

# THE MANY CONFUSING THEORIES ABOUT THE VENETI AND ABOUT THEIR LANGUAGE

*A short paper for scholars new to the subject of the  
“Veneti”, to associated beliefs about the origins of  
European Civilization, and Linguistic Confusion  
about their language*

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## **ABSTRACT**

*I wrote this short paper for those people interested in the ancient “Veneti” and who are finding a confusing mess of alternative theories -The traditional academic theory that is found in encyclopedias, the Slovenian theory that is being strongly promoted in the internet by Slovenians and Slavs, other theories by Celtic and Germanic scholars in the past, and my own realistic point of view, which I have not really publicized, since my interest in the Veneti has been to interpret the language found in the Adriatic inscriptions. In this paper I will list past nationalistic theories about ancient Europe and “Veneti”, both the current ones and earlier ones, and the various misguided rhetoric from linguists. I conclude with my view on this matter.*

## **PART ONE: THE “VENETI” IN GENERAL**

### **THE CURRENT SITUATION**

The following article begins by enumerating past theories about the peoples who appear in historical texts under the name “Veneti”, “Eneti”, “Venedi”, and similar names. If you are not yet familiar with this subject, you will be confused by what you will find. If you investigate a website belonging to an encyclopedia, you will be told that the ancient Veneti people were farmers who migrated all around Europe, and who spoke an Indo-European language. You will also find what

appears to be sophisticated linguistic pronouncements about the Venetic language as presented in the inscriptions they left in northern Italy in the half century before the rise of Rome. It will seem that because scholars are saying it, it must be true, but that is not always the case. History has shown that the academic world has often been off on a wrong tangent until someone points out the errors.

On the other hand you may encounter the great amount of promotion of a Slovenian theory coming from outside the academic world, that claims all of the “Veneti” were Slavic. In this case, it lacks the academic support, and appears to be driven by nationalism, and therefore has the appearance of being more nationalistic self-aggrandisement than scholarship. The Slovenian theory claims all of Europe was originally Slavic, and that Slovenian is close to the original; and that Celtic and Germanic languages developed from Slavic. In their view, the “Venedi” of the South Baltic – and everywhere else! – were Slavic. Slavic scholars of earlier times only proposed that only the “Venedi” of the south Baltic, had been Slavic, West Slavic.

Nationalistic revisions of beliefs about the past, is nothing new. Humans have been inventing glorious pasts for themselves since the beginning.

In the past, there have been other fantastic, nationalistic, theories about early Europe. Not long ago, Celtic scholars imagined that, before the Roman Age, there were “Celtic” peoples throughout Europe, including regions that were previously called “Germanic”. Celtic scholars explained why they regarded Germanic as Celtic with the following argument: The Rhine, they said, was an arbitrary boundary, created by the Romans choosing the Rhine River as the boundary of Roman Gaul, and which separated Celtic tribes on the west side, and Germanic tribes on the east side. Therefore, they said, the Germanic tribes belonged to the same peoples as the Celtic tribes. (This argument can also be used in reverse to claim Celtic was Germanic!)

That is not all! Before the Celtic theory there was a Germanic one that assumed the entire region the Romans called “*Germania*”, plus southern Scandinavia, had been Germanic. That means, they claimed, the peoples called “Wends”, which developed from “Venedi”, was Germanic. The south and southeast Baltic tribes too, and more. Because a 6<sup>th</sup> century monk named “Jordanes” had written a book entitled “The history of the Goths”, Germanic scholars believed Germanic was found everywhere that the “Goths” had resided, which even included the region from the Baltic to the Black Sea and in the Balkans. Thus, the earlier Germanic theory covered much of region covered by the recently developed Slavic theory.

The West Slavic scholars of around the 1960’s, which I already mentioned above, were the first to challenge Germanic scholars when they claimed the historic people called the “Venedi” were the source of the West Slavic languages like Polish. Germanic scholars have since then come back with evidence of “Wends” in the ancient past of Germany, used Germanic.

Meanwhile, when archeologists found that around 2000 BC, a farming people called the “Corded-ware Culture” or the “Battle-axe Culture” had entered Europe from the east, and that it appeared to have been Indo-European in nature, Lithuanian and Latvian scholars claimed their “Balt” languages were descended from those people. That theory, in effect, implied that Lithuanian and Latvian ancestors were at the foundations of Germanic. That benefits the recent Slavic scholars because Latvian and Lithuanian are Indo-European languages closest to Slavic.

So we see how there has been a battle going on, wherein different nationalities are trying to appropriate the theories of rivals and try to make themselves more glorious than the other. Mostly these revised nationalistic views involve peoples named “Venedi”, “Veneti”, “Wendi”, and some other names assumed to refer to one people.

### **SELF-SERVING INACCURATE HISTORY FROM THE PAST**

This kind of nationalistic revisionist behaviour, even among educated scholars, is not new. Let me describe some more examples from the past.

1. REFUGEES FROM THE TROJAN WAR. When the historic Venetians were dominating the Mediterranean trade, wealthy Venetian families, believing they were descended from the “Eneti” heroes of the Trojan War, were creating family trees that showed descent from one of the heroes of Troy. The belief was as follows: the “Eneti” who assisted the Trojans, after the Trojan War was over, sailed to the Adriatic Sea, conquered the people called “*Euganei*”, and settled. This theory originated with a Roman historian called “Livy”, who came from that region. It was self-serving for him. But since then archeology has proven that there was no such immigration or conquest. The Veneti of the northern Adriatic Sea region, they say, developed gradually as a result of influences from the north.

2. CELTIC ROYAL DESCENT. KING ARTHUR. In ancient times people wanted to claim they were descended from famous heroes or from royalty. Do not be surprised, when you study “Celtic” history, to find family trees that begin with ancient Roman heroes, and “Celtic” kings. Then there is “King Arthur of the Round Table”. Today, the “Welsh” language is considered to be “Celtic”. But before linguists had identified it as “Celtic”, people thought of “Welsh” only as the original “Briton” language. The “Welsh” sought heroes too, and legends of “King Arthur of the Round Table” developed. Today, scholars know that it was all made up. Some believe there must have been an original person who inspired it, but that is speculation. The tales about “King Arthur” were someone’s fictional writing, but in earlier times it was taken as real, and even now, there are some who want to believe there is a kernel of truth in it.

3. JORDANES EPIC HISTORY OF THE GOTHs. The “History of the Goths” was written by a monk named Jordanes living about the 6th century on the coast of the Black Sea – maybe at Constantinople. It is the best example of an older theory that glorifies a people. In spite of its questionable nature, Germanic people have believed it. In recent times scholars have formed the opinion that Jordanes was a naive amateur historian, and much of what he wrote is unreliable. Jordanes seems to have been inspired by a history of the “Getae” written by a Greek historian named “Dio Cassidorius”. “Cassidorius” only wrote about a people named “Getae” who lived between the east coast of the Black Sea, and Macedonia. Jordanes was also aware of “Goths” in Roman history, and in southern Sweden, Scandia. He had also heard about peoples with a similar name on the north side of the Black Sea. If he could tie them all together, he could create a comprehensive people out of all the mentions of names resembling “Goths”. Trying to fit the many different pieces together, and never thinking that maybe he was dealing with different peoples with similar names, he created a history that may have truth in its individual pieces, but in general was put together according to Jordanes’ personal interpretations. In his reconstruction, he imagined that the “Goths” originated in southern Sweden, which was known as “Scandia”, and that they reached the different parts of Europe where the GOTA type names were found, in a series of migrations. Not everyone caught in Jordanes web was really Germanic. Close inspection suggests that many of these people were Finnic, and that the GOTA type word originated from the Finnic word meaning ‘home(land)’ which in modern Estonian is *kodu*.

4. THE ARYAN RACE THEORY THAT INSPIRED HITLER. By the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, there was the “Aryan Race” theory, that the Indo-European languages of Europe – all of them, including Germanic and Celtic – originated from an “Aryan Race” of tall blonde peoples. This theory led to Hitler’s celebrating of the “Aryan” tall, blonde, and to trying to exterminate the Jews, who, speaking a Semitic language, were not Indo-European, and being dark, not “Aryan”. If Hitler had continued, he would have continued exterminating, or at least suppressing, all peoples who were not from Indo-European languages and who did not show “Aryan” characteristics. The Slovenian theory is essentially a new version of the “Aryan” theory in that it tries to present the original Slavs as the original Indo-Europeans. Slovenian scholars, using language and population genetics, have been trying to prove that the Slovenian language is a remnant of the original Indo-European language. Adolf Hitler would have approved the recent Slovenian theory! I showed above how theories about the past have been used to justify nationalistic suppression, but they can also lead to racism and genocide. As for the tall, blue-eyed, blonde race, there exists a theory that it developed in the north, not in the south, as an adaptation to acquiring vitamin D, in the north, where people have less access to the sun, partly from the sun travelling lower in the sky

and partly because of the need to stay inside in the winter. (Lighter skin has been shown to absorb vitamin D more easily.)

