

Venetic

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1. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

The Venetic language is attested by approximately 350 inscriptions that have come to light in the territory of pre-Roman Venetia in northeastern Italy. The inscriptions cover a span of nearly five hundred years, dating from the final quarter of the sixth century to the middle of the first century BC. The spoken language did not survive Roman colonial expansion and the spread of Latin into the northeastern portions of the Italian peninsula during the second and first centuries BC. Venetic has no modern descendants.

Venetic inscriptions have been found at sites scattered throughout most of pre-Roman Venetia as well as in territories lying to the north and east. The community of Adria, which is situated in the Po River valley a few kilometers inland from the Adriatic Sea, marks the southern limit. The rock inscriptions at Würmlach and the votive texts from Gurina, both sites located in the valley of the Gail River in Austrian Carinthia, mark the northernmost boundary. Venetic inscriptions have been uncovered as far east as Trieste at the head of the Adriatic.

The most abundant source for Venetic inscriptions is the sanctuary of the goddess Reitia at Baratella just east of Este. The religious sanctuary at Lâgole di Calalzo in the valley of the Piave River is another principal source, yielding nearly a quarter of the total number of Venetic texts. Important inscriptions come also from Padova and Vicenza in the south, from Montebelluna and Belluno located along the Piave River, from Oderzo, situated east of the Piave at the head of the Adriatic Sea, and from Gurina in the valley of the Gail River.

According to Livy, the Veneti arrived in northeastern Italy as exiles from the Trojan War. Livy's account of the arrival of the Veneti is fictitious (he was a native of Venetic Padua), but the date of the arrival of Venetic-speaking peoples implied by his tale is likely to be accurate. Archeological evidence points to the development of an independent Iron Age culture in this area shortly after the beginning of the first millennium BC (Fogolari 1988; Ridgway 1979).

The corpus of Venetic inscriptions consists almost exclusively of two epigraphic types, votive inscriptions and funerary inscriptions, with each type accounting for approximately one-half of the total number of inscriptions.

Votive texts were inscribed on objects such as bronze plaques, small replicas of alphabetic tablets, bronze writing implements, and the handles of bronze pails, all of which were commissioned for dedication at religious sanctuaries. The following are typical votive inscriptions (see Fig. 6.1). Inscriptions in the native Venetic alphabet are printed in boldface type; those in the Latin alphabet are in italics. Inscriptions are cited from Pellegrini and Prosdocimi 1967 = PP; Prosdocimi 1978 = P*.

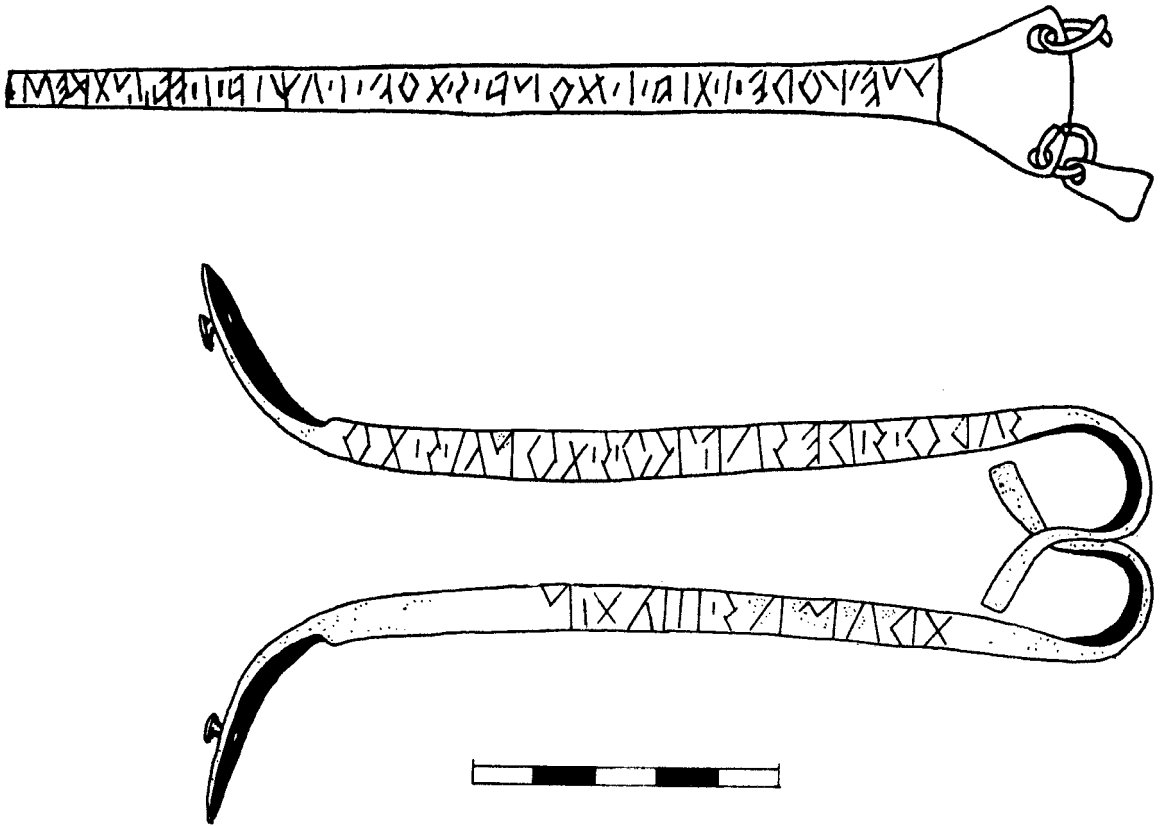


Figure 6.1 Venetic votive inscriptions

A, Este, PP Es 57, bronze stylus

me^o re.i.tiia.i. dona.s.to v^hugia.i. va.n.tkeni [a]

"me"-acc. sg. "Reitia"-dat. sg. fem. "gave"-3rd sg. past "Fugia"-dat. sg. fem.

