Medieval England

An Encyclopedia

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Palatinate

The term "palatinate" designates select regions ruled by feudal magnates who owed allegiance to the king. Palatinates had Frankish origins; in Merovingian and Carolingian France the comites palatinitus or comites palatii was an important court official who carried out legal and judicial duties on behalf of the ruler. After the collapse of Carolingian central authority the comites palatii emerged as a semiautonomous local ruler; by the 11th century his power diminished as the central government resumed its power. In 12th-century Germany, however, counts palatine had extended local power, best exemplified by the count palatine of the Rhine.

William I introduced the concept of palatinates to England; Orderic Vitalis refers to Odo of Bayeux as "consul palatinus." From that point until the 13th century its development remains obscure. Palatinates, whether called "liberties" or "franchises," were at first without a clear legal definition. Nevertheless, they were understood for what they were; areas of considerable distance from the seat of government, in which royal powers were enjoyed by powerful—but not independent—local lords. By 1300 the three greatest palatinates were Chester, Durham, and Lancaster. With the exception of Lancaster power in these regions included the power to raise armies, levvy taxes, and exercise justice.

The counties palatine of Chester and Durham had separate histories. Cheshire was an earldom by William I in 1071 as a northern buffer state against Mercian rebelliousness. In 1237 Henry III attached it to the crown. After that date (specifically in 1293, when a quo warranto proceeding—an investigation into legal rights to specific powers—uses "palatine" in referring to Chester), it had the advantage of palatine privileges: earls of Chester presided over county courts; royal writs "did not run"; taxes levied by parliament did not apply; feudal military levies exempted Cheshire men. Cheshire was taken under direct crown control in 1377, and Richard II, who recruited his infamous Cheshire bodyguard there, accorded it special status by raising it to the rank of a principality (in 1397). Richard's deposition in 1399 returned Chester to its palatine status, but its privileges remained through the 15th century.

Even before the 1293 quo warranto proceedings acknowledged its select status, Durham enjoyed palatine privileges. Based ultimately on the ancient immunity of St. Cuthbert, successive bishops of Durham were granted charters of liberty from post-Conquest kings. Like Cheshire the liberty of Durham had most of the benefits of palatine status, including a county charter of liberties issued in 1303. Indeed Durham enjoyed even wider franchial rights than Cheshire, as it could claim ecclesiastical immunities atop lay liberties. These extensive rights, however, were not exhaustive. Henry II made it clear that royal justice would obtain in "the land of the blessed Cuthbert," and from time to time the bishop's autonomy was curtailed by royal seizures of some of its lands.

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Bibliography


See also Lancaster, Duchy of; Marches

Paleography and Codicology

Anglo-Saxon

Although the earliest Anglo-Saxons were familiar with writing in runes and some of them may have been aware of the use of other forms of writing from contact with romanized peoples, it was not until their conversion to Christianity that they themselves became literate in the Latin alphabet. Christian missionaries, from Ireland to the north and west of England and from Rome to the east and south, brought both a new religion and an emphasis on the written word. Although most of these writings were in Latin and ecclesiastical in nature, certain texts, such as the Anglo-Saxon laws, were written down in the vernacular from the earliest days of the conversion, requiring some adaptation of the sound values of some letters in the Latin alphabet to suit OE.

Latin texts written in 7th- and 8th-century England were usually written in local interpretations of the formal bookscripts used in late Roman ecclesiastical manuscripts. The earliest Anglo-Saxon Gospel books, Bibles, and diplomas were written in majuscule or semimajuscule scripts (Uncials or Half-uncials). The latter are found in books produced in churches associated with the Irish mission and the former in those with closer links to Rome. From the 8th century books and documents were increasingly written in minuscule scripts, those characterized by the use of ascenders and descenders. The earliest varieties are described as forms of "Insular Minuscule"—that is, of a type produced within the British Isles but not specific to any one of the constituent regions. In "Phase I" of this period, before ca. 700, the minuscule script is cursive and has many ligatures (links between neighboring letters); in "Phase II," from ca. 700 to the first half of the 9th century, the script exists in a hierarchy of grades of formality (hybrid, set, cursive, and current) that could be adapted to a variety of texts.

