

Anglo-Danish Connections and the Organisation of the Early Danish Church

Contribution to a Debate

Marie Bønløkke Spejlborg

INTRODUCTION

The Christianization of Northern Europe is closely linked to concepts of cultural transfer, transmission, and influence. Latin Christianity was essentially foreign to the medieval North, and foreign expertise was needed for the implementation of the Christian faith and for the formation and development of ecclesiastical institutions. Consequently, the subject makes an excellent case for comparative studies. Indeed, when discussing the effects of the Christianization, comparison is essential. For Scandinavia, where written sources from the conversion period, as well as for the following phases of establishment and consolidation of the churches, are scarce and archaeological evidence rarely conclusive, it is often necessary to look for parallels abroad in the areas from where the Christian missions came.

The study of English influence in Scandinavia has attracted particular attention and the importance of English contacts for the Christianization of Scandinavia is well-established.¹ In Denmark, English contacts become most apparent from the late-tenth century when raids across the North Sea were renewed, a period often termed 'England's second Viking Age'. The

¹ L. Abrams, 'The Anglo-Saxons and the Christianization of Scandinavia', *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (1995), pp. 213-49.

Danish campaigns culminated in the conquests of England, first by the Danish King Swein Forkbeard in 1013 and three years later by his son Cnut the Great who came to rule both England and Denmark until his death in 1035. The contacts forged in this period changed the ecclesiastical scene in Denmark – at least for a while. The question of how the English contacts affected the processes of Christianization – especially in terms of ecclesiastical organisation – in Denmark does, however, remain elusive. The scarcity and ambiguity of the historical as well as the archaeological evidence has called for comparisons across the North Sea in an attempt to establish the internal organisation of the early Danish Church. But the differences of the circumstances of the Danish and English Churches in their origin as well as their later structure make direct comparisons tenuous.

Here, I will suggest that identifying the channels through which influence would have been carried will make it possible to correlate the English evidence with the Danish and determine the nature and extent of English influence on the early Danish Church. Accordingly, this paper is divided into two parts. It begins with short review of the state of the English Church at the beginning of the eleventh century with a focus on ecclesiastical organisation. It then considers the historical evidence of English presence on the ecclesiastical scene in Denmark from the late-tenth century into the eleventh and suggests that the picture of English influence on early Danish church organisation is more complex than previously supposed. The second part of this paper provides a new focus for the study of English influence on early medieval Denmark that takes into account the variety of contacts that extended between Denmark and England in the eleventh century.

THE ENGLISH CHURCH: FROM MINISTERS TO PARISH CHURCHES

In his major work on *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, John Blair convincingly demonstrated how the English Church underwent a transition from minsters to parish churches in the period 850-1100. The mother-parishes, or minster *parochiae*, had been the central model of ecclesiastical organisation in England since the seventh century. The large parishes were serviced by central churches, i.e. the minsters. While most minsters at this time were established by acts of royal or episcopal policy, they were otherwise diverse in origin, and secular minsters served by colleges of priests existed together with monastic communities.² In return for pastoral care the minsters received a number of specific church dues. Tithes were only

² J. Blair, 'Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church', in J. Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition 950-1200* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 1-19; J. Blair, 'Secular Minster Churches in Domesday Book', in P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *Domesday Book: A Reassessment* (1985), pp. 104-42, at pp. 114-15.

introduced as part of obligatory church dues in England in the late 920s.³ From the late-ninth century a system of local proprietary churches, patronized by local magnates, was gaining ground in a process of general socio-economic change, accelerated by Viking invasions. In this process they encroached on the rights and dues of the minsters; as a result, the latter entered a slow process of decline and underwent a fragmentation of their large parishes. In Edgar's law on church dues (959-72) the local churches were officially recognised, and it was ordered that a thegn who had a church with a graveyard on his land should pay a third of his tithe to this church.⁴ With the local churches came the local parishes, and by the beginning of the eleventh century two models of parochial organisation coexisted in England: the large mother parishes, served from the central minsters, and the small local churches, often with their own priests, churchyards, and part of the tithe.⁵ According to Blair the central minsters and their large parishes did, however, remain the official unit of parochial authority into the reign of William the Conqueror, and their financial integrity was supported and maintained by the kings.⁶

In 1014 a law code on the breach of sanctuary could differentiate between four kinds of churches: a 'head minster' (*heafodmynster*), a 'moderate minster' (*medemre mynster*), 'one yet smaller' (*gyt læsse*), and a 'field church' (*feldcyrice*).⁷ John Blair has identified the first as a cathedral, the second as a normal clerical minster, the third as the thegn's estate-church, and the fourth as a chapel without rights.⁸ This is, of course, a simplistic representation of the complexity of the English Church. Still, we may draw an important point from it: by the beginning of the eleventh century, when Danish kings ruled on both sides of the North Sea, the structure and organisation of the English Church was complex and therefore we cannot, solely on the basis of this picture, determine precisely what element(s) of ecclesiastical organisation might have been transferred to Denmark. Much would have depended upon the channels through which they were transmitted.

ENGLISH PRESENCE IN THE EARLY DANISH CHURCH: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

One of the primary pieces of evidence for possible English influence on newly Christianised Denmark is found in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, written in the 1070s, and is often

³ J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 434-40; Blair, 'Secular Minster Churches in Domesday Book', p. 119.

⁴ II Edgar 1.1-1.3 in F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze Der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1 (Halle, 1903), p. 196.

⁵ J. Campbell, 'The Church in Anglo-Saxon Towns', in J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 139-54; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 368.

⁶ Blair, 'Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church', pp. 1-19; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 367-8.

