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ABC – History and Form of the Latin Script

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On the History of the Latin Script

→ Easy-to-understand overview of the history of the Latin script

→ For students and interested laypeople who are looking for an introduction into the development of our script, from early inscriptions to digital typologies

Based on Hans Eduard Meier's (1923–2015) standard work *The Development of Script and Type* (first published in 1959), the editors have completely revised the book, supplementing and expanding it with state-of-the-art scientific findings.

In his original work, Meier described the development of the Latin script, from Phoenician inscriptions and Greek lapidarian writing to the most important printed texts of the early 20th century.

The publication *ABC – History and Form of the Latin Script* provides an overview of the development of the Latin script. It covers the origin of Latin characters and how they were changed and altered over the centuries and cumulates in a presentation of contemporary digital scripts and fonts.

The authors supplemented Meier's original work with a genealogy of all the fonts presented, including their font genres, as well as important 20th and early 21st century milestones that were previously absent.

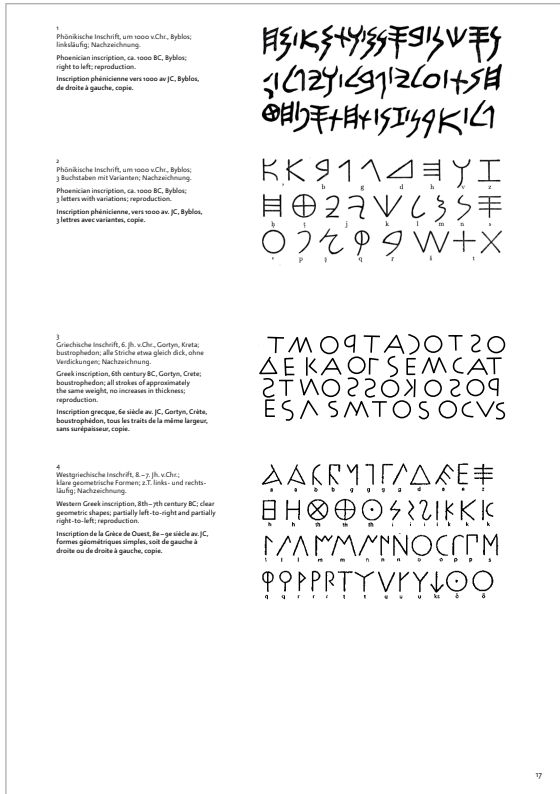
The book is intended as a reference work for students of type design or visual communication, as well as for laypeople interested in fonts and scripts who would like to learn how the Latin alphabet developed across the epochs.

