

THE SIGMATIC FUTURE AND THE GENETIC AFFILIATION OF VENETIC: LATIN  
*FAXŌ* ‘I SHALL MAKE’ AND VENETIC *VHA.G.S.TO* ‘HE MADE’ {1}

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ABSTRACT

Latin has a so-called sigmatic future *faxō* ‘I shall make’. Scholars are divided as to the origins and antiquity of *faxō*; some believe it to go back to desideratives, others to aorists, and some argue that the formation arose within Latin, others that it can be traced back to Proto-Italic. Closely connected with these problems are the questions whether Venetic is an Italic language and whether its past (‘aorist’) tense *vha.g.s.to* ‘he made’ is related to *faxō*. I intend to show that *faxō* is based on inherited *s*-aorists, not on desideratives, that the formation arose late, within Latin itself rather than within Proto-Italic, and that there was never a past indicative beside it. Because of the last two reasons, *vha.g.s.to* must be independent of *faxō*. Venetic may still be an Italic language, but the form *vha.g.s.to* cannot be used as an argument in favour of such a connection.

1. LATIN FUTURE FORMATIONS

There are several ways of referring to future time in Latin. The most frequent future tense is the simple future formed from the *īnfectum*-stem, for example *fac-iam* ‘I shall do’ from *facere* ‘to do’. The future perfect is built on the *perfectum*-stem and denotes anteriority and conclusion, for instance *fēcerō* ‘I shall have done’. There is also a periphrastic formation,

*factūrus sum* ‘I am going to do’; this is based on the third stem, also called the supine-stem, and since it contains the copula it can, unlike the other futures, also be put in the subjunctive. Early Latin has yet another future formation, the so-called *s*-future or sigmatic future. It does not exist for every verb and is already on its way out in Plautus and Terence, although certain vestiges remain for some time as deliberate archaisms belonging to a higher register. The sigmatic future of *facere* is *faxō* ‘I shall do’ (*fac-s-ō*). It has beside it a sigmatic subjunctive *faxim* ‘I might do’. Such forms are not based on the *infectum*-stem *faci-/face-*, the *perfectum*-stem *fēc-*, or the third stem *fact-*. The sigmatic forms present a number of thorny problems. The most important of these concern the meaning of the *s*-morpheme, the genesis of the forms, and the age of the formation. With regard to the *s*-morpheme there are two competing theories: some scholars think the *-s-* is the same formant that we find in the sigmatic aorist, while others believe it to be a desiderative marker. Concerning the genesis of the forms, most would agree that they are innovations, although there is no consensus on how exactly they were formed. There is no *communis opinio* about the age of the formation either; it has been claimed that *faxō* was created within Latin itself, or during the Proto-Italic period, or even before that.{2}

In this first section of the article I shall discuss these questions. After briefly looking at the Indo-European root behind *facere* and its stem formations, I shall examine the synchronic semantics of the sigmatic forms and its consequences for the diachronic analysis of the *-s-*, and finally I shall advance a hypothesis of how, why and when the form *faxō* was created. What is innovative in my analysis is that I take the synchronic semantics of the forms into account; this has been neglected in previous studies, but shall prove vital for solving the problems. After discussing the genesis of *faxō*, I shall turn to the Venetic past *vha.g.s.to* ‘he made’ in section 2.{3} *vha.g.s.to* has always been analysed as an aorist and I shall not advance any different theory. The main problem concerning *vha.g.s.to* is whether or not it should be connected with *faxō*. Based on my analysis of how and when *faxō* came into

existence I shall argue that the Venetic form is independent of the Latin formation. The similarity between *vha.g.s.to* and *faxō* has hitherto been one of the main reasons why some scholars assign Venetic to the Italic language family; while it is still possible to regard Venetic as Italic, the case for doing so is considerably weakened by my findings. Section 3 will summarize my results.

### 1.1. The root $*d^heH_1(-k)$ - ‘place, put; make’

The root behind *faxō* is  $*d^heH_1(-k)$ - ‘place, put; make’. It is attested in several Indo-European languages. Since it is a telic root, we expect it to have a root aorist and a derived present in Indo-European.{4} This is still the case in a number of languages, for instance in Vedic Sanskrit and Ancient Greek. To some extent, the original situation is also reflected in Latin. Thus, Vedic has a root aorist  $\acute{a}-d^h\bar{a}-t$  ‘he put’ <  $*H_1\acute{e}-d^heH_1-t$  and a reduplicated present  $d\acute{a}-d^h\bar{a}-ti$  ‘he is putting’ <  $*d^h\acute{e}-d^heH_1-ti$ . The Greek equivalents of the Vedic forms are  $(an-)\acute{e}-t^h\bar{e}$  ‘he consecrated (by setting up)’ (Boeotian) and  $t\acute{i}-t^h\bar{e}-si$  ‘he is putting’; note that in Greek *e*-reduplication in the present stem has generally been replaced by *i*-reduplication. In Latin, the situation is somewhat more complicated. The root has the additional element *-k-*, which we also find in the Phrygian thematic present *ad-dak-e-t* ‘he is making’ (Haas 1966: 226—227);{5} the Greek form  $\acute{e}-t^h\bar{e}-ke$  ‘he put’, however, does not belong here because the *-k-* is not part of the root and is thus functionally very different from the *-k-* in Italic (Untermann 1993: 468). The root aorist survives in the Latin ‘perfect’ *fēc-it* ‘he made’. The present is not reduplicating, but is nevertheless derived; it is the *ye/o*-present *fac-it* ‘he is making’.

