

KOLEMBUS, Jozef: *Riešenie disku z Faistu* (Decipherment of the Disc of Phaistos). Bratislava, Elena Kolembusová 1988. 24 pp.

There are several undeciphered writing systems in the world which pose and will pose considerable problems to those who would like to penetrate into their structure and functioning. The reasons vary. Sometimes it may be the absence of a bilingua or unfamiliarity of the language behind the writing. One of the most remarkable mysteries of the world of writing is the disc of Phaistos. The views on the origin of the symbols that cover it in the shape of a spiral diverge considerably.

Jozef Kolembus is one of those who have tried to decipher the inscription upon the disc. He was neither philologist nor historian and it cost him a considerable effort to master the problem that had been worrying him for years. He has learnt Greek and studied literature on the disk itself as well as various methods used for decipherment of writing systems in general. Evidence of his efforts may be found in the introductory pages of his booklet as well as in his procedure.

The author explains the elementary ideas or theses of his approach to the problem in the introduction. In his opinion the writing is syllabic and consists of 45 symbols written from left to right in a spiral starting from the centre of the disk. (There would not be enough space upon the disk if written in the opposite direction.) The individual syllabic symbols are assumed to have been derived from original pictograms in accordance with the acrophonic principle. In J. Kolembus' opinion there are no true ideograms or determinatives upon the disk.

The author proceeds on the assumption that the disk contains the name Phaistos and expects that in accord with Linear B this noun would be written as PAI-TO. Kolembus proceeds on the hypothetical assumption that the language of the disk of Phaistos is ancient Greek, not an unintelligible pre-Greek language of the area.

Methodologically J. Kolembus relies upon four different techniques – acrophonic, comparative, complementary, and statistical. On p. 11 the author gives his version of the hypothetical Greek text followed by its Slovak translation. The text has been commented by late professor Okál. Additional information on the disk and the circumstances relevant to it are contained in a total of eight Appendices.

It may be said that Jozef Kolembus has tried to approach the problem of decipherment in a serious and careful way in accordance with his knowledge of the problem. His method may be characterized as essentially orthodox and logical. However, the absence of a bilingua or of other external sources of information makes it extremely difficult if not impossible to check and prove the plausibility of any interpretation proposed by him or somebody else. This, however, does not mean that Kolembus' attempt at decipherment should be rejected in advance.

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