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Kilbride, William George (2000) *An archaeology of literacy and the church in southern England to AD 750*. PhD thesis.

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AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF LITERACY AND THE CHURCH IN SOUTHERN ENGLAND TO AD 750

**WRITTEN BY WILLIAM GEORGE KILBRIDE IN THE DEPARTMENT
OF ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW AND
PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
THE FACULTY OF ARTS AT THE SAME UNIVERSITY, OCTOBER
2000**

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the impact of the Christian clergy on daily life in Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh and eighth centuries AD. Noting from the outset an interpretative impasse in historical sources, the archaeological record is explored for what it may reveal concerning those areas and peoples most hidden from historical scholarship. Noting problems with techniques that assume clear distinctions between Christian and pagan ritual – in particular funerary ritual – the anthropology of religious phenomena and religious conversion is introduced to support and expand that critique, but also to focus attention on the sophistication of the problem to be addressed. It is argued that the social sciences are ill-equipped to investigate religious phenomena and that a more subtle, if more complicated, approach is required. Considering the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England as an encounter between missionaries and their audience, we are encouraged to investigate the subtle tensions implicit in that relationship. The relationship is thus recast in terms of access to literacy, since this is a distinguishing factor of the clergy in England in the seventh and eighth centuries. Literacy, modelled as a set of discursive practices embedded in and re-produced through social relationships, is investigated from the perspective of the archaeology of surveillance. Two case studies from Hampshire — Micheldever and Saxon Southampton (or *Hamwic*) — support the view that literacy can be used as a means of investigating the missionary encounter. It is proposed that, by the first half of the eighth century, the populations of these two areas were drawn into an intricate engagement with the clergy, facilitated by the bureaucratic and discursive deployment of literacy practices. Though necessarily more complicated than approaches that depend on the archaeology of the cemeteries to investigate the relationship between the clergy and the laity, this insight does at least do justice to the complexity of the issue being discussed.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am humbled by the open-handed generosity of the many people that have helped in the production of this thesis. Only a small number can be named, else the acknowledgements would dwarf the work itself. Any omissions from the list that follows should be attributed to a shortage of space not a lack of gratitude.

First and foremost I must acknowledge the support and unfailing kindness of my parents. Any credit residing herein is theirs. In addition, my brother Thomas has been a constant source of inspiration and good humour with John Kilbride and Susan Kilbride who complete the set.

Mairi-Claire Mallon has worked tirelessly and selflessly, without a hint of the boredom that must have been her lot. More than anyone else, it should be said that she has been my strength when I have been tired, my own path through the wilderness. She takes credit for the completion of this thesis and it is dedicated to her. In addition, Brian Mallon and Margaret Mallon have encouraged and supported the completion of my studies.

Thirdly, I turn to my supervisor Dr Jeremy Huggett whose patience seems eternal and good humour knows no bounds. I am deeply grateful to him for many discussions on the substance of this thesis for his confidence in me when I had none and his help in its ultimate completion – but I am more grateful for his gentle good humour and companionship throughout.

The staff and students of Glasgow University have provided innumerable inspiring conversations, happy times, radical thoughts and true friendships, augmenting and enhancing those that had already stood the test of time before I began my work there. Recently, I have been lucky enough to find the same replicated in the University of York, where the thesis was finished, mirroring my experience at the University of Southampton where it was first conceived. Therefore, I thank the following heartily; I wish them well; and know that I have been more lucky than I deserve: Stuart Airlie, Leslie Alcock, Katie Anderson, Paula Andrews, Simon Andrews, Tony Austin, Andrew Baines, John Barrett, David Bates, Col Batey, Jim Boyle, Kenneth Brophy, Margareth Buer, Abigail Burnyeat, Ewan Campbell, Laurence Cavanagh, Sarah Champion, Thomas Clancy, Jo Clarke, Chris

Dalglish, Kate Fernie, Caroline Gilchrist, Meggen Gondek, Stuart Halliday, Janet Hooper, Rob Hosfield, Andy Jones, Claire Jones, Ruth Kelly, Maria Kostoglou, Andrew Leck, Marie Leck, Gavin MacGregor, Gilbert Markus, Steve Marrett, Chris Morris, Jerry O'Sullivan, Effie Photos-Jones, Maureen Poulton, Julian Richards, Jane Richardson, Andrew Roach, Damian Robinson, Allan Rutherford, Kylie Seretis, Jim Simpson, Eland Stewart, Marcia Taylor, Peter Van Dommelen, Keith Westcott, Dave Wheatley, Judith Winters and Denise Young. To these I would like to add the members and associates of the St Margaret of Scotland Youth Group for forcing me to retain a sense of proportion throughout.

In particular, I would like to thank those that have read and improved my text: Marie Leck, Thomas Kilbride, Maureen Poulton, Mairi-Claire Mallon, Brian Mallon and Margaret Mallon and Damian Robinson. The consistency and accuracy herein is their doing. In addition I would like to thank Lesley Abrams and Steve Driscoll for their patient and perceptive criticisms.

I end with a formal acknowledgement of the Student Awards Agency for Scotland who provided financial support, of the University of Glasgow that provided technical and institutional support, and of the Archaeology Data Service who provided links to a deal of the data presented here.

I claim for myself only the errors and confusion that remain.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The scope of our study

This thesis examines the influence of the clergy in Anglo-Saxon England in the period up to 750 AD. In doing so, it brings together themes that are often considered in isolation: the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England, the means by which royal authority became expanded and entrenched in the same period, developments in trade and exchange, and possible changes in the domestic and agricultural lives of the population. Drawing these themes together provides the foundation for an alternative insight into the development of the church in southern England. It attempts to draw these different threads together by investigating the breadth, impact and penetration of clerical literacy in secular affairs in the period up to 750 AD.

The period from 600-750 AD saw a series of seemingly unrelated social, political, religious and physical changes in the English landscape. It saw the development of the first law codes and charters in Anglo-Saxon England, the first indigenous coinage since the Roman period, the decline of certain types of funerary activity and the development of new fashions in clothing and jewellery. The period saw the earliest development of “ports of trade”, and novel forms of industrial production. It saw large-scale investment of wealth in the church. The same period saw disparate changes in the landscape of production and agriculture. These changes have largely been studied in isolation. Thus, much-quoted work on the development of emporia makes little reference to the activities of missionary clergy, and no reference to law codes (Hodges 1989a). Christopher Arnold discusses the archaeology of social change, but is dismissive of historical sources (Arnold 1997). Patrick Wormald on the other hand offers an intensive and thorough analysis of law, with only passing reference to the archaeological evidence of goods, landscapes and populations to which the laws refer (Wormald 1999). Nicholas Higham makes the connection between kingship, conversion and christianisation, but without reference to trade or the landscape (Higham 1997). In addition, a raft of social theory, comparative history and anthropological evidence has tempted a variety of commentators to introduce analogies from places and times quite distant from the one in question here (inter alia Mayr-Harting 1991, 1994, Cusack 1998, Higham 1997).

This thesis will attempt to bring these different threads together so that we may better understand the influence of the clergy. If this is a success, then the benefits may be great. Even if it is not, then there are still benefits to be had. As well as being a useful exercise to compare data sets and identify differences, it would allow for the generation of new research agendas that may in turn cross the gaps between specialist areas.

The argument seems, on first inspection, to be relatively straightforward. As well as establishing certain forms of Christianity, the clergy were also responsible for the re-introduction of literacy to Anglo-Saxon England. Literacy was used in the rites and liturgies of the church, emphasising clerical learning. Yet literacy was not confined to these liturgical occasions but also seems to have been used to organise and maintain resources. The organisation of resources using literacy appears to present an opportunity to explore the impact of the clergy in the secular lives of the population, since it was in the daily lives of the population that the ordering and maintenance of resources would have been felt most keenly. Moreover, the ordering and maintenance of physical resources is a question of material culture which archaeology ought to be well placed to answer. In simple terms, if archaeology could demonstrate that the clergy were able to intervene in the daily lives of the population through the literate organisation of resources, then we may (by extension) support the view that they were also able to intervene in their religious lives too. If we can demonstrate that they were not able to intervene in the daily lives of the population, then we can extend our critique of missionary activity.

In fact, this thesis shows that the connection between literacy, conversion and missionary activity is not clear-cut. The connection between archaeology and literacy is complicated and the relationship between historical sources and archaeological evidence rendered problematic by a dislocated chronology. A number of significant obstacles prevent a bold or simple conclusion. For a start, there are questions of a religious nature to contend with: topics like baptism, conversion and christianisation have excited a lot of critical comment. The topic of literacy is also sizeable, with historians arguing over the nature of literacy in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval England. Moreover, the disparate data sets support and require different types of chronological precision, which means that conclusions can only be drawn at the level of the most coarse data set available, however

frustrating that is for those used to more precise methods. Finally the critical issue of definition of terms is very important. They sound simple, but terms like “religion” and “literacy” are controversial.

This introduction attempts to lay out some of these problems. We start with the study of religious phenomena, and the difficulty of connecting missionary work to the impact of literacy. Then we look at the way other commentators have discussed literacy in Anglo-Saxon England, noting a significant gap between their conclusions and the period we wish to study. Thereafter we turn to the problems of dating and the reconciling of different forms of evidence that is required by this sort of study. We then turn to the question of literacy, looking first at different approaches to the term, and then to the context of Anglo-Saxon England. This allows a contextually specific evaluation of the forms which literacy may take. This leads to a discussion of two concepts that will be used throughout the thesis: the idea of literacy as a means of surveillance and the concept of the “literacy event”.

After this introduction, we move to a section where a whole number of terms will be given short explanatory definitions and discussions, for reference while reading the text. Finally each chapter will be summarised to give an outline of the thesis.

1.1.1 Problems with religious phenomena: conversion, literacy and Christianity

The problems start with the historical analysis of religion. The spread and development of Christianity are hotly contested subjects. As we shall see in Chapters Two and Three, the term “conversion” has been subject to a detailed critique and the role of generalised processes, both personal and social, have been emphasised. Neutral terms like “christianisation” have been proposed, while the historical record has been studied in detail to identify the precise relationship between missionary activity, the clergy and conversion.

Intellectual problems surface when we attempt to study religion. The definition of the term itself is problematic. A range of definitions has been used within the social sciences, with emphases on the social or intellectual foundations of religious phenomena. Functionalist theory has been the dominant system over the last

century, arguing that the social function of religion is greater than its ostensive claims: that while religion may claim to be cosmological, it is actually a way of managing populations. Alternative intellectualist accounts have become more common in the last twenty years, in which the cosmological role of religion has been emphasised against the social consequences. These will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, but it can be seen immediately that the study of “conversion” or “christianisation” is partly dependent on the definition we chose to adopt. If we accept a functionalist definition of religion then we can only really present a social account of conversion. If we accept an intellectualist stance, then we will focus on the perceived “rationality” of conversion. It is generally true to say that our initial preconceptions may colour the conclusions we reach, but in this case the dangers are perhaps more significant than often realised.

A more fundamental problem is manifest in the phenomenological challenge to the study of religion: that religion is not susceptible to study by the social sciences in the way that generations of scholarship have taken for granted. Not only are the terms of the encounter partly determined by definition, academic analytical methods are antithetical to “*sui generis*” religious phenomena. This challenge will be met head on in Chapter Three, but it highlights that there is always something in the study of religion that cannot be reached by empirical methods. This is true not only of historical cases where we lack sources, but in modern examples where practitioners and participants are available for as much empirical study as we can sustain and they will tolerate.

In the end, we cannot study conversion directly, but must rely on other methods to elicit and describe the conditions in which it may have been a reasonable action. While we cannot describe conversion, we can describe the changing conditions in which it was made attractive. So, we can describe the impact of missionary clergy, not so much in terms of their religious mission, but in the subtler and perhaps more important social and cultural conditions which they sought to create.

In addition to problems with describing conversion – and there are many additional problems in store – there will inevitably be at best an attenuated connection between missionary work, conversion and literacy. For example, the relationship between “conversion” and missionary work is not simple, and should not be presumed. The clergy undertook missionary work in Anglo-Saxon England,

but there is not a direct correlation between this work and conversion, since it will be argued here that conversion pertains to the individual. The missionary can provide a context in which that conversion may take place, as may the “christianisation” of certain cultural practices. In the end personal conversion is a matter for each individual, even if there are superstructures of group identity and collective action present.

The question then turns not so much to the relationship between conversion and missionary work, but the means by which the missionaries were able to influence the broader social context. As will be argued in Chapter Three, this is the key feature of much missionary work as reported from anthropological contexts: not so much the message but the broader social encounter between missionary and the lay population. This means we should turn the question of missionary work round. In anthropological contexts, the question “What are the missionaries teaching?” is less important than “Why should we listen to them?” The same question “why should anyone pay any attention to the clergy?” may also be asked in the Anglo-Saxon context.

This question has generally been met by an appeal to political and military power. Commentators have concentrated attention on kings. This thesis attempts a different tack, asking whether literacy could have had any social or cultural impact, and whether it could thus have supported the position of the clergy. It *may* have supported the clergy but this cannot be demonstrated comprehensively and empirically with the limited evidence available. It can only be posited by appeal to other contexts where literacy clearly projects and maintains certain forms of hegemony. All other problems aside, we cannot make an explicit historical connection between clerical literacy and social power. It is posited here as an assumption that is supported by sociological and anthropological analogy. It is also, however, supported by the liturgical and artistic paraphernalia of the early Middle Ages that repeatedly stresses the connection between Christianity and literacy.

Of course, the emphasis on literacy as opposed to royal power sounds profound, but in practice is less so. It is often difficult to establish the boundaries between the deployment of literacy by the clergy, and the deployment of the clergy by the king. Thus, in shifting our attention to literacy, we ultimately shift it back again to

royal power – though with an enhanced understanding of how the two were inter-dependent.

If we accept the assumption that literacy could have lent a peculiar form of discursive power to the clergy, then we must start looking for the ways in which that discursive power may be deployed. Analysis of the period suggests that literacy was one of a number of developing mechanisms for surveillance (discussed below) supporting a set of newly expanded kingdoms. This depends on a critical reading of the archaeological record, with all its contradictions, presumptions and inaccuracies. The claim that there were new forms of surveillance in the seventh century may be contentious, but is not unreasonable given what we know of the period. In addition to this reconstruction of the archaeology, we can only make oblique connections between this archaeology and the practice of literacy. There is no direct linkage between this reconstructed archaeology and the historical uses of literacy – merely a sense that they are too similar for it to be a simple coincidence. It makes most efficient use of the scarce evidence to see them as parts of the same process. Other interpretations are certainly possible.

There is thus a tenuous connection between the literacy of the clergy and the archaeology of material resources. This is not a direct connection, and is not straightforward. This thesis claims that there is a broad correspondence between the archaeological record and the intentions of the clergy revealed within a set of historical documents. That correspondence may be termed a “chicken and egg” problem: the direction of causality cannot be established for certain. That they arise together is important, since it implies that the clergy were (to some extent) involved in these mechanisms for surveillance. “Involved” is a deliberately vague word since we cannot demonstrate that the clergy created them: perhaps they did, or perhaps they simply saw an opportunity to use their literacy to appropriate them. It is all but impossible to resolve the situation one way or another, though the temptation to argue that one “caused” another is strong. The best that we can say is that they influenced each other in a dialectic that cannot be easily disentangled.

The connection between the clergy and these new methods of surveillance is tenuous, presented in a handful of documents that may or may not have been in wide circulation. Readers should be watchful to see whether they agree that such a

claim is sustainable. If it is, then we can present two more answers to the question “Why should we listen to the missionaries?” If the clergy were involved in these new mechanisms of surveillance then they were well placed to act as arbiters between the people being supervised (the local population) and the people doing the supervising (the king). Thus to the question “why listen to them?” we could answer, “because they have influence with our political and military masters”. This is as much as to confirm the view taken by many previous commentators. But, if the clergy were using these mechanisms of surveillance to project a discourse on literacy, then they may have been able to reinforce their position as mediators of new and esoteric forms of knowledge to an illiterate population. Thus, to the question “Why listen to them?” we could also answer, “because they are more learned than we are in this new skill of reading and writing”. Neither of these answers actually tell us about conversion. They do however put conversion into a context where it would seem rational.

If readers feel the link between the clergy, literacy and these new methods of surveillance is unsustainable then much of what follows will seem pointless. If readers feel that the discursive influence of literacy is a red herring, and that we should look only for practical consequences of literacy, then this thesis will have little to offer. If these diverse and attenuated relationships are unconvincing or too tenuous to be taken seriously, then we must revert to a theory of kingship and military power to account for the influence of the clergy. Yet, as will be argued in Chapters Two and Three, this existing theory is itself based on a series of problematic definitions. The Early Middle Ages is a period which is hard to understand and often difficult to provide really thorough demonstrations of causes and connections. If connections and linkages offered above are tenuous, then that is largely in keeping with the period in discussion.

1.1.2 Discussions on literacy: Clanchy, Wormald, Keynes, Kelly and Lowe

Problems also lie in wait when we look to the historical analysis of literacy. The deployment of literacy by Anglo-Saxon clergy is not really in doubt. Commentators disagree about the precise numbers concerned, but it has been argued that there may be as many as 100 interpolated copies, apparently accurate copies or originals of genuine charters from the period to 750 AD (Wormald 1984). The same period saw land transactions and law codes committed to parchment, as well as a

remarkable florescence in the production of religious texts. Such sudden vitality in the culture of literacy seems to promise immediate gains.

In fact, however, historians dispute the impact of literacy in this period. Michael Clanchy describes this period as a prelude to the literacy practices of the later Middle Ages, arguing that literacy only had any positive impact on government in the centuries after the Norman Conquest – that is some 500 years after the arrival of Augustine and his colleagues. Clanchy implies that we look in vain for real literacy in Anglo-Saxon England (Clanchy 1993). If literacy had no impact until the eleventh and twelfth centuries, then we cannot hope to use it to help interpret the archaeology of Middle Saxon England.

Clanchy's views have fostered a lively debate about medieval literacy. Patrick Wormald has argued that, for all the early evidence, literacy in Anglo-Saxon England was only of the most restricted kind (Wormald 1977). Thus, while there may be documents, they do not compare favourably with later periods in England, or contemporary practices abroad. Moreover, a detailed review of all the documents available suggests that the few surviving law codes are erratic, unstructured and impractical from a legal perspective (Wormald 1999). That does not mean that they did not serve a purpose or are somehow bogus, but it points to the conclusion that they are ideological tracts rather than practical handbooks of law. In Wormald's view, literacy is rather more discursive than practical.

Wormald's view of law sits within discussions of charters and the institutions of land tenure. There is a complicated, long-standing and detailed debate over the precise nature and earliest evidence of tenure in Anglo-Saxon England. Some commentators have argued that "book-right", the mechanism by which the church seems to have held its earliest estates, was quite distinct from "folk-right", the traditional form of land tenure. It has been argued that "book-land" was held free of certain tributes, and in perpetuity, as against traditional tenure that carried traditional "folk" burdens and lasted only the lifetime of individuals (John 1960). The tempting conclusion is that the church, through literacy, had a significant impact on tenure (Campbell 1973 82). Wormald has questioned the special privileges associated with "book-land" (Wormald 1984), arguing that the evidence for special privileges associated with charters is problematic, and that long-term holding by kin was not in fact unusual with or without a charter in support. In

short, therefore, as well as dismissing law codes, Wormald dismisses the importance of early medieval charters as evidence for any special literacy practice.

Wormald's view of law and Clanchy's view of the development of medieval bureaucracy have not been universally approved. For example Susan Kelly has pointed out that a lack of evidence is the dominant feature of Anglo-Saxon lay literacy. She points out that while evidence for the earlier period is non-existent, the ninth century saw the development of a small but significant number of vernacular charters, associated with secular poetry and chronicles. These, she argues, represent lay people taking advantage of literacy from the ninth century. Though unable to mobilise large amounts of evidence, she contends that the evidence of the ninth and tenth century could only survive if foundations already existed (Kelly 1990).

Kelly's view of lay involvement in literacy is supported by Simon Keynes, arguing that the tenth-century court was supported by lay and clerical scribes (Keynes 1990). This claim offers two challenges to Wormald and Clanchy, since it argues that late Anglo-Saxon government depended in practical terms on the use of literacy for functional as well as discursive reasons, at a date long before Clanchy would accept. Also, by identifying a lay scribe, Keynes shows that this work could be divorced from clerical control and thus that the laity were not only interested in owning and perhaps reading charters, but were quite capable to undertake the work for themselves. He argues that the late Anglo-Saxon court was used to the written word as tool for passing on instructions whether as wills or writs, that the Anglo-Saxon court had some form of permanent secretariat in the tenth century, and is even able to identify one thegn employed as a "scriptor" in royal service (Keynes 1990 257). This is a powerful argument that, by the tenth century and perhaps at some point before, the laity was actively engaged in the culture of literacy.

The argument against Wormald and Clanchy's view of literacy has been extended into theoretical considerations by Katherine Lowe who argues that their description of literacy is circular, and identifies a set of documents which may have been owned and curated by lay people, though pertaining to church estates and prepared by clerics (Lowe 1998). The earliest of these she identifies from 804 AD (S1187), which exists now as a cartulary copy. She argues that this document is best understood as the earliest in a succession of "chirographs" that to her mind

show that the laity was keen to obtain the benefits of literacy from at least the ninth century if not before. The case should not be over-stated: the grant in question favours a church, and the principal benefit is theirs; the documents she describes are not numerous, and only become common in the tenth and eleventh centuries. But the suggestion that the laity were interested in literacy from at least the early ninth century provides something of a challenge to Wormald and Clanchy's view of lay interest in literacy. Lowe argues that the trend continued into the tenth and eleventh century, reinforcing Kelly's claim for an early date in the lay interest in literacy.

These different arguments are complicated, and have been summarised very briefly. They will return in various forms throughout the thesis, especially in Chapters Four and Five. However, it is worth pointing out that, even if we accept the very earliest date for lay involvement in literacy, we are still some sixty years short of the end of the period set here. If we are to bring lay involvement in literacy back to the seventh and eighth century, then we must extend it back by a significant margin. So, if even by the most positive analysis, lay involvement in literacy developed several generations after the arrival of the missionaries, it must be admitted that the prospects for using literacy to tie together the archaeology of middle Saxon England are far from promising. As we shall see, the prospects are not as bad as they may first appear. The topic of lay literacy has been discussed at length: the topic of lay illiteracy has not.

1.1.3 What is literacy?

Literacy is a contentious and convoluted topic that will be explored more fully in Chapter Four. Different approaches to literacy have been used and developed in different disciplines, including anthropological, educational and historical contexts. Two authors in particular – Jacky Goody and Walter Ong - have encouraged considerable debate over the last few years, placing emphasis on the inevitable social, intellectual and economic consequences of literacy. These views have been criticised, with later commentators emphasising the peculiar historical forms which literacy takes, and its ideological status. These themes will be discussed later, though it is important to introduce them here even if that pre-empted subsequent detail. It is essential that, if we are to identify the impact of literacy, we at least know what it means.

Many recent accounts of the historical impact of literacy start their discussions with the work of Jack Goody – even where the ultimate conclusions are at odds with his analysis (e.g. McKitterick 1990). Goody's ideas on literacy have developed over three decades, influencing, among others, Patrick Wormald and Michael Clanchy (Wormald 1977, Clanchy 1993). Goody argued that once released and made popular, literacy brings certain inevitable consequences. Thus, for example, ancient Greek writings reveal a facility with the long chains of reasoned argument that is only made possible by being written down (Goody and Watt 1968). While the ideas presented in these Greek tracts are not themselves the results of literacy so much as human thought, literacy allowed the classical mind to expand by providing a tool to facilitate memory. That tool has the consequence of re-making and expanding the analytical process, resulting in logical analyses. Similarly, the facility to keep records allows for the expansion of economic activity, since merchants are able to remember and calculate debts over much longer periods and much larger areas than previously. Again, the trade activity existed before literacy, and is not in itself the result of literacy; the facility to keep track of debts re-invented and expanded trade and exchange in the ancient Near East (Goody 1986 45-86). In the same way, literacy has effects on law (Goody 1986 127-170), royal government (Goody 1986 87-126) and religions (Goody 1986 1-44) by extending and reinforcing relationships between peoples in different places through longer periods.

Parallel to Goody's historical and anthropological analysis is the work of Walter Ong, a Jesuit scholar and educationalist who has worked extensively on the particular psychological and intellectual aspects of writing (e.g. Ong 1992). Ong offsets oral and literate cultures, arguing that literacy allowed for the abstraction of concepts from the "plenum of existence", and thus facilitated much extended personal intellectual development. Abstract thought, he argues, is not available to oral cultures that depend on experiential analyses of phenomena. Placed within a wider social context, the implications of this divide are clear: that sustained intellectual and personal development depends upon appropriate schooling. The teaching of literacy in schools is connected to the development of reasonable social discourse. "Oral" culture is not just intellectually poorer than literate culture, but the retention or resurrection of oral cultures would be detrimental to the body politic. Ong's social and political claim for education is contentious, but the basic claim that literacy restructures thought has been supported by neuro-physiological

analyses of writing. These have emphasised the cognitive impact of literacy, and have demonstrated the unexpected and unlikely physical impacts of literacy within anatomical functions of thought (e.g. Tzeng and Wang 1983).

Goody and Ong present subtly different accounts of the impact of literacy that appear to give us a relatively simple task in the context of Anglo-Saxon England. By identifying the social and material consequences of literacy, Goody in particular seems to provide a set of analytical tools that can be used in any context to analyse the social impact of literacy. Areas such as trade and royal government already feature in archaeological and historical accounts of the period, so subtle shifts, if not full-scale re-organisations, in these areas should not only be visible in the material culture associated with them, but provide keys for the development of literacy. It is harder to see how religion or logic could be used in the same way, but it is not inconceivable that thoughtful analyses could yet bring them together once the economic and political spheres were studied.

Yet the situation is more complicated than it first appears. The claims of Goody and Ong have been roundly criticised by a number of commentators, emphasising instead the ideological baggage associated with literacy. They have drawn attention to the historically constituted nature of literacy. The result of this critique is that we cannot simply use Goody's ideas as a set of trans-cultural tools to analyse Anglo-Saxon England

The critique of Goody and Ong emerges from the work of a number of scholars, foremost among them Brian Street (e.g. Street 1995). This group has based their theories of literacy on carefully controlled and thoughtfully considered anthropological and sociological fieldwork in different settings, rather than the largely historical accounts offered by Goody, and the introspective theoretical analyses offered by Ong (e.g. Barton and Hamilton 1998). Street and others have argued that, rather than being a single social norm to which all should aspire, multiple and competing forms of literacy are prevalent in single contexts. Some of these forms of literacy are socially approved, others tolerated but not rewarded, other forms actively condemned. They have noted that access to approved forms of literacy is allied to social power, and that exclusion from approved forms of literacy is consistent with social deprivation. While there may be certain forms of mechanical ability that are consistent, the real social importance of literacy derives

not from the consequences it may bring, but from the way it is deployed, and the discursive potential it offers. Literacy may indeed have a whole variety of consequences, but these are not driven through literacy itself but are worked out according to conditions that exist prior to and contemporary with its development.

Perhaps the single most important finding of this research is that literacy does not just impact on those who have the mechanical ability to read and write, but that it also impacts on the illiterate. Illiteracy should thus feature in any analysis of literacy, in particular if we wish to describe the discursive elements of literacy. In short the projection of literacy and illiteracy may have a wider social impact than the intellectual, economic or political consequences that Goody and Ong claimed. Whatever the case, if we want to analyse literacy we cannot simply impose a model from the anthropological literature, but must develop a contextually sound model of how and why literacy develops and the different impacts it may have had.

There are other complications to this debate. While Street and others have stressed that literacy is constituted differently in different social and ideological contexts, there is a danger that political and social analyses swamp the subject of literacy entirely. A number of defences can be built to prevent us losing sight of the object of study: a theory of communication from the philosophy of language, and an analytical vocabulary that attempts to control that which we study. These themes will be developed much more fully in Chapter Four and in the chapters that follow it, but again it will help our discussion here if we introduce one of them now and present the analytical vocabulary alongside our more general definitions of terms.

Goody and Ong both presented literacy and “orality” as polar opposites. While later commentators have tended to move away from these “great divide” theories stressing continuities (e.g. Tannen 1982), the philosophy of language presents grounds to suppose that there is a divide between written and oral communication. Specifically, the property of written language to be communicated (however problematically) across much wider spaces and over much longer times than oral communication gives rise to some discussion about the development and analysis of symbolic meaning within written language. Paul Ricoeur has described this distinctive property of written discourse as “distanciation” (Ricoeur 1978). The term will be explored more fully later on, but it is useful to bear this in mind from

the start, since it specifies a unique property of reading and writing as against oral communication. This raises the interesting theoretical proposition that, if we can identify significant shifts in the space or time of communication, then we may be relatively hopeful that this is the result of literacy, since the space and time of oral communication is considerably more constrained.

1.1.4 The contexts of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England

As noted above, literacy has received considerable attention over the last few years from historians of Anglo-Saxon England intent to find the earliest evidence for lay literacy. Yet, as we will see, the theoretical propositions of Street and others encourage us to realise that literacy is not just about the literate, but may also have an impact on the illiterate. This is encouraging since it means that we need not become overly concerned by the sixty years or more between the end of our study period and the earliest evidence for Anglo-Saxon lay literacy. All we need to do is demonstrate that clerical literacy could have projected the distinction between literate and illiterate onto the lay population. In that way we can genuinely say that the laity were involved in literacy from an early date, without necessarily saying that they were literate.

More important however is the need to formulate a contextual view of literacy, which connects literacy to the broader social, ideological and political practices of the period. Literacy may indeed have a whole variety of consequences, but these are not driven through literacy itself. Instead, they are worked out according to conditions that exist prior to and contemporary with its development. This is where we turn from generalised discussion to historical specifics. Much of this argument is developed more fully in Chapters Two, Four and Five, and is subject to a more sustained investigation in Chapters Six and Seven. Nonetheless, it helps to clarify a complicated discussion by pre-empting and summarising it at the outset.

What do we know about England in AD 600? A number of important social and economic trends can be recognised. Firstly, Steve Bassett and others have argued that the generation either side of AD 600 saw the middle and closing stages of a struggle for power between a large number of small kingdoms that were slowly amalgamating into larger and politically more stable power blocs (Bassett 1989). Thus, the kingdom of Kent developed in the later half of the sixth century, while Northumbria was drawn together out of diverse provinces in the early years of the

seventh century. Wessex seems to have taken slightly longer to settle down, but seems to have emerged in the middle years of the seventh century. Some of the smaller kingdoms survived into the eighth century, but were unable to retain their independence against the overwhelming power of their neighbours: for example, the Hwicce appear in historical sources in the seventh and eighth century, but were ultimately subsumed into the larger kingdom of Mercia. By around 750 the numerous petty kingdoms of 600 had been reduced to a few much larger ones including Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex. These larger kingdoms must have depended on much longer lines of communication than their predecessors. The kings of these larger kingdoms had much greater amounts of tribute to collect and much more wealth available which means that not only were the royal houses much wealthier by 750, they depended for that wealth on administrators to recover and deliver it.

This view of the aggressive expansion of kingdoms in the century and a half before 750 is consistent with archaeological analyses of “aristocratic” burial in the period. The generation before 600 is marked by a number of wealthy barrow burials associated with quite wealthy deposits of grave goods at places like Taplow and Swallowcliffe Down. This tradition reaches a peak in the first quarter of the seventh century with the extraordinary wealth of the cemetery at Sutton Hoo. Yet by 750, the situation seems to have changed quite markedly. The aggressive and wealthy aristocratic burials were replaced by a more conservative and more homogeneous “neo-classical” style of burial that suggests considerably more stability and considerably less aggressive consumption (Geake 1997). This is consistent with the wider view of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms because it implies that a new and cosmopolitan elite had emerged. This is supported by analysis of clothing and jewellery styles that seem to signal that this new elite had more in common with each other than with their predecessors.

The economic condition of Anglo-Saxon England prior to 600 AD is harder to establish, but the broad pattern of change witnessed in political developments is mirrored in economic affairs too. It is clear for example that there was no indigenous Anglo-Saxon coinage in England prior to the seventh century, with small runs of gold “tremiss” coins appearing in the first half of the century, and larger runs of silver “sceatta” coins in use by the end of the century and in extensive circulation in some locations by 750. Industrial production before 600

was universally small-scale with hand-made pottery generally produced from local clays and fired at low temperatures. By the end of the period, this situation had changed markedly with, for example, Ipswich-ware pottery being produced centrally in what may be small but permanent kilns, and distributed across much wider areas. There is little evidence for much in the way of urban settlement, even in the surviving remnants of Roman towns around 600. The evidence for settlement points to small, self-sufficient and shifting rural settlements. By 750 AD there is evidence for occupation of at least two reasonably substantial settlements that seem to combine industrial activity with trade (at Lundenwic and Hamwic). It is certainly feasible that this number could be doubled by the inclusion of York and Ipswich which both give grounds for hope.

This discussion could be extended at length, and will be given much more room in Chapter Five. There are however, inevitable problems with the dating of these phenomena that hamper our ability to place them within the precise historical contexts of the arrival of the missionaries. Thus, for example, we can speak with only approximate dates for the development of coinage, accurate at best to decades. If we argue that the development of coinage was somehow the result of the conversion of a given king with given dates, then with the best will in the world we will not be able to locate it within the constraints which that precise narrative really requires. Similarly we should be wary of extrapolating over-enthusiastically from one kingdom or decade to the next. Simply because the laws of Ine of Wessex talk of minor functionaries does not in itself allow us to assume the same of Northumbria or Mercia. Tight controls will be required if such statements, which may be controversial in their own right, are to carry any weight in other contexts. Finally, generic dating methods such as place-name evidence, artefact typology or hedgerow dating are occasionally all that are available. Where these are used, and where the argument comes to depend on them, we should be absolutely certain that they are supported as far as possible by other means, so that they may be made as secure as possible.

1.1.5 Literacy and surveillance: image and reality

It should be obvious enough, however, that literacy was introduced into Anglo-Saxon England at a time of considerable change in political, social and economic terms. It is important to note that the origins of these changes pre-date the development of literacy. Any argument which argued that these were the

“consequences” of literacy would not only be inconsistent with how literacy is understood here, but would be out by perhaps fifty or a hundred years. However, these changes give us grounds for asking two questions: in what way was the development of literacy influenced by the context in which it emerged; and to what extent did the development of literacy subsequently influence these changes? As we shall see, certain aspects of literacy were deployed to support and perhaps also represent aspects of the surveillance of resources.

It is clear that clerical literacy did indeed respond to these on-going changes, and in ways not confined to the religious sphere alone. The prime motivation for the clerical use of literacy, we must assume, was the effective and appropriate conduct of the liturgies and rituals of the church, as well as the use of letters and the like to manage and extend the mission. Thus, from an early date, we have evidence of letters from Gregory to the mission urging them and answering questions of a spiritual nature. We also have reason to believe that Gregory wrote to a number of kings and bishops to seek their support for the mission if not their own baptism. Bede tells us that these letters accompanied liturgical books that were (and remain) an important element in the conduct of the sacraments, prayers and rituals of the church, as well as personal meditation. All of this is entirely unexceptional. It is precisely what one would expect literate missionaries to do when they have access to literacy.

However, there is evidence that, from a very early date, literacy was also appropriated for what seem more like secular affairs too. This is more remarkable. The earliest law code of Kent in the reign of Aethelberht was followed after an interval by two more codes of Eadric and Hlothere, and Withred. A fourth, by Ine of Wessex completes the set of (surviving) law codes issued in the seventh century. These few texts are evidence that the clergy saw no impediment to using writing to intervene in secular affairs, even if as Wormald has argued, that intervention was not practically effective until some later date. The image of that intervention is also important. Similarly the clergy clearly used literacy to record grants of land to their benefit. Charters and the complications they bring will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, but the point is worth making that these charters are relatively numerous from the period up to 750, especially from the second half of the seventh century. They record grants of land to the clergy from the laity, but did not simply sit in monastic libraries unseen and unknown to the laity that made the

grant. As well as making the grants, there is some evidence that the laity would have witnessed the charters, if not by formal signature, at least in some ritual fashion. Different from law-making, the evidence of charters for land tenure again shows that the clergy had no hesitation in using literacy to manage and intervene in secular affairs.

The question arises therefore, why should such practices be necessary? Why should literacy be extended in this way? A number of commentators have argued over the Mediterranean or Frankish origins of charters. There is certainly evidence that aspects of these practices were introduced into England from abroad, but that is not in itself an argument for why they should have developed in their own right. The answer as to why charters and law codes should have persisted and developed can be found instead in the local context of Anglo-Saxon England.

If the seventh century witnessed significant changes in the nature of Anglo-Saxon kingship, including the development of larger kingdoms and more extended lines of communication, then the opportunity must have existed for the clergy to exploit this political and military disruption. It has long been noted that Christianity offers a set of religious practices that support and extend medieval kingship: the semi-sacred status of kingship, the controlled but extravagant display of wealth, the numerous analogies with biblical kingship, and the association with the authority of Rome. These factors are undoubtedly important, but the clergy also had access to literacy. In a context of extended lines of communication and an inevitable breakdown in face-to-face exchanges, one can imagine that literacy would have offered an important opportunity to sustain royal authority across longer distances and times, and abstract royal authority from the person of the king to the office which he held. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the discursive impact of literacy would allow the king to appear in the Roman manner, suggesting if not actually realising that aspiration. The king may not have been able to read or write himself, but by associating his power with literacy he could then draw on the same appearance of access to esoteric knowledge. Theoretically, literacy thus could have provided much needed support for Anglo-Saxon kings at precisely the moment it was needed.

While the evidence does not rule out such a proposition, it does not provide much immediate support for it either. What is clear however is that the period also

saw the development of a whole variety of mechanisms of surveillance which both represented, maintained and extended royal power. Surveillance may be defined simply as “vigilant supervision”. It is not unique to Anglo-Saxon England, nor should we imagine that it developed in response to the development of extended kingship. What is special about the period between 600 and 750 is the apparent development of new methods of surveillance in order to sustain these extended kingdoms. These new methods of surveillance could allow the king and royal government to be present physically in all areas of the kingdom simultaneously, regulate life in the localities and to an extent standardise them. Surveillance is not simply a way of intervening directly to obtain or maintain power, such as the collection of taxes or the suppression of rebellion, but it could also be a means to symbolise that power indirectly, such as the appearance of the royal image on currency.

The seventh and eighth century seem to witness a whole variety of phenomena that may be described as mechanisms for surveillance: mechanisms for supervising the physical and human resources of the kingdom that are better suited to coping with the extended kingdoms. These too will be described in more detail in Chapter Five, but can be introduced in outline here. For example, there is evidence that royal officials appear in the localities for the first time, carrying titles like “scirman”. These may have existed in an earlier period, but if they did they must have had a considerably less important role in proximity to the king. The appearance of “high-status” settlements, interpreted as estate centres for royal officials in the localities, also supports the view that these people were not simple legal fiction. The seventh and eighth centuries also saw the division of the kingdoms into large ecclesiastical units, which seem in some circumstances to mimic large royal estates and seem to be centred on existing royal estate centres. These divisions may not in themselves have been new, but the fact that they were re-invented in the period suggests a certain concern with dividing the landscape into manageable chunks that could be overseen, especially when seen alongside the appearance of royal officials in the localities. The seventh century saw the development of coinage: tentatively at first but with growing circulation. By 750, this coinage had already moved from bullion to currency in some places, and we have some evidence that as well as being abundant, it could also be tightly regulated. This regulation and production of coinage is evidence of another new form of surveillance. Other more discrete elements may also be cited.

Archaeological evidence of settlements in the eighth century suggests that settlements were more carefully demarcated from the rest of the countryside. This is certainly the case with Hamwic where a large ditch marked the extent of the settlement, and entrance to and from the settlement may have been policed at a gateway. Sites like Catholme, for example, provide evidence of similar divisions between and within settlements (Losco-Bradley 1984). This marks the physical intervention of the technologies of surveillance in movement in and out of settlements. Also, Hamwic seems to suggest that the town was demarcated internally too, identifying plots of land. It is hard to demonstrate that this represents a concern with personal property, but it is at least consistent with such a proposition, with small groups seeming to supervise their resources. In other contexts, there is evidence not only of settlements being marked out, but entire landscapes too.

The purpose of this discussion is to suggest that Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh and eighth century had need of new mechanisms for surveillance in order to maintain the extended networks of royal authority, and that this need was met by the invention of a series of practical measures. It is in this context that the charters and law codes of Anglo-Saxon England seem to make most sense. Though they may be problematic in practical terms, the law codes are largely consistent with the pattern we find in the archaeological record. The seventh century sees the first development of coinage, and the law codes speak straightforwardly about coinage. The law codes speak of the need to enclose land and to manage personal property: the archaeological record is consistent with a new concern for property and boundaries. Archaeology presents a number of examples of how new mechanisms of surveillance may have emerged in practice. It is clear that literacy was also used, at least symbolically, to the same end.

This means that if we want to study literacy in Anglo-Saxon England, we have the option to investigate two interconnected aspects of literacy. On one hand we can study the discursive impact of literacy as a way to project the superiority of the clergy over the illiterate laity. On the other hand we can study the practical impact of literacy as one element in a system of supervision and surveillance that supported expanded royal authority.

Of course, these two options overlook the fact that the discursive representation of literacy may have a practical impact too. If it proves too difficult to connect between the clergy and the supervision of resources (i.e. the surveillance rôle) then we may nonetheless be able to develop an argument about the discursive impact of literacy in practical matters. This alternative proposition would hold that, while the surveillance did not bring about change through literacy, the clerical monopoly of literacy provided a key into the royal authority that in fact drove these changes. Thus, rather than relying on the practical impact of literacy to manage physical resources, the clergy may still have drawn from its discursive power by appearing to do so. Access to literacy may have appeared to provide access to a growing royal authority. To that extent, missionary clergy may have appeared in the localities as arbiters with a new social and political order as well as with a new deity. It is the appearance of influence rather than the reality that is important.

If we accept that the literacy of Anglo-Saxon charters and law codes in part responded to the needs of the time in terms of surveillance and the maintenance of resources, then we may in turn ask if literacy had an impact beyond that which was initially intended. This important question is restricted by the limitations of the dating evidence available to us in the narrowly defined time-frame studied here. It is clear that the centuries after the conversion saw the growth of literacy for bureaucratic purposes, that the church retained a significant control over literacy, and that many aspects of government were indeed extended by the use of literacy. Thus, for example, the writ and will became common elements in the supervision of material resources that are decidedly about different times and places from their preparation. But the earliest evidence for writs and wills is beyond the time-frame set here.

Can we detect any evidence that literacy could have had any impact on technologies of surveillance in the period up to 750? The limited evidence available suggests that the answer to this should be yes on two counts.

First, the impact of literacy means the introduction of a specialist class of administrators not required for the other forms of surveillance that were described. By connecting literacy to the extension of royal authority and to the maintenance of resources, they created a new set of relationships between the literate and illiterate populations. Access to literacy thus also brought access to (certain of) the means of

surveillance. The clergy thus invited themselves to mediate between the king and his population in secular affairs.

Secondly, the apparent evidence that mechanisms of surveillance were extended to diverse corners of the kingdom is indicative of a change in the space-time geography of social relations. These newly extended kingdoms were not simply conglomerations that affiliated to one or other royal person. In one case that we shall investigate in Chapters Five, Six and Seven – the case of Wessex – different parts of the kingdom developed similar mechanisms of surveillance within a generation or so of the promulgation of Ine's law code. This takes us to the complicated arguments about the nature of written as against oral discourse, where it was argued that literate discourse does indeed offer unique properties that matter in space and time. The argument is not a strong one – it may be likened to the mathematical properties of an atom saying something about the big bang. “Distanciation” cannot be proven, but simply inferred, from its impact on the environment (after Kelly 1990 36). The impact in Wessex in the eighth century can be detected in the development of boundaries in the rural uplands and in trade restraints in the coastal lowlands – both of which are clearly articulated requirements of Ine's law code.

1.1.6 Locating literacy: the literacy event in Anglo-Saxon England

So, if literacy in Anglo-Saxon England was, among other things, appropriated for use as a mechanism for surveillance, we are one step closer to identifying what the archaeology of this literacy might be. The gap between the archaeological record and the historical practice remains wide, but the broad configuration can be identified. Commentators have developed a set of analytical terms that seek to specify the empirical basis for the manifestation of literacy in real lives, referring to this as a “literacy event”. This term, and the allied vocabulary of literacy practice, communicative practice and textual community provide a set of related terms which can be deployed usefully in the context of Anglo-Saxon England to set aside certain aspects of literacy from other social practices. These are developed more fully in Chapters Four and Five, but it will certainly clarify later work if these are introduced here, and if the conceptual problems around them are identified.

The literacy event is broadly described as any event in which literacy is mobilised. This definition seems simple, but given the complex nature of literacy and the disputes surrounding it, even this simple definition is not straightforward.

At a very basic level, the act of writing may be termed a literacy event, since the act involves both acts of reading and writing, along with the associated actions of creativity and the physical motion of the arm and hand. Writing is the classic literacy event since it encapsulates all aspects of literacy. Problems arise as we move away from this centre of gravity to other more fluid definitions of literacy that do not lay the whole emphasis on reading and writing.

At one remove from the act of writing is the act of reading. Commentators generally support the notion that any act of reading may be termed a literacy event, since the core of the activity is focussed on the interpretation of symbols. Yet, if one were to pursue a rigorous definition of literacy that identified literacy as reading and writing, then the act of reading alone would necessarily fall outwith the precise definition of a literacy event. Such a precise definition seems niggardly, but would be the position followed by some within the debate on literacy, such as Walter Ong who identifies literacy as both reading and writing. This thesis is prepared to accept that reading can be described as a literacy event, since the definition of literacy offered by Ong seems unconvincing. Indeed, the reading of a complicated tract seems infinitely more taxing than the writing of a note.

Yet the problems do not end here. As has already been mentioned, and as will be argued more fully in Chapter Four, literacy cannot be easily separated from illiteracy, nor from a whole discursive environment in which the roles of literate and illiterate may be projected. Thus, it would follow that an illiterate person may be able to participate in a literacy event by virtue of the presence of a literate person. In such circumstances, not only would the illiterate person depend on the literate one to enable their participation, this relationship of dependence could reinforce other social, cultural or ideological dependencies. That an illiterate person could participate in a literacy event may seem counter-intuitive. In fact the early Middle Ages give us numerous opportunities to explore such contexts. Thus, famously, Charlemagne's attempts to write came to nothing in spite of his determined effort, and his efforts to read also came late in life under the guidance of Alcuin and Peter of Pisa (VC III 25). Similarly the preface to Bede's

Ecclesiastical History clearly anticipates that it will be read aloud for listeners as well as readers (HE Preface). Bede also describes letters written by Pope Gregory to various of the Anglo-Saxon kings. It is hard to imagine what use an illiterate pagan king would have had for a letter from the Pope – unless the subtleties of the situation imply some other discursive purpose that was not simply concerned with the contents of the letter.

While we cannot always now identify the relevant hearers and readers of these texts we can at least say that, in order to receive the text, the hearers were largely dependent upon their reader. These are just a few examples in the Middle Ages of how those who could not read or write were nonetheless able to participate in literacy events. Though perhaps controversial, this wider definition of literacy events is accepted in this thesis because it is entirely consistent with the ideas of literacy as a discursive social practice proposed by Street and others. So, the literacy event may involve the illiterate as well as the literate.

If literacy events can be extended in this way to include the illiterate, then the question arises whether or not we should accept that literacy events may occur without the presence of a literate mediator. This takes us some steps away from the very narrow definition offered at the start, and may threaten to weaken its utility. But it is not inconsistent with definitions of literacy offered that stress the discursive impact of literacy. As we will note, as well as being practical, literacy offers discursive tools in which different sectors of the population may take on different roles according to their relative access to the technical ability to read and write. Thus, literacy may be about image as well as the practicalities of meaning. The Middle Ages again provides some evidence of contexts where illiterate members of the population were confronted with literacy, without the presence of a literate interpreter. For example, the Ruthwell Cross bears a series of inscriptions that would have been inaccessible to most of the local population. The meaning within the inscription may have been lost to them, but the fact that the meaning existed and that it could be recovered by a certain social class would still be present. The meaning of the inscription may have been lost, but the discourse on literacy was still present. The same is the case with much of the coinage of the early Middle Ages that clearly bears an inscription. This seems like a controversial claim, but in consideration of the definition of literacy offered by Street and others it is not inconsistent. If a literacy event is any event in which literacy is mobilised,

then the discursive mobilisation of literacy and illiteracy is appropriately described as a literacy event.

The Ruthwell Cross and coinage are examples of how the discourse of literacy may still be present even if the ability to recover meaning is lost. It works as a definition, but also appeals to common sense since the inscriptions provide a direct link with reading and writing. The script embodies the image of literate and illiterate that may be created. The definition of literacy, however, identifies a discourse on access to esoteric forms of knowledge. It does not follow that a text need be present for that discourse to be activated or the rôles projected. Although it is quite distant from the discrete moment of reading and writing with which we started, and though it may seem to weaken the precision of the term, definitions of literacy proposed here suggest that a literacy event may in fact be any event in which the discourse of literacy is activated. The discourse of literacy may be activated without the presence of a reader, a writer or even a text, so it follows that a literacy event need not involve any of these players either.

Readers should be aware that this is a controversial definition of the “literacy event” that may not fit easily with more conventional usage, and may indeed ultimately corrupt the original intended meaning of the phrase. The point is that the “literacy event” sounds like a simple and precise term, but closer scrutiny shows that it is hostage to the definition of literacy used. While the core of the literacy event seems solid, the edges are more fluid. Different types of literacy event will be ruled in or out depending on the definition of literacy used, since this will dictate where the boundaries of the literacy event are set. The definition used in this thesis draws those boundaries quite widely, because this seems the logical conclusion of the discussion of literacy that will be presented in Chapter Four. Readers, however, may wish to reflect whether such a wide definition is indeed useful in the context, and choose to reject certain of the literacy events identified here. They are certainly only tenuously connected with a more conservative or mechanical definition of literacy that focuses exclusively on reading and writing. Readers should be warned of this possible problem, and are at liberty to discard conclusions that depend upon it. Nonetheless, the definition used here is defended since it seems largely consistent with the broad thrust of thought about literacy in the generation after Goody and Ong.

The problems that may be encountered by the broad definition of literacy are to some extent the result of trying to apply concepts from other disciplines to shed light on relatively unknown areas of other periods. This thesis seeks to ask new questions of old problems and to present new theoretical insights into subjects that seem caught in an interpretative impasse. It is almost inevitable that the interdisciplinary gaze that this thesis seeks to promote will have some problems reconciling the vocabularies of disparate disciplines and the expectations of diverse readers. Misunderstandings or confused meanings may result, but they are not an argument for not trying.

1.1.7 Literacy and archaeology: dating and other problems

As if all the problems identified the previous sections were not enough, there is the significant problem of reconciling any changes perceived in the archaeological record with the use of literacy. This has two facets: the difficult task of reconciling historical and archaeological evidence, and the more difficult task of identifying the “consequences of literacy” in the archaeological record.

The archaeological record is not excavated with historical labels already attached, so even in the most controlled setting, the identification of archaeological evidence with historical events remains provisional. This is because neither the historical or archaeological records are complete in their presentation of historical events. There is thus always the possibility that there is some missing feature or detail that would change completely the relationship between them. In the context of Anglo-Saxon England, this problem is exacerbated by two factors: the relative scarcity and necessarily complicated interpretation of the historical record; and the chronological crudeness of archaeological data when set against historical material. For example, Bede records the activities of King Edwin and his party at the “locus idolorum” at “Godmundingaham” (HE II.13). The identification of this place with Goodmanham in Yorkshire seems beyond doubt, but the archaeological evidence for the pagan shrine which once stood there is not straightforward, and the precise location of the important site within the modern parish remains problematic. The most recent discussion of the topic identifies the site of the shrine with the later parish church (Blair 1995 22-24). The argument carries weight, but John Blair is careful to offer a number of qualifications in the light of the available evidence. If this is the case with a place as historically important as Goodmanham, as clearly dated and as accurately described, then it is to be

expected that there will be problems making a clear connection between historical sources and archaeological evidence in other contexts too.

Yet, even if the parish church, all the surrounding burials and the various associated pre-historic monuments were excavated completely, it would still be hard to say beyond question that this was the site referred to by Bede. The chronology offered by archaeological evidence makes it very hard to offer the precision required to tie a site to a particular historical date. The site may have been standing but out of use throughout the period in question; there may have been another site now destroyed or otherwise invisible; there may simply be nothing more than a few shards of pottery or pieces of metalwork which could be dated on stylistic grounds to the period. Even “absolute” dates require considerable expertise to interpret. The point is that it is hard, if not impossible, to reconcile historical sources with archaeological evidence with complete confidence. In many cases, all that is possible are reasoned deductions that remain provisional or parallels that seem reasonable. If this is the case, then it will necessarily be difficult to connect changes in the archaeological record directly with historical accounts.

More problematic even than the relationship between historical sources and the archaeological record are the problems of identifying the impact of literacy, separating the impact of practices that derive entirely out of literacy from those that are simply translated from earlier practices, then attempting to identify the archaeological record associated with them. This is why we must be clear about what we mean by literacy, the terminology which surrounds it, and the various other analytical terms used to describe the breadth and penetration of literacy in the wake of the coming of the missionaries.

1.2 Definition of Terms and Discussion

In sketching the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England, this thesis develops ideas from some unusual places. Thus, theological tracts, psychological analyses, anthropological studies and philosophical enquiries are discussed. In order to keep track of these different fields, and in order that they may cohere, a number of concepts will emerge and recur through the work. While these will be discussed in more detail at the appropriate points in the text, it is as well to be aware of them at

first. This early series of definitions can only assist the reader. They indicate the broad thrust of the argument, and they denote that much of what is to come will be unusual. Moreover, they allow the reader to refer back to a brief authoritative definition when such terms are used in the text. Every effort has been made to ensure that the appropriate terms are deployed at appropriate times.

1.2.1 Missionary Encounter: definition and discussion

One feature of the anthropological literature of missionary work is the way that phenomena, which have no direct relevance to the overt religious message of the missionaries, become woven into a broader encounter between different groups with distinct, and at times conflicting views of the world. The divergence or congruence of the habits of the missionaries with the indigenous population can have a lasting impact on the relationship between the missionaries and their “audience”. The overt religious message of missionaries is always presented within broader social and cultural practices. The distinction between the religious message and the rest of the cultural baggage may be clear to the missionaries, but the audience may not be able to disentangle the religious message from these other elements. Anthropology provides numerous examples where missionaries have deliberately employed these other tools to support a religious message. Although written from the perspective of the missionaries, the relationship between the missionary and the indigenous population must be viewed as a dialogue. Thus, any study of missionary work must be aware of the complex reality of the relationship between missionary and indigenous population. In this study of missionary work, we concentrate therefore on the complex relationship between the clergy and the Anglo-Saxon population.

In the following pages, the broader engagement between missionary and laity is termed the “Missionary Encounter”. It is described in more detail in Chapter Three. The reality and breadth of the day-to-day encounter between indigenous and missionary has been described by Comaroff and Comaroff in the context of nineteenth-century Africa. Describing the relationship as a conversation, they argue that:

This conversation had two faces. Its overt content, what the parties most often talked about, was dominated by the substantive message of the mission, and was conveyed in sermons and services, in lessons and didactic dialogues.the Gospel delivered thus made little if any sense along the African frontier in the first half of the nineteenth century. More often than not it was ignominiously ignored or rudely rejected. But, within and alongside these exchanges there occurred another kind of exchange: an often quiet, occasionally strident struggle between the Europeans and the Africans to gain mastery over the terms of the encounter. The earliest objects of this struggle were the forms that the churchmen sought to impose on the conversation itself: among others, linguistic forms, spatial forms, forms of rational argument and positive knowledge. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991 199)

Though defined in abstract terms, the encounter was played out in apparently innocuous, mundane forms. Thus, the western and indigenous forms of agriculture were different, as were methods of building. Attitudes to production and language diverged. These exchanges did not take place at high political levels or as cultural abstractions but in such mundane activities as hoeing a garden and washing linen. Perhaps more important to the mission than preaching or prayer was the “matter of fact theatre of protestant industry” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991 202).

Thus, the missionary encounter defines the whole developing relationship between missionary and indigenous population. It may be at once political, liturgical and spiritual. But, in drawing attention to the work of Comaroff and Comaroff, I seek to argue that it may also be mundane. While the missionary encounter may be described in abstract terms, the subtle differences between missionary and indigenous population may be embodied in practical realities. This concern with practical realities serves as a reminder that the missionary encounter was not simply between kings and missionaries, but also between the missionaries and “ordinary” people. The missionary encounter therefore need not simply have been about how to govern or how to impress populations with new rites. The missionary encounter could also have been about daily things, such as how best to raise cattle, how to move through the landscape, and how to fish. In short, the missionaries in England in the seventh century could not restrict themselves to religious matters, nor could their influence be restricted to the elite. As we shall

see, the impact of the clergy in the development of bureaucracy and allied technologies of surveillance provide an alternative view on the missionary encounter.

On first inspection, it may seem odd to use the term “missionary” to cover a period of perhaps as much as one hundred and fifty years. The question therefore arises as to when does a missionary cease to be a missionary and become just another member of society. The answer to this question depends in part on our definition of the term “missionary”. There are broadly two approaches to the idea of missionary – one that views the missionary as an agent of change. Once the change has been achieved, the missionary reverts to a more conventional clerical role, but this change may take a long time to achieve. On the other hand, a missionary may be the first generation of clergy in an area. Once that first generation has passed, then the missionary group revert to a more conventional clerical role, even if the mission has not been achieved in any formal way.

If we follow the definition of missionary as an agent of change, then the deployment depends on recognising the completion of missionary work. One commentator has recently defined the “conversion period” as being the entire period from 600 to 850 (Geake 1997). Following this definition, it would seem quite appropriate to use the term missionary not only to 750 AD, but for a century afterwards too. Defining the missionary as one who undertakes the work of conversion has a profound impact on the time frame to be discussed: once the populace is converted, then the missionary ceases to be a missionary since the evangelical motivation characteristic of missionary work is no longer necessary. The task of conversion may take many years – indeed many generations, so the duration of the missionary encounter can be extended indefinitely. This definition refers to the missionary as if he were a sales-man who can stop working once everyone has bought his goods. Such a definition is attractively simple, but is clearly limited for our purposes since it assumes an answer to the question of conversion, and an outright determination of the completion of the missionary’s work. It is based on a number of assumptions about religious conversion that will be questioned in Chapters Two and Three.

If on the other hand, the term missionary is restricted to the first generation of clerics in an area then the duration of missionary work is restricted. However, this

definition assumes that missionary activity is only possible within constrained environments where Christianity – or the particular brand being preached by the missionaries – is new and alien to the local inhabitants. This definition is attractive because it specifies a very precise context. However, it underestimates the extent of evangelism implicit in some brands of Christianity, where “mission” is perceived as a form of renewal that can have a profound impact on long-established Christian communities. It also under-estimates the persistence of memory: it may take more than one generation for the perception of missionary work to be displaced. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it implies some form of *tabula rasa* in which Christianity is new. All of these objections cause problems, though a number of qualifications are possible. Thus, if we accept that the idea of missionary work can be remembered for longer than one generation – especially in contexts where the message is not received easily – then it is possible to be less restrictive about the time constraints, but still retain the useful idea of the first preachers. If we accept that there may be earlier generations of Christians that were less committed to obtaining converts, then we can to some extent overcome the problem of identifying the earliest introduction of Christianity.

This thesis tends towards the latter definition of the missionary as a member of the first generation of clerics in a locality committed to making converts. This means that, as well as the role the missionary may take on himself, the role is defined in relation to a specific context too. The missionary can only be identified as such depending on his actions and when the missionaries first “arrive” in an area.

While this may seem an obvious combination, it can in fact be very hard to describe precisely: in Kent missionaries may appear in the late sixth century, in the Isle of Wight they may only appear considerably later. Moreover, uncertainty over the activities of British, Irish and Frankish clergy, not to mention possible Romano-British survivals, confuse the picture even more.

Much of this thesis is concerned with Wessex – specifically Hampshire – so frequently the terms apply to the situation of missionaries there. Yet Wessex cannot be identified as a single undifferentiated whole. Although Cynegils of Wessex was baptised in 635, this may have had little effect on the much larger territory of Wessex. Cynegils' kingdom in 635 was considerably smaller than Ine's

kingdom of 700. Thus, the Jutish provinces of Hampshire – the very areas presented in our case studies – may not have been incorporated into the Wessex Kingdom until 685-6 (Yorke 1995 59). This has an impact on how we view the progress of the missions in Hampshire. It suggests that Hamwic was probably only brought into the Christian kingdom of Wessex towards the end of the century, and that Micheldever in northern Hampshire may only have been incorporated into a Christian kingdom in the late seventh century, since the foundation of a diocese in Winchester (660-3) has been taken to mark the Wessex kings' determination to mark out a northern boundary and secure this area for themselves (Yorke 1995 58-9). Traditions of an earlier date for the foundation of the Old Minster at Winchester derive entirely from late and unreliable sources (Yorke 1982).

This late incorporation into the kingdom of Wessex is important for the study of missionary work. If we follow the commonly-held view that missionary work followed the expansion of kingdoms, then it would seem that the earliest missionary work in Hampshire may be as late as the second half – perhaps the fourth quarter – of the seventh century. Yet such direct correlation between royal interests and missionary work is problematic. The fact of the matter is that we simply cannot identify the earliest missionary work in Hampshire, though there are no clear indications of any missionaries active here before 660. This view is consistent with Bede's claim that the Isle of Wight did not receive Christianity till 686 (HE IV 16).

So, our earliest reliable dates suggest that missionary activity in Hampshire may in fact have begun in the second half of the seventh century and perhaps as late as the mid 680's. Such dates are uncertain, but the margin for error falls on either side. If we accept 660 – the earliest reliable date for the diocese at Winchester – as the earliest date for missionary work in Hampshire, the suggestion that missionaries were still active in the late seventh century seems reasonable. 660 may indeed be a generous date, since it assumes a commitment to Southern Hampshire long before it was actually secured for the Christian kingdom of Wessex (Yorke 1995 59). If we relax the stringent definition of missionaries as the first generation of clerics, and allow for the "mission" to be remembered for one more generation, it should be clear that missionary activity in Hampshire could easily have continued into the eighth century, especially in more remote rural areas.

In other contexts, however, a date in the eighth century would imply an abuse of the term “missionary”. In Kent, for example, it would clearly be stretching the point – or making a significant assumption – to suggest that the work of the clergy was “missionary” in the first decade of the eighth century, since the clergy had clearly been active in Kent from the last decade of the sixth century. Even in Wessex, there are clear indications that the upper Thames area, which formed the heartlands of the Wessex kings, was exposed to Christianity at a much earlier date (Yorke 1995:171-81).

Thus, the term “missionary” and related concept of “missionary encounter” are sensitive to specific times and places as well as the mission itself. So long as precise times and places are borne in mind, we can avoid the terms being used inappropriately. Given the generations that elapsed between the arrival of the clergy in different parts of Southern England, the danger that these terms become confused is real.

The concept of missionary and in particular the missionary encounter are heavily coloured on our imagination by the activities of nineteenth-century clerics taking Christianity to the empire. There is a danger, therefore, that in using the terms we introduce anachronistic concepts that pertain to the colonial encounter of the nineteenth century. If this is allowed to happen, then rather than aiding our analysis, anthropological analogies will in fact obstruct our study. The terms will be discussed more completely in Chapter Three, where a whole range of concepts pertaining to religion will be analysed. Suffice to say that terms are interrogated vigorously and carefully abstracted before being translated into the Anglo-Saxon context that is our primary concern. Even so, readers are invited to consider whether the terms and analyses adopted are indeed appropriate, or whether they introduce confusion born of anachronism.

1.2.2 Liturgy: definitions and discussion

It follows from this that missionary activity was more than simply ritual. This takes us to the question of liturgy, and the role of liturgy within the spread of Christianity in England. In the pages that follow, the term “liturgy” has a formal definition. It is the form of service or regular ritual of the church. Thus one may talk of the “Liturgy of Baptism”, the “Liturgy of the Eucharist” and so on.

If the “missionary encounter” is concerned with a broad range of exchanges secular and religious, “liturgy” and “liturgical practices” are concerned with a much more narrowly restricted series of exchanges. Commentators have attempted to write the archaeology of “liturgy” by reference to two forms of evidence: cemeteries and church buildings. It is assumed that changes or transformation in these practices represent a structural shift in favour of the clergy. Thus, archaeologists have tended to use a re-constructed liturgy of burial as a metaphor for conversion, focussing on supposed changes that the church sought to impose in the disposal of the dead. Chapter Two discusses the problems with such methodology in more detail, but in outline, it is argued here that cemeteries do not provide a good analogy for the spread of Christianity (Samson 1999a, Hadley 2000). Yet, even if they did, there would still be more to discuss than the relationship between the indigenous population and the liturgy of the missionary church. As a number of commentators have pointed out, changes in ritual behaviour need not come about purely for religious reasons (Young 1975, Paxton 1990, Huggett 1996). The form of the grave is polysemous, as are the materials associated with it. Numerous interpretations are possible, with careful attention to context providing the only means of controlling the free play of signifiers (Pader 1979, 1980). The dynamic form of the grave, changing through time as well as location, provides a useful model for changes in ritual behaviour, even if putative relationships to the liturgies of the church cannot be reconstructed easily (Halsall 1998). Moreover, anthropological work shows that there is more to the “missionary encounter” than the overt religious message, but a whole range of social and cultural baggage that has implications for change in areas that are not considered religious by the clergy (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). It is not inconceivable therefore that the clergy brought about change in the use and development of cemeteries inadvertently. Such changes are not impossible, but there is no evidence that this was the result of liturgical constraints imposed by the clergy.

Great care is needed in reconstructing liturgy from archaeological evidence. A number of logical fallacies and interpretative errors are possible. Firstly we may simply over-state the impact of the clergy. Secondly we may attribute liturgical status to practices that were not thought of as liturgical, especially if we place too much emphasis on later evidence. Finally, we may mistakenly reject archaeological approaches to liturgy when what we seek to investigate is not liturgical in the first case.

In order to avoid these contradictions and inconsistencies, a careful vocabulary is used in the following pages. Liturgy, the provenance of the church, is distinguished from ritual activity. Ritual or ritual activity in turn is not necessarily the provenance of the church though may in fact be. This distinction is made because the connection between the church and certain forms of activity cannot be proven satisfactorily, and may in fact be a red herring (Huggett 1996, Halsall 1998). Liturgy is taken to be ritual associated with religion: ritual is simply visible ceremonial practice, connected to religion or not. “Liturgical practices” are those practices associated with liturgy in the formal sense. This subtle distinction is made because “liturgy” cannot be preserved archaeologically, except in exceptional circumstances. As often as not, it is the archaeology of liturgical practices that survive, not the liturgy. It is also worth noting that, in practice, the archaeology of ritual is most often identified here with the archaeology of the cemetery, since other forms of ritual are less well represented in the archaeological record.

1.2.3 Conversion, “christianisation” and the coming of Christianity: definitions

A third set of inter-connected terms relating to religious conversion also needs to be defined at the start then used consistently, even if this pre-empts later discussion.

The term “conversion” has come to signal a whole range of related if subtly different phenomena in religious and historical studies, themes that will be developed in Chapter Three. Morrison comments that when we talk of conversion, even in a very discrete and defined context we inevitably refer to “a variety of models of conversion, some quite incompatible, all cobbled together (Morrison 1992 xix). Muldoon has recently described the saturation of meanings associated with conversion, and the problems that result:

By using the term conversion to describe a range of related religious experience ... we oversimplify its meaning. St Paul's intense and personal experience is equated with the gratitude that Constantine felt towards the deity who insured his crucial victory. The result is a far too simple model of that experience, one that places too much emphasis on a single traumatic experience that causes a rapid, radical change in an individual's or a society's way of life. In reality, these experiences form a range or spectrum of experiences that we label conversion rather than a single moment. (Muldoon 1997 1)

As we shall see, commentators have adopted alternative words and phrases to overcome the problem. Thus, for example, the term "christianisation" has been used to describe the method by which certain institutions are made compatible with a Christian world-view (e.g. Paxton 1990, Lynch 1998). It has also been used to describe the method by which populations were also made Christian (e.g. Sawyer et al 1987). In addition, a more neutral vocabulary can also be detected which does not seek to comment on the effectiveness or process of conversion or christianisation, simply noting its arrival. Thus, Mayr-Harting discusses simply the "Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England" (1991). These terms supplement and clarify Nock's definition of conversion as a personal experience:

by conversion we mean the re-orienting of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies consciousness that a great change is involved. (Nock 1933 7)

This definition is useful since it identifies conversion as a personal experience, not a corporate or institutional one. Nock offsets his definition against "adherence" which does not require any significant changes, except the supplementing of old forms with new ones (Nock 1933 7). Thus, whereas christianisation is a social or institutional process, conversion is a process for the individual.

