Palaeography is the scientific study of old writing, of the history and evolution of its techniques and forms. It is especially concerned with the forms of script used in medieval MSS and their reading and interpretation. The word "palaeography" was coined from the Greek *palaiós* 'old' and *-graphía* 'writing, script' by the Benedictine monk Bernard de Montfaucon, who in 1708 published a book on Greek scripts entitled *Palaeographia Graeca sive De Ortu et Progressu Literarum*. In practice, however, palaeographic studies had already been begun by his confrere Jean Mabillon, whose pioneering work *De re diplomatica libri VI* appeared in 1681. Whereas epigraphy deals mainly with texts written on lasting material like stone, palaeography is concerned with texts on paper, parchment, papyrus, linen, and wax. These can be written with a reed or straw pen (Latin *harundo* or *calamus*), a brush, quill (Latin *penna* 'feather'), or stylus (Latin *stilus* or *graphium*) of metal or bone. They can be written either in formal book script for literature or in cursive everyday script for official or private purposes.

Palaeography is an important auxiliary science for philology and history. The palaeographer's main tasks are interpreting texts, determining the date of MSS, and identifying and differentiating scripts. Palaeographic analysis of a script examines the appearance of the letters, abbreviations, the slant of writing, the movement of the pen, the size of the letters, the penstrokes, the nature of the writing material, and the nature of the text. Medieval palaeography overlaps or has points of contact with other disciplines; besides epigraphy, these include diplomatics (from which it developed), sphragistics (seals), papyrology, and numismatics.

In the Middle Ages, the most important writing material was parchment, the dressed skin of calves (vellum), goats, or sheep. Writing was done with quill pens, normally made from goose or swan feathers. There were also many different kinds of ink; the normal color was black.

The most usual form of parchment book is the codex, a book comprising one or more folded sheets. In the 14th century, it became customary to label or foliate the pages of books with letters and roman numerals, for example Ai, Aii, up to Axvi, followed by Bi, Bii, and so on. Continuous pagination did not become standard practice until early modern times. In the right bottom corner, each page normally had a *custos*, or catchword, the first letter or syllable of the word beginning the next page; this sign made it easier to check that the pages were bound in the correct order. Book formats were classified as folio, quarto (4to), octavo (8vo), duodecimo (12mo), sextodecimo (16mo), according to whether the sheet was folded to make two, four, eight, twelve, or sixteen leaves. The codex was usually bound in wooden boards covered with leather and often fitted with a clasp. Titles and headings were written, often by special rubricators, in red ink after the MS was finished.

MSS, especially liturgical ones, could also be embellished with miniatures in gold, silver, and other colors. Illuminations included the adornment of initials, which were sometimes used to frame little pictures, and the creation of larger illustrations. An early example of Nordic book-painting is the illuminated gospel harmony known as *Dalbyboken* (DKB, GkS 1325 4to) from around 1050. Icelandic book-painting, which flourished in the 13th and 14th centuries, is conservative in character but also shows originality. There are also exquisite illustrations from the 15th and 16th centuries. Primarily law codices and religious books were illustrated. From Norway and Sweden, there are examples of illuminated law codices from the 14th century; the mid-15th-century *Magnus Erikssons landslag* (SKB B 172) has great artistic and cultural interest.

Paper, a Chinese invention that came to the West via the Arabs and Spain, gradually replaced parchment as a writing material. Paper came into use in Spain and Italy in the 12th and 13th centuries, reaching Scandinavia in the 14th. A feature of European paper is the watermark, a design or pattern visible when held up to the light. Watermarks are important dating aids.

In order to save work and parchment, Roman script used abbreviations and ligatures. The following abbreviation methods came into general use throughout western Europe: (1) suspension, *i.e.*, omission of one or more letters at the end of a word, the abbreviation being marked by a point or colon or by a stroke over or under the word; (2) contraction, *i.e.*, omission of one or more letters in the middle of a word, the abbreviation being marked by a stroke over the word as in *ds̄* for *deus*; (3) superscript or interlinear letters (a kind of contraction), the omitted letter(s) being written above the word or between the lines; (4) special abbreviaton signs, known as Tironian notes, a system devised by Cicero's freedman Tiro, in which, for example, "depressed" ⁊ stood for *et* 'and,' ꝯ for *con* 'with'; a curved or zigzag line represented *er* or *re*, and a bar over a letter indicated the omission of a following nasal.

