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Understanding Relations Between Scripts II
Early Alphabets


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Chapter 10

The matter of voice – the Umbrian perspective

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Introduction
Among the many difficulties and curiosities in the study of the various early Italic languages on the Apennine peninsula, Umbrian remains, in large parts, an enigma. A very common reference amongst philologists working with Umbrian is the passage at the very beginning of Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina, where the Umbrian Iguvine Tables are used as a metaphor for the complexity of life itself, in that certain things that appear to be fully comprehensible, at closer sight might reveal themselves as almost fully uninterpretable (see e.g. Weiss 2010, 1–3).

The seven bronze Iguvine Tables describe the cult at the old Umbrian city of Iguvium (modern Gubbio), and are divided into two sets: five older, written in the Umbrian alphabet, and two younger, written in the Latin alphabet. The two sets partly replicate one another but differ in terms of detail, and most probably copy the subject matter of an original, older text, now lost (Bradley 2000, 74–76). The ritual content is both similar to what may have been the case in the neighbouring community of the Latins – tripartite elements in the sacrifices and prayers, the names of the deities themselves, their epithets, bird watching as an element of the augury, and so on – but at the same time includes elements that are fully different from the point of view of Rome.

1 Among the older tables, Tables III and IV are considered older, dated to the end of the third century BC, whereas Tables I and II are somewhat younger, probably from the early second century. The section on Table V inscribed in the Umbrian alphabet is dated to c. 150 BC. Remaining sections, inscribed using the Latin alphabet, are probably from the early first century BC (Ancilotti 2011, 22).
2 See for example Watkins 1995, 210–211 and Fischer 2014, on the parallels between the prayers in the Tables and in Cato’s De Agricultura.
3 See Turner 1977 for a discussion on Umbrian ritual in a broader anthropological context.
The same holds for the language itself; Umbrian is similar enough to Latin to classify it as a closely related language, part of the Italic language group (e.g. Wallace 2007, 3–4), but there are several aspects that differentiate Umbrian from Latin to the extent that it is sometimes very difficult to understand the text, although it is written, partly, ‘in a perfectly legible Roman script’ (Weiss 2010, 3).

One aspect of this difficulty lies in what appears an almost complete lack of organised orthography. In the writing of front vowels, for example, one and the same form can be written in several different ways; the acc. pl. of the word ‘birds’ is attested in the following forms: T.Ig. Ib 1 avīf, VIB 47, 48 auīf, ib 10 avef, and VIB 4, 18 auīf. All of these forms represent attempts to write the vowel in the ending *-ef of *-i-ms, affected by the Sabellian vowel shift, a pre-historic sound change that affected all Sabellian languages whereby long vowels were heightened and short vowels lowered (Crawford et al. 2011, 22–24; Tikkanen 2011, 14–15). In Oscan the resulting three-partite system of front vowels was evidently perceived of as a ‘problem’, and around c.300 BC a new vowel sign was introduced, <drops> for the new mid front vowel /ef/, placed at the end of the Oscan alphabet, next to <drops> for back vowel /o/ (Crawford et al. 2011, 22–24). The signary used to write Umbrian was not similarly adapted, giving a very fluctuating annotation of the vowels. As a consequence, there seem to have been no coherent rules for how the words were to be written down, but rather instant solutions, as if though different scribes came to their own individual, impromptu, solutions to the problem of spelling.

There is indeed spelling variation also in the earliest period of writing of the other early languages on the peninsula, since the proper codification of a spoken tongue is a later process in the history of writing. The ‘birth’ of Roman literature, for example, is traditionally set to the early third century BC, with the first translations of the Homeric epics into Latin, by the freedman Livius Andronicus (c. 284–204 BC) marking the start for a national, Latin literature; towards the end of the same century the schooling system at Rome had taken shape, and there was schooling to be had also outside of the private home (Plutarch Quaest. Rom. 59; Conte 1999, 39–40). Similar developments can be hypothesised for some of the other languages in pre-Roman Italy, such as Etruscan (Colonna 1976) and Oscan (Rix 1996, 2005), since both of these language corpora display a high level of standardisation, although there is no preserved literature as such. In Umbria, however, it seems that there was no similar centralised standardisation of the language, not only in terms of the so-called ‘minor’ Umbrian inscriptions (cf. Rocca 1996), but the long, coherent texts preserved on the Iguvine Tables, the codification of the community cult, also appear haphazard in their linguistic expression.

