

Life and cult of Cnut the Holy

The first royal saint of Denmark

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Report from an interdisciplinary research seminar in Odense.
November 6th to 7th 2017

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Kulturhistoriske studier i centralitet – Archaeological and
Historical Studies in Centrality, vol. 4, 2019

Forskningscenter Centrum – Odense Bys Museer
Syddansk Univeristetsforlag/University Press of Southern Denmark

From Cnut the Great to Cnut the Holy: England and Denmark in the Eleventh Century

By Marie Bønløkke Missuno

At the elevation of the relics of Cnut IV in Odense on the 31st of March 1095 the martyred king's bones were tested by fire in a ritual that is likely to have entered Denmark from England (Esmark 2010). Present at the event was the anonymous author of the *Passio Sancti Kanuti regis et martiris* who describes the ritual. Along with the *Gesta Swenomagni regis et filiorum eius et Passio gloriosissimi Canuti regis et martyris* by Aelnoth, c. 1109-1122, this text provides a clear testimony to the presence of Englishmen in Denmark (Abrams 2004). Similarly, the *Tabula Othiniensis*, an epitaph interred with Cnut's relics in Odense in 1095, should be counted as part of an English Odense tradition (Geertz 1912: 60-62; see Petersen in this volume). The inscription lists the names of Cnut's companions at the time of his martyrdom, and though the names are Danish some are spelled according to Anglo-Saxon phonetics; the scribe, then, is likely to have been of English origin (Leach 1921: 78).

Connections across the North Sea throughout the early medieval period are well-documented. From the late eighth century, Viking raiders from Scandinavia regularly ravaged the English coastline, and from the mid-ninth century Scandinavian settlement in England created a set of new opportunities for cultural transmission across the North Sea (see for example Hadley *et al.* 2000; Adams *et al.* 2004; Abrams 2012; Missuno 2017). The culmination of these connections was the conquest of England by Cnut the Great in 1016 and the subsequent establishment of an Anglo-Danish Empire which further strengthened the transfer of people, artefacts, knowledge and ideas across the North Sea (Pedersen, 2004; Roesdahl 2007; Spejlborg 2016). On the basis of primarily written evidence, this paper seeks to explore some of these connections which laid the foundation for the English presence and influence evident at the translation of the relics of Cnut IV.

Connections between England and Denmark in the time of Cnut the Great

The conquest of England opened a direct corridor of contact between England and Denmark, which resulted in a significant movement of people, goods, technologies and ideas between the two kingdoms. Perhaps surprisingly, this is a period in which only few individual travellers outside the royal sphere can be identified on the basis of the historical sources, but it is possible to reconstruct parts of the network that surrounded the establishment of a North Sea Empire which came to include Denmark, England, Norway, parts of Sweden, and an overlordship of Scotland.

The time from the conquest of England by Cnut the Great in 1016 to the collapse of the Anglo-Danish kingdom with the death of his son Harthacnut in 1042 was the most intense period for English contacts in Denmark. Here, a variety of people travelled between England and Denmark.

First, the members of Cnut's conquest army returned to Scandinavia after the successful campaign. Many of these had spent years in England and returned to Scandinavia with, we must assume, part of the tribute payed by the English, as well as foreign, and particularly English, experience. Second, many of the highest-ranking men who had taken part in the conquest were rewarded with earldoms or other important positions in England. But many, including Thorkell the Tall, who had received the earldom of East Anglia and Erik Hakonson of Norway, who had been named to the earldom of Northumbria, continued to hold interests (and in some cases also land, positions and other commitments) in Scandinavia. The travels of many of these individuals would have included the movement of other people (wives, retinues, servants and more), thus expanding the net-

work of people active on both sides of the North Sea. Third, similar suppositions can be made for the journeys of Cnut himself; we must assume that his retinue included people of varying status and different functions, from the royal priest to the housecarl and the craftsman (Spejlborg 2016: 100-134). Excavations at Viborg Sønderlø support this picture and demonstrate that even a relatively short stay by the Anglo-Danish monarch could have significant influence on a local area (Iversen *et al.* 2005). Fourth, this period saw the intensification of some of the connections that had been initiated already during the reign of Cnut's father, Svend Forkbeard. These include specifically the employment of English moneyers and ecclesiastics in Denmark (Roesdahl 2007; see Poulsen in this volume). By placing English experts at the top of institutions such as the Church and the mint in a period when these were still in their formative years, Cnut created the possibility of a lasting English influence in these areas. Consequently, the reign of Cnut laid the foundation for contacts and relations of later periods.