Forms containing both *-k-* and a sigmatic element are attested in at most three languages, Phrygian *dakset* (W-01b in Brixhe and Lejeune 1984: 40), Venetic *vha.g.s.to* and Latin *faxō*. I am saying ‘at most’ since it is not clear if the *psi*-shaped letter in the relevant

Phrygian inscription really should be interpreted as having the value *ks* (Brixhe and Lejeune 1984: 41, Brixhe 2004: 52); still, Lejeune's earlier arguments in favour of *ks* and thus in favour of *dakset* should be taken very seriously (1978: 783—790). Because of its semantics, the Indo-European root had a root aorist, and it is highly unlikely that a sigmatic aorist existed alongside it. This is consonant with the fact that the Phrygian form, if it is sigmatic, cannot go back to the same proto-form as the Venetic and Latin tokens; Phrygian *-a-* can be traced back to Indo-European *\*-eH<sub>1</sub>-* or *\*-ēH<sub>1</sub>-*, but not to zero-grade *\*-H<sub>1</sub>-* (Brixhe 2004: 80), whereas Venetic and Latin *-a-* can be derived from *\*-H<sub>1</sub>-*, but not from full-grade *\*-eH<sub>1</sub>-* or lengthened-grade *\*-ēH<sub>1</sub>-*. {6} Even if a sigmatic aorist of the verb *\*d<sup>h</sup>eH<sub>1</sub>(-k)-* had existed in Indo-European, we would expect the root to have been in the lengthened grade or the *e*-grade, which might have given us the correct Phrygian form, but presumably also the wrong Venetic *†vhe.g.s.to* and Latin *†fēxō*. Consequently, if Venetic *vha.g.s.to* and Latin *faxō* are aorists – and for the Venetic form this has never been doubted – they must be innovations. However, not all scholars accept *faxō* as an aorist, and this is the problem we have to examine next.

### 1.2. Latin *faxō* and *faxim* as aorists

The *-s-* in Latin *faxō* 'I shall make' and *faxim* 'I might make' cannot be as easily analysed as an aorist marker as the *-s-* in Venetic *vha.g.s.to*. *s*-perfects like *plānxī* 'I have beaten' (*plānc-s-ī*) are derived from *s*-aorists; such perfects always have future perfects like *plānxerō* 'I shall have beaten' (*plānc-s-erō*) and perfect subjunctives like *plānxerim* 'I might have beaten' (*plānc-s-erim*) beside them. However, even if we ignore semantic differences and the absence of *-er-* in *faxō* and *faxim* for the moment, there is an important paradigmatic distinction between *faxō* and *plānxerō*: *faxō* and *faxim* are not accompanied by a perfect indicative *†faxī*, which can hardly be due to chance, given the frequency of the futures and subjunctives.

*Facere* is one of the most frequent verbs, and perfect indicatives are generally more frequent than future perfects and perfect subjunctives together. Consequently, the origins of *faxō* have always been a matter of dispute.

There are two main theories. Scholars like Sturtevant (1911: 221) or Mellet (1994: 152) argue that the *-s-* in *faxō* is the marker of the sigmatic aorist. Since pre-Latin subjunctives regularly develop into Latin futures, it is not difficult semantically to derive the future form from an older aorist subjunctive. The subjunctive *faxim* would then go back to an aorist optative – old optatives normally become Latin subjunctives. However, it is hard to explain why there should be an *s*-aorist alongside an inherited root aorist or why this *s*-aorist should have a zero-grade root and no indicative.

The alternative theory, advocated for instance by Benveniste (1922: 34—38), Jasanoff (1988: 233, footnote 15 and 2003: 195, footnote 35), or Meiser (1993: 177—178), is that *faxō* goes back to an *s*-desiderative. The development of desideratives to futures is well attested, as we can see from the fact that Indo-European *\*deH<sub>3</sub>-syé-ti* ‘he wants to give’ becomes Sanskrit *dā-syá-ti* ‘he will give’.<sup>{7}</sup> But this theory is not without problems either. On the basis of Indo-Iranian, Balto-Slavic, Greek, Sabellic and Old Irish data, Jasanoff (1988: 232—233) reconstructs four different desiderative formations for Indo-European; a similar list of five non-aoristic *s*-forms can be found in Jasanoff (2003: 133). None of these types is a good match for Latin *faxō*. The Latin form would have to go back to a zero-grade root with a simple *s*-suffix and no theme vowel, but there is no such desiderative among Jasanoff’s forms.

Rix (1998a) looks at the type *faxō* in detail, but does not state his opinion about its origin clearly. On the one hand he claims that such forms are always morphologically distinct from the sigmatic aorist (1998a: 633), but on the other he calls them ‘perfective futures’, which presumably means that they do not go back to desideratives.

