Venetic inscription on the silo from Štanjel

Venetski napis na silosu iz Štanjela

Manca VINAZZA, Luka REPANŠEK

Izvleček

Na rebru silosa, ki je bil najden v kletnem prostoru stavbe iz 5. in 4. st. pr. n. št. v Štanjelu, je delno ohranjen vrezan napis. V sekvenci vertikalnih in poševnih vrezov v grobo površino je mogoče prepoznati tudi take, ki niso naključni, zato ugotavljamo, da gre za napis (odslej označen s siglo *Ts 4) v venetskem alfabetu. Poteka od desne proti levi, pri čemer sta na koncu sekvence dobro vidna le interpunktuirani <.a.> in <e>. Celotno zaporedje torej utegne predstavljati zapis *[---].a.e* (pri čemer <e> ni zaključen z interpunktom, kot bi bilo sicer pričakovano). Napis je najverjetneje treba interpretirati kot oznako lastništva in bi lahko predstavljal trenutno najstarejši ohranjeni napis na keramiki v Sloveniji.

Ključne besede: Slovenija; Štanjel; starejša železna doba; keramika; silos; venetski napis; paleografija

Abstract

The rib of a silo from Štanjel, which was found in the storage building from the 5th and 4th centuries BC, bears a partially preserved incised inscription. The series of vertical and diagonal marks on the rough surface is non-accidental enough to be recognized as an inscription in the Venetic alphabet (henceforth labeled with the siglum *Ts 4). In a sinistroverse sequence, an interpunctuated <.a.> and <e> are clearly legible at the very end, enabling a tentative reading *[---].a.e* (with aberrant, non-framing interpunctuation of final *e*). The sequence most likely represents a mark of ownership and may represent the oldest preserved Venetic inscription on pottery in Slovenia.

Key words: Slovenia; Štanjel; Early Iron Age; ceramics; silo; Venetic inscription; paleography

Initially, the identification of the silo from Štanjel was a major challenge for researchers, mainly because there are no comparable finds at Slovenian sites. A typo-chronological analysis (Vinazza 2016) revealed that it is a ceramic form typical of the wider area of northern Italy and occurs in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlement contexts. Recent petrographic and geochemical analyses have provided insights into the manufacturing technology, and analyses of the organic remains have allowed a narrower interpretation of its function (Vinazza et al. 2025, in print[1]). As the rib of the silo has an incised inscription in the Venetian alphabet, we present its analysis and interpretation.

[1] M. Vinazza, D. Potočnik, N. Ogrinc, A, Šošter, M. Dolenec, N. Rogan Šmuc 2025, Another ceramic enigma. Silo – a specific Late Bronze and Early Iron Age ceramic form in the area of northern Italy and western Slovenia. – In: M. Miše, A. Carrasco (ed.), *Digging into Pottery*, London (in print).

