Anthony Ambrozic, Pavel Serafimov, Giancarlo Tomezzoli

THE VENETIC INSCRIPTION Es 120 ON THE CUP OF "SCOLO DI LOZZO"

Abstract

Reputedly the oldest Venetic inscription, Es 120 was found in 1931 in locality "Scolo di Lozzo" near Este (Veneto – Italy). The inscription dates to not later than the middle of the 6th century BC. A. Marinetti divides the wording of the inscription as follows: ALKOMNO METLON ŚIKOS ENOGENES VILKENIS HORVIONTE DONASAN. According to her translation three offerors named Sikos, Enogenes and Vilkenis are making a votive offering to the Dioscuri (Alkomno) at their temple, which allegedly was located near the locality of Lozzo. The inscription is in fact a palindrome starting at the bottom of the inscription. The palindrome's first line can be read as follows: NA SAN ODET NOI VROH SI NE KLI VSE NEG ON E S OKI SNOL TEMON MOK LA and is followed by its inverse counterpart running downward: AL KOM NOMETL ON ŚI KOS E NOGE NE SVIL K E NIS HOR VION T E DONASAN. The first line can be translated as: COVERED FOR SLEEP, MAY THE DEVIL NOT HAVE EVERYTHING GERMINATE FOR HIM, BUT LET HIM RATHER WITH THE EYES SUSPEND AS THREAD ON THE LOOM THE DARK MOISTURE; whereas the inverse counterpart can be loosely translated as: BUT TO WHOM DID HE PILE UP A PIECE? MAY THE ONE OFFERED TO YOU, FROM BELOW UPWARD TWINING, NOT COME TO HARM! The palindrome in its first line is a hopeful admonition to the dark powers to keep a seed-containing basin free of mold. In its second line it provides inside the message the indication of how the inscription should be read, i.e. from below upward. The astounding close similarity of the words in the palindrome with the words of contemporary literary Slovene language, Slovene dialects and other Slavic languages indicates that Slavic was incredibly uniform and undiversified in the past, so that Venetic, Slavenetic, Old Early Slavic, Old Phrygian, Dura Europos Macedonian, and early Thracian were one and the same language.

Introduction

Reputedly the oldest Venetic inscription, Es 120 appears on a well-preserved bronze container. It was found in 1931 in locality "Scolo di Lozzo" above the regional road Montagnana – Este, approximately 200 meters from the Torre Bridge, at the depth of about 5 meters. It was hidden by one of the workers for 30 years. Scholars now estimate that the inscription dates to not later than the middle of the 6th century BC.

The cup and the inscription

The cup and the inscription (cf. Fig. 1) are fully described in a paper by Locatelli and Marinetti [1], pp. 181-182.
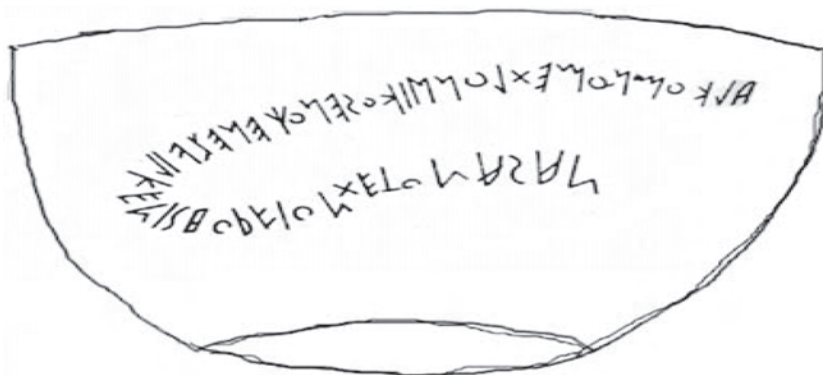
Fig. 1: the bronze cup from „Scolo di Lozzo" with the Venetic inscription Es 120.

