

Introductory remarks

1.1 Background and aims of this work

When asked ‘what is the basic function of a hagiographical text?’ one might answer by mentioning the function of edifying its audience. This, in any case, was the answer Delehaye, who initiated modern scholarship on hagiography, gave in his definition of the term *hagiography* in 1905.¹ There is no doubt that edification is an important aspect of the use of hagiographical writings, but historical research on hagiography has shown that many individual texts can be argued to have also other functions, depending on the historical context of their production and their use, including such functions as the ‘construction’ of a saint, the presentation of a model of conduct, the foundation of a saint’s cult, or the strengthening of a religious community.²

Whereas a remarkable array of such functions has been documented in modern historical research, the question of the multifunctionality of individual hagiographical texts has so far not received much attention, as Bihrer noted in his recent account of the state of the art in scholarship on early and high medieval European hagiography.³ The present work aims to contribute to filling this research lacuna.

The main subject of the present work is a Latin hagiographic text written around 1112 by the Anglo-Saxon monk Ælnoth of Canterbury (Latin: Ailnothus), who lived in Denmark at the time, about the Danish king Cnut who was killed by rebels in 1086 and later venerated as St Cnut. Following an opening letter addressed to the ruling king at the time of writing, Niels, Ælnoth presents a short overview of the development of Denmark followed by the deeds of Sweyn before focusing on the

1 “On le voit, pour être strictement hagiographique, le document doit avoir un caractère religieux et se proposer un but d’édification” (DELEHAYE, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, p. 2). The English version reads: “It thus appears that, in order to be strictly hagiographic, the document should be of a religious character and should aim at edification” (DELEHAYE, *The Legends of the Saint*, p. 5).

2 Cf. BIHRER, *Heiligkeiten im europäischen Früh- und Hochmittelalter*, p. 19 f.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 28: “Forschungen zur Multifunktionalität von Hagiographik sind bisher noch selten”.

vita and *passio* of one of Sweyn's sons, Cnut.⁴ The work closes with a description of the development of the cult of St Cnut under Cnut's successors and an epilogue.

The title of the text used by the editor Gertz, 'Gesta Swenomagni regis et filiorum eius et Passio gloriosissimi Canuti regis et martyris'⁵ (short: 'Gesta Swenomagni'), already indicates some aspects of the complexity of this work, i.e. the focus on both the history of the Danish King Sweyn (and his sons) and, in the later parts of the text, the *vita* and *passio* of his son Cnut.

The 'Gesta et Passio'⁶ – I shall use this abbreviated title in my study –, is the first major literary work written in Denmark and a major source for the early history of Denmark. Somewhat pointedly, one could say that Ælnoth intended not only to give the Danish people a complex and elaborate hagiography following the models of Anglo-Latin saints' lives, but also to write a chapter of a 'Historia ecclesiastica gentis Danorum'. In the course of hagiographical research his text has alternately been characterised as a historical work,⁷ a typical hagiography, pure religious propaganda,⁸ and as "something of a hybrid",⁹ containing homiletic elements and features of a panegyric. It is probably for its functional complexity that the text was sometimes considered heterogeneous and strangely structured.

In my own study, this textual complexity forms one of the starting points of my analysis. Instead of pronouncing an aesthetic judgment on the text, I shall try to show how the author employs different textual means to achieve a plurality of functions adapted to his superordinate aims in the historical situation he addresses. Part of the result of my analysis consists in showing how 'function' in this text and thereby making sense of the seemingly strange form of the text.

The rhetorical and stylistic peculiarities of Ælnoth's work indicate what kind of text he intended to write, namely a sophisticated text with literary qualities that was worthy of its great topic and that could fulfil various functions. In order to deal with these aspects of complexity I not only use methods from the historical study of hagiography but also draw on methods developed in literary studies on Medieval legendary narrative and linguistic studies on the functional analysis of texts.

4 The spelling of the Danish names differs across languages. I have decided to follow the English spelling variant of the Danish names but have retained the original spelling in quotes.

