

Inscriptions on Spindles from Vinca

Dipl.-Ing.(FH) Kapt.(AG) Wolf Scheuermann
Forschungskontor

Version v1.0
Hamburg, 2016

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Griffen's Deciphering of the Inscriptions	3
3	Alternative Reading of the Inscriptions	7
4	Summary	10
5	Appendix	11
6	Literature	14

1 Introduction

The professor emeritus of the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Toby D. Griffen published in 2007 his discovery of similar inscriptions on spindles, known as Jela 1 and Jela 2, from the Vinca culture [1].

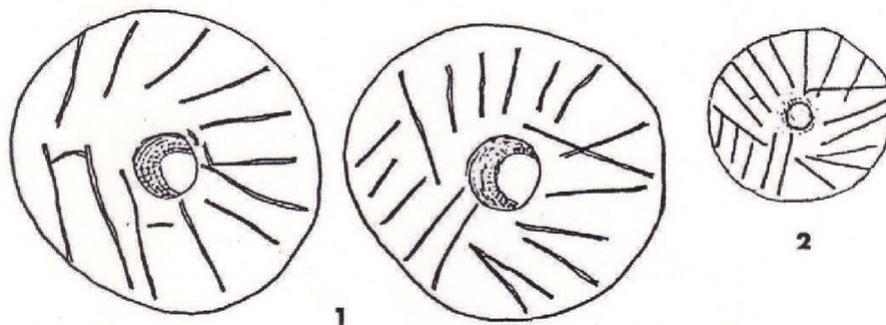


Figure 1: Spindles from the archeological site Jela near Vinca. [1] p.4

Griffen provides an interpretation and reading of the signs and a deciphering of the inscriptions. He argues quite convincingly. Therefore his approach must be taken into further consideration.

Based on the approach to reconstruct linguistic properties of the old-european language [2], we propose a different reading of the inscriptions, but Griffens interpretation turns out to be an important starting point.

Wolf Scheuermann, Hamburg 0:00 AM 10/25/2016

2 Griffen's Deciphering of the Inscriptions

Griffen recognized and identified on two spindels from Jela similar inscriptions and isolated three recurring signs.

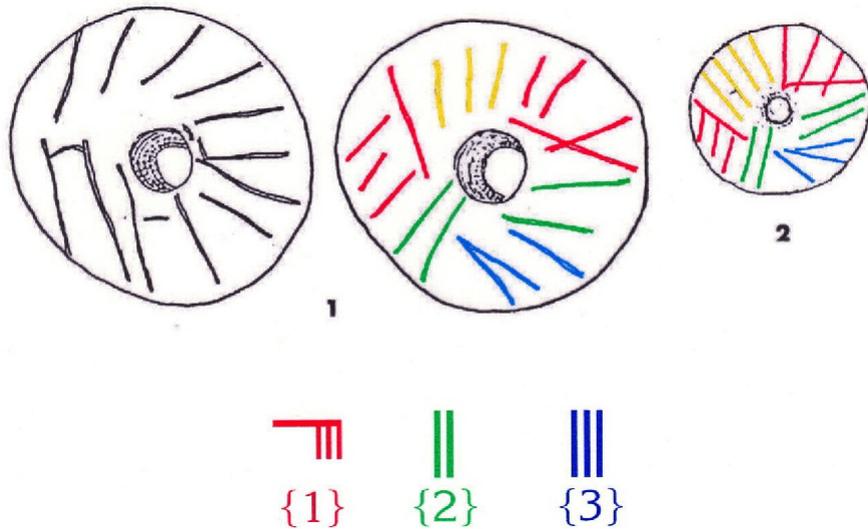


Figure 2: Recurring signs on both spindles. ([1] p.9)

