

RHEA AT BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH ENDS OF THE ANCIENT VENETIC AMBER TRADE

Investigating Venetic Inscription references to Rhea and Historical Information about Worship of Rhea

Andres P ä ä b o (Ontario, Canada)

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ABSTRACT

*In my interpreting of the Ancient Venetic inscriptions documented in **THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL** I found that the results from more or less direct interpretation (ie getting meanings from context and cross-checking across all complete inscriptions) produced many words and grammatical elements that appeared Finnic in nature. This makes sense in a theory that the Finnic northern culture exploited the Baltic amber washing out of the southeastern coasts, first for their own jewelery, and then as a trade good to ancient Asia Minor as early as before 3000 BC. Both archeology of amber roads and ancient writings identify a clear connection for thousands of years between the Baltic amber source regions and places along the route of the amber. This leads one to believe that the markets and colonies of the Ancient Veneti of northern Italy were established by Finnic amber traders from 1000 BC, and the language stuck, even if, like in any successful economic region, the area itself drew into it enterprising peoples from all around. If this connection with the north is true, then it follows that we would find a connection between Ancient Veneti and the Finnic north in not just language, but in deeper culture too, namely religious practices. Therefore we should find the goddess worshipped at sanctuaries by the Ancient Veneti, appearing in the word **re.i.tia.i.**, in the north at the amber sources. First of all I identify the goddess as the pre-Greek Rhea. This paper shows evidence that she was in the north and that remnants of her worship via boars endured until relatively recent times in Estonian culture.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Religion Changes Slowly and Should Endure at Both Ends of Amber Trade

The linguistic connections between the Adriatic *Eneti/Veneti* suggested by names recorded in ancient texts, was the general purpose of my project, summarized in **THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL**. But it is obvious that where there are linguistic connections there must also be cultural connections too.

One of the strongest areas of culture that people want to preserve is their religion. It follows that, besides the apparent linguistic mirroring between the south and north, there should also be religious mirroring. The archeologists of ancient Adriatic *Eneti/Veneti* have all noted that *Veneti*-named peoples appear to have followed the practice of cremating their dead, and burying the ashes in cemeteries inside some container like an urn. In the north, scholars have also found that the *Aestii* at the southeast Baltic cremated their dead, and archeology has found ashes in cemeteries buried within small wooden boxes. Traditional scholars are correct in associating the

“Urnfield Culture” – burying their dead as ashes in urns – with the *Veneti*, although nobody before me has suggested all the Urnfield cultural sites were actually nodes of a large scale long distance trade system. Such nodes would have ranged from important colonies assisting wares to transfer from one water system to another (such as from the Oder to the Elbe), to large colonies and markets at the terminuses of routes, to small settlements that may have mainly served as a pitstop for the shippers.

But let us look more deeply into the Adriatic Venetic religious worldview and whether there were parallels in the north. Although no ancient writing has been found in the north, we can learn a few things in ancient texts and infer a few truths.

Concerning the south, the traditional scholars of Venetic, think they have found numerous deities. This arises from the past Latin approach to deciphering the Venetic inscriptions, which basically looked for Latin-like words in the inscription (continuously written inscription lacking word boundaries) and then assumed all the remaining parts were proper names of people or deities. Given that in ancient times even proper names were descriptive, this methodology renders the results 100% impossible. In my deciphering using a proper methodology that does not require an a priori assumption, and which I described in detail in *THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL* I found no proper names of people (all names of people were descriptive – referring to the deceased in terms of their profession (shipper or horseman) or country of origin, or relationships to the living like ‘father’). And as for deities, I only found two deities (although there seems to be a statue depicting Apollo too). The first was the goddess found in the word **re.i.tiia.i.** and the second was found in the word **trumusia**. The former appeared near Este, and the latter appeared in the Lagole inscriptions high in the Piave River valley. In my analysis I found that *trumusia* probably was a deity of the merchants, traders, who came down the Piave River valley, but it could actually have been a generic word, as the meaning, I found, was ‘those of the marketland’ which could have referred to the visitors of the spa or sauna at the Lagole location. For more, see the abovementioned document. The purpose of this paper is the name that traditionally has been assumed to refer to a Venetic deity named “Reitia”, but which I determined was actually the common *Rhea*.

This paper shows evidence that she was not just in the Venetic inscriptions but also in the north and that remnants of her worship via boars endured until relatively recent times in Estonian culture.

1.2 The Goddess in the Inscriptions is Rhea

The Ancient Venetic inscriptions dating to before the Roman era, include prayers to a goddess. The word that appears in the inscriptions for the goddess is **re.i.tiia.i.** This word appears in a position where she is a recipient of offerings, prayer, etc. Therefore it consists of a stem plus grammatical endings.

(Note about how Venetic is written. The Venetic alphabet is converted to small case Roman, keeping the dots.)

The following is an example. Venetic writing is read in the direction the letters are pointing (not the “E” pointing left hence it is read to the left.)



\$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i.

Often in front of this word **re.i.tiia.i.** was a descriptive term **\$a.i.nate.i.** (where in my interpretation \$ represents a long ‘S’¹)

Traditional pursuits of deciphering the ancient Venetic inscriptions, which assumed Venetic was an ancestral language to Latin, pursued the translations with a view to finding Indo-European and perhaps Latin-like stems and case endings.

Most of the objects on which the word **re.i.tiia.i.** were found were found by archeologists at a sanctuary to the goddess. Sanctuaries were places where rituals, ceremonies, and offerings were made. The texts appear to have accompanied offerings to the goddess, and most of the sentences followed the general form.

meگو dona.s.to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i.

The traditional Latin perspective towards Venetic saw in **meگو** the Latin word *ego* for ‘I’ and in the **dona.s.to** the Latin *donato* ‘give, donate’. Thus the traditional translation saw in this structure the meaning ‘*I give.....to shining (or sacred) Reitia*’. The endings (vowel).i. were thus seen to be a Dative case ending. However in my own direct analysis from the objects and comparison across the inscriptions I found an interpretation that read literally ‘*Our (formal My) brought-item.....to unite with You, in the character of the Gods, to unite with Rhea*’ This is literal so as to break down the elements into their truest meaning, but the actual translation in meaning is in the sense of ‘*Our offeringto join the devine Rhea*’ The ending (vowel).i. in our translation is not a Dative but a unique dynamic/active interpretation of the Partitive case. In my analysis, the reason the word **re.i.tiia.i.** is about *Rhea* (**re.i.a**) and not “Reitia”, is because the ending is **ii + a.i.** and the T appears purely to break up the long string of vowels. (For example, Finnish and Estonian will add a T or J in such situations of endings adding nothing but vowels.) Thus the nominative **re.i.a** taking the ending **ii** (Iative case) and **a.i.** (Dynamic Partitive) becomes **re.i.aiia.i** which is unspeakable, so a T is added to arrive at **re.i.tiia.i**

(There also exists a point of view that imagines the word comes from *Rhea* plus the Greek term for ‘goddess’ *theia*. But we note that ancient *Veneti* appears to have had most close connections with Etruscan, even suggested by the *Veneti* adapting the Etruscan alphabet and not the Greek alphabet.)

In the perspective on the *Veneti* I have adopted, and which is explained in detail in the full document ***THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL***, the Ancient *Veneti*, who ancient Greek writers saw as the distributors of amber into the Mediterranean civilizations, were established by Baltic amber traders. They found a new alternative route to the Mediterranean (the old route being down the Danube and descending to Greece from above) that came down to the Adriatic.

This implies that the Adriatic *Veneti* were southern terminal colonies for the northern amber trader tribe at the source of the amber. If the peoples at the source of amber were Finnic, that would suggest that with the establishing of the colonies brought not just language but deeper cultural institutions like religion.

¹ My analysis found that the character represented by an M-shape could not be the currently believed “SH” sound because that sound is expressed as a palatalized (dotted) S. Parallel words in Estonian and Etruscan showed that this word was really “ISS” or “SS” depending on its environment. That is why I chose to represent it in Roman letters with \$ to avoid confusion.

It would not be believable just to interpret the Venetic inscriptions speaking of *Rhea*, and then not find *Rhea* in the north. Thus I set out to look at the literature to see if I could find evidence of *Rhea* at the north end of the amber routes.

Archeology has determined from dropped amber the two major routes by which amber (and other northern products like furs) travelled south. From the southeast Baltic source of amber it was taken south by *Venedi* (a name which in the northern Finnic meant (*Venede*) '(people) of the boats') by going up the Vistula a short ways, breaking across to the upper Oder, proceeding to the Danube near Vienna, and from there south to the northeast coast of the Adriatic Sea, and then down the Adriatic coast towards Greece. The second route began at the Jutland Peninsula, went up the Elbe and across the Danube water basin and eventually down the Adige to the Adriatic. The second route could also handle traders from the southeast Baltic if the traders first went to where the Oder bends and portage into the middle Elbe and continue on the Elbe route.

At the southeast Baltic amber source, amber washed out of the Samland Peninsula. Greek traveller Pytheas identified it as an island and called it *Abalus*. In Pytheas' time the land was lower and the lowland behind the Samland Peninsula was flooded, so that the Samland Peninsula was an island in his time. In Finnic ABA-LA, meant 'place of the lagoon, bay, area' which was appropriate for a place located in waters behind the long sandbars running parallel to the shore and containing the Samland Peninsula. (See the map in the next section.)

Pytheas provides little information about the people other than that there are several other words that translate descriptively via Estonian. But centuries later more information is provided by Roman historian Tacitus who wrote in his *Germania* (98AD). The following explicitly mentions *Rhea*.

*. . .the Aestii nations who have religious observance and demeanour of the Suebi, They worship the **Mother of the gods**. As the characteristic of their national superstition, they wear the images of wild boars. This alone serves them for arms, this is the safeguard of all, and by this every worshipper of the Goddess is secured even amidst his foes.*

(Tacitus *Germania* ch 45)

The *Mother of the gods* in Greco-Roman mythology was *Rhea*, a Titan who the Greeks considered the mother of the regular Greek gods. But we should not assume the *Rhea* of the *Aestii* was the Greco-Roman version. *Rhea* did not originate with Greeks or Romans. She existed in Europe long before the Greeks or Romans and was widely worshipped, especially by long distance seafaring trader peoples.

The other significant detail in Tacitus' description is the reference to the boars. But there is evidence that the veneration of boats was not local to the *Aestii*. The 19th century story writer Jacob Grimm wrote² of a mythology of '*The Boars of Freya*' and that in early Christian Scandinavia, everywhere across the north, pigs were offered at Christmastime in the name of *Freya*. *Freya=Rheia*? Obviously when the original Suebic tribes were assimilated into the kingdoms created by Germanic-Gothic military conquests they preserved original customs, but it became changed by the new Germanic language.

This places *Rhea* also at the Jutland Peninsula source of amber. The Grimm folk tale suggests the survival of ancient religion in folk tale form as late as the 19th century. Ancient practices had been remembered in story form and when the original Finnic language was replaced by Germanic, the word *Rhea* was transformed to *Freya*. The added F to the front of the *Freya* name in the Germanic language, can probably be attributed to the strong initial trilled R used in the Finnic languages, which the Germanic language evidently interpreted with FR.

² Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 1844, p 41-42

Unfortunately history and archeology provides very little if anything about the Jutland amber source, other than that amber washed out of the west coast and the floating pieces of amber were collected by people along the shore near the mouth of the Elbe. (One possibility is that the handlers of the amber there were the ancestors of the *Saxones* because the name is close to one of the words for amber, *succinum* in Rome, *saccal* in Egypt, and *socci* in the Venetic inscriptions. According to Finnish *sakka*, ‘dregs, percipitate’, the word may be Finnic, and reflect the notion that amber was a percipitate of the sea. The word might have been used in the east Baltic too, since a southern region of Estonia is called *Sakala*, ‘place of SAKA’.)

1.3 What is known about the Southeast Baltic Amber Coast?

We can presume that the Grimm folk tale about Freya and the Boats reflects the celebration of Rhea through boars was found at the Jutland source of amber, but as far as I know, history and archeology provides no further information. Therefore, we will turn our attention to the southeast Baltic. What do we know about that area?

The southeast Baltic coast area was the major source of amber to the ancient world, as shown by archeology finding Baltic amber (as determined by spectroscopic analysis) in Babylonian tombs dating to before 3000 BC. And the area was wealthy because of it. The intimate contact with the southern world will explain northern imagery and legends appearing in the ancient Greek world. For example the “HEL” words in ancient Greece, have much more presence in words of Estonian than Greek. All Estonian words beginning with “HEL” speak of ‘brightness, lightness’ in all senses – from visual to aural to weight. The word for ‘amber’ in the Finnic north was *helmes*, and it was probably the source of the Greek word for ‘amber’ which was *electridas*. (I believe it came from the word the Venedic traders used for their major amber product – a necklace strung with amber beads – which could be expressed with *hellekede rida* ‘row, string, of (amber) jewels’. The history of the area included the pilgrimages of the “Hyperborean Maidens” mentioned by Herodotus, to Delos, and their probably being responsible for the Greek myth of Apollo being born of Leto at Delos, which seems to personify the way Abalus (*abala* – ‘the lagoon place’) was created by the water action (Est. *leeta*) producing sandbars that produced the lagoon region.