Nock's definition of conversion is unfashionable. Critics have accused him of making moral and personal judgements that "narrow the scope of the term severely" (Cusack 1996 4). Yet, however unfashionable, there is much to be said

for narrowing the scope of our vocabulary, for precisely the reasons that Muldoon and Morrison identified (Muldoon 1997 1, Morrison 1992 xix). By confining use of the term to individual experience, we can control our intended meanings and concepts accordingly, making understanding and critique all the easier. Moreover, by confining the term “conversion” to the individual experience, we clarify its relationship with other analytical terms such as “christianisation”. Thus when we refer to the “process of conversion” we know that this is a personal experience in the mode of the “conversion” of Margaret Ebner (Hindsley 1997), not a generalised social process that might make a whole society or population Christian. Perhaps most significantly, however, it allows us to focus upon individual agency. As we shall see, personal agency is largely absent from accounts of the spread of Christianity.

Thus, however unfashionably, this thesis follows Nock’s definition of conversion as a personal experience as opposed to the wider social phenomenon. This does not prevent discussion of conversion as a “process”, but it does rule out discussion of social or institutional processes. If we wish to describe social or institutional processes, then we must find other terms. The term “christianisation” is used to describe the wider social or institutional engagement.

Adoption of this terminology does not come without a price. For example, the term “christianisation” is a perilous one since there is a danger that the institutional or social processes are studied without reference to agency. If social processes are allowed to drive without reference to personal involvement, then logical fallacies will result, such as the claim that “lack of evidence” can be interpreted as negative evidence. Chapter Three will show that reference to a theory of christianisation, without reference to what it excludes, hinders analysis.

The danger that we exclude personal agency from our accounts exists because our primary sources present serious obstacles to establishing the nature of the individual experience. At first inspection, this danger appears to be the result of a lack of sources but, as shall be demonstrated in Chapter Four, the problem resides in a deeper hermeneutic problem of the social sciences and their relationship to religious phenomena. The best we can hope for in any circumstance is a provisional and non-exhaustive account. We may not be able to say with any

confidence whether or not an individual was converted, but we can point to the mechanisms by which that conversion could have been facilitated.

Relating conversion principally to individual experience as against social or cultural norm is only one half of the problem, though it does provide scope for a further clarification of the term. Nock's definition clearly relates a change in consciousness and the "soul" against forms of piety (Nock 1933 7). In this respect he combines spirituality (the soul) with their outward appearances (piety). Yet these are two different phenomena. Again, the definition or confusion of these concepts at the outset will colour our analysis.

If conversion is simply concerned with outward shows, then the study will be limited to their simple empirical observation. If instead we are committed to a more thorough analysis of the spiritual side of conversion, then the study will be considerably more complicated. The gap between outward expression and inner belief is, to some extent, the basis of phenomenological objections to the study of conversion, which challenge us to look beyond outward forms alone and require a more thoughtful analysis in which outward, empirically accessible, forms are only tangentially connected with what may be regarded – within theological studies at least – as the real substance of conversion.

Chapter Three will explore this complicated theme more thoroughly, but a definition is appropriate at this point.

By conversion, this thesis refers to a substantial change in belief – in personal conviction rather than their outward form. This definition creates an immediate challenge to archaeological study since there is no practical way to study "conversion" defined in these terms. Yet the problems are not restricted to history or archaeology: sociology and anthropology are confounded in the same way, even with accessible witnesses. Thus, a significant shift in analysis is undertaken, where it is proposed that, instead of studying "conversion" and "converts" we should instead study the contexts in which conversion may have made sense: the rationality of conversion. This does not mean the study of outward forms per se, since these are only tangentially connected to conversion. Instead it means a study of the dialogue between missionary and their audience, registering the impact of

the missionaries on the local population, and asking whether or not conversion would have been reasonable.

Superficially, it may seem that adoption of such a contentious and complicated definition of literacy creates problems that are both unwelcome and unnecessary. If we were to follow an alternative definition that simply mapped compliance with the outward forms of religious observance, then the task would be a great deal simpler. However, as numerous archaeological and historical studies have shown, compliance with outward forms is a poor measure of religious sentiment in historical contexts (inter alia Bullough 1983, Van Engen 1986, Huggett 1996, Halsall 1998, Milis 1998, Samson 1999a, Hadley 2000). Moreover, anthropological and sociological analyses show that outward forms are a poor measure of conversion, even when subjects can be interrogated directly (inter alia Trexler 1984, Hefner 1993, Rambo 1993, Trompf 1996). So, while the definition of conversion as primarily an issue of personal commitment to spiritual beliefs is problematic, it does at least do justice to the complexity of the issue.

Given the constraints imposed by this definition of conversion, the analysis is deflected from a discussion of conversion per se to an attempt to identify the locus of rationality that could have made conversion reasonable. This challenge is couched in precise, technical language which will be explained and defended more thoroughly in Chapter Three.

The term christianisation also presents problems of anachronism. If we take the view that christianisation was a process that could only be completed in the fullness of time, then we must assume that there was an inevitable historical moment to which this process was moving. This risks an anachronistic definition of orthodoxy. If, on the other hand we accept that Christianity is fluid and responsive to historical conditions, then we must be content to accept that we need tightly defined contextual controls against which we may define Christianity. We must therefore carefully avoid the notion that there was an inevitable or desirable outcome of the process in the “longue durée”.

There is thus a relationship between “conversion”, “christianisation” and the “missionary encounter”. Following these definitions, the missionary encounter gives rise to a variety of social interactions that may set in train the

“christianisation” of certain social institutions, practices or structures. Conversion, a personal experience, cannot be shown definitively: only the structures and interactions by which conversion was made “rational”. The structural elements derive from christianisation: the other elements, both religious and secular, derive from the missionary engagement.

1.2.4 Conversion, literacy and the influence of Christianity: a discussion

The origins of this thesis are an attempt to develop a thoughtful re-interpretation of the archaeological and historical resources used to discuss the phenomenon of religious conversion. In the context of Anglo-Saxon England, the recognition that literacy was the unique property of the clergy holds out the prospect that it may be used to some extent as a metaphor for the development and spread of the influence of the clergy. Thus, questions of conversion, christianisation and missionary encounter could, in theory at least, be re-constituted as an interrogation of the archaeology of literacy. Yet further investigation reveals that the archaeology of literacy is itself a complicated and contentious theme, meaning that those answers which can be obtained from the archaeology of literacy can only be used as oblique references to the archaeology of clerical Christianity.

The reasons for this complexity lie in part in the complex nature of literacy. As noted in Chapter Four, and described above, literacy cannot be regarded as a simple technical fact, so much as a complicated social process. If it were a simple technical fact, then consequences would flow easily. The consequences would be universally true so an investigation of a better known historical or anthropological context would allow us identify those spheres in which it was active in Anglo-Saxon England. Thus, the consequences of literacy could be identified effortlessly, and the extension (or not) of clerical influence specified with ease. If only it were so simple. Chapter Four reveals that literacy is a complicated social practice. It is historically and contextually specific, so it does not have inevitable consequences. This means we cannot specify discrete spheres of influence for the clergy by reference to universal laws. Instead, we have to spend some time looking at the specific historical conditions of Anglo-Saxon literacy and the broader social milieu in which literacy developed and was (or was not) deployed.

Thus, the archaeology of literacy does not present a simple solution to the problems associated with the spread of Christianity. Instead, it gives rise to a series of inter-connected hypotheses that in turn provide an insight into the influence of the clergy in certain areas of social life. Conversion can be seen to be an aspect of this influence, but is not the end result, nor is it a “consequence” of the spread of literacy.

Even though the relationship between literacy and conversion turns out to be complicated, the argument that connects them is fruitful. It is partly useful in the number of sidelights it casts on different aspects of Anglo-Saxon life and culture, partly because it causes us to question the theoretical underpinnings of approaches to conversion and literacy. It is most useful, however insofar as it suggests that the clergy were more influential in the ordinary lives of the peasant community than is visible in conventional analyses.

Contemplation of anthropological accounts of missionary work encourages us to look at the spread of Christianity from an holistic perspective: that liturgical and related ceremonial practices are only one aspect of the missionary encounter (inter alia Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1992, Fisher 1985, Hefner 1993, Horton 1971, 1975a, 1975b, Ranger 1987, 1993, Rambo 1993, Trexler 1984). If therefore we are to attempt a novel analysis of the spread of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England, then it will assist us to change our focus from ceremonial acts and liturgical practices to – paraphrasing Comaroff and Comaroff (1991 202) – “the matter of fact theatre of clerical values”.

If we are to look at the impact of literacy as an element of the missionary encounter, then we need to investigate the configuration of literacy in this particular context. Literacy may take many forms, but seldom takes all of them in any given situation. It is historically constructed, so the particular form that it takes will bear the traces of the historical processes in which it was deployed. Thus, for example, Kevin Johnston has shown that literacy and scribes were used in the consolidation of fragile polities in Mesoamerica (Johnston 2001). In the Athenian democracy, literacy was used to record heroic acts of political and military leaders, stripping away the veneer of democracy in Athens, and revealing the dominance of military might (Thomas 1989). As we shall see in Chapter Five, literacy in Anglo-Saxon England seems to have taken two complementary forms.

On one hand it took a liturgical and ceremonial form, with the creation and display of lavish religious texts, such as the Lindisfarne Gospels. On the other hand, literacy was deployed as a means of extending control over resources, or at least symbolising that control – in particular over land, but over other resources too.

The religious use of texts is an interesting study in its own right. The book remains a key symbol of Christian liturgies, a significance that can be traced back to the Hebrew origins of much early Christian practice. There are numerous useful discussions to be had about the creation of such manuscripts in Anglo-Saxon England, their deployment, and the discursive role of liturgical literacy in the conversion of England (see most recently Brown 2001 plus references). However, if we are to look beyond the ceremonial and liturgical activities of the clergy, then this material is perhaps less immediately important than the texts associated with legal and allied transactions – that is the charters and law codes.

As pointed out above, the earliest charters of England have been a source of enormous debate (see most recently Wormald 1999 and references). We shall look at this discussion in more detail in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. For now it is simply worth noting that the seventh and early eighth centuries saw a rapid development of texts associated with land-holding and the law. The precise number is a matter of debate (following Wormald 1984 7), as are claims to “lost” charters that may be reconstructed from other texts – but the broad thrust is symptomatic of growth in the recording of land and allied legal transactions in the seventh and early eighth centuries. This growth should be sufficient cause for interest.

In seventh- and eighth-century England literacy was deployed “bureaucratically”. The term bureaucracy has two meanings. On one hand it represents the institutions that deal with the paperwork of administration, on the other it describes the work of the administration. In the context of this thesis, by bureaucracy I mean those practices of literacy that pertain to the control of resources. This might be simply a rhetorical mechanism for symbolising that control, or it may be a tool used to regulate and report on the state of resources, or it may indeed be both. Commentators disagree about the extent of their practical or discursive roles.

It is inconceivable that these charters could have been created without the presence of the clergy. Commentators agree that they were written by the clergy, often using the same ornate uncial script used for liturgical texts. They pertain to clerical estates, and are suffused with clerical language and ideas. Moreover, the texts themselves and the resources required to create them were expensive. The years of training required to read and write are often under-estimated in a culture where mass literacy is the norm. In the early Middle Ages, reading and writing was a highly specialised skill and the number of practitioners small.

Why should the clergy spend precious resources recording their ownership of resources in a society where word of mouth or symbolic gesture had presumably sufficed for generations? The discursive opportunities it afforded are one obvious reason. In addition, the theories of language identify a unique property that marks our written language from oral communication: distanciation. This idea is explained in more detail in Chapter Four, but in essence it means that the meaning of language persists in time and across much larger areas. Thus, the use of writing to manage resources means that these resources can be managed for greater lengths of time and across much larger areas. The clergy thus had at their disposal a mechanism for the more effective management of resources, and a means to symbolise their own discursive power.

Even so, the potential of literacy to extend the effective reach of administrators is not sufficient cause for it to be actually deployed in this way. The question of why should literacy take this bureaucratic form still needs to be addressed.

This is where arguments about the causes and effects of literacy become difficult. Historical sources and archaeological evidence can be deployed to show that the seventh and eighth centuries saw the rapid development of new forms of kingship and authority, expressed in novel media and expanded by novel means. Putting that another way, the seventh and eighth centuries saw an expansion in the mechanisms and display of disembodied royal authority. In a variety of contexts, this period saw the development of extended kingdoms, the earlier development of coinage, the enclosure and partition of landscapes, the promulgation of law codes, the earliest development of economic towns and the imposition of a central administration. It saw novel forms of tax and the development of a plethora of minor royal officials in localities to oversee and collect this tribute. All these

points will be developed more fully in Chapter Five, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven. What is remarkable in all this is the transformation in the space-time geography of authority.

The relationship between these novel mechanisms and expressions of power, their expansion over enlarged areas and times, and the development of literacy, with its ability to tamper with the space and time of discourse, might be described as a “chicken and egg” problem. Three positions may be adopted.

Firstly, it may be argued that this was a simple, if inexplicable, coincidence: that literacy played no part in this, and that these developments played no part in the development of bureaucratic literacy. Secondly it could be argued, following Ong, Goody and Watt, that these novel mechanisms of royal authority represent the inevitable consequences of literacy: that the space-time geography of kingship and of royal authority was bound to be extended. Finally, it could be argued that literacy was drawn into the novel mechanisms of royal authority, expressing, but not necessarily altering, the continuing but slow development of such institutions.

The first of these seems unconvincing, since it fails to explain why literacy takes the forms that it does at the time when it does. The second is to be rejected on theoretical grounds discussed in Chapter Four. The third fails because it implies that the obvious correlation between the expanded royal authority of the seventh and eighth century and distancing are entirely coincidental.

A fourth, more complicated position is developed here: a combination of the second and third propositions which takes account of the historically constructed nature of literacy and the possible impact of distancing in a defined context. Thus, it is argued that literacy was drawn into a milieu in which novel forms of political and military power were already being developed. Literacy could thus be drawn into a series of changes that – paraphrasing Horton – were “already in the air” (Horton 1971 104). Once drawn into this process, however, the benefits of distancing could transform social relations. Having been drawn into an autonomous social process with its roots in the Anglo-Saxon past, bureaucratic literacy accelerated and extended the development of the process that rapidly gave us extended, defined kingdoms, currency, law codes, tax registers, private property and a partitioned, administered landscape.

Thus, it is the contention here that literacy, manifest as the practices of bureaucracy, was one of a series of strategies of surveillance that transformed Anglo-Saxon society. By transforming the space and time geographies of power, literacy allowed a move from the face-to-face exchanges of petty chieftdoms to the extended and sustained power relations of the medieval monarch. This abstract vocabulary of power relations and surveillance was manifest in the mundane existence of daily life. The archaeological record bears witness to the intervention of these new structures of authority and surveillance in the daily life of the population. Chapter Five will identify these in general terms, while Chapters Six and Seven will pin-point them in two extended case studies.

In both case studies, novel forms of surveillance are identified. It will be argued here that these novel forms of surveillance are part and parcel of the same broad social process that appropriated literacy for the production of charters and law codes. The fact that both these novel forms of surveillance arrived at the same time as literacy is not a mere co-incidence. The new methods of surveillance present in the countryside and towns is in fact directly connected to the development of literacy – made real as the bureaucratic literacy of charters and law codes.

How then does this relate back to the missionary encounter?

It has been noted that the conversion of Anglo-Saxon England should be seen in a wider social and political context – in the context of the development of a new and expanded aristocratic elite and newly expanded kingdoms (e.g. Blair 1995 22). This thesis refines that hypothesis by arguing that literacy provides a link between the novel forms of surveillance that made such an expansion possible and clerical Christianity.

The argument developed in this thesis is that without the clergy there would have been no literacy; without literacy the development of mechanisms of surveillance would have taken on different forms. Certainly there are runes in England before 597, but these are both so fragmentary and so rare that they can hardly be considered as equivalents to what happened after 597. As we shall see in chapter four, there are grounds for supposing that, by failing to form sentences, runes are not an issue in the discussion of literacy. The extended mechanisms of

surveillance identified in the seventh and eighth centuries find their ways in to the daily lives of the population. This may be conceived of as a new discursive order where the reality of power and its expression are made real in novel ways. The clergy, who bring literacy to the localities, are, however, uniquely placed to negotiate these structures. In some cases it is clear that they are manipulated to the advantage of the clergy. Thus, as well as having special access to literacy and the novel, esoteric forms of knowledge that come with it, the missionaries have special access to the mechanisms of surveillance imposed on people's lives.

The missionary encounter, expressed in this special access to knowledge and mechanisms of surveillance, is not the same as conversion. However, it does identify the means by which the clergy were insinuated into the daily life of communities, and in such a way as to become key figures in the community. It is hard to argue with the ineffable superiority of a literate agent when the rest of the population cannot read and write, and when the control of resources is seemingly dependent upon literacy – even if that dependence is largely symbolic. This sort of taken-for-granted authority would be termed by some theorists as hegemony (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 1991 24-25 and references). So, when we say that literacy enabled the clergy to create an hegemony in discrete communities in the seventh and eighth century in England, we make a very precise claim about the role of the clergy and how they attained that position.

There is no question that this is a complicated argument, with a series of subtle shifts that are necessary if it is to remain consistent and avoid circularity. It may be conceived of as a series of steps. If we are to understand the spread of Christianity, we must look at the whole missionary encounter – including those elements not directly connected to the religious message of the missionaries. In our context, the missionaries bring and maintain literacy. Literacy is a social practice taking particular forms at particular times. In this context it takes (inter alia) a bureaucratic form. It takes this form partly in response to changes that were “already in the air”, and in turn feeds those changes. Thus, literacy was situated in a much larger structure of surveillance, which was in turn transformed by it. These transformed structures of surveillance find expression in phenomena such as newly defined estate boundaries, coinage and allied mechanisms that pertain to the control of resources. In this way, these extended mechanisms of surveillance find their way into the daily life of the population – or more precisely within the daily

lives of the populations that lived within the confines of the case studies presented in Chapters Six and Seven. The clergy – the arbiters of literacy in the localities – are therefore part of a new and compelling discursive order in these locations. While that may not cause “conversion”, it does identify methods by which the Christian message could be made real, and conversion seem rational.

To some extent this series of shifts is necessary to compensate for shortages of evidence. For example, if we were able to identify significant numbers of clergy active in localities by more direct means, then the argument would develop differently. Such an assumption cannot be made, however since we cannot point to clear evidence in that way. As we shall see, even quasi-urban centres present only indirect evidence for the relative significance of the clergy, while the rural hinterlands are considerably more difficult. So, careful contextual controls are required: the sorts of practices and discourses discussed suggest that the clergy may have been active in the discrete areas presented within the very limited contexts of two case studies. It is tempting, but dangerous, to extrapolate from these to other locations. Any argument that attempts such an extrapolation without an evaluation of local evidence and local conditions can only be speculative.

1.2.5 Literacy events and literacy practices: definitions

Scholars investigating literacy have also developed a useful set of analytical terms: the “literacy event”, “literacy practices”, “communicative practices” and the “textual community”. These have already been mentioned in section 1.1.6, but are repeated under this heading to provide some extra guidance. They are also discussed in Chapter Four. The literacy event is any given historical moment in which literacy is deployed. This means that any act of reading or writing falls easily within the scope of the definition. Yet if, as Street and others argue, literacy is discursive, then we should be prepared to admit a certain fluidity round the edges of this definition. The extent to which we are prepared to extend the edges of the literacy event will determine what sorts of evidence we are prepared to rule in and rule out as evidence for a literacy event. For example, a monument like the Ruthwell Cross, which bears an extended inscription, presents a text which must have been recognisable as such to anyone who viewed it, even if they could not read or write. Thus, by contemplating the Ruthwell Cross, a discourse of literacy and illiteracy may be activated, without there having to be an act of reading.

Literacy practices are one step wider than literacy events, representing the social practices associated with literacy and in which literacy events are realised. Thus, for example, Barton and Hamilton give the example of a woman following a recipe to bake a pie (Barton and Hamilton 1998 8). It is no coincidence that it is a middle-aged, working-class woman baking: the literacy deployed in this context is prefigured by a set of cultural practices that relate to gender, class and age. In this context, the literacy event is brought about with reference to abstract notions or stereotypes of social behaviour. Literacy practice thus defines the space between existing cultural practices and their realisation as literacy events. Consequently, it is literacy practices that should be at the forefront of any analysis of the development of literacy since the realisation of existing social practices must pass through this intermediate step before being realised in practical empirical terms as literacy events.

At one remove beyond literacy practices are communicative practices that institutionalise literacy and other modes of communication. Thus, the institutions of schooling, government, weights and measures and the like each have a bearing on the pie being baked in Barton and Hamilton's example. The impact of these institutions and the practices that they promote may be abstract and tenuous but they do provide a means of analysing the reception and development of literacy as against other forms of communication by evaluating the wider social setting of literacy practices. In the study of the development of literacy, the institutions that support, replicated and either extend or restrict literacy will be the key areas to analyse.

Finally, it has long been noted that texts and writing have a quality that can unite populations who may not have direct access to the text, or who may not even be able to read or write. In historical and religious terms, works like the Bible, the Koran, and Marx's *Das Kapital* can be seen to have had significant impacts in communities that are often unable to read the texts for themselves. Stock has presented a more detailed study of exactly this quality of texts in his study of the Cistercian rule (Stock 1983). He uses the term "textual community" to describe such a group brought together by shared knowledge of a common text.

1.3 The shape of this thesis

We start with a review of the literature, looking in the first instance at the historical context of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England, partly through the early history of Christianity, and partly through the knotty issues of early Anglo-Saxon history and archaeology. Archaeological evidence of Anglo-Saxon paganism will be brought into focus first of all as an obvious place to start a study of the influence of the clergy. However, it will be shown that there is little reliable evidence for Anglo-Saxon paganism, either historical or archaeological. The practice of paganism is always presented in terms of ritual and organisational homogeneity – in particular in terms of funerary ritual. This view takes no account of the historical complexity of the issue, and seems predicated upon a symbolic and religious regularity that owes more to clerical Christianity than pre-Christian practice. The historical sources for Christianity are also reviewed, recognising the unenviable interpretative impasse of using clerical documents to explore issues in which the clergy themselves had a vested interest. Scholarship, caught in this stalemate, views such sources cynically, re-presenting conversion as a poorly fitting disguise for secular opportunism. The pre-constituted view of history that ensues answers its own questions with inevitably pre-constituted answers. Archaeology, it seems, provides the only escape from the intolerable crisis of historical interpretation: but only the most disingenuous reader would suppose that it has all the answers. Conventional interpretations of cemeteries rely on assumptions about the relationship between the formal liturgy of the church and ritual practices more generally. The interpretative strength of architecture can only be deployed after the missionary engagement has been a success: the missionary engagement being the mechanism by which populations are encouraged to enter churches, not the message they receive once in them. Only theories of pastoral care hold out much hope, but these have not been developed thoroughly, nor do they investigate, to any great extent, the context of the "missioned".

The missionary engagement, however, is not the unique property of medievalists. Indeed, medieval studies have taken a decisively anthropological twist over the last twenty years, a move that accommodates archaeology rather more than its sister disciplines, since archaeology enjoys a closer relationship with anthropology than others. Yet investigation of the anthropological literature reveals the depth of the problem. Contemporary thinking on early medieval religion operates in the thought-world of functionalism: a mechanistic theory of

religion and society that has been long been criticised by anthropology. Chapter Three investigates this, suggesting that any emergent theory of early Medieval Christianity ought to be predicated on the assumption that religion is less of a mechanism for social control, and more of an unfolding technology for understanding the world. This assumes, of course, that the social sciences can even begin to support empirical study of that which, by its very nature, is not empirically constituted. For studies of “conversion” and allied phenomena, this means that we should investigate the rationality behind conversion, rather than the political or economic advantages that accrue. It also means that we can identify in detail the omissions from existing understandings of the missionary encounter in early Medieval Europe: rationality and charisma ought to be restored to our analytical vocabulary, technical terms with precise meanings. Of course, any empirical analysis of religion is fraught with difficulties, even when the populations are present. Instead of authentic conversion — which is beyond analysis — we ought to investigate the structuring structures that predispose people towards conversion. A case study of nineteenth-century missionary work is presented in which it is shown that the missionary engagement resides in almost imperceptible tensions over how to be a knowledgeable social agent. Thus, rather than studying authentic conversion, we can at least study why it may have appeared a rational decision.

Chapter Four appears to take an abrupt twist, investigating the missionary engagement in an attempt to identify the subtle or unexpected tensions of the spread of Christianity. Conceived of as a developing dialogue between clergy and laity, the missionary engagement can be re-described as a tension over the symbolic resources of literacy. On one hand, the clergy retain a monopoly over literacy; on the other, the mass of the population excluded from literacy, who are cast suddenly and unexpectedly in the dependent rôle of illiteracy. Literacy is a hazardous political issue for archaeologists to explore, but is implicit in the foundations of the discipline as a means of distinguishing between history and pre-history. Theories of literacy are explored, and one theory expanded, where it is argued that literacy is a discourse on access to resources, ideologically constructed, and purposefully deployed. Consequences do not flow from the development of literacy: they emerge through deliberate manipulation in response to particular needs and goals. Nonetheless, the unique hermeneutics of literacy and the text have implications for the production of place, expanding the limited geographies of communication in

time and space. Hooked to mechanisms of supervision, literacy as bureaucracy has implications that transcend the literate community, implicating all who are drawn into the social practices of surveillance. A technical vocabulary of literacy event, literacy practice, communicative practice and textual community are outlined to support a novel archaeology of literacy practices, conceived of more broadly than the crude mechanics of reading and writing. Two short case studies support the argument that this approach to the extension of clerical influence in Anglo-Saxon England is sustainable. First, an investigation of Gregory the Great's pastoral bureaucracy corroborates the view that early medieval literacy involved the whole of the population, not simply the clerical elite – allowing us to proceed to an analysis of the less developed literacy of Anglo-Saxon England. Secondly, an investigation of the archaeology of gender provides a real case study of how the archaeological record can be reconstituted to permit an archaeology of social practice. Rather than being an autonomous technology, literacy is produced out of the choreography of social living.

Encouraged by the pregnant synthesis of literacy practice and the archaeology of practice, we turn to a threefold-archaeology of literacy. Chapter Five presents three circuits of literacy, drawing eclectically from the archaeology and history of Anglo-Saxon England between 600 and 750. Starting with a narrow investigation of literacy events understood as the simplest unit of analysis, we look at the types of communities that these events may produce. We then move to the archaeology of social practice, reviewed thematically in brief inter-connected pilot studies of social power and the economy. Armed with a novel insight into the operation and transformation of these social institutions in the light of distancing, we are left to contemplate the scale of the social involvement in literacy practices. A third circuit of communicative practices reveals the institutional settings of literacy, and how access to the symbolic resources of literacy were policed through education and how they allowed for social and material resources to be re-created to the immediate benefit of the clergy.

The eclectic and synthetic generalisations of Chapter Five are supported by sustained analysis of literacy practices in two very different, though related, contexts. Chapter Six investigates the construction of space in Micheldever Hundred in northern Hampshire. A full-scale re-organisation of the landscape is revealed and the likely fulcrum of that change identified as the middle Saxon

period. The dating evidence for this is problematic, but the limited provisional dating available suggests that the middle years of the eighth century seems the most likely date for this change. A correspondence is noted between this transformation in tenure and the development of legal institutions to regulate the use of space, a correspondence that is no simple co-incidence but the manifestation and re-constitution of literacy practices in which the clergy were involved, both directly and discursively. A similar, though more complicated, pattern of literacy practices is revealed in a second case study in Chapter Seven, where life in Hamwic is re-constructed to reveal dominating structures of surveillance in which literacy and the clergy were involved. The missionary engagement in both cases can be described in terms of a subtle tension over the control of symbolic resources: a tension in which the clergy were clearly successful by the first half of the eighth century and perhaps for several decades before then. Statements like "the population were converted by the start of the eighth century" are clearly unconvincing, while arguments like "the process of conversion began in the eighth century" can be questioned. What we can demonstrate is that the structural agents of conversion, of which a clerical discourse on literacy was only one part, were in place, and already self-replicating by the middle years of the eighth century. We can map the breadth and penetration of literacy. In this way we can begin to investigate the impact of the missionary clergy.

Chapter 2 ON PREVIOUS WORK — AN ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF THE MISSIONS TO ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

This chapter concentrates principally on previous work by other scholars. It is my goal to report on this previous work, pointing out weaknesses and strengths, with frequent critical forays. These critical comments are the basis and the *raison d'être* of the present volume. It begins with a very broad historical introduction to the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire and its importance to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. We then turn our attention to the connected problems of Anglo-Saxon paganism and early Medieval Christianity. Neither of these can be defined with much precision, yet much scholarship seems to depend on an assumed distinction based upon liturgical practices, ritual and symbolism within the context of the cemetery. We touch on paganism first, investigating the modern archaeology of supposedly pagan symbols. Thereafter, we turn to the historical sources for the coming of Christianity, recognising the problems inherent therein. Finally, we turn to three different types of archaeological evidence that have been deployed to represent the arrival of Christianity: funerary archaeology, architectural study and the archaeology of “pastoral care”.

2.1 Christianity in south east Britain to 597 AD

Any general study of coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England, ought to start not in 597 AD with the arrival of Augustine in Kent, but in 33 AD with the arrival of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. Missionary work started with the very first act of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4)

At the end of a day teaching and preaching in all the languages of the ancient near east, we are told, the number of believers had risen from little more than a dozen to over 3,000 (Acts 2:41).

The first century of Christianity seems to have been marked not only by rapid growth, but also with uncertainty as to the appropriate relationship between Christianity and other religious groups, in particular Judaism (Kee 1993 *passim*). The scene described by St Luke was not the norm of missionary work in the ancient world. MacMullen is clear about the activities of the Christians before 312 — “*Christians kept quiet*”, partly on account of periodic persecution, and partly in renunciation of the sinfulness of the world (MacMullen 1984 103). It may well be true that the persecution was erratic and diverse. But Christians were nonetheless deeply self-conscious, a difficult group to join, with extended and demanding rites of initiation:

A sort of invisible minefield divided the Church and Town ... to cross it required a conscious decision (MacMullen 1984 104)

The practical implications of this reserve are described by Lynch in terms of baptismal liturgy, an attenuated rite designed to ensure the authenticity of converts (Lynch 1998 8-13). Nonetheless, the composition of this early Church varied tremendously. Although the majority of believers were urban poor and middle classes, Brown (1996 25) reminds us not to be fooled into believing that these were always the oppressed masses reported in hagiography. Influential people were also numbered among believers. This diverse community is neither the *cognoscenti* nor the oppressed that Tertullian and Origen would have us believe.

Roman Britain fits into this pattern with relative ease. References to British Christians can be found in Tertullian’s *Adversus Judaeos*, in Origen’s *Homily 4 on Ezekiel*, in Lactantius’s *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, and subsequently in the writings of St. Jerome. While such references are attractive, Thomas (1981 34-60) cautions against naïveté. Britain was a province, quite literally, at the end of the known world. There is every reason to suspect that references to Britain in such sources derive from rhetorical panache, not religious cartography. More specific and thus more reliable details come in the identification of individual Christians active in the Roman province. We know the names of eight resident British citizens, known to be Christians in the third and fourth centuries. Five formed an ecclesiastical party attending the Council of Arles in 314, and the other three were martyrs who appear in hagiographical tracts (Williams 1912, Frend 1968: 46-7, Morris 1968, Biddle 1977, Thomas 1981 35-60, Thompson 1984). The lives and activities of these individuals, such as we can make out, accord well with contemporary developments across the Continent (*inter alia* Brown 1981 1996, Markus 1990). The

strengths of such parallels are important as they imply that the church in Britain was organised on similar lines, with similar institutions, and similar personalities as the Church in the rest of the Western Empire.

The archaeology of this community is more substantial and more widespread than the historical sources (Watts 1991, Thomas 1981), although much more problematic in terms of interpretation, and not as clearly dated to before or after the conversion of Constantine (Cookson 1987). This archaeology comes in a variety of guises, such as individual pieces of ornament or decoration like the “Senecianus” ring, recently discussed by Finney (Finney 1994a), or the more famous and more widely discussed Water Newton treasure (Painter 1977). Also cited as evidence of Christianity are various structures identified as baptisteries, basilicae or shrines (Painter 1971, Thomas 1980), and the set of lead tanks identified as evidence of Christian ritual on epigraphic grounds (Watts 1988). The accurate identification of such structures notwithstanding, the suggestion is of a small scale Christian community with some wealth at its disposal, but not huge fortunes (Frend 1992 122). Finney has recently re-evaluated the nature of Early Christian art, arguing, that while the earliest Christians were not opposed to artistic representations of Christian themes, they did not go out of their way to develop specifically Christian material culture until the first decade of the third century (Finney 1994b 99-145). So, the apparent absence of Christian art before the third century in Britain is consistent with the pattern noted elsewhere at the same time. In this case, it would be dangerous to interpret a lack of evidence as proof of the absence of Christianity in the first or second centuries.

The history of Christianity was changed completely in the second decade of the fourth century when Constantine surprised his retainers by announcing his intention to convert to Christianity. While we should not be fooled into thinking that this single conversion brought an entire empire blinking into the light of Christianity, it did mean that every door in the Empire could now be opened to the Christian clergy.

Markus has argued that the later fourth century saw a surprising loss of confidence about the nature of Christianity, a phenomenon which is attested in all corners of the Empire (Markus 1990 31). For example, martyrdom, long the epitome of faith in practice, was problematic now that Christianity enjoyed the protection of the Emperor. How much of the old life could be carried over into this

new dawn? Broadly speaking, there were two internal responses to the sudden expansion in its numbers: the first was a “return” to asceticism of the desert fathers, the second was the sharper definition of what being a Christian entailed in terms of dogma and orthodoxy, with concomitant definitions of heresy. A third external response can also be discerned in the developing, but slowly reversing relationship between Christianity and paganism.

Disturbed by the relative ease of their faith in the new dispensation offered by Constantine’s baptism, Christianity and asceticism became interchangeable:

Asceticism was coming to be the mark of authentic Christianity in a society in which to be a Christian no longer needed to make any very visible difference in a man’s life (Markus 1990 36)

This shift is evident in many quarters. It is not clear whether St Paulinus of Nola understood conversion to refer to baptism and the acceptance of Christianity, or the renunciation of the world and rebirth into ascetic life. The career of St. Martin of Tours, and the parallels which his biographer drew between St Martin and St Anthony — the founder of desert monasticism — show that asceticism was already a topos of Christian writing by the middle of the fourth century in the West. Confusion over the relationship between the lay and religious life can be found in St Jerome’s blunt attack on those who rejected asceticism, which was met by numerous protests, such as the writings of Jovinian (Markus 1990 40). The argument underpinning this debate concerned the degree of renunciation that Christianity required of its followers.

A second response to this new order can be found in the definition of orthodoxy. The Council of Nicaea, for example, saw a reconsideration and codification of the Christian faith and the century after Nicaea witnessed the first ever execution of a heretic, the radical ascetic Priscillian: a sign of the times. The fourth century witnessed controversy over three of the greatest heresies of the early church: Arianism, Donatism and Pelagianism. Each of these three controversies was rooted in debates over the implications of the Council of Nicaea. The definition of orthodoxy provided three supports. First, it allowed condemnation of those who were not knowledgeable enough to know whether or not they were true Christians, thus intellectualising belief. Secondly it cut the great numbers down to size by excluding those, who called themselves Christians, but were patently unorthodox. Thirdly, it insulated those parts of the church that had not reacted to their novel

respectability with asceticism from accusations that their practices were inappropriate.

A third response to this new respectability can be found in Christianity's relationships with pagans. The century after 312 — especially after Theodosius's laws against temples and paganism — is often described as a period of acrimonious intolerance:

The Christian contribution to toleration theory peters out with the cessation of persecution and the upturn of the Church's fortunes (Garnsey 1984 16)

Brown (1995 27-54) has challenged this stark contrast, arguing that the bluster of law tells us more about the continuing inadequacy of imperial administration than about the Church. The pragmatics of social cohesion limited intolerance:

All over the Mediterranean world, profound religious changes, heavy with the potential for violence, were channelled into the more predictable, but no less overbearing 'gentle violence' of a stable social order (Brown 1995 53)

Such arguments are about scale.

Once again, Britain can be fitted into this analysis with relative ease. The first point to note is that the urban concentration of Mediterranean Christianity does not sound encouraging for the expansion of the Church in Britain, where it has been argued that urbanism and towns were already falling into disrepair by the time of Constantine (Reece 1980). That said, there are no grounds for supposing that Christianity in Later Roman Britain was any more insular in this later period than in the previous centuries. This can be seen in the career of Pelagius: a Roman Briton who, though condemned as a heretic, was completely in step with many other continental writers of his generation. The same can be said of the later writings of Gildas, which carries the baroque latinity of Late Antiquity into the sixth century (Orlandi 1984). In line with continental developments, therefore, we should expect the Christian community in Roman Britain not only to have increased in number and status, but also to share many of its concerns, including those mentioned above. Moreover, a continuing debate over Christianity's claims of inheritance of Roman culture can be presumed (Markus 1990, Dunn 1989, Brown 1996 35-36, 1995 3-9). The order of the universe was directed by God. Like

a dissatisfied customer, if one wanted to deal with problems caused by lesser powers, it was better to deal directly with their superior. This is the origin of all those exorcisms and casting out of spirits. The spirits being cast out were real enough, but their power had been defeated at the moment of resurrection.

The fate of Roman Christianity in England from 450 onwards is as uncertain as much else of the Roman settlement of the country. It would seem that coterminous with Augustine's appropriation of Roman secular culture on the continent was the rejection or decline of Roman secular and religious culture in England. It is striking that the apparent strength of the Church in the early years of the fourth century was not matched in the later years of that century. By around 400, the Romano-British Church, which had previously been considerably more vibrant than its Gaulish counterpart, had been surpassed by its nearest continental neighbour. Frend argues that this was the result of the so-called "Barbarian Conspiracy" of A.D 367 (Frend 1992). This is a significant departure from his position in 1968 when he suggested that the first decades of the fifth century witnessed an "*astonishing outburst of energy*" by the British Church (Frend 1968 45). Charles Thomas has pushed the survival of Christianity somewhat further, titling his book on the subject *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500*, though the geographical focus of Christianity changes significantly in the last century of that period (Thomas 1981). The contrast between these views is informative of our state of knowledge. Conventionally, the removal of the last Roman legions in the middle years of the fifth century left the way clear for (non-Christian) Saxon mercenaries to mount a coup d'état in the province, an act that would have imperilled the official religion of the state. They deposed the last remnants of Romano-British, (partly) Christian administration, overcame the few vestiges of Romano-British resistance and consigned this community to the west and north where they were to remain for the best part of two centuries.

This period is the subject of continuing debate, with positions varying between essential acceptance of the scheme to thorough scepticism. At issue here is the reliability of certain key historical documents, principally Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae*. Also at stake are Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* which reproduces and concurs with Gildas's account of the period, and Constantius's *Vita Germani* which purports to describe the state of British Christianity in the first half of the fifth century. The archaeology of the period is a deal more complicated. Archaeological

evidence for the period is considerably more substantial, but considerably more problematic in interpretative terms. Disagreements about the nature of the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, the power they achieved and the implications for the indigenous population betray deeper concerns about the nature of material culture, in particular its ability to describe the ethnic identity of populations.

Conventionally, the next century and a half or so were epitomised not just by the expanding Anglo-Saxon settlement of the islands, but also by the imposition of Germanic forms of ritual and belief, characterised by cremation and burial with grave goods (Owen 1981, Wilson 1992). Attempts have been made to reconstruct the religious ceremonial of Anglo-Saxon paganism on the basis of a cultic archaeology of temples and shrines (Blair 1991, Meaney 1995) and to reconstruct Anglo-Saxon beliefs by comparison with considerably later forms (Ellis-Davidson 1993). Also relevant in this respect are documents from slightly later Christian contexts that contain direct or indirect references to pagan practices of the earlier period (Meaney 1985, John 1992). Attempts have been made to elucidate these practices through a sort of residual analysis of Anglo-Saxon Christianity (Hines 1997). We shall turn to these more fully later, but the significant issue of continuity and change must be discussed first.

Any analysis of the development of Christianity in Britain can ill afford to overlook the contribution of the Roman Empire, with particular reference to the contribution of the Romano-British population. A full review of the literature is impractical if not impossible in a thesis on the impact of literacy and the clergy. In order to illustrate the salient points, therefore, we shall concentrate our efforts on one volume, Chris Arnold's *Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (1997). This is the most recently published volume ambitious enough to tackle the literature at the appropriate scale. Three problems are evident: how to select evidence for consideration; a continuing reliance on culture history; and the need to account for the historical record.

It is almost impossible to decide what evidence should be permitted in discussions of the settlement of Anglo-Saxon England. Just as Thomas's claim for the survival of Christianity to 500 AD in Britain are open to criticism because the evidence is largely drawn from the north and west, not the south and east, so any discussion about the Anglo-Saxon settlement is prone to anachronism. It hardly needs saying that in 350, the term "England" would not have been understood. By

750, England and its neighbours were all too aware of Anglo-Saxon identity. The utility of the term in the intervening years is a moot point. Anxiety over language may seem frivolous, yet it disguises a fundamental problem — certain forms of evidence are made admissible, and others ruled out *a priori*. Arnold falls foul of these problems in identifying the difference between incoming settlement and long-distance trade (Arnold 1997 28-29, Hines 1984, 1992, 1994, Alcock 1992). For example, we are told that,

Those areas of England where no Germanic style artefacts are found merit greater attention as they may provide a base line for comparison (Arnold 1997, 29)

Firstly, note that the term England is anachronistic. The question can be rephrased as, “How, if pushed, would the author defend the limits of that study area?” — presumably by pointing to those areas where Anglo-Saxon style artefacts occur. But, there is a danger of circularity in this argument, since the definition of Anglo-Saxon style artefacts is partly dependent upon their location.

Arnold is much more direct in his criticism of culture-history approaches to ethnicity through the archaeological record, in particular where that is concerned with migration. Arnold rejects traditional historical approaches, and concentrates his energy on the archaeological evidence. Arnold (1997 21) concurs with Hines (1994 49-50), and other more general discussions, in discounting a biological or genetic definition of ethnicity (Banks 1996 2-4, Pluciennik 1996 42). While some commentators would be happy to suggest that genetic traits can separate native or migrant populations (Jackson 1995, but see also Lloyd-Jones 1995), that is several steps removed from suggesting that these groups represent clearly bounded ethnic groups. If distinct ethnic groups are to be defined, they are defined on the basis of material culture, not biology. The archaeological evidence for this consists primarily of burial evidence and settlement (e.g. Hamerow 1993, 1994). Controversy about burials is followed in a number of interconnected directions: either through developments in the style and deposition of grave goods, in particular jewellery and dress fasteners (e.g. Ozanne 1964, Davies and Vierck 1974, Dickinson and Härke 1992, Swanton 1974, Hines 1984, 1992, Loveluck 1995), or through pottery (Myres 1977). Cemetery studies consider the style of deposition — such as cremation or inhumation (e.g. Richards 1987, Härke 1990) — but also include discussions of weapon typology manifest in inhumations (e.g. Dickinson and Härke 1992). Debates about settlement have concerned the detailed origins

and style of the Anglo-Saxon building tradition (e.g. Jones 1973, Jones 1979, Dixon 1982, James, Marshall & Millett 1984, Marshall & Marshall 1993, Scull 1991) or the nature of the settlement at a wider perspective (e.g. Newman 1992, Hamerow 1995, Day 1991, Crabtree 1989a, 1989b).

To sum up these long debates, there are limited grounds for believing that there was a change in material culture from the middle of the fifth century. There seems to be a widespread change in dress, described archaeologically in terms of metalwork and jewellery. This change is arguably, though not categorically, present in burial rites, but seems consistent in terms of the location of burials. This is less clear in terms of weapon technology: knives, shield bosses and spears all represent technologies that are known in Britain before the fifth century, or are so close as to be virtually indistinguishable. The range of architecture changes, with the *Grubenhäuser* representing a new, and ubiquitous feature, while the hall house seems to retain certain of its original features, with substantial modernisation. As far as the landscape is concerned, there is no coherent picture that is valid for all areas, and considerable variations locally too.

Arnold is happy to accept the proposition that there was considerable change in material culture, but is less inclined to accept that this was the result of mass migration. The classic argument, revived by Hines and others (e.g. Hines 1984, 1992, 1994, Hamerow 1994, Scull 1995) is that these changes are the result of migrations from Germany. He plays down the migration hypothesis, for example, talking about metalwork:

... the fact that many of the earliest imported metalwork types are female clothing fasteners only demonstrates that women were dressing in a certain manner, not necessarily that such women came from across the North Sea. (Arnold 1997 24)

But, in rejecting the migration hypothesis he fails to present a realistic alternative. There is a series of classic alternative explanations available for these changes in metalwork and building tradition provided from archaeological writing. Principal among these, and as traditional as they come, is diffusion. The other classic explanation is exchange, focusing on social exchange between the elites of different locations. Higham has recently proposed the essentially small scale of the migration, a term which he consciously reinvents as *infiltration* (Higham 1992 228).

Hodges has proposed another solution, modelled loosely on the colonialist experiences of Captain Cook and others as expounded by anthropologists (Hodges 1989b, Sahlins 1985). In each of these explanations, it is style or know-how that moves, while the great mass of populations remain more or less constant. Scull has recently refined these, suggesting that the small infiltrating group took advantage of similarities between society on the Continent and the failing province of Britain, similarities that were in a sense the result of historical accident (Scull 1992 8-15, 1993 70, 1995 72). He has also recently suggested that contemporary *post-processual* archaeology finds more in common with the migration hypothesis than with arguments that assume the long term stability implied by the challenge offered by Arnold. He quotes a number of instances where the migration hypothesis has been reconstructed (Rouse 1986, Anthony 1990, Champion 1990, Scull 1995). In so doing he strikes a chord with the more closely defined study of Loveluck (1995) who also uses the term *acculturation* to account for the formation of an Anglo-Saxon society and identity in the indigenous population of the Peak District. Arnold's lack of commitment to any other explanation is reflective of the problems of understanding the archaeology of early Anglo-Saxon England.

So, Arnold is critical of the migration hypothesis, arguing it depends upon an overstated argument. There are a number of possible alternatives. However, for any of these alternatives to be convincing, they must not only make effective use of the archaeological evidence, but must also account for the historical evidence too. Arnold is quite clear about the value of the historical evidence to an archaeologist interested in the fifth and sixth centuries:

...the surviving texts are not contemporary with the period and say as much about the aspirations of the writers in their own times as about the past they were presenting ... (Arnold 1997 16)

With that he moves on to an archaeology that consciously owes more to prehistoric archaeology than to historical enquiry. If Arnold is serious in mounting a challenge to the migration hypothesis, then he must surely account for its early inception. Yet, an informed reading of these sources casts doubt on the migration. The imagined link between England and Germany is perhaps as important as the rhetoric of Gildas or Bede. Howe, for example, presents this case with reference to one of the less well known Old English poems, *The Exodus* (Howe 1989). *The Exodus* allows the converted, eighth-century Anglo-Saxons to align their history with the Old Testament (1989 106), and thus reconcile their pagan past to the plan

for salvation being mapped out by Bede and subsequently by Boniface. The poet seeks to distance himself from Germany as much as possible, and does not hark back to the old country as one might expect. The poets and historians of the eighth century were the same monastic scholars with the same detailed knowledge of Christian and Biblical history. It is clear that *The Exodus* poet viewed the unbaptised population of Germany with suspicion if not horror, a sentiment echoed by Bede and Boniface (Howe 1989 126). Thus, although the later historians may have been prepared to accept the migration, the thought of Germanic ancestry did not fill them with pride, but presented them with the problem of converting those who claimed to Boniface “*De uno sanguine et de uno osso sumus*” [*We are of one blood and one bone*] (Howe 1989 127). The migration allowed them access to biblical allusions to explain the success of their later history, and thus accounted for their present as much as for their past. Perhaps this provides another clue as to why the next flourishing of Scandinavian metalwork in Anglian England was greeted with greater alarm.

In short, therefore, the historical sources that Arnold dismisses may be read sympathetically, in support of his distrust of the migration hypothesis.

All this leaves the question of religious continuity very much open to debate. Only two statements can be made with any certainty, pertaining to the fate of Christianity in the fifth and sixth centuries. It is clear that England played host to a Christian community of sorts at the start of the fifth century, a community that seems to have been very much part of the late Antique world insofar as material expressions of that Christianity are concerned. Secondly, by the last decade of the sixth century, external observers thought that England was no longer Christian, and were so concerned by the perceived decline to send missionaries to bring England back to the faith. Romano-British continuity, such as it was, was not insulated from the Anglo-Saxon population by geography or difference, but was probably integrated into taken for granted Anglo-Saxon practices.

2.2 the pagan problem and questions of change

Other problems exist pertaining to the state of England prior to the arrival of the missionary clergy. As yet unexplored in this thesis, we turn now to the state of paganism, the anthropological ‘other’ that is central to the concept of conversion and missionary work.

It has long been thought that the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon paganism could be traced courtesy of the inhumation or cremation rites used to dispose of the dead: the obverse of the so-called final phase burials (e.g. Wilson 1992 67–172). Indeed the dearth of any other sort of evidence, or a lack of imagination among scholars, may well be said to have made the archaeology of paganism principally the archaeology of funerary deposits. As with inhumation rites, the cremation burials have been subject to a large number of analyses, seeking a wide variety of answers to a large number of questions on identity (Huggett and Richards 1990, Huggett 1997, Richards 1987, Myres 1969). In spite of this, it has never been seriously questioned whether or not such burials are or could represent anything other than pagan burials. It is not the purpose of this discussion to prove the opposite, but by showing how the link between cremation and burial was institutionalised as received wisdom, we can shed light upon the whole structure of Anglo-Saxon paganism as understood by archaeologists.

Looking at the identification of cremation as a pagan rite, one quickly comes upon a small group of cinerary urns carrying runic symbols associated with the Gods of Northern Europe associated closely with the pagan world of Germanic mythology (Wilson 1992 142). Following Owen (1981 92), Wilson singles out those that appear to contain the runic symbol “↑” or a swastika design. He suggests that the rune ↑ is an abbreviation of the name *Tiw*, the Germanic god of war, and that the swastika represents a quasi runic symbol for *Thunor*, equivalent to *Thor*, the god of storms and lightning. Also worthy of mention here are those pots which carry a device which Wilson describes as the “*wyrm*” in a variety of shapes and sizes. This he equates (Wilson 1992 150) to the serpent or dragon of mythology, and through an interpretation of later mythology to the god *Woden* (Speake 1980 85-82). There are, he contends, a substantial number of cases where these symbols either appear together, or where they are accompanied by the motifs of animals, the only naturalistic features identifiable on this particular type of pottery.

Superficially, there can be little argument against the identification of this set of material culture with the religious beliefs described. The identification is strengthened by the introduction of three specimens from the excavation at Spong Hill in Norfolk, where three runes are stamped one after another in the form of the word *TIW* (Hills 1974 88-9, Wilson 1992 148). The possibility that these occupied a central position within the cemetery and the discovery of “gaming pieces” that

associate the cremation with masculine old age corroborate the claim that the occupants of these particular pots had some special affinity with the god. Even so, there are serious problems with interpretations of this kind. Before looking at the particular implications in this case, we would do well to remember the origin of the interpretative schema employed.

Let us start our deconstruction of these symbols with the association of the quasi-runic swastika symbol with Thunor, the god whose euhemerised name gives us the word *Thursday*. Wilson is unclear as to the nature of the association of Thunor with the swastika. Two possible grounds are offered to support the association. Firstly, he notes that,

... the swastika, the symbol of Thunor, whose name ranks with Woden as a place-name element occurs very frequently as decoration on cinerary urns from cemeteries in East Anglia, in precisely that area where Pagan place names are not found. (1992 17)

Precisely how the distribution of place names and the swastika are related is not clear. Wilson (1992 119) suggests that this may simply represent the loss or active obliteration of such place names. This latter argument sounds suspiciously like special pleading for which no substantial grounds are given.

While conceding that the swastika may well simply represent an artistic motif, without explicit religious significance – and the swastika is a motif redolent with meanings far beyond the Anglo-Saxon world – he persists

... at Bifrons, Kent, the sword pommel from grave 39 was decorated on one side by an incised swastika, and on the other by incised zig-zag lines, apparently lightning symbols, and again having an association with Thunor ... (Wilson 1992 115)

There are reasons why this should be rejected also.

The pommel to which Wilson alludes was excavated in the third quarter of the nineteenth century and published in 1880, and is not in question (Godfrey-Faussett 1876, 1880). The identification of Thunor with storms and with thunder, however, is dubious, deriving from a Norse, and thus much later context. If the sparse Anglo-Saxon sources are to be relied upon at all, it is Woden, not Thunor that should be given the title god of storms and of thunder (Ryan 1963). This confusion reveals a deeper conundrum. Thor, the Norse deity with whom Wilson confuses

Thunor, the god of storms and of thunder, was also associated with the swastika. By admitting this fudge, the author undermines his own clearly stated aim of concentration upon purely English material without anachronistic resort to Scandinavian scholarship (Wilson 1992 3).

Thirdly, the reliance of the interpretation on one single artefact from one context, followed by the wholesale adoption of that interpretation into contexts removed by several hundred miles, requires a detailed, highly sophisticated and fully developed, if not tortuous argument. No such argument is presented by the author. At best this argument remains not proven.

Before moving on from the swastika device to more established runic inscriptions, it would be useful to investigate the supposed relationship between the Norse god Thor and the swastika symbol. The association is vague at best, but the clearest statement of the relationship is presented by Hilda Ellis Davidson (1964 82–83) in her discussion of the cult of Thor, and the association of Thor with a short handled hammer. In order to let the argument develop fully, it is necessary to quote at length:

...An object very like a hammer or double axe is also depicted among the magical symbols on the drums of Lappish shamans, used in their religious ceremonies before Christianity was established. The drums themselves were struck with an implement which resembles a hammer, and here we have another connexion with the metal hammers said to be used in Thor's temple to imitate the noise of thunder. The name of the Lappish Thunder god was Horagalles, thought to be derived from *Pórr karl*, "Old Man Thor". Sometimes on the drums a male figure with a hammer like object is shown, and sometimes this is a kind of cross with hooked ends resembling a swastika. The swastika or hooked cross is a sign found in many regions of the world and known from remote antiquity. It was very popular among the heathen Germans, and appears to have been associated with the symbol of fire. There may be some connexion between it and the sun-wheel, well known in the Bronze Age, or it may have arisen from the use of the hammer to represent thunder, which was accompanied by fire from heaven. Thor was the sender of lightning and the god who dealt out both sunshine and rain to men, and it seems likely that the swastika as well as the hammer sign was connected with him.

Thus Ellis Davidson treats us to a tour through the Bronze Age, Germany, Lappland and subsequently through to England in the Tenth Century, suggesting that a primordial language of symbols lead us always to the same god, Thor. Ellis Davidson's more recent general discussion of the topic (1993) is considerably more reticent on the association of Thor, Thunor, Donar or even *Pórr karl* with the swastika. Perhaps Wilson (1992) would have been wiser observing this silence also.

Thus, the association between the swastika and Thunor is tenuous to the point of incredulity: we would do well to exclude it from any discussion of cremation urns.

Wilson also identifies a group of cremation urns with the God *Tiw*. Here he seems on much firmer ground. As noted, three of the pots in this group are actually stamped with the name of the god in the runic alphabet (Wilson 1992 148, Hills 1974 88–89). Moreover, the impression on these pots is runic in nature, not the opaque quasi-runic swastika. In addition to the few cases where the complete

name appears, Wilson notes cases from Spong Hill in Norfolk (Hills 1974), Loveden Hill in Leicestershire (Fennell 1964) and Caistor by Norwich, also in Norfolk (Myres and Green 1973) where the runic symbol ↑ is either impressed by stamp or incised.

Wilson grants that ↑ is a simple form, so he would tend to rule out those in the assemblage for which the symbol appears as moulded decoration on the raised shoulders of the urn, as these should not be read as runes, but as simple decoration. More significant are those cases where the symbol is scratched free hand or stamped. Thus, for example, one case at Loveden Hill is quoted where the rune is scratched onto the handle of the pot (Wilson 1992 147).

What is known of the god Tiw? Unlike Thunor, the name Tiw is rare in Anglo-Saxon place names, occurring for certain in only three place names: *Tislea* (Hants); *Tyesmere* (Worcs); and *Tysoe* (Warks). It also may be present in the name *Tuesnoad* in Kent, but the linguistic evidence is unclear (Cameron 1977:121). The name of Tiw is most commonly recognised in “*Tuesday*”. Unlike Thunor or Woden, almost nothing survives from pre-Viking mythology or history upon which to comment. It is left to Tacitus to equate Tiw with Mars, and thus with warfare. Tacitus informs us that animals were sacrificed to this god along as well as to Woden and Thunor. The only other source, again a classical one, tells us that Frisian tribesmen serving in the Roman army in Britain went by the name “*Tuihanti*”, a name which Myres (1986 77) associates with Tiw. It is interesting that none of the sources for the spread of Christianity in Germany, in the seventh or eighth century make any mention of this god. This could well be the result of scribal reticence rather than religious apathy, but seems unlikely as similar sources mention the other gods of the Germanic pantheon.

The largest single source of information about Tiw is Tacitus’s *Germania*. We do well to consider the merits of this work, contemplating its origin. Tacitus was born in Rome around 56 AD, beginning his career under Vespasian. He wrote his histories from a pro-republican perspective, and tended to be critical of the Emperor and imperial power. The *Germania* is a study of the German tribes, describing their daily lives and routines. Some of this has been confirmed by archaeological excavation (Todd 1975). The work sets the pure noble savagery of the German tribes against the decadent vainglory of the Roman state, betraying the moral undercurrent in all of his work and his sympathy for those who struggle

against oppression. This makes his narrative both penetrating and absorbing, with clearly defined heroes and villains acting out their struggles against the background of political absolutism and military might (Freeman 1996 396-397). There can be no argument that Tacitus is a more reliable source for the earlier Anglo-Saxon period than the Norse writings of Snorri Sturluson. The search for parallels with Snorri's prose is more likely to result in constructive anachronism than that of Tacitus, who describes that world he saw before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain. Even so, it is fair to ask whether Tacitus has much to offer as a source for the history of the German tribes in the first century. At times it is difficult to know the precise source of many of his comments (Norden 1959), and it is thus virtually impossible to isolate the politically motivated exaggeration from reliable reportage. If Tacitus is at the messy end of critical scrutiny for the first century, then how much more sceptical should we be three or four centuries later? In short we should be very sceptical indeed.

So, Tiw is a stranger to modern archaeologists and historians, and it is difficult to be certain that the cult of which Tacitus talks survived as long as the fifth or sixth century. Given the context, one cannot but believe that the pagan Anglo-Saxons did indeed have a god of war, and that this god would have been important within the unstable warrior society that is evidenced across the Continent throughout the millennium. But such a conclusion is meagre at best. There is always the possibility that our efforts have been misdirected, and that the runic inscription actually refers to a completely different word. Once again, this approach makes no effort to pass ownership and interpretation to the historically situated human agent. The attempt to connect the rune with one or other deity is an argument that can never be fully resolved, and can never be proven.

Wilson's last group of designs pertains to the conventionally most powerful deity, Woden. Wilson identifies a group of pots which are marked with a device which he terms the "*wyrm*" motif, a design which occurs more frequently than the other two (1992: 150). In this identification, he follows Speake (1980 85-92). According to epic poetry, the *wyrm*, or dragon was known to act as the guardian or protector of the wealth deposited in burials. Thus:

... se ðe on heaum hofe hord beweotode stan-beorh steapne [The dragon, who in his lofty dwelling guarded the treasure hoard in the stone tumulus...] (Beowulf 2212-13)

In such circumstances, it would make sense for the wyrm of Woden to be represented upon the cremation urns of his faithful, especially in East Anglia where Hauck has suggested (1954) that there was a particularly close affinity with that particular deity.

It must be accepted that the device is open to ambiguous interpretation. Thus, for example, the appearance of wavy lines on a pot should not be taken for granted as a representation of a deity. The device has been the subject of an informal typology, which gives some measure of the reliability of the interpretation. Thus, where the stamped impressed design is “segmented” or where the freehand design is represented with an eye, then our identification is reliable; where the identification is of a moving serpent, that simply consists of a series of apparently unconnected lines, then the identification is less certain. This typology is less than convincing. The logical extension of this classification is the “stationary” wyrm, which presumably would consist of a straight line, but no such classification exists. More complicated are those occasions where the wyrm device is confused or conflated with the swastika.

The suggestion that Woden had special powers over snakes is preserved and made explicit in the Nine Herbs Charm in the book of Anglo-Saxon Leechdoms. The relationship between the two is strengthened by the interpretation of a seventh-century coin pendant from Bacton in Norfolk (Speake 1970): but reliance on this would lead to a circular argument. Other examples of metalwork are quoted from Denmark and Sweden. It is certainly true that the metalwork of early Anglo-Saxon England contains many representations of limbless animals interwoven and interlinked. That such metalwork figures are intended as serpents is clear, since the same corpus of metalwork (styles one and two) also includes large numbers of unidentifiable quadrupeds (Speake 1980). Yet in supporting the assertion that the snake, serpent, wyrm or “limbless, wingless and greatly elongated” creature is in fact the badge of Woden and his followers in Anglo-Saxon England, the author travels to sixteenth-century Sweden (Chadwick 1959 194 ff); to Lithuania (courtesy of Adam of Bremen Bk IV 17); Gaul (courtesy of Pliny's *Natural History*, XXIX c.3); the Lombards and — echoing Ellis Davidson's inquest into the swastika — the Bronze Age in Scandinavia. Are we really to believe that the material culture of Europe between the Bronze Age and the sixteenth century is so homogenous that sweeping generalisations of this kind are credible? Surely not.

Speake makes a strong case for his identification by quoting contemporary and near contemporary sources from the Continent — parts of the Continent that were certainly in contact with East Anglia and other parts of England in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries (e.g. Hodges 1989a). But the assumption that the entire material culture of Europe can be summed up in one set of symbolic generalisations is an assumption that cannot and can never be proven. It fails by omitting the singular importance of the consumer in the negotiation and appropriation of meaning as against the impotence of the author to control interpretation.

Woden is unique among Anglo-Saxon deities in that he may be referenced in certain Old English poems. Such sources are preferable because they are chronologically closer to the period in question; because they derive from a geographically English context; and because they are written in Old English, and thus do not face the same complications of translation into clerical Latin. Ryan (1963) has pinpointed several places in Old English literature where Woden is referred to as the god of storms, wind and battle, the magician and necromancer (1963 468–472). He does this by investigating the literary devices used by the authors to discuss each of these themes. Ryan accepts that the writings of the seventh or eighth centuries do not suggest that contemporaries were still active in their practice of paganism, but that by that time, the cult practices of the fifth and sixth centuries had been euhemerised as literary convention.

Meaney (1966) argues the direct opposite to Ryan. She is critical of Ryan for not distinguishing clearly enough between Woden, the Anglo-Saxon deity, and Oðin, the Anglo-Norse deity. She points out that Anglo-Norse paganism was in constant retreat, and it is unlikely that the worship of the Anglo-Norse pantheon ever gained much currency among the indigenous population (1966 105). The kaleidoscope of misspellings of the name Woden in later sources underline the fact that the two are continually confused, even to this day. Secondly, she reminds us that the name of Woden probably made its first appearance in the genealogies of the ruling houses at the end of the eighth century (Sisam 1953). Next, she argues that the appearance of the birds and beasts of battle are the product of both observation and genre. Meaney reminds us that none of the indigenous historical traditions of paganism precede 597, and that only one comes prior to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. The significance of this point cannot be underestimated, since two intertwined, though

separate transformations may have occurred from that point onwards: the dilution of mythology to suit the Christian intelligentsia, and the independent transformation of pagan culture in comparison with its Christian counterpart. This latter, more subtle, transformation is attested by Goody's experience in Africa when he notes the devaluation of the non-literate culture against the currency of the literate (1986), a relationship that we shall investigate later.

Implicit in all this is the unfounded assumption that there ever was a received and developed canon of pagan beliefs, and that the dogma and iconography of this paganism underwent no substantial or significant changes. The Christian, monastic sources speak pre-discursively of religion as a phenomenon with clearly defined mechanisms and boundaries. There is enough material in the anthropology of belief and religion to suggest that there are no necessary conditions for religious forms or practices, a point we shall review in Chapter Three.

The symbolic unity of paganism for which Wilson and others have searched is always already a Christian phenomenon.

Before moving on, perhaps we should recapitulate the long arguments that have gone before. The group of cremation urns under scrutiny were selected as the most reliable representation of paganism available. Thus, arguments used to counter or weaken the identification of this particular body of material will also directly or inadvertently undermine the entire edifice of our knowledge about Anglo-Saxon paganism. I have sought to overturn the connection between the swastika emblem and the god Thunor; have suggested that the connection between Tiw and the runic symbol ↑ is more reliable, but of little actual merit; and have suggested that the identification of Woden with the wyrm device rests on an inextricable confusion between Norse and Anglo-Saxon pantheons, which can only be considered reasonable if one also presumes a large measure of conformity through long stretches of time and space.

Yet, the preceding arguments have also worked from the assumption that the interpretation of symbolic meanings on cremation pots is a worthwhile pursuit. This assumption is the foundation of the archaeological study of paganism, and is thus an essential element in the construction of a critical history of that study. Yet linguistics suggest that interpretations of this nature rely upon the interests and context of the interpreter, and as far as Anglo-Saxon studies are concerned, there is

good reason to suspect that this is still the case today (Frantzen 1990). There are few or no contemporary historical sources from which we can construct an *Encyclopaedia of Later Paganism*, as Di Berardino has attempted for the Early Church (1992).

To demonstrate the point, let us investigate a fourth set of urns. The investigation of any report from a cremation cemetery gives the reader an idea of the intricacy with which the archaeologist routinely analyses the decoration on the surface of the pot, let alone the nature of its deposition, or the minor matter of its contents. The excavations at Spong Hill in Norfolk are a case in point. In 1994, Hills, Penn and Ricket announced the “fifth and final” catalogue of finds from this cemetery, bringing the total to well over three thousand (1994 1). These three thousand pots were subdivided according to stamped decoration into 132 groups in which similar groups of stamps were used. Of the groups published in this catalogue, five groups were linked by the use of what could be described as a swastika motif in combination with other pots, while twenty of the groups were linked by a zig zag line consistent with one or other description of the wyrm device given by Wilson (1992) or Speake (1980) (Hills Penn and Ricket 1994 2-17). As we have seen, these two symbols have been the focus of considerable debate. Largely ignored, however, have been the 46 groups linked by one or other symbol which is consistent with any definition of a cross.

It would be foolhardy to suggest that the cross depicted on these cremation urns was in any way connected to Christianity, without firstly establishing a suitable context for that symbolic meaning. One would have to show that the cross was parallel to other crosses of a similar type in a Christian context, and that the context referred to had at least tenuous associations with England. One would be expected to show that the practice of cremation was consistent — or at least not necessarily inconsistent — with Christian ritual or symbolism. As with the rune for Tiw, one would have to show that the symbol was not merely incidental, but was meaningfully or at least thoughtfully constituted. It would probably thus be necessary to discount a large number of the representations as inadmissible.

In short, the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon paganism resides on a whole series of ungovernable assumptions that can be turned over time and again. Perhaps the single biggest obstacle is the assumed correlation between paganism and an undisclosed, though coherent, set of ritual practices. The focus of archaeological

investigation has been the identification and rationalisation of those ritual practices. This archaeology has failed even in its own terms, without even needing to appeal to broader theoretical issues.

2.3 the historiography of the missions to Anglo-Saxon England

The problems of identifying pagan practice are one face of a two-sided problem. If paganism is obscure, then it may be sufficient to work backwards instead, from a clear definition of Christianity. This will be the subject of this and subsequent sections, dealing with archaeological and historical evidence. In this section I take a much closer look at conventional wisdom about the coming of Christianity drawing from historical sources, citing the authoritative voices of Frank Stenton, Henry Mayr-Harting and more recent authors, in particular Nicholas Higham. I shall criticise all of these for their over-reliance upon one historical source, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, a source that has been the subject of detailed historical criticism by better-informed critics than this one. I will develop a slightly different line from these however, arguing latterly that Bede's almost exclusive fascination with kings and kingdoms has obstructed the writing of any alternative account.

Not only does the arrival of the Gregorian mission in 597 represent an important point in ecclesiastical history but also a key point in historiography. Compared to the century and a half after 450, historical sources for subsequent periods are plentiful. Confident historical analysis of Anglo-Saxon England tends to start with the Gregorian mission rather than the *adventus Saxonum*. Numerous writers have written on the topic of the spread of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England. Frantzen reminds us that Anglo-Saxon Christianity represented one of the key elements in the political narrative of the Reformation, with interest groups appropriating and accentuating or diminishing the importance of the Roman Church, the Celtic missions, the Germanic invaders and the like (Frantzen 1990 35-50).

Among the more important writings are the works of Frank Stenton (1971), and Henry Mayr-Harting (1991). These two scholars have largely set and confirmed the historical agenda for the topic, concentrating attention on the relationship between the missionaries and the kings to whom they quickly became attached, and the political benefits of conversion for king and clergy alike. This overlooks important

elements of the impact of the clergy, the missionary encounter with the large majority of the population, but remains a dominant theme.

