

# From Latin to Castilian: The Origins of Spanish

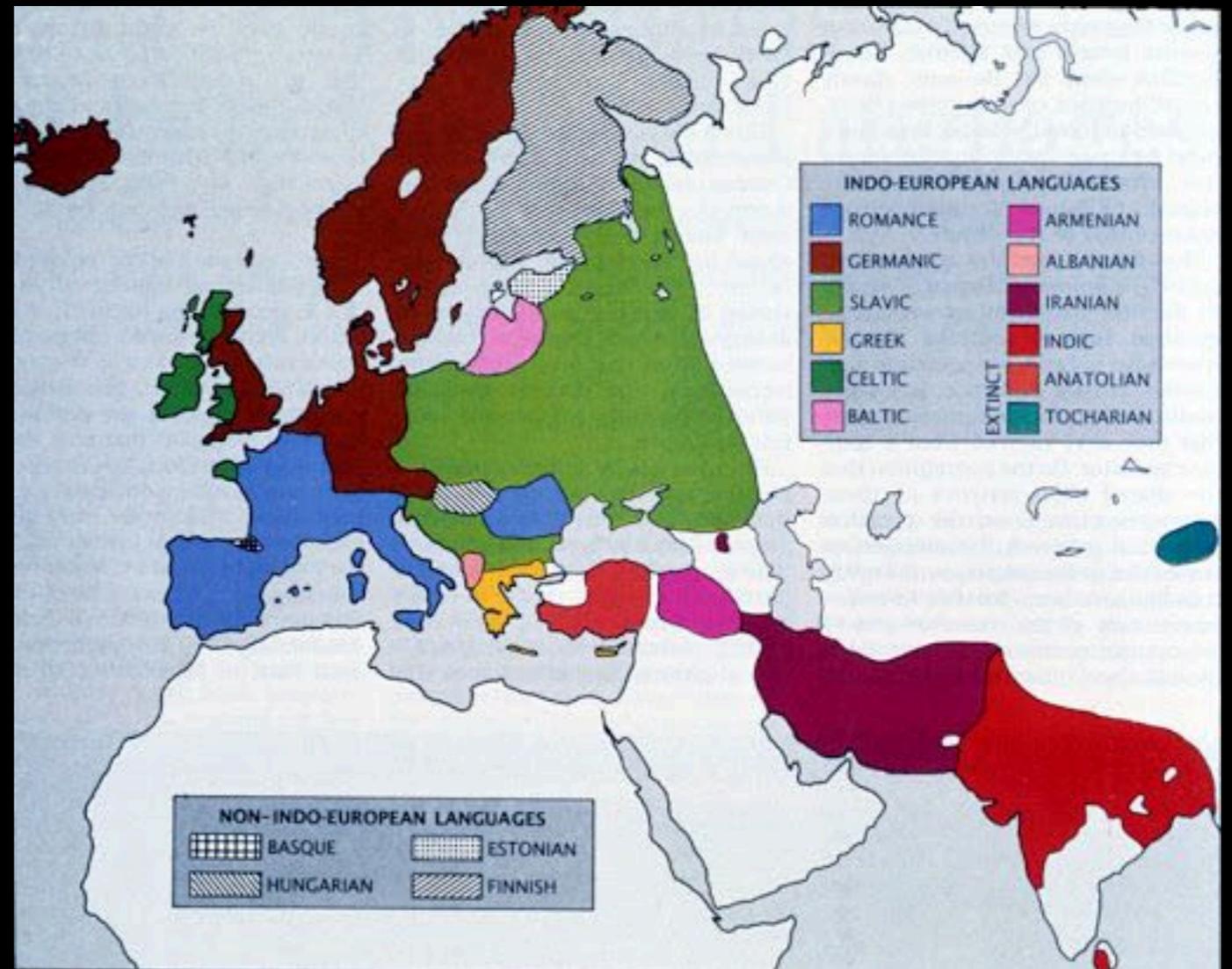


Abbie McCabe

# Overview

- In this project, I focus on how the Spanish language came to be; the focus is both historical and linguistic
- I begin with a general discussion of the Italic language family, then move on to Latin, then talk about Spanish
  - I've also added a brief section about Romance languages
- I've included a "further reading" section at the end of the project with interesting articles, blog posts, etc.
- I've tried not to focus ~too much~ on just Spanish; I wanted a lot of the information to be about Latin since the "older" IE languages are the focus of our class

