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# SITOVO INSCRIPTION

## Abstract

A new reading of the Sitovo inscription is presented. Few of the letters resemble those of the Phrygian alphabet; the others belong to another, related writing system. Twelve words were found in the Sitovo inscription: *Ncha kuiss chia i simle on uchl i nebu echli u shinei*. Translation into English, based on Old Bulgarian and other Slavic languages is: **The deceased who (was) in earth, he went to heaven, cried both (his) sons**. All the 12 words have Sanskrit cognates, whereas the number of cognates in other languages is: Etruscan 7, Greek 6, Tokharian 5, Avestan 4, and Hittite 3.

## Introduction

The inscription was found in 1942 by A. Peev in a cave near village Sitovo, Bulgaria. First it was published by Z.R. Morfova [1] in 1950 and Ilyov dated it to 4500 BC [2]. Later it was studied also by J. Todorović [3], L. S. Bayun [4], and I. Duridanov [5]. The letters in the Sitovo inscription are 40 cm high, and the length of the inscription is 340 cm. Depiction of it is presented in Figure 1.

## Reading of the inscription by Ilyov

Ilyov [1] offered the translation of the Sitovo inscription in 1995 based on the Macedonian language. He reads the text starting from the upper line, reading from right to the left, and beginning with number 40.

In Cyrillic alphabet:

И ТЕШТ НИ НЛТИ : И УСЈЛТ УЖСИ ЊГ СУ ТИШТИЛИ И  
 ЕТЕ ПСЛМИ КШТ : И : У РШ ГСТ СИ УТК : ИД СЊ

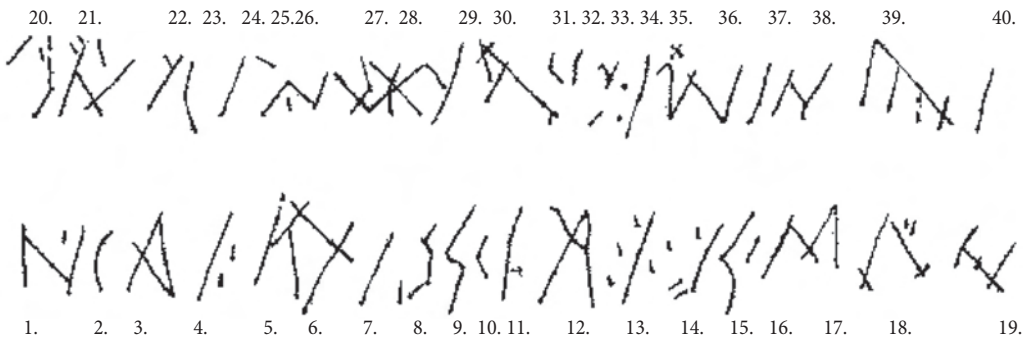


Figure 1. The Sitovo inscription [1].

In Slavic Latin alphabet:

I TEŠTNI NĀLTĀI : I USĀJLĀTUĀSI NJĀGSUTIŠLI I  
ETE PSĀLMI KĀSHT : I: URĀŠ GĀSTI SI UTKĀ : ID SĀNJ

where

Š has phonetic value as in English word **SHORT**

Ā has phonetic value as in English word **EARTH**

In “English” Latinic:

I TESHTNI NLTĪ: I USJLTUZHSI NJGSUTISHTILI I  
ETE PSLMI KSHT: I: URSH GSTI SI UTK: ID SNJ

This he translated into contemporary Macedonian:

**I testot ni naleta I vo ovoy let u znasi nego go tishtele i ete psali kukyata i vo  
resh si gostin na utkite odi sonuvai!**

English translation:

**And the father in-law ran in (flew in) and in this flight horrors have haunted  
him and there the house psalms (in the house they sing psalms) and in roast  
you are a guest of the ducks - go, dream!**

I have some remarks concerning this translation:

The word **psalm** (second word of bottom line) isn't Slavic; **psalm** comes from Greek ψάλλμος and Latin **psalmus** with meaning: song [6].

The phrase: **na utkite** (to the ducks) shows the features of an analytic language like New Bulgarian and Macedonian.

All ancient Slavic languages were synthetic, but after the 16<sup>th</sup> ct. AD Bulgarian and Macedonian lost their cases and became analytic languages.