Royal authority dominates Stenton's account of the impact of the clergy. Few have argued in principle with his assertion that the "*attitude of local kings determined the date at which Christianity reached his people*" (Stenton 1971 127). Indeed, he imbued the mission with political goals from the outset:

That Gregory's attention was first called to Britain by a simple desire for the conversion need not be doubted. But Gregory was in the succession of ancient Roman statesmen, and could not have been indifferent to the political advantages that would follow from the reunion of a lost province of the Empire to the Church of its capital (Stenton 1971 104)

Consider, for example, Stenton's treatment of the Gregorian mission to Kent. Initial contact was with the royal house of Kent, meeting on royal terms in Thanet. Stenton reminds us that Kent's previous contacts with Christianity were largely political in nature, since Bishop Liudhard's arrival was among the political intrigues of the Frankish court (Stenton 1971 105). King Aethelberht housed the mission; he fed the mission; and gave his permission for them to preach (Stenton 1971 105). It was Aethelberht who protected church property twelve times over (Stenton 1971 107). What little progress there was outside Kent seems to have been entirely dependent upon Aethelberht's good relations with other kings, such as his nephew Saberht of Essex, or Raedwald of East Anglia (Stenton 1971 109, 112). Apparently so dependent was this early mission on royal power that the whole enterprise virtually collapsed in 616 when Aethelberht died. Similar reversals followed in Essex on the death of Saberht. The mission to Kent could only be resumed when Eadbald, Aethelberht's son, had a change of heart. Eadbald's successor assured the success of the mission by ordering the destruction of pagan idols throughout the kingdom (Stenton 1971 113).

The same theme might be developed for each kingdom in turn in Stenton's account of the progress of the mission. Missions to Northumbria began with the arrival of Paulinus to serve at the royal court as part of a marriage alliance between Kent and Northumbria, enjoying a rapid, if superficial, success after the king's baptism (Stenton 1971 113). His mission to Lindsey was undertaken while Edwin was overlord of the province (Stenton 1971 115). Paulinus fled Northumbria in 632 at Edwin's sudden death (Stenton 1971 116). Sigeberht, king of East Anglia, was

the inspiration behind the activities of Felix in that kingdom (Stenton 1971 116). The shadowy career of Birinus in Wessex brought him into contact with the local ruler Cynegils and, it would seem, the long arm of Oswald of Northumbria (Stenton 1971 117). This same Oswald was instrumental in the second expansion of Christianity in Northumbria, while his successor Oswiu encouraged the mission of Finan to the Middle Angles and their sub-king Peada (Stenton 1971 120). In short, Stenton argued that royal power was the decisive influence in the missions to England. He even bewailed the lack of attention paid to this royal authority, suggesting that fluctuations in the overlordship of Southern England represented a useful but under-exploited model of the progress of the mission (Stenton 1971 127).

James Campbell's thoughtful analyses of the conversion present, all too briefly, an alternative insight into the conversion of England that does not rely entirely on political machinations. Arguing that Anglo-Saxon and Frankish kingdoms were similar in many respects, he presents an analogy with the behaviour of missionary bishops south of the Channel. In particular, his account of the career of Columbanus and his stormy relationship with Theuderic emphasises the role of charisma in conversion (Campbell 1971 60). It follows from Campbell's argument that the charisma of men like Cuthbert or Aidan should be a factor in any analysis of their successes or failures. Even so, his comments are still focussed primarily on the relationship between the missionary and the king, suggesting that the mass of the population had little option but to fall in behind a royal authority. Indeed, his account of the conversion of the Isle of Wight makes explicit links between the violent coercion of military subjugation and the imposition of Christianity (Campbell 1973 77). Thus, while the missionaries may have been able to use charisma to extend their influence in royal circles, it was military force not charisma that extended it to the population.

Stenton's proposed connection between royal authority and the mission has been accepted by every subsequent commentator, although the details have been subject to scrutiny. If anything, the most comprehensive recent study of the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England has accentuated the point (Mayr-Harting 1991 *passim*). The first half-century of the mission was grouped together under the general title "*Kings and Conversion, 597-664*" in Mayr-Harting's account. He took a step back from Stenton's claim of Gregory's political duplicity, arguing

that the Pope may have had a pastoral objective (Mayr-Harting 1991 60) but was clear about the role of kings within this programme:

...the church acknowledged its helplessness without the support and protection of kings. More often than not they led their people to the baptismal font; they provided the initial endowments of land and buildings for bishoprics and monasteries; they protected church property with their sanctions; they enforced the payment of church dues by the people; they fought the church's enemies, and might even (like Oswald) be regarded as martyrs in its cause, (Mayr-Harting 1991 248)

Like Stenton, though more critical of the historical sources, Mayr-Harting argued that the mission was a royal affair.

For example, Mayr-Harting confesses that our knowledge about the mission to Kent is problematic, that we do not actually know whether or not Aethelberht was baptised until 616 (Mayr-Harting 1991 63). Nonetheless, the attractions of Christianity to the *bretwalda* were presented clearly in political, military and economic terms: the Christian God protected his servants in battle; Mediterranean Christianity opened new luxury markets; and alliance with the Frankish court and the papacy would only be beneficial (Mayr-Harting 1991 62-4). In return, Aethelberht extended the mission to Essex where his policy was influential and to Raedwald of East Anglia, even if the latter was ultimately unsuccessful. The mission was imperilled because court dissidents used paganism as means of dissent (Mayr-Harting 1991 64). The same might also be said of East Anglia and Essex, where dissent or protest took different forms. A similar pattern can be observed in the other chapters of Mayr-Harting's work. For example in Northumbria, Paulinus ensured that "*Every stop was pulled out*" to ensure the baptism of Edwin, for whom the activities of the pagan Raedwald were an obvious difficulty for anyone wishing to convert (Mayr-Harting 1991 67).

Mayr-Harting emphasised the importance of kings again in his recent and seemingly unlikely comparison between Anglo-Saxon England and Bulgaria. The case of Bulgaria is informative, since the text of a ninth-century letter survives from the Pope to Khan Boris answering certain questions about the nature of Christian life and exhorting him to accept baptism from the Roman Church (Sullivan 1966). This text is important because it not only reveals the papacy's programme for

idealised Christian living, but also reveals the particular concerns of a pagan ruler thinking of conversion. Significantly:

...in each case one can discern strong political reasons on the part of the rulers for conversion when it actually came, such as its likely cohesive effect on their populations, its giving a universally accepted sanction to rule, its use for dealing with neighbouring Christian peoples on equal footing, and the perceived advantage of help from its God in warfare ...
(Mayr-Harting 1994 6)

Again, political considerations and the power of kings are core and target of missionary activities.

Writers other than Mayr-Harting and Stenton have taken up the same argument. Richter has argued that, in addition to being the target of missionary activities, the king could often find himself, consciously or not, the agent of conversion, preaching and proselytising by word and deed (Richter 1987). By implication, the missionaries had little real influence on the outcome of the mission, and were delivered completely through political machinations. Higham has taken up where Stenton left off, using the ebb and flow of *imperium* to chart the success and failure of the missions among the convert kings (Higham 1997).

The reason for this concentration on kings and politics is clear enough. Accounts of the coming of Christianity depend almost exclusively on the one historical source that purports to give us access to an eyewitness account – Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. It should be clear from the outset again that scholarship has pored over Bede's writings intensively and comprehensively for well over a millennium. This is not the place to expect new insights into his writings, nor is it even the place to find a comprehensive commentary on that corpus. What follows is necessarily selective, leading us to consider its utility in an archaeology of missionary work.

The *Ecclesiastical History* (hereafter *HE*) is just one of a range of works associated with Bede, including a series of letters and homilies, a tract on computistics, a history of the abbots of his monastery, at least one saint's life and two lesser chronicles. These were written in excellent Latin which betrays a knowledge of important patristic, biblical and classical writers. Bede entered the

monastery of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow at the age of 7 and was 58 by the time he completed the *HE* in 731.

In his favour, we can trace many of Bede's sources, since he sets these out for us in the preface. These include venerable oral traditions given to him first or second hand from eyewitnesses. For material pertaining to Canterbury and the Gregorian missions he consulted with Albinus, abbot at Canterbury. In addition, Nothelm, "a godly priest" from London had visited Rome, investigating the Lateran archive for information about the mission, also passing on Albinus's testimony. Other testimony was included from other sources, as and when they were appropriate. At times, Bede seems critical of these sources, using phrases like "it is said that", suggesting a degree of scepticism in the author's mind about the events he describes. In this respect Bede was an historian ahead of his time.

For Bede, history was a branch of homiletics. His history was purposeful and practical, not remote or academic. His writings were not inspired by the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. He was anticipating the sort of research assessment exercise that would decide one's fate for all eternity, an altruism that had very direct consequences. Bede wanted to save our souls. Naturally this provides a comfortable foundation for the critical evaluation of the events and attitudes described. While the revelation of his predilections means we have to be careful in interpreting the text, nonetheless, the very fact that he makes his goals so explicit strengthens the critical stance we can adopt towards it. This leaves the modern commentator in a sort of double bind: at least we know the bounds of our knowledge.

We can be sure, therefore, that Bede purposefully did not describe certain activities. For example, he presents frustratingly little information on Anglo-Saxon paganism. In fact, he presents just as little information on paganism as was reasonable without being actually deceitful. There are also aspects of the coming of Christianity that Bede overlooked, perhaps not on principle, but simply because he did not (and perhaps could not) have known about them. We have already seen that Mayr-Harting equivocated on the date of Aethelberht's baptism — a scholarly ambivalence that derives from Bede's own reticence (Mayr-Harting 1991 63). In spite of his good contacts with the Canterbury community, Bede's details on the Gregorian mission are sketchy, suggesting that the events described were not well recorded and perhaps a bit vague by the time that Albinus and Nothelm made their

enquiries. Kent is perhaps the most important weakness in the *HE*, but other areas such as Wessex, East Anglia and even Mercia are not elaborated upon. It should come as no surprise that Bede should be relatively more generous in his dealings with Northumbria.

The prospects for addressing Bede's geographical limitations by appeal to alternative sources are not good. In Wessex, for example, much has been made of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as an alternative historical source. However, scholarship now seems agreed that this source was only collated several centuries after the events which concern us here, in the politically charged context of Alfred's court. It is certainly conceivable that certain of the entries for Wessex in the seventh century are derived from earlier lost annals. Even so, two major problems are apparent. Firstly, it would be uncommonly difficult and eminently contentious to separate the reliable from the wayward. This would necessitate an alternative source against which to verify them. The only text really capable of such is, of course, Bede's *HE*, returning us neatly to the point of departure. Secondly, chronicle entries are laconic. Even if accurate, they reveal only the most basic detail, for which we might turn to Bede.

There are specific cases, where local knowledge can correct or supplement Bede. For example, while the activities of Wilfrid in Sussex are not recorded in detail, Eddius Stephanus's life of the saint includes a passage on his work in that area. Bede seems to have known about this source, but disagrees sharply with Stephanus about the success and implications of that mission (Kirby 1981 166-170, Mayr-Harting 1981). Thus, while Bede is a partial source, the dissonance between the two allows us to be more critical of both. As Mayr-Harting points out, such analysis does not always favour Bede's scholarship (Mayr-Harting 1981 4, Campbell 1966 188-9).

Access to sources outside Northumbria is only one constraint with the *HE*. Also significant are the rural population that may not have had much contact with the clergy. As we have seen, this is a significantly more important oversight, since Bede seems not to have been interested in the rural population, so even in areas where we appear to have comprehensive knowledge, we should anticipate a lack of detail. Bede reveals his concerns about the lack of pastoral formation for the rural population in his letter to Egbert, describing rural populations that have been

seldom visited by clergy (EB 5). In those geographical locations that lack detail, the historical sources leave us in ignorance.

Little wonder that Stenton and Mayr-Harting were at a loss to account for the greater percentage of the population. Stenton describes the situation on the eve of the Synod of Whitby in gloomy terms:

There is no doubt that Christianity was the dominant religion throughout England ... But it is equally certain that the older beliefs of the English people, though driven underground were still alive. (Stenton 1971 128)

Underground survival and syncretism are themes taken up by Mayr-Harting. If anything, he was more critical of the sources, pointing to texts of the later seventh and eighth centuries which speak of attempts to expand the pastoral mission in the countryside, or report the failings of supposedly Christian groups (Mayr-Harting 1991 240-261). For Mayr-Harting, paganism was hardly an underground phenomenon, surviving into the eighth century in some places and in certain social institutions that had survived through the seventh century.

If conversion was reserved for kings and their retainers, how did the greater mass of Anglo-Saxons ever become Christian, or obtain sufficient Christian veneer to be thought of (or perhaps more importantly to think of themselves) as Christian?

This question has been asked more widely of the early Medieval period, with a consistent answer. Rather than presenting conversion as a single, sudden experience (e.g. Nock 1933 7), commentators have concentrated on conversion as (part of) a social process in which populations are moulded by adaptation to overarching social structures. Thus, they are made Christian by accident of birth and the predetermined internalisation of social structures. Christians are produced, not converted. The language in which this phenomenon has been analysed stresses long-term continuity over short-term dissonance. The word *Christianisation* has been introduced as an alternative to the term conversion, emphasising both the long-term social process and the re-negotiation of structural elements.

This move from event to process has been one of the most significant shifts in historical scholarship. It can be traced in a variety of works, including the writings of Valerie Flint, Premyslav Urbanczyk, Jacques Le Goff and Ludo Milis (e.g. Flint

1991, Milis 1998, Urbanczyk 1998, Le Goff 1964). The term has been used to discuss the process by which certain social institutions were remodelled to suit Christian teaching, so authors talk of the Christianisation of kinship or of death or of design (Lynch 1998, Paxton 1990, Lager 2000). It is also to be found in the writings of Carol Cusack, who distinguishes broadly between “top-down” and “bottom-up” conversions — the conversion to European Christianity being an example of the former, while the latter may not ever have occurred, remaining a theoretical possibility (Cusack 1996 1-21, 1998). The term also has its critics, in particular John Van Engen (Van Engen 1986). Christianisation is also used to describe the process by which certain geographic areas became Christian, (e.g. Sawyer *et al* 1987, Staecker 2000). In Anglo-Saxon England, the focus on kingly conversion and the dismissal of popular piety has been completed recently in the work of Nicholas Higham (Higham 1997). It is to this work, therefore, that we shall turn to sketch out some of the problems with such an approach.

Higham is explicit in his treatment of the history and archaeology of the spread of Christianity. Firstly, he states that his principal intention is the study of kings and the political relations that may be inferred from religious affiliation. He justifies the exclusion of the larger mass of the population by further excluding on principle any explanation that is not political:

At the heart of this volume lies the assumption of a fundamental sylloge between royal and episcopal interests as the driving force behind the English adoption of, and adaptation to Christianity, and the view that it was this rather than psychological or intellectual processes which primarily facilitated and empowered the process of conversion (Higham 1997 10)

Given that kings are the subject of the work, it may seem disingenuous to criticise Higham for failing to investigate the relationship between Christianity and the vast majority of the population. But on this point he incisively steps beyond that royal focus:

Popular religion is necessarily a red-herring in the context of seventh century England and cannot aid our interpretation of the conversion as a process, if only for lack of data. (Higham 1997 28)

In this he both reveals the critical problem of sources for our period and betrays the naïveté of scholarship in this field. There is indeed a lack of data, but a lack of data

cannot really be interpreted as negative evidence. There are particular reasons why this evidence is lacking. Moreover, it is possible that the phenomena have been investigated or understood in terms that are antithetical to that which is under discussion. This is precisely the mistake which Higham makes in dealing with religious phenomena. As we shall see, he makes further errors that derive from a particular reading of anthropological texts which he uses to support the model he seeks to construct. For now, however, let us concentrate on the apparent absence of popular religious expression in Anglo-Saxon England.

Reading the historical sources uncritically, one has the impression of popular devotion in the seventh century. Higham offers a circumspect, sceptical antidote against imprudent capitulation to such sources (Higham 1997 18-19). All historical analyses of the spread of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England rely upon the literature of the missionaries, not the “missioned”. Such texts are bound by the assumptions of the missionaries or their rationality and thus tend to exaggerate claims, to present religious phenomena in wholly religious language, to disregard other determinants and thus present an account that is one-sided. Historical sources are not just problematic – they are part of the problem.

Higham’s account tips away from the religious language of the sources and is concerned with political interests. The main players are kings first and foremost and their actions are theorised in political terms. Other aspects are swamped by political concerns. The implications are clear, and the conclusion is inevitable. A concentration on this particular aspect leads to the inevitable conclusion about the importance of the socio-political context. The themes are thus pre-constituted in socio-political terms, stripped of other forms of agency.

By ignoring the religious psychological and cultural aspects, and by ignoring the greater mass of the population, mistakes are inevitable. There is no scope for popular expressions of religious enthusiasm, not because we can say that there was none, but because there is no scope for popular assent or disapproval in any aspect of the work. We do not know the popular feeling on any subject, but no attempt is made to communicate this. The historical sources are either silent on the topic, or where they talk about the topic, they are rightly treated with suspicion. The result is a methodological impasse. There is little scope to access the majority, and so we are reliant upon studying the ways in which people may have been drawn into that

particular discourse, yet no attempt is made to suggest how practice might or might not have drawn people into that discourse.

This thesis will attempt to address the problem in a novel way and will thus return to the topic, but let us stay with Higham's account. As a case study in the problems, let us return once again to missionary activities in Kent. Higham presents a detailed analysis of the conversion of Aethelberht that can be compared to some extent with those already mentioned (Higham 1997 53-132).

The despatch, successes and failures of Augustine's mission are related directly to local and regional politics — in particular the changing fortunes of the competing dynasties of the Frankish kingdoms at the end of the sixth century. Thus, the well-attested marriage of Bertha to Aethelberht, Higham argues, is associated with an early mission led by Liudhard, the Frankish bishop who came with her to England as her chaplain. Aethelberht toyed with Liudhard, neither accepting baptism from him, nor preventing him from practising his faith. Liudhard, he argues, was little more than an ambassador from Chlothar, the Frankish potentate that held sway in most of the Channel provinces. Acceptance of baptism at the hands of such an ambassador may have won certain strategic and political advantages, but might also have confused relations with other Frankish powers. This explains why Aethelberht resisted baptism from Liudhard. In the long run this proved to be a shrewd policy, since the sudden death of Childebert II in 596 left a dangerous power vacuum, in which Chlothar, Childebert's principal rival in the North, and Brunhild, Chlotar's bereaved wife, clashed. Pope Gregory, who had had an interest in English and Frankish affairs for some time, saw the opportunity of advancing his own position North of the Alps, and intervened on Brunhild's side, forcing Chlothar to make the best of a bad lot, and assist an alternative mission that compromised Liudhard, who had already been marginalised by Aethelberht who had been working to distance himself from Chlothar (Higham 1997 53-90).

The mission and conversion was thus completed almost entirely as a result of the ever-shifting tides of Frankish dynastic politics. Gregory, Aethelberht, Liudhard, Chlothar, Bertha and Brunhild all acted with political motives, to achieve political goals. Christianity, to paraphrase von Clausewitz's dictum, was an extension of foreign policy by other means. The actual teaching of the missionaries in Kent is restricted in Higham's analysis to the time taken by

Augustine to convert the king, which can be characterised by the production of several miracles. We are told that,

Augustine had no more than eight months to persuade the king to convert and then prepare him for it, and may even have been out of England for some six weeks or so of that period for his own consecration (Higham 1997 92).

What is wrong with this analysis? There are clear contradictions in Higham's account of the episode, which suggest that the situation must have been a deal more complicated and subtle than is suggested.

Firstly, to reduce the teaching of mission to one period of activity by Augustine is not a little disingenuous. Higham's account is saturated by the connections that existed between Kent and the North Frankish world. It stresses time and again the way that Kent was drawn into the world of Frankish politics, and stresses the presence of Christian ministers and clerics therein, and their influence upon the fortunes of Kent from long before the arrival of Augustine. One can reasonably assume that the Christianity which permeated other Frankish courts had penetrated this foreign outpost of the Frankish world, even if it had not been adopted formally until 597 (*contra* Mayr-Harting 1991:63). In other words, to suggest, as Higham does, that the preparation of Aethelberht had to be rushed through because of other engagements does little justice to the contemporary scene in Kent. In fact, it may well be argued that the time taken to effect the baptism, and for that matter Augustine's miracles, are in fact arguments against Higham's broader thesis, for if the *realpolitik* of Frankish politics were the real driving force behind the conversion, then it seems unlikely that Augustine would have had to take as long as eight months to baptise the king, and certainly would not have been assisted in this decision by miraculous events.

On a similar theme, Higham's account of the career and world of Liudhard seems strangely inconsistent with the broader outline which he traces. At the very least, he fails to account for apparent discrepancies in the logic of the events that he proposes. Thus, Liudhard is presented as an ambassador to Kent for the court of Soissons. He provided a link between Kent and its nearest neighbours, and may also have presented Frankish models of government to Kent. Ultimately, however, Liudhard had to stand aside as Augustine, the envoy of different political interests, cemented those interests with the baptism of the king. But, if court politics really

were the decisive element of the baptism, then we must ask why the baptism came when it did, and not earlier. The marriage of Bertha and Aethelberht represented the apogee of relations between Kent and the Frankish world. If Aethelberht were able to resist baptism at that point in the 580's, why was he unable to resist it in the 590's? Higham argues that Augustine offered the opportunity to realign politically, moving away from the crumbling power of Chlothar II. Even if this can be sustained, then we are left to question why this particular realignment should be signified in such a different way from previous ones. Assuming that the political moves he reconstructs are accurate, and thus postponing the crucial matter of evidence, the point is that Higham fails to establish a sufficient cultural context for the signification of political alliance, and the changes which seem to occur within the system of patronage. In other words, his reduction of the apparent success of the mission to political adversity is anthropologically naïve. It is ironic that this should be so, given that so much of his energy has clearly been invested in digesting and evaluating relevant anthropological discussions.

Even in matters of politics, Higham's account of the conversion of Aethelberht is inadequate. The entire focus for religious developments inside Kent is encompassed by political developments outside of Kent. In essence, Aethelberht's religious policy, if we may talk in such terms, was dominated by his foreign policy, whether in order to gain favour in the Frankish world, or to exercise some manner of power in Wales. At no point are the politics of Kent considered in their own terms. It seems to be assumed that the kingdom was an homogenous monolith, in which the word of the king ran without opposition or question. This is more than a little problematic. By all accounts, Anglo-Saxon royal authority relied upon a combination of military prowess and supernatural charisma (Wormald 1986). Unlike Edwin or Aethelfrith, Aethelberht, for all that Bede describes some sort of imperium, was not described in clear detail. In none of the surviving sources is he presented as either the triumphant leader of a war band, or as the boastful donor of booty, nor as the charismatic spiritual leader. The essence of his position is undisclosed since there are insufficient sources for us to know how this imperium was achieved. It is essential that we understand the internal politics of Kent in order to understand the apparent success of the mission. Given what Wormald says of Anglo-Saxon kingship, it appears that he would be the last person interested in sanctioning a cult over which he would have less control than hitherto. In order for such a cult to be successful, it must offer some significant alternative that could

reproduce royal power more effectively, or at least as effectively, since any significant change would ultimately be dangerous for a king already established in power. Higham misses the entire local context of the mission, which is ironic, since his reading of the anthropological literature should have alerted him to the importance of that immediate context. In this respect he reasserts the primacy of external stimuli.

In his theoretical excursus, Higham presents, *inter alia*, the work of anthropologist Robin Horton (Higham 1997 20-21). Among numerous writings on the subject of religious conversion, Horton has argued that Islam and Christianity in the context of Africa anticipated changes that were already “*in the air*” (Horton 1971, 1975a, 1975b). We shall return to this topic in more detail later, but in at least one crucial respect, the arrival of the missionaries from Rome seems to have anticipated changes in Kent that were already “*in the air*”, and which — seen in stark functionalist terms — might also be able to account for the relative ease with which Aethelberht was able to exchange his supernatural charisma in return for new and more effective means of reproducing his authority. Aethelberht’s conversion seems to have been the necessary stimulus for the development of literacy in Kent. Significantly, the earliest document from Kent after Aethelberht’s conversion is a law code, which neatly characterises the transformation in royal authority brought about by his conversion. By converting, Aethelberht may have lost out on some of his charisma, but gained a technology that was to revolutionise the exercise of royal power.

On a different theme, the psychology of conversion is hardly mentioned. In a world of short lives and violent deaths, the early Medieval mindset was surely more open to the appeal of radical conversion (Allison 1966, 1968, 1969, Kirkpatrick 1992, Kaufman 1981). Aethelberht can hardly be studied like Gandhi or the *Young Man Luther* (Erikson 1958). Psycho-historical approaches have not been well received by conventional historiography, even though the theoretical foundations of psycho-history seem much closer to established practices than is often recognised (Kohut 1986). By pre-constituting the debate around the actions of kings, any such discussions about individuals are ruled out of order before the analysis has begun.

Thus, Higham's dealings with Aethelberht are inconsistent; clearly failing to account for the complexity of the situation described, he overlooks alternative, but potentially significant, aspects of the mission to Kent.

Before moving from Higham's account it is only fair to express a note of caution concerning the way in which he uses the historical sources, and the faith he is prepared to put in them. There are problems with much of the reconstruction of Frankish politics, since many of the lines of argument are in fact based upon relatively little attestable historical material. Higham constructs a whole series of embassies and interests in the careers of men like Liudhard and Chlothar with considerably more confidence than other scholars working on similar material. Thus, for example, Wood argues that Kent was part of a broad Frankish hegemony in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, and as such we can expect to see the influence of various Frankish kings at work, both in support of the mission and in matters pertaining to trade and exchange (Wood 1992). He does not, however, specify which embassy came from which kingdom at which time, and how these different ambassadors would have been received. This is not the place to be critical of this material in detail, but it would seem that Higham accepts much of Bede's account at face value when compared to other historians. Thus, Higham extends the limited historical material, yet fails to reach out for other sources that might well prove more reliable.

2.4 the archaeology of the spread of Christianity

On account of historical reticence, commentators have turned to archaeology for enlightenment (e.g. Mayr-Harting 1991 14, 23, 135, Higham 1997 8, see also Abrams 1998 for a review of the same in a different context). Archaeology seems well placed to fill many of the gaps. Archaeological evidence, dominated by the mundane activities of the rural population, is in direct contrast to the summarising event-driven history of Bede's *reges et principes*. Moreover, archaeological evidence has quite a different geographical spread, surviving in those areas such as the Isle of Wight or Sussex where historical references are sparse (e.g. Arnold 1982b, Welch 1983). Furthermore, archaeological evidence is not homiletic so, unlike Bede, it records good things of bad people as well as the evil deeds of good men. In addition, archaeological study is expanding, with new light being shed on old problems. This is a pleasant contrast to historical study, where the data set is well-known, thoroughly investigated, and unlikely to expand.

Of course, such a naïve view of the archaeological record is hardly justified. The archaeological record invariably frustrates attempts at a narrative account of the past. Indeed, it is questionable whether such an account is even an attractive proposition. Ian Hodder and many others have argued that archaeological knowledge should be decentralised and that alternative interests should be encouraged not discouraged — that diversity and disagreement should be considered a strength not a weakness (e.g. Hodder 1999). In some respects this represents a difference of agenda between historical and archaeological scholarship. Archaeologists have reacted against the dominant historical agenda by arguing that the period in question should be treated in isolation as if it were prehistoric (Arnold 1997 *passim*), while historians, frustrated by the indeterminacy of archaeological interpretation, have tended to disregard material culture. Famously, it has been claimed that the spade cannot lie, because it cannot speak.

The reconciliation of archaeological practice with historical agenda need not present a serious challenge so long as these divergent interests are borne in mind. The concerns represented by the commentators above assume that archaeology and history are clearly bounded disciplines. It might be argued that the early Medieval period, in general, is liminal to both historical and archaeological methods. Many of the surviving historical documents survive in monumental scale, possessing material properties normally associated with archaeology (e.g. Thomas 1992, 1994). Simultaneously, the apparently self-evident meaning and interpretation of written texts can be subjected to a full scale assault from a linguistic perspective, revealing that while meaning is not entirely hidden, it can only be resolved in the light of given linguistic criteria that, in turn, prove to be contingent. More importantly, however, perceived disciplinary boundaries have been subject to a thorough critique and found to be the product of historical and intellectual traditions that need not necessarily constrain contemporary or future analyses. A more productive line of enquiry assumes the unity of the social sciences and proceeds on that basis, drawing upon methodological or analytical schemae as necessary.

Broadly speaking, there remain two reasons why, in spite of the objections presented above, an archaeology of the impact of the clergy remains a worthwhile and necessary project. Firstly, only archaeology can verify or challenge the assumed sylloge between political and religious spheres in terms that allow us to see what is missing from the historical record. Secondly, an archaeology of the phenomenon allows us to investigate the material conditions in which conversion

may have taken place. It thus challenges us to investigate the ways in which religious change was made present in the routine of daily life. In this way, archaeology can provide a framework to analyse the breadth and penetration of the impact of the clergy, as well as providing a critique of the process model.

It has long been thought that the investigation of the structure of cemeteries or the contents of the grave can shed light upon the faith or allegiance of the inhabitants of the cemetery. The excavation of cemeteries has, for historic reasons, been at the forefront of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, with long-term implications for the direction of the study of the period (Arnold 1997 1-18). This concentration on cemeteries has only been addressed in the last 30 years or so, with a long needed archaeology of Anglo-Saxon settlement patterns and house structures (e.g. Faull 1984, Hooke 1988, Millett and James 1983). Less intensively studied within the archaeological record has been the identification and excavation of early churches. These are numerically few in comparison with cemeteries, perhaps because they were always few in number, but also because the fragile remnants of such structures are often incorporated into, concealed or destroyed by the fabric of later and very much grander buildings. Moreover, a cemetery is easily recognised in archaeological contexts and associated metalwork relatively easy to date, whereas church buildings are both harder to identify from form and to designate chronologically. Latterly, a concern with pastoral care identified from the historical sources has given rise to novel insights into the relationship between clergy and laity (e.g. Blair 1996b). Each of the approaches will be considered in turn.

2.4.1 The archaeology of cemeteries

Cemetery archaeology is attractive not simply because of the intrinsic value of finds, nor for the way that it opens the whole of population to scrutiny, nor even for the relative ease with which they are recognised or dated, though each of these are important. Cemetery archaeology is attractive to scholars and commentators because the common occurrence and recurrence of standard features allows for generalising hypotheses to be drawn over wide areas of the country (Samson 1987). The cemetery has a clearly defined function connected to the disposal of the dead and the ritual associated with that apparently mundane problem. At a fundamental level, the comparison of data sets is only possible when the data sets are obviously comparable. Not only are cemeteries geographically ubiquitous, but superficially they are functionally, stylistically and thus typologically comparable.

The *final phase* model of pagan burial represents the clearest statement of the supposed relationship of cemetery archaeology and religious belief. In fact, the term developed as an attempt to emphasise the complexity of the relationship between religious belief and mortuary practice. It was first used by ET Leeds in 1936 to describe and accentuate the slow development of Christian burial practices and the reluctance with which pagan burial practices were abandoned (Leeds 1936 96). This claim was supported by excavations at Burwell in Cambridgeshire, where the excavator, TC Lethbridge, was clearly uncertain about the cemetery population presented to him. The quantity of grave-goods convinced him of pagan practice, but such dating evidence as was available suggested that they were a non-Christian community in a Christian kingdom (Lethbridge 1929 109). Only latterly did he change his mind, suggesting that, in spite of the quantities of grave-goods recovered, the cemetery was Christian (Lethbridge 1931). The apparent contradiction was emphasised and elaborated in his subsequent excavations at Shudy Camps, where he specified the characteristics of such early Christian cemeteries (Lethbridge 1936). Characteristically, few of the graves had grave-goods, and those grave-goods that did exist were of a different character from earlier pagan graves. Moreover, the cemetery could be dated to a time when earlier pagan cemeteries had closed. The presence of a church was also considered an important feature, although not necessarily connected to the cemetery (Lethbridge 1936 27-29).

Vera Evison refined the model presented by Lethbridge two decades later in reporting the cemetery of Holborough in Kent, noting that certain of the grave-goods from Kent appeared to use or replicate Christian imagery. Significantly, she also noted that the cemetery was organised carefully with a coherent east-west orientation (Evison 1956). She also argued that the grave-goods were much more homogenous than in previous centuries. This point has been developed recently by Helen Geake, arguing for a more homogeneous tradition in the seventh century and early part of the eighth century (Geake 1997). Miranda Hyslop, however, related this phenomenon directly to Christianity by suggesting that the spread of Christianity somehow facilitated communication (Hyslop 1963 193). Hyslop identified final phase cemeteries as a separate group, arguing for their homogeneity as a distinct tradition, and extending beyond the Kentish focus envisaged by Leeds. This was partly because of the form and contents of the cemeteries, but also partly because of the apparent relocation of final phase cemeteries away from earlier

burial grounds, a phenomenon noted from her excavations at Chamberlains Barns. Hyslop gave eleven criteria to the final phase cemetery:

- brooches are either entirely absent or few in number. The cruciform and square headed brooches, which are such a common feature of 5th and 6th century graves appear altogether to have gone out of fashion. Apart from a few exceptions, most of which are almost certainly survivals, the only brooches are diminutive annular brooches, occurring principally in the north, and rich composite brooches, unfortunately rare outside Kent. Neither of these types occurs before the 7th century
- the great necklaces of amber and glass beads are generally replaced by festoons of a few beads strung together with silver wire rings. The silver wire rings are a new feature, beads of silver or gold make their appearance, and amethyst beads are relatively common in all areas
- pendants of all sorts are a common feature
- clothes may be fastened with linked pins, in gold or silver, sometimes with garnet settings
- buckles are mainly small, usually with plain, oval loops
- thread boxes in bronze or silver appear with female graves. Also small wooden chests, with bronze or iron fittings
- weapons are relatively rare. Amongst those that do occur the large scramasax plays a more important part than hitherto. Shield bosses are usually tall, and the sugar loaf variety develops
- cremation graves are altogether absent. Amongst the pottery occurring in inhumation graves, globular forms with tall necks and squat, wide-mouthed vessels are most common
- orientation is markedly consistent within the cemetery, and the graves often appear to have been arranged in regular groups or rows

- one or more graves may be contained in a barrow, as a primary or secondary burial. Where no trace of such a mound is visible from the surface, its former existence is often suggested in the site name or by ring ditches surrounding the grave
- the proportion of graves containing no furniture or only a knife is high.

(Hyslop 1963 190-191)

This analysis should be seen in the light of her interpretative comments on two successive cemeteries at Chamberlains Barns. The movement from one to the other was an important feature of the analysis, and could be accounted for as part of the development of the final phase just as much as the metalwork or orientation of the graves. The reports she presents are problematic, however, since the excavations were carried out under extremely difficult conditions, and in some parts, the publication is little more than an account of scribbled field notes taken in advance of mechanised quarrying. The theme of successive cemeteries was explored more comprehensively in the much more controlled excavations at Winnall Down near Winchester, where two successive cemeteries occur in close proximity (Meaney and Hawkes 1970). Meaney and Hawkes drew on Hyslop's concept of the final phase to account for this movement, presenting a clearer statement on the relationship between the final phase and the Christian Church, a relationship that had not been fully explored in previous works. Describing the perceived decline of grave-goods, they suggest that burial with grave-goods was tolerated at first, but that latterly it was frowned upon and ultimately eradicated:

...the archaeological poverty of a cemetery like Winnall II is a demonstration of the Church's success in combating one of the outward shows of heathenism. (Meaney and Hawkes 1970 53)

Significantly, Martin Biddle has pointed out that the Winnall II cemetery fell out of use at exactly the same time as the earliest levels of Winchester Cathedral. He suggests that these represent the Church's final appropriation of the disposal of human remains, the culmination of the abandonment of grave goods at Winnall II (Biddle 1976, 69).

The movement of burial grounds in the seventh century was the subject of detailed analysis by Margaret Faull in her research and report on the cemeteries at Sancton in Yorkshire. This report illustrated Hyslop's earlier argument about the

wide geographical distribution of the final phase group across the country. In addition, it suggested that previous, larger cemeteries serving relatively large regions and numerous settlements were replaced by a series of much smaller cemeteries, perhaps therefore closer to the settlements, but necessarily serving relatively smaller populations (Faull 1976). The earlier cemetery was marked by cremation burials, while the later cemetery was characteristically in the final phase mould as presented by Hyslop and by Meaney and Hawkes.

Richard Morris has identified more than thirty cemeteries that fit the criteria listed for final phase burials, criteria that have been summarised by Andy Boddington (Morris 1983 55-56, Boddington 1990). In essence the cemeteries were thought to have been established under Christian influence, consisting entirely of inhumations, consistently oriented west to east, but with some graves in or under barrows. Grave-goods tend to be few, while those that are present tend to be items of personal dress or other small personal tokens. Weapons are rare, but some objects have apparent Christian symbols. Behind this programme of burial, Boddington notes the Church's desire to suppress pagan practices, to separate Christian practices spatially and to succeed from previous cemeteries (Boddington 1990 181-2).

How useful is this scheme in analysing the impact of the clergy?

Superficially it promises to represent the introduction of Christian belief and practice within a pagan society in two ways — the degree and distribution of the changes representing the geographical spread of the clergy and the penetration of Christian ideas within localities. Numerous objections and qualification have been proposed by commentators (e.g. Boddington 1990, Samson 1999a, Hadley 2000). Yet the final phase model is so established in archaeological writing that it is still essential to emphasise just how dubious are the assumptions upon which it is based and thus how misleading are the conclusions that may be drawn from it. Sloppy scholarship still insists on describing east-west oriented cemeteries, or cemeteries with few grave-goods as Christian in spite of the obvious objections.

Let us look firstly at the relationship between burial and the Church.

It is assumed that the Church is a relatively coherent power bloc, with a consistent programme of ritual and the means to coerce or convince the population to adopt these uniform liturgical practices. Yet a single glance at what we know of

the early Medieval Church reminds us that this assumption is naïvely anachronistic. As we shall see, local variation is the only norm which can be taken for granted in early Medieval Christianity

Bede's text reveals clearly the very active, and at times divisive, negotiations on how best to be a Christian in the seventh and eighth centuries in England. Bede is clear that not everyone who called himself or herself a Christian really knew what that meant. The most obvious contrast in styles of Christianity comes from the set piece debate at the Synod of Whitby, where the Celtic party were required to defer to the Roman party (HE III.25). Whitby reveals that Bede had quite clear ideas about how to be a Christian, ideas that were not necessarily shared by others within the Church. This disagreement was not contained within the vastly over-emphasised Easter debate, but can be traced in a variety of different phenomena. For example, the British bishops were less than impressed with Augustine's exploits at their conference at St. Augustine's Oak (HE II.2). The nature of the tonsure worn by monks and their relationship to bishops were open to dispute. The Frankish bishop Agilbert was dismissed, not for any failing in matters of religion, but because he was unintelligible to his Wessex audience (HE III.7). Wilfrid and Theodore fell out with each other repeatedly about the nature and extent of the northern dioceses, while Hadrian was appointed to make sure that Theodore did not introduce any unfamiliar Greek elements into English practice (HE IV.1). A cantor was brought to the monastery at Monkwearmouth to teach the monks there to sing properly, emphasising the monastery's links with St. Peter's in Rome (HE IV.18). Other issues that concerned the orderly running of the Church in England included the right of bishops over their own dioceses and clergy, and the nature of divorce between married couples (HE IV.5). The English bishops were outspoken in their condemnation of various heresies, including those of Eudoxius, Macedonius, Eutyches, Nestorius, Arius, Theodorus, Theodore and Ibas (HE IV.17). In a different source, Bede revealed his concerns about the state of monastic institutions that were run for profit, not for sanctity.

Even a cursory read of Bede's Ecclesiastical History reveals that Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England, even in its so-called Golden Age, was subject to considerable local variation.

It would be a mistake to think that these negotiations were confined to the mission fields of England. The letters of Gregory the Great reveal that liturgy was

devised locally as appropriate. Gregory described the Church as a “*concors membrorum diversitas*” a congregation of diverse members in which each local community constituted a church in its own right. These communities were free to develop local liturgies. Thus, for example, there was no consensus on the appropriate rite of baptism in Spain. Gregory’s letter to Leander of Seville specifically recommended that he vary from established practice at Rome, for very local reasons. More famously, he instructed Augustine to develop the liturgies which he thought would be most appropriate for Anglo-Saxon England, partly by drawing on Roman or Frankish practices, and partly through innovation. Nor should one get the anachronistic impression that the supremacy of Rome unified the Church — quite the opposite. Claims of supremacy, such as those that emanated from Constantinople, tended to divide opinion in the first millennium. Later in the seventh century, the Archbishop of Ravenna split from Rome entirely, declaring that his dioceses were autocephalous. In the sixth century, the patriarch of Carthage excommunicated the bishops of Rome. Fourteen hundred years of history make it difficult to imagine such diversity in the Catholic world: a world in which authoritative figures at the very top of the clerical ladder could say without irony that the pope was not a Catholic.

It is wrong to assume that the Church had a programme for burial as is implied by the final phase model, since the Church and its liturgy did not cohere in the way it presupposes. We cannot assume a direct correlation between ritual and belief (Bullough 1983, Halsall 1998).

Were there therefore any localised attempts to manipulate burial rites? The answer to this is equally clear. At no time did anyone in the Anglo-Saxon church make an authoritative statement about orthodox modes of burial. At no time were grave goods banned; at no time were cremations prohibited; at no time was supine burial recommended; neither were pagan burial grounds prohibited; neither were secondary burials. Any model which is based upon the assumption that they did is misleading.

There are early statements of the Church in the West regarding funeral liturgy, including various statements by Caesarius of Arles on matters pertaining to viaticum, the forgiveness of sins and the treatment of the dying (Paxton 1990:48-69; Forshaw 1976 54). There is no evidence from England to which we can appeal that compares to these sources. Indeed, caught between the apparently differing

traditions of Irish, Frankish and Roman clergy, we should expect the situation in England to be altogether more muddled. The earliest systematic approaches to the treatment of the dead are to be found in Carolingian texts that prohibit cremation rites. These derive from Carolingian attempts to model Frankish society in Christian terms, and belong to the late eighth and early ninth century, during the very bitter and aggressive Christianisation of the Saxons (Paxton 1990, especially 92-161). Such prohibitions are irrelevant in the case of Anglo-Saxon England. That the Church was reticent on such matters does not mean that the Church was not concerned with such matters, or was unable to declare its will. The Church was very concerned with the saving of souls, and was certainly able to raise matters such as baptism and the theft of ecclesiastical property and other matters. It may be argued that this reticence is another example of the lack of evidence: that statements were made that are now lost. Such an argument seems improbable, though, since the Church retained its reticence on burial, even when the Laws of Aethelberht expressly dealt with the payment of wergild “*at the open grave*” (Whitelock 1979 392).

Rather like the wearing of trousers (Mayr-Harting 1994 21) or the use of magic potions for reasons of health (Jolly 1985 *passim*), there is simply no evidence that the Church was concerned with the disposal of the dead in the seventh and early eighth century. The burial of the dead was a thoroughly secular matter to which a secular response was sought.

In fact, the archaeological record provides at least one, albeit unusual, case study where the Church — and some of the highest officials within the Church at that — acted in direct and flagrant contravention to the guidelines which it is alleged to have promulgated. The very wealthy burial of the very poor St. Cuthbert is the clearest, if perhaps anomalous example of this. Others, such as the unholy tussle over St. Martin of Tours; the audacious theft of the diffident Bede; and numerous examples of similar wealthy clerical burials on the mainland should alert us, and remind us that, even if such guidelines did exist, they could be broken, even by senior clergy.

It is instructive to consider that numerous other phenomena may inform the creation of a cemetery. Archaeologists have pointed out the inadequacy of assuming that a burial rite should pertain to one discourse alone. For example, Faull is quite clear that the changes at Sancton are more representative of a change

in the nature of the settlement that used the cemetery, from a large dispersed settlement to a small nucleated one (Faull 1976 232). Boddington is clear that the changes which he detects in the archaeological record through statistical analyses are likely to have a number of sources. Others have concentrated on the various different types of identity that are, or at times may be, articulated through the medium of cemetery ritual. Gender (Pader 1982), age (Huggett 1996, Dickinson 1993 38-39), social status (Alcock 1981, Arnold 1982a), ethnicity (Chadwick 1924), land tenure (Shephard 1979) and kin group have all been proposed as alternative explanations for the variability in individual graves or cemeteries. Geake avoids the obvious trap of attempting to ascribe the changes she described to any one simple factor, arguing instead for a broad cultural movement (Geake 1997). Economic factors have also been proposed as alternative contexts for the distribution of grave-goods at a much larger scale (Huggett 1986). The combination of such factors have also been proposed, though the challenge of isolating one or other aspect has not been met with any concerted effort.

The isolation of one or other aspect of social discourse through the macroscopic analysis of minor variation in typology presents questions that archaeologists cannot hope to resolve. The inherent ambiguity of material culture derives not so much from reticence as from volume: that any given symbol can have numerous — more correctly infinite — meanings (Hodder 1982a 1982b, 1989). Archaeologists are thus wary of presuming that one or other aspect of material culture, taken in isolation, can be mobilised to present any particular abstract meaning without first providing a supportable context, derived either from historical sources or from carefully considered analogy. The purpose of this critique of cemetery archaeology is to show that the mapping of Christian or pagan cemeteries has not resolved, nor can it ever resolve independently, even the most basic issues of religious conversion.

The desertion of cemetery studies reduces our ability to address the entirety of the population through one data set. The search for other forms of evidence within the archaeological record also reduces the comparability of the data set, since the mundane function of other structures is not always as transparent. There is no reason to suppose that the various churchyards, chapels, crosses and ecclesiastical enclosures of the same period performed the same function in various parts of the country. In fact, as we shall see below, there are historical grounds for believing that contemporaries deliberated on the ambiguity of the word *monasterium* (Foot

1992), while the precise clerical rôle of the monks who inhabited them were also matters of dispute. There was clear uncertainty about the rôle of the bishop, and his relationship to the metropolitan. Indeed the power and precedence of the various dioceses, diocesans and metropolitans of Britain remained unresolved until the elevation of Glasgow as an archdiocese in 1492, a generation before the Reformation transformed the whole structure again. Yet, these obvious discontinuities in the data set are a strength rather than a weakness, since they focus the mind upon a contextualised appreciation of the material. We are thus forced to consider the evidence at the human scale of a locale and its inhabitants rather than at the scale of, for example, nineteenth-century municipal corporations, or the early modern state.

2.4.2 The archaeology of churches

It has long been recognised that many of the local country churches of England contain fragments of much earlier churches, while some of the bigger cathedrals and monastery churches have retained long associations with Anglo-Saxon founders, both real and fanciful. Thus, for example St Swithun's shrine at Winchester was venerated throughout the Middle Ages, even though the Anglo-Saxon foundations have only come to light and been understood in the last thirty years (e.g. Biddle 1970). The extant architecture of these churches has been the subject of considerable study over the last hundred years, with significant publications including Harold and Joan Taylor's three volume study of every identifiable extant Anglo-Saxon building, Sir Alfred Clapham's study of the Romanesque architecture of English parish churches before the Norman Conquest, and Baldwin Brown's compendious study of Anglo-Saxon architecture (Taylor and Taylor 1965-78, Clapham 1930, Baldwin-Brown 1925). That these buildings invariably happened to be churches means that this corpus is surprisingly uniform in functional terms, allowing for minute studies of variation in form and ornamentation.

The architectural, archaeological and artistic analyses of these buildings represented in these and other studies have been dominated by matters of empirical concern. They can be characterised as an attempt to establish a master narrative for slowly evolving (and inevitably improving) architecture, largely independent of the development of Christianity per se. Thus, for example, the excavation report on the Anglo-Saxon Minster at Brixworth uses a battery of techniques to arrive at the remarkably sparse conclusion that the minster was

probably built in the mid-eighth century, and that the various elements of the church were probably contemporary (Audouy 1984). This is a phenomenon repeated over and over in the literature on church archaeology and architecture in which the lived experience of the individual agent is abandoned in favour of style and form, even though these material concerns should provide a key to access that lived experience (e.g. Rodwell 1977 47, 52, 58, Fawcett 1996, Tatton-Brown 1996, Blair 1996a).

Where the topic of religion is introduced, it is normally handled disingenuously. For example, a brief excavation report from the church of St. Botolph at Iken, identified tentatively as the minster of Icanho mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 654 (Cramp, Scarfe and West 1984). The paper presents an excavation report from a known Norman church, showing an earlier set of foundations associated with a spread of Middle Saxon Ipswich ware, suggesting an early occupation of the site. Thus, the site heralds the “*coming of East-Anglian Christianity*”. Yet, the report fails to demonstrate any direct connection between the earliest levels and Christian practice, save the Norman associations and an assumed long-term occupation. The claim of survival from the seventh or eighth centuries is undermined by its absence from the Domesday Book for Suffolk. While a fragmentary cross shaft is discussed, it is not explained how this fragment came to be built into the wall of the church: its presence or manufacture on site is assumed. More significantly, no attempt is made to articulate from this one particular location to the East Anglian kingdom, whose Christianity it supposedly heralds. Nor is any attempt made to investigate or conjecture the mechanisms by which a building like this would be interpreted by the pagan or recently converted population. It is the failure to reconcile archaeology with human agency that is critical. Put simply, there is infinitely more to Christianity and conversion than the adoption of architectural conventions.

It is unfair to be overly critical of such analyses, however, since they derive from a determined effort on the part of the archaeological profession to liberate ecclesiastical matters from unsystematic antiquarianism. As Richard Morris points out, church archaeology has only recently become a serious pursuit. In such circumstances, the collection and appraisal of empirical evidence is a necessary precondition of more sophisticated analyses (Morris 1996).

These earlier, narrative-oriented traditions have given way recently to more systematic attempts to reconcile discrete locations and events with broader social, political, economic and religious processes. The origin of such studies may be traced in part to Ian Wood's work on the audience of architecture in early Medieval Gaul (Wood 1986). He suggested that the architecture of Merovingian churches was not only ornate, but disguised a deal of esoteric knowledge that would only be available to a very select few — the architects and their literate patrons — a programme which extended to include the dedications as well. Richard Gem has recently written of the need to interrogate church archaeology with broader aims in mind, such as: the relationship between clergy and populace; patterns of trade or exchange represented through the acquisition and deployment of elite resources; the use of labour and so on (Gem 1996 2). Beth Bartley has approached this topic directly in an intensive analysis of St. Andrews in Hexham (Bartley 1996). In this study she attempts a critical reconstruction of the building with its surviving crypt. With this reconstruction, she investigates the architectural knowledge that was available to the builders, the origins of the theoretical insight that this required, and the proposed religious schema to which they adhered. Significantly, however, this is developed with a carefully considered analysis of the social context of construction and consumption, with an eye to the spatial organisation of liturgical practices, the cult of the saints, and the symbolic form of the building. It is a detailed model for the type of analysis for which Gem calls.

Thus, while architectural studies of churches and cathedrals have revealed the Anglo-Saxon origins of many Medieval churches, little effort has been made to articulate between the stylistic and functional aspects of these buildings and the social or religious purposes for which they were designed and mobilised. Until this is undertaken at a more determined pace, Anglo-Saxon churches will remain “a wasting asset” (*pace* Rodwell 1977). Yet even if this were to be achieved, significant problems would remain unanswered.

As we have already seen, Early Medieval ritual defies simple classification. Local variation has been presented as the norm rather than the exception. This presupposes that liturgies such as the sacraments or baptism may have been pursued away from the confines of normal worship, and thus encompassed entire landscapes, or discrete unidentifiable localities. The discovery of a temporary portable altar among the grave-goods associated with St. Cuthbert confirms this view. Thus, absence of church buildings need not be interpreted as the lack of

active ministry. Nor for that matter should buildings be taken as symbolic of the acceptance of the Christian message. The key issue is not so much the presence of a church, or the scale of its endowment, both of which are evidence of patronage, so much as the attendance and the impact of attendance on daily life. Neither of these can be ascertained through an investigation of the archaeology of church buildings.

2.4.3 the archaeology of pastoral care.

The problems of cemetery archaeology and the need to link the architectural contexts of liturgy to the wider countryside have been recognised. The most coherent, and most successful, attempt to circumvent these criticism is represented by the multi-disciplinary study of pastoral care, most obvious in the study of the minster churches of England.

Patrick Hase, for example, has investigated the extant historical documents for Hampshire. With considerable assistance from historical geography and archaeology, he has mapped out the extent of the “Mother Churches” of Hampshire (Hase 1975). The mother churches investigated by Hase and the privileges they enjoyed do not emerge clearly in the historical record until the late ninth century at the earliest, and often not until considerably later, so the origin of the minster system cannot be taken for granted. Blair associates the earliest foundations with the seventh century, and thus the earliest churches in many neighbourhoods, assuming the title of mother church once new churches were established in the parochia. In this the minster system was probably much closer to decentralised, less clearly diocesan structure apparent from Ireland and the West of Britain (Blair 1996b 6).

The investigation of these mother churches and the relationship of ecclesiastical foundations to political institutions is an important step, since it encourages us to think of the impact of the clergy within a broader social, economic and political milieu than is possible with the investigation of ritual space alone (Blair and Sharpe 1992). Blair reminds us that the community populating a minster church may be well in excess of any other concentration of population, and thus would be an important element in the development of the towns of the High Middle Ages (Blair 1996b 9-10). By implication, therefore, they are important economic entities as well as religious institutions. In this way, it is possible to specify some of the

mechanisms by which the population was drawn into a particular form of relationship with the Church.

The relationship between the mother churches identified by Hase and the *parochia* they served was characteristically liturgical. The mother church could also act as a buffer between local interests and the interests of the diocesan ordinary, regulating the appointment of clergy, the foundation of new parishes and the payment of fees to the cathedral for chrism. More importantly, the relationship between clergy and laity, while normally approached in pastoral terms, need not necessarily have been based on any ritual practice. As noted above, the minster church could have had economic influence locally, as both a consumer and landowner. Thus, aspects of Christian practice, and the affairs of the church may have encroached upon the quotidian life of those who were not necessarily well placed geographically or socially to participate in the rituals of the cemetery or the church building. The remainder of this thesis will evaluate one particular facet of that relationship, demonstrating how certain of the taken for granted values of the religious elite came to be established beyond the confines of the religious world.

2.5 on previous work: summary and reflection

In short, therefore, while there has been considerable interest in the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England by scholars in many diverse fields, there remain a variety of problems with how it has been understood. Problems pertaining to the supposed migration of the Anglo-Saxon provide a back drop to any study. In particular, though, there are deep-seated problems with the construction of the analytical categories of “Christian” and “pagan”, since these have primarily been based on unstable assumptions of uniformities in ritual activity, particular in terms of funerary practices. In the case of paganism, there are no grounds for supposing that such uniformity ever existed, while the historical evidence for Christianity demonstrates considerable variability in practice. These historical sources are themselves problematic, only revealing a small portion of the whole picture, and even that is subject to well-founded scepticism. The processual approach implicit in the analytical term “Christianisation” has also been found wanting.

In order to proceed with an archaeology of the impact of the clergy, therefore, two elements need to be established. Firstly, it is clear that the subject would

benefit from a more perceptive insight into the topic of conversion, in particular where that affects large numbers of a population. Secondly, and related, the analytical categories implicit in the term conversion need to be re-evaluated. The former will be the subject of the next chapter, where religious phenomena and religious conversion in particular will be highlighted. It will be noted that the social sciences have significant problems with this issue, and cannot be expected to resolve their own predicament. The latter will be explored in the subsequent chapter, where an alternative scheme will be devised in the light of literacy practices.

Chapter 3

ON RELIGIOUS CONVERSION — AN ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA

The problems outlined in the previous chapter derive, in part from problems with sources. Not only are they lacking, the questions asked have subtly pre-determined their conclusions. This chapter will take a step back from the specific case to investigate the topic more generally, identifying what sorts of questions can realistically be answered given the nature of the evidence.

We start with an investigation into attitudes towards religious phenomena in the social sciences. The conclusions of this critique will have immediate implications for Anglo-Saxon England, suggesting that certain approaches are unsustainable, or at least more complicated than recognised hitherto. We then look at religious conversion in particular, investigating the rôle of the autonomous individual and the properties of rationality and charisma, a psycho-social phenomenon associated with religious conversion. This shall open a broader critique of the study of conversion. The interpretative weaknesses of the historical and archaeological records are revealed as relatively trivial when set against the hermeneutic predicament of subject and object. A number of brief case studies elucidate the problem. Finally we observe non-linguistic aspects of missionary work from the recent past. These observations do not pre-suppose uniformities in ritual – such as assumptions about cemeteries – or an artificially homogenised indigenous culture. Nor do they depend upon the writings of “colonists”. Instead, the missionary encounter is viewed as a dialogue between two equals, in which resistance and conflict were channelled in some unlikely directions. This case study invites a re-evaluation of the trends of resistance and conflict in the coming of Christianity to of Anglo-Saxon England.

This analysis should be viewed in the context of a distinct anthropological turn in Medieval studies. The earliest indication of what was to follow can be found in the preface to Henry Mayr-Harting’s *Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (Mayr-Harting 1991 6-7). Though not stated explicitly, the attraction of anthropology is the ability to enhance the rather sparse historical sources with comparative studies of that which may have taken place beyond the historical gaze, for example among the ordinary people. Others have stated that attraction more

categorically. Markus pondered the depths of the rain forests in his study of Late Antiquity, while Cusack drew explicitly from conversion studies to develop a general theory of conversion (Markus 1990, Cusack 1996, 1998). Paxton and Lynch also recommended anthropological explorations in their studies of mortality rituals and baptism in early Medieval Europe (Paxton 1990, Lynch 1998). Prehistoric archaeology has long enjoyed a closer relationship to anthropology than historical enquiry. This influence can be detected clearly in the work of diverse commentators on Anglo-Saxon England, including Richard Hodges (1989a, 1989b), Chris Arnold (1982a) and John Hines (1992), though these may be exceptions in the field.

These mirror broader movements in history and archaeology generally. Evans-Pritchard suggested that the two disciplines were sides of the same coin (Evans-Pritchard 1950). Levi-Strauss put this in a nutshell when he suggested that:

Both history and ethnography are concerned with societies other than the one in which we live. Whether this otherness is due to remoteness in time or to remoteness in space, or even cultural heterogeneity is of secondary importance compared to the basic similarity of perspective (Levi-Strauss 1963 16).

Among historians, writers such as Thompson (1978), Darnton (1985), and Lowenthal (1985) have suggested that history and anthropology are part of the same project.

The strength of anthropologically informed study does not simply extend to that which is otherwise invisible. Perhaps more significant is the elucidation of otherwise invisible dispositions of history. Many of the criticisms of the previous pages have their origin in the historical and archaeological tendency to be content with functionalist accounts of religion, a tendency that discloses mechanistic accounts of culture in society. Critique of that tendency began in Chapter Two with the historical sources that are used as the empirical basis of the analysis. In this chapter, the argument is opened wider to demonstrate the implied inconsistencies that stem from such undisclosed theoretical propensities.

3.1 the anthropology of religious phenomena

Three principal schools of thought on the nature of religious phenomena are presented here: intellectualist and functionalist accounts, and phenomenological

objections to them. There are, of course, numerous theories and arguments pertaining to the analysis of religion. Some of these, like Marx and Freud, constitute religion as representations of other phenomena, such as class struggle or the psyche (Hamilton 1995 80-87). Mann argued that religion, as a subset of ideology, is a means of achieving social power (Mann 1986 1-30). These theories are mutually exclusive, but each may draw upon functionalism or intellectualism as appropriate. Thus, for example, it is possible to reconcile a Marxist approach with both functionalism and intellectualism. Marxism does not in itself present a challenge to the theories of religion developed in sociology and anthropology. Phenomenology, however, presents a much more critical stance, and cannot be reconciled easily. Other theories exist which need not trouble us here (Stark 1981, Bainbridge and Stark 1979, Stark and Bainbridge 1980, Bainbridge and Jackson 1981, Wallis and Bruce 1985).

3.1.1 religion as a technology to understand the world: intellectualism

In the 1960's various anthropologists, dissatisfied with established accounts of religion, turned back to earlier generations of writers like Tylor, Spencer and Frazer in order to inject new insights into their studies. Their rejection of the dominant thesis – functionalism – was based on a number of factors. Firstly, there was a tendency for functionalist accounts of religion to be *reductionist*, claiming that ritual was simply designed to replicate society (Bloch 1986 6-7, Hamilton 1995). Secondly, these approaches tended to disregard any native exegesis of religious practice as irrelevant elaboration disguising social function, unless of course they supported the broad thrust of the argument (Quinlan 1993 11). Thirdly, functionalist perceptions of religion tend to ascribe to religion a normative value. Religion, of course, can be a cause of conflict as well as cohesion between and among interest groups, while class groups often have differential access to the exegeses of rituals.

Instead, the alternative approach, dubbed *intellectualist*, presented religion as a cosmology whose basic explanatory category is personal agency. Human or superhuman entities transform the perceptible world, and can thus be invoked to explain the occurrence of any circumstance. This gives humans a means of influencing the social and physical world by providing technologies for negotiating with the supernatural (Skorupski 1976:2). Intellectualists argued that participants perform religious or magical rituals because they believe them to be instrumental.

Thus, religion or magic are distinguished from other instrumental technologies or social institutions by reference to supernatural forces (Spiro 1966:98). In other words, religious phenomena are distinguished from science by differing ontologies and theories of causation rather than tests of empirical validity. It is on the relationship between science and religion that functionalist and intellectualist understandings of religion diverge most notably. For the functionalist, religion and rituals associated with it are of a different order from scientific enquiry and methodology. If it could be demonstrated unequivocally that religion is not concerned with explaining or controlling the natural world, and was only concerned with manipulating the social, then the claims of intellectualism would be nullified.

Robin Horton has attempted to shift the debate away from grand definitional statements that include or preclude different issues simply by definition, arguing that

we can point to no single ontological or epistemological category which accommodates all religious entities. (Horton 1960 205)

Instead of grand definitions, Horton attempted to fix discussions on the nature of activity:

in every situation commonly labelled religious we are dealing with action directed towards objects which are believed to respond in terms of certain categories — in our own culture, those of purpose, intelligence and emotion — which are also distinctive categories of human action ... The relationships between human beings and religious objects can be further defined as governed by certain ideas of patterning such as categorise relationships among human beings ... In short, religion can be looked upon as an extension of the field of people's social relationships beyond the confines of purely human society. And for completeness's sake, we should add the rider that this extension must be one in which the human beings involved see themselves in a dependent position vis-à-vis their non human alters — a qualification necessary to exclude pets from the pantheon of Gods. (Horton 1960 211)

This makes no reference to the social ramifications of religion, concentrating instead on the instrumental acts that seek to influence the physical world. To that extent, the critique offered by Horton and others of functionalism more generally is

relevant to the dominant view of the expansion of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England, so it is worth investigating the critique further.

Horton's analysis of African religions, argues that they are like — though not the same as — western science. He has stressed the continuities that exist between the two: both seek to understand the physical world; both seek to generalise, predict and control forces outwith the realms of experience; both are reduced to a limited number of general principles that are shared by theorists (Morris 1987 204). Horton does not intend to argue that religion is a form of science or vice versa (Horton 1970 131, 140), but that both share the same concern with explanation, and are thus similar kinds of activities. The differences between them consist of the kind of processes and entities which they postulate to be responsible for the state of the world. In addition to the ontological difference, he argues that modern and traditional programmes utilise different means to resolve conflict. Firstly, there is a dearth of inter-theoretic competition in Africa compared to a valorising of such competition in the West. Secondly, absolute acceptance of established theoretical tenets is encouraged, as a threat to these tenets is a threat to society (Horton 1982 227).

Horton's view of traditional and modern societies has been much criticised. Kuhn, for example, has demonstrated that scientists tend to cling to favoured paradigms long after counter evidence has disproved the paradigm to which they conform (Kuhn 1962). Feyerabend has shown that scientists rely more upon primacy of construction than evidence to decide between theories (Feyerabend 1975). Barnes has taken this further, arguing that none of the criteria used to distinguish between science and non-science actually succeed, since they tend to favour science as “natural” thought, against the flawed thinking of non-science (Barnes 1974).

The claims and implications of Kuhn and Feyerabend in themselves do not necessarily threaten Horton's argument that science and religion are different, even if they both share the same concern with explanation. They simply provide evidence for bad practice among the scientific community. Such a deconstruction would probably be ruled out of order in the realm of religion where the gap between what people claim to do and what they actually do is taken for granted. Barnes's claim that science and religion are in fact direct equivalents is a more complicated one that leads us directly into the philosophy of science. His claims

are complicated and would require an extensive and somewhat prolix detour into epistemology, a detour that cannot be followed here. His position stands or falls on his claim that science has no unique methodology, and whether or not it offers a new or different view of the world from religion. The problem with magic and religion in general, though, is not why they exist, or what their methodology is, so much as why do they persist, if science can be seen to be instrumentally more effective at manipulating the physical world. This question cannot be addressed given Barnes's position.

Skorupski has dealt more directly with Horton's argument that traditional societies, for which we might as well read Anglo-Saxon England as Africa, are incapable of generating alternative theories of knowledge (Skorupski 1973a, 1973b, 1976). He claims that, while they do not seem capable of generating alternatives explicitly, they are still able to conceive them independently. New ideas do not simply supplant old ones, but tend to be incorporated alongside them. Rather than being like western science, he concludes, traditional religion is more like western religion. Horton has tackled Skorupski's challenge directly (Horton 1973). He contends that the tolerance of paradoxes is not unique to traditional religion, nor does science lack such tolerance. Western religion, however, is quite different in that, while unhappy with contradiction, it does allow some movement by introducing the concept of mystery: that which cannot be explained by human reason. In this sense western religion is quite unlike traditional African thought or modern science. Thus, Horton argues, the parallel between magic and science remains valid.

It would be possible to examine the debate in greater detail, but the point to carry forward to our Anglo-Saxon case study is that a significant body of anthropological opinion favours the view that religion is a technology for understanding the world. This is obviously at odds with the position adopted by Higham and others who suggest social reproduction exclusively is the domain of religion (Higham 1997). Moreover, this body of anthropological opinion has developed a parallel analysis on why religious institutions change and develop. This is of immediate importance to the Anglo-Saxon case study, since it delineates in theory the blue-print for an alternative understanding of religious change in Anglo-Saxon England.

3.1.2 religion as a mechanism for social reproduction: functionalism

The conventional view of archaeologists and historians on Anglo-Saxon England is more consistent with an alternative approach proposed by those who would base their analyses of religion upon its material external effects rather than its internal claims to knowledge. This is the functionalist or symbolic approach to religion, epitomised by the work of French anthropologist and intellectual Émile Durkheim.

For Durkheim, all religions were equally valid, and drew their strength and explanatory force from their social functions. His work starts with a basic distinction between the sacred and the profane (Durkheim 1926 37). Fundamental to the effective social working of religion was the performance of ritual, which symbolically iterated collective realities. For this to be effective, Durkheim proposed that religion was necessarily a shared theorisation of the world:

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things ... things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them. (Durkheim 1926 44)

The collective sense of ritual distinguishes it from magic: *“the magician has a clientèle and not a church”* (Durkheim 1926 44). Goody has pointed out that this definition confuses or merges the public and social domains, since the properties Durkheim assigned to religion may just as well be extended to non-religious ceremonial (Goody 1961 146-7). Indeed, but for the dichotomy between sacred and profane, Durkheim’s definition of religion might well be extended to include Marxism, or the support of a football team (Hamilton 1995 17, Scharf 1970 33). The latter is instructive, since Stalinist Marxism would claim to be established in opposition to religion.

Characteristic of the functionalist account is a disparity between the exegeses of believers and the commentary of the analyst. It is also one of the reasons that intellectualists returned to the work of Tylor and Frazer. This *“back to Frazer”* movement was considered by some to be a regressive step, with racist overtones. By comparing science and religion, intellectualists were supposedly imputing ignorance to those whose instrumental acts failed to produce the desired end (Beattie 1966 63, Leach 1967 41). This also seems to assert the superiority of

western science and the failure of primitive theoretic discourses to allow sufficient competition.

This charge can be seen to have no substantial grounds. As Quinlan observes, on this premise all Europeans ignorant of particle physics are irrational since we cannot account for the causes of events in the particle physics of nuclear power stations (Quinlan 1993 9-10). The charge of colonialism can be levelled at those who made it. The likes of Spencer and Tylor seem less guilty than many functionalist commentators. These Victorian sociologists claimed an essential, universal rationality for humanity, founded in the intellectual equality of the human race. They implied no substantial difference between the analytical capacity of the western academic and that of the non-academic in traditional society. In comparison, the functionalist approach to religion presumes to argue that cultural belief does not mean what it purports to mean and even if it does, the “natives” do not believe what it says in any case (Spiro 1968 243).

Also open to criticism is Durkheim's notion that the sacred and the profane can always be clearly defined. Leach has attempted to elaborate this dichotomy, arguing that the demarcation is not rigid, but continuous, with the majority falling somewhere between the two poles (Leach 1954 12-18). Durkheim's account of religion has also been criticised for its emphases on the trans-generational transmission of cultural values, which tend to be conservative (Nisbet 1952 174-5). Of course, religion can be concerned with ideology, and the negotiation of relationships of dominance and subordinacy (Giddens 1978). But this point is not made explicit in Durkheim's theory, since it allows religion to act as a form of false consciousness. Durkheim is ambiguous in his use of the term “represent” when he argues that religion symbolically represents society, since it could be used to imply that religion represents the social order directly (Lukes 1973 465). This leaves the door open to religion both to represent and misrepresent the social order. Thus, for an Anglo-Saxon case study, religious phenomena may disclose the real imbalances of power relations as well as disguise them. One or other cannot be presumed.