The two original handles of the cup disappeared. The inscription is engraved on one external side of the cup. It was written *in continuo* without punctuation. The orientation of the characters appears to indicate that it should be read from above downward.

Transcription

Correct in her transcription, to wit:

ALKOMNOMETLONŚIKOSENOGENESVILKENISHORVIONTEDONASAN

The renowned Venetist, A. Marinetti [1], pp. 181-182, as other Venetists often, when stumped for meaning, is cornered to having to resort to the artifice of selecting some very odd names for the portions of the inscription she cannot decrypt. She divides the wording of the inscription as follows:

ALKOMNO METLON ŚIKOS ENOGENES VILKENIS HORVIONTE DONASAN

According to her translation [1], pp. 181-182, three offerors named Sikos, Enogenes and Vilkenis are making a votive offering to the Dioscuri (Alkomno) at their temple, which allegedly was located near Lozzo, cf. [1], p. 79.

Some of the other transcriptions and interpretations are presented in [2]. Unfortunately, since the inscription is a palindrome starting at the bottom, the interpretation presented in [2], although struggling valiantly in varying degrees, offers no better results.

The palindrome

The Greek word *palindromos* meant "running backward". The palindrome format was intended to contain a secret and have eternal potency. In the inscription at hand, an indispensable tool to successful decipherment will be grammar. It is astounding how faithfully the inscriber follows its Guidelines. Even more astounding is the unyielding tenacity of the Slovene, bucking the headwinds of 2,500 years of tidal erosion in every side.

Starting at the bottom, the palindrome's first line will be followed by its inverse counterpart running downward. Intending the twining plant as an offering, the inscriber in NIS HOR VION

("from below upward twining") clearly indicates the inscription to be a pictorial representation of what in due course will sprout from the covered seedlings. By starting the passage at the bottom, he may also have intended to outwit the devil by placing the letters backwards.

Line One

Division

NA SAN ODET NOI VROH SI NE KLI VSE NEG ON E S OKI SNOL TEMON MOK LA

Present-day literary Slovene word sequence and punctuation

NA SEN ODET, NAJ VRAG SI NE KLIJ VSE,
NEGO ON Z OČMI LE JE SNUL TEMEN MOK!

English translation

COVERED FOR SLEEP, MAY THE DEVIL NOT HAVE EVERYTHING GERMINATE FOR HIM, BUT LET HIM RATHER WITH THE EYES SUSPEND AS THREAD ON THE LOOM THE DARK MOISTURE.

Commentary

Comparing Slovene rendition to the Venetic, one is struck by how close the two languages are. Were it not for the word: LA (the Sln.: LE of today) (for Sln. see the Abbreviations Table), even the word sequence and sentence structure of both are similar. Only the feature of *okanje* (the tendency to substitute letter O for A and other vowels), in the Venetic grudgingly gives some ground to the passage of about 2,500 years. And even there, this may have been due to a dialectal peculiarity of the inscriber or the area where the cup was found. Seen in NOI (for Sln. "NAJ"), in VROH (for Sln."VRAG"), in ŚNOL (for Sln."SNUL") and in TEMON (for Sln."TEMEN"), in Line One and again in NOMETL (for dial. Sln. NAMETəL) and VION (for Sln. "VIJEN) in the Reverse Line, only the feature of *okanje* can here lay claim to any sort of an individual Venetic identity (in juxta-position to the generally Slavic of the time) for the language of Es 120.

Comparison and parsing

NA: gsl. (see the Abbreviations Table) with meanings ranging from "to, on, upon, at, in, up, over". A prep., it takes either the acc. or loc., here governings SAN in the acc. Cf. inscriptions M-01b and P-04a in [3], pp. 32-35 and 48-50. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [4].

SAN: gsl. for "sleep" and "dream", ranging from SC. "san", to R. "son", and Cz. and Sln."sen". N., masc., sing., acc., governed for case by NA. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [4].