The Anglo-Danish elite in the mid-eleventh century

Contacts between England and Denmark continued beyond the collapse of the Anglo-Danish Empire. Throughout the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) and beyond the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066, Danes still arrived in England and people of Danish origin remained active in English politics. At the same time people of significant English experience or of English origin continued to arrive in Denmark (Spejlborg 2016). These connections are most visible among people of high elite status and the links across the North Sea are often of a close personal nature (Spejlborg *in print*). The family of the English Earl Godwine is the most striking and well-documented example of this type of Anglo-Danish connection.

The Godwinsons

During the early years of Cnut the Great's English rule, the king married off his sister, Estrith, to the Danish magnate Ulf. Ulf's sister, Gytha, was married to Godwine and their family became the most prominent force in Anglo-Danish relations in the mid-eleventh century (Schmeidler 1917: 114-115) (fig. 1). It

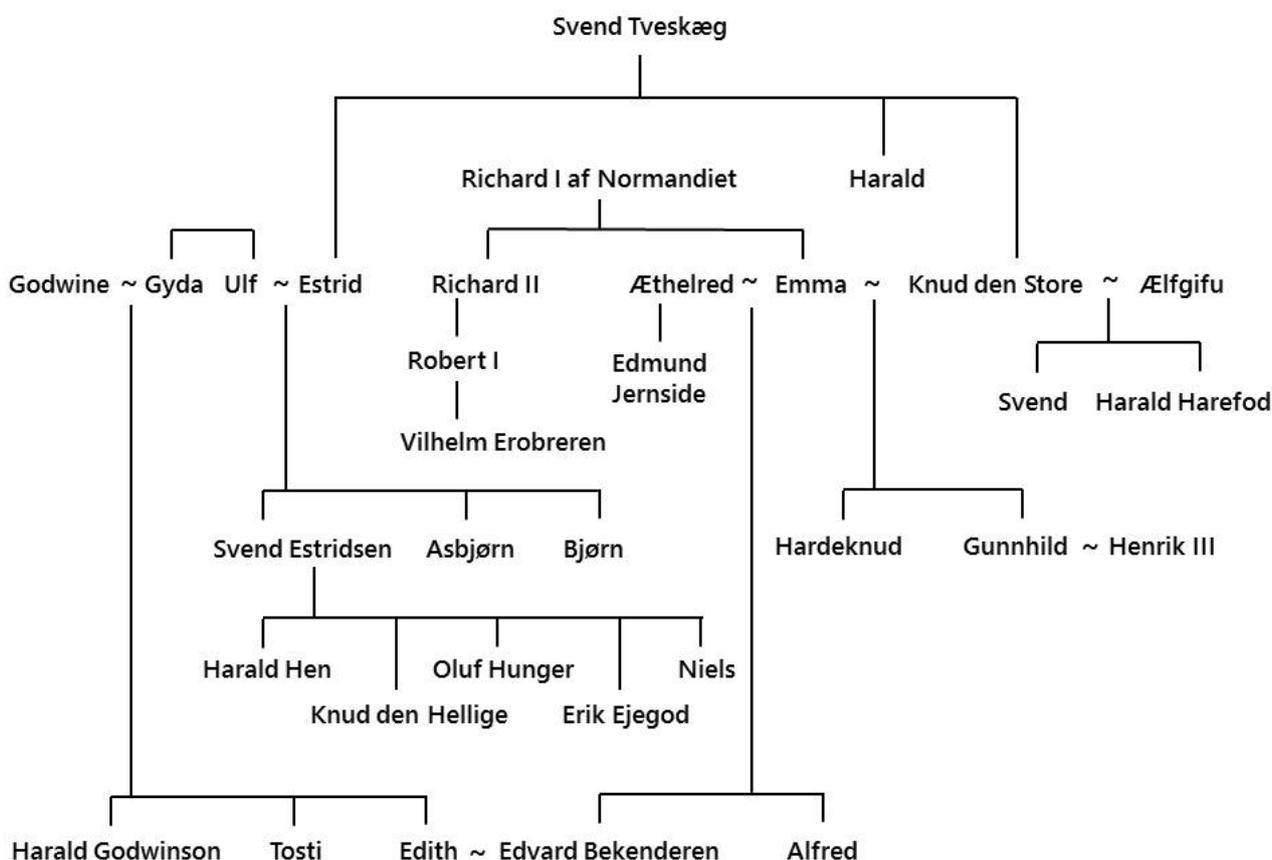


Fig. 1: Anglo-Danish familial connections in the eleventh century including the Godwinsons.
Illustration: Marie Bønlokke Missuno

was their son, Harold Godwinson, who ascended to the English throne following the death of Edward the Confessor in 1066, and who was killed at the Battle of Hastings when William the Conqueror invaded England with his Norman army later the same year. However, Godwine and his descendants were not the only ones active on both sides of the North Sea.

The exile of Osgod Clapa

In 1046 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle relates the exile of one Osgod Clapa: “In this same year Osgod Clapa was outlawed before Christmas” (Whitelock 1961: 109). No additional information on the origin and identity of Osgod is given in the entry, but he is traceable in a number of other eleventh-century sources. In the period from 1026 to 1042, during the reigns of Cnut the Great and Harthacnut, his name appears on the attestation of royal charters. Between 1042 and 1046 he attested charters under Edward the Confessor. Osgod’s power seems to have centred on London and East Anglia. He was commemorated in the *Liber Vitae* of Thorney Abbey and in the early 1040s he witnessed the will of Thurstan, Lustwine’s son, as a member of the shire-court of Norfolk (Sawyer 1968: 1531).