In spite of these criticisms, sociologists have been attracted to Durkheim's account of the role of religion in society, not least because it was based upon active fieldwork. Authors such as Radcliffe-Brown (1952) have adopted a similar position in order to comprehend traditional beliefs. He has argued that society is a group of individuals held together in networks of social relationships sharing a common

value system. Religious belief, he argued, works to evince and reinforce a common consensus on such matters, without which society could not operate. The persistence of religious beliefs and practices, even though they fail to deliver their ostensive goals, is because religion is largely independent of the efficacy of its rites (Radcliffe-Brown 1952 140, 160). Spiro has shown that this position followed to its logical conclusion, becomes absurd (Spiro 1966). If a ritual's operational value were ever to be criticised or disbelieved, then, regardless of its failure, the rite would continue to be practised in order to bring about the necessary social function. This criticism may also be levelled at theorists who argue that these functions provide a sufficient and exhaustive account of religion and the persistence of religious practices (Spiro 1966 14).

Beattie has provided an alternative account of the role of ritual (Beattie 1966). He argues that ritual is conceived as the symbolic expression of cultural values, with its efficacy residing in its expressiveness. Thus, ritual is viewed as a mode of symbolic social communication which can, *inter alia*, symbolise social differentiation, define and maintain socially important categories, and transmit these categories cross-generationally (Beattie 1966 66-69; Leach 1968 524-6). This stance can be criticised on two grounds. Firstly, it simply gives ritual and religion a role in replicating society, but no role in the creation or production of the social order. In other words, it faces the same accusation of conservatism that Nisbet made of Durkheim (Nisbet 1952). Secondly, it assumes a simplistic correspondence between symbol and meaning. If, as Saussure argues, symbols lack meaning, and if ritual symbols lack the semantics and pragmatics that fix these meanings, then it cannot be assumed that participants actually comprehend the subtleties of any rite (Saussure 1960).

A further criticism of Durkheim and the functionalist account can be constructed from their theorisation of magic and non-operational ritual. Magic was excluded from Durkheim's theory since it is discrete rather than public. This disqualification is of central importance, since the operational rites and the instrumentality of magic form the core of the intellectualist account of religion. Beattie has argued that magic exists because the rites are symbolically appropriate rather than because the magician or the participants believe them to possess any causal effectiveness (Beattie 1964). A participant may regard a magical rite as a way of achieving certain desires, but this is not why he or she regards it as effective (Peel 1969 75). So, the question of whether or not such activities are effective

simply cannot arise. This construction of magic is circular. Beattie believes that, for practitioners of magic, to symbolise an end deceives them into thinking that the end has been achieved, or at least that the end is being brought about. The ideal connection with the real is taken to be a real causal connection — precisely the position that Beattie rejects at the outset (Hamilton 1995 35). So, in the case of Anglo-Saxon England, if it could be shown that any "magical" or associated ritual were thought to have operational value then the claims of functionalism — and through them Higham and others — are undermined.

Finally, the functionalist theory of religion fails to account for the historical origins of ritual and exegesis. It may well be possible to find a need for ritual and exegesis. However, it fails to explain the variety of techniques available for the symbolisation of social relations. An example of this failure can be traced in the work of Max Gluckman and his account of the Swazi Ncwala ceremonies (Gluckman 1963). Gluckman interprets this ceremony as a symbolic way of reinforcing social relationships. The ritual is ambivalent, but Gluckman argues that the effect is to remove stresses that prevent society from realising its aims (Gluckman 1963 125-126). Yet certain aspects of this ritual remain ambiguous. In some cases, far from being protests, the actions of the Ncwala may be considered a form of humour and public amusement — in many respects a more sophisticated and effective way of releasing tension than the symbolism of ritual. Secondly, Lincoln reminds us that the ceremony was specifically devised by one particular monarch who consciously reorganised the symbolism after political discontent led to a rebellion against the authority of the king (Lincoln 1987 137-138, Quinlan 1993). In both cases, Gluckman's mistake is to present the ritual as homoeostatic mechanisms manipulated to guarantee the continuing existence of a naturally occurring social organism.

It would be possible to examine this in greater detail too, but the point to carry forward to our Anglo-Saxon case study is that there is a substantial critique of the functionalist theories of religion. In particular there are problems with the exegesis of ritual, instrumentality in practice, agency in the production of ritual, the definition of sacred and profane, and the trans-generational transmission of values. Deployed wisely, it extends the critique of established wisdom on the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England, which favours the functionalist account.

3.1.3 religion as a phenomenon *sui generis*: phenomenology

A greater challenge to the sociology of religion comes from those who argue directly that religion is an inappropriate subject for any type of reductive analysis: that religion is what religion is, and cannot be understood in terms of sociological or anthropological principles. If religion is a *phenomenon sui generis*, then the sociology of religion is limited to the sympathetic description and interpretation of different belief systems. Eliade, for example, argues that we should not seek to understand religious phenomena by reducing them to sociological or psychological ones: the sacred is irreducible to any other kind of explanation (Eliade 1969). This claim is attractive, since knowledge obtained by religious means is often misconstrued in the social sciences. By way of comparison, no one would claim to understand chemistry from an entirely economic perspective, or biology through the psychology of the biologist. The approach is appealing to those who would argue, on theological grounds, for the primacy of theology over all forms of knowledge since it precludes sociological or psychological analysis from approaching articles of faith. For an Anglo-Saxon case study, it would imply that religious phenomena are beyond our knowledge, except in terms of a sympathetic reading of the historical sources.

Such radical anti-reductionism is vigorously opposed by social scientists (Cavanaugh 1982, Segal 1980, 1983, 1989). They defend the reductionist position of the social sciences, claiming that those who reject reductionism attribute to religion an ontological status that cannot be demonstrated. They argue that claims for the *sui generis* nature of religion constitute an attempt to restrict social sciences, caused by an anxiety to shield religious convictions against those who would claim that they can be explained in multiple, contrary and deprecatory fashions.

The challenge of phenomenology and the assertion of the appropriateness of reductionism are incommensurate, since they derive from quite different accounts of the nature of knowledge, and what can be known. Other manners of reconciliation have been attempted by those who argue that sociology presents an account of the sacred that is contingent, non-exhaustive and insufficient (Wiebe 1984, 1990, Pals 1986, 1987, 1990, Dawson 1988, 1990). Thus, alternative theories may exist simultaneously without necessarily being contradictory or challenging each other directly. Phenomenology is important, not just on its own merits, but because it has become a significant feature of archaeologists' own understanding of the past (e.g. Thomas 1996, Tilley 1994).

The resolution of this problem is essential before any progress can be made, since the phenomenological challenge could invalidate any archaeology of religion or religious phenomena, this one included. Thus, if we are to proceed to an archaeology that discusses religion in Anglo-Saxon England, we must find a way of reconciling it with the claims of phenomenology. This is not impossible, but necessitates a brief theological detour. In short, to suggest that the Christian tradition is antithetical to the social sciences is to embrace a deterministic theology. Such a position is more acidulously opposed to the theology of free will embedded within Christianity (or more precisely orthodox Early Medieval) than is found in even the most trenchantly atheistic social science. Perversely, the anti-reductionist stance of phenomenology is itself a reductionist position, since it assumes that religious theories cannot embrace other epistemological reconstructions of the past.

Within Christian thinking, free will and creativity are not the unique property of God, but are distributed throughout humanity. Following Ward (1992), we might argue that rather than intervening directly in human affairs, the social sciences are dependent upon the initial gift of free will and creativity, which are part of creation. The social sciences account for the expression of that creativity. Thus, arguments which look to psychological reasons for religious phenomena represent arguments about what is already given: the nature of psychology or individuality, which are in and of themselves the creation of the creation. Thus, God may stand behind as well as in front of the sociology and psychology of religion.

This is not the place to give an entire account of the history of theories of predestination and God's place in history. However, reflection upon such themes informs a modern reading of contemporary or near contemporary sources, providing release from phenomenological objections. Arguments about free will and creativity are not new to Christianity. In contemplating free will and creativity, we return to Bede's view of England. Concepts such as predestination and the degree to which God intervenes in human affairs were, and still are, at the core of significant disagreements in theology (Hogg 1824 *passim*). These arguments were familiar to the church of the early Middle Ages, since a debate not dissimilar to this one formed an important strand of thought in Late Antiquity. Pelagianism asked similar questions of the place of individual agency in history, developing a theology of grace and action that was rejected by St Augustine (Bonner 1992, 1993). St Augustine responded that actions were not enough to obtain salvation since God

alone could provide redemption, through his own freely willed grace. The argument that developed between Augustine and the various Pelagian authors drew together various themes concerned with free will and predestination.

It is clear from his pastoral writings that Bede knew more about this debate than simply its historical context. Apparently, Bede drew his thoughts on the origin and purpose of history more or less directly from Augustine, with one or two later additions (Bonner 1970). Accordingly, it is clear that Bede, for one, vested human beings with agency of their own — an agency that could lead them into sin and damnation as well as lead them to seek forgiveness for those sins. For Bede, predestination was not an issue (Bonner 1970 46).

This section has led us through some unfamiliar territory and has been cursory. In essence, competing theories need not do violence to the religious phenomena they describe. In fact, the claim of hermeneutic phenomenology is at odds with the free will that is attributed to humanity. So, finding other motives for human action is consistent with orthodox early Medieval theology, and need not imply reductionism.

The realisation that the sociology and anthropology of religion are not exhaustive represents a critical development in the study of religion, and one that is surely relevant to the study of archaeology and history, where accounts of religious phenomena are dependent upon incomplete descriptions of practices and beliefs. Furthermore, it nods in the direction of earlier intellectualist accounts of religion that tended to stress native exegeses. It also provides a significant parallel with recent developments in archaeology which have stressed the relationship of the knowledgeable agent within social reproduction, and the body as the only analytical point of origin appropriate to the study of space, landscape and architecture (e.g. Barrett 1994, Tilley 1994).

3.1.4 some concluding remarks on the sociology of religion

The various arguments presented above may seem to remove us from the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England, and the study of the coming of Christianity. Nonetheless, they provide a broad outline to the sorts of questions we can reasonably ask and the sorts of answers we can expect. Five guiding principles result.

- * ... competing theories not exclusive

Firstly, intellectualism and functionalism are not mutually exclusive. The statement of this principle is almost a cliché among the social sciences, although there seems to be little evidence of the two being brought together in a meaningful synthesis. If such a synthesis were to be attempted, it would have to take into account the phenomenological critique of knowledge and interpretation. It can be recognised that functionalism and intellectualism do different things with different levels of success, depending on the evidence available. Functionalism provides a model of the effects of religion upon society while intellectualism provides a theory of the relationship of the cognitive aspects that bring individuals to belief in any account of the nature of the physical world. That these analytical frameworks should diverge is not necessarily a weakness, and may even be termed a strength, since they provide the tools to ask different questions.

★ ... the failure of the functionalist social theory

However, this simple reconciliation is naive. The theory under-pinning functionalism involves an implicit denial of agency within the social structure. The key to such a criticism is the *reductio ad absurdum* made explicit in, for example, the work of Spiro, where he argues that any ritual will continue regardless of its operational failure in order to service the needs of the independently self-replicating social system (Spiro 1966). This criticism has been elaborated more generally, more expressively and more influentially by other authors, including Marshall Sahlins (1985), Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Anthony Giddens (1984). Sahlins attempted to account for the reasons why events happen in history, and posited an analytical structure to mediate between process and event, which he termed the *situational synthesis* of action (Sahlins 1985). Bourdieu's work has been much more influential in archaeological writings, drawing a similar conclusion about the need to interpose a third analytical category transcending the usual antinomies of condition and creativity. Bourdieu defines the term *habitus*:

systems of durable transposable dispositions, structured structures
predisposed to function as structuring structures (Bourdieu 1990 55)

Anthony Giddens has outlined a theory of what he terms *structuration*, which also attempts to reconcile the individual and the context of their existence. These theories are distinct, and it would be a disservice to suppose that they are equal. Yet each returns the ownership of action and categories to the individuals concerned, rather than the social system. The social system creates structures in which those actions may take place, actions that include the reconstruction of the

structures. For religion, this means that various exegeses are possible simultaneously within any context, the individual mediating between them directly. As the intellectualist position makes no appeal to social theory, changes in social theory do not undermine it in the same way as functionalism.

* ... the status of exegesis

A further critique of functionalism that does rebound on intellectualism is the status of exegesis. Functionalism has been accused of arrogance, claiming that the understanding of those who participate in the religion is less important than the analyst's perception. It therefore assumes that the western scientific methodology is always preferential when placed alongside the methodology of non-Western, non-scientific paradigms. An extension of this argument is that such accounts are irrational: that natives are incapable of rational thought. Given this failing, together with the debate about what may or may not be said about religion, there is a strong case for including exegesis in anthropological and archaeological accounts. This also undermines functionalism, rebounding positively upon intellectualism, which tends to include such explanation as a matter of course. Gellner, however, has pointed out that this desire to be generous to alternative cultures has had an unexpected effect upon the anthropology and sociology of religion: "*it enables us to attribute meaning to assertions which might otherwise be found to lack it*" (Gellner 1970 41). He points out that this may inadvertently lead to the misdescription or misconception of such cultures. It may obscure those aspects of change that are brought about through critique of contradictory or inadequate ideas. In other words, we must be prepared to accept the existence of dysfunctional or contradictory concepts; that exegesis is always already symbolic.

* ... the variety of experience

Fourthly, a critical understanding of religion must encompass the variety of religious experience. This is the point made by Hodder in a different context when he engages in an ethno-historical critique of Middle Range Theory (1986 107-120). He points out the difference between conditions of phenomena and their causes. This argument may be extended to functionalism. Why, if the social outcome is more important than the ostensive goal, are not all religions actually and practically alike? The functionalist account of religion cannot account for this variation.

This criticism may also be levelled at intellectualism. In most cultures, different groups have differential access to ritual and exegesis. Gellner reminds us that we

should avoid presuming that, because one or other action appears, superficially, to have no obvious reason or function, that supernatural entities may be invoked (Gellner 1970). Furthermore, Strecker has given one example of a society that managed ritual without any specialists in symbolic exegesis: the Hamar of Southern Ethiopia retain a “curious silence” when asked about the meaning of their symbols (Strecker 1988). Sperber has approached the question of exegesis from the analysis of ritual and symbolic acts, arguing that if symbols are always meaningful, their transcription should be easy. But this is simply not the case: very few, if any, societies can give a complete account of their entire symbolic, ritual or religious repertoire (Sperber 1975 20-21). In other words, symbols or rituals need not actually mean anything. This led Sperber to the surprisingly obvious position that:

... exegesis does not constitute the interpretation of the symbols but one of its extensions, and must be symbolically interpreted. (Sperber 1975 48)

In other words, exegesis itself needs to be accounted for as part of the “problem”. We should not presume that any account is exhaustive, and that each individual has a valid, if differently, situated account of the physical and social worlds. Accepting the personal negotiation of such accounts brings us close to the concepts of habitus, structuration and situational synthesis which have been described earlier.

* ... return to archaeology

Post-processual accounts of archaeology are consistent in their criticisms of structuralism and functionalism. Similarly, phenomenological approaches give primacy to the constantly changing experience of the agent rather than the archimedean view. The questions that would be posed in either of these types of analysis would attempt to provide a series of differentiated and, at times, dissonant views of religion rather than one single and comprehensive account. Intellectualism, by posing the question how people account for that which cannot be accounted for in other modes of thought, is more easily reconciled with such questions than functionalism. Intellectualism allows each individual to come to unique conclusions about the supernatural, rather than mechanically replicating the social order. Of course, covalence between theories is not, of itself, sufficient grounds for adopting either position, but does provide a good position to develop a critical, theoretical dialogue between them.

3.2 the anthropology of religious conversion

This thesis is not concerned with generalised accounts of religion, so much as with one particular aspect of religious behaviour in one specified historical context. The previous section has provided a working framework for these discussions, we now turn in detail to investigate the specific problems of understanding religious conversion and missionary work. Problems with Horton's work on religion will be presented in terms of the nature of rationality. This is a complicated issue, leading us to a psychoanalytical model of charisma that leans heavily on the insights of Max Weber. It will be argued that this is the necessary point of departure for an intellectualist account of the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England.

3.2.1 Horton on the rationality of conversion

Horton's anthropology of religion was concerned with the practice of religion in historically situated contexts. Conversion was a key component in the analysis he developed, discussing the conversion of traditional societies in Eastern Africa to Christianity and Islam (Horton 1971, 1975a, 1975b). In this, he argued that the indigenous context was as important as the missionary culture. Investigation of this context produced evidence of a diverse and dynamic microcosm that gave way to a macrocosm, a larger world populated by more remote and more powerful deities. The macrocosm displaced the lesser spirits of the microcosm, facilitating dialogue between the local populations and the missionaries, who were cast, and at times actively portrayed themselves, as the agents of the macrocosm. Conversion to Christianity or Islam was thus perfectly rational within the existing indigenous culture. The origins of conversion can thus be traced in the pre-colonial development of indigenous mythology. Indeed, as Horton famously put it, such changes were already "*in the air*". Monotheism was the direction of a vital cosmology, regardless of the ready-made theology offered by missionaries. The ultimate direction of that monotheism was guaranteed by secular and religious leaders and the timely colonialist context.

This account of conversion has not gone uncriticised (e.g. Ifeka-Moller 1974, Ikenga-Metuh 1987, Stevens 1991, Cusack 1998). Fisher notes that the concentration on indigenous contexts practically excluded the missionaries as agents of conversion, nor did it take account of specific historical conditions (Fisher 1985). This criticism is incisive, since it parallels the criticisms made of functionalism by Horton: the failure to account for specific forms and ideas in specific situations. Fisher caricatures Horton's account of conversion as a

“juggernaut” that could hardly be stopped and barely influenced. The root problem of the analysis is an abstract one. While Horton has developed a sophisticated theory of religion and of conversion that emphasises the place of “rationality”, the origin and context of that rationality is not disclosed. Thus, by failing to situate or embody rationality within a given social or interpersonal context, it escapes its substantivist origin and becomes its own antithesis: a depersonalised historical force in its own right, akin to economy, kin-groups, class relations or ideology – the building blocks of functionalist anthropology. The trick then is to understand the origin and context of the rationality described.

3.2.2 the autonomous religious practitioner

What, then, should we understand by the term “rationality”? The answer to this question is complicated.

Lewis Rambo, for example, has provided one possible solution, which relies very heavily on individualism, focusing on the process of personal conversion (Rambo 1993). This subtle realignment, dependent in part on a distinction between a macro-contexts and a micro-context, is appealing since it accommodates Horton and the intellectualist account, and the latitude of functionalist time. Moreover, his open-ended, almost modular analysis means that many different experiences of conversion can be entertained. Yet, certain components of the model are closed to all but the individual who is constructed in modernity in a social structure that fetishises the autonomy of the individual. The view that individualism is itself a construct of post-enlightenment thought conflicts with attempts to reproduce this model in the Middle Ages, a period prior to the invention of the socially constructed individual (Luckman 1967, Foucault 1975 197, Comaroff and Comaroff 1992 187-88, Haley 1978). The question thus arises concerning the limits of agency and individuality.

Psychoanalysis provides us with a possible solution to this dilemma. The existence of the self and the construction of the micro-context to which Rambo alludes are given facets of psychoanalytical theory, which concerns itself with the tension between ego, id and superego needs, and how these can be satisfied. Psychoanalysis claims a privileged historical perspective, derived from the assertion that the Ego is biologically constituted. Thus, for example Devereux argues that psychoanalytical theory provides universally valid laws from which we may draw (Devereux 1978 68). For Mithen, the analysis of the material and

biological condition of the human organism provides a very different assessment of the origins of human autonomy, through the study of evolutionary biology. His conclusion is that agency and Ego are the result of millennia-old trajectories of biological and evolutionary necessity (Mithen 1996). Both, therefore, would support the existence of the Ego in our Anglo-Saxon context.

There are also deeper philosophical and theological questions about the nature of the human condition pertinent here. A number of historical principles shed light on the issue. First is the concept of universal human rights. To limit the autonomy of the human agent within finite given historical circumstances is by extension to deny the universality of free action, and by extension the rights that guarantee that free action. Secondly, the claim of uniformitarianism presupposes that, for all its differences, the past retains certain qualities that can be recognised in the present. In particular, the physical properties of the past lie beyond the scope of historical deconstruction. In short, therefore, there is a finite reducibility to historical individuality that it is difficult and perhaps dangerous to transgress.

In the light of this claim, we are forced to consider not so much the existence of the individual in history, so much as the historically situated construction of the Ego. How was individuality articulated in this particular historical case? In the Anglo-Saxon context, the key to this is the pre-Christian negotiation of selfhood, since this is the context in which conversion may have taken place, what Horton would call the *indigenous microcosm*.

Needless to say, the sources are scant enough for England after 597, for which we are reliant upon either contemporary accounts from outside England, or non-contemporary accounts from within England. The prospects for understanding the construction of self in England before 597 are not good, since the majority of the evidence derives from complicated inhumation contexts (Huggett 1996). It may be possible to use the Christian sources as a benchmark, to investigate the dialogue between the pre-Christian world-view and the Christian one, differences revealing aspects of the pre-contact model of selfhood. This is, in part, the project undertaken by John Hines (Hines 1997). Yet even this thoughtful analysis cannot deliver much on the specific construction of the individual in what is essentially a pre-historic context. As things stand, therefore, we are left with the bare bones of an unhistorical Ego.

3.2.3 “world building rationality”

The problem remains of how to embody Horton’s rationality in a context where the sources are meagre. This was not a problem for Rambo who set his work in the present tense of unreconstructed individuality in a pluralistic, implicitly polytheistic context. An idea of what is theoretically possible has been provided by Robert Hefner, who has attempted the age-old social science conundrum of reconciling the individual and the social, following ideas first proposed by Max Weber (Hefner 1993). Weber’s approach revolves around the relationship between rationalisation, charisma, bureaucracy and prophecy.

Weber drew a distinction between “traditional” and “world” or “historical” religions. The former were dependent upon the role of the magician, while the latter were formed round a sustained dialogue on temporal and spiritual worlds (Weber 1946, 1956, Parsons 1963, Bendix 1977, Whimster and Lash 1987 6, Hefner 1993 8). Various scholars have drawn on this theory and the differences between traditional and world religions, giving rise to sequences of religious evolution (Bellah 1964). Of course, traditional religions are far from being universally passive in the light of political and social orders, nor are world religions necessarily antithetical to political or social orders (e.g. Burridge 1969, Ranger 1993). The important point to tease out, however, is what Weber terms *rationalisation*, the process by which individuals in the world religions question their social nexus, otherwise reinforced by traditional religions. Rationalisation enjoyed some currency in historical sociology, in religious studies and in cultural anthropology in the 60’s and 70’s, divested of the naive evolutionism from which it originally emerged (Geertz 1973 171-2, Hefner 1993 9-10).

There is dispute concerning the nature and causes of rationalisation, a disagreement that can be traced in Weber’s own work (Parsons 1963 xxix, Mommsen 1987, Hefner 1993 10-11). The process of rationalisation he argued was dependent upon specific and independent norms, in which political or economic interests collide with, or draw upon, the symbolic repertoire of religious thought, causing both to be re-invented or re-conceptualised. He outlined three manifestations of rationalisation. The first is the “... *struggle between various competing groups and prophecies for the control of the community*” (Weber 1956 68). This kind of struggle he sees as the result of “*intra-denominational*” contest. The second form of rationalisation is an internal one, caused by differential access to doctrine and clerical attempts to fight indifference on the part of the laity,

attempts which reveal both the material and symbolic interests of the clergy. The third form of rationalisation is brought about by attempts of cognate religious groups to distinguish themselves from one another, or from other rival groups, thus making transference of allegiance difficult. This form is contrasted with the first, and is termed by Hefner “*inter-denominational*” competition (Hefner 1993 11-12).

Rationalisation apart, Weber also emphasised a characteristic specific to the creation of religious doctrine that stands behind rationalisation and rationality. This is the creation of the set of motifs from which canon may subsequently come to be selected: the revelation that precedes any institutionalisation or elaboration. This revelation is not unique to the start of a religious movement *per se*. The mechanics of producing such new revelations or revivals, he argued, are more erratic and idiosyncratic than their subsequent rationalisation, involving the inspiration of charismatic and prophetic intellectuals who take upon themselves the task of articulating novel perspectives on an existing set of symbolic and cultural codes. This perceived inspiration, in turn, is dependent upon the ability of a religious leader to communicate such ideas or to induce fervour, even ecstasy, in his or her audience, and is thus in part dependent upon complicated and deeply embedded factors of group sociology and individual psychology. This is of quite a different order from the quasi-political faction-fighting that he argued was behind the three-fold process of rationalisation (Camic 1980).

Weber identified two “types” of charismatic individual, a microcosm of Weber’s distinction between world and traditional religions. The magician who acts to protect the social order and to replicate social and political relations in traditional society, and the prophet who speaks on the normative order, denouncing both social structures and traditional beliefs that benefit from it:

Prophetic revelation involves for both the prophet himself and his followers a unified view of the world derived from a consciously integrated and meaningful attitude to life. To the prophet, both the life of a man and the world, both social and cosmic events have a certain systematic and coherent meaning. To this meaning the conduct of mankind must be oriented if it is to bring salvation, for only in relation to this meaning does life obtain a unified and significant pattern. (Weber 1956 58)

The prophet is a charismatic intellectual who criticises the existing social order, combines this criticism with a radical re-negotiation or revival of a pre-existing symbolic code, and makes this a public statement, calling on others to change their lives in the same radical manner. At the heart of this message lies a transcendental tension between the world as it is, and the world as it ought to be. This point is central to Weber's disagreement with Marx and Durkheim about the role of socially-instituted ideas in history. In short, Weber argues, ideas can transform the world, especially when institutionalised (Hefner 1993 13).

It is this aspect of charismatic prophecy, and the creative agency that it bestows upon religious phenomena that is most lacking from discussions on the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England. Its absence from the sources is hardly surprising when we consider its constitution, but its complete exclusion can hardly be justified. It should be obvious from above, but perhaps needs to be stated more bluntly, that there is more to Weber's understanding of the term charisma than the attractive flamboyance or assertiveness that might be said to characterise a more conventional understanding of the term. Not only is charisma psychoanalytically oriented, but can be specified given preconditions of certain anaclitic, narcissistic, superego or id needs. Four types emerge, which are termed in turn "omnipotence", "excellence", "sacredness" and "uncanniness" (Camic 1980).

Charisma may be attributed differently and simultaneously. Thus, all four types may be attributed to one single individual, either by the same group, or by different groups for different reasons. It may be consciously developed, or it may be come upon inadvertently. It may be attributed with, without, or in spite of the inclinations of the person to whom it is attributed. More importantly, the different varieties of charisma have different implications for the sociology of the relationship between the charismatic and his or her followers. Therefore, investigation of the psychoanalytical model would allow us to elicit a variety of consequences for charisma. Thus, the mechanics of the relationship between a charismatic and his followers cannot be specified with any certainty, but simply postulated as likelihoods. In other words, the relationship between the prophet and his or her followers is historically rather than psychologically constituted. All this is quite absent from the archaeology of religion in Anglo-Saxon England.

The charismatic's success and the durability of the message preached depend on much more than the creative context from which they are derived, their ability to

respond to various extraordinary psycho-analytical needs and the process of rationalisation which may or may not elaborate or be super-imposed upon them. The successful propagation and maintenance of the revelation involves both the clarification and the incorporation of that revelation into routine practice. In short, the revelation has to appropriate the means of organisation, replication and delivery. This becomes the work of the clerical elite, thus priming the institutionalised revelation with the means for both further rationalisation and subsequent charismatic dissent. Here, however, we may be on firmer ground for an early Medieval case study. We may not be able to trace the development of the charismatic revelation archaeologically, but its institutionalisation is much more prone to archaeological methods.

There are of course, objections to Weber's view of charisma. The terms used seem antiquated, even when stripped of their evolutionary naïveté. The importance of charisma is stated so emphatically that force of this personality trait of itself seems to diminish the historical or intellectual context of the revelation. Other commentators have stressed the need to understand how revelation is received, to ask what made one message compellingly real as opposed to many others (e.g. Burridge 1969). Also, the role of the prophet in traditional societies is complicated. It has already been suggested that prophecy has a central role in the development of traditional religions (Burridge 1969, Wallace 1972, Evans-Pritchard 1956, Lienhardt 1961).

Hefner has recently revisited Weber's study of charisma and rationality, arguing that revelation is distinctively rationalised in world religions, and that it is more carefully stage-managed here than in traditional religious contexts.

... the most distinctive feature of the world religions ... is something both doctrinal and social organisational. These religions regularise clerical roles, standardise ritual, formalise doctrine, and otherwise work to create an authoritative culture and cohesive religious structure. (Hefner 1993 19)

He distinguishes this institutional order from the interiorisation of that religion, and from the "rationality" of its practitioners, which are both outwith the development of the doctrine *per se*. In the specific case of conversion, it can be demonstrated over and over again that the elaborate rationalisation of doctrine is

simply not a *sine qua non* of conversion. In fact, Hefner argues that the almost infinite variation in the phenomenology of conversion reveals only one recurring feature. Rather than the interiorised reorganisation of symbolic forms, he argues that the recurring feature of conversion is that of a change — sometimes thoroughly radical sometimes purely nominal — in self-identification:

... conversion ... always involves commitment to a new kind of moral authority and a new or reconceptualised social identity (Hefner 1993 17).

If the term masks several distinct processes with causes and effects sharing a complex dialectical relationship, then we are encouraged to recognise the pluralistic and perhaps discursive nature of religious thought and of culture more generally. Thus, one element of religion might be rationalised or elaborated at one time in one particular way by one element in the religious community, independently of others within the same community, who may have other concerns, quite unlike and quite unconnected with the other group, and coexisting happily (or not) in the same community. As numerous commentators have reminded us, cultural traditions, religion included, are never the undivided property of the whole society, and the individual is not acculturated by the mute internalisation of externalised truths (Hefner 1993 18).

For Hefner, the unique form of the rationality of world religions:

... lies in their linkage of these strict transcendental imperatives to institutions for the propagation and control of religious knowledge and identity over time and space. (Hefner 1993:19)

This might be described as the unique linkage between charismatic prophecy on one hand and religious bureaucracy on the other.

Hefner focuses directly upon conversion, reviewing Horton's discussion of the rationality of conversion, relating these explicitly to Weber's theory of rationalisation. In the first instance, Hefner faults Horton for over-emphasising the boundedness of the microcosm, an analytical fiction explicitly constructed, and criticised by many authors (Hefner 1993 21, Cusack 1996, Kopytoff 1987, Ranger 1993). Divested of the unsubstantiated polarity of microcosm and macrocosm, however, Horton's model still gives an insight into how religious institutions are affected by the incorporation of localised ideas and thoughts into a larger context, and how ideas can be changed and reinvented. In the second instance, Hefner

sides with some of the more obstinate critics of Horton. He argues that Horton's model, viewing developments as indigenous, means the agency of the missionary is marginalised if not eradicated (Hefner 1993 22-23, Comaroff 1985, Fisher 1985, Ifeka-Moller 1974, Ikenga-Metuh 1987). Hefner argues that:

... the challenge ... is to strike a balance between the two extremes of intellectualist voluntarism [e.g. *Nock, Horton or Rambo*] and structural determinism. Even if politically imbalanced, conversion encounters are always two-sided, and the social and intellectual dynamics of each camp affect the outcome. Rather than over-emphasise intrinsic or extrinsic variables in conversion, then, we should explore the way in which the two interact, and expect that the relative importance of each may vary in different settings. Such an approach would clarify why some indigenous peoples eagerly embrace Christianity ... but others tend to appropriate its meanings selectively ... or reject them outright. (Hefner 1993 23-24)

This is directly related to rationalisation, since in the scheme developed here, the creation of doctrine is linked to the means of replicating and disseminating it. In this respect, as Goody has pointed out, the illiterate, traditional religion is at a severe disadvantage to the literate one (Goody 1986). Thus, even if deeply embedded in the microcosm of social relations, "world" religions nonetheless possess the organisation to escape from the microcosm of social relations, and to reinvent themselves at times of crisis. We need not repudiate Horton's attempts to view conversion through the eyes of the converted in psychological terms, but realise that the socio-political environment in which the conversion takes place is more than a passive container for these actions.

Hefner moves from Horton's cosmological adaptation to a position that mimics Horton's cosmological writing on conversion, but is situated within what sociologists term the *reference group* (Hefner 1993 25-28). The reference group is a concept that bridges psychology and social phenomena by positing that self-identification is constructed in relation to a specific group of people and institutions against which judgements and activities, moral and ethical codes, situations and viewpoints are monitored and assessed. This reference group need not be a coherent one, and is likely to include quite distinct elements such as personal affection for individuals, ethnic and social affiliations, sexual orientations, political inclinations, gender, age group loyalties, and nationalism(s). This reference group is thus drawn from both the immediate social and economic sphere

(the membership group), and from a symbolic repertoire of ideal types. It may draw from supernaturally constituted and self-evidently fictional characters. It should be seen that the reference group can thus be maintained over long distances or times. Moreover, one of the features of religious conversion is the inclusion, and likely exclusion, of elements of that reference group.

The question for Anglo-Saxon archaeology, therefore, turns not on process or moment, so much as on how the clergy may insinuate themselves within the reference group. In order to understand this, it is necessary not only to demonstrate this in the material conditions of living, but also to reveal the parallel institutionalisation of revelation. The reference group is fundamentally a tool to effect reflexive monitoring. Only where it is threatened or altered will the reference group be open to manipulation. The constitution of the reference group mirrors the psychoanalytical model of charisma which brought us to the conclusion that the most explicit consequences of charisma were identification (or resonance identification) with charismatic leaders and transference onto the charismatic of emotional responses drawn from the psyche. It should be remembered that the charismatic revelation is an integral part of the creation of religious doctrine, prior to its rationalisation, dissemination or formal institutionalisation.

3.2.4 some concluding remarks on rationality, charisma and conversion

This section has been abstract, and, like the previous section on religious phenomena, may seem unconnected with the spread of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England. As with the previous section, however, a number of points can be drawn out.

Firstly, the intellectualist account of religion reported and recommended in the previous section provides the foundation for a coherent theory of conversion. If we are to understand conversion in England from an intellectualist standpoint instead of the dominant functionalist perspective, we must attempt to understand not only the pre-Christian mind set – the “native microcosm” – but also that conversion must have been a rational decision in the terms of that mind set.

Rationality, however, is a problematic concept, since it relies on a poorly defined, modern understanding of selfhood. A more critical appraisal embodies rationality within the psychoanalytical Ego. This in turn leads to the recognition of

charisma as a motive force in the production of revelation, a necessary precondition for rationality and rationalisation. Charisma and the psychoanalytical constitution of rationality are utterly lacking from accounts of Anglo-Saxon England. Their absence from historical accounts is not surprising, but their exclusion is untenable.

More evident in the archaeological and historical record are the means by which revelation and rationalisation are institutionalised for their maintenance, revelation on its own being unsustainable. Not only does this mean we should look for the organs of institutionalisation, but it may be possible to map the reach of that institutionalisation by exploring the reference group. If it can be demonstrated that the reference group is narrow, then the revelation only impacts on a narrow group: if the group is wide, then the impact of its reconstitution would be wider.

3.3 putting theory into practice

The discussion so far has been abstract. The anthropology of religion is littered with case studies which show what these ideas mean in practice, and the two parts of this section will deal with real case studies. The first part will ask, on the basis of case studies, whether religious conversion can ever be the subject of empirical enquiry in the terms described above, recognising that Horton's theory of religion posits a supernatural – *i.e.* non-empirical – ontology to religious phenomena more generally. The second section will attempt reconciliation, recognising once again that the types of questions asked will be of crucial importance.

3.3.1 the plot thickens: can we validate that which is not empirical?

The anthropology of religion provides many case studies that show what Weber's rationality and charisma mean in practice (*e.g.* Hefner 1998 *passim*). But there are further complications, as there are obvious problems with observation. The problem with Weber's stance is its immateriality. Marxist analysis may point uncontroversially to the material conditions of production. Their materiality literally ensures their place in history. Durkheim too, may reveal the structures of social inclusion or exclusion through the analysis of social patterning. Weber's rationality, in contrast, is immaterial and thus largely invisible within the material conditions of living. Yet, even in the presence of those participating in that course of symbolic meaning, the rationality of action is still controversial. In early Medieval studies, it is tempting to explain this problem away through the lack or

unreliability of the historical sources. Yet this claim of unreliability is naive. Modern analyses of modern populations reveal a deeper problem with the comprehension of religious phenomena. The problem is not the lack of evidence, so much as the estrangement of otherness: a subject object dichotomy that cannot rely on a de-personalised gaze, but which inevitably calls on the observer to be “*his/her own instrument of analysis*” (Levi-Strauss 1976 35).

Even if they wanted to, ethnographers could not ... hope to remove every trace of the arbitrariness with which they read meaningful signs on a cultural landscape. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992 8)

This problem and the means of reconciling us to it will be articulated through a number of case studies.

The most problematic aspect of the anthropology, history and archaeology of religion is attempting to ascertain whether what is disclosed through observation actually reveals anything of substance, or whether the participants in ritual and cult practices are present, but have not in fact internalised any of the teachings to which these practices pertain. To that extent, the analyst is always caught in a hermeneutic vice of over- and under-determination, to which phenomenology presents a plausible but deceptive solution.

The obvious danger in pursuing a phenomenological methodology is that the analyst is left with nothing other than an account of procedures which do not actually reveal the depth to which that particular programme has been internalised. This works in two ways. Interviews with leaders of groups who have privileged access to symbolic exegesis might result in a negative or positive account of the group, perhaps designed to disguise the group’s failure, or as the inevitable result of enquiring of a member of the group who has interiorised the doctrine to such a degree as to expect extraordinary levels of commitment from the laity as well as the clergy. Both of these tensions can be seen in the historical sources for Anglo-Saxon England, indeed, within the same witness. The former provides a relevant interpretative context for Bede’s letter to Egbert (EB) where he bemoans monastic abuses and the failure of the church, the latter a context to interpret the claim of the hundred who were baptised in short order.

If we are to look beyond the clergy — assuming that there is such a class of specialists — then a different but equally problematic situation may well arise. An

intelligent member of a group may be more articulate, or more inclined to rationalise group religious practices for the benefit of the analyst, while actually having little faith in the programme. On the other hand, a less articulate or less intelligent member may have complete faith in the leadership of the cult, but not be in a position to articulate this to the analyst in question. Such a simple situation would reveal precisely the opposite to the analyst than was actually the case, since the articulate member might appear more convincing than the less.

This point has been illustrated acerbically by Robert Balch who went “behind the scenes” of cult practices in the modern United States (Balch 1980). This also reminds us that time provides a crucial extra-dimension that is often overlooked in analyses. That Balch was forced to enter the group by covert means is instructive about the manner in which information is controlled and disseminated in such groups. Clearly, he felt that discussion with active participants could not reveal the true level of their commitment. This suspicion was reinforced by interviews with former members who no longer participated in the group’s dominant discourse. Once inside the group, observation alone was insufficient to identify those who were active and those who had lost interest: not even the group leaders could distinguish them. Membership was a fluid category. At the outset, members of the group were presumably at their most open to the restrictions of membership — hence the various accounts of members making significant sacrifices to participate in the group. Thus, to say that a member is committed to participation is to discuss a specific moment in a context that is liable to change. For this reason it might be more relevant to discuss the mechanisms by which the group reinforced and maintained the commitment of its members. It is clear that, in the case discussed here, such mechanisms were either absent or relatively unsuccessful.

A similar hermeneutic conundrum was reported by Trompf, though resolved in a very different way (1996). It is the empathy of the analyst rather than empirical evidence that differentiates Trompf’s account from Balch’s. Trompf apologises for his lack of direct critique and leads the reader to accept the reality of the conversion on trust as an eye-witness to his subject. Various elements are missing from this account such as the economic or social benefits of the conversion described as possible factors. At the end of the analysis, the career of the convert is revealed through the apparent scale of the transformation viewed empathetically by the writer.

The difference between the approaches of Trompf and Balch is more than simply the amount of empathy they are able to mobilise for their respective subjects. The subjects are themselves of a different scale: one is the anthropology of an entire cult movement seen through various particular anecdotes; the other is the biography of a single convert acting as a reflection of an entire movement. One wonders whether, if this methodology were reversed, we would have similar results. Biography of a single cult member masks experiences of many others and seems more likely to evoke empathy, while reflection on a large group is more likely to scrutinise inconsistencies in the behaviour of members of the group. They are, however, alike in their reliance upon direct observation and discussion with their own subject. In this respect both embody a subject-object relationship that cannot always be replicated. Both can expand questions until they are exhausted. Both can attempt an infinite description of the contexts. They can employ empathy as a methodological device. This is simply impossible in most historical and archaeological contexts in which the very absence of that which is being analysed is the essential foundation to the entire project. Empathy is used as an interpretative strategy in the latter of the two cases quoted above. The methodological question for us is the development of an interpretative scheme that will allow for the same intellectual freedom available to participant observation, without a naïve phenomenology that either surrenders critique or ends with the ironic elevation of the preconstituted historical evidence to a state of pre-interpretative grace.

The basic problem lies not in the evidence nor in the questions asked of it, so much as in the methodologies selected and the empirical validity to which they aspire. Religious phenomena are not empirically constituted, and the search for empirical validity in religious phenomena is at best problematical, if not essentially hostile to the phenomena in question. This point is of central importance to the understanding of religious conversion in Anglo-Saxon England, indeed in any context. It is a core issue in the social sciences also.

To put this point another way, whether or not the members of Balch's cult were genuine in their commitment is a question which can only be answered with the advent of the eschatological crisis they anticipated. Likewise, Trompf's empathy and witness are provisional. This same point can be made in numerous cases. Nor is the problem a property of the subject-object dichotomy of the observed and observer implicit in these two cases. The same problem exists in autobiographical

accounts, such as the recently reviewed career of Margaret Ebner, a Medieval nun, whose autobiography reveals her struggles to attain complete or true conversion, or the life of Elizabeth White, a puritan whose biography reveals the most personal issues of faith and action (Hindsley 1997, Caldwell 1983). In both cases, there is a sense of literary genre, which raises questions as to the “reliability” of their conversions, casting them as observed against the observing reader.

Part of the problem also resides in the historical constructedness of conversion itself. That conversion means different things in different times and cultures is more than significant. Thus, for Ebner, conversion means the complete surrender of will to God, and might more poetically be termed “*falling in love with God*”. That is not the case for Trompf, whose subject was concerned with a conversion to “*public spiritedness*”. For Balch’s cult members, conversion was something quite different again, involving the surrender of resources, such as time, money or relationships.

Of course, acceptance of this point places us in a strict phenomenological strait-jacket, since we are unable to assess the fundamental category which we intend to study without participating in the cult, or at least developing a critique which does no harm to the cult itself. This is much less than satisfactory, since we may wish to be critical of the cult, and may want to maintain a distance from it. An alternative methodology may be proposed however. Instead of examining the truth or falsity of conversion, we can proceed with an alternative strategy which charts the ways in which religious truths are created, negotiated and maintained in particular historical and cultural contexts. It should be clear that this discussion takes us one step away from the analysis of whether or not conversion and religious belief is purely token or deeply embedded within the psyche of the converted, to a position which seeks to ascertain the culturally conditioned shape of religious discourse, and the dialogue between the convert and the missionary.

3.3.2 the colonisation of consciousness: the missionary garden

Comaroff and Comaroff have attempted to develop just such a scheme in the context of missionary work in colonial Southern Africa, which they term a theory of the historical imagination, focusing on the symbolic struggle between “*conscience and consciousness*” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992 235). In addition to more formal analysis of the history of missionary work, they approach the spread of Christianity among the Tswana through the colonisation of the symbolic and

linguistic sphere at a time when the expansion of the Zulu state had sent shock waves through the entire subcontinent, shock waves that were ultimately to encourage the colonial project.

A number of simple points are raised in relation to the study of missionary work in such an historical context. Firstly, it is recognised that the Tswana, the particular case in question, and the missionaries are both complex collectivities, each with their own agenda and more importantly each endowed with a complex (unique) historicity. The differences between the groups can be described in grand terms, but in reality such differences are articulated *in practice* — in the minutiae of cultural activities that are quotidian and unreflective. In effect this means that we should not be content with the historical record alone as a preconstituted text, not simply because it belongs to the colonisers and is thus biased by them, so much as because it is the product of modernism itself. In other words, the historical documents are our subject, as much as they are the means of enquiry about a subject. In response to this challenge to historical scholarship, we may choose to transcend the explicit narratives of this record, since:

...the poetics of history lie also in mute meanings transacted through goods and practices, through icons and images dispersed through the everyday... (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992 35)

So, if we are to investigate the articulation of hegemony, we may extend our analysis beyond the canonically historical into the welter of domestic details which exist behind the declarative heroic narrative.

Study of missionary activities in Southern Africa reveals a pre-occupation with control over and manipulation of the mundane world: an attempted reconstruction of the habit and habitus of the native inhabitants in such a way as to demonstrate conformity with missionary practices (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992 235-263). This reconstructed world became the context for integration into the colonial scheme, even if that had been the intention neither of the missionaries nor of their subjects. Significantly, in this case, the missionaries did not attempt to convert through the presentation of elaborate ceremonial or ritual, an aspect which struck a chord with the Tswana who had no tradition of ritual nor any significant ceremonial institutions. Instead, the missionary work can be presented as a dialogue on matters pertaining to the normal world in all its detail and intimacy. Comaroff and Comaroff do not claim that the themes they present are exhaustive, and the part of

it reflected here is fragmentary, but it serves to emphasise the relationship between missionary activity and the daily lives of individuals. This is, however, particularly welcome to archaeology, since in the routine of daily life are to be found the material conditions of social reproduction that are the stuff of archaeological enquiry. We shall concentrate on three themes that describe the contours of the missionary encounter: a dialogue on the nature and politics of water; a dialogue on the politics of production and economics; and a complicated negotiation of language barriers.

* Water

Water is elementary to life. Control over such a resource is a matter of life and death. For the population of Southern Tswana, water, like land, did not occur in nature, so much as at the behest and gift of the chief to the households. Annual rains were the inseminating force by which the chief made land, through the virility of the ruler directly or through an intermediary rain-maker appointed by him. Rain was the object and principal metaphor of the chief and associated royal rites. The chief opened assemblies with a greeting “*ka pula*” — *with rain* — while the word for water was cognate with the word for town, the origin and nucleus of human existence, where social order (metonymically represented in chiefship) withstood or triumphed over the chaotic wilderness which threatened to engulf the community. Water was the property of the female population, who as the principal domestic producers were responsible for the cooking and cleaning, as well as limited hoe-cultivated crop production. Men on the other hand, were charged with the much more prestigious and responsible task of overseeing the well-being of cattle.

Water also predominated among the metaphors of the missionaries. They were the “*gardeners that had come to water the wastes of Africa*”. Africa’s wastes, they taught, were to be “*watered by the streams of life*”. A programme of missionary work could legitimately begin with practical action. The first actions of the missionaries were to dig wells, to cut trenches and to irrigate the fields which were both a necessary source of life to the missionaries and a practical lesson to the natives. The neatly fenced order transparent in the mission enclosures was a source of pride to the missionaries, who compared them to the shallow ploughing and scarce irrigation of native agriculture. Thus, even by simply watering their gardens, the missionaries were in effect presenting something of their programme to the African population, articulating a significant difference in metaphor and in technology.

This difference implicated a challenge to two indigenous hegemonies: the role and power of the chief and his rain-makers to provide water; and the rôle of women in the domestic sphere where they controlled the productive deployment of water. A wedge was soon fixed between European and indigenous ways. This was no novelty for the Europeans who had long been involved in the process of self-identification and representation. For the Tswana, however, the dialogue elicited an entirely novel model of self-representation, in which Tswana was itself effectively conceived. For the first time, the cultural practices which were identifiably native were brought together in opposition as a coherent body of knowledge and practices. For the first time, a group which simply had identified itself as *batho* — the human beings — identified itself as a political and ethnic identity with a particular collective consciousness. Thus, the mundane practices of the missionaries not only instigated an informal programme of evangelical revelation, but also instigated a critical moment of self-objectification.

* Production

The missionary garden was a source and symbol of civilisation, in which the Europeans could enact and announce the principles of material individualism which they not only took for granted but also sought to replicate among the indigenous population: the accumulation of wealth by self-possessed labour; the appropriation of nature to capitalism; a division of male and female labour; and the privatisation of property. Presented here was a challenge not only to the chiefly and female hegemony of water, but also a lesson in the division of labour and the direction of effort which contrasted idleness with industry. The missionaries were compelled to self-sufficiency, by both material and ideological conditions, taking for granted a division between female labour within the house, and male labour outwith the house.

In contrast, the Tswana division of labour separated cattle husbandry from cultivation: the former was the domain of men, from which women were strictly excluded, the latter as we have already seen, was the place of female work. The introduction of the plough challenged this division, since the simple act of yoking a beast to a plough implied an unprecedented combination of one with the other. Thus these practices of farming de-stabilised the indigenous social order.

The adoption of the plough did not happen overnight, and it would be wrong even to describe such as a process. Nonetheless, the harvest and the surplus derived from it were soon appropriated by men, as the women folk became increasingly confined to a much narrower domestic sphere. The surplus drew the indigenous population into markets which had hitherto been closed, and encouraged new ones to develop. Enclosure and cultivation threatened the cattle economy, and ironically undermined existing practices for the conservation of water, bringing drought, famine and disease. Even more ironically, these phenomena drew the indigenous population more effectively into the missionary world, since each could be dealt with by recourse to the missionaries' techniques of trade, technology and medicine. Slowly a structure of inequality was established in which families were dispossessed of land, and, encouraged by the missionaries, a small number of wealthier peasants forsook existing communal obligations for concepts of ownership which engendered further participation in market economics and the introduction of currency. Within fifty years, the whole community was oriented around the culture and practices of labour and commodity production instigated by the material individualism of the missionary garden.

* Language

If the missionaries can be identified from other Europeans in the colonial context, it is by their adherence to the word of God, and their desire to bring that to the Heathen. For the non-conformist missionaries, the word of God was contained in the Bible, stripped of liturgical or sacramental elaboration. For them, language not ritual was the universal medium of human communication. With the capacity to give certain names to certain things, all mankind were heirs to Adam and the rightful inheritors of a naturally ordered civilisation. The word transcended, and universal truths could be communicated if only the signs and symbols could be manipulated effectively. The missionaries may have doubted their own ability to speak to the Tswana in their indigenous language, but had no doubt about its capacity to contain and convey the meanings that Christianity and civilisation might demand of it.

The translation of the Bible into this indigenous language was at the forefront of any attempt to preach, and this was given its first significant development when Robert Moffat published the first translated text of the Bible in Tswana. This translation had implications far beyond its author's intentions, fixing meanings and

cultural registers in ways that he could never have foreseen. For example, he used the word for ancestors, "*badimo*", to denote "*demons*", since this fitted with the contemporary mission organisation and their thinking about the nature of indigenous belief. Yet this translation did violence to both the native and missionary traditions. Other Tswana words became the subject of new meanings: thus, the word for *teacher* was appropriated as the word for *minister of the church*, while the noun for *one who is in agreement* was appropriated for *believer*. Neither the concept of belief nor of a minister of religion were available within the native vocabulary, and near approximates were sought. It is easy then to see why more complicated concepts such as incarnation or communion could be the subject of bizarre and unexpected interpretations.

The scope for misunderstandings in such a context is vast, but more significant differences were also highlighted by the control and manipulation of language. African languages, it was assumed, were at best coarse, if not utterly stupid. They might be compared to the folk languages of Europe like Welsh or Breton, but lacked the sophistication of formal languages like English or Dutch. Unreflective of the structure of their language, and unwilling to assist, it was the job of the missionary to bring order to grammatical structures and vocabulary. It was, of course, taken for granted that Tswana had a recognisable grammatical structure that could be elicited, and that the subtleties of ideophonics could be rendered comprehensibly by written forms. Once systematised and ordered, it was then re-presented to the community as a grapholect, and a new community formed of those who could effectively communicate in reading, writing and speaking this manufactured orthodox language. It is in this manufactured orthodox language that the Tswana find a place in the historical record.

* Conclusion

While the actual beliefs of the Tswana escape us, and their individual or group motives may be both more and less than the historical record allows us to construct, we can nonetheless identify the ways in which the routine world of practice can articulate and insinuate parts of a programme of religious reform and education. Participation within these practices cannot be equated with religious belief, but can reveal the degree to which a group or individual is able to identify with the symbolic repertoire of the religion.

The significant point is that the missionary encounter encompassed more than simply the ostensive signs and symbols of religion, but permeated social life with novel practices and subtle tensions.

Comaroff and Comaroff are particularly well placed to develop their model of missionary work in Colonial Southern Africa, partly because the written historical sources are plentiful and immediate, and partly because the folk traditions and practices of the area still retain much that is relevant to their study. Moreover, the “conversation” between missionary and Tswana encompassed the material conditions of daily life, as much as — perhaps more than — active verbal dialogue. In this way the case of Tswana differs markedly from missionary work in other colonial contexts, such as the spread of Spanish Catholicism in seventeenth-century Mexico or the Anglicanism of nineteenth century Rhodesia (Trexler 1984, Ranger 1987). In the former case, missionaries drew from and developed a repertoire of complex ritual and ceremonial practices that resembled and in part recreated the ritual drama of pre-Columbian religious practices. In the latter case, the symbolic appropriation of the pre-missionary landscape provoked a crisis of meaning so deep as to almost guarantee the success of the mission. The absence of intricate Tswana ritual and the matter-of-fact technical know-how of the Non-Conformist preachers ensured that the dialogue would be located in the material of daily life.

For these reasons, Comaroff and Comaroff are able to expand their project for historical imagination in ways that are unique to their case. To this extent, we have not yet been challenged to come to terms with cases like that of early Medieval England where such sources are much less immediate and much less expansive. Bearing in mind that the question we wish to ask is not the state of faith so much as how religious discourse is reproduced in unexpected ways, the subtlety of that discourse makes some aspects invisible, other aspects more substantial. As with the missionary garden, we should expect these to be identified as often in the routine choreography of life as in the space overtly oriented towards religion. This is why we should study the whole missionary encounter.

3.4 summary and reflection

The answers to a number of important theoretical questions lie buried in the preceding text, questions which will adjudicate on the types of questions we should ask and the types of data which can be mobilised in answering them. It is

time to summarise the key points to be taken from these myriad arguments, and to reflect upon their relative importance for the Anglo-Saxon milieu it is our intention to study. I will summarise that line of argument before reflecting upon the implications.

3.4.1 Summary

We started with the anthropology and sociology of religion. Objections to both functionalist and intellectualist accounts were recorded, but the intellectualist account was shown to be more appropriate on account of the implied mechanistic social theory associated with functionalism, and to a lesser extent for ethical reasons too. Phenomenological objections were evaluated and found inappropriate after an investigation of contemporary theological preoccupations revealed that the charge of reductionism was unfounded.

The next section investigated the intellectualist account of religious conversion, revealing a core weakness on the matter of rationality. The failure to specify the mechanics of rationality led us to consider the origins of rationality as a pre-discursive attribute of human existence. This was only possible after a brief digression into matters pertaining to individuality, where it was argued that, social discourse aside, there is an essential core of finite irreducibility inherent in the human organism, and that this somatic reality includes the Ego as presented by psychoanalytical theory. The Ego not only monitors rationality, but attributes (specified) forms of charisma to compensate for its own weaknesses. Charisma was identified as the motor for the disclosure of alternative types of revelation.

Thereafter we turned to more mundane concerns, coming face to face with hermeneutic problems. It was noted that religious phenomena are not easily appropriated into the empirical project of the social sciences, even when participant observation is possible. For archaeologists and historians, this hermeneutic bind means that, regardless of how much data is made available, we would still be in a state of ignorance as to the depth or sincerity of a convert's progress. The crisis of interpretation precipitated a change of direction. Rather than tackling the question of conversion head on, it was proposed that a more fruitful line of enquiry is to investigate the structures that predispose people to conversion, remaining silent on the topic of conversion itself. These structures may, of course, be situated or visible among what on first inspection seem like unlikely repositories for religious discourse. One case study was presented in

which the dialogue between missionary and “missioned” was framed in the material of daily life, with topics as mundane as agricultural practice and water. This encourages us to be ambitious for the study of the impact of missionary clergy in Anglo-Saxon England.

3.4.2 Reflection

What then does this extended argument mean for the study of Anglo-Saxon England? Six themes should be taken into account. These are in no particular order, but should be read in conjunction with a knowledge of the critique presented in the previous chapter about the existing literature of the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England.

*** ... functionalism not good enough**

It should be clear that the functionalist account of conversion is weak. It is the undisclosed foundation of the accounts presented in the previous chapter, where religious issues are reduced to their political contexts, without recourse to the forms that political intentions or actions may have taken. In each case there is an unstated theory of religion as false consciousness, disguising the deceitful manoeuvrings of a political elite from the larger mass of the population, a population that are as stupid as their rulers are crafty. This cannot be allowed to go unchallenged in the light of anthropology’s own critique of functionalism.

*** ... perceived absence of charisma or rationality**

This chapter has dealt extensively with religious conversion from numerous different contexts. Of course, much of the evidence used in these case studies would be quite impossible in a case like Anglo-Saxon England. The question then arises: why be concerned with rationality or charisma, two facets of conversion that are singularly lacking from our sources? Two reflections come to mind on this theme. First, we actually know very little about the conversion in Anglo-Saxon England. A glib historical narrative masks what must have been momentous crises and challenges. These cannot be identified or investigated if we are to focus solely upon the canon of historical documents. Secondly, investigation of psychoanalysis and the cognitive sciences reveal that certain aspects of conversion can be known, without recourse to these texts. The perceived absence of charisma and rationality is a feature of the sources used, not a feature of the context, since different types of charisma are prediscursive. We can be certain that both were present in the case of Anglo-Saxon England, even if specifying the precise role they played is more complicated.

* ... need to investigate the “native” context and rationality

The strength of intellectualism lies in its ability to talk freely and interpretatively with the participants of the rituals and beliefs described. However, the distance upon which archaeology and history are predicated confines this dialogue to historical sources and archaeological remains. Superficially, these undermine attempts to listen to the native exegesis of conversion, and thus identify what Horton terms the “rationality” of conversion. Yet, this dialogue is always constrained, interpretative weaknesses remaining even when the participants are present. The point of rationality is not to argue that somehow conversion is a virtue to be cherished by all rational people. The point is to focus attention on the local indigenous culture instead of the endogenous colonising one. If we are to investigate conversion in Anglo-Saxon England, therefore, we should be interested in practice both before and after 597 AD. Changes in the cultural order between 597 and 750 might well be just as important to conversion as the actions of the missionaries.

* ... empirical evidence on the validity of conversion unusable – a more nuanced question that investigates structures of predisposition is needed

The constraints imposed by the shortage of evidence is only one of the problems. There is a deeper hermeneutic issue too. Religious phenomena, unless reduced to other social phenomena, are not amenable to simple empirical tests without recourse to methodological empathy. Methodological empathy is not an option for Anglo-Saxon England, so different manners of questions need to be asked. Instead of investigating the authenticity of conversion, we must instead investigate the structures by which people were predisposed to conversion, leaving matters of faith to one side. Any writer who claims Anglo-Saxon England was Christian, or not Christian, by any given date is either making a fatuous claim, or is making a more subtle claim about the direction of socially sanctioned discourse.

* ... an investigation in material terms

It follows that the investigation must relate to archaeology, rather than historical sources, or at least recognise the historical sources as active parts of a broader milieu. The structures of predisposition revealed in the case of Tswana were located in mundane realities of daily life. For Anglo-Saxon England, these are among the most clearly visible aspects of interpretative archaeology. Therefore, daily life presents a favourable, if apparently unlikely, locus for such discourses. There are grounds for optimism, so long as the appropriate aspects of practice can be identified. Though achieved in a different way, this point supports the

argument made in the previous chapter about the need to look beyond the historical sources which cannot give us access to conversion among the greater mass of the population, nor even really help us specify the mechanisms of the encounter. By shifting the analysis to the material conditions of life, we not only encompass the greater mass of the population, but also facilitate a closer critique of those mechanisms. This repeats and amplifies some of the objections raised in the previous chapter.

★ ... archaeology of practice superior to the archaeology of ritual

If nothing else is obvious, it should be clear that the archaeology of daily practice – the archaeology of the whole missionary encounter – is preferable to the archaeology of presumed ritual norms – at least when compared to how archaeologists have tended to approach cemeteries. Evidence for missionary work among the Tswana, interrogated in the terms identified above, was drawn from the choreography of daily life. Though derived from quite a different perspective, this point is consistent with what we have already noted about Anglo-Saxon Christianity, where it was noted that ritual practice was fluid, and thus an unreliable guide to conversion. So an archaeology of daily life is more likely to inform us about why conversion may have seemed rational than an archaeology of ritual practices that depends upon cemetery studies.

Chapter 4

ON LITERACY AND PRACTICE: AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF RITUAL ACTIVITIES

The second chapter of this thesis reviewed and found wanting traditional accounts of the coming of Christianity that drew from the archaeology of liturgy and ritual – especially those that draw upon cemetery studies. The third chapter amplified those concerns, providing some ground rules for how that study could be improved. The retreat from such approaches to ritual in early Medieval contexts need not be taken as the abandonment of the entire project of understanding early Medieval Christianity through the archaeological record. What is required is a new theoretical insight into the operation of Christianity and the material relations that characterised that operation.

This chapter delineates an alternative to the archaeology of ritual activities, proposing instead an archaeology of literacy. It will establish the relationship between Christianity and literacy, then investigate the anthropology of literacy to establish what sorts of questions should be asked of the archaeology of literacy. These insights provide a methodological framework that will be used to investigate the context of missionary work in Anglo-Saxon England in the following chapters. Subsequent chapters will elaborate and refine that provisional methodology through contemplation of, and responses to, otherwise well known empirical data.

4.1 literacy and the mission culture of Anglo-Saxon England

In this section it will be argued that the expansion of clerical Christianity in the seventh century in England facilitated growth in the use and importance of literacy. This expansion was concomitant and co-extensive with the spread of Christianity, and so can reasonably be assumed to be part of the missionary encounter.

Of course, Christianity did not bring literacy to Britain in 597. Nor, for that matter did Christianity introduce concepts of schooling and education into Britain. In some places in the North and West of Britain, and in particular in Ireland, literacy survived and was transmitted well into the seventh century and beyond, so the expansion is particularly noteworthy in Anglo-Saxon England, even if the cultural and ethnic implications of such a term are ambivalent.

It is, however, important to be clear about what we mean and do not mean by literacy. The concept has attracted a great deal of critical and analytical attention and it is, in fact, difficult to rule out certain meaningful practices as literacy without carefully crafted analyses. As previous arguments have shown, the archaeological record bears witness to the existence of writing a century or more before 597: the incision of runes into personal objects, or the moulding of letters in ceramic (see Page 1995 *passim*). These are of a different order from the literacy of the seventh and eighth centuries. Individual letters or words do not constitute meanings in the same way as words phrased within sentences with verbs, subjects, predicates and so on. Such aspects — the semantics and pragmatics of writing — are partners with the signifier/signified relationship in the production of meaning within texts.

This divergence can be traced to the work of Paul Ricoeur, whose critique of structuralism focuses upon the exclusion of certain principal concepts in the model of language offered by Ferdinand de Saussure (de Saussure 1960). Ricoeur reintroduces these concepts to linguistic study (Ricoeur 1978 66-76), offering a theory of language that is premised on a dichotomy between system and discourse. Drawing on Benevise's theory of language, the transition between these two levels is not continuous (Benevise 1971). In other words, the sentence is not itself a signifier, but an unlimited and indeterminate creation of a different order from the signifier. He thus proposes a shift from the semiotics of the sign to the semantics of the sentence. Thus, the sentence, not the sign, is the principal unit of discourse. In short, therefore, at least as argued by Ricoeur, what we have inscribed into cremation urns are of a substantially different order from the discourse of the sentence found in the texts of the seventh century clergy.

A return to the archaeological record creates a similar sense of the difference between the occasional rune and clerical literacy. As often as not, the runes are discrete and concealed: impressed on the side of a buried cremation urn; scratched into the least visible corner of a sword handle; or hidden in a mess of ostentatious metalwork. The presence of such symbols is not to be recognised by many. The interpretation of their meanings is even more exclusive.

Runes seem to present a challenge to the Latin alphabet, and thus an alternative, if incipient, literacy from the Latin alphabet of the Christian clergy. Evidence for runes is widespread in Anglo-Saxon England, yet there is only one extended runic

text clearly associated with an Anglo-Saxon context. That this one exemplar should be a poem about a cross, incised all the way round a cross, and delivered in the voice of the cross, is surely evidence that, far from being inherently “pagan”, this literacy could be appropriated by the clergy. We cannot assume that there was anything inherently pagan about these runes. The same may be said of the Auzon (Franks) Casket, on which a few lines of runes are carved, but which was clearly executed under the influence of the Church (Webster 1999 Lang 1999).

It would be unrealistic to suggest that pagan Anglo-Saxon society was ignorant of reading and writing. There was enough contact with the Frankish, Celtic, Roman and Irish worlds to ensure that writing must have been well known in Anglo-Saxon England long before the arrival of the missionaries; but this is simply to state that the Anglo-Saxon world was not closed to outside influences. Proximity to Christianity was part and parcel of this proximity. That Christianity is predicated upon the existence of various texts may be taken for granted. While entry to the Christian community was not dependent upon the ability to read or write, and while the essential elements of ritual practice were sacramental, nonetheless scripture contains a basic canon of precepts that were (and remain) the foundation of clerical Christianity. In that respect, literacy was the preserve of the clergy, without being the preserve of Christianity *per se*.

It is widely accepted that the arrival of the Augustinian mission in 597 and the earliest (written) law code (c. 601) were not unrelated. That they are so close in time and place must be something more than coincidence. Dumville has recently spelled out clearly the close proximity between the Augustinian mission and literacy:

Augustine, his fellows and their successors ... were drawn from the Roman, Mediterranean world, if not from Rome itself. They were, accordingly, participants in a culture which, even in its secular aspect, enjoyed a significant access to literacy. (Dumville 1995 97)

If we are to search for the earliest literate community in Anglo-Saxon England, however small, it seems futile to look any further than here, unless that is to an alternative clerical group from elsewhere in the British Isles.

Wormald argues that it is in the nature of the relationship between the written word and kingship that we find the biggest difference between Middle Anglo-Saxon

England and the continent (Wormald 1984, see also McKitterick (ed) 1990, *passim*, especially Wood 1990). The origins of the Medieval chancery and the documents they produce are matters of the most intricate debate. In Merovingian Gaul, the work of scribes was subordinated directly to the work of government through the office of the chancellor. The Frankish kings employed scribes on royal business, producing records of land transactions as charters, and promulgating law codes as early as the latter part of the sixth century. While in France and Italy, charters were produced by freelance writers whose main source of income and support was writing on behalf of the crown, charters in middle Anglo-Saxon England were almost certainly never written in any form of royal chancery. Such an office took several centuries longer to emerge in England than on the continent.

Thus, in the peculiar case of Anglo-Saxon England, evidence of writing and literacy should be taken more as evidence of the exertion of ecclesiastical rather than royal influence in the century or so after 597. This does not mean that kings were not able to use literacy to their advantage, or that literacy did not substantially alter the power relations between them, or between kings and those that they subjugated. As we shall see later, this was exactly what did happen. Rather, it means that every time we refer to literacy, we are invariably referring to a clerical milieu and, by extension, thus a discourse on clerical Christianity.

Wormald also points out a strange imbalance in style and distribution of texts (Wormald 1984 1). Even allowing for the wastages of time and scribal practices, Britain north of the Humber produced literary texts at a rate not equalled at any previous date, or repeated until several centuries later. In contrast, Kent, Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia — in short the greater part of newly converted country — did not witness the production of a single hagiography or history. In contrast, the texts surviving from this part of the country are almost exclusively bureaucratic: law codes, charters of land transactions, tax returns and the like. This same evidence is absent from Northumbria: evidently, the “Golden Age” of Northumbria did not extend to the institutions of law and government.

That the literature of Northumbria was ecclesiastical in origin and consumption can be taken for granted by recourse to the subject matter and topics discussed by them. That the earliest bureaucratic documents of Southern England were also ecclesiastical can be demonstrated by their style, beneficiaries, sanctions and function. This does not mean that clergy were the only people to use or be

implicated in the use of charters (Lowe 1998). In the earliest period, however, the principal beneficiaries of charters were, in every case, churchmen — perhaps the same churchmen responsible for their transaction. There are debates about their form and its origin (Chaplais 1969, Wormald 1984 9, Kelly 1990 40) but there is no need to enter the debate here, since the clerical origin is the only one that matters, and this has not been questioned.

What can we take from this discussion? Christianity was responsible for the (re)introduction of literacy and in particular the incipient bureaucracy of Southern England in the seventh century. Literacy was thus a distinctive part of the missionary encounter. The relationship between Church and literacy is so close that, wherever we find evidence for literacy, we assume the existence of churchmen or at least their influence.