ODET: Sln. participle from infinitive ODETI – "to cover"; v., masc., sing. It appears from the context that ODET relates to VSE. However, in lit. Sln. VSE is of neuter gender, which would predicate the form to be ODETO. What comes to the rescue

is dial Sln., which has ODET as the form for neuter nouns and pronouns. Being an artificial creation of as recently 175 years ago, the lit. Sln. has to give priority to dial. Sln. in all such cases of conflict. Contextually also, it is unlikely that ODET relates to VROH, which is masc. For the relating noun ODEJA - "cover" see corresponding Csl., SC., Chk., Mac., Blg., R. and Slk. equivalents in [4].

NOI: gsl. part. and conj., NOJ and NEJ are dial. Sln. equivalents of lit. Sln. NAJ - "let, may, let it, may it". See NEY in inscription W-010 in [3], pp. 8-10. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [4].

VROH: gsl., ranging from Sln. VRAG - "devil" to Cz. VRAH – "killer, enemy", to R. VOROG – "enemy devil". For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [5]. N., masc., nom., sing., subject of KLI. See ARAG in ARAGAYUN in the inscription M-01bin [3], pp. 32-35.

SI: gsl., prn., dat., sing. of the lit. Sln. shortened reflex. SEBI –"to himself, to oneself". For corresponding Slavic equivalents see SE I in [4].

NE: gsl., adv. and conj. – "no, not", governing SI, KLI. Cf. inscriptions X and XL in [6], pp 17-20, 62-69. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [4].

KLI: lit. Sln. KLIJ from inf. KLITI – "to germinate, to sprout". V. imp., sing., its subj. being VROH, and its obj. being VSE. For corresponding Csl., SC., Blg., P., Kash.,Cz., Ll. equivalents see [4].

VSE: gsl. with variations of VSE and SVE – "all, everything". Prn., ntr., sing., acc., obj. of KLI. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see VES in [4].

NEG: conj., lit. Sln. NEGO – "but, but rather". For corresponding Ocsl., SC., Blg., R., Ukr., Br., Cz., Slk., Ul. equivalents see [4].

ON: sl. – "he", prn., masc., sing., 3rd prs., nom. Subj. of E ŚNOL. See inscriptions IV, [6], pp. 7-11; XXV, [6], pp. 37-38; XXVI, [6], pp.39-43; XXVIII, [6], pp. 44-45, XXIX, [6], 45-46, and XXXV, [6], pp.55-57. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [5].

E: gsl., lit. Sln. JE – "is", v., 3rd prs. sing., pres. of BITI – "to be", serving as aux. to ŚNOL. Due to its frequent occurrence as aux. v., it can be found in every second inscription in [3].

S: together with Z – "with, from"; S and Z alternate depending on which letter the word they governs commences with. A prep. taking the instr. case it governs OKI. See inscription W-08, [3], pp. 38-42. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see Z in [5].

OKI: an arch., pl., instr. form of OKO – "eye". With an irregular declension, OKO now appears only in the nom. and acc., sing. For other sing. cases the root now changes to OČES – and to OČ – and OČES – for pl. cases. For corresponding SC., Blg., Csl., R., Cz., P., Slk., Ul, Ll. equivalents see [4].

ŚNOL: lit. Sln. part. SNUL, from inf. SNUTI - "to place the basic thread on a loom". Its aux. is E, its subj. ON and its obj.: TEMON MOK. V., part., sing., masc., nom.. The only corresponding Slavic equivalents are Csl. SNUTI – "to place the basic thread on a loom" and old Cz. inf. SNOUT – "to plan, to warp, to knit".

TEMON: Sln. TEMEN – "dark", adj. of TEMA – "darkness". Adj., masc., sing., acc. agreeing in gender, number and case with MOK. For corresponding Ocsl., SC., R., Cz., P. equivalents see [5].