4 This chapter follows the transcription principle that inscriptions written in the Latin alphabet are transcribed using italics, and inscriptions written in a non-Latin or non-Greek script are transcribed using bold.
of the Etruscan script in use in southern Etruria (Bakkum 2009, 379–380). All of these alphabets attest to the writing of voiced stops differently than in the Oscan alphabet: all three scripts have a sign for the voiced dental /d/ similar to the Greek delta, Latin and Sabine also write the voiced labial /b/. The Venetic alphabet stems from a northern Etruscan script (Marinetti 2013), with the later addition of adopted Greek letters in order to express voice (see Pandolfini and Prosdocimi 1990, 245–259). The scribes of Umbrian appear not to have achieved the same level of clarity in the writing of their own language, and the problems posed by the Iguvine Tables depend, to some extent, on the uncertainty that arises from an imperfectly adapted writing system.

Writing in Umbrian

Apart from the Iguvine Tables writing in Umbrian is scarce, with often only one or two inscriptions originating from the same locality. The oldest Umbrian inscriptions date to the late fifth or early fourth century BC, and come from Tuder, in the south of the Umbrian speaking area (see further p. 190). Tuder is suitably located on the Tiber river, on the boundary between the Umbrian and the Etruscan speaking communities, and may also have been the location for the transmission of writing.

Writing is subsequently attested in Umbrian communities located along the Tiber river, in inscriptions from c. 300 BC, at Ameria, Assisium, Plestia, Tadinum, and Perugia. Inscriptions from Iguvium, Sextinium, and Hispellum, are somewhat later on in time, dating to the range 280–150 BC. Contrary to the early inscriptions in for example Latin (Cornell 1991), and from Sabellian-speaking communities around the Bay of Naples (Tikkanen forthcoming), few of the oldest preserved Umbrian inscriptions are proprietary inscriptions found in tombs, but most are of an official character, often inscribed on bronze objects, such as statuettes or tablets, expressing the result of a dedication (thus Tuder 2, Ameria 1, Plestia 1–4 and Hispellum 1).

The Battle of Sentinum in 295 BC became a decisive turning point in the Third Samnite War, after which the Romans were able to overcome the coalition formed by the Samnites, Etruscans, Umbrians and Senone Gauls. Rome subsequently colonised the Umbrian region, sending out some 40,000 Roman settlers, which meant that around the end of the third century about a third of the inhabitants of the region were of Roman or Latin status. The building of the Via Flaminia (220–219 BC) further intensified contacts between Umbria and Rome, linking in particular the communities in the south, such as Ameria, to the Roman capital (Bradley 2000, 193–194).

Apart from having an effect on the social and political landscape, this also affected the habits of writing, and in some places the Latin alphabet was adopted for the writing of Umbrian as early as the late third century, at for example Fulginiae, and perhaps also Interamnia Nahars. In other places this is attested from the mid- or late second century, as in Tadinum, Assisium, Trebiae, and Mevania. Just as with inscriptions written in the Umbrian alphabet, inscriptions written in the Latin script also bear an official character. The majority of these inscriptions are building inscriptions (Fulginiae 1, Interamnia Nahars 1), or cippi and stelae marking official boundaries (Asisium 1, Assisium 4, Trebiae 1, and Mevania 3–5). The Latin language appears in official inscriptions from the south of Umbria towards the end of the second century BC, although Umbrian remained in use in other places (Bradley 2000, 214).

6 Bakkum (2009, 380) briefly mentions an ‘early Sabellian’ alphabet attested in the seventh-century inscriptions from Poggio Sommavilla labelled as ‘paläoumbrisch’ in Rix 2002; see also Rix 1995. Crawford et al. (2011, 162, and 164) consider these inscriptions, Forum Novum 1 and Forum Novum 2 (Um 2 and Um 3, respectively, in Rix 2002), as written in the Sabine alphabet.

7 See, however, the discussion on the interpretation of the Garigliano bowl, the oldest preserved inscription that may or may not feature the sign <b>, or perhaps rather a digamma (Hartmann 2005, 149–153; Maras 2005; Morandi, 2009).

8 Pandolfini and Prosdocimi (1990, 250) suggest that this is not entirely about voicing but rather a question of expressing aspiration.

9 It could also be the case that Ariminum 1, dated to 450–400 BC, is part of this early corpus of Umbrian inscriptions, although the alphabet in this inscription is of uncertain origin (Crawford et al. 2011, 151–152).

10 Bradley (2000, 113–114) writes that Etruscan inscriptions from Tuder ‘vastly outnumber’ inscriptions written in Umbrian from the same location, although this is a truth with modification. Crawford et al. (2011, 131–144) list in total eleven Umbrian inscriptions as originating from Tuder, and Meiser (2014, 787–788) accounts for an equal number, eleven Etruscan inscriptions, originating from the same settlement, with an additional seven marked ‘falsus ex genuine’.