⁷ VIII Æthelred 5.1 in Liebermann, *Die Gesetze Der Angelsachsen*, p. 264.

⁸ Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 368-417 (especially pp. 368-9).

called upon by historians. According to Adam, the Danish King, Swein Forkbeard, appointed the 'bishop Gotebald, who came from England, to teach in Skåne'.⁹ This occurred around 999. Some ten years earlier (by 988) Swein had exiled the four bishops who had been appointed to Denmark from Hamburg-Bremen and effectively dismissed the authority of the archdiocese.¹⁰ Swein's ecclesiastical policies were (initially) continued by his son Cnut when he ascended to the Danish throne *c.* 1019, and his reign provided new conditions for the transfer of ecclesiastic personnel from England to Denmark – and *with them* the transfer of models and materials.

In his *Brevis historia regum dacie* (*c.* 1188), the medieval Danish historian Swein Aggesen states that Cnut brought many priests and bishops with him when he came to Denmark from England to secure the throne *c.* 1019.¹¹ According to Adam of Bremen, he appointed three English bishops to Denmark in 1020-22: Bernard was placed over Scania, Gerbrand over Zealand and Reginbert over Funen.¹² A fourth bishop, Odinkar, a Danish noble, had been taken to England to be 'instructed in letters' and was appointed to the diocese of Ribe.¹³ Thus in the early decades of the eleventh century the episcopal sees of Denmark were dominated by Englishmen.¹⁴ It is only reasonable to suppose that the dominant position of the English bishops in this period left its trace on the church. According to Ellen Jørgensen's pioneering studies of foreign influence on the early Danish Church, the early phases of Danish church formation were 'characterized by strong English influence that became especially visible in ecclesiastical vocabulary (the Old Danish words *ærkibiskup*, *gufsfafur*, *kristindom* originate in Old English *arcebiscop*, *godfæder*, *cristendom*) and hagiolatry (a number of English saints occur in Danish church dedications and liturgies, e.g. St Botwulf, St Alban, and Ælfheah).¹⁵

The comparatively short period of the reigns of the Anglo-Danish kings and the English bishops appointed at this time has been the central focus of the discussion of English influence. One of the key objectives for the early bishops would have been the foundation of churches, and

⁹ 'Gotebaldum quendam ab Anglia venientem episcopum in Sconia posuit doctorem'. Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, MGH, ed. B. Schmeidler (Hannover, 1917), II.41, schol. 26.

¹⁰ DD O III 41 in T. Sickel, *Diplomaticum Regum Et Imperatorum Germaniae. Conradi I. Herinrici I. Et Ottonis I. Diplomata*, MGH, 879-1884), pp. 988.

¹¹ Sven Aggesen, 'Brevis Historia Regum Dacie', in M.C. Gertz (ed.), *Scriptores minores historiæ danicæ medii ævi*, vol. 1 (Copenhagen, 1917), ix.; E. Christiansen, *The Works of Sven Aggesen, Twelfth-Century Danish Historian* (London, 1992), pp. 18-26.

¹² Adam of Bremen, *Gesta*, II.55

¹³ 'eruditus litteris' Ibid., schol. 25.

¹⁴ For a thorough discussion of this see, M.H. Gelting, 'Elusive Bishops: Remembering, Forgetting, and Remaking the History of the Early Danish Church', in S. Gilsdorf (ed.), *The Bishop: Power and Piety at the First Millennium* (Münster, 2004), pp. 169-231.

¹⁵ E. Jørgensen, *Fremmed Indflydelse under den Danske Kirkes tidligste Udvikling* (Copenhagen, 1908); E. Jørgensen, *Helgendyrkelse i Danmark, Studier over Kirkekultur og Kirkeligt Liv fra fet 11te Aarhundredes Midte til Reformationen* (Copenhagen, 1909), p. 175; J. Toy, *English Saints in the Medieval Liturgies of Scandinavian Churches* (London, 2009).

the co-operation between king and bishop is likely to have been one of the driving forces behind this development. During the reign of Cnut (or possibly already at the time of Swein) churches were founded in the emerging towns of Lund and Roskilde, and possibly Viborg as well. According to Stefan Brink, the impact of the work of the English bishops should not be underestimated. He argues that the foundation of the early Scandinavian churches was laid by 'representatives of the Anglo-Saxon Church', and that they may have been organised along the lines of the English minster system.¹⁶ In Denmark, this model has been proposed specifically for the early foundation of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Lund and extended to a number of other foundations across medieval Denmark.¹⁷

For a brief period following the death of Cnut in 1035 the rule of England and Denmark was divided between his sons Harald and Harthacnut.¹⁸ There is no indication, however, that this situation changed the character of Anglo-Danish relations and the possibilities of English influence in Denmark. Harthacnut, who had succeeded his father on the Danish throne, had considerable English experience and connections. Furthermore, in 1040 he also acceded to the English throne. In Denmark his rule has left few marks.¹⁹ At the death of Harthacnut in 1042 direct Danish access to the resources of the English Church ceased to exist. But as the case of Swein Forkbeard's appointment of Gotebald has shown, this was not a prerequisite for Anglo-Danish contacts on the episcopal level. Hereafter followed a period of unrest in Denmark during the struggles for power between Magnus and Swein Estridsson. When peaceful times prevailed in the reign of Swein from 1047, a new agenda was set and c. 1060 the diocesan structure of Denmark was reformed. The bond to Hamburg-Bremen was maintained, but simultaneously attempts were made to establish an independent archiepiscopal see for Scandinavia.²⁰

On the basis of the written material, again most notably Adam of Bremen, the presence of