"Vantkenia"-nom. sg. fem. "Vantkenia gave me [as a gift]
to Reitia on behalf of Fugia"

B, Lagole, PP Ca 7, bronze handle

suro.s. resun.k.o.s. tona.s.to trumus.iiatin

"Suros"-nom. sg. masc. "Resunkos"-nom. sg. masc. "gave"-3rd sg. past "Trumusiats"-acc. sg. fem "Suros Resunkos gave [me as a gift]
to Trumusiats"

The oldest Venetic funerary inscriptions from Este are incised on stone cippi in the shape of obelisks (see Fig. 6.2A). Inscribed funerary stelae with figures sculpted in relief are characteristic of Padova (see Figure 6.2B). Less impressive, but more numerous, are the funerary inscriptions scratched on the bodies or on the covers of terracotta vases that served as repositories for the ashes of the deceased (see Fig. 6.2C).

In addition to the aforementioned epigraphic types, a few inscriptions have been found, less than ten in number, that belong to other epigraphical categories. For example, PP Pa 19 is a manufacturer's advertisement stamped on a large storage container (dolium), **keutini/ceutini** "[from the workshop] of Keutinos."

Dating Venetic inscriptions is often problematic because the archeological contexts in which they were discovered were not adequately recorded. In lieu of dating by archeological criteria, most Venetic texts are dated, albeit very roughly, on the basis of a few key

characteristics of the writing system. Venetic texts from Este are divided into four chronological periods based on these orthographic/paleographic features:

- (1) Archaic, c. 525–475 BC (no syllabic punctuation)
- Ancient, c. 475–300 BC (syllabic punctuation, /h/ = 𐀨, 𐀩)
- Recent, c. 300–150 BC (innovative /h/ = ·𐀨)
- Latino-Venetic, c. 150–50 BC (use of Latin alphabet)

Venetic is a member of the Indo-European language family, but its often-mentioned affiliation with the languages of the Italic branch, in particular with Latin, is difficult to determine. On the basis of existing evidence the precise position of Venetic within Indo-European remains an open question (see Beeler 1981; Carruba 1976; Euler 1993; Lejeune 1974:173; Polomé 1966:71–76; Untermann 1980:315–316).

Venetic shows the “centum”-style treatment of the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) dorsal stops. The Proto-Indo-European palatals and velars merge as velars (Venetic **ke** “and” from PIE **k̑*; Venetic **lo.u.ki** “grove” from PIE **lowkos*); but there is a distinctive reflex for Proto-Indo-European labiovelars (Venetic **-kve** “and” from PIE **k^ve*).

A third-person singular mediopassive ending in **-r** may also be attested, but the verb forms that have this suffix appear to be functionally active (transitive) rather than mediopassive, for example, **tuler donom** “brings/brought (?) a gift [as an offering].”

Several features that are common to the Indo-European languages of the west are found in Venetic. The Proto-Indo-European laryngeal consonants appear as **a** in Venetic in the environment between consonants, as in Italic and Celtic: for example, Venetic **vha.g.s.to** “set up [as an offering],” Latin *facit*, Oscan **fakiiad**, all from the zero-grade of the Proto-Indo-European root **d^heh₁-* with **k-* extension (< **d^hh₁-k-*). Venetic probably also shares with

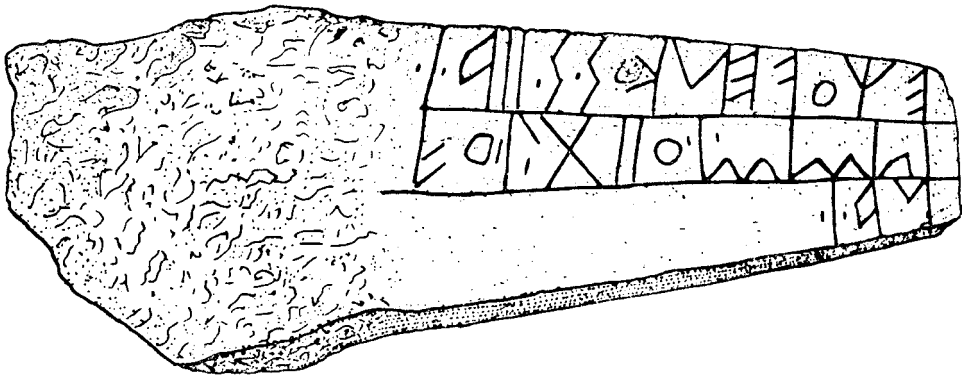


Figure 6.2 Venetic epitaphs

A, Este, PP Es 2, cippus

ego vhu.k.s.siia.i. vo.l.tiio.m.mnina.i.

“I”-nom. sg. “Fugsya”-dat. sg. fem. “Voltiomnina”-dat. sg. fem. “I [belong] to Fugsia Voltiomnina”

B, Padova, PP Pa 2, stele

plede.i. ve.i.gno.i. kara.n.mniio.i. e.kupetari.s. e.go

“Pledes”-dat. sg. masc. “Veignos”-dat. sg. masc. “Karanmnis”-dat. sg. masc.

“funerary monument?”-nom. sg. “I”-nom. sg. “I [am] the *ekupetaris* (funerary monument ?) belonging to Pledes Veignos Karanmnis”

C, Este, PP Es 77, terracotta vase

va.n.t.s.a.froi

“Vants”-nom. sg. masc. “Afros”-dat. sg. masc. “Vants, for Afros”

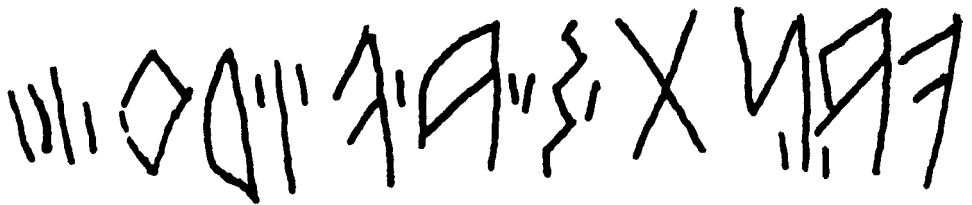


Figure 6.2 (cont.)