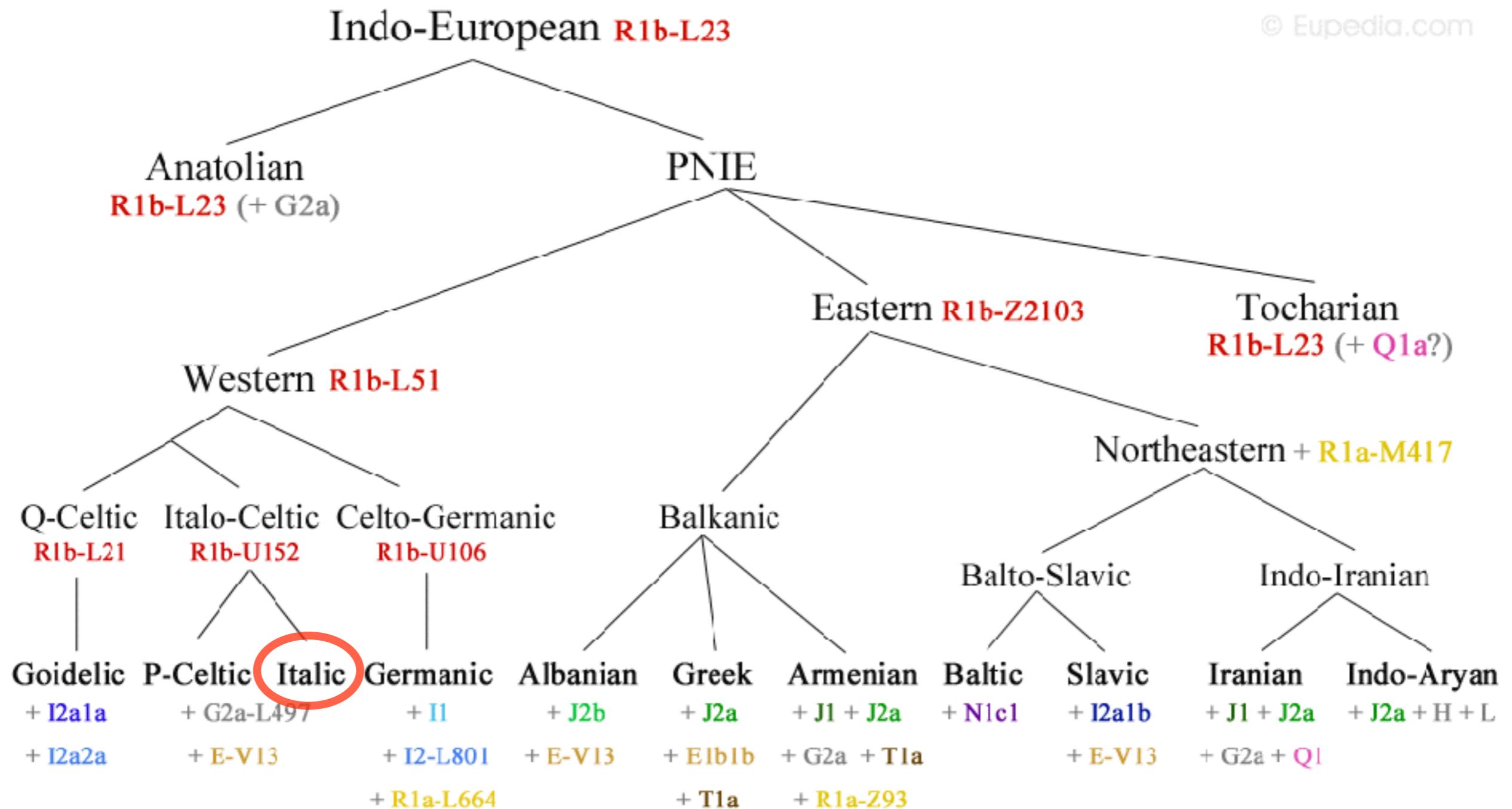
# Indo-European



# Spanish is Indo-European.

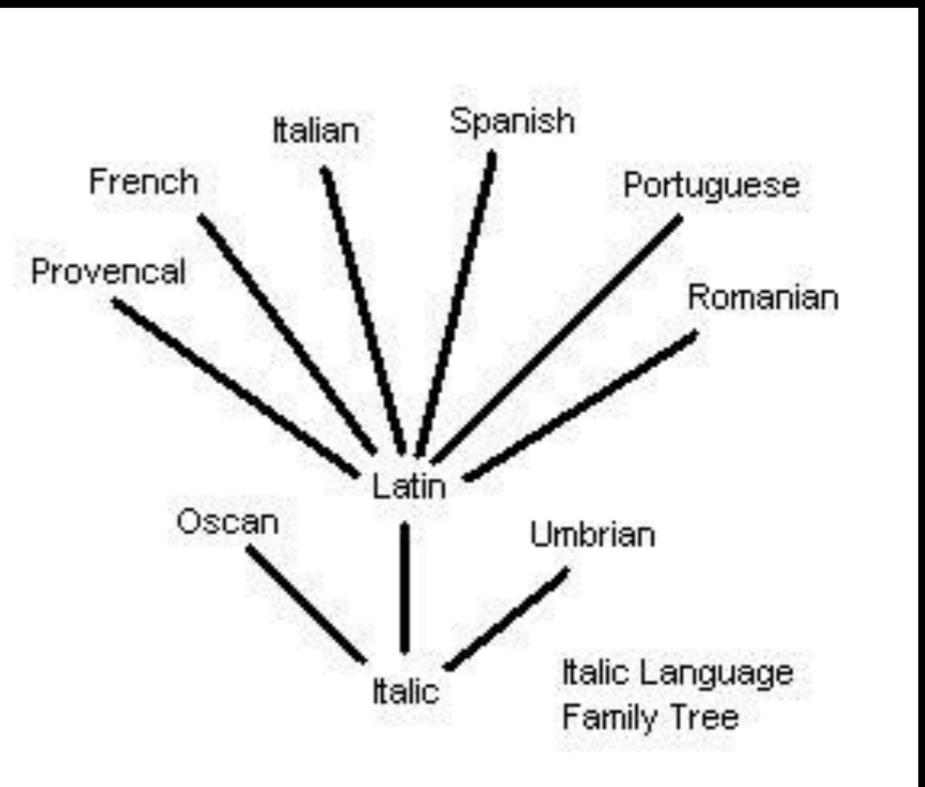
- As with all other IE languages, Spanish can be traced back to Proto-Indo-European
- Spanish is part of the **centum** branch of IE languages, meaning the palatal stops that existed in PIE merged with plain velars
- Working backwards: Spanish (Castilian) is a Romance language descended from Latin (Vulgar Latin), which is an **Italic** language; Italic languages were part of the larger Italo-Celtic family (potentially — there's some debate about this); & etc.

# The IE Family Tree



Phylogenetic tree of Indo-European languages according to Maciamo Hay with Y-DNA haplogroups associated with each branch.

