**The Archeologic Figures of the Pigeons**

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**VUKOVAR’S PIGEON**

This is all about a very important archaeological find of a remarkably well-preserved figure of a hen-pigeon dug out in 1938, near the city of Vukovar in Croatia. This archaeological site is located near the River Danube, at a place called Vučedol-Gradac. This is the reason why archaeologists call the figure the ‘Vučedol’s pigeon’.

The Vučedol culture lasted from 3000 to 2200 BC in the region of eastern Slavonia at the same time as the invention of writing in Mesopotamia. This ancient European culture reached its peak of power and distribution throughout Eastern and Central Europe at the same time as the megalithic cultures in Western Europe.

The hen-pigeon figure is a remarkable example of artistic creation, but also a religious symbol related to the cult of ‘Magna Mater’. It was created between 2800 and 2500 BC and became a symbol of style, culture and the period of the dawn of European civilisation.

The Vukovar’s Hen-pigeon is a ritual vessel made of terracotta. Its height is 19,5 centimetres. There are three double axe-shaped signs carved on the neck of the figure, as well as the necklace. The body is also carved with vivid ornamentation filled with white encrustation. A very important decoration is the peak on the back of the head.

The colourful feathers on its wings and wide breast, as well as the feathered peak on its head, are all clear proof that this is the fancy pigeon which was being bred in Pannonia Depression more than 4500 years ago. This proves that European pigeons breeding is older than previously thought.

The Vukovar’s Hen-pigeon is the oldest pigeon figure which has been found in Europe, and the second oldest in the world, right next to the terracotta pigeon from Mesopotamia, from the fifth Millennium BC.

Did this ancient pigeon breed originate from the Rock Dove in the Panamanian Depression, or did it come from Mesopotamia by the ancient land route which connects Europe and Asia and runs along the bank of the Danube in one part?
Does this pigeon have any connection with the old Sumerian pigeon which is ancestor of the Archangel pigeon?

**Right:**

Archangel Pigeon from today.

If we compare the head and the and the neck of the Vukovar’s Hen-pigeon and the head and the neck of the Archangel pigeon, resemblance is possible. It is possible that the Holy Sumerian Pigeon arrived in Europe even before the great migration of Illyrians. But this is yet to be explored.

The Vukovar’s Hen-pigeon is kept in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb.

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**THE PIGEON FROM THE VIS ISLAND**

Hundreds of years before Christ, Illyrians had lived on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. One of the Illyrian tribes was the Dalmati (Dalmatae tribe). They lived on the coast as well as on islands. The eastern area alongside the Mediterranean Sea (Adriatic sea) is called Dalmatia (named by the Dalmatae tribe) and it is located in Croatia.

The Illyrians worshipped the goddess Aphrodite and natured the cult of the pigeons as a holy bird. That fact was confirmed by an archaeological site on the Vis island in Croatia. It is at the necropolis (cemetery) at Marvilo, where many objects were found. The object were from the 4th
Century BC, and there were pigeon images among them. Found there was a well-preserved figure of a pigeon from the 3rd Century BC, made of terracotta, length 15.7 cms, with a stylised flower on its breast.

The figure of this pigeon is kept in the Museum on the island of Vis.

THE PIGEON FROM BATINA

For the first time, the ancient figure of the pigeon will be introduced to the public all over the world. The figure was dug out at the old archaeological site on the hill of Batina, located on the right bank of the River Danube, in east Croatia.

In 1902, Bela Lafler donated the figure of the pigeon to Sombor’s Museum in Serbia where it has stayed until today. The figure comes from the Early Iron Age, around 10th Century BC. At the same time the Illyrians lived in the same area. This period is also known as Hallstatt culture. The Illyrians nurtured the cult of the pigeon as a holy bird.

The figure is 10.5 centimeters high, made of baked clay, graphite-grey in colour and decorated with line shaped ornamentation. The figure is hollow, with a little ball inside which produces a tinkling sound when the figure is shaken. Archaeologists were led to believe that this figure was in fact, a baby rattle.

That’s why the city of Sombor, which is also known as one of the oldest pigeon centres of Europe, (Pigeon club established 1871), can proudly claim that it keeps, in its museum, the oldest toy in the shape of the pigeon, 3000 years old.

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