Vernacular medieval texts from Denmark and Sweden show a limited use of abbreviations. Those most commonly found are the nasal bar for *m* and *n*, the curved sign for *er* and *re*, "depressed" ⁊ for *ok* 'and,' and ꝫ for *-et(h)* (*thꝫ* = *thet[h]*). An interlinear open *a* is used for *ar*, *ra*, *er*, and *re*. Suspension is indicated by a point or colon, or by a stroke that was variously curving or wavy. The use of abbreviations decreases around the middle of the 16th century, the longest to survive being the nasal bar and the use of interlinear letters.

Medieval West Norse writing employs considerably more abbreviations in vernacular texts than does contemporary East Norse script. Latin abbreviations are used even for native words with the same meaning, for instance "depressed" ⁊ for *ok* 'and,' *n* (= *non*) for *eigi* 'not.' As in East Norse script, the nasal bar and interlinear letters occur. The abbreviation for *er* has many other meanings. Suspension was common. Scribes often wrote just the initial letter followed by a point or some other sign; the letter could also be written between two points, as in *.b.* for *biskup* 'bishop,' *.e.* for *eða* 'or.' Abbreviations became less common in Iceland and Norway in the 16th century.

Ligatures of two (or three) letters sharing a common feature, such as the central upright in NB (= *N[ota] B[ene]*), are much more frequent in West Norse than in East Norse texts. A ligature can stand for a single sound, such as *æ*, but the letters can also retain their individual values, as in ſk (*s* + *k*). Carolingian script, in contrast to Merovingian, restricted the use of ligatures, retaining virtually none except those for *st*, *ct*, and & (= *et*). These ligatures were adopted into Nordic writing at an early date.

All western European script goes back to Roman writing. The development of Roman script can be sketched as follows. An original archaic script of a majuscular type gradually evolved into a book script known as *scriptura capitalis*, usually divided into classical *capitalis rustica* (a form with tall, narrow letters; Fig. 147) and *capitalis quadrata* or *elegans* (with almost square letters, which survived until the 6th century A.D.; Fig 147). At an early stage, almost certainly before the 3rd century B.C., a cursive script evolved, and in the first half of the 3rd century A.D., this cursive formed the

basis for the first book script of minuscule type, known as the original or primitive minuscule. The typical book script of the early Middle Ages was uncial, with its rounded stems and lines. The letters *A, E, D, H, M, Q,* and *V* are particularly characteristic of uncial script (Fig. 147). Magnificent uncial MSS survive from the 4th to the 9th century. Around the year 400, scribes developed the contemporary everyday writing into yet another book script, half-uncial. A variety of national scripts (Beneventian in Italy, Merovingian in France, Visigothic in Spain, Insular in the British Isles; Fig. 147) gradually developed out of half-uncial and cursive script. From the time of Charlemagne until the end of the 12th century, the West (with the exception of the British Isles) was dominated by Caroline minuscule (Fig. 147), a development of the book script of late antiquity. This script, the prototype of our lower-case alphabet, is clear and legible, with each letter written separately. The short letters, as well as the ascenders and descenders, were all the same height, and abbreviations and ligatures were used sparingly. At the end of the 12th century, Caroline minuscule was reformed to a laterally compressed script with tall, narrow, angular, "broken" shapes; bowed letters like *d* and *p* were joined to the following round letter like *o*. From this Gothic book script was gradually developed *Fraktur*, the German blackletter type. German handwriting is a direct continuation of cursive Gothic script. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, there was a return to the clear Carolingian script. Humanistic book script (*antiqua*) became the model for our Roman type, while humanistic cursive evolved into our italic type.

Latin script came to Scandinavia along with Christianity. Denmark, like Sweden, mostly learned the art of writing from Germany. The following periods can be distinguished:

Caroline minuscule (ca. 1050–1250). The sources, in Latin, comprise MSS, books, and diplomas. Significant books include Denmark's oldest liturgical MS, the *Dalbyboken* mentioned above, and the 12th-century *Necrologium Lundense* (LUB, medeltidshs. no. 6 4to), with about eighty different hands, showing the development of writing over nearly a century; the numerous names have great interest to philologists and historians. Documentary script is more conservative than book script, having preserved older features going back to Merovingian script. It is not a true cursive. It is characterized by its long ascenders and descenders and the looping decoration of the minims and abbreviation signs. The oldest surviving diploma is from 1135.

Early Gothic (ca. 1250–1350). Latin sources include diplomas, chronicles, annals, necrologies, and town charters. The compilation *Kong Valdemars jordebog* has some brief passages in Danish; of particular value is the abundant place-name material. Abbreviations are frequent in these MSS. Danish sources include law texts, medical books, and religious literature. The oldest extant MS in Danish is *Skånske lov* (SKB B 74) from around 1250. These texts, like contemporary Swedish MSS, have few abbreviations. Documentary script differs from book script by becoming cursive: more letters are written continuously without lifting the pen.