11 Ameria 1, in Crawford et al. 2011, 148.

12 Assisium 2, in Crawford et al. 2011, 103.

13 Plestia 1–4, in Crawford et al. 2011, 115–118.

14 Tadinum 2, in Crawford et al. 2011, 96.

15 Umbria 1, in Crawford et al. 2011, 85.

16 Iguvium 1 coinage, in Crawford et al. 2011, 94.

17 Sextinium 1, in Crawford et al. 2011, 93.

18 Hispellum 1, in Crawford et al. 2011, 109.

19 Exceptions are Umbria 3, a female name on a bronze frying pan. The inscription is dated to the last half of the first century BC, but is of unknown provenance (Crawford et al. 2011, 89–91), and Tuder 9 (see further p. 189).

20 Fulginiae 1, in Crawford et al. 2011, 112.

21 Interamnia Nahars 1, in Crawford et al. 2011, 145.

22 Tadinum 1 and Tadinum 4, in Crawford et al. 2011, 95 and 98 respectively.

23 Assisium 1 and Assisium 4, in Crawford et al. 2011, 101 and 107 respectively.

24 Trebiae 1, in Crawford et al. 2011, 119.

The Umbrian alphabet

At the time of the adoption of writing in Umbria, or at least at the time when the scribes of Umbrian began adapting a source alphabet for the writing down of their own tongue, the Etruscan alphabet had already been simplified, and all ‘dead’ letters had been removed from the alphabetic row. The inclusion in the Umbrian alphabet of the sign <s> for /ʃ/ dates the time of adoption to the fifth century (Rocca 1996, 15; Stuart-Smith 2004, 100), meaning at a time postdating the exclusion of signs for voiced stops from the signary (Pandolfini & Prosdocimi 1990, 49, 51). A few signs were added to this script, although, as has already been pointed out, their use was not all that regular.

One such addition was the sign for the voiced dental, <q>. As already mentioned, all of the Italic regional scripts have a sign for the voiced dental, and in a majority of alphabets this seems to go back to the sign delta in the Greek alphabet. In the Etruscan alphabet, the sign <q> was the standard way of writing in /f/, from the mid-sixth century onwards (Pandolfini and Prosdocimi 1990, 51), and was adopted with this function into both the Oscar and the Umbrian alphabets. For this reason, in these scripts the Greek delta cannot be used to mark the voiced dental; in Oscar, this led to the re-characterisation of delta as <r>, possibly through the addition of a diacritical mark to the Greek letter rho (Adiego 2015, 17). The Umbrian letter <q> for /d/ also seems to be a version of the Greek delta, where the ‘body’ of the sign has been lifted upwards, possibly through Etruscan influence (Rocca 1996, 12; Calderini 2011, 24).

The sign <q> is however attested for /d/ only in two very early inscriptions (see further p. 190), and by the time of the writing of the Iguvine Tables intervocalic /d/, the exclusion of signs for voiceless velar /k/ was already in the Umbrian alphabet (Pandolfini & Prosdocimi 1990, 49, 51). In their entry for /d/, the Iguvine Tables inter-vocalic /d/, and also /d/ next to a consonant, had been spirantised to /f/, and the sign <q> had been re-characterised to mark this sound (Meiser 1986, 218–224). In corresponding sections of the tables written in the Latin alphabet the sound is reflected as <rs> or <s>:

1a 29 testru-ku: pefi: kapiše: pešum feit/u
‘At your right foot make a hole for the bowl’ (translation by Poultney 1959, 162)

Vib 24 destra-co. persi. westisia. et. pesンドro. sorsom. fetu.

‘He shall offer at his right foot a libation and a pig; persondro’ (translation by Poultney 1959, 262)

The sign <q> is also found upside down, as <d>, marking a palatalised /k/ (transcribed as <c>); in the sections of the Iguvine Tables written in the Latin alphabet this corresponds to an <s> (Meiser 1986, 200–204), e.g. Va 9 triβiçu, Vla 54 tribrisme ‘triad’ (Poultney 1959, 200, and 248). This word also attests the sign <s> (<b>) for the voiced labial (see further section 3.2.1).