5 Gertz states that he used a subheading from the proemium of the main text as title for the entire work. Cf. VSD, p. 77 (fn. 1). Gertz published his edition in his volume on the 'Vitae Sanctorum Danorum' (VSD). I am grateful for the digitisation of this volume, which Ruth Sindt from the University Library in Kiel prepared early on in the course of my research and which is freely available online: <http://dibiki.ub.uni-kiel.de/viewer/!fulltext/PPN834949911/1/>.

6 The English translations of Ælnoth's text are quoted from Marchlewski's work, which she so very kindly made available to me. In some cases I prefer a different translation and have marked it at the respective places. See also, also GAZZOLI, Gesta Swenomagni: A Partial English Translation.

7 Cf. SKÓRZEWSKA, Family Matters, p. 337; P. M. SØRENSEN, Ælnoths Buch über Knud den Heiligen; GERTZ, Knud den Helliges Martyrhistorie, p. 1.

8 Cf. VSD, p. 43, the original Danish reads "Værket er et religiøst Tendenskrift af reneste Vand".

9 MARCHLEWSKI, St. Cnut, p. 27.

As for the value of the ‘Gesta et Passio’ as a source for the political history of the period, scholars have been divided in their opinions.¹⁰ As Sørensen noted, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars in particular tended to deny the ‘Gesta et Passio’ any historical value.¹¹ This is also true of Gertz, the editor of the ‘Gesta et Passio’, who claimed that “this value is not nearly as high as some of our newer historians seem to think.”¹² More recent research, however, has been, with certain reservations, more positive as to the usefulness of the ‘Gesta et Passio’ as a historical source.¹³ In contrast to the assessment of Gertz, I argue that this work is of considerable value to historians if we change the focus of our approach from individual historical facts to using the text as a source for the identification of attitudes towards sanctity, kingship, ecclesiastical development and the complexity and challenges of the time as seen by the Anglo-Saxon Ælnoth living in Denmark.

One aim of my study is to analyse the Anglo-Saxon monk’s *perspective* on the role of the Danish church and its relationship to the monarchy and his view of recent Danish history as culminating in the creation of the first royal martyr – the ‘protomartyr’ – of Denmark. The focus on multifunctionality aims to display the various facets of this ‘worldview’ as they become visible in the course of Ælnoth’s text. His way of seeing both history and the contemporary situation of Denmark includes, among other aspects, his view of history as salvation history, his construction of Cnut’s history as the history of a royal saint, and his views on ideal kingship and on the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty. Thus, one of the aims of this study is to identify relevant networks of topics and clusters of functions and their interaction.

Before going into more detail of my analysis, I shall now provide a brief preview of the contents of my study. I shall start by giving a short account of the concepts and methods used in my analysis, followed by a chapter on the historical background of Ælnoth’s text, presenting also relevant historical research on the period and on the conceptualisation of saints and sanctities. This is followed by a survey of the extant sources on St Cnut, focusing in particular on the ‘Gesta et Passio’, its author and audience, dating and transmission as well as its reception. Then I shall take a close look at the basic structures, narrative strategies and rhetoric of Ælnoth’s ‘Gesta et Passio’. The main body of my study presents the analysis of different functions of various passages of the text and their interaction, including, first and foremost,

10 On the general question of the potential of Medieval hagiography for historical research, cf. LOTTER, *Methodisches zur Gewinnung historischer Erkenntnisse aus hagiographischen Quellen*.

11 P. M. SØRENSEN, *Ælnoths Buch über Knud den Heiligen*, p. 55.

12 Translation by author. The original Danish reads “Værket er et religiøst Tendenskrift af reneste Vand [...], hertil maa der tages det nøjeste Hensyn ved Bedømmelsen af dets Værdi som historisk Kildeskrift, og efter min Meninger denne langtfra saa høj, som de fleste af vore nyere Historikere synes at mene” (VSD, p. 43).