As it would be unreasonable to reconstruct yet another *s*-formation, we should decide for either the aorist hypothesis or the desiderative theory. Since morphology cannot help us

here, we should look at semantics. There are indeed some unusual patterns of usage that seem to be relevant.

I have discussed futures like *faxō* in de Melo (2002 and 2004). In main clauses, only the one form *faxō* ‘I shall make / I shall bring it about’ is attested. It occurs 70 times in Plautus and always has simple future meaning. In subordinate clauses, a variety of verbs in all persons and numbers occurs, for example *faxis* or *amāssis*. The meaning is ‘you will have done / loved etc’, that is, these forms are equivalent not to simple futures, but to future perfects, which in Latin always have future anterior meaning. We find 53 tokens in Plautus. Example (1) illustrates *faxō* in a main clause, while (2) shows a sigmatic future in a subordinate clause: {8}

(1) iam ego h-ō-c ips-um oppid-um expugnā-t-um  
 fac-s-o er-i-t lēnō-ni-um  
*soon I.NOM this-ACC-PARTICLE self-ACC town-ACC conquer-PARTICIPLE-ACC*  
*make-SIGMATIC-FUT.1SG be-FUT-3SG pimp-ADJ-ACC*

‘I’ll see to it that this pimp town will be taken soon’ (PLAVT. Pseud. 766)

(2) si hercle tu ex ist-ō-c loc-ō  
*if INTERJ you.NOM from this-ABL-PARTICLE place-ABL*  
 digit-um trānsuors-um aut ungu-em lāt-um excesseri-s,  
*finger-ACC wide-ACC or nail-ACC broad-ACC go.out.FUTPERF-2SG*  
 aut sī respec-s-i-s, dōnicum ego tē  
 iusser-ō,  
*or if look.back-SIGMATIC-FUT-2SG, until I.NOM you.ACC*  
*order.FUTPERF-1SG,*  
 continuo hercle ego tē dēd-a-m discipul-am cruc-ī

*immediately* INTERJ *I.NOM you.ACC* *give-FUT-1SG pupil-ACC* *cross-DAT*

‘by Hercules, if you will have gone a finger’s or a nail’s breadth away from your place, or if you will have looked back until I’ve told you, I will, by Hercules, immediately put you on the cross for a lesson’ (PLAVT. Aul. 56—59)

In (1), it does not make sense to translate *faxō* as a future perfect, ‘I will have seen to it’. It behaves just like a simple future. In (2), on the other hand, the sigmatic *respexis* ‘you will have looked back’ is parallel to the future perfect *excesseris* ‘you will have gone away’ and is best translated as a future perfect as well.

The simple future meaning of main clause *faxō* is easy to derive, whether we believe that it goes back to a desiderative or to an aorist subjunctive. However, the future perfect meaning in subordinate clauses can hardly be explained if we posit desiderative origin. The development of desideratives to future perfects is simply without parallels. But if the forms began as aorist subjunctives, that is, as perfective forms, they could have developed into perfective futures and then into anterior futures.

The usage of sigmatic subjunctives like *faxim* ‘I might do’ or *appellāssīs* ‘you might call’ points in the same direction. I have discussed these forms in de Melo (2004 and 2005). Compare this example from Terence:

(3) *nē* *me* *ist-ō-c* *posthāc* *nōmin-e* *appellā-ss-ī-s*  
*not* *I.ACC* *this-ABL-PARTICLE* *hereafter* *name-ABL* *call-SIGMATIC-SUBJ-*  
2SG

‘don’t ever call me by that name again’ (TER. Phorm. 742)

This usage is typical of sigmatic subjunctives; there are 118 sigmatic subjunctives in Plautus and Terence, of which 33 occur in main clause prohibitions and 12 in subordinate

clauses introduced by *nē* ‘lest’. Neither in Plautus nor in Terence is there a single example of a sigmatic subjunctive used in a command, and there are only two tokens in clauses introduced by *ut* ‘that’. By way of contrast, subjunctives without the *s*-formant are far less frequent in prohibitions and *nē*-clauses and occur far more often in commands and *ut*-clauses.

Such a pattern is difficult to explain if the sigmatic subjunctives go back to desideratives. However, if we accept aoristic origin, there are no such problems, as we would simply be dealing with the continuation of an inherited usage. Sanskrit regularly employs the aorist injunctive in prohibitions (Whitney 1896: 217, with examples), while Ancient Greek has the aorist subjunctive (Goodwin 1897: 89, also with examples); compare the following passage from Homer:

(4)   Prīam-ídē,                                 mē    dē                                 me    hélōr                                 Dana-oîsin  
          eā-s-ēi-s  
          *Priam*-PATRONYMIC.VOC,   *not*    PARTICLE                                 *I.ACC*   *spoil.ACC*                                 *Greek-*  
DAT.PL *let*-AOR-SUBJ-2SG  
keî-sthai  
*lie*-INF.PASS  
‘son of Priam, don’t let me lie as a spoil for the Greeks’ (Il. 5,684-685)

Note also that these modal aorist forms in Greek and Sanskrit are not found in commands, just as the Latin sigmatic subjunctives.

