

1. OLD ITALIC SCRIPTS

(Etruscan, Oscan, Umbrian, Messapic, Faliscan and Picene)

• OLD ITALIC: DEFINITION AND ORIGINS

“Old Italic” is an umbrella term for a range of alphabetic scripts that were in use in the Italian peninsula prior to the rise of the Roman Empire and the consequent spread of the Latin script.

The alphabets were not identical, but they do have a common core to which individual alphabets add specific characters. Nor were the alphabets static once they developed.

The Old Italic alphabets were developed from the west Greek alphabet, which came to Italy via the Greek colonies on Sicily and along the west coast of Italy. The Etruscans adapted the Greek alphabet to write Etruscan sometime during the 6th century BC, or possibly earlier. Most of the other alphabets used in Italy are thought to have derived from the Etruscan alphabet.

The alphabets unified as “Old Italic” include: Etruscan, Oscan, Umbrian, North Picene, South Picene, Faliscan and archaic Latin.

• ETRUSCAN

Before Rome became the dominant state of the Italic peninsula and imposed its culture and language on the non-Roman Italic population, there were a bewildering number of ethnic and linguistic groups that thrived in the Italic peninsula.

One of the most dominant and powerful of these groups was the Etruscans, the first people in the Italian peninsula to learn to write and from them writing spread to other cultures of the Italian peninsula such as the Romans.

However, little is known about the Etruscans or their language.

The Etruscan language has never been conclusively shown to be related to any other language in the world. The problem is compounded by the fact that the textual corpus is limited in scope, mostly from tombstones. There are some bilingual texts with Phoenician, but they are short and few in number.

As a consequence, the Etruscan language remains poorly understood.

The Etruscan alphabet is thought to have been developed from the Euboean Greek alphabet.

The earliest known inscription dates from the middle of the 6th century BC.

More than 10,000 Etruscan inscriptions have been found on tombstones, vases, statues, mirrors and jewellery. One of the most famous is the Tablets of Pyrgi, golden plates discovered in 1964 with text from the Etruscan sanctuary at Pyrgi, the port of Caeres. Fragments of a Etruscan book made of linen have also been found, it is known as “Liber Linteus”.

Most Etruscan inscriptions are written in horizontal lines from right to left, but some are left to right and a few are even boustrophedon (running alternately left to right then right to left).

There are various stages of the Etruscan alphabet:

1.- The Archaic Etruscan alphabet (8th-5th centuries BC.)

The "Archaic" alphabet was used between the 8th and 4th century BC, before the Etruscans were part of the Roman Empire.

2.- The Neo-Etruscan alphabet (4th-3rd centuries BC.). A transitional stage, influenced by Latin.

3.- The Late Etruscan alphabet. (2nd BC.–1st AD.) The "Late" version was used at a time when Etruscan as a language was rapidly being replaced by Latin. Knowledge of Etruscan finally died out by the 1st century AD.

The Etruscan alphabet was the foundation for many other alphabets such as Oscan, Umbrian, and maybe even Futhark. However, its descendent, the Latin alphabet, would come to be one of the most widely used alphabets in the world.

ALPHABETUM is the more complete font you can find at the present time, since it contains most of the character variants used in Etruscan script. Please see the character listing below.

• OSCAN

Another ethnic Italic group are the Oscans, who occupied the southern part of the Peninsula that was not settled by Greeks. Oscan is believed to have been spoken in Samnium, Campania, Lucania and Abruzzo.

The Oscan speakers adopted the Etruscan alphabet to write their language.

This event probably occurred around the 7th century BC. but the first evidence of the Oscan alphabet did not appear until the 5th century BC. in the form of inscriptions on coins. Because the Oscan language is Indo-European, its phonology is different from that of Etruscan. As a result, many letters not used in Etruscan but inherited from Greek were revived to denote Oscan sounds such as [b], [g], and [d]. Sometimes the [u] letter is used to denote the [o] sound (which did not exist in Etruscan and therefore there was no letter for it). Also, two new letters were invented during the 4th century BC, namely í and ú, for the long vowels [i:] and [u:]. The total tally of letters in the Oscan alphabet is therefore 21.

The Oscan alphabet is written from right to left. Also, to mark separation between words, a dot is used.

More than 300 Oscan inscriptions, dating from between 400 and 79 BC, have been found in various sites in southern Italy: “Cippus Abellanus”, “Tabula Bantina”, “Tabula Agnona” etc.

As Rome conquered territory occupied by Oscans, it assimilated the Oscan people into the Roman world. As a consequence, the Oscan ethnic identity and culture disappeared, and the Oscan language ceased to be spoken and written by the end of the 1st century AD.