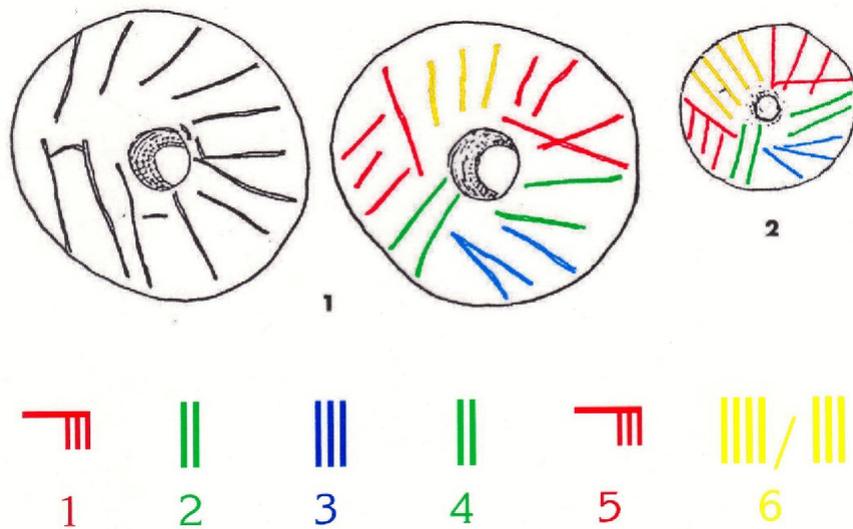


Figure 3: Full inscriptions on the spindles from Jela. ([1] p.9)

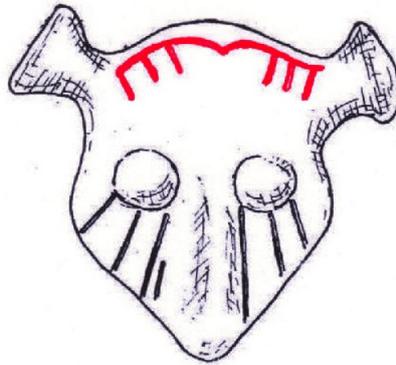


Figure 4: Bear face sculpture from Plocnik bearing sign {1} as design. ([1] p.14)

Griffen argues convincingly that sign {1} denotes a "Bear". He calls the sign also sign {E} because it reminds us of the letter "E". He also connects the sign {3} with a bird.

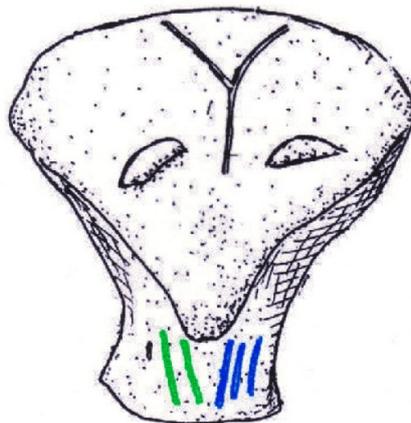


Figure 5: Bird head from Gomolava with sign {3}. ([1] p.15)

Examples of goddesses show regularly the sign {2} inscribed on their figurines. This justifies the suggestion that the meaning of sign {2} is "Goddess", "Divine Being", or similar.

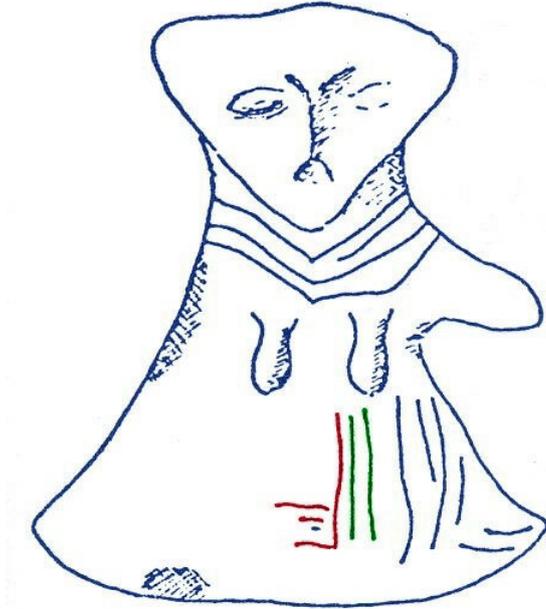


Figure 6: Figurine of a bear goddess with signs {E} and {2}. ([1] p.14)

The greek goddess Artemis is predating the greek language [3] and has the attribute of the "bear goddess" in her name. "Ar(k)t(os)" ("bear") is of later indogerman origin while "Temis" ("goddess") is older.

Artemis: Bear Goddess

Indo-European	*ἰκῑο-s 'bear'
Greek	ἄρκτος
Middle Irish	art
Welsh	arth
Gaulish	Artio 'Bear Goddess'

Figure 7: The mixed origin of the name "Artemis". ([1] p.23)



Figure 8: The goddess Artemis. ([1] p.24)

From these prerequisites Griffen derives his interpretation of the signs and the inscriptions of the spindles.

{1}		bear
{2}		goddess
{3}		bird

Figure 9: Decipherment of Vinca signs according to ([1] p.19)

He reads the signs $\{E\}-\{2\}-\{3\}-\{2\}-\{E\}-\{2+2\}$ as "bear-goddess-bird-goddess-bear-goddess goddess, or goddess indeed with the emphasis and closure. Quite fitting for a religious mantra on a spindle whorl" ([1] p.21).