To summarize my findings so far, because of their peculiar patterns of usage the sigmatic forms of Latin are best derived not from desideratives, but from aorists. The next task is to discuss the remaining problems of such an analysis: why is there a sigmatic aorist next to a root aorist? Why does the sigmatic form have a zero-grade root? Why are there temporal differences between *faxō* ‘I shall make’ / *faxim* ‘I might make’ and *plānxerō* ‘I shall



have beaten' / *plānxerim* 'I might have beaten'? And why is there no perfect indicative *†faxī*? These questions are best answered in connection with another one: what is the genesis of *faxō* and *faxim*? In other words, how, why and when were forms like *faxō* and *faxim* created?

### 1.3. The genesis of Latin *faxō*

The original, inherited sigmatic aorist forms are the 'perfect' indicative *dīxī* (*dīc-s-ī*) 'I have said' (perfect < aorist), the future perfect *dīxō* (*dīc-s-ō*) 'I will have said', and the perfect subjunctive *dīxim* (*dīc-s-im*) 'I might say'. However, this type of future perfect and perfect subjunctive is already rare in early Latin; in PLAVT. Asin. 839—840 we still find *dīxīs*, but this is already an archaism. Only in Latin, but not in Oscan or Umbrian, do we get an innovated element *-er-* in the new, productive future perfect *dīx-er-ō* and perfect subjunctive *dīx-er-im*. This element *-is-* / *-er-* is of unclear origin and function, but since it occurs only in Latin, it must have arisen after the split between Latin (with Faliscan) on the one hand and Oscan and Umbrian on the other. {9}

Doublets like the two perfects *pepercī* 'I have spared' (old perfect stem) and *parsī* 'I have spared' (old aorist stem) remained in the language for a long time. Thus, it is only natural to assume that the old *dīxō* / *dīxim* coexisted with the new *dīxerō* / *dīxerim* for some time as well. But once *dīxerō* and *dīxerim* had become the standard future / subjunctive and subjunctive / optative forms beside *dīxī*, it is clear that *dīxō* and *dīxim* could be reanalysed as autonomous future / subjunctive and subjunctive / optative formations independent of the *perfectum* stem.

Of course we have to ask ourselves why such special modal forms should have been preserved at all. One possible answer could be that speakers felt a need to have more forms of expression in the oblique moods. In late Greek, for example, the inherited perfect was

becoming rarer and rarer, but it was first lost in the indicative, while the oblique moods were retained longer; presumably, the aspectual contrast between perfect and aorist was felt more clearly or was deemed more important here than in the indicative. It is not inconceivable that in Latin the merger of perfect and aorist was completed in the indicative first and that the modal forms *dīxō* and *dīxim* were kept because they enabled speakers to maintain a distinction between these aoristic forms and the innovated *dīxerō* and *dīxerim*, in which the contrast between aoristic and perfect force had been neutralized.

However that may be, another contrast seems more important to me, that between imperfective and perfective aspect. It is generally assumed that in the future (< subjunctive) and the subjunctive (< optative), the contrast between *īnfectum* and *perfectum* was originally purely aspectual, the *īnfectum* being imperfective and the *perfectum* being perfective. We still find this kind of situation in Ancient Greek, where the contrast between present and aorist stems is purely aspectual in the oblique moods. In Latin, on the other hand, the *perfectum*-forms *dīxerō* and *dīxerim* were strongly associated with the past indicative *dīxī* and took on its anterior meaning. *dīxerō* and *dīxerim* thus mean ‘I will have said’ and ‘I might have said’, not just perfective ‘I will say’ and ‘I might say’. Vestiges of the earlier non-anterior usage merely remain in the fossilized future perfect form *uīderō* ‘I shall see to it’ and in the subjunctival types *nē fēcerīs* ‘don’t do’ and *dīxerit quispiam* ‘someone might say’. We have a clear indication of when this semantic shift from perfective to past took place among the oblique moods. Since *faxō* in main clauses and all the sigmatic subjunctives have preserved the non-anterior meaning, it happened after the creation of the forms with *-is-* / *-er-* like *dīxerō* and *dīxerim*, that is, within Latin itself rather than within Proto-Italic.<sup>{10}</sup> In fact, it is probably this semantic shift which provides the ultimate rationale for creating forms like *faxō*. Once *dīxerō* and *dīxerim* had assumed anterior meaning, *dīxō* and *dīxim*, the paradigmatically isolated original forms, were the only non-anterior perfective forms that could contrast with

the *infectum* forms. Thus, once *fēcerō* and *fēcerim* had become anterior, there was a good reason for creating *faxō* and *faxim*.

One might object that there was no reason to create *faxō* and *faxim* because the innovated *fēcerō* and *fēcerim* presumably had older root aorist forms *\*fēkō* and *\*fēkim* beside them, which corresponded to *dīxō* and *dīxim* both formally and functionally. While I acknowledge that this is a problem, I do not think that it is impossible for *\*fēkō* and *\*fēkim* to have died out, only to be subsequently ‘re-created’ in the form of *faxō* and *faxim*. Similarly, *\*ēgō* / *\*ēgim* and *\*kēpō* / *\*kēpim* could have died out before *āxō* / *āxim* (from *agere*) and *capsō* / *capsim* (from *capere*) were formed.

