

REVIEW ARTICLE:

THE LINGUISTIC PREMISES OF MATEJ BOR'S
SLOVENE-VENETIC THEORY

Rado L. Lencek

Jožef Šavli and Matej Bor, *Unsere Vorfahren die Veneter* = Jožef Šavli, "Auf den Spuren der Veneter," 9-175; Matej Bor, "Die venetische Sprache," 177-356; and Ivan Tomažič, "Meinungen und Kommentare," 357-407. Vienna: Editiones Veneti, 1988. 408 pp.

Matej Bor, Jožef Šavli, and Ivan Tomažič. *Veneti naši davni predniki*. Ljubljana: Editiones Veneti / Maribor: Večer, 1989. 527 pp.

Introduction.* There are few topics more controversial in the study of the evolution of languages than the problem of their linguistic prehistory. They are usually argued on the basis of the similarity of a few linguistic items of an otherwise unknown language and—purely on the basis of ancient spellings whose phonetic equivalence is not always known—related to a known tongue; and they often represent, to paraphrase Ernst Pulgram (1958: 181), "a travesty upon honest comparative linguistics." Unfortunately, the book *Unsere Vorfahren die Veneter* (henceforth Šavli-Bor 1988) and its counterpart in the Slovene language, *Veneti naši davni predniki* (henceforth Bor-Šavli-Tomažič 1989) fit the description of this kind of linguistic paleontology very well. Their authors—Jožko Šavli, a socio-economist by education and an amateur historian, and Matej Bor, a member of the Slovene Academy of Arts and Sciences in Ljubljana—have been working on this project for some years, the former on its ideological and historical dimensions, the latter on the linguistic intricacies of the complex problem. The two volumes represent different versions of their discussion of the problem, with the Slovene edition somewhat less restrained in offering daring conjectures, and also slightly reshaped in its chapter arrangement. The role of the publisher and editor, Ivan Tomažič, in both volumes is to report on sympathetic responses and commentaries to Šavli's and Bor's hypotheses.

Here, we focus our review on Bor's treatment of the Venetic inscriptions and their relation to the Slovene language. The reason for this limitation is obvious: the pre-eminently linguistic evidence offered in support of the Šavli-Bor postulates calls for a general survey and examination of the facts and of the methodology used in the linguistic treatment of the argument, to be contrasted with the standard criteria required for plausible linguistic argumentation. Such a critical inspection of the linguistic apparatus of Šavli's and Bor's discussion should, we believe, precede any serious discussion of any other aspect of the Šavli-Bor ethnogenetic postulate, and will be the principle aim of this review article.** We base our commentary on the German edition, Šavli-Bor 1988, and refer to Bor-Šavli-Tomažič 1989 only occasionally, to complete the information.

The main theses of Bor's proposition are as follows: (1) that today's Slovenes are descendants of the Adriatic Veneti, who were archaeologically part of the Venetic Iron Age culture called "Atestine;"¹ (2) that together with the Adriatic Veneti they survived the downfall of the Roman Empire and, after a subsequent ethnogenetic fusion with East European Slavic tribes, acquired their contemporary Slovene ethnogenetic identity;² and (3) that the old Venetic inscriptions (dated to the fifth century B.C.) contain the elements of Slavic morphology and phraseology, directly linked with today's Standard and dialectal

Slovene usage.³ Bor claims to have discovered in the Alphabetic tablets of the ancient Ateste the clue to the secret of the old Venetic grammar,⁴ and this assumption is represented as a major breakthrough in the research into old Venetic and Slavo-Venetic inscriptions.⁵

We concentrate our attention on four aspects of the Venetic-Slovene linguistic relationship as postulated in Bor's essay, and discuss: a few basic facts about the Venetic inscriptions and their language; Bor's suggestions about Venetic phonology; his treatment of Venetic grammatical evidence; and the critical need for a rigorous methodology in the treatment of linguistic similarities between languages.

The co-ordinates we use in our discussion are the same two authorities on the Venetic inscriptions that Bor uses in his work: Pellegrini-Prosdocimi (1967) and Lejeune (1974), and three additional authorities, namely the three best-known American descriptive linguists who have worked on Venetic: Conway (1933), Whatmough (1934) and Beeler (1949). Not surprisingly, there is a substantial agreement among these five Venetic scholars on both sides of the Atlantic in two crucial aspects of their analysis of the Venetic inscriptions: in word segmentation, and in grammatical analysis. There is also agreement with respect to keeping the translation of the inscriptions as close as possible to the cultural atmosphere of the time and the society in which they were recorded for posterity.

The Venetic Inscriptions and their Language. The historical evidence of the Veneti and their language is based on factual and authentic records sufficiently numerous to allow us to speak about them as an ethnic and linguistic entity of Iron Age Italy. The language was recorded in about 190 inscriptions found on a territory corresponding to an extended Italian province of Veneto, in the north-eastern part of Venezia-Giulia, at several points in Istria, in Friuli and in Carinthia. Most of the inscriptions come from Este (the ancient Ateste) on the river Adige; Padua; Vicenza; Treviso; Belluno; and various sites in the Piave and adjacent river valleys. Several also come from archeological sites in today's Slovene language area, e.g., from around Trst/Trieste, Škocjan/San Canziano, Čedad/Cividale, Špeter Slovenov/San Pietro al Natisone, Kobarid, Most na Soči, Idrija pri Bači, Slap ob Idrijci; and also from several points on the Gurina plateau in the upper Zilja/Gail valley in Carinthia, i.e., outside today's Slovene language area.⁶ Insofar as these inscriptions were known to the earliest historians of the Slovene lands, they must have served as their first stimulus and invitation for the identification of the oldest inhabitants of their homeland with the Slavs, which must have been the earliest known form of Slovene autochtonism.

The great majority of the inscriptions from the Este, Vicenza and Padua regions, which seem to be a focal area for the Venetic archaeological discoveries, belong to a period between the 6th and mid-4th centuries B.C., to the time when the old Atestines were known—as Veneti—in classical literature. Most of these inscriptions are sepulchral and votive, and are found on vases, most of them cinerary, and many with dedications to the goddess Reitiia; epitaphs on various tombstones, on bronze pins and bronze plates, and on block stones; and fourteen bronze alphabetic tablets which show, in addition to the votive inscription itself, the letters of the alphabet arranged either in their regular alphabetic order, or in particular combinations of letters. These tablets are very probably examples of the model which had to be copied by each learner of the alphabet; a knowledge of this model sufficed for reading and writing the language.