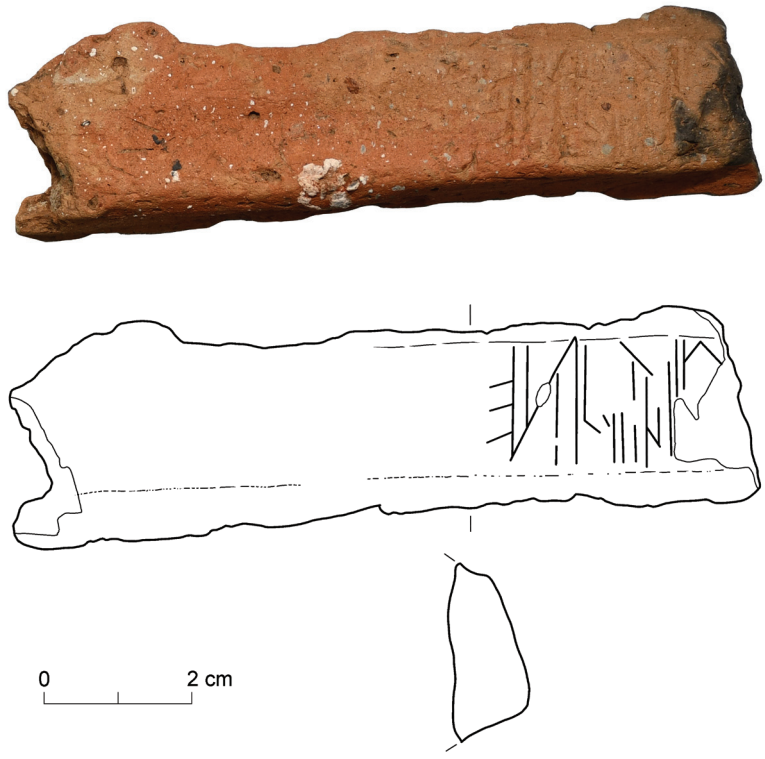


Fig. 1: Venetic inscription on the right part on the silo`s rib.
Sl. 1: Venetski napis na desni strani rebra silosa.

The silo was found in the basement of a 2 × 2.2 m^2 building, of which three walls were preserved, built using the dry-stone technique (Fabec, Vinazza 2014, Fig. 39.3–4; Vinazza 2021, 425). Numerous archaeobotanical remains were found in the debris layers, including the wild and domesticated grapevine seed (most recently Vinazza 2021, 426). Fragments of a silo were found in the latest fill of the building (SE 28), which, according to a typo-chronological analysis of pottery and metal finds, belongs to the 6th and 5th centuries BC. The results of radiocarbon dating indicate the end of the site's use in the early 4th century BC (Fabec, Vinazza 2014, 60; Vinazza 2021, 425, 428, Fig. 5).

The silo from Štanjel was not found in situ but scattered in a fill layer (SE 28). In total, there are 517 fragments with a total weight of 15 kg. The diameter of the opening is 76 cm, while the height is estimated at a maximum of 1 meter. It was probably partially buried in the ground, but the upper part with the rib and the inscription was visible.

It is made with a freehand slab technique, in which slabs are joined together in such a way that some of the joints have the shape of a U, while others have the shape of an inverted U (cf. Vinazza 2016, Fig. 6). On the basis of petrographic, mineralogical and geochemical analyses, we determined that the silo consists of coarse-grained local clay with only organic temper such as grasses, chaff or straw. The firing was carried out under controlled conditions and did not exceed 750 °C (Vinazza, Chatzimpaloglou 2024, 13; Vinazza et al. 2025, in print[2]), reflecting the technological choices made by the potters to achieve certain properties of the final product.

The organic residues analysis from the silo revealed the presence of plant lipids and alcohols, which is related to the fermentation of the fruit-based beverage. Although no traces of tartaric acid were found, we assume wine production based on the grapevine seeds discovered (Vinazza et al. 2025, in print[3]). Therefore, the presence of the inscription on the rib is not surprising, as it is a vessel intentionally made for specific content. The inscription (*Fig. 1*), which was incised before firing, is located on a horizontally applied rib with a trapezoidal cross-section. The difficulty in

[2] See Fn. 1.
[3] See Fn. 1.

legibility is attributed to the fact that the clay into which the inscription was incised is coarse-grained and the inclusions and temper in it do not allow easy carving, as is the case with fine clay (*cf*. the inscription from Kaštelir above Korte (Repanšek, Saccara 2023, Fig. 1).

THE INSCRIPTION (*Ts 4)

The attested epigraphic sequence consists of several vertical lines of varying length but given that these are combined with shorter and longer slanting strokes, the entire string gives a convincing impression of an inscription in the Venetic alphabet (*Fig. 1*). Judging from the orientation of the last letter form, the sequence is undoubtedly sinistroverse, but the only satisfactorily legible letters are <a> and <e>.