There are no preserved Umbrian abecedaria, and it is thus impossible to know where these signs were located in the signary. The sign <s> for /ʃ/ was most likely positioned at the end of the signary, as in the Etruscan abecedarium from Magliano, from the mid-sixth century BC (Pandolfini and Prosdocimi 1990, 48–51). The other added signs, <b> for /b/ and <d> for /d/, might have been inserted in the beginning of the alphabet, in the positions of the Greek equivalents, similar to the Latin and Umbrian abecedarium (cf. Rix 2005), whereas <d> might have been included at the end. It is, however, common practice among modern philologists to list the signs <s> and <d> after <s> in schematic overviews of the Umbrian alphabet, e.g. Rocca (1996, 15), Wallace (2007, xiii). For an equally speculative version, with <s> /ʃ/ after <e>, <q> /ʃ/ /f/ after <e>, and <d> after <s>, see Poultney (1959, 25).

Apart from these added letters, there is also a certain level of regional variation within the Umbrian writing habitat in terms of the sign used to write voiceless velar /k/. The alphabet used in the northern Umbrian settlements Iguvium and Sestinum features the sign <s> (k) for the voiceless velar, probably influenced by the Etruscan alphabet in use at Perusia and Cortona (Maggiani 1982; Pandolfini and Prosdocimi 1990, 46–47), e.g.:

Sestinum 1 vukes ‘grove’, cf. T.Ig. Ib 1 vuks-‘(to the) grove’
Iguvium 1 ikuvins ‘iguvinus (nummus)’
T.Ig. tuta-per ikuvina (passim) ‘for the iguvine state’

Umbrian inscriptions from further down south, from Assium, Plesia and Tudor, instead use <e> (e), from the southern Etruscan script, possibly that used at Volsinii (Wallace 2007, 7), e.g.:

Assium 2 estac ‘this’
Plesia 1–4 sacru ‘sacred’

One can therefore imagine a dividing line within the Umbrian writing continuum, running from Perusia to Camerium, with <e> used north of this line, <e> to the south. This was not necessarily too sharp a division, as seen in inscriptions from Mevania, geographically south of this imagined line, e.g. Mevania 7, with the form kaltini ‘Caltinius’, a family name inscribed on an incinerary urn from c. 125–100 BC (Crawford et al. 2011, 129), as opposed to the more or less contemporary building inscription Mevania 2, featuring the form cvestur ‘quesator’, c. 100 BC (Crawford et al. 2011, 122–123). Given the different genres of the two inscriptions, it could suggest a difference between a personal way of writing and a more official orthography. The Caltinius family might originate from north of the Perusia-Camerium line, and if so would probably prefer to maintain the ‘original’ spelling of their family name, particularly in a funerary setting.

There are no preserved certain instances of the writing of the voiced velar /g/ in any of the early Umbrian inscriptions. The only potential example is the
inscription on a bronze statuette from the second half of the second century BC, of unknown provenance but found at S. Vittore di Cingoli: Umbria 2 cair saiz variens / įuve zalse iure 'Gaius Variesius, son of Paetus, (dedicated this) to Jupiter zalse iure' (Crawford et al. 2011, 87–88). The praenomen may reflect the spelling of a voiced labial /g/, although this might equally well be the standard Roman writing of the name.

Umbrian spelling of voiced stops

There was thus some amount of modification to the first writing encountered by the Umbrians. The Etruscan alphabet was not adopted straight off, but certain signs were added to the signary in order to achieve an unambiguous writing of Umbrian. Of these additional signs two mark voiced stops, <b> for /b/, and <p> for /d/, although their use is not as regular as in other alphabets on the peninsula featuring equivalent signs.

The voiced labial

The most obvious spelling variation in the Umbrian alphabet is found with the sign for the voiced labial, <b>, in the Iguvine Tables. There are numerous examples where a voiced labial is written as either <b> or <p> in the Umbrian alphabet, but uniformly as <b> in the Latin alphabet, e.g.:

verb pre: treplantes: įuve: krapuvī: tre: buf: fetu:
Via 22 pre. uerei. treplateī. įuiv. grabouei. buf. tref. fetu.

'Before the Trebulan gate, sacrifice three oxen to Jupiter Grabovius' (translation by Poultney 1959, 158)

In this short sample, the geographical name treplateī – treplateī,72 and the name of the deity, krapuvī – grabouei,73 show a variation in spelling where the text written in the Umbrian alphabet writes /b/ as <p>, whereas the Latin alphabet has <b> (the same holds for /g/, written <k> vs. <g>). At the same time, there is also the instance buf – buf,74 with <b>, <p> in both versions of the text. There are also instances where one and the same word is spelt in different ways in the Umbrian alphabet, e.g. Ib 24 apruf (acc. pl.), but IIa.11 abrunu (acc. sg.), vs. VIIa.3 abrof (acc. pl.) 'boar'.75

The attested spelling variation only occurs in medial position in the word; a voiced labial in initial position in a word, is always written <b> in the Umbrian alphabet. Looking at the evidence for the spelling in medial syllable, there are some words that attest to the spelling with <p> only, such as treplateī, some that show <b> alone, such as trebe (although there is only one such instance), and some, the final examples mentioned above, that attest to variable spelling.