¹⁶ S. Brink, 'New Perspectives on the Christianization of Scandinavia and the Organisation of the Early Church', in J. Adams and K. Holman (eds.), *Scandinavia and Europe 800-1350: Contact, Conflict, and Coexistence* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 163-75, at pp. 172-3; S. Brink, 'The Formation of the Scandinavian Parish, with some Remarks regarding the English Impact on the Process', in J. Hill and M. Swan (eds.), *The Community, the Family and the Saint: Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 1998), pp. 19-44. Dagfinn Skre has convincingly shown how this may have been the case in Norway. D. Skre, 'Missionary Activity in Early Medieval Norway. Strategy, Organization and the Course of Events', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 23 (1998), pp. 1-19. It is, however, important to keep in mind the temporal and geographical differences in the process of Christianization across Scandinavia and the accordingly heterogeneous nature of early Scandinavian ecclesiastical organization.

¹⁷ See esp. P. Carelli, 'Lunds äldsta kyrkogård - och förekomsten av ett senvikingatida danskt parochialsystem', *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 2000 (2001), pp. 55-90, at pp. 59-61, 74; P. Carelli, 'Lunds äldsta kyrkogård och förekomsten av ett senvikingatida danskt parochialsystem', in N. Lund (ed.), *Kristendommen i Danmark For 1050* (Roskilde, 2004), pp. 253-8.

¹⁸ A.R. Rumble, 'Introduction: Cnut in Context', in A.R. Rumble (ed.), *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway* (London, 1994), pp. 1-9, at p. 5.

¹⁹ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. MS D, ed. G.P. Cubbin, vol. 6 (Cambridge, 1996), 1040.

²⁰ O. Fenger, *Kirker Rejses Alle Vegne: 1050-1250*; Gyldendal og Politikens Danmarkshistorie, vol. 4 (Copenhagen, 1989), pp. 51-2.

English bishops in Denmark seems to have slowly diminished from the late 1020s, and especially after the fragmentation of the North Sea Empire following the death of Cnut. Whether this development should be seen as a decline in royal involvement in church affairs (at least for a short period) remains uncertain, but it does seem clear that the appointment of English ecclesiastical personnel was used, in part, as a policy to counter the involvement of Hamburg-Bremen throughout the eleventh century. In 1059/60 the Danish king Swein Estridsson appointed the English bishop Henric, who had previously acted as the treasurer of Cnut the Great, to the see of Lund.²¹ Later, in the 1090s, the English contacts were called upon again for the foundation of the first Benedictine community in Denmark. At the invitation of the king a group of twelve monks from the monastery of Evesham in England settled in Odense c. 1095; shortly before 1100 Hubald, another English Benedictine, was consecrated to the episcopal see of Odense and established a monastic cathedral chapter drawing on English models.²² According to Peter King, it was the interests and relations of the Danish kings that brought and maintained the English influence in Denmark.²³

Unsurprisingly, the kings and bishops stand out as the main actors in the establishment of the Danish Church. Indeed the point is often repeated in scholarship dealing with the Christianization process in Scandinavia that the co-operation between king and bishop was the driving force behind the first implementation of Christianity and the initial organisation of the churches.²⁴ This picture, however, is partly a consequence of the type of sources available to us. What the historical and documentary sources actually tell us amounts to little beyond the fact that English bishops and priests worked in Denmark throughout the eleventh century and that most seem to have been brought there by subsequent Danish kings as a consequence of the connections established in the reigns of Swein and Cnut. A closer look at how these main propagators interacted with the church in England – and in Denmark – seems the natural starting-point for a further investigation into the ways in which the presence of English bishops in Denmark and close contacts across the North Sea on the royal level may have influenced the

²¹ At the same time the Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen appointed the Bishop Egino to the nearby see at Dalby. Adam of Bremen, *Gesta*, III.77; K.R. Jørgensen, 'Lundensis Eccl. (Lund)', in H. Kluger (ed.), *Archiepiscopatus Lundensis. Series Episcoporum Ecclesiae Catholicae Occidentalis Ab Initio Usque Ad Annum MCXCVIII*, vol. VI/2 (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 7-33, at p. 14.

²² P. King, 'The Cathedral Priory of Odense in the Middle Ages', *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* 7 (1966), pp. 1-12, at p. 1; H. Kluger, 'Othinse (Odense)', in H. Kluger (ed.), *Archiepiscopatus Lundensis. Series Episcoporum Ecclesiae Catholicae Occidentalis Ab Initio Usque Ad Annum MCXCVIII*, vol. VI/2 (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 54-63, at p. 59; P. King, 'English Influence on the Church at Odense in the Early Middle Ages', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 13 (1962), pp. 144-55, at pp. 145-50.

²³ King, 'The Cathedral Priory of Odense in the Middle Ages', p. 4; King, 'English Influence on the Church at Odense in the Early Middle Ages', p. 150.

²⁴ Brink, 'New Perspectives on the Christianization of Scandinavia and the Organisation of the Early Church', pp. 172-3; Brink, 'The Formation of the Scandinavian Parish, with some Remarks regarding the English Impact on the Process', pp. 19-44; E. Nyborg, 'Kirke – Sognedannelse – Bebyggelse', *Kirkearkæologi i Norden* 2 (1986), pp. 17-44, at p. 28, n. 22.

formation of the Danish Church. Before moving on it must, however, be noted that it is problematic to view the English – or any other – Church as a pattern for Danish Church organisation on the whole. The early network of churches was both complex and composite and cannot be captured in one simple, cogent model. The emerging Danish Church of the eleventh century was markedly different from the English Church in the same period and several features also separate their respective processes of Christianisation.²⁵ As two cases in point, the itinerant character of the early Scandinavian bishops had no direct parallels in England, and contrary to England in the seventh century, Denmark (or Scandinavia) did not have its own archbishop during its process of establishment and consolidation. Here, multiple interests and influences interplayed and it is more than likely that several systems were in place at different (or even the same) location at a given time, and it is possible that the meeting of different practices and multiple influences in new circumstances could have created something new that does not fit within any strict systems or models.