The inscriptions themselves are written in a characteristic alphabet which was obviously borrowed from the Etruscans who had established settlements in the Po valley toward the end of the sixth century B.C.. A remarkable feature of Venetic writing is the punctuation system of the text continuum: vowels not preceded by consonants, and consonants not

followed by vowels (other than those followed by *r*, *l*, *n*) are regularly written with a point or dot on either side, e.g., *Re.i.tiia*. It does however seem that the Venetic punctuation system was, for all practical purposes, not generally useful (Beeler 1965).

It is clear that Venetic was an Indo-European language. Pauli (1891), the first scholar to discuss its position within this family, related it most closely to the scantily-known idiom of ancient Illyria, and for almost sixty years Venetic was regularly classified as an Illyrian tongue. This view has however now been abandoned by most students of the subject. Some regard the language as closely related to Latin and to other members of the Italic branch, while others (e.g., Krahe after 1950, see Krahe (1955)) classify it as a wholly independent member of the Indo-European family. The evidence is however not yet sufficient to afford a completely unambiguous answer to the problem. This is a good reason why the Venetic inscriptions are still easy game in the pursuit of ethnolinguistic conjectures and hypotheses.

Bor's Suggestions about Venetic phonology. In his reading of the Venetic inscriptions Bor, in general, accepts the phonetic values of the graphemes as agreed upon by specialists on the subject since the time of Pauli (1891). His departures from the consensual basic structure include the following: (1) disagreeing with Vetter, a respected Venetic scholar at the University of Vienna, he denies any phonetic function to the dots in the texts, so that, e.g., an original *ne.r.ka* (perhaps a woman's name) becomes *nerka* (Šavli-Bor 1988: 434); (2) the alternation of the *s*, *ś* and *š* sounds; (3) the "frequent" 'phonetic' free alternation of the *z*, *ž* and *ž* sounds; (4) the graphemic free alternation of the "s" and "z" letters, "similar to Adam Bohorič's usage of symbols for these two sounds;" (5) the "alternation" *g*, *ȝ*, *h* and *ø*, as found "in western Slovene dialects" (for these reflexes, see Ramovš 1924: 233-39). According to Bor's proposition, Venetic did not have a voiced occlusive /g/; the grapheme #18⁷ stood for both /ȝ/ and /h/, "je nachdem, um welches Wort es sich handelt" [sic!] (Šavli-Bor 1988: 207), giving, in Bor's notation, e.g., *ogenj - oȝeñ - hañ*; (6) the sound-change linking /b/ and "v" as attested in western Slovene dialects (Šavli-Bor 1988: 204), giving, e.g., *vug* instead of *bug* for *bog* 'God', *bišad* instead of *višad* || *višava* 'height'⁸ (Šavli-Bor 1988: 254), "because both the speakers of the Venetic language as well as the speakers of Western Slovene Primorski dialects share [sic!] the free interchange between *v* and *b*" (Bor-Šavli-Tomažič 1989: 242), though in fact this alternation obtains only before front vowels (Ramovš 1924: 158); (7) the existence of a Ven. digraph "kv" which is not to be treated as Lat. "qu" but as the Sle. /kv/ cluster (Šavli-Bor 1988: 207); and (8) the Ven. alternation between /k/ and /h/ as in Sle. "k tebi" vs. "h komu" (Šavli-Bor 1988: 204). Moreover, Bor's reading of the grapheme #7 of the Venetic alphabet is /d/, not /z/ as claimed by most specialists on Ven. inscriptions, e.g., Conway 1933: 197, Beeler 1949: 197; therefore he reads /donasto/ rather than /zonasto/ as the equivalent to Lat. 'donauit' (see the example below).

In addition to these graphic and phonetic hypotheses, Bor's treatment of the Ven. texts departs from the classical position of specialists in two distinctly original "handlings" of the alphabet. The first involves his reading of grapheme #2: for this, he proposes two phonemic values, viz., /je/ initially and /e/ elsewhere. The logic of this hypothesis is discussed below. The second involves his reading of a grapheme (which he omits from his table!⁹) as /j/ or /i/—and only much later in the book is /h/ permitted as an alternative thereto—rather than consistently as /h/ (Pauli 1891, Conway 1933, Beeler 1949). Traditionally, the digraph combining the grapheme #6 with this grapheme has been read as "vh", i.e., as the /f/ phoneme of the Lat. sound system. Bor's reading changes the rules of the game altogether: the Ven. sound-system did not, he claims, have the voiceless

Allgemeine Atestiner Buchstaben			Seltene Buchstaben	
A	—	𐌀	T	— 𐌀
E	—	𐌁	T, D	— 𐌁
I, J	—	𐌂	H	— 𐌂
O	—	𐌃	B, V	— 𐌃
U	—	𐌄	Č	— 𐌄
V	—	𐌅		
D	—	𐌆		
T, T'	—	𐌇		
K	—	𐌈		
L	—	𐌉		
M	—	𐌊		
N	—	𐌋		
P	—	𐌌		
S, Š	—	𐌍		
R	—	𐌎		
S, Z, Ž	—	𐌏		
B, V	—	𐌐		
G, H	—	𐌑		
C	—	𐌒		

Dieses Alphabet ist aus den sogenannten „tavolte alfabetiche“ (alphabetische Täfelchen) und anderen Inschriften entnommen.

labiodental spirant /f/ at all; like Common Slavic, Ven. could have this sound only on onomatopetic and in borrowed words; consequently, the Ven. digraph usually rendered as “vh” could not stand for /f/, and Bor defines it as the sequence /vi/ or /vj/ (Šavli-Bor 1988: 205-07, see also below).