In explaining the attested variation in medial syllable, Poultney (1959, 26) and Meiser (1986, 283–284) both detect the influence of Etruscan writing habits in the Umbrian spelling. Following Meiser, the fact that Etruscan voiceless stops in medial position were pronounced with some amount of additional voicing, as seen in the Latin rendering of Etruscan words, e.g. Etr. titi, Lat. tīdi CIE 819 (Clusium), and Etr. papasa, Lat. pābassa CIE 832 (Clusium), meant that Umbrian scribes were sometimes induced to write voiced stops in medial position using the sign for the voiceless equivalents. In a similar way, Poultney argues that the spelling of <p> for /b/ stems from the lack, in the Umbrian alphabet, of stops for /d/ and /g/, a remnant of the nature of the Etruscan alphabet. Both of these explanations are, however, lacking in the sense that they do not explain the variation actually attested; some words attested with only one spelling, <b> or <p>, and some with variable spelling, either <b> or <p>.

A different explanation would be to consider etymological origin and the phonological context of all instances in of a voiced labial in Umbrian word. It then appears that variable spelling of the voiced labial occurs in words in which the voiced labial is the result of some kind of process of sound change, which may have caused an ambiguity in terms of spelling. This was the case with apruf vs. abrunu, displaying the sonorisation of an original cluster */pr-/ (see Meiser 1986, 283), but it may also have been the case with the labialisation of the voiced labiovelar */g-/ in medial position, as in la 24 hapināf (acc. pl.) but la 27 habinā vs. Vb 22–24 habina (acc. pl.) 'lamb' */gwōn-/ (Untermann 2000, 314). In addition, the majority of instances in which the sound represented as a voiced labial <b> in the Latin alphabet is written <p> in the Umbrian alphabet can be explained as due to coartication with low vowel /o/ (see e.g. Pape et al. 2003). Note that this would not be the case of an actual sound change, but rather the consequence of a less exact writing system, in combination with a lesser level of standardisation of the language through official (or semi-official) writing schools.

Remaining Umbrian inscriptions do not at all attest to the same level of variable spelling of the voiced labial as that found in the Iguvine Tables. Apart from one potentially early example, Ameria 1, in which the sign <b> is completely reconstructed,76 there is only one other instance attesting the letter in question, Tuder 9 vibie 'Of Vibius', a proprietary text on a black slip plate, c. 200–100 BC (Crawford et al. 2011, 142–143). The same name is rendered with the voiced labial

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27 Uncertain etymology; this may originate from the PIE stem *treb- 'to live', found in a number of Sabellian words, such as Osc. tribarakavām 'to build', Osc. tribāvām 'house' (Untermann 2000, 762–763, and 765–766).

28 It has been suggested that Umbr. krapuvī/grabouie might be connected with Lat. Gradivus, although the two cannot be etymologically equated (see Poultney 1959, 240).

29 From the voiced labiovelar */gwos/*, cf. Lat. bōs, bovis (de Vaan 2008, 74). Lat. bōs is explained as an Italic loanword into Latin (Sihler 1995, 165).


31 Side A, line 3 bejwy(e)dis, Side B, line 4 b(e)jwyedis, reconstructed based on the name Bettuedia in CIL XI 4447 (Vetter 1953, 165; Roncalli 1996); see further p. 188.
reflected as its voiceless equivalent, <p>, in one mid-third century BC limestone block, Assium 2, which documents the erection of a stone gate, in which the same name is preserved as vipies (Crawford et al. 2011, 103–104).²² Names built to the stem Vib- were, however, common in both Etruscan and Latin sources, e.g. the Etruscan hero Avile Vipienas, known to the Romans as Aulus Vibenna (see Pallottino 1939, 455–457; Heurigon 1966; Thomson de Grummond 2006, 177). For this reason, the spelling Tuder 9 vibie and Assium 2 vipie cannot be taken to reflect authentic spelling practices within the Umbrian speech community as differing between north and south, since both spellings, the Etruscan version and the Latinate one, would have been known to scribes as well as potential readers.