Later Gothic (ca. 1350–1525). There are many Danish sources of various kinds: legal texts, diplomas, chronicles, medical works, and religious literature. True book script (Fig. 148) is found particularly in liturgical MSS. Up until 1450, the predominant script in books and diplomas is a semicursive form known as Gothic hybrid (*lettre bâtarde*) in which the different letters are written with broad penstrokes and only partly joined, and have elegant, rounded, sweeping lines (Fig. 148). True cursive script occurs both in books and in documents after 1450 (Fig. 148). During this period, Danish takes over from Latin and Low German as the language of diplomas. The oldest surviving vernacular diplomas from Denmark are from the 1370s. After the Reformation, Denmark was dominated by the neo-Gothic script developed in Germany, found in textual and cursive forms. This functioned as a national script, alongside Latin or humanistic script, mainly in names and for texts in Latin and Romance languages. Neo-Gothic script was used in Denmark and Norway until 1875.

The development of writing in Sweden was similar to that in Denmark. The oldest extant original Swedish diploma dates from 1165. A fragment of the older *Västgötalagen* (SKB B 193) from 1225–1250 shows the influence of Insular and West Norse writing. The oldest surviving book in Sweden, a complete text of the older *Västgötalagen* (SKB B 59), from around 1285, is written in Gothic minuscule. The later Middle Ages (*ca.* 1370–1526) are dominated by a Gothic hybrid script (Fig. 148). As in Denmark, neo-Gothic script achieved currency at the time of the Reformation and remained the national script until the early 19th century. The German letters *ä* and *ö* were introduced with the Reformation, and *å* was adopted in 1526; these innovations distinguished Swedish from Danish, which retained its medieval letter forms.

Iceland's writing has a twin origin: Caroline minuscule from the Continent and Insular from England (partly introduced via Norway). The oldest surviving texts in Icelandic, from the latter half of the 12th century, are written in Caroline minuscule adapted for Icelandic (Fig. 148); the script lacks Insular letters, with the exception of *þ* (thorn). However, judging by the *First Grammatical Treatise* (written in the 1130s) and Ari fróði's ("the learned") *Íslendingabók* (1120s), both of which are preserved only in later transcripts, Insular script appears to have been known in Iceland before 1150. From the Carolingian period (around 1150–1225), there are about twenty-five MSS in Icelandic. Only one MS is certainly older than this period: an Easter table (AM 732a VII 4to), written between 1121 and 1139. The table contains an almost complete alphabet (minuscules and capitals). From the Carolingian-Insular period (*ca.* 1225–1300), there are several MSS of various kinds in Icelandic, including one of the oldest known MSS, a fragment of *Egils saga* (AM 162 A ϑ fol.; Fig 148). The *Second Grammatical Treatise* (written *ca.* 1200, preserved in later MSS) enumerates almost the entire Latin alphabet as well as *ǫ, ę, ø, y,* and *þ*. During this period, there is a strong East Norse influence on Icelandic script. During the Gothic period (*ca.* 1300–1550), the Icelandic sources consist of a large number of MS books (including the *Codex Regius* of Snorri's *Prose Edda*) and numerous diplomas, the oldest of which dates from 1315. Diplomas in Iceland were written mostly in the native language, but in the 15th century there is sometimes a mixture of Icelandic, Danish, and Norwegian. Cursive script does not become common in diplomas until 1400; before this, the script used in diplomas and books was essentially the same. The Gothic hybrid never achieved any currency in Iceland. As in the rest of Scandinavia, neo-Gothic script was adopted at the Reformation for native Icelandic texts. Latin and French words, however, are written in Latin cursive script. In the mid-19th century, German script is wholly given up in favor of Latin. Distinctive features of medieval Icelandic scripts are the frequent use of abbreviations and ligatures, and the many functions of capital letters and accents. Capital letters are used for the following purposes: to emphasize words and names, such as sa-

DESPECTVS· TIBI· SVM·NEC·
DEVCALIONVACVVM
REMISIT EUM/ AD HERODEM
a a b c d e e d f f g h
a b c d e e f g h i l l m n o p q r s t
Hadriano summo papae patrique beato·
Rex carolus salue mando ualeque pater.