The alpha is of the so-called open type (with the middle articulus running parallel to the right hasta), such as it established itself as the predominant variant in the north-eastern Venetic territory, i.e. Altino, Treviso, Montebelluna, Oderzo, Làgole di Calalzo, Friuli, Magdalensberg, Gurina (for the most part, but side-by-side with some instances of archaic <a>), in the post-archaic phase, starting in the 4th century BC. The primitive variant of <a> with the medial articulus still attached to the frame is typical of peripheral areas such as Posočje, but only of the autochthonous inscriptions Is 1, Is 2 (Idrija pri Bači, grave 14) and *Is 4 (Grad near Reka), not, however, of the significantly younger Is 3 (Idrija pri Bači, grave 7/8), or the undoubtedly allochthonous *Is 5 (Berlotov rob). The six Venetic inscriptions discovered in Karst and northern Istria, which form the south-western group of Venetic inscriptions discovered in the south-eastern Alpine region (Škocjan, Parti near Stara Sušica, Kaštelir above Korte, Stramare/Štramar, Knežak, and Štanjel),[4] show three examples of archaic <a>: Ts 1 (Škocjan, Okostna jama) *.o..s.tiiare.i.*, *Ts 2 (Parti near Stara Sušica) *ṣṭevạ*, and Stramare/Štramar (Brancale, Decarli 1997, 52; Crevatin 1997, 231) *au*. The inscription from Okostna jama in Škocjan and the one on the stone slab found in Parti are dated to the 5th/4th century BC, while the find from Stramare/Štramar has been provisionally dated to the 2nd/1st century BC (on assumption that we are dealing with grey ware). The inscription from Knežak (awaiting publication), on the other hand, shows several examples of *alpha* with an unattached middle articulus that neatly correspond to what we seem to have attested on the inscription from Štanjel. Given the spatial and chronological distribution of the two post-archaic non-Euganean variants of <a>, it is very likely that we are dealing with an inscription younger than Ts 1 (Škocjan, Okostna jama), even though not necessarily allochthonous.

The three diagonal articuli of <e> point regularly downwards (as opposed to the inscription from Parti near Stara Sušica but in full accordance with what we see in the inscriptions from Okostna jama, Kaštelir, and Knežak), though the supporting vertical hasta extends beyond the point of contact with the upper-most articulus, which is abnormal.

Between <a> and <e>, there is a vertical incision which does not reach the base-line of the inscription (thus removing the possibility that we are dealing with an <i>), which is dominated by the contact between the left-most hasta of the *alpha* and the vertical hasta of *epsilon*. As such it can potentially be interpreted as an interpunct, the sequence then yielding *a.e*. Since what precedes the *alpha* is a vertical hasta of comparable length, it is likely that it too represents an interpunct, so that ultimately the sequence would read *.a.e* sinistroversely. If this interpretation is correct, the inscription is in almost perfect accordance with the rules of syllabic punctuation, on which principle one would ideally expect *.a.e.* (i.e. with framing punctuation of <e>). The several vertical incisions preceding this sequence do not afford any reliable features that would make it possible to recognize further letters of the Venetic alphabet.

Maximally, then, the inscription from Štanjel, henceforth allotted the siglum *Ts 4, may be read as a sinistroverse sequence *[---].a.e*. Linguistically speaking, however, nothing decisive can be said about it. No directly comparable sequences are attested in the Venetic corpus, nor does the ending fit what one would expect in terms of Venetic morphology, so that it may be tentatively concluded that it most likely represents a mark of ownership similar to what we have attested in what seems to be an abbreviated sequence *vos.e.* (which, interestingly, also terminates in *-e*) on a bowl sherd from Kaštelir above Korte, dated to

[4] Beside *Ts 4, the corpus of Venetic inscriptions from Northern Istria and Slovenian Karst published so far contains: Ts 1 (Škocjan, Okostna jama): *.o..s.tiiare.i.*, *Ts 2 (Parti near Stara Sušica, siglum assigned in Repanšek, Saccara 2023): *ṣṭevạ*, *Ts 3 (Kaštelir above Korte): *vose*, Stramare/Štramar (no siglum): *au*.

the 2nd/1st century BC (Repanšek, Saccara 2023). Based on the comparison with the paleographical characteristics of other Venetic inscriptions, *Ts 4 can be roughly dated to the period between the 4th and the 1st centuries BC.

From the archaeological investigations in Štanjel, which are mainly related to the infrastructure construction, we conclude that the southern and south-eastern part of Štanjel hillfort was mainly used as a settlement area (cf. Bratina 2019, 49, 50, 52; Bratina 2021, 58).

If we accept the assumption that wine was produced in the silo, the ownership mark on the silo could indicate that this space and the western part of the hillfort was used for the community and not for individual households.

BRANCALE, G., L. DECARLI 1997, *Istria: dialetti e preistoria*. – Trieste.

BRATINA, P. 2019, Štanjelski hrib v preteklosti. – In: E. Belingar (ed.), Štanjel, variacije v kamnu. Kulturna dediščina Štanjela, 43–62, Maribor.