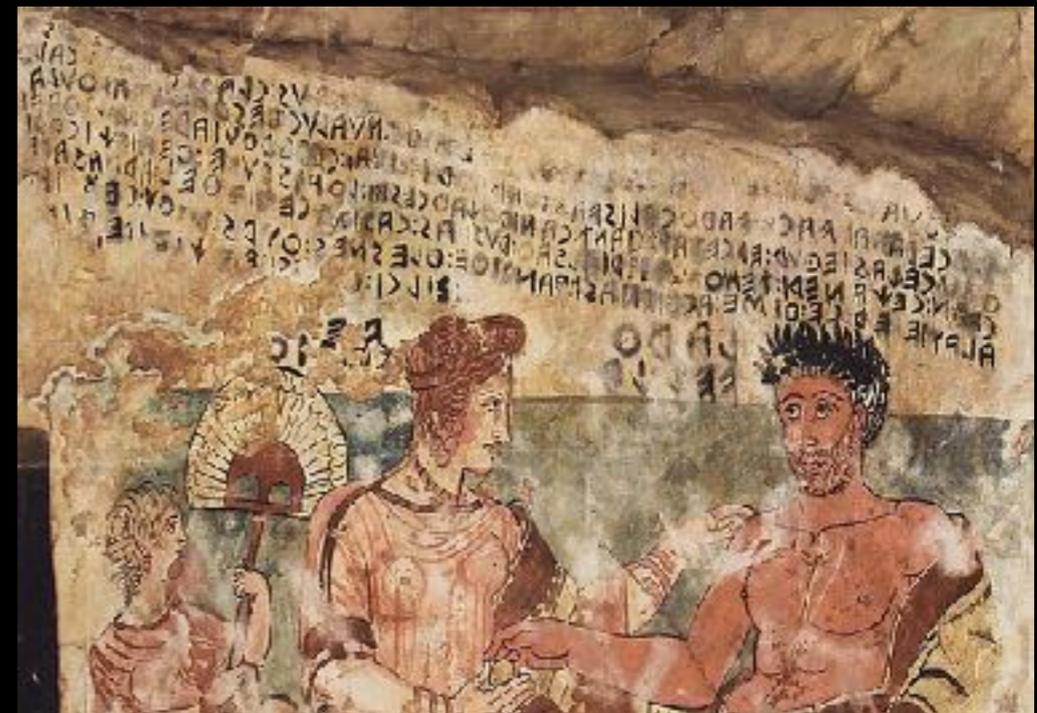
# The Italic Family



# The Italic Languages

- Italic is a **centum** family of languages consisting of most of the ancient IE languages of Italy
- **Etruscan** was the language of the Etruscans, a tribe originally from northwestern Italy that began to spread along the Italian peninsula
  - Etruscan was influenced by the Greeks (alphabet)
- As Etruscan influence waned, the use of Latin increased

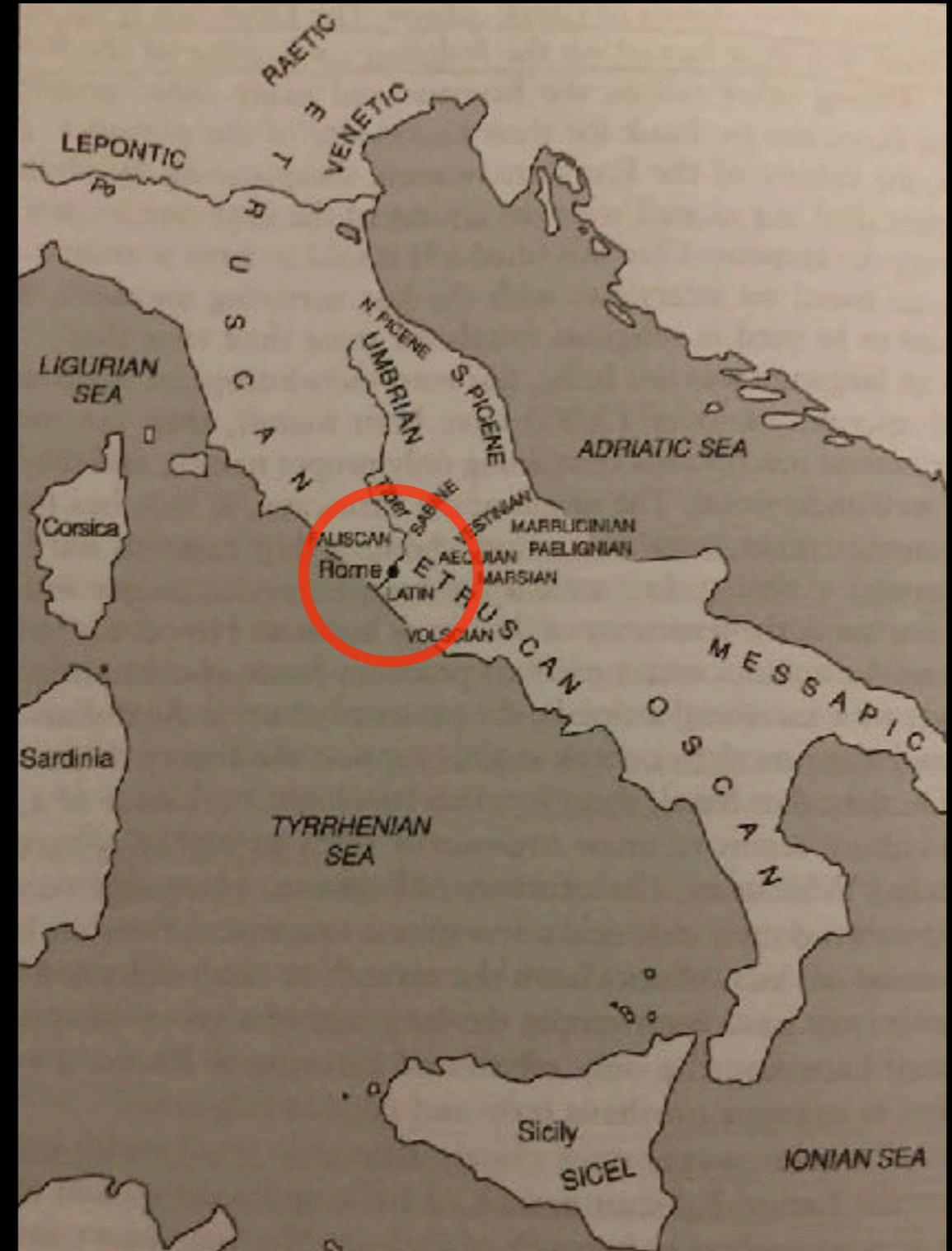
⊗	⊖	⊗	⊖	⊗	⊖	⊗	⊖	⊗
⊗	H	Z	V	E	D	G	B	A
[tʰ]	[h]	[ts]	[v]	[c]	[r/d]	[k]	[b]	[a]
M	⊖	O	⊖	⊖	⊖	J	K	I
Š	P	O	E	N	M	L	K	I
[ʃ]	[p]	[o]	[s]	[n]	[m]	[l]	[k]	[i]
	Ψ	Φ	X	Υ	Τ	Ζ	Ϟ	ϙ
	ψ	φ	x	υ	τ	ς	ρ	ο
	[kʰ]	[pʰ]	[z]	[u/w]	[t]	[s]	[r]	[a]