13 For example, some of the authors of the recent Volume by HOPE/BJERREGAARD/HEDEAGER KRAG et al., *Life and Cult of Cnut the Holy*.

portraying and constructing Cnut as a royal saint. Further functions are propagating and showing the beginnings of the cult of St Cnut, propagating an ideology of kingship, enhancing the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty, furthering ecclesiastical interests and providing edification as well as entertainment. And finally, I will briefly show the development of the cult of St Cnut after the completion of the ‘Gesta et Passio’.

1.2 Concepts and methods

In analysing Ælnoth’s text, its historical background, its structures and its functions I shall, as I mentioned before, draw on concepts and methods developed in different contexts of scholarly work, especially historical work on Medieval hagiography, literary studies on Medieval legendary narrative and linguistic studies on the functional analysis of texts. In the following passages I shall give a brief outline of these concepts and methods, thereby also indicating how they can be combined to create a unitary approach.

As for the background of relevant historical studies, I mainly rely on recent work emphasising the variety of concepts of sanctities (“Heiligkeiten”), the various strategies of the construction of sanctity, and the functions of saints’ cults and hagiographical writings in specific historical contexts.¹⁴ Of particular relevance to the latter aspect is recent work on forms and functions of sanctity in the European periphery of the Nordic countries.¹⁵ This line of work provides useful examples and models for the kind of differentiated functional analysis I develop in my study of Ælnoth’s work. In the case of the ‘Gesta et Passio’,¹⁶ relevant historical contexts include the still precarious situation of the Danish church in the years around 1100 and the situation of the dynasties vying for power during this period. Taking into account this historical situation will make it possible both to make sense of many aspects of Ælnoth’s text and to show its historical relevance and its functional potential in this particular context.

An important concept that has frequently been used in recent historical studies and that I already mentioned in the last paragraph is the concept of ‘construction’, which is derived from constructivist epistemology. The basic idea is that “writing

14 Cf. the individual contributions in the following volume: BIHRER/FRITZ, *Heiligkeiten*.

15 Cf. e.g. ELLIS NILSSON, *Forming and Fashioning Early Scandinavian Sanctity*; GAZZOLI, *Monk and Bishop, Missionary and Martyr*; HOPE, *Reformulating the Sanctity of Olaf Haraldsson*.

16 VSD, p. 77–136. Following the editorial principles of e.g. Jiroušková, *Marchlewski and Love*, I chose to render ‘e caudate’ (ĕ) used by Gertz as ‘e’. Cf. JIROUŠKOVÁ, *Der heilige Wikingerkönig: Untersuchung*, p. 7; MARCHLEWSKI, *St. Cnut*, p. 80; LOVE, *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints’ Lives*, p. clxxxiii.

history means ‘constructing the past’.¹⁷ From a methodological point of view the usefulness of this concept lies in the fact that it draws attention to the means and strategies that are used to perform this constructive activity. For my study using this concept means that I shall lay particular emphasis on the analysis of the textual means and strategies that are used by Ælnoth to create the image of a royal saint and to present his history as part of salvation history.

The basic attitude towards the plurality of forms and functions of sanctity that I mentioned in connection with recent historical studies can also be found in recent literary studies on legendary narrative.¹⁸ In this case, this attitude leads to a particular emphasis on the differentiation of narrative patterns and motifs and the different options an author has to give a story its narrative form. It is this kind of attention to Ælnoth’s narrative strategies that helps to create an understanding of the functional status of individual text passages and to show by what means the multifunctionality and interactions of individual functions of the text are achieved by its author. From a narratological point of view, it is necessary to analyse both the story (or stories) told about the events in the saint’s life (and death) and the various textual elements of narrative discourse that serve extra purposes like commenting on the course of events, evaluating the conduct of the protagonists, reflecting on the possible consequences of events, showing the theological dimension of these events, etc. And it is important to determine how these elements are connected to their surrounding context and how the sequential structure of textual elements is organised what in classical rhetoric was called the *dispositio* of a text. Looking at our hagiographic text from this perspective we are presented with the picture of a considerable functional complexity, so that it can indeed be considered multifunctional.