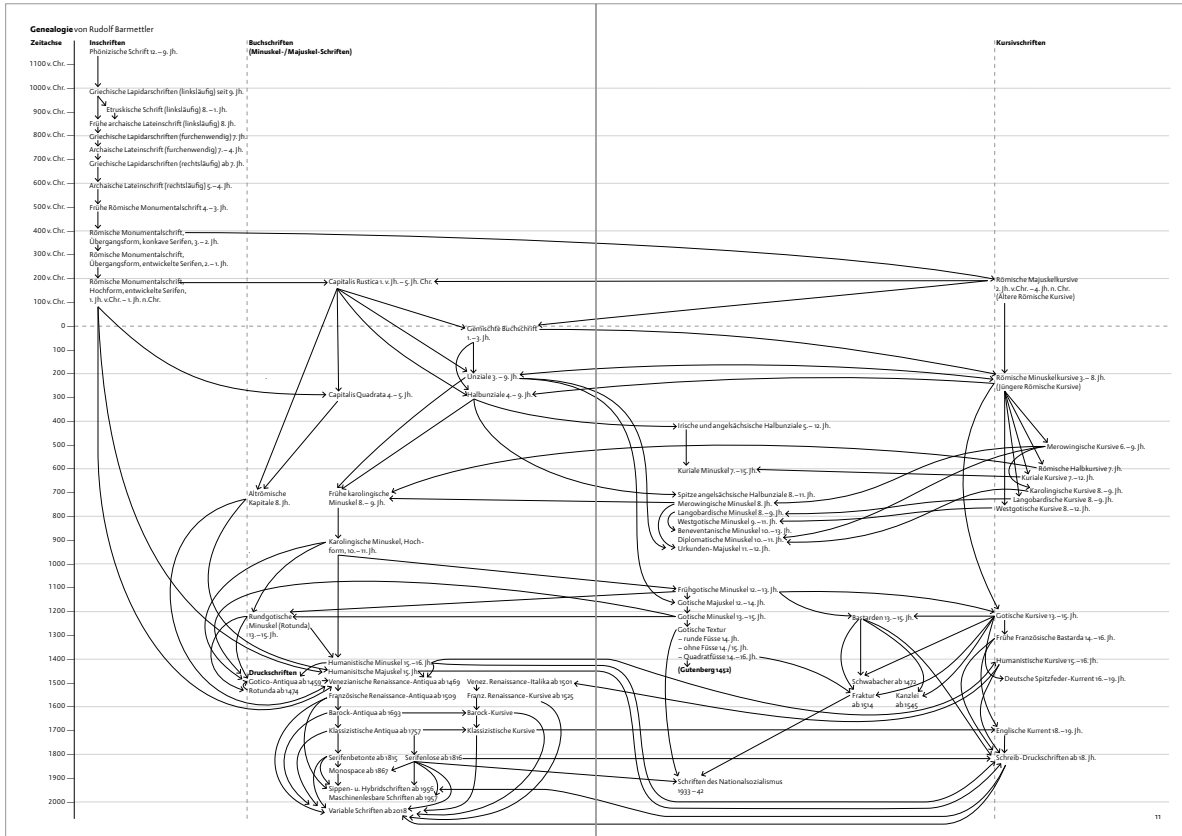
About the editors

Rudolf Barmettler started as a lecturer at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) for typography in 1989, headed the Visual Communication subject area from 1999 to 2008 and founded and headed the post-graduate programs CAS / MAS Type Design and Typography in 2006. His research focused on Swiss typographical design of the 20th century.

Rupert Kalkofen graduated in German Studies and History in Bonn and Konstanz, received his doctorate in Karlsruhe and taught in Karlsruhe and Konstanz. Since 1991, he has been living in St. Gallen, teaching at the University of St. Gallen and the St. Gallen University of Teacher Education (PHSG).

Roland Stieger is a trained typesetter and typographic designer as well as a co-founder of the TGG Visual Communication agency in St. Gallen. After having completed further training in type design at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), he is now the co-director of the College for Visual Design at GBS St. Gallen, initiator and co-organizer of Typo St. Gallen and president of VGS publishing house.





Capitalis Quadrata
Sie entstammt der Capitalis Monumentalis und der Capitalis Rustica. Überliefert ist sie in Handschriften des 4. u. 5. Jh. Die Grundform ist tendenziell quadratisch, die Buchstaben werden mit unterschiedlichen Schreibwinkeln geschrieben (Abb. 18).

Capitalis Quadrata
This script developed out of Capitalis Monumentalis and Capitalis Rustica. It survived in manuscripts of the 4th and 5th century. The basic shape of the letters tends to be square and the letters are written with elaborate changes in writing angle (Fig. 18).

Capitalis Quadrata
Elle émane de la Capitalis Monumentalis et de la Capitalis Rustica. On la retrouve dans des manuscrits du 4e/5e siècle. La forme de base tend à être carrée, les lettres sont écrites avec des angles d'écriture différents. (Illustr. 18)

Uncial
Diese Majuskelschrift entstammt der Gemischten Buchschrift, der Majuskelskursive, der Capitalis Rustica und wird vom 2. bis zum 9. Jh. geschrieben. Sie ist von runden Formen geprägt, hat ansatzweise Ober- und Unterlängen und einige Buchstaben in Kleinbuchstabenform. Ihre Abschlüsse sind zum Teil schräg und stumpf oder spitzig. Die Schrift ist gut lesbar, läuft breit und wird dadurch repräsentativ, braucht aber entsprechend viel Trägermaterial (Abb. 19).

Uncial
This majuscule script developed out of Mixed Book Hand, Majuscule Cursive and Capitalis Rustica and was written from the 2nd to the 9th centuries. It is characterised by round forms, has rudimentary ascenders and descenders and a few letters in lowercase form. Some of its terminals are slanted diagonally and can be either blunt or pointed. The script is easily readable and sits very wide, giving a distinguished appearance. However, this means that it requires a greater amount of surface material to write on (Fig. 19).

