

# Actions speak louder than words?

{ Language and identity in pre-Roman Italy

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# Languages of Italy, c.500 BC

Q. Ennius tria corda habere sese dicebat...



... quod loqui Graece et Osce et Latine sciret.  
(Aulus Gellius)



# The Pyrgi Tablets



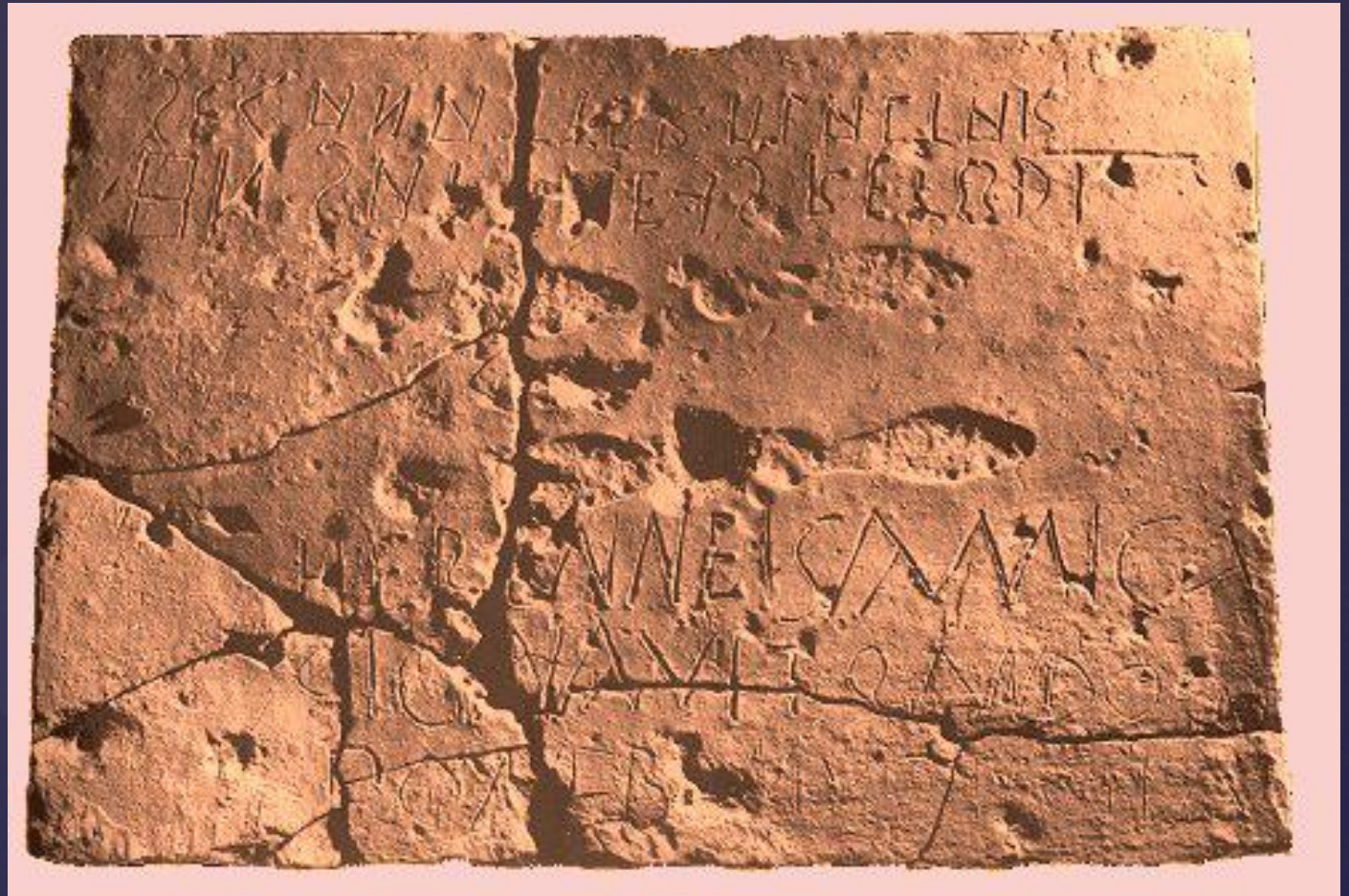
Etruscan

Phoenician

Etruscan



# Oscan / Latin tile



hn. sattiieís. detfri / **seganatted.** plavtad

**herenneis.** amica / signavit. qando / ponebamus. tegila(s)



Rebel currency, c.90 BC