5. OTHER THEORIES. There are many other theories, some grandiose, and some modest. It is in human nature. We have always invented false pasts to glorify our people. The story in “*the Iliad*” about the Trojan War is an example from the distant past. It contains elements of the truth, but combined to tell a story to entertain and inspire Greek audiences. The glorious legend faces the reality that after that, ancient Greek fell into a dark age. Perhaps the Mycenaean lead nations were destroyed by the Hittites, or peoples ancient texts refer to as ‘sea peoples’.

### **ORIGINS OF EUROPE: THE PLAIN TRUTH AS I SEE IT**

Obviously Europe began with the hunter-gatherers of the Ice Age, not from any peoples who were already farmers. Even the Slovenian theory admits that Europe began with hunter gatherers.

But ALL the theories, even the sane theories of scholars in universities, scholars who have no nationalistic agenda, make the great mistake of omitting the prehistoric original peoples from the development of European civilization almost like they were animals in the forests. They simply admit they were there, but then treat them like background, like animals of the forest. Yes they were there originally, but then died off or assimilated into European civilization. Scholars fail to consider that the prehistoric hunter-gatherers could develop out of their primitive state and themselves participate in the development of European civilization.

Who were those original hunter-gatherers in northern Europe? Let us go back to the Ice Age, when glaciers covered much of continental Europe. Then from about 50,000 years ago the climate warmed and the glaciers began to melt and recede back to their origins in the mountains of Norway. By about 15,000 years ago, the tundra had moved north to northern continental Europe.

To the south of the reindeer tundra, there were plains that contained horses and bison and other plains animals. Further south there were developing forests.

As the climate continued to warm, the melting glaciers and warming climate turned the northern reindeer tundra into a wilderness of lakes, bogs, and marshes where humans could not walk very much. It forced the descendants of the reindeer hunters to develop boats (dugout canoes) to move around the flooded landscape. Boats allowed them to travel even more quickly than walking, and these new boat-people, were able to travel further and faster than on foot. Archeologists call these people the “Maglemose” culture from their being first identified in a bog in Denmark.

As the climate continued to warm, nature blossomed from the climate warming and the lands freed from glaciers filled with life. The populations of both humans

and wildlife exploded. The boat peoples who originated from the “Maglemose” culture followed northern coasts and rivers across Northern Europe as far as the Ural Mountains. The Finno-Ugric languages are descended from them.

Thus from about 8000 B.C. until historic times relatively, these boat-using hunter-gatherers lived primitive lives. However where they came into contact with civilization, they adapted to varying degrees. Tribes who were located in the upper Danube region, discovered settled farmers, and began trading with them. Some may have begun long distance trading on the Danube since archeologists have found jewelery made from a shell of a mussel found only in the Mediterranean Sea. Boat peoples who had descended the Dneiper or Volga discovered the growing civilizations of Sumeria and Babylon, and began trading with them too with goods such as amber and furs. Archeology has found Baltic amber in Babylonian tombs dating to before 3000 BC.

While the aboriginal boat peoples had no experience in farming, they were now, after many millennia, experienced in making and using boats, and in following a nomadic way of life. They were happy traveling waterways for 100’s of kilometers a year, moving from campsite to campsite, returning to the same place only a year later. That was their normal life.

These northern boat peoples had all the knowledge, skills, and way of life required for becoming long distance traders for the settled peoples who had to remain in one place to look after their farm fields, animals, and settlements.

Accordingly, the boat peoples closest to civilizations, adapted to civilization by providing the service of long distances trading. They linked the settled peoples to one another even though the settlement areas were a thousand kilometers apart. The traditional way of life of the original hunter-gatherers, which consisted of moving from campsite to campsite through the year, was among these professional trading groups, simply replaced by moving from one marketplace to another in the wide world of settled peoples.

Since this way of life was completely different from the way of life in the farming settlements, the two cultures remained separate, and they did not assimilate into each other. That means if the northern aboriginal peoples were an early “Finno-Ugric”, they remained that way. It resulted in the evolution of a trade system in which the large scale trade language, or “lingua franca”, originated from the northern boat peoples, and was Finnic in nature. (I use the term “Finnic” for the western part of the “Finno-Ugric” languages family, which was originally found everywhere across the north where farming peoples could not survive. It ranged from northern Britain to the original Scandinavia, across to the south and east Baltic northward, and then across Russia to the Ural Mountains, south of the reindeer tundra.

Because they were always seen in boats, they called themselves ‘boat peoples’ which in modern Estonian would be “*venede*”, from the plural genitive of “*vene*”

'boat'. "*Vene*" is a word that probably came from the word for 'water' as in "*veena*" 'instrument of water'. This is a suggestion that can be explored further. Estonians called the peoples who were called "Rus" in the Viking Age, with the word "Vene", and the Slavic subjects of the new Kingdom of Russia in the recent historic period, inherited both "Russian" and "Vene" even though Slavic people were settlement people and had never been boat peoples.

As the trade system established by these VENEDE traders grew, the large scale trade system of continental Europe, starting from the amber trade and fur trade, evolved through many stages. Next there was an expansion of the trade networks and trading in many other goods, like tin and walrus products from Britain. Cultural practices among these boat peoples moved easily through the developing trade system. For example the practice of cremating the dead and putting the ashes in urns, which archeologists called the "Urnfield Culture". It probably began when the long distance traders wanted to carry those who died on the road home to a cemetery belonging to their peoples.

It lasted until the rise of the Roman Empire. The Romans introduced rules, regulations, taxation, and military policing, that broke up the Venetic long distance trade system so that different parts of it assimilated into the Latin, Celtic, Germanic, Slavic, and other languages of their particular regions. That would explain the evidence in the post-Roman era, of various "Venedi" or "Veneti"-named peoples seeming to have been using all these languages.

Traders speak the languages of their customers, and when traders have to speak different languages in different areas, then a common large scale trade language was needed. But if the system was fragmented, such as by the Roman Empire, that large scale language was no longer needed. The fragmentation of the original Venetic trade system in effect brought the Venetic large scale trade language to an end.

The reason why this simple description of European history and the origins and language(s) of the *Veneti/Eneti/Venedi* named peoples, has not been promoted much, is simple: in order to understand it, it is necessary to have an interest in Finnic or Finno-Ugric languages and prehistory. The reality is that it is of interest to only a minority, and mainly scholars of Finnish or Estonian culture. Since the number of such scholars is only a small percent of the world's scholars interested in and speaking of European prehistory, the aboriginal peoples of Europe is still today peripheralized or ignored, treated as if they never existed, or were ignorable background peoples in the forests.

Now and then, some information emerges that give insights into the aboriginal foundations of European civilization. Population genetic studies, looking at the y-chromosome of Swedish men, obtained results that lead to the conclusion that Swedish men were actually of aboriginal origins, which means the innovations in farming, etc, were not brought by immigrants, but transmitted through contacts

with farmer peoples towards the south. The idea that Swedish men were actually aboriginal in origins helps the argument too, that the aboriginal peoples may have been light skinned as an adaptation towards skin absorbing sunlight better and producing the needed vitamin D. (Vitamin D deficiency leads to rickets).

In general, the theory that seems to explain more, and seem straightforward and logical, will tend to be the correct one. European civilization was not developed by a single ethnicity performing all functions, but by a wide variety of peoples interacting with one another towards the collective benefit of the whole.

### **THREE MAJOR WAYS OF LIFE IN ORIGINAL EUROPE**

My investigation of the language in the Adriatic Venetic inscriptions, that I documented in “*THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL* “ discovered that the language of the Veneti was Finnic as the above common sense analysis predicts.

My view is that Europe arose from the uniting of the skills of the northern boat peoples, and the skills of the settled farmers and pastoralists, and not from a single people.