Latin and with Celtic an *o*-stem genitive singular ending *-ī*, for example, **keutini** “[from the workshop] of Keutinos,” **lo.u.ki** “of grove,” but the diagnostic importance of this isogloss is not securely established (see §4.1.1).

Linguistically, Venetic inscriptions are relatively homogeneous over the whole of the Venetic-speaking world. Very little evidence points to regional dialect differences. There is, however, one phonological isogloss that can be extracted from extant documents, namely the treatment of the nasals **n** and **m** in word-final position.

In prehistoric Venetic, **m* and **n* merged as **n** in word-final position throughout most of Venetia, for example, **.e.kvo[.]n[.]** “horse” < **kwom*. However, in the valley of the Piave River near Cadore the spelling of word-final nasals is in a state of flux. The bilabial **m** appears regularly in word-final position in inscriptions incised in the local writing system, for example, **dono.m.** “gift.” However, a few inscriptions written in a system strongly influenced by the one used at Este show **n** in this position, thus, **donon.** Regardless of how the **m** versus **n** variation is to be explained diachronically (preservation of original **m** with **n** introduced via dialect borrowing or reintroduction of **m** through contact with Latin speakers), this is a phonological feature that serves to set off the region of Cadore from the rest of Venetia during the Recent Venetic period.

2. WRITING SYSTEMS

2.1 The Venetic alphabet

Venetic texts prior to the Latino-Venetic period were written in an alphabetic script that was introduced into southern Venetia from Etruria during the first half of the sixth century BC (Cristofani 1979:388–389; Pandolfini and Prosdocimi 1990:244–289). The source of the Venetic alphabet was a northern Etruscan script of the “reformed” type, namely one that had eliminated the letters *beta*, *gamma*, *delta*, and *omicron* from the canonical list of letters forming the teaching alphabet. The fact that the Etruscan alphabet introduced into Venetia lacked these letters forced those responsible for adaptation to use the letters *phi*, *khi*, and *theta* with a new function, namely as signs for the voiced stops /b/, /g/, and /d/ respectively. At some point during the formative stages, the letter *omicron* was “reborrowed,” most likely from a Greek source, and added to the very end of the alphabetic series, thus yielding the earliest form of the native Venetic alphabet, the so-called *alphabet princeps* (see Table 6.1).

Local differences in the spelling of the dental stop phonemes /t/ and /d/ developed during the latter half of the sixth century and the first decades of the fifth century as the *alphabet princeps* spread throughout Venetia. Other communities altered the spelling of the *alphabet princeps* in diverse ways, thus giving rise to the local writing traditions attested by Venetic inscriptions (see Table 6.2).

During the Recent Venetic period (c. 300–150 BC) orthographic changes and stylistic developments that altered the shapes of certain letters introduced greater geographical diversity into Venetic orthography.

One interesting diachronic change concerns the spelling of the labiodental phoneme /f/. In the northern Etruscan writing system of the sixth century, /f/ was spelled by

Table 6.1 Venetic *alphabet princeps* (c. 550 BC)

A	a
Э	e
1	v
⌘	z
⊘	h
⊗	d
l	i
⋈	k
∨	l
⋈	m
∨	n
∩	p
M	s
D	r
∨	s
T	t
V	u
⊘	b
Y	g
O	o
⊘1	spelling for /f/

Table 6.2 Spelling of Venetic dental stops

	/t/	/d/
Este, Lågole	×	✕
Padova	⊙, ◇	┘
Vicenza	×	┘
Cadore	×	∨

means of a digraph **vh** 𐌶𐌷. Venetic inherited and maintained this digraphic spelling in most local writing traditions. However, at Cadore, after the sound /h/ was lost, the digraphic spelling of /f/ was simplified to *heta* 𐌺 = /f/, for example, 𐌺𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌺 = /futtos/ (PP Ca 15).

Inscriptions from Este dating to the period before 300 BC typically show the letter *heta* in its older shapes 𐌶, 𐌷. Near the end of the fourth century **h** is stylistically streamlined to a form without horizontal strokes ·|, a form that is all but identical to *iota* with syllabic punctuation (see §2.2). For example, the personal name **vhaba.i.tonia** shows both **i** (iota with syllabic punctuation) and **h** with precisely the same form ·|. The motivation for this stylistic change is not clear, but the innovative form of **h** spread rapidly from Este throughout most of Venetia during the first decades of the Recent Venetic period. Interestingly, this innovation failed to gain a foothold at Lågole and at Idria in the Julian Alps. Even more remarkable is the fact that at Idria the letter **h** 𐌶 was used with the same functions that the letter ·| had in other local writing systems: it represented the second part of *i*-diphthongs and the second part of the digraphic spelling of the sound /f/, for example, **la.i.v.na.i** = 𐌶𐌶𐌶·|𐌶𐌶𐌶𐌶 (PP Is 1).

Venetic inscriptions were written *scriptio continua*, without spaces separating words, though in modern copies of the texts word breaks are generally indicated. The most common direction of writing was sinistrograde, but dextrograde writing was not unusual. A few Venetic inscriptions were written in boustrophedon style (“as the ox plows”), with every other line alternating in direction. The precise layout and arrangement of inscriptions on obelisks, stelae, and bronze plaques depended to some extent on the aesthetic considerations of the sponsor or of the craftsman responsible for the work (see Fig. 6.2a and b).

2.2 Syllabic punctuation

The most striking feature of the Venetic orthography was “syllabic punctuation.” This was a form of punctuation (indicated in transliteration by a period) in which all syllable-initial vowels (word-initial vowels and vowels in hiatus), with the usual exception of *i*, and all syllable-final consonants, including the final element of diphthongs, received a mark in the form of a short vertical stroke or, less often, a point, for example, 𐌶, 𐌷. Punctuation was generally placed both in front of and behind the letter, as noted above, but at Lågole inscriptions are found in which punctuation is marked with a single point, usually placed after the letter.