BRATINA, P. 2021, Najstarejša zgodovina Komenskega Krasa. – In: D. Friš, M. Matjašič Friš (ed.), *Prazgodovinska gradišča in etnobotanika za trajnostni turizem / Kaštelir. Prapovijesne gradine i etnobotanika za održivi turizam*, 53–80, Maribor.

CREVATIN, F. 1997, Nuovo testo venetico da Trieste. – *Incontri linguistici* 20, 231.

FABEC, T., M. VINAZZA 2014, Štanjel. - In: B. Teržan, M. Črešnar (ed.), *Absolutno datiranje bronaste in železne dobe na Slovenskem*, Katalogi in monografije 40, 595-602.

REPANŠEK, L., M. SACCARA 2023, The Venetic inscription *Ts 3 from Kaštelir above Korte (Venetski napis *Ts 3 s Kaštelirja nad Kortami). – *Arheološki vestnik* 74, 309–314. https://doi.org/10.3986/AV.74.09

VINAZZA, M. 2016, Silosi – posebne keramične oblike: prispevek k poznavanju gospodinjstev v starejši železni dobi na Krasu. - *Arheo* 33, 7-23.

VINAZZA, M. 2021, Naselbinska keramika starejše železne dobe na Krasu (Settlement pottery from the Early Iron Age in Kras). – *Arheološki vestnik* 72, 419–452. https://doi.org/10.3986/AV.72.14

VINAZZA, M., P. CHATZIMPALOGLOU 2024, Investigating the pottery firing techniques in western Slovenia during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages using FTIR and petrographic analysis. – *Documenta Prahistorica* 51, 2–27. https://doi.org/10.4312/dp.51.19

Venetski napis na silosu iz Štanjela

Prevod

Prepoznavanje silosa v Štanjelu je bilo velik raziskovalni izziv predvsem zaradi odsotnosti primerljivih najdb na slovenskih najdiščih. Tipokronološka analiza (Vinazza 2016) je pokazala, da gre za keramično obliko, značilno za širši prostor severne Italije, ki se pojavlja v poznobronastodobnih in starejšeželeznodobnih naselbinskih kontekstih. Nedavne petrografske in geokemične analize so nam ponudile vpogled v tehnologijo izdelave, analize organskih ostankov pa so omogočile ožjo interpretacijo njihove namembnosti (Vinazza et al. 2025, v tisku[1]). Ker je na rebru silosa ohranjen vrezani napis v venetskem alfabetu, na tem mestu prinašamo njegovo analizo in interpretacijo.

Silos je bil najden v kletnem prostoru stavbe, velikem 2 × 2,2 m^2, od katere so se ohranili trije zidovi, grajeni v suhozidni tehniki (Fabec, Vinazza 2014, sl. 39.3–4; Vinazza 2021, 425). V ruševinskih plasteh so bili odkriti številni arheobotanični ostanki, med drugim peške divje in udomačene vinske trte (nazadnje Vinazza 2021, 426). Odlomki silosa so bili najdeni v najmlajšem zasutju stavbe (SE 28),

[1] M. Vinazza, D. Potočnik, N. Ogrinc, A, Šošter, M. Dolenec, N. Rogan Šmuc 2025, Another ceramic enigma. Silo – a specific Late Bronze and Early Iron Age ceramic form in the area of northern Italy and western Slovenia.– In: M. Miše, A. Carrasco (ed.), *Digging into Pottery*, London (v tisku).

ki na podlagi tipokronološke analize keramičnih in kovinskih najdb spada v 6. in 5. st. pr. n. št., rezultati radiokarbonskih datacij pa kažejo na konec uporabe prostora v začetku 4. st. pr. n. št. (Fabec, Vinazza 2014, 60; Vinazza 2021, 425, 428, sl. 5).

Silos v Štanjelu ni bil najden *in situ*, temveč razpršen v plasti (SE 28). Skupno gre za 517 odlomkov v skupni teži 15 kg. Premer njegovega ustja znaša 76 cm, medtem ko višino ocenjujemo do največ 1 m. Najverjetneje je bil delno vkopan v zemljo, zgornji del z rebrom in napisom pa je bil viden.