One of the major routes by which amber took to Greece, was to first descend to the Adriatic Sea, and then follow the east coast south. Ancient Greek writers wrote about the *Eneti* of the north Adriatic being the source of amber delivered to Greece. Archeology confirmed and continues to confirm the amber routes to the Adriatic, and the antiquity of the route.

That there was an intimate relationship between the amber coasts in the north (both the southeast Baltic and the western coast of the Jutland Peninsula) and the *Eneti/Veneti* at the Adriatic, and that it lasted for millennia, is clear. With such an intimate, such a long period of contact, nobody should be surprised that there would be significant mirroring of language and culture between the sources of amber and the southern destinations.

Not only was there mirroring of the north in the south, but the south in the north – until the rise of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire compromised or destroyed the original European trade systems. While the Roman Empire did not cover eastern Europe, it compromised the activity of trade towards the east anyway, by their being in control of the north Adriatic region and other southern destinations of trade. Venetic trade sought to bypass the Roman Empire by carrying wares to the east, and heading via rivers like Dneiper to the Black Sea. From earliest times, traders had used the Dneiper and Volga to carry northern furs and amber to the Black Sea, but the Roman Empire promoted the movement of wares from Scandinavia eastward to the eastern Rivers. That was the beginning of the eventual development of the Scandinavian “Rus”

becoming dominant in the eastern river route to the Black Sea, which eventually gave rise to “Russia” (or in Estonian “Venema) – named for the Scandinavian traders, but which eventually was transferred to the Slavic settlers of those regions.

In Estonian *venede* is the genitive plural of *vene* ‘boat’ (a word that may have originated as ‘instrument of water’ *veena*. Thus the name *Venedi* is in fact a plainly descriptive word for the groups that spent most of its time in boats, carrying the amber collected and prepared on the coast, south to Greece. Because the word was descriptive, all traders who spoke a Finnic language could have been generically called *venede*, in much the same way that today people who carry wares from one location to another can all be called “shippers”. Eventually it was the foreigners like Greeks, who, not knowing the generic meaning, turned the word into a proper name.

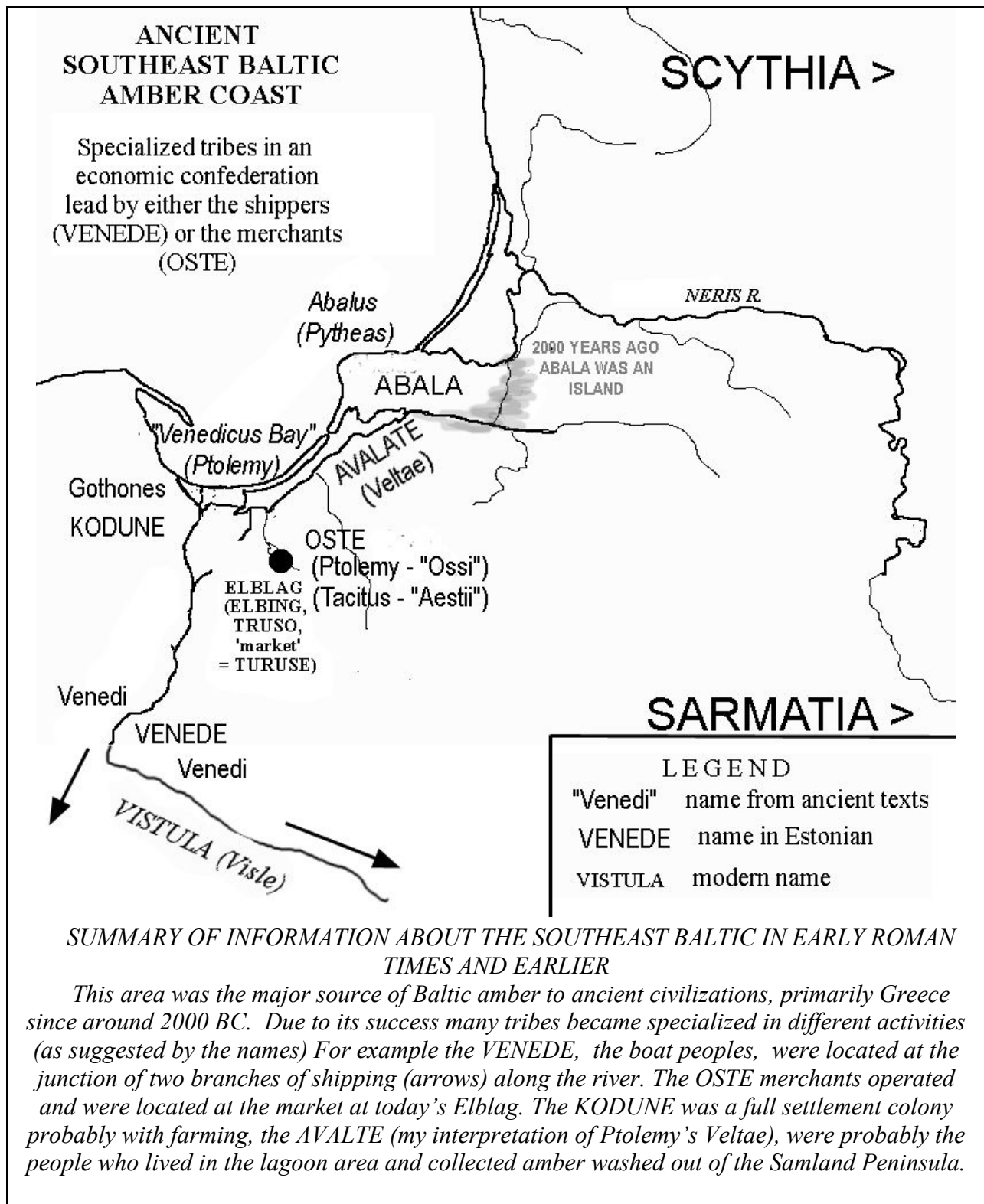
The northerners who spoke Finnic along the east Baltic coast kept their understanding of the descriptive meaning. That is why the shippers who others called “Rus” were descriptively called “*Venede*” (or in singular “*Vene*”) by east Baltic coast Finnic peoples. Always aware of the descriptive meaning, all the river-trader peoples were called “*venede*” . Finnic speakers said “*Vene*” or “*Venede*” for the “Rus”, but also the Livonians used “*Venede*” for the historic “Wends”. The “Wendi” (as Latin called them) who settled where Ventspils, Latvia, is found today, and then moved to Cesis, Latvia, were called *Venede* by the Finnic Livonians (the original Finnic peoples of the Gulf of Riga before the non-Finnic Latvians), and their use of the word was the original descriptive one. Livonians called Cesis *Venede-culle* ‘*Venede-town*’, and it was located on a river by which they could reach Lake Peipus and the Votic traders there. The Livonians even used the word *Venede* for the Votes at Lake Peipus to the east of Estonia and based around Narva. Estonians call the Votes by *Vadja*, a word that is very close to *vedaja* ‘transporter’, hence it too was a descriptive term. The Votes were descended from the original *Venede* who travelled the Dneiper and Volga to the Black Sea, long before the arrival of the East Slavs into these regions.

Returning back to Roman and pre-Roman times, the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus appears to have personally have visited the southeast Baltic. He commented about the veneration of Rhea through boars, and how the people collected amber. But most importantly he seem to have described a region in which different tribes carried on an economic confederatikon revolving around mainly the amber trade. Just as the name of the tribe called “*Venedi*” was descriptive, so too other tribe names too described what role a tribe had in this economic confederation. Ptolemy, taking his information from Greek sources, saw the tribes collectively as “*Venedae* races”. But Tacitus, arriving by sea with Suebic hosts, saw the region as “*Aestii* nations”. So let us look for a meaning in the word “*Aestii*”.

The word *Aestii* (or *Eesti*, which Estonians use today) has no meaningful interpretation in Estonian, but if we assume the word *Aestii* was originally spoken in a high dialect then the word becomes more like OSTE words meaning ‘(people) who purchase’ (=merchants). History shows that when Estonia developed their language, they based it on the northern dialect, but it appears the southeastern dialect which was oriented towards the market at the southeast Baltic had a raised dialect from Suebic influences. Thus we can conclude that what Tacitus heard was the common Estonian word *oste* ‘of the purchase’ spoken in a raised dialect so it sounded like “ASTI” but with the Finnic stress on the first syllable.

The *Venede* of course specialized in shipping wares. The *Oste/Asti* merchants were managers of the international market that was located where Elblag is today. Along the west shore of the Vistula towards the coast, Tacitus found the “*Gothones*”. The word “*Gothones*” is Finnic too, based on the meaning ‘home’, which is a very very old word, that in modern Estonian is *kodu*. It makes sense. If the *Venedi* were the mobile shippers, then the *Gothones* were the settled home-

base peoples. Tacitus mentions other tribes. For example the *Rugii* were probably specialized in making the river boats (based on Estonian *ruhi* meaning 'dugout boat'). Thus, in the economic confederations, the OSTE managed the market, the AVALTE (ie ABALTE) inhabited the lagoon and collected amber, the VENEDE acted as shippers, and so on. This is illustrated below combining information from Tacitus, Ptolemy, and Pytheas with interpretations via Estonian.



Thus, all the tribes in this region around the amber island (Samland Peninsula was originally an island before the rebound of the land behind it) worked in specialized activities for the overall economy oriented towards trade in amber, furs, and other northern goods.

Wherever there is an economic confederations, there will be one tribe that is perceived from the outside to be representative of them all. The ancient Greeks who were familiar with the *Venedi* who brought them amber, these tribes of the southeast Baltic, were generally Venedic tribes. And that is what Ptolemy called them (“*Venedae Races*”). But Tacitus, arriving from the west by sea, probably carried by a Suebic trader ship, landed at the major port that was operated by the *Aestii* (OSTE, probably the *Ossi* mentioned by Ptolemy), and so named the economic confederation after the people at the market, hence “*Aestii Nations*”.³

2. INFORMATION OF *RHEA* AND BOARS FOUND IN HISTORIC TEXTS

2.1 Evidence of Worship of Sea-Road Deity

Given that archeology indicates that the *Veneti* of the north Adriatic had origins that predate even the Greeks, it is possible the Venetic *Rhea* identified in the word **re.i.tiia.i.** was the original one, not the one in Greek mythology, and the *Veneti* had not ceased to worship the original one that was embraced mostly by seafaring peoples.

By understanding the original *Rhea* better, we may learn more about the Adriatic *Veneti*, since their cultural practices would have been brought with them from wherever they came from. We all know that even if a people move into a region with other cultures, they will retain the deeper aspects of their religious culture and continue to practice them even as they superficially adopt more local customs and fads.

Evidence shows that deities, like anything in the ancient world, were named by describing them, adding an ending to identify it as a name. It follows from *Rhea*'s apparent popularity in the sea-trade that her name would be descriptive in the languages of early seetraders – which, owing to the long distance travels of the traders would have been widespread, a *lingua franca*. If she can be linked to sea-trading peoples perhaps she was ultimately the goddess of the routes of the sea-trade. Note too that in ancient times, the world was seen as a great flat sea with all lands being islands in it. Back then the concept of an Earth Mother was quite local, related only to lands, and therefore was a lesser deity. The true goddess of everything would have been the goddess that personified the entire plane of the sea that surrounded all the lands. There is no contradiction, therefore, in the ancient linking the supreme Goddess to the sea, and finding her revered especially by the men who sailed the open sea.

One of the interesting words in Europe is the word for ‘sea’. In Latin it is *mare*, and this also exists in Romance languages today in similar forms. For example in French ‘sea’ is given by *mer*. Interestingly the French word for ‘mother’ is similar – *mère*. This closeness is as close in Latin, where ‘mother’ is given by *mater*. This type of word for ‘sea’ exists in Indo-European languages beyond Romance languages too. It obviously originated in the pre-Indo-European traders, the early ones with whom we associate the use of –RA for major trade rivers which retained some of their original forms in the Latin versions *Rhodanus*, *Rhennus*, *Ligera*, *Otra*, *Wesera*, etc. And it is from this deeper origin that the word for ‘sea’ endures in Estonian and Finnish as *meri*, with higher vowel but still original.

³ Reference: Tacitus *Germania*, Ch 45-46, and Ptolemy's geography of *Sarmatia*.

With lower vowels *meri* becomes MARE and still lower becomes MORA. We can thus see all historical versions. Since this word most likely originated from seagoing, boat-using, peoples, we should not seek its origins in the land-oriented peoples such as the Indo-Europeans were. The most likely candidate for origins of a word involving the sea would be the ancient, even prehistoric, seafaring peoples, and that the word probably originates from “AMA” which also meant ‘mother’. This word form for sea or water can even be found in boat-oriented native peoples of North America such as Inuit and Algonquians, where it is also similar to a word meaning ‘mother’. In other words, for all boat people, Mother Earth was mainly the vast sea.