Syllabic punctuation is not found on the earliest Venetic inscriptions and thus must be a secondary development postdating the borrowing of the alphabet from Etruscans. It appears first on Venetic inscriptions from the fifth century and is an obligatory feature of the writing system from this period onward. The probable source of syllabic punctuation is the scribal school affiliated with the religious sanctuary of Apollo in the southern Etruscan city of Veii (Wachter 1986). Syllabic punctuation is used on votive inscriptions at this sanctuary from c. 600 to c. 500 BC and it is likely that this orthographic feature was introduced into Venetia by



Figure 6.3 Latino-Venetian inscription
Frema.Ivantina..Ktulistoi vesces
 "Frema"-nom. sg. fem. "Iuantina"-nom. sg. fem. Ktulistoi-dat. sg. masc. "vesces?"-nom. sg. fem.(?) "Frema Iuantina, for Ktulistos, vesces?"

means of contacts between the scribes of the Etruscan sanctuary at Veii and scribes affiliated with Venetic religious communities. One scenario suggests that syllabic punctuation was first adopted by scribes at the sanctuary of Reitia at Este and then, because of this sanctuary's prominence, spread throughout Venetia via other important religious sanctuaries.

2.3 The Latin alphabet

During the final period of the Venetic language, inscriptions ceased to be written in the native Venetic alphabet and were written instead in a Latin alphabet characteristic of the late Roman Republic. These late Venetic inscriptions composed in the Latin script employed the usual features of Republican orthography: dextrograde ductus, punctuation between words, and letter-forms typical of "cursive" Latin orthography (see Fig. 6.3).

3. PHONOLOGY

3.1 Consonants

The inventory of Venetic consonants consisted of sixteen, possibly seventeen, phonemes. There were two sets of stop consonants with four distinctive points of articulation – labial, dental, velar, and labiovelar. The labials, dentals, and velars had a contrast in voicing. The fricatives in the system were voiceless. The nasals, liquids, and semivowels were voiced. Table 6.3 summarizes the Venetic consonant system:

Table 6.3 The consonantal phonemes of Venetic							
Manner of articulation	Place of articulation						
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Labiovelar	Glottal
<i>Stop</i>							
<i>Voiceless</i>	p		t		k	k ^w	
<i>Voiced</i>	b		d		g		
<i>Fricative</i>		f	s				h
<i>Nasal</i>	m		n				
<i>Liquid</i>							
<i>Lateral</i>			l				
<i>Nonlateral</i>			r				
<i>Glide</i>				y		w	

The consonantal phonemes are illustrated by the examples of (2). Here and throughout the remaining sections of this chapter, the following abbreviations are used in glossing examples: ID (personal name); PT (patronymic); DN (name of a god or goddess).

(2) Venetic consonantal phonemes

per. (“by, through”) /p/, **te.r.monio.s.** (“of the boundaries”) /t/, **ke** (“and”) /k/, **.e.kvo.[.n[.]** (“horse”) /kʷ/
bu.k.ka (“Bukka” ID) /b/, **de.i.vo.s.** (“god”) /d/, **.e.go** (‘T’) /g/
vha.g.s.to (“he made”) /f/, **donasan** (“they gave”) /s/, **ho.s.tihavo.s.** (“Hostihavos” ID) /h/
murtuvoi (“dead”) /m/, **dono.m.** (“gift”) /n/
lo.u.derobo.s. (“children”) /l/, **re.i.tiia.n.** (“Reitia” DN) /r/
iorobo.s. (“?”) /y/, **vo.l.ttiomno.i.** (“Voltiomos” ID) /w/

In addition to these sounds, the letter *san* M (transcribed by š) probably represented a phoneme distinct from /s/, most likely a palatal fricative /š/ or a dental affricate /tʃ/ (Lejeune 1974:152–157). Unfortunately, neither the status nor the quality of the sound represented by š can be securely determined.

3.2 Vowels

There were at least five vowels in the Venetic phonemic inventory, all differing in quality. The writing system did not distinguish vowel quantity but it is possible that Venetic maintained the distinction in length that it inherited from Proto-Indo-European. If so, the Venetic vowel system had a five-way distinction in quality accompanied by a distinction in quantity at each position.

(3) Venetic vowel phonemes

vivoi (“living”) /ī/, **tribus.iiate.i.** (“Tribusiatis” epithet of Reitia) /i/
pater (“father”) /ē/, **te.r.monio.s.** (“of the boundaries”) /e/
vhratere.i. (“brother”) /ā/, **vha.g.s.to** (“he made”) /a/
dono.n. (“gift”) /ō/, **hostihavo.s.** (“Hostihavos” ID) /o/
.u. (“on behalf of”) /ū/, **klutiiari.s.** (“Klutiariis” PT) /u/

The simple vowel phonemes listed above were complemented by six diphthongs:

- (4) **de.i.vo.s.** (“gods”) /ei/, **te[.]u[.]ta** (“community, nation”) /eu/
bro.i.joko.s. (“Broijokos” ID) /oi/, **vhouge** (“Fougonta” ID) /ou/
.a.i.su.n. (“god”) /ai/, **augar** (“?”) /au/

Of these the diphthong **eu** was subject to both geographical and chronological restrictions, found in a handful of words from Lâgole and also attested once at Padova. All of the examples date to the Recent Venetic period or later, which makes interference via contact with non-Venetic (Celtic?) speakers a likely culprit (see Lejeune 1974:110–111), though a sound change **ou** > **eu** (geographically restricted?) cannot be ruled out of the picture.

3.3 Diachronic developments

The inventory of vowels remained relatively stable throughout the history of the language. However, in the Latino-Venetic period, particularly in Venetic inscriptions written in the Latin alphabet, there is evidence for sporadic monophthongization: **ou** > *o* /ō/, *Toticinai* (dat. sg. fem.), and **ei** > *e* /ē/, *Trumusiate* (dat. sg. fem.). Since **ou** and **ei** develop to /o/ and /e/ in nonurban Latin inscriptions, it is possible that these changes were contact-induced.