Short example:

I RECHE EMU BOG means: *and God said to him* (Old Bulgarian). EMU ‘to him’ is in the Dative case; the corresponding ending here is **U**.

In Modern Bulgarian the same sentence is: I RECHE GOSPOG **NA** NEG. Here we see the presence of preposition **NA** ‘to’ which is not used in Old Bulgarian. The suffixed definite article in the words: **testot** and **kukyata** is also typical for New Bulgarian and Macedonian language, not for their ancient form.

Example: I OTARASHI NOZE EGO VLASAI SVOIMI means: *And wiped out his feet with (her) hair* (Old Bulgarian). The same in Modern Bulgarian is: I IZTRI NEGOVITE NOZE SAS SVOITE KOSI. The suffixed definitive article in the words **NEGOVITE** and **SVOITE** is not used in Old Bulgarian.

## My reading of the Sitovo inscription

In my opinion, the inscription should be read differently, beginning from the bottom line, with the direction of reading from left to right, starting with number 1, but not assigning any phonetic value to letters in position 4, 13, 35.

**Table 1.** Phonetic value of signs from the Sitovo inscription.

No.	Иѣов [1] Cyr.	Here Cyr.	Here Lat.	Read as
1	Ѓ	Н	Н	Н
2	С	Ч	Ї	CH
3	Д	А	А	А
4	И	*	*	*
5	К	К	К	К
6	ТУ	У	У	У
7	И	И	И	И
8	С	С	С	С
9	Г	С	С	С
10	СТ	Ч	Ї	CH
11	Ш	И	И	И
12	УР	А	А	А
13	И	*	*	*
14	Т	И	И	И
15	КШ	С	С	С
16	И	И	И	И
17	М	М	М	М
18	ПСЛ	Л	Л	Л
19	ЕТЕ	Е	Е	Е
20	И	О	О	О

No.	Иѣов [1] Cyr.	Here Cyr.	Here Lat.	Read as
21	ТИШТИЛИ	Н	Н	Н
22	У	У	У	У
23	С	Ч	Ї	CH
24	Г	Л	Л	Л
25	Ѓ	И	И	И
26	И	Н	Н	Н
27	ЖС	Е	Е	Е
28	ЛТ	Б	В	В
29	ИУ	У	У	У
30	Т	Е	Е	Е
31	Л	Ч	Ї	CH
32	Ј	Л	Л	Л
33	С	И	И	И
34	У	У	У	У
35	И	*	*	*
36	НЛТ	Ш	Ѓ	SH
37	И	И	И	И
38	Н	Н	Н	Н
39	ТЕШТ	Е	Е	Е
40	И	И	И	И

\* The sign has no phonetic value; it serves as a word (sentence) separator

Ї read as in English word **CHERRY**

У read as in English word **TOO**

К read as in English word **KEY**

Ѓ read as in English word **SHAPE**

In Cyrilic alphabet:

НЧА КУИСС ЧИА И СИМЛЕ

The upper line has the same direction of reading:

ОН УЧЛ И НЕБУ ЕЧЛИ У ШИНЕИ

In Slavic Latinic:

NĀA KUISS ĆIA I SIMLE

ON UĀL I NEBU EĀLI U ŖINEI

In "English" Latinic:

NCHA KUISS CHIA I SIMLE,

ON UCHL I NEBU ECHLI U SHINEI

Thus, the signs of the Sitovo inscription have the following phonetic values as presented in Table 1. Combined, my reading of the Sitovo inscription (in English Latinic) is as follows:

NCHA KUISS CHIA I SIMLE ON UCHL I NEBU ECHLI U SHINEI

In Old Bulgarian [7] it should be:

НИЦЪ КЫЙ ТОУ У ЗЕМЛЕ ОНЪ ОТИШЪЛ У НЕБЕСОУ ЕЧАЛИ ОБА СЫНЫ

In Latinic:

NICĀ KĀI TU U ZEMLE ON UTISHĀL U NEBESU ECHALI OBA SĀINĀI

Translation into English, based on Old Bulgarian and other Slavic languages:

**The deceased who (was) in earth, he went to heaven, cried both (his) sons.**

## Explanation of words

NCHA corresponds to Old Bulg. НИЦЪ - NITSĀ with meaning: *'fallen on the ground with face down'*; also with the word НИЗЪ - NIZĀ with meaning: *'low, down'*, this word is a common Slavic one. NCHA corresponds also to the Sanskrit [8] word NICA *'low'*, Etruscan NICA *'to lower'*, and also Tokharian NAK *'to die'* and Tokharian AŃC *'down'*. The Old Bulgarian word НАВЪ - NAVĀ *'dead one'*, is also related.