I believe MARE and variations, began as AMA-RA ‘mother road’, where AMA meant ‘mother’⁴. If all the early trade roads were waterways, then the seas were naturally the mother of waterways. Since the world was seen as a great sea, the personification of the sea, AMA-RA, was also the World Mother. This word AMA-RA could abbreviate in two ways AMARA>MARA>MAR leading to *mare, mer, mor, meri*, etc and AMARA>MARA>ARA>RA which would now make the goddess a goddess of routes, *Rhea*⁵ while still retaining her identity as ‘mother’. If you were a trader, and you wished to condense a word, then you would retain that part that was most relevant to you. The element meaning ‘route’, was most relevant to sea-trade.

Rhea became known throughout the world of traders through their long distance travels. But did it originate in the Finnic world of boat peoples?

Finnic peoples arose from the prehistoric boat-using hunter-gatherers who were seasonal nomads pursuing circuits from campsite to campsite, returning to the same location only in the following year. While those towards the north and in remote places continued the primitive life, those who sailed the Baltic and interacted with Indo-European farming settlements, found themselves quite pre-adapted to performing the service for the settled peoples of long distance traders. Short distance trade was no problem for settled peoples as they could all travel tens of kilometers to settlement markets, but they were not able to leave their settlements and farms for long periods of time. Hence there was a great market for the services of long distance traders who carried wares hundreds of kilometers and returned with exotic wares from far away. A way of life was available for the northern boat peoples who were already familiar with boats, navigation, and living a nomadic life. Instead of moving from campsite to campsite, they moved from marketplace to marketplace, setting up shop if there was nothing permanent.

Unlike part-time traders – hunter-gatherers who every year sent wares to market – professional traders made their living by procuring wares where they were cheap and trading them where they were valuable.

Estonians in particular were involved with the sea. Already over 5000 years ago, there existed the archeological “Kunda Culture” a seagoing offshoot of the “Maglemose Culture” of the swamps from Britain to the east Baltic. The “Kunda” large harpoons could only have been used to hunt seals and small whales in the early Baltic. That means they had large seaworthy dugouts.

Farming was very difficult along the east Baltic coast, even later when attempting to grow the hardy rye, often the wet late summer would soak and destroy the harvest, and practices were developed that brought the cut grain indoors and smoke dried it in high log houses which were also the prototype for the standard saunas of today. Thus farming never overtook seagoing practices on the east Baltic coasts (until recently with advancements in agriculture) Long distance sailing by Estonians was so common in recent history that the term *kauge-sõit* literally

⁴ The word AMA for ‘mother’ can be found in early pre-Indo-European languages of Asia Minor; also today in Basque as *ama*, and in Estonian as *ema*.

⁵ Latin represented the trilled R by adding an H as in RH-. Written Estonian and Finnish does not add an H, but the R is trilled to varying levels. Venetic appears to have marked the trilled R with dots as in .r.

'distant-journey' actually meant 'travelling outside the Baltic' The very use of such a meaning implies that journeys often went beyond the Baltic, as far as Britain and further, and that may explain why Tacitus also found that the *Aestii* language was 'closer to' native British in around 98AD than it was to Suebic of the south Baltic and the Jutland Peninsula.

I suggested above that the word *Rhea* itself was a descriptive word, and that the descriptive word in effect rendered her a personification of sea routes of the ancient seafarers. What evidence is there in today's Baltic Finnic languages that this may be the case?

Estonian uses *reis* for 'voyage', Finnish has *reitti* 'course, route' Both contain the "REI" sound. And related to these are probably *retk*, or *retki* 'excursion', wherein the -K is seen as a nominalizing suffix added to *ret-*

How did *Rhea* become to the Greeks and Romans, as Tacitus said "The Mother of the gods"?

When the Indo-European conquerors of Mycenaea expanded their military subjugation of the Greek Peninsula and Crete, they found the indigenous peoples worshipping *Rhea* and some other deities, like *Cronos*. They could not remove the established religion, so the Greek priests and poets turned these existing pre-Indo-European deities into the "Titans" thus removing them from daily use in the Greek world, and promoted the idea that *Rhea* was the mother of the new deities that came with the Greek conquerors.

The Romans, who originated as a Greek trade colony at the south end of the Italic Peninsula, inherited the Greek mythology, and hence the Roman, Tacitus, referred to *Rhea* who was being worshipped by the *Aestii* as the "Mother of the gods". There is no question he was referring to *Rhea*, except these people were worshipping her through the imagery of the boars.

2.2 Some Revelations about the Worship of Boars in Veneration of a Female Deity

It is clear from all information there exists around Europe that *Rhea*, as a great woman, took on all attributes of a woman, notably the ability to give birth. Each people who worshipped her adapted her a little to their own way of life. Farming peoples who bred animals, for example, could appeal to her mothering qualities to help their animals multiply. The *Aestii*, who obviously carried on some farming, bred pigs.

It is human nature to worship very few deities. This is because major deities are like adults to children. A child grows up with mother, father, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, etc. Therefore the most natural way of envisioning deities is to see them as a family in the invisible environment. And in any family there is a ruler. In a warrior or hunter society the head of the family was male, but it seems that originally, before the Indo-Europeans, when human populations were small and there was little competition (by males) over limited resources, the head of the supreme family was the mother, and I believe she was *Rhea*. She not only personified the entire world, a sea, but she also tended to births, took care of the ill, and everything else associated with the female. The wide application of *Rhea* (instead of limiting her to being the mother of the Greek gods) is found in the ancient information of *Rhea* worship outside of or before the Greek world.

While doing my detective work regarding the origins of *Rhea*, I discovered some more ancient text regarding a goddess and pigs that resonated strongly with facts in the north. The Greek historian Herodotus (5th century BC) wrote about pig-sacrifice in Egypt connected with the Moon. In that practice the innards of the pig were burned. Poor people made bread pigs.

...They [The Egyptians of the 5th century BC] do not offer swine in sacrifice to any of their gods, excepting Bacchus and the Moon, whom they honour in this way at the same time, sacrificing pigs to both of them at the same full moon, and afterwards eating of the flesh.The following is the mode in which they sacrifice the swine to the Moon:- As soon as the victim is slain, the tip of the tail, the spleen, and the caul are put together, and having been covered with

all the fat that has been found in the animal's belly, are straightway burnt. The remainder of the flesh is eaten on the same day that the sacrifice is offered, which is the day of the full moon: at any other time they would not so much as taste it. The poorer sort, who cannot afford live pigs, form pigs of dough, which they bake and offer in sacrifice.

(Herodotus, 2.47 , about 420BC)

The connection of this practice to a goddess, is suggested by the offering being made before the day of the full moon, since the moon was always associated with the woman's cycle. He does not specifically refer to *Rhea*, but what is interesting in this quote is the dealing with pigs, and in the quote from Tacitus, the *Aestii* worshipped *Rhea* through boars (male pigs).

Since Tacitus identified *Rhea* in the *Aestii* culture, let us make reference to Estonian, which is descended from the *Aestii* culture of the east Baltic coast⁶. From the Estonian islands southward to the mouth of the Vistula Aestic language was the *lingua franca*. (The Balt tribes from which Latvian and Lithuanian comes, archeology shows, did not come to the coast from the interior until after the 10th-11th century.

Looking for evidence within Estonian, we could propose that the purpose of a pig-sacrifice ritual might be revealed in the Estonian word for pig, *sig*. This word, which was applied to the goat too, uses the same stem as many other Finnic words pertaining to sex and procreation. This suggests that the intrinsic meaning of *sig* is 'bred animal', and the custom probably ultimately originated with the domestication and artificial breeding of animals in Europe, which may have been brought by the Indo-Europeans ("Corded-ware Culture"). Since Finnic cultures originated from boat-using aboriginals, it is logical that the adoption of farm animals would find them being identified simply as 'bred animals'. The breeding of animals involved reverence to the deity responsible for reproductive success.⁷ It follows that originally the Estonians hunted animals in the wild, and when adopting farming practices from the "Corded-ware" Indo-Europeans, they had to distinguish between the bred animal and wild one as the first step. Distinguishing between the bred animals was the next step,

While sailors could see *Rhea* in the oceans, women could see themselves empowered by her. Needless to say hard core male-worshipping cultures did not like this empowering of women. Some goddess-worshipping cultures were still found north of the Aegean. Herodotus reported that the Scyths, hard core male-oriented societies north of the Black Sea, had a severe taboo against the possession of pigs and any worship of the Goddess. They destroyed any Goddess worshipping peoples whenever they encountered them, according to Herodotus. The Scyths offered every kind of animal to their warrior deity, but pigs were taboo. (Chapter 4) This taboo towards pigs has somehow been preserved in Judaism. Judaism, insofar as it promoted a male high god (as seen in the Bible), would naturally have similarly objected to whatever the female worshipping peoples did. In general as male-oriented warrior peoples of Indo-European origins took control of the Mediterranean, female deities had to be forced into secondary positions

⁶ Proof that the east and southeast coast of the ancient Baltic was Finnic-speaking is abundant for anyone who knows Finnic since it appears everywhere in historic and surviving place and tribe names., but invisible to Slavic, Germanic, or Balt scholars who do not know any Finnic. (The Romanized word "*Aestii*" is in regular Finnic *Ostja* 'merchant (people)' spoken in a high Livonian-like dialect, also apparently Suebic.)

⁷ The Finno-Ugric peoples, like many aboriginal peoples lack gender in their words. Gender in language can only have arisen among a people intensely concerned with animal breeding, after which they begin to see their whole world in terms of a male-female dynamic. Finnic lacks gender so that means they do not have origins in animal breeding, and acquired the practice; whereas Indo-European languages do have gender, and that means they originate from intense animal breeding – probably the breeding of horses.

relative to male deities, reflecting the new social power structure of families in which the male became especially prominent.

By Herodotus time Goddess-worshipping peoples were rare, and even in Egypt this pig sacrifice was feared and being suppressed, which affirms its connection to the female deity. Egypt, originating, they say, in a female-dominated culture, as all very early agricultural cultures were, was becoming a male-oriented society like the rest of the Mediterranean by Herodotus' time.

It would appear, therefore, that ancient Egyptian burnt offering customs such as the burning of the innards of the pig, might have been picked up by Venetic amber traders who visited Egypt, in pre-Greek times (the times of the Pelasgic Greece, Crete, Babylon, Egypt, etc). The traders then carried the custom into the north. OR it began in the north and went south. We must bear in mind that sedentary peoples did not spread cultures: mobile peoples (ie traders) did. And if they did, they spread their own culture or culture that they had absorbed somewhere and then transmitted⁸ in their travels.

Although Tacitus states that the *Aestii* worshipped a deity he perceived of as *Rhea*, through veneration of boars (pigs), are we really talking about the same goddess as the one associated with pigs in the pre-Indo-European Mediterranean? Are we being presumptuous, in linking the coincidence of Tacitus mentioning a boar-cult among the *Aestii*, and the pig-sacrifice in ancient Egypt around the fifth century BC ?

Tacitus failed to describe how the *Aestii* expressed their boar-veneration, other than drawing courage from it in war. What we would have liked was for him to describe pig sacrifice – such as “burning of innards”. He did not. However, there is evidence of it in later historic accounts: In the centuries after Tacitus' observation, the southeast Baltic coast was victim to the turmoils of the first millenium of the modern era, and the original peoples there, those who Tacitus identified as the *Aestii*, were joined by immigrants of Lithuanian tribes from the interior, and a mixed culture developed on the Samland Peninsula with its own mixed dialect. However, even though Tacitus' *Aestii* assimilated into invading Lithuanian tribes on the Samland Peninsula, major *Aestii* customs endured. An account dated to after the Catholic Church had established, in 1531 in connection with the Samland Peninsula, tells of how the people of six communities there were allowed by the priest to kill pigs as offerings and to ceremoniously burn their innards for luck in fishing.⁹ Here we have the practice of burning the innards of a pig, the exact ritual described by Herodotus, here performed perhaps one final time in the 16th century among descendants of the *Aestii* with the permission of the priest. It helps us believe that this was not new, but was being done at the time of Tacitus' writing.

By the second millenium AD the original Finnic populations south of today's Estonia were assimilated (or nearly assimilated in the case of the Livonians), by invaders of Germanic, Slavic, and Balt origins. The southern part of the east Baltic coast, south of Estonia, eventually became politically organized on large scale, with the development of the nations of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. The region of Estonia was lucky in that the native Estonian language endured among feudal peasantry until the feudal system came to an end. Estonian Finnic culture may have survived also because Estonia, having so much coastline, was an extremely maritime place, and the Latvian/Lithuanian tribes had farming traditions (as their original words and mythology

⁸ like for example transmitting the cult of the bull, Taurus, through the Mediterranean. This cult probably originated with southern European hunters who, finding original herds vanishing, began to domesticate and artifically breed and promote the most managable of herd animals (cattle)

⁹ Source: attributed to *Amelung, Baltische* . . . , p 307 in footnote p36-37, M.J Eisen, *Esivanemate Ohverdämised* , a new printing, Tallinn, 1996

shows) and lacked the enthusiasm for the sea found in a culture with the seafaring and trading traditions.

But was the event at the Samland Peninsula the last in the custom described by Herodotus? Along with the continuation of the Estonian language and customs among the peasantry in the Estonian area, after the arrival of foreigners and Christianity, it appears offering of pigs continued in altered form, and was even condoned by the Church until about the 18th century! How? The Catholic Church defined St. Anthony as the guardian of pigs, and because of it, the clergy discovered that when they created cemeteries in the name of St. Anthony, they were able to draw the Estonian peasants' custom to the cemeteries, bringing pigs as offerings in celebrations to St. Anthony, on St. Anthony's day, followed by feasting on the pig.