In the entry of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS D, which deals with his exile, he is titled *stallere* (Whitelock 1961: 109). Individuals of this position were of thegnly rank, but the role of the stallers and the title itself, sometimes associated with the office of marshal and translated thus, have not been satisfactorily explained. Traditionally, it has been viewed as an honorific title introduced by Cnut, but the stallers of Edward the Confessor – during whose reign the mention of stallers in the sources becomes prominent – do share certain characteristics (Larson 1904: 146-152). They all had extensive landholdings and great wealth, and often seem to have acted as non-committal officials in close service of the king (Mack 1986: 123-134). Hermann’s *De miraculis sancti Eadmundi* (c. 1100) refers to Osgod as *major domus*, a title used in Merovingian France to describe the manager of the royal household (Liebermann 1879: 8). The implications in late Anglo-Saxon England were almost certainly different, but likely still denoted an official position at the court.

Furthermore, Osgod held at least one estate near London and may have had some administrative authority in eastern England (Bolton 2009: 62-64). There can be no doubt that Osgod was a man of high standing with royal connections. It was at the wedding of his daughter, Gytha, to Tofi the Proud

(another staller, prominent Dane and an associate of Osgod) that Harthacnut had died in 1042 (Darlington *et al.* 1995: 532-535).

It is often argued that Osgod was one of the Danes who had come to England with Cnut or during the early part of his reign, but Ann Williams has proposed the alternative hypothesis that he was instead of East-Midland origin and a descendant of Osgod, son of Eadulf, a kinsman of Bishop Theodred of London in the mid-tenth century. In the mid-eleventh century, Osgod Clapa held an estate at Pakenham, Suffolk, which had previously been in the hands of Osgod, Eadulf’s son (Williams 1989: 333-334). Whatever his origin, the contemporary record leaves no doubt as to Osgod’s Danish connections. The name of his daughter, Gytha, supports the notion of a strong link to Denmark.