Perhaps the type *faxō* is easiest to explain if we assume that it arose by analogy to the inherited *dīxō*. One possible way of deriving the form is this: *dīcis* ‘you are saying’ (present indicative): *dīxis* ‘you will have said’ (sigmatic future) and *dīxīs* ‘you might say’ (sigmatic subjunctive) = *facis* ‘you are doing’ (present indicative): *x*, where *x* = *faxis* ‘you will have done’ (sigmatic future) and *faxīs* ‘you might do’ (sigmatic subjunctive). With regard to the time when *faxō* and *faxim* were created, all we can say is that this took place after *\*fēkō* and *\*fēkim* had died out and after *fēcerō* and *fēcerim* had assumed anterior meaning. The latter happened after the Proto-Italic period, that is, within Latin itself.

If my hypothesis is correct, it explains why there is an aoristic, zero-grade *faxō* next to an equally aoristic stem *fēc-*, and also why there is a future *faxō* and a subjunctive *faxim*, but no indicative *\*faxī*. Such an indicative would not fill any gaps. Corresponding to *dīxī*, *dīxerō* and *dīxerim* we have *fēcī*, *fēcerō* and *fēcerim*, and by analogy to *dīxō* and *dīxim* new *faxō* and *faxim* were created; but a new form *\*faxī* would not have been necessary or filled any empty slot. In fact, there can never have been a past indicative based on a stem *fax-* in Latin.

This absence of a past indicative *\*faxī* is significant: the Venetic past form *vha.g.s.to* ‘he made’ has often been connected with Latin *faxō* ‘I shall make’ and has been one of the main arguments for regarding Venetic as Italic; yet this connection presupposes that there was

a past *\*faxī* next to *faxō*, and that this past form was lost. If there has never been a past *\*faxī*, the connection between *faxō* and *vha.g.s.to* becomes much more doubtful, and with it the connection between Italic and Venetic. But now it is time to turn to Venetic.

## 2. VENETIC *vha.g.s.to* 'HE MADE', LATIN *faxō* 'I SHALL MAKE', AND THE PROBLEM OF SUBGROUPING

Before I can turn to *vha.g.s.to* itself and its putative connection to Latin *faxō*, I shall first introduce the basics of the Venetic language.

### 2.1. *The basics of Venetic*

The fewer texts there are of an ancient Indo-European language, the more difficult, but also the more fascinating are the problems it presents. This makes Venetic a very interesting language indeed – there are only some 350 inscriptions, most of them rather short. Except for a handful of recent finds, these inscriptions are collected and discussed in Lejeune (1974) and Pellegrini & Prodocimi (1967). Both works are best read in conjunction with Untermann (1980), who questions some of the more fanciful interpretations contained in them.

Most of the texts were discovered in the region inhabited in antiquity by the *Venetī*. Thus, the lion's share comes from Este, Padua and Vicenza, but a few inscriptions were also unearthed in Oderzo, Altino (Treviso), Lågole (Cadore) and other places. The Este culture can be traced back to about 950 BC and lasted until the beginning of Romanization around 175 BC. The earliest texts date from roughly 550 BC and the latest ones from around 100 BC.

Deciphering the texts is not particularly difficult because the Venetic alphabet is derived from a northern Etruscan script (Bonfante & Bonfante 2002: 120; Širola 2004: 110—112 discusses the different local alphabets and diachronic variation). Venetic also has the Etruscan system of syllabic punctuation, which has nothing to do with sentence, word or morpheme boundaries.

While the affiliation of the Venetic script is clear, the position of the language itself within Indo-European remains problematic because many of the texts are somewhat enigmatic. The following inscriptions are examples of the Venetic texts that we understand relatively well: {11}

(5) (dedication on a writing stylus)

vda.n.	vhugia	.u.r.kle.i.na /	re.i.tie.i.	dona.s.to
<i>alphabet-ACC</i>	<i>Fugia-NOM</i>	<i>Urkleina-NOM</i>	<i>Reitia-DAT</i>	<i>give-AOR-3SG</i>

‘Fugia Urkleina gave the alphabet to Reitia’ (Es 47)

(6) (dedication on a bronze plaque)

ve.n.na	tola/r.	magetlo.n.
<i>Venna-NOM</i>	<i>set.up-PAST.3SG</i>	<i>?-ACC</i>

‘Venna set (this) up as a *magetlon*’ (Gt 3)

(7) (dedication on a bronze *situla*)

ke.l.lo.s.	ossoko.s.	doto	dono.m.	trumusijate.i.
<i>Kellos-NOM</i>	<i>Ossokos-NOM</i>	<i>give-AOR.3SG</i>	<i>gift-ACC</i>	<i>Trumusijate-DAT</i>

‘Kellos Ossokos gave (this) as a gift to Trumusijate’ (Ca 5)