# (Italic) Languages of Ancient Italy



circa ~600 BCE

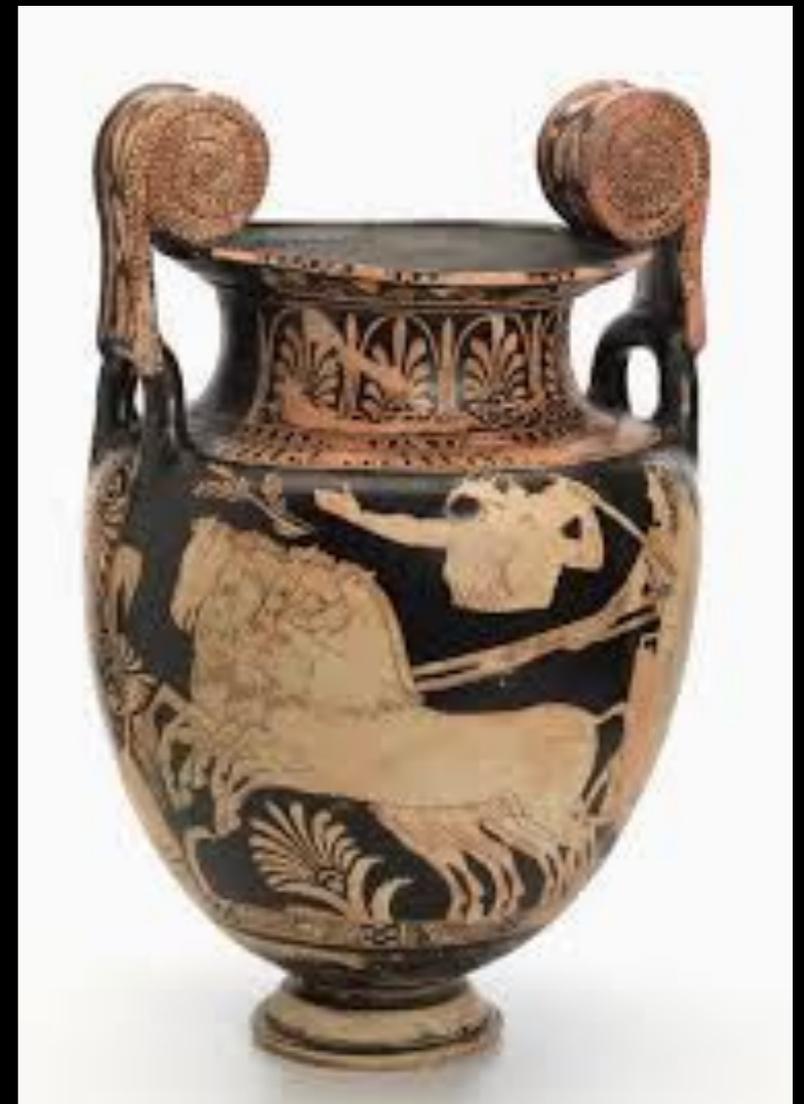


# Italic Phonology

- (Fortson 277-278)
  - Since Italic is a centum branch, PIE's palatal stops merged and became plain velars
  - PIE's voiceless and voiced stops remain the same
  - Resonants — retention of PIE's consonantal liquids, nasals, and glides
  - Sibilants — Proto-Italic preserved *\*s*, but it became voiced to *z* in the daughter languages due to rhotacism
  - Non-vocalized laryngeals were lost, but vocalized laryngeals were preserved
  - Vowels and diphthongs were preserved (except for *\*eu*, which merged with *\*ou*)
  - Overall, there's not a *-ton-* of phonological change from PIE to Italic

# Italic Verbs

- Verbs were conjugated based on stem-vowels *ā*, *ē*, *e*, and *ī*
  - Conjugations arose because of sound change
- Tense-aspect system
- PIE imperfect was not preserved in Italic and replaced with the suffix *\*-f-*
- Perfect system combined IE perfect and aorist
- PIE subjunctive became Italic future
- Dual personal ending was not preserved



Faliscan krater

# Latin

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
A	BE	CE	DE	E	EF	GE	HA
ā	bē	cē	dē	ē	ef	gē	hā
[a:]	[be:]	[ke:]	[de:]	[e:]	[ɛf]	[ge:]	[ha:]
I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
I	KA	EL	EM	EN	O	PE	QV
ī	kā	el	em	en	ō	pē	qū
[i:]	[ka:]	[ɛl]	[ɛm]	[ɛn]	[o:]	[pe:]	[k <sup>w</sup> u:]
R	S	T	V	X	Y	Z	
ER	ES	TE	V	EX	I GRAECA	ZETA	
er	es	tē	ū	ex	ī Graeca	zēta	
[ɛr]	[ɛs]	[te:]	[u:]	[ɛks]	[i: 'grajka]	['ze:ta]	

# A Brief History of Latin

- **Latin:** the language originally of Latium; part of the Latino-Faliscan subbranch of Italic
- **Archaic Latin:** the earliest iteration of Latin (from the first known examples up until the second century BC)
- There are two predominant varieties of Latin:
  - **Classical Latin**, which followed Archaic Latin and existed until ~17 CE; associated with literature
  - **Vulgar Latin**, which was a widely-used vernacular; later evolved into the Romance languages



# A Brief History of Latin



that's a lot  
of Latin  
speakers!

# A Brief History of Latin

- Latin was spread by the expansion of the Roman Empire
  - From Latium to the rest of the Mediterranean region, as well as other parts of Europe/Africa
- Began to decline with the Roman Empire, but remained in use until a while afterwards
- Vulgar Latin slowly evolved into other languages due to the breakdown of the empire, especially after 800 CE
  - The vast geography of the empire reduced contact between groups; the isolation meant their dialects of Latin eventually became different enough to constitute their own languages

# Linguistics of Latin: Phonology

- Word-internal voiced aspirates distinguish Latin from other Italic languages
- Rhotacism — *s* between vowels became *r*
- In many environments, \**s* disappeared or assimilated
- Vowels — PIE's mobile accent system became a stress system
- Long vowels in final syllables were shortened