It is well-known that Christianity tolerated 'pagan' practices, as long as they were re-directed to the Christian religion. *Rhea*, REIA, was thus replaced by Saint Anthony. Is it also possible that the city of Riga, Latvia, originally a Livonian region, originates as "*Reia*"? Did the Church who built a mission there in the 12th century do it there deliberately and call it that, to appropriate the ancient Aestic most significant deity? (Does anyone have any evidence? Estonians have never known that town as "Riga" even though it is not difficult to say it. It has always been *Rii'a*.)

Did the Mother Goddess vanish that easily in the east Baltic? No. Folk religion affirms that there was a strong sense in the Estonian countryside of *maa-ema* 'mother of the land'. By coincidence, the Catholic Church could present Mary, the mother of Christ, which in Latin – which the Catholic Church used – was expressed as *Maria*. This word could be interpreted as *maa* ('land') plus REIA, RIIA. Accordingly, the Church's *Maria* could be viewed as 'REIA of the land'. In any case for a time (before Estonia became Lutheranized) Estonia was known to the Church as "Maria's Land". Elsewhere too in the world, where the Mother Goddess was still strong among the people owing to a pre-Indo-European legacy still alive, such as in originally Iberian Spain, *Maria* similarly became the replacement for a prior female deity.

But that is not the end of my discoveries!

Besides the offering of the pig and feasting on it, there was another activity that endured, also described by Herodotus. Note in the quote from Herodotus given above: *The poorer sort, who cannot afford live pigs, form pigs of dough, which they bake and offer in sacrifice.*

M.J Eisen¹⁰ wrote that among the Estonians during this period of venerating St. Anthony with pig sacrifices: *Poorer people offered, in the absence of a real pig, a symbolic hog, made out of bread* (p 36) (Note Eisen himself seemed unaware of Herodotus describing the same burning of innards or making a bread pig, and these are original discoveries made here by us - AP.)¹¹

When the Catholicism with all its saints, was replaced by Lutheranism, the pig offering custom was transferred to the nearest Lutheran day next to Saint Anthony's day – Christmas, and continued with the feasting on pork. In general the modern practice of a roast pig or at least ham at Christmas throughout Scandinavia must have roots in the veneration of *Rhea* via pigs. If the Grimm brothers found the legend of *Freya and the Boars*, then the practice must have existed in southern Scandinavia too before the Gothic expansion from the interior of Germany, which eventually displaced the original Suebic language.

¹⁰ M.J Eisen, *Esivanemate Ohverdämised*, a new printing, Tallinn, 1996

¹¹ The fact that these last Eisen pig offering references relate to Estonia, which is towards the north part of the east Baltic coast, some distance from the Samland Peninsula and ancient *Aestii*, tends to prove that the Estonians, who have called themselves *Eesti* as far back as memory and history reaches, were part of the same culture as the ancient *Aestii*. However, evidence suggest the *Eesti* were located from West Estonia southward, while north Estonia on the Gulf of Finland were the Viru, Viro who were oriented east-west in the Gulf of Finland and hence spoke a language closer to Finnish – the result being that modern standard Estonian is a mixture of East Baltic Finnic and Gulf of Finland Finnic, something that shows up especially in some alternative forms in grammar.

2.3 Sanctuaries and How *Rhea* Was Worshipped

Little is known about how Estonians worshipped in ancient times, as the Church made great efforts to stamp out their “pagan” religion. But folkloric evidence shows that Estonians had *püha hiis* literally ‘sacred grove’, which were parklike religious places with offering stones. While the Estonian word *hiis* means ‘grove’ the word *hiieala*, has a more general religious meaning of ‘underworld’, suggesting an original spiritual meaning. I believe that the word HIIS originally meant the same as **.i.io.s.** in Venetic and referred to an eternal place. This place was not really under the ground. Humans have always naturally seen death as a sleep and hence the place they went was the same place one goes when dreaming. That place is not in any location we can understand in terms of our wakeful world. According to Estonian folk religion, Estonians believed living things had two components. One component, the spirit, was like a spark that came and went from above. The other component, the soul, came and went from this dream world, also seen as a kind of a womb.

The *Veneti* had sanctuaries, and archeologists found one with a great number of texts praying to the Goddess at the Baratela site near Ester. According to ancient Latin and Greek authors, the sanctuaries in the north Adriatic landscape were found in every context. There were sanctuaries in a natural state often fenced in to define their boundaries, or located in important urban places – marketplaces, ports, etc. There were public sanctuaries associated with political and military centers in a region. Communities too might establish sanctuaries in association with natural features like springs. Sanctuaries would be physically defined by fences or walls to set them apart from the regular urban environment. Inside the sanctuary space one would find the facilities – including pillars, statues, pedestals, etc - for practicing the religion whether it be processions, rituals, prayers, offerings. Gifts and offerings, including sacrifices, accumulated in such places.

Permanent temple structures were only built in more important sanctuaries in the larger cities. Religious rituals carried out at the sanctuaries included purification rituals involving liquids, and sacrifices of animals to deities. Such institutions are not unusual for the ancient world. Before Christianity, animal sacrifice was common. Its origins were probably in the act of slaughtering a farm animal for food. Making it religious made it easier to perform the slaughter, perhaps.

It is important to bear in mind that making an offering involved burning; hence there would be references in the inscriptions to sending an offering towards the deity via the smoke. In addition, material goods could be left as well as gifts. Since archeology has found styluses in large quantity, we can presume that the visitors came, wrote a message onto the thin bronze sheet at an altar, and then left the stylus behind. Since the styluses were used to write messages, they did not need to have messages on them, themselves. But a good number of them do have inscriptions. The stylus with the message on it, would then be left at a special location designed to receive the material goods. Perhaps these material offerings were used to fund the operation of the sanctuary?

It is important for us to be able to picture the practices in order to interpret the inscriptions correctly.

2.4 Some Conclusions About Links In Religion Between North and South

To conclude, it is quite likely that the goddess REIA was actually born among the sea-trading peoples of northern Europe in the Bronze Age. She may have reached the Mediterranean through earlier stages of north-south trade via the Rhine-Rhone, or Atlantic. Once in the Mediterranean, spread by sea-peoples, she would have become an established pre-Greek goddess

of the seafaring Cretans and their contacts. This point of view proposes that the language of the seafaring was of Finnic origins. While it is difficult to prove, there is the very strong fact that the only long distance transportation was by water highways which needed peoples with not only skills with making and using boats, but had thousands of years of experience being nomadic. That was the case with north European aboriginal hunter-gatherers, who were born in the meltwaters of the Ice Age glaciers. While anyone can argue that individuals in farming peoples could have changed professions, it was difficult to do so especially when children were raised to the culture into which they were born. The only way the Indo-European people could acquire seafarers was by having the real seafarers change their language (As was the case for example the famous Vikings becoming speakers of a Germanic language)

The connection between the north and the ancient *Veneti* at the Adriatic is already suggested by the connections in the amber trade (discussed elsewhere) and here we are finding that *Rhea* did exist in an original form in the north, and could clearly have travelled south, along with the northern language, to be established in the Adriatic *Veneti* as well. But can we also find in the Adriatic *Veneti* veneration of *Rhea*, a connection to the boars as indicated by Tacitus?

There appears to be something that might show a boar: The following is an illustration of a Venetic votive disc found at Montebelluna from the 4th century BC located in the Civic Museum of Treviso. It is believed it depicts the goddess *Rhea*. Note the animals in front of her and behind. Behind her is some kind of water bird. What is the male animal in front of her? Some may think it is a dog or wolf. But if so it is poorly done. Look at the hairless tail. How many dogs have a short, thin, hairless tail? If it really is a badly drawn dog, we have to wonder why that is depicted. Maybe the woman is not *Rhea*, but simply a depiction of a woman in daily life?

Figure 1



Venetic votive disc found at Montebelluna is thought to depict the Goddess. The animal to the left may be a badly drawn wolf. But it could also be a badly drawn boar. Note how badly drawn the bird behind her is so the artist clearly has little understanding of animal anatomy

The following summarizes the connections we can make between the northern origins of the amber trade, and the north Italic region and the ancient *Veneti*:

- a) between *Aestii* and *Suebi* and amber trade south to the *Veneti*
 - b) between *Rhea* and *Aestii* (and *Suebi* via the later myths of *Freya*)
 - c) the association of *Rhea* with boars in the north seems to have some parallel in the south – at least in ancient Egypt via Herodotus writing.
 - d) between *Aestii* and *Eesti* (Estonians)
 - e) between *Eesti* and the pig-veneration customs
- etc.

This is typical detective work of the kind used by archeologists, which leads to strengthening a connection between Finnic and Venetic languages. While it does not help us decipher the Venetic, what it does, it **increases the validity of making references to Estonian**, and secondarily other Baltic coast Finnic languages like Livonian and Finnish.

According to principles of science, the more coincidences point to the same explanation, the more probably that explanation is correct. This is the principle upon which judging innocence and guilt in a court of law is based – the preponderance of evidence. Anyone familiar with deductions based on evidence, like archeologists, will recognize how remarkable the preceding coincidences are.

3. OBJECTS BROUGHT TO BE BURNED SO THAT THE SMOKE UNITES WITH *RHEA* IN THE SKY

3.1 How **re.i.tiia.i.** is **re.i.a** (goddess *Rhea*) plus Grammatical Endings

In the Venetic inscriptions *Rhea* appears in **re.i.** within the word **re.i.tiia.i.** We thus have a stem, and the remainder **-tiia.i.** are endings. The following looks at the words more closely.

First we note the double **ii**, which occurs significantly often as an infix in the inscriptions that we decided it was an emphasis or lengthening that could mean exaggeration ‘to extend towards’ (in extreme way?). Although I decided it was an infix and called it “Iiative”, given that I proposed Venetic writing was literally phonetic, the doubling of the I could simply represent a natural emphasizing. (Like for example how in Estonian *isand* ‘paternal entity’ when emphasized on the S becomes *issand* ‘lord, god’). In Venetic we could maybe have **vo.i.tio** meaning ‘vault’ (of a room) and **vo.i.tiio** meaning ‘the whole dome of the universe overhead’

Returning to the components of the word **re.i.tiia.i.** next, we have what we determined in our analysis to be a Partitive (**v.i.**). It is added here to the Iiative.

The final issue lies in the “T” between **re.i.** and **ii.a.i.** The answer may be quite simple. As I already pointed out earlier, if the stem is **re.i-** and we added **-ii.a.i.** we would get **re.iiia.i** - far too many vowels! A “T” had to be inserted purely for phonetic reasons. This occurs in Finnish. When in adding endings beginning in vowels to stems that already end in vowels, Finnish adds consonants like T, J, or H. Estonian similarly introduces a consonant in such a situation. It is not peculiar.

Thus if we now insert a T between the stem **re.i-** and **ii.a.i.** we get exactly what we are looking for - **re.i.tiia.i.** The meaning would be something like ‘to extent (ii) to unite (v.i. – Partitive in a dynamic sense as discussed earlier) with *Rhea*’.

3.2 Interpreting - mego dona.s.to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tia.i.

So far we have established the identity of the Goddess and above proposed that **re.i.tia.i.** was composed of **re.i** the stem for *Rhea*, and endings **ii** plus **a.i.** with a T inserted for phonetic reasons.

The major phrase in the inscriptions of prayer to *Rhea*, as I mentioned above is **mego dona.s.to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tia.i.** Sometimes one or another of these words is not present, but implied. I said above that traditional analysis that assumed Venetic was Latin-like took **dona.s.to** to be like Latin *donato* 'donate, give' and *mego* to be as in Latin *ego* 'I'. Giving the result '*I give.....to shining (or sacred) Reitia*'. I added that my result was '*Our (formal My) brought-item.....to unite with You, in the character of the Gods, to unite with Rhea*' This is literal so as to break down the elements into their truest meaning, but the actual translation in meaning is in the sense of '*Our offeringto join the divine Rhea*'

Those who approached Venetic arbitrarily (no solid reason to do so) as if it was archaic Latin, were convinced it was Latin because of similarities of **dona.s.to** with *donato*, and some other words. How could it not be Latin, they asked. But Latin did not arrive into an empty land. Latin entered lands of NON-Indo-European languages such as Etruscan and Ligurian. The word *donato* may actually be NON-Indo-European and possibly Etruscan. River names of the form DAN, DON, DANUS, etc must have come from pre-Indo-European boat-using Europe, and not from the settled farmers. If we wish to find non-Indo-European in Latin words, one source of information is Basque. The other still-existing non-Indo-European languages today are of course Finnic, which ranges from the Saami of northern Scandinavia to the Baltic Finnic languages – Estonian, Finnish, Karelian, Livonian, Votic, etc. The meaning of DO, DA, etc is best seen in Estonian *too*, Finnish *tuo* meaning 'bring'. It must be a very very old stem. For example the Danube is first documented by Romans as *Danubius* (Latinized) which can be seen originating from DAN-ABA, DAN-OBA etc. It is obviously based on DO 'bring' and OBA, ABA, etc meaning river (actually estuary, but large rivers viewed at the mouth, were all seen as estuaries – see also Basque for 'river'.) In any case, from Estonian *too* 'bring', one can get *toonustus* 'something brought' which suits **dona.s.to**, and yet is not from Latin.