MOK a root of a gsl. adj. MOKER – "wet, moist". N., masc., sing., acc., obj. of E ŚNOL. Of infrequent usage, it appears idiomatically in adages like SONCE GRE NA MOK "it is getting ready to rain". For MOKER see [4].

LA: gsl., lit Sln. LE – "let, may it be, let it be that". See inscriptions W-01b, M-01a [3], pp. 17-20, pp. 29-32. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [4].

Reverse Line

Division

AL KOM NOMETL ON ŚI KOS E NOGE NE SVIL K E NIS HOR VION T E DONASAN

Present-day dialectal and literary Slovene for each word.

AL(dial) KOM(dial) NOMETəL(dial) ON ŚI KOS JE NOGE NE ZVIL Kə (dial) E NIS GOR VION Tə (dial) JE DONAŠAN

Today's literary Slovene word sequence and punctuation.

ALI KOMU NEMETEL ON SI KOS JE? NOGE NE ZVIL KI BI, NIZ GOR VIJEN, KI TI JE DONAŠAN!

The humouring freedom of the chiding rhetorical question in the first sentence, where the devil is depicted as almost childlike, is followed by the structures of the palindrome format constraining the inscriber in the last. Accordingly, a looser rendering for the word sequence as well as interpretation in both Sln. and Eng. is called for. It should also be kept in mind that the letters are no longer running backwards and the devil can now read them.

Looser literary Slovene rendition.

ALI KOMU NAMETEL ON SI KOS JE? NAJ, NIZ GOR VIJEN, NOGE NE ZVIJE, KI TI JE DONAŠAN !

Strained English rendition.

BUT TO WHOM DID HE TROW TOGETHER A PIECE? MAY HE NOT TWIST A LEG, WHICH FROM BELOW UPWARD TWINING, IS BEING BROUGHT TO YOU.

Looser English translation.

BUT TO WHOM DID HE PILE UP A PIECE? MAY THE ONE OFFERED TO YOU, FROM BELOW UPWARD TWINING, NOT COME TO HARM!

Comparison and parsing.

AL: dial. Sln. for lit. Sln. ALI – "but, however, or", conj. and adv. Cf. inscriptions W-09 and W-08 in [3], pp. 37-38, 38-42. For corresponding SC. and dial. R equivalents see [5].

KOM: dial Sln. For lit. Sln. KOMU – "to whom". It is a prn., dat., sing. of KDO – "who", having no pl. form. For corresponding SC., Mac., Cz., R., Ukr., Br., P., Slk., Ll. equivalents see [4].

NOMETL: *okanje* for dial. Sln. participle NOMETL from lit. Sln. inf. NAMETATI – "to throw in quantity, to fill up by throwing". It is a combination of gsl. prefix NA – "to, on, upon, at in, up, over" and inf. METATI – "to throw". For corresponding Ocsl., SC., R., Cz. equivalents see [5]. Its aux. is E.

ON: gsl. – "he", prn., masc., sing., 3rd prs., nom. subject of SI E NOMETL. Cf. inscriptions IV, [6], pp. 7-11; XXV, [6], pp. 37-38; XXVI, [6], pp.39-43; XXVIII, [6], pp. 44-45, XXIX, [6], pp. 45-46, and XXXV, [6], pp.55-57, and W-010, [3], pp. 8-10.

ŚI: gsl., reflex. prn. – "to himself, to oneself", 3rd prs., sing, masc., dat., relating to ON, being a shortened form of reflexive SEBI. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see SE I in [4].

KOS: gsl. – "piece, portion", n., masc., sing., acc., obj. of SI E NOMETL. Cf. inscriptions XLIX, [6], pp. 83-85 and IX, [6], p. 16. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [4].

E: gsl. JE – "is", v., 3rd prs. sing., pres. of BITI – "to be", serving as aux. to NOMETL.