Bor also reads the disputed Venetic combinations *oi*, *ai*, *ei*, and the grammatical ending sequences *-o*, *-a*, *-e* followed by the enigmatic Venetic symbol for *i* (our #3: a vertical stroke between two dots), not as IE-Lat. diphthongs *oi*, *ai*, *ei* (Conway 1933: 4-5), but as Slavic *oj*, *aj*, *ej* and the grammatical endings *-oj*, *-aj*, *-ej*. Where other authorities have *Rehtiah* or *Rehtiai*, for instance, he has *Rejtiaj*, even *Rej ti jaj* (cf. Conway 1933: 195 and Beeler 1949: 4-5 with Šavli-Bor 1988: 299-300). Hence, in two grammatical categories, in the nominative singular masculine pronominal forms of the adjectives and in the imperative singular forms, Bor's interpretation, anachronistic as it is, becomes rather painfully incongruous.¹⁰

There are at least two self-defeating aspects of Bor's handling of Ven.-Sle. sound correspondences. One concerns his arbitrary surface comparison of Sle. and Ven. segments on the basis of purely accidental sound resemblances. This practice violates the basic prerequisite of the comparative method, which demands setting its analysis of cognates in the languages being compared on the basis of a twofold similarity: similarity in *sound*, and similarity in *meaning*. The semantic similarity in Bor's procedure, as we shall see below, is in most instances fabricated; i.e., his analysis is based upon a simple similarity of letters, with no sense of the typology of historical development, and showing little acquaintance with other languages. His analysis is wholly arbitrarily projected into and superposed over the segments of the Ven. transcription.

The other problematic aspect of Bor's analysis of correspondences has to do with the fact that he makes no attempt to establish an orderly set of recurring correspondences and a system of regularities of correspondence between the compared languages. As is well-known, the first step in this direction should be to establish the phonetic value of each unit and its correspondence(s) in the compared languages. What Bor, as a linguist, should have provided for his readers was an adequate descriptive account of the entire Ven. phonology. Such a description could have been something like the descriptive statement of one of the sounds involved—a sound which is not in the least insignificant in what we may presume to be Bor's phonemic structure—presented in Table I.

TABLE I

Venetic /e/ corresponds to /e/ in Latin, to */e/ in IE., and to /e/ in cognate words in the IE languages (Beeler 1949: 18); OR, Venetic /e/ corresponds to /e/ in Slovene, except in initial position, where it corresponds to /je/ (Šavli-Bor 1988: 179-87).

VENETIC INSCRIPTIONS	COGNATE IE LANGUAGES	SLOVENE
<i>v.e.ske.ś</i> (?) Es 76 (B 18)	Lat. <i>vesces</i> (?) '?' (W 291/17)	<i>kvišku</i> adv. 'up' (BŠT 356)
<i>ne.r.ka</i> Es 59 (B 18)	? (W 291/19)	<i>naricaljka</i> subs. 'wailing woman' (BŠT 250)
<i>lo.u.zera.i.</i> Ca 4 (B 18)	Lat. <i>libera</i> Gk. <i>ἑλευθερος</i> (B 18)	- <i>lo uderaj</i> = <i>udari</i> 'strike!' (BŠT 250)
<i>.e. n. nonio</i> Bl 1 (B 18)	Venetic proper name (W 290/17)	<i>jeno</i> [ni on] = <i>in</i> , dial. <i>ino</i> 'and' (BŠT 253-54)
<i>.e.xo</i> Es 1, 2, 3, passim (B 18)	Lat. <i>ego</i> 'I' Gk. <i>ἐγώ</i> , etc. (B 18, 37)	<i>njega</i> 'him', cf. text (BŠT 339)
<i>mexo</i> Es 23 and passim (B 18)	Lat. <i>ego</i> , etc. (B 18)	<i>mego</i> = acc. of <i>jaz</i> 'I'
<i>e.ku..peθari..s.</i> Pa 1 and passim 'charioteer' (B 18)	Lat. <i>equus</i> OIr. <i>ech</i> OSax <i>eku-</i> (B 18, C 130-32)	<i>popotujoč</i> pres. act. p.cple. 's peketajočim konjem' (BŠT 261-263)

Abbreviations: B = Beeler (1949); W = Whatmough (1934); C = Conway (1933); BŠT = Bor-Šavli-Tomažič (1989).

The Treatment of Venetic Grammatical Evidence. The grammatical evidence that Bor cites in support of his thesis is anchored in his original proposition that the key to the secrets of the Ven. inscriptions is to be extricated from the bronze tablets of the ancient Ateste scriptoria, known as the "Alphabetic Tablets" of the earliest North Etruscan writing systems. Among these, he investigated in particular the series Es 23 through Es 27, which show the alphabetic symbols of the Ven. script; combinations of some of the letters; and a sequence of symbols which reads upwards as A K E O and downwards as O E K A, in what seems to be a single word repeated sixteen times in a charm-word arrangement. As the graphemic diphthong OE does not occur elsewhere in the Ven. inscriptions discovered so far (Conway 1933: 88), and because Venetologists always read texts upwards, this charm was usually read as "A K E O." This charm structure, which was first suggested in 1911 by the German Venetologist A. Dietrich, may have served as a kind of protective shield on the tablets, being intended to protect the writer against the use of written spells or evil magic.

It is in this protective shield that Bor found his "Schlüssel zur venetischen Sprache," as he proudly tells us (Šavli-Bor 1988: 199), namely that—against all the wisdom of classical Ven. philologists—he decided (1) to accept the top line on the tablets as the point of

departure, and read downwards, i.e., O E K A instead of A K E O; and (2) to eliminate the same topmost line of this anagram, instead seeing in it an ornamental line that divides the tablets (i.e., reading the sequence of “o” graphemes as distorted in this way). Therefore, in this hypothesis, the charm-words on these tablets all begin with the sequence E K A. Bor also decided (3) to include in the anagram, in addition, the bottommost line of the tablets, which comprise a series of signs standing for *e h b t i s r s p l m n k i d v*, which makes the charm-words in the anagram read “EKAE, EKAH, EKAB, EKAT, EKAI, EKAR, EKAS, EKAP, EKAL, EKAM, EKAN, EKAK, EKAI, EKAD, EKAV;” and (4) to change to “je” all initial instances of “e” (as described above) and also some (non-specified!) non-initial instances of “e” (contrary to his phonemic analysis, as mentioned above), “wie noch heute im Russischen [als *je* ausgesprochen], obwohl es mit *e-* (*ego*, *jego* = *njega*) geschrieben wird.” This results in /jekaje/, /jekah/, /jekab/, /jekat/, /jekais/, /jekar/, /jekas/, /jekap/, /jekal/, /jekam/, /jekan/, /jekak/, /jekaj/, /jekad/, /jekav/ (Šavli-Bor 1988: 186).