Here, the nominatives have the inherited endings *-a* or *-os*, just as in the first and second declensions of early Latin. The accusative ending is sometimes the inherited *-om* and sometimes the innovated *-on*. The dative ending *-i* is not unexpected either. The deverbal noun *dono.m.* ‘gift’ in (7) corresponds exactly to Latin *donum* ‘gift’. *vda.n.* in (5) is normally glossed as ‘alphabet’, but the meaning is not certain (Untermann 1980: 306). The meaning of *magetlo.n.* in (6) remains entirely unclear. *dona.s.to* is the third person singular sigmatic aorist of the denominative verb *dona-* ‘present, give’, which exists in Latin as well; the ending *-to* is formally a middle ending, as in Greek *epaideúsa-to* ‘he educated (for himself)’. Schmidt (1963: 168—169) claimed that the contrast between active and middle had been preserved in Venetic. However, now that we have the formally active *donasan* (\*Es 120), which is the third person plural counterpart of *dona.s.to*, it is more sensible to argue for a paradigm which is semantically active, but composed of inherited active and middle forms.{12} *doto* looks like an aorist of Indo-European *\*deH<sub>3</sub>-* ‘give’; nevertheless, a number of morphological problems persist.{13} *tola.r.* seems to belong to the root *\*telH<sub>2</sub>-*, but the exact derivation cannot be explained. The form appears to have past meaning, yet it is impossible to tell whether it is equivalent to aorists like *dona.s.to* and *doto* or whether it belongs to a different tense or aspect.{14}

While we can explain individual forms like these, Lejeune’s remarks about the Venetic verbal system as a whole are undoubtedly true of the other parts of speech as well (1974: 79):

Il faut se résigner à cette situation: du verbe vénète, dont nous n’avons que des membra disiecta, le système nous échappe, qu’il s’agisse des temps, des modes, des voix, des paradigmes. Dans l’état présent de notre information, tout essai de reconstruction est voué à l’arbitraire.

‘We have to accept this situation: the Venetic verb, of which we merely have membra disiecta, keeps its *system* hidden from us, regardless of whether the tenses, moods, voices, or

paradigms are concerned. In the present state of our understanding, every attempt at reconstruction is doomed to arbitrariness.’

## *2.2. The relationship between Venetic vha.g.s.to ‘he made’ and Latin faxō ‘I shall make’*

Establishing the genetic affiliation of Venetic within the Indo-European family is just as fraught with difficulties as working on its morphology. There are various hypotheses concerning the status of Venetic, but among these, only two theories seem tenable and have met with widespread approval. The first regards Venetic as an independent branch of Indo-European, comparable to Albanian or to proto-languages like Germanic or Tocharian; this position is for example advocated by Penney (1988: 726). Adherents of the second theory like Beeler (1956: 48) believe that Venetic is an Italic language and thus more closely related to Latin, Faliscan, Oscan, and Umbrian than to other Indo-European languages. How can we decide for one of these alternatives?

Traditional linguistic subgrouping relies mainly on phonology and morphology. Shared retentions are relatively uninteresting; as Ringe, Warnow & Taylor (2002: 66) put it, ‘in order to subgroup a particular subset of the family’s languages together, one demands that they exclusively share clear and linguistically significant innovations which are unusual enough that they could not reasonably have arisen more than once independently.’ They rightly point out (2002: 66—69) that phonological innovations of the same type often recur in unrelated language families, while the same does not hold for morphological changes. Thus, shared morphological innovations are more important for subgrouping than shared phonological ones.

In fact, Venetic affords us an example of the risks we take if we rely too heavily on phonological criteria in subgrouping. Hamp (1954) claims that Venetic is not only Italic, but

also closer to Latin-Faliscan than to Sabellic because of its treatment of the Indo-European voiced aspirates. According to him, Indo-European  $*b^h$  in medial position corresponds to the voiced stop  $[b]$  in Latin and Venetic, but to the voiceless fricative  $[f]$  in Sabellic. An example is the dative / ablative plural ending  $*-b^h(y)os$  (Sanskrit  $-b^hyas$ ), which we find in Latin *mēnsi-bus* ‘in the months’, Venetic *lo.u.dero-bo.s.* ‘for the children’, and Oscan **FISIAIS EIDUIS LUISARI-FS** ‘in the holidays, the Loisarian Ides’. However, Rix (1998b: 51, footnote 71) argues that the Venetic  $\langle b \rangle$  stands for a voiced fricative here (Širola 2004: 160 thinks that this is probably only true in some contexts). Moreover, Stuart-Smith, who reassesses the treatment of voiced aspirates in Italic, concludes that word-medial  $\langle f \rangle$  in Sabellic stands for a voiced fricative  $[\beta]$  as well (2004: 142). Even Faliscan, which is undoubtedly closer to Latin than any other Italic language, has  $[\beta]$  here, just like Oscan-Umbrian; compare Faliscan *CAREFO*  $[karēβō]$ , which corresponds to Latin *carēbō* ‘I shall lack’ (Meiser 1998: 101). Moreover, even if Venetic  $\langle b \rangle$ ,  $\langle d \rangle$  and  $\langle g \rangle$  did stand for voiced stops, the discrepancy between  $-d-$  in *lo.u.dero-bo.s.* and  $-b-$  in *liberīs* would be worrying, as both come from  $*H_1leud^h-$  (compare Greek *eleútheros* ‘free’).