The only other of a voiced labial reflected as <p> is Tadinum 2, a fragmentary inscription on a limestone block, dated to before c. 300 BC (Crawford et al. 2011, 96–97). The only preserved word in the second line in the two-line inscription, the form eitupes may reflect a voiced labial, if the etymologisation *eit-hab-€nls ‘they have decreed’ (3. pl. perf.) is correct; this would be from a parallell root to two undeciphered forms found in the Iguvine Tables, Va 2, 14 eitipes, explained as from < eit-hēp- (Untermann 2002, 210–211), or perhaps *jhap- (Crawford et al. 2011, 97); ultimately this would be from the stem *ghab- (Untermann 2002, 311–314). If so, the pair eitupes – eitipes might be similar to the pair prehubia – prehabia ‘prepare’ (3 sg. pres. subj.); see Crawford et al. (2011, 97), though note that Untermann (2002, 311) considers prehabia a scribal mistake.

The single example makes it difficult to arrive at any kind of certain solution regarding the spelling; the Tadinium reflection of a stem ‘to have’ is only the instances in Umbrian displaying a <p>, whereas all other instances of the same stem *ghab-€ ‘have’ in the Iguvine Tables are written using <b>, e.g. Ib 18 svepis: habe: ‘if anyone is caught’, Va 17 muneklu: habia: ‘he shall receive a donation’ (translation by Poultnay 1959, 164 and 222).²³

The voiced dental

As mentioned on p. 186, the Umbrian alphabet did feature a sign <q>, which was initially used for the voiced dental /d/. There are however only two early inscriptions in which this sign marks this sound, from c. 400 and c. 300 BC:

³² The same spelling, potentially referring to the same individual, may be preserved in a MS of a now lost inscription, Assium 3. The name was previously read as vibies, e.g. Um 5, in Rix (2002, 62), corrected (without comment) by Crawford et al. (2011, 105–106).

³³ Forms from the parallel root *ghab-ye-i or *ghap-ye- ‘hold’, show a different surface spelling (Untermann 2002, 316), e.g. Ib 11 krenkatarum: hatu: ‘take a stole’, Ib 42 hutra: furu sehemenier: hatutu: below the Forum of Semonia they shall catch them’ (translations by Poultnay 1959, 164 and 168). For a summary analysis of forms reflecting the concept ‘to have’ and ‘to hold’ in the various Italic languages, see de Vaan 2008, 277–278.

Tuder 2 ahali trutitis dunum dede ‘Ahali Truitis gave this as a gift’²⁴ Ameria 1, side A, l. 1 [?e-] duchi(e) dunu(’u) dr-?] / side B, l. 1 [?e-] ducie’ dunu’ d[r-?] ‘... (they) gave as a gift (?) to Jupiter ...’²⁵

This spelling has been accounted for in two different ways. On the one hand, Meiser (1986, 219–220) explains the spelling in these inscriptions as examples of ‘historisierende’ orthography, meaning the conscious use of the sign <q> in an older, out-dated function, representing an original spelling practice previous to the spirantisation of /d/ > /ř/ (see also Stuart-Smith 2008, 100). On the other hand, Rocca (1996, 32) and Untermann (2002, 176) both interpret these inscriptions as reflecting an earlier spelling, antedating the sound change in question.

Both Tuder 2 and Ameria 1 are among the oldest preserved Umbrian texts. Both are also votive inscriptions, and feature the phrase dunum(m) dede ‘gave (as) a gift’.

The formula *donom *dō- is attested in several other Italic languages, in Latin, Oscan, Volscian, and Venetic, and appears to have formed part of a shared Italic vocabulary of dedications and votive inscriptions (Euler 1982). Following Meiser and Stuart-Smith, the use of the formula itself, in the particular context of votive inscriptions, may have been the basis for an archaising spelling, since mere formulaic habit would have prevented any other spelling than that used in the other Italic languages; in short, a scribe would not be prone to write the phrase following the ordinary spelling practices of his own time, according to which /d/ was written <t-, thus **tunum(m) **tete.

However, this cannot be the only reason, since the sign <q> is understood to mark /d/ also in one of the names in the list in Ameria 1, beltoDIS(b)jvetedis (see note 35). In addition, in the Iguvine Tables there are a few attestations of the imperative of the verb ‘to give’, all spelt with <t- for /d-/ titu (Ia 33), tetu (Ia 9, 21), vs. ditu (Vib 10, 16, 25).²⁶ The spelling is thus not necessarily limited to a formulaic phrase alone.

In deciphering this, one needs to have a closer look at Ameria 1. The last word in the first line on side A of Ameria 1, is <q>, i.e. *-dr- (sinistroverse writing; side B probably contains the same form, although this is too fragmentary).²⁷ This is understood to represent the third person plural perfect form of the verb ‘to give’, i.e. [these people] gave’, and Rocca (1996, 37) suggests an alternative verb ending, *detr(o), parallel to
The attestation of step 2 in Ameria, in the south, and Tadinum, nearby Iguvium, suggests some form of shared spelling praxis among the Umbrian communities, although the precise nature of this, such as the source or spread, remains difficult to determine.

