

# Palaeography

DIGITAL HUMANITIES FOR MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES

## 4. Uncial, semiuncial, carolingian minuscule

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<https://www.mihaimaga.ro/dh/>

1 Evolution

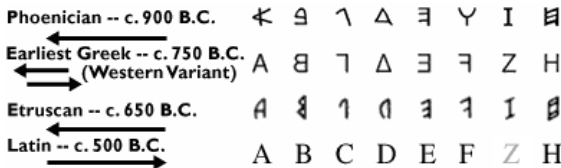
2 Characteristics

3 Abbreviations

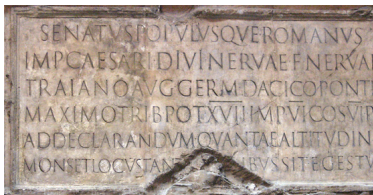
4 Example

 Homework

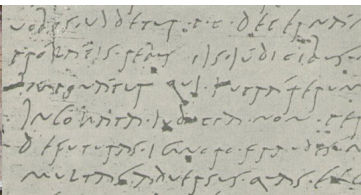
The Latin alphabet originates in the Etruscan alphabet, which in turn originates in the western variant of the Greek alphabet.



Initially there was a single set of characters (capitals), which began to differentiate by support and author of writing (writing hands).



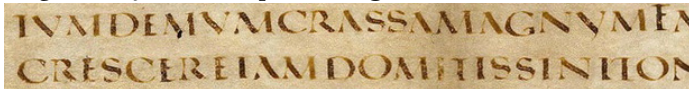
Trajan's Column (2<sup>nd</sup> c.)



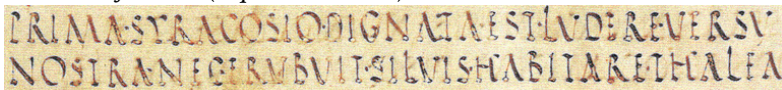
Papyrus with Senate discourses (1<sup>st</sup> c.)

Gradually, the letter shapes transformed to accommodate the writing needs.

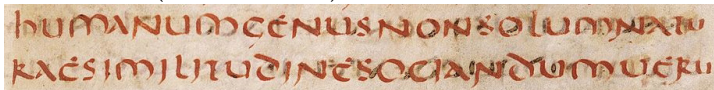
- elegant majuscule (*capitalis elegans*) 1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> c.



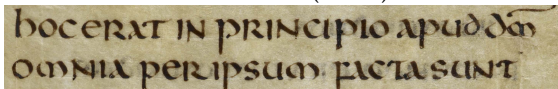
- rustic majuscule (*capitalis rustica*) 1<sup>st</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> c.



- uncial letter (*littera uncialis*) 3<sup>rd</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> c.

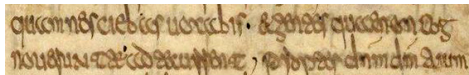


- semi-uncial letter 5<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> (–10<sup>th</sup>) c.

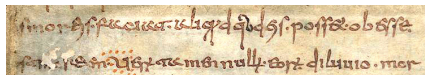


Starting from the 7<sup>th</sup> c. forms of cursive writing appear in different areas of Western Europe (national hands).

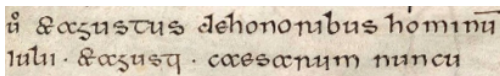
- merovingian cursive  
(Luxeuil)



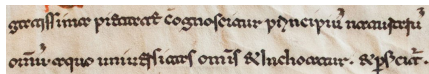
- visigothic cursive



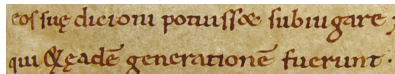
- insular (irish)  
cursive



- italian pre-caroline  
(beneventan and  
franco-lombardic) cursive

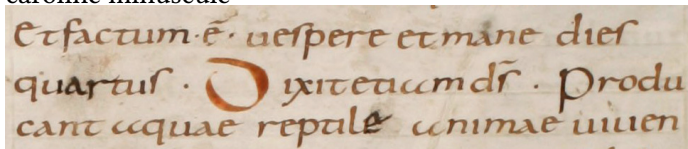


- german pre-caroline  
cursive



Starting from the 8<sup>th</sup> c., following the reform initiated by Charlemagne, a new writing is developed, intended to be easier to read and uniform in the Holy Roman Empire.

■ caroline minuscule

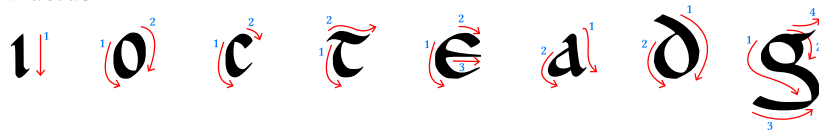


Some national hands continue to be used in some territories even after the caroline reform. Simultaneously, the uncial or the roman capitals start to be reused to differentiate the initials.

- rounded lines
- discrete hooks
- uniform letter widths

α δ ρ ο τ  
ι λ ρ α  
Δ ι ρ η ο

## Ductus



Some letters have a new shape in minuscule cursive writing:

f/s s r r a/a a g/z g d/d d l l τ t e/e e

Abbreviations are less frequent and have multiple forms:

- sigla inherited from the Romans

**&** (et)    **Ꝣ** (cum/con-)

- usage of the tilde for nasalization and contraction

**hominũ** (hominum)    **om̃s** (omnis)

- *nomina sacra*

**ih̃c** (Ihesus)    **x̃pc** (Christus)    **ḡs** (Deus)    **sp̃s** (Spiritus)

Gradually abbreviations appear from the common ones (see *Course 3*)

- common abbreviation signs

**p** (per)    **q** (quod)    **ē** (est)    **q̄** (-que)    **ę** -ae-    **9** -us

- irish abbreviations

**.n.** (enim)    **.i.** (id est)    **.f./s.** (scilicet)





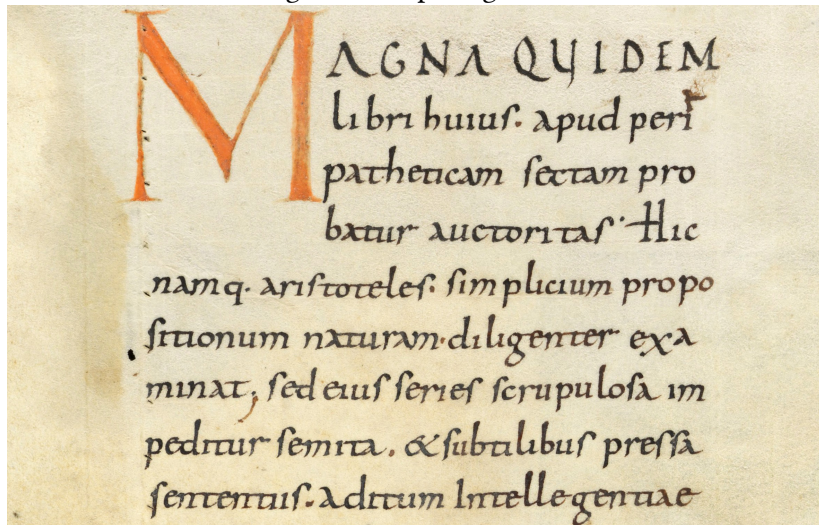
461ra

461ra

461r

9 / 10

Transcribe the following manuscript fragment:



St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 820, p. 62 (second half of 9<sup>th</sup> c.)

BOETHIUS. *In Perihermeneias Aristotelis*