These reconstructions seem to be the main source of at least one chapter of Bor’s morphology of Ven., namely, the conjugation. The variety of the overall inventory of verbal forms is, of course, limited by the state and nature of the texts, yet its total size is still above and beyond the inventories of most Venetian philologists. Conway’s inventory of verbal forms (1933: 190-91), for instance, identifies only four conjugational forms, while Bor’s verbal morphology (Šavli-Bor 1988: 189-99) operates with a dozen or so. Conway has the 3rd sg. form of the root-aorist *zoto* Lat. ‘dedit’; an s-aorist *zona.s.to* Lat. ‘donavit’; an es-aorist *.a.tra.e.s.t.* Lat. ‘adstruxit, exsecutus est’; and a perfect or pres. tense form *ollo.i.kiθ.* Lat. ‘obiacet, sepultus est.’ Bor, on the other hand, claims to have identified with his analytic and descriptive techniques, apparently modeled upon contemporary, historical and prehistoric patterns found in Sle., Church Slavic, Common Slavic and general Slavic grammatical structures, all of the following: a Ven. infinitive, e.g., *jekati* ‘sob’ || Sle. *ječati*; Ven. *jekaiti*, an iterative form of the same verb; a short infinitive, perhaps even a supine, e.g., Ven. *jekat* || Sle. *ječat*; a 1st sg. pres. form, e.g., Ven. *donasto* || Sle. *donašam*; a 2nd sg. pres. form, e.g., Ven. *jekais* || Sle. *ječiš*; Ven. *goltanos* || Sle. *goltneš* ‘swallow, devour’; an imve. sg. form, e.g., Ven. *jekaj!* || Sle. *ječi!* ‘sob!’; Ven. *uderaj!* || Sle. *udari!* ‘strike!’; Ven. *netijoj!* || Sle. *neti! zaneti!* ‘ignite!’; Ven. *osti!* || Sle. *ostani!* ‘stay!’; aorist forms, e.g., 1st sg. Ven. *jekah* (note: no aorist in Sle, except in the Rezija dialects; an aorist in Serbo-Croatian, Bor-Šavli-Tomažič 1989: 202), 3rd sg. Ven. *r(e)ka* || Sle. *rekel je* ‘he said;’ Ven. *stiha* || Sle. *utihnil je* ‘he silenced;’ Ven. *be* || Sle. *bil je* ‘he was;’ 1-pcple (past act. pcple) forms, e.g., Ven. *vajul* || Sle. *vojeval* ‘having waged war;’ Ven. *metl* || Sle. *(po)metel* [*skledo žgancev* (sic!)] ‘having bolted down [a dish of žganci]’; a pres. act. pcple pattern, e.g., Ven. *jekaji* || Sle. *ječaje* ‘sobbing;’ Ven. *turi* || Sle. *utirajoč* [*si pot*] ‘plowing [his way];’ a past act. pcple, e.g., Ven. *mak* || Sle. *premaknivši* ‘having moved’ (presumably, by way of an incorrect analogy with the pattern of Russian *mjaknut* ‘to soften,’ past indicative *mjak* — but cf. the past act. pcple *mjakšij!*); and a past pass. pcple pattern, e.g., Ven. *arbon* || Sle. *zagreben* ‘buried,’ Ven. *appioj* || Sle. *opit* ‘intoxicated.’

The Need for a Rigorous Comparative Linguistic Methodology. It is known that one of the most naive approaches to unknown tongues is to read them using the vocabulary and grammar that one is familiar with from languages already known, and within the framework of the apparatus that has been applied to the description of the already-known languages. This kind of “tourist’s attitude” to the foreign and the unknown, which consists in judging everything in a language that is strange and different on the basis of what is

found at home' (Nida 1946: 1), is at the same time perhaps one of the most dangerous attitudes toward a language that a linguist wishes to describe. Kollár (1853) did just this, with old Pre-Italic, Italic and Lat. inscriptions. Trstenjak (1878) did much the same when he hypothesized Slavic elements in the Pre-Romance and Romance dialects of Northern Italy. Unfortunately, Bor is doing the very same thing with his "Venetic adventure," as he calls his research project in his chapter "Schlüssel zur venedischen Sprache" (Šavli-Bor 1988: 179-87).

On the other hand, a plausible linguistic methodology for dealing with genetic affinity must be based on a series of rigorous systematic procedures and verifications.¹¹ Thus the use of lexical comparisons based upon semantic approximations is not yet a method, indeed barely a heuristic practice; and lexical juxtaposition based upon similarities (real or apparent) is even less so. One example: Ven. *kolassiko* (Ca 1) || Sle. *koleselj* 'light carriage' (Bor-Šavli-Tomažič 1989: 319, where the meaning is defined by the sculpture!), and Ven. *brigdinaj* (Es 105) || Sle. *dnevne brige* 'daily worries' (Šavli-Bor 1988: 299).

The central characteristic feature of the comparative method consists in establishing recurring correspondences in plausible cognate forms, on the basis of similarities in sound and in meaning. In searching for genuine cognates it is not the close phonetic similarity of two graphemic segments that counts, but rather the overall regularity of the correspondence. Furthermore, comparativists must tabulate all the pairs of sounds which stand in contrast in any given position; and they must compare the contrasting elements in one position with contrasting elements in each other position, in order to decide which element in each position belonged to the same phoneme as an element in the other position. Only when this is thoroughly completed can they attempt the reconstruction of morphophonemic alternations and the reconstruction of grammatical patterns in a language. This is the investigative procedure of the comparative method, which is the prerequisite for serious linguistic research; and contrasted with this, the simple juxtaposition of segments of a dead language on the one hand and living language and dialectal data, recorded two-and-a-half thousand years later, does not make sense. Bor's juxtapositional method as it were bypasses the crucial screening of apparent similarities between segments and forms of compared languages which is required for establishing lexical identity and real sound correspondences; and his 'establishing' cognates appears to lack any screening. A proposed cognate set will offer evidence that is quite useless, if it involves a mistaken correspondence; a striking example of this is provided by the set (Bor-Šavli-Tomažič 1989: 431) Ven. *.e.xo* (a form regularly used on funeral urns, and followed by the name of the deceased in the genitive) || Sle. *njega*. In fact, both of these are related to forms with the same phonetic shape, but the two phonetic shapes belong to two quite different words; on the one hand, Ven. *.e.xo* || Lat. *ego* 'I', a pers. pron., 1st sg. nom., cf. Sle. *jaz* and CS. *azŭ* 'I', in which the /z/ ← IE *ǵ; and on the other, *njega*, in Sle. a pers. pron., 3rd sg. acc./gen., deriving from original CS. *ego*, the anaphoric pron., gen. sg..

