This work, by the greatest living authority on medieval palaeography, offers the most comprehensive and up-to-date account in any language of the history of Latin script. It also contains a detailed account of the role of the book in cultural history from antiquity to the Renaissance, which outlines the history of book illumination. Designed as a textbook, it contains a full and updated bibliography. Because the volume sets the development of Latin script in its cultural context, it also provides an unrivalled introduction to the nature of medieval Latin culture. It will be used extensively in the teaching of Latin palaeography, and is unlikely to be superseded.

First published as Paläographie des römischen Altertums und des abendländischen Mittelalters in 1979, the book has been somewhat revised and, where necessary, brought up-to-date by the translators. The result is a book which should be owned by every medievalist.

From reviews of the original edition

'S... the combination of new ideas, the comprehensive treatment, the rich notes and bibliography, all complemented by the extraordinary judgement which is the hallmark of Professor Bischoff's writing, make this handbook unequalled and unapproached in our present literature and a superb guide to further study.' Speculum

'Latin palaeography has received its vade mecum from its foremost representative.' Eranis

'I suspect that this may well be the last time that one scholar will be able to produce a survey of the state of the subject in a single volume on this scale, in which a wealth of material and discussion have been unified by the personal interpretation of one who has thought deeply and fruitfully about the subject for many years.' Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur

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Cover design by Ken Farnhill

Cambridge University Press
www.cambridge.org
ISBN 978-0-521-56726-4
Latin Palaeography
Antiquity and the Middle Ages

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DÁIBHÍ Ó CRÓINÍN AND DAVID GANZ

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE MEDIEVAL ACADEMY OF IRELAND

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
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  1 Latin script  54
Preface

This book grew out of my contribution to Wolfgang Stammler’s Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß entitled ‘Palaeographic mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des deutschen Kulturgebiets’, in which the concentration was on the Germanic countries. In that essay it was only possible to sketch briefly the evolution of Latin script from Antiquity, and the forms of writing outside the Germanic countries. My suggestion that a new edition might develop these aspects was welcomed by the editor, and the expanded work enabled me to explain my views on controversial questions in the palaeography of Antiquity, and perhaps to bring one or two of them closer to a solution. I am grateful to Dr Ellinor Kahleski (†) and to Hugo Moser, who inaugurated their series Grundlagen der Germanistik with this new volume. I also thank Michael Bernhard for his drawings of Latin abbreviations, and Gabriel Silagi for his help in correcting the proofs of the German editions.

A second, revised German edition (Berlin 1986) contains substantial additions to the notes and bibliography to keep abreast of the constant developments in international research on palaeography. Here Monsignor Leonard E. Boyle’s bibliography (Medieval Latin Palaeography, Toronto 1984) and the critical surveys by Jan-Olof Tjäder in Erano have proved particularly helpful. A French translation, by Hartmut Atsma and Jean Vezin, has also appeared (Editions Picard, Paris 1985) which included three new figures and twenty-three plates. These plates have also been included in this first English edition, together with facing sample transcriptions.

I must include a word of thanks to the many friends and colleagues who have assisted me over the years by sending me their books and articles, and I want especially to remember those who have died: Francis Wormald, Franco Bartolini, Giorgio Cencetti, Giovanni Muzzioli, Charles Samaran, Jean Mallon, Neil Ker, Albert Bruckner, Otto Pächt, and T. J. Brown. Without their help this book might not have been completed, and would certainly have contained far more gaps.

Introduction

Palaeography acquired its name with the publication in 1708 of Palaeographia Graeca by the Maurist Bernard de Montfaucon, a book that dealt so comprehensively with the handwriting and other characteristics of Greek manuscripts that it remained the leading authority on the subject for almost two centuries. The decisive move towards the systematic study of the handwriting of Latin manuscripts had been made somewhat earlier, in 1681, when Jean Mabillon, Montfaucon’s older friend and fellow Benedictine, included in Book V of his De re diplomatica samples of Latin scripts from the fourth to the fifteenth century, arranged by type of script and century, and so began to reduce the material to order.1 But whereas Mabillon had seen ‘Gothica’, ‘Langobardica’, ‘Saxonica’, and ‘Francogallica’ in isolation from one another as national scripts of the Germanic peoples and set them apart from Roman handwriting, it was Scipione Maffei of Verona who recognised that the so-called national scripts were in fact no more than later developments of Roman script. Maffei’s division of Latin scripts into majuscule, minuscule, and cursive could have been the most productive point of departure for a genetic history of writing, but though his thesis was accepted in principle, the outstanding palaeographical achievement of the eighteenth century consisted in the diligent collection of all known varieties of Latin handwriting and their arrangement according to a system. This task was accomplished by the Maurist Benedictines Dom Toussain and Dom Tassin in their Nouveau Traité de Diplomatique (Paris 1750–65, especially Vol. 3).