Upon his banishment from the English kingdom in 1046, it is likely, then, that Osgod went to Denmark, but Flanders is also a possibility. In 1049, three years after his exile, Osgod attempted a return to England. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* writes: “Then the king was informed that Osgod was at Wulpe with thirty-nine ships, and the king sent for all the ships he could summon from among those which had gone home. And Osgod placed his wife at Bruges, and they went back again with six ships, and the others went to Sussex to *Eadulfesness*, and they did damage there and then returned to the ships, and then a strong wind overtook them so that they were all lost except for four that were killed overseas” (Whitelock 1961: 113).

The chronicle of John of Worcester (d.1140) contains a slightly different account. It asserts that Osgod came to England with twenty-nine instead of thirty-nine ships, and that only two ships, not four, survived the storm and were taken. In addition, Osgod’s movements in relation to his wife differ from those given by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. John of Worcester writes: “However, Osgod, having taken back his wife, whom he had left at Bruges, returned to Denmark with six ships.” (Darlington *et al.* 1995: 548-549).

Dorothy Whitelock has suggested that the discrepancies may be explained by a misunderstanding of the Old English version, but we cannot exclude that the Worcester chronicler may have had other sources at his disposal (Whitelock 1961: 113, n. 4). John of Worcester’s specification that when Osgod left England with his six ships it was to Denmark that he returned also strengthens the suggestion that this is the place he retreated to when he was first exiled,

and that it was there he assembled his twenty-nine or thirty-nine ships and their crews.

Associated with Osgod Clapa's exile from England is, if we follow John of Worcester's account, the staller's wife and thus probably a large part of his household. Many of these would have spent a long time in England – if not their whole lives – and built up a significant knowledge and experience of English culture and society.

It is uncertain, however, whether Osgod stayed in Denmark or returned to England. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* relates that he died suddenly in his bed in 1054, but does not specify on which side of the North Sea (Whitelock 1961: 129). The fact that the chronicler knows of his death suggests that he might have returned to England, but no other evidence exists to support this impression. If he had stayed in Denmark and died there, the entry of his death into the chronicle would suggest a high degree of contact and knowledge and news exchange between Denmark and England at this point in the mid-eleventh century.

The story of the exile of Osgod Clapa is not unique. The mid-1040s saw the expulsion of a number of Danes from England and the demotion of others with known Danish loyalties while Norman magnates were given positions at Edward's court (Barlow 1970: 93-94; Spejlborg 2016) - a precursor to the events that followed the Norman invasion of England about two decades later.

Again, the movements of the Godwinsons provide a well-documented example of these events. Gytha, the Danish wife of Earl Godwine, had gone with him and other members of the family into exile to Flanders in 1051 but returned to England the following year (Whitelock 1961: 119-121). After the Norman Invasion and the death of her son Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings, she departed from England to Flatholme in 1068 and later crossed the sea to St Omer in Flanders. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, she was accompanied by many distinguished men's wives (Whitelock 1961: 148). Here sources cease to mention Gytha but she is very likely to have continued soon after to Denmark along with her daughter Gunnhild and possibly her granddaughter Gytha (Bolton 2005).

The sons of Harold Godwinson are also recorded to have made their way to Denmark in the aftermath of 1066. Following the death of their father, they went first to Ireland to assemble a fleet (McGurk 1998: 6-9). Later, two of the sons sought refuge at the court of their father's cousin, Svend Estridsen

along with their sister, Gytha (Friis-Jensen *et al.* 2005: 16-17). Timothy Bolton has studied the movement of the Godwinsons and other English refugees at the court of Svend Estridsen around 1070, and counts both landholders and ecclesiastics among them (Bolton 2005).

Common to all of these movements is a shared network of Anglo-Scandinavian connections that were activated and called upon in an event such as exile. Within this network one set of contacts could lead to further connections, thus creating multiple links between England and Denmark as well as between the links created during the time of Cnut the Great and contacts utilized in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest.