Of course, the simple equation includes no estimate of the impact literacy may have actually had. Historians have tended to deprecate its historical impact. Patrick Wormald described the state and influence of bureaucratic practices prior to the Norman Conquest (Wormald 1977). He was emphatic on the topic, arguing that literacy had little impact before 1066, and that such technical literary skill as existed was restricted. Even late Anglo-Saxon Wessex failed to produce any signs of a significant growth, literacy having little impact upon the exercise of government. This account has been expanded by scholars including Michael Clanchy and Jack Goody (Clanchy 1993, Goody 1986). Though Clanchy discusses literacy in the later Middle Ages, he develops the theme from before the Norman Conquest, summarising and restating Wormald's argument. This position has been taken further by Jack Goody, who extended Clanchy's hypothesis and restated more categorically Clanchy's summary of Wormald (e.g. Goody 1986 188).

Yet doubts have been expressed. Significant contributions to the study of literacy have come from Susan Kelly, Simon Keynes and Kathryn Lowe, who have reviewed and questioned the late date proposed by Wormald and others (Kelly 1990, Keynes 1990, Lowe 1998). These scholars have come to precisely the opposite conclusion based on precisely the same evidence. For Keynes, the practice of royal government depended on the written word long before the Norman Conquest. Moreover, later Anglo-Saxon lay society was well accustomed to the use of literacy, and was pragmatic in its application: a currency that belies much earlier origins. Kelly complements this position, emphasising the prevalence

of the vernacular in a variety of formal and informal documents. Lowe takes this argument one step further, identifying the use of charters by the laity and the popularity of the chirograph long before the Conquest. This, she notes, can be traced to at least as early as 804 and, one presumes, to some date before then (Lowe 1998 174).

In a perceptive summary, Lowe identifies the origin of the disagreement in the theoretical perspectives on literacy proposed by either side (Lowe 1998 161-68). On one hand, Clanchy and Wormald share the anthropological views of Jack Goody, Ian Watt and Walter Ong, a school of thought that looks upon literacy as an “autonomous” phenomenon. Lowe herself, Keynes and Kelly take a different view, sharing the view of Brian Street and others (e.g. Street 1993, 1995), that literacy can only be understood within a wider cultural frame that includes power and ideology.

For all their apparent differences, several key factors are shared by all of these commentators. All accept that there is considerably more to literacy than the mechanical ability to read and write. All view literacy as influential characteristics of government and social discourse, in particular of clerical discourse. Thus, whichever side is correct, the expansion of clerical Christianity in the seventh century in England facilitated an unprecedented growth in the use and importance of literacy. This expansion was concomitant and co-extensive with the spread of Christianity, and so can reasonably be assumed to be part of the missionary encounter. It is the extent and influence of the religious élite that is in dispute.

Lowe’s point about the different theoretical stances is significant, because the adoption of one or other theoretical approach will hinder or sustain any attempt to understand the impact of literacy, and through that to comprehend the missionary encounter of the seventh and eighth centuries.

4.2 behind the scenes of literacy

The different sides of the literacy debate in Anglo-Saxon studies betray two sides of a broader debate about literacy in general. On one side, theorists have proposed that the implications of literacy are cross-cultural, with a significant divide between literate and oral cultures. On the other, it is argued that literacy is a social phenomenon, only effective in the context of wider social practice. It is proposed that the divide between literate and illiterate is a discourse from which the illiterate

are purposefully excluded. There are contradictions and unresolved issues on both sides, but the debate is important to the case of Anglo-Saxon England, because the schools of thought locate literacy in different social milieux. If the former group is reliable then the introduction of literacy should witness unparalleled social upheaval, akin perhaps to the invention of speech. This would be identified easily in the archaeological record, making the investigation of the missionary encounter relatively trivial, though the concept of restricted literacy may postpone its impact by several hundred years. If the latter is favoured, then a more gradual but more complicated pattern should be expected, and a more sensitive and more convoluted investigation required. Moreover, without a more formal exposition of literacy, much of what may be attempted would be arcane. An investigation of the two schools is necessary before we can develop or refine our methodology.

4.2.1 a great leap over a great divide

It has been argued that the implications of reading and writing extend cross-culturally from the maintenance of property rights to the restructuring of the brain. Jack Goody and Walter Ong, for example, make significant claims for the importance of reading and writing in culture and history. It is argued that there is a deep cultural schism between oral and literate cultures. In essence, this difference is to be found in the way that writing separates all sorts of things in all sorts of ways. The oral/literate dichotomy they propose is a qualification of broader anthropological distinctions such as “wild/domesticated” or “pre-logical/logical”.

In the most recent restatement of his position, Ong presents fourteen separate, but interconnected arguments that differentiate literate and non-literate societies. These illuminate Ong’s general claim that literacy is “*diaeretic*”. So, writing separates the knower from the known, and interpretation from data. It distances words from sounds and speaker from listener. It separates words from reality and demands verbal precision. Literacy creates administration, logic and learning. It creates high culture from vernacular culture, dialects from language. Literacy abstracts forms, is the necessary medium for philosophy and facilitates the syllogism of logical sequence (Ong 1992 307-313).

Ong’s position has been roundly criticised by linguists who have stressed the holistic nature of language, arguing that literacy and orality cannot be isolated in such stark contrast (e.g. Daniell 1986, Street 1993, 1995). Ong’s “*Great Leap*” theory became prominent in the US, where it was seized upon by various political

and special interest groups within academia. Ong's methodology in the establishment of the theory is largely conceptual, following a line of argument that presents itself purely on the basis of its internal logic. In fact, anthropology and sociology have largely failed to support the great cognitive leap of literacy he proposes: if anything, they have tended to contradict it, suggesting a failure to incorporate historical, political, social, economic and cultural factors. Moreover, the implicit hierarchy of abstract knowledge has also been questioned. Ong presumes and implicitly celebrates the peculiarities of the western academy as self-evident intelligence. Thus, Ong's hermeneutic failure lies not so much in conceptual abstractness as in his failure to recognise and thus interpret his own relationship to the issue. Faux objectivity causes him to conjecture on the basis of data that is already ethnocentric and ideologically constructed, giving rise to conclusions that are always already politicised.

More influential in the study of literacy and more informed by anthropological writings, have been various propositions of Jack Goody (e.g. Goody and Watt 1968, Goody 1977, 1986). His earliest account, titled "The consequences of literacy", worked on the assumption that the specific historical conditions reconstructed in Classical Greece could be taken as cross-cultural generalisations. This case study revealed certain key differences between oral and literate cultures. For Goody, however, literacy was something greater than the technical or mechanical skill of reading and writing. It was possible for societies to retain a restricted condition of literacy without the same broad social consequences. Only the development of a critical mass of literacy could bridge the "great divide" between the literate and oral. Without literacy, however, it is all but impossible for a society to take fundamental steps on the road to rationality. It is the ability to question what one reads that provides the core of inter-theoretic competition that distinguishes the West from non-western traditions. Literacy and its concomitant rationality are a great divide in social development.

Goody has qualified his position latterly. In 1977, he even questioned the wisdom of the original title, adding that "implications" might have been a more astute term than "consequences". This demonstrates a degree of misgiving about the almost mechanistic development originally described. Nonetheless, the basic great divide between literate and oral was retained, reformulated as a change in the technology of communication. He acknowledged that, as a theoretical model, it created an uncommonly profound dichotomy between two states: a dichotomy that

was simplistic. Yet, once the complexities of history had been removed, the same basic set of developments could be identified in each context (Goody 1977 especially 46).

Goody also discusses the relationship between religion and literacy, a discussion which has been translated into the study of the early Middle Ages (Nieke 1988).

There are grounds for scepticism in relation to Goody's work also. For one, his theorisation of the relationship between literacy and orality is close to that produced by Ong, so many of the criticisms are the same. Both postulate a "great leap" between self-evident orality and equally self-evident literacy: a leap that delivers cognitive and social benefits. Yet anthropological study suggests that there are different types of orality and different types of literacy (e.g. Barton and Hamilton 1998, Smith 1986). Ironically, this problem spills over into the colonial context in which Goody's anthropological investigations are located (Goody 1986 1-44). For example, he confuses the significant contrast between the sophisticated literacies of the colonial government and African oralities in the nineteenth century with the essence of the clash between the literate and the oral. The differences he observes need not epitomise this relationship alone, but are also partly the product of historical forces of colonialism that are independent of literacy. The "great divide" is the result of external historical circumstances, not the internal dynamics of literacy.

Similar problems of an historical nature can be traced: Classical Greece, another one of Goody's case studies, is more famous for its metaphysics than its record keeping (Goody 1968). It has recently been argued that the classical case study used by Goody can be subjected to a direct interpretative challenge: that literacy was symbolically and ideologically structured in Athenian democracy, and was in fact quite restricted (Thomas 1989). Various other points have been made on the structure of literacy: it has been argued that the structure of the Latin alphabet was the result of particular historical co-incidences and politicking (Morison 1957); and that the introduction of spaces between words (Saenger 1997) has greatly extended the utility of written language. Both suggest that literacy is itself subject to historical development.

Lowe shrewdly notes a circularity in Goody's own position (Lowe 1998 166-7). Goody's ideas were enthusiastically adopted when first published. Among those

influenced by Goody's "Consequences of Literacy" was Patrick Wormald, who adopted the concept of restricted literacy to describe the case of Anglo-Saxon England (Wormald 1977 97). This restricted literacy could account for the existence of literate skills without the great conceptual leap that could only be detected after the Norman Conquest. As already noted, the same position was assumed by Michael Clanchy in a book that collapsed the interpretation of earlier forms for the analysis of subsequent developments. In accepting Wormald's position on Anglo-Saxon England, Clanchy also accepted the theory of literacy originally articulated by Goody through Wormald. Perversely, Goody then adopted the work of Clanchy to demonstrate his own later arguments, despite having moderated his own position in the intervening years. Lowe notes,

The irony ... is that Goody is essentially using a conclusion based on his own outmoded theory that he himself had later reworked (Lowe 1998 167)

This circularity is evidently a reason for handling Goody's theory of literacy with some care, if not scepticism.

Thus, there are significant objections to Goody's and Ong's theories of literacy and its relationship to orality. The case they postulate seems implausible in practice, especially given that they are not supported by any convincing anthropological case studies. The implications for Anglo-Saxon England are that we should not expect literacy to have a profound universal or easily recognised impact. In contrast, the study will be a deal more convoluted, dealing with situated historical contexts. This tends towards the model of literacy proposed by Street and others (Street 1993, 1995). However, this view too must be subject to the same critical scrutiny before moving to consider our methodology for understanding literacy in the particular case.

4.2.2 literacy and power

Though undoubtedly influential, Goody and Ong have not met with universal acceptance. Indeed, the same volume that introduced the academic audience to the "Consequences of literacy" included two articles that were more cautious in their conclusions, laying greater emphasis on the historical and ideological constructedness of literacy than its cognitive and social consequences. Gough sounded a note of caution twice, arguing that literacy does not necessarily produce specific forms of political structure (Gough 1968a), and failing to locate the

cognitive and social consequences of literacy in her anthropological study of the Kerala. Literacy may enable these changes to take place but it was not in itself a sufficient cause (Gough 1968b). Schofield argued that, while literacy may have peculiar and at times predictable consequences, the definition of the term used was itself the product of a certain set of institutionalised values (Schofield 1968). He noted that the structure of educational practices was among the ideological phenomena that had to be addressed before a more sophisticated analysis could be achieved. Though neither Gough nor Schofield stated it in such terms, both made the point that literacy could not be treated as an autonomous, neutral technology, but that it was already culturally and ideologically constituted, both in the object of study and the mind of the analyst.

A number of authors wrote in response to Goody and Ong's theories, arguing that literacy and orality were a continuum (Coulmans and Ehlich 1983, Frawley 1982, Nystrand 1982, Tannen 1982). They argued that Ong and Goody overstated the case and that the two states, previously distinguished from each other, overlapped and influenced each other much more. Street has argued that this move was "*more rhetorical than real*" since, though they placed literacy and orality on a continuum, this second generation of theorists placed the two so far apart on the continuum as to reinforce the great divide theory they aimed to critique (Street 1993 4, Besnier 1988). At the root of the problem were some of the methodological and theoretical assumptions about literacy and how to study it. Thus, the phenomena were analysed within a very narrowly defined social context, literacy was assumed to be a neutral technology without ideological baggage, and linguistic analyses were restricted to syntax without reference to narrative or illocutionary force. These criticisms have led Street and others to develop a more flexible, context-specific approach to literacy that is informed by ethnographic and anthropological studies in which power is theorised in its explicit ideological and more subtle hegemonic embodiments.

These ideas have been most forcefully developed by Street in two books: "Literacy in Theory and Practice", "Social Literacies" and in a volume of edited papers entitled "Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy" (Street 1984, 1993, 1995). Other anthropological studies reveal the constructed nature and specificity of literacy, demonstrating both the complicated relationship between literate and oral practices, and the close relationship between literacy and power that Street postulates. The title of David Barton and Margaret Hamilton's recent volume on the

subject sums this up: the book is titled “Local Literacies” (Barton and Hamilton 1998). Smith, on the other hand, has studied literacy at a more general level, investigating the plight of North American manual workers during a period of economic depression and industrial transformation. The problem noted is not illiteracy so much as a dearth of the pragmatic literacy needed to survive outwith traditional working practices (Smith 1986). Anthropological studies reveal that literacy is implicated in and constructed by the social context of its use.

Barton and Hamilton studied the variations in literacy practices in a community in the north of England (Barton and Hamilton 1998). Instead of a great divide or inevitable consequence, they discovered that, not only were there multiple types of literacy available, but that these are negotiated strategically in given locales with specific aims and methods in mind. The ethnographic evidence they produced demonstrates that, in this particular context, literacy was negotiated, distributed and reproduced in a multitude of different ways. These depended upon existing structures of authority, but not uniquely. Alternative and vernacular literacies might develop in opposition to or parallel with dominant ones, as the needs and tastes of the community and individuals vary. *Contra* Goody and Ong, these literacies are neither autonomous nor neutral, nor predictable but are situated within practice, both responding to and structuring other social, economic, political and cultural institutions.

A similar, if smaller, study is presented by Smith, who has studied varieties of literacy and illiteracy in the contemporary United States (Smith 1986). Research among the unemployed in the United States reveals what Smith terms “the new illiterate”. This group does not represent the traditional image of the unemployed, but workers of long standing in various industries, and blue-collar middle class workers who are highly unionised, highly skilled and highly paid. These workers can read and write, yet various attempts to obtain new employment or retraining fail because they are unable to read or write well enough to take advantage of opportunities offered to them. The employees are competent and highly skilled, working in specialist and technically sophisticated environments, whose very existence was predicated upon a substantial penetration of the ability to read and write. The problem is not so much illiteracy as possession of the wrong literacy. A number of issues are presented through this work, including the validity of the terms “literate” and “illiterate”. It is proposed that, “different cultures of literacy

will have different notions of what counts as literacy” (Smith 1986 265). If this is the case then it can be suggested, contrary to received wisdom, that illiteracy need not be a problem. It only becomes a problem when it becomes a problem — when upheaval in economic or social conditions makes unexpected demands on the population.

Forms of social exclusion such as poverty, disability, sexism and racism are thus among the key components of the problematics of illiteracy, but Smith argues there are certain aspects of literacy which are active in the creation of illiteracy. Problems reside in the culture of literacy that may give little merit to sophisticated but undervalued forms of literacy. Thus, for example, ethnographic evidence is presented of students tagged as illiterate or non-readers, and who identified themselves with these groups in spite of clear empirical evidence to the opposite. Identification with this illiterate or non-reading group had consequences for self perception which was adversely affected by their supposed relationship to literacy, even though there were few observable differences between the actual reading habits of the supposedly illiterate and literate groups. The origin of this perception was traced, not through reading practices, but to classroom politics and the interiorised perception of the students by teachers. Thus, to be illiterate means very little in relation to reading and writing, so much as failing to respond or conform to the sociology of schooling.

This position qualifies earlier work by Ogbu, who noted that the biggest obstacle to literacy is the social caste system that creates particular difficulties for children from minorities (Ogbu 1980). Illiteracy is not the cause of their exclusion, so much as its result. In a complicated fraud, therefore, the illiterate are not only excluded from the contexts in which literacy makes sense, but are also prevented from setting off on the socially and politically sanctioned road to literacy in the first place. This not only makes it difficult to conceive of becoming literate, but also increases exponentially the demands for admission to literacy. All this is the result of erroneous classroom perception and in the face of clear empirical evidence that these perceptions are misguided.

The work of Smith and Ogbu is paralleled in work such as Richard Hoggart’s volume on the “The Uses of Literacy”, published in 1958 (Hoggart 1958). Hoggart described the relationship of British working class culture to “high culture”. Despite the tension between the two, he argued that both were under threat from

what Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer had denounced as the “mass deception” of the “culture industry” (Adorno and Horkheimer 1945). Similar themes are developed in the work of Paul Willis (Willis 1977) whose seminal book “Learning to Labour” presented an analysis of the culture of resistance and authority that hindered the upward mobility of the working class in spite of rhetoric about comprehensive education. While these were directed towards problems in the educational establishment, the mechanisms used by that establishment are exposed as the mechanisms of hegemony. Rather than being the autonomous neutral technology proposed by Goody and Ong, literacy in practice is loaded with ideological and hegemonic nuances.

The critique offered by Street, and the anthropology that supports it, threatens to swamp the entire phenomenon of literacy within other social concerns. If literacy were completely politically or ideologically constructed in nature then its study would be little more than an extension of the study of political structures. This has concerned linguists, frightened that the contexts would overwhelm their field of study (Street 1993 13). Can we study literacy without studying other social institutions, or can we study literacy as a phenomenon in its own right? The answer to this question will rebound directly on our ability to use literacy as a paradigm for early Medieval Christianity.

In order to proceed with their analyses, linguistic and ethnographic scholars have adopted the concept of *discourse* to reconcile the social practices of literacy with the study of progressively larger units of analysis proposed in linguistic writings (Street 1993 12). As well as recognising the complexity of literacy as a social construct, this has thus fostered the re-integration of linguistic and anthropological study. It provides the means to replace Goody’s great divide or Ong’s great leap with a more sophisticated account of the rise of literacy in society. A number of analytical terms have been developed in order to further this line of study. The concepts of the *literacy event*, *literacy practices* and *communicative practices* nest different contexts of the deployment of literacy from relatively discrete events in time and space to overarching and enduring structures of wide relevance. A fourth term, the *textual community*, embodies these different practices within specific and identifiable social groups. These categories provide us with an important set of analytical tools to comprehend the use of literacy in Anglo-Saxon England, since the same phenomena can, within theory at least, be posited in historical contexts.

The *literacy event* is conceived of as the essential empirical context where literacy is located (Heath 1983, Street 1993 12, Barton and Hamilton 1998 8): any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of a participant's interactions and their interpretative processes. Barton and Hamilton elucidate this rather grandiose sounding definition with a remarkably everyday example — following a recipe (Barton and Hamilton 1998 8). A variety of oral and written forms of knowledge is employed simultaneously, derived from a number of different sources, and in such a way as to be almost indistinguishable from each other. Mathematical and metric practices are integral to the task. Literacy is not the abstract object of an abstract exercise, nor does it depend on any given set of literate forms. In this way, we see that literacy is not necessarily a schoolroom practice, nor is it “separated from the plenum of existence” but provides one of a number of methods for performing relatively mundane tasks. It is situated firmly in the routine of daily life and cannot be extricated from oral practices.

This definition of the literacy event seems simple, but given the discussions that have gone before, even this simple definition is not straightforward. In essence, there is a contradiction between a narrow definition of the literacy event, which concentrates on reading and writing, and the broader social context, in which literacy may be discursive also.

The act of writing is an obvious literacy event, involving both reading and writing. Writing may be described as the classic literacy event since it encapsulates all aspects of literacy. Problems arise as we move away from this centre of gravity to other more fluid definitions of literacy that do not lay the whole emphasis on reading and writing, and which lay more emphasis on the discursive aspects of literacy.

For example, commentators support the notion that reading may be termed a literacy event, since the core of the activity is focussed on the interpretation of symbols. Yet, if one were to pursue a rigorous definition of literacy that identified literacy as reading and writing, then the act of reading alone would necessarily fall outwith the precise definition of a literacy event. Such a claim seems unnecessarily restrictive.

But there is more to literacy than reading or writing: literacy cannot be easily separated from illiteracy, nor from a whole discursive environment in which the roles of literate and illiterate may be projected. Thus, it should follow that an illiterate person may be able to participate in a literacy event. If an illiterate hearer were to listen to a reading, and know that reading was taking place, then he or she would be a participant in a literacy event. Not only would the illiterate person depend on the literate, this relationship of dependence could reinforce other social, cultural or ideological dependencies. It has already been noted that the early Middle Ages give us various examples of precisely this, such as Charlemagne's attempts to write (VC III 25), the hearers of the Ecclesiastical History (HE Preface), and the letters of Pope Gregory to various of the Anglo-Saxon kings. The literacy event may thus involve the illiterate also.

Another, wider definition of the literacy event follows from this recognition that the illiterate may participate. It follows that literacy events may occur without the presence of a literate mediator. If a text is presented to an illiterate person, they may be made aware of their illiteracy, thus activating a discourse on literacy. It may seem odd that a literacy event may involve a failure to read or write, but it is not inconsistent with definitions of literacy that stress its discursive impact. Literacy may be about image as well as the practicalities of meaning. Chapter One presented several possible examples of such an event: the Ruthwell Cross, medieval coinage, and all manner of inscriptions. Individuals may not have been able to read such inscriptions or texts, but the fact that they could have been read may have been sufficient to activate the discourse of literacy. Thus, literacy events need not involve a literate participant. Such a broad definition may seem like a controversial claim, but it is not inconsistent with the definition of literacy offered by Street. If a literacy event is any event in which literacy is mobilised, then the discursive mobilisation of literacy and illiteracy is appropriately described as a literacy event.

It is possible to extend the definition of literacy event one degree further without changing our understanding of literacy itself. If, as Street and others suggest, literacy is a discourse on access to esoteric forms of knowledge, then the activation of the discourse may be a literacy event. If the activation of a discourse is all that is required, then it does not follow that a text need be present. All that is required is the roles of literate and illiterate be projected. This is significantly distant from the

discrete moment of reading and writing with which we started. It may seem to weaken the precision of the term, but social definitions of literacy suggest that a literacy event may in fact be any event in which the discourse of literacy is activated. The discourse of literacy may be activated without the presence of a reader, a writer or even a text, so it follows that a literacy event need not involve any of these players either.

There is no doubt that this is a controversial definition of the literacy event that may not fit easily with more conventional usage, and may indeed ultimately corrupt the original intended meaning of the phrase. It certainly extends the definition. The “literacy event” sounds like a simple and precise term, but critical scrutiny shows that it is hostage to the definition of literacy itself. The core of the literacy event seems solid, but the edges are more fluid. Consequently, different types of literacy event will be ruled in or out depending on the definition of literacy used, since this will dictate where the boundaries of the literacy event are set. Street’s emphasis on the discursive and social impact of literacy implies that those boundaries should be drawn widely.

As noted in Chapter One, readers may wish to reflect whether such a wide definition is indeed useful in the context, and choose to reject certain of the literacy events identified here. These events are certainly only tenuously connected with a more conservative or mechanical definition of literacy that focuses exclusively on reading and writing. Readers should be warned of this possible problem, and are at liberty to discard conclusions that depend upon it. But readers should also be aware that a narrower definition is not without its own contradictions.

Street proposes the term “literacy practice” as a slightly broader term to describe similar phenomena, but aimed at more abstract notions of how to behave with literacy (Street 1984, 1993 12-3). Thus literacy practices include literacy events, like the recipe, but also “folk models” of recipes and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them. So the recipe does not exist as a text in isolation, but is used according to learned behaviours. Significantly, in Barton and Hamilton’s example, it is a woman who follows the recipe, which was written by a friend and has been passed to other friends. It is no coincidence that women exchange recipes, nor is it an accident that this particular recipe was chosen from the shelf of recipes available to produce this particular result. The exchange of recipes is a form of

literacy practice with gendered overtones, while the choice of this particular recipe betrays learned behaviour with concrete experiential dimensions. These considerations transcend the literacy event described, but are influential in its course and eventual outcome.

Beyond these are more sophisticated issues of political, social and economic concern. Grillo describes these as “*communicative practices*”, including the social activities through which language or communication is produced, the way in which these activities are embedded in institutions, settings or domains which in turn are implicated in other, wider, social, economic, political or cultural processes and the ideologies which may be linguistic or other which guide the processes of communicative production (Grillo 1989). Thus, literacy is among a range of communicative practices within a larger context. The cook could achieve the same results with different sets of tools depending on political, social, economic or cultural resources. The recipe may be passed on orally; it may be presented in a book for an aspirational bourgeois readership. Even a measure of flour or sugar can be imperial. Thus, different communicative practices reveal and inform different social, economic, cultural or political processes. These too can be located in the literacy event described above, but at a level of abstraction beyond even literacy practices.

These categories extend beyond, indeed transcend the categories of literate and illiterate, creating unequal relationships of power between the two categories. The illiterate is necessarily, if unwillingly drawn into literacy. Brian Stock has developed and deployed an analytical category that partly identifies the extent of that relationship in an historical instance (Stock 1983). The *textual community* describes a group in which, although the ability to read and write may be restricted, and the skills of literacy and the use of texts need not be co-extensive, the effects of literacy reach beyond that mechanical ability. This is not necessarily a community that can read and write, so much as a community which is predicated upon the acceptance of one or other text, or particular reading of it. So, the Cistercian order that Stock quotes as an example developed in relation to texts: but to subject oneself to a rule is not the same as being able to read and write. To argue that the Cistercian order negotiated its identity through the consumption and reproduction of certain texts is not the same as saying that all Cistercian brothers, lay and regular, could read and write. It is the internalisation of such literate

discourse in oral culture that Stock sees as the fundamental change in literacy and orality in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The question then becomes not whether people could read or write, but the extent of the textual community. In essence, this brings us one more time to the sociology of language. What can be disclosed in front of the historical sources, prior to their production and manufacture, and what does their production imply about the organisation of society?

There are, it must be admitted, problems with Stock's conclusions, problems that arise out of the methods used to obtain them. Van Engen astutely observed that Stock's argument is circular, since it requires him to see through well-known clerical texts and to discover oral communities behind them. The state of these oral practices can only be inferred from texts that were supposedly the product of a different, literate, culture (Van Engen 1986 548). This methodological problem undermines Stock's argument but serves to encourage us to contemplate the archaeology of these practices, since this need not be predicated on texts in the same way.

Thus, the anthropology of literacy practices has moved towards a contextualised approach to the development and deployment of literacy. This emphasises not only the ideological component proposed by the early critics of Ong and Goody, but also encompasses small scale, discrete and transient components that are unique to each and every context in which literacy is deployed. The study of literacy has moved in line with other branches of anthropology to note the unpredictable relationship between structure and agency that gives rise to social reproduction. The unifying principle behind this relationship in the case of literacy is discourse, a programme of communication behind and through which power is negotiated. As a form of communicative practice, literacy is a form of discourse, revealing not so much a total culture, but partial and unequal power relationships that are constructed out of specific historical and political conditions and make certain rhetorical forms objective and authoritative. In such circumstances, social change can be brought about by challenges to existing discourses and the assertion or production of counter-discursive practices. These, if successful, will bring about new, objective material conditions that may in turn be the location of power and the subject of challenge (*inter alia* Asad 1979).

In short, therefore, it is possible to study literacy in practice but not literacy in isolation, because literacy is itself both a container for power and the means of attaining it. If, as is supposed by the autonomous school, we attempt to reduce literacy to a neutral technology with particular cognitive and social implications, then we necessarily overlook significant issues in its development. For example, we will necessarily fail to recognise why certain uses and forms of literacy develop in some situations and not others. This will help us to explain the different types of document that emerge in Anglo-Saxon England. However, the acceptance of the many different faces of literacy means that we should be ready to find literacy located in a variety of apparently unexpected contexts. Not only is literacy unpredictable, but it is situated alongside a variety of other communicative practices, the interaction of which is integral to the production of discourse in its varied forms. In this respect, literacy is considerably greater than the ability to read and write, drawing in not only those with the verifiable mechanical ability to read and write, but also drawing in those who cannot read or write into particular relationships of exclusion. So, our study of literacy in Anglo-Saxon England must move beyond the literate elite to a broader, more sophisticated analysis of literacy in society.

4.2.3 Ricoeur, distanciation and the limits of literacy

Yet there remains a tension between the theory of literacy developed above and the review of literacy in the specific context that pre-figured it. I have argued that literacy in this particular context was associated peculiarly with the Christian clergy, and that this association allows an alternative, and more historically informed perspective on the development of Christian discourse than presumed changes in funerary or other ritual. Yet if literacy is infinitely flexible in historical construction, as Street and others argue, then one of the earliest links in the argument is potentially flawed. Pre-Christian runic letters were excluded as a form of literacy. Street *et al* would seem to dispute that preliminary dismissal. A resolution comes from within the structure of language, and Paul Ricoeur's proposition that certain forms of literacy have unique properties, even if socially constructed.

As already noted, Ricoeur follows Émile Benveniste in arguing that the sentence is a linguistic unit of a different order from the word: a unit which, though constructed out of individual words, cannot be reduced to them (de Saussure 1960 Benveniste 1971). Thus, still following Benveniste, Ricoeur argues that

structuralist semiotics cannot encompass the totality of language, since a second analytical category of semantics is also present. These cross over, but are distinct. While semiotics is concerned with the sign in isolation, semantics is concerned with the declarative use of those signs. It follows from this declarative mode of semantics that analysis presumes the context or instance of use: thus, semantics pertains as much to discourse as to semiotics. He also argues for the investigation of the historical sense and declarative purpose of language, postulating a finite state, rather than the infinite regression of reference proposed by classic post-structuralism. Thus, Ricoeur's theory of language focuses attention on those aspects of language which structuralism either ignores or puts aside: history, the referenced world, the subject and the structure of the sentence (summarised in Ricoeur 1978 65-76).

As noted previously, this account of meaning and language gives us reason to include and exclude certain practices as being of a different order. Sentences, we note, are of a different order to individual words or letters. It is this distinction that underpins the earlier rejection of individual runes of runic characters. While these may be described as literacy, it cannot be maintained that they have the same relationship to the semantic interpretation of discourse.

But there is more to be gained from a consideration of Ricoeur's theory of language. It is the on the nature of text that Ricoeur begins to present an alternative insight into the operation of literacy, in which the full implications of his theory are developed. The text, he notes, is an order of structured totality distinct from the sentence. Just as the sentence is composed of words, but is irreducible to these components, so the text is composed of sentences, but cannot in its turn be reduced to these elementary forms. The unique characteristics of the text become apparent when the text is manifested as the product of labour. It is more than simply a stylised composition of sentences, but is a physical reality, a work in every sense of the word. This product of physical labour is a written work, quite distinct from the spoken sentence since the fact of inscribing discourse necessitates a series of transformations that are unique to writing.

Ricoeur argues that written discourse is different from spoken discourse, most particularly in the way that it is distributed. This is presented in the four-fold concept of *distanciation*.

- * Writing preserves the meaning of discourse in such a way as to transcend the “instance of discourse” of spoken language. Thus, texts have an attenuated, special relationship to the temporal dimensions of discourse.
- * The meaning of a text once inscribed escapes the author’s proprietary gaze and enjoys a career independent of the author. In essence, the precise detail of the text matters more than the original intention of the author, since the former can be given, but the latter cannot be made present.
- * Unlike spoken discourse, texts, by virtue of their materiality, confront an unidentifiable, perhaps unimaginable, readership. Texts are thus released from the immediate historical contexts of their production into unlimited historical contexts of readership.
- * The shared reality between speaker and hearer that is taken for granted in the case of spoken discourse no longer holds true in the case of the text, which thus loses the shared ostensive reference of meaning. Texts do not refer to their contexts of production so much as to the world of the readership. It thus posits a view of the world and being in the world for the engaged subject.

In short, the four-fold theory of distancing proposes inherent qualities for texts that are irreducible, in spite of their ideological or historical condition (Ricoeur 1981 198-203). Ricoeur makes two specific claims about the objective text. Firstly, distancing extends and transforms the discourse that is contained within it, and does so in ways that cannot be anticipated. Secondly, he claims that text leads to an appropriation of reality in which peculiar self-knowledge is produced.

Ricoeur’s theory is of immediate interest to archaeology since some of his ideas have been influential in the metaphorical apprehension of material culture as text (*inter alia* Moore 1986, 1990, Shanks and Tilley 1992 17-18, Tilley 1994 32, 1999 14-17). His comments on post-structuralism rebound on archaeological approaches to meaning (e.g. Hodder 1982a, Hodder 1982b, Tilley 1984, Bapty and Yates 1990, see also Barrett 1994 164-72).

It is possible to expand this topic, if not *ad infinitum*, then at least *ad nauseam*, but there is enough here to warrant a number of conclusions. These draw particularly upon Ricoeur’s theory of distancing and its impact on literacy. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, the distancing associated with text is, if not peculiar, then at least distinctive in writing and written texts. It is a unique feature of literacy. This follows because the self-identification that Ricoeur claims

for meaningful action, and various archaeologists claim for material culture, can only be produced as the result of a different, twofold process of interpretation in which meaninglessness is moderated through the hermeneutics of *emplotment*. Written texts, through the mediation of language, are the subject of less elaborate interpretative processes. The second important conclusion, therefore, is that literacy is indeed a distinct form of communicative practice. Thirdly, this hermeneutic distinctiveness pertains to its operation in time and space, though does not necessarily impute any moral good or superior incipient rationality over other forms of discourse. It is the relationship of the author and the situated, empowered readership that is important: a relationship that exists not in theory but in real time and real space. This latter point is of particular consequence when we consider the axes of power between literacy and surveillance. Finally, with an eye to archaeological theory more widely, to claim that material culture operates in the same way as text is not just to misconstrue material culture, it is also to misunderstand the operation of meaning in texts.

The implications for our Anglo-Saxon case study are complicated. Firstly, at an abstract level, textual literacy is a discourse distinct from the symbolic discourse of runes. The division postulated previously can be sustained. Secondly, literacy facilitates a series of changes in the space/time geography of discourse. In particular, communicative practices are altered in practical historical ways. So, as well as identifying literacy practices and events within broader social discourse as proposed in our review of Street *et al*, we should focus our attention on changes in the space/time geography of discursive practices, since this is a particular feature of literacy. Any changes that betray the deployment of such non-face-to-face exchanges are of interest, since these may represent practical examples of distancing.

4.3 towards a methodology for the archaeology of literacy practices

The purpose of this chapter is to develop and refine an alternative methodology for understanding the breadth and penetration of literacy and the clergy Anglo-Saxon England. A number of important steps have already been taken, and before proceeding it may be useful to recapitulate them.

The problems of using cemeteries and other ritual to understand conversion have been highlighted along with the problems of reducing the spread of

Christianity to other political phenomena. A more detailed critique of functionalism revealed the need to identify the rationality of conversion from within a pre-Christian milieu. The absence of the psychoanalytical study was noted, and the presence of charisma postulated as an undetectable pre-condition of the psyche. It was shown that the questions asked are of central importance, since subtle nuances in the formation of questions may result in unsustainable critique. An approach which distributed the missionary encounter through the negotiation of seemingly mundane and otherwise irrelevant issues was proposed as a means of interrogating the extent to which the values of the clergy were interiorised by the subject population. This asks not about the authenticity of conversion so much as about an encounter with missionary practices and the manufacture of hegemony. The role of literacy in Anglo-Saxon England was proposed as a mechanism for divining the impact of the clergy on the daily life of the population. The problems of literacy have been refined further, with a recognition that it also is negotiated through situated practice. Analytical terms were introduced that aim to ensure that literacy is not swamped by context.

There is a broad consensus between these different threads. For example, the need to investigate daily practice has been articulated at every turn, whether as a remedy to the historical sources, or as a solution to the variability of the archaeology of cemeteries or other ritual forms. Practice has been proposed as a more accurate means of representing the missionary encounter, and avoiding functionalist assumptions of the role of religion. Finally, literacy has been identified not as a neutral technology but as an embedded social practice through which discourse is perpetuated. Literacy is located and extended in unlikely ways and encompasses the illiterate. It is clear therefore that the methodology developed should take account of practice, identifying literacy in unlikely locations. In addition, there appear to be no particular contradictions. For example, the adoption of literacy does not necessitate a functionalist account, nor does it require an unhistorical constitution of religious practice. Moreover, the textual community of literacy theory and the reference group of conversion studies are at least congruent if not directly analogous.

We turn now at last to the archaeological record to contemplate the sorts of archaeological evidence that may be deployed to support the archaeological impact of the clergy. All the arguments so far may be unassailable, but if they cannot be identified within material culture, then they remain contingent. For example,

Tzeng and Wang argue that literacy restructures the nature of thought, with different forms of reading and writing exercising and physically altering distinct areas of the brain to process information (Tzeng and Wang 1983). Readers familiar with alphabetic scripts such as the Latin alphabet tend to use the left cerebral hemisphere significantly more than readers of logographic scripts such as Chinese, who tend to use the right hemisphere for the task of reading and understanding. This stimulates different thought processes, with a particular contrast between the use of visual memory (Sasanuma 1974). These neuro-physiological changes, brought about through literacy practices, are pre-discursive. The same phenomena may well restructure action too, though this is only completed through the disposition of agents to act in certain ways. To that extent, literacy is a structuring structure of action, but it is all but impossible to locate this within the material culture record. An argument based on these incontrovertible findings would become futile when confronted with the archaeological record.

Two questions need to be posed. Firstly, we need to investigate archaeological approaches to social practice. Thereafter, we need to have an idea of the disposition of literacy in the context under review. It is in the synthesis of the two that an archaeology of the breadth and penetration of the culture of literacy will cohere.

4.3.1 an archaeology of social practice

Literacy has been taken for granted by archaeologists. It is present in the debates about archaeological theory and writing, whether as a textual metaphor or as a container for the social practice of language. Literacy is a key component in educational literature, pertaining to the representation and interpretation of the archaeological past to the general public or focused educational interests. It is thus a key element in the democratisation or intellectualisation of the discipline. It is also the foundation of the concept of pre-history. We have seen, however, that literacy is also an historical phenomenon in its own right which, like gender or class relations, may take on particular forms at particular times. If we are to develop an understanding of literacy through the archaeology of practices, it would be useful to identify archaeological approaches to other types of social practice, since these provide ready-made case studies, identifying pitfalls and errors as appropriate.

Archaeologists have argued that the archaeological record articulates and contains different aspects of a variety of types of social practice. A number of themes have been the subject of analyses. Thus gendered practices, practices pertaining to the human body and practices associated with space and time have been construed by various authors (e.g. Spector 1993, Yates 1993, Tilley 1994, Gosden 1993). Social class, age and ethnicity are also discussed at length, as are issues pertaining to death (e.g. Clark and Blake 1993, Shennan 1989, Downes and Pollard 1999). Each of these provides concrete case studies in the identification of practice within and through the archaeological record. To that extent, therefore, the identification of literacy practices within the archaeological record is similar to the identification of gendered practices within the archaeological record. The advanced state of the critique of the archaeology of gender allows us to avoid more treacherous areas, thus allowing us to progress more rapidly in the archaeology of literacy practices.

Gender has been implicit in archaeological literature since the inception of the discipline but has, until recently, received only indirect allusion. The recent florescence of literature concerning the nature of gender and its place within the archaeological record has divergent origins, but can be attributed in no small measure to the parallel, and now somewhat clichéd study of gender history, gender anthropology, gender politics and “women’s issues” in general. Prime movers in this field in archaeology include Alison Wylie, Meg Conkey, Janet Spector and Rosemary Joyce, whose work in the mid 1980s was received by many as a call to arms (Hodder and Preucel 1996 416). These issues have received support from theoretical developments which encourage oppressed groups to be given access to the writing of archaeology, and the possibility of competing, and discordant archaeologies (Trigger 1984). That gender archaeology developed alongside the post-structuralist challenge is instructive, since it provides one way to escape the straitjacket of interpretation thus identified.

There are three elements of gender archaeology: a concern with the professional status of different gender groups in the profession of archaeology (e.g. Conkey and Spector 1984, Gero 1983, 1986, Beaudry and White 1994, Ford 1992, Whittlesey 1994, Cane *et al* 1994); a concern with gender as represented to the public through the medium of archaeology (e.g. Gero 1985); and a concern with gender as an organising principle of human existence which may be used as an interpretative

category in archaeological analysis (Hastorf 1991). The latter, termed by Hodder and Preucel the “*gender-as-social*” approach, takes for granted the existence of gender relations as a constitutive element of social relations (Hodder and Preucel 1997 418). In other words, all societies in all times and places negotiate and re-negotiate gender relations. Furthermore, given that gender and its physical referent, biology, is a universal human characteristic all human relationships are to some extent involved in the negotiation of gender. It is from this area of research that we can derive a model for the archaeology of literacy.

For the *gender as social* model to work, it is necessary to constitute gender relations coherently and convincingly, extending biological categories (Gero and Conkey 1991 8, Joyce 1992, Yates 1993, Foucault 1981). Consequently, the recognition of gender in the archaeological record does not depend upon some grand methodological breakthrough, but upon a realisation that “*gender is ... produced out of the choreography of human existence*” (Barrett 1987 13-14). This is self-evidently different in the case of literacy, since it is clearly a socio-cultural artefact, not an adjunct of social being. But this is not the point of the argument. The existence of literacy in this case is guaranteed by and through the historical record. It is the locus of gender in practice that is important, since this may provide a model for the identification of literacy in practice. The challenge is to develop the critical realisation that, if literacy is a social practice, the archaeological record contains numerous, though oblique, references to literacy events, literacy practices and communicative practices, all produced by multidimensional textual communities coalescing and dissolving in the mundane drama of daily life. In other words, literacy practices and events need not be confined to the historical record and the locus of its physical production.

We can use the model of gender to illuminate heuristically what a reconstituted data set might look like. The range of examples is vast, and to delineate more than one would risk gross misrepresentation. There is no consensus on how to approach gender in such broad areas as economy, political life, the rise of the state, the origins of culture, the development of hominid behaviour or the like: some treat it as fundamental, others see it as present, but secondary (Hodder and Preucel 1996 420). If such divergence exists in the evolved critique gender studies, then the underdeveloped study of literacy should expect to be provisional, at least until a critical mass of comment and dispute can refine analyses. Like gender studies, however, it must start somewhere.

To pick a well developed example of the archaeology of gendered practices, Hastorf investigates the development and expansion of the Inca Empire, and how this political and military development affected and was affected by the relative division of labour between male and female (Hastorf 1991). It shows that the differences between male and female labour increased as men were drawn into the political economy of the state, receiving wages in return for labour. The relative condition and position of women diminished as they began to focus more and more upon domestic concerns. Thus, the autonomy of women became confined to the domestic sphere. These conclusions were reached through the study of food consumption and production patterns, and their changing spatial relationship. This is a twofold argument, relating in the first instance to the labour involved in food preparation and in the second to differential access to food resources.

The archaeology of gender as presented by Hastorf is dependent upon the construction of an analytical bridge between gender as a social category and its material expression. Hastorf attempts this by exploring the role of food: the space of food preparation and diet. An archaeology of literacy will similarly depend upon the construction of a solid analytical bridge between practice and material culture. For such a link to be created, it is necessary to turn to the historical sources to establish the contextualised disposition of literacy.

4.3.2 literacies, practice and surveillance: the pastoral bureaucracy

Familiarity with historical sources gives us a privileged insight into the culture of literacy in the southern half of Anglo-Saxon England in the later seventh and eighth centuries. It has already been pointed out that there is a strange imbalance in the historical record between northern and southern England in the seventh and eighth centuries. Whereas the “*Golden Age*” of Northumbria was characterised by numerous religious tracts – hagiography, providential history, homiletics, liturgies and the like – little of this material survives from England south of the Humber. Those documents that do survive are dominated by bureaucratic texts — charters, law codes, tax registers and the like. These texts betray forms of literacy practice that can only have been brought about by a collision between reading and writing and practices aimed at the maintenance or attainment of control over physical, symbolic or human resources.

As has been noted, texts enjoy unique properties associated with time and space in the transmission of meaning. Distanciation is at the core of these unique properties, and has implications for surveillance. For example, Giddens, drawing on the work of Hägerstrand, illustrates the field of time-geography (Giddens 1984 110-144). This takes as its starting point the routine of daily life, connecting it to features of the human body, such as mobility and communication, in its path through the “life cycle” (Hägerstrand 1975). It is clear that the human body is relatively constrained in its activities, creating boundaries to behaviour in time and space. These and other related aspects of the human condition express the material axes of human existence and underlie all contexts of association. They inevitably condition interaction over short and longer terms, and are drawn into power relations. These basic concepts were developed further by Janelle, who points out that the distances and times between different places could be attenuated by the intervention of media (Janelle 1969). This shrinkage is, of course, dependent upon the resources available, the individual’s ability to take advantage of these resources and rational decision-making about the most appropriate resource to use. Giddens uses these conceptual tools as a springboard for his own analysis of time and space, in particular the regionalisation of activities through the presence or absence of agents. Communication has the ability to change this. Giddens notes the importance of modern mass communication, but pays lip service to literacy, noting that this only creates new forms of time-space convergence at the same speed as the fastest horse (Giddens 1984 123). Yet this omits what Giddens himself is keen to emphasise: the regionalisation of time. Thus literacy, on account of distanciation, creates the conditions for time convergence in depth.

All this talk of surveillance and bureaucracy seems, on the face of it, several steps, and certainly several centuries, removed from the study that is our primary focus. How and why should we suppose that bureaucratic practices have anything to do with the organisation and maintenance of pastoral care, the dissemination of religious truths or models of the apostolic life? There is, however, at least one exemplar of bureaucratic practice familiar to the clergy involved in the mission, and current for several centuries, which suggests that they are directly connected. That is the case of St. Gregory the Great.

Mediterranean sources reveal an extensive culture of literacy in the sixth and seventh century that involved a whole series of minor officials and lawyers communicating textually. This contrasts sharply with England, where even the

most positive analyses situate the impact of literacy in the ninth century at the earliest (Kelly 1990, Keynes 1990, Lowe 1998). Thus, this short case study does not attempt to establish inappropriate parallels between England and the Mediterranean; instead it provides a short examination of the recognition of literacy practices from an historical context. If the deployment of literacy had little or no impact on the greater mass of the population in the Mediterranean, then claims about Anglo-Saxon England would seem absurd. If, instead, we can see that these literacy practices were folded into the routine of daily life and had an impact on the whole population in the Mediterranean where literacy was widespread, then an argument about Anglo-Saxon England is made possible. It is precisely because the two are so different that the argument is relevant. This case study is therefore used to provide conceptual support, in order to see whether or not an argument about literacy in Anglo-Saxon England is even possible.

Of course, Gregory the Great's literacy practices have the added attraction in that they provide more than simple conceptual support. While there may be considerable differences in literacy culture between Rome and England, there were contacts between them. The Augustinian mission was led by papal clergy, and carried letters from the pope to various kings and bishops; Hadrian and Theodore both came to England direct from Rome, and were influential in establishing a more formal organisation for the English church (Cubitt 1995). Individuals, like Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop also clearly travelled backwards and forwards to Rome. So, the image of the Roman church using literacy to regulate its activities does hold prospects for understanding how the senior clergy in England may have imagined their role, and the role of literacy in law, government and administration. If we are to use such an insight, we must guard carefully against drawing inappropriate parallels between these ideal visions and the less than ideal reality. Moreover, it may not be possible to do much other than to propose that the clergy may have had Roman or other models for the use of literacy in mind. A case study like this does, however, provide the foundation for developing a clearer understanding of the role which the clergy may have perceived for literacy.

Richard Markus has recently completed a biographical study of the life of Gregory the Great (Markus 1997). Gregory is an obvious subject for biographical investigation because of his own writings, the relatively early accounts of his life, and, more particularly, the registers of the letters he wrote to a diverse group

people involved in all manner of business with the Pope. These letters reveal not only the contours of the political and ecclesiastical landscape, but also something of the character of the man himself (Markus 1997 147-156). He is an important figure in the coming of Christianity to England, not just because of his own associations with it, but because his injunctions on the pastoral care of the laity remained popular and current in clerical circles for many years after his death.

It is possible to excavate his writings for what they reveal about the literacy and communicative practices of Gregory, his missionaries, and that of subsequent generations. Thus, Markus argues, Gregory had quite a different linguistic perception of the world from a man like Augustine of Hippo. Whereas, in Late Antiquity, Augustine of Hippo wrote with a sense of the fluidity and thus complexity of language, Gregory, on the other hand, viewed the relationship between word and world in much more concrete terms. Words and symbolic actions had concrete, unequivocal meanings. Gregory had no interest in abstract questions of signification (Markus 1997 49-50). This might in part account for the perceived ambivalence about matters such as instruction or uniform practice, since the sacraments in and of themselves were capable of bringing about the state of grace about which other generations of theologians might be more abstruse, and about which generations of historians may be somewhat more sceptical.

The letters also reveal Gregory's concern to locate "the Church" in parallel rather than hierarchical relationships. This is, of course, as much a sign of the times as the Pope's view of ecclesiastical organisation. Nonetheless, Gregory's objection to Constantinople's claim to ecumenical patriarchy is expressed in terms that deny universal authority to any metropolitan, and not specifically the inflated claims of Constantinople (Markus 1997 91-95). This is consistent with the vision of the Church revealed in his manual for good practice among ecclesiastical leaders, revealed most explicitly in his book *Pastoral Care*. This presents the Church as an organisation displaying "unity with diversity", a "*concors membrum diversitas*". Gregory envisaged each local church, under its own bishop, as a church in its own right. These churches developed their own practices and their own liturgies as was appropriate to the needs of the local communities. This policy can be seen in practice through a number of the letters, such as those to Spain on the question of the most appropriate formula for baptism, or in letters to the Church in North Africa about the selection of bishops (Markus 1997 72-75). These examples provide a context in which to comprehend Gregory's policy towards England,

where he instructs Augustine to be flexible in the use and development of liturgy. This is not only consistent in its own terms, but seems consistent with the diverse liturgical practices argued for in Chapter Two, where we saw that diversity and discontinuity seem to have been the norm, even in among orthodox Christian groups.

More importantly, however, the letters let us see the shape and orientation of Gregory's bureaucratic practices. These bureaucratic practices give us an exemplar of the relationship between literacy and, more recognisably, pastoral methods. Nowhere is this revealed more clearly than in the numerous letters Gregory wrote to his *rectores*, the officials sent by Gregory to maintain and improve the papal estates, and oversee the return of revenues from them.

The various officials to whom the letters were addressed tended to be minor clergy charged in the main with secular duties. Thus, the majority of the letters are addressed to deacons or sub-deacons within the papal patrimony, relating to the needs of the localities. The *rectores* of the papal estates did not have a systematic brief, nor was there much consistency between the missions they were asked to undertake. Instead, the missions undertaken depended upon the needs of the localities, the ability of the personnel engaged, and the political situation in which they worked. This is also partly why we know so much about the work of the *rectores*, since Gregory wrote to them often, as needs arose.

In addition to the mundane responsibilities of estate management, the *rectores* could also be asked to carry out important civil, political and ecclesiastical functions. An example of all of these functions is Peter, a sub-deacon working as rector and occasional papal vicar in Sicily. His responsibilities were primarily the financial and curatorial ones we might expect. Peter was charged, as a matter of routine, with the concerns of land management. He was to ensure that the peasants were paid a fair price for their crops, and that the correct weights and measures were used and false ones destroyed. He was to compensate peasants if unfair taxes were imposed upon them, and to buy and sell livestock and equipment as he thought fit, ensuring a good return. He was to help an orphan obtain his lawful inheritance, and undertake any number of other minor duties (Markus 1997 119). He was also charged with gathering the bishops of Sicily together once a year in a council to discuss matters pertaining to the province; to feed and clothe the poor of the province; and to correct any excesses or abuses that he found. It goes without

saying that this is a remarkably wide brief for a cleric as lowly as a sub-deacon (Markus 1997 115). Other *rectores* were given equally important pastoral duties. They were asked to identify candidates for the priesthood; to impose penances on impious or lapsed clergy; to dissuade bishops from too-hasty sentences of excommunication; to bring renegade monks into line; to depose a sinful abbot; and to enquire on Gregory's behalf into charges of witchcraft. In one case, a sub-deacon was charged with the task of rebuking a metropolitan archbishop, the most senior clerical order that existed, a task that was barely even within the Papal prerogative at the time, and certainly not a task that would have been undertaken lightly. In return for these occasional extraordinary powers, the *rectores* were expected to live by the highest standards, be familiar with Gregory's aims and means, and render annual accounts of income and expenditure. On no account were they to be dishonest, nor were they to be high-handed in the exercise of their official duties. They were generally drawn from the religious communities of Italy, and in particular from Rome: those with which Gregory was most familiar. It goes without saying that literacy was a necessary pre-requisite of the *rectores* in the routine exercise of their duties.

What does this tell us about literacy, literacy practices and their relationship to pastoral care and the religious life that Gregory wished to extend to England in the late sixth century? The literacy practices in which Gregory indulged can reasonably be described as pastoral bureaucracy. The preceding sections suggest that this pastoral bureaucracy was not a formal continuum from literate to oral, but in fact involved a whole series of intricately interpenetrating practices. It is clear that other communicative practices and means of representation were used alongside literacy, principally involving the use and exchange of money, but also the uses of weights and measures, the collection and equivalence of rents and resources, as well as more esoteric legal and religious practices. *Contra* Ong, literacy in this context was directly involved and in its own way recreated the "*plenum of existence*". Moreover, the apparently secular administration of the estates and the more obviously spiritual exercise of pastoral responsibilities permeate each other to such a degree as to be virtually indistinct. Administration, both action and institution, was oriented to the saving of souls. Good practices of estate management were founded on Gregory's soteriology, as were the appropriate use of weights and measures, the rights of the poor when unfairly denied and the return of regular accounts, along with more familiar religious concerns such as the

admonition of wayward clergy. It is clear that the powerful players in Gregory's estates were not necessarily the senior clergy so much as the clergy to whom Gregory entrusted these occasional responsibilities. At times, even the ownership of a letter from Gregory could carry more weight than the most exalted of clerical status.

Thus, the literacy practices of Gregory the Great's pastoral bureaucracy had an impact beyond those who could read or write in the Mediterranean. The literacy culture of the Mediterranean involved a whole range of activities that rebounded to some extent on the whole of the population – literate and illiterate alike. Gregory's letters concerned peasants in fields as well as lawyers and senior clerics. To a greater or lesser extent, all were drawn into the bureaucratic practices that the letters describe. They describe a close connection between literacy and the maintenance and exploitation of resources. It is clear that literacy was not confined to the transmission religious doctrine or prayer, but that secular and religious uses collided. The effective administration of secular affairs did not simply bring secular benefits but was also a moral duty and spiritual exercise.

Turning our attention to Anglo-Saxon England, two broad conclusions may be drawn that will help our analysis, but which should not result in the development of misguided parallels.

Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, the Mediterranean example suggests that a study of the impact of literacy on the population is not entirely unreasonable. The literacy culture of England was quite different to – perhaps several centuries “behind” – the literacy culture of the Mediterranean. Had a study of the Mediterranean shown that literacy had no impact on the population, then attempts to develop such an analysis in England would have been dealt a crushing blow. However, this would not appear to have been the case. Gregory's letters reveal an intention and ability to intervene in all manner of activities through the deployment of literacy. They show clearly that literacy should not be divorced from all the other routines and practices of daily life, nor was it concerned purely with the needs and interests of the literate elite. In this respect, the Mediterranean case study is simply an enabling argument. It tells us that, in the right circumstances, we may be able to locate literacy practices within the daily lives of the population – though it does not complete that analysis by showing how or

where they are located. Moreover, it does not tell us whether or not such circumstances applied in Anglo-Saxon England. It does however encourage us to proceed to an analysis that may or may not identify such practices, and to discuss what steps are needed to support such an argument.

This conceptual support is the primary purpose of the case study, and in this respect it is the intellectual parallel of the gender study presented in 4.3.1 where it was established that we are able to write an archaeology of social practice. However, the case study also provides an opportunity to draw some carefully constructed conclusions about clerical views of literacy in Anglo-Saxon England. This facilitates the second broad conclusion that we may draw. It is clear that the senior clergy in England had contacts with Rome throughout the seventh century and beyond, so a review of Roman practices may reveal one strand in clerical thinking about the deployment of literacy in England. Indeed, Gregory provided a pattern of pastoral care in Anglo-Saxon England (inter alia Thacker 1992 152-8, Cubitt 1992 193), so an investigation of Gregory's literacy practices provide – to a limited extent – an idea of how the clergy may have seen the role of literacy. This general discussion fits into a narrower debate on the origins of charters and law codes, elements of the early literacy culture of England (e.g. Wormald 1984, Chaplais 1969).

One distinction between England and the Mediterranean is the numbers of people able to read and write. In Italy, it seems that literacy was much more common and much more readily available, while in England it was much less common, and difficult to obtain – indeed impossible without clerical instruction. This difference has two consequences. On one hand, it is clear that the ability of the clergy to administer and supervise resources using literacy was much reduced in England, since it was much harder to obtain the necessary skills. It is not inconceivable that each of the mother churches, with a community of clerics, may have had access to reading and writing, though this is an assertion that cannot be proven: the concentration of clergy and the value that the clergy placed on literacy being the only real indicators.

However, this relative dearth of literacy may not have had quite the detrimental effect that one would expect: it may have enhanced the role of the clergy considerably. As we have seen, modern discussions of literacy focus on the

political economy of literacy skills, and the discursive potential they have for creating social dependencies. The scarcity of literacy in England, therefore, created the conditions in which the discourse of illiteracy may have had a more significant impact than in Italy. A number of examples suggest that the clergy may indeed have been able to use this discourse to their advantage. Superficially, letter writing must have been one of the least effective methods of preaching in Anglo-Saxon England: it is hard to imagine what an illiterate, pagan Anglo-Saxon war lord would have done with a letter from the pope. Yet this incongruity is itself perhaps the basis for recognising the discursive power of literacy and a key to how that may have been exploited. This same tension perhaps underpins aspects of the extravagantly decorated gospel books of the seventh and eighth centuries. As we shall see, the act of creating a charter may itself have been a symbolic acceptance of a peculiar clerical hegemony.

Thus, as well as providing an enabling argument, the case study provides a model for how literacy may have been perceived by the senior clergy. It is clear that literacy was much less widespread in England than in Italy. Even a positive analysis – that each minster gave the local population access to literate clergy – does little to bridge the gulf. However, it does suggest that the discursive impact of literacy rather than its practical application may have been more substantial in England.

4.4 Summary and Reflection

In developing the archaeology of literacy practice, it was proposed that the material conditions in which literacy was constituted would represent the key step in the construction of the archaeology of literacy practices. To paraphrase Barrett "[literacy] is ... produced out of the choreography of human existence" (Barrett 1987 13-14). Identification of this analytical bridge is not difficult. As the case of Gregory the Great shows, the peculiar, historically situated clerical literacy of the seventh century, which continued to develop in the eighth century, was deeply permeated by the practices of surveillance. Not only was surveillance at the heart of literacy practices, but the converse is true also: literacy came to be at the heart of surveillance. The elision of the two sets of social practices (literacy and surveillance) might be termed *bureaucracy*. Rather than being the object of bureaucrats or the collectivity of bureaucrats, it is a social practice, negotiated and re-negotiated according to specific goals, consistent with and reproducing the

structuring structures of predisposition. As social scientists have noted, surveillance is both a means of signalling power and a means of maintaining or obtaining power (e.g. Giddens 1981 169, 1984 127). Literacy with the ability to transform the time and geography of spoken discourse is a powerful tool in the extension of surveillance. The impact of this can be pursued in both the symbolic and direct interventions of surveillance, whether as a means of collecting or disseminating information about resources, or as a resource in its own right.

Surveillance and social control are already features of archaeological scholarship on the early Middle Ages, even if the details and theoretical underpinnings of that archaeology are controversial. For example, the relationship of social classes, the symbolisation of status, the development and organisation of exchange, and the ordering of the landscape have all been contested and debated by archaeologists over the last twenty years, with empirical studies giving scope to different interpretative statements. Surveillance and social control are appropriate topics for archaeology above all because they pertain to material resources, the stuff of archaeological enquiry. The inclusion of bureaucracy in these analyses need not presuppose a single closed narrative of cause and effect. As we shall see, the origins of the phenomena described lie outwith the remit of this thesis, and thus cannot naively be said to be caused by literacy or brought about by bureaucracy. We have surely come far enough in the anthropology of literacy to reject such crudely mechanistic imperatives. Indeed, the structure of these phenomena might well be said to structure bureaucracy. Yet it cannot be supposed that literacy is insignificant in these contexts, since in distanciation we have a distinctive property that changes the rules of discursive engagement. Bureaucracy is thus neither cause nor effect so much as simply involved. This association is significant enough.

This chapter has moved from a relatively simple objective through numerous, unfamiliar and at times treacherous subjects to what may seem a meagre conclusion. It has been argued that literacy, the provenance of the clergy in seventh- and eighth-century England, should be approached not as an autonomous technology but as a social practice in line with the contextualised discursive construction of such practices. That being so, and accepting that literacy nonetheless brings a unique hermeneutic to language, it can and should be taken seriously by archaeologists, in much the same way as feminist and post-feminist archaeologists have approached and enlightened the social practices associated

with gender. Literacy does not exist in isolation, but is embodied and instanced in practices. Embodied as practice, it thus draws in not only those identified as “literate”, but also those denied access to that specialist resource: the other of literacy, the “illiterate”. Wherever those practices can be identified, so we can identify the penetration of clerical motifs within social life. In this given context, literacy was directly and incontrovertibly (though not necessarily exclusively) the provenance of surveillance. Thus, through bureaucracy as much as through the preaching of the word, the routine of liturgy, or the working of the Holy Spirit, it can be said that Christianity could alter and renew the face of the Earth.

Chapter 5

THREE TIMES ROUND AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF LITERACY: THE BREADTH AND PENETRATION OF LITERACY AND THE CLERGY

Chapter Two of this thesis suggested that we revise conventional categories in our approach to the archaeology of middle Saxon England, arguing that the traditional methodologies used to distinguish these categories were problematic. Chapter Three took that critique further, arguing that, instead of discrete secular or religious spheres, both the practical experience of missionary encounter and the core of the religious phenomena render the whole world of lived experience at once sacred and profane. If we wish to specify the impact of the clergy we are more likely to find it in the complex routine of daily life than in the rituals of the cemetery. Chapter Four presented a new insight with which we might re-invigorate the analysis of the impact of the clergy in Anglo-Saxon England, consistent with criticisms made in previous chapters. It was argued that literacy, in particular the practices of surveillance, offer a subtle leitmotif in the missionary encounter with Anglo-Saxon England, notwithstanding theoretical and practical qualifications. In this chapter we turn decisively to matters archaeological. It may be useful to recognise the prevalence of literacy and related practices within social discourse as a theoretical possibility, but this leaves us with peculiar problems. These were hinted at in the last chapter, where a number of analytical tactics were recommended. Specifically, the archaeology of bureaucracy, which involved the deployment of literacy, provides a series of opportunities to reconstitute the archaeological record and approach the issue of why conversion may have seemed 'rational'.

The consequent interrogation of the archaeological record remains untried. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is twofold. Firstly, it interrogates the archaeological record in its own right, making a case in general, synthetic terms. Secondly, it informs and supports the more general case about literacy in archaeology. Both these undertakings support the more detailed studies that follow.

5.1 three times round the archaeology of Middle Saxon England

The important point for the breadth and penetration of the clergy conversion in Anglo-Saxon England is that literacy, as well as providing a useful metaphor for the relationship between clergy and laity, is a social practice, and as such is open to archaeological investigation. Moreover, constituted as practice, it pervades some unlikely aspects of social life. There is no ready-made template that the analysis may follow, even if we have attempted to use the archaeology of gender as a spur. Some of the ground rules have already been identified, as have useful analytical tools, such as the nested concepts of literacy event, literacy practice and communicative practice, and the concept of the textual community, transcending pre-supposed categories of literacy. This analysis presents literacy three times, using the different levels of abstraction proposed in the previous chapter. These develop from narrowly focussed moments where literacy is actively engaged (the *literacy event*), to a wider category where literacy is influential in social reproduction (the *literacy practice*), to the broadest category, where literacy as a mode of communication is influential, (*communicative practices*). These three categories pervade each other, so the same evidence may be presented three times over as appropriate. The circuits are not exclusive, but may be considered hierarchically, in terms of the operation of the symbolic arsenal that literacy created. So, the third circuit describes the widest orbit, one that encircles the other two. Circuit two is narrower, circuit one narrower still. Finally, this analysis takes place at a high level of synthesis, so the evidence that is presented will be abstracted, and other elements set aside. It is inevitably contingent and incomplete.

The first circuit is perhaps the most obvious, and superficially the most discrete. The circuit of literacy events is the circuit of authorship in the first instance and readership more generally. An archaeological investigation of those that could read or write may start with a naïve archaeology of the tools of reading and writing. Such identifications do not prescribe attention to social processes, since each case is recognised as a unique manifestation of literacy practice. The literacy events involve a discrete series of transactions that involve relatively small groups of individuals. The distribution of the material culture of literacy allows us to develop a simplistic, but mercifully rapid archaeology of literacy events and the communities involved in these exchanges. Yet the archaeology of the literacy event is always to some extent under-determined. The presence of the archaeological

artefacts of literacy bears witness to such literacy events, but each artefact may have been used in many possible instances, while one instance may draw upon many different artefacts. Moreover, the community of these literacy events was necessarily limited, though given that the events themselves cannot be described, the communities thus produced cannot be evaluated either. So, while there is undoubtedly an archaeology of literacy events, this is possibly more important as a statement about the archaeological record than about the literacy events themselves.

The second circuit is at once much wider and more complicated, being constituted around participation in literacy practices. It might be considered the circuit of participation in literacy though, as the previous chapter has shown, this is considerably wider than simplistic categories of reading and writing. Literacy practices, as presented earlier, include literacy events but pertain to the implicit tensions and historicities of their construction. Thus, the texts reveal a concern with bureaucracy, drawing together a disparate group of practices concerned with symbolising and realising power. The ensuing reconstitution of power is effected over considerably wider areas of time and space, suggesting that the unique properties of distancing have been mobilised also. It is crude and inaccurate to suppose that literacy had in and of itself brought about this reconstitution – such would be contrary to the carefully worked out literacy as social project described in the previous chapter. The deployment of literacy as bureaucracy responded to specific indigenous conditions that were *already in the air*. However, once deployed in this way, the implications of distancing became manifest, rebounding on the processes and contexts that brought them into existence. These processes and contexts are not most accurately described through the texts alone, but are disclosed more completely in the broad sweep of material culture of which the texts are a subset. So the investigation of literacy practices pertains as much to what is disclosed in front of the texts and their readership as what is disclosed by the texts themselves. This means that literacy events themselves must be re-evaluated as instances of surveillance, extended through the inherent properties of literacy. This has implications for all who are the subject of surveillance, meaning that the communities of literacy practices and events are altogether more extensive.

The third circuit, communicative practices, takes us back to issues of the breadth and penetration of literacy with which we are primarily concerned. Literacy

practices, allied with surveillance, give rise to and are given purpose by particular modes of social and political capital, exploited in the production and reproduction of unequal relationships of dependence and autonomy. Yet, literacy practices are themselves constituted and reconstituted in wider institutional and ideological institutions that are themselves reconstituted through their exploitation of literacy. Literacy practices coincide with communicative activities, perceived not as a mechanical facility with reading and writing so much as a tension over the control of symbolic capital, and specifically tensions over how these practices are objectified and institutionalised. In the case of Anglo-Saxon England, these communicative practices lead us back to the questions of conversion with which we started. Institutionalised in clerical Christianity, the literacy practices that are constituted by these over-arching structures of communicative practice both represent the values of the clergy and actively reproduce them. Of course, the institutionalisation of literacy has a long historiography from the time of Maitland and others (Maitland 1897, see Klingelhöfer 1992 1-10), but the connection between deployment of literacy and the 'rationality' of conversion has not been explored. The institutionalisation of literacy practices afforded the clergy an opportunity to represent and recreate the world.

The nature of this circuitous enquiry is such that there is no useful distinction between academic disciplines: it assumes the unity of the social sciences. Thus, archaeological evidence will routinely be cited in context with many other types of evidence. It should be obvious that historical sources (for example), by virtue of their own materiality, are a subset of the material culture upon which all archaeology is predicated, even if their internal semantics confer unique linguistic characteristics. While we take a decidedly archaeological turn, we do so more comprehensively than conventional distinctions would normally permit.

5.2 the circuit of literacy events

The literacy event was introduced in the last chapter to describe certain types of activity in which literacy was present, even though it was not the object of that activity. The example provided by Barton and Hamilton was the activity of baking a pie while following a recipe (Barton and Hamilton 1998 8). Information is stored and deployed in this activity, though the exchange of information is not the goal of the participants. Indeed, the information may be transformed or rejected according to the needs, resources and whims of the participants. The literacy event is

identifiable in time and place, it is enmeshed in other structural phenomena, articulating them, transforming them and reproducing them.