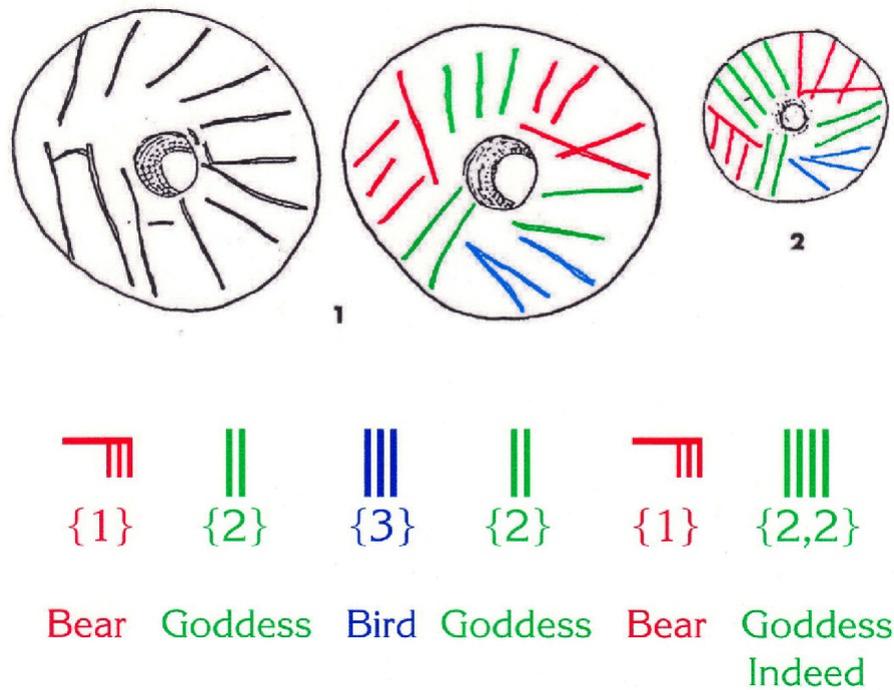


Figure 10: Griffens deciphering of the inscriptions. ([1] p.21)

He believes also, it is an "orthographic variation" that the last sign on the first spindle is rather sign {3} than sign {2 + 2}. In other words: Caused by mistake ([1] p.21).

3 Alternative Reading of the Inscriptions

It is undeniable that weaving was been seen as a divine gift (as it still is e.g. for the Diné (Navajo)). The tools of the craft may have been held as holy objects and may have been blessed with religious inscriptions. But belonging to the daily life it is possible the inscriptions might be much more profane.

The inscriptions as a praise of the goddesses, as proposed by Griffen might be possible, but often the content was much simpler: Imagine the comb of Wolfgang. The inscription might read "comb", or "Wolfgang's comb", or "Wolfgang made it", or just things like that. Could this be the case with our spindles too?

Haarmann gives in [3] a list of greek words which occurred before the indoeuropean language influenced the greek language. We used this list in [2] to

establisches a vocabulary of the old-european language. To generate somehow meaningful sentences we developed a simplified transcription of the words and had to introduce some assumed words.

Fortunately, the word for "spindle" is old-european and appears in our vocabulary:

The ancient (old-european) greek word for spindle as well as the spondylus shell is $\sigma\pi\omicron\nu\delta\nu\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ (spondylos). We simplified it into spu-nti-l*.

There are examples that the vocal "u" can be replaced by "i" and vice versa. Take for example:

The "great goddess" "kibele" or "kubaba".

So we can pronounce the word as spi-nti-l* or spi-ntu-l*. Also, like in Linear B the consonant "l" might be replaced by "r". We will therefore write "R".

An example for this change is "kliban" and "kriban" for "oven".

The vocabulary suggested the idea that the writing was readable even vowel-free. With mute vowels, replaced now by the asterisk "*", our word looks in syllable writing like:

"sp*-(n)t*-l*" or "sp*-(n)t*-R*",
where the "n" in "nt*-" is not given its own syllable. All these variations can also be found in the Linear B writing [4].

We assume the inscriptions on the spindles half as writing and half as design. We see the inscription in right-to-left writing as {E}-{2}-{3} and in left-to-right writing also as {E}-{2}-{3} while meeting and merging in the center at sign {3}.