It is important to note that the connections to Denmark among the English and Anglo-Danish magnates in England were not unilateral, but also created opportunities in England for members of the Danish elite. In the late 1060s this becomes evident with the dispatchment of Danish fleets to England to participate in the battles for power that followed the Norman Conquest and in which the later Cnut IV took part.

Cnut IV in England

The Norman conquest of England and the unrest that followed did not only facilitate movement of English exiles to Denmark, it also renewed Danish royal interest in England. Late in the summer of 1069 a Danish army under the leadership of Earl Asbjørn and three of Svend Estridsen's sons arrived in England (Whitelock 1961: 149). Two of the sons can be identified as Cnut and Harald (McGurk 1998: 8-9), the third remains unknown but could be either of the later kings Olaf or Erik.

On arrival, the Danes were met by the Northumbrians, including the earls Gospatric and Waltheof, and Edgar *Ætheling*. This type of alliance was made possible in part by the existence of previous contacts and relations. The Danes first proceeded to York where the Norman defenders set fire to the city in order to prevent the Danes from taking the castle. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the Danes stormed and destroyed the castle, captured the Norman treasure in it, and killed many hundreds and took many others hostage (Whitelock 1961: 149-150). According to John of Worcester, William the Conqueror then hurried north and managed to pay off Asbjørn. The agreement reached stipulated that the Danes would leave England the following spring but had permission until then to ravage freely along the

coast. The Danish fleet spent the winter between the River Ouse and the River Trent while William harried the north (McGurk 1998: 8-9; Whitelock 1961: 149-150).

From there the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and John of Worcester are in disagreement. John asserts that the Danish fleet did leave as promised and that the Danish King Svend outlawed his brother Asbjørn for having accepted the payment and submitted to William (McGurk 1998: 10-11). John, however, seems to be in error here. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the Danes did not leave as agreed. Instead a second Danish fleet, now under the command of Svend Estridsen himself, arrived in the River Humber, but it did not join forces with the earlier fleet, and so there could be some truth in John's account of Asbjørn's banishment. Asbjørn's force went south to the Fenlands where they supported the local resistance against Norman rule (Whitelock 1961: 150-153).

The sack of Peterborough

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS E (Oxford Bodleian Library MS Laud 636), also known as the Peterborough Chronicle, gives a lengthy account of the sack of Peterborough by the English rebels under Hereward the Wake, assisted by the Danes, and deserves to be reviewed in full: "Then forthwith in the morning all the outlaws came with many ships, and wanted to enter the monastery, and the monks withstood them so that they could not get in. Then they set fire to it and burnt down all the monks' houses and all the town except one house. Then they got in by means of fire at Bolhithe Gate, and the monks came towards them and asked them for a truce, but they paid no attention, and went into the church, climbed up to the Holy Rood and took the crown off our Lord's head – all of pure gold – and then took the foot-rest that was underneath his feet, which was all of red gold. They climbed up to the steeple, brought down the altar-frontal that was hidden there – it was all of gold and silver – and took there two golden shrines and nine of silver, and they took fifteen great crucifixes, of both gold and silver. They took there so much gold and silver, and so many treasures in money and vestments and books, that no man can reckon it up to another. They said they did it out of loyalty to the monastery. Then they went on board ship and proceeded to Ely, where they deposited all the treasure. The Danes expected that they were going to overcome the Frenchmen. [...] Then the Danes proceeded out of Ely with all the above-mentioned

treasures, and took them with them. When they were in the middle of the sea there came a great storm, and scattered all the ships carrying the treasures – some went to Norway, some to Ireland, some to Denmark and all that reached there was the altar-frontal and some shrines and some crosses and much of the other treasure, and they brought it to a royal town called [*gap in MS*] and then put it all in the church. Then afterwards through their carelessness and drunkenness the church was burnt one night with everything that was in it. Thus was the monastery of Peterborough burnt down and plundered. Almighty God have pity on it through his great mercy!" (Whitelock 1961: 151-153).