By the late 9th century it is possible to distinguish an English style (Pointed Anglo-Saxon Minuscule) distinct from Irish or Welsh types of script; this script still allows a number of ligatures (particularly that of high e with a following letter) and the "underslung" form of i, and has a pointed top to a. This was succeeded during the 10th century by Square Anglo-
Saxon Minuscule, a reformed script originating in southern England, in which ligatures and the "undertaker" stroke were generally avoided, and in which the module of a, n, s, and u is square. Although this script continued in use at some writing centers for both Latin and English texts for most of the century, in those monasteries that were reconstituted by the mid-10th-century Benedictine Reform it was usually retained only for English; in Latin texts its place was taken by Caroline Minuscule. In bilingual texts both scripts were used, one for each language, and in these one can most plainly see the contrasting forms of the letters a, d, f, g, h, r, and s.

Caroline Minuscule was a script that had been developed ca. 800 at the court of Charlemagne and had soon spread widely on the Continent but had not hitherto been generally used in England. Its greater legibility as compared with earlier scripts was helped by the scarcity of ligatures and the reduced number of letters having descenders, there being none on f, s, or high i. In England two varieties may be discerned—Style I in manuscripts written at monasteries associated with Bishop Æthelwold, such as the Old and New Minsters, Winchester, and Abingdon Abbey; Style II in those, such as Canterbury and Glastonbury, associated with Archbishop Dunstan. By the mid-11th century the size of letters in English Caroline Minuscule is generally larger than in the contemporary Norman variety. There is also a difference in the treatment of feet on minims, the short vertical strokes used in such letters as i, n, m, and u; scribes trained in England tended to make the feet horizontal, while those trained in Normandy formed them at an angle of 45 degrees.

The script used for uncorrected texts developed fromSquare to Round Anglo-Saxon Minuscule in the early 11th century. In this, as in the preceding Insular, Pointed Anglo-Saxon, and Square Anglo-Saxon Minuscule scripts, when OE texts were written there occur the letters æ (æ), thorn (þ), eth (ð), and wynn (ƿ), the 7-shaped abbreviation for ang, the abbreviation for þæt, but few other abbreviations.

A study of script can sometimes provide evidence for the origin of a particular manuscript or at least lead to the identification of a group of manuscripts or documents written by the same scribe. Where one of these can be precisely dated from its content, such dating can then give an approximate date to the others. Codicology, the study of the physical features of a manuscript book, may also give significant information relative to its precise origin but usually reveals facts only about its later history. Differences in the character of the parchment (usually calf- or sheepskin) on which the text was written may indicate that it was imported from the Continent rather than produced in Britain—early insular types being thicker and more suede-like and having less contrast between hair and flesh sides. Similarly the method of prickering the parchment sheets to guide the page rulings in each quire of a book (the gatherings of leaves folded and sewn together within a book) may reflect the book’s early insular origin. In Britain before ca. 900 such quires were pricked after folding rather than before and therefore show pricks in both margins of each page rather than in only the outer one.

Different styles of decoration, the range of colored inks used in a book, the number and arrangement of sheets used to make its quires, and the manner in which quires are marked for the binder, as well as the nature of any original binding itself, may each relate to a particular place or region of production and should be carefully recorded. Additional features, such as glosses, marginalia, flyleaves, later bindings, marks of ownership or sale, and library marks, can also tell of the later use and location of a manuscript before it reached its present home. All such external features of manuscripts are relevant to our knowledge of the original patronage, the intended audience, and the continued use of early-medieval texts into the modern period.

**Post-Conquest**

After the Norman Conquest scribes did not suddenly cease copying OE texts. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was still being kept at Peterborough in the mid-12th century, while copies of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*, saints’ lives, the West Saxon Gospels, and Bede’s Death Song were being made elsewhere in the late 12th or early 13th centuries. However, by 1220, it is clear from errors of transcription that scribes had difficulty comprehending the language they were copying, and this inspired a monk at Worcester to provide glosses (usually in Latin but occasionally in early ME) to 23 Anglo-Saxon manuscripts (Ker, 1985: 67–69).

Copies of OE texts were only a small fraction of the total output of book production in 12th-century England. As the century progressed, the demand for books grew rapidly. Cathedral and monastic libraries were anxious to build up their holdings and sought in particular to acquire the works of the Fathers of the Church (Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory, Jerome). Students at the emerging universities required copies of their set texts and commentaries on them. In the 13th century the new orders of friars needed books. Laypeople who read for profit and pleasure also began to desire books (Parkes, 1991).