From the point of view of the authors, writing such a text presents the challenge to use their various textual resources to provide for this functional complexity. And for the person analysing such a text it is necessary to use analytical instruments that will facilitate presenting a clear overview of the functional structure of the relevant texts.¹⁹ For the purpose of my study of the present text, I shall adapt, as part of my analytical instruments, a conceptual tool from the field of linguistics, namely Swales’

17 GOETZ, *Constructing the Past*, p. 3.

18 Cf. E. KOCH, *Optionen des Erzählens von Märtyrerheiligen*, p. 89 f. WEITBRECHT, *Brautenschaft und keusche Ehe*, p. 159; WEITBRECHT, *Fülle durch Mangel*; CONTZEN, *The Scottish Legendary*, p. 12. From the point of view of literary studies Koch highlighted the notion of ‘narrative options’ in martyr histories (“Optionen des Erzählens von Märtyrerheiligen”). In this context she emphasised the variety and flexibility of patterns and motives in legendary narrative: “Die Vielfalt und Flexibilität von Mustern und Motiven bei einer stetigen Adaption an die jeweiligen Kontexte und Funktionen des Erzählens” (E. KOCH, *Optionen des Erzählens von Märtyrerheiligen*, p. 89).

19 Cf. the focus on the functions of orientation and evaluation in the much-quoted early study on narrative analysis by Labov and Waletzky: LABOV/WALETZKY, *Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience*.

“genre analysis”,²⁰ which assumes the differentiation of functional levels, i.e. the level of tasks, the level of moves, and the level of steps.²¹ In this functional hierarchy, ‘tasks’ refers to the highest functional level of texts. Tasks can be performed by various moves and combinations of moves, and moves can be made by performing various steps or combinations of steps. To give an example from the genre of hagiography: One of the basic tasks of the writer of a saint’s life is the construction of this person as a saint. This task can be performed by the moves of describing his repentance and conversion and/or of demonstrating his *imitatio Christi*.²² The move of showing his *imitatio Christi* can, again, be implemented by making the steps of narrating episodes of the (future) saint’s healing a blind person and of his meeting a Judas-like traitor figure etc. Such steps also include the use of particular rhetorical means, e. g. the use of certain epithets, biblical comparisons, and digressions.

By using this analytical tool I shall try to give a perspicuous overview of the functional structure of Ælnoth’s text, without, however, always pedantically referring to the respective ‘level’ addressed in my analysis. A basic assumption of such an approach, worth mentioning at this point, is that a given textual element, e.g. a narrative passage, may be used to perform more than one task. For the structure of my analysis this means that in some cases certain passages from Ælnoth’s text will be discussed in more than one place and in other cases I will provide cross-references.

Taken together, the concepts and methods shown in the last paragraphs combine usefully to provide instruments for my analysis of the multifunctionality of Ælnoth’s ‘Gesta et Passio’ and its embedding in the historical context of Denmark around 1100. It can even be argued that the “genre” of saint biography is particularly well-suited to allow for such a multifunctionality. Thus, Huntington, focusing on authors of such texts, notes that

writing a saintly life could be an act of piety, an expression of affection for the subject, and/or a statement of firm belief in the subject’s sanctity. It could also – and indeed concurrently – be an attempt to bolster the prestige of people or institutions associated with the subject, or to impress models of behaviour upon its audience. Depictions of sanctity, therefore, not only reflected but also directed and shaped manifold cultural, spiritual, and social concerns.²³

20 Cf. SWALES, *Genre Analysis*.

21 The concept of task is used by Swales in a different function from the way I use it here (cf. *ibid.*, p. 68–83). My use of ‘tasks’ corresponds to the use of *kommunikative Aufgaben* by Strecker and other linguists (cf. STRECKER, *Sprachliches Handeln und sprachlicher Ausdruck*; GLONING, *Funktionale Textbausteine*).

22 The use of ‘and/or’ in this sentence draws attention to the fact that in some cases tasks are performed by a sequence of several moves and the fact that in some cases there is a choice between alternative moves.

