

## Glozel Stone Reindeer

When Shy Grass sings at dusk,  
I shall visit our grass.  
I shall club the pitiable creature,  
I shall smash its handsome head like so.



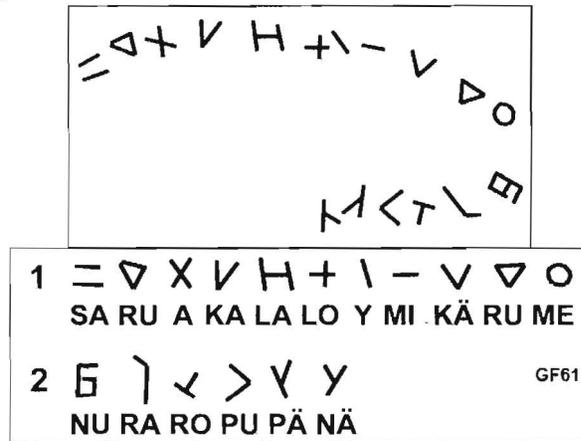
In 1924 on a farm at Glozel near Vichy in central France, a plow broke through a subterranean vaulted room. Glozel is hilly country, and this field was toward the bottom of a steep valley, close to a wooded creek, near an ancient chambered burial mound. In the room someone had carefully preserved stone and pottery objects covered with writing in an unknown script, so many inscriptions that it might have belonged to a school. Most objects dated to 300 BC, some as late as the middle ages. A few were much older, including a polished black stone inscribed with a reindeer in profile.

The reindeer gazes up at a field of stars made of tiny pits in the stone, while around his head circles an inscription like a halo. It is a tomb stone, an epitaph in Old European for Shy Grass, the scribe's favorite reindeer, who must be killed for food. Of all my translations, this may be the most poignant.

An estimate of the stone's age can be gained by analyzing the text. The inscription is not Glozel, because the language is pure Finnish without Glozel's strong dialect. Writing proceeds from left to right, so

it is not Iberian, making it older than 700 BC. That leaves only Old European, a script that died out after 1200 BC when Celtic replaced Finnish in France. It could be as old as 4000 BC, because it matches a similar inscription on a reindeer scapula from Spain that assesses a strategy for corralling wild reindeer. The upper limit is 18,000 BC when reindeer began to be herded in France.

**Translation**



**Old European**

SA RU A-KA LA-LO Y, MI KA RU-ME •  
 NU RA, RO PU PÄ NÄ

**Finnish translation of Old European**

Sa Ruoho Aika lauloa yön, mie käyn ruohomme.  
 Nuijin rahjus, rouhin puhas pää näin.

**English translation of Finnish**

When Shy Grass sings at dusk, I shall visit our grass.  
 I shall club the pitiable creature, I will smash its handsome head  
 like so.

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