The major features of the diachronic phonology of Venetic vowels are the changes affecting the suffix *-yo-*. In the prehistoric period **o* was lost before word-final **s* in the environment **C-yos*; thus, **Cyos* > **Cis*. Onomastic formations in **-yo-*, for example, **ve.n.noni.s.** (nom. sg. masc.) < **-nyos* and **klutiari.s.** (nom. sg. masc.) < **-ryos* illustrate this development. In the historic period, the *i* resulting from loss of **o* in this suffix was also lost before word-final *-s*, for example, **.e.ge.s.t.s.** (nom. sg. masc.) < **egestis* < **egestyos*, compare **.e.ge.s.tio.i.** (dat. sg. masc.). This change is characteristic of the Recent Venetic and Latino-Venetic periods, though it seems to have affected different areas of the Venetic-speaking world at different times and with varying degrees of intensity (Lejeune 1974:111–125).

The inventory of consonantal phonemes was subject to reorganization as a result of several phonological changes. The earliest documented change involved the loss of the glottal fricative **h**. The sound disappeared in all Venetic-speaking areas between c. 350 and 300 BC.

By the beginning of the Latino-Venetic period the distinction between **s** and **ś** also seems to have been eliminated. In Venetic inscriptions written in the Latin alphabet, both sounds are represented by means of Latin *sigma*, though it should be kept in mind that the lack of an orthographic distinction here could be attributed to underdifferentiation on the part of the Latin spelling system, Latin having a single sibilant sound in its phonemic inventory.

3.4 Accent

No direct evidence is available to determine the accentual system of Venetic. It is possible to infer, however, from the syncope of short vowels in noninitial syllables, that Venetic had a stress accent system with stress positioned on or near the initial syllable (Lejeune 1974:125; Prosdocimi 1978:318).

4. MORPHOLOGY

Venetic was, like all ancient Indo-European languages, an inflecting language. Inflectional categories were specified by means of suffixes attached to nominal and verbal stems.

4.1 Nominal morphology

The Venetic nominal system, comprising nouns, adjectives, and pronominal forms possesses the inflectional features of case, number, and grammatical gender. There are three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter) and two numbers (singular and plural). The total sum of cases in the nominal system cannot be securely determined because the extant inscriptions are so few, and because the inscriptions that are attested belong to such restricted epigraphic types. As a result, there are serious gaps in all nominal paradigms. From the evidence at hand, however, it is possible to recognize five cases: nominative, dative, accusative, genitive, and ablative.

4.1.1 Nominal classes

Venetic adjectives and nouns are organized into inflectional classes based on the sound characterizing the stem. There are five vocalic-stem classes: *o*-stems (**ke.l.lo.s.** nom. sg. masc.); *a*-stems (**vhugiia** fem. sg. masc.); *u*-stems (**.a.i.su.n.** “god” acc. sg.); *i*-stems (**trumusijatin** acc. sg. fem.); and *e*-stems (**.e.nogene.s.** nom. sg. masc. vs. **.e.nogene.i.** dat. sg.). The *o*-stems split into subtypes: stems in *-yo-* had the vowel(s) of the nominative singular syncopated,

for example, *yo*-stem **.a.kut.s.** (nom. sg. masc.) < **akutis* < **akutyos*, compare **.a.kutiio.i.** (dat. sg. masc.). Consonant-stems had three inflectional types: stop-stems (**va.n.t.s.** nom. sg. masc.); *r*-stems (**lemetore<.i.>** dat. sg. masc.); and *n*-stems (**mo.l.do** nom. sg. masc. with loss of final **-n**, compare **pupone.i.** dat. sg. masc.).

(5) Venetic *o*-, *yo*-, and *a*-stems

	<i>o</i> -stems	<i>yo</i> -stems	<i>a</i> -stems
NOM. SG.	vo.l.ttiomno.s.	.a.kut.s.	vhrema
ACC. SG.	.e.kvo[.].n[.]	—	re.i.tia.n.
DAT. SG.	vo.l.ttiomno.i.	.a.kutiio.i.	vh.u.k.s.siia.i.
ABL. SG.	leno	vo.l.tio	—
GEN. SG.	keutini	—	—
NOM. PL.	—	—	—
ACC. PL.	de.i.vo.s.	te.r.monio.s.	—
DAT./ABL. PL.	<i>andeticobos</i>	—	—

(6) Venetic *r*-, *n*-, and stop-stems

	<i>r</i> -stems	<i>n</i> -stems	stop-stems
NOM. SG.	lemetor	molo	va.n.t.s.
ACC. SG.	—	—	—
DAT. SG.	lemetore.i.	pupone.i.	va.n.te.i.
ABL. SG.	—	—	—
GEN. SG.	—	—	—
NOM. PL.	.a.nsores	—	—
ACC. PL.	—	—	—
DAT./ABL. PL.	—	—	—

The evidence for the *o*-stem genitive singular **-i** rests on a small number of forms, almost all of which are problematic in one way or another (see Untermann 1960, 1980). The least controversial example of this case ending is stamped, along with a version in Latin, on the body of a large storage container (PP Pa 19), namely **keutini**, Latin *ceutini*, “[from the workshop] of Keutinos.” But since this inscription belongs to the latest Venetic period, it may not be possible to rule out Latin influence here, even though the name appears to be of local origin (Prosdocimi 1978:303). The only other reasonably good example of this **i**-ending is **lo.u.ki**, which is found on an inscription from Padova (PP Pa 14; Prosdocimi 1979) as the object in a prepositional phrase **.e.n.to.l.lo.u.ki** “within the grove” (/entol/ for **entos* via assimilation?). Unfortunately, this text and its interpretation are not at all clear and so the analysis of **lo.u.ki** as a genitive must be viewed with some caution.