23 HUNTINGTON, *Saintly Power as a Model of Royal Authority*, p. 327.

This functional potential is, as Winandy aptly summarises, also a reason that made this type of texts so alluring to authors.²⁴

There is a possible objection to the method of analysing an author's moves etc., which I should like to defuse at this point. One could reasonably object that we can never find out the intentions of a medieval author. However, in the individual passages of their texts we can find strong indicators for the functions this text could be expected to perform. Therefore, the close observation and analysis of such textual elements is a central task of my study.

Whereas the concepts of task, move and step relate to the speaker or writer – it is the writer who makes a move by using certain textual means –, the concept of function relates to the text and its use in given contexts. If the writer of a text is successful in the production of their text – including the various moves they make – the text will be useful in performing certain functions, e.g. the function of constructing a person as a saint or the function of edifying its readers. Thus, there is a direct correlation between tasks, moves and steps and various functions (and sub-functions).

24 Cf. WINANDY, *Hagiographie in Fleury*, p. 142.

Historical context and literature review

For Ælnoth, writing in the early twelfth century, both the history of the Christianisation of Denmark and the political and ecclesiastical events of the recent past formed a background to his presentation, which, as I mentioned before, showed his awareness of current conflicts and his views concerning ideal kingship and the relationship between the king and the church. In order to introduce some of this historical background and also some relevant research I shall now present a brief overview of phases of the Christianisation of Denmark and the development of the relationship between the Danish kings and the early Danish church, a relationship which is also influenced by connections with England on the one hand and the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen on the other. Key places and regions for the Christianisation process of Denmark as well as the ‘Gesta et Passio’ can be found on the map on page 19.

2.1 Denmark’s transition to Christianity

By the time Ælnoth wrote his ‘Gesta et Passio’ there had already been a long tradition of regarding the northern geographical regions as remote countries inhabited by wild and uncivilised peoples.¹ Examples of this topos are Rimbert’s story of Ansgar’s journey north, where Rimbert creates what Wood describes as “a sense of working on the edge of the unknown”.² Adam of Bremen also opens his report of Rimbert’s missionary efforts by explaining that he had to go to a region so very remote from their world: *in tam remotissima, inquam, ab nostro mundo regione*.³ And Ælnoth begins the main part of his ‘Gesta et Passio’ by introducing kingdoms of the North as set aside in remote parts of the world (*Regna aquilonis, in remotis mundi partibus*

1 Cf. also the biblical notion that the North is the origin of all evil (Jeremiah 1:14), referred to by Ælnoth (VSD, p. 84:7 f.).

2 WOOD, *The Northern Frontier*, p. 239.

3 Adam von Bremen, *Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte*, MGH SS rer. Germ. 2, I.XLII, p. 45:8.



Figure 1: Map of Denmark with relevant places and regions (map created with data from ©EuroGeographics 2023 for the administrative boundaries).

abdita).⁴ For both Adam and Ælnoth the geographical remoteness symbolised religious distance and “otherness”. Ælnoth, however, differentiates somewhat by stating that Denmark was just a little closer to the Christian Gauls and Saxons than the Swedes, Goths, Norwegians and Icelanders.⁵ The acceptance of Christianity

4 VSD, p. 82:12.

5 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 82:23–24.

reduced this distance.⁶ Ælnoth wrote accordingly: The northern kingdoms were “abandoned to the grasp of the pagan religions for a long while, until God’s mercy drew them from the depth of ignorance and faithlessness.”⁷

This passage and others in Ælnoth’s work indicate his awareness of a close relation between Christianisation and what has been called the *Europeanisation* of the northern countries. This topic has for some time been the object of lively debate among historians, and I shall here mention some of the positions taken and results reached in this debate. At the same time these remarks prepare my presentation of the phases of the Christianisation of Denmark which form the main part of this chapter. Before dealing with these phases of Christianisation in more detail, I want to point out that recent scholarship has considered Christianisation as an element of a wider cultural transformation. For example, Brink emphasised that “Christianisation is looked upon as part of a much larger cultural shift, which has sometimes been termed a *Europeanisation*, where Scandinavia adapted to a Continental situation.”⁸ One element of this cultural shift concerns the development of more unified realms and stronger, centralised kingship. So religious and political developments occurred simultaneously in Denmark. Thus, many scholars have treated these two elements together.⁹ Schieffer describes these processes as “decreasing the distance”¹⁰ between the North and the European centre and calls this process a “Europäisierung des Nordens”.¹¹ The term *Europeanisation*¹² is generally accepted to describe the processes taking place in Scandinavia between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries but scholars for the most part agree that we should give up the idea of cultural diffusion from one or more European centres to the peripheries¹³ and rather consider individual regions emulating or rejecting cultural elements of peoples they