• UMBRIAN

Another language spoken in ancient Italy was Umbrian, in the region of Umbria.

Umbrian is known to us primarily from the “Tabulae Iguvinae”, seven bronze tablets, dating from between about 350 and 50 BC, which contains some notes on ceremonies and statutes for priests.

These plates are almost the only examples of the Umbrian alphabet that have been found.

The Umbrian alphabet is likewise of Etruscan origin.

The Umbrian is written from right to left and two dots are used to mark separation between words.

• MESSAPIC

The Messapic alphabet is thought to have derived directly from the Greek alphabet, rather than developing from the Etruscan alphabet.

The Messapic language was not related to the other languages of Italy. It is quite certain that Messapic is of Illyrian descent, having been brought over across the Adriatic.

The only known inscriptions in the Messapic alphabet date from the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.

Some inscriptions have come down to us in the native alphabet, but others are written with Greek letters.

• PICENE

Picene is less of a linguistic concept than a geographical one; there being two very distinct (unrelated) varieties: northern Picene and southern Picene, generally listed together, but quite different.

Southern Picene has much in common with the Osco-Umbrian group.

However, it is doubtful whether northern Picene is even Indo-European.

• LATINIAN DIALECTS (FALISCAN and LATIN)

The Latinian dialects are those that preserve Indo-European /qu/. Faliscan is of this type, though it shows a good deal of borrowing from its neighbor languages. Faliscan is very closely related to Latin.

Latin, once restricted to a small area of Latium (archaic Latin), soon became the official language of the Empire (classical Latin) and gave rise to the modern Romance languages. Its alphabet has survived to the present and is the basis for the modern western European scripts.

The ALPHABETUM Unicode font contains the 35 Old Italic characters encoded by the Unicode Consortium in the Supplementary Multilingual Plane (Plane 1), plus other 175 characters (in Private Use Area) needed to type the languages described above.

ALPHABETUM is for the moment the only Unicode font which offers such wide coverage for Old Italic scripts.

OLD ITALIC. ALPHABETUM GLYPH CHART

These are the 215 glyphs required to represent Old Italic scripts in electronic text documents.

Less characteres would be required if duplications of glyphs were eliminated, which I do not recommend.

Duplications of glyphs facilitate the task of entering Old Italic characters present in Private Use Area via Insert/Symbol in Word or by using BabelMap, since they are encoded as a string in alphabetical order.

Most of the characters shown below are not found in the Unicode 4.0 specification.

IMPORTANT NOTICES: 1) There is not full consensus among specialists concerning the shapes, number and even attributions to letters of Old Italic characters, so that you will probably find some shape discrepancies or unexpected locations of any characters in the following chart.

2) I am well aware that some glyphs inserted in ALPHABETUM are surely superfluous, however I prefer to err on the safe side and to include an unnecessary glyph for a letter than to omit one.

	ETRUSCAN	UMBRIAN	OSCAN	FALISCAN	PICENE	MESSAPIC	LATIN	Others
a	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇
b		𐌆	𐌆		𐌆	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆
c	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉		𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	
d			𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇
e	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇	
v	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆
z	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆	𐌆	[𐌆 𐌇]	
h	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆
th	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆		𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇		𐌆
i	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	
k	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	
l	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆
m	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇
n	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇
š	𐌆 𐌇		𐌆		𐌆	𐌆		𐌆 𐌇
o	[𐌆 𐌇 𐌈]		[𐌆]	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	
p	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆
ś	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈			𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	[𐌆]		
q	𐌆 𐌇		[𐌆 𐌇]	𐌆		𐌆	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆
r	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈
s	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆
t	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈	𐌆	𐌆	
u	𐌆 𐌇 𐌈 𐌉	𐌆	𐌆 𐌇	𐌆	𐌆		𐌆	

ks	+			×			×	
ph	ϕ ∅							φ
kh	ψ γ ↓ ↓			↓ ψ	Ψ	× ↑		
f	g g g	[8]	[8 :]					
rs		q p						
ch		d b						
í			† † † · †					
ú			v γ		v v			

NUMERALS:

Etruscan			Latin	
1	𐌠	100 𐌡 𐌢 𐌣	1 𐌠	100 𐌠
5	𐌡	500 𐌤	5 𐌡	500 𐌡
10	𐌢	1000 𐌥 𐌦 𐌧	10 𐌢	1000
50	𐌣	10000 𐌨	50 𐌣 𐌤 𐌥	𐌡 ∞

- **SAMPLES:**

➤ **OSCAN**

The Oscan alphabet.

