



In early texts written in the Greek alphabet, only two front vowel signs are used, <ι> and <ε>. In later texts the three vowel qualities are distinguished, in that the digraph <ει> marks mid-vowel /i/, e.g. μεδδειξ (on the nominative plural ending \*-ēs. In Oscan inscriptions written in the Latin alphabet, /i/ and /i/ are written with the same sign, e.g. *licitud*.

## II. Back vowels

Early Oscan inscriptions have no special sign for rounded back-vowel /o/, but <u> marks any back vowel. Around 300 a new sign <ú> was introduced for [ō], reserving <u> for /ō/.

(4) Osc. **dunúm** < \**dōnom*, cf. Lat. *dōnum*

Oscan inscriptions written in the Greek alphabet do not distinguish between three back vowels, only two. Before the spelling reform of 300 BCE, these are written <o> and <υ>; post-300 inscriptions use, as before, <o> for /o/, but have the digraph <ov> for /ō/ and /u/. The Latin alphabet has, in the same way, only two back-vowel signs: <o> for /o/, and <u> for both /ō/ and /u/.

In Sabellian in general, after the initial change, inherited long /ū/ was fronted and became closer to /ī/. This change was complete in Umbrian but only partial in Oscan, where the sound is reflected partly as /ī/, as in the ablative singular of a *u*-stem (5), partly as /ū/ (6).

(5) Osc. *castrid* < \**-ūd* (cf. gen. sg. *castrous*)

(6) Osc. **fruktatiuf** < \**frūg-*

Oscan inscriptions written in the native Oscan alphabet of post-300 show some amount of regional variation in the representation of long [ō] in the ablative singular \*-ōd and masculine nominative plural \*-ōs. The material can be roughly divided into two groups:

- in inscriptions from eastern Campania, all instances of the two cases are written with the same sign as in all other representations of \*ō, e.g. **trístaament-ud** (abl. sg.), **menerevii-us** (nom. pl.; *yo*-stem).
- in inscriptions originating from central Samnium and southern Campania, analogical levelling (cf. acc. sg. -**úm**) has caused all instances of ablative singular and masculine nominative plural to be written with the same sign as for \*ō, e.g. **tangin-úd** (abl. sg.), **abellan-ús**, **núvlan-ús** (nom. pl.).

## 4 The Sabellian vowel shift in Umbrian

### I. Front vowels

The Umbrian scribes did not develop any distinct signs for the new mid-vowel, /i/. There is instead oscillating spelling, in the shifting between <i> and <e> in the native Umbrian alphabet, and, in the Latin alphabet, between <i>, <e> and <ei>.

- (7) Umbr. **tefri** vs. **tefre** vs. *tefrei* "to Tefre" (dat. sg.)  
 (8) Umbr. **krapuvi** vs. *grabouie* vs. *grabouei* "to Grabovius" (dat. sg.)  
 (9) Umbr. **avif**, *auif* vs. **avef** vs. *auief*, *auuei* "birds" (acc. pl.)

## II. Back vowels

The Umbrian native alphabet had only the one sign <u> for representing any back vowel. The later *Tabulae Iguvinae*, written in the Latin alphabet, do distinguish between a vowel <o> and a vowel <u>.

- (10) Umbr. Ib.42 **hutra**<sup>ADP</sup> **furu**<sup>ACC.sg</sup> **sehmeniar**<sup>GEN.sg</sup> **hatutu**<sup>IMP.pl</sup>  
 (11) Umbr. VIIa.52 *hondra*<sup>ADP</sup> *furo*<sup>ACC.sg</sup> *sehemieniar*<sup>GEN.sg</sup> *hatuto*<sup>IMP.pl</sup>  
 "below the Forum of *Semonia* they shall catch (them)"

The fronting of /ū/ to /i/ is more manifest in Umbrian than in Oscan; /ū/ is written <i>, <i> throughout, in monosyllabic as well as polysyllabic words, and in internal and final syllables alike.

- (12) Umbr. **trefi-per** < \*treβiud < \*tri-b<sup>h</sup>u-  
 (13) Umbr. **aṛputrati** < \*ad-bit-ero-tiud

## 5. The development of \*-ā

In initial and internal syllables, inherited long \*ā was continued unaltered.

- (14) Osc. **maatreis**, Umbr. **matres**, SP **matereih** < \*mātr-

In absolute final position the sound was rounded, probably to something like /ɑ̃/ or /ō/, as in the ā-stem nominative singular, as in the ā-stem nominative singular:

- (15) Osc. **viú**, *touto*/τωFτο < \*tewtā<sup>1</sup>

The rounding process is uniform throughout the Oscan language continuum. Dialectal inscriptions from the northern Oscan areas, written in the Latin alphabet, use -a, probably the result of Latin influence.

In Umbrian, the earlier Tables written in the native Umbrian alphabet show some oscillation between <-a> and <-u>, though the later Tables, using the Latin script, have <-o> throughout.

## 6. Vowel length

Vowel length is optionally marked in both Oscan and Umbrian, though in different ways.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ven. **teuta**, OIr. *tuath* "tribe, people", Cymr. *tud* "land"; corresponding to Lat. *populus* and *res publica* (Untermann 2000: 779-781).

- In inscriptions written using the Osco-Etruscan alphabet, the long vowel is written twice (e.g. **duunated** (Ve.149); not however that /ī/ is written <ii> (not <ii>)). This marking of length is only marked (with one exception, **trīstaamentud** (Ve.11)) in initial syllable, and it has been suggested that (a) by the time of the preserved texts, opposition of length had been given up in non-initial syllables, and (b) that this points to an initial accent.
- In Umbrian inscriptions vowel length may be marked writing <h> after the long vowel, e.g. **kumnahkle**. The same spelling convention is found in inscriptions written in the Latin alphabet, beside forms with the vowel repeated after the -H-, e.g. *SPAHAMU* beside *SPAHMU*, or more rarely simply written twice, e.g. *EETU*. The marking of long vowels in Umbrian is never consistent.