Moreover, Bor makes semantic matches which involve formal discrepancies, in that they require the assumption of an abbreviated and/or otherwise inconsistent form of the Venetic inscriptions, involving sound elisions, contractions, vowel reductions, and so on. Examples of correspondences assumed on this kind of basis: Ven. *pširš* || Sle. *poširiš* 'you widen a little' (Šavli-Bor 1988: 196); Ven. *jaj* || Sle. *jahaj* 'ride!' (Šavli-Bor 1988: 296); Ven. *bug* ~ *bag* ~ *vug* ~ *vok* || Sle. *bog* 'god'; Ven. *arse* || Sle. dial. *varuj se* 'be careful!'; Ven. *uerse* || Sle. dial. *ver'se* = Sle. *[pre]veri se* 'ascertain!'; or Ven. *ša* || Sle. dial. *oša* = Sle. *odšel* 'went away, left.'

It is also obvious to linguists that onomatopoetic forms may not be taken as potential

support for a hypothesis of genetic relationship, since any similarity may be due to the fact that the different languages have, rather than commonly-inherited forms, independent approximations of the same sounds that occur in nature. So, for instance, Bor's reconstructed verbal forms **jekat*, **jekam*, **jekaš*, **jekal*, **jekaj*, in his readings (see above) of the formulae on the Alphabetic Tablets, *O E K A T*, *O E K A M*, *O E K A S*, *O E K A L*, *O E K A I*, which he links to Slovene onomatopoeic predicates in sentences such as *Ženske hodijo na grob jekat in jokat* 'Women are coming to the burial place to sob and weep'; *Jekam, ker nočem jokati* 'I sob because I don't want to weep'; *Kaj pa tako jekaš?* 'Why are you sobbing so?' *Sever je jekal okoli voglov* 'The north wind sobbed around the corners'; *Nikar več ne jekaj!* 'Stop sobbing already!' (Šavli-Bor 1988: 186, Bor-Šavli-Tomažič 1989: 202) are among the best examples of a correspondence that is produced in an entirely arbitrary fashion in support of his hypothesis of a genetic relationship.

The erroneous morphological segmentation of a continuous text, with unrecognizable word- and morpheme-divisions arbitrarily projected into the text, can complicate matters beyond the realms of any possible philological analysis. For example, in a Venetic inscription on the oldest situla found near Trieste, the Situla of Škocjan (Ts 1, Šavli-Bor 1988: 232-33), is a short segment transcribed *.o.s.tiareh* (Conway 1933: 165), having two parallel forms in other inscriptions: *.o..s.t..katu.s* (Conway No. 152), clearly a personal name in the nom. sg. masc., and *.o.s.tiioh* (Conway No. 125a), the same name in the gen.sg.. The text Ts 1, enigmatic as it is, is segmented by Bor as *OSTI JAREJ* and interpreted as 'bleib gesund!' ['Stay healthy!'], Sle. 'Ostani zdrav!' In his discussion of this inscription, Bor argues: [Ven.] "*osti* (= bleib). Slow. *ostani*, sbkr. *ostaj* (Befehlsform). Das Altslawische hatte zwei Wurzeln *sta* und *sti*, wie schon Miklošič feststellt. Die Befehlsform *sti* ist im slow. "oprosti" (entschuldige) erhalten geblieben (Skok, Etim. rječnik)." And further, [Ven.] "*jarej* (= jung). Slow. *jar* (frühlingshaft, neu), z.B. *jaro žito*. Das Wort ist allgemein slawisch," (Šavli-Bor 1988: 232-33). Bor's juxtapositional methodology does not however lead anywhere in this instance; his forms and formulae do not necessarily support his thesis. Miklosich's "two roots," *sta* and *sti*, are not relevant for these etymological correspondences. There is no *osti* in Sle. *ostani* or in Sle. *oprosti*, and Bor's morphological segmentation of *oprosti* has nothing to do with his targeted **sti*. There was a CS. **jar-* 'early, young' (linked with an IE. etymon **hōjōrō* 'this year', and Lat. *hōrnus* 'of this year' (Vasmer 1973, sub *jara*); there is however no place for *jarej* in the syntactical structure of the inscription in question.

Another example: a bronze pin from Old Ateste (Conway 1933, No. 16), inventorized as Es 40, carries a votive inscription which (from right to left) reads: *vhō.u.xo.n.tahvo.u.xo.n.tna..zona.s.torehtiiah*. There are two segments in this short continuum which can be easily recognized. First, a word segmented from the very end of the sequence seems to be *rehtiiah*, i.e., Rehtia, the name of the Venetic goddess worshipped at Ateste. The word is recorded in what appears to be the dat.sg. *Rehtiiah*, as always used to denote the recipient of an offering on votive inscriptions. The segment before this name—*zona.s.to*, quite frequent in Venetic votive inscriptions both as *zonasto* and as *zonasθo* (e.g., Conway 1933, Nos. 33, 102)—stands for '[somebody] made a donation', i.e., to Rehtia. The remainder of the continuum, namely *vhouxontahvouxont-na*, must contain the subject of the predicate 'made a donation,' and again this is a relatively simple problem. The divisions here must be *vhouxont - ah - vhouxont - na*, a bipartite personal name with the grammatical or derivational elements *-ah* and *-na*. The *-ah* element is easily identified in a number of names on tombstones and cinerary urns; it is a gen.sg. of f. *a*-stem nouns, the 'so-called genitive of the mother;' whereas the second

element, *-na*, is a nom.sg. ending of f. *a*-stem nouns. In Venetic votive inscriptions, both endings are most frequently found in this very combination. The name in the gen. *vhouxontah* added as a matronym to a second name in the nom. *vhouxontna* provides the required grammatical subject for *zonasto*, viz., *Vhouxontna*, daughter of *Vhouxonta* as the subject for *made a donation to Rehtia*. In his transcription of this text, Bor (Šavli-Bor 1988: 299-301) identifies a hypothetical **ougon* (which he segments from *vhouxontah-*) with Sle. *ogenj* 'fire'; he identifies a form **viougontna* (which he modifies from a segmentation of *-ahvouxontnazo-*) with a CS. gen.sg. indefinite adjective (past pass. pcple?) corresponding to Sle. *sežgan* 'burned to ashes', translated as *upepeljen* 'cremated'; he identifies the segment *taj* with Sle. *tajn*, 'secret, gen.pl.'; he identifies the segment *tna* with a Sle. dial. *tenjá*; and he reads not *zonasto* but *donasto* and identifies this with Sle. *ob nas to*, i.e., 'her along us'. In this way Bor casually and nonchalantly strings together a series of false cognates—unrelated forms from two languages which may not be closely related—and this makes his comparative analysis highly questionable, to say the least. His translations are: *Das im Feuer Eingeäscherte bringe ich an Reitija, V ogenj ta upepeljenca donašam Reitiji*.