The publication of an inscription discovered near Oderzo (Prosdocimi 1984 *Od 7) offers a more interesting entry in the discussion of *o*-stem genitives in Venetic. The text, which is cited below, is incised on an oval-shaped funerary stone. Side (b) has a bipartite onomastic phrase in the nominative case; side (a) is inscribed with a single word.

(7) Oderzo, P *Od 7, oval-shaped funerary stone

(b) **padros . pompeteguaios.**

(a) **kaialoiso**

Side (a) has been interpreted as the genitive singular of an *o*-stem idionym **kaialo-** (Gambiari and Colonna 1988:138; Lejeune 1989). This interpretation may prove to be correct

but it is not without difficulties because the Proto-Indo-European form of the *o*-stem genitive singular is **-osyo*, not **-oiso** (cf. the Latin *o*-stem genitive singulars *ualesiosio popliosio*). A satisfactory explanation for the change in this putative Venetic ending **-osyo* > **-oiso** has not yet been offered (for suggestions, see Gambiari and Colonna 1988:138; Lejeune 1989:64; Eska 1995:42–43). Interestingly, forms with what appear to be the same ending **-oiso** are attested on Lepontic inscriptions (for which, see Gambiari and Colonna 1988; Eska 1995), so that a final determination concerning Venetic **kaialoiso** must be made with due consideration of the Celtic evidence (see now Eska and Wallace 1999).

4.1.2 Pronouns

Venetic inscriptions have thus far yielded only three pronominal forms. Two forms belong to the first-person pronoun: **ego** (nom. sg.) and **meo** (acc. sg.). The third form is a pronominal adjective *sselboisselboi* “himself” (dat. sg.), which is interesting not only because of its double spelling of the sibilant and its reduplicative structure, but also because of its etymological connection to forms found in Gothic *silba* and Old High German *seltselbo*.

4.2 Verbal morphology

Venetic verbs are inflected for tense (present, past), mood (indicative, imperative, and possibly subjunctive), voice (active, mediopassive), person (first, second, third), and number (singular, plural).

4.2.1 Verbal classes

The number of inflectional classes for present tense verbs cannot be determined. The past tense forms **dona.s.to** “gave,” **donasan**, presuppose *a*-stem inflection in the present (**dona-**). **atisteit** “sets up” is customarily analyzed as a present tense form built from the zero-grade of the PIE root **steh₂-* “stand” + prefix **ati-**, but exactly how and with what morphemes the stem **-stei-** has been formed is not at all clear (Lejeune 1974; Prosdocimi 1978; Untermann 1980).

Dona.s.to, **donasan**, and **vha.g.s.to** “offered” form their past tense stems by means of a suffix **-s-**, and so may be parsed as **dona-s-to**, **dona-s-an**, **vha-g-s-to**. For etymological reasons **doto** “gave” probably also qualifies as a past tense form. In most Proto-Indo-European languages the past tense (aorist) of the verb “give” is a root formation and Venetic **doto** appears to have a similar structure (**do-to**), compare Greek *édōke* (3rd sg. act.), *édoto* (3rd sg. mediopass.) “he gave” and Vedic *adāt* (3rd sg. act.), *adita* (3rd sg. mediopass.) “he gave.”

The tense of the verb forms **tole.r.**, **tule.r.**, **tola.r.** “brought” (?) is more difficult to gauge because the suffixes **-e/a-r** and their functions are not clear. The fact that the verbs **tole.r.**, **tule.r.**, **tola.r.** are used in votive texts, contexts in which past tense forms are preferred to presents by a significantly large margin, points to a past tense formation. However, neither the suffixes **-e/a-**, nor the bare mediopassive ending (?) **-r**, are characteristic of past tense formations.

4.2.2 Verb endings

The inflectional features of person, number, and voice are marked by “personal endings.” The ending for active voice is attested by the third singular **-t** (**atisteit**). It is also likely that the endings were split into sets based on tense stems, a set of primary endings for present and a set of secondary endings for past (sg. pres. **-t**, sg. past **-to**, pl. past **-an**).

The third singular past ending **-to** looks like the secondary mediopassive ending found in Greek *-to* and Sanskrit *-ta*. The Venetic ending may share with these a common etymological source, but it is not clear that it has middle force in Venetic, and it seems to correspond functionally to the active third plural ending **-an**.

(8) Venetic verb forms: summary

present	atisteit (“sets up”)
past	dona.s.to (“gave”), donasan vha.g.s.to (“made”), doto (“gave”) tole.r. (?), tola.r. tule.r.

4.2.3 Nonfinite verbals

The nonfinite forms of the verb system are even less well represented than the finite forms. There is one possible example of a present participle in **-nt-**, **horvionte**, but its root form, meaning, and case are not readily apparent. Other participle forms in **-nt-** appear in onomastic formations, for example, **who.u.go.n.ta.i.** (dat. sg. fem.), **who.u.go.n.te[i.i.]** (dat. sg. masc.), both from the root **vhoug-** “flee,” compare Greek *phēugont-* “flees,” Latin *fugient-* (3rd-*iō*). A Latino-Venetic inscription from the first century (PP Es 113) contains the only possible example in Venetic of a deverbal adjective in *-to-*, *poltos* “distressed.”

4.3 Naming constructions

The basic form for personal names, of both women and men, is the individual name or idionym (**va.n.t.s.** masc.; **vhugia** fem.). Additional names were commonly added to the idionym to create two- or three-part onomastic phrases (**suro.s.resu.n.ko.s.** masc.; **va.n.t.s.mo.l.do.n.ke.o.kara.n.mn.s.** masc.).

Some idionyms were originally substantives, and their derivational history is clear. For example, the idionym **who.u.go.n.t-** is in origin a participial formation in **-ont-** built to the verb root **vhoug-** “flee” (see §4.2.3). **domator-*, an idionym presupposed by the derived name **tomatoriio.i.** dat. sg. masc. (initial **t** by distant assimilation?), is built from the stem **doma-* by means of an agent noun suffix **-tor**, compare Latin *domitor* “tamer” (< PIE **domh₂-* “tame”).