ANGLO-DANISH KINGS AND BISHOPS

Unfortunately, we know little about the English bishops who moved to Denmark apart from the locations of their sees. Only Gerbrand is mentioned in a source outside Adam of Bremen's *Gesta*. His name appears as 'Gerbrand of Roskilde parish of the Danish people', in charter of Cnut the Great granting land to the Monastery of Ely.²⁶ Niels Lund has argued that Cnut planned to establish Roskilde as an archiepiscopal see with precisely such a purpose in mind,²⁷ although this aim seems to have been abandoned in 1027 when Cnut travelled to Rome and met with the German Emperor.²⁸ We are consequently left with the examples of the kings.

When Swein Forkbeard conquered England in 1013 he only held power there for a very brief period until his death in 1014. No sources connect Swein to the English Church or the English administrative systems. Our image of him in England is thus limited to the picture of a conqueror. We know little more about his dealing with the church in Denmark. Adam of Bremen's story of his heathen uprising has long been dismissed as a construction, while the information given on the appointment of an English bishop, Gotebald, to the newly established

²⁵ L. Abrams, 'Eleventh-Century Missions and the Early Stages of Ecclesiastical Organisation in Scandinavia', in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies XVII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1994* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 21–40, at p. 33.

²⁶ 'Gerbrandus Roscylde parochiae Danorum gentis', S 958.

²⁷ N. Lund, 'Ville Knud Den Store Gøre Roskilde Til Ærkesæde?', *Historisk Årbog Fra Roskilde Amt* 1994 (1994), pp. 3–12.

²⁸ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta*, II.56, II.64; N. Lund, 'Cnut's Danish Kingdom', in A.R. Rumble (ed.), *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway* (London, 1994), pp. 27–42, at p. 41.

see of Scania (Lund) in Denmark some time before the year 1000, should be considered comparatively reliable.²⁹ This appointment took place before Swein's conquest of England and cannot therefore be attributed to his later (but brief) access to the English Church as king. It must instead be the result of on-going Anglo-Danish contacts and additional relations forged by Swein himself in the last decades of the tenth century.³⁰

Adam of Bremen's entry on Gotebald states only that he came from England and was appointed to teach in Scania.³¹ Nothing further is revealed about his function or about the church he entered, but the early date of his appointment makes it likely that his duties were mainly missionary. His possible role in the formation of the early Danish Church may, however, be illuminated by archaeology. On the basis of dendrochronological analysis of the surrounding graves Maria Cinthio has dated the remains of the wooden church below the Church of Holy Trinity in Lund to the 990s.³² She subsequently identifies it as the church built by Swein Forkbeard mentioned by two written sources. The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (written c. 1041/42) tells the story of how the body of Swein Forkbeard was brought back to Denmark by a 'certain English matron' where it was placed 'in the monastery which the same king had built in honour of the Holy Trinity, in the sepulchre which he had prepared for himself'.³³ By a combination of (later) written evidence and the archaeological dates Cinthio connects the Church of the Holy Trinity in Lund with Swein Forkbeard and the bishop Gotebald. But the nature of the evidence does not allow us to make any further assumptions about the function of this early wooden church and the work of Gotebald.

Anglo-Danish relations were strengthened during the reign of Cnut the Great, and it seems clear from the written evidence that the decision to appoint English bishops to Denmark was a conscious choice of both Swein and Cnut to circumvent the influence of the Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen. One of the main features that distinguishes the period of Cnut's reign is the degree of cultural openness between Denmark and England brought into effect by the double kingship, and through it the Danish access to the knowledge and workings of the Anglo-Saxon state and Church. Despite the importance of Swein Forkbeard's contacts in England, however, he primarily encountered the church through his Viking attacks. But during Cnut's reign

²⁹ Gelting, 'Elusive Bishops', pp. 169–231.

³⁰ L. Abrams, 'Diaspora and Identity in the Viking Age', *Early Medieval Europe* 20 (2012), pp. 17–38; N. Lund, *De Hærger Og De Brænder: Danmark Og England i Vikingetiden* (Copenhagen, 1997), p. 139.

³¹ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta*, II.41, schol. 26.

³² M. Cinthio, 'Trinitatiskyrkan i Lund - med engelsk prägel', *Hikuin* 24 (1997), pp. 113–34, at pp. 114–15; M. Cinthio, 'Trinitatiskyrkan, gravarna och de första lundaborna', in N. Lund (ed.), *Kristendommen i Danmark Før 1050* (Roskilde, 2004), pp. 59–73, at pp. 159–61; Carelli, *Lunds äldsta kyrkogård - och förekomsten av ett senvikingatida danskt parochialsystem*, 56–61.

³³ in monasterio in honore Sanctae Trinitatis ab eodem rege constructo, in sepulchro quod sibi parauerant.' *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, eds. A. Campbell and S. Keynes (Cambridge, 1998), II.3.

peaceful contacts prevailed, and the situation was changed; as king of England, Cnut engaged with the English Church in ways that his father could not have done. Cnut's relations and preferences in his dealing with the different levels and elements of the English Church may cast some light on the influence that he and his English bishops are likely to have brought to Denmark and shall be considered here in more detail.