If we think of it, the original peoples of Europe consisted of three ways of life, one for each of three different environments: (To keep it simple, I have omitted the reindeer herders of the arctic tundra, and development in the Mediterranean)

1. THE NORTHERN MARSHY WILDERNESS: The boat-using, nomadic, hunter-gathers across the north who developed the skills of long distance travel along rivers and coasts was required by early trade when waterways were the only long distance highways. These peoples were pre-adapted to traveling hundreds of kilometers and spending up to a year before returning to the same place again. Traveling long distances like the Danube, Dneiper, or Volga to southern civilizations was normal for them.

2. THE FERTILE HIGHLANDS OF NORTH-CENTRAL EUROPE: The agricultural peoples learned how to grow crops on relatively flat lands with fertile soils. They were tied to their farmlands and settlements, and only traveled with horses or oxen to regional local markets. Because they stayed in one place, they could develop their impressive settlements, and through the generations filled their settlement with amazing architecture and culture. Nomadic people could not do this.

3. THE MOUNTAIN VALLEYS. These were the pastoral peoples. Often we forget that the mountains were not empty. Mountains originally contained hunters, but when herding animals like goats and sheep were semi-domesticated, a family or tribe could assume ownership of the herd, and tend to them. These people were more mobile than crop farmers, because they could move the herds around mountain pastures.

## THE MAJOR LANGUAGE FAMILIES THAT AROSE FROM THE ICE AGE

All humans arose from the Ice Age in Europe. Linguists generally agree that the “Uralic” languages originated from the reindeer peoples. The “Uralic” family divides into the “Samoyedic” languages of the arctic, whose speakers tend to reindeer, and the “Finno-Ugric” languages of peoples south of them, whose languages and cultures are filled with boat and water bird imagery. (It is interesting that the water bird and egg image is prominent in Adriatic Venetic archeological finds.)

The cave paintings of prehistoric peoples of southern Europe show that before they expanded out of Europe humans hunted not just reindeer, but horses, bison, and the ancestor of cattle and goats (aurochs and ibex). I think the various large language families evolved out of the division of the original humans as they specialized in pursuit of each of these groups of animals in their different environments.

The reindeer herds, around 15,000 BC and before the warming that created the boat-people, were in the tundra right below the glaciers. South of the reindeer herds, there were grassy plains with herds of bison and horses. They had their horse and bison hunters.

Then as the climate warmed and the reindeer tundra became marshlands, the grassy plains turned into forests. Just as some reindeer herds could migrate northeast into Russia and remain in tundra, so too horses and bison could migrate east where the landscape was drier. The plains conditions continued in the drier eastern Europe.. These plains herd hunters followed at least the horse herds to regions north of the Black Sea, and followed them even further, into the pastures of northern India. Eventually they domesticated the horse and that made them very successful. It caused a population explosion that sent breakaway groups galloping back west to the Black Sea. (Success of horse domestication continued to send breakaway groups of horse-peoples riding into eastern Europe out of the east about every thousand years, or so it seems from history.)

Thus the reindeer peoples and the boat-peoples who developed from that explain the origins of the “Uralic” languages that consist of the division into “Samoyed” and “Finno-Ugric”. The plains hunters, who found the horses easiest to hunt and then domesticate, can explain the origins of the “Indo-European” language family, which, after arriving at the Black Sea from the east, probably as the original “Scyths”, had a great impact on civilizations in southeast Europe.

I believe the people who remained in the south of Europe were those who adapted to domesticating the wild cattle and goats, two animals that do not need wide-open plains. It explains the institution of bull fighting in Spain. It is possible

that the mountain pasture peoples are descended from them, and their language was of the same origins as Iberian (Iberian still existed in the Roman era, but has become extinct.) I don't believe that Slavic people were found in Europe before the Indo-European cultures appear in southeast Europe, but it is possible that some languages associated with the Balkans and Alps may be a combination of the original language of mountain peoples and later Scythians.

## ORIGINS OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

The message I offer here, is that ALL Europeans in their own way, ever since the Ice Age, had a role in European civilization. And we must not treat languages as if they are genetic. Languages are not genetic. They can seem genetic when humankind is expanding as in the original expansions out of Europe. We tend to think languages are genetic because we learn our mother's language as a baby and later we cannot remember learning the language. But it is learned. That baby raised by another woman, will speak another language. Adults can lose one language and speak another, and that other one is then passed onto the baby.

This should be obvious to everyone. We have all experienced immigrants to our country losing their original language and speaking ours in subsequent generations. Even more obvious is that the English language in North America did not arise from native peoples, but was imported. And then, descendants of native peoples who now speak English in North America, certainly does not mean English was an native language.

Languages have an independent existence. They can move without needing migrations. For example the Latin language did not spread throughout Europe from great migrations from the Italic Peninsula. Most people who came under Roman rule adopted the Latin of the Romans who dominated them and lost their original language. Similarly the peoples of today's Germanic Scandinavia lost their original language (Finnic) and became Germanic.

I believe the Venetic language in pre-Roman Europe was a trade language like English. It was spoken by everyone involved in the world of trade, industry and commerce north of the Mediterranean/ Meanwhile the entire north shore of the Mediterranean was dominated by the Greek *lingua franca* (yes Greek was a large scale language, with most users also having their own mother tongue). And the south shore of the Mediterranean had Phoenician as the large scale trade language. Later, the Roman Empire made the large scale language Latin, and nobody required the speakers have Roman ancestors. Except that the Roman Empire did not cover all of Europe. In Eastern Europe and from there down to the Black Sea and the Balkans, where Romans were not in charge, there certainly was a large scale language that was not Latin. What was it? Obviously it was the language spoken by the surviving remnants of the original Venetic trade system working the

trade routes that went south via the Oder and Vistula, going down to the Black Sea and to the Danube and onward to the Balkans and generally the regions to the east of the Adriatic Sea. The Venetic language continued there. But at the same time, the invasion of the Huns into Europe from the east caused major refugee movements among the Slavs. (In 2015 we are well aware of what major refugee migrations can be cost by a war zone). After the Hun invasion, the Ostrogoths, Visigoths/Gepidi and Huns united to take on the Romans and their Gothic mercenary allies, continuing the wars. When the dust settled, the Roman Empire was in decline, and Slavic refugees were now inhabiting regions larger than original. The northern refugees becoming the East Slavs, the western refugees becoming the West Slavs, and the refugees to the southwest becoming the Balkan Slavs. All this was occurring in the first centuries AD, and continued for centuries until the Roman Empire was gone and the dust had settled.

Thus the customers of the continuing Venedic trade were now Slavic speaking, and like all trader peoples, the Venedic traders learned the language of their customers. Initially they would have been bilingual, keeping their Venedic language in use among themselves. But originally the Venedic/Venetic language was sustained by being needed in the original trade system covering all of continental Europe. With much of it now compromised by Latin, and later Germanic, it lacked its original strength as a *lingua franca*, and so the original Venetic language, no longer needed, slowly vanished.

After the Roman Empire, the large scale language was German, used throughout Europe's large scale economy, from England to Novgorod. English has developed as the world's major large scale language only since the World Wars which brought German into disrepute.

The practice of tying nationalism to language is fundamentally erroneous and pointless. My interpretation of the Venetic inscriptions was purely an intellectual pursuit without any political motives and my discovery Adriatic Venetic was Finnic merely proves the theory that the northern boat people, the VENEDE, were responsible at least for developing the long distance trade network in Europe north of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean. (The Phoenician traders, the Assyrian traders, the Greek traders, and others in the southern world had their own more complex origins.)

## PART TWO: CONFUSION IN THE LINGUISTIC INTERPRETING OF THE ANCIENT VENETIC INSCRIPTIONS IN NORTHERN ITALY

### THE CONFUSION CONTINUES INTO THE INSCRIPTIONS

If you explore the information regarding the ancient Veneti further, the fact that the Veneti are today argued to have been Latin-like, Slovenian-like, etc, always leads the debate to the ancient inscriptions that were left behind by the Venetic cities in what is now northern Italy.

The Latin approach, as I explained above, assumed the Veneti developed locally and spoke a regional Indo-European language, perhaps Latin-like. That meant the Venetic inscriptions had to be interpretable via Indo-European, notably Latin.

The Slovenians, in claiming all the Veneti-named peoples had been Slavic and that Slovenian preserved an ancient Slavic, practically trapped themselves into needing to find translations of the Venetic inscriptions via Slovenian.