Thus, it is better to rely on morphology. Euler (1993: 105), after looking for shared morphological innovations, concludes that Venetic is Italic, but that it separated from all other Italic languages first. Rix (1994: 24) and Jasanoff (2003: 54, footnote 57) advocate the same position. Because of the divergences in the verbal system, Meiser (2003: 35) is doubtful if Venetic is closely related to Italic, and he believes that if it is, it branched off first. My stance is somewhat similar: although I am not sure if Venetic is Italic or not, I believe that if it is Italic, it split off from the other branches while they still formed a single speech community.

Perhaps the most striking innovation which we find in both Venetic and Latin concerns forms of the verb ‘do, make’: Venetic has a form *vha.g.s.to*  $[faxsto]$  ‘he made’, while Latin has the aorists *faxō / faxit* ‘I / he will make’. They share the zero-grade root *fak-*  $\langle *d^hH_1k-$  and the *s*-suffix, a most unusual combination. The main difference concerns the



endings: the Venetic form has a secondary middle-ending *-to*, which, however, has active meaning, whereas the Latin forms have the same future (< subjunctive) endings that we find in forms like *er-ō / er-it* ‘I / he will be’. The difference between Latin *[ks]* and Venetic *[xs]* is insignificant. Venetic has replaced the old *[ks]* with *[xs]* (compare also Širola 2004: 160—161, who thinks that fricativization is the most plausible hypothesis for this spelling). This can be spelled *-k.s-* (as in *vhu.k.s.sii.a.i.* ‘to Fukssiia’ in Es 2), but also *-g.s-*. Neither spelling is ideal because in the Venetic script *k* is voiceless, but not a fricative, while *g* can be a fricative, albeit normally a voiced one (see also Rix 1998b: 51). Venetic *vha.g.s.to* is attested twice. Its meaning can be seen here:

(8) (dedication on a vase)

voto	klutiiari.s.	vha.g.s.to
<i>Voto</i> -NOM	<i>Klutiiaris</i> -NOM	<i>make</i> -AOR-3SG

‘Voto Klutiiaris made (me)’ (Pa 16 a)

(9) (another dedication on a vase)

hevi.s.so.ś.	[...ϕ.]i.	hva.g.s.to
<i>Hevissos</i> -NOM	?-DAT	<i>make</i> -AOR-3SG

‘Hevissos made (me) for X’ (Pa 15)

Since these inscriptions are found on completed objects, the verbs can only be interpreted as having past reference. For this reason, the *-s-* is best regarded as the inherited aorist stem formative, just as in *faxō*. However, even though the individual elements of *fak-s-* are inherited, their combination is an innovation, as the original aorist stem was *fēc-* without *-s-*, and as those verbs that did have an *s*-aorist never had a zero-grade root. The use of the *s-*

suffix is not only an innovation with this verb, but also when it is used with denominal verbs like *dona-* in (5) above.

It is the similarity in stem formation between *vha.g.s.to* and *faxō* that led scholars like Porzig (1960: 181—182), Euler (1993: 102), and Szemerényi (1996: 285) to believe that the forms must be related and that, as a consequence, Venetic is an Italic language. But are the forms really connected, or is this just a chance resemblance? By now the answer should be clear. I have argued that *faxō* arose within Latin itself, after the Proto-Italic period, and that it never had a past indicative beside it. Thus, the Venetic and Latin forms are not related – they are no relatives, but mere look-alikes. For all we know, Venetic may still be an Italic language, but any arguments to that effect have to be based on forms other than *vha.g.s.to*.

### 3. CONCLUSION

I have tried to argue that Latin *faxō* is an aoristic form which arose after the Proto-Italic period by analogy to inherited modal aorist forms like *dīxō*. The latter was an isolated form after the creation of the new future perfect *dīxerō* within the history of Latin. When such innovated future perfects took on anterior meaning, the old forms received a new function: they were the only non-anterior forms contrasting in aspect with the forms of the present stem. After the demise of the old aorist *\*fēkō* and the assumption of anterior meaning by *fēcerō*, there was a gap to be filled. This is why *faxō* was formed. Since *fēcerō*, just like *dīxerō*, arose within the history of Latin itself, the creation of *faxō* comes later than the Proto-Italic period as well. Corresponding to *dīxī*, *dīxerō* and *dīxerim* we have *fēcī*, *fēcerō* and *fēcerim*. By analogy to *dīxō* and *dīxim*, *faxō* and *faxim* were created. However, no new perfect indicative *\*faxī* could arise, as this place was already filled by *fēcī*.