Izdelan je v prostoročni tehniki s t. i. glinenimi trakovi. Ti so med sabo spojeni tako, da imajo nekateri spoji obliko črke U, drugi pa obliko narobe obrnjene črke U (prim. Vinazza 2016, sl. 6). Na podlagi petrografske, mineraloške in geokemične analize smo ugotovili, da je silos izdelan iz grobozrnate lokalne gline, v katero so primešali le organske primesi, kot so trave, pleve ali slama. Žganje je potekalo v nadzorovanih pogojih in ni preseglo 750 °C (Vinazza, Chatzimpaloglou 2024, 13; Vinazza et al. 2025, v tisku[2]), kar odraža tehnološke odločitve lončarjev v želji po pridobitvi določenih lastnosti končnega izdelka.

Analiza organskih ostankov silosa je pokazala prisotnost rastlinskih maščob in alkoholov, kar povezujemo s fermentacijo pijače na osnovi sadja. Čeprav sledov vinske kisline nismo našli, na podlagi odkritih pešk vinske trte domnevamo pridelavo vina (Vinazza et al. 2025, v tisku[3]). Prav zato napis na rebru ne preseneča, saj gre za posodo, ki je bila namerno izdelana za določeno vsebino. Napis (*sl. 1*), ki je bil vrezan pred žganjem, leži na vodoravno apliciranem rebru trapezastega preseka. Napis je težko berljiv, kar pripisujemo dejstvu, da je glina, v katero je bil vrezan, grobozrnata, vključki in primesi v njej pa ne omogočajo enostavnega vrezovanja kot pri bolj fini oz. prečiščeni glini (prim. napis iz Kaštelirja nad Kortami (Repanšek, Saccara 2023, sl. 1)).

NAPIS (*Ts 4)

Sekvenca vertikalnih zarez različne dolžine, izpričanih na silosu, skupaj z nekaterimi prav tako različno dolgimi diagonalnimi zarezami daje vtis, da gre za napis v venetskem alfabetu (*sl. 1*). Sodeč po orientaciji zadnje črke, je jasno, da napis poteka od desne proti levi, četudi je zadovoljivo vidno le zaporedje črk <a> in <e>.

Alfa je t. i. odprtega tipa s srednjo, krajšo hasto vzporedno z desno stranico. Tak tip alfe se je v postarhajski dobi od 4. st. pr. n. št. naprej uveljavil kot prevladujoča različica severovzhodnega dela venetsko pišočega areala ter ga redno najdemo na napisih iz Altina, Trevisa, Montebellune, Oderza, Làgola, Furlanije in Gurine (ob primerkih arhaičnega <a>), prav tako na napisu s Štalenske gore. Primitivna oz. arhaična varianta <a> s stično srednjo hasto je ob tem na severovzhodu značilna za periferna območja, npr. za Posočje, a še tam le za avtohtone napise Is 1 in Is 2 (Idrija pri Bači, grob 14) ter *Is 4 (Grad pri Reki), ne pa za vsaj dobro stoletje mlajši napis Is 3 z Idrije pri Bači (grob 7/8) ali za nedvomno alohtoni Is 5 z Berlotovega roba. Med šestimi venetskimi napisi, ki sestavljajo jugozahodno skupino venetskih napisov jugovzhodnega alpskega prostora (Škocjan, Parti pri Stari Sušici, Kaštelir nad Kortami, Stramare/Štramar, Knežak in Štanjel),[4] trije izkazujejo <a> arhajskega tipa, in sicer Ts 1 (Škocjan, Okostna jama) *.o..s.tiiare.i.*, *Ts 2 (Parti pri Stari Sušici) *ṣteva* in Stramare/Štramar (Brancale, Decarli 1997, 52; Crevatin 1997, 231) *au*. Pri tem je napis iz Okostne jame pri Škocjanu datiran v 5. oz. 4. st. pr. n. št., prav tako fragmentarno ohranjena sekvenca na odlomku kamnite plošče s Partov pri Stari Sušici, medtem ko se da napis iz Štramarja pri Miljah na podlagi keramike previdno datirati v 2. oz. 1. st. pr. n. št. Na še neobjavljenem napisu s Knežaka so vse alfe odprtega tipa in ustrezajo črki <a>, kakršna je izpričana na štanjelskem silosu. Ob upoštevanju prostorske in časovne distribucije postarhajskih neevganejskih variant alfe bi to govorilo v prid verjetnosti, da je štanjelski napis mlajši od tistega iz Okostne jame (Ts 1), a nikakor ne nujno alohtonega izvora.