Perhaps there have been scholars who have tried to see Celtic or Germanic in the Venetic inscriptions, but they are not currently active and there is no need to discuss them.

So let us consider what is being claimed currently, and how the confusion exists within the realm of interpreting the Venetic inscriptions.

The drive to decipher the inscriptions made by ancient peoples in what is now northern Italy is now centuries old. Attempts to make sense of the inscriptions, written in an alphabet that was similar to the one used by Etruscans, began long before the science of linguistics.

The earliest investigations of the inscriptions from the point of view of interpreting what they say had their beginning in 1652 by Orsato and 1789 by Lanzi. Because of the *Veneti* adaptation of the Etruscan alphabet, these early scholars took the point of view that Venetic was a northern form of Etruscan; but thereafter the inscriptions were assumed Indo-European—beginning with the view it was “Illyrian”.

According to *MLV*<sup>1</sup>, the first major work was done by Ghirardini and Pauli in 1880-1890 on the tablet found near Este along the Adige. Next, Pichler and Pauli did work in 1885 and 1891 on the Gurina tablets. Then came the major work *Die Veneter* by Carl Pauli which attempted, in 1891, a description of the language based on the assumption it was “Illyrian”, ancient peoples situated between the Adriatic and Balkans north of Greece, who were thought to have endured in the Messapic inscriptions on the east Adriatic coast.

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1 M. Lejeune's *Manuel de la Langue Vénète*, 1974

Any attempts to decipher the inscriptions were done without involvement of any science called linguistics. Let us quickly review the history of the science of linguistics.

Linguistics began in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries with the attempts by theologians to prove the Bible's take if the confusion of languages at Babel through attempting to show that all languages are traceable back to biblical Hebrew. Non-religious classification of languages can be traced to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, notably to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who is best known as the co-discoverer of calculus. But the field of linguistics as we know it today seems to date to Sir William Jones, who compared Sanscrit, Greek and Latin, and commented: "no philosopher could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from the same common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists."

This opened the door to comparative historical linguistics, where many scholars studied languages that seemed, intuitively, to be related, in order to rationalize those similarities and reconstruct their descent from common parents, thus creating linguistic family trees. These early linguistics included Danish Rasmus Rask, German Franz Bopp and Jacob Grimm. Grimm was first to note systematic shifts such as English and German having an *f* and *v* in places where other groups have a *p*. This was the beginning of linguistic pursuit of sound shifts in related languages. By identifying the sound shifts the similarities between the languages was made much clearer.

Shifts in sounds are comparable to accents and dialects. For example, when someone says "HIPPI DI" for the English '*happy day*', one can linguistically propose a shift from the sound "AE" to "I". Accents in a language come from speakers adopting a new language and speaking it with the phonetic characteristics of their original language. Dialects come from arbitrary drifting in languages separated from their parental language. We know accents well, from the speech of immigrants to our country, and we know dialects well from how people in different parts of the country or even a large city speak in slightly different ways to distinguish themselves from others. Before mass media, dialects were common in the landscape. . Every European country had numerous dialects even though there was a single standard national language. The continuation of accents or dialects depended on the strong presence of speakers of the "proper" way of speaking. In modern times, radio and television around the world has influenced speech towards what citizens hear in these media. Even before mass media, people lost their dialects and accents by associating with the larger world at major markets. That would be similar to a person living in a region outside a major city most of the time, visiting the markets of the city a few times a year, and registering the ideal of speaking like the majority of people experienced at the markets. In ancient times, the shared markets and large scale gathering places, were often hundreds of kilometers away but if you had the means of transport to go there – such as boats –

your reaction to visiting the place was to value the dialect dominating the place. It would be exactly the same as today a Chinese immigrant to Canada idealizing losing their accent every time they speak to people in the majority. This desire to become part of a larger social order when communication provides contact, is called convergence.

## SOME HUMAN INSTINCTIVE SKILLS WITH LANGUAGE

Languages that have evolved from divergence from a common parent, are really nothing more than extreme dialects. Dialects have developed so much that the related dialects are so extreme that it is very difficult for speakers of these extreme dialects to understand each other. For example, someone who speaks English, when listening to Swedish, will be able to understand pieces here and there, from the way one understands mild dialects. But English and Swedish have been diverging dialectically so much that linguists call them separate languages. To understand a dialect, you listen to the speaker until your mind, subconsciously, becomes familiar with the systematic shifts. It seems the ability of humans to process dialects is probably something that has developed in humankind to be innate. One can see the advantage – when prehistoric tribes separated from one another, it was an advantage that if the tribes encountered one another decades later, that they would both be able to get past the dialectic differences that had developed.

Because humans have the innate skill to process dialects, when we are a tourist in a foreign country, we will naturally try to understand the foreigner by this innate skill. Like the example of an English speaker listening to spoken Swedish, it works if the foreign language is sufficiently similar. The Swedish sentence taken at random from a travel phrasebook, is “*Vär är bussen , som går till centrum.*” The English speaker would correctly hear “*Where are buses*” and “*until the centre?*”, and with some intelligence may actually interpret it correctly as “*Where are the buses which go to the town centre (downtown)?*” Other sentence examples can be tested in this way, and, while there will be better results for some sentences and worse in others, generally English will form sentences that are sensible for the simple reason that for Swedish most of the words will be correct and their meanings will have a logical relationship from which a logical thought can be expressed.

Another pair of languages where humans can understand a great deal through the innate processing of dialects would be Estonian and Finnish. The Finnish sentence for the same sentence given above “*Mistä lähtee bussi keski kaupungille?*” (‘Where are the buses which go to the town centre (downtown)?’)

The Estonian will immediately detect “*Mis (what?) - lähe (goes) – buss(bus, a loanword) – kesk(center) kaubang(business-place)ille(to)*”. Only the last

interpretation – ‘business-place’ instead of ‘town’ is somewhat off. Although modern Estonian practice does not express it in an exactly parallel way to Finnish, nonetheless a parallel ‘Estonianization’ of the Finnish version is still comprehensible— “*Mist (=mis kohast) läheb buss kesk-kaubangille*”.

In the history of human use of language, most situations involved mild dialectic differences from linguistic drift from a relatively short periods of separation. For example we can estimate the differences between English and Swedish or Finnish and Estonian to represent little more than a thousand years separation. If the separation is more then the innate ability to process dialects fails. It becomes necessary to do some amount of formal rationalization. The science of linguistics developed to do this rationalization. Linguistics developed to rationalize the way in which languages from the same origins drifted apart from each other and in what time frame. The above examples of English speakers needing to rationalize Swedish *som* and Estonian speakers needing to rationalize some aspects of the Finnish, are mid examples of the rationalization necessary. But in the extreme, when two languages are extremely diverged from many thousands of years of separation, the challenge is very difficult if not impossible

We can illustrate such extreme differences by comparing the English “*Where are the buses which go to the town centre (downtown)?*” with “*Mistä lähtee bussi keski kaupungille?*”. If we naively assume the other language is a dialect, then the results will be absurd. Trying hard to find something meaningful in the Finnish sentence, the English speaker, ignoring word boundaries and allowing much flexibility we may come up with “*Missed the lattice bus’s sick pesky cow, Pungilly*” Note we were forced to turn a problem section into a proper name Pungilly. (This trick is very common in the traditional Latin-based interpretations of the Venetic inscriptions.)

This demonstrates that if the ancient Venetic inscriptions were indeed close to Latin (or alternatively Slavic) that the interpretations of the inscriptions should be relatively easy and be appropriate to the object on which the inscriptions were found. Thus, even though it is possible to directly come up with a sentence from a combination of ‘hearing things’ and some ad hoc rationalization, in general when a result is absurd and departs from close parallelism, this is indicative of the assumption of relatedness being erroneous.

The human skill in processing dialects and accents is so deeply ingrained, that we are inclined to believe that if we only studied, studied, studied the sentence, we would eventually reach the results we expect. Thus the assumption that ancient Venetic was an archaic Latin or Slavic is difficult to abandon even if it is completely false. It would be like an English speaking tourist in France doggedly interpreting the French he hears with English. (Such as interpreting *meilleur* as ‘mayor’ or *bon* as ‘bone’ or..... and producing the most ridiculous interpretations.) In short, the best evidence of your interpreting the other language, whether spoken

or written in context, is that IT IS NOT ABSURD relative to the real world context in which it was spoken or written. (Note: archeologists tend to consider the Slavic interpretations of the Venetic inscriptions as being absurd relative to the archeological context, and the traditional interpretations are strange in being little more than proper names in the manner of modern gravestones, and do not offer any real sentences,

In spite of the flaws in interpreting via the innate abilities to process dialects, linguists have at least accepted the results of the traditional analysis, modifying the hypothesis from being archaic Latin to generally being “an ancient Indo-European”.

