

Robert Granjon, letter-cutter;
1513–1590: an oeuvre-catalogue

Hendrik D. L. Vervliet

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Introduction

When the artist involved is a Granjon, it is difficult to know which to admire most, the ingenuity of the whole system, or the abstract beauty of the single parts.
– Daniel Hertz, *Pierre Attaignant*, 1969, 48

THE PRESENT WORK aims to bring together what is known today about the sixteenth-century letter-cutter Robert Granjon (1513–1590). Like his better-known contemporary Claude Garamont he may be considered as one of the best and most influential type designers of the pre-industrial period of typography.

Unlike Garamont, a steadfast Paris resident, Granjon was a freelance craftsman, wandering all over Europe in search of new markets, and earning his livelihood in Paris, Lyons, Antwerp, Rome. He did not own a typefoundry nor did he trade in cast type, but (quite exceptionally in the history of pre-industrial printing) sold sets of matrices of his founts all over Europe.

Granjon's most durable contributions to the history of typographical design are his Italics, which are considered as the best in the class of typefaces known as old-face Italics. Next to his Italics, one may refer to his flowers (a source for many present revivals), to his Civilités (a new rendering of the old French Bastarda letter), and to his Slavic and Oriental founts, whose elegance equals the calligraphy of the best manuscripts.

Primarily intended as a tool, the present work offers a synthesis of what is known about Granjon, mostly in dispersed sources and publications. Aspiring to completeness and reliability of the attributions, this survey of the life and works of a sixteenth-century letter-cutter, aims to be of interest to book or type historians, and bibliographers.

The attributions are based on following criteria (in order of certainty):

- a. Granjon's type-specimens;
- b. archival references;
- c. punches, matrices or type conserved;
- d. types used by Granjon in his own publications;
- e. types in the publications of Granjon's main customers;
- f. wide distribution of the founts;
- g. first appearances coinciding with Granjon's whereabouts;
- h. stylistic arguments.

Methodology

The founts and flowers that follow are presented in the chronological order of their first occurrence, either globally, or alphabetically by letter family. The latter comprises:

- a. Arabic founts
- b. Armenian founts
- c. Civilité founts
- d. Cyrillic fount
- e. Flowers
- f. Greek founts
- g. Hebrew founts
- h. Italic founts
- i. Music founts
- j. Phonetic fount
- k. Roman founts
- l. Script initials
- m. Syriac founts
- p. Varia

An entry typically consists of following three elements: date; name and size of the fount or flower; recent references. The name field comprises the traditional nomenclature and, between brackets, the acronym of the letter family and the measure of twenty lines of unleaded text.¹

The facsimile reproductions are at actual size. Some too-large formats have had to be reduced as noted in the caption.

The reproductions from recent castings in surviving matrices have been purged of later additions or foul sorts as far I am aware. But there is no assurance that they show all variant sorts. The same caveat applies to the reconstructed alphabets.

¹ The measure is 20-lines in millimetres, except for the titlings, Hebrews, musics, initials that show the type or stave height and for the flowers, which show the width.

Chapter 1. Granjon's biography

ON 10 SEPTEMBER 1579 in an audience with Pope Gregory XIII, Robert Granjon was introduced as an *intagliatore di caratteri singularissimo* ['most excellent type-cutter']. A few years later, in his Arabic specimen of 1583, he himself used the terms *typographus et characterum incisor* ['typographer and letter-cutter'].

But such qualifications were rarely used. In most of his imprints, he resorted to terms such as *Ex officina*, *Apud*, *De l'imprimerie de*, sometime adding *typis propriis*, while in contemporary archives he is mostly described with terms such as 'libraire', 'marchant libraire', 'imprimeur', 'imprimeur en livres' or 'maitre imprimeur'.

Granjon's abilities as type designer and letter-cutter were first explicitly publicized in the privileges and prefaces of his *Civilité* publications of 1557–8, about fifteen years after his entry into the profession. Thus the royal privilege prefixed to his 1558 edition of Galtherus' *Alexandreidos libri decem* protects Granjon's new 'invention', which is the standard Latin term for design. It forbids others to copy or counterfeit the new typeface (See below, pp. 26–7).