KUISS corresponds to Old Bulg. КЫЙ - KĀI with meaning: *this one who*. KUISS corresponds also to the Sanskrit word KA- *'who'* Avestanic CISH *'who'*, Hittite KUI *'who'*, and Tokharian KUS *'who'*. KUISS corresponds to Slavic KTO *'who'*, and KOTORY *'this one who'* (Russ.).

CHIA corresponds to Old Bulg. ТОУ - TUI *'here'* and ТЪ - TĀ *'this'*. CHIA corresponds to Sanscrit word ESHĀ *'this'* Avestanic ACA *'there'* and Etruscan CEIA- *'this'*.

I corresponds to Old Bulg. ОУ - U *'in'*, also to common Slavic V *'in'*, and to Sanskrit ABHI *'into'* Avestanic AIWI *'in'* also to Welsh I *'into'* and Etruscan EI *'here'*

SIMLE corresponds to Old Bulg. ЗЕМЛЕ - ZEMLE *'earth'* in Locative case. SIMLE corresponds also to common Slavic ZEMLJA *'earth'*, also to Sanskrit KSAMA *'earth'*, to Avestanic ZAM *'earth'* and Hittite SAMANA *'base, earth'*.

ON corresponds to Old Bulg. ОНЪ - ONĀ *'he'*. ON is also a common Slavic word, related to Sanskrit ENA *'he, this one'*.

UCHL corresponds to Old Bulg. ОТИШЕЛ - OTISHĒL *'(he) went'*. UCHL corresponds to Russ. USHEL - *'(he) went, departed, leaved, escaped'*, as well as to Slovenian UŠEL *'escaped'*. UCHL corresponds also to Sanskrit verbs CHAL, CHALATI *'to walk, to depart'* ACALAT *'he departed'* VISH, VISHATI *'to go in'*. UCHL corresponds also to Tokharian word KLU *'travel'*

I (As the previous I)

NEBU corresponds to Old Bulg. НЕБЕСОУ - NEBESU - *'heaven'* in Locative case. NEBU corresponds to common Slavic NEBO *'heaven'*, also to Sanskrit NABHA, NABHAS *'heaven'* and to Hitite NEBISH *'heaven'*

ECHLI is past tense, plural of the verb ECHA *'to cry'*: ECHLI - *'they cried'*. ECHLI corresponds also to Slovenian JEKALI *'they cried'*, and to Bulg. verb ECHA *'I cry'*. ECHLI

corresponds to Sanskrit verbs AC, ACATI 'to ask, to honour'; YACH, YACHATI 'to ask, to beg, to implore'; also to Tokharian word KLYOS 'to hear'.

U corresponds to Old Bulgarian ОБА - OBA 'both' and to Sanskrit UBHA 'both'. U is abbreviation of OBA (Bulg.) UBHAYA (Sans.).

SHINEI corresponds to Old Bulg. СЪИНЫ - ŠĀINĀI 'sons, people'. SHINEI corresponds also to common Slavic SIN 'son', and Sanskrit SUNU 'son'. Tokharian word SOYA 'son' is also related

In Table 2 are presented some additional comparisons of the above-mentioned words with those in some ancient languages.