As Timothy Bolton has shown, Cnut enjoyed close relations the English archbishops; most notably Wulfstan of York.³⁴ He was furthermore in regular contact with other bishops and abbots that attended his court and councils, and priests were working within the royal household. More importantly, Cnut was a great benefactor. He granted and confirmed gifts of land, involved himself in the transferral of saints' relics, and donated a great number of precious objects. From the evidence of English charters it seems that it was especially the monasteries, like Evesham and Bury St Edmunds, and the larger episcopal churches, like Canterbury and Winchester, which received Cnut's patronage, although some smaller churches also benefited from his pious generosity.³⁵ It may also be noted that the majority of Cnut's grants and donations went to monastic foundations and episcopal churches and not to moderate minsters.³⁶ According to the *Encomium Emmae*, he built and dignified churches, and in 1020 he founded a minster at the site of *Assandun* to commemorate his victory here.³⁷ At his death, Cnut the Great was buried in the Old Minster, the Cathedral Church of Winchester.

From this evidence we may conclude that that Cnut was concerned particularly with the higher levels of the church, the cathedrals and monasteries. While some of the churches supported by Cnut may have developed from minster sites and while some held on to parts of their old parochial privileges, only few had this as their primary function. Most of the churches considered in the charters of Cnut were either episcopal centres or Benedictine monasteries. Although English minsters were still in function in the first half of the eleventh century they do not seem to have been the primary focus of Cnut the Great.

As mentioned above, a number of problems are connected with direct parallels between the Danish and English Churches in the eleventh century. While Cnut encountered in England a well-established ecclesiastical system, in Denmark he was charged with the challenge of

³⁴ T. Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut the Great: Conquest and the Consolidation of Power in Northern Europe in the Early Eleventh Century* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 78-86.

³⁵ M.K. Lawson, *Cnut: The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (London, 1993), pp. 150-60; Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut the Great: Conquest and the Consolidation of Power in Northern Europe in the Early Eleventh Century*, pp. 86-106.

³⁶ Out of eighty-eight grants and gifts issued by Cnut the Great (see P.H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968)) four churches are specifically named 'minsters' but all seem to have either episcopal or monastic stratus.

³⁷ *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, II.19.

creating one. For this reason it is relevant to examine in further detail the one example of an English church founded by Cnut. For the year 1020 the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* writes: 'In this year King Cnut came back to England. And in this year he went to Ashingdon and had a minster built there of stone and mortar, for the souls of the men who had been slain there, and gave it to his own priest whose name was Stigand'.³⁸ The Chronicle describes the church at *Assandun* as a *mynster* (a minster). Warwick Rodwell has argued that this confirms 'its status in the hierarchy of ecclesiastical foundations of the era'.³⁹ John of Worcester, writing in the first half of the twelfth century, calls it an *ecclesia*.⁴⁰ Due to the ambiguity of these terms nothing conclusive can be drawn from this basis. More important are the attempts to identify the location of the battlefield of *Assandun* and consequently of the memorial church. The traditional identification with Ashingdon has been questioned by Cyril Hart who favours the site of Ashdon.⁴¹ Neither of the churches at these two sites does, however, fit the requirements of a minster.

Rodwell puts forward the possible explanation that Cnut's church is no longer standing and notes that it might have failed some time during the Middle Ages since it is never again mentioned after 1020. But as Rodwell emphasises, by 1020 the minsters were no longer the sole focus of parochial organisation and their large parishes were gradually broken up. If the church founded by Cnut was a minster it had to be 'fitted into in anachronistic system'. As a consequence, it is unlikely that Cnut's minster at *Assandun* resembled the minsters of the seventh and eighth centuries.⁴² It is then possible that the church at *Assandun* was not a minster in the most accepted definition of the word: a central church administering pastoral care for a larger parish and served by a collegiate of priests. Instead it might fall somewhere between the categories of minster and local (perhaps proprietary) church. It clearly served an important function as a memorial church, but as long as the church is unidentified it remains impossible to ascertain its place within the ecclesiastical hierarchy of early-eleventh-century England. Of its staffing we know nothing but what the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tells us, namely that the church was given to, or perhaps left to the charge of, Cnut's own priest, Stigand.

Although Cnut's engagement with the level of the society that upheld the parochial organisation

³⁸ 'Her com Cnut cing eft to Englalande. And on þisum geare he ferde to Assandune 7 let timbrian ðar an mynster of stane 7 lime far ðare manna sawle ðe ða ofslagende wæran 7 gief hit his anum preoste þas nama was Stigand'. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. MS F, ed. by P.S. Baker, vol. 8 (Cambridge, 2000), 1020. My translation.

³⁹ W. Rodwell, 'The Battle of Assandun and its Memorial Church. A Reappraisal', in J. Cooper (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact* (London, 1993), pp. 127-58, at pp. 142-3.

⁴⁰ John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, eds. R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk, 2 vols., II: The annals from 450 to 1066 (Oxford, 1995), s.a. 1020.

⁴¹ C. Hart, *The Danelaw* (London, 1992), pp. 553-65.

⁴² Rodwell, 'The Battle of Assandun and its Memorial Church. A Reappraisal', especially pp. 147-8 and 155-8.

of the minsters might suggest that he would have supported this model for Denmark, no specific links can be assessed between Cnut and this level of the English Church. The composite organisation of the Church in England on the eve of the Danish conquest makes it difficult to accept the 'minster model' as a reliable model of comparison for the Danish Church.⁴³ The fact that the distinctive parochial organisation of the early medieval English Church was in a process of fragmentation already before the eleventh century challenges the hypothesis that a system of Danish minsters was developed in the time of king Cnut and his immediate successors.