A most puzzling—even a grotesque—interpretation may be found in Šavli-Bor 1988: 265-67, where Bor analyzes the inscription of *La situla di Vale* (Ca 4), found in Pieve di Cadore, a location far up the Piave valley (Conway 1933, No. 162). Conway's segmentation of this text is *. eh.k xo.l.tano.s zoto lo.u.zera.h kaneh*, and his translation is '[?] ehk Xoltanos gave to Louzera [?].' The form *louzerah* represents, according to Conway, a dat.sg. of the f. name of the deity *Louzera* (Latin *Libera*), to whom an offering is being made. The predicate here is *zoto* '[he] gave,' a 3rd sg. root-aorist form, in Latin translation *dedit*. *Xoltanos* is the subject, a m. name in a nom.sg. form. The inscription is however damaged; a break in the bronze results in just a fraction of the first segment, which is assumed to be part of the subject form of a man's name and linked to Xoltanos, perhaps *Kraehk* (Conway 1933: 159). The last segment, *kaneh*, is also enigmatic; its assumed *-eh* ending points to a dat.sg. form of a f. noun, and may be an epithet for the deity Louzera. Bor's reading of this inscription reads: *EJ K GOLTANOS DO TOLO UDERAJ KANJEJ*, and his translations: *Ej ko goltneš do tu-le, udari po konjih!*, *He! Wenn du bis hier getrunken, schlage die Pferde!*, "Das heisst: *Genug! Fahr weiter!*," i.e., "Gee-up! When you've drunk up to here" [i.e., up to the line of the inscription, under the topmost edge of the pail], "whip up the horses!", i.e., "Enough! Ride on!" The crucial segment in Bor's reading of the text is *goltanos*, which he equates with Sle. *goltneš*, vulgar *pogoltneš* 'gulp down', i.e., 'drain the pail.' Also vital to his reading are: the equation of *do tolo* with the dial. Sle. *do tu-le*; the analysis of *uderaj* as approximating the Sle. imper. *udari!*; and *kanjej*, diagnosed as the Sle. acc.pl. *(po) konjih*. Such a linguistically distorted and ungrammatical message, such an immaterial and trivial interpretation of the meaning of a votive inscription on a situla may result from an arbitrary segmentation of the text; but the segmentation itself must have been born from a wave of poetic inspiration in its translator. Bor himself may have felt this discord, for he himself has voiced the reader's amazement: "Und wenn diese Poesie ... nur ein Produkt deiner Phantasie ist? Bist du nicht vom Pfad der Wissenschaft abgekommen, um wieder deinen Pegasus zu besteigen?" (Šavli-Bor 1988:266-67, 301).

Bor has no pretensions to being either a linguist or an archaeologist. He admits that he approached the Venetic inscriptions as "ein genialer Dilettant," as Goethe once characterized himself and his own work in some subjects (Šavli-Bor 1988:227); we would prefer to say that he approached them as a non-professional amateur in the arts, who did not apprehend all the difficulties related to the questions that he was dealing with. Still, his

is an honest stand, and we must respect the sincerity. The “venetischer Abenteuer” was for Bor no more than a wandering into romance; and much wandering of this kind has been done in Slovene cultural history during the present century—partly from wanderlust and for the innocent pleasure of the journey, and partly to prove some ulterior point. Bor puts this point quite frankly (Šavli-Bor 1988: 180): “Damit wäre die Ethnogenese der Slowenen deutlich verändert und damit auch die Ansicht über unsere Identität: woher wir kommen und was alles unsere Sprache, unseren Charakter, unser Bewußtsein und Unterbewußtsein prägt, auch wenn wir uns dessen nicht bewußt sind.” If such wanderings into the unknown are further encouraged by a national propensity to romanticize, such inquiries may be intellectually gratifying. For those who are sympathetic to such enquiries and to members of factions with shared interests the publication of Matej Bor’s essay must be a major event, but for the rest of us, prosaic linguists, is is much ado about nothing.

Both editions of the work under review, the German as well as the Slovene, are printed on glossy paper; they are richly illustrated, hard-bound, and protected by attractive book-jackets. Bor’s essay is the only one furnished with a bibliography, but this has, unfortunately, many factual omissions, mistakes, and examples of incomplete bibliographic information. There is no index of the inscriptions discussed in the German edition of Bor’s chapter, and there is no index of the words and forms reconstructed in his essay. Paradoxically, all the inscriptions, and all the words and forms discussed in both Šavli-Bor 1988 and Bor-Šavli-Tomažič 1989 are given exclusively in Bor’s idiosyncratic transcription and segmentation; there is no reference to the segmentations and transcriptions proposed by Pellegrini or Lejeune, let alone Conway or Beeler, who are to this day the recognized experts on the Venetic inscriptions.