The increasing demand for books could not be met by monastic scriptoria. Even for a monastery’s own needs it soon became necessary to employ outside scribes to help in the task of copying; according to the late-12th-century chronicler of Abingdon Abbot Faricius (1100–17) employed six *scriptores* to copy patristic manuscripts, while the copying of service books was reserved for the monks (the *claustrales*). At Cirencester, ca. 1150, Ralph Pulleham, *scriptor*, was hired to assist canon Alexander produce a copy of Bede. Professional scribes who were paid for copying supplied the new markets created by the secularization of learning and advances in lay literacy. By the mid-13th century a book trade thrived in the university towns, where both new and secondhand copies of texts could be bought by scholars (Parkes, 1991), while in London the trade was firmly established near St. Paul’s Cathedral by the end of the 14th century (Christianson, 1989).

Although one speaks of the "book trade," this does not necessarily mean that scribes were paid to work in an organized bookshop on a regular footing. John Lutton of Oxford, who copied two manuscripts of Higden’s *Polychronicon*, one for Hyde Abbey, Winchester, and the other for Bath Priory, is
recorded in 1410 both as a scribe and a brewer (Doyle, 1990: 18). In London the poet Thomas Hoccleve, clerk of the privy-seal office, was one of five early-15th-century scribes who worked independently to produce a manuscript of Gower’s Confessio Amantis (Cambridge, Trinity College R.3.2); he must have been “moonlighting” to eke out his income. The mid-14th-century scribe of the Harley Lyrics (BL Harley 2253), the Anglo-Norman romance Fouke Fitzwarin (BL Royal 12.C.xii), and of at least 40 documents conveying property for burgesses, craftsmen, clerics, and widows in the Ludlow area may have been the parish clerk.

Scribes like those of the Trinity Gower were probably employed by an entrepreneur who undertook financial responsibility for arranging the copying of a work and who accepted commissions from the book-buying public (Doyle and Parkes, 1978). Hoccleve’s co-workers included one scribe who, since he also copied six other copies of the Confessio Amantis, two copies of the Canterbury Tales, a copy of Piers Plowman, and part of Troieus De proprietatibus rerum, seems to have been a full-time specialist in vernacular book production. A second scribe copied both the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales (National Library of Wales Peniarth 392; San Marino, Huntington Library 29 C 9). On the other hand, scrivens could also be hired by a patron, as was William Eabhesham by Sir John Paston to copy a “Grete Boke” (BL Lansdowne 285).

Eabhesham’s bill for the “Grete Boke” gives some idea of the costs incurred in producing a relatively plain manuscript in the late 15th century. For copying and rubricating (adding headings and other features in red ink) he charged Sir John 63s. 8d. Earlier accounts itemizing the costs of parchment, copying, decoration, and binding are not noted on the flyleaves of books given by William Dyngley, bursar, to Peterhouse, Cambridge (MSS 88, 110, 114, 142, 154, 193). Little was spent on rubricating (only 6d. to 12d. a volume) as opposed to copying these books for the library (from 16d. to 20d. a quire). By contrast a two-volume missal commissioned in 1382–84 by Nicholas Lydington, abbot of Westminster, containing over 50 historiated initials and miniatures, had cost £5 for copying but £22 3s. 4d. for illumination. Because of such costs relatively few ME books had pictures: only six copies of the Canterbury Tales were illustrated (Parkes and Beadle, 1980: 3:58 n.72), including the Ellesmere Manuscript, which has portraits of each pilgrim who tells a story. The copy of Troilus and Criseyde found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 61, was intended to be illustrated with about 90 pictures, but only the frontispiece was executed (Parkes and Salter, 1978).

Some people copied their own books, thereby saving money: Robert Thornton, a frugal Yorkshire gentleman, copied two large compilations of religious texts, medical tracts, and romances (Lincoln Cathedral 91; BL Add. 31042), and sixteen-year-old Thomas Spirleyn shared with his father, Geoffrey (a burgess of Norwich), the copying of the Canterbury Tales (Glasgow University Library Hunterian U.1.11).

