7.10 Old Italic

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Old Italic: U+10300–U+1032F

The Old Italic script unifies a number of related historical alphabets located on the Italian peninsula which were used for non-Indo-European languages (Etruscan and probably North Picene, which is likely not related to Etruscan), various Indo-European languages belonging to the Italic branch (Faliscan and members of the Sabellian group, including Oscan, Umbrian, and South Picene), and a separate Indo-European branch (Messapic). The ultimate source for the alphabets in ancient Italy is Euboean Greek used at Ischia and Cumae in the bay of Naples in the eighth century BCE. Unfortunately, no Greek abecedaries from southern Italy have survived. Faliscan, Oscan, Umbrian, North Picene, and South Picene all derive from an Etruscan form of the alphabet. Strictly speaking, the Messapic alphabet was derived directly from Greek sources, not from an Etruscan prototype. But structural similarities in the Old Italic and early Greek alphabets as well as practical considerations of scholarly interest have suggested that Messapic should be unified with Old Italic, not with Greek.

There are some 10,000 inscriptions in Etruscan. By the time of the earliest Etruscan inscriptions, ca. 700 BCE, local distinctions are already found in the use of the alphabet. Three major stylistic divisions are identified: the north, south, and Caere/Veii. Use of Etruscan can be divided into two stages, owing largely to the phonological changes that occurred: the "archaic Etruscan alphabet", used from the seventh to the fifth centuries BCE, and the "neo-Etruscan alphabet", used from the fourth to the first centuries BCE. Glyphs for eight of the letters differ between the two periods; additionally, neo-Etruscan abandoned the letters KA, KU, and EKS.

The unification of these alphabets into a single Old Italic script requires language-specific fonts because the glyphs most commonly used may differ somewhat depending on the language being represented. Formal use of the VARIANT SELECTOR is not thought to be useful for selection of variant glyphs at the present state of knowledge and standardization of these alphabets, but it cannot be ruled out for future specification.

Each of the other languages have added their own characters to this repertoire: Etruscan and Faliscan add LETTER EF; Oscan adds LETTER EF, LETTER II, and LETTER UU; Umbrian adds LETTER EF, LETTER ERS, and LETTER CHE; North Picene adds LETTER UU; Adriatic adds LETTER II and LETTER UU; and Messapic adds LETTER TA. *(TA is not currently under ballot in 10646-2, but is attested in Haarmann 1990)*

The Latin script itself derives from a south Etruscan model, probably from Caere or Veii, around the mid-seventh century BCE or a bit earlier, but because there are significant differences between Latin and Faliscan of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE in terms of formal differences (glyph shapes, directionality) and differences in the repertoire of letters used this warrants a distinctive character block. Fonts for early Latin should use the *upper-case* code positions

U+0041–U+005A. The unified Alpine script, which includes the Venetic, Rhaetic, Lepontic, and Gallic alphabets, has not yet been proposed for addition to the Unicode Standard but is considered to differ enough from both Old Italic and Latin to warrant independent encoding. The Alpine script is thought to be the source for Runic, which is encoded at U+16A0–U+16FF.

Character names assigned to the Old Italic block are unattested but have been reconstructed according to the analysis made by Geoffrey Sampson. While the Greek character names (ALPHA, BETA, GAMMA, etc.) were borrowed directly from the Phoenician names (modified to Greek phonology), the Etruscans are thought to have abandoned the Greek names in favour of a phonetically-based nomenclature, where stops were pronounced with a following *-e* sound, and liquids and sibilants (which can be pronounced more or less on their own) were pronounced with a leading *e-* sound (so [k], [d] became [ke:], [de:] but [l:], [m:] became [el], [em]. It is these names which were borrowed by the Romans when they took their script from the Etruscans; evidence for this can be found in the word *elementum*, has among its meanings 'letter of the alphabet'.

Directionality. Most early Etruscan texts have right-to-left directionality. From the third century BCE, left-to-right texts appear, showing the influence of Latin. Oscan, Umbrian, and Faliscan also generally have right-to-left directionality. *Boustrophedon* appears rarely, and not especially early (for instance, the Forum inscription dates to 550-500 BCE). Despite this, for reasons of implementation simplicity, many scholars prefer left-to-right presentation of texts, as this is also their practice when transcribing the texts into Latin script. Accordingly, the Old Italic script has a default directionality of strong left-to-right in this standard. When directional overrides are used to produce right-to-left presentation, the glyphs in fonts must be mirrored from the glyphs given in the tables below.

Punctuation. Earliest inscriptions are written in *scriptio continua*, with no space between words. There are numerous seventh-century Etruscan inscriptions with dots separating word forms, attested as early as the second quarter of the seventh century BCE. This punctuation is sometimes, but rarely, used to separate syllables rather than words. From the sixth century BCE words were often separated by one, two, or three dots spaced vertically above each other. (Is it time for us to specify recommended characters to use for these purposes?)

