

DANA-REF

Dictionary of the Middle Ages

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INDEX

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Scholarship, legal

Scholarship, Byzantine classical (*cont.*)

- lexica, 11:52b-53b
 - meter, 11:52a-b, 52a
 - philosophy, 11:54b-55a
- Scholarship, legal. *See* Glossators; Law, schools of
- Scholastica, St., 2:169a
- rhymed office to, 10:370b
- Scholasticism, 11:55b-58b
- Aristotelian framework, 11:688a
- on *ars antiqua*, 1:543a-544a
- astrology and, 1:607b
- authority of Scriptures in, 11:56b
- ban on interest taking and, 12:337a
- biblical exegesis and, 2:213a-b
- on blasphemy, 2:271b
- in canon law, 11:57b-58a
- church criticism of magic practices and, 8:28a-b
- commentary format, 11:57a
- concordia discordantium* as goal, 11:56a
- departures from Aristotelian authority, 11:56b
- derivation of term, 11:55b-56a
- disputation, 10:241a
- ecclesiastical authorities, 4:375b
- effect on 13th-century literature, 4:448b
- first Scholastic treatises, 12:21a
- French prose and, 5:255b-256a
- on God's omnipotence, 8:36a
- Ibn Sīnā's influence on, 11:306b
- impact of university on, 11:57a-b
- innovation and, 1:468a
- intellectual life in Latin church and, 3:357b-358a
- Jewish translators and, 12:134b
- Meister Eckhart and, 4:381b, 9:32b
- musical theory, 7:39a
- Neoplatonism and, 9:100b-101a, 700a
- origins, 9:557a
- Anselm of Canterbury, 9:588a
- quaestiones*, 10:238a-b
- question format, 11:57a
- quodlibet*, 10:238b, 241a
- religious orders and, 1:465a
- scholastic method, 11:56a-b
- basic characteristics, 11:56b
- development of, 11:56a-b
- importance of Aristotelian logic in, 11:56b
- standardization of, 11:57b
- as servant of theology, 11:56b-57a
- in Spain, 11:407a
- Isidore of Seville and, 6:566a
- summa format, 11:57a-b
- in theology curriculum, 11:691a
- theories of government, 4:451b-452a
- witchcraft and, 12:658b, 661b
- Scholasticus*, translators, 12:137b
- Scholia*. *See* Pseudo-Nonnus
- Scholica enchiridiadis*, 8:639b
- alphabetic notation and, 8:614a, 614b
- Dascian notation in, 8:618a
- Schöner, Johannes, 1:613b
- Schongauer, Martin, 11:58b-59a
- engraving technique of, 4:488b, 490a
- Madonna in a Rose Arbor*, 11:58b, 59a (*illus.*)

School of Chartres. *See* Chartres, School of

School of the Persians, 9:142a, 11:564b

- Schools, 11:63b (*illus.*)
- academy, Consistoire de Gai Saber, 10:251b
- Byzantine, 7:595a-b
- in Constantinople, 3:556b
- see also* Universities, Byzantine
- cathedral, 11:59a-63a
- careers as specialists prepared at, 11:61b
- Carolingian reform movement and, 11:60a
- as centers of 12th-century intellectual life, 11:60b
- Chartres, 12:638b
- curriculum of, 11:59b, 61a-62a
- early bishops' schools, 11:59b-60a
- literature and the arts in, 11:59b
- masters of, 11:60b
- monastic reform movement and, 11:60a-b
- prestige of, 11:62a-b
- subservience to scriptures, 11:62a
- universities and, 11:62b
- see also* Theology, schools of
- elementary, goals of religious instruction, 10:301a
- grammar, 11:63a-64b
- Byzantine, 11:63b
- Carolingian reform and, 11:64a-b
- fostered by alphabetic script, 11:63a-b
- in late Middle Ages, 7:600a-b
- religions of the book and, 11:63a
- Roman, 11:63b-64a
- teacher qualifications, 11:63b
- textbooks, 11:64b
- trivium studies and, 12:206b
- Irish, 6:516a, 544a
- manuscript transmission and, 6:545b
- for poets, 6:532b, 534b-535a
- religious literature in, 6:542a
- Islamic, 11:64b-69a
- Arabic or literary sciences or arts, 11:65a
- colleges, 11:65a-66b
- divisions of knowledge in, 11:65a
- exclusion of "ancient (Greek) sciences," 11:65a
- fatwā* in, 11:67b
- home and library studies, 11:66b-67a
- Islamic sciences, 11:65a
- law, 4:407a
- learning methodologies, 11:67a-b
- license to teach, 11:67b-68a
- madrassa and, 11:66a-b
- masjid-khan* complexes, 11:65b-66a
- memorization in, 11:67a
- scholastic method in, 11:67a-b
- students, 11:68a-b
- for *ʿulamāʾ*, 12:245a
- university and, 11:64b-65a
- see also* Azhar, al-; Madrasa
- in Italy, closing of in the 6th century, 7:598b
- Jewish, 11:69a-72b
- adult study, 11:72b