Vowels											
a	ā	e	ē	i	ī	o	ō	u	ū	y	ȳ
[a]	[a:]	[ɛ]	[ɛ:]	[i, j]	[i:]	[ɔ]	[ɔ:]	[u, w]	[u:]	[y]	[y:]
Diphthongs											
ae	oe	ei	au	eu	ui						
[ai]	[ɔi]	[ei]	[au]	[ɛu]	[wi]						
Consonants											
b	c	ch	d	f	g	gn	h	j	k	l	m
[b]	[k', k]	[x]	[d]	[f]	[g]	[ŋn]	[h]	[j]	[k]	[l]	[m]
n	p	ph	qu	r	s	t	th	ti	v	x	z
[n]	[p]	[φ]	[kw]	[r]	[s]	[t]	[θ]	[ts]	[w]	[ks, gz]	[dz, z]

Inventory of  
Classical Latin

# Linguistics of Latin: Cases

- Latin uses cases to distinguish between uses of nouns
  - nouns are grouped into different declensions based on their case endings: singular or plural; and nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, or ablative
  - Classical Latin had five; Vulgar Latin had about three

**Table 1 First, second and third declensions in Classical Latin**

		1st decl.	2nd decl.	3rd decl.	
<b>Sing.</b>	<i>Nominative</i>	těrra 'land'	lŭpus 'wolf'	pānīs 'bread'	pater 'father'
	<i>Accusative</i>	těrram	lŭpum	pānem	patrem
	<i>Genitive</i>	těrrae	lŭpī	pānīs	patrīs
	<i>Dative</i>	těrrae	lŭpō	pānī	patrī
	<i>Ablative</i>	těrrā	lŭpō	pāne	patre
<b>Plu.</b>	<i>Nominative</i>	těrrae	lŭpī	pānēs	patrēs
	<i>Accusative</i>	těrrās	lŭpōs	pānēs	patrēs
	<i>Genitive</i>	těrrārum	lŭpōrum	pānum	patrum
	<i>Dative</i>	těrrīs	lŭpīs	pānibus	patribus
	<i>Ablative</i>	těrrīs	lŭpīs	pānibus	patribus

# From Latin to Spanish: Nouns

- Erosion of the case system
  - In late Latin more prepositions were used, reducing the need for an extensive case system; a binary case system was adopted
  - It's believed that the *-s* suffix changed from a plural ending to a plural marker, further simplifying the case system
  - Only the accusative case survives in Spanish

**Table 2** Vulgar Latin nominal system

		<b>1st decl.</b>	<b>2nd decl.</b>	<b>3rd decl.</b>	
<b>Sing.</b>	Nominative	[ˈtɛrra]	[ˈlopos]	[ˈpanes]	[ˈpater]
	Oblique	[ˈtɛrra]	[ˈlopo]	[ˈpane]	[ˈpatre]
<b>Plu.</b>	Nominative	[ˈtɛrras]	[ˈlopi]	[ˈpanes]	[ˈpatres]
	Oblique	[ˈtɛrras]	[ˈlopos]	[ˈpanes]	[ˈpatres]

# From Latin to Spanish: Nouns

- Increased consistency and efficiency in gender marking — erasure of Latin neuter nouns (McKenzie 2017)
  - Most first-declension neuters became feminine nouns ending in *-a*
  - Most second-declension neuters became masculine nouns ending in *-o*
  - Third-declension neuters were arbitrarily assigned genders
    - This can be confusing to Spanish language learners! I've seen the word *mar*, meaning “sea,” marked as both masculine and feminine; typically, it's considered to be masculine in contemporary Spanish

# From Latin to Spanish: Adjectives

- Similar to nouns, adjectives in late Latin and in Spanish became increasingly gendered
  - First and second declension became masculine *-o*
    - Altered to match gender of subject
  - Third declension/neuter adjectives were given an *-e* ending; based on *-em* from Classical Latin
    - Ex. *suaue* “smooth,”
    - Some were made consonant-final in Medieval Spanish
      - *igual* ‘same’ < \**iguale* < *aequālem* (McKenzie)

# From Latin to Spanish: Verbs

- Latin has four conjugations based on stems *-āre*, *-ēre*, *-ere*, and *-īre*; Spanish has only three conjugations based on stems *-ar*, *-er*, and *-ir*
  - The *-ere* and *-ēre* stems merged into the single stem *-er* due to a change in vowel length
- Latin's **deponent** verbs, which had both an active and a passive voice, simply use the active voice in Spanish
- Verb stress changed between the tenses of each language

Table 1 Stress retraction in first and second persons plural

Subparadigm	Latin form	Modern form
Imperfect (indicative)	cantābāmus	cantábamos
Imperfect (indicative)	cantābātis	cantabais
Imperfect subjunctive (-ra-)	cantā(ve)rāmus	cantáramos
Imperfect subjunctive (-se-)	cantā(vi)ssēmus	cantásemos
Imperfect subjunctive (-ra-)	cantā(ve)rātis	cantarais
Imperfect subjunctive (-se-)	cantā(vi)ssētis	cantaseis

Conjugation  
of the verb  
*cantar* “to sing”

(McKenzie)

# Spanish

EL INGENIOSO  
HIDALGO DON QUI-  
XOTE DE LA MANCHA,

*Compuesto por Miguel de Cervantes  
Saavedra.*

DIRIGIDO AL DVQUE DE BEIAR,  
Marques de Gibrleon, Conde de Benalcazar, y Bañar-  
res, Vizconde de la Puebla de Alcozer, Señor de  
las villas de Capilla, Curiel, y  
Burguillos.

Año,



1605.

CON PRIVILEGIO,  
EN MADRID Por Iuan de la Cuesta.