Those scholars who quickly assumed Venetic was an archaic Latin from the word **dona.s.to** and a few other coincidences, never considered how Latin acquired plenty of non-Indo-European influences from Etruscan or even *Veneti* already established in the Italic Peninsula. A similar mistake is made by linguists of the Germanic languages. When they find a word both in Germanic language and Finnic languages, they patronizingly assume Finnic languages borrowed it from Germanic, when in fact the Finnic languages, in originating in aboriginal languages, preceded the original Germanic language. In general there is always this strange assumption that there was nobody in Europe before the Indo-Europeans arrived!!!

Thus Latin contains many borrowed words, borrowed from the indigenous pre-Indo-European languages. When a word is borrowed, the borrower usually gives it their own meaning. For example the relationship between *Veneti* and Latin *vendo* 'sell' could be based on the fact that the *Veneti* appeared at Latin or Etruscan markets and were sellers of goods there. Similarly when someone brings something, it is a gift to whoever receives it; hence *toonustus* will be interpreted by the receiver as 'gift, donation', hence explaining Latin *donatio*, rather than by its real meaning - 'something brought'.

Is it possible that the stem **\$a.i.n-** too could have originated in the pre-Indo-European languages, and then a form of it adopted into Indo-European, in a slightly altered meaning? Indo-Europeans could have seen non-Indo-Europeans using the term when addressing the sun-god that dominated Europe during the Bronze Age, and it would have seemed to promote the idea of

‘shining’ in the minds of Indo-European observers.¹² But what did the word **\$a.i.n-** mean originally in the pre-Indo-European? Let us investigate, with the help of Etruscan and Estonian, the question of what **\$a.i.nate.i.** most probably meant.

The highest probability – based on ancient texts in which gods are addressed – is that **\$a.i.nate.i** was an expression in which one humbles oneself before the god. All religious texts present the sentiments of ‘supreme’, ‘almighty’, ‘master’, ‘lord’, ‘supreme father’, etc. For this reason alone we must put aside something like ‘shining’ found in Indo-European, as having a low probability of being correct here, while meanings that flatter or honour the deity, have a much higher probability of being correct because we actually find them in ancient texts in which gods are addressed. In other words, it is human nature that a deity would be honoured in words as well as actions and not simply given a descriptive adjective.

The word stem **\$a.i.na** seems to have deep, widespread, pre-Indo-European origins, which means it was spread, as was *Rhea*, via long distance traders. We discover in a lexicon of Etruscan words the word *ais, eis* (pl. *aisar, eisar*), meaning ‘god’, serving also as a stem for *aisna, eisna*, adjective meaning ‘divine, of the gods’. (Many Etruscan words have been identified thanks to parallel texts in Phoenician.) the *Veneti* borrowed the Etruscan alphabet and no doubt also ways in which the Etruscans used writing in funerary and votive matters.

Let us also look at Finnic words. Let’s see what Estonian offers that might shed light on this word.

Let’s consider the strongly established modern Estonian word *issand*. The Estonian term *issand*, meaning ‘lord’, is an emphasis of *isand* ‘father figure’. Used in recent times in Christianity in the address *Issand Jumal* ‘Lord God’, it was probably used before Christianity to address an earlier god. As discussed earlier, the Venetic character that looks like an M, (which we write as **\$**) could be interpreted as ISS- (as in English *hiss*), and it makes *issand* start to resemble **\$a.i.nate.i**. The stem of *issand* would be *issa-* and the *-nd* suffix can be interpreted loosely as ‘entity, something’. But we can add other endings to the stem and *issana* would be ‘in the form of Lord’ which is exactly like Etruscan *aisna*. This is a start. We can now proceed to decipher the rest of the word.

According to Tacitus the *Aestii* “worshipped the mother of the gods” which to a Roman would have been *Rhea*. Did the *Aestii* say *Issand Reia* (‘Lord *Rhea*’)? Or even more elaborately *Issand Teie Reia* (‘Your Lordship *Rhea*’)? But you could also say *Issana Teie Reia*. If you pluralized it, then it becomes *Issaina Teie Reia*. (‘Thou, in the form of the deities, *Rhea*’). All that is necessary now is the ending that traditional Latin approaches have decided was a Dative, but which with much cross-checking I decided was a kind of dynamic Partitive. If a regular Partitive means ‘part of’ the dynamic one means ‘becoming part of’ as in ‘join, unite with’ as a religious person might say – ‘unite with God’.

The past Latin approach got a close result with the Dative because of the obvious context of giving suggested even by assuming *donato*. But Dative means to give in an abstract sense. The intended idea is that the offering – the thing brought – becomes one with *Rhea*, as opposed to handing her something as if she was a person.

This Dative is the only case ending past Latin approach analysis got right. If you are well versed in the results of the Latin-like Indo-European approach as documented by Lejeune and then read my summary of Venetic grammar in the last chapters of ***THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL*** you will see that the skeletal grammar in LeJeune mostly involves projecting Indo-European onto the Venetic where there are only one or two ‘examples’, and incorrectly deciding *-na* endings are a gender marker.

¹² Since Estonian is filled with words with stem of the form HEL(G), it is easy to accept that the sun-god was called HEL(G), and this was corrupted here and there to BEL(G). The name *Belgae* probably originated from it.

Since all languages have repeating grammatical endings, it is possible for any language to try to find their own grammatical endings in those repeat patterns in the other language. Unless the grammar described is thorough and can be demonstrated with many examples in the Venetic (as I did), the grammar is little better than fiction.

3.2.1 Interpreting - **meگو**

Traditionally, Venetic interpreters have decided that the first word **meگو** meant ‘I’. This assumes it is of Indo-European origin in the form of an archaic Latin.

If we did not make such an initial assumption, and consider the perhaps Venetic was not Indo-European, we could first look at Etruscan, where we find *mech* ‘people, league’. And there is Etruscan *mi, mini* ‘I, me’. Since the *Veneti* borrowed and modified the Etruscan alphabet, one would think scholars would first look at Etruscan. They didn’t and as a result they slowly indoctrinated themselves into believing it was a predecessor to Latin – without having any reason for it other than a whole crowd of linguistic scholars who knew Latin were pursuing Venetic with Latin. (Fads get going in the academic world too, and there is no stopping the silliness!)

We can look at other non-Indo-European languages too. Both the Etruscan interpretations have close parallels in modern Estonian where we have *mehed* ‘men’, and *mina* ‘I, me’. The similarities to Etruscan reveal how ancient Estonian belonged to the broader world of pre-Indo-European language. (Archeologically speaking I think there is reason to believe that Etruscan too began with trader people coming down from the north, but in their case coming down via the Rhine and Rhone, maybe around 2000BC, and their language drifting away from the northern Finnic (I use the term ‘Finnic’ loosely to refer to the original people, whose most westerly today are the Saami)

The above references might suggest the meaning of **meگو** is something like ‘men’, but my analysis of the inscriptions, where **dona.s.to** is a noun, does not allow ‘(we) men offer...’ The most appropriate approach seems to be via the word for ‘I, we’ but in possessive.

The most interesting non-Indo-European and Finnic coincidence for **meگو** is Livonian *meeg*. This is the 1st person plural pronoun (‘we’). In Estonian this pronoun is *meie*. In Finnish the nominative is *me*, and then the stem becomes *mei-*, the “I” coming from the I-plural marker. Finnish a very good in catching older forms as Finnish retains older features of Finnic. This suggests that the form *meie* is closer to the original, and that the “G” entered into the I-position. Can we interpret **meگو** as a Royal ‘Our’ (ie ‘Our’ representing ‘My’). This would be consistent with addressing the deity with formality and respect – using the plural in both first and second person pronouns even if it is singular. That gives us ‘Our/my brought-thing (offering) to join with the Almighty *Rhea*’

3.2.2 Interpreting – **dona.s.to**

I have already discussed **dona.s.to** a little above.

If we entertain the notion that Venetic was Finnic, there are many approaches to **dona.s.to** based on what has survived in Estonian and Finnish in terms of similar sounding words. First there is *toonustus* ‘something brought’, based on *too* ‘bring’ (Finnish *tuo*) Next there is a version with the lower vowel - Estonian *tunnistus* ‘acknowledgement’. This is based on the verb *tundma-* ‘to know’, and could work too. Thirdly Estonian has *teenistus* ‘service’, based on *teeni* ‘earn’ which in turn is somehow related to either *tee* ‘do’ or *tõõ* ‘work’. This word is commonly applied in religious terms as in *Jumala teenistus* ‘service of God’. This last one is interesting because **donasto** appears in the inscriptions mostly in the context of a prayer to a deity.

Some of these T+vowel words in Estonian obviously refer to the relationship between a worker and his master, including the master being a deity. To that theme we can add *tõota* ‘pledge, promise’ from *tõo-* ‘truth’, from which we could derive *tõondus* ‘the pledged thing’. Finnish offers an array of possibilities too, but based on **tuo** ‘bring’

With so many options, many of them fitting so well into **me go dona.s.to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i.**, how do we decide which Finnic word is applicable? We already know from context that it refers to the offering, but the reason for looking at Finnic too, is always to fine tune the meaning so that the results are not vague. We cannot determine a refined meaning directly from the inscriptions. The inscriptions roughly suggest the concept of ‘offering’. But an ‘offering’ can have many connotations – something brought, act of service, a pledge, etc.

From among all the Finnic possibilities, we note that parallel words in both Finnish and Estonian are indicative of origins in a common ancient language, and Finnish has changed less due to being more remote. Finnish has *tuo-* ‘bring’. It also uses the stem in trade terms such as *tuote* ‘product’, or *tuonti* ‘import’. The latter gives the idea of ‘object brought’. The evidence thus suggests the TUO- words were established in pre-Indo-European Europe, long before Latin and at least contemporary with Venetic. Finnish also has words to parallel Estonian *tee-* ‘do’ in Finnish *teh/d* ‘to do’. There is also the associated parallel to Estonian *tõõ* ‘work’ in Finnish *työ*. Thus all these options with Finnish and Estonian parallels have great age dating to the common origins of both.

What is the solution if we assume Venetic is Finnic and draw our clues from Estonian and Finnish?

As we will find many times, to make a final decision, the best way is to note that throughout the inscriptions Estonian parallels have a slight tendency to use lower vowel tone than Venetic. In my study I saw this kind of thing where we had to lower the vowel level in Suebic names to detect the Estonian parallels. Thus if Venetic presents **dona.s.to**, then theoretically the Estonian, with lower vowel tone, should be something like - lowering all vowels by one grade - DUNOSTU. That might suggest Estonian *tunnistus* ‘acknowledgement’ instead of *toonustus*. However note that the Finnish form for *too* is *tuo*, with the lower vowel U. Also the Estonian infinitive of *too* is *tuua*, indicating an origin in the lower vowel. To conclude, when we look at Finnish words beginning with TUO, like *tuonti*, we indeed see the lower vowel U, and we can presume that Estonian once said *tuonustus*, not *toonustus*. This then satisfies the ideal of the Estonian version having lower vowel level than Venetic, found often elsewhere in the inscriptions. And finally even if *tunnistus* is closer, that derived word works too, as the way in which the Venetic is written, **dona.s.to** could mean ‘something brought in acknowledgement’.

Thus Estonian *toonustus* is most applicable. It would mean ‘something brought’. But in English that sounds awkward and in our interpretations we will often interpret **dona.s.to** with ‘offering’ when the connotation is actually ‘brought thing’ (‘Offering’, has a more active connotation. If the object brought is only to join with *Rhea*, there is no offering and no Dative case. If the object is burnt and transmitted to *Rhea* via smoke, well you are not directly offering her the item burnt, but sending her the smoke to join her – which in that context further explains why a kind of dynamic Partitive is required.)

Now since Venetic also presents other versions based on the same stem, like **doto** and **donum** let’s break it down further.

To begin with we need to identify the Venetic stem **do-** ‘bring’. From this using Estonian grammatical parallels, **doto** would be a Past Participle (Est *toodu*) and **donum** another nominalized form ‘brought thing’ From the breakdown of Estonian *toonustus*, thus **do-na-s.to** would literally mean ‘something arising from the nature of bringing.’ In short ‘a brought thing’. Obviously the English translation ‘offering’ is less cumbersome in English, therefore bear in

mind that when we interpret it as ‘offering’, that is strictly incorrect as it is really speaking about that which the pilgrim brings to turn into ash for the ground and smoke to join *Rhea* up in the sky.

3.2.3 Interpreting – **\$a.i.nate.i.**

The interpretation of initial Venetic M-like letter in **\$a.i.nate.i.**, as the sound “ISS” (as in English *hiss*) and not as “SH” as traditional Venetic scholars say, was discussed above.

The Estonian word *issand*, today used under Christianity to address the Lord God, is the perfect reference with which to interpret the Venetic **\$a.i.nate.i.** We mentioned it already earlier. Here is some more analysis:

Estonian identifies the suffix *-nd* to mean something like ‘entity’. The stem *isa-* and its emphasized *issa-* could originate from the fluid concept ‘big, large’ especially since there exists in Finnish *iso*. Thus adding *-nd* would give it the intrinsic meaning of ‘large entity’, ‘important entity’; however in Estonian *isand* actually means ‘father-entity’ and *issand* ‘lord, master’ (ie ‘highest father’).