Feminine idionyms are generally secondary formations. Most are derived from masculine *o*-stem idionyms by replacing the stem-vowel **-o** with **-a**, for example, masculine **vhugio-** gives feminine **vhugiia**. Feminines built to consonant-stems generally add **-a** to the final consonant of the masculine stem, thus, masculine **vhougont-** provides feminine **who.u.go.n.ta.**

The forms making up the second and third members of Venetic personal names are derived from idionyms by means of a limited set of suffixes belonging to either *o*-stem (for masculine) or *a*-stem (for feminine) inflection: for example, **-io:** **who.u.go.n.tio.i.** (dat. sg. masc.); **-ia:** **vhu.k.s.siiia.i.** (dat. sg. fem.); **-ko:** **ossoko.s.** (nom. sg. masc.); **-ka:** **who.u.go.n.tiiaka** (nom. sg. fem.); **-(V)nko:** **.a.r.bo.n.ko.s.** (nom. sg. masc.); **-na:** **who.u.go.n.tna** (nom. sg. fem.); and **-kno:** **bo.i.kno.s.** (nom. sg. masc.).

The familial relationships specified by the second and third members of personal name constructions are the subject of serious disagreement. One of the interpretations currently under debate regards the formations built with **-io/-ia**, **-ko/-ka**, **-kno**, etc. as patronymics

(Lejeune 1974:53–57). Thus, in bipartite constructions the second member of the phrase specified the patronymic of the idionym, for example, **va.n.t.s. mo.l.donke.o.** “Vants, (son) of Moldo,” while in tripartite constructions the third member referred to the grandfather of the idionym, for example, **ka.n.te.s. vo.t.te.i.io.s. a.kut.s.** “Kantes, (son) of Vottos, (the son) of Akutos” (for a dissenting view, see Untermann 1980).

Feminine constructions having derived forms in **-na** as the second or third member indicate a different type of relationship. The **na**-suffix is specialized to designate the gamonymic (Lejeune 1974:60–63). Thus, in the phrase **ne.r.ka lemeto.r.na**, the second member specifies the “wife of Lemetor.” Three-member constructions, such as **vhugjia.i. a.n.detina.i. vhginiia.i.**, indicate both gamonymic and patronymic, thus “Fugia, (wife) of Andetos, (daughter) of Fugs.”

4.4 Compounds

Several nominal compounds are attested in the Venetic onomastic system. There are native formations such as **ho.s.ti-havo.s.**, **volti-genei**, **vo.l.to-pariko.s.**, and **eno-kleves**, as well as formations of Celtic origin, for example **ve.r.ko.n.darna** < **Wer-kon-daros*. Outside of the anthroponymic formations, however, the inscriptions give us only a single example of a nominal compound, **.ekvopetari[.].s.** plus variants **.e.kupetari.s.**, **.e.p.petari.s.**, *ecupetaris*, and *equpetars*.

This compound undoubtedly refers to a funerary monument of some type, perhaps for members of an equestrian social class, suggested, of course, by the fact that the first element is the stem **.ekvo-** “horse.” Nevertheless, this compound continues to generate considerable discussion, not only because the second constituent **pet-** has yet to be given a convincing etymological explanation, but also because it is not clear how the variants **.ekvo-**, **e.p.-**, etc. are to be connected to one another, if at all (see Brewer 1985; Lejeune 1971a; Prosdocimi 1978:297–301; Pulgram 1976).

5. SYNTAX

5.1 Case usage

In typical Indo-European fashion, the role of Venetic noun phrases (NPs) is denoted by the inflectional feature case. The complements of the verb are marked by nominative case for subject, accusative case for direct object, and dative case for indirect object and for beneficiary. The genitive case is used to indicate possession. Accusative and ablative serve as the cases to mark NPs as the objects of prepositions, the case of the object being determined by the preposition: **per** “by, through (?)” and **.u.** “on behalf of” governed the accusative case; **.o.p** “because of (?)” took the ablative.

5.2 Word order

Nothing definitive can be said about the underlying order of the major constituents (subject, direct object, verb) in a Venetic sentence. Only votive inscriptions have finite verb forms, and the order of the constituents attested for this sentential type may be the result of syntactic processes such as topicalization.

At Este, *iscrizioni parlanti* (“speaking inscriptions”) are found with SVO (Subject–Verb–Object), OVS, and OSV orders:

- (9) Este, PP Es 48, stylus

SVO: **vhu.g.sii.a vo.l.tiio.n.mnin.(a) dona.s.to r(e).i.tiia.i. mego**

“Fugsia”-NOM. SG. FEM. “Voltionmnina”-NOM. SG. FEM. “give”-3RD SG. PAST

“Reitia”-DAT. SG. FEM. “me”-1ST PRO. ACC. SG.

“Fugsia, wife of Voltiomnos, gave me to Reitia”

Este, PP Es 54, stylus

OSV: **mego (v)hugia dona.s.to re.i.tia.i.**

“me”-1ST PRO. ACC. SG. “Fugia”-NOM. SG. FEM. “give”-3RD SG. PAST “Reitia”-DAT.

SG. FEM.

“Fugia gave me to Reitia”

Este, PP Es 53, stylus

OVS: **mego dona.s.to re.i.tiia.i. ner(.)ka lemeto.r.na**

“me”-1ST PRO. ACC. SG. “give”-3RD SG. PAST “Reitia”-DAT. SG. FEM. “Ner(i)ka”-NOM.

SG. FEM. “Lemetorna”-NOM. SG. FEM.

“Nerka, wife of Lemetor, gave me to Reitia”

Numerically, OVS is the most prominent, followed by OSV. These orders could be the result of the movement of the direct object pronoun **mego** “me” into sentence-initial position, which is a common position for the first-person pronoun in votive inscriptions of this type in all of the languages of ancient Italy. As a result, it is quite possible that the basic order at Este was SVO, which has the smallest actual number of attestations, and that the various permutations of this basic order are the result of syntactic movement rules: SVO becomes OSV by fronting the direct object, OVS by subject–verb inversion. This would bring the basic order of the major constituents at Este in line with what is attested for votive inscriptions at Lagolè (Berman 1973).