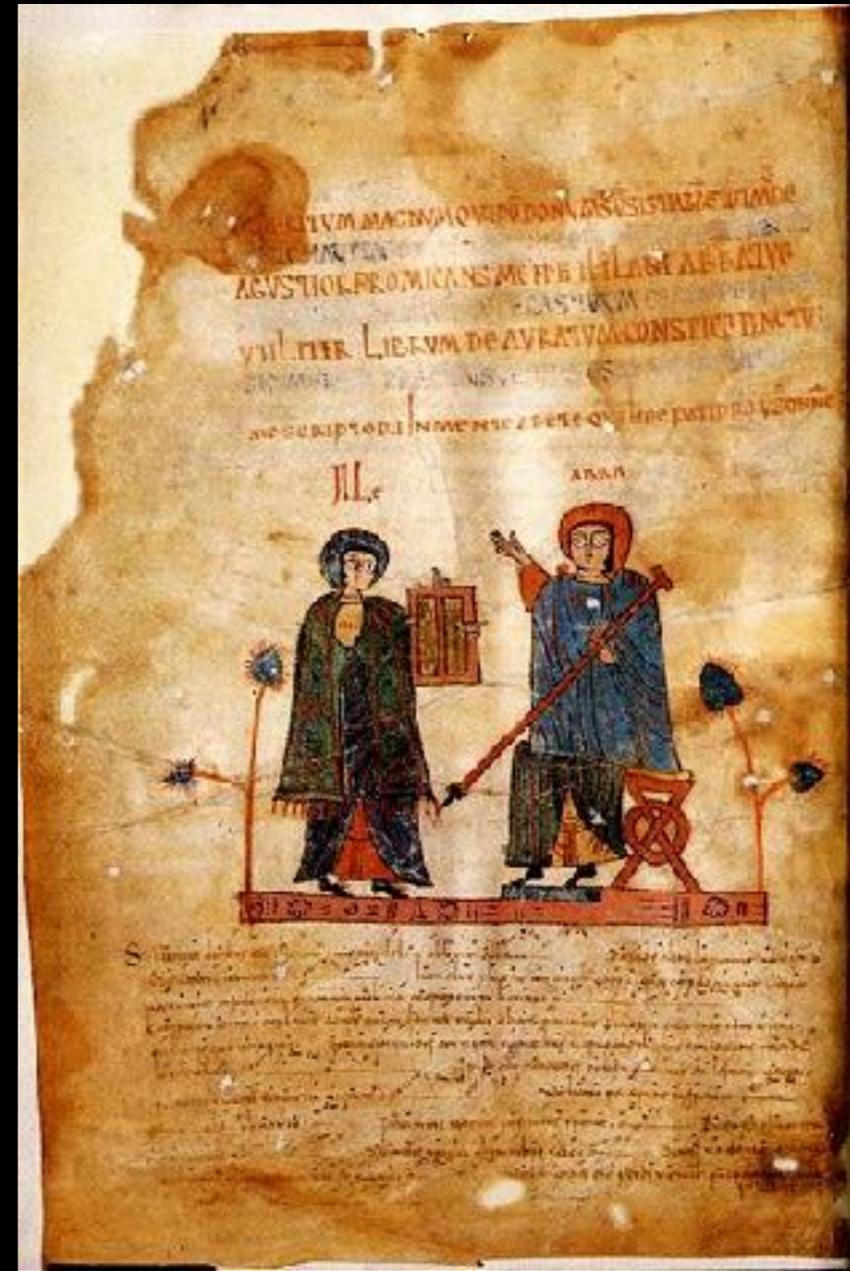
Vendese en casa de Francisco de Robles, librero del Rey nro señor.

# The Languages of Historical Spain

- Before the existence of Spain and Portugal, the Iberian peninsula consisted of a series of small kingdoms/regions, each with its own language
  - **Gallo-Portuguese/Galician:** Spoken in Galicia and Portugal
  - **Leonese:** spoken in León
  - **Aragonese:** spoken in Aragon
  - **Basque/Euskera:** spoken in the Basque region of Spain; a language isolate, not genetically related to any of the other languages of Spain
  - **Castilian:** spoken in Castile
  - **Catalan:** spoken in Catalonia

# The Languages of Historical Spain

- **Arabic:** brought to Spain when the Moors, an Islamic group from northern Africa, took over the Iberian Peninsula in 711 CE; not genetically related to Spanish
- Quite a few Spanish words are borrowed from Arabic
  - *el azúcar* “sugar,” *el alfombra* “carpet,” *el algodón* “cotton”
- **Mozarabic (*el mozárabe*):** a group of Romance dialects heavily influenced by Arabic and generally spoken in the southern part of Spain
  - Usage declined as the Moors were gradually forced out by the Spanish



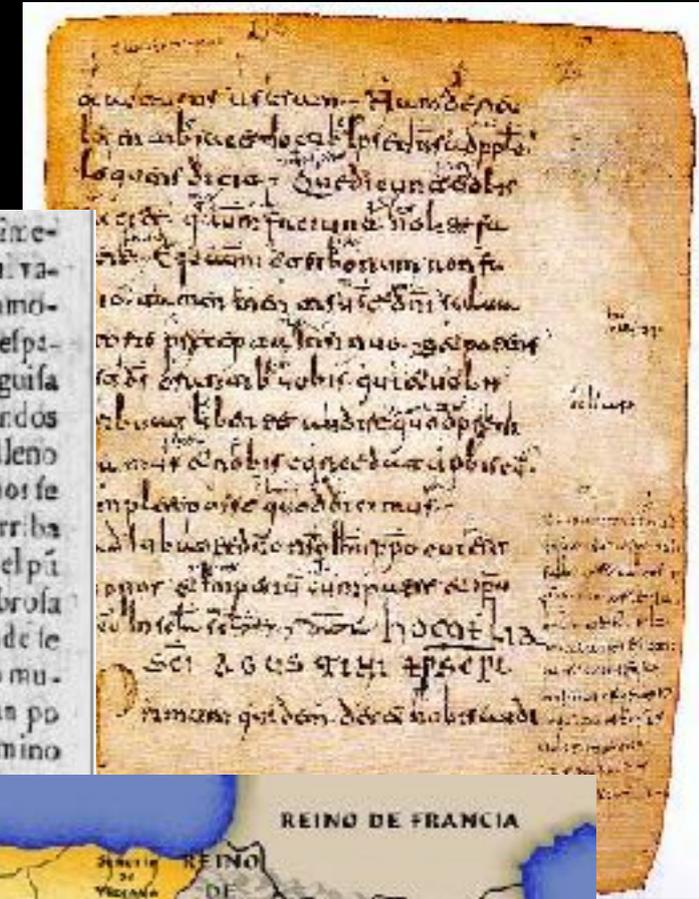
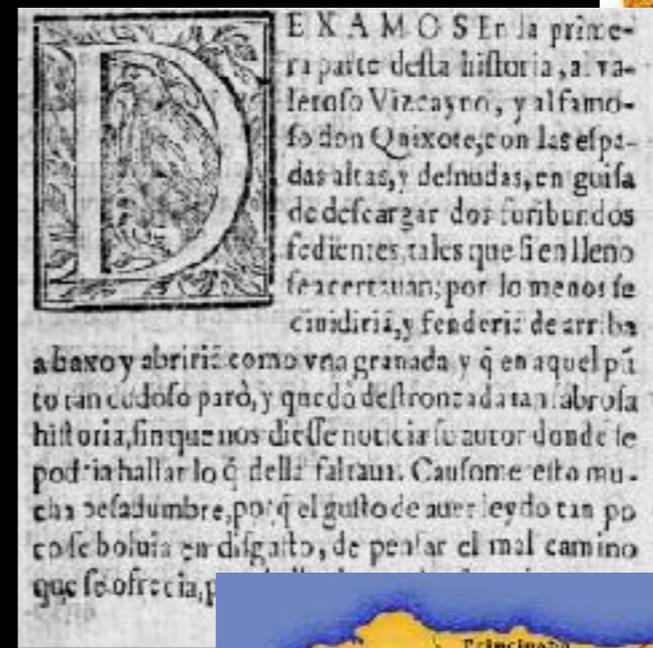
# The Languages of Historical Spain