At the same time, considering the spelling in Tadinum 2 as part of an orthographic reform attested in different locations also means that one does not need to assume that the Tadinates used a different alphabet than that in use at nearby Iguvium, one that lacked the sign for <t> (and -b) (thus Crawford et al. 2011, 97).

In all later inscriptions, the sign <t> can be assumed to reflect the spirantised sound, including in names, e.g. Mevania 8 vi(pis): ia(?): peřunia[n(?)] ‘Vi. Pedonia[n(us)], son of ia[n(tus)].’

The only exception to this writing are bronze coins from Tuder, Tuder 1 Coinage tutere ‘from Tuder’. These coins are inscribed in the Umbrian alphabet, and are dated to the third century BC (Rocca 1996, 128). The spelling reflects an un-spirantised intervocalic /d/, unaffected by the sound change, apparently similar to the spelling of the word tudere ‘boundary’ in the later Iguvine Tables, where Meiser (1986, 227–228, 230) detects a backformation of intervocalic /d/ in the context of an /r/.

The matter of voice in Umbrian

Among the oldest sources regarding the Umbrian people are two often quoted passages from Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1, 19, 1) and Pliny (NH 3, 112–13), who speak of the Umbrians as being among the oldest aboriginal tribes in Italy, a ‘great and ancient people’. Although both Roman and Greek historians were apparently fascinated by the old legends pertaining to this people, in the historic period the Umbrians did not constitute any large political body, and the communities within the Umbrian territories appear more akin to the Etruscan model of city-states than to the wider ethnic organisations of the central Apennine ‘tribes’ (Bradley 2000, 11). At the same time, it is very difficult to argue any obvious differentiation between the different Umbrian communities in terms of literacy and spelling practices, due to the very limited material there is.

At a very shallow level, the Perusia-Camerinum line mentioned on p. 187, in relation to the writing of /k/, seems to hold also when it comes to the generic spelling of voice. The single inscription attesting to the use of <b> for /b/, Tuder 9 vibie, comes from south of the line, and inscriptions featuring the same name written with the sign for the voiceless labial, i.e. <vipes>, come from north of this line. However, as argued

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38 Supposedly modern Gualdo Tadino, about 20 km southeast of Gubbio (Poultony 1959, 274).

39 On the sandstone cover for a cinerary urn, is dated to c. 125–100 BC (Crawford et al. 2011, 130).

40 Etymology uncertain, see Untermann 2000, 771–772.

41 Bradley (2000, 292) mentions an inscription on a bronze votive statuette from Montesanto (Tuder), only known from a manuscript, Jintuters-e. This is not included in the catalogue by Crawford et al. (2011).
on pp. 189–190, the frequency of the name itself, in both Etruscan and Latin sources, makes this spelling very ambiguous and no argument can be deduced from this.

The attestations of the voiced dental also superficially seem to divide within the Umbrian speech community, since the two inscriptions attesting to the use of <b> for /d/ (depending on interpretation) come from south of the Persus-Camerinum line, whereas inscriptions that have <t> for /t/ come from the north, the only exception being Mevania 8. These attestations are however from different time periods, the inscriptions with <t> for /d/ being older than those with <b> for /t/. As argued on p. 192, the former spelling can be interpreted to reflect an original, authentic use of the sign <t>, whereas the latter reflect the altered spelling, while Ameria 1 and Tadinum 2 can be taken to display a potential mid-stage in this process.

Attempting, then, to form a coherent notion of the matter of voice in the writing of the Umbrian language, the primary factor to keep in mind is that it is impossible to force the treatment of these sounds into a coherent group. These sounds were evidently not perceived of as a ‘set’ of sounds, corresponding in their phonological and/or phonetic set-up, but they were treated as individual phonetic elements in the language, of which some were distinguished in writing, some not.