The account of the sack of the monastery of Peterborough is a later interpolation to the *Chronicle* added in the first half of the twelfth century, but it nevertheless raises some interesting points. The composition and size of the treasure taken from the monastery is clearly described, but the inventory should be treated with caution; and it is unclear whether everything taken from the monastery came to the Danes or whether some of it stayed with the Anglo-Saxon rebels. Nevertheless, the account gives an indication of the variety of artefacts which could have entered Denmark from England - remembered from an English point of view. The account of how the treasure was lost is likely fictitious, and destruction through shipwreck and carelessness is not an uncommon motif in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (e.g. Whitelock 1961: 95-96).

Judging by the accounts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* such as the above, significant amounts of English artefacts, including church fittings, could have reached Denmark during the eleventh century. Yet this is not clearly reflected in the archaeological record despite an increase in metal-detector finds, including artefacts of insular origin, in recent years (Beck *et al.* 2019.; Baastrup & Vang Petersen 2010; Baastrup 2014a; Pedersen 2004: 43-67). A number of the more recent finds are dated to the early Viking period and throw new light on Anglo-Scandinavian connections and the effects of the Viking raids across the North Sea in this period (Beck *et al.* 2019). For the later Viking period and early Middle Ages the Anglo-Saxon cloisonné enamel brooches attracts some attention. The group is stylistically dated to the late 900s and the eleventh century, and a rare example of a brooch of this type discovered in a datable context has been found in a well in Odense, dendrochronologically dated to 1117 (fig. 2) (Baastrup 2009: 224-226). These exclusive dress-fittings are of



Fig. 2: Cloisonné enamel brooch found in Odense. Photo: Asger Kjærgaard.

a style associated with East Anglia and South East England, and we may wonder whether these were trading objects or whether they arrived in Denmark on the clothes of a traveller. Alternatively, they may have been objects of trade catering to the taste of an Anglo-Danish elite in Denmark.

Baastrup has demonstrated a close link between insular imports from the Viking Age and sites or areas associated with the elite and its activities (Baastrup 2014a: 357, 2014b: 61-62). This opens the possibility of a connection to the movements of magnates and other members of the Anglo-Danish elite discussed above. However, the difficulty of precisely dating artefacts found through metal-detecting complicates any direct association between specific finds and people in this context. That being said, we must recognise that artefacts such as the cloisonné enamel brooches are likely to have arrived in Denmark through movements and contacts of people similar to those witnessed in the written sources.

The absence of a higher degree of English imports in Denmark in the eleventh century might partly be explained by the fact that we are dealing with a rather limited set of elite relations. Furthermore, from the mid-eleventh century many of these connections were partly broken with the end of the North Sea Empire of Cnut the Great and his sons, and later with the Norman invasion. These contacts are consequently less likely to have left a clear imprint on the archaeological record (Baastrup 2014b: 62).

Further clue to the absence of late Viking Age and early medieval insular imports – especially imports similar to those described in the *Anglo-Saxon Cron-*

icle's account of the sack of Peterborough – may be found in the routes taken by the Danish fleets to and from England. In 1075, we learn, the fleet of Cnut IV went to Denmark by way of Flanders (Whitelock 1961: 157-158). For the year 1000 the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* states that the Danish fleet had gone to Normandy (Whitelock 1961: 85). The reason behind these Continental stop-overs can be glimpsed in a treaty between King *Æthelred* and the Norman duke Richard I, dated 991, the terms of which are reported in a letter from Pope John XV, preserved in the *Gesta regum anglorum* of William of Malmesbury: that neither ruler shall receive the enemy of the other (Mynors *et al.* 1998: 166). This can only be a reference to the Viking fleets and their ability to safely harbour and sell the results of their plunder in Normandy. The possibility that much of the English loot was sold and exchanged to coin on the Continent before the raiding fleets returned to Denmark can help explain why so few items seems to have made their way to Denmark. It may also go some way to account for the mixed nature of many late Viking and early medieval hoards (Moesgaard 2006). Some ecclesiastic artefacts of English origin, however, did make their way to Denmark. The relics of Saints Alban and Oswald in Odense provide the most obvious example.