6 Jensen, however, emphasises the point that those perceived as non-Christian were considered “uncultured or uncivilized, no matter whether they lived in the geographical periphery of Europe or in the heart of France” (JENSEN, *Martyrs, Total War, and Heavenly Horses*, p. 91).

7 MARCHLEWSKI, *St. Cnut*, p. 163. The Latin original reads: *longe diuque paganis tenebantur ritibus dedita, quousque ea de profundo erroris et infidelitatis diuina extraxit clementia* (VSD, p. 82:13–14).

8 BRINK, *Christianisation and the Emergence of the Early Church in Scandinavia*, p. 622–623.

9 E.g. Rudolf Schieffer, in his 2013 monograph ‘Christianisierung und Reichsbildungen’, traces the connection between Christianisation and the establishment of Christian kingdoms and concepts of kingship from the Carolingians to Scandinavia, Western and Southern Slavs and the Rus: SCHIEFFER, *Christianisierung und Reichsbildungen*, e.g. p. 316–317.

10 “[fortschreitende] Überwindung der Abstände” (*ibid.*, p. 277).

11 *Ibid.*, p. 276.

12 The processes referred to by this term have occupied historians for many years. They concern the development of a region of the same or very similar religious orientation (i.e. Christianity) and ideas of rulership spanning the continent of Europe. These processes had their heyday between the ninth and thirteenth centuries and have been described as the “making of Europe” (Bartlett 1993) or the “birth of Europe” (Le Goff 2005). Cf. BARTLETT, *The Making of Europe*; LE GOFF, *The Birth of Europe*.

13 This view is described in Kaufhold’s 2001 introduction to *Northern Europe* who summarises that Christianity ‘transported’ models of rulership to the North, which consequently received

got in touch with. Rüdiger and Foerster, for example, criticise the idea of a contrast between a European centre and the peripheries in need of *Europeanisation*¹⁴ and suggest the conceptual pair of *aemulatio* and *recusatio* to describe the agency of Scandinavians in selecting or rejecting elements of the “European” civilisation and political culture.¹⁵ A similar view is taken by Ingesman and Lindkvist, who used the term self-Europeanisation (*själveuropeisering*)¹⁶ to describe these processes. This view is corroborated by archaeological finds: While medieval Christian authors in the twelfth century describe Denmark as a remote place, objects of Scandinavian origin found in various places as well as objects of foreign provenance found in Scandinavia show that it was not a completely isolated place at the Northern fringe before the twelfth century: Trade and conflicts were main points of contact and facilitated exchange of coins and other objects, be it through trade, gift exchange or robbing of treasures.¹⁷ Analysing the continuity of cult-sites in Scandinavia, Andrén raises the question: “Did Christianization mean the first ‘Europeanization’ of Scandinavia or was it on the contrary much earlier incorporations of European models in Scandinavia that made the transition to Christianity possible?”¹⁸ Thus, Jensen concludes that “Scandinavians knew what was happening elsewhere in the Christian world, but they did not want it, because they had something better.”¹⁹ It is unfortunately not possible to verify this assumption as we know too little about Scandinavia before the twelfth century but the statement emphasises the crucial question of how and why Scandinavian rulers adopted and adapted Christianity and reorganised their realms between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries. Overall, recent scholarship shows that the Nordic countries played a stronger and more active role in the processes of Christianisation and *Europeanisation*.