NOGE: gsl. NOGA – "foot, leg", N., fem., sing., gen. The genitive case here is of significance. It singularizes NOGE. As obj., the noun NOGE would normally be in the acc. case. However, when a verb in the Sln. is governed by a negative, the rules of grammar call for a genitive case. Here, we have the negative NE governing E

SVIL   of which NOGE is the obj. Accordingly, NOGE is sing., because the pl. gen. is NOG, as it is also from the dual.

NE: gsl., adv. and conj. – "no, not", governing E SVIL. Cf. inscriptions X and XL in [6], pp 17-20, 62-69. For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [4].

SVIL: ZVIL is part. of inf. ZVITI – "to twist, to contort". In its relationship to NOGA it means "to twist one's foot, to wrench one's foot". ZVITI is a completed action counterpart of imperfected inf. VITI. It is governed by NE and has the E between K and NIZ as aux. and NOGE as its obj.

K: Kǝ - dial. Sln. for lit. Sln. KI – "who, which, that which, the one which". The meaning depends on the person or thing the word relates to and may vary depending on the context. Here, it serves as the subj. of NE SVIL E, of E DONASAN and E VION. As a relative prn. it introduces the subordinate clauses K E NIS HOR VION - "that which is from below upward twining" and K TE DONASAN – "that which is being brought to you". For corresponding Csl., SC., Chk., Mac., Blg., R., Ukr., P., Slk., Ul., Ll. equivalents see [4]. E: gsl., JE – "is", v., 3rd prs. sing., pres. of BITI – "to be", serving as aux. to SVIL and VION.

NIS: lit. Sln., adv. NIZ – "down, alongside, below" is the root of the gsl. adj. NIZEK – "low". Preceding HOR – "up, upwards", it points to the starting point of the twining palindrome. For corresponding Csl., SC., Mac., Blg., R., Ukr., P., Slk. equivalents see [4].

HOR: dial. Sln. HOR – "up, upwards" is still in use in some dialects, but the lit. counterpart GOR has much wider currency. Cf. inscription G-105, [3], pp. 56-57. For corresponding Csl., SC., Mac., Blg., Cz., P., Ul., Ll. equivalents see [4].

VION: an *okanje* form of dial. Sln. VIJAN and lit. Sln. VIJEN – "twining, twisting". A v., part., masc., sing., nom., agreeing in gender, number, case and person with K, its

aux. being E. Cf. inscription M-01b, [3], pp. 32-35. Its inf. is VITI – "to twine, to twist". For corresponding Csl., SC., R., Cz. equivalents see [5].

T: dial. Sln. Tə for lit. Sln. TI – "to you", a shortened form for TEBI is a pers. prn., 2nd pers., sing., dat.. Cf. inscriptions M-04 and B-01 in [3], pp. 27-29, 52-56. For other corresponding Ocsl., SC., R., Cz. equivalents see [5].

E: gsl., JE – "is", v., 3rd prs. sing., pres. of BITI – "to be", serving as aux. to DONASAN.

DONASAN: the lit. Sln. DONAŠAN is a nonperfective, continuing-action participle of inf. DONAŠATI – "to continue to bring, produce, or bear fruit". Here the verbal conjugational inflection indicates an incomplete status of the action. As v., part., masc., sing, nom., it agrees in gender, number, case and person with K. It is composed of prefix DO, much employed in idiomatic structures with meaning of "up to, as far as, until" depending on the context, and an imperfective, continuing -action form of the gsl., inf. NOSITI – "to carry, to bear". For corresponding Slavic equivalents see [4].

Conclusion

A hopeful admonition to the dark powers to keep a seed-containing basin free of mould, the present inscription Es 120 has a parallel in the Old Phrygian, 5th century BC, bidding of: E STAT OIAV VUN – "infertility keep out " – cf. inscription G-144 in [3], pp. 11-12. In fact, parallels with Old Phrygian and Slavenetic vocabulary, syntax and morphology generally still echo in the preponderance of the wording in the inscription being gsl.