From the sparse evidence available, Cnut's dealings with the Danish Church seem to mirror, on many points, his engagement with the Church in England – though on a different level and scale. In Roskilde we may have an example of a Danish episcopal see endowed by Cnut. According to Lund, the great wealth of the bishop in Roskilde can be attributed to Cnut.⁴⁴ Roskilde's special status might be further highlighted by the so-called 'Copenhagen Wulfstan Collection'.⁴⁵ The manuscript was likely produced in Worcester under the direction of Archbishop Wulfstan of York in, or a few years before, 1022. It contains thirty-four texts, many of them annotated in Wulfstan's own hand, relevant for the work of a bishop. Johan Gerritsen has suggested that the book was presented to Gerbrand at his consecration and later accompanied him to Denmark.⁴⁶ If this was indeed the case, it might suggest an interest in the nascent Danish Church on the highest ecclesiastical level in England – possibly mediated by the relationship between Archbishop Wulfstan and Cnut the Great.

Alongside this, Cnut's involvement in the appointment of bishops continues the impression of the Danish king's interest in, and engagement, with the higher levels of the church. As mentioned above, this is unsurprising. The important point lies in the fact that Cnut's dealings with the Danish Church, as far as they can be followed in the written evidence, leave no indication that he should have proposed a specific ecclesiastical organisation. His preference of the English Church is more likely to have depended on considerations of possibilities and control. This does not imply that an ecclesiastical system based on the model of the English minsters could not have been implemented in Denmark in the early-eleventh century. The

⁴³ For discussion of the 'minster model' see Blair, *Introduction: From Minster to Parish Church*, pp. 1-19; J. Blair, 'Debate: Ecclesiastical Organization and Pastoral Care in Anglo-Saxon England', *Early Medieval Europe* 4 (1995), pp. 193-212.

⁴⁴ Lund, 'Ville Knud den Store gøre Roskilde til ærkesæde?' pp. 3-12.

⁴⁵ Copenhagen, Royal Library, GKS 1595 4°. See J.E. Cross and J. Morrish Tunberg (eds.), *The Copenhagen Wulfstan Collection: Copenhagen Kongelige Bibliotek Gl. Kgl. Sam. 1595*, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 25 (Copenhagen, 1993).

⁴⁶ E. Petersen, 'Wulfstans Kodex og Schumachers Liste: Om den ældste fortægnelse over håndskrifter i det Kongelige Bibliotek', *Fund og Forskning* 48 (2009), pp. 7-56; J. Gerritsen, 'The Copenhagen Wulfstan manuscript: A codicological study', *English Studies* 79 (1998), pp. 501-11.

greater part of the task of establishing the Danish Church, though probably directed by the king, would have been left with the bishops. But the fact that the English minster organisation was under pressure and slowly disappearing makes it a tenuous claim.

Some elements of the English ecclesiastical organisation were however adopted in Denmark as a result of close Anglo-Danish relations. The main example in this context is Lund, and according to Maria Cinthio a number of architectural parallels exist between the successor of the wooden Church of the Holy Trinity in Lund and the Old Minster in Winchester.⁴⁷ Anglo-Danish relations in Lund were significant and have been attested by archaeology, numismatics, as well as historical evidence, and there almost certainly was English there.⁴⁸ But to argue that a minster-like organisation existed in early medieval Denmark implies that more churches formed part of the same system. There can be no doubt that a number of early Danish churches did serve central functions and it is generally agreed that some churches exerted supremacy over smaller foundations.⁴⁹ But this is not enough to suggest a foreign pattern of organisation. The establishment of central churches is well known in the context of missions and may be considered a condition for missionary activity.

Although English bishops were appointed to Denmark after the end of the reign of Cnut, it is difficult to recognise any specific English influence on ecclesiastical organisation in this period. The short period of Harthacnut's rule makes it difficult to follow his actions in relation to the English Church in any detail, but from the evidence available he seems to have followed the example of Cnut.⁵⁰ It is likely he would have done the same in Denmark. In the latter half of the eleventh century English bishops ceased to play a dominant role, and they seem to have been mainly called upon when specific political strategies favoured (partial) autonomy from the Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen.

The lack of any specific 'English' mark on Danish Church organisation does not, however, mean that the presence of English ecclesiastics in Denmark in the eleventh century was without impact. Behind the English connections held by kings and bishops ran a large network of Anglo-Danish contacts that encompassed a variety of people of higher and lower rank, who are not included in the main conversion and Christianization narratives, but some of whom might have had the opportunities and resources to found and patronize churches. Their contribution to the establishment of the early Danish Church should not be dismissed. According to Lesley

⁴⁷ Cinthio, 'Trinitatiskyrkan i Lund - med engelsk prägel', p. 122; Cinthio, 'Trinitatiskyrkan, gravarna och de första lundaborna', pp. 159-73.

⁴⁸ A. Andrén and P. Carelli, 'De Anglosaxiska Spåren', *Kulturen* (1998), pp. 26-36.

⁴⁹ Nyborg, 'Kirke – Sognedannelse – Bebyggelse', pp. 28-30; E. Nyborg, 'Kirke, Sogn Og Bebyggelse o. 1000-1300', in S. Jensen (ed.), *Marsh, Land Og Bebyggelse: Ribeegnen Gennem 10.000 År*, vol. 1 (Højberg, 1998), pp. 191-210, at p. 205.

⁵⁰ He continued grants to monasteries (S 995; S 993) and bishops (S 994).