Numerals. Etruscan numerals are not well-attested in the available materials, but are employed in the same fashion as Roman numerals are. Several additional numerals are attested, but as their use is at present uncertain, they are not yet encoded in the Unicode Standard.

Glyphs. The default glyphs in the code charts are based on the most common shapes found for each letter. Most of these are similar to the Marsiliana abecedary (mid-seventh century BCE). Note that the phonetic values for U+10317 ✕ EKS [ks] and U+10319 Ψ KHE [kʰ] show the influence of western, Euboean Greek (eastern Greek has U+03A7 X CHI [x] and U+03A8 Ψ PSI [ps].

		Mar	Et1	Et2	Osc	Umb	Fal	NPi	SPi	Mes
ꓯ	A	ꓯ	ꓯ	Ʌ	ꓯⱯ	ꓯ	Ʌꟻ	ꓯ	ɅɅ	ɅɅꓯ
ᗷ	BE	ᗷ			ᗷ	ᗷ			ᗷ	ᗷ
ᐸ	KE	Γ	ᐸ	ᐸ	ᐸ		ᐸ	ᐸᐸ	ᐸ	Γ
ᗡ	DE	ᗡ			ᖇ		ᗡ	ᖇ	ᖇ	ᗡᗡ
ꟼ	E	ꟼ	ꟼ	ꟼ	ꟼ	ꟼ	ꟼ	ꟼ	ꞘꞘ	ꞘꞘ
Ⅎ	VE	Ⅎ	Ⅎ	Ⅎ	ᗬ	ᗬ			Ⅎ	ⅎᗬ
Ɪ	ZE	Ɪ	Ɪ	Ɪ	Ɪ	ǂ	Ɪᖶ			Ɪ
ᗯ	HE	ᗯ	ᗯ	ᗯⵔ	ᗯ	ⵔ	ⵔᗯ		ⵔⵔ	ᗯH
⊗	THE	⊗	⊗	⊗⊙○		⊙	⊙	⊗	◇⊠	⊗○
Ⅰ	I	Ⅰ	Ⅰ	Ⅰ	Ⅰ	Ⅰ	Ⅰ	Ⅰ	Ⅰ	Ⅰ
ᛕ	KA	ᛕ	ᛕ	ᛕ	ᛕ	ᛕ	ᛕ	ᛕ	ᛕ	ᛕ
ᒪ	EL	ᒪ	ᒪ	ᒪ	ᒪ	ᒪ	ᒪ	ᒪ	ᒪᐯ	✕
ᛙ	EM	ᛙ	ᛙ	ᛙ���✕	ᛖ	ᛖ✕	ᛙᛖ	ᛙ	ᛙ	ᛙᛙ
ᛧ	EN	ᛧ	ᛧ	ᛧᛖ	ᛝ	ᛝ	ᛧᛖ	ᛧ	ᛝ	ᛧᛝ
⊞	ESH	⊞								
○	O	○					○	○	·	○
Γ	PE	Γ	Γ	Γ	⊓	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ	Γ
ᛉ	SHE	ᛉ	ᛉ	ᛉᛩ		ᛉ		ᛉᛙ		
Ϙ	KU	Ϙ	Ϙ				Ϙ		Ϙ	Ϙ
ᑭ	ER	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭᗡ	ᗡ	ᗡ	ᑭя	ᗡ	ᑭ	ᑭᑭ
ᔑ	ES	ᔑ	ᔑᔑᔑ	ᔑᔑ	ᔑ	Sᔑ	ᔑᔑᔑ		ᔑᔑ	ᔑᔑᔑ
⊤	TE	⊤	⊤	⊤	⊤	✝	⊤	✝⊤	⊤Ⅰ	⊤⊤
Ⅴ	U	Ⅴ	Ⅴ	Ⅴ	Ⅴ	Ⅴ	Ⅴ		Ⅴᐱ	
✕	EKS	✕	✕				✕			✚✕
Φ	PHE	Φ	Φ	ΦΦ						
Ψ	KHE	Ψ	Ψ	Ψᐯ						Ψⵡ
8	EF		ᗯⅢ,8	8	8	8	↑		:	
ᑭ	ERS						ᑭ			
Ь	CHE						Ь			
⊣	II				⊣Ⅰ·ᖶ				⋈	
Ɐ	UU				Ɐ				Ψ	Ψ
Ψ	TA	Ψ								Ψ

Marsiliana	Oscan	North Picene
Archaic Etruscan	Umbrian	Middle Adriatic
Neo-Etruscan	Faliscan	Messapic

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Lepontic

Gallic

Rhaetic

Venetic

Etruscan

Central
Sabellian
languages

Umbrian

Picene

Oscan

Ligurian

Etruscan

Messapic

Faliscan

Latin

Volscian

Elimian

Greek

Sicanian

Siculan