5.2.1 an archaeology of literacy events

The principal textual evidence from Anglo-Saxon England provides evidence of two different types of literacy event. Both types are ecclesiastical in origin and language, but their apparent subject matters mark a difference between documents concerned with managing secular affairs and those that direct have a direct, recognisable spiritual purpose. Even this tentative distinction is complicated, because it may be said that the charters have a spiritual purpose too. As we shall see, charter evidence is complicated, in part by the necessary complexity of their interpretation and in part because we know little about their deployment. In contrast, we can be more confident of the deployment of religious texts that were used in the rituals of the church. As stated at the outset, the purpose of this thesis is to look beyond the religious aspects of missionary work to the broader missionary encounter, so this section shall concentrate primarily on the latter.

Charter evidence (numbered here according to Sawyer 1968) provides one set of pointers to literacy events as described in chapter four. However, the corpus of early Anglo-Saxon charters is difficult to use: partly because the set is subject to sophisticated and fluctuating critique which it is hard to present accurately in a few words. Thus, rather than attempting to summarise inadequately the complete set, we shall look at three particular texts (S9, S14 and S248) and what they tell us about the historical use and contemporary interpretation of the texts. Each of these provides a slightly different insight into the origin and function of charters. The first allows a description of the relationships that we can establish directly between charters, and so shows that literacy events may be connected to each other and to other events that we cannot now reconstruct. The second gives us a glimpse of the formalities of land transfer, showing that transaction may have been a public event that involved more than just monastic scribes, and reminding us that literacy is not simply about the literate. The third example takes us into the detail of charter construction, showing the methods by which historians evaluate their evidence. The three charters presented have been subject to recent critical analysis that has argued for their authenticity or the authenticity of the text they carry. They are deliberately drawn from two different kingdoms and three different monastic houses.

The literacy events these charters represent should be taken as a possible model, but not a definitive guide. It does however open up a discussion on the relationship between literate and pre-literate transfer, with a short discussion on the topic of “bookland” and “folkland”, noting the implications of literacy for the ownership and transmission of land.

* Charter S9 and the number of Literacy Events

Investigation of Kentish charters provides probably the clearest view of the operation of charters in the seventh and eighth century. Kent is unique in England for the number of original charters that survive in tact, making earlier Kentish charters easier to analyse than those from other parts of England. Moreover, the charters of St Augustine’s Abbey outside Canterbury and Minster in Thanet have recently been published with commentary (Kelly 1995). Kelly identifies nine likely original charters from the archives of Christ Church in Canterbury that assist our understanding of the charters from St Augustine’s (Kelly 1995 lxxi). The early charters of St Augustine’s are distributed among a range of libraries and archives, and though none appear as originals, there are reasons to believe that the texts are genuine.

For example, charter S9 is preserved within a bound manuscript collection now housed in the British Library. It is bound with a miscellany of other items including several charters that purport to be from the archive of St Augustine’s (BM Cotton Julius, Kelly 1995 xliii). These are later copies, all created by one scribe perhaps in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, who has not even copied all the texts that may have been available to him. The unusual collection of charters and its peculiar presentation leads Kelly to speculate on the existence of a lost cartulary that may have been the exemplar to the surviving work.

As with many Anglo-Saxon texts, the present form of S9 is unconvincing, but the text deserves closer analysis (see Kelly 1995, Cox 1976, Wormald 1985, 25). Its composition is closely comparable to two surviving originals of the period (S8 and S19). It also reflects the style of similar authentic charters from England, and has similarities with private Roman deeds that may have been the model for Anglo-Saxon charters (Kelly 1995 31). The origins of these charters has been the subject of extensive debate within Anglo-Saxon studies. While Italy was long regarded as

the origin of the charter, with their use fostered by Augustine or Theodore (Chaplais 1969), it is difficult to be entirely certain about the relationship. The evidence is problematic, since, as Wormald points out, the weight of evidence would lead us to that conclusion simply because we have so many Italian documents with which to compare our Anglo-Saxon documents. He therefore stresses the other influences – especially Celtic and Frankish – proposing that the Anglo-Saxon charter should be considered “*sui generis*” (Wormald 1984 14).

Charter S9 purports to be a grant of land adjacent to land at Stodmarsh in Kent, presented by King Eadric to St Augustine’s monastery in June 686. The land in question is related to land previously granted by King Hlothere to the abbey, a transaction apparently recorded in charter S7. Kelly, following Scharer reports reasons to be suspicious of S7 (Kelly 1995 26-30). While many aspects of the diplomatic of S7 are acceptable, the inclusion of a blessing and the description of the estate are both inconsistent with contemporary forms. Kelly argues, however, that Kentish charters need not follow a strict form, so these inconsistencies may be the result of a fluid diplomatic as much as later interpolation. One of three conclusions is possible. S7 may derive entirely from an authentic exemplar, displaying a fluid construction; it may derive in part from an authentic exemplar with later interpolations and revisions that confuse analysis; or it may be a later forgery. The existence of S8, with its implied reference to this earlier transaction does suggest however, that the transaction referred to in S7 did indeed take place. If the grant were genuine, then there is every reason to suppose that there was a charter made in support of it.

As well as the connection with the questionable text of S7, S9 shows a close connection to a surviving contemporary charter of Christ Church Canterbury, S8. Indeed, so close are the two that they share a grammatical error. In both cases, the word “*pertinentibus*” in the list of appurtenances is rendered “*pertinentia*”. It is hard to avoid the conclusion this error shared occurred because both were created from the same model (Kelly 1995 31). It is not inconceivable that they shared a common author, or that the earlier (S8) was the model for the later (S9).

The conclusion that the text of S9 is largely authentic is not the only conclusion that may be drawn. The text is evidence that there was at least one event – a discrete and empirical moment in time – in which the text played an integral role.

The creation of the text represents a clear literacy event in the strictest meaning of the term. There may be others associated with the document – indeed the argument that the text was transcribed at a later date demands that there was at least one other event in which it was involved. For the time being we can discuss one unequivocal literacy event in which the text was involved. What can be known about this literacy event?

The text gives us some clues to piece together this event. The date of the charter is not in question, so we can be reasonably certain about the broad date of this event: June 686. We can be less certain of the people that participated, since the witness list of the charter is limited to Eadric and Theodore. However, their attestation to the charter should not be taken to represent anything like a signature. The proposed Mediterranean origin of the text implies that Theodore, not Eadric, was responsible for the text. As with other Anglo-Saxon kings, Eadric did not operate a chancery, or anything that could even be described as one (Wormald 1984 9). This is an important point, since it implies that the creation of documents and archives in Anglo-Saxon England was the result of clerical activity. Eadric may be the king – but the record of his reign and actions is the result of clerical activity. This monopoly over literacy has the effect that clergy were involved in every recorded land transaction.

The text of the charter, however, does not describe any other elements of the event of its creation. While we may speculate that the actions of the Kentish court would have mirrored Frankish styles (Campbell 197153-55), and while we may extrapolate from other contexts (see below), the precise nature of any ritual (or none) cannot be positively known. We cannot be certain whether the charter recorded a grant made before it was drawn up, or whether the document was presented to the king for his approval, or whether it was drawn up on the king's instructions. We cannot now identify whether the date given (686) was the date of the grant or of the document. We cannot even be sure that the king and archbishop were even directly involved, or simply represented by royal and ecclesiastical functionaries.

Even so, there is sufficient abstract material disclosed by the simple existence of the charter that we can posit the involvement of a number of parties not identified directly. First and foremost we know that there must have been a scribe. Then, in

addition, there were the workers who supplied the raw materials – the parchment, pen and ink. Though not necessarily present at the creation of the charter, these people were involved by remove, since their time and labour were directed towards making such things possible. At another remove are the people who lived on the estate in question “adjacent to land at Stodmarsh”. Again, though it is unlikely they were present, they were undoubtedly involved – even if their involvement was no different from involvement in any land transaction, recorded or not. There are claims that the book-land transfer like this would have brought special privileges, but we shall hold off discussion for now until other evidence has been introduced. Even so, the fact that their landlord recorded the details of the transaction must have had wider implications for them. It suggests a landlord that wanted to keep careful track of resources, potentially at some distance, and with a much longer memory than hitherto. That the transaction was supported by spiritual sanction and blessing implies that the relationship between tenant and landlord was more than simply economic.

The creation of a charter like this one can easily be described as a literacy event – an event in which literacy was mobilised. The immediate context also allows us to identify two other literacy events that seem to have been influential in the creation of S9: the production of the exemplar to S7 or its equivalent which concerned other land at Stodmarsh; and the production of S8 which included the unusual, shared grammatical error. The wider context of charters and their form is less clear but also significant. The use of disparate forms and unusual vocabulary in S9 hints at a wider European context to this and similar charters, as does the subscription of Archbishop Theodore. The point is that charter S9 is not just the product of one isolated literacy event at Canterbury in June 686, but is to some extent the product of many similar literacy events at a variety of dates and locations that may stretch as far back as the late roman legal tradition (John 1960 1-23).

However, a text like S9 may in turn have been drawn into other literacy events. Imagine therefore the monastery where such a charter was kept, and the student that was made to read its muniments. Imagine the arrival of a new abbot and his enquiry as to the Abbey’s holdings. Such events cannot be demonstrated empirically, but cannot and should not be ruled out. The point is that the charter is evidence for at least one literacy event, but may in fact have been involved in many more.

Even though subsequent literacy events cannot be identified comprehensively, charter evidence allows us to hint at some of them. Just as S7 and S8 seem to have been influential after their own creation, so it seems reasonable to speculate that S9 was also read and perhaps copied from time to time. We may only identify the later uses that are recorded – not those occasions that have no record. Thus, for example, the wording of S9 has echoes in later charters, including S235 (688), S12 (689), S11 (690), S13 (690), S14 (690), S15 (694), S19 (697), S65 (704), S100 (716-757) and S56 (759) (Kelly 1995 30-33, dates Sawyer 1968 *passim*). This does not mean that the charter was necessarily taken down and read before any of these charters were prepared, though in some cases it is possible. Each of these charters, in turn needs more careful analysis to verify their authenticity. It simply means that there is a long chain of events that connect these different charters together. To that extent, we can identify at the most 10 other literacy events in which S9 – or S9's own exemplar – may have been influential. There are undoubtedly others that we cannot now even begin to reconstruct.

Thus, charter S9 provides a clue to the form and relation of literacy events in Anglo Saxon England. Key points are that each charter may have been involved in more than one literacy event – but while this is an obvious fact, it is impossible to identify all, or even very many of them. It is also important to note that the clergy are involved in all of them: and that other participants, both literate and illiterate were also involved. The clergy through their monopoly of literacy have an obvious discursive advantage in these encounters: activating a discourse of literacy and reminding other participants of their illiteracy. Also, the charter is focussed on the articulation of property rights, and the supervision of resources more generally.

* Charter S14, the literacy event, the illiterate, and "pre-literate" transfer

Another view of the literacy event in Kentish charters is provided by investigation of charter S14, in which Oswine, king of Kent, granted land in Thanet to the church of Minster in Thanet in 690. The analysis of S9 allows us to see a chain of literacy events and to identify the way in which a charter may be involved in several different literacy events throughout its lifetime. S14 presents shadowy evidence of the wider social context of the literacy event, and the audience that may have participated in it.

As with S9, this document is preserved in the British Library, in the Cotton archive (BM Cotton Jul Dii folio). Again, there are reasons to suppose that the text is in fact a copy made in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, and that this may have been a copy of a now lost cartulary that held a compendium of various charters pertaining to the Kentish church (Kelly 1995 xlii-vii). Kelly suggests that the text is largely genuine, since it is comparable to other contemporary charters (see also Wormald 1984 25). She also identifies a number of elements that appear inconsistent with these parallel texts, although it is unclear whether these are the result of later interpolations that introduced spurious material, or inelegant phrasing that derives from a fluid diplomatic tradition or incompetent scribe (Kelly 1995 151- 153). Again, S14 is evidence for more than just a land transaction, but is also evidence of a literacy event. There are reasons to connect it with other charters that have similar constructions, so there are grounds for supposing that, as well as representing a literacy event in its own right, this charter may have participated in a variety of subsequent literacy events that are also represented by surviving charters or copies of them. Moreover, there are grounds for believing that it was the product of more than one “literacy event”, but that the form, vocabulary and structure depended on a series of earlier models that may in turn also be termed literacy events. In the same way as S9, we can only hint at the other possible literacy events that are not recorded in any place and are now lost to us, such as the various times the charter may have been displayed, read or copied.

In this case, however, the text of the charter gives us some indication that the land transaction was cemented by ritual activity. The text tells us that the king placed a sod of earth from the estate on the altar of the church in confirmation of the grant. This is paralleled in a second charter from the Abbey of Minster in Thanet (S15). Though this second charter is more dubious than S14, the reference to such a practice suggests that such practices were not unknown. Other charters of the period suggest similar activities, including S1164 (670-676), S239 (687), S1805 (675-692), S1806 (675-692). (Kelly 1995 lxxxiii, dates Sawyer 1968) In addition, S1804 says that the charter itself was placed on the altar of the church. Kelly detects an Italian tradition for such activities (Kelly 1995 lxxxiii).

A number of points can be gleaned from the practice of placing sods of earth or copies of the charter on the altar of the church in confirmation of the grant. It would seem, on first inspection that this is the act of a society which the unambiguous ritual act supports the literacy event of the creation of the charter. However, if this practice were introduced from late Roman Italy, then the situation is more complicated. Literacy was deployed with much greater frequency in Italy, where the numbers of people able to read and write were considerably greater than in Anglo-Saxon England. Consequently, the practice is likely to have been adapted to support the relative novelty of literacy in England, rather than designed with that in mind from the outset.

Perhaps more importantly, the ritual activity suggests that transfer to the church was supported by public acts that were meant to be seen by the parties involved in the transfer. While in some cases, the charter may have simply been a record filed out of sight of the public, it is clear that the charter may also have had a public rôle. Again, details are very scarce, so it would be wrong to extrapolate over-enthusiastically. However, the public ritual of placing sods of earth on the altar of the church hints at a public role for the charter too. It is difficult to be certain about this, or to identify these practices in anything other than the most shadowy outlines. But, if charters were part of the public ritual of land transfer, then we may expand somewhat the group of participants, drawing both literate and illiterate into the literacy event. If so, then the transfer of land would have become an opportunity for the clergy to rehearse their monopoly over esoteric knowledge, and through this to extend and maintain their social position as arbiters of that knowledge.

This point is worth contemplating in the light of our discussions of the “missionary encounter” in chapter three. Comaroff and Comaroff provide thoughtful insights into the means by which European clergy represented a world-view through certain modes of behaviour. Thus division of labour between men and women, the location of water and the semantics of language became the objects of a “conversation”(Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1992). In other contexts, Trexler and Ranger have shown how European missionaries appropriated the symbolic world and cultural landscape of indigenous populations (Ranger 1987, Trexler 1984). Land tenure was not new in Anglo-Saxon England, nor was the granting of land and estates: the church was granted land that was already occupied. By

ritualising the transaction, the church symbolised its proximity to the king, indeed the king symbolically re-enacted his baptism by accepting the authority of God and the clergy's role as mediator between God and man. Furthermore, by committing the transaction to writing, the participants in the ritual witnessed the power of the clergy not just as intermediaries with God, but as arbiters of written culture. The laity were cast into a dual role of dependence: illiterate before writing and impotent before God. They depended on the clergy for both. Pagan priesthoods might claim to mediate with the gods, but they could not mediate with writing in this way. The clergy schooled in literacy and in prayer could do both.

Wormald and others have argued that the Anglo-Saxon charter and law code are more rhetorical than instrumental (eg Wormald 1977, 1999). This may indeed be true, but what it fails to note is that rhetoric can be instrumental too. The drama of literacy, hinted at in charter S14, was not just for the archives of the clergy, but was staged for the benefit of all present, literate and illiterate alike. It confirmed the clergy to themselves as the arbiters of knowledge. It also demonstrated their potency to the laity, imposing illiteracy on the population.

It is fair to say that we cannot now identify all the different forms of land transfer that could have existed in Anglo-Saxon England. While we can describe the literacy events associated with a small number of charters, there is every possibility that other forms of tenure and transfer existed at other points in society. But in this context, the relationship between clerical and earlier forms of transfer simply does not arise, since the intervention of the clergy is enough of a change in its own right. The transfers identified in the charters may be new forms entirely, or may be simple transformations of ancient custom: it is the intervention of the clergy that makes the difference.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the activities and impact of the missionary clergy, searching for mechanisms by which they could invade the conceptual space of a non-Christian society. Pre-literate transfer could provide some supplementary detail to support such a study, but cannot take us very far. Moreover, the very concept of oral transfer of land being recorded in historical sources is itself something of a conundrum. The oral transfer could only be known to us if it were recorded in historical sources, and if it were recorded in historical sources it would not be an oral transfer. This may seem niggardly: it is possible for

oral traditions to be recorded. The point should not be lost, however, that, even if oral transfers were recorded, they would, of necessity, be recorded by the clergy. Thus, even if it could be identified “oral” transfer would be recorded with the imposed hand of the clergy and their susceptibilities.

★ Charter S248 and historical method

Charters S9, S14 and their counterparts have been presented with a view to identifying the literacy event. However, if the charter is not itself genuine, then we seek in vain for the events that pertain to it. Charter S248 (Taunton, Somerset Record Office, DD/SAS PR 501 c/795) provides an alternative insight into the operation of Anglo-Saxon charters, in a context where early documents are fewer than in Kent. It does, however, provide an insight into the analysis of historical texts.

The diploma purports to be the record of a transaction of land between King Ine of Wessex and Abbot Beorhtwald of Glastonbury, dated to either 705 or 706. Recent commentaries contend that though the surviving document is problematic, the text it presents is nonetheless an accurate rendition – indeed to some extent a facsimile – of an authentic exemplar (Edwards 1988 27-33, Abrams 1991, Costen 1992). It survives as a single sheet, not in a cartulary. This document is particularly important because it could preserve the sole record of a charter of King Ine whose text has not been altered. Moreover if the claim that it is to some extent a facsimile can be sustained, then it is the earliest evidence for the physical layout and script of a West Saxon diploma (Abrams 1991 98).

Assessing the validity of the document is an important first step.

Abrams (1991 105-110) identifies a number of features of the palaeography of the text that are consistent with an early eighth-century date, and other elements that are less straightforward. Spelling provides another insight suggesting that, even if the diploma is not authentic, the text that it bears is (Abrams 1991 110-112). Finally, the diplomatic structure of the text is largely consistent with equivalent documents of the seventh and eighth centuries (Abrams 1991 112-116). The dating clause is unusual insofar as it identifies the year by incarnation and indiction. Though these conflict in the actual date, the formulae used are compatible with an

early eighth-century date. Finally the witnesses to the charter are nine bishops whom we can be varyingly certain lived when the grant was made (Edwards 1988 30, Abrams 1991 116). Thus, it is no simple matter to say that this document is either “authentic” or “spurious”. Palaeographic evidence would suggest that the diploma was not itself written in the early eighth century, though in style it preserves certain aspects of a document that was. The unusual spellings of names, the diplomatic form of the text, and the convincing witness list, however, suggest that the text is authentic.

As with S9 and S14, there is more to the charter than just the charter itself. It is also evidence for the occurrence of a literacy event. What can be known about this literacy event?

It should be possible to be relatively precise about the date of charters since dating clauses are regular features of West Saxon diplomatics (Edwards 1988 312). S248 is dated according to indiction and by incarnation. Abrams notes, however, that these different dates conflict, since the incarnation date of June 705 is incompatible with the fourth indiction, which came in 706 (Abrams 1991 116-119). A possible resolution of the date is provided by the witness list, since Aldhelm, who attests as bishop, had only just been raised to the episcopate at that time. However, the precise date of his elevation is not clear either. The fact of the large gathering of bishops suggests that the charter should be associated with a church council of some importance. However, the evidence for church councils in the period 705-6 is equally ambiguous, with councils in Wiltshire and Yorkshire both being proposed. Alternatively, an unrecorded council at some other location cannot be ruled out. The difference between the two dates is a simple error of one minim added or overlooked by scribe or copyist. Thus, the precise date of the literacy event cannot be identified with absolute certainty. There is little to choose between June 705 or 706.

The location of the event is also complicated. The identification of this document with a second document associated with Aldhelm, and located at a council at “Noodr” has been taken by Edwards to suggest that there was a council meeting in Yorkshire on the River Nidd in 705 (Edwards 1988 115-116). However, Abrams points out that this second document is attested by Ine, who is unlikely to have been in Northumbria at this or at any point (Abrams 1991 118). Thus, the

River Nadder in Wiltshire is at least as likely, if not more so. Even so, we must still concede the possibility that the charter pertains to an unrecorded council. Thus, while the River Nadder in Wiltshire is a likely location for this literacy event, we can by no means be certain.

Some of the people involved in the literacy event – though not necessarily all of them – can be suggested. The witness list is the most obvious indication of those involved, though in this case the king who makes the grant is not included. Although the witness list of nine bishops – nine individuals whom we would expect to be able to sign their names – means that the original subscriptions could have been autographs, and even though attestations do bear traces of individuality, though the original document would not have been autographed. Edwards suggests that the charter may have been written or dictated by Daniel of Winchester, since his attestation is peculiar (Edwards 1988 31). Instead of being termed bishop, his name is associated with an unusual humility clause that is found in other of his charters and in his letters. So, there are tenuous grounds for supposing that Daniel of Winchester, or someone in his retinue created the original document.

This raises the possibility that the literacy event of the creation of the charter is potentially distinct from the church council proposed. In fact, as with S9, we cannot be certain about the precise conditions under which the charter was written, other than it relates to such a meeting, nor can we ascertain any details that may tie this charter to the type of ritual display proposed for S14. In essence, there are three possible models for the creation of the charter. It could have been written before the council and presented to the council for approval; it could have been written and witnessed during the council; or it could have been written after the council as a note of one of its (verbal) transactions. The text alone neither supports nor contradicts any of these possibilities. As with S9, although the charter is unambiguous evidence of a literacy event, it is difficult to know the configuration of that event.

As noted with S9 and S14, any given document may participate in any number of literacy events in addition to its creation. These can only be guessed at normally, but in the case of S248, there is possible evidence of the charter being “re-cycled”. Abrams has identified two other eighth-century transactions concerned with the estate at “Pouelt”, and possibly a third (Abrams 1996 204-211). Four

grants in fifty years is a rapid turnover by any standards, though it is not clear whether they all refer to the same land. Indeed, the later charters describe the land differently, suggesting that these do not refer to precisely the same parcel of land in each case. Indeed, the precise location and form of the estate is not clear in any of the grants, nor can it be reconstructed with ease. Abrams suggests one possible solution to the problem: that the grants refer to different parts of a larger multiple-estate known by the name Pouelt. The eighth-century grants are not incongruent with the later Domesday estates of the area, so it is not inconceivable that the grants survived with some alteration to the eleventh century.

The relationship between the different grants therefore should be considered carefully. One of two possible scenarios could be considered. Either the grants represent the same block of land being transferred with different descriptions, or the different grants of land in the same vicinity were made with respect to previous grants and presumably existing settlement patterns. The former interpretation would hint at a chain of literacy events with successive charters effectively replacing each other, but is unconvincing because of the changes from one diploma to the next. The latter hints at a gradual demarcation of the landscape with disparate elements being documented at different times. In either case, the influence of the first and subsequent charters cannot be clearly articulated, though it is tempting to speculate that they may have been invoked by or at least known to the parties concerned. That three of the four clearly involved the abbot and monastery of Glastonbury encourages us to think that the charters were indeed known and perhaps referred to when subsequent grants were made. Though the history of these documents is obscure, it is unlikely that their exemplars were anywhere other than the abbey at Glastonbury throughout the eighth century.

Similarly, Abrams presents grounds for believing that the charter was used again in support of claims to land at Pilton (Abrams 1996, 200-204). Confusion over place names in the Anglo-Saxon charters, and differences between the charters and the Domesday Book conspire to make precise reconstruction of the estates difficult. This confusion results in part because of differences between S248 and a revised version of the same grant – S247.

The competing claims to land, and the precise relationships between charters are complicated, and often cannot be resolved satisfactorily with the evidence

available. The eighth-century history of S248 may, however, have included a number of other literacy events that we can be identified. The spaces between these putative events remain unintelligible.

The significant change which the exemplars to S9, S14 and S248 reveals is the fact that the clergy made written copies of land transactions. This statement seems almost trivial, but is noteworthy. Literacy has a great many uses, and we know that the clergy of the seventh and eighth century in England were adept at creating large and intricate texts for use in the rites of the church, as well as for meditation and contemplation. This same skill was clearly applied to the articulation of property rights and the supervision of resources. Why should literacy be used in this way?

The text of S248 is revealing in this respect. As well as the clerical sanctions and the religious language used, the writer of the charter seems aware that this is not the only way that such business could be transacted or recorded. Indeed, the transfer of land by verbal testimony is taken for granted. The novelty is made explicit in the proem to the charter:

licet sermo tantum ad testimonium sufficeret tamen pro incerta futuri
temporis fortuna cirographorum sedulia sunt roboranda (translit. Abrams
1991 133)

The text makes clear that the charter is designed to strengthen claims against the uncertainties of future times. Literacy is thus consciously used as a means of preserving and strengthening control over resources, as well as articulating that control. The charter is to some extent a rhetorical device, since it does not provide a precise definition of the estates in question. However, the text encourages us to see that there is more to this than showmanship. All other arguments notwithstanding, the innovation in this and similar charters is the use of literacy to achieve that goal.

* Conclusion: the clergy, the illiterate and the literacy event

There is a large literature on the nature of Early Anglo-Saxon land tenure, the origins of Anglo-Saxon charters, and their development (Klingelhöfer 1992 1-15 provides a useful historical introduction). Literacy changed the nature of tenure by introducing a literate class into the transaction. Literacy changed land tenure by allowing the clergy to invade a sphere of life that had previously been closed to

them, and in which they had no obvious right to meddle. Literacy changed land tenure because it gave the clergy an opportunity to express their own inimitable superiority over the rest of the population. Even if there were no other changes to the nature of tenure, even if the rites and practices of tenure were unaltered in any other way, the intervention of a literate class meant that the rest of the population were left to ponder their own illiteracy. In practical terms, the act of land transfer could become a stage on which the discursive drama of literacy could be acted out.

Literacy should not be treated in isolation. The same period saw a developing relationship between sacred and secular authorities that was mutually beneficial, and which was concerned with more than just literacy. The king could also benefit from the deployment of literacy, and by using the clergy could in his turn have used the clergy to associate himself with literacy. This may indeed provide a context for the earliest Anglo-Saxon law codes that seem more concerned with style than reality of government (Wormald 1996). The wider pattern of conversion described by Higham and others is relevant too, providing a view on how the clergy could have brought political advantages (Higham 1997). However, the aim of this thesis is, to some extent, to isolate one element of that broader relationship, and identify the advantages that it may have brought.

In the case of Anglo-Saxon England, the result was that the clergy, with unique access to literacy, were able to use this literacy to secure their own material *and cultural* resources. It demonstrated that the clergy alone had access to novel forms of specialist knowledge, and novel means of producing and extending that knowledge. Moreover, the properties of distancing meant that this knowledge could be re-produced in times and spaces not available to other forms of communication. So, while the transfers recorded in S9, S14, S248 and other charters may in fact be entirely consistent with Anglo-Saxon legal institutions before the arrival of the clergy, the very fact that they were transcribed meant that these institutions have changed subtly in the favour of the clergy. Thus, irrespective of arguments about literate and pre-literate transfer, literacy makes a difference.

To repeat the point made earlier, the question of “non-literate” transfer of land simply does not arise. There may indeed have been many different forms of land transfer simultaneously in Anglo-Saxon England, of which we can only observe a

tiny fraction. However, the question to what extent are the forms of tenure recorded different or similar to previous forms that may have been in use is answered by the fact that it is itself recorded. This thesis investigates the activities of the missionary clergy and how they could occupy the conceptual space of a non-Christian society. Transfer before the arrival of the clergy provides some supplementary detail, but does not reveal their activities. Even if oral transfers were recorded, they would be recorded by the clergy. Thus, even if non-literate transfer could be recorded, it would be recorded with the imposed hand of the clergy with their interests and ways of working.

The involvement of the church in spiritual affairs may be taken for granted, and has been taken for granted in this discussion of the “literacy event”. The impact of literacy within the secular world of resources, their maintenance, and the articulation of claims over them, presents a more interesting insight into the relationship between clergy and laity since it (potentially) involved all of society, not just those who were directly involved with the clergy. The literacy events associated with charters present an unexpected and unexplored insight into the ongoing encounter between the clergy and the laity.

5.2.2 the communities of literacy events

The methods proposed in Chapter Four asked us to eschew simplistic categories of “literate” and “illiterate”, concentrating instead upon a continuing tension over the control of symbolic resources that literacy affords. To that extent, the illiterate are necessarily drawn into any discussion of literacy as surely as the literate, forming communities in which the discourses of literacy may be played out. Evaluated in this way, the literacy event is the practical realisation of these tensions. The numbers involved in any literacy event thus allow us to ascertain the extent to which different social actors were drawn into this discourse. The different types of literacy events, alluded to above by the different types of paraphernalia, could thus give rise to different types of discourse forming different communities.

In some respects, we are well placed to evaluate the literacy communities involved in charters and similar documents, because these often carry the names of those associated. The groups most in evidence, somewhat inevitably, are the royal families and the clergy. Yet the documents often pertain to the transaction of land, and thus involve wider communities than the named parties alone: the charters

may have been of importance to the un-named and invisible inhabitants who worked the land. There is a sense in which the charter connects the agricultural population with the named individuals, exercising and symbolising the subordination of the agricultural peasantry. To this extent, the peasantry may not have assented to their participation in such a community, but were drawn into it in any case. Moreover, this type of community was relatively easy to produce, since it need not involve gathering the whole community together at a single time. The effects of the charter could unfold over a very long time, perhaps over several generations: the community of literacy of a charter could be very tenacious.

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The liturgical texts provide a second, very different theatre for literacy, where literacy became a performance rather than a means of surveillance. Active participation in liturgy may have been more transitory, more difficult and more voluntary. In many cases, participation in the liturgy may have been a luxury for the clergy or those connected with them. It also depended more immediately on time and space, requiring the presence of clergy and population. There is enough evidence to suppose that this sort of liturgical engagement was difficult to sustain for many sectors of the population. Yet, had the population been able to witness any liturgy, they would probably have witnessed a very direct reminder about the clerical ownership of the symbolic resources of liturgy. The highly ornate texts are evidence enough of the liturgical fascination with reading and writing. Repeated themes of the evangelists, representations of the clergy, the saints and God in attitudes of literacy, with books and manuscripts, reinforce the perception that the clergy represented literacy as a cardinal virtue (e.g. Webster and Backhouse 1991 124, 125, 181, 200, 206 *et cetera*).

The contexts of production are probably much more discrete, though the production of codices involved many different individuals, from the master calligrapher to the tanner that provided and prepared the skins. There is no evidence that such production was a public spectacle, so though the numbers involved may have been quite large, the potential for display was only realised after the text had been produced. The community involved in creating the texts was thus, probably very small, and restricted almost entirely to those already directly connected to the clergy, or who were already members of the clergy.

The conclusion to draw from this is that the communities that formed and were reproduced through literacy events could have been quite large, involving more than simply the individuals who could read or write. This group was drawn into an unfolding engagement with symbolic resources that also gave access to very large amounts of physical resources. Yet, as pointed out, the literacy event has only been defined very narrowly, so the community has been very narrowly defined too. Recognising the rôle of literacy practices in a broader social engagement may have the result of expanding that community to include others drawn into these broader social practices. Thus, the community of literacy practices is much larger than the numbers who could read or write. It may indeed be described as the whole body politic, if it can be demonstrated that the whole population was drawn into literacy practices.

5.3 the circuit of literacy practices

The concept of literacy practice was introduced in the previous chapter after it was recognised that literacy is best understood as a set of social practices. In essence, literacy practices describe what people do with literacy, but as Barton and Hamilton point out, they are not observable since they involve undisclosed attitudes and feelings (Barton and Hamilton 1998 6). The idea of practice is useful since it conceptualises a link between the activities of literacy and the social structures in which they are embedded and re-create. Practice is thus a consciously vague term, as social engagement may be realised in a number of different ways. An alternative vocabulary with the same sense is proposed by Barton where he described the “ecology of literacy” (Barton 1994 34-52).

5.3.1 an archaeology of literacy practices

As noted previously, the archaeology of literacy wants for practical exemplars. In order to survey the archaeology of literacy practices, this section will abstract two themes of middle Saxon archaeology and history to establish the possible relationships between the archaeology of middle Saxon England and the phenomena of literacy. The themes of kingship and the economy are neither self-contained, nor are they meant to be comprehensive, but they provide a test bed for ideas on how the changes in the archaeological record can be traced to the development and deployment of literacy practices. There is, of course, a danger of circularity in this argument, which can only be avoided if we recognise that the changes described were not the “consequences” of literacy. These changes were not caused by literacy any more than the social processes created literacy itself. It

is the complicated, historically specific relationships between them that are important. Thus, the exercise of certain practices associated with power can also be seen as literacy practices and vice versa; some of the practices associated with economic activity can also be seen as literacy practices, and so on.

This argument has a profound impact on our previous description of the archaeology of literacy events and the communities that form round them, since it will be argued that the number of literacy events has been radically underestimated. In short, by around 700 many forms of active social engagement could activate a discourse on literacy, so by extension many forms of active social engagement could be regarded as a literacy event. This is particularly true the higher one ascends the social structure, or in dealings involving the social elite.

* literacies in action 1: surveillance and social power

The discussion of literacy practices begins with the largely uncontroversial claim that the seventh and eighth centuries saw the rise of new, larger and more stable political entities, forged out of older, smaller independent territories. It will be argued that these new political entities drew on the unique properties of distancing to provide mechanisms to regulate and communicate political power, a point illustrated by law codes and charters. These documents, which have already been identified as elements of literacy events, were the tools of a new political dispensation in which technologies of surveillance were deployed across greatly expanded time/space geographies. Thus, the distancing of bureaucracy did not exist in conceptual isolation, but was realised in a variety of practices that can be traced in the archaeological and historical record, such as the development of a network of local and regional officers of administratively robust, if politically volatile, kingdoms. It will be argued that these new mechanisms of surveillance extended to the management of time and of property, on a large and small scale. As well as providing a mechanism for attaining and maintaining power, surveillance is discursive, offering a mechanism to communicate power. Changes in the representation of power can also be discerned, consistent with the introduction of new technologies of surveillance.

Literacy practices may have been involved in these developments, not least through the transformed space and time evident in surveillance. The decline of face-to-face exchanges in favour of distanced “remote control” is to that extent a

product of literacy applied in the very particular historical and cultural context. Thus, any practices that exercised or extended these new mechanisms of surveillance was *ipso facto* a literacy practice – realised as a literacy event. The number of discrete literacy events was therefore much higher than a simplistic consideration of the historical record would have us believe, and the communities they reproduced and which produced them were substantial.

We start with the claim that the kingdoms of the seventh and eighth century were larger and more stable than their predecessors.

Steve Bassett and others have argued that the earliest Anglo-Saxon territories of the late fifth and sixth centuries were considerably smaller than the kingdoms that emerged in the middle of the seventh century. By the end of the seventh century, a patchwork of smaller kingdoms had been replaced by a familiar group of four or five (classically seven) kingdoms. These incorporated small territories like the Gyrwas or the Hwicce and much larger ones like Lindsey, Essex and Middlesex that had been independent or autonomous in the previous century. These made occasional appearances in the historic record alongside some much larger ones, but these references tend to be at the end of their existence. Examples of the incorporation of smaller kingdoms into larger ones are numerous: Kent (Brooks 1989), Northumbria (Higham 1997), Elmet (Jones 1975) or Winchcombeshire (Bassett 1989) provide case studies, while a larger perspective is offered through the numerous peoples that are identified through toponyms, or the numerous petty kingdoms of the Tribal Hidage (Dumville 1989a).

The case of Wessex is instructive, partly because of the wealth of scholarship that is available (Yorke 1982, 1989, 1995 52-84, Dumville 1985, Biddle 1976b, Kirby 1965, Walker 1956), and partly because it will re-emerge in our case studies. A number of smaller areas that were independent of each other at the start of the seventh century seem to have become dependent upon the **Gewisse** of southern central Hampshire by the end of the century. The Gewisse had expanded their influence throughout the seventh century, taking possession of lands in Sussex that were under Kentish control, and defeating the Jutes of southern Hampshire on the Solent and annexing the Isle of Wight. By 680, it would seem that the influence of the Gewisse stretched as far as Exeter, including large parts of Dorset. This

represents a meteoric ascent from relative obscurity in the space of perhaps two generations.

The precise relationship between these larger kingdoms and their constituent territories is complicated (e.g. Bassett 1989 6-17). It would seem that the incorporation of smaller kingdoms by larger was a feature of Anglo-Saxon England before the start of the seventh century. Thus, the complexity apparent in seventh-century historical sources is the result of an historical dynamic that can be traced to the sixth century. This glosses over problems with the historical record. The Tribal Hidage, for example, is the cause of considerable debate: its date and place of manufacture being the subject of disagreement (Dumville 1989a, 1989b). Bede's Ecclesiastical History is tantalisingly confused in its vocabulary dealing with kings and kingdoms, and can be interpreted in several ways. It has been argued that this represents a very genuine "messiness and ambiguity" within the reality described (Campbell 1979 4).

It is important to note that these changes were not brought about by the introduction of literacy. The introduction of literacy was an enabling phenomenon that responded to the needs of these newly expanded kingdoms. This is most evident in the charters of the early eighth century, where the expansion of kingdoms is mapped by interrogation of the charter evidence. As was noted in the previous chapter, the irreducible core of literacy is not so much the unsubstantiated claim of rationality, so much as the ability to transform space-time geographies. The transformation of these kingdoms from intimate landscapes to expansive territories represents a parallel transformation of the space-time geography of kingship, in which new technologies for the maintenance of power must have been indispensable. So, for example, it is clear that the kings of Wessex and Mercia used literacy to state their claim over new or disputed lands. The author of the Tribal Hidage attempted to manufacture and represent a sort of expansive power base that depended on literate forms of surveillance for its maintenance. The relationships between kingdoms were anything but relaxed (*inter alia* Lamb 1998, Yorke 1995 61-64). The changing fortunes of the various heptarchs can be mapped diachronically by their charters. The more successful and expansive the kingdom, the further away are the places named in the charters from what in previous generations was the core of that kingdom's territory. This is clearly demonstrated along the continually fluctuating boundary between Wessex

and Mercia, where gifts of land compete with each other continually until Mercia's eventual defeat by the Viking Army in the ninth century.

The enlargement of kingdoms was not the only significant development of the seventh and eighth centuries. It is clear also that in addition to being geographically more expansive, these enlarged kingdoms were also more stable through time. This claim is implicit in the texts that talk of the emergence of larger political units at the start of the seventh century. Of course, Northumbria, East Anglia and Mercia survived little more than a century after 750, which somewhat undermines claims of stability. However, in comparison with the petty kingdoms from which they emerged, survival for as long as a century seems remarkable enough. Moreover, their collapse was induced not by internal dissent, but by the actions of an external aggressor. Without the arrival of the Viking raids in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, we may argue that the emergent kingdoms of the seventh century could have survived for several generations more. Wessex shows that the foundations laid in the seventh century were substantial.

It is clear that the king was still very much a military figure in the eighth century. Despite the perceived stability of the kingdoms they governed, individual kings were no less vulnerable to defeat in battle or assassination than before. Yet, in spite of debilitating defeat, kingdoms survived. So, though defeated by Wessex, the constituent parts of Kent did not disintegrate. Northumbria survived the battle of Nechtansmere, even if Egbert didn't. The kingdom was not the personal fief of a great man. To that extent, kingship was not concerned with the face-to-face exchange of individuals so much as a conceptual unity of land and governance. Kings ruled land, not people. This is a significant contrast with how commentators have discussed the relationship between kings and their power in the sixth century. It seems, therefore, that power was abstracted from individuals to an abstract institution in the same century that saw the adoption of literacy.

Had we accepted Goody and Ong's theories of literacy, the move from literacy through abstract thought to conceptual institutions of government would be straightforward. However, recognising the situated nature of literacy encourages us to look beyond these assumptions to the mechanisms by which such apparent stability may have been realised. The abstraction of the charismatic power of the individual into an enduring institution suggests that mechanisms for government

had been developed in the seventh or eighth century. The point is that, rather than bestowing unique rationality on kingdoms, literacy was deployed to support and expand royal authority. Consciously or not, this deployment transformed the space/time geographies of surveillance to the benefit of these expanded kingdoms.

This is an important point which needs closer scrutiny. Consider, by way of example, the case of Kent. The surviving texts of the earliest laws of Kent raise a series of interesting historiographical issues (Lendinara 1997). The precise relationship between the law codes and customary practice is uncertain. This is because we know relatively little about the sixth century so cannot know what came before the texts as they are now presented to us. It could be argued that the law codes fossilise ancient practice or that they are inherently novel, or that they combined both contemporary and ancient practices. The fact they contain much material about the organisation of kin relationships could be taken as evidence that they were simply the literary appropriation of much older customary practices. Richardson and Sayles, however, argued that the texts were written before the arrival of Augustine, representing essentially pagan texts, with a later Christian gloss (Richardson and Sayles 1966 1-12). This suggestion has not been taken seriously by other scholars, but the concept of an “*oral text*” might be a more appropriate way of understanding the relationship between the two (Dumville in Lendinara 1997 231). Some aspects of the law must have been novel in the seventh century, in particular those that specify certain religious practices, such as baptism within 40 days. It might be assumed that those which protect Church property and the property of the clergy were novel, but it should be borne in mind that we know so little about sixth-century religious practice as to render such suggestions speculative.

Literacy, law and legal culture in Anglo-Saxon England

Patrick Wormald has recently begun a major re-evaluation of the sources and nature of Anglo-Saxon, and by extension European, law making between the end of Roman Empire and the Middle Ages (Wormald 1999). This extensive review, which draws from almost every historical source for the period, reiterates and extends much of his previous work on the topic. It would hardly do justice to the work to summarise it, but certain broad conclusions are relevant to the case here, so require our attention. Firstly, he argues that, in spite of the evidence of legal

documents, Anglo-Saxon society was “not fully literate”, when compared with later English law making. This is also true when comparison is made with the rest of Europe – in particular the Mediterranean (Wormald 1999 482, 477-483). Secondly, he argues that such law codes as exist owe more to rhetoric and ideology than the day-to-day governance of daily life. So, Alfred’s law code was directed to the “symbolic moment” instead of codification (1999 429). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he stresses the apparent failure of pre-conquest legislation to have any meaningful impact on the maintenance of law and order, arguing that the impact was principally aspirational and ideological.

On first inspection, Wormald’s argument about the literacy culture of England seems weakened by an imprecise definition of literacy itself. There is no clear definition of literacy, nor a discussion of the complications that arise from different perspectives. The thrust of the argument suggests that “full literacy” did not emerge until the twelfth century in England. But, our discussions presented grounds for believing that literacy is not an objective aspiration towards which society evolves. This would appear to undermine Wormald’s position.

First impressions are misleading: Wormald’s argument actually reveals considerably more subtlety on the subject of literacy. Thus, for example, he argues that legal literacy in pre-conquest England was discursive, if not instrumental:

Alfred’s code need no longer be understood as a primarily legislative instrument. It neither *made* nor codified law ... Instead, it said something of immense symbolic moment about the law of Wessex. That Alfred had an unrivalled grasp of the material necessities of government brooks no denial. The fact remains that he was also a ninth-century intellectual. He would not otherwise be the only early medieval king who wrote books about his job. It is therefore neither incongruous nor improbable that his priorities in compiling his lawbook should be literary and ideological: that he himself gave it the form that has descended to posterity (Wormald 1999 429 original italics)

So his view is not really constrained by a monolithic view of literacy as a technology for social control, but is also open to discursive possibilities. This sits

comfortably beside Street's analysis of literacy presented in Chapter Four. However, it also means that the idea of "full literacy" needs clarification.

The claim that legal literacy had no significant impact on the daily life of the population is clearly important. The evidence mobilised in support of this claim is extensive, drawing upon numerous legal manuscripts, as well as all the contemporary Anglo-Saxon sources that have any bearing on legislation, and a comprehensive cross-section of European law. Working through the manuscripts of legislation he notes that the text themselves are arranged illogically and their contents,

quaintly elementary, or ponderously rhetorical, their form inconsistent, their content a baffling mix of the unhelpfully specific and the ineffectually general (Wormald 1999 417)

Looking beyond the codes themselves, he notes that written law has little impact on culture: there are no examples of Anglo-Saxon law codes being quoted in defence or opposition to disputes. On the contrary, he sees legislation "as literature", focussing on the stylistic traditions that created it. Thus, the transmission of Mosaic Law, ideals of a Christian Empire, and canon law are presented as the driving force behind what was only an aspiration, not a practical reality. The comparison with European legal traditions is striking (Wormald 1999 29-92). Whereas the Frankish and Carolingian legislation was considerably more abundant (with ten times more royal edicts and fifteen times more law codes), it was scarcely able to sustain a strong legal culture, in spite of what the cartularies may say.

Wormald's analysis of law and legal texts is impressive and often compelling. Even a skim through the sources is intimidating. Yet the unifying characteristic of the sources is their textuality. The impact of legal texts is mainly expressed as their impact upon each other. Times and spaces are collapsed in textual analysis. The people who may or may not have been affected by them are barely mentioned, nor indeed is anything other than the institutional gaze of law. An all seeing eye creates a master narrative of transmission and diffusion. The author himself describes the end product as an "old-fashioned book" which owes a debt of

gratitude to Victorian gentleman scholars and their pre-occupations with English constitutional law (Wormald 1999 x).

This does not mean that the issues of law and government discussed did not have a practical impact on the population at large. The issues discussed are pertinent to the greater mass of the population, though in varying degrees.

Wormald's concern with manuscript sources over other forms of evidence does not contradict his argument but it does weaken it. If, for example, literacy were approached through the social sciences, the argument would be supported. If we could demonstrate some correspondence between Wormald's argument and the archaeological record then the matter may be put beyond doubt.

How could archaeology support or contradict Wormald's case? Much of the substance of the law codes cannot be contested archaeologically, such as whether or not children were baptised or whether or not appropriate fines were paid. However, certain aspects of the law codes purport to speak about the organisation of material resources – the division of the landscape, the use of coinage and the like. Broadly, therefore, it may be claimed that the law codes purport to represent the intervention of royal authority in localities by supervising the deployment of resources. If the archaeological record in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries revealed no particular change in the mechanisms by which resources were managed, then we could construct an argument supporting Wormald's claim that these legal documents had no particular impact. If, on the contrary, we find rapid or unexpected changes in the archaeological record that seem to show changes in the mechanisms used to control resources, then his case would be weakened. This would imply that there was a basic congruence between the imagined world of the law codes and daily practice.

Chapter Six and Chapter Seven will present two focussed and detailed accounts of this archaeology in two different contexts. However, at the risk of pre-empting those arguments, a number of changes can be described that appear to undermine Wormald's hypothesis.

Thus, Klingelhöfer has studied in detail the landscape of Micheldever Hundred in Hampshire from the Iron Age up to and beyond the later Middle Ages (see

Chapter Six). In so doing he notes that the Iron Age and Romano-British settlement of the area is markedly different from the medieval settlement. The definitive change he argues is in the early Saxon period where settlements moved to the river valleys from the tops of the valleys. However, this move was followed by a period of consolidation and definition in the middle Saxon period in which estate boundaries were described with new, physical boundaries. Although these new boundaries are not dated very precisely, and though the dates are only provisional, they appear to coincide with the development of early “*parochiae*” in the region, with the development of the emporium at Hamwic (for which see Chapter Seven), the appearance of the earliest coinage in the region (also Chapter Seven), and the appearance of the first law codes and charters. The law code of Ine, for one, speaks directly about the landscape, dividing it into discrete areas for discrete activities.

So, on one hand, we have a law code that seeks to describe the physical landscape in terms of discrete units, and on the other we have a landscape that is indeed divided into discrete units. If Klingelhöfer’s chronology can be trusted, these seem to appear within a generation of each other. On one hand, we have a law code that describes goods and services in terms of cash coinage, and we have a florescence of locally produced coins. Both appear within a generation of each other. On one hand we have a law code that talks of legal officials in the localities, and on the other we have the appearance of literate clergy who may have been equipped to act as the king’s representative in the locality; again both appear within a generation of each other. It would seem, therefore, that in Hampshire at least, there is a broad correspondence between the law code, the archaeological record and other contemporary phenomena. It is worth stressing that this correlation does not mean a causal connection between the two, it just suggests a weakness of Wormald’s case.

Wormald does not consider the archaeological evidence, so it is hard to know how he would account for this apparent correspondence, other than as a simple, if unconnected co-incidence. The relationship between these changes and the developing legal culture cannot be demonstrated by reference to extant documents: there is no charter documenting the enclosure of Micheldever, nor can the local “officials” be named, indeed they can only be surmised. There is no royal edict ordering the creation of coinage. Thus, while the counter-evidence of archaeology is strong, it is difficult to match the two different sets of evidence together.

If it is difficult to connect the two different sets of evidence, then the counter thesis – that the archaeological record undermines Wormald's claim – may in turn be attacked. Although we can point to changes in the archaeological record, we cannot tie these down to particular literacy practices per se. Hence, coinage, the division of the landscape, royal officials and other elements may be ruled out of the argument on the grounds that such changes are as likely to result from oral culture as literate. That is to say that, though there are changes, these cannot be connected to literacy or law codes: that the law is genuinely unconnected, or simply part of the same process. Oral law, it may be argued, could instigate all these changes, without reference to law codes or literacy culture. Thus, Wormald's proposition is reconciled with the archaeological record, without harm to either.

Yet it is questionable whether oral culture really could have instigated these changes in the way that they are materialised in the Middle-Saxon landscape. Our discussion of literacy introduced the concept of "distanciation", noting that writing can transcend the boundaries of oral discourse. Writing thus alters the space/time geography of discourse. If it can be shown that the changes described in the archaeological record demonstrate a shift in such space/time geographies, then we have a *prima facie* case for arguing that literacy was involved. Such an argument an argument may perhaps remain exploratory, but is more convincing than reliance on a theory of coincidence.

In fact, the evidence does indeed suggest that the novel features of the archaeological record represent a change in the space-time geography of power relations. A number of phenomena indicate this. For example, little is known of early medieval Wessex, except that it seems to have been a patchwork of much smaller territories. By the eighth century, however, it appears as a large, and relatively stable political unit (Yorke 1995). In outline, therefore, power relations have been extended beyond the face-to-face exchanges of oral discourse. This is exactly the sort of change that we would expect to result from distanciation, or at least from the political centralisation that the law codes seem to assume.

At a more particular level, the cases of Hamwic and Micheldever mentioned above provide another view on this. In Micheldever, we see the demarcation of the landscape and the division of the landscape into the *parochiae* of mother churches

(see Chapter Six), apparently (though not conclusively) in the first half of the eighth century. Why should we suppose that the division of the landscape should have anything to do with literacy? Klingelhöfer argues that middle Saxon estate boundaries were pre-cursors to later, and much better documented, Saxon settlements in the area (Klingelhöfer 1991, 1992).

The limited evidence suggests that a radical change from the Romano-British and Iron Age settlement of the areas fossilised at the middle of the eighth century, at the same time as the first law codes and first charters in Wessex. There are undoubtedly problems in finding a precise date for these changes, but a range of circumstantial evidence tends to support Klingelhöfer's view. There is no evidence of climatic variation, or soil damage or any other environmental reason why such estate boundaries should appear in the eighth century. There is no evidence of invasion or migration, nor any other obvious anthropogenic explanation. The only likely explanation is that this area was brought into the orbit of the kings and clergy of Wessex a century or so before the earliest surviving documents, but in a way that was entirely consistent with those later, documented landscapes. This later documentation, which purports to be only a century or so after the period in question (though see Brooks 1982 who claims it is a later forgery), supports the view that this landscape could have been part of a literate legal culture in the eighth century that survived with a few changes into the later Saxon period. The later literacy-influenced landscape of Klingelhöfer's broad argument, therefore did not spring, fully formed in the tenth or eleventh century but was, in the first instance, a product of the seventh and eighth centuries.

In Hamwic, a very different sort of place, we see the development of technologies of surveillance, such as coinage and property, at the end of the seventh or beginning of the eighth centuries. Both these changes are representative of the development of new methods of controlling and ordering resources, worked out to suit local conditions.

Thus, two different and remote areas seem to have developed new methods to manage resources in the late seventh century or in the eighth century. These two examples suggest that technologies of surveillance were extended in new ways, in different parts of the kingdom as part of a single process. This is exactly the sort of

result one would expect from the impact of distancing when attached to law and governance.

As with so many aspects of Early Medieval history and archaeology, the argument about distancing as against oral law is not one that can be demonstrated with complete satisfaction. Terms like “oral law making” and “distancing” are open to multiple interpretations, while the evidence is always problematic. However, it is in the estate boundaries in Micheldever that we have, perhaps the clearest evidence that literate law making may have had a material effect. Micheldever was, literally and metaphorically, a backwater. It is some twenty miles from the likely centre of political and economic activity at Hamwic, and seems peripheral to the interests of the church and the king. There is no evidence that the estate was held by any of the great monasteries or churches (until the tenth century), and there are still no religious or economic centres worth discussing. There is no evidence that it was ever contested in the various skirmishes between Wessex and Mercia in the eighth and ninth centuries, and was not near enough to the roman road to have enjoyed much passing trade. The river Dever is little more than a stream that could hardly be described as navigable. If anything, it is the last place that one would expect to find the intervention of royal authority. If we accept that the estate boundaries were part of an attempt to manage resources, and if we accept that the area was otherwise remote from royal intervention, then we can only conclude that these divisions could not have been created by conventional “oral” law. The precise dating of these boundaries is problematic, but if we can accept the provisional dating offered by Klingelhöfer, then we have reason to question Wormald’s view on law.

If we were to follow Wormald’s view on the subject, one would have to assume that the various novel technologies of surveillance – coinage, estate boundaries and the like – simply appeared simultaneously with the first law codes and charters by happy co-incidence. One would then need to find another explanation for each of these. Thus, a theory of “oral law” cannot readily account for the changes manifest in the archaeological record.

Of course, these law codes are not alone in representing new forms of authority over considerably wider times and spaces: charters and other documents perform the same operation in different ways.

The conclusion is that literacy radically remade the royal authority that drew upon it, allowing regulation of much larger areas over much greater periods of time. It also created a symbiosis between royal authority and the clergy. The need for face-to-face exchanges between the ruler and the ruled was obviated, provided local conditions could be managed on the king's behalf provided the clergy could intervene. Developed in this way, literacy provided the focus for a wholesale re-negotiation of social authority. It meant that the clergy had special access to royal authority, making it hard to establish where the interests of one started and the other ended. New mechanisms of surveillance were thus the practical realisation of a new political dispensation in which literacy played an important role. They may thus have activated a discourse on literacy. They may thus be described as literacy practices even though individually they may not have depended on the exercise of reading and writing.

The law codes and the grant of land through charters were not abstract exercises undertaken by clerical dreamers in isolation from the real world. Substantive changes accompanied the deployment of literacy, informing and informed by it. Four distinct but related mechanisms for surveillance were either introduced or altered in the seventh and eighth centuries: royal administrators emerged in localities; property rights were asserted more vigorously; the calendar may have been re-organised in line with Christian practice; and weights, measures and coinage were subject to alteration. These elements can be considered in turn.

Royal officials in the countryside

It is difficult to be specific about the emergence of the royal officials. It is clear that by the end of the eighth century, the king was represented by officials referred to as reeves or ealdormen (Dumville 1997 345-374). Although the origins of these officials varied from kingdom to kingdom, the middle years of the seventh century seem to be the most important in their development. Firstly, in Wessex, it is clear that they were in existence *before* the laws of Ine were drafted. Sub-kings appear in sources from the start of the seventh century, whereas at the start of the eighth, the terms used imply a more pronounced concentration of power. Thus, after the reign of Ine in Wessex, terms like "*princeps*", "*patricius*" and "*praefectus*" appear within charters (Yorke 1995 84, Thacker 1981 201-36, Chadwick 1905 282-90). Similar arguments have been adduced for the appearance of royal officials described as

“praefecti” in the laws of Hlothere and Eadric, also from the last years of the seventh century (Hawkes 1982 72, 76). This is supported by consideration of the organisation of legal institutions in the larger kingdoms. Royal officials with subsidiary jurisdiction simply could not have had the same sort of authority in the smaller kingdoms at the end of the sixth century, since many of the kingdoms at that time seem too small to warrant such attenuated lines of communication. In addition, there is an implicit acceptance by some that the seventh century witnesses an archaeology of just such an organisation. For example, the appearance of possible *“villae regales”*, such as Cowdery’s Down, suggests that revenue was collected from royal estates in the king’s absence (Millett and James 1983). This would suggest that the king’s influence reached the countryside through locally appointed representatives. Finally, the assorted documents already mentioned must have had an audience. It is not clear who actually read (or listened) to such documents, though the very fact that they were written in Old English is perhaps important. In Wessex, the laws of Ine expressly indicate the desire to strengthen the king’s power throughout the kingdom, to prevent ealdormen from perverting the king’s laws and to instruct his subjects about the law. The implication is that the code was drafted for royal officials in the localities.

This is another area where it is hard to separate the royal from the clerical. If royal administration involved any form of reading or writing then administrators would either have to be members of the clergy, or dependent on them. Even if they did not depend on reading and writing, proximity to literacy may have created a peculiar discursive relationship between them, as to which one enjoyed privileged access to royal authority.

A new calendar

Consideration of royal officials operating in localities fits closely with what has already been noted about the abstraction of authority from face-to-face exchanges to centrally sanctioned and approved administration. Yet the expansion of bureaucracy was not confined to royal administrators in the countryside. Historical sources reveal that the calendar was also changed in line with Christian practice. To that extent the clergy attempted to transform the regulation of time as well as the regulation of physical resources.

This change is attested in Bede's *De Temporum Ratione*. It gives an account of the traditional months of the pagan Anglo-Saxon calendar, comparing them to the Christian calendar. The names of the months are given with a short etymology of how these names were used. The months of the Anglo-Saxon calendar corresponded to a routine of ritual and agricultural activities (Meaney 1985). From a computistical perspective, this round must have extended beyond a simple annual cycle, to encompass a much longer cycle of eight or nineteen years, with nineteen seeming the most plausible (Harrison 1979 65-78). Thus, the calendar represents and schematises activities over what must have been the scale of life times as well as months. So, the changes advocated by Bede represent changes in the organisation of activity as well as time. By reorganising the calendar, the Church offered a reorganised template for living. This was an ambitious transformation. Of course, reflection upon the historical context of the text raises questions about the extent of its impact. Suffice it to say that social aspects of time are collapsed, conflated and transformed by our source (Gosden 1993, Gurevich 1976). Moreover, we would be naïve to suppose that Bede did not measure his comments very carefully. Nor, should we presume that the changes were necessarily adopted outwith his immediate circle. But, while we cannot say with certainty if Bede's account was universally relevant, the very fact of its existence reveals an ambitious plan. The clergy, intimately involved in literacy as a means of regulating physical resources, were also keen to regulate the rhythm of time.

Property rights

The concern with regulated time and space is confirmed in a series of practices that pertain to property. On one hand, large-scale property rights seem to have become a matter of specific concern, a concern that is in part articulated through material culture. On the other hand, small-scale property rights seem to have been the subject of change, partly through changes in the use of weights and measures, and partly through the novel deployment of coinage.

This question of property rights is explored most usefully in the architecture of settlements. The seventh and eighth centuries witnessed the division of settlements into apparently self-contained units, representing a greater concern with private property than earlier centuries. Property boundaries appear *de novo* at Catholme (Losco-Bradley 1984), West Stow (West 1985), Chalton (Addyman 1972, 1973a), Cowdery's Down (Millet and James 1983) and Cowage Farm (Hinchliffe 1986).

Cassington and New Wintles have no evidence for this, while Bishopstone reveals such a division of property, but may display such features in the fifth century (for which see also Hinton 1990 27 and Bell 1977). At West Heslerton, there was no evidence of property boundaries within or between the various activity areas. These were defined purely on the basis of perceived activities, and were not delimited in any observable physical sense. From this, it seems safe to argue that there were *no* boundaries on the site (Powesland 1997). The report from Mucking pays little attention to post holes on site, so while it is impossible to point to the published plans and show that it presents no divisions, this might be a simplistic argument (Hamerow 1993, Powesland 1997 110). The *pièce de resistance* for divisions inside a settlement and between settlements and the rest of the world is Hamwic, where the seemingly planned roads, carefully divided properties and the division between town and country are most pronounced (Morton 1992, Andrews 1997). Klingelhöfer proposes that this division was replicated in the countryside round Micheldever (1992).

Is it possible that the seventh century witnessed the alienation of property in ways that were not possible or considered useful in the sixth century? It is certainly conceivable that the overt concern with the demarcation of property was a feature of the seventh century, but a number of factors and contrary examples tend to weaken the argument. Thus, for example, neither West Stow nor Mucking — probably the two most completely excavated rural settlements of the period — present a stratification of property boundaries of the type we might anticipate. These sites contrast most sharply with Hamwic, a site that has not only a large boundary ditch but evidence of internal planning which corresponds closely to what we might imagine to be a centrally planned allocation of property within the settlement. Other sites, in contrast, clearly were not as closely involved in property rights or their alienation. It is little surprise then that the same concern is not articulated within their boundaries. However, following such logic, we should anticipate the greater penetration of the economy to be marked by an expansion of property boundaries or hierarchy within settlements.

This seems several steps removed from the circuit of literacy practices with which we are concerned. Why should the alienation of property — tenuous as the evidence seems to be — reveal a concern with or betray the workings of literacy? Once again, the relationship is mediated through surveillance. The bureaucratic

practices reveal a concern with the legitimate alienation of property. Historical scholarship has presumed the ownership of property as read, but this is not so. Bureaucratic practices reveal an intensified concern with the protection of property rights. It is a simple step from witnessing that concern in historical documents to witnessing the same phenomenon in physical terms on the ground. The concern for property evident in charters was not constrained to parchment, but was played out materially in the demarcation of boundaries. Boundaries and property draw together the whole of the population, since successful alienation inevitably denies access as well as enables it. They create unequal access to resources and thus hierarchies of resource procurement and alienation. The fence lines and boundary ditches of the middle Saxon settlement are not trivial: they embody the working out of a literate, and ultimately Christian, logic of property rights.

Weights, measures and coinage

Localised property rights have a parallel in the use of weights and measures. The entire corpus of balances and weights — which amounts to no more than thirteen examples — has been recovered from cemetery contexts. Ignoring the symbolic construction of cemetery archaeology may well result in interpretations in which form follows function. The study of weights has concentrated on the establishment of metrological standards (e.g. Scull 1990 189-190). This concern with a macro-metrology suppresses local uses of the scales and balances as means of achieving equal shares, irrespective of an organised metrology. Discussions concerning the social and economic context of the use of the scales and their relationship to currency transactions have tended to take them for granted without a discussion of the implications of such transactions for the organisation and maintenance of power. Significantly, most of the balances and scales come from the sixth century. Few, if any, are known from the seventh century, and none can be securely dated to the latter half of the century, although one set is exceptional (Cappelle and Vierck 1971 71-77). In essence, therefore, the seventh century seems to witness a decline in the use of balances and weights. Superficially, this sits uncomfortably with arguments about the burgeoning surveillance of the seventh century. However, such a decline is not only in keeping with this hypothesis but it adds to it. For example, Werner argues that scales and balances were used as a response to specific monetary conditions, not simply as a technology of trade (Werner 1961 327-29): they were used on the fringes of monetised economies, where coinage was

accumulated as bullion, not as a medium of exchange. To Werner, the use of balances and weights is representative of a monetary vacuum in which there is no authority to guarantee the value of the coins. In such circumstances, empirical assessment is the only way to warrant good faith. While the bold lines of his argument have been softened (Steuer 1987 447-59), this is compatible with the broad lines of the argument here. The decline of balances and scales was made possible by the intervention of more carefully regulated mechanisms, such as currency.

The apparent disappearance of weights and balances is consistent with the abstraction of power proposed above, but is dependent on the development of currency. The development of cash currency in England in the seventh century is central to the argument. In the sixth century, exchange could only take place in relation to the merits of that which was being exchanged, and was organised on an *ad hoc*, face to face basis. Foreign currencies were an obvious means of conducting such exchange. In the seventh century, however, the development of a local coinage meant that balances and scales were no longer the necessary accompaniment they once were. Thus, coinage obviated the need for individually negotiated exchanges, and was part of the growing intervention of abstract forms of authority in daily life. Coinage is thus one of the bureaucratic practices of government, and thus indirectly with the discourses of Christian practice. Coinage was not necessarily very widespread in middle Saxon England. The middle Saxon economy cannot be described as a monetised one in any meaningful sense of the term. Yet it is clear that relatively large numbers of coins were minted in the period after 650, and that by the middle of the next century, pennies were circulating right across the country.

Underpinning this argument, of course, is the recognition of the need for currency to be validated and regulated by an over-arching regulatory body, such as bureaucratic institutions. The emergence of coinage in the seventh century in England is entirely consistent with the pattern of distanced government of law and charter. To that extent, even where the coinage does not actively carry literacy, the exchange of coinage can be interpreted as a literacy practice.

So, the four related areas of time, property rights, local administration and weights and measures each show a convergence on the seventh century as a period

of rapid expansion and deployment of novel mechanisms of surveillance. The practices associated with surveillance, however, extend beyond the crude exercise of power, engendering its representation also. Thus, novel means of surveillance gave rise to novel mechanisms to represent power.

Investigation of the archaeological record reveals a number of cases where there are obvious changes in the representation of power, some of which have already been mentioned, such as coinage, a medium that remains the principal mechanism for representing the symbolic authority of the monarchy. Other changes can be suggested, such as the appearance of settlement hierarchies or symbolic barriers. Independently these seem only esoterically connected to surveillance and its representation. But, when considered alongside the decline of “spectacular” burials, or the representation of controlled violence, or the rise of neo-classical styles, these symbolic representations of authority may be part of a larger structural shift to more subtle, if no less effective, means of symbolic intervention.

For example, royal centres seem to become more visible archaeologically in the seventh and eighth centuries. There is really very little domestic evidence of royal centres prior to the middle of the seventh century. Although deeply problematic, in earlier centuries status seems to have been articulated through explicit association with wealth and violence. This is seen most commonly in cemeteries, where it is argued that status is reflected by relative quantities of grave-goods and their relative militarism (Härke 1990, 1997). The discourse of power seems to change from one of action and movement (through weaponry) in the sixth and early seventh century to one of permanence and residence in the later seventh and eighth.

It is a commonplace of Anglo-Saxon archaeology that the larger, wealthier burials of the later sixth and seventh century were already a memory by the middle of the seventh century. The tradition seems to come to an end very shortly after its climax, the Sutton Hoo burial. This has, of course, been the foundation of interpretative schemata, such as Arnold’s suggestion that this tradition was itself a response to “social stress” and marks a re-organisation of status within society (Arnold 1982a). In other contexts, it has been argued that the demise of large-scale burials in Scandinavia represents a change in the locale of ritual activity (Fabeck 1994). Neither of these interpretations are convincing: the first for its unsatisfactory assumption of status and wealth; the latter for its characterisation of

ritual activity: but it can hardly be denied that wealthy burials decline sharply after 650. At the same time, and perhaps for a generation before 650, a whole set of expanded settlements appear that, purely on the basis of their scale, are thought to be connected with royalty, such as Yeavinger (Hope-Taylor 1977), Cowdery's Down (Millett and James 1983), Atcham (Welch 1992 47), Sprouston (Smith 1991), Hatton Rocks (Rahtz 1970, Hirst and Rahtz 1973), Drayton and Long Wittenham, (Welch 1992 47), and Northampton (Williams 1984). Other large settlements of the period, though not necessarily secular foundations, may have enjoyed royal patronage, such as the monasteries at Jarrow or Whitby in Northumbria, and the enigmatic site at Brandon in Suffolk (Carr et al 1988), all reasonably supposed to be monastic foundations with royal approval. Finally, the list of larger settlements would not be complete without a mention of the so-called emporia, settlements that combine production and exchange, notably *Hamwic*, Ipswich and *Lundenwic*.

The simplicity of this reconstruction of events betrays a number of problems. Firstly, the implicit assumption that royal status is inherent in the scale of a settlement is as unsatisfactory in settlement studies as it is in cemetery studies. The assumption has a common-sense appeal, but lacks compelling logic. Secondly, many of the settlements to which the argument refers either antedate the period in question or are so roughly dated as to be open to doubt. For example, earliest phases of the middle Saxon palace of Northampton are dated to any point between the fifth and eighth centuries (Williams 1985).

The first of these objections can be circumnavigated since really the point is not about status so much as about the scale of the settlement. Indeed, it might be argued that the relative visibility is itself indicative of significant changes. Such a change in scale could be taken to demonstrate differences in practice from one period to another. At the very least they indicate significant changes in economic practices from the seventh century onwards, and a relative increase in the density of population. It is less important that a given site has royal associations so much as that it forms part of an emergent hierarchy of sites.

