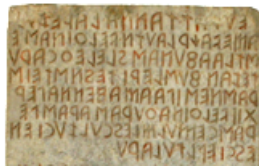


Etruscan script and the Western Greek alphabet influences.



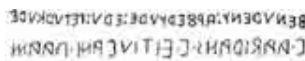
Cortona's table, broze script.



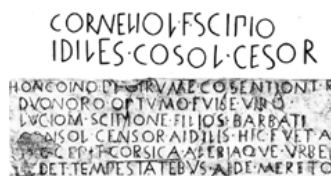
Cipo di Perugia, III b.C.
Etruscan inscription, reading from right to left, alignment to the right.



Etruscan script. Tomb of Claudi, IV b.C.
Caere (Cerveteri).



Umbro and Osco scripts.



Latin ancient script.
Tomb of Cornelius Scipio, 300 b.C.

It is a common opinion that the language and spirit of the Roman Empire have marked the European, Asian and African civilizations; therefore today it is considered a Foundation of the western culture. Undoubtedly Rome at the beginning was a mixture of cultures, that fused together different populations of various origins and from which the Etruscan character emerged arrogantly. The art, the war, the laws, the religion, the mythology, the divination, the public ceremonies, the semiotic apparatus, the rationality and the Roman irrationality came from the "Bacchus people". As it emerged from this study the same Etruscan language, not only dominated in the first republican period but was still alive in the Imperial era. It was probably only with the coming to power of the Christianity that the Etruscan culture was extirpated from the heart of the Italian people and destroyed all written works. The Etruscan language used "alphabetical" signs called "cunei"; it is a name that shows that before these signs they used the "cuneiform" signs, which were in common with all populations of the mesopotamic cultural area and specifically the Babylonian one. In order to distinguish the signs of the new "alphabetical" writing from the "cuneiform" ones, the Etruscans used to call it "cunei di sin", that is a Jewish God's appellation. This writing was invented around the 4.000 bc. by the Sumerian population, who lived by the Euphrates river.

The Mesopotamian counterfoil of the Etruscan culture is shown not only by the "cunei" names given to the signs of their alphabetical writing but also by other names like Jupiter that used to be called with his Babylonian name "EA" written only with the letter "A", that used to be schematically represented by a bulls head just like the pictographic and hieroglyphic sign writing. The new alphabetical writing that replaced the cuneiform, was beginning to be elaborated and used in Phoenicia in the last few centuries of the second millennium before Christ; the expansion throughout the Mediterranean world and the end of the cuneiform coincides with the "People of the sea" invasion, that is the Dorian Heraclitus and the Phrygian that changed the whole Mediterranean political structure. The Greek alphabet derives from the Phoenician one that was subdivided in a western block, including the Etruscan and Latin alphabet, and in an oriental one which includes the Greek alphabet and the ones derived from it, just like the Russians, but beside the Greek also the Jewish and the Arabic alphabets are derived from the Phoenician one.

The letters of the Etruscan alphabet had a very characteristic and recognizable shape that they tenaciously continued to use and it was different from the Greek, Latin and other contemporary populations letters, but was identical to the one used by the Lemnos and by the Lydians, which can be recognized to be just like the Etruscan people.

We must notice that before the Doryan invasion, the old Greek Mycenaean and the Achaean of Homer, that used to speak an archaic Greek, did not write using the Mesopotamic cuneiform signs but instead they used a particular type of hieroglyphic signs, different from the Egyptians and the Hittites, called "B linear writing"; other texts of "B linear Cretan" have been found on the Greek territory but some tracks have also been found in Italy and it is documented that the Ionians and the Achaeans had arrived before the Dorians, brought by the new alphabetic-Semitic writing; their alphabet arrived in the Greek mother-country as Ionic-Achaean colonies in Anatolia. During that period of time the new writing also arrived in Italy and maybe it erased the old Mycenaean hieroglyphic writing which was already incomprehensible. Its presence indicates even here a Doric invasion, but for different reasons the relation between the new Dorians and the old Mycenaean-Ionians must have had a different evolution from the one recorded on the Greek land in which the Dorians were uncontested winners. In Italy there must have been an unbalance in favour of the Mycenaean, and in particular the Ionians: that were Etruscans; up to the point that hate between the two races had diminished and was changing into an alliance between the Etruscans and the Dorians, in other words between old and new Greeks.

An opinion that used to be commonly held and still is held by many is that the Latin alphabet was derived directly from the Greek in a form used by Greek colonists in Italy. The theory rested on an assertion that the Latin alphabet corresponds to the Chalcidian variety of the western group of Greek scripts employed at Cumae in Campania, southern Italy. This theory is unlikely; indeed, as already mentioned, the Etruscan alphabet was the link between the Greek and the Latin. For instance, the most interesting feature in the inscription of the Praeneste Fibula is the device of combining the letters f and h to represent the Latin sound of f. This was one of the Etruscan ways of representing the same sound. Also, most of the Latin letter names, such as a, be, ce, de for the Greek alpha, beta, gamma, delta, and so on, were taken over from the Etruscans.