Especially, the inscription Es 120 attests to the astounding state of linguistic preservation of the Slovene language. It is also clear confirmation of the claim by the noted Slovenian etymologist F. Bezlaj [7], pp. 88, that "in the 8th century AD Slavic was incredibly uniform and undiversified". Hence, its decryption points to such a state of affairs having been even more uniform 1,200 years earlier. It serves as a direct confirmation of the claim in [3], p. 122, that whether one appends the term of Venetic, Slavenetic, Old Early Slavic, Old Phrygian, Dura Europos Macedonian [6], pp. 74-86, and early Thracian were one and the same language.

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Povzetek

Venetski napis Es 120 na čaši iz "Scolo di Lozzo"

Najstarejši venetski napis Es 120 so našli leta 1931 v kraju "Scolo di Lozzo" pri Estah (Veneto – Italija). Nastal naj bi najkasneje kot sredi 6. stol. A. Marinetti ga razdeli v naslednje besede: ALKOMNO METLON ŚIKOS ENOGENES VILKENIS HORVIONTE DONASAN. Po njenem prevodu trije darovalci, Sikos, Enogenes in Vilkenis darujejo Dioskurom v njihovem templju, ki naj bi bil pri predelu Lozzo. Napis je v resnici palindrom, ki se začne spodaj. Od spodaj navzgor beremo kot: NA SAN ODET NOI VROH SI NE KLI VSE NEG ON E S OKI SNOL TEMON MOK LA, v nasprotni smeri pa AL KOM NOMETL ON ŚI KOS E NOGE NE SVIL K E NIS HOR VION T E DONASAN. Prvi del lahko prevedemo kot NA SEN ODET, NAJ VRAG SI NE KLIJ VSE, NEGO ON Z OČMI LE JE SNUL TEMEN MOK!, v nasprotno smer pa kot ALI KOMU NEMETEL ON SI KOS JE? NOGE NE ZVIL KI BI, NIZ GOR VIJEN, KI TI JE DONAŠAN! Prvi del nadebudno opominja temne sile, naj pazijo, da seme v posodi ostane brez plesnivosti. Drugi del pa je sporočilo, kako je treba brati ta napis, to je od spodaj navzgor. Presenetljiva podobnost besed v palindromu z besedami v knjižni slovenščini, slovenskih narečjih in drugih slovanskih jezikih kaže, da so bili slovanski jeziki v preteklosti neverjetno enoviti, tako da so bile venetščina, slovenetščina, praslovanščina, stara frigijščina, makedonščina v Dura Europos in zgodnja tračanščina verjetno en in isti jezik.

Table of Abbreviations

Acc.	Accusative	Mac.	Macedonian
Adj	Adjective	Masc.	Masculine
Adv.	Adverb	N.	Noun
Arch.	Archaic	Nom.	Nominative
Aux.	Auxiliary v.	Ntr.	Neuter
Blg.	Bulgarian	Obj.	Object
Br.	Belorussian	Ocsl.	Old Church Slavonic
Chk.	Chakavian Croatian	P.	Polish
Conj.	Conjunctive	Part.	Participle
Cr.	Croatian	Pl.	Plural
Csl.	Church Slavonic	Prep.	Preposition
Cz.	Czech	Pres.	Present tense
Dat.	Dative	Prn.	Pronoun
Dial	Dialectal	Prs.	Person
Fem.	Feminine	R.	Russian
Gen.	Genitive	Reflex.	Reflexive
Gsl.	Generally Slavic	SC.	Serbo-Croatian
Imp	Imperative	Sing.	Singular
Inf.	Infinitive	Subj.	Subject
Instr.	Instrumental case	Slk.	Slovak
Kash.	Kashubian	Sln.	Slovene
Lit.	Literary	Ukr.	Ukranian
Loc.	Locative case	Ul.	Upper Lusatian
L.	Lusatian	V.	Verb
Ll.	Lower Lusatian		