Columbia University

NOTES

- * I am grateful to Tom M.S. Priestly for valuable comments on an earlier version of this review article. Errors are of course mine.
- ** Scholarly argument concerning facts and historical principles with reference to the Šavli-Bor-Tomažič theses, their methodology and the self-deception behind their historical thinking, have received a fair amount of constructive criticism in the Slovene press. See, for instance, Bogo Grafenauer’s arguments, summarized as follows: “Tako naj povem, da je pri obeh” [i.e., in both Bor’s and Šavli’s writings] “težko govoriti o kakršnikoli ‘ugotovitvah’ [ascertained findings], celo o ‘hipotezi’ ali ‘teoriji’ v znanstvenom smislu težko, ker se more vsaka taka hipoteza ali teorija opirati na vsaj nekaj dokazanih *dejstev* [substantiated facts]. Oba pa se pri svojih mnenjih o začetkih slovenske zgodovine opirata samo na *trditve* [assertions], ki pač niso prav nič v skladu z znanstveno veljavnimi in v resnični znanosti kar brez ugovorov sprejetimi dejstvi in na njih slonečimi teorijami, pri tem pa sta v hudem nasprotju - in to tehta še več - s splošnimi metodološkimi načeli in prijemi tistih ved, na katerih področje se spuščata. Pri enem in drugem ne gre pri tem predvsem za zgodovino, marveč bi želela le iz *enega* dela preostankov, ki ga obravnavata osamljeno in na *metodološko neustrezen* način, ki je tuj zgodovini in njeni metodi, bistveno spremeniti rezultate tistega zgodovinskega raziskovanja, ki se opira na vse vrste virov in skuša uporabiti njihove izpovedi po načelih in načinih uveljavljene znanstvene zgodovinske metode ob interdisciplinarnem upoštevanju vse rezultatov drugih ved, ki jih je na kakršen koli način mogoče usoglasiti med seboj,” (Grafenauer 1988a: 299). Cf. also Grafenauer 1988b, with references to the literature of argumentative discussion in the Slovene press; and see also Pleterski 1985.

1. "Das Gebiet der adriatischen Veneter reichte bis nach Istrien and Slowenien, aber auch nach Kärnten. In diesem Gebiet wurde unser erstes geschriebenes Wort gefunden. Alle diese Texte können wir mit Hilfe der Sprache, die wir auf den Grammatiktäfelchen von Ateste entdeckt haben, erklären und verstehen," Šavli-Bor 1988: 218.
2. "Die Veneter in Norditalien wurden romanisiert, die Veneter in den Ostalpen ... überlebten den Zerfall des römischen Imperiums. Ihre Nachkommen sind wir Slowenen. Der Unterschied liegt nur darin, daß bei den westlichen mehr venetische Einflüsse - auch in der Sprache - erhalten blieben, bei den östlichen aber weniger. Aus den einen wie den anderen entstand bei der Ansiedlung neuer Stämme aus dem östlichen Gebiet Europas ein neues Volk, die Slowenen, denen gerade diese Mischung der unterschiedlichsten Grundelemente den speziellen Character, ihre ethnogenetische Identität gibt," Šavli-Bor 1988: 223.
3. "Wenn die Veneter die Urslawen waren, und die Atestiner Tafeln betstätigen dies nicht nur, sondern liefern den unzweifelhaften Beweis dafür, dann müssen die bisher offiziell gültigen Behauptungen, wir seien erst im 6. oder vielleicht im 5. Jh. hierher gekommen, wo wir heute leben, verworfen werden und wir müssen zur alten Überzeugung zurückkehren, daß die Slowenen ein autochtonisches Volk sind," Šavli-Bor 1988: 347. An example of a more concrete linguistic thesis, not formulated in Šavli-Bor 1988, is found in Bor-Šavli-Tomažič (1989: 420): "Venetščina stoji z eno nogo še v praslovanščini, z drugo pa že stopa naprej. Njeni sledovi so še danes živi v knjižni slovenščini, zlasti pa v slovenskih narečjih. Tako npr. obsoški *a*, ki je baje posledica akanja (*adna* = *ena*, *atkuot* = *odkod*) ali *ai* v ribniškem (*maisit* [= *mesiti*], *mainit* [= *meniti*], ki sem o njem že govoril, ugotavljajoč njuno istovetnost z letonskimi oblikami *maisit*, *mainit*, nista šla skozi stcslovansko [starocerkvenoslovansko] fazo *o*, oziroma *ě*, temveč sta še ostanka iz venetskih časov. Isto velja npr. tudi za *ruoka*. Tako se glasi *roka* (stcsl. *rōka* iz prasl. *renka* ali *ronka* [sic!]) v ribniškem narečju - in v slovarjih letonskega knjižnega jezika. Že v poglavju, kjer primerjam letonske in slovenske besede, sem omenil, da sta dve popolnoma različni poti iz istih izhodišč do popolnoma enakih oblik kot sta *maisit* in *ruoka*, skrajno neverjetni. Toda poleg omenjenih posebnosti v venetščini in slovenskih narečjih jih je še cela vrsta v fonetičnem pogledu (vokalna redukcija), pa tudi v morfološkem (kratek infinitiv itd.). Knjižno slovenščino in slovenska narečja je oblikovalo sto in sto stvari, ... - toda venetske korenine so ostale. Ni jih mogoče ločiti od slovenske govorice."
4. "Nach langjährigem Erforschen des Venetischen, das mich immer mehr anzog und interessierte, denn die Denkmäler mit den Inschriften dieser Sprache wurden auch in den Gebieten gefunden, in denen wir nicht heute leben, entdeckte ich, was ich entdeckt habe. Die slawische Morphologie und Phraseologie auf Täfelchen die aus der Atestiner Schule der Schreiber beim Heiligtum des Gottes oder der Göttin Reitija aus dem 5. Jh. vor Chr. stammen. Es ist verständlich, daß *dies keine unbedeutende Sache ist*," Šavli-Bor 1988: 347 [my italics, R.L.L.].
5. "Der einzige Philologe, dem es bis jetzt gelungen ist, die venetische Schrift wissenschaftlich zu entziffern, ist Matej Bor," Šavli, in Šavli-Bor 1988: 174. See also Tomažič, in Šavli-Bor 1988: 379-81.
6. The following inscriptions are quoted in this review article: the inscriptions on the stone tablets at Ateste, Es 1 - Es 4 (Pellegrini 1967: 51-60); the bronze tablets of Ateste, Es 23 - Es 26 (Conway 1933, Nos. 1-5); two inscriptions on bronze pins from Ateste, Es 40 and 59 (Conway 1933, Nos. 16 and 34 respectively); inscriptions on vases from Ateste, Es 76 and 105 (Pellegrini 1967: 193-95 and 222-24 respectively); the inscription on a bronze situla from Škocjan, Ts 1 (Conway 1933: 165); an inscription on the lost situla of Belluno, Bl 1 (Conway 1933, No. 157); the incription on a tombstone found in the Upper Piave Valley, Ca 1 (Conway 1933, No. 160); the inscription of La Situla di Vale, Ca 4 (Conway 1933, No. 162); and two fragments of inscriptions on rock from Würmlach (Carinthia), Gt. 14 and 16 (Pellegrini 1967: 623-24).
7. The Venetic graphemes are identified here according to their sequential position in Diagram I, which is taken from Šavli-Bor 1988: 202.
8. Abbreviations used here and below: IE. = Indo-European, Gr. = Greek, Lat. = Latin, CS. = Common Slavic, OCS. = Old Church Slavic, OIr. = Old Irish, OSax. = Old Saxon, Sle. = Slovene, Ven. = Venetic; dial. = dialect, dialectal; adv. = adverb, vb. = verb; m. = masculine, f. = feminine, n. = neuter; sg. = singular, pl. = plural; pers. = personal, pron. = pronoun; nom. = nominative, acc. = accusative, gen. = genitive, dat. = dative; act. = active; imve. = imperative; pass. = passive; pres. = present; pcppl. = participle. The symbol || is used to mean "corresponding to" in (hypothesized or proven) cognate sets.
9. The omitted grapheme is a vertical stroke between two dots, the dots positioned at mid-height.
10. E.g., for adjectives: "*vivoi* = *vivoj* 'lebend' (lies *bivoj*)" [sic!] [Sle. *živ-i*]; "*murtuvoi* 'tot'" [Sle.