it's a video!

# What Even Is “Spanish?”

- The language that we think of as “Spanish” is technically Castilian; it’s named for the medieval kingdom of Castile (*Castilla*) located in what’s now the middle of Spain
- King Ferdinand of Castile married Queen Isabella of Aragon and the couple began to unite the Iberian Peninsula into a single kingdom
- Castilian became the “official” language of Spain



# Linguistics of Spanish

- Phonetic inventory
  - Vowels: [a], [e], [i], [o], [u]
  - **Semiconsonants:** [j] and [w]; “...a kind of approximant, i.e. a consonant-like sound that is articulated with loose approximation of the articulators and no audible friction” (McKenzie)
  - Consonants:

\*This is the IPA transcription of consonants — I couldn't think of a good way to switch them over to Fortson's version. Also, some of them vary by region/accent, but for the most part this is pretty standard.

Table 3 The consonant sounds of Spanish (shaded cell indicates voiced sound)

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar
<b>Stops</b>	[p] capa		[t] pata				[k] pico
	[b] ambos		[d] lindo				[g] vengo
<b>Fricatives</b>		[f] café	[θ] caza	[s] casa			[x] caja
	[β] lobo		[ð] cada	[z] mismo		[j] ayer	[χ] lago
<b>Approximants</b>				[ɹ] Israel			
<b>Affricates</b>					[tʃ] chico		
					[dʒ] ya		
<b>Nasals</b>	[m] cama	[ɱ] enfermo		[n] cana		[ɲ] caña	[ŋ] tengo
<b>Laterals</b>				[l] cala		[ʎ] calla	
<b>Tap</b>				[ɾ] caro			
<b>Trill</b>				[r] carro			

# Linguistics of Spanish: Verbs

- There are three verb endings, *-ar*, *-er*, and *-ir*, that are conjugated differently in each tense
- Verb tenses
  - Past perfect - completed past actions
  - Imperfect - repeated past actions
  - Present perfect -
  - Present - facts, habitual actions, routines (think “I walk”)
  - Subjunctive - expresses desire or doubt; present or past
  - Future - action that will be completed

# Linguistics of Spanish: Nouns

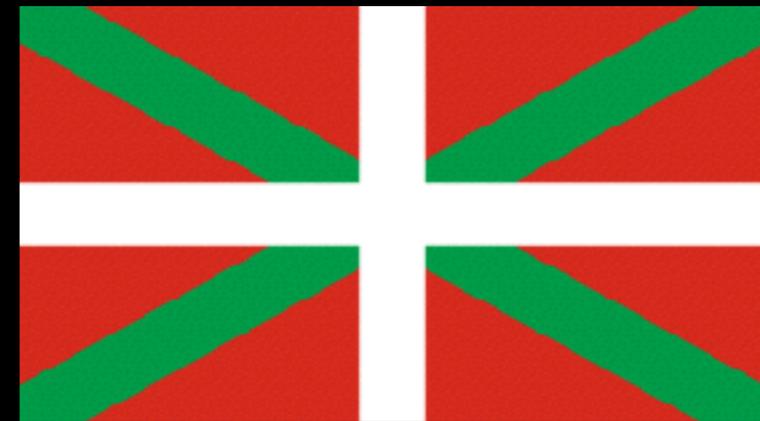
- As mentioned in the “Latin to Spanish” slides, each noun in Spanish has a gender — masculine or feminine — that typically corresponds with its ending
  - Ex. el libro “the book,” la silla “the chair”
- Nouns related to Latin’s third-declension/neuter case are gendered, but their gender doesn’t necessarily correspond with their endings
  - Ex. la flor “the flower,” el mar “the sea”
- Words that begin with “a” are typically masculine no matter the ending to avoid repeating the vowel
  - Ex. el arma “the weapon” vs. la aarma
    - I’ve seen the plurals of some words like this written as feminine (“las armas”) on occasion, but they’re more commonly written as masculine

# Linguistics of Spanish: Adjectives

- It's also mentioned in the "Latin to Spanish" slides, but adjectives correspond with their nouns in gender and number
  - Ex. *la mujer* "the woman," *las mujeres* "the women"

# Languages of Spain Today

- The official language of Spain is Castilian
- Many of the other regional languages are spoken, but to a lesser degree; a large percentage of Spaniards are bilingual, speaking both Castilian and their regional language (and/or English!)
- For some Spaniards, speaking Basque or Catalan has political implications; both Catalonia and the Basque country are pushing to secede from Spain