From the mid-1560's onwards he seems to have stressed his qualifications as a type-cutter. Thus he is termed 'Maistre

Chapter 2. Granjon's publications

- Horae in laudem beatissimae virginis Mariae*, Paris, 'Apud Robertum GranJon, in clauso Brunello, ad insigne magnorum iuncorum, supposito his insigni Seb. Gryph.', 1546; BP16: 112489; UB Augsburg, 02/XIII.10.8.58. **Paris: 1546**
- Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ. *Novum Testamentum Graecè & Latinè*, Paris, J. Du Puys, M. Fezandat, J. & D. de Marnef and 'Apud Robertum GranJon, in taberna Gryphiana'; BP16: 113405; Baudrier, 2: 49–50; Delaveau-Hillard, 2002, no. 3809. **1549**
- Cardano, G., *Hieronymi Cardani medici Mediolanensis, de subtilitate libri XXI*, Paris, 'Ex officina Michaëlis Fezandat, & Roberti GranJon, in monte D. Hilarii sub Iuncis', 1550; BP16: 113873; Gallica. **1550**
- Habert, F., *Les epistres heroïdes, tressalvtaïres, pour servir d'exemple a toute ame fidele composées par F. Habert*, Paris, 'De l'Imprimerie de Michel Fezandat, & Robert GranJon, au mont S. Hylaïre, à l'Enseigne des Grandz Ions', 1550; BP16: 114026; Gallica. **1551**
- Bartelon, P., *Epitome in prosodiam, ex varijs scriptoribus compendiosè collecta: Pantaleonte Bartelonaëo Raverino authore*, Paris, 'Ex officina Michaëlis Fezandat, & Roberti GranJon, sub Iuncis', 1551; Bavarian State Library Munich: 821161 L.lat. 81.
- Boccacio, F., *L'histoire de Titus et Gisippus et autres petiz oeuvres de Beroalde latin. Interpretés en rime françoise, par François Habert*, Paris, 'De l'imprimerie de Michel Fezandat, & Robert GranJon, a l'Enseigne des Grans Ions', 1551; USTC 27358; Gallica.

Chapter 3. Granjon's types: a chronology

1542 Calvin in Geneva, 1541–64
Granjon's Long Primer Roman [R 65]

1543 Copernicus' *De revolutionibus*; Vesalius' *De fabrica*; Benvenuto Cellini
in Paris, *La Saliera*
Granjon's English-sized Italic^A [It 98]
Granjon's Roman titling on Two-line Brevier [R 3.9]
Granjon's flower on Great Primer^A [FLS 80.1]

1544 †Clément Marot
Granjon's Pica Roman^A [R 82]
Granjon's flower on Nonpareil^A [FLS 4.4]
Granjon's flower on English^A [FLS 4.7]
Granjon's flower on English^B [FLS 8.7]

1545 *Council of Trent; Garamont publishing
Granjon's Long Primer Italic^A [It 67]
Granjon's 'François Gryphius' Long Primer Italic^{A2} [It 67]
Granjon's Two-line Pica Roman [R 150]
Granjon's flower on Brevier^A [FLS 3.6]
Takes apprentice type-caster: Hubert d'Armilliers
Settles in Taberna Gryphiana

1546 †Martin Luther; †Henry II of France; François Rabelais, *Tiers livre*;
Michelangelo designs St Peter's
Granjon's Long Primer Greek [Gk 68]

Chapter 4. Granjon's types classified by date¹

- 1542, Granjon's Long Primer Roman [R 65]: *Palaeotypography*, 1: 217; *Conspectus*, no. 40
- 1543, Granjon's English-sized Italic^{A1} [It 98]: Le Bé, 1618, 18; *Palaeotypography*, 2: 311, 325, 330–1; *Conspectus*, no. 278–9
- 1543, Granjon's Roman titling on Two-line Brevier [R 3.9]: *Palaeotypography*, 1: 222; *Conspectus*, no. 162
- 1543, Granjon's flower on Great Primer^A [FLS 8.1]: *Flowers*, no. 55; attributable to Granjon as it also occurs at Volant's press (*Le livre de pasetemps*, Lyons, 1560; FVB 48480)
- 1544, Granjon's Pica Roman^A [R 82]: *Palaeotypography*, 1: 218; *Conspectus*, no. 70
- 1544, Granjon's flower on Nonpareil^A [FLS 4.4]: *Flowers*, no. 1
- 1544, Granjon's flower on English^A [FLS 4.7]: *Vine Leaf*, no. 162; *Flowers*, no. 2
- 1544, Granjon's flower on English^B [FLS 8.7]: *Flowers*, no. 3
- 1545, Granjon's Long Primer Italic^A [It 67]: Le Bé, 1618, 20; *Palaeotypography*, 2: 314, 326–7, no. 2; *Conspectus*, no. 238
- 1545, Granjon's 'François Gryphius' Long Primer Italic^{A2} [It 67]: *Palaeotypography*, 2: 361, no. 28; *Conspectus*, no. 239
- 1545, Granjon's Two-line Pica Roman [R 150]: *Palaeotypography*, 1: 219, no. 3; *Conspectus*, no. 134

¹ The [measures] show a 20-lines measure, except for the titlings, Hebrews, musics, initials that show the type or stave height and for the flowers, which show the width.