From comparing the names of gods and goddesses from our old-european vocabulary, e.g. "Artemis" (equals Latin "Diana"), "Demeter", "Athene", "Aphrodite", etc. , we found the syllable "di-", "de-", "the-" or "te-" as a common pattern and assumed the word "ti" for "god" or "goddess".

We interpret therefore the second sign {2}, the two lines {||} that Griffen reads "goddess" in the same way: "ti-" "divine beeing". Because this is also the second syllable in our word "sp*-(n)t*-l*" we got the suspicion

that the sign {3} must have something to do with birds and the syllable "l*-".

Looking up our vocabulary we found lots of words for birds and one match: "elea" or simplified "'ili'a" for "marsh bird". Applying the rebus principle, this could stand for "bird", Griffen's reading", or even for the syllable "l*-" . And it even came better: The old-european word "läai", simplified "la'a", means "spindle whorl" - the thing on which it is written! In both words only the consonant "l" appears, the last syllable of our word "sp*-(n)t*-l*". The vowels "a" and "i" are also interchangeable (see example above) and are omitted here, anyway.

Unfortunately, there is no word for "bear" in our vocabulary. But there may be good reasons now to assume that "sp*-" is part of the old-european word for "bear". The sign {E} may just be a reduced logogramm for a bear.

In our interpretation the writing on the spindles read "Spindle", incised in a decoratively mirrored way so that it can be read from both sides. But what about the last sign?

The last sign on one spindle is {|||}, three lines, and on the other {||||}, four lines. In many writing systems the numbers are represented either by points or by lines. Here obviously lines were used.

{|||} means 3 and

{||||} reads 4.

We now can conclude that the inscription on the spindle "Jela 1" reads simply "Spindle No.3" and the inscription on the spindle "Jela 2" reads "Spindle No.4", what does make much sense and explains the difference of the last signs.

Herewith, three signs of the Danube script can be read or translated. But even more is known: The number 3, {|||}, is the same like sign {3}, "marsh bird", and may be pronounced in the same way: la, la'a, ra, ra'a, 'ili, 'ili'a, 'ila, 'ila'a, 'ali, 'ali'a, 'ala, 'ala'a, 'iri, 'iri'a, 'ira, 'ira'a, 'ari, 'ari'a, 'ara, 'ara'a, with all the possibilities of exchanges - the reader may guess... We assume for short, 2 is "li".

(**Note:**"'ala" is one of the possible readings of this sign and, by chance, the Latin word for wing is "ala", the body part that carries the bird. May

be, the word "Atlas", the earth-carrier, also derives from this word - pure speculation.)

Also the number two is known: The sign {||} does not only mean "goddess" but also number 2. It is therefore pronounced "tu" or "ti". We may further purport that number 1, sign {||}, is simply pronounced "i" (or "a").

We may count in Old-European:

1. "i"
2. "ti"
3. "li"
4. ?

4 Summary

This document and the work of professor Griffen approves the possibility, that the Danube script will be read in the future. This does not mean that it actually can be translated. At least three methods should be included within further studies:

1. Follow the current approach. Look for similar inscriptions and try to get clues from the objects that carry them.
2. The frequency of syllables are not homogeneously distributed. Some syllables are much more numerous than others. There are about 30 basic syllables and about 30 basic symbols of the Danube script [2]. The comparison of the frequencies of both should give hints for the reading of the symbols (quantitative approach).
3. The abstract and linear Danube script, as earliest emergence of a writing system, did not vanish but spread into the aegean, minoan, phoenician and, via others, finally into our own writing system. A backward looking comparison of the phonetic values of the signs should give further hints to the reading of the old-european writing.

One final question remains: Where are the missing "Spindle No.1" and "Spindle No.2"?

5 Appendix

Here are some pictures that show how to make yarn from wool using a spindle whorl.



Figure 11: Working with the spindle.



Figure 12: Woman with spindle from Ecuador.



Figure 13: Medieval medal.



Figure 14: Making yarn.



Figure 15: Modern retro-spindle.

6 Literature

References

- [1] Toby D. Griffen:
Deciphering the Vinca Script.
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Revised 1 August 2007
Internet 2016: <http://www.fanad.net>

- [2] Wolf Scheuermann:
Wie sprachen die ersten Ackerbauern Europas?
Version v1.0
Hamburg 2016
Internet 2016: www.Forschungskontor.de

- [3] Harald Haarmann:
Einführung in die Donauschrift.
Buske.
Hamburg 2010

- [4] Josef Fischer:
Eine kurze Einführung in Linear B.
Internet 2003