Books were written in one of three basic kinds of script depending on the type of book: 1) Textura, also called Gothic Bookhand or Textualis (Brown, 1990: 80–89), an elaborate, angular “display” script used especially for psalters, liturgical books, and books of hours. A smaller version with drastically modified letter forms was used for academic books. 2) Anglica, a cursive script introduced into books toward the end of the 13th century, which was more familiar to readers who were accustomed to read documents (Parkes, 1979: xiv–xvi and pls. 1–3). Cheap books of vernacular prose and verse were produced in this script throughout the 14th and 15th centuries. A more calligraphic variety of the script, Anglica Formata, was used in more expensive manuscripts containing works like the Canterbury Tales and Confessio Amantis (the Ellesmere and Hengwrt manuscripts and the Trinity Gower). A third variety was Bastard Anglica (Parkes, 1979: pls. 7–8), used in deluxe books. This was a mixture of the cursive hand of documents and the Textura script of the most expensive books or between a “base” and a “noble” hand, hence described as “Bastard.” 3) Secretary, a cursive script imported from France at the end of the 14th century (Parkes, 1979: pls. 11–13); it rapidly became popular, completely supersedes Anglica by the 16th century. The upmarket variety of this script, Bastard Secretary, developed from a mixture of Secretary and Textura (Parkes, 1979: pls. 14–15). Throughout the 15th century, however, books were often produced by scribes unconcerned with calligraphy who wrote mixed hands with letter forms appropriate to Anglica and Secretary appearing together in their individual repertoires.

In most surviving manuscripts text was copied across quire boundaries, the quire being a gathering of conjoint leaves (often eight) secured one within the other by sewing through the middle of the center bifolium. Many manuscripts, however, consist of separate groups of quires where one group or “booklet” originated as an independent unit from another group and included self-contained texts. Collecting a number of such booklets together was the cheapest and easiest way to build up a private library.

Because many medieval books contain “libraries” of texts rather than a single item it is often possible to discern from the tastes reflected in the choice of contents the class of reader for whom a particular manuscript was intended. The mid-14th-century Auchinleck Manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates 19.2.1) is a compilation of ME religious and secular texts, perhaps produced for a wealthy London merchant who wished to emulate the lettered chivalry in his choice of reading. Like the French books of romances that the latter would have been reading the Auchinleck Manuscript contains illustrated copies of “household romances” (Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Hampton) and histories (Richard Coeur de Lyon). The massive Vernon Manuscript (Bodl. Eng. poet. a.1) contains almost every item of religious and devotional prose and verse available at the time it was produced (ca. 1400), perhaps for a community of women (Doyle, 1987). The title “sowlehele” at the head of its table of contents emphasizes its function as a spiritual encyclopedia. A plain unillustrated volume containing texts from the Primer, saints’ lives, and popular and pious romances (CUL Ff.2.38J) seems intended for the edification of a devout bourgeois family of the late 15th century. The ownership of a volume (when it can
be established) can provide even more specific information about the reception of a work. Thus, from the number of anthologies of courtly verse owned by 15th-century knightly families, it clearly was fashionable among them to read Chaucer's and Lydgate's minor verse (Bodley 638 facsimile, p. xxxv).

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Bibliography

PRIMARY
Scripts

Manuscript Facsimiles

SECONDARY
Anglo-Saxon

Middle English

See also Books; Chaucer; Friars; Harleian Lyrics; Hoccleve; Literacy; Manuscripts of Polyphonic Music; Notation of Plain-song; Notation of Polyphonic Music; Patronage, Literary; Textual Criticism; Universities; Wycliffite Texts

Parish Church Architecture
The division of England into parishes was a long and complex process, beginning in the later Anglo-Saxon period and continuing into the 12th century. In the Anglo-Saxon period churches with multiple clergy, known as minsters, were the mother churches of areas much larger than the later medieval parishes. The foundation of other churches in the minster's peruchia, whether by local thegn, larger monasteries, or even by the clergy of the minster itself, led to the breakdown of the minsters' authority and their eventual relegation to parish-church status themselves, although they sometimes retained special privileges in an area, a higher status often reflected in their post-Conquest architecture, particularly in their possession of cruciform plans.

There appears to have been a "great rebuilding" or building of small local churches, whatever their precise status, in stone during the century ca. 1050–1150. The vast majority of these buildings appear to have been simple structures of two parts, the larger a general assembly area for the congregation—the nave—and the other, at the east, a sanctuary for the altar. The latter space might be apsidal but was more commonly square, though usually narrower than the western compartment. The arch separating the two areas might be decorated with carved capitals or rudimentary arch moldings, and the same might be true of the doorway(s) into the nave, which was