**Table 2.** Words in the inscription compared to those in some other ancient languages

	SITOVO	SLAVIC	SANSKRIT	GREEK	ETRUSCAN
1	NCHA	NITSĀ <i>low</i>	NICHA <i>low</i>	NEKPOΣ <i>dead</i>	NICA <i>to lower</i>
2	KUISS	KĀI <i>who</i>	KA <i>who</i>	ΠOIOΣ <i>who</i>	
3	CHIA	TU <i>here</i>	ESHA <i>this</i>	EAΩ <i>here</i>	CEIA <i>this</i>
4; 8	I	U <i>in</i>	ABHI <i>in</i> , NI <i>in</i>	ΣE <i>in</i>	EI <i>here</i>
5	SIMLE	ZEMLE <i>earth</i>	KSHAMA <i>earth</i>	XΩMA <i>earth</i>	SEMLA <i>earth-goddess</i>
6	ON	ON <i>he</i>	ENA <i>he</i>	ANTOΣ <i>he</i>	AN <i>he</i>
7	UHL	UŠEL <i>went</i>	CHAL <i>to depart</i>	ΠAΠIATΩ <i>go</i>	ETERA <i>foreigner</i>
9	NEBU	NEBESU <i>heaven</i>	NABHA <i>heaven</i>	OYPAHOΣ <i>heaven</i>	
10	EHLI	EČLI <i>they cried</i>	AC, ACATI <i>to ask, to honour</i> ; YACH <i>to beg</i>	ΦΩNAEΩ <i>cry</i>	AKA <i>voice</i>
11	U	OBA <i>both</i>	UBHA <i>both</i>	ΔIO <i>both</i>	
12	SHINEI	ŠINEI <i>sons</i>	SUNU <i>son</i>	ΠIOΣ <i>son</i>	

## Discussion

The language of the inscription is undoubtedly Slavic; that is confirmed by some grammatical peculiarities:

The presence of Slavic form of Locative case in two places SIMLE and NEBU, the endings correspond to the endings of Locative case in Old Bulgarian: E and U.

The presence of Slavic form of past tense in two places: UČL and EČLI. The first one corresponds to past tense of a common Slavic verb ITI 'to go', USHEL, UTISHEL, OTISHAL 'he went'

EHLI corresponds to past tense, plural of the Slavic verb EKAM 'I cry', EKALI 'they cried'

SHINEI is plural form of common Slavic word SIN 'son' the best match is Russian СЪИНЫ-ŠĀINĀI 'sons'

The grammatical similarities between the language of the inscription and the common Slavic languages are too many, and too specific, so the possibility that it could be just a coincidence has to be rejected.

The dating of the inscription by Ilyov [2] to 4500 BC looks a bit overstated. It is very unlikely that the Slavic language of 4500 BC would resemble so greatly Slavic languages of 1300-1500 AD. After all, 6000 years is quite a long period of time in which a lot of changes occur. The presence of Neolithic pottery in Sitovo cave doesn't automatically date the inscription to 4500 BC. I'm not aware of any inscriptions on the concerned pottery with signs, resembling these of the inscription. The presence of such old pottery only shows that Sitovo cave was a sacred place, venerated for thousands of years, just like Perperikon in Southern Bulgaria [9]. Judging by the similarities of the signs from Sitovo inscription with Phrygian alphabet it is more acceptable to date the inscription to the XIII ct. BC, i.e. some time before the invasion of the so-called Sea people into Asia Minor.

'Sea people' were the Thracian tribes Serdae (Shardunash), Trausi (Trshu), Moesians (Meshwesh), Bessi (Weshesh), Dardani (Drd), Teucri (Tchekr), Socoloti (Shekelesh), Licians (Likka) and of course Pelasgians (Peleset). Because of climate changes some parts of these tribes went to Asia Minor and later to Egypt, it was not really an invasion, but a migration. These ancient Slavic tribes were called *People from beyond the sea* (in other word – from the Balkans), which was corrupted to Sea people. It is not true that they were unknown to Egyptians as some scholars claim. Serdae served Amenhotep IV as personal guards, Moesians and Teucri fought against Ramses II in the battle at Kadesh, later he hired some of them. Phrygians were one group of them, called by Egyptians Meshwesh, which corresponds to Moesians. Phrygian king Midas was called by Assirian king Sargon II: Ruler of Mushki (Moesians) [10-18].

The Sitovo inscription seems to be the oldest testimony of Slavic literacy found till this moment, and it shows the high culture of the ancient Slavs, who had their own alphabet, long before the Greeks and Romans.

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## Povzetek

### Napis iz Sitovega

Predstavljeno je novo branje napisa iz kraja Sitovo pri Plovdivu. Nekateri znaki spominjajo na frigijsko pisavo, drugi spadajo v drugo, sorodno skupino. V napisu iz Sitovega je dvanajst besed: *Nča kuiss čia i simle on učl i nebu ečli u šinei*. Prevod v slovenščino: *Umrlí, ki (je bil) v zemlji, je odšel v nebesa, sta ječala oba (njegova) sinova*. Vseh 12 besed ima sopomenke v sanskrtu, 7 jih ima v etruščanskem jeziku, 6 v grškem, 5 v toharskem, 4 v avestijskem in 3 v hetitskem.