In the following passages I shall deal with four aspects of Denmark’s transition to Christianity: (1) phases of Christianisation, (2) early developments (the “infiltration of Christianity”), (3) the Anglo-Danish connection and the organisation of the Danish church, (4) consolidation and growing independence of the Danish church.

Scandinavia entered Christianity relatively late and slowly. From what we know of this process, it took several centuries,²⁰ was influenced by various factions and showed considerable regional differences. Thus, we cannot consider the Christi-

the profile of ‘normal’ European rulership (“erhielt [...] allmählich das Profil ‘normaler’ europäischer Königsherrschaften”). Cf. KAUFHOLD, Europas Norden im Mittelalter, p. 165.

14 Cf. BARTLETT, *The Making of Europe*.

15 RÜDIGER/FOERSTER, *Aemulatio – Recusatio*, here 450.

16 INGESMAN/LINDKVIST, *Norden och Europa under medeltiden*.

17 SINDBAEK, *Local and Long-Distance Exchange*, p. 150; GELTING/H. SØRENSEN, *A Kingdom at the Crossroads*, p. 52.

18 ANDRÉN, *The Significance of Places*, p. 28.

19 JENSEN, *Martyrs, Total War, and Heavenly Horses*, p. 93.

20 Cf. KRÖTZL, *Quer durch Europa. SantiagoPilger aus Skandinavien*.

anisation process or even processes as linear.²¹ Some even argue that “Scandinavia never became exclusively Christian.”²² Since the nineteenth century, there has been a widespread interest in the study of the Christianisation of Scandinavia. This is true of Scandinavia in particular, in the context of a wider focus on national unification, the so-called *rikssammling*, and the development of centralised kingdoms.²³ Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, interest in the Christianisation of Scandinavia peaked again as part of a wider interest in the processes of Christianisation, which is documented, for example, in two volumes edited for the 2013 exhibition ‘CREDO – Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter’ in Paderborn, giving an extensive overview of processes of Christianisation from the fourth century up to and beyond the fourteenth century, spanning the entire Eurasian continent and various scholarly disciplines.²⁴ This trend is also witnessed by an international and interdisciplinary research project led by Berend, which presented a volume of introductions to and overviews of Christianisation processes in Scandinavia, Central Europe and the Rus, assembling detailed regional case studies.²⁵ Further introductions to various aspects of Christianisation were published by von Padberg,²⁶ Carver,²⁷ and Fletcher.²⁸

Since the 2000s, scholarship has mainly focused on analysing the complexity of the Christianisation process and has thus placed great emphasis on describing the diversity of the developments by distinguishing and analysing various phases and processes and looking more closely into the differing regional developments, taking into consideration both written sources as well as a variety of archaeological evidence.

Concise overviews of the state of the art of research on the Christianisation of Scandinavia can be found in recent work by Nordeide,²⁹ Antonsson,³⁰ Finnestad,³¹

21 Cf. OERTEL, *Die Christianisierung Skandinaviens*, p. 181.

22 NÍMHAONAIGH, *Converting the Isles*, p. 124.

23 Cf. RÜDIGER/FOERSTER, *Aemulatio – Recusatio*, p. 450.

24 Cf. STIEGEMANN/KROKER/WALTER, *CREDO. Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter I: Essays and STIEGEMANN/KROKER/WALTER, CREDO. Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter II: Katalog*.

25 BEREND, *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*. Berend herself and Bartlett give a historiographic overview and detail central issues of relevant scholarship. Cf. BEREND, *Introduction* and BARTLETT, *From Paganism to Christianity in Medieval Europe*. The members of the research project also published an accompanying website, detailing their research questions, regional summaries as well as listing an extensive bibliography: <http://christianization.hist.cam.ac.uk/menu.html> [accessed 21st May 2020].