Unciale
Cette majuscule trouve son origine dans l'écriture livresque mixte, la Cursive Majuscule et la Capitalis Rustica. Elle est utilisée du 2e au 9e siècle. Elle se caractérise par des formes rondes et à un certain point, elle présente déjà des ascendantes et des descendantes et quelques lettres minuscules. Les extrémités sont en partie obliques et émoussées voire pointues. L'écriture se lit facilement, est d'apparence plutôt large ce qui lui donne son caractère représentatif mais nécessite une quantité d'autant plus importante de matériel de support. (Illustr. 19)

Die Römischen Kursivschriften
Kursiv meint eine Handschrift für Texte, die nicht so lang und wichtig sind, dass sie in Büchern geschrieben werden. Das gilt für den Geschäftsverkehr ebenso wie für alltägliche Notizen. Die ältesten Formen stammen aus dem 3. Jh. v. Chr. Sie werden in Wachs oder Schiefer geritzt und mit spitzer Feder auf Papyrus geschrieben.

Roman Cursive Scripts
Cursive refers to a handwritten script for texts that are not long or important enough to be written in books. This includes business transactions as well as day-to-day notes. The oldest forms originate from the 3rd century BC. They were etched into wax or slate and written on papyrus with pointed nibs.

Cursives romaines
Cursive désigne une écriture à la main, concernant des textes qui ne sont pas suffisamment longs et importants pour être publiés dans des livres. Ceci est valable aussi bien pour les affaires que pour des documents du quotidien. Les formes les plus anciennes remontent au 3e siècle av. J.C. Elles sont gravées dans de la cire ou sur de l'ardoise ou écrites sur du papyrus avec une plume pointue.

Römische Majuskelskursive (Ältere Römische Kursive)
Sie wird vom 3. Jh. v. Chr. bis ins 4. Jh. n. Chr. geschrieben und ist eine Vereinfachung der Inschriften-Schrift sowie eine Modifikation der Kapitale. Zunächst eine Zwei-Linien-Schrift aus getrennten Buchstaben (Abb. 20, 21), zeigt sie im 2. Jh. durch kurze Ober- und Unterlängen Ansätze zu einer Vier-Linien-Schrift, die zusätzlich einige Buchstaben verbindet (Abb. 22).

Roman Majuscule Cursive (Old Roman Cursive)
This script was written from the 3rd century BC to the 4th century AD and is a simplification of the inscription lettering as well as a modification of the capital scripts. Initially a two-line script of angular letters (Fig. 20, 21), in the 2nd century it started showing signs of becoming a four-line script, featuring short ascenders, descenders and partially joined (Fig. 22).

Cursive mojesculaire romaine (Cursive romaine ancienne)
Elle est utilisée du 3e siècle av. J.C. jusqu'au 4e siècle apr. J.C. et correspond à une simplification de l'écriture des inscriptions mais aussi à une modification des capitales. Il s'agit, dans un premier temps au 3e siècle, d'une écriture composée de lettres séparés sur deux niveaux. (Illustr. 20, 21) L'apparition de courtes ascendantes et descendantes la fera évoluer vers une écriture sur 4 lignes comportant quelques liaisons de caractères. (Illustr. 22)

18 Capitalis quadrata, Buchschrift, 4. Jh., Vergilius Silius, Iliadis, breite Rohrfeder, wechselnder Schreibwinkel, 2 mit Haarstrichen.
Capitalis Quadrata, book hand, 4th century, Vergilius Silius, Iliadis, broad read nib, constant slightly diagonal writing angle, d, n, q as in No. 17.
Capitalis quadrata, écriture livresque, 4e siècle, Vergilius Silius, Iliadis, calame large, angle d'écriture variable, en partie avec des défilés fins.

19 Römische Unciale, Buchschrift, 5. Jh., breite Rohrfeder, gleichbleibend leicht diagonalen Schreibwinkel.
Roman Uncial, book hand, 5th century, broad read nib, constant slightly diagonal writing angle, d, n, q as in No. 17.
Unciale romaine, écriture livresque, calame large, angle d'écriture constant, légèrement en diagonale.

20 Römische Majuskelskursive (Ältere römische Kursive), Gebrauchschrift, 1. Jh., spitze Rohrfeder auf Papyrus.
Roman Majuscule Cursive (Old Roman Cursive), functional script, 1st century, pointed read nib on papyrus.
Cursive mojesculaire romaine (Cursive romaine plus antique), calame pointu sur papyrus.

21 Römische Majuskelskursive (Ältere römische Kursive), Grafitto, erste Hälfte 1. Jh., Stilis in Putz; 2 bis 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

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