mrtv-i] (Šavli-Bor 1988: 281); for imperatives: “*koljaj!* = ‘schlachte!’, slow. *kolji, klati*;” “*kantaj!* = ‘begrabe!’, altslaw. *katati* ..., slow. *pokopati*, kleinruss. *kutaty*, russ. *kutat*” [sic!]; *omnoj!* = ‘erwähne, erinnere dich!’. slow. *omeni!*, *pomni!*” (Šavli-Bor 1988: 197). Cf. also Bor’s comment: “Wie man sieht, habe ich das *-oi* als *-oj* geschrieben. Warum? Weil im Venetischen die Formen der determ. Adjektive auf *-Ṭi* (ṬjṬ) schon ins *oj* übergegangen sind. An einer anderen Stelle habe ich einige Beispiele erwähnt, wo das *-oj* (*-oi*) ein Suffix für den Imperativ ist ... Wir sehen also, wie brüchig die Argumente derer sind, die im Venetischen eine Spur des Lateinischen sehen möchten,” (Šavli-Bor 1988: 282).

11. For a discussion of written records, analytical phonemic procedures, the comparative method, and the identification of morphemes, see recognized authorities in general linguistics: Bloomfield 1933, Hockett 19589, Nida 1946, and Pike 1947.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beeler, Madison Scott. 1949. *The Venetic Language*. Berkeley-Los Angeles CA: U California P.
 ----- . 1965. “Venetic language,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed..
 Bloomfield, Leonard. 1933. *Language*. New York NY: Holt.
 Conway, Robert Seymour. 1933. “The Venetic Inscriptions”, in Conway, Whatmough and Johnson 1933.
 -----, J. Whatmough and S.E. Johnson. 1933. *The Prae-Italic Dialects of Italy*, I. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP.
 Grafenauer, Bogo. 1988a “O izvoru slovenskih prednikov, I-II,” in Branko Marušič, *Odgovori na vprašanja o avtoktonističnih teorijah v zvezi s prihodom slovenskih prednikov v sedanjo domovino v 6. stoletju. Primorska srečanja* (Nova Gorica: Lipa Koper) 82-83: 298-309; 84-85: 409-17.
 ----- . 1988b. “Ob tisočštiristoletnici slovenske naselitve na današnje slovensko narodnostno ozemlje,” 321-422 in Pavel Diakon (Paulus Diaconus). *Zgodovina Langobardov* (= *Historia Langobardorum*). Maribor: Obzorja.
 Hockett, Charles F. 1958. *A Course in Modern Linguistics*. New York NY: MacMillan.
 Kollár, Jan. 1853. *Starolitalia slavjanská aneb objevy a důkazy živlu slavských v zeměpisu, v dějinách a v bájesloví, zvláště v řeči a v literatuře nejdávnějších vlaských a sousedních kmenu, z kterých zřejmo, že mezi prvotními osadníky a obyvateli této krajiny i Slavjané nad jiné čtenější byli*. Vienna: V Císařské královské dvorské a státní tiskárně.
 Krahe, Hans. 1935. Review of Conway, Whatmough and Johnson 1933, in *Indogermanische Forschungen* 53: 63-72.
 ----- . 1950. *Das Venetische. Seine Stellung im Kreise der verwandten Sprachen* [= Sitzungsberichte der Jahrg. 1950, 3 Abhandlung]. Heidelberg: Winter.
 ----- . 1955. *Die Sprache der Illyrier*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
 Lejeune, Michel. 1974. *Manuel de la langue vénète*. Heidelberg: Winter.
 Nida, Eugene. 1946. *Morphology. The Descriptive Analysis of Words*. Ann Arbor MI: U Michigan P.
 Pauli, Carl. 1891. *Die Veneter und ihre Schriftdenkmäler*. [= *Altitalische Forschungen* 3]. Leipzig: Barth.
 Pellegrini, Giovan Battista and A.L. Prodocimi. 1967. *La lingua venetica I-II*. Padua: Istituto di glottologia dell’ Università/Firenze: Circolo linguistico fiorentino.
 Pike, Robert L. 1947. *Phonemics. A Technique for Reducing Languages to Writing*. Ann Arbor MI: U Michigan P.
 Pleterski, Andrej. 1985. “Veneti - naši davni predniki? Znanstvena metoda, po kateri bi utegnil biti Jezus Kristus Slovenec,” *Naši rzagledi*, 9 August 1985, 450-51.
 Pulgram, Ernst. 1985. *The Tongues of Italy. Prehistory and History*. Cambridge MA: Harvard U P.
 Ramovš, Fran. 1924. *Konzonantizem* (= *Historična gramatika slovenskega jezika* 2). Ljubljana: Učiteljska tiskarna.
 Šavli, Jožko. 1985. “Veneti - naši davni predniki?” *Glas Korotana* 10: 23-125.
 Trstenjak, Davorin. 1878. *Slovenščina v romanščini*. Klagenfurt/Celovec: published by the author.
 Vasmer, Max. 1964-73. *Ětimologičeskij slovar’ russkogo jazyka*. Moscow: Progress.
 Vetter, Emil. 1939. “Etruskisches: Zur altetruskischen Silbeninterpunktion,” *Glotta* (Göttingen) 27: 157-62.
 Whatmough, Joshua. 1934. “New Venetic inscriptions from Este,” *Classical Philology* 29: 281-92.