

## Punctuation and typographic variation in 18th century printings: on the vanishing of the virgule

Donnerstag,  
05.03.2020  
09:00–09:30  
VMPS 2098/2194

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In German printings of the early 18th century, the shift from the hitherto dominant sentence-dividing punctuation mark, the virgule, to the comma, takes place astonishingly rapidly. It is also astonishing that until recently, research has barely devoted itself to this phenomenon, even though it is at least a turning point in the history of the highest-frequency punctuation mark in German writing (pleasing exceptions cf. references).

On the basis of different types of text and usage domains, the talk examines to what extent the transition from the use of the virgule to the comma is carried out in a phase-specific manner. Previous samples have indicated the influence of the font choice on the choice of punctuation: Printers or typesetters in the early 18th century set the comma especially in the environment of the Antiqua script, which is used to graphically label non-native words or syntagms. Is this a kind of „gateway“ to the comma?

By means of a corpus analysis in micro-diachronic sections, the status of the virgule / comma variation will be associated with the typographic variation in terms of the use of Latin Antiqua type and the German type.

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