We propose that the Venetic **\$a-** as the stem, is paralleled by the Estonian *issa-* ‘lord’ We note that the Etruscan *ais-* or *eis-* for ‘lord, god’ is surprisingly similar. Etruscan forms an adjective using *-na*, as in *eisna* ‘lordly, divine’. This ending resembles Finnic Essive case (*-na* ‘as’, ‘in the nature, form, of’) and Estonian can form *issana*, ‘in the form of lord’. We can add an “I” to *issa-* to form the plural stem *issai-*. From this we get *issaina-* ‘in the form of the lords (ie gods)’. (Grammatical note: Estonian and Finnish mark the plural with “T” or “I,J” depending on surrounding environment of vowels and consonants, and as we proceed in interpreting Venetic we find a high probability that Venetic is similar in this way in its pluralization. It is possible **\$at** ‘gods’ but when an added *-na* was added, it was phonetically better to have **\$a.i.na** instead of **\$atna**

Thus if the letter shown as **\$** discussed earlier sounds like “ISS”, then the Venetic **\$a.i.na-** is “ISSAINA-” which is interpretable with Estonian to mean ‘in the form of the lords’

Finally we have the **te.i.** Although there might be a couple of alternative approaches, my inclination is to regard **te.i.** as a separate word, a pronoun meaning ‘you’ (Estonian *teie*), because history is filled with examples of higher powers being addressed by “Your Highness, Your Lordship, etc” This is a case where we use the context of the sentence to assist making final decisions. Thus **\$a.i.na te.i.** can be interpreted ‘to You, in the form of the Lords (Gods)’, It resonates very well with Estonian such as *Issaina Teie* In modern Estonian style, however, which prefers the T plural, one is likely to hear (if it is every spoken!) *Issadena Teie*

Note that the *Teie* word is in the dynamic Partitive so to be literal it would actually be ‘*To join with You (who are) in the form of the Gods; to join immense Rhea*’ (Finnic repeats case endings when there is modification)

The intended meaning could be expressed in many ways ‘to you, as one of the gods’, ‘to you in godly form’, ‘to you, of the godly ones’, or simply ‘your godliness’ or ‘your lordship’. In this study we will keep it simple ‘to you, of the gods’. In our interpretations we will simplify the English, but the reader must remember the above literal interpretation as it demonstrates just how reverent the ideas behind it are.

What is satisfying about this result is that it is consistent with what we know about ancient ways of addressing gods and lords. Ancient text is filled with ‘Your Highness’, ‘Your Lordship’, ‘Your Worship’, and so on. Thus **\$a.i.na te.i.** has too many remarkable coincidences with Estonian, Finnish, and even Etruscan to dismiss it.

3.2.4 Interpreting – **re.i.tiia.i.**

This word was already analyzed above in section 3.1.. We can proceed to a final analysis:

3.2.5 Interpreting **ALL OF IT: mego dona.s.to\$a.i.na te.i. re.i.tiia.i.** *Our brought-thing (to be burnt)to (unite with) You of the gods, Rhea.*

Note that in our analysis we have used Etruscan, Estonian and Finnish to refine our meanings – and to discover just how reverent it is, and how consistent it is with the idea of sending smoke from a burnt offering to unite with *Rhea*, rather than to give her something tangible.

If we did not have the evidence from Etruscan and Estonian we can still say that the expression is about the pilgrim to the sanctuary coming with something that is then offered to *Rhea*. We can also deduce that the expression **\$a.i.na te.i.** has to be a modifier of the goddess, which from tradition is probably a praiseful address. Without any reference to known languages, we can still sense that it means something like ‘*My/Our offeringto Devine Rhea*’. Estonian and Etruscan simply act as added evidence which, if correct, refines the meaning into a form in which we can even break it down into its grammatical structure. Our ability to rationalize the word stems and grammar serve as strong evidence of being correct.

4. WHAT DO THEY SAY ? DECIPHERING SOME EXAMPLES

4.1 Introduction

The Baratela sanctuary archeological site near Este is one of two major sites of Venetic inscriptions. At the Baratela site a large number of bronze sheets and styluses were found, inscribed with Venetic writing often addressing the “reitia” or, according to my analysis, actually the original *Rhea*.

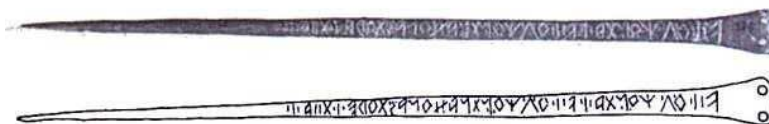
To understand the use of these special bronze sheets we have to try to imagine the practices at the sanctuary. According to ancient Latin and Greek authors, the sanctuaries in the north Adriatic landscape included groves in a natural state often fenced in to define their boundaries. Inside the sanctuaries space one would find the facilities – including pillars, statues, pedestals, etc – for practicing the religion whether it be processions, rituals, prayers, burnt offerings. Permanent temple structures were only built in more important sanctuaries in the larger cities. Religious rituals carried out at the sanctuaries included purification rituals involving liquids, and sacrifices of animals to deities. There were sanctuaries associated with important urban places – marketplaces, ports, etc. There were public sanctuaries associated with political and military centers in a region. Communities too might establish sanctuaries in association with natural features like springs. Ceremonies and rituals were carried out at sanctuaries. It was something like an outdoor church.

The first question is whether the skill of writing belonged to a special priestly class. If it was, then the behaviour at the sanctuary was strictly overseen. But I don’t think so, simply because it was expensive to create an institution of priests to oversee religious practices. It seems to me that the sanctuaries were like parks or cemeteries – people went there to express their religious needs. But could ordinary people master Venetic writing? As I argued in *HOW VENETIC SOUNDED A New Interpretation of the Dots in Ancient Venetic Inscriptions, and Resulting Phonetics* elsewhere in the Mediterranean such as with Etruscans and Greeks, writing was applied to all possible used. (For example there are several hand mirrors with scenes depicting Hercules on the one side, and a text on the other that describe the scene – clearly not intended as a religious, but

practical and novelty object with writing added to increase its saleability.) In my theory about the dots in the writing, proposed that the dots were added as an all purpose phonetic marker for tongue actions (mainly palatalization) that alter the sound of the letter from its clean, normal, form. This was so easy that anyone could master it – you simply added a dot around any letter sound that was altered by tongue action. Even a child could master it.

If Venetic was easy to learn, then it could be learned by anyone with no more difficulty than a child can learn writing text today. This means that the styluses and writing prayers onto bronze sheets was for all pilgrims, and the operators of the sanctuary helped pilgrims how to write their messages – or gave them styluses with messages already on the styluses – which were left at a place where offerings were collected. And that can also explain why some ‘teaching’ or ‘practice’ sheets were found at that location. They were intended to teach those pilgrims to the sanctuary who wanted to write their prayers, how to do so. An alternative view is that there were student priests practicing the writing, but I have come to the final conclusion that there was no priestly class – other than some people taking care of the sanctuary location. But it could have varied from one sanctuary to another, according to the wealth of the surrounding society that used it.

Figure 2



Example inscribed styluses used to inscribe messages on thin bronze sheets

Past analysis of the inscriptions at Baratela that has assumed arbitrarily that the language was a Latin-like Indo-European language, would notice the structure **me go dona.s.to\$a.i.na te.i. re.i.tiia.i.** and immediately hear something (even in modern English!!!) that sounds like ‘Me (I) donate ...to shining Reitia’. This shows just how easy it is to ‘prove’ Venetic was just about any language, if the analyst does not pursue close matching of words, nor identify the grammar – but let us not discuss the silly ‘hearing things’ approaches of analysis of the past. What we want to point out in this discussion of Rhea, is that because of the coincidence, already earlier, analysts decided that there was a goddess called “Reitia”, and that most messages at Baratela are directed at a goddess. Accordingly, the Baratela finds are considered to have been used at a “sanctuary to Reitia”.

But as I showed above, the actual meaning of **me go dona.s.to\$a.i.na te.i. re.i.tiia.i.** is literally: *Our brought-thing (to be burnt)to (unite with) You of the gods, Rhea.* In this case it is fully rationalized, grammar identified.

Most of the inscriptions addressing Rhea were found on the styluses, and only a few on the bronze sheets into which the styluses pressed the prayers. The reason is obvious – thin, almost foil-like bronze sheets were so thin, they could not survive long in the ground, compared to the solid styluses. I think also that the foil sheets were treated like paper – restored to a blank sheet to be reused. In my search for complete sentences, I only found one such bronze sheet that looked like it was one of the sheets onto which the messages were written using a stylus.

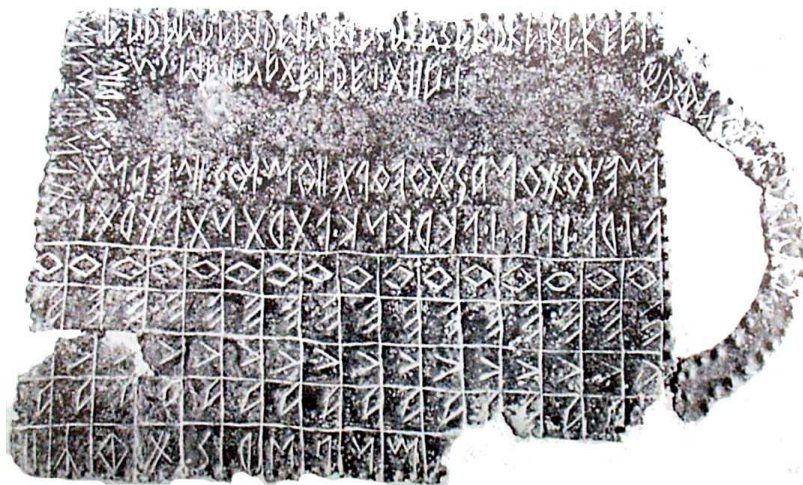
Figure 3



6.A) vda.m.v.i.ugia.u.r.kle.i.na|re.i.tie.i.dona.s.to - [MLV-28, LLV-Es47]¹³

The rest were unusual sheets that repeated the letters O-E-K-A. The illustration below shows the best example of the several such sheets that have been found. Note how the lower half is scored and how the four upper squares contain (reading downward) the letters O-E-K-A and each of these ends with the letters of the Venetic alphabet. It is as if these sheets were teaching sheets, with the OEKA grid at the bottom showing how each of the letters should be written and then providing the space above to practice writing a message.

Figure 4



[ref: MLV 10 ; LLV Es25]

A PRACTICE BRONZE SHEET?

Shown above is one of several bronze sheets found at Baratela which appear to have been designed for teaching Venetic writing. Of particular interest is the repetition of the characters for "O" "E" "K" "A" followed by one of the Venetic characters. The 6 missing letters of the bottom right are probably P, H, V, T, U, I, J as the remainder are in OEKA itself.

¹³ The numbers 6A and the MLV and LLV numbers identify the archeological office as use in **THE VENETIC LANGUAGE An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL**

4.2 Connecting the OEKA Repetition to Teaching Practices

We see in the bronze sheet in the illustration, the Venetic characters in the lower region scored into a grid of squares (from top to bottom) in what looks like “O” “E” “K” “A” followed by a different letter of the Venetic alphabet (The bottom row in the illustration above). The question arises, why are the top four characters, OEKA, repeated over and over?

This is a question that has puzzled analysts for years, and there have been several ideas. But none of the ideas offers anything believable. I will proceed to my own explanation because it *IS* believable, even common sense!

My own explanation of the OEKA repetitions, is that it seems that the repetition is a kind of educational repetition. In education it is common to repeat, such as “2 times 2 equals 4; 2 times 3 equals 6 ; 2 times 4 equals 8; etc”. When I was studying French, the teacher wanted students even stating the name of the grammatical ending before giving it. It seems this kind of repetition for education is quite natural to human nature.

In Estonian tradition it is common in studying the language to be attentive to the ‘correct way’ of speaking. Hence Estonian dictionaries and grammar, have been fond of the terminology *õige keelsus* ‘correct way of speaking’, ‘proper language’ If we assume this phraseology could have existed 2000 years ago, we can regard the letters OEKA as being equivalent to Estonian *õige* ‘correct’. The antiquity of this word seems to be affirmed by its strong presence in Finnish too as *oikea*. (When a word stem is found in both Estonian and Finnish, it can very well be more than 2000 years old.) Perhaps the Finnish form can be seen to be the original form, and both the Venetic and Estonian, simplifications as in OIKEA > ÕIGE and OIKEA > OEKA

At the end of each OEKA is one of the Venetic characters. Thus what we see here is something analogous to the Estonian ‘*õige A, õige B,...*’ translating as ‘The correct (way of writing) A, the correct B, etc’

<u>Finnish</u>	<u>Estonian</u>	<u>Venetic</u>
<i>oikea a</i>	<i>õige a</i>	<i>oeka a</i>
<i>oikea b</i>	<i>õige b</i>	<i>oeka b</i>
<i>oikea d</i>	<i>õige d</i>	<i>oeka d</i>
<i>oikea e</i>	<i>õige e</i>	<i>oeka e</i>
<i>- etc -</i>	<i>- etc -</i>	<i>- etc -</i>

Similarities of Finnic words for ‘correct a,b,c, etc’ to Venetic oeka: A coincidence? Or was the Venetic oeka doing the same thing for student writing practice?