Abrams, the close relationship between king and bishop was one of the defining characteristics of the early Scandinavian churches, but its impact on the extension of ecclesiastical organisation was modest. Instead she draws attention to the (largely invisible) role of other secular and religious actors.⁵¹

MOBILE ELITES AND THE FORMATION OF THE EARLY DANISH CHURCH

The fragmentary nature of the written sources from the eleventh century does not permit any comprehensive picture of Anglo-Danish contacts, but close readings of a range of different historical and documentary sources reveal a small number of named individuals who travelled from England to Denmark in the course of this period. One example is Gunnhild, a kinswoman of Cnut the Great, who is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and John of Worcester's *Chronicon ex Chronicis*. Gunnhild was exiled from England in 1045 and left for Denmark with her two sons Heming and Thorkell.⁵² Later, in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest, Turkil Harmeworth, a thegn who had held land in Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, left England and went over to the Danes 'who were his kinsmen', as is recorded in the Red Book of Thorney.⁵³ And Turkil was not alone. According to William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum*, written in the 1120s, the harshness of William the Conqueror caused members of the English elite to leave England. Some went to Denmark, where they assembled armies.⁵⁴ The Domesday Book records the name of Eadric, a middle-ranking landowner from East Anglia, who became an outlaw in Denmark at this time.⁵⁵ The same seems to have been the case for Ringwulf who is mentioned in a property statement of the Abbey of St Benet of Holme.⁵⁶ These seemingly unique incidents appear to be part of a larger network of North Sea connections that is worth considering as representing potential channels of cultural transfer – also within the sphere of religion.

A second group of people, who came from England to Denmark in the course of the eleventh

⁵¹ L. Abrams, 'Eleventh-Century Missions', pp. 34–40.

⁵² ASC 1045 D; John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, 1044.

⁵³ 'Thorney Monastery', in W. Dugdale and others (eds.), *Monasticon Anglicanum: A History of the Abbeys and Other Monasteries, Hospitals, Frieries, and Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, with their Dependencies, in England and Wales; also of all such Scotch, Irish, and French Monasteries, as were in any Manner Connected with Religious Houses in England. Together with a Particular Account of their Respective Foundations, Grants, and Donations, and a Full Statement of their Possessions, as Well Temporal as Spiritual*, vol. 2 (London, 1819), II.604.

⁵⁴ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, eds. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, vol. 1 (New York, 1998), III.254.2.

⁵⁵ J. Morris, *Domesday Book: Norfolk*, vol. 33 (Chichester, 1984), p. 200a.

⁵⁶ F.M. Stenton, 'St. Benet of Holme and the Norman Conquest', *English Historical Review* 37 (1922), pp. 225–35, at p. 227.

century, are the moneymen. The first coin bearing the name of an English moneymen was struck under Swein Forkbeard *c.* 995. The reverse legend states that the moneymen was named Godwine.⁵⁷ A pen case lid from Lund, inscribed with the name Leofwine, might have belonged to a moneymen working there.⁵⁸ English names continue to be prominent on Danish coins throughout the eleventh century, but their part in the total number of coins struck falls from the mid-eleventh century onwards, that is, during the reign of Swein Estridson.⁵⁹ Of course, the names alone do not give incontrovertible evidence of the import of English moneymen, but the ambiguity of the onomastics is compensated by the coins themselves. A large part of Danish coins struck in the eleventh century imitate Anglo-Saxon models or were struck from dies that can be linked to England.⁶⁰ The movement of people between England and Denmark is also evidenced in the archaeological record. Pottery from the early urban centres of Lund, Viborg, and Roskilde suggest, not only the import, but the local production of Torksey and Stamford ware – a skill that must have been transferred along with people.⁶¹ In addition, riding equipment that combines Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian designs demonstrates a shared cultural affiliation on both sides of the North Sea. The examples found in Denmark are likely to have belonged to – and travelled on – an Anglo-Scandinavian warrior elite centred on Cnut the Great, as has been argued by Anne Pedersen and Else Roesdahl.⁶²

Although a few Anglo-Saxons are recorded to have travelled to Denmark in the eleventh century, the majority of the people who came from England were of Danish origin. While in England, some had held positions as earls or thegns for longer or shorter periods of time. They were part of a shared Anglo-Danish culture and as such, just as they brought their Scandinavian culture to England, they must also have brought elements of English culture back to Scandinavia. All these people can be associated with the higher levels of English society – a group which were known as founders and patrons of churches. In England the status of the Danes as second-generation Christians does not seem to have prevented them from interacting

⁵⁷ J. Steen Jensen, *Tusindtallets Danske Mønter Fra Den Kongelige Mønt- Og Medaillesamling / Danish Coins from the 11th Century in the Royal Collection of Coins and Medals* (Copenhagen, 1995), p. 22.

⁵⁸ E. Okasha, 'An Inscribed Anglo-Saxon Lid from Lund', *Medieval Archaeology* 28 (1984), pp. 181-3.

⁵⁹ P. Hauberg, *Myntforhold Og Udmyntninger i Danmark Indtil 1146* (Copenhagen, 1900), p. 104.

⁶⁰ B. Malmer, *The Anglo-Scandinavian Coinage c. 995-1020* (Stockholm, 1997), p. 54.

⁶¹ E. Roesdahl, 'English Connections in the Time of Knut the Great - Material from Viborg', in U. Fransson and others (eds.), *Cultural Interaction between East and West: Archaeology, Artefacts and Human Contacts in Northern Europe* (Stockholm, 2007), pp. 276-8.

