

Language endangerment: orthography development for language maintenance and revitalisation  
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**Changing script in a threatened language:  
reactions to Romanization at first-century Bantia**

The Tabula Bantina is one of the longest texts in Oscan (spoken in Italy in the first millennium BC). It is often supposed that Oscan as a written language had died out in Bantia, as subsequently elsewhere, necessitating the adoption of the Latin alphabet. We revise this view by examining the orthography of the text in greater detail than previously: while the alphabet is largely Latin, aspects of its spelling appear to be based on Greek orthography. Since the Greek alphabet was used to write Oscan in the area around Bantia, this suggests that the writers deliberately chose to use the Latin alphabet. We show that the writing of official texts in the Latin alphabet may have been a concession to Rome, even while members of these communities were used to writing Greek. Rather than the Oscan language being partially revived as a show of regional identity, a community that was still using its traditional language felt compelled to change its script. This paper seeks to unravel an intertwining of influences on the script of a community whose ethnolinguistic vitality was under threat, and shows how the threatened languages of the past reacted to pressure from dominant political powers.

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