А В Ъ Я Э Ъ І Ї І Х Ј Ћ Њ П Д Ъ Т У 8 Ь УУ
a b g d e v z h i k l m n p r s t u f í ú

Sample text: “Cippus Abellanus” (Boundary stone from Abella)



12. ለዘመናዊ የቴክኖሎጂ ልማት
 ማዘጋጀት የሚያስፈልጉ የሥራ ማህበራት
 ማቅረብና ማጥናት ይቻላል።
 የሥራ ማህበራት ማቅረብና ማጥናት
 የሥራ ማህበራት ማቅረብና ማጥናት
 የሥራ ማህበራት ማቅረብና ማጥናት
 የሥራ ማህበራት ማቅረብና ማጥናት
 የሥራ ማህበራት ማቅረብና ማጥናት
 የሥራ ማህበራት ማቅረብና ማጥናት

► **UMBRIAN**

Sample text: “Tabulae Iguvinae” (Iguvian tablet I)

KVVTE8:LEZNIIMVAPFEJEDFCE:
 VKDILED:8I2IV:TVTRLED:IKVCIHA:8EIV:ZECVM:
 CR4VCR8EDINE8:EIV:QEDIS:CIIV:QEDIVNI:
 IVI:FE:KDIRVCI:TD8VB8:8EIV:ADIIA2VTEIV
 IEDNIAIE2:1Z2NAE2:1DEFEDE2:Z2NAI1DEI:NAE2:
 E2TE:LEDKJVM:ACE2:ANLEDIAITE2:ENEIV

➤ ETRUSCAN

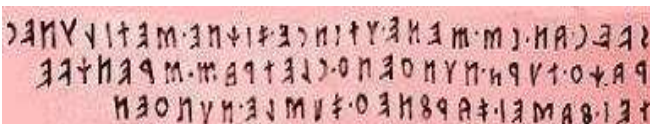
Sample text: Golden tablets from Pyrgi

Side A



ET·D·A·I·A·I·M·T·A·T·I
D·A·M·A·F·A·F·A·I·E·Y·E
A·I·M·E·O·Z·E·D·T·A·J·A·I·N·Y
A·E·O·A·T·V·O·J·E·M·A·Z
J·A·Z·Z·A·N·A·I·J·E·I·I·E·I·D
J·V·D·V·T·Z·A·I·N·E·I·A·Z·J·D·V
Z·A·Y·O·Z·A·T·Z·I·N·Y·M·E·J
T·A·M·E·D·E·Z·A·I·A·C·E·E·
I·F·A·I·D·Z·A·N·E·Z·A·D·E·J·V·T
J·V·D·F·A·D·T·E·Z·I·M·E·I·T
J·A·Z·J·A·Z·Z·A·J·I·E·J·A
J·A·J·I·Z·A·N·A·D·T·A·Z·A·N
J·A·Z·Z·A·N·A·A·J·A·T·I·E·J·Z·J·A
M·A·D·E·B·M·I·N·A·T·I·Z·D·E
J·V·T·A·Z·A·I·N·E·J·I·F·A·E·E
A·F·Y·M·V

Sample text: “Liber Linteus”



ET·D·A·I·A·I·M·T·A·T·I
D·A·M·A·F·A·F·A·I·E·Y·E
A·I·M·E·O·Z·E·D·T·A·J·A·I·N·Y
A·E·O·A·T·V·O·J·E·M·A·Z
J·A·Z·Z·A·N·A·I·J·E·I·I·E·I·D
J·V·D·V·T·Z·A·I·N·E·I·A·Z·J·D·V
Z·A·Y·O·Z·A·T·Z·I·N·Y·M·E·J
T·A·M·E·D·E·Z·A·I·A·C·E·E·
I·F·A·I·D·Z·A·N·E·Z·A·D·E·J·V·T
J·V·D·F·A·D·T·E·Z·I·M·E·I·T
J·A·Z·J·A·Z·Z·A·J·I·E·J·A
J·A·J·I·Z·A·N·A·D·T·A·Z·A·N
J·A·Z·Z·A·N·A·A·J·A·T·I·E·J·Z·J·A
M·A·D·E·B·M·I·N·A·T·I·Z·D·E
J·V·T·A·Z·A·I·N·E·J·I·F·A·E·E
A·F·Y·M·V

REMINDER: ALPHABETUM Unicode font provides a lot of glyph variants for Old Italic languages, but remember that ALPHABETUM is a computerized font. Ancient scribes and engravers did not have word processors. A word processor cannot duplicate the various epigraphical and handwriting nuances such as the size of caps, long descenders, etc.

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<http://guindo.cnice.mecd.es/~jmag0042/alphaeng.html>