As I say, the science of linguistics developed to rationalize the way languages seem similar to one another in the manner of dialects continuing to develop to extremes. Rationalization can take understanding of relatedness of similar languages considerably beyond what we are able with our innate skills in processing dialects.

I have also mentioned accents. Accents arise when speakers of one language adopt another language and continue to speak with the characteristics of the original language. We know this today in examples like how Chinese people tend to want to pronounce the “R” sound with “L”. If speakers with an accent are in contact with a dominating people speaking the language in the “proper” way, then that accent will disappear in a generation or two. (Like sons and daughters of immigrants speaking English without the slightest accent.) If, however, the people with the accent lack sufficient examples of any ‘better’ way of speaking, the accent can continue, generation after generation and become a permanent characteristic.

For example, the Danish language and the south Swedish dialect of the Swedish language, are both strongly palatalized. It suggests the possibility that the people originally spoke in a highly palatalized way (ie that the original SUEBIC language was highly palatalized) and then when the people adopted Germanic language, the palatalized manner of speaking was transferred. Of course it is possible too that the palatalization developed in situ and there was no change in language.

The paralinguistic features of a language are significant from the point of view of there having been a change in language. The characteristics of an ancient language can endure even after the speakers of that ancient language changed languages.

## **LINGUISTIC METHODOLOGY CONTINUED**

Returning to the history of the development of linguistics, the comparative linguistic techniques of determining the descent of languages from patterns of similarity between them, was advanced forward in the 19th century. It attained nearly modern form in the mid-19th century with August Schleicher. He was the first to chart language families as branches of a tree, and to try to reconstruct

parental languages that no longer existed (today called “proto-languages”) by inferring the original parental words from the later forms appearing in the descendant languages. This process is extremely laborious and has been compared to triangulation. Because languages can abandon words, it is possible to identify kinship between languages indirectly – not requiring all languages compared to have the same cognates in common. Traditional linguistics compare a few languages at a time, looking for common characteristics and inferring roots.

Obviously the more languages there are to compare, and the more words they have, the more successful the linguistic analysis will be.

But how does linguistics apply to the interpretation of an unknown language like Venetic, existing only inscribed on ancient objects? Comparing two languages requires the linguist has two known languages. An unknown language is little more than plenty of sounds. In North America in the last century or so, there were many languages in North America descended from the aboriginal people. North American linguists had to live with the speakers to first learn the language from direct experience with them. If the unknown language exists in only written form, the same would apply. The linguist would learn how writing is used, and from context learn the words and grammar. We can understand the process if we have experienced being a tourist in a country whose language we do not understand. By observing the context in which words are used, we can infer the meanings of the words. For example the word above bin of apples probably means ‘apples’, or the word on a red octangular sign at the end of a road, probably says ‘stop’. Similarly we can make very good guesses about words on packaging of consumer products, advertising, headlines under pictures in newspapers. I have encountered people who reveal they learned English by reading comic books – where the pictures suggested what was being spoken.

But usually the linguist would find among the speakers of the unknown language, one person who spoke not only the unknown language, but also the language of the linguist. They then became the informant. The linguist could simply ask what various unknown words meant. When we speak of the written language, someone may have created a dictionary we can consult. In the history of deciphering ancient inscriptions, the key to deciphering the unknown written language was for archeology to discover examples of the unknown inscriptions being accompanied by a translation in a known ancient language like Greek or Phoenician. For example although Etruscan remains somewhat mysterious from being pre-Indo-European, there are some examples of Etruscan texts accompanied by Phoenician texts. This had permitted the discovery of many words.

If there is no dictionary or parallel text, we are stuck with an unknown language that is nothing more than a lot of written characters and sounds. This has been the case with Venetic inscriptions. Archeology has found plenty of examples of Venetic getting mixed with Latin in the Roman era, finally becoming pure Latin,

but there are no examples of parallel texts (ie Venetic and Latin). Thus, while linguistics has had plenty of known ancient languages – Latin, Greek, Phoenician, Egyptian, and more – the Venetic inscriptions have remained unknown. With Venetic being unknown, comparative linguistic methodology is impossible to imply.

### MISGUIDED PAST METHODOLOGIES WITH VENETIC

Many linguists became excited when in the early 1960's a fad developed to try to interpret the ancient Venetic inscriptions found in northern Italy, using Latin. Previous beliefs had been that the ancient Venetic writing was in a form of Etruscan, because it used the Etruscan alphabet, or that it was "Illyrian" because ancient Historian Herodotus mentioned there having been "Eneti" in "Illyria" in addition to the north end of the Adriatic Sea. By about 1960's in frustration perhaps someone decided why not assume the Venetic was an archaic Latin. That opened a floodgate of everyone linguistically inclined who had learned Latin, wanting to try projecting Latin onto the Venetic, and coming up with non-absurd translations, as well as identifying some repeated patterns at the ends of words as various grammatical markers, notably gender. The accumulating results were summarized in the early 1960's in *La Lingua Venetica* by G.B. Pellegrini and A.L. Prodocimi . But since each scholar had worked independently each in their own way, the results were inconsistent. In the early 1970's M. Lejeune attempted to create a summary catalogue of all the results, trying to find some kind of overall truths that could be found by reviewing all the work. The book, entitled, *Manuel de la Langue Vénète* (1974) sought a consistent interpretation of the Etruscan-like letters, looked for common ideas between the work of different scholars, and the linguistic debates between them. When one compares *La Lingua Venetica* with *Manuel de la Langue Vénète* one finds that the earlier cataloguing presented the translations of the various scholars, while the latter presented almost no declared translations at all – only the various issues and arguments, all using Indo-European (mainly Latin) as the template. The reason is obvious – Lejeune did not find the translations reliable – they were just the scholar's creative assumptions. If you look at the lexicon at the back, you will find that close to half of the words listed are deemed proper names of deceased, his relatives, deities, etc arising from a scientifically questionable methodology of projecting Latin words onto the Venetic, and then assuming the untranslatable pieces in between are proper names, and that the translation will be something like the inscriptions introduced by the Romans for memorials, dedications, and tomb markers, where there does not need to be any sentence – just some keywords plus proper names, analogous to today's tombstones ('*in memorium* – [name of deceased ] – [relatives of the deceased]') For example, obelisks marking locations of tombs all began with the word (converted to small case Roman) **.e.go**. Assuming that word was the same as Latin

*ego* for ‘I’, all of them were interpreted as ‘I am [the name of the deceased]’ (I found the word actually meant ‘rest, remain’ in the sense of ‘sleep, rest, eternally’ and that the rest described the journey to eternity and not one named the person. I believe the Romans invented official naming in the course of needing to take official inventory of all their subjects in the Roman Empire for the purpose of taxation, etc.

I give one example of a past deciphering from the Latin perspective.

**.e..i.k.go.l.tano.s.dotolo.u.dera.i.kane.i**

Venetic, divided by analyst : **eik goltanos doto louderai kanei**

Latin (literal): *hic Goltanus dedit Liberae Cani*

English translation: *Goltanus sacrificed this for the virgin Kanis*

Note that the literal Latin barely resembles the original and requires the invention of two proper names *Goltanus* and *Cani*.

Lejeune himself presents one of the few actual translations to which he commits in his *Manuel de la Langue Vénète*. The sentence **ENONI . ONTEI . APPIOI . SSELBOI SSELBOI . ANDETIC OBOSECUPETARIS** - [*container* - *MLV 236, LLV B-1*] was interpreted by him as ‘Burial vault of Ennonios for (his brothers) Onts (and) Applios (and for) himself, (all three) sons of Andetios’.

It can be argued that since the finder of the object – a container – said he had seen two other identical ones, three brothers had the same object made to put into a tomb, and that gives it some meaningful context. However, note that in the above, the bracketed words are assumed, and that some of the words are turned into proper names (underlined) and that the analyst only had to find a word that looked like Indo-European for ‘burial vault’. All the results of all these scholars are like that – there are only one or two words that can be gleaned from Indo-European word lists, and then the rest are assumed the names of people or deities, and contexts assumed. It is assumed that additional claims as to grammatical markers help to solidify the Indo-European hypothesis. But when we look at the description of grammar, we find it is largely empty. It mostly allows the words turned into proper names to be deemed masculine or feminine. And as for grammatical markers, the only one that appears to be affirmed in the inscriptions themselves is the dative, suggested by a repeated ending with **-i**. appearing in the context of offerings being given to a deity at a site called Baratela.

