

Shepherdess of New Grange Inscriptions

North of Dublin, in the immediate vicinity of New Grange, lie many chamber tombs and large earth mounds built between 4000 BC and 3200 BC, after which the population was wiped out.

The entrance passage at New Grange slants upward, so that horizontal rays of the spring solstice rising sun illuminate the floor of the deepest niche like an arrow. Two side chambers form a cross within the circle of the mound, an ancient nautical symbol that spells A ME, Finnish Akka Meian, meaning 'Old Woman of the Sea', the first phrase of a prayer to the sea goddess before embarking on a voyage, whose format of three repeating stanzas and a fourth prayer was preserved on a jar in Greece.

Old Woman of the Sea,
Old Woman of the Sea,
Old Woman of the Sea,
Bring my son (husband, lover) safely home to me.

Inscriptions decorate many large standing stones and surrounding curb stones. The tourist center provided a sheet of these inscriptions, most of which are deeply incised map symbols that accompany the chamber tombs¹. A few, however, were inscribed lightly in Old European after the tombs were constructed, as shown below. A short summary of the inscriptions and their context follows.

"You bring the sheep, I'll bring the beer," wrote her friend on a stone in the passage grave, 5,000 years before it was called New Grange.

Crouching low, the shepherdess edged out of the dry, dark chamber and climbed the grassy mound where her sheep grazed. Around this sacred site, light green meadows contrasted with a patchwork of dark forests. Other hilltops held similar mounds from the past, but her sheep could only keep this mound free from trees.

The next day she returned and wrote, "I felled ewes, many I got." It would be a happy celebration, a time to renew friendships, to sing and dance till the sun rose.

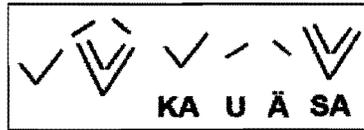
But the beer changed things. On a stroll with her companion, she found he had other things on his mind besides talking. Afterwards she crept deep into the passage and wrote, "He began a new speech. Abruptly other feelings lashed out. Many flirts he made there, father of swine."

The next moon announced her pregnancy. Returning to the dark passage, the young woman called on her gods for vengeance: "Smite Ve! Smite Ve! Smite Tuuri!" The customs were strict about unwed mothers. Her parents might banish her for having loose morals; or worse. She entered a final inscription, written like an infant drowning beneath the waves: "Tears rain down, tears of grief, tears for me."

Stuart Harris, Kilkenny, Ireland, July 2011

¹Jay Wakefield & Reinoud de Jonge, *Ancient Rock Art and Megalithic Navigation*, 2008.

New Grange 'eyebrow'

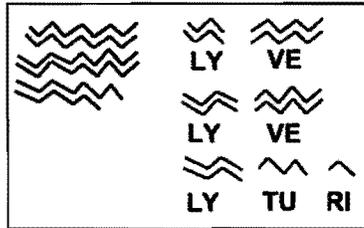


Old European: KA U Ä SA

Finnish: Kaa'an uuhet, äijä saan.

English: I felled ewes, many I got.

New Grange 'triple wave'



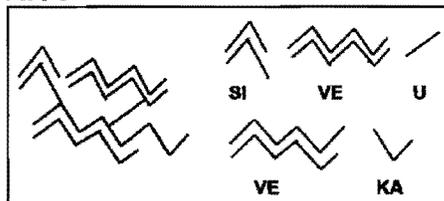
Old European: LY VE. LY VE. LY TU-RI.

Finnish: Lyð'ös Ve! Lyð'ös Ve! Lyð'ös Tuuri!

English: Smite Ve! Smite Ve! Smite Tuuri!

Three sets of wavy lines look like decoration but actually invoke a plea to two Norse deities: **Ve**, the giant brother of Odin and victorious leader of the rival clan of Vanir; and **Tuuri**, a giant woodsman who brought good luck by swinging his great axe.

New Grange 'double wave'

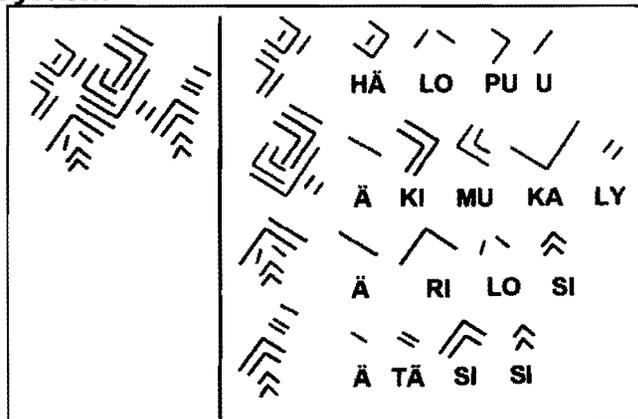


Old European: SI VE U, VE KA

Finnish: Sie veä uuhe, veän ka'ja.

English: You bring the sheep, I'll bring the beer.

New Grange 'labyrinth'



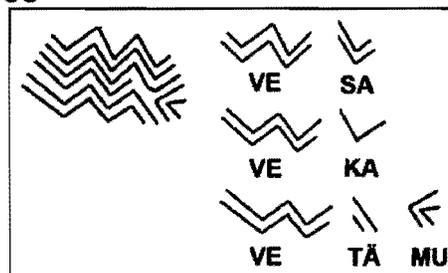
Old European: HÄ LO PU U. Ä-KI MU KA LY. Ä RI LO SI, Ä-TÄ SI-SI.

Finnish: Hän loihe puhe'et uuen. Äkin muu kaihot lyöä. Äijä riiat loi siihen, ätä siaksin.

English: He began a new speech. Abruptly other feelings lashed out. Many flirts he made there, father of swine.

The scribe skillfully chose words written as diagonals. The noun 'flirts' means something like 'attempted marriage', where marriage meant the physical union of man and wife after a wedding.

New Grange 'sea waves'



Old European: VE SA, VE KA, VE-TÄ MU.

Finnish: Ve'et sa'a, ve'et kaihon, vettä mua.

English: Tears rain down, tears of grief, tears for me.