26 PADBERG, *Christianisierung im Mittelalter*.

27 CARVER, *The Cross Goes North*.

28 FLETCHER, *The Conversion of Europe*.

29 NORDEIDE, *Conversion to Christianity in Scandinavia*.

30 ANTONSSON, *The Conversion and Christianization of Scandinavia*.

31 FINNESTAD, *The Study of the Christianization of the Nordic Countries*.

Brink³² and Wood.³³ More extensive treatments are presented in a monograph by Bagge,³⁴ in Sanmark's comparative study of methods of conversion, pre-Christian religions and newly introduced Christian regulations³⁵ as well as in a comprehensive volume edited by Berend.³⁶ Among the forerunners of this development, Birgit and Peter Sawyer must be mentioned, who pushed for such a close analysis of the Christianisation of Scandinavia in the 1980s.³⁷ While the process of Christianisation is often looked at for the whole of Scandinavia, there are also regional analyses focusing on the individual developments in Denmark,³⁸ Norway³⁹ and Sweden.⁴⁰

The paucity of written sources led to the development of a lively and broad scholarly field exploring Christianisation in Scandinavia from the perspectives of history, art history (iconography, decorations) and archaeology, including the study of religious artefacts, burial customs, settlements, churches, churchyards, jewellery and numismatic evidence.⁴¹ Cult sites, burial practices, artefacts, iconography,⁴² rune stones⁴³ and saga literature⁴⁴ as well as legal texts⁴⁵ provide glimpses at pre-Christian beliefs and practices.⁴⁶

- 32 BRINK, *Die Christianisierung Skandinaviens*; BRINK, *Christianisation and the Emergence of the Early Church in Scandinavia*; BRINK, *New Perspectives on the Christianization of Scandinavia*.
- 33 WOOD, *The Northern Frontier*.
- 34 BAGGE, *Cross & Scepter*.
- 35 SANMARK, *Power and Conversion*.
- 36 BEREND, *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*.
- 37 Cf. B. SAWYER/P. SAWYER/WOOD, *The Christianization of Scandinavia*; B. SAWYER/P. SAWYER, *Medieval Scandinavia*.
- 38 E.g. GELTING, *The Kingdom of Denmark*; GELTING/H. SØRENSEN, *A Kingdom at the Crossroads*, SKOVGAARD-PETERSEN, *Early Political Organisation: (B) the Making of the Danish Kingdom*.
- 39 E.g. NORDEIDE, *Introducing Christianity to a Challenging Environment: The Example of Norway*; NORDEIDE, *The Viking Age as a Period of Religious Transformation*; BAGGE, *Christianization and State Formation in Early Medieval Norway*; BAGGE/NORDEIDE, *The Kingdom of Norway*; SKRE, *Missionary Activity in Early Medieval Norway. Strategy, Organization and the Course of Events*. B. SAWYER/P. SAWYER/WOOD, *The Christianization of Scandinavia*; BIRKELI, *Hva vet vi om kristningen av Norge?*
- 40 E.g. BRINK, *Early Ecclesiastical Organization of Scandinavia*; ØERTEL, *The Cult of St Erik*; BLOMKVIST/BRINK/LINDKVIST, *The Kingdom of Sweden*.
- 41 Cf. SUNDQVIST, *Vorchristliche Religion im skandinavischen Raum*.
- 42 Cf. ANDRÉN, *The Significance of Places*, p. 28; GRÄSLUND, *The Material Culture of Old Norse Religion*; GRÄSLUND, *The Material Culture of Christianisation*.
- 43 GRÄSLUND/LAGER, *Runestones and the Christian Missions*.
- 44 Cf. SEE, *Die Christianisierung des Nordens*; HULTGÅRD, *The Religion of the Vikings*.
- 45 Raudvere traces popular religion of the Viking Age in legal texts like the 'Íslendingabók', the Icelandic collection of early legal texts 'Grágás' (Laws of Early Iceland) and saga literature like 'Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar', 'Kórmáks saga', 'Snorri's Edda', 'Ynglinga saga' and 'Víga-Glúms saga'.
- 46 More recently, scholars have refrained from calling pre-Christian belief a "religion" and rather used the Old Norse term *siðr* ("custom"). Cf. ØERTEL, *Die Christianisierung Skandinaviens*, p. 164 f. SCHJØDT, *Paganism and Christianity*; STEINSLAND, *Den hellige kongen*, p. 187.