⁶² E. Roesdahl, 'Denmark-England in the Eleventh Century: The Growing Archaeological Evidence for Contacts Across the North Sea', in N. Lund (ed.), *Beretning Fra Seksogtyvende Tverfaglige Vikingesymposium* (Højbjerg, 2007), pp. 7-31, at pp. 22-26; A. Pedersen, 'Anglo-Danish Contact Across the North Sea in the Eleventh Century: A Survey of the Danish Archaeological Evidence', in J. Adams and K. Holman (eds.), *Scandinavia and Europe 800-1350: Contact, Conflict, and Coexistence* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 34-67, at pp. 50-5.

with the church on equal terms with their English peers.⁶³ I would therefore argue that some of these were in a position, and had the experience, to act as carriers of English Christian and ecclesiastical culture. We are then left with a picture of Anglo-Danish contacts that extends from the late-tenth to the late-eleventh century, and consequently goes beyond the kings and their bishops. Furthermore, it seems that many of the people who came to Denmark from England in this period did so after the time usually associated with English ecclesiastical influence. This observation might, however, be a result of an imbalance in the available sources.

The possible diversity in the ways in which Anglo-Danish contacts may have affected the early Danish Church has often been neglected in Danish scholarship. This oversight can be accounted for, mainly, by the overshadowing effect of the close links between kings and bishops in the early phases of Christianisation. But it is also due, in part, to the fact that the concept of English ecclesiastical influence has been associated with overarching models, such as the 'minster model'. This has left little room for the consideration of local and private initiatives in relation to Anglo-Danish contacts. Yet the manifold connections between England and Denmark outside the royal-episcopal sphere make a case for revisiting the Danish evidence. According to Adam of Bremen, writing in the 1070s, Denmark was replete with churches: three hundred in Scania, half as many on Zealand, and a third on Funen.⁶⁴ The archaeological evidence for the earliest phases of Danish church formation is, however, extremely meagre, and it is likely that the construction of churches did not make progress before the mid-eleventh century.⁶⁵ Although no connection can be proved, it is interesting to note that this is the time when the movement of people from England to Denmark may have increased as the result of the Norman Conquest.

It has often been noted that the earliest Danish towns had a comparatively high rate of small urban churches and that this was a result of English influence.⁶⁶ Much can be said in favour of this interpretation, as the highest number of churches is found in towns where high levels of English presence are otherwise well established.⁶⁷ Twelve churches have been attested in Viborg, fourteen in Roskilde and more than twenty in Lund. In comparison, the early town of Ribe had only six and Schleswig eight.⁶⁸ In England, small urban foundations were established especially from the late-tenth century as a part of the general development towards private and

⁶³ E.g. Ulf, whose name is inscribed on a sundial in the parish church in Aldborough, East Yorkshire. It states that Ulf ordered the church to be erected for the sake of his soul. E. Okasha, *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 47.

⁶⁴ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta*, IV.7

⁶⁵ E. Roesdahl, 'Hvornår blev kirkerne bygget?', in N. Lund (ed.), *Kristendommen i Danmark Før 1050* (Roskilde, 2004), pp. 201–6.

⁶⁶ J. Ulrichsen, 'Fremmed indflydelse i vikingetid og tidlig middelalder (700-1150 e. Kr.)', *Årbog. Historisk Samfund for Roskilde Amt* (2011), pp. 79–119, at p. 103.

⁶⁷ E. Nyborg, 'Kirke og Sogn i Højmiddelalderens by', in S. Bitsch Christensen (ed.), *Middelalderbyen* (Aarhus, 2004), pp. 113–90, at pp. 116 and 124.

⁶⁸ Ulrichsen, 'Fremmed indflydelse i vikingetid og tidlig middelalder', p. 103.

local churches. The new churches were diverse in origin, but mainly associated with magnates of higher or lower status. Urban churches listed in the Domesday Book were mainly private foundations in the hands of magnates, priests, and burgesses, and it is likely that the urban class of moneyers was involved as well. It is worth noting that this development coincided with a period of extensive Anglo-Danish interaction, and that the expansion was largely concentrated in East Anglia and the East Midlands – precisely the areas where we find the heaviest degree of Danish presence. Small churches related to rural estates become visible in English records from the late-tenth century, and archaeological evidence suggests that the juxtaposition of church and lay residence became typical and widespread at this time. Like the urban churches, the rural foundations were most prevalent in the eastern part of the country.⁶⁹ If the Danish pattern of small urban church foundations was, indeed, a result of English influence, then the churches must have been private initiatives, as was the case in England.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

The earliest phase of church building in Denmark was directed by kings and bishops, who established a network of central churches. It is often argued that a significant element of English influence, brought by the bishops of Swein Forkbeard and Cnut the Great, helped shape this development, but the hypothesis that this influence should have extended to include a specific model of English church organisation – such as the minsters – seem tenuous. The network of central churches was shortly followed by local and private foundations, and it is likely that contacts with England were more important in this context than previously supposed. A brief comparison between the Churches of Denmark and England in the eleventh century shows significant parallels of local and private foundation of churches. The channels through which this influence would have travelled extended from the late tenth century until after the Norman Conquest, thus providing us with a wider timeframe for English influence than the one surrounding the bishops. We should, consequently, widen our perception of English influence on the early Danish Church – socially, geographically and in time.

⁶⁹ Campbell, 'The Church in Anglo-Saxon Towns', pp. 146-47; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 387-8, 406, 423, 432-98.

⁷⁰ A runestone dated to the late Viking Age and found near the Church of St Stefan in Lund supports this claim. It reads: 'Toki had the church made and ...'. 'Tōki lēt kirkju gorva ok ...' DR 315 "Runedatabasen Danske Runeindskrifter," Nationalmuseet and Nordisk Forskningsinstitut, Københavns Universitet, <http://runer.ku.dk/> (accessed December 20, 2012).