The position of Venetic within Indo-European remains problematic. Shared morphological innovations are probably the best indicator of common genetic origin. Since the Venetic aorist *vha.g.s.to* looks deceptively similar to Latin *faxō*, and since both forms are clearly innovations, it has often been claimed that they are evidence for Venetic being an Italic language. However, if my argument is correct, *faxō* arose within Latin and never had a past indicative *\*faxī* beside it. This in turn means that it is completely independent of Venetic *vha.g.s.to*. Venetic could still be an Italic language, but *vha.g.s.to* cannot be used to support such a theory.

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## NOTES

{1} This article is based on a paper presented at the Cambridge Triennial in July 2005. I would like to thank James Clackson for discussing its contents with me both in Cambridge and in a series of e-mail exchanges. I was first introduced to the study of Venetic by Anna Morpurgo Davies and John Penney. I hope that their great expertise and the effort they put into teaching me will, however dimly, be reflected in my article. I am also grateful to the two anonymous referees, whose comments have been extremely helpful.

{2} There is still disagreement on how we should explain the similarities between Latin (with Faliscan) and Sabellic (Oscan, Umbrian and minor dialects). Some scholars have argued that the similarities are entirely due to contact, while others insist that there must be a common genetic origin. While I do not wish to deny that there has been extensive borrowing in both directions, it seems to me that Meiser (1993: 170—171) is right in stating that some of the shared features are more easily explained if we assume a common proto-language, Proto-Italic, than if we restrict ourselves to borrowing. As Rix (1994: 28) says, the family tree model and the *Sprachbund* theory are not exclusive alternatives, but rather supplement each other.

{3} The digraph *vh* stands for */f/*. Punctuation inside a word may seem peculiar at first. Most Venetic texts have such syllabic punctuation; any letter that is not part of an open syllable with consonantal onset has dots around it. Syllabic punctuation is discussed for example by Lejeune (1974: 34—40) and Wachter (1986).

{4} For the influence of telicity on verbal morphology in Indo-European compare Hoffmann (1970).

{5} The function of the *-e-* is not entirely clear. Brixhe (2004: 52) analyses *daket* as a present subjunctive.

{6} Short or long *-e-* followed by the first laryngeal resulted in late Indo-European *-ē-*, and this vowel was preserved in Venetic (Lejeune 1974: 108).

{7} We can of course also compare the development of English *will* ('want to') to a future auxiliary.

{8} The reference system used here for Latin is that of the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. I have tried to keep the translations as literal as possible, even where this results in unidiomatic or ungrammatical English. Where vowels are elided, I have not marked quantities, even if they are long when the words are said in isolation.

{9} Different suggestions concerning the origin of *-er-* (< *-is-*) have been made by Jasanoff (1991: 86, footnote 5), Rix (1992), and Untermann (1968: 170).

{10} The future perfects and perfect subjunctives of Oscan and Umbrian also have anterior meaning. If my argument is correct, the semantic shift from perfective to past / anterior took place independently in the Sabellic languages.

{11} The reference system adopted here for Venetic is that of Pellegrini & Prosdocimi (1967). The transliteration, however, follows Lejeune's conventions (1974) because they are as close as possible to the reconstructed sound values of the letters while still enabling us to retrieve the original spelling. To give one example of the differences, Pellegrini &

Prosdocimi's <z> in the transliterations reflects the origin of the letter, but stands for /d/; in the phonemic transcriptions they do write *d*, but there is no syllabic punctuation. Lejeune uses the more phonemic <*d*>, which is what the *Venetī* themselves did when they used the Latin alphabet, and retains the syllabic punctuation.

{12} Compare for example Marinetti & Prosdocimi (1997: 587), who state that ‘-*to* come forma di medio non implica il medio come categoria’ (‘-*to* as a middle form does not imply the middle as a category’). Untermann (1980: 298—299) is even more cautious and argues that the voice system remains unclear.

{13} An aorist middle form ought to have a zero-grade root, as in Greek *édōto* ‘he gave in his own interest’ < \**H<sub>1</sub>é-dH<sub>3</sub>-to*. But would a syllabic \*-*H<sub>3</sub>-* be realized as -*o-* in Venetic? Syllabic \*-*H<sub>1</sub>-* has -*a-* as its reflex, as in *vha.g.s.to* < \**d<sup>h</sup>H<sub>1</sub>k-s-to*. Compare Lejeune (1966: 201) for a more detailed discussion.

{14} *tola.r.* above is only attested once, while *tole.r.* is more frequent. The forms mentioned so far, together with *vha.g.s.to*, which will be treated in detail below, are the principal finite verb forms in our inscriptions. Untermann (1980: 302) discusses *atisteit* (\*Es 122). *te.u.te.r.s.* (Pa 14) is dealt with by De Simone (1998), who concludes that it is probably not a verb form at all; Jasanoff (2003: 33, footnote 11) reserves judgment on this issue. Since *.a.tra.e..s.* (Vi 2) stands next to a verb, it is presumably not a verb form itself. Lejeune believes that *la.g|--* (Es 27) was sigmatic *la.g.s.to* before the inscription was damaged, and he compares it to Latin *lac-iō* (1974: 82); he also thinks that *--jido.r.* (Ca 64 b) stands for *dido.r.* ‘I give’ (1974: 279). Both suggestions should be treated with great caution.

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