- Ashkenazic educational patterns, 11:69b, 71b
- in Babylonia, 7:107b
- beginning study of Leviticus in, 11:70a
- Bible study and, 11:70b
- communal self-government under Islam and, 7:73a-b
- curriculum, 11:70a-b
- etymology of *heder*, 11:72a
- foundings of, 7:162a
- gaon (Jewish academy head), 7:73a-b, 74a
- in gaonic period, 5:357a-358a
- logical prowess and, 11:71a
- as mediators of culture, 11:69a-b
- in Palestine, 7:104a-105b
- prestige of rabbinic masters, 11:71a
- "Prince of Torah" ceremony and, 11:69b-70a
- in Qayrawān, 7:98a-b
- regulation of, 11:69a, 72a
- rite of passage into, 11:69b-70a
- role in Judaism, 7:162a
- Sephardic, 11:69b, 71b
- southern vs. northern approaches, 11:71a-b
- talmudic (yeshiva), rabbi training and, 10:243b
- transmission of rabbinic authority, 6:256b
- see also* Exegesis, Jewish
- minstrels'. *See* Minstrels, schools of
- monastic, 11:72b-78a
- antiphilosophical stance of, 11:73b
- Benedictines and, 2:173b-174a
- in Byzantium, 11:75a
- cantus* (chant), 11:76a
- Carolingian reforms and, 11:60a, 75b-76a
- of cenobites, 11:73a-b
- computus* (counting), 11:76a
- contriban model, 11:74b-75a
- Latin as language of, 11:75b
- literacy tests in monasteries, 11:73b
- missionary, 12:137a
- monastic histories, 11:76b
- notae*, 11:76a
- post-Nicene monasticism and, 11:73a
- pre-Reformation neglect, 11:77a
- preservation of scriptures in, 11:76b
- psalmi*, 11:76a
- as repositories of writings, 11:75b
- responsibility for Western education, 11:74a-b, 75a-b
- rhetoric, 11:76b
- silent reading in, 11:73b-74a
- studia linguarum*, 12:137a
- under Saxon emperors, 11:77a
- writing and bookmaking in, 11:74a
- music and, 8:581b-582a
- for nobles, courtesy books in, 3:660b
- palace, 11:78a-b
- definition of *schola*, 11:78a
- Emperor Heraklios, 9:697a
- flowering under Carolingians, 11:78b
- Medici Platonic Academy, 9:698b, 703b
- replacement of, 11:78b

SCHOOLS, PALACE

Emile Lesne, *Histoire de la propriété ecclésiastique en France*, V: *Les écoles de la fin du VIII^e siècle à la fin du XII^e siècle* (1940); Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (1946); Aimée Lorcin, "La vie scolaire dans les monastères d'Irlande aux V^e-VII^e siècles," in *Revue du moyen âge latin*, 1 (1945); Henri Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, George Lamb, trans. (1956), and *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 4th ed. (1958); Gerard Paré et al., *La renaissance du XII^e siècle: Les écoles et l'enseignement* (1933); Friedrich Prinz, *Mönchtum und Gesellschaft im Frühmittelalter* (1976); Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West*, John J. Contreni, trans. (1976).

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[See also Anchorites; Arts, Seven Liberal; Brethren of the Common Life; Calendars and Reckoning of Time; Canterbury; Carolingians and the Carolingian Empire; Cato's Distichs; Chivalry; Church, Latin; Clergy; Computus; Dictamen; Franciscans; Hermits, Eremitism; Historiography, Western European; Medicine, History of; Mendicant Orders; Merovingians; Mirror of Princes; Monasticism, Byzantine; Monasticism, Origins; Pepin III and the Donation of Pepin; Quadrivium; Rhetoric; Sex Aetates Mundi; Trivium; and individual personalities.]

SCHOOLS, PALACE. Schools (*scholae*) were a prominent feature of court life in many barbarian monarchies during the early Middle Ages. *Schola* seems not to have had a precise, fixed meaning. Most historians prefer to translate *schola* as "the group or corporation of young people at court." Many ecclesiastical and secular officials received their early training at court. Children usually joined the palace entourage shortly after puberty. To judge from some of the school texts created by the masters, instruction was quite elementary. Riddles, jokes, and question-and-answer dialogues between masters and students seem to have been the chief pedagogical methods employed.

The training dispensed at the palace was essentially vocational. Young princes and the sons of nobles who were sent to court for instruction and to cement the ties of their families to the king were schooled in the military and bureaucratic duties they would later assume. In the early Frankish courts, supervision of the young people was entrusted to the mayor of the palace. The atmosphere in the palace schools was quite informal. There was no fixed curriculum. Instruction could take place

anywhere in the palace, including in the baths, and at any time. Relationships among students and their mentors was quite convivial. Some texts complain of excessive drinking. Some parents worried about the immorality at court.

The best-known palace school was that of the Carolingians, particularly during the reign of Charlemagne (768–814), when masters such as Alcuin and Einhard were among those who directed the school. Royal patronage made the palace a magnet that attracted poets, grammarians, and liturgists from Ireland, Anglo-Saxon England, Spain, and Italy. It was the most literary of the early court schools. The notaries in the royal chancery, the manuscript illuminators, the scribes responsible for disseminating Carolingian minuscule, and medical practitioners were all linked to the school. Later Carolingian kings continued to draw scholars to their courts. In the Carolingian view, the school served a sharply defined function: to establish norms of behavior and practice and to produce individuals capable of realizing the ideal of a Christian society.

Later in the ninth century, the Anglo-Saxon Alfred the Great established a school at his court, while on the Continent some tenth-century nobles in France and Germany continued the tradition of the palace school. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the academic functions of the palace school had been taken over by the monastic, cathedral, and municipal schools, and, later, by the universities. The courts continued to remain centers of artistic and literary patronage.

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[See also Alcuin of York; Alfred the Great; Carolingians and the Carolingian Empire; Charlemagne; Einhard; Mayor of the Palace; Universities.]