The argument of settlement hierarchy opens a less nuanced version of the same argument about royal association with certain settlements. Not only are such settlements completely new in some cases, but something about the scale or wealth or historical associations of the settlements has led commentators to label them as

being socially distinct from other local settlements. Thus, for example, the amount of work put into the largest house at Cowdery's Down suggests that this site is somewhat different from other Hampshire settlements such as Chalton, which is superficially much smaller (Millett and James 1983, Addyman 1972, 1973a). On the other hand, while West Stow is large, it is in effect little more than a village whereas the site of Ipswich or Brandon reveal considerably more wealth in their construction and their small finds (West 1985, Wade 1988, Carr et al 1988). As far as historical associations are concerned, it is clear that certain sites, such as Bamburgh or Winchester, were central points in a local hierarchy of sites and settlements, in spite of the known Middle Saxon settlement pattern being largely invisible.

Similar, if more muted, objections can be raised to this proposal as might be presented to the claim that royal sites are more apparent from the seventh century onwards. Firstly, the apparent greater portable wealth or greater investment in building might be a result of the types of archaeological investigation undertaken. For example, it is now widely acknowledged that Leeds knew very little about Anglo-Saxon building traditions when he excavated Sutton Courtenay, and may well have overlooked numerous larger but archaeologically less well preserved halls when he excavated the various *Grubenhauser* there (Leeds 1927, Welch 1992 37). If such an oversight were repeated several times in a region (and we will never really be able to demonstrate this one way or the other) then some of the supposedly high-status sites might begin to look altogether more ordinary. Interestingly, one of the criticisms made of the excavation report from Mucking was that it spends comparatively little time looking at individual post-holes and the implications that such minor features might have over the entire site (Powesland 1997 110). Secondly, there are obvious objections to the idea that status is contiguous with the size of a settlement, or the amount of finely worked material found there, or the fact that a site happens to be mentioned in an historical document. Only a very carefully constructed contextual archaeology would be able to make such links satisfactorily, but even this would be in danger of creating a circular argument. For such an archaeology to work effectively, we would also need to know a great deal about Anglo-Saxon settlement in a given vicinity — information which is not available for every region, and not truly satisfactory for any.

For the purposes of this thesis, the origins of this settlement hierarchy are central. Arguments that relate the expansion in settlement hierarchies to warfare or an expansion in violence are unconvincing since the expanded settlements present little or no obvious concern with defence. None of them even give evidence of a substantial perimeter fence, which is in stark contrast to the contemporary settlements in the Celtic world, or for that matter the towns of Roman Britain or the *burhs* of later Anglo-Saxon England. On reflection, this is little short of extraordinary. It is conceivable that in certain cases, the perimeters of the sites have been poorly examined, or that later reconstruction has disguised the period with which we are presently concerned. Certainly, there was a reasonably substantial ditch surrounding Hamwic, but the excavator found no evidence of a bank within the ditch, and postulated that if such a bank did exist it would likely be on the outside, rather than the inside. Perhaps we find here once again evidence that surveillance rather than violence constituted the principal means of articulating and maintaining power.

The point is that we can perceive a change in the place of violence within discourse. The sixth and early part of the seventh centuries are replete with evidence for not just the use of violence, but the explicit representation of violence as an element of the ideological packaging of kingship. Consider, for example, the very graphic representation of violence obtained from a site like Sutton Hoo, which seems to include not just the tools of violence, but also to have witnessed the very direct implementation of that violence (e.g. Wilson 1992 165-172). Consider also, in spite of all the flaws in the argument, the connections that Heinrich Härke has observed between weaponry and social status (Härke 1990, 1997). His analysis would simply not be possible if there were not already large numbers of weapons associated with graves. It would be facile to argue that violence had been reduced by the end of the seventh century. It is clear from all our historical sources that violence was an expected and ubiquitous feature of government. However, by 700 violence had been joined by other forms of representation. This had the net effect of lessening the prominence of violence within the repertoire of devices used to represent authority, stylising the occasions on which this motif could be expressed.

This is a complicated question. It is difficult to demonstrate any comments about power through archaeology. However, in this context, I believe it is fruitful to consider aspects of the settlement pattern in the seventh and eighth centuries. I

would argue that the high-status sites referred to here differ from supposedly high-status sites of the west of Britain of the same period, or from high-status sites of later in the Middle Ages. The point can be made by looking at the architecture of the sites, at their general topographic context, and the way in which that topography is used. None of the sites seems to have been designed with defence as a high priority. In other words, it is hard to find violence or warfare made explicit through the architecture of the sites, even though it seems clear from the historical sources that violence was very much present upon such sites. This lack of defensive characteristics is all but unique among high-status secular foundations of the Medieval world, raising questions about the nature of practical power that could have initiated or maintained these sites.

The material representation of authority in middle Saxon England through the mechanism discussed here fits into a broader context of the representation of wealth through the deployment of neo-classical styles (Higgitt 1973, Greenhalgh 1989, referenced in Geake 1997). Viewed from the perspective of the survival and currency of Roman material culture, it can be seen that literacy coincides with other contemporary interpretations of the Roman world. Thus, it was part of a cultural movement that reinforced the perceived values of a society in which literacy was taken for granted. Helen Geake argues that the transformation is more consciously Romanesque than would have been possible had the norms of contemporary Byzantine fashion been adopted (Geake 1997 121, Ager 1985). In this respect she revises the Roman/Byzantine hypothesis of Hyslop rather than point to some generic Mediterranean extraction (Hyslop 1963, Geake 1997 108). In addition, Tyler Bell has investigated early Medieval fascination with Roman relics, noting the propensity for early Medieval church buildings to be directly associated with remnants of Roman masonry (Bell 1998). From the seventh century onwards there was a steady increase in the numbers of stone buildings with mortar as an integral feature (Ferne 1983). Though these new stone and mortar buildings are generally ecclesiastical in nature they fit into a broader pattern in which Mediterranean and neo-classical motifs were adapted in the repertoire of art and design. Thus, as part of the Roman cultural inheritance the deployment of literacy practices in the representation of power is consistent with other broader cultural and artistic trends.

The discussion here has moved some distance from the tightly focussed circuits of literacy with which we started. Why is settlement hierarchy presented here in a discussion of literacy? There are several routes into this argument that relate these apparently unconnected phenomena. Firstly, the settlements are not heavily defended. This associated with the decline and abandonment of militaristic posturing in funerary display can be interpreted as the creation of new means of displaying and maintaining status. Simultaneously, royal patronage of literacy had obtained new means of promulgating and supervising authority, characterised in bureaucratic practices. Not only do the more densely populated settlements lead us to suppose a greater economic wealth, but they also provide direct means for the surveillance of the human body, the locus of all surveillance exercises. Moreover, the apparent lack of defence tends to suggest that violence must have been regulated in a somewhat abstract manner in such settlements, since little material evidence can be adduced to demonstrate the practical measures taken. Significantly, the regulation of violence was one of the prime concerns of the law codes that prescribe complex combinations of fines and penalties in the event of unlawful violence or theft. Thus, the development of larger, open settlements gave rise to and was the result of changing types of surveillance and regulation which pertained to the human body, its disposition and its violation. Literacy was involved in these novel practices: partly allowing an altered space-time geography of social exchanges, and partly as a discourse on literacy. In this respect, the literacy practices of bureaucracy not only impinged on the lives of the whole population, but were confirmed by the material conditions of existence in the daily round of practice.

* literacies in action 2: surveillance and the economy

Discussion of the abstract values of coins and currency, the development of property rights and the fate of scales and balances inevitably draws us into the economic sphere, about which so much has been written. Again, if we had accepted the theoretical perspectives of Goody and Ong, this section would be relatively easy to write, since both make direct claims relating developments in the economic sphere to literacy practices. However, given that we have adopted an alternative position in relation to literacy, the topic becomes that much more complicated. Rather than assuming crude cause and effect, it is necessary to locate literacy in specific practices that inform the development of distinct literacies.

The exchange of property at the large scale has been the subject of much scholarship in literacy studies and in early Medieval archaeology. Jack Goody listed matters of trade and exchange in his more recent work on literacy and the organisation of society, noting that the origins of writing in Mesopotamia are inextricably linked to the development of the economy. In particular, the key concepts of shareholding and credit, both putatively unique properties of literacy, were fundamental to the success of the economy (Goody 1986 71-77). Early Medieval archaeology has long had an interest in economic studies, with Pirenne and his followers arguing that early Medieval economics provide the basic foundations of Medieval civilisation. This has worked into Anglo-Saxon archaeology, most notably in the various articles by Richard Hodges on the state of the middle Saxon economy (*inter alia* Hodges 1989a, 1989b). Literacy is absent from all these accounts, but it should be obvious that the previous sections have shown that bureaucratic practices are significant elements of this economy, at least in its regulation. In essence, then, the community that was involved in these economic trends was also drawn into literacy practices.

This section starts by expanding what has already been said on currency and coinage, moving from there to the limited evidence of craft specialisation that accompanies this coinage in quasi-urban settlements of the emporia. Any discussion of production in the middle ages leads, inevitably to a discussion of agriculture that was the source of all wealth. Several trends will be noted, including a greater penetration of long distance trade into localities, a more pronounced organisation of the landscape and discussion of perceived expansion of agriculture. Each of these themes is related to the more efficient and demanding management of resources and the more exacting demands of an evolving bureaucracy which utilised the newly expanded mechanisms of surveillance to its own advantage. Middle Saxon literacy practices may thus have been present in the evolution of the whole Medieval landscape and economy, revealing the discourse of literacy and Christianity in the material conditions of daily life.

As noted before, middle Saxon England saw significant developments in coinage. The earliest *indigenous* coins of Anglo-Saxon England were the short-lived Saxon gold tremisses that circulated in Kent from the 620s. Dating for these coins is vague since they never seem to have been great in number, but they seem to have gone out of circulation by the 650s. Their use was simultaneous with the

development and subsequent abandonment of Frankish gold tremisses. English tremisses were followed by silver sceattas after an interval of some twenty years or so. The primary sceattas have a similar distribution to the tremisses, but were more widespread by the end of the seventh century. The sceattas also fit the established pattern of continental coin circulation (Hodges 1989a, Blackburn 1986 *passim*, Hill and Metcalf 1984 *passim* Metcalf 1993-4 *passim*).

It is clear that there were imported coins in England for several generations before the English ones, and that they continued in use after 620. It has been suggested that imported coins were used for a whole variety of transactions in Kent, from as early as 540 (Hawkes 1982 72-74). The symbolic use of currency is also attested in the law codes of the seventh century, where compensation was measured in “scillings” and “sceattas” even before the earliest coins were minted. This hints at the social and juridical role of coinage before any economic importance. It seems reasonable to argue that imported coins were used as bullion. They are rarer than we would expect of a popular currency; they are generally recovered from contexts such as burials that would tend to support the view that they were deployed for symbolic or less commonly storage purposes; and they are seldom if ever found as stray finds. Moreover, arguments about the use and deployment of balances and weights emphasise their role as a means of comparing bullion (Scull 1990).

In contrast to foreign coins and tremisses, however, the indigenous sceattas seem to have been more readily used as cash. Their intrinsic value was much less, making them more appropriate for small-scale exchanges. They are not found as grave goods as much, and are more commonly found as stray finds, removed from what would otherwise be considered elite or royal associations or as hoards (e.g. Sutherland 1948).

Why is coinage more important than bullion? There are many different aspects of coinage and exchange that could be extrapolated from numerous anthropological studies (starting with Malinowski 1922). The significant point is summed up by Burnett:

...the differentiating characteristic of a coin as opposed to a piece of bullion is that it is issued with a recognised value by a competent authority. This authority is normally the sovereign body in the state such as a king or popular assembly although in practice this authority might be delegated to or assumed by another body or individual (1991 10).

In other words, coinage is a barometer for changes in other areas. If we follow Burnett's analysis we can assume that coinage talks of authority abstracted from individual exchange, as proposed above. Thus the appearance of coinage implies the abstraction of authority and the intervention of that authority to guarantee exchanges. The appearance of coinage necessitates regulation both in the value of the coins and their silver content. At the most basic level, entering circulation, the coinage represents exchange of produce for a royally sanctioned standard of cash payment. Rather than an abstract transformation of value, coinage is related to literacy as an element situated in the emerging bureaucracy of surveillance and control witnessed in other areas of middle Saxon archaeology.

The development of a European model of currency is consistent with broader economic changes in middle Saxon England. It is clear that the seventh and eighth centuries witness significant transformations in the nature and degree of craft specialisation. Firstly, certain commodities appear in England in the seventh century that appear to be the result of craft specialisation. The example of Ipswich-ware pottery might be proposed here. The argument that it is the result of craft specialisation resides not so much in the fabric or its manufacture, so much as in its distribution and the relationship between this distribution and its place of manufacture (Wade 1988 97). It was centrally produced to a consistent standard and distributed widely across a defined area. This is quite different from the types that were used in the later sixth century and early seventh. Earlier types were not as well fired and were hand-made using local resources. It has been suggested that perceived similarities between these pots occur because the die-stamps with which the pottery is decorated circulated round quite large areas (Russell 1984). This circulation may be the result of itinerant craftsmen plying their trade and making to order in the localities, whereas the latter position would suggest a greater investment in industrial capital (kilns in particular) causing the potter to stay in one place and eke out his living in one locale. The kilns that produced Ipswich-ware have been excavated, showing relatively substantial foundations (Wade 1988

95-6). In short then, the pottery of the later seventh and eighth century witnesses an unprecedented and centralised investment in the means of production. Of course, even in Ipswich, the potter may have been a member of a farming community, turning his hand to the craft when required to do so. This is not specialisation as it might be understood later in the Middle Ages — but the comparison with the early Saxon period is instructive.

We can also pursue this question of specialisation through the development of quasi-urban settlement. Of course, the principal candidate for this quasi-urban status in seventh- and eighth-century England is the much-discussed settlement at Hamwic (Morton 1992, Andrews 1997). Other examples exist, though the details are not as well known (Vince 1988, Wade 1988). Hodges viewed Hamwic as a seasonal settlement, only used at certain times of the year, and lying empty for most of the time (Hodges 1989b). Brisbane argued that Hamwic was continuously occupied (Brisbane 1988), suggesting that the population earned their livelihoods through production that was essentially an intermediate step between the agricultural work of the countryside and the demands of foreign trade. Moreover, he argued that Hamwic consumed much of what it produced. The archaeology of the settlement would tend to support the view that Hamwic was indeed continuously settled (Morton 1992, Andrews 1997). There is only limited evidence that the crafts evident at Hamwic were unusual. What was different about Hamwic was the number of crafts that seem to be practised altogether: iron working, (both smithing and smelting), copper, lead, gold and silver working (Hinton 1996); bone and antler working; wool processing and textile processing; leather and skin working; glass working (processing and production); milling; and pottery production. It is the appearance of such a range of crafts together and the possibility that the population lived and worked at these crafts throughout the year that is significant.

Excavations at West Heslerton in Yorkshire provide an opportunity to explore this proposition (Powesland 1997, 1998). These have revealed a complicated, long-term settlement pattern, with craft activity areas and residential areas cheek-by-jowl, yet distinct. This is different from the situation at Hamwic since industrial activities seem to have been located within an agricultural settlement. Cereal processing seems to have been among the principal activities on site. This would suggest that the West Heslerton population were fundamentally tied to agricultural

production, turning to craft production as and when they were required to do so. This is different from Hamwic where production and exchange seem to have been full-time pursuits. In this respect, West Heslerton is no more of a challenge to the argument than any other agricultural settlement of the early Anglo-Saxon period.

Again, we have come some distance from the circuit of literacy practices with which we were originally concerned. How might the development of craft specialisation be related to literacy practices? At a basic level, there is considerable historical evidence for clergy investing in and developing novel crafts in England, such as glass making and stone masonry. These suggest that the church was interested in the development of crafts, but this is distinct from concerns with literacy practices. It is the association between craft specialisation and surveillance that provides the link. The distribution of Ipswich-ware coincides with the distribution of sceattas, suggesting a degree of commercialisation in the economy. If craft specialisation arose out of and gave rise to the adoption of managed currency, and if literacy arose out of and gave rise to this currency, then it can be seen that all three were integral in this particular historical context.

Not only was craft specialisation intensified in the middle Saxon period, but these were concentrated in new quasi-urban settings. Craft specialisation did not happen in a spatial vacuum, but significantly in permanent centres of production and exchange. It occurred under royal patronage and very probably with active encouragement. To that extent, the craft specialisation of Ipswich and Hamwic was an extension of those same mechanisms of surveillance and control which have already been illustrated. Once again, the implementation of new modes of surveillance and authority are the key. The same royal benefactors that promulgated law codes and managed their resources by the remote control of distanciation created the towns and encouraged the activities that we now recognise as craft specialisation. Literacy was part and parcel of that programme. An awareness of literacy as part of the programme may be sufficient to activate the discourse of literacy, thus enabling us to describe a literacy event.

The economic changes mentioned above represent more than just a few esoteric realignments in the restricted distribution of prestigious goods. The changes seem to have encompassed the whole of the productive capacity of the economy, leading to an increased involvement of local agriculture in long distance exchange.

Moreover, the apparent increase in royal power over larger areas, and concomitant transformation of the means of surveillance over these areas, implies that those in authority – a combination of royal and clerical interests – could manage and deliver renders from disparate parts of quite large kingdoms (Bassett 1989 *passim*). Given this state of affairs we can imagine that someone like Ine was able to bring resources from right across Wessex to Hamwic. In East Anglia, the widespread distribution of Ipswich-ware and of the intermediate sceattas would suggest exactly this state of affairs (Wade 1988). In this way, the whole of the resource base, including agricultural, woodland and mineral resources could have been drawn into the world of long-distance trade. This is a radically different situation from the gift exchange model proposed for the end of the sixth and start of the seventh centuries, where the resources of any given political leader were more limited in extent.

Not only was there a more widespread involvement of local production in long-distance exchange, but that involvement is represented in a much wider and much more consistent penetration of apparently high prestige goods right across England. Geake argues that by the end of the seventh century, the material culture of elite expression was homogeneous across England for the first time. This is in contrast not only with Kentish predominance at the end of the sixth century, but also with the situation at the start of the seventh century in which she identifies distinct material culture groups that may or may not be reconciled with Saxon or Anglian identities. In doing so, she aligns her hypotheses with work pursued in parallel disciplines. She concurs with the philological analysis of John Hines and the diplomatic studies of Patrick Wormald, which each suggest that, though still some way from active articulation of the fact, by the end of the seventh-century England was a virtual nation (Wormald 1983, Hines 1990, Geake 1997 126). Also significant in this regard are ecclesiastical affairs. The seventh century witnessed the first conscious act of English identity in the gathering of the clergy at Hatfield under Abbot Theodore in AD 679 (Cubitt 1995).

Once again, this appears remote from the world of literacy with which we are concerned. How might the penetration of supposedly high status commodities into the localities and the involvement of local production in long-distance exchange help us situate literacy practices? Once again, it is in the intervention of surveillance that we find a connection. Firstly, the relative decline of Kent and the

expansion of the other kingdoms into the elite goods market seems to have been achieved in association with ever tightening means of surveillance over resources and people, mechanisms of surveillance in which literacy was evidently situated. Moreover, the development of indigenous coinage as currency, a phenomenon with which literacy was also directly connected, created the conditions in which the market place could be entered more confidently, providing a common abstract language of exchange that enabled a greater volume of trade across a greater range of commodities. Once again, literacy and thus Christianity entered the Anglo-Saxon landscape along the same lines of communication as trade. It goes without saying that such literacy practices implicate the entire population as producers and consumers.

There is always a danger that discussions of trade and exchange in Medieval contexts lose sight of the agricultural base from which all wealth was derived, and on which the vast majority subsisted. Superficially, the prospects do not seem good, as the countryside seems quite remote from the discourses of literacy. Nonetheless, the effects of surveillance and control can be seen here too, specifically on the organisation of the landscape and the expansion of agriculture.

The nature of land tenure and estates in early Medieval England has been and remains among the most vexed historical issues. Little can be said without courting controversy. The historical landscape of England emerges in detail at the end of the eleventh century, with some parts emerging before that. It is hard to be certain whether Domesday Book reveals a landscape that had been static for centuries, or whether it is a snapshot of a changing pattern. Wessex is the one area where this can be discussed in detail, partly because it was least disrupted in the political upheavals of the Viking invasions, and partly because it provides comprehensive documentation on land tenure before 1066. It is clear that the estates and systems of land tenure visible in Wessex in the ninth and tenth centuries were long established. It is also clear that it was radically different to the Romano-British settlement pattern (Klingelhöfer 1992). The precise origins of this tenure will be the subject of a detailed analysis in the next chapter, and local variations probably confuse the picture. However, it is clear that in Wessex, the period between the fifth and ninth centuries witnessed a major transformation of tenure and estates and that the early eighth century was the decisive moment in the development of at least one major estate.

This is consistent with other studies. Della Hooke has argued that the seventh and eighth centuries witnessed the subdivision of the large “multiple estates” that had characterised agriculture in the later Roman and earlier Anglo-Saxon periods in certain areas. She argues that the seventh and eighth centuries are the most likely periods to witness the break-up of larger estates, and the movement of the population into nucleated settlements (Hooke 1997 76-82). This transformation was not planned wholesale, nor was it completed overnight, with arable land being most susceptible to change. Higham has argued that the smaller estates rationalised resources in order to remain competitive (Higham 1990). Pesez, on the other hand, suggests that power was at the heart of the transformation, allowing the closer supervision of tenants by moving them into easily monitored, or self-monitoring communities (Pesez 1992). Hooke argues that, whatever the cause, the motive force was unlikely to have come from a conservative peasantry (Hooke 1997 80).

There are numerous grounds for believing that the seventh century saw an intensification of agriculture, some of them based directly upon agricultural evidence, others based on contextual evidence for which an intensification of agriculture and a greater surplus must have been necessary preconditions even if not a sufficient explanation. In the former category we find the micro and macro fossil evidence, as well as arguments about the technologies used (e.g. Fowler 1997). In the latter we find those arguments about the expanding economy and craft specialisation, both predicated upon a greater surplus, and also those arguments about growing hierarchy of settlement, and the implication of such an expanded hierarchy for the organisation of agriculture, all of which have been reviewed above.

* literacies in action 3: reflection and summary

This discussion of literacy practices has ranged widely through many of the important issues in the archaeology of middle Saxon England, presenting a partial and synthetic account. Literacy practices, implicit in the many faces of surveillance, have been proposed in the negotiation and maintenance of social power and the development of the rural and quasi-urban economy. Other areas, such as aesthetics have been hinted at but subject to even more draconian synopses. The argument has suggested that literacy practices were prevalent in Anglo-Saxon England, pervading and reconstituting many aspects of social and

political organisation. These pertain to distinct elements in social practice, such as the structuring structures of economy and social hierarchy. However, access to the properties of literacy outlined in the previous chapter, and deployed in particular historical ways permitted literacy to transform these structures in novel ways. The reconstituted social structures both drew upon literacy and extended it in unforeseen ways. Moreover, they found concrete expression in the material conditions of social reproduction, and thus were realised in a whole variety of events that can thus be described as literacy events.

As already noted, it is in the nature of literacy practices to be fluid. The term is comfortably vague to allow for open-ended discussion that does not fix upon unhistorical categories of literacy. In the case of Anglo-Saxon England, literacy and surveillance inter-penetrate so thoroughly that it is hard to know where one ends and the other starts.

5.3.2 the communities of literacy practices

It follows that the communities brought together by such literacy practices were much larger than that which was presented previously. Actively adopted as a tool for social reproduction, literacy practices encompassed all social actors, in all manner of contexts. Merchants in their emporia; kings in their counting houses; criminals in their courts; workers in their fields: all were drawn, at least tangentially, into a broad social engagement with literacy. In this way, the categories of literate and illiterate are empty distinctions, revealing not so much the extent of literacy, so much as privileged access to the symbolic resources which literacy afforded.

5.4 the circuit of communicative practices

A third level of analysis was identified in the last chapter: the communicative practices in which literacy practices were shaped by given institutional interests. The study of the institutionalisation of literacy has been one of the core features of historical scholarship for more than a century, though literacy itself has largely been unquestioned. Moreover, the relationship between the literacy practices of the clergy and the 'rationality' of conversion has not been explored. The last two sections have had to interrogate the archaeological record quite vigorously in order to establish their accounts of literacy. The study of communicative practices is better placed than the other two. Therefore, this section will review two short thematic case studies, with a following discussion, suggesting ways in which

accepted historical accounts of the development of the institutions of literacy might be linked more directly to the missionary encounter.

5.4.1 institutions of tenure

There are few historical topics as controversial or as thoroughly investigated as the development of English Medieval tenurial relations. The earliest analyses of the early Medieval landscape are dominated by minute dissections of historical documents. These shed light upon (and often differ most markedly about) the origins of the tenurial relations described in the documents. On one hand, the influence of lordship is emphasised in the development of the Medieval manor, an institution inherited by and expanded upon by Norman invaders. On the other hand, free landed peasants are credited with the invention of the vill, a model for government that not only survived until the Norman Conquest, but had become enshrined within a quasi-democratic constitutional monarchy: an incipient democracy brutalised by the Normans and only fully realised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet neither of these analyses give credence to the importance of literacy, the social practice underlying these documents, as an historical phenomenon in its own right. Nor, until recently, has the archaeological record been regarded with much importance. However, this historical gaze has dealt extensively with related questions of administrative bureaucracies, bearing upon the origins of late Anglo-Saxon administration and its relationship to Anglo-Norman government. Once again, opposite conclusions have been drawn from the same evidence. It is in this context that alternative forms of evidence have been invoked, such as perspectives drawn from the cultural and physical landscapes of historical geography. This section shall start by describing arguments about the origin of tenure, then present one particularly relevant aspect of that debate, the debate on the origins and nature of “book-land”.

*** Tenure**

Evidence for land tenure remains the single most prevalent surviving expression of literacy between 597 and 750. Indeed, charters remain the most prevalent expression of literacy until well after the Norman Conquest. The apparent simplicity of such documents has encouraged many generations of historians to use them as the basis for all manner of historical enquiry, such as the origin of Anglo-Norman society, the nature of Anglo-Saxon society, and the origin of rural institutions such as the manor and the vill. Significantly, one of the earliest works on this topic, Charles Andrews’s *The Old English Manor* attempted to moderate the

ethnically charged speculations of late Victorian historians (Andrews 1892 *passim*). This view never gained currency, but was quickly overshadowed by Maitland's vast and influential *Domesday Book and Beyond* (Maitland 1897). Maitland set the standard for a generation or more of English historians, supporting and substantiating the claims of germanist historians such as Stubbs and Freeman. Maitland's claims were soon extended by the work of Vinogradoff, claiming the historical precedence for the vill over the manor (Vinogradoff 1905).

Even so, Chadwick argued the opposite case (Chadwick 1905). Though more elaborate, late Medieval tenure resembled the Anglo-Saxon pyramid of rank and loyalty. Chadwick's views were given considerable support by Hodgkin (Hodgkin 1935). He extended Chadwick's analysis by suggesting that the earliest Anglo-Saxon *fyrð* or army was also constructed hierarchically. Yet these views were soon disputed, and the germanist tradition espoused by Vinogradoff and Maitland was once again propounded by Stenton (Stenton 1971). Stenton argued that a depressed peasantry were forced into service on account of the rise of manorial lordship, a phenomenon that was given added impetus in the late Anglo-Saxon period by the novel appearance of territorial lordship. Thus the democratic, free German peasants of the Anglo-Saxon conquest became the vassals of their Norman conquerors.

Stenton's view did not go uncriticised. Aston, for example argued that the process of domination proposed by Stenton actually worked in reverse, because by the twelfth century reduced demesne estates suggested that manorialism was already in decline (Aston 1958). Simultaneously, Eric John argued that though early charters appear to alienate land completely, those receiving land did not do so with immunity, with specific forms of service being reserved by the crown (John 1960). Stenton's position was further undermined by Finberg's study of the charters of Wessex (Finberg 1964a). He argued that though many charters were late, they drew from existing but lost charters of an earlier period. These late echoes of the seventh and eighth centuries suggest that manorial tenure was older than Stenton could have realised. Finberg's analysis is significant because his reading of the ninth- and tenth-century evidence enlarged the empirical core of the argument. Much of the material he drew upon had been ruled out of previous analysis on grounds that were questionable. Stenton's views were dealt a further blow by Finberg's study of place-names as an historical source, arguing on linguistic

grounds that the ubiquitous “Charlton” place name was evidence of a manorial settlement of bonded peasants. This coincided with a widespread review of Anglo-Saxon place-names, in which many familiar toponyms were found to be of considerably earlier or later date (Gelling 1984). In all these, it can be seen that Stenton’s view of a free, democratic peasantry being marginalised by Norman aggressors cannot be accepted at face value, though each of the objections in turn have their own specific failings. John’s view on reserved services depends largely on his analysis of only one estate at Oswaldslow. Stenton would reject many of the charters upon which Finberg based his claim as unreliable, if not spurious. Aston’s review of the decline of manorialism perhaps tells us more about the eleventh and twelfth centuries than the seventh or eighth.

Thus, since the time of Maitland, questions of land tenure have been dominated by the “germanist” tradition he espoused. In each case, however, the historical scholarship has taken literacy as a given, uncontroversial, intellectual fact, rather than an intricate, historically situated social phenomenon. Standing back from what the historical evidence tells us about minor land transactions, the simple fact of literacy in itself is a more important theme than what it might or might not reveal about the origins of Anglo-Norman lordship.

While the debates about manorialism and serfdom have disregarded the development of literacy, parallel arguments about administration have come closer to discussing literacy in context. Moreover, discussions about administration have drawn upon a wider empirical base, including the landscape and topographic perspectives of historical geography. In essence, the debate has focussed on the origins of the late Anglo-Saxon administration, and its relationship to the subsequent Norman government. In particular, the local institutions of shire, hundred and parish have been scrutinised.

Chadwick, who disputed Maitland’s theory of manorialism, argued that the hundred was an invention of the late Anglo-Saxon government, originating in ninth-century Wessex (Chadwick 1905). These hundreds were preceded in Wessex by an older division of land called the *scir*. This landscape of administration and control represented a practical expression of his view of the systematic hierarchy of Anglo-Saxon society more generally. This represented a break from Maitland’s earlier vision of the Anglo-Saxon landscape (Maitland 1897) in which he argued

that land was divided into areas providing the expenses for a given number of warriors, the *feorm*; and local divisions of judicial authority, the *moot*. These were alienated piecemeal, providing one of the building blocks for late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman manorialism.

Whitelock, like Finberg, identified both the hundred and shire as institutions that developed first in Wessex, but which were transplanted to the rest of the country thereafter, losing some of their original coherence in the process (Whitelock 1979 429). Indeed, she dated the origin of this transplantation to the reign of Edmund (939-946) on the basis of the “Hundred Ordinances”, a law code that stipulated in precise terms the role of the Hundred in the later Anglo-Saxon period. Stenton attempted to map the Wessex predecessor of these institutions, concluding frustratedly that it was “one of the most difficult problems in Anglo-Saxon history” (Stenton 1971: 298). While there was a division of land, it was not called a hundred, and as far as can be discerned did not correspond to later, historically recognisable hundreds. It did however, as Cam pointed out, enjoy a particular relationship to royal estates, and seems to have been administered by a royal reeve (Cam 1932).

This takes us to the related, and equally vexed question of parish origins. Hase has examined the development of parishes in Hampshire extensively, arguing that the mother churches of multiple parish *parochia* have a close relationship to royal estates (Hase 1975, 1994). He noted that in the seventh or eighth century, a mother church was established at every *villa regalis*, and that these survived differentially through to the high middle ages through an irregular assortment of dispensations and privileges. However, attempts to reconstruct this landscape depended on extant late Anglo-Saxon and Domesday records, which refer to later hundreds, rather than their middle Anglo-Saxon predecessors. An alternative view of the origin of the parish boundary was presented by Bonney and Goodier, who argued that parish boundaries had a statistical correlation to the distribution of pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (Goodier 1983, 1984, Bonney 1972). As a consequence, it was argued, these boundaries were in fact of considerable antiquity, predating the establishment of their churches by several centuries at least, and perhaps by considerably more. Yet this argument is flawed in statistical terms (Reilly 1988: 168-173).

Thus, the question of small-scale Medieval territories and their socio-political and economic foundations remains troublesome. The Anglo-Saxon period saw the integration of individual household territories, *hides*, into a larger agricultural unit, the manor. Limited surviving documentary evidence suggests that pre-Conquest manors had substantial similarities to later, better-documented Anglo-Norman manors, consisting of demesne with a mix of land. All this functioned through the operation of an incipient bureaucracy, in which the lord's or crown's representative, the reeve, shared authority in some unresolved relationship with the village assembly or moot.

★ "Folk-land" and "book-land"

There has been much discussion among historians of the means by which Anglo-Saxon land tenure came to be recorded in charters. This development can best be seen in the long view: in the sixth century, land holding was quite independent of any legal documentation, whereas by the eleventh century, documents were widespread. This debate has focussed on the relationship between "book-right" over "book-land" and "folk-right" over "folk-land" (inter alia Vinogradoff 1893, Maitland 1897, Stevenson 1914, Stenton 1971, John 1960, 1966, Brooks 1974, Wormald 1984, 1986, Kenedy 1985, Roffe 1990, Reynolds 1992).

The distinction between these categories seems both esoteric and fluid, and has itself been the subject of debate. It was put most clearly, and in simple terms by Sir Paul Vinogradoff in 1893:

The folk-land is the holding of an individual which is governed by the ancient folk-right, and therefore subject to restrictions which tend to preserve it as a family estate; book-land is held under the terms of a privilege (Vinogradoff 1893 10-11)

Eric John is perhaps the scholar most associated with the debate in the last 50 years. Pointing out the similarities between Anglo-Saxon charters and late Roman documents, he has claimed that, while different in crucial respects, there is some congruence between the "ius perpetuum" of late Roman law and "book-right" of Anglo-Saxon England (John 1960 11). He has criticised Stenton's view of customary rights over land, pointing out certain inconsistencies (John 1960 33-38).

Stenton argued that, folk-land was the land of the people that maintained the king, and was thus subject to uniform tribute. Book-land in contrast was innovative, and exempt from these burdens. By undermining these common burdens, book-land was thus a threat to “the community of free peasants”, and hence to some extent the origin of manorial tenure (Stenton 1971 306-313). John goes on to identify the unique properties of book-right as being the transition from “precarious to permanent” tenure (John 1960 39). He also disagrees with Stevenson’s view of the “common burdens”: military service, bridge repairs and fortification (John 1960 64-66). Stevenson argued that church land – for which read “book-land” – was subject to certain burdens from earliest times, even though such burdens were only articulated from the middle of the eighth century (Stevenson 1914). John cites the famous letter of Bede to the archbishop of York in favour of his claim that “book-land” was in fact exempt from military service. Thus, he claims, the reservation of these burdens from the time of Offa onwards allowed an extension of lay “book-land” tenure. In essence, therefore, John argues that “book-right” was a permanent claim to land that originally brought certain exemptions, and which derived in essence from the late Roman “*ius perpetuum*”.

It has also been argued that “book-land” may in some respects be connected to certain types of jurisdiction, meaning that disputes over “book-land” could only be resolved in certain royal courts, though this position has been criticised recently (Kenedy 1985).

John’s position on “book-land” has not been without critics. Most recently, Patrick Wormald has criticised the view that Roman models underpin Anglo-Saxon charters, arguing that there is in fact a much wider context for these charters that is now invisible. He thus disputes the connection between “book-right” and late Roman models, citing instead sources that are now lost (Wormald 1984 11-19). He disputes John’s reading of Bede’s letter to Egbert, and he points out that grants of immunity from tribute are known in seventh- and eighth-century charters, but as individual charters: if this immunity were taken for granted, then the immunity charters would be redundant. Immunity was thus distinct from land, not included with it (Wormald 1984 19-21). Moreover, Wormald tackles head-on the claim that perpetual tenure was a novelty of “book-right”. Drawing on the distinction between patrimony and acquisition, he argues that charters were important insofar as they demonstrated acquisition of property that – unlike patrimony – could thus be

disposed of freely. In this way, though book-right did not create hereditary tenure, it did create a new category of hereditary tenure that blurred the distinction between acquisition and patrimony (Wormald 1984 21-23).

How does this debate relate to our discussion about the role of literacy in the missionary encounter? Superficially it appears to cut right across our arguments about the impact of literacy. If it can be shown that the clergy, through the medium of literacy, introduced a new form or perpetual land tenure that undermined royal authority, then we have a *prima facie* case of the impact of the clergy in secular matters. Yet, the arguments about “folk-land” and “book-land” are constructed out of long-term historical structures that create a broad-brush historical analysis.

The arguments of Wormald, John and others are not about individuals and their relation to the church, so much as historical institutions. The arguments seem, on first inspection, disconnected from the greater mass of the population. However, though they do not present these in detail, the institutions they describe have very practical implications for individuals and their daily lives.

Thus, for example, John’s argument sweeps from late Roman law to the Alfredian court; Wormald too, though less concerned with Roman law, is nonetheless compelled to draw upon sources from Lombard Italy to support his argument. The result is a coarse processual account. This means that there is an apparent dichotomy between what these different positions purport and what the distinction between “book-land” and “folk-land” may have represented in practice – in the daily practice of the population as opposed to the abstract institutional histories from which they derive. Thus, if we are to make any sense of the “folk-land” and “book-land” dispute, we need to identify the elements of the debate and the institutions which may have had an obvious impact on the population. The broad historical analysis contains elements that would have been visible at the scale of human existence, but these need to be identified.

For example, it is hardly conceivable that the population would have been informed or even interested in whether “book-land” was an authentic inheritance from late Roman practice. It would have mattered that it was presented as such – and Bede implies that “book-right” and other legislation was at least presented to

emulate the Roman example (Wormald 1996). This emulation, rather than the details of the text was perhaps more important in daily life, involving claims to political legitimacy, cultural inheritance and spiritual orthodoxy. These would have been understood in a landscape that was still dotted with Roman antiquities, and a society that sought to emulate Roman styles in clothing and jewellery (Greenhalgh 1989, Geake 1997). Assuming John's argument can be sustained, exemption from certain tributes would have had more of an impact, as would the possibility of land tenure into perpetuity. Both these would have made "book-land" considerably more attractive to the lay population, and would have been visible to the population in different ways. However, the claim that "book-land" could bring such privileges is clearly suspect for the reasons that Wormald provides (Wormald 1984). Bookland may indeed have brought privileges, but in the light of Wormald's critique it is hard to be certain whether these were universal or particular to each individual case.

There is one key distinction between "book-land" and "folk-land" however that cannot be disputed by either side. Book-land, by its very nature, depended on the existence of a charter. Even if this did not actually confer any new or special privileges, the fact that it was inscribed in a charter means that the clergy were necessarily involved. Put another way, therefore, the clergy, through literacy, were an essential pre-requisite for "book-land" transactions but not "folk-land". Compared to the transformation in land tenure that John proposed, this seems like meagre pickings: the employment of literacy to record transfer of land seems trivial. It does however, undermine Wormald's implied claim that this is simply business as usual. The intervention of literacy in these transactions suggests that this was not a simple continuation of existing practices. Land transactions gave the clergy an opportunity to impress an illiterate population with their superior access to abstract forms of knowledge. These build on and extend the clergy's obvious access to power and wealth through the land that was actually transferred and the legitimation that power, wealth and specialist knowledge bring.

What is new, therefore, is the way that the clergy, through literacy, were able to invade the mechanisms of land tenure. This is consistent with either of the positions described above. Perhaps the key question in the "book-land" debate is not what impact it had, but why land tenure was considered an appropriate subject for writing in the first place. Of course records of land transactions existed in

contexts very far removed from Anglo-Saxon England, before Christianity or the clergy were involved. The practice of recording in other contexts may thus have a very different meaning, and indeed may contain a whole variety of subtle meanings in each different context. The question of why literacy became an appropriate medium for recording land transactions in Anglo-Saxon England will have nuanced answers that are not appropriate for other contexts.

Thus, this is necessarily a complicated topic that may produce different answers in different contexts. Moreover, it is clear that some parts will remain unanswerable, since by its very nature, the evidence for "pre-literate" transfer is suspect. Some of the background can be seen in the literacy practices in other parts of Europe, and in the literacy culture of the early medieval church. These provide necessary preconditions, not a sufficient cause. More generally, we can see that literacy was introduced by the clergy into a context in which novel means of surveillance were developing in other spheres of life. In this context, the use of literacy to record the ownership, or rights to property makes sense. Moreover, the "bureaucratic" practices that developed transformed surveillance by transforming the space / time geography of power relations. The extended power relations find expression in novel interventions in the daily life of the population. They are represented not only in charters but also in the material conditions of daily life.

* Tenure, Folkland and Bookland: a conclusion

Thus, while the role of literacy in tenure has been questioned, its discursive impact has not been scrutinised in detail. Moreover, the relationship between these practices and the impact of the clergy has been questioned little, and never pursued with any great vigour in the last hundred years or so. Throughout this thesis, it has been argued that, in order to resolve certain questions about the impact of the clergy, it is necessary to investigate the structuring structures that predisposed communities to Christianity. Literacy practices, it has been argued, are an appropriate place to begin that analysis, since they pervade a number of institutions. What is missing from scholarship on the institutions of tenure is a recognition of the rôle of the clergy – even if they cannot be disentangled from secular affairs. Implicit in all the arguments presented above are the activities of the literate clergy. Tenorial relations, institutionalised in charters and other documents, gave the clergy direct, if symbolic access to the whole landscape.

Conventional scholarship on tenurial relations has - to some extent - overlooked the role of literacy and the Church in creating the Medieval landscape. Moreover, it has not recognised and the role tenure had in shaping literacy and thus the clergy. By virtue of their monopoly over the symbolic resources of landscape, clerics may have become the indispensable agents of royal authority and law.

5.4.2 instituting education and exclusion

The institutionalisation of education has not been as thoroughly investigated as the institutionalisation of tenurial relations, probably because the historical sources are less well disposed to such analysis. However, it is clear that the development of literacy was to some extent dependent upon the development of mechanisms to reproduce literacy, and there is sufficient evidence to suggest a number of directions in which this institutionalisation might have progressed. There is also literature on the sociology of education, which places the development of these institutions in historical and anthropological perspective.

In order to approach education, we are largely dependent upon monastic sources and the occasional sidelight they cast on teaching. Evidence of practices at the school established by Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury are relevant here though we should be careful not to extrapolate too enthusiastically to the rest of the country (Lapidge 1995 *passim*). In this case, the curriculum revolved around patristic and biblical scholarship. Learning, however, was not constrained to literary concerns, but included elements of mathematics, building and music. It is clear that practical skills were also included as part and parcel of the educational programme of monastic schools. It seems reasonable to suppose that this was the same in other locations too, as lavishly illuminated texts, intricate metalwork and heavily worked stone all emanated from monastic centres, all representing expertise that could not have been come by without considerable amounts of training and expertise. To an extent, the works produced are indicative of the training available (e.g. Netzer 1994). Significantly, many of the illuminations develop themes which were drawn from a literary, Biblical, repertoire.

The development of specific forms of education seem distant from the broader concerns of the previous section, and thus seems incongruous. Monastic learning seems remote from the larger body of the population with which we are primarily concerned. This is because the curriculum has been the subject of analysis, while the sociological implications have been overlooked. Turning briefly to

anthropological and sociological study, the development of education is significant for the whole population insofar as they were excluded from it. As we have already seen, Willis argued that the responses to education are largely dependent upon deeply rooted sociological factors, ensuring that in contemporary Britain, the “empowerment contract” of educational rhetoric was turned on its head. Rather than empowering adults, education emasculated them (Willis 1977). A similar position is argued by Ogbu who based his analysis on the politics of race and exclusion in the modern US (Ogbu 1980). From the colonial narratives of missionary work, mission schools were closely associated with the development of the colonial economy, sometimes in spite of rather than because of the wishes of the mission teachers (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, Carmody 1989). All these studies point to the fact that education cannot be taken for granted as a neutral or necessarily benevolent institution.

To that extent, it seems reasonable to assume that education in Anglo-Saxon England, and in particular literacy, was a very carefully controlled resource, controlled to exclude the vast majority of the population and to reproduce the educational monopoly of the Christian, clerical elite. Education, closely related to literacy, was thus an exclusionary practice. It impacted on more than simply those who were included, but also those who were excluded, since they were denied access to important symbolic resources. Denial of access to literacy may indeed be more important than its limited transmission. Moreover, it is clear that access to literacy was only possible after a diet of patristic and biblical writings. To that extent, access was manipulated to guarantee the religious orientation of the literate, ensuring that religious truths were monitored and maintained.

In short, therefore, access to the symbolic resources of literacy could be controlled with relative ease in middle Saxon England. While the details are sketchy, it would seem that the clergy had almost unique access to literacy, and constituted access to it in such a way as to ensure the religious orientation of its subjects.

5.4.3 “... and renew the face of the earth”

If the institutions of literacy, such as the classroom and the scribe, have been studied to a greater or lesser extent, their relationship to missionary work has not been scrutinised deeply. The third chapter of this thesis made some

recommendations for understanding the missionary encounter that were consistent with what was being studied, and could be sustained through the archaeological record. Literacy has allowed us to take that provisional insight forward into the context of Anglo-Saxon England, but it is in communicative practices, more particularly, that we can make the link most explicitly, since these represent the over-arching social structures within which literacy is situated. While the scribe and education are both elements in that social structure, they lead inexorably back to the clergy. Thus, the tension over symbolic resources initiated by literacy has a direct connection to the interests of clerical Christianity.

The case is made most clearly by comparing the evidence cited above with the missionary encounter described in Chapter Three (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). Here it was noted that the missionary encounter in colonial Africa formed round unexpected and pervasive elements of daily life: specifically the control of water, the politics of language and the reification of consciousness. Water was an important metaphor for the missionaries and missioned, but was crucial also to the successful pursuit of daily life. Changes in the organisation of water thus had a profound impact on symbolic and practical activities. It would be invidious to extrapolate too energetically from this to other contexts, but it does make the point that small changes can mask significant tensions.

With this insight it is relatively easy to suggest that the control over symbolic and physical resources in middle Saxon England underwent similar sorts of changes. New technologies for controlling physical and symbolic resources are evident: mechanisms that were not the neutral tools of an ahistorical evolution, but the mechanisms of historically situated, vulnerable social practices. It is difficult to imagine scribes, coinage, education, weights and measures, property rights, craft specialisation, a new calendar and all the other literacy and communicative practices identified being introduced without some degree of tension. Nonetheless, by the middle of the seventh century, many of these practices were beginning to be instituted, and by the middle of the eighth century most were securely embedded in the routine of daily life. To that extent not only are the interests of clerical literacy evident in the archaeological record, their adoption and ineffability suggest that by the middle of the eighth century, the values of clerical literacy were beyond question. From being the excluded outsiders of 597, the clergy had established an hegemony of literacy to which they had unique access.

The colonial case study also highlighted the importance of indigenous consciousness, noting the self-identification that followed the arrival of the missionaries. Again, it would be naive to extrapolate this too vigorously, but a number of parallels may be located in the Anglo-Saxon milieu where self-perception may have been altered by the intervention of the clergy and clerical literacy. The first of these pertains directly to literacy. The proliferation of literacy events created numerous occasions when the lay population was cast into the role of illiterate. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this must have had an impact on self-perception, for literate and illiterate, and all those in between. Secondly, and more ephemerally, it has been argued that the eighth century saw the emergence of a pan-English identity, consistent with linguistic, archaeological and ecclesiastical evidence (Wormald 1983, Hines 1990, Geake 1997, Cubitt 1995). While the origins of this unfolding unity are inevitably fraught, the clerical literacy and the experience of the missionary encounter must have had some impact on this, not least because the Church operated at a pan-English level.

5.5 summary and reflection

This chapter has moved to more familiar material, with a decisive shift to archaeology, even if that has been approached using unfamiliar techniques. The initial circuit of literacy events revealed a well-defined, but simplistic set of resources that were deployed in a number of contexts. The second circuit took a much more robust approach to literacy practices, identifying many novel technologies for surveillance and regressing them back to the transformed space/time geographies of distancing. This transformation was purposefully mobilised to maintain and extend control over all sorts of resources, and also afforded opportunities to represent that control. The literacy practices that ensued were endemic in the archaeological and historical record by the middle decades of the eighth century, and in some cases several decades before that. There is, inevitably, considerable variation. The final circuit investigated the institutions behind literacy, in particular the scribe and his education. Both of these lead us back to the Church and the clergy, with a clear indication that all the literacy practices related to much more than the literate few, and that all these practices must be seen in the context of a developing relationship between clergy and laity.

The conclusion should be clear. By insinuating the values of clerical literacy, partly through their own actions and partly on account of changes that were already in the air, the clergy were able to harness social practice to their missionary activities. This varied from place to place but is pronounced by the end of the seventh century and is widespread by the middle of the eighth century. This tentative conclusion requires more thorough investigation in other contexts, but the preceding argument provides some pointers as to how those case studies can be begun. In particular, localised case studies should investigate technologies of surveillance as a means of representing, monitoring, maintaining and reproducing the values of clerical literacy.

Chapter 6

LITERACY AND THE CLERGY IN RURAL HAMPSHIRE

Chapter Two of this thesis proposed that we question the simplistic generalisations of the cemetery and allied rituals as a means of understanding the spread of Christianity in the seventh and eighth century in England. In Chapter Three, the complexity of the problem was realised and in Chapter Four, an alternative insight was proposed and refined. A preliminary reconnaissance of that new insight was presented in Chapter Five, with three discussions of the breadth and penetration of literacy presented through an analysis of the archaeological record. This chapter follows from that point, presenting a more sustained analysis of the specific geography of literacy practices: the specifics of the missionary encounter. Two case studies will be presented in this and the next chapter. In the first of these, we shall scrutinise the rural economy of the Micheldever Hundred in northern Wessex for evidence of literacy practices. It will be noted that the landscape that emerged in the historical record around 900 had already been appropriated by bureaucratic institutions. It will be shown that the development of this characteristic Medieval landscape of tenurial rights and services is coterminous with the development of bureaucratic institutions. Consequently wherever we perceive the development of these institutions we can discern the values of clerical literacy. It is in the ensuing tension over symbolic resources and the reproduction of social practice that the missionary encounter will be situated.

6.1 The Micheldever Case Study: an introduction

After some careful consideration, the area around Micheldever in the northern half of Hampshire was chosen as a case study in the archaeology of literacy practices. As noted in the previous chapter, scholarship derives England's Medieval agricultural institutions from an ill-defined, but widely accepted Wessex origin. Wessex largely stood apart from the disruption caused by Danish invasions, followed by the subsequent re-emergence of Anglo-Saxon political institutions that led to the fossilisation of hundreds, shires and burhs across the rest of England. So, if the physical setting of tenurial relations in the rest of the country was created out of the political ascendancy of Wessex in the ninth and tenth centuries, then there can be little certainty that these institutions have any significant historical associations before that period. Concentration upon a Wessex case study is thus more likely to reveal conditions in pre-Viking England. This doesn't mean that

there were no changes at all, just that we know more about the conditions of literacy and its institutions of Wessex before the Viking assaults than any other part of the country. In addition, as was mentioned in Chapter Two, Wessex is one of those areas where there has been less direct study of the emergence of Christianity than, for example, Kent or Northumbria. This means that, not only are the conditions promising for an analysis of the landscape and its institutions, but any discussion of the impact of the clergy will have a greater impact in terms of our understanding. Wessex thus makes a natural home for the study that has been proposed in the thesis up till now.

The area round Micheldever was chosen over a number of alternatives because the area has been subject to an intensive though relatively low profile series of analyses, leading to the publication of two major complementary volumes on the middle Saxon archaeology of the area (Klingelhöfer 1991, 1992). These volumes, both published on the other side of the Atlantic, do not seem to have received much attention from UK-based commentators on Anglo-Saxon archaeology and deserve a higher profile than they have hitherto commanded (though see Hooke 1994 86).

Drawing upon multidisciplinary methods, the Micheldever project was designed to address in detail five basic questions about the early history of the area (Klingelhöfer 1991 16). The initial aim was to map the field systems of the hundred, with a broad awareness of the other physical characteristics of the landscape. With this knowledge-rich map as a basic resource, the project then attempted to identify and refine the historical divisions of the landscape, with particular attention to the Medieval manorial divisions of the valley. Having established the historical territories within the area, the project set about identifying the settlement pattern of the landscape, reviewing the relative date, size and forms of the settlements. This process of identification provided a foundation for establishing complex patterns of change and continuity in tenure and settlement, allowing comparison with other similarly understood areas. With this understanding, it became possible to create general hypotheses on the political and economic circumstances of the major early Medieval institutions of hundred, manor and vill. Thus, by describing the physical landscape in historical terms, the Micheldever project sought to identify in material terms the changing and underlying socio-political and economic characteristics of the valley through the

late Roman period to the high Middle Ages. Significantly absent from this conventional historical gaze was an engagement with the cultural landscape, an understanding which comes about by recognising the active relationship between cultural knowledge and concrete topography.

In short not only is Wessex in general — and Micheldever in particular — rich in archaeological evidence, not only have its strengths been overlooked, not only can it provide answers to some of the more tenacious problems of Medieval history, it is also ripe for a cultural re-interpretation. Such a reinterpretation provides proof of concept for the "embeddedness" of literacy practices and the clerical culture that gave rise to them.

Much of the following description of the area is drawn from Klingelhöfer (Klingelhöfer 1991 1-16). The hundred of Micheldever lies more or less at the core of rural Wessex and as such provides specific views onto many of the issues that have been raised before. The wealth of documentary and archaeological resources available ensures that it is an important subject for the study of early Medieval settlement and land use. It also provides us with the necessary conditions to situate literacy practices and thus the direct influence of the clergy in the daily life of the rural peasantry: a topic to which we shall return in later discussions. Lying ten miles north of Winchester, the 12,200 acre manor of Micheldever was a *villa regalis* in the ninth century (the king's *tun* of a royal manor). In 862, the royal council is said to have met at Micheldever, perhaps in the *gemut hus* or meeting house mentioned in documentary sources. In 900, Edward the Elder gave the whole estate to the New Minster at Winchester (later Hyde Abbey) in honour of his father Alfred the Great. This gift means that the estate is poised at an important juncture in documentary history; between the earlier grants of the Old Minster, whose earliest records are either lost or were never textual in the first place and the later Medieval norm of charter and writ. Significantly, except for a brief confiscation by William the Conqueror, the New Minster retained the lands until the dissolution, at which time the Wriothesley earls of Southampton acquired the bulk of the estate. It has remained intact to the present day, with only two further changes of ownership. Even the industrial revolution and urbanism have left the area more or less undisturbed, though agricultural improvement has had an inevitable impact. Only recently have economic developments such as the extension of the M3 motorway had a significant effect on field boundaries and topography —

developments that gave rise to the intensive archaeological study of the area upon which much of the following is based. Thus, the relative stability of the landscape means that a comprehensive vision of the landscape of the Micheldever Hundred can be established for the high Middle Ages, partly through an investigation of physical evidence and partly through documentary research. This provides favourable conditions to evaluate the Anglo-Saxon landscape. .

Figure 6.1: the location of Micheldever Hundred

As well as being a relative backwater economically, the area has enjoyed a stable political and military history. This is in part because of and in part given rise to the absence of any important political or military or urban centres. Northern Hampshire does not contain a Roman urban site between Winchester and Silchester, though the landscape is dotted with identifiable villa properties. The road connecting these two provincial capitals could have influenced the area through which it passed, as we shall see, this influence seems to have waned by the fifth or sixth century. Moreover, the upper Hampshire basin was not the site of an Anglo-Saxon *burh*, although market towns appeared in the later Middle Ages. Its inhabitants no doubt dealt with Winchester, the nearest city, but it lies outside the recognisable suburban territory of Winchester. In spite of its relative proximity to an important Roman and Medieval centre, the Micheldever Hundred seems to have remained almost entirely agricultural.

Topographically, the Micheldever Hundred is focussed around the valley of the Dever, a tributary of the River Test that runs perpendicular to it. It lies in an area rimmed by the Hampshire uplands, equidistant from the Thames Estuary and the Bristol Channel, and as far from the middle Thames as from the Solent. There is no dominant physical bias in external relations of the area except that provided by the east to west flow of the narrow Dever stream, and the subsequent southerly flow of the Test. More broadly, central Hampshire is a two-tier basin formed by the catchments of the Test and Itchen rivers and their tributaries. The northern, upper part of the basin is a single environmental zone of broad chalk downlands and deep fertile valleys, with moderate soil conditions and climate. Klingelhöfer takes this northern half to be a more or less integral area, since the southern portion of the basin was supposedly occupied by an ethnically different population (Klingelhöfer 1991 13). While this argument may not hold out to a challenge on the

archaeological construction of ethnicity (e.g. Loveluck 1996), it may nonetheless be retained as a geographical description. This northern Hampshire basin extends physically from the Itchen Valley realignment in the south, several miles north of Winchester, to the Hampshire Downs in the north where a central ridge separates the Thames valley catchment area from the catchment of the Solent and the Channel.

Figure 6.2: Close up of the Micheldever Hundred

The connection with New Minster (a.k.a. Hyde Abbey) ensures that the area is well served with historical documents from a relatively early date, including a collection of pre-conquest charters as well as entries in Domesday Book. For the Saxon manor of Micheldever, there are five charters with bounds, and ten others giving the boundaries of adjacent manors. The largest single body of evidence is several copies of the late Medieval Hyde Abbey cartulary, one of which, the *Liber de Hyda Chronicle*, was published in the Rolls Series in 1866. Two Hyde Abbey cartularies remain unpublished, and two other related items survive from the monastery: an abbey miscellany and King Edgar's New Minster charter of refoundation.

These sources describe estates and their components, but detailed information on field systems is restricted to high and late Medieval records. Nonetheless, the records do provide evidence for early Medieval land use because references to field systems, woodland development, village extents and the road network are incorporated in the late Medieval copies of the Hyde Abbey Cartulary. Most of these records are of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century date, and consist of abbreviated notes of land transactions, donations, and leases directly involving the abbey. Named agricultural units, such as fields or woods, were usually accompanied in the later records by a more detailed location or description by which their physical lay-out can be delineated. Thus, elements of field systems associated with such field names can be compared to land units and fossilised field boundaries recorded on estate and tithe award maps of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Little in the way of pre-Conquest patterns of land use survives directly, but later evidence can explain and clarify earlier references. The later Medieval field names occasionally contain names or references from the pre-

Conquest period. Consequently, these details are particularly suited to long-range study of landscape features and manorial and parochial boundaries.

The Micheldever area, as the whole of Wessex, is well served by different historical disciplines. Wessex in general, and Hampshire in particular, has received serious archaeological attention, partly owing to the fame of its many extant archaeological sites. Significant studies include such works as JP William-Freeman's 1915 "Introduction to Field Archaeology, as Illustrated by Hampshire", and inevitably OGS Crawford's seminal 1928 "Wessex from the Air". The urban centres of Hampshire have also been the subject of continuing research, with excavations round Winchester and a crop of excavation reports on Roman, Saxon and Medieval Southampton. Hampshire and Wessex are home to several contracting archaeological field units, two active academic research centres at Winchester and Southampton and several amateur field groups. Other areas in Hampshire have been the subject of settlement studies. The parishes of Chalton on the eastern edge of the county and King's Somborne on the west as well as the area immediately around Winchester have yielded details of Anglo-Saxon settlement patterns and manorial boundaries, allowing analyses of Micheldever to be placed within a solid comparative framework.

6.2 Previous Work on Early Medieval Micheldever

There are two particular and detailed studies of the Micheldever Hundred that must be introduced into any discussion of the area in the middle Saxon period. The first of these is particularly relevant to a discussion of religious topics, because it deals directly with the origins of the parishes of the area (Hase 1975). Hase argues that Micheldever was the locus of an ill-defined, but extensive parish, founded contemporaneously with the other parishes of Hampshire in the late seventh or eighth century. This has obvious implications for the organisation of clerical activities in the area, though, as we shall see, the analysis struggles to make much headway beyond generalised assumptions about the parishes of Hampshire. The second body of previous work connects more directly with what was noted in Chapters Four and Five about the nature of pastoral bureaucracy and the Church's involvement in surveillance (Klingelhöfer 1991, 1992). It is proposed that the landscape underwent significant changes in the middle Saxon period, being enclosed by property boundaries for the first time, boundaries that became dominant features of land tenure until the end of the Middle Ages. This study is

important not only because it corresponds to arguments presented previously, but because in locating the material conditions of literacy practices, it allows us to develop a more sophisticated and more coherent description of the missionary engagement consistent with the position adopted in Chapter Three.

In addition to the detailed studies by Hase and Klingelhöfer, a number of other commentators have studied the area. Thus, for example, Nicholas Brooks has presented a detailed analysis of the “Micheldever Forgery” (Brooks 1982a). This analysis reminds us that the earliest documentary evidence for Micheldever, a charter that purports to be written in 903, was probably actually written in the eleventh century. Although the landscape which the charter describes may well be historically accurate for the tenth century, it does extend further the distance between firm documentary evidence for the use of charters to regulate the landscape, and the period studied here. The gap between the earliest textual horizons and our study period may be as much as three centuries, not the century and a half that appears on first inspection. This means that textual evidence for estate formation can only be used with caution, and any conclusions drawn using these sources will be tentative. It also means that an argument on the development of literacy practices will have to account for this problematic gap in the historical record.

Barbara Yorke has also made reference to Micheldever in her study of early medieval Wessex, noting that the hundred appears fragmented in the historical sources for the eleventh century, specifically in Domesday Book and in the suspect charter of 903 (Yorke 1995 127-9). Yorke’s view of Micheldever in the eleventh century is shared by Klingelhöfer who argues further that the estate was a single landscape territory in the eighth century: a position on which Yorke makes no comment (Klingelhöfer 1992 196 (fig 3.1)). In this respect, Klingelhöfer attempts to piece together the disparate parts that Yorke describes. She does, however, share Brooks’s view that the earliest historical sources, though not as early as they purport to be, give an accurate reflection of the landscape in the early tenth century.

6.2.1 Hase and the mother church of Micheldever

In a widely quoted but unpublished thesis, Hase has attempted to map the extent and influence of the supposedly early mother churches of Hampshire, including

Micheldever and its neighbours (Hase 1975 see also Hase 1994). Though largely discounted by Klingelhöfer, Hase's study is immediately relevant for the present analysis, since it literally attempts to map the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular jurisdictions. In this respect, though never stated in explicit terms, the goal is in part to examine the relationship between clerical concerns for the cure of souls and the secular demands of bureaucracy and surveillance. The study encompasses the Micheldever Hundred within its broader geographic remit, going some way to reconstruct the earliest parochial boundaries in the vicinity. Thus, Hase's study investigates some of the key elements in the missionary encounter in Micheldever, and is of some considerable importance and relevance here. Yet, Hase's work is traditional in its orientation and methodology, relying heavily on historical sources instead of archaeological evidence, underpinned with simplistic assumptions on the nature of missionary work. Three principal objections can be noted. Firstly, in spite of Herculean efforts, Hase was unable to locate with any certainty the mother church of Micheldever, a deficiency caused by the complexity of the historical sources that were more effective in other locations. These same problems mean that Hase's suggested outline of the boundaries of the parochia of the proposed mother church are problematic. A number of possible errors and inconsistencies can be identified. Finally, even if his reconstruction could be validated, it would not help resolve the questions and problems posed in Chapters Two and Three, where rituals such as funerary practices were discarded in favour of the mundane drama of daily practice. Adopted uncritically, Hase's reconstruction would replicate the problems noted in Chapter Two where the church of St Botolph at Iken was thought to herald the "*coming of East Anglian Christianity*" (Cramp Scarfe and West 1984).

Hase's study on the mother churches of Hampshire fits into a comprehensive review of the nature of early medieval ecclesiastical organisation. A number of authors have contributed to this review, not least David Rollason and Eric Cambridge, (Cambridge and Rollason 1995, Rollason 1994), Nicholas Brooks (Brooks 1982b) and in particular, John Blair (Blair 1988a, 1988b, 1992, 1994, 1995 1996b). Blair's hypothesis of the development of rural ecclesiastical institutions in England argues that within a generation or so of the arrival of Christianity, each kingdom developed a coherent network of parochie, which were founded by a combination of episcopal and royal action and were based on what Hase would term "mother churches", and what Blair terms "minsters". These minsters or

mother churches were diverse in constitution: some may have been monasteries in the stricter later sense; others were communities of secular clergy. Most performed some degree of pastoral work within defined territories. The ecclesiastical territories of the *parochiae* were defined on the basis of existing secular territories, and were considerably more extensive than later medieval parishes, which only developed out of the from them several centuries later. Thus, Hase's work in Micheldever fits into a broader pattern of research in which it is claimed that the first generation or so after the arrival of Christianity witnessed a widespread development of ecclesiastical territories that were larger than medieval parishes, but smaller than dioceses. These had diverse foundations, but exercised a varying degree of pastoral care in defined territories. Blair suggests that the model is consistent with developments across Western Europe (Blair 1995 210-211).

Hase identifies the Micheldever Hundred as the probable *parochia* of a mother church on the basis of the shape and extent of local boundaries, and of contiguous areas. *Parochia* is the term he uses to describe a large geographic area under the jurisdiction of a church of early foundation, broken into smaller parishes in subsequent generations. It identifies something quite distinct from the *parish*, even though they may in fact serve similar functions. These *parochiae* were located round a mother church that was the earliest pastoral church in the vicinity. Many mother churches survived to the later Middle Ages with parishes that were considerably reduced in size, the reduction being caused by the creation of new parishes that were hived off from the original. Nonetheless, the mother churches often retained rights and precedence over their later neighbours. While the Micheldever Hundred alone would represent a very small *parochia* compared to the others in Hampshire, the existence of minute hundreds — the Domesday hundreds of Bermondspit and Mainsborough — on its borders suggests that these had been carved off at some point after the foundation of the *parochia*, and might thus be seen as a single unit. Such a situation occurs elsewhere in Hampshire, with minute hundreds termed by Hase as *franchisal hundreds*.

Franchisal hundreds were lands held either by the bishop or by one of the ancient religious houses (Hase 1975 293-4). These hundreds were established later than the mother churches, coming about as an amalgamated block of land with a single owner. At some stage, the king, as a pious gesture, would grant the rights of a hundredal court for this block of land, making a new jurisdiction coterminous

with an ecclesiastical estate. The mother churches of franchisal hundreds are very difficult to distinguish from genuine historic mother churches because bishops are entitled to re-organise dependent churches at whim, and larger royal monasteries were well placed to obtain episcopal consent to rearrange the churches on their estates. This obstructs attempts to reconstruct earlier Medieval parochial and estate boundaries. Churches in franchisal hundreds may be old mother churches, or they may represent no more than a tenth- or eleventh-century rationalisation, following an expansion of ecclesiastical land-owning in the area, combined with the pious gesture of a king (Hase 1975 294).

Hase relates franchisal hundreds like Micheldever to his reconstruction of the entire Hampshire parochial system (Hase 1975 308). It can be demonstrated that franchisal hundred churches had clearly defined parochiae after Domesday. Many of these were probably based on early Medieval mother churches, although some may be considerably later. Certainly, the tiny hundreds adjacent to Micheldever look like remnants, which can be fitted together to create a larger territory comparable to other, less complicated hundreds – and doubtless with an average mother church parochia. So the Micheldever Hundred, as it appears in Domesday, represents only one part of a larger territory from which small parcels of land had been cleaved. This original territory was coterminous with the parochia of the mother church, though the specific location of the mother church and the precise relationship of the various territories present particular problems of reconstruction. This topographical argument is to some extent borne out by the historical sources. These reveal that the later Medieval parishes of the area were dependants of Micheldever (Hase 1975 297-299). In 903, the foundation charter of the New Minster in Winchester described Micheldever parish as an “*appurtenant of the manor*”. In short, therefore, Micheldever enjoyed the historical privileges one would associate with a mother church from at least 903 until well into the later Middle Ages. However, this does not necessarily mean that it had enjoyed these rights from an earlier period because, as a franchisal hundred, the rights may have been manipulated to favour the large royal monastic house.

So, problems remain. Firstly, the period before 903 cannot be studied, because there are no historical references to support any discussions of the earlier history or foundation of the parochia. This is also true of the mother church, which is presumed to be at the village of Micheldever, but cannot be demonstrated. Hase is

restricted by his use of Domesday Book and other historical sources, especially when he has to project back from them several centuries. Furthermore, as Klingelhöfer notes (1992 73) the proposed merger of the Domesday hundreds of Micheldever with Bermondspit and Mainsborough would result in a territory that extended across the high, wooded watershed between the Dever and Candover valleys. The resulting territory may be well proportioned when compared with the hundreds of southern Hampshire, but is inconsistent with the settlement pattern of the area in the middle and later Saxon period. Consequently, it is unlikely to have comprised a viable unit for pastoral or administrative activities. Even if the analysis had been able to identify the boundaries with precision or certainty, many of the important issues raised in Chapters Two and Three about the nature of conversion and the missionary encounter would remain unanswered. The mere identification of an early mother church or *parochia* is not sufficient evidence upon which to base theories of religious conversion or the impact of the clergy. Thus, Hase's thesis leaves many questions unanswered providing an opportunity and stimulus to take a new analysis forward.