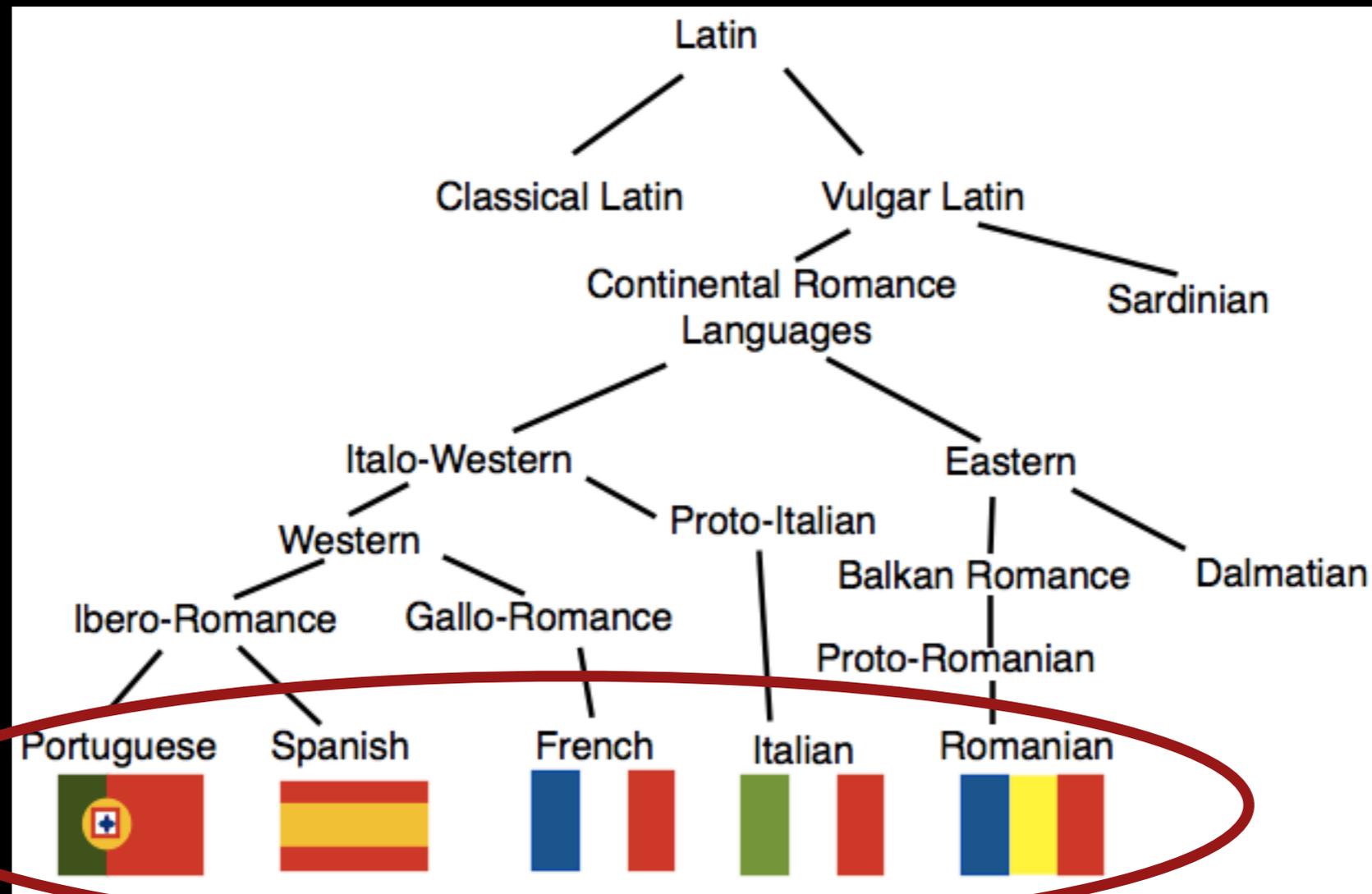
Basque  
flag



Catalonian flag

# The Romance Languages

# Spanish is a Romance Language.



These are the “major” Romance languages that are widely used today. As of 2017, Spanish has the second-most native speakers out of all the world’s languages (behind Chinese).

# The Impact of Latin and the Romance Languages on English

- Words borrowed from or rooted in Latin and the Romance languages constitute a large portion of English vocabulary
  - Though English is Germanic in structure, inflection, and lineage, its vocabulary comes from a wide variety of linguistic sources
  - English has borrowed some words from Spanish: “corral,” “flotilla,” “junto,” “guerrilla,” and many state names (Colorado, Montana, Nevada...)
  - When the Normans occupied England in the 11th century CE, many French words were adopted into English, especially legal terms

# Further Reading:

- <https://abagond.wordpress.com/2016/06/20/vulgar-latin/>
- <https://es.slideshare.net/yourkamden/claudius-i-and-the-etruscans>
- [www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/i.e.mackenzie/](http://www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/i.e.mackenzie/)

# Works Cited

Fortson, Benjamin W. *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

McKenzie, Ian. "The Linguistics of Spanish." Newcastle University, 2017, [www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/i.e.mackenzie/](http://www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/i.e.mackenzie/).

# Image Credits

Title Slide: <https://historiaespana.es/edad-antigua/hispania-romana>

Indo-European Map: <http://spanishlinguist.us/2014/02/fun-with-proto-indo-european-roots/>

Italic Language Tree: <https://www.jesterbear.com/Aradia/tree.html>

Etruscan Script: <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/etruscan.htm>

Illustrated Etruscan Script: <https://crewsproject.wordpress.com/2019/08/29/learning-etruscan/>

Languages of Ancient Italy (in color): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umbrian\\_language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umbrian_language)

Languages of Ancient Italy (black & white): Fortson pg. 276

Faliscan Krater: <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/422/>

Latin Alphabet: <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/classicallatin.htm>

Archaic Latin: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Latin)

Roman Empire Map: <https://www.thegreatcoursesdaily.com/language-evolution-one-language-became-five-languages/>

Don Quixote Text: <https://marielebert.wordpress.com/2014/10/21/quijote/>

Mozarabic Literature: <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Mozarabs>

Map of Castilla: <https://www.geografiainfinita.com/2018/01/la-evolucion-territorial-del-reino-de-leon/>

Old Castilian Text I: [https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/anuario/anuario\\_10-11/carrasco/p05.htm](https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/anuario/anuario_10-11/carrasco/p05.htm)

Old Castilian Text II: <http://www.proel.org/index.php?pagina=mundo/indoeuro/italico/romance/iberorromance/espanol>

Map Video: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozarabic\\_language#/media/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozarabic_language#/media/File:Linguistic_map_Southwestern_Europe-en.gif)

[File:Linguistic\\_map\\_Southwestern\\_Europe-en.gif](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozarabic_language#/media/File:Linguistic_map_Southwestern_Europe-en.gif)

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