147. Line 1: rustic capital, 5th–6th century; line 2: square capital, 4th century; lines 3–4: uncial, 7th century; line 5: insular round, 8th century; line 6: insular pointed, 8th century; line 7: Caroline minuscule, 8th century. Reproduced from Lars Svensson, *Nordisk paleografi* (1974)

148. Lines 1–2: Caroline minuscule, Iceland. From *Reykjaholtsmáldagi*. Hand 1, the end of 12th century. Reykjavík. Line 3: Caroline-Insular minuscule, Norway. From *Jordebok från Munkelivs kloster*. *Ca*. 1200. KKB, codex 1347 4to (old collection). (Note insular *f, r, v*). Lines 4–5: Caroline-Insular minuscule, Iceland. From the fragment of *Egils saga*. Mid-13th century. AM 162 A. ϑ fol. (Note the numerous abbreviations.) Lines 6–10: Gothic minuscule, Sweden. From *MEL*. The latter part of the 14th century. LUB, medeltidsh. no 17, p. 83 verso. Lines 11–12: Gothic hybrid, Sweden (Vadstenakursiv). From *Vitae patrum*. The end of the 14th century. SKB A 110 (Codex Oxenstiernianus), 4to, p. 381. Line 13: Gothic Cursive, Norway. *Dipl. norv.* XXV, 19. 1484. Line 14: Gothic cursive, Denmark. From Korsør Kirkes Arkiv. DRA, 26/7 1490. Reproduced from Lars Svensson, *Nordisk paleografi* (1974)

cred names sometimes written with more than just the initial letter in capitals (*e.g.*, *MaRia*); to indicate the start of a new sentence or section; for calligraphic reasons, especially *R, N, S* (*e.g, utaN*); to indicate geminate consonants (*þaN*); for clarity; and as initials. Accents, usually acute, are used as a diacritic mark over *i* (not systematically); as a diaeresis over one or both vowels in hiatus; over little words (*e.g.*, *ér*); over vowels in stressed syllables; as rhythmic markers; to mark vowel quality; as a correction sign; over *y* instead of a dot; to mark long vowels; as a transposition mark; and as a hyphen at the end of a line. A specifically Icelandic feature is the writing of a dot over a consonant to mark length, a usage that survives, side by side with gemination, throughout the Middle Ages. Furthermore, it should be noted that medieval Latin in Iceland never achieved the dominant position that it enjoyed in so much of the rest of Europe. Most of the country's medieval literature is written in Icelandic.

In Norway, too, literature written in Latin has a subordinate position in the Middle Ages. From around 1200, Latin is used mainly, and to a decreasing extent, in diplomas and ecclesiastical documents. Other literature was written in the vernacular. The oldest surviving books, written in Carolingian-Insular script, date from the mid-12th century (Fig. 148). The oldest extant original diploma in Norwegian (with formulas adopted from English documentary language) dates from around 1210. Norwegian was long the documentary language, developed in Bergen and Niðaróss (Trondheim), after 1314 in Oslo. Swedish or Swedish-influenced language is encountered in Norwegian diplomas during the period when the two kingdoms were united (1319–1355). In the first half of the 15th century, a mixture of Swedish and Norwegian was written in the Brigettine monasteries. Pure Danish became customary in royal rescripts after 1450, and in episcopal letters from Niðaróss and Oslo after 1500. After the Reformation, Danish also became the language of literature and of the Church in Norway. Medieval Norwegian script is, like Icelandic, rich in abbreviations and ligatures. Capital letters and accents are also used in a similar way. In Norway, as in the rest of Scandinavia, neo-Gothic script came into use at the time of the Reformation. The change to Latin script occurred at the same time in Norway as in Denmark, in 1875.

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MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA

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David M. Wilson
British Museum

Garland Publishing, Inc.
New York & London 1993

ÁRNASTOFNUN

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Medieval Scandinavia: an encyclopedia/Phillip Pulsiano, editor;
Kirsten Wolf, co-editor; Paul Acker, associate editor, Donald K. Fry,
associate editor; advisers, Knut Helle . . . [et al.].
p. cm. — (Garland reference library of the humanities; vol. 934. Garland encyclopedias of the Middle Ages;
v. 1)
Includes index.
ISBN 0-8240-4787-7
1. Scandinavia–Civilization–encyclopedias. 2. Northmen–Encyclopedias.
I. Pulsiano, Phillip, 1955–. II. Wolf, Kirsten, 1959– . III. Series: Garland reference library of the humanities.
Garland encyclopedias of the Middle Ages; v. 1.

DL30. M43 1993
948'.02'03—dc20

92–19300
CIP

Printed on acid-free, 250-year-life paper
Manufactured in the United States of America