As these examples show, if you turn most of the words into proper names (ignoring the fact that in ancient times names themselves had meaning such as ‘horseman’, ‘shipper’, ‘smith’, ‘farmer’ and so on) and then assume context in order to fudge the translation to make sense, you could even prove the Venetic inscriptions are Chinese and debate the results among Chinese linguists.

As I say, if you don’t model your translations in this way, and do not even try to get linguistic integrity, you will get something more challengeing, and needing a poet to come up with a non-absurd result. An interpretation of the Canevoi

container above using Slovenian was done by Matej Bor, and translates into English with *'And now, drunken as you are, have fear, have fear even of children around you, when you travel.'* And of course, it was necessary to add a paragraph of explanation of children being malicious to drunks, etc.

I will write more below about the ludicrousness of these initial translations, and the even sillier 'hearing things' approach by amateur Slovenian scholars that results in truly absurd interpretations. But the point of this paper is to point out that since linguistics can only analyze known language, linguistic analysis is subject to the integrity of this first stage, this first deciphering. If the linguist arrives at Venetic without studying the science or lack of science in the original questionable deciphering methods, then the linguist is a victim of the bad science that has come before.

As pointed out to me by a linguist when I began myself to simply try to hear language within Venetic inscriptions, already some time ago, nothing is achieved by simply finding similarities between two languages, since all human languages are limited to the limited number of sounds humans can comfortably make, and other properties. For example, human language imitates the cause and effect of actions, and that produces the subject, object and verb. It appears that humans are hardwired to construct languages in basically the same way, and that what differs between languages is the patterns that represent meanings, including meanings of small elements that are considered grammatical markers.

This truth, linguistics said, will ensure that if the number of examples of the unknown language is limited, and if the analyst accepts rough similarities, then any language on earth will find similarities between parts of the unknown language and a known language, and be able to, if they wanted, argue that the unknown language was related to the known one – especially if many of the words are assumed to be meaningless proper names.

I can see that at least for the scholarly approaches taken with the Indo-European assumption, that there was great effort made to try to find the consistent grammar, word stems, linguistic shifts, and all the rest that historical linguistics plays with, to compensate for the vagueness of the initial 'hearing things' methodology. But with such a limited number of Venetic inscriptions it is impossible to prove much of anything from the inscriptions themselves, and the game becomes one of projecting presumed ancient Indo-European onto the Venetic, and practically forcing something onto the Venetic inscriptions that is not really there.

I have seen linguists practically screaming that Venetic is an Indo-European language, and refer to some linguistic examples, never considering that all languages have similarities, and if the number of actual examples of the Venetic language are small, it is impossible to prove any claim is either correct or incorrect.

Linguists are not immune to the insanity brought on by nationalism and academic politics. They like nationalistic historians can simply believe something is

correct, and be blind to evidence like that which I presented above, starting with the truth that linguistics only analyzes known language and that the integrity of linguistics rests on the integrity of the deciphering (connecting patterns to meanings). If the linguist does not know enough about the laws of probability and the possible ways false results have been promoted by allowing vague similarities, or turning unknowns into proper names, or dividing continuous texts without word boundaries into whatever words you please, then the linguist will not realize just how bad the original interpretations around which the linguistic debates are oriented really are.

## THE HISTORY OF LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION OF VENETIC

The history of interpreting the Venetic inscriptions as the science of comparative historical linguistics grew continued as follows:

In the earlier-mentioned period of pursuing Venetic as Illyrian, in 1911 and 1912 there were works by F. Cordenons. In 1933 R.S. Conway published a work on the ancient dialects of Italy. Then there was the work in 1892 by R. Thurneysen, in 1924 by F. Sommer (h=i.), in 1932 by E. Veter (first theory on meaning of dots), in 1950 and 1965 G.B. Pellegrini (Lagole texts). The 'Illyrian Hypothesis' began to be questioned in 1943 by P. Kretschmer, and then in 1949 by M.S. Beeler, who in *The Venetic Language* saw Venetic being closer to languages of the Italic peninsula and thought Venetic was an Italic language preserving unusual characteristics. It was at this time that analysts began to project assumptions on the Venetic inscriptions that it was Latin-like, and to try to interpret it with Latin, a language that existed at the time of the ancient Venetic inscriptions.

Then in 1950, H. Krahe in *Das Venetische* thought that Venetic, in spite of the correspondences with Italic languages, should not be considered an Italic language but an independent Indo-European language. With that, the rejection of an Illyric Venetic was complete, and the scholars settled on seeking an archaic Indo-European Venetic. Obviously the simple assumption Venetic was an ancient Latin-like language of the Italic Peninsula had not been fruitful.

At about this time the science of linguistics was highly developed, and one saw the entry into this field of comparative Indo-European linguists such as M.S. Beeler, O. Haas, P. Kretschmer, M. Lejeune, G.B. Pellegrini, V. Pisani, E. Polomé, A.L. Prosdocimi, etc. who now sought the solution to the Venetic inscriptions in an independent archaic Indo-European language. Traditional scholarly Indo-European studies of Venetic culminated in 1967 with a comprehensive inventory of the inscriptions being presented in *La Lingua Venetica* by G.B. Pellegrini and A.L. Prosdocimi. It was a summary and catalogue of the Venetic inscriptions to date with photographs and drawings. Another summary (but without illustrations) followed in 1974, *Manuel de la Langue Vénète* by M. Lejeune.

However the Illyrian theory did not quite die, but was transferred over to a Slovenian theory that replaced “Illyrian” with “Slovenian”, a theory that in due course emerged in *die Veneter* by J. Savli, M. Bor, 1988 (Translations into English and other languages, with revisions and expansions, followed during the 1990’s.) The Slovenian unscholarly approach has not been taken seriously among the legitimate linguistic establishment, because of its simply projecting Slovenian onto the inscriptions, without any serious attempt to show linguistic integrity. However, linguists with sympathy towards the Slovenian point of view, are not troubled by the archaic Indo-European point of view, because as you can see in the summary in *Manuel de la Langue Vénète* that while earlier scholars were bold in trying to find Latin-like parallels, the new archaic Indo-European linguists wanted to show more integrity and achieve a consistency in the deciphering of Venetic. The result is that *Manuel de la Langue Vénète* presents very few actual translations. Insofar as the discussions are now about explaining seeming shifts when Venetic is assumed ancient Indo-European, and other debates, it really does not matter that earlier there were a handful of bold silly translations with Latin, and a handful of unbelievable translations using Slovenian. To linguists these earlier less scholarly ‘hearing things’ translations are irrelevant compared to debating unresolved issues.

But the problem lies in the assumption that Venetic was Indo-European. While the Veneti were in an environment with Indo-European languages around it – both in the Italic Peninsula, towards the north, and across the Adriatic sea – it is also true that the Veneti were neighbours of the NON-Indo-European Ligurians to the west, and NON-Indo-European Etruscans to their immediate south. Thus an alternative legitimate approach is to ASSUME Venetic was NON-Indo-European. After all the Veneti borrowed the Etruscan alphabet. There is an obvious reason why Etruscan has been ignored (other than the early observation of the similarity of Venetic and Etruscan writing and an inclination to assume purely from the writing that they were related.) The reason is simple. There is little knowledge of Etruscan and NON-Indo-European languages in general.

In addition to Etruscan and Ligurian, ancient historical texts suggest that the ancient Veneti were the source of amber that came from the north by a route called *Eridanus*. Archeology shows strong trade connections between the north Italic location and both the Jutland Peninsula and southeast Baltic, the two major sources of amber.

This raised the high probability that the Venetic cities may have been deliberately established by northern amber trade entrepreneurs, given that Baltic amber went south to Mediterranean civilizations already two millenia before the founding of the north Adriatic Venetic cities. (Archeology has found Baltic amber in Babylonian tombs dating to before 3000 BC, and in ancient Greece before 2000 BC, and Polish archeology has found amber goods crafting workshops at the

southeast Baltic dating to 4000 years ago. The Baltic origins of amber is determined by spectroscopic analysis, and since northern Europe was well established by boat-using nomadic hunter-gatherers, the north was also the source of men preadapted to becoming professional long distance traders on the major European rivers.