Vse tri poševne haste črke <e> so sicer regularno usmerjene navzdol (kot, denimo, na napisu iz Okostne jame, s Kaštelirja nad Kortami in s Knežaka, a v nasprotju z napisom s Partov pri Stari Sušici), vendar ima vertikalna hasta podaljšan vrat, ki sega nad stik z zgornjo od treh poševnih zarez, kar je s tipološkega vidika neobičajno.

[2] Glej opombo 1.

[3] Glej opombo 1.

[4] Korpus doslej objavljenih venetskih napisnih spomenikov severne Istre in slovenskega Krasa vsebuje naslednje napise: Ts 1 (Škocjan, Okostna jama): *.o..s.tiiare.i.*, *Ts 2 (Parti pri Stari Sušici; sigla določena v Repanšek, Saccara 2023): *ṣteva*, *Ts 3 (Kaštelir nad Kortami): *vose* in Stramare/Štramar (brez sigle): *au*.

Med črkama <a> in <e> je vertikalna zareza, ki se ne dotika spodnje linije, zato zagotovo ne gre za črko <i>. Poleg tega se na spodnji liniji leva hasta alfe in vertikalna hasta epsilona dotikata. Krajšo vertikalno zarezo bi bilo mogoče interpretirati kot interpunkt in sekvenco brati kot *a.e*, kot interpunkt pa bi se dalo razumeti tudi vertikalno hasto identične dolžine, ki je vrezana pred alfo. Celotna zaključna sekvenca je torej *.a.e* (od desne proti levi). Če je ta interpretacija pravilna, je izvedba interpunktuacije regularna z izjemo zaključka, saj bi interpunkt pričakovali tudi za črko <e> (torej *.a.e.* in ne *.a.e*). Prestalih vertikalnih zarez pred sekvenco *.a.e* ni mogoče prepričljivo tolmačiti kot črke venetskega alfabeta.

V maksimalnem smislu je venetski napis na silosu iz Štanjela mogoče interpretirati kot sekvenco *[---].a.e*, ki poteka od desne proti levi, a se o njej z jezikoslovnega vidika ne da navesti nič določnega, saj primerljiva zaporedja v venetskem korpusu niso izpričana, prav tako pa tak končaj s stališča venetskega oblikoslovja ni pričakovan. Najverjetneje gre torej za lastniško oznako, podobno okrajšani sekvenci, odkriti na odlomku skodele s Kaštelirja nad Kortami, datirane v 2. oz. 1. st. pr. n. št. (Repanšek, Saccara 2023, 313). Na podlagi primerjave s paleografskimi značilnostmi drugih venetskih napisov ga je mogoče grobo datirati v obdobje med 4. in 1. st. pr. n. št.

Na podlagi arheoloških raziskav v Štanjelu, povezanih predvsem z gradnjo infrastrukture, ugotavljamo, da je bil predvsem južni in jugovzhodni del štanjelskega griča namenjen poselitvi (prim. Bratina 2019, 49, 50, 52; Bratina 2021, 58).

Če sprejmemo domnevo o pridelavi vina v silosu, lahko lastniška oznaka na njem napeljuje na misel, da sta bila ta prostor in zahodni del gradišča namenjena širši skupnosti in ne posameznemu gospodinjstvu.

Manca VINAZZA
Oddelek za arheologijo
Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani
Aškerčeva 2
SI-1000 Ljubljana
manca.vinazza@ff.uni-lj.si
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5261-8473

Luka REPANŠEK
Oddelek za primerjalno in splošno jezikoslovje
Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani
Aškerčeva 2
SI-1000 Ljubljana
luka.repansek@ff.uni-lj.si
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6530-7597

llustrations: Fig. 1 (photo: Manca Vinazza; drawing: Ida Murgelj, NMS).
Slikovno gradivo: Sl. 1 (foto: Manca Vinazza; risba: Ida Murgelj, NMS).

Authors acknowledge the financial support from the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency, research core funding No. P6-0247 and No. P6-0218.
Prispevek je nastal v okviru raziskovalnih programov P6-0247 in P6-0218, ki ju financira Javna agencija za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije.