Writing was brought to the Apennine peninsula in the late 9th century BCE, when colonizing Greeks from Euboea, north of Attica, settled on the isle Pithekoussai (mod. Ischia) outside the Bay of Naples. This marks the entry of the peninsula into the historical period.

During the centuries to follow, settlers from various Greek city states founded colonies along the southern coasts of the peninsula, and brought with them the alphabets in use in their home states. In this multitude of scripts, the line created by the two rivers the Silarus (Sele) and the Aufidus (Oftano) became a lasting boundary between the Greek influence in the south, tied to settlements such as Poseidonia (Paestum) by the mouth of the Silarus, and the northern region, where the Etruscans, speakers of a non-Indo-European language, were the culturally more pronounced ethnic group.

There are Etruscan inscriptions from late 8th century aristocratic graves in Tarquinia, and subsequent attestations of Etruscan writing in other cities in South Etruria, such as Caere and Vulci. From the 6th century onwards Etruscan inscriptions are found in the more remote and peripheral Etruscan-speaking regions (Bagnasco Gianni 2010, 115-116; Maras 2016, 206). In the earliest Etruscan inscriptions the script is very similar to the Euboean alphabet, but during the centuries to follow the Etruscan scribes successively calibrated the technique of writing to fit their own language (Pandolfini and Prodsocimi 1990, 11-15, Maras 2016, 201). The resulting Etruscan alphabet, in different stages of modification, came to influence several of the tribes in the central and northern parts of the peninsula, who eventually came to develop their own individual scripts, all based on the Etruscan modified alphabet.

The project Archai口径cchief: Spelling Reforms: Alphabetic Adaptations on the Apennine Peninsula analyzes adaptations visible in the scripts in the central and northern parts of the peninsula, and the spread of writing in terms of technical knowledge. The project studies the individual scripts devised and used by the Latinis, the Faliscans, the Umbrians, the Picenes, the Veneti, along with the use of their scripts on the north of the Silarus-Aufidus line. Examples that are analyzed include the writing of voiced stops, the spelling of /l/, and the number of vowels in a given script.

The alphabets further up north solved the issue of writing voiced stops in different ways. The Falisicians, Latin and Sabine alphabets stem from a version of the Etruscan alphabet in use on the northern Etruscan peninsula, probably dating to the 7th or early 6th century (Bakkum 2009, 379-380). All three scripts have <D> for /d/, and Latin and Sabine write <B> for /b/ (Faliscian uses only <P>). There is, at first, no sign for /g/, but the sign <C> was used to write both velar sounds, /g/ and /k/ (on the “C/K/Q-convention”, see left). A specific sign for /r/ was created in the Latin alphabet only in the late 3rd century BCE, with a diacritical mark added to <C> making <Q>.

In the Venetic and Umbrian alphabets the problem of writing voiced stops was solved in yet a different way. The Umbrian alphabet featured a sign <B>, although this was very irregularly used (Tikkam 2019). There was also initially a new sign <P> for /p/, although from the 3rd century BCE this marks a spirantized /p/, and /p/ is written using the sign <F> (Adiego 2015, 17).

The Venetic alphabet introduced the Greek signs <p>, <q>, and <q> for /b/, /d/, and /g/ respectively (Fogolari and Prodsocimi 1988, 328-51).

In the Apennine Peninsula constitutes a micro-climate within which it is possible to study the evolution of several different alphabets. Several of the archaic Italic scripts were based on the Etruscan alphabet, in itself an adaptation from the Eastern Greek alphabet used on Euboea.

Some of the adaptations visible in the northern Etruscan alphabet can be analyzed as due to complementary distribution. The presence of <B> and <D> in several of these scripts is often explained as Greek influence, but they can also be attributed to the Etruscan teachers, who might have transmitted the alphabet in the same row as it was taught to them (the change of letter names is thought to have taken place within the Etruscan language continuum). But whereas <B> and <D> seem to have been included in the Italic abecedaries fairly easily – Faliscan and Umbrian (regular <B>) – the only apparent exceptions –, in several scripts <C> was used to write voiceless velar /k/, as in Etruscan. Only scripts that had <G> for /k/ could feature <C> for /g/, as in the South Picene and Ocean alphabet. Scripts in which <C> was used for /g/, meaning all scripts based on the northern Etruscan alphabet, present alternative solutions (see table above). The same kind of “problem” caused the creation of Osc. <R> and Umb. <P> for /p/, since both alphabets featured <D> for /d/, as in Etruscan (Adiego 2015, 17, Tikkam 2019 and forthcoming).

Other adaptations are due to different levels of external cultural influence, as well as internal stress. The Venetic script features the archaic Etr. digraphs <FB> with no apparent simplification. South Picene, Ocean, Sabine and Umbrian have <B> for /b/, from the simplified version of the Etruscan script (with the second sign in the digraph), whereas the later Latin alphabet has <P>. Faliscan, finally, has an individual sign <T> for /t/, coined earlier than the Etruscan digraph, evidently caused by the stress of writing out the name of their own ethnic. In short, the technique of writing was variously received by the different communities on the Apennine peninsula. The different outcomes reflect both old patterns of centralisation with distinct scribal schools, and where the Etruscan script was encountered. The adaptations visible in the scripts in the central and northern parts of the peninsula, depend on when and where the Etruscan script was encountered, later on simplified to <B> (a rounded version of <B>), which was variously continued in the different alphabets (see table left).

The lack of signs for voiced stops imposed limitations in the writing of the Italic languages, as scripts of these tongues adapted the Etruscan alphabet to their own respective languages. To some extent differences between the various Italic alphabets depend on when and where the Etruscan script was encountered. The South Picene and Ocean alphabets feature complete sets of signs for voiced stops, possibly due to (partial) Greek influence. However, since the Ocean script featured Etr. sign <D> for /d/, Ocean scripts instead created <R> for the writing of /d/ (Adiego 2015, 17).

**CONCLUSION**

In the Apennine Peninsula, artefacts from the different communities on the Apennine Peninsula are often ascribed to the Etruscans, who primarily speak a language that used Etruscan signs. This is due to the Etruscans’ influence on the surrounding cultures, which led to the adaptation and modification of the Etruscan script. In particular, the Etruscan alphabet was adapted to reflect the sounds of the respective languages, leading to variations in the alphabets used in different regions.

The presence of specific signs in the different alphabets is due to external cultural influence, such as the influence of Greek culture in the south of Italy. The Etruscan alphabet was adapted to reflect the sounds of the respective languages, leading to variations in the alphabets used in different regions.

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