Archeology reveals that the Adriatic Venetic cities developed gradually ‘from northern influences’ since 1000 BC. It probably developed as an alternative way of reaching the Mediterranean. At that time Greece was a major consumer of amber, and traders originally descended to Greece from above, going south from the Danube. Greeks were told amber now came from *Eridanus*. This word sounds very much like a Finno-Ugric ‘alternative trade route’ (Hungarians still call the Danube, *Danus*, and *eri* is the Estonian word for ‘alternative’)

### **SOME INSIGHTS INTO LANGUAGE USE AND CHANGE**

I already pointed out the basic flaw in comparative linguistics in that it assumes all languages diverge, and behave as if they were inherited genetic traits. But the real world of language use and language change is complicated. Let us explore some characteristics of language, and what traditional linguistics is interested in.

Shifts in sounds are comparable to accents and dialects. For example, when someone says “HIPPI DI” for the English ‘*happy day*’, one can linguistically propose a shift from the sound “AE” to “I”. Accents in a language come from speakers adopting a new language and speaking it with the phonetic characteristics of their original language. Dialects come from arbitrary drifting in languages separated from their parental language. We know accents well, from the speech of immigrants to our country, and we know dialects well from how people in different parts of the country or even a large city speak in slightly different ways to distinguish themselves from others. Before mass media, dialects were common in the landscape. . Every European country had numerous dialects even though there was a single standard national language. The continuation of accents or dialects depended on the strong presence of speakers of the “proper” way of speaking. In modern times, radio and television around the world has influenced speech towards what citizens hear in these media. Even before mass media, people lost their dialects and accents by associating with the larger world at major markets. That would be similar to a person living in a region outside a major city most of the time, visiting the markets of the city a few times a year, and registering the ideal of speaking like the majority of people experienced at the markets. In ancient times, the shared markets and large scale gathering places, were often hundreds of kilometers away but if you had the means of transport to go there – such as boats – your reaction to visiting the place was to value the dialect dominating the place. It would be exactly the same as today a Chinese immigrant to Canada idealizing

losing their accent every time they speak to people in the majority. This desire to become part of a larger social order when communication provides contact, is called convergence.

**Diverging into dialects, and dialects into related languages.** Languages that have evolved from divergence from a common parent, are really nothing more than extreme dialects. Dialects have developed so much that the related dialects are so extreme that it is very difficult for speakers of these extreme dialects to understand each other. For example, someone who speaks English, when listening to Swedish, will be able to understand pieces here and there, from the way one understands mild dialects. But English and Swedish have been diverging dialectically so much that linguists call them separate languages. To understand a dialect, you listen to the speaker until your mind, subconsciously, becomes familiar with the systematic shifts. It seems the ability of humans to process dialects is probably something that has developed in humankind to be innate. One can see the advantage – when prehistoric tribes separated from one another, it was an advantage that if the tribes encountered one another decades later, that they would both be able to get past the dialectic differences that had developed.

**Human innate ability to process dialects.** Because humans have the innate skill to process dialects, when we are a tourist in a foreign country, we will naturally try to understand the foreigner by this innate skill. Like the example of an English speaker listening to spoken Swedish, it works if the foreign language is sufficiently similar. The Swedish sentence taken at random from a travel phrasebook, is “*Vär är bussen , som går till centrum.*” The English speaker would correctly hear “*Where are buses*” and “*until the centre?*”, and with some intelligence may actually interpret it correctly as “*Where are the buses which go to the town centre (downtown)?*” Other sentence examples can be tested in this way, and, while there will be better results for some sentences and worse in others, generally English will form sentences that are sensible for the simple reason that for Swedish most of the words will be correct and their meanings will have a logical relationship from which a logical thought can be expressed.

Another pair of languages where humans can understand a great deal through the innate processing of dialects would be Estonian and Finnish. The Finnish sentence for the same sentence given above “*Mistä lähtee bussi keski kaupungille?*” (‘Where are the buses which go to the town centre (downtown)?’)

The Estonian will immediately detect “*Mis (what?) - lähe (goes) – buss(bus, a loanword) – kesk(center) kaubang(business-place)ille(to)*”. Only the last interpretation – ‘business-place’ instead of ‘town’ is somewhat off. Although modern Estonian practice does not express it in an exactly parallel way to Finnish, nonetheless a parallel ‘Estonianization’ of the Finnish version is still comprehensible— “*Mist (=mis kohast) läheb buss kesk-kaubangille*”.

**Dialect-interpreting ability going crazy.** In the history of human use of language, most situations involved mild dialectic differences, from linguistic drift from a relatively short periods of separation. For example we can estimate the differences between English and Swedish or Finnish and Estonian to represent little more than a thousand years separation. If the separation is more then the innate ability to process dialects fails, it becomes necessary to do some amount of formal rationalization. The science of linguistics developed to do this rationalization. Linguistics developed to rationalize the way in which languages from the same origins drifted apart from each other and in what time frame. The above examples of English speakers needing to rationalize Swedish som and Estonian speakers needing to rationalize some aspects of the Finnish, are mid examples of the rationalization necessary. But in the extreme, when two languages are extremely diverged from many thousands of years of separation, the challenge is very difficult if not impossible

We can illustrate such extreme differences by comparing the English “*Where are the buses which go to the town centre (downtown)?*” with “*Mistä lähtee bussi keski kaupungille?*”. If we naively assume the other language is a dialect, then the results will be absurd. Trying hard to find something meaningful in the Finnish sentence, the English speaker, ignoring word boundaries and allowing much flexibility we may come up with “*Missed the lattice bus’s sick pesky cow, Pungilly*” Note we were forced to turn a problem section into a proper name Pungilly. (This trick is very common in the traditional Latin-based interpretations of the Venetic inscriptions.)

**Craziness if erroneously convinced Venetic is what it is not.** This demonstrates that if the ancient Venetic inscriptions were indeed close to Latin (or alternatively Slavic) that the interpretations of the inscriptions will be relatively close to the proposed parallels, and appropriate to the object on which the inscriptions were found. Conversely if the Venetic inscriptions are in fact NOT close to Latin or Slavic, then the results will be forced – with poor matches and much invention and poetic manipulation like those in the above examples. (However, amazingly those convinced they are right manage to adjust the results poetically and rationalize the meaning.)

Thus, even though it is possible to directly come up with a sentence from a combination of ‘hearing things’ and some ad hoc rationalization, does not mean it reflects reality. In general when a result is absurd and departs from close parallelism, this is indicative of the assumption of relatedness being erroneous.

The human skill in processing dialects and accents is so deeply ingrained, that we are inclined to believe that if we only studied, studied, studied the sentence, we would eventually reach the results we expect. Thus the assumption that ancient Venetic was an archaic Latin or Slavic is difficult to abandon by those pursuing it even if it is completely false. It would be like an English speaking tourist in France

doggedly interpreting the French he hears with English. (Such as interpreting *meilleur* as ‘mayor’ or *bon* as ‘bone’ or..... and producing the most ridiculous interpretations.) In short, the best evidence of you interpreting correctly any spoken or written unknown language, is that IT IS NOT ABSURD relative to the real world context in which it was spoken or written. (Note: archeologists have pointed out how the the interpretations have failed to be what the object on which the inscriptions were written would suggest.<sup>2</sup>)

In spite of the flaws in interpreting via the innate abilities to process dialects, linguists have at least accepted the results of the traditional analysis, modifying the hypothesis from being archaic Latin to generally being “an ancient Indo-European”. The inadequacy of the results have never been considered as evidence of the initial hypothesis being wrong.

**Accents vs Dialects.** I have also mentioned accents. Accents arise when speakers of one language adopt another language and continue to speak with the characteristics of th original language. We know this today in examples like how Chinese people tend to want to pronounce the “R” sound with “L”. If speakers with an accent are in contact with a dominating people speaking the language in the “proper” way, then that accent will disappear in a generation or two. (Like sons and daughters of immigrants speaking English without the slightest accent.), If, however, the people with the accent lack sufficient examples of any ‘better’ way of speaking, the accent can continue, generation after generation and become a permanent characteristic.