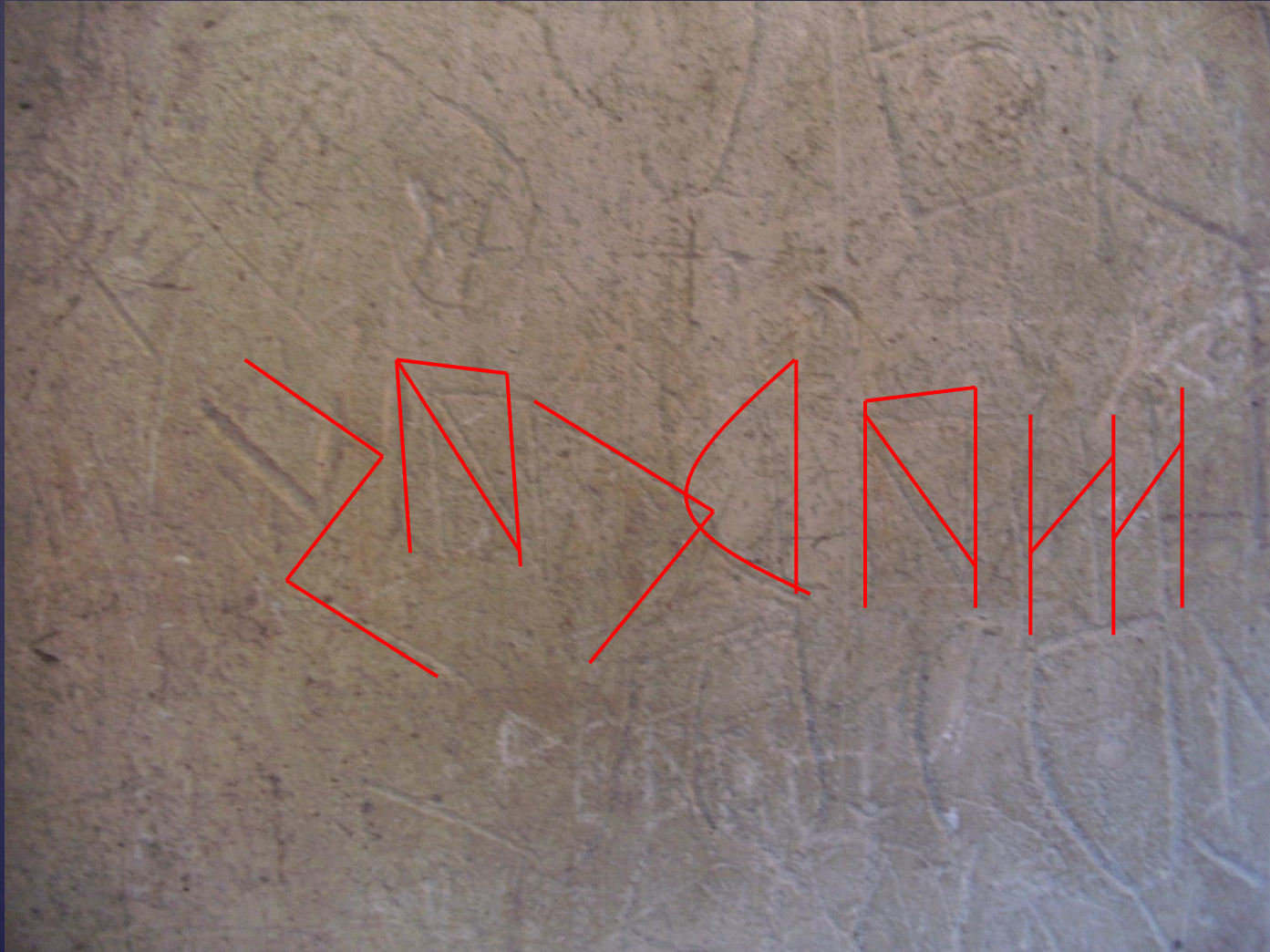




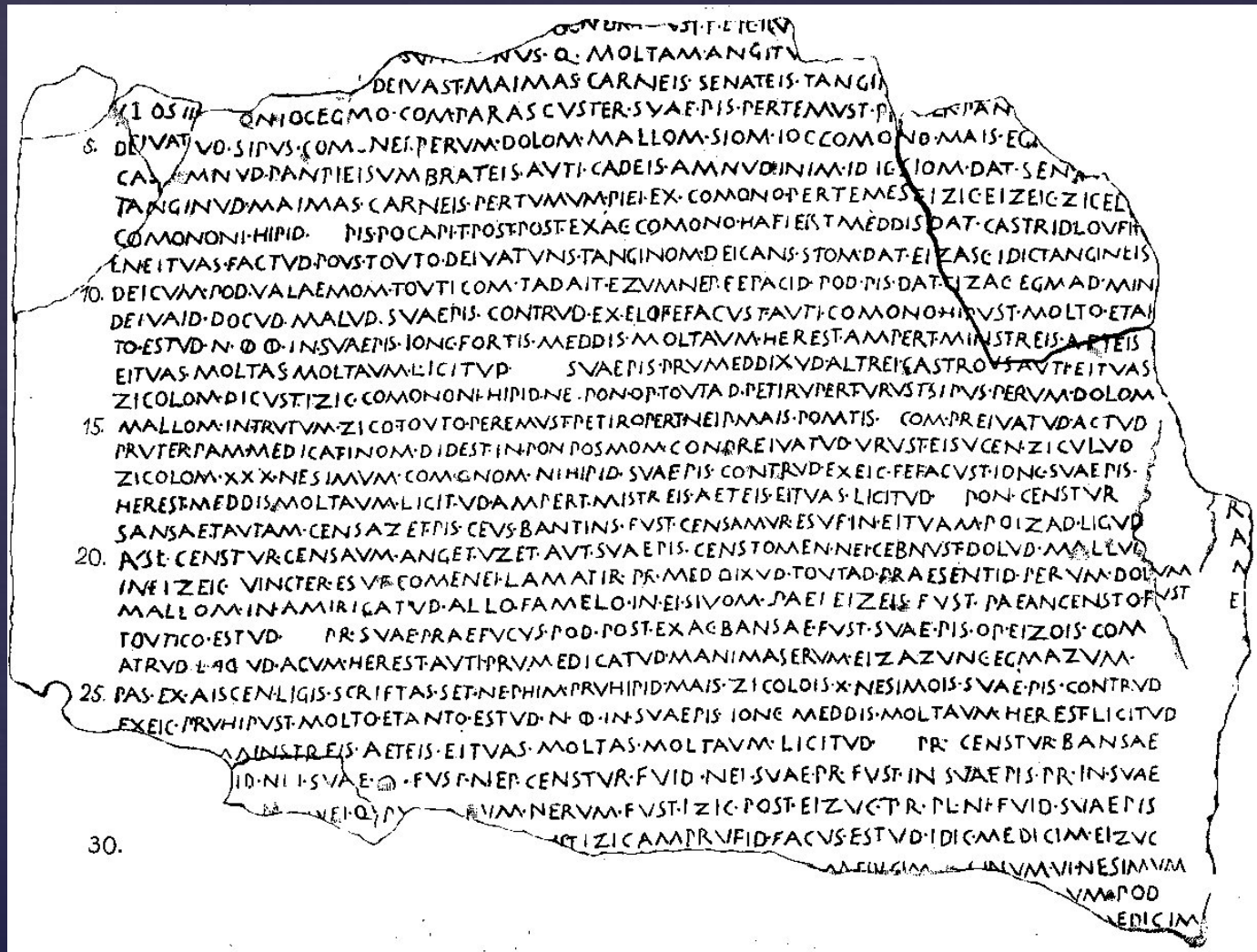
*mensa ponderaria, Pompeii*



# Graffiti in the brothel



# The Tabula Bantina, c.90 BC





# “Borrowed” features?

## Conditionals

**suae pis contrud exeic fefacust...** ~ *si quis contra hoc fecerit...*

## Commands

**...molto etanto estud.** ~ *...multa tanta esto.*

## Coordination

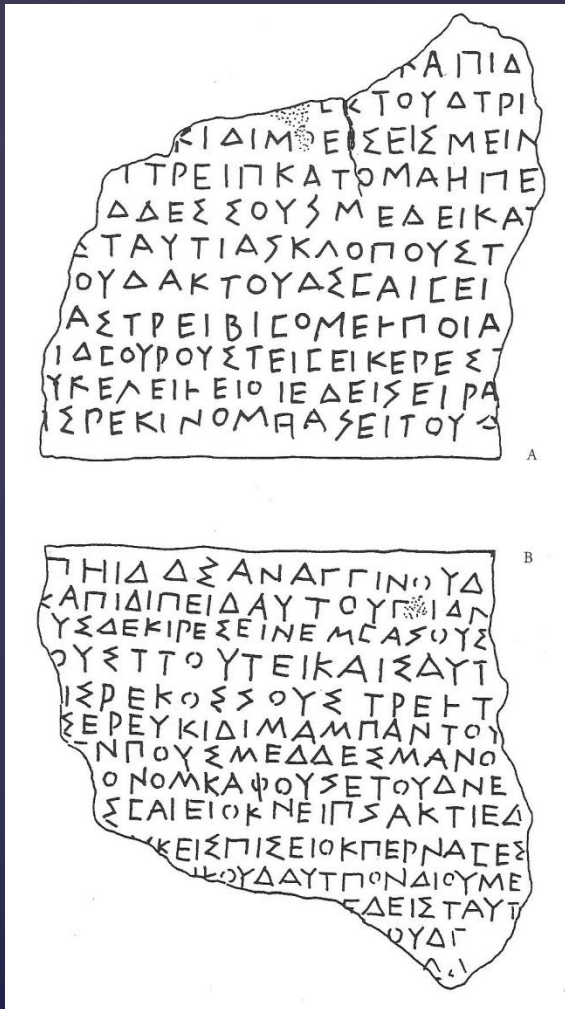
**nep... nep...** ~ *neque... neque...*

## Set Phrases

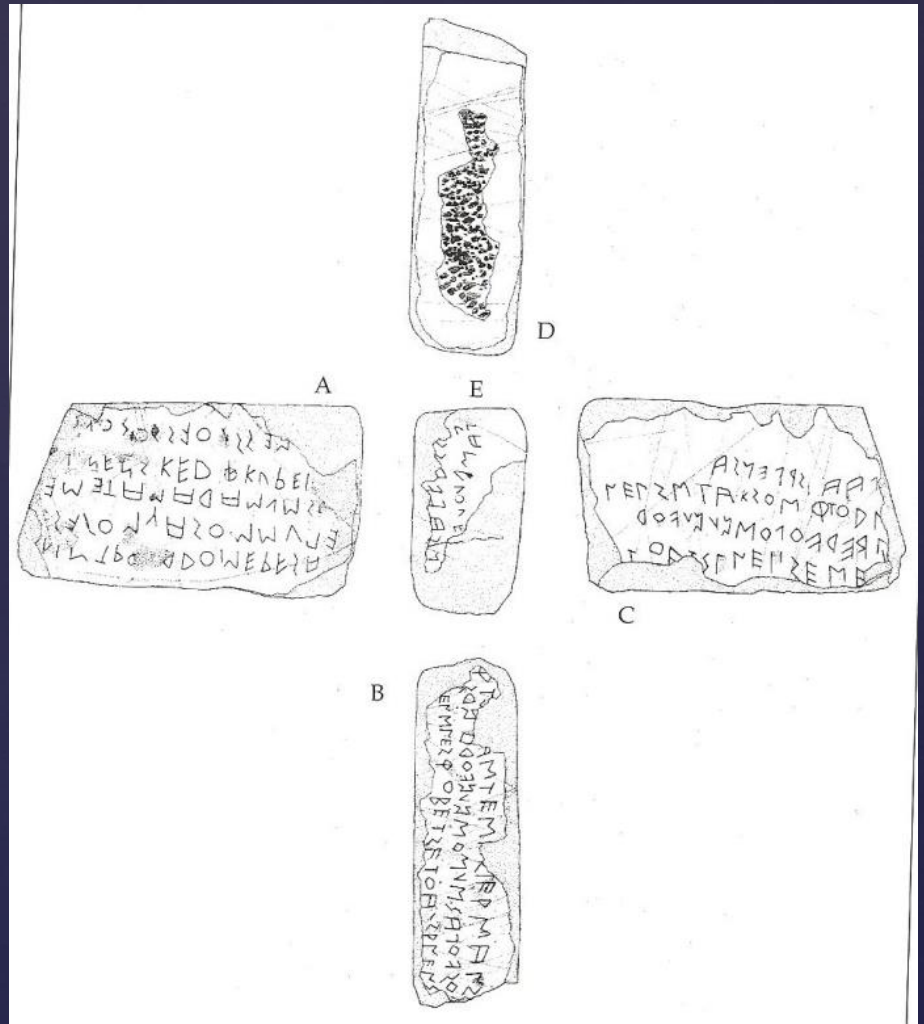
**senateis tanginud** ~ *de senatus sententia*

**egmas touticas** ~ *rei publicae*

# Italic laws



Roccagloriosa (bronze)  
c. 300 BC



Tortora (stone stele)  
c. 500 BC



# Or traditional features?

## Conditionals

**suae pis contrud exeic fefacust...** ~ *si quis contra hoc fecerit...*

Roccagloriosa: ...*aut iaf klopoust...*

Roccagloriosa: *swai eiok neip faktied...*

## Commands

**...molto etanto estud.** ~ ...*multa tanta esto.*

Tortora: ...*wolos fufuwod nepis taiiosqtod.*

Roccagloriosa: ... *aktoud.*

Roccagloriosa: ... *rekinom hafeitoud.*

# Or traditional features?

## Coordination

**nep... nep... ~ neque... neque...**

Tortora: *nepis... nepis...*

Roccagloriosa: *neip... neip...*

## Set Phrases

**senateis tanginud ~ de senatus sententia**

**egmas touticas ~ rei publicae**

Tortora: *towtid*

Roccagloriosa: *touteikais; tagginoud*



# Conclusions

- The language, syntax and structures used can be a powerful expression of identity.
- This is not always obvious from our viewpoint.
- The influence of Latin can often be overstated.