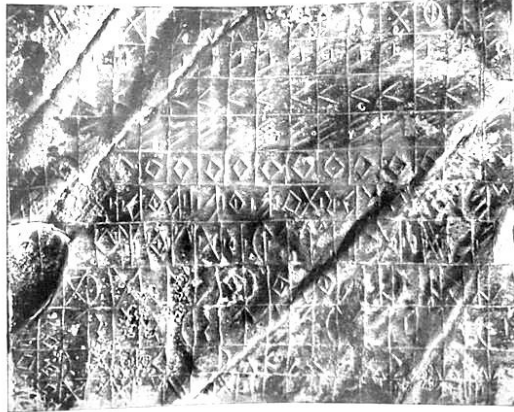
If the teacher asks “What is the proper way of writing A” then the student is asked to repeat “The proper way of writing A is. . . .” It drums in the concept.

In our view, therefore, the bronze sheets were inscribed by students under the authority of a teacher. Whether there was a formal class or any pilgrim to the site could be tutored enough to be able to write something to the Goddess, we do not know. But there must have been a formality to the teaching, as that would explain why there are a number of them all of the same form, even some with handles at the end.

4.3 Practice Rhea prayers above the OEKA Repetitions

4.3.1 Example 1 in Brief

Figure 5



[bronze sheet- MLV-8 LLV-Es23; image after LLV]

The **oeka** columns are at the top. The text below reads:
megodona.s.to.e.b.v.i.aba.i.\$a p|ora.i..o.pio|robo.s.

First we identify word boundaries with spaces. Much of the word boundaries can be determined by comparing with other inscriptions with similar patterns.

The sentence, showing most likely word boundaries with spaces is given below.

me go dona.s.to .e.b. v.i.aba.i \$a pora.i. .o.p iorobo.s.

We first establish that the inscription will express the fact that an offering is being made. The first two words **me go dona.s.to** reflect the expression discussed earlier **me go dona.s.to.....\$a.i.na te.i. re.i.tia.i.** However we note that our new sentence lacks **.\$a.i.na te.i. re.i.tia.i.** That means it is implied. Thus to begin with we can interpret it as

Our brought-thing (to be burnt and offered) .e.b. v.i.aba.i \$a pora.i. .o.p iorobo.s.

It is clear that the untranslated part describes what the offering does.

Our further analysis, using comparisons with other inscriptions with similar words gets us to

Our brought-thing (to be burnt and offered) remains to v.i.ab- \$a pora.i. up into the eternal way.

The question is now, what does the offering do? It does something up into the eternal way. A great deal of our methodology involves making educated guesses as to what would work and then choosing what works best and is most probable. We place ourselves into the situation and imagine all the possibilities. For every suggestion, we have to then look for confirmation.

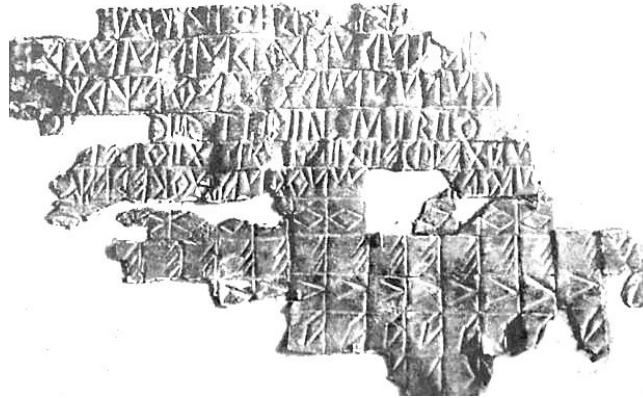
In the end we settle on the final result:

Our brought-thing remains to attain to free(itself) to turn up into the eternal way.

The result we achieved here, needed some reference to Estonian to solidify it. Without Estonian we would have achieved results, but they would have been less clear. We may have used other concepts that still worked; nonetheless most of it would have been correct.

4.3.2 Example 2 in Brief

Figure 6



[vda.]n[.] vo.l.t[iio.n.]mno.s. [do]na.s.to ke la.g.[s.]to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i. o.p [vo].l.tiio len[o]
[bronze sheet- MLV-12A, LLV-Es27; image after LLV]

This bronze sheet is quite fragmented, but the writing on it has been reconstructed with the help of comparisons with other bronze sheets and Venetic phraseology. The bracketed [] parts are the reconstructions made by scholars from other similar constructions..

vda. n vo.l.tiio.n. mno.s. dona.s.to ke la.g. s. to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i. .o.p vo.l.tiio
 leno

The first thing we note is that this sentence has the full expression **mno.s. dona.s.to ... \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i.** which we determine earlier meant *Our brought-thing (to be burnt and offered)to (unite with) You of the gods, Rhea.*

The next most significant observation are the additional words within this expression – the underlined below:

dona.s.to ke la.g. s. to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i.

We can determine first that **ke** means ‘and, also’. Thus if **dona.s.to** means ‘the brought thing’ then **la.g.s.to** must indicate the same object in a different way. Could it be ‘the brought thing and offering’? Note that even without any reference to Estonian, we can guess it, but we do find in Estonian the word *lahkustus* ‘gift, present’ to parallel *toonustus* ‘something brought’. Furthermore, as we continue our references to Estonian throughout this project, we find that the dots in the Venetic are often represented in Estonian with the sound H ahead of it. We can thus conclude that the last portion

dona.s.to ke la.g. s. to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i.

is

brought-thing also gift .to (unite with) You of the gods, Rhea.

With this established we greatly reduce the amount needing to be translated.

Next, note that the word **.o.p** occurs here. We mentioned earlier that the meaning of **.o.p** as ‘up’ is obvious from how it is used. Another inscription also ends with **.o.p vo.l.tiio leno** which suggests it is a standard phrase suitable as an end tag. We determine that this means *up to the heavens, fly!*

vda. n vo.l.tiio.n. mno.s. *brought-thing also gift .to (unite with) You of the gods, Rhea. Up to the heavens, fly!*

That reduces our analysis to three words. This technique of translating pieces, starting with the main repeated concept, is a methodology that does not require the entire sentence being translated at once. We can have dozens of incomplete sentences for which the solutions may emerge later.

We have already discussed **vo.l.tiio** and **mno.s**. The word **mno.s** is perfectly paralleled by *minnes* ‘going’ so that **vo.l.tiio[n.]mno.s** appears to mean ‘to the heavens-going’.

That then offers suggestions for the first word – **vda.n**. We can already tell that it has to be a word regarding bringing. It happens to parallel Estonian *vedan* ‘I transport’ (-n marks the 1st person indicative).

The methodology is always the same – we interpret first what is most clear, until we arrive at a partially translated sentence. Then we can guess the meaning that fits what has been translated so far, and then make references to additional clues to confirm or narrow down the meaning. Last but not least, whatever meaning we choose, must work everywhere it appears. We cannot arrive at our final results until the whole project is near complete. (See *THE VENETIC LANGUAGE: An Ancient Language from a New Perspective: FINAL* for the final results)

The result is never absolutely certain, but some sentences are more certain than others. This one is one of the more certain ones. Our final translation is:

I convey to the heavens-going our brought-thing also gift .to (unite with) You of the gods, Rhea. Up to the heavens, fly!

Note this translation is very literal. Obviously a good English translation would rewrite it better to be less awkward-sounding. All translations herein are as literal as possible. The reader can rewrite it as it would be said in English. (Past deciphering has rewritten bad results poetically to disguise the fact that they were absurd when taken literally.)

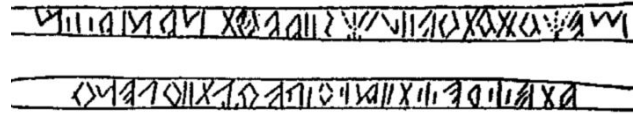
4.4 Example Texts on Styluses (taking the ones needing least explanation)

The styluses are merely pointed bronze with three flat sizes on which sometimes inscriptions were inscribed. They were obviously used to write onto a surface that would leave an impression. The foil-like bronze sheets were obviously one way of leaving an impression. Possibly wax tablets like Phoenicians used were another. Only a portion of the styluses had writing on them, suggesting writing on them was not crucial. Indeed, if their purpose was to write onto bronze sheets, then they were merely instruments. However, perhaps for those who did not know how to write, the makers of the styluses began to put the same messages onto some of the styluses. Possibly the practice was to write on a bronze sheet or wax tablet at the sanctuary and then leave the stylus behind, whether it had writing on itself or not

4.4.1 Example #1

This example is similar to those on the bronze sheets, except using **doto** – Past Participle – and using another noun for the offered item instead of **dona.s.to** Note we see here the familiar that we saw on one of the bronze sheets, and which means ‘up to the universe, fly!;

Figure 7



7.F) **megodotov.i.u.g.siiavotna\$a.i.n|ate.ire.i.tiia.io.pvo.l.tiio leno** [MLV-25, LLV-Es44]

Analysis always begins by separating the continuous writing into words.

mego doto v.i.u.g.siiavotna \$a.i.nate.i re.i.tiia.i o.p vo.l.tiio leno

The main issue is in the exact grammatical form of **v.i.u.g.siiavotna** translated with a guess in the underlined part that it means ‘conveyances’ because there is plenty of evidence in other inscriptions that the **v.i.u-** stem means ‘convey’

Our brought conveyances taken to join You of the Lords, Rhea of the lords. Up to the heavens, fly!

4.4.2 Example #2

Figure 8



7.G) **v.i.ugiaso.u.v.naton.a.s.tore.i.tiia** - [MLV-36, LLV-Es55]

v.i.ugiia so.u.v.na ton.a.s.to re.i.tiia

The first word **v.i.ugiia** is obviously a nominative or if it is a verb an imperative, as it does not have a grammatical case ending. The second word has the Essive ending for ‘as’. It introduces a word that occurs only once. Here is an instance where we know generally from the other inscriptions what the text wants to express but the word **so.u.v.na** occurs only once in the inscriptions and we have to guess. When we have nothing else to help us narrow the meaning we can refer to Estonian or Finnish. In this case it remains an educated guess. The stem is **so.u.v** and it seems like Estonian *soov-* ‘recommendation, wish’, and the rest is familiar (the T on **tona.s.to** is simply a scribe’s interpretation or mistake and so is writing **re.i.tiia** rather than **re.i.tiia.i**. This lazy text also leaves out the subject, etc.)

We can translate it (assuming **v.i.ugiia** is an imperative) with:

Convey (v.i.ugiia) as so.u.v the offering to Rhea (ton.a.s.to re.i.tiia)

if we interpret **so.u.v** with Estonian *soov* ‘expression of wishes’.

That produces the final result: *Convey the offering as expression- of- wishes to Rhea*

4.4.3 Example #3

Figure 8



7.D) **v.i.o.u.go.n.tai.v.i.o.u.go.n.tnadona.s.tore.i.tiia.i.** -[MLV-21, LLV-Es40]

v.i.o.u.go.n.tai .v.i.o.u.go.n.tna dona.s.to re.i.tiia.i.

We determined via several other inscriptions that the stem referred to some collection of something, perhaps the place where pilgrims to the sanctuary left their inscribed bronze sheets and styluses. The idea I think is that the writing continued to speak the prayers.

Here we see **v.i.o.u.go.n.t-** with two different grammatical endings. The first one seems to be Partitive and the second is the familiar **-na** (Essive case expressed by ‘as’ ‘in form of’) Thus if we use the general term ‘conveyance-collection’ then the literal meaning is

*The offerings (things brought) (**dona.s.to**) to Rhea (**re.i.tiia.i.**) as conveyance-collection (**.v.i.o.u.go.n.tna**), to unite with the conveyance-collection (**v.i.o.u.go.n.tai**).*

What this repeating might have either of two meanings: A) If the objects brought are animals to be sacrificed, then one ‘conveyance collection’ refers to the offerings brought, and the second ‘conveyance-collection’ represents the destination of the spirits in the sky.

B) The objects brought are material gifts (?) including the styluses or objects with writing on them and then those objects are left at a special place where at the sanctuary the objects accumulate like a church collection, and are then sold to pay for the operation of the sanctuary(?)

More information is needed from archeology, etc, to determine exactly which the visitors to the sanctuary did.

4.4.4 Example #4

7.E) **megodona.s.tore.i.tiia.i.|ner.kalemeto.r.na** - [MLV-34, LLV-Es53]

mego dona.s.to re.i.tiia.i. ner.ka lemeto.r.na

Here the standard **\$a.i.nate.i.** is missing, because the last to words express the sentiment of humility

The first three words are clear *Our offering to Rhea*. What interpretation of **ner.ka lemeto.r.na** would fit? First of all, this sentence needs a verb. The word **lemeto.r.na** we determined from its appearance in several sentences that it meant ‘ingratiating’ (from Finnic *leme-*). The word **ner.ka** can be a verb if we use Finnic as a guide is a plain imperative – ‘humble!’ Using what we have learned to this stage, our result, trying to remain true to the apparent grammatical requirements is (literally)

Our offering to Rhea humbles as ingratiations-producer

This makes sense. The gifts brought for *Rhea* humble themselves to be ingratiating-producers. The concept is consistent with what we have seen so far in regards to the inscribed gifts that are brought and left, but not burnt.