## 7. Syncope

Syncope of short vowels in internal and final syllables is an extensive phenomenon in Sabellian, and even more so in Umbrian than in Oscan. It was dependent on the introduction of an initial stress accent, a feature shared with Latin and Etruscan.

- A. Syncope in *final syllable* was a characteristic of Proto-Sabellian (all Sabellian languages have gone through this change). In Latin this was not a prominent change.
- B. *Internal syncope*, on the other hand, was a later process than syncope in final syllable. Internal syncope is a feature of both Latin and the Sabellian languages, though the processes themselves were language specific.
  - Latin syncope of short, unstressed vowels in internal syllable is dateable to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, and vowel weakening in internal syllables (open or closed) was an ongoing process lasting down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Meiser 1998: 66f., 70f.).

There are differences within the Sabellian language group, where some languages show traces of this, some not.

- *unscopated*: South Picene (AP 2) **matereih patereih** "of the mother, of the father" (gen.sg)
- *synscopated*: Osc. **maatreis**, Umbr. **matres**. The change probably began sometime towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

## 8. Anaptyxis

In Oscan, a secondary vowel was often inserted between a liquid or nasal and another consonant, after a stressed syllable containing a short vowel. This is a typical Oscan innovation, and any dialect showing this feature will be classified as "Oscanoid". Anaptyctic vowels appear in Latin, though this is limited to sequences involving a stop consonant followed by a liquid, and is not conditioned by vowel length (cf. Sihler 1995: 90, Meiser 1998: 89f.).

There was no anaptyxis in Umbrian.

### *I. Anterior anaptyxis in Oscan*

Anaptyxis in words where the liquid or nasal precedes the consonant is a regular Oscan characteristic, and the regularity with which this is marked in writing proves that the new vowel must have constituted a full syllable, not just a glide. This is seen in, for example, Oscan renderings of the Greek name Ἡρακλῆς (Lat. *Hercules*), thus *herecl(eis)* (Molina), **herekleís** (Abella), **hereklúí** (Agnone) and *herekleis* (Lucania).

### *II. Posterior anaptyxis in Oscan*

Anaptyxis where the liquid or nasal follows the consonant is observed in all southern Oscan areas, but is unknown in the northwest, and the conditions are less clear than for anterior anaptyxis. The difference is probably the result of variant realisation or interpretation of the syllable boundary: *sa-kra* (Capua) but *sak-ra* > *sa-ka-ra* (south).<sup>2</sup>

Southern Oscan	Northern Oscan	Latin/Umbrian
<b>paterí</b> (Agnone)	<i>patres</i> (Rapino)	cf. Lat. <i>patrī</i>
	<b>fratrúm</b> (Capua)	cf. Umbr. <b>fratrum</b>
<b>sakaraklúm</b> (Abella)	<b>sakraklúm</b> (Capua)	cf. Lat. <i>sacellum</i>
σακορο (Messana)		cf. Umbr. <b>sacru</b> , <i>sacra</i>

## 9. Monophthongization

Monophthongization was a wide-spread phenomenon on the Apennine peninsula, including Etruscan, although it affected the languages at different degrees. The following summary focuses on Oscan, Umbrian and Latin.

Inherited diphthongs are preserved mostly unaltered in Campanian Oscan, thus dat. sg. **-úí** (< \*-ōy) and **-aí** (\*-ay) and dat. pl. **-uís** (\*-ōys) and **-aís** (\*-ays), in the *o*- and *a*-stems respectively, and so on.

Alternative spelling in Oscan, with for example a monophthongized gen. sg. **-es** instead of **-eís** (< \*-eys), suggest a sociolinguistic feature or a lower register, though it may also depend on Pre-Samnite influence.

In Umbrian **all original diphthongs**, long and short, were **monophthongised** in pre-historic time. The result is, in all instances, a new long vowel. Monophthongisation is an attested regular process in Volscian and Aequian as well.

The only change to affect the complete language continuum is that of *\*ew* > *\*ow* (a phenomenon shared with Latin and Umbrian). The original diphthongs are preserved in Venetic.

<sup>2</sup> The insertion of a vowel was an innovation in the northeast in the late 5<sup>th</sup> or mid-4<sup>th</sup> century (Rix 1996: 249. von Planta (1892: 251-253) suggests two “waves” of anaptyxis, one of which reached Capua (anterior), the other not (posterior).

## 10. Summary

Oscan is the most conservative of the Sabellian languages, and is on the whole very little affected. Umbrian, on the other hand, is heavily altered through several later changes.

**Syncope** is seen in several languages on the peninsula, and is related to the introduction of a strong, initial stress accent. Syncope in final syllable was a shared, Proto-Sabellian development, whereas internal syncope was a later change from after the split between Oscan and Umbrian. Syncope took place also in Latin, though to a lesser degree than in Sabellian.

**Monophthongisation**, unknown in Oscan apart from in certain social layers, was complete in Umbrian, along with Volscian and Aequian, before the advent of writing. In Latin, monophthongisation was a change of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, with several conditioned variations.

**Rhotacism** was an early change in Umbrian, perhaps contemporary with the Latin process.

**The Sabellian vowel shift** and the **rounding of final long \*-ā** are both peculiar to Sabellian, though the rounding process is a somewhat later, individual change.

The only innovative change specific to Oscan is that of **anaptyxis**, which is unnoticed in Umbrian. This is seen also in Latin, though this was a development separate from Oscan, and under different conditions.