In the Nouveau Traité, however, and in subsequent publications, palaeography remained in the shadow of diplomatic until well into the nineteenth century, even at a time when – due to the invention of photography and mechanical means of reproduction – the materials for study could be increased at will and were more reliable than before. In addition to providing instruction in

1 See also De re diplomatica, I 10. Traube traced the history of Latin palaeography in Veröffentlichungen der Abhandlungen 1; see also Cencetti, Lineamenti, 7–17; Foerster, Abriss, 9–36; Steinmann, Palaeographie, 23–54. For Renaissance views of the history of Latin script cf. E. Casamassima, ‘Per una storia delle dottrine palaeografiche dall’Umanesimo a Jean Mabillon’, Studi Medievali, ser. 3, 5 (1964) 525–78.
the correct decipherment of old handwriting, the traditional task of palaeography was to provide the means of dating manuscripts. For this purpose various rules of thumb were derived from the examination of characteristic letter forms and of the nature of writing materials.

The breakthrough to the recognition of what script could tell us about history was achieved by Leopold Delisle and by Ludwig Traube, who linked it closely with Latin philology and the study of text transmission. The concept of the scriptorium was discovered, samples of different types of scripts were collected, and Traube laid the foundations of a historical understanding of abbreviations. The greatest work from Traube's school was the *Codices Latin Antiquiores*, edited by E.A. Lowe, in which all Latin literary manuscripts up to 1500 are described at length and palaeographically assessed.

The realisation that the development of the structural forms of writing was determined by the act of writing itself only appeared later. But this insight was not restricted merely to some modern palaeographers. I remember how, in the late twenties, Rudolf von Heckel, Professor of Diplomatics at the University of Munich—who, along with Paul Lehmann, introduced me to palaeography—taught us that for him cursive writing was the key to changes in scripts through the centuries. He made us understand that the development of 'b with the bow to the left' to 'b with the bow to the right' was a natural process resulting from the dynamics and economy of writing.

In order to achieve a historical understanding of the development of handwriting certain reservations and misgivings about transgressing the boundaries of the discipline, and the difficulty of some materials, had to be overcome: notably the failure to deal with documentary scripts, with the handwriting of the later middle ages, or with papyrology. We know that during some periods the scripts of chanceries—conservative as they often were—and everyday writing influenced and advanced the development of bookhands. The scripts of the Latin papyri—limited in number and mostly fragmentary as they may be—are even more indispensable for our understanding of changes in scripts, since they constitute the only evidence for centuries which are otherwise inaccessible.

The almost simultaneous appearance of two monumental works on the Carolingian centre of Tours, one written by E.K. Rand from the viewpoint of the palaeographer (1929), the other by Wilhelm Köhler from the art historian's perspective (1930), showed that students in these two disciplines need to be aware of the developments in each and to take their results into account.

In the course of more recent work many programmatic statements have been formulated, of which I mention here only those by Augusto Campagna and Heinrich Fichtenau. But there are still many desiderata. Latin palaeography has two sister disciplines in epigraphy and Greek palaeography. The research of Jean Mallon into the relationship of bookhands to the script of inscriptions has resulted in very valuable insights, but a synthesis of what has been postulated for these three disciplines to the mutual benefit of all has not yet been achieved to any great degree.

Palaeographical work, of course, goes on. In our own time international cooperation undertakes to solve fundamental problems. Tools are being created which will provide palaeographers with reliable assistance and ease their work. With the aid of technological advances palaeography, which is an art of seeing and comprehending, is in the process of becoming an art of measurement.

In conclusion I should like to say a few words about the intention and purpose of this book. As the title indicates, it is intended to provide an understanding of handwriting and to introduce the reader to the history of script as part of the history of the book in Roman antiquity and in the middle ages. The first part describes the materials used in books and the procedures in book-making. The second part is the history of script itself. The third part, which is neither a history of transmission nor of libraries, tries to sketch the role of manuscripts in our cultural history and draws attention to the high-points of book illumination that are an inseparable part of our subject. Every manuscript is unique. Our aim should be to recognise that uniqueness, to consider the manuscript as a historical monument and to be sensitive to its beauty, especially when its script and illumination are of a high aesthetic order.

Our account of the history of writing ends around the year 1500. The later history of handwriting from its medieval roots up to modern times lies beyond the scope of this book. That is a chapter in modern palaeography that still remains to be written.

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3 Cencetti, *Lineamenti*, 19, recalls the understanding of the history of letter-forms which is already set out in Wattenbach's account of the stages in the development of letters, W. Wattenbach, *Anleitung zur lateinischen Palaeographie* (Leipzig 1886).


5 Ch. Sumaran, Preface to *Codicologia I* [Litterae textuales] (Amsterdam 1957) 9 f.