4.4.5 Example #5

The following strongly resembles an inscription written on one of the OEKA sheets (See paper on OEKA or the main document) But this one has a few words I failed to interpret.

7.K) **meگو dona.s.to \$a.i.nate.i.re.i.tiia.i. pora.i.|.e.getora .r.i.mo.i. ke lo|.u.de robo.s.** - [MLV-26, LLV-Es45]

meگو dona.s.to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i. pora.i. .e.getora- .r.i.mo.i. ke lo.u.de-robo.s.

This sentence is similar to the ones on the bronze sheet, such as **meگو dona.s.to .e.b. vhaba.i.t\$a pora.i. .o.p iorobo.s.** where we interpreted the last part **pora.i. .o.p iorobo.s.** as ‘to turn up into the infinite-way’. The above inscription contains many of the same words, and notably **pora.i.** and **robo.s.**

We can partially translate it with:

Our offering to You, of the Gods, Rhea (meگو dona.s.to \$a.i.nate.i. re.i.tiia.i.) to turn (pora.i.) (?)to eternal something(?)...(e.getora- .r.i.mo.i.) and (ke) towards the lo.u.de-way (lo.u.de-robo.s.)

Unfortunately there are words here that do not occur anywhere else – although the grammatical endings are clear – and with the information we have we cannot translate – other than that we can make an educated guess that **.e.getora- .r.i.mo.i** with the **.e.ge-** is probably about eternity and that the word **lo.u.de-robo.s.** can be compared to the earlier **iorobos** which suggests **lo.u.de** has to be a synonym of the heavens, infinity. (This shows the methodology of inferring synonyms from comparing with other inscriptions with same structure) Furthermore from the conjunction **ke**, we can also infer that **.e.getora- .r.i.mo.i.** and **lo.u.de- robo.s.** generally refer both to the same thing, like ‘edge of infinity’, ‘path of eternity’, etc, etc. We cannot know the exact poetry of meaning without more examples of these words

But at least we know that in general **.e.getora- .r.i.mo.i. ke lo.u.de- robo.s.** are two ways of referring to the destination of the offerings to *Rhea*.

4.4.6 Example #6

Here is an example of badly written Venetic.

7.O) **ka.n.ta ruma.n[.]na dona.s.to re.i.tia.n** - [MLV-30, LLV-Es49]

This sentence appears to be written by someone with poor Venetic since the grammatical endings are not what we would expect. The word **ka.n.ta** is one of the words for ‘carry’. The word stem **ruma.n.** is obviously ‘Roman’. The meaning that would be most natural is

The Roman carries the offering to Rhea (?)

There may be other interpretations if we get serious about grammar, but we have to be careful about overanalyzing something that appears to be poorly written or in poor language. This applies to the next as well.

7.P) **n(=m)ego (do)na.s.to ka.n.ta ruman re.i.tiia.i.** - [MLV-31, LLV-Es50]

n(=m)ego (do)na.s.to ka.n.ta ruman re.i.tiia.i.

This too has obvious mistakes. It reads as follows

Our offering carry the Roman to Rhea

4.4.7 OTHER INSCRIPTIONS ON STYLUSES

Some of these inscriptions are longer ones and resemble those on the thin bronze sheets. The shortness of most of the stylus inscriptions is probably the result of the limited space on the stylus. They had to inscribe it on the sides of the three sided stems. The bronze sheets on the other hand offered a large space onto which to write. See examples of the inscriptions on the OEKA sheets for some nice long sentences in which *Rhea* is addressed in full form.

According to archeology, there were great numbers of styluses of which only a portion had writing on them. This suggests what happened at the sanctuary was that the visitor purchased a stylus to use, and perhaps paid more to have an inscription added. Or maybe they brought it from elsewhere, and then left it behind because writing continued to speak the prayer even after they had left. That continuation of the message is the main reason it was used in ancient times – put on monuments etc.

But only some styluses had messages already on them. The stylus was used to write a message onto a bronze sheet – of which there is only one that has been found. Perhaps the styluses with writing on them were obtained by people who could not write. In any event, the styluses and maybe some gifts, were left at a special place (the **v.i.ougont-???**) and were considered to be continuing ingratiations, worshipping, to *Rhea*. (as one of the inscriptions states)

5. VENETIC GODDESS MYSTERY SOLVED?

5.1 Summary

The nature of the inscriptions on the Este bronze sheets and styluses clearly displays a theme of administering high regard to what appears to be the ancient Goddess *Rhea*, which existed before Greeks and Romans. It makes sense that this *Rhea* is the original one, and not the version that appeared in Greek mythology as one of the Titans. If the *Veneti Rhea* had been borrowed from Greek mythology, then we would expect there would be many examples of other Greek gods in the Venetic inscriptions; but there isn't.

Traditional flawed approaches to deciphering the inscriptions freely turned undecipherable fragments into names of people and deities, thus producing numerous assumed deities without meaningful names. If we use the word **\$a.i.na te.i.** as an indicator that a god is addressed in the inscriptions, then there are only two gods in the inscriptions - REIA and another appearing as “**Trumusia**” in the Lagole inscriptions. The reality is that aside from **Trumusia** which is discussed in the full document, there is no evidence in the body of Venetic inscriptions of any interest in any other deity than *Rhea*. This should not be surprising, since it is human nature down through history to focus on one deity. For example, in North American aboriginals, the primary deity is the Creator, the Great Spirit, even though the people saw lesser spirits of all kinds within Nature. This is consistent with human nature. Humans evolved within bands or tribes, where there was one leader, one ‘alpha’ person, one chief. It follows that basic religion similarly assumes one chief deity, even if there may or may not be recognition of other lesser spiritual agents.

This means that for the *Veneti* this original *Rhea* was akin to “God” in modern Christian religion, and the inscriptions often sound very much like modern-day prayers to “God”. The deity is seen to be almighty, high above, as if reigning over an eternal destination; and that both the spirit of the deceased in the inscriptions on the cremation urns, or the spirit of the burnt

sacrifice journeyed towards it. It is possible that when early Christianity developed in the Italic peninsula later in the Roman period, many of the concepts already established in the Italic Peninsula, were transferred to Christianity.

It makes sense that even after the Greeks and Romans appropriated *Rhea* into their own mythology, the original *Rhea* would have endured in the north where there was even less influence from the Greek civilization. Nonetheless the Roman historian Tacitus, hearing the *Aestii* speak the name RAI'A or REI'A, would conclude they worshipped *Rhea* of Greco-Roman mythology (the Titan who mothered a number of the Olympian gods), and wrote that the *Aestii* “worshipped the Mother of the gods.”

As Tacitus said in his *Germania*, she was connected with a boar-cult. Since later in Scandinavian mythology there was *Freya* and her boars, there is no question that *Freya* was the same goddess, now pronounced in a Germanic fashion, the F arising from the fact that Finnic language trilled the initial R.

If we can argue that the *Veneti* colonies were initiated from the north as a result of amber trade, then we can argue that *Rhea* was carried south as well by the traders and preserved by those of the trader clans who remained to manage the colonies at the southern terminus (such as at *Ateste*) . Thus it is possible that the Venetic prayers to *Rhea* represented a northern religion that was transferred south. Perhaps the only difference between the north and south was that a culture of writing developed in the south so that sentences originally only spoken were now written as well.

Other than the *Rhea* inscriptions, “**Trumusia**” inscriptions, we do not find evidence of any other gods addressed in the inscriptions. While Etruscan inscriptions show a knowledge of Greco-Roman gods, and the exploits of Hercules, the Venetic inscriptions show no evidence of affinity to the Greco-Roman gods. That suggests the *Veneti* - at least those in the communities where the inscriptions were made – were more closely tied to the northern world, than the world of the Mediterranean

5.2 Postscript: Alternative Interpretations by Opponents

Venetologists today who have committed themselves to regarding *Veneti* as Latin-like, or Slovenian-like, or something else, will try hard to find objections to anything that seems to connect the ancient *Veneti* to Finnic culture. The easiest way to dismiss the above research as evidence of Finnic *Veneti*, would be to propose that the *Aestii* were not Finnic but Balt, Germanic, or East Slavic. Then the claim would be that the veneration of pigs via *Rhea* is actually from ancient Balt, Germanic, or East Slavic. And then the claim would be that the Estonians adopted the custom. But there is much more information to support the view that the Estonian language was ancestral to the Aestic language, that the *Aestii* spoke Finnic, and that Finnic cannot be arbitrarily dismissed from arguments regarding the ancient northern Europe. The best example that the natives at the southeast Baltic were Finnic, is from Pytheas around 320 BC. He called the amber island “Abalus” which via Finnic ABA-LA means ‘lagoon, bay, estuary’ – ‘place-of’. This perfectly corresponds to the geographic reality – in Pytheas’s time, the shallow land behind the Samland Peninsula was flooded, so the Samland Peninsula (from where amber is washed out of cliffs in storms) was an island. Running along the coast is a sandbar, so that the the ancient amber island would have been located in a lagoon-location. Herodotus, even before Pytheas, wrote of “Hyperborean Maidens” making pilgrimages to Delos in the Aegean to make offerings of the first harvest to the goddess *Eilythia* – *Eilythia* was a pre-Greek goddess of birth from before ancient Greece. The route described can only mean they travelled by a standard amber route to Greece,

The Greek legend of the birth of *Apollo* from goddess *Leto*, attended by *Eilythia*, appears was carried to Delos with these Hyperborean Maidens. First of all *Apollo* originated from the ABALA, as a personification of this lagoon area from which amber came. The Estonian word for ‘water action causing sandbars’ is expressed by the stem *leet-* hence even in Finnic, LETO would be the creator of ABALA through creating sandbars. Although the Finnic language is now gone there, my internet scanning revealed there is a popular legend on the long sandbar about a giantess who makes sandbars with sand carried in her apron.

The connection between this area and ancient Greece was the ancient amber trade. In Estonian all the words with the HEL- stem relate to brightness, lightness, and within the word *helmes*, it means ‘jewel’ and in Livonian *helmes* is ‘amber’.

In Estonian if we wished to express ‘dancing lights’ (such as sparkles of sun on waves) we would say *heljad*. That is surprisingly close to the *Heliades*, Greek daughters of *Helios*, who shed tears into the water, which turned into amber. One of the Greek words for amber was *Elektridas*. This may originally have referred to the amber necklace because it sounds much like *hellekede rida* ‘row, line, of jewels (amber beads)’. (It is interesting to think that the modern word “electricity”, ultimately was born in ancient Baltic-Finnic amber trade to Greece.)

Returning to Pytheas, another one of the most remarkable words that came from him is *Mentonomon*. Up until the last century, one could find maps that show the Hela Peninsula at the mouth of the bay that leads to the Vistula, called *Mände Neem* (Estonian for ‘peninsula of the pines’ – or in Finnish *Mänteniemi*). It is not uncommon for the names of an often used word for a geographic feature to endure a long time. The word “*Hela*” was probably an alternative name from earliest times. In ancient times *Hela* could refer to a lighthouse. Ancient lighthouses were usually highly polished sheets of metal that flashed sunlight out into the sea. In Estonian a flash was a *helk*, so the word might also appear as *Helgo*. Thus this peninsula probably had (and still has) a lighthouse at its tip; hence the alternative name of *Hela* was always there as well.

The *Aestii* market was located where *Elblag* is today. Before that the name was *Elbing*. Both words begin with ELB, which probably arose ultimately from the HEL- stem for the amber. Before *Elbing*, in Prussian-Germanic times, the place was called *Truso*. Like many places in the long distance trader world, this was a name for ‘market’, but its original pre-Germanic form would have been TURUSE ‘market-place’. A “K,G” could also be added as in TURGESE. In Finland today there is the city of Turku. At the south end of the ancient amber route at the Adriatic was the Venetic city of *Tergeste*, today Trieste, which is a higher vowel version of what in Estonian is *Turgeste* ‘(place) arising from the market’.

It is possible to continue to create an entire paper that continues to show the Estonian-like names in tribe and place names recorded by ancient historians, and even still surviving in modern toponymy. You may ask why this is not widely known. The answer is that the population of speakers of Estonian or Finnish is relatively small, universities few, and the numbers of academics even interested in this subject had always been very small. Add to this the hurdle of writing papers in a more common language like English, and then there is wisdom easily obtained from ancient Roman or Greek texts by speakers of Finnic language, but invisible to the vast majority of academics who speak English, German, French, or Russian.

Finnic languages in the Baltic did not ‘arrive’ but were always there since the Ice Age, descended from the aboriginal boat-using hunter-gatherers that emerged out of the Ice Age reindeer hunter. Internal movements within the entire range, which includes interactions with Samoyeds, and movements of traders in the Volga, are another complex subject of exploration that do not affect the basic truth that northern Europe had aboriginal people before any Indo-European farmers appeared, and that these aboriginal people adapted to the farmers where

contact occurred, which included becoming professional traders for the static farming settlements.

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