One very simple explanation for these orthographic reforms, meaning the introduction of new letters into an alphabet, would be that scribes might have considered a written text ambiguous in terms of decipherment. The question is: When does the potential level of written ambiguity cause the scribe to require, or invent, a different sign to distinguish a sound for which there is no separate letter in the alphabet? In the preserved Umbrian material, this kind of stress surfaces as the result of sound change in relation to the spirantisation of /d/, and the attempts to write the ‘new’ sound without disrupting the functions of the alphabetic signs, before the spelling reform in the shape of a re-characterisation of an existing letter. There is no similar internal evidence for the stage before this, meaning the reason for the initial introduction or creation of a sign for /b/ and /d/ to begin with, although the reason for /d/ can be at least hypothetically explained through morphology. In his brief discussion of the origin of the Faliscan alphabet, Bakkum (2009, 378) suggests that one reason that there was never any sign for /b/ in this signary was that the sound in question was the least frequent in the language. He also suggests that the differentiation between /b/ vs. /p/ was not morphologically relevant, as was the case with /d/ vs. /t/, in the primary and secondary endings of the third person singular. The opposition /d/ vs. /t/ in the endings of the third person singular, *-ti > -t and *-t > -d (Sihler 1995, 453–454), was a shared Proto-Indo-European feature in all Italic languages, and all of them, in the early stages of the standardisation of a local alphabet, introduced a sign to mark /d/. In Umbrian, final consonants were weakened and lost around the end of the fifth or beginning of the fourth century (Meiser 1986, 274; Tikkanen 2011, 24–25). This must have meant that the morphologically relevant opposition between /d/ and /t/ in the third person singular was weakened as well, and since there was thus no longer any ‘stress’ involved with writing <t> for both /d/ and /t/, the sign <b> could, as the final step in an orthographical reform, be re-characterised to mark /t/.

There are no attestations of the sign <b> in Umbrian inscriptions until the irregular use in the Iguvine Tables, in the mid-third century BC, and only sporadic occurrences from the later period, and nothing can thus be said for certain regarding the time of the introduction of the sign. There is some evidence that the sign <b> might have been in use in the writing of Etruscan somewhat longer in the Tiber Valley region than in other parts of Etruria; there is one inscription from Perugia preserving the word abat (Pandolfini and Prosdocimi 1990, 47), that might attest to an archaising continuation of the Greek alphabetic row, alpha, beta, ... If this does indeed preserve a marginal carrying on of the second letter of the alphabet, the irregular use of the sign in later Umbrian inscriptions might symbolise an imperfect learning on behalf of Umbrian scribes, if taught by Etruscan teachers. This is the gist in the explanation offered by Meiser (1984, 283–284), although this requires a gap of several centuries between the last Etruscan attestation of the letter and the onset of the Umbrian period of writing. It therefore seems relevant to consider a different source of the spelling uncertainty than mere Etruscan influence, for example seeing the writing of <b> for /b/ in Umbrian as the default writing, unless there was ambiguity in terms of spelling due to, for example, sound change (pp. 188–189).

By the time the Latin alphabet became adopted for the writing of Umbrian, this signary included a complete set of signs for all three voiced stops /b, d, g/, which meant that the object of distinguishing the voiced sounds became more standardised. At this point in time, and with the new instrument for the codification of their own language, Umbrian scribes flawlessly insert signs for all voiced stops, in all expected positions.

**Summary**

Umbrian will very likely remain an enigma to many Umbrologists to come, since, in the words of Weiss (2010, 443): ‘It is in the nature of the game that there can be no final interpretation of the Tabulae Iguvinae.’ All the same, when it comes to the spelling of Umbrian, it is still possible to arrive at a plausible explanation for the spread and use of writing, and the function of orthographic reforms within the writing habitat. The letter <t> for /d/ was an Umbrian invention, probably inspired by an Etruscan or Greek letter, but its shape is not mirrored by any other alphabet on the peninsula; the function of the sign also changed over time due to Umbrian internal sound changes, with the result that /d/, from the mid-third century onwards, was written with the sign for the voiceless equivalent. The sign <b> was also added to the Umbrian alphabet, but was very irregularly used.

Umbrian inscriptions are few and far apart, and there is usually only one or two from each community in which writing is attested. This, in combination with the type of inscriptions that have been preserved, gives the impression that literacy
remained fairly limited to a small class of educated scribes. It is also evident that the period during which the Umbrians wrote down their language using their own, ‘native’ Umbrian alphabet was not all that long, meaning that there might not have been the time needed to reach a proper standardisation of the orthography of the Umbrian alphabet; some letters were added; at least one sign received an altered function due to sound change; but the matter of voice was not morphologically relevant, and could, for the most part, be ignored in writing, without causing written ambiguity.

In connection with the closer contacts with Rome from the third century onwards, and the advent of the Latin alphabet to Umbria, the Umbrians would have become familiar with the Roman schooling system, favouring the introduction of orthographical principles similar to those used in the writing of Latin.

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42 Though see Cornell’s 1991 critique against drawing too far-reaching conclusions on the function and use of writing, based on only very meagre inscriptional corpora.