The order of elements within a noun phrase depends upon the type of modifier present. As far as can be determined, adjectives are generally positioned before the head noun (**te.r.mon.io.s. de.i.vo.s.** “gods of the boundary”?). In onomastic noun phrases, however, the patronymic and gamonymic modifiers followed the idiomym (**vhugiia.i. a.n.detina.i. vhginiia.i.** “Fugia, (wife) of Andetos, (daughter) of Fugs”).

5.3 Agreement

The Venetic verb is marked with an inflectional ending which agrees with its subject in number and person (third person unless a pronominal non-third-person subject is used); thus, below, the verb **doto** takes the third singular ending **-to**, having the singular subject **vhrema.i.s.tina**.

- (10) Este, PP Es 41, stylus

vhrema.i.s.tina doto re.i.tiia.i.

“Fremaistina”-NOM. SG. FEM. “gave”-3RD SG. PAST ACT. “Reitia”-DAT. SG. FEM.

(a divinity)

“Fremaistina gave [me] to Reitia”

Agreement is also found in Venetic noun phrases. An attributive adjective agrees with its head noun in case, number, and gender, for example, **te.r.mon.io.s. de.i.vo.s.** (masc. acc. pl.) “gods of the boundary” (?). In onomastic phrases the modifiers of the idiomym similarly show agreement (see §5.2).

5.4 Coordination

Unfortunately, Venetic inscriptions do not attest any examples of sentential subordination. There is, however, some evidence for coordination. Coordinate noun phrases and coordinate sentences were linked by one of two conjunctions, **kve** or **ke**. The two forms appear to be functionally similar but differ in terms of their syntax. **kve** is judged to be enclitic on etymological grounds (**vivoi oliialekve murtuvoi** “for [him] living and **oliiale** (?) dead”); **ke** may have been proclitic (**.<a>.i.mo.i.ke lo.u.derobo.s.** “for Aimos and [her] children”).

6. LEXICON

Apart from personal names and theonyms the number of vocabulary items in the known Venetic lexicon amounts to approximately fifty words. So few lexemes cannot provide an adequate picture of the lexicon; this condition is only exacerbated by the fact that the vocabulary is drawn basically from two text-types.

The “core” element of the Venetic lexicon consists of those words which have etymological connections to lexemes in other Indo-European languages. The words listed in (11) have solid Indo-European comparanda.

(11) Venetic words with cognates in Indo-European

dono.m./dono.n. ACC. SG. NEUT. “gift,” cf. Latin *dōnum*, Oscan **dūnum** “gift”

doto “gave,” cf. Greek *didōsi* “gives,” *édoto* “gave”

dona.s.to “presented (as a gift),” Latin *dōnat* “presents (as a gift),” Oscan

duunated “presented (as a gift)”

vha.g.s.to “offered,” cf. Latin *facit* “makes,” Oscan **fakiad** “makes”

<v>hratere.i. DAT. SG. MASC. “brother,” cf. Latin *frāter* “brother,” Umbrian **frater**

NOM. PL. MASC. “brothers,” Greek *phrētēr* “brotherhood”

hostei DAT. SG. MASC. “host,” cf. Latin *hostis* “guest”

vivoi DAT. SG. MASC. “living,” cf. Latin *uīuus* “alive,” Oscan **bivus** NOM. PL. MASC. “alive”

murtuvoi DAT. SG. MASC. “dead,” cf. Latin *mortuus* “dead”

kve “and,” cf. Latin *que* “and,” Greek *te* “and”

In addition to vocabulary with sound Indo-European pedigrees, there is a handful of words with probable etymological connections within Indo-European. For example, the root **vol-**, found in the ablative form **vo.l.tiio**, is most likely connected with the Proto-Indo-European root **wel-* “wish, desire.” **vo.l.tiio** is probably an adjective built from a *nomen actionis* **wl-ti-* (Lejeune 1974:88). Similarly, the root **mag-**, which forms the base of the Venetic noun **magetlon**, **mag-** plus instrumental suffix **-(e)tlo-**, referring in all likelihood to an offering of some type, may be etymologically connected with the root attested in Latin *mactus* “honored, adored.”

Venetic also has a small cache of vocabulary items that are without Indo-European etymologies. An interesting example is the nominal form *vesces* (nom. sg.), **ve.s.ke.ś.** (nom. sg.), **ve.s.ketei** (dat. sg.), which is used as either an attribute of, or an appositional noun phrase referring to, masculine and feminine names. The meaning of this form remains unclear, at least in part because it lacks an etymological connection within Indo-European (for an attempt, see Lejeune 1973; contra, see Untermann 1980). The Venetic noun **.a.i.su.n.** (acc. sg.), **.a.i.su.s.** (acc. pl.), which is assigned the meaning “god(s)” on the basis of comparison

with forms found in the Sabellian languages, e.g., Paelignian *aisis* “gods,” Marrucian *aisos*, etc., could be a western Indo-European formation. However, it is worth noting that the stem **ais-** is also found in Etruscan (*ais, eis* “god”) and may well have been borrowed into Venetic and Sabellian through contact with Etruscan speakers.

During the second and first centuries BC, Roman presence in territories beyond the Po Valley intensified. One result of contact between Romans and the Veneti was the introduction of Latin loanwords into Venetic. The best examples are *miles* “soldier” and **liber.tos.** “freedman.” It is also worth mentioning that the kinship term *filia* “daughter,” which is often assumed to be a native Venetic word (Lejeune 1967), may actually be a loan from Latin. The inscription on which this word appears is incised in a Latin alphabet and can thus be dated to c. 150–50 BC. Admittedly, the status of this word in the Venetic lexicon cannot be securely determined on the basis of this inscription alone, but the fact that a loan from Latin cannot be ruled out serves as a reminder that the shift from Venetic to Latin as the language of choice in this area was well underway at this time.

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