For example, the Danish language and the south Swedish dialect of the Swedish language, are both strongly palatalized. It suggesst the possibility that the people originally spoke in a highly palatalized way (ie that the original Suebic language was highly palatalized) and then when the people adopted Germanic language, the palatalized manner of speaking was transferred. Of course it is possible too that the palatalization developed in situ and there was no change in language.

The paralinguistic features of a language are significant from the point of view of there having been a change in language. The accent-related characteristics of an ancient language can endure even after the speakers of that ancient language changed languages.

## **FRAUDULENT VS PROPER METHODOLOGIES OF DECIPHERING VENETIC.**

Obviously the more languages there are to compare, and the more words they have, the more successful the linguistic analysis will be. And of course the closer

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<sup>2</sup> And for that reason, I restructured my own investigation from making the study of what the context suggested the core of my methodology, and any similarities to a known language was a final consideration only.

the languages are to the ideal that mirrors genetic descent. But linguistics is the study of languages, not unknown sound patterns. Obviously there is something not quite correct if linguistics is used to try to say things about the Venetic inscriptions. In order to properly use linguistics you have to have an actual known language!

**Linguistics only analyzes known languages.** Comparing two languages requires the linguist has two known languages. An unknown language is little more than plenty of sounds. First you have to develop some knowledge to analyse! You first have to decipher the language. So how can linguistics be used to decipher the language? The answer is it can't. What linguists have done is ASSUME Venetic is Indo-European (either Latin-like or recently Slavic-like) and then by projection PRETEND Venetic is Indo-European. You then apply linguistic analysis to something that is essentially an invention!

Linguistics is not a methodology for deciphering an unknown language, In North America in the last century or so, there were many languages in North America descended from the aboriginal people. North American linguists had to live with the speakers to first learn the language from direct experience with them. If the unknown language exists in only written form, the same would apply. The linguist would learn how writing is used, and from context learn the words and grammar.

We can understand the process if we have experienced being a tourist in a country whose language we do not understand. By observing the context in which words are used, we can infer the meanings of the words. For example the word above bin of apples probably means 'apples', or the word on a red octangular sign at the end of a road, probably says 'stop'. Similarly we can make very good guesses about words on packaging of consumer products, advertising, headlines under pictures in newspapers. I have encountered people who reveal they learned English by reading comic books – where the pictures suggested what was being spoken.

All human beings are hardwired to naturally learn a language from actually experiencing it in use in context. It is how a baby learns his language. It is the only way a baby can learn a language. But if you have already learned language A, then if you want to learn language B you find a person who already knows language A and B to be your informant, translator, teacher.

This if the linguist can find an informant among the speakers of the unknown language, they will employ that person to speed up the learning of the unknown language. They then became the informant. The linguist could simply ask what various unknown words meant. When we speak of the written language, someone may have created a dictionary we can consult. In the history of deciphering ancient inscriptions, the key to deciphering the unknown written language was for archeology to discover examples of the unknown inscriptions being accompanied by a translation in a known ancient language like Greek or Phoenician. For

example although Etruscan remains somewhat mysterious from being pre-Indo-European, there are some examples of Etruscan texts accompanied by Phoenician texts. This had permitted the discovery of many words.

**The linguistic fraud connected to Venetic** If there is no dictionary or parallel text, we are stuck with an unknown language that is nothing more than a lot of written characters and sounds. This has been the case with Venetic inscriptions. Archeology has found plenty of examples of Venetic getting mixed with Latin in the Roman era, finally becoming pure Latin, but there are no examples of parallel texts (ie Venetic and Latin). Thus, while linguistics has had plenty of known ancient languages – Latin, Greek, Phoenician, Egyptian, and more – the Venetic inscriptions have remained unknown. With Venetic being unknown, comparative linguistic methodology is impossible to apply.

What has happened is that linguists have simply ASSUMED without any substantial evidence, first that the Venetic inscriptions were in an archaic Latin, and then modified the assumption to a more general assumption of an early Indo-European of southern Europe.

Having ASSUMED the inscriptions are Indo-European, the linguists ASSUME word patterns that seem to parallel reconstructed ancient Indo-European word patterns, and ASSUME that repeated patterns at the ends of the word are grammatical markers of an Indo-European nature.

Purely from ASSUMING, it is not even necessary to properly translate the sentences. And if you look at the catalogue of LeJeune:1974 you will find very few actual full translations. Most of the texts are linguistic discussions trying to explain how the projections onto the Venetic deviate from the presumed Indo-European proto-language.

The Slavic translations do not even bother trying to analyze it linguistically or to find word stems or grammatical markers so we need only see them as having the ‘hearing things approach’ such as in the earlier example of English hearing an absurd sentence in Finnish. So we will relegate all the Slovenian-Slavic material into that realm.

But you can see the problem if you ASSUME the Venetic inscriptions are Indo-European. Linguists of course want to identify the same word pattern repeated often to make it legitimate, and to see the same seeming grammatical marker occurring over and over. But there are two problems that need to be addressed a) that the number of Venetic inscriptions is too limited to adequately test the I-E projections on actual other sentences, and b) all languages are quite similar to one another because they use the same hardwiring in human speech, including more or less the same speech sounds. These make it possible for linguists to even assume Venetic is Chinese, and this approach will still work.

And if there is little commitment to final translations, it avoids accusations of the meaning being absurd.

Traditional linguistics thus fails scientifically, and is a fraud. But believers in the idea that Venetic was Latin-like or Slovenian-like will not accept it, and be in denial.

## THE POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT INTERPRETATION OF VENETIC

In my study, however, I noted that all the Venetic inscriptions are short sentences written on objects whose purpose and context, as determined by archeologists, is well understood. It should therefore be possible to infer meanings from the object and context around the inscriptions, and proceed almost as if there were parallel texts. By carefully proceeding from the most obvious, it was possible to make solid determinations of words and then by looking for those certain words elsewhere, to use them for leverage to reveal more and more. This process, followed by my continuing to address the fact that it looked very Finnic, is all documented in my final summary “*THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL* “.

But this approach is new.

In the tradition of trying to interpret Venetic, scholars simply tried to ‘hear’ a presumed known language in the Venetic. With the development of linguistics, and the desire to apply the new linguistics methodology, the problem of the Venetic language being unknown, was dealt with by simply ASSUMING a relatedness to a known language and then looking for that known language within the Venetic inscriptions.

This process is analogous to the examples I gave earlier of an English speaking person ASSUMING a Finnish sentence was related to English and producing a very strange sentence because they are not related. The linguistic methodology requires that there is a REAL RELATEDNESS hopefully as close as English to Swedish or Estonian to Finnish. However, with linguistic rationalization, it would be acceptable if the relatedness was more distant, such as between English and German.

But the relatedness must be there, or else there will be a situation similar to how an English speaking person will project their English onto Finnish in my example given earlier. ( Interpreting Finnish *Mistä lähtee bussi keski kaupungille?* with an invention like *Missed the lattice bus’s sick pesky cow, Pungilly.*) With linguistics involved, however, there will be an attempt to respect word boundaries and identify grammar.

(We can note that while the traditional scholarly approach, which increasingly employed linguistics, was keen to identify some grammar and a consistent lexicon, there was and is no linguistic aspirations in the current interpreting with Slovenian. This meant that the Slovenian approach was able to come up with absurd results in the manner described above, whereas the traditional scholarly approach was so

restricted by needs to be linguistically sound that the resulting translations are either unresolved or as empty as names on a modern gravestone, accompanied by maybe a single word like ‘remembered by’.)

For a detailed description with examples of the methodology of interpreting Venetic directly, see the full documentation ***“THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL”***

This approach again and again generated words and meanings that strongly paralleled Estonian and sometimes Finnish words. Note that this methodology is very different from a priori assuming almost arbitrarily from historical coincidences that the inscriptions are in a Latin-like or Slovenian-like language. In this methodology we try to find meanings directly from the context in which they appear in the archeology, and then cross-check them across the entire body of inscriptions to arrive at word stems and grammatical elements that are the same throughout. It is remarkable how far one can get this way without ever needing to consult a known languages for additional information. This methodology does not project Estonian onto the Venetic (which by the way does not even work since Estonian and Venetic are far apart in time and space). Instead it deciphers Venetic directly and then projects the results onto Estonian or Finnish. There is some ability to consult Estonian and Finnish words to refine results, but this methodology is fundamentally based on what can be determined directly from the inscriptions and their context.

## REFERENCES

*This has been a discussion based on general knowledge. However where references needed to be cited, they are given within the text. See the main document for more information****“THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL”***