The relics of St Oswald

The anonymous *Passio Sancti Kanuti regis et martiris* written in Odense 1095×1100 tells the story of how Cnut IV was martyred in the church dedicated

to the Virgin Mary and St Alban. It further relates how Cnut loved St Alban above all others and that he himself had had the relics of this saint translated to Odense from the land of the English (Gertz 1912: 68-69; see also Hope in this volume). Aelnoth's *Gesta* adds a little more detail about the relics in relation to the assault on the Danish king: "Then as the bravest heroes dislodged the hostile troops from the church door, these turned to the eastern part of the sanctuary where they had seen the pious prince devoted in prayers, and with their swords and axes they set on the posts cutting and destroying, and the falling post knocked down the chests containing the relics of the worthy martyrs Alban and Oswald along with the sacred cross that stood between them onto the lowest ground." (My translation, based on Gertz 1912: 120-123.)

The relics of the English saint cannot have been sizable since they could be stored in *capsulae*, literally 'small cases' small enough to be knocked off the altar when the post crashed down on it. Cnut certainly did not bring home the entire St Oswald. Relics of St Oswald are known to have been at both Peterborough and York (Blair 2002: 549-550), and

Cnut is likely to have been present at both locations as a member of Asbjørn's fleet. Although the relics are not mentioned explicitly, the sack of Peterborough presents a fitting context for the removal of St Oswald's relics to Denmark. Small pieces of this particular saint, England's first royal saint, could also have arrived in Denmark, not through plunder but through diplomacy (Antonsson 2005: 61-62) (Fig. 3).

Cnut IV made a second journey to England before he came to the Danish throne. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Cnut arrived in England with a fleet in 1075, presumably to assist a group of English rebel earls in a revolt against the Norman rule. But the rebellion was crushed before that Danes arrived and the Danish fleet resorted to plunder before they returned home by way of Flanders (Whitelock 1961: 157-158).

The timing of the arrival of the Danish fleet with an Anglo-Saxon uprising exemplifies the way in which the Danish campaigns in England of the mid-eleventh century were based on knowledge, links and claims on (royal) power created during the reign of Cnut the Great (and earlier) and kept alive by the movements and aspirations of people like Osgod Clapa and the Godwinsons.



Fig. 3: The relics of St Alban and St Oswald in Odense are now lost. But in the nearby village church of Sanderum this collection of relics has survived. The parchment labels attribute one of the relics to St Oswald and it could be a fragment of the Odense relics. Photo: Jens G. Aagaard.

The martyrdom of Cnut IV

Cnut IV planned one final campaign for the conquest of England in 1085, but the king was detained by trouble on his southern border and unable to join the fleet that had already assembled in the Limfjord. The delay and subsequent fines imposed by the king led to a revolt that spread across the Jutland peninsula (see Gazzoli and Poulsen in this volume). The king fled to Odense on the island of Funen, where he was killed in the church dedicated to the English St Alban on the 10th of July 1086 (Fenger 1989: 65-59). Thus, this last Danish attempt at restoring the double kingdom of Cnut the Great never came to be. But connections between the English and the Danes continued to exist after the death of Cnut IV, as is evident from the rituals surrounding his elevation and translation.

Sometime before 1100 an English bishop by the name of Hubald was appointed to Odense. It was probably during his pontificate that the Benedictine cathedral priory of Odense was founded. A monastic cathedral chapter such as this was very unusual outside England and must be a result of English influence (King 1966: 1). Around 1095 twelve monks had arrived in Odense on the invitation of the Danish king Erik Ejegod to form a daughter house of the monastery of Evesham (King 1962: 149; see Gazzoli in this volume). The scheme had the patronage of the English king, William Rufus, and the choice of Evesham as origin for the new monastic centre in Odense may have its roots in the time of Cnut the Great (Knowles 1963: 163-164). The Anglo-Danish king had been among the benefactors of the abbey, and its abbot in the period 1014-1040, Ælfweard, had been a relative of Cnut, probably through his first wife, Ælfgifu of Northampton (King 1962: 149). The Danish king Erik held further links with the English Church, and he and his queen Bothild were commemorated in the Durham *Liber Vitae*. According to Gazzoli, the acquisition of confraternity at the Benedictine community at Durham would have required Erik's personal presence (Gazzoli 2011: 147). The Odense community maintained its links to its mother house and also fostered connections with St Mary's Abbey in York (*DiplDan*, vol. I.2, 24, 66, and 67 and vol. 1.3, 48 and 171).

