SN, SK	BUH, BOG	God
ZBRO	corresponds to okr, preg, SK	ZBRAL, IZBRAL	collect, select
G	corresponds to okr, SK	GLEJ	see
HUI	corresponds to SN, SK	HUJ, HUJE	worse, sin heavy
G	could also correspond to okr, SK	GA	him

Thus, the meaning of the inscription in word by word sequence in Slovene and in English should be:

Mladega te Bog izbral glej huje. or Dar tebi Bog zbral ga huje.
 Young you God select see worse. or Gift (for) you God collect it worse.

In the free translation:

Glej huje je ker te je Bog mladega izbral. or Dar tebi Bog čeprav sem ga težko zbral.
 See it is worse while you God young select. or Gift for you God though I collect it heavy.

Conclusion

Although in the possible different decipherments, the inscriptions of Grafenstein and Ptuj appear to preserve much more similarities with Slavic languages than with Latin. The Roman influence is however recognizable in some Latin cursive letters of the inscription of Grafenstein, and in some Roman square Capital letters in the Poetovio alphabet in the inscription of Ptuj. Thus, from said inscriptions appears clear that, although Romanised to a certain degree, the Noricum society at least till 2nd century AD kept basically its original Slavic language as the main part of its original culture.

Abbreviations

Engl. = English	Blg. = Bulgarian	O.Blg. = Old Bulgarian	O.Ch.Sl = Old Church Slavonic	G.Sl = Generally Slavic
Sl. = Slavic	Blg. Dial.= Bulg. Dialectal	Slov. = Slovenian	Gen. Germ = Generally German	Dem. Pron. = Demonstrative Pronoun

Ukr. = Ukrainian	Ukr. Dial. = Ukrainian dialectal	Cz. = Czech	Dat. = Dative	Gen. = Genitive
SK = Slovensko Knjižno - Literary Slovene [8]	SN = Slovensko Narečno - Dialectal Slovene	HK = Hrvško Knjižno - Literary Croatian [9]	PL= Pleteršnikov Slovar - Pleteršniks Dictionary [7]	okr = okrajšava - abbreviation
preg = preglas -mutation	prem = premet - toss	sin = sopomenka - synonym	BC = before Christ	AD = Anno Domini = <i>In the year of our Lord</i>

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Povzetek

Noriška napisa

Na spletu Instituts für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Wien sta prikazana dva noriška napisa. Prvi je iz Grafensteina blizu Celovca, ki je iz 2. stoletja po Kr. in je pisan v ležečih latinskih črkah na delu opeke velikosti okoli 27 x 13 cm. Drugi je na vrčku, ki ga je našel Vnuk v grobu št. 8 v Spodnji Hajdini blizu Ptuja in je v ptujskem črkopisu v zveznem besedilu. Ker ni soglasja o enovitem razumevanju teh napisov so predložena razumevanja vzpodbuda za nadaljnje raziskave.

Čeprav gre za nekoliko različna razumevanja, napisa kažeta bistveno več podobnosti s slovanskimi jeziki kot pa z latinščino. Napisa dokazujeta, da je Noriška družba kljub delnemu romaniziranju, še najmanj do konca 2. stoletja po Kr. obdržala svoj jezik kot bistveno sestavino svoje prvobitne kulture.