None of the clerics who arrived from Evesham on the invitation of King Erik, however, are likely to be the author of the *Passio Sancti Kanuti regis et martiris*. The anonymous writer claims to have been present at the elevation of Cnut, which took place in the spring of 1095, before the death of King Oluf

and the ascension of Erik to the throne. We are consequently dealing with not only one, but two or more influxes of English clerics to Denmark – and Odense – in the late eleventh century. It is possible that the author of the *Passio* had arrived with or in connection with the relics of the Saints Oswald or Alban. In any case, some interpersonal contact and communication with England in general, and Evesham in particular, would have been in place already before the arrival of the twelve Evesham monks under Erik (Esmark 2010: 187-200; Nyberg 2000: 56). There is no reason that this contact could not, in part, have been instigated or led by an existing Anglo-Saxon presence in Denmark.

The English-influenced Odense literature also include the already cited *Gesta et Passio* of Aelnoth. In his preface to his work Aelnoth informs us that he was born in Canterbury but had been in Denmark twenty-four years (Gertz 1912: 77). He was, in his own account, present at the translation of the body of St Cnut in 1000×1001, and so must have arrived before then. He could have come at the time of the establishment of the monastery in Odense, but an earlier date is possible as well. There is no secure evidence that Aelnoth was a monk or that he was permanently established at Odense. He might instead have been attached to the royal court (Gelting 2011: 40), and his animosity against the William the Conqueror, evident in his work (e.g. Gertz 1912: 98-99), could indicate that he, as other English clerics, had left as a consequence of Norman rule. He is, however, unlikely to have arrived in Denmark prior to 1086 (Gelting 2011: 39). Aelnoth's *Gesta et Passio* was dedicated to King Niels who, like his predecessors, employed English men in central positions. For example, Arnketil, a monk from St Albans, goldsmith, treasurer and moneyer, was employed at the early twelfth-century Danish court (Mørkholm 1989: 2).

Conclusion

The Anglo-Danish links of the late eleventh century represent the last phase of connections first created during the reign of Cnut the Great and his father Svend Forkbeard. They led to English influence on the formation of the Danish Church and monetary economy as well as in other less visible areas, and one of the final larger effects of these connections was the English influence in the establishment of the cult of Cnut the Holy.

The Anglo-Danish network exceeded the aggregate sum of the individual journeys recorded and

discussed here. Through participation in this network, people who had arrived in Denmark from England were able to keep in touch with events and developments on the other side of the North Sea without necessarily having to set out on a journey themselves. The English connections brought the Scandinavian elites into contact with a culture and society in which supranational institutions were firmly established in a way which was not the case in Scandinavia, and this provided an opportunity for the transfer of new ideas, models, and technologies. The network facilitated these flows of communication and meant that the connections established in the first half of the eleventh century had impact and relevance into the latter half of the century—including in Odense.

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Notes

¹ Date after Gertz 1912: 30, who stresses this as a hypothetical date and gives the 7th of April as the latest alternative.

² Fortissimis igitur heroibus hostiles acies a foribus basilice deturbantibus, ad orientem sanctuarii, ubi principem deuotissimum precibus insistentem introsperant, uersi gladiis et securibus postibus secundis et diruendis insistent capsulasque reliquiarum preciosorum martyrum, Albani scilicet necnon et Oswaldi, cum cruce sacra interposita, poste ad ima uergente solo deiciunt.