Hase's thesis contains the basis for a re-evaluation that may begin to address the questions that, in its current form, it cannot answer. Underpinning his approach are assumptions about early Medieval Christianity that are consistent with what was noted in Chapter Five about surveillance and literacy practices. The evident concern with boundaries and the articulation of the landscape into managed pastoral units provide some scope for re-interpreting the evidence with an eye to bureaucratic practices, consistent with the aims of this thesis. Despite his inability to identify its precise location definitively, Hase has no doubt that the Micheldever Hundred was part of the *parochia* of an early mother church. So, although we cannot map their extents, we can be confident that the landscape was divided into pastoral jurisdictions. This is perhaps more important for our analysis than the location of the mother church or the extents of its parish. Hase argues for the origin of these mother churches at an early date. Precise dates are hard to establish, but it is clear that some of the mother churches were already well established before 700, especially in the western frontiers of Wessex where the influence and survival of Romano-British Christianity was most evident (Hase 1994 50-52). For Micheldever and its vicinity, it is argued that the reign of Ine saw the extension and completion of this pattern (Hase 1994 52-54). In short, therefore, the Micheldever Hundred was part (or all) of a *parochia* by the end of the first quarter of the eighth century,

and very probably some time before. This date is important because it is consistent with the transformation of the middle Saxon landscape hinted at in Chapter Five, and proposed by Klingelhöfer.

6.2.2 Klingelhöfer on Micheldever Hundred and other territories

Klingelhöfer's approach to Micheldever Hundred is less concerned with the extent of ecclesiastical influence and boundaries, as with secular ones. Yet, in contemplating these rural boundaries, Klingelhöfer presents a clearer opportunity to understand the mechanisms by which the population encountered the discursive practices of clerical Christianity. His work is presented in two separate but connected volumes: the first on the specific archaeology of the Micheldever Hundred, the latter on the nature of land tenure in early Medieval Wessex (Klingelhöfer 1991, 1992). Both works are relevant because they articulate and clarify many of the issues of surveillance and the maintenance of property discussed in Chapter Five. Thus, his discussion of territories reminds us of the development of abstracted forms of authority in which local officials were charged with overseeing the rights and responsibilities of the king. It may even be argued that the early Medieval territory represents a practical expression of distancing, since they represent a mapping between the effective reach of face-to-face exchanges undertaken by royal officials and the impossibility of distant monarchs achieving that degree of regulation across a newly extended kingdom. Klingelhöfer's discussion of the local landscape is important for what it reveals about the impact of literacy practices, specifically the impact of novel mechanisms for surveillance, in discrete localities. The same discourse is played out in two different ways along these new boundaries, through their construction, and then through their daily negotiation. The latter provides a real example of how literacy practices, that is the influence of the clergy, re-ordered the material conditions of daily life for the rural population. So, Klingelhöfer's analysis of territories in Hampshire and of Micheldever in particular provide means of sustaining a new understanding of the missionary encounter, with a degree of precision not available in the broad synthetic sweep of Chapter Five.

In order to develop these points, however, it is necessary to expand a little on the two different elements of his work. We start with a summary of his discussion of territories, moving to a more finely grained analysis of Micheldever thereafter.

The discussion of early Medieval territories revolves round the related institution of shire and hundred, both of which are well attested in Domesday Book. Klingelhöfer presents the patchy evidence that Wessex was divided into shires in the seventh and eighth centuries (Klingelhöfer 1992 91-112). The evidence reveals a familiar pattern: signs of divisions in the tenth century, but little concrete evidence whether these were long established units, or newly created ones. The term *scir* (or shire) first appears in historical sources from the late seventh century but what this term meant in that period is not at all clear. A multiplicity of terms can also be identified that confuse the situation even more (Klingelhöfer 1992 102), since they pertain to tribal rather than geographical entities. Only *scir* survived into the later Anglo-Saxon period. The context in which it was first deployed superficially seems to describe Hampshire, so if the historical sources are reliable, the whole of Micheldever may have been part of an extensive shire county from as early as the middle of the eighth century. If the later Anglo-Saxon administration of Wessex actually dates to the same period as the arrival of the missionary clergy, it would have a profound effect on our argument here, since it suggests that many of the institutions of Medieval and later government have their origin contemporary with the missionary encounter.

Klingelhöfer's approach is clear (Klingelhöfer 1992 98-102). The source that uses the term *scir* is valid, but in the context used, it refers to a very limited area that is not the same as modern Hampshire. The early reference to *Ham tunscir* (ASC sa 757 (755)) is significant for its irregularity, and does not support the wider view that Wessex was divided into recognisable "shires" by the middle of the eighth century (contra Stenton 1971 293). Translating this analysis to Micheldever, the appearance of *Ham tunscir* did not necessarily mean that Micheldever had been brought into a single, vast and coherent political and administrative unit. Nonetheless, it does give us a view onto contemporary thinking about landscape and territories. In that respect, the significant feature of *Ham tunscir* is that, unlike other terms, it makes no reference to tribal allegiances. Instead, the name refers to an administrative unit. In that respect, the division of late seventh- and eighth-century Wessex represents a very significant development indeed, one that parallels and is contemporary with Hase's proposed division of Hampshire into *parochiae*.

Thus, the shire is of less immediate importance to Micheldever than the other Domesday land unit, the hundred. This term has been used rather loosely up till now, but it should probably be handled with more care, and with particular attention to the specific historical context in which it was understood. Klingelhöfer argues that early divisions of middle and northern Hampshire were defined by river valleys and their catchment areas. These valley-based units can be mapped across the whole of Hampshire, serving as a basis for reconstructing the earlier landscape. Klingelhöfer describes these notional valley units as *archaic hundreds* (Klingelhöfer 1992 84-91). Klingelhöfer's archaic hundreds are not simply an exercise in geographic determinism, but include later manorial and hundred boundaries where these can be identified, the amount of tribute they produced, and known judicial units. Moreover, they may have corresponded to the *parochiae* of mother churches, which can be reconstructed in some cases. Moreover, the place-names associated with the centres of archaic hundreds tend to be among the earlier place-names in the area. Thus, Klingelhöfer's archaic hundred provides a mechanism to understand many of the structures of local agricultural settlement: a unit that facilitated political, economic, and spiritual discourses for the whole population.

Confusion over these archaic hundreds is the source of confusion on the origins of later Anglo-Saxon settlement patterns in the area. Later hundreds were formed from archaic predecessors, but with sufficient changes to make the translation between the two more complicated than might otherwise be anticipated. So, the Domesday Hundred of Micheldever contained a parish whose influence extended not much further than the eastern half of the valley, surviving as a single ecclesiastical and political entity right through the Middle Ages. The western half of the valley, however, was dispersed in terms of land tenure and spiritual foci by 1086. This complex pattern, however, was much simpler in the middle Saxon period, as the whole valley unit formed a single political and religious entity, with its own court and mother church. Evidence is brought in to support the claim that this simple, valley-wide unit was established in the late seventh century, breaking down only thereafter as conflicting claims to land and title saw different areas being exchanged and usurped (Klingelhöfer 1991 125-127).

In both these cases, Klingelhöfer envisaged the development of later Anglo-Saxon institutions of hundred and shire at the end of the seventh century, developing and being reformed into their recognisable form at some point

thereafter. Although his interpretation differs significantly with Hase's over the detailed geography of the upper Hampshire area, there is considerable overlap. Both argue for the appearance of localised institutions at the end of the seventh century, simultaneous with the earliest appearance of clerical Christianity. As we shall see, this gives us scope to initiate a discussion on the discursive practices of literacy in the seventh century, but not before we take a much closer look at the archaeological evidence in support of these claims about the division of the landscape.

As should be apparent, much of Klingelhöfer's work on early Medieval settlement is drawn from evidence and interpretation of the Micheldever Hundred, a study that carries forward from the Romano-British settlement of the area up till the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This work shows that many of the most significant changes in the landscape and settlement pattern occurred in the early and middle Saxon periods. Moreover, formal dating evidence, consistent with other less chronologically precise indicators, reveals that the emergence of this re-ordered landscape is coterminous with the arrival of bureaucratic practices, bearing upon the ordering and negotiation of space and other resources.

The Romano-British occupation of the Micheldever area is uncontroversial and relatively pronounced. Micheldever fell into the administrative orbit of the *Belgae*, a province stretching from the Isle of Wight to the Bristol Channel, focussing on the local capital at Winchester (Frere 1967 23-52). To the east of this large canton lay the more focussed and geographically more cohesive canton of the *Atrebates*. The dividing line between the two must have been close to Micheldever, though the whole of the Micheldever fell into the Belgic administration, and firmly within the economic orbit of the capital at Winchester (Klingelhöfer 1991 18). Three Roman roads surround Micheldever, though seem to have had relatively little direct impact on its economic geography. Settlements in the valley do not follow what might be regarded as natural contours of the valley, such as the course of the stream or the upland ridges that skirt it, nor are fertile soils preferred over poorer ones (Klingelhöfer 1991 66). However, settlement in the first half of the first millennium tended to be high in the valley: only one building has been detected below the 80-metre contour. Other scatters of Roman finds have been detected, but no evidence of habitation (Klingelhöfer 1991 66). This is surprising, as there is no evidence that

the area was waterlogged, nor even that lower soils were too heavy for cultivation. An economic explanation has been invoked:

The settlements would rarely appear in the valley bottoms if they were normally sited in the center of their fields. The streams would have served as natural divisions between farms, just as ridgelines were the usual location of Celtic routes of communication. (Klingelhöfer 1991 66)

So the *latifundia* of villa agriculture in and around Micheldever were divided on either sides of the valley divided by the stream, with habitation central to the lands held at a point relatively high on the sides of the valley. This analysis is comparable to other analyses of Romano-British settlements of the uplands of South Central England (Johnson 1981 46-65, Applebaum 1972 241-2, Myres 1974).

The Anglo-Saxon settlement pattern, augmented by study of place-names, reveals that a significant, if at times poorly understood change in resource allocation took place at some point in the early Saxon period. There is little evidence of continuity at any of the Roman sites identified, and a new distribution of sites can be recognised. The earliest toponyms are associated with the valley floors, and settlement sites situated either on the valley floors or below the 80metre contour. There is no evidence for burial in the upper, eastern reaches of the valley, so the majority of identified sites are of settlement. The two burial sites that survive in the lower, western end of the valley are slightly above the contour, but are still closer to the valley bottom than the downland ridges. This distribution is consistent with the nearby Titchbourne, Candover, Alre and Somborne valleys, where identified Saxon settlement favours the valley floors, with some evidence for burials on the sides, but by no means the tops of the valley. Only one site in Micheldever does not conform to this pattern, Popham. Despite its apparently early place name, Popham sits high on an exposed piece of ground above the valley. It is situated on the Roman road between Winchester and Silchester, so it is conceivable that it was influenced by proximity to it. The significant point is that the early Saxon settlement of the Dever valley is noticeably different from the earlier Romano-British settlement. The early Saxon settlement was concentrated upon the river valleys, with outlying cemeteries on the hillsides nearby. With one or two exceptions, early Saxon and Romano-British occupations of the area are mutually exclusive. This is consistent with other areas nearby, though is by no means a universal trait in Wessex.

As well as identifying this shift, Klingelhöfer has presented a number of possible explanations. On one hand, it could be argued that a sudden change in the water table made upland settlements no longer viable, though this is contradicted by environmental indicators which suggest that the area was in fact wetter in the sixth century than the fourth (Klingelhöfer 1991 73). On the other, Applebaum argues that soil erosion was responsible for the movement from shallow upland soils that were prone to erosion (Applebaum 1972 231-47). Whatever explanation we adopt, the logic of the previous interpretation implies a movement towards what were previously the fringes of estates. So, not only should we envisage a movement in settlement, but there is also a re-allocation of agricultural land and the re-organisation or disintegration of older estates.

The middle and later Saxon settlement pattern gives us a clue to the nature of these earlier parcels of land. Though much larger and more intensive than their predecessors, the later settlement pattern was also focused along river valleys. Analyses of later records shows that these villages were at the centres of complicated distributions of lands ensuring that each settlement had a group of fields that extended from the valley bottom to the ridge (Klingelhöfer 1991 122). These divisions encompassed a variety of lands and a range of different resources. The river was the focus of the settlement pattern, with divisions along the ridges, providing each locality with the resources for mixed agriculture. This division of land originated in the early Saxon period, a complete re-organisation from the Romano British settlement.

Thus, Klingelhöfer provides a detailed review of the landscape of Micheldever and the institutions of land tenure from the Iron Age to the later Middle Ages. This review is important since it concentrates our attention on the period between 500 and 900, a period which saw a transformation not only in the institutions of land tenure, and the foundations of the Medieval institutions of tenure, but also a practical and extensive re-orientation. The newly established institution of the (archaic) hundred was focussed on the river valleys, with settlements low in the valleys near the rivers. The upland areas which had been the centre of Romano-British settlement became pasture and woodlands that were owned by the populations of the valleys, but were not settled by them.

However, a number of problems persist with this analysis. Like Hase, the chronological precision is not great. The period between 500 and 900 is treated as a single unit, even though it is clear from Klingelhöfer's own analysis that the period witnesses many significant changes, not just in settlement patterns, but also in their institutions. Like Hase, even if that chronological precision could be guaranteed, and the various issues teased out more fully, weaknesses remain. For one thing, the value of the archaeological and historical record and their interpretation are taken for granted. For another, and consistent with the first, the early Medieval landscape appears as the subject of study in its own right, rather than the lived experience of its occupants. These were never part of Klingelhöfer's project design, so it is unfair to be overly critical. Nonetheless, with the exception of a number of tentative expeditions into the new geography of the 1970's, Klingelhöfer makes no reference to almost thirty years of debate on such matters as the constitution of archaeological data, the interpretative complexity of material culture, or the importance of material conditions to practice. In this respect, while recognising the depth of historical scholarship evident, he does not even raise let alone answer many of the questions that have been the core concerns of archaeological research since the 1960's, and which are central to this thesis. Yet, like Hase, Klingelhöfer's work contains a core of material that may be deployed to begin to answer such criticisms. It is to that revitalisation that we now turn.

6.3 Making the most of Micheldever

The history of land tenure in the vicinity is of course more subtle than this summary might suggest, since at some point the territories identified for mixed farming took on a more rigid form and were associated with specific units of assessment. Moreover, the pattern described above tells us little about settlement nucleation. By the late Anglo-Saxon period, it is clear that the population lived in small villages with concentrated populations, but it is not clear whether these are long established agricultural villas, or recent nucleations. This moment of definition is crucial to the study, since it was at that point that the settlement pattern moved from what must have been a fairly mobile and ephemeral early Saxon pattern to become a much more robust and rigid one. Moreover, the picture developed so far has largely omitted the activity of individuals, implying that agricultural practices are little more than an "extra somatic means of adaptation". The cultural landscape has been largely overlooked, to the extent that the relationship between evolving ecclesiastical and agricultural and administrative units has not been explored fully.

Two questions thus remain to be asked. Firstly, by what date can we ascertain the consolidation of the early Saxon settlement that gave rise to the recognisable later Saxon and Medieval pattern? Klingelhöfer brings evidence to bear on this question, that provides an initial basis for an attempted answer for a second question about the cultural and symbolic activities that fixed the landscape historically.

Field boundaries can be difficult to date, even within a closely defined area like Micheldever. They do not lend themselves to morphological analysis with the chronological resolution that a study like this requires, while archaeological methods can provide a broad relative chronology, but not a precise date. The opportunities for radiocarbon or dendro-chronological dates are rare, only providing an open *terminus post quem*. Such dates do not date the fields themselves, since the fields may come into production any time after their enclosure. However, the boundaries of the Micheldever area are susceptible to one particular form of dating evidence. The Dever valley is straddled by a series of property and field boundaries marked in places by hedgerows. Hedgerows are susceptible to a broad dating method based upon the number of species of plant that can be recorded within a given sample area. Early Medieval hedges, created out of one single shrub like hawthorn, were subject to colonisation at the rate of about one every century (Hooper 1971, Hoskins 1971). Klingelhöfer subjected a number of the hedges of Micheldever manor to Hooper's sampling method (Klingelhöfer 1991 125-7). The sampling strategy used provided an opportunity to investigate and hopefully specify the origin of the Medieval field system, and to show boundaries which were either not part of the system, or were replanted at some point after being laid out.

The dating of hedgerows is a topic of significant academic debate and dispute (e.g. Hall 1980, 1982). While many studies have used Hooper's method to support chronologies in a variety of contexts, a number of commentators have also cast doubt on the efficacy of the method and the reliability of any dates that derive from it. For example, R Cameron and D Pannett attempted to use hedgerows to calculate dates for various landscape features in Shropshire, but found instead that the diversity of species – which Hooper used to calculate his dates – is only weakly related to age, and requires considerable local knowledge first (Cameron and Pannett 1980). Peter Casselden, (Casselden 1986, 1987) on the other hand

proposed a number of correctives to Hooper's method that allowed him to map the development of a landscape in Buckinghamshire, where one Anglo-Saxon hedge was clearly identified and validated with historical sources (Casselden 1987 133). The same conclusions were repeated by Chris Currie who argued that the formula would only be useful in the light of carefully constructed regional studies (Currie 1987). Currie and Casselden also suggested a margin of error in the region of 200 years if the method were used without prior local analysis. Attempts at controlled experiments have also given mixed results. In one case in Warwickshire, where historical sources were available, the method was only partially successful (Hetherington 1986). Here it was argued that the method could work, but required careful local knowledge first. In Hampshire, where the hedgerow-dating hypothesis has been refined in response to local conditions (Currie 1987 263), the results of one study correlated well with historical sources (Hewlett and Hassall 1973). This latter example is important, not just because of its geographical proximity to our Micheldever case study, but because it identified activity in the Anglo-Saxon period. The dating of hedgerows is problematic, but this is the only independent dating evidence that Klingelhöfer is able to bring to the debate.

Analysis of the samples produced a vast range of dates, from as early as 740 till as late as 1800. The results suggest that the territorial entities of Weston Colley, Godwinsdown and Northbrook, have been in existence since long before the Norman Conquest. The tenth-century date tempts us to associate the tenure of these divisions with Alfred's reinvigoration of the bureaucracy in the tenth century, with the appearance of land tenure for money rents or military service. But, the appearance of eighth-century dates *circa* 740 in several sections of the hedgerow suggests there may have been an earlier field systems that overlapped and coincided with the lines of the later arrangement of perhaps more thoroughly hedged divisions. The implication is that the tenth-century re-organisation followed lines that may have been established as early as the middle of the eighth century. If these dates are accurate, we may begin to discuss the origins of the Medieval tenure of Micheldever Hundred. The implication would be that the Anglo-Saxon land divisions were consolidated and regulated in a process that may have started in the eighth century, even if it continued to change and evolve through later centuries.

Klingelhöfer's chronology of the development of the Middle Saxon landscape in Micheldever, where that depends on dates obtained from hedgerows, is, however, open to significant objections. Even accepting that hedgerow dating works – contrary to the opinion of some commentators – the prospect that the margin of error may be as wide as 200 years is a cause for concern. This would be sufficient to shift the establishment of estate boundaries forward into the later Anglo-Saxon re-organisation of the tenth century, or back to the Anglo-Saxon settlement of the sixth – thus placing the creation of estate boundaries outside the chronological scope of this thesis, and undermining any proposed connection between the landscape phenomena, the clergy and the discourses of literacy. Regrettably, Klingelhöfer provides no quantification of the possible error either side of the date derived, so it is difficult to place any confidence on this date alone.

An approximate date for one stretch of hedge is hardly a secure foundation for sweeping conclusions about an entire landscape. It should be clear that there are problems with an eighth-century date, not least because 1200 years BP is just about the outer limit for this sort of dating. This is why Klingelhöfer's earlier work on territories becomes important, because a date in the first half of the eighth century is consistent with the development of territories. To that extent, the date is also consistent with Hase's proposed dissection of the area into pastoral units. If the "*archaic hundred*", the "*scir*" and the "*parochia*" are all dated to the first half of the eighth century by a variety of different methods and bodies of evidence, then the creation of field boundaries in the same period should come as no surprise.

There is a real danger of circularity here, not least because Klingelhöfer implicitly uses the date for hedgerow to support the date for the coalescence of the archaic hundred, and through that the development of the ancient shire (1992 84-91). If we in turn use the archaic hundred to support the date of the hedgerow, then we are in effect supporting the date of the hedgerow with the date of the hedgerow. If, in turn we support the date of the establishment of the parochiae by reference to a bureaucratic zeitgeist then we are in danger of hanging an entire argument on a very shaky nail. However, this date can be supported by evidence that draws upon other, more closely dated material that cannot be dismissed so easily, specifically the law code of Ine of Wessex dated to around 700 and the less securely dated organisation of place-names. Moreover, many of the developments noted in the previous chapter suggested that the first half of the eighth century saw

an increased investment in surveillance. In that respect the development of property boundaries like the ones described in Micheldever is entirely plausible.

The date, however, is broadly supported by other forms of evidence, though the corroboration that they supply is far from complete. Place name evidence provides one means to reduce the margin of error. Though the associations are complicated, Micheldever provides four examples of “-tun” placenames that Klingelhöfer associates with the movement from an early to late phase of settlement. The dating of place names is fraught with dangers, but Gelling has pointed out that the earliest evidence of a place names with a “-tun” suffix is the middle of the eighth century (Gelling 1997 181-3). This does not mean that the Micheldever “-tuns” are of the same age, but it does provide a useful date to set alongside the hedgerow evidence. If these two pieces of evidence are combined, then it follows that the re-ordering of the landscape is more likely to have taken place in the period after 757 than before. Thus there is a broad congruence between the place name evidence and the hedgerow dating. Though both forms still imply a large margin of error, it does at least suggest that the transformation described did not happen before the middle years of the eighth century.

Other forms of corroboration can be induced from a reasonable interpretation of parallel developments, such as the development of “parochiae”. If, following Blair and Hase, these first emerged in the eighth century in northern Hampshire, then this provides a context in which estate boundaries may have been marked more forcefully. The extension of royal authority in Hampshire is itself suggestive of new assertive forms of power that may materialise in new ways. None of these provide conclusive proof that clinches the argument, but it does suggest that a mid-eighth-century date is not unreasonable.

Many of the large-scale developments, such as the foundation of parochiae and the development of the *scir* have been related to the long reign of Ine, King of Wessex in the last two decades of the seventh and first three decades of the eighth century. Though little is known of his reign, one significant document, a law code preserved in a later Alfredian text, shows that he was concerned with the more careful administration of the kingdom. This law code, which will be discussed more fully below, suggests that organisation of duties and responsibilities were on the agenda in the first half of the eighth century. Careful demarcation of the

landscape such as described by Klingelhöfer would not only be consistent with that agenda, but was required by it.

Further corroboration for this early eighth-century focus can be found in the development of nucleated settlements. It has long been recognised that the late Saxon and Medieval pattern of nucleated settlements in Hampshire differs markedly from the early Medieval dispersal evident in archaeology and in toponymics (e.g. Hughes 1984, Hinton 1981). This same pattern is clearly evident in Micheldever, with earlier settlements being all but invisible, presumably on account of their smaller scale, but late Saxon and Medieval ones evident in physical and documentary terms (Klingelhöfer 1992 19-24). Yet the date of this important centralisation remains nebulous. This connects to the place name evidence, since nucleation is often associated with the appearance of the *-ton* suffix (Klingelhöfer 1992 21, Gelling 1997 181-3).

It has to be accepted that there are serious limitations in the dating evidence. Klingelhöfer's dating of the re-organisation of the landscape to the middle of the eighth century is neither accurate, nor precise, nor rigorous, though it is in keeping with broader patterns, such as place names. The chronological problems can only really be resolved with renewed archaeological investigations of the area. Until such work has been completed, any discussion of the chronology must remain coarse and provisional. If a date in the middle years of the eighth century is accepted, then a discussion about the relationship between the missionary encounter and re-organisation of the landscape is reasonable.

Klingelhöfer proposes that the field boundary forms part of the process of nucleation, since the later Saxon mixed fields were the property of each of the small nucleated settlements: so the development of one has a bearing on the other. It would be anachronistic to suggest that they were entirely parallel developments and that the date of one is appropriate as the date of the other. It would be equally unsatisfactory to assume causality of either upon the other (Welsh 1985 20). Yet the earliest date for this classic element of manorialism comes from documents that are late, and seem to assume its existence already. It is a practice that cannot be dated archaeologically. At Micheldever, it is clear that, while the practice cannot be dated through the field boundaries, these dated boundaries are nonetheless consistent with a mixed division of resources. These provisionally dated

boundaries may have enabled strip field agriculture from the first half of the eighth century.

Thus, investigation of the Micheldever field boundaries presents useful parallels for other historical problems, and can be used in limited ways to address or qualify the questions raised by them. A provisional analysis of the dating evidence suggests that the first half of the eighth century may have seen the start of a process that enabled the development of classic medieval agriculture. The process continued for several centuries and marked a significant change in the organisation of earlier Saxon agriculture. If we can accept this provisional chronology for the development of the landscape as the basis for discussions, we can ask alternative questions about life within the boundaries thus created.

6.4 Literacy, Landscape and the Clergy

A provisional chronology is all very well, but has not taken us close to matters of literacy practice which were reviewed and extended in Chapters Four and Five, nor does it seem to support the approaches to the study of missionary work discussed in Chapter Three. Indeed, it barely addresses the issues of lived experience which Klingelhöfer and Hase were criticised for overlooking. The question therefore arises, how can we tie the landscape of Micheldever and its early Medieval institutions to literacy practices and through them the clergy. The hinge that articulates these disparate elements is discourse.

Discourse was introduced in discussions about literacy practices, realising that there is more to reading and writing than mechanical skills, coming to the conclusion that literacy draws upon and reproduces specific structures of knowledge, and in so doing (re)produces asymmetrical relationships of dominance and dependence between individuals and polities. In the case of literacy, these relationships focus on the cultural space of literacy and illiteracy, which is not so much a continuum but a tension over the control of symbolic resources and the means of producing and controlling forms of knowledge production. It is the claim of this thesis that it was partly through this discursive exercise of literacy that clerical Christianity was presented to the greater mass of the population. These discursive practices were informed by and reproduced the material conditions of social life, and thus provide a core of empirical evidence upon which to base the analysis of these practices. So, the problem is not so much how the seemingly

disparate themes of literacy, landscapes and the clergy can be brought together. The question is how did the discursive practice of literacy attend the Micheldever Hundred in the early Middle Ages?

The answer to this question necessitates a significant shift in analysis from those proposed by Hase and Klingelhofer. In short, it is necessary to populate the valley, interrogating the archaeological record from the perspective of lived experience rather than its physical or documentary constitution. This has been the project of archaeology over the last thirty years, and though there has been considerable disagreement about the means by which to achieve this goal, in essence archaeology has been dominated by issues of a social nature (Hodder and Preucel 1996 *passim*). The question of lived experience posed here is more than an account of the operation of stable systemic variation of parameters, nor is it sufficient to provide a contingent symbolic reading of the archaeology. In order to recognise discourse we must map the inhabited space of the Micheldever Hundred, reconciling the physical geography and temporal rhythm of practice through which predispositions of action are constructed. This takes us close to what Bourdieu termed *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977, 1990).

In this respect, the creation of field and other more nebulous boundaries dated provisionally to the eighth century, and their expansion and elaboration in subsequent centuries become of central importance. Other parts of the material conditions of life in the valley may be proposed, but in the boundaries and their division of the valley into discrete but similarly resourced units, we have material evidence for the expansion of bureaucratic practices into the daily lives of the entire population. Living and working within these imposed constraints of bureaucracy, asymmetrical relationships of dependence and dominance were created, relationships that were informed by and in turn informed literacy practices. Literacy is thus reproduced in the choreography of daily life (after Barrett 1987).

A privileged view of the lived space of the Micheldever Hundred is facilitated in part through the survival of historical texts, such as the charters, and in particular the law code of Ine. That the Micheldever area was involved in the extended late Anglo-Saxon round of administration and bureaucracy is self-evident. As has already been noted, the manor is mentioned a number of times in documentary

sources, and the royal council reputedly met at Micheldever in 862, presumably in the *gemot hus* or meeting house mentioned in the charter accounts. It would be a simple, but all too naïve, extension to assume that this later activity represents the culmination of centuries of bureaucratic activity. There remains a gap of about 150 years between the first evidence of the middle and later Anglo-Saxon settlement pattern, the field boundaries they gave rise to, and the round of rural bureaucracy of the late ninth and tenth centuries. This could arise out of one of two possible, mutually exclusive conditions: either there were no earlier records; or such earlier records as there were have been lost.

A lack of evidence is always problematic. It would be necessary to build a very detailed and compelling argument to demonstrate lost documents, let alone their contents. The assumption that the ninth- and tenth-century documents are the culmination of several centuries of bureaucracy is dealt a further blow, for in places where there is reliable charter evidence, it can be difficult to ascertain the nature or extent of those claims. In short, there is evidence of a considerable change in literary culture, and the nature of record-keeping which may account for the gap, and which may in turn be because the charters of the ninth and tenth centuries were entirely new.

Nonetheless, the provision or otherwise of charters to define the landscape represents only one aspect of the literacy culture. As we have already seen, the literacies of the late seventh and early eighth centuries were (to a greater or lesser extent) concerned with bureaucratic practices, literacy practices harnessed to the exercise of surveillance. This can be manifest in a variety of different ways, not simply in the exchange of land. The single unique feature of literacy is its peculiar transcendence of time-space geography, termed by Ricoeur *distanciation* (Ricoeur 1978). Thus, in studying lived practice within time-space geography we should be attuned to apparent renegotiations of that geography which are consistent with its appropriation by novel structures of surveillance. This generic statement means that a variety of different literacy practices may be adopted or detected, where novel structures of time or space are deployed. This is exactly what we find in the definition of boundaries in Micheldever Hundred, though it is more clearly demonstrated by comparison with law codes than with charters.

For Micheldever, the concern with marking out space and time can be visited in the Laws of Ine of Wessex (Whitelock 1979 398-407, hereafter *LI*). This code, dating to the last decades of the seventh century, was reinstated in the ninth century by Alfred, an act that ensured its survival. The laws provide a welter of social and political information relevant to the lives of the ordinary population of Micheldever. They provide clues to the exercise of bureaucratic surveillance, partly through legal conceptualisations of space in which activities may be undertaken, and partly through the allocation of time to certain cyclical or occasional activities. The combination of these provides us with an insight into the abstract space time geography of middle Saxon Wessex. It is through the former in particular that we can map the literacy practices to the archaeological record presented above.

The seventy-six different provisions of the laws are arranged in haphazard fashion in their longest surviving manuscript, with injunctions being periodically repeated, and the sense of evidently coherent sections broken up by seemingly irrelevant interjections. It cannot be assumed that the Alfredian promulgation encompassed the complete original text, while we may reasonably suppose that the text includes paragraphs that were added after the reign of Ine, though identifying these plausibly is all but impossible.

The text of the laws appropriates the middle Saxon landscape with respect of certain proscribed or required activities. It creates and distributes places for action, renegotiating the pre-existing landscape within a culture and rhythm of bureaucracy. The cultural places thus (re)created pertain to temporal and spatial patterns, but it is in the material conditions of space that their archaeological record is constituted.

So, pertaining directly to material entities, actions in or around ecclesiastical buildings are regulated, and the buildings themselves marked out as the locus of sanctuary in the law:

(LI:5) If anyone is liable to be flogged, and reaches a church, the flogging is to be remitted.

If then, we accept Hase's tentative claim that Micheldever church is the likely successor to an early mother church, then we can see that this assignation relates

the building to the whole landscape and the population within it. Even if we reject his hypothesis about the location of the mother church, he nonetheless asserts the presence of a church somewhere within the area, so it is safe to assume that at some undisclosed part of the valley, legal sanctuary could be afforded to anyone liable to flogging. This may seem trivial, but it makes the point that the landscape was divided into certain areas for certain types of activity, according to a programme that was very probably communicated textually for symbolic reasons at least. This demarcation of the legal space of the church and its special rôle in the landscape can justifiably be described as a literacy practice. The demarcation of the church as a place of sanctuary in law should not be overlooked either. Not only is this literacy discursive, but it has self-evidently been employed to reinforce the special status of the church within society, over and above any literacy practices. Thus, by defining special areas for particular types of activity, a two-handed message is delivered: clergy as brokers and producers of abstract knowledge; and church as place of sanctuary and safety.

In similar vein, control over actions within space pertains to all manner of activities and a variety of different spaces, not simply the special place of the church building. So, the location of a fight to an extent decided the severity of the punishment imposed, and the destination of any compensation that might accrue:

(LI:6) If anyone fights in the king's house, he is to forfeit all his possessions, and it is to be at the king's judgement whether he is to keep his life or not (6.1), If anyone fights in a minster, he is to pay 120 shillings compensation (6.2), If anyone fights in the house of an ealdorman, or other important councillor, he is to pay 60 shillings in compensation and is to give another 60 shillings as a fine (6.3), If he fights in the house of a rent payer or gebur, he is to pay 120 shillings as a fine, and six shillings to the gebur. (6.4) And even if the fighting is in open country, 120 shillings is to be paid as a fine.

The laws in this case emphasise the rights of the king and to some extent the clergy. The point to make is that identifiable localities are treated differently. Moreover, the implication of the statement about "open country" is that the law does not simply cover discrete identifiable localities, but that distribution of legally formulated localities forms a continuous surface, extending across the whole kingdom. Once again, if we accept Hase's position that Micheldever was home to a

minster or mother church, then we can identify at least one locality in the vicinity where the legal compensation for a fight would be different from the rest of the surrounding area.

The particular privileges of the clergy are emphasised again when the legislation turns to the punishments associated with unlawful entry, another judicial restraint that controls and constrains movement and access to legally defined space:

(LI:45) Forcible entry into the residence of the king or the bishop, within his own diocese, one shall compensate with 120 shillings; [into that] of an ealdorman with 80 shillings; [into that] of a king's thegn with 60 shillings; [into that] of a gesith born man who owns land 35 shillings; and deny it correspondingly.

Once again, as with the sanctuary offered by the church against flogging, this regulation empowers the clergy in two ways. As a literacy event in its own right, the law discursively extends and articulates the rôle of the clergy as mediators and producers of abstract knowledge, but in practical terms it also entitles the church to enhanced legal retribution, on a parity with the king. While this gives us an indication of contemporary trends, it is less relevant to Micheldever, which did not house a bishop. Even so, the regulations pertaining to the *thegn* and *gesith-born man* are probably directly relevant. Such properties cannot be identified archaeologically, and no contemporary historical evidence exists – but it seems unlikely that there were no households of this or similar rank in the vicinity.

The purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that certain points in the landscape of Micheldever were marked out by certain types of legally constituted activities at the end of the seventh century or start of the eighth century. The church was marked out as sanctuary, and the properties of the king, his representatives and the clergy were protected by extended fines, or particular forms of compensation. Bureaucratic practices also delineated the rights and customs pertaining to open country as opposed to the physically bounded space of buildings. In short, bureaucracy had appropriated the whole of the Dever valley.

The discrete legal and physical locations of households and properties are to some extent defined by virtue of their own boundaries, while open country might be identified as the remainder of the space. To that extent, the continuous surface

of law proposed may be stretching the point. Nonetheless, the proposition that these laws present an abstracted map of legally defined spaces can be supported by the investigation of other clauses. Other forms of practices are regulated by virtue of their spatial characteristics. For example the geographic extent of the laws is of course assumed, but alluded to directly in one paragraph:

(LI:10) If anyone within the boundaries of our kingdom commit robbery and rapine, he is to give back the plunder and give 60 shillings as a fine.

This statement is tautological, since one assumes that the boundaries of the kingdom and the extent of the laws are coterminous. Yet this paragraph betrays an abstraction worth noting, since it plainly states that the kingdom is indeed a bounded totality; and that the rule of law is the same from one end to another. This is a significant abstraction given the rapid ascent of Wessex as a politically cohesive unit under one ruler. It is implicit in the whole legal programme that the laws instituted. Abstractions like this across a whole region represent the practical expression of Ricoeur's *distanciation*, and provide a practical instance of the centralisation of tasks proposed in Chapter Five as a feature of literate government in middle Saxon England. Instead of depending upon face-to-face encounters with the king and entourage, law is made present by the inscribed and distributed instruments of bureaucratic government. Micheldever may not have seen its king very often, but he was present in the law.

Abstractions are not limited to the notional extent of the kingdom. Certain areas are defined in precise terms in relation to the types of behaviour that is to be expected of individuals inhabiting these spaces. Thus, famously:

(LI:20) If a man from a distance or a foreigner goes through the wood off the track, and does not shout nor blow a horn, he is assumed to be a thief, to be either redeemed or killed

So, the track is an appropriate place for movement across a landscape, but the wood is not. Failure to abide by these ordinances can result in the individual contravening them being exempted from the protection of the law, being assumed a criminal without appeal or redress to other legal process. In the relatively closed world of Medieval agriculture, a "man from a distance" need not have come from a different kingdom, nor even from particularly far. Indeed, the laws seem to assume that the family or kin of the stranger will get to hear of the killing, and in some circumstance be entitled to certain forms of compensation. In short, movement

across the landscape, in which we must include the Micheldever Hundred, was restricted. Only approved and well-known tracks could be used to access parts of the kingdom safely. Consider then the relationship between Micheldever and other surrounding areas such as King's Somborne or Candover. Overland travel was presumably a precarious and cumbersome business, and only certain routes could be used safely once leaving one's own native locale. The point is that ordinary people were made to adopt certain practices in response to laws that had become the property of the literate clerical elite who came to mediate on such matters.

It seems fair to suppose that the restriction of movement to paths is not simply a cordial means of protecting aliens from assault by locals. The paths identified presumably also afforded greater opportunities for surveillance of the movement of people, and by extension all manners of goods and services across the kingdom. It also subtly discourages the deployment of local topographic knowledge, a step that presumably benefited a non-local administration.

Of course, at the time of writing, the law may simply have appropriated long established customs, so it could be argued that this had little real impact on such common law. But even this appropriation of established norms is relevant. Within a generation or so, the literate clergy may have become the arbiters and repositories of such age-old common sense. Whichever way we view this edict, the literate elite was able to establish or reinforce its position. It is against the local population, like those at Micheldever that this position was established and reinforced, and across their landscape that movement was restricted. Moreover, it is by virtue of distanciation that this edict was made present in the diverse parts of the kingdom to which it applied.

Foreigners were not only restricted in movement by path, they were also restricted in the locus of their encounters with the local population, a theme to which we shall return in the Hamwic case study in Chapter Seven:

(LI:25) If a trader buys among the people in the countryside, he is to do it before witnesses.

For Micheldever, this restriction was twofold. Firstly, it meant that merchants required special licence or surveillance to exchange or to acquire goods. So the movement of goods out of Micheldever was regulated. Secondly, by the same

token, it meant that merchants were probably harder to obtain in Micheldever than in the vicinity of the appropriate markets: so the movement of goods into Micheldever was also constrained.

The subdivision of the kingdom into different administrative units, with different jurisdictions is also evident in a number of the paragraphs. Thus, the shire and the hundred are mentioned, though their shape and composition are not elucidated to any degree. As we have seen, it would be foolish to suppose that these units were direct analogues for the institutions of the same name in the late Anglo-Saxon period. Nonetheless, whatever the meaning of the terms, it is clear that they represent geographically defined administrative units: units that were theoretically replicated across the kingdom:

(LI:39) If anyone goes away from his lord without permission, or steals into another shire, and is discovered there, he is to return to where he was before and pay 60 shillings to his lord.

(LI:54) He who is accused of homicide, and wishes to deny the slaying with an oath – then there shall be in the hundred [hides] a man entitled to swear a king's oath at 30 hides, both in the case of a gesith born man or ceorl whichever it may be. (54.1) And if wergild is paid, then he may give in each of the hundreds [of the wergild] a slave, and a coat of mail and a sword if he need.

Thus, the population of the Micheldever Hundred was, to an extent, mandated to remain in a defined geographical area, or at least were not permitted to leave the *scir* without permission. More locally, a number of officials existed to assist in the administration of justice on behalf of the king. In practical terms therefore, we can see the implications of the abstraction of power proposed in Chapter Five. The expanded kingdom was divided into identifiable administrative units, with movement between these units constrained for the majority of the population. This expanded kingdom consisted not only of a patchwork of local units, but these local groupings included royal officers capable of overseeing and guaranteeing certain types of legal proceedings, specifically oaths. Klingelhöfer's *archaic hundred* provides a model for how these types of activity may have been carried out. Thus, at least in theory, there was a royal official resident in the extended hundred. Moreover, the rural population were probably not able to move much away from the hundred, or its immediate neighbours without permission of their lord. If they

did obtain that permission, they presumably were only able to leave by established paths.

Much of the law pertains to the maintenance of property rights, and compensation due under certain circumstances should those rights be violated. In a number of cases, however, these specifically include instructions for the definition of delimited areas in which specific property rights were guaranteed or demitted. The extent of these areas was marked, not by imagined boundaries, but by physical barriers. Thus:

(LI:40) A ceorl's homestead must be fenced winter and summer. If it is not fenced, and his neighbour's cattle get in through his own gap, he has no right to anything from that cattle; he is to drive them out and suffer the damage.

(LI:42) If ceorls have a common meadow or other land divided in shares to fence, and some have fenced their portions and others have not, and [if cattle] eat up their common crops or grass, those who are responsible for the gap are to go and pay to the others, who have fenced their part, compensation for the damage that has been done there. They are to demand with regard to those cattle such reparation as is proper. (42.1) If however, it is any of the cattle that breaks the hedges and enters anywhere, and he who owns it would not or could not control it, he who finds it on his arable is to seize and kill it; and the owner is to take its hide and flesh and suffer the loss of the rest.

(LI:49) If anyone finds swine on his mast pasture without his permission, he is to take then a pledge worth six shillings.

So the laws specifically call upon and reward agricultural practices that enclose and define property. These definitions are all too physical, not the conceptual abstractions that have been mentioned up to now. Failure to enclose certain parcels of land for protection of or against livestock could have resulted in serious losses for the early Medieval farmers of Micheldever. The laws have implications not only for working practices on the pasturing of livestock but imply a subtle demarcation between the domestic and agricultural arenas. It is here that we find a very tempting correlation between the archaeological record as identified and studied by Klingelhöfer and the intervention of literacy practices through the

definition of laws. Could it be that the earliest boundaries evident in the archaeological record are contemporary with the legal injunction? While the relationship between them remains unclear – it would be fatuous to claim that the laws “caused” the boundaries to be built – it would be equally foolish to ignore the very striking correspondence between them.

Could it be that this correspondence was simply a happy coincidence? The previous chapter has shown that surveillance was something of a *zeitgeist* in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. To argue that the correspondence noted here was merely a coincidence implies that a whole series of mechanisms for surveillance occurred or expanded simultaneously in Wessex by unrelated haphazard accident. This cannot be sustained. Thus, the proposed development of boundaries in eighth-century Micheldever could have been part and parcel of the same movement that created the laws that themselves spoke of the types of boundary which we have seen were erected. The laws, whose creation was a literacy event and which betray a whole gamut of literacy practices, informed the creation of and were themselves created out of the material conditions of living. If we wish to seek literacy practices in action, we can see their effects very clearly on the valley sides round the Dever stream.

But there is more to the laws than even this detailed analysis has revealed. Underpinning all the laws is a series of equivalences and transactions based on land tenure and family relations for the provision of certain tribute and the exercise of legal rights and duties. Legal activities were expressed as hides of land: the amount of land necessary to provide for a single household. The number of hides held was instructive in the calculation of individual worth, so that the greater the number of hides held, the greater the influence an individual may exert, and the greater the legal duty that individual was expected to carry. For example:

(LI:14) He who is accused of [complicity with] a band [of marauders] is to clear himself by [an oath] of 120 hides, or compensate correspondingly.

(LI:19) A king's geneat, if his wergild is 1200 shillings, may, if he is a communicant, swear for 60 hides.

(LI:32) If a welsh man has a hide of land, his wergild is 120 shillings; if however he has half a hide, 80 shillings, if he has none, 60 shillings.

(LI:70.1) As a food rent from 10 hides: 10 vats of honey, 300 loaves, 12 ambers of Welsh ale, 30 of clear ale, 2 full grown cows, or 10 wethers, 10 geese, 20 hens, 10 cheeses, an amber full of butter, 5 salmon, 20 pounds of fodder and 100 eels.

These provisions and equivalences encompass the whole of agricultural production, the lives and activities of the entire population, literate or illiterate, year in and year out. The bureaucratic practices of literacy were brought home to the whole rural population within the defined legal and, as Klingelhöfer would have us believe, physical boundaries of taxation and jurisdiction. Payment and management of food-renders required continuous conspicuous labour within clearly defined parcels of land. These bounded units, which may have existed for several centuries, or may have been relatively recent, were nonetheless given particular and peculiar importance by surveillance strategies that drew on the use of literacy.

The laws provide regulations for the provision of justice, dividing the landscape into units according to the provision of resources for the implementation of that justice alongside the creation of relationships of dependence and dominance. Underpinning these bureaucratic practices was a conceptual scheme derived from kin relations in which society was imagined as a series of inter-dependent households. Thus, various rights are ascribed to various groups on the basis of real or imagined familial relationships, while marginal groups such as foreigners are ascribed to a household for the purposes of surveillance. These notional households not only provided a focus for face-to-face exchanges, but were also the subjects of abstract composition and of geographical equation. Thus, each notionally equivalent household comprised a certain membership, which was equated to a certain area of land. In other words, interpersonal relationships had a geographical equivalence as well as a notional legal one. This double equivalence was played out on an annual basis by the demand that each household make an obligatory tribute. The routine of surveillance was thus expressed in geographical, interpersonal and calendrical structures. These discursive practices of surveillance were physically inscribed in the material conditions of living, underpinning and

underpinned by the production of space, and structuring and structured by practice.

The point of this discussion of the division of the kingdom into legally defined spatial and conceptual elements is to demonstrate that the creation of boundaries witnessed in the Micheldever Hundred and provisionally dated to the eighth century is entirely consistent with contemporary, but novel literacy practices. If the proposed eighth-century date can be sustained, then present in the field divisions is a novel expression of concerns over demarcation and boundedness that pertains not only to the practices of literacy, but through them to the clergy that instigated and were in turn empowered by those practices. It is not my goal to argue that these new expressions of spatial definition were the product of bureaucratic practice, nor of literacy. Spurious arguments about cause and effect must be utterly rejected. It is my intention, instead, to remark upon their correspondence. It is my claim that they are both physical manifestations of and preconditions for an ongoing discourse of surveillance in which, by virtue of its unique access to literacy, the values of clerical Christianity were implicit. It is by investigating how these clerical practices of literacy reproduced and were reproduced by the material conditions of lived practice that we can best hope to obtain a meaningful and novel insight into the missionary encounter.

Of course, the division of activities across the surface of the landscape and their physical manifestation in field boundaries may be taken to represent in microcosm other imperatives that were not present in the material conditions of life, and thus cannot be reconstructed from the archaeological record. Patterns of space cannot exist without recourse to the distribution of time. Perhaps, the most important structure of surveillance, that cannot be shown archaeologically but which can be assumed, was the division of time to rhythms of labour and tribute. These have already been alluded to in discussions of the legal framework of divisions, with the annual payment of tribute appearing as an obvious foundation. Other injunctions make similar demands. Thus, the baptism of young children is required within a certain period after birth:

(LI:2) A child is to baptised within 30 days; if it is not, 30 shillings compensation is to be paid.

Work was restricted to the days of the week, leaving Sunday as a day of rest:

(LI:3) If a slave works on a Sunday at his master's command, he is to be free and the master pay 30 shillings as a fine. (3.1) If however the slave works without his knowledge, he is to be flogged. (3.2) If then a freeman works on that day without his lord's command, he is to forfeit his freedom.

The provision of certain fees and charges was associated with certain times of the year.

(LI:4) Church-scot is to be paid by Martinmas; if anyone does not discharge it he is liable to 60 shillings and to render church-scot twelve-fold.

The value of certain commodities was dictated by the time of year:

(LI:55) A ewe with a lamb is worth a shilling until 12 days after Easter.

Although invisible archaeologically, these temporal provisions make explicit the link between clerical forms of Christianity and the novel forms of surveillance that are under discussion, since they make direct reference to the times and seasons of the Christian calendar, as well as fees payable to the Church. All of these injunctions convey the same double emphasis on the role of the clergy: a discursive representation of the clergy through literacy and a direct representation of the importance of Christian values. They also provide a conceptual link with the re-organised calendar discussed in Chapter Five. It is difficult to be clear whether the transformed calendar that Bede discusses in the context of Northumbria was relevant as far south as Micheldever, or if the terms he described were locally specific (Meaney 1985). Even if the Northumbrian calendar were unique, it is not hard to imagine a similar process of transformation taking place within Micheldever. Of course, the impact of such a transformation may have been offset by the appropriation of existing fairs: a question that cannot be answered satisfactorily, even if they also include new injunctions about the importance of early baptism. Nonetheless, the relationship between calendar and structures of surveillance was brought to a new level of abstraction in the literary practices described here. Precise terms of reference accompany seasonal activities, activities that are replicated (or assumed to be replicated) across the whole kingdom irrespective of previous customary practices.

The obvious counter to such arguments is that we cannot map the geographical extents of the calendrical practices mentioned, even in the relatively discrete context of early Medieval Wessex, beyond the scribe or religious community that committed them to writing. Far from representing a widespread bureaucratic practice, they may only represent the imagined or desired practices that the clerical elite would wish to extend to the whole population. However, the argument that bureaucratic practices are evident in the organisation of the landscape provides a broad framework in which we may argue about the probable geographic extents of the organisation of time. That the space of the Micheldever hundred was appropriated to bureaucracy should predispose us to think that the rhythms of time were also transformed. This argument also depends to some extent on the date of the re-organisation of the landscape.

Also explicit in the bureaucratic framework, though invisible within the archaeological record from Micheldever are the symbolic exchanges between commodities, made possible through the notional intervention of currency, though here the archaeological record suggests that the proposed transactions were more notional than real. These exchanges lead us into discussions on the subject of currency, a theme that is worth noting at this stage, but which will be more completely developed in the next section on the emporium at Hamwic.

Literacy practices thus impinged directly on daily life as a means of surveillance and as a means of representing surveillance. If literacy practices are present, then we can reasonably turn to literacy events, the basic empirical unit if literacy identified in Chapter Four. An outline of such events will be necessary before we can return with any confidence to the questions of the spread of Christianity with which we started this thesis. To do this, it is necessary to locate these discourses more precisely within the context of the inhabited space Micheldever, and how they were involved in the routine of daily life. This will also facilitate the kind of discussion of the 'rationality' of conversion mentioned in Chapter Three. In short, what impact might these discourses have had on the population? Two interconnecting sets of practices can be considered. Firstly, there are the practices and activities by which the discourses of literacy were established. Secondly, there are the practices that recreated the discourses of literacy, and were in turn transformed by them.

The first of these is harder to imagine, though more easily recognised in the archaeological record, since it is in part represented by the construction of the field boundaries that exercised us earlier in this Chapter. At some point after 700 AD – and provisionally in the middle years of the eighth century – a group of farm labourers planted a series of hedges to divide parcels of land, one from another. It is not clear whether this activity was undertaken by command, or voluntarily, though the law codes tend to indicate that the boundaries are required, which might hint that the division took place by command or under oversight. It is not clear whether they created new boundaries or followed the lines of existing ones, though again the implication is that they defined older ones. It is not clear whether they mapped out these boundaries extensively, or if their planting activities were restricted to the immediate vicinity with which we are now familiar. However, these formal physical boundaries, which had not hitherto been common, may have coincided with an equally unprecedented demarcation of the landscape into new units of formal administration — a landscape that was to emerge several centuries later as a landscape of hundreds and shires and parishes. These new landscape units, though they did not survive unaltered for long, were the result of and necessary condition for the expansion of royal authority expressed in new symbolic ways and delivering vastly increased rewards in terms of stability and patronage. Clerical Christianity, creating and to some extent created by this royal authority, may have been symbolically involved in the erection of these new boundaries insofar as its monopoly of literacies gave it a monopoly over the surveillance of the meagre resources these labourers would produce. The interdependence of clerical and royal interests is important here since it is hard to identify one or other directly. This has implications for our initial objective of identifying clergy independently of the royal authority. We will turn to this in more detail below, but though the work party that erected the hedgerows and fences may not have realised it, the erection of these new boundaries created a visible reminder of why conversion could be ‘rational’.

Secondly, the practices that recreated the discourses of literacy, and were in turn transformed by them are easier to describe, but impossible to specify, since they belong to the absent social agents of the seventh and eighth century in Micheldever. For many reasons, discussed in chapter three, it is impossible to talk about religious conversion in terms of transformations or personal witness. Sophisticated analyses mean that it is necessary to reject the stark antitheses of

traditional conversion narratives in favour of more compelling, if less specific narratives of habitus. Practice, knowledge of how to be an effective social agent, the knowledge of how to live, can be invoked to investigate the structuring structures of predisposition upon which social life is founded, without emasculating the freely willed creation of social agents. By exclusion from the symbolic resources available to the clerical bureaucracy, and by virtue of the adoption of bureaucratic practices of surveillance, the inhabited material conditions of the agricultural population of Micheldever Hundred became the intellectual property of the clergy. For almost a thousand years, any change in these conditions, any alteration in these boundaries would necessitate the involvement, and subsequently the approval of the clergy. We cannot write an archaeology of conversion, but we do at least have here a novel account of the missionary encounter.

Thus, the literacy practices of surveillance gave rise to two different types of literacy event. The first, the erection of the boundaries was discrete and can be described in some detail, at least in theory. The latter group is much less clear, though probably more important. By organising the material conditions of life to coincide with literacy practices owned and maintained by the clerical elite, the secular elite vested control over these boundaries in the clergy. Life, work and experience within and round these boundaries became life work and experience subtly regulated and monitored by structures of symbolic expression owned and maintained almost exclusively by the clergy.

6.5 Going over old ground: missionary encounter in Early Medieval Micheldever

This discussion has progressed round the archaeology of literacy, from historical discussions of parishes and territories, through the landscape in which space was produced to the discursive literacy practices of surveillance that informed the production of space. It is now time to complete the circuit, returning, as it were, to the point of departure: the breadth and penetration of literacy and the clergy. Five concrete conclusions be drawn:

- The archaeological evidence allows a view of the rural landscape otherwise invisible to us through documents alone.
- This provides an important supplement and alternative to conventional historiography of the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England.

- We can now see much more clearly than hitherto an important aspect of the missionary encounter, while rejecting naive generalisations of process or authenticity.
- It is important to bear in mind that the terms of the encounter described here are limited to one aspect of the missionary encounter alone: there may be many more which are beyond our knowledge. Indeed, Hase's difficulty in identifying the mother church of Micheldever assumes as much.
- It is possible to specify with much more rigour the relationships between the elites: in particular, the symbiosis between royalty and clergy, a relationship which has hitherto defied analysis.
- However, our discussion of the impact of the clergy has led us back to a discussion of the interdependence of royal and clerical interests. This echoes the positions of Mayr-Harting and Stenton described and criticised in Chapters Two and Three.

With these conclusions in mind, it is possible to offer some comments on the missionary encounter in Micheldever and potentially elsewhere in England at the same time.

Discussions of the anthropology of religious conversion in Chapter Three identified the need to specify the structuring structures within which conversion seemed rational: practices that arose from the encounter between missionary and their audience. It is for that reason that we moved from the conventional archaeology of ritual – especially the cemetery – as a metaphor for understanding the spread of Christianity to the impact of literacy practices as a more realistic, if altogether more complicated strategy. By moving in this direction, we can begin to view the missionary encounter from the perspective of discursive practices for the whole population rather than the isolated activities of a clerical elite. What does this conceptual shift reveal about the impact of the clergy in Micheldever Hundred?

The precise chronology is difficult to establish, but there are limited grounds for arguing that the clergy had an impact on the working practices of the agricultural population from the first half of the eighth century. It is clear that the arrival of literate Christianity in Wessex at the end of the seventh century was not simply a matter of the elite and their retainers. Within one generation of 700AD, the whole landscape of rural Micheldever, including the agricultural population, had become

involved in an ongoing, if unresolved, engagement with the clergy. This engagement was materialised in strategies for surveillance and control that rose out of literacy practices, and was distributed comprehensively if unevenly. The clerical elite, by virtue of their monopoly of literacy, retained an unassailable advantage in the ensuing tension over the control of symbolic resources. This had the greatest direct impact on the political and economic elites that turned to the clergy for mechanisms to extend and maintain their privileged access to resources. The literacy practices that were produced by this encounter had an impact upon all that were drawn into the social relations of production or jurisdiction that reproduced social and economic hierarchies. Moreover, by creating a discourse on literacy, the clergy had the wherewithal to cast the remainder of the population into the role of illiterate, thus establishing for that remainder a relationship of dependency with the clergy that secured their continuing influence.

The conclusion that the clerical discourses of literacy practices were present in the countryside from perhaps as early as the middle eighth century is not, in itself, terribly surprising. It is largely in accordance with what a thoughtful reading of the historical sources would have us believe. Yet, as has been pointed out continually by numerous commentators, including this one, the historical sources are notoriously treacherous. Examining an area like the Micheldever Hundred for evidence of the impact of the clergy and literacy without recourse to historical sources provides an alternative insight into the phenomena they describe.

Of course, identifying the terms of the encounter is not the same as providing a concrete answer as to how the encounter was played out. Several points have to be made. Firstly, the fact of the evident clerical discourse is related to, but not evidence for conversion. Secondly, to portray the relationship between clergy and laity purely in terms of literacy would be reductive. Bureaucracy provides archaeological evidence of one of the many possible encounters, perhaps the only one that can be identified in the extant material record, but it would not have been the only encounter.

It would be quite contrary to the intentions of this thesis, to suppose that the development and reification of these literacy practices are coterminous with the “authentic conversion” of the rural population. It has been my intention to argue that archaeological and even conventional sociological practices are

incommensurate with question of personal revelation. While they cannot address questions of a religious nature in a precise way, they can provide necessary supporting detail, revealing and analysing the means by which religious sentiments are mediated, monitored and maintained in certain circumstances. In the case of the Micheldever Hundred, therefore, it would be facile to claim that the population “was converted at the start of the eighth century”. This cannot be proven by any of the tools available to the social sciences, even if the population were available for consultation on the issue. Nor can we realistically defer to a debased argument like “the process of conversion started in the late seventh or early eighth century”. For reasons explained previously, it is not satisfactory to have recourse to the language of historical process, since generalising accounts of historical process undervalue the key importance of agency, particularly in matters as discrete as belief. Thus, comments like “the process of religious conversion began at the start of the eighth century” are unhelpful. The conclusion to draw is considerably more subtle and precise than either of these formulations. Collectively, and individually, the population was brought into an ongoing engagement on the ownership and negotiation of material and symbolic resources, an engagement that encompassed the material conditions of living, the production of space and the reproduction of practice. This was materialised in the discursive practices of literacy, made real in bureaucratic surveillance. Situated within this discourse, and dominating it, were the interests and ambitions of a clerical elite that, by virtue of its monopoly over literacy practices, ensured that access to the symbolic resources of literacy were explicitly Christian and carefully guarded.

Thus, there are grounds for suggesting that, by the first half of the eighth century the clergy had fostered their own hegemony in the Micheldever Hundred. This extended to the entire population and impacted on many different types of social interaction. The precise date is provisional, but not unreasonable.

The point about hegemony reminds us that there is more to this than meets the eye. Hegemony can be understood in terms of those matter-of-fact taken-for-granted areas of the exercise of power that were so obvious as to remain invisible, and thus essentially beyond question (*inter alia* Comaroff and Comaroff 1992 6-33, especially 24-25). In that respect, the discourses of literacy practice are a classic example of the exercise of a form of authority so implicit as to be beyond question within the dialectics of culture and society.

Yet, it would be wrong to suppose that this was the only form of discourse available to the Medieval clergy, or even the only one used. It is clear from the historical sources that, at least in terms of pastoral aspiration, the clergy viewed it as their responsibility to spread the gospel among the agricultural population. Nor for that matter were these activities confined to the performance of ritual. There are repeated if problematic accounts of such activities taking place, which suggest that these encounters were not simply constrained in the formal drama of liturgy, such as Wilfrid's encounter with the fishermen of Selsey. These points remind us that the analysis presented above pertains only to that which can be demonstrated archaeologically and historically, stepping beyond the impasse of historical sources noted by Van Engen (1986). Other more explicit or perhaps more immediate elements of the encounter are now beyond reach. As we have seen, the missionary encounter may have many facets that are conceptual and abstract: facets that cannot be reconstructed, even with a wealth of documentation and surviving archaeology. Our analysis is therefore constrained by the decay of time in order to remain empirically valid.

The analysis of literacy practices, and their role in the production of the spaces of agricultural production is instructive for what it reveals about the relationship between the early Medieval clergy and existing structures of power, in particular the king. As has often been noted, the locus of identifiable missionary activity revealed in historical sources focused on the person of the king and his immediate retinue. Whether the impact of the clergy in the countryside was not worth reporting, or whether it was simply never undertaken is a moot point. It has long been pointed out, however, that the king and his retinue were necessary to the spread of Christianity. It has not been clear, however, whether the king received any material incentives additional to the spiritual ones that accrue from baptism. Vague, but unspecified theories of ritual elaboration and sanctification, or association with Roman glory can be found in the literature, but these fail to explain why these particular strategies were adopted in these particular circumstances. Ritual elaboration, sanctification and association with Rome were all available in a range of different ways to early Medieval monarchs, without recourse to baptism. Literacy, expressed in the form of bureaucratic surveillance, however, was the unique property of the clergy. Thus, an invitation to the clergy did not just give access to a new model of kingship, it provided the necessary

mechanisms for remodelling power relations, securing vast, otherwise unrealistic territories.

This brings us close to arguments presented in Chapter Three on the failure of conventional approaches to investigate the rationality of conversion within a specific context. Literacy evidently held any number of attractions for the early Medieval king. But the rationality of conversion must not be reduced to an exchange between political elites. As has been argued continually, the ineffable logic of literacy, deployed discursively by the clergy, offered coherent advantages to the greater mass of the population, refashioning them in the role of the illiterate. It is not stretching the point to suppose that their access to literacy conferred unique, learned superiority to the abstract knowledge they were able to produce.

These conclusions are not simply of relevance to the Micheldever Hundred, but have implications for the rest of the country. It is clear that there are specific conditions in the Micheldever Hundred, and in Hampshire more generally, which mean that the processes visible here may have existed, but may no longer be in evidence elsewhere in the country. We shall turn to these more fully once a second case study has been presented. A couple of salient features are worth considering. The ownership of literacy practices remained with the clergy for more than a millennium, and the symbolic language of education still draws heavily from its religious heritage. Thus, in all cases where literacy practices are evidenced in the early Middle Ages and beyond, we may draw a conclusion about their proximity to religious sentiment. Of course, by the time of the Norman Conquest the bureaucratic evaluation and monitoring of physical resources was so clearly equated with religious discourses that the association was almost trivial, and adds little to our understanding of the period. However, archaeologists of the earlier Middle Ages have not recognised the potential of literacy practices and bureaucracy to inform interpretations of the archaeological record. While the unique properties of the Micheldever Hundred mean that the particular empirical expression of these practices may not be repeated in the same way in other contexts, the principle that literacy practices inform and are in part created out of the material conditions of practice indicates that imaginative, contextually specific analyses of other locales may reveal similar patterns. Some of these other practices were suggested in the last section of chapter five. To that extent, the archaeology of

the breadth and penetratiojn of literacy and the clergy in all these other areas of the country is just waiting to be written.

Chapter 7

LITERACY AND THE CLERGY IN HAMWIC

Chapter Two of this thesis proposed that we abandon simplistic generalisations of cemetery studies and associated ritual as a means of understanding the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England. In Chapter Three, the complexity of the problem was realised and in Chapter Four an alternative insight was proposed and refined. A preliminary reconnaissance of that insight was presented in Chapter Five, with Chapter Six presenting a more sustained analysis in a clearly defined context. This chapter continues that sustained analysis, presenting a second detailed study of the specific geography of literacy practices by investigating the archaeology of the emporium at Hamwic. This presents a distinctive perspective on the discursive practices of literacy and by extension a distinctive outlook on the expansion of clerical influence in seventh- and eighth-century England. It will be argued that clerical influence pervaded the development of the market economy at Hamwic, an influence that was extended through various novel forms of surveillance situated within novel social institutions. The contextualised emergence of literacy practices will be used as a means of identifying and developing the analysis of the missionary encounter between clerical Christianity and indigenous populations.

Hamwic contextualises literacy practices in a very different setting from Micheldever. Not only are they distinct in historical and geographic senses, they also have quite distinct historiographies and archaeologies. In the last chapter, a region was investigated through extensive survey, in an area that has only recently come to the attention of archaeological scholarship. Micheldever has remained something of an economic and political backwater for several hundred years if not several millennia. This chapter involves a relatively limited area in the middle of what was once one of the world's busiest ports and which has been the subject of archaeological study since the time of Leland. The area is largely known through excavation and chance finds, which, as we shall see, have been published in exhaustive detail (though there is much more still to be published, and work continues apace). It is my goal to demonstrate that the tensions over symbolic resources implicit in the development of literacy practices are not the unique or peculiar property of clergy or a small coterie of nobility, but that they resonated in many different contexts such as coinage and the production of space. That the two

case studies share overlapping chronologies ensures that they are relevant to each other.

7.1 The Hamwic Case Study: an introduction

Many of the grounds proposed in support of the Micheldever study also pertain to the choice of Hamwic. As in the rest of Wessex, the spread of Christianity in Southern Hampshire remain obscure. This omission is partly because of the relative dearth of historical sources in comparison to better-known study areas such as Kent or Northumbria. Having investigated an upland rural area of this extensive and slowly emerging political landscape at Micheldever, it is logical therefore to turn to matters in the “urban” and “lowland” areas that were more fully integrated into the political, military *and religious* development of the kingdom. Such an analysis both informs and is informed by that previous case study. As we shall see, the issues raised at Micheldever will appear again. These provide a wider context and suggest that the phenomena reported are of more than local importance.

The political centre of Wessex at Winchester has also been the subject of continued excavation and analysis. Not only was Winchester the seat of the bishops of the area, but a strong literary tradition demonstrates the importance of the written word to that religious community. The purpose of this thesis, however, has not been to study great churches or religious communities, so much as the mechanisms by which the population were brought into them. In this respect, Winchester would make a poor case study. The other obvious centre of population in middle Saxon Wessex was ten miles south of Winchester on the coast at Southampton. The archaeology of Southampton has been almost entirely written in terms of social and economic practice; its history seems altogether more secular (e.g. Brisbane 1998, Hodges 1989b, Morton 1999). For that reason, and on account of the consistently high volume and high quality of the scholarship pertaining to it, I have chosen Southampton, or more correctly the seventh- and eighth-century settlement of *Hamwic* (pace Rumble 1980), for a second detailed case study on the archaeology of literacy. As shall become apparent, this will provide an innovative insight into the missionary encounter.

In comparison to the relative obscurity of early Medieval Micheldever, Hamwic is familiar territory for archaeologists and historians. The historical sources are

plentiful, ranging from early charters and hagiography through to some of the best-known English and European historical sources (Rumble 1980). The area has been subjected to continuous archaeological investigation since the nineteenth century (for fuller references see Morton 1992 4-15). These provide a general pattern of settlements in the vicinity of the modern town. Sitting on a peninsula between the rivers Itchen and Test, the modern town faces outwards across Southampton Water to the Isle of Wight, the Solent, and the English Channel beyond. Protected by the mass of the Isle of Wight, which is partly responsible for the port's famous double tide, the Southampton peninsula sits at the most sheltered point in a extensive natural harbour stretching from Portsmouth in the East to the New Forest in the West. The overall lie of the land slopes from the Thames Watershed north of Winchester to the south coast, where numerous rivers drain into the Solent. Many of these smaller rivers are navigable to some distance inland and are associated with small ports that may have been the foci of early Medieval settlements: the towns of Hamble and Portchester being cases in point. It would seem that the coastline and riverbanks have not changed significantly over the last 2000 years (Morton 1992 20, Stagg 1980)

Figure 7.1 Location map of Hamwic

The Southampton area has been the subject of numerous archaeological and historical studies. Significant post-war excavations, combined with the presence of a large research institution, have brought many leading figures in British archaeology into contact with the archaeology of the city. Among the significant published excavations are the excavations at Melbourne Street (Holdsworth 1980), at Six Dials (Andrews 1997), at Southampton Castle and old town (Platt *et al* 1975, Oxley 1986), and in the area of Hamwic (Morton 1992 also Addyman and Hill 1968, 1969). There are a variety of smaller reports that qualify, clarify and inform the findings of these larger monographs (*inter alia* Hinton 1977, Pallister 1976). These have given rise to numerous detailed analyses of particular features of the excavations, in particular studies of the small finds including non-ferrous metals, glass, pottery, coins and animal bone (*inter alia* Hinton 1996, Heyworth and Hunter 1998, Hodges 1981, Andrews 1988 and Bourdillon 1980). Such detailed analyses have lead to numerous synthetic works on the nature of the successive settlements, and in particular their role in the early Medieval economy (*inter alia* Burgess 1964, Harden 1978, Platt 1973, Hodges and Hobley 1988, Hodges 1991, Morton 1999).

Not surprisingly, the town figures prominently in textbooks on Anglo-Saxon archaeology and thematic works on towns and trade (e.g. Arnold 1997, Hinton, 1990, Ottaway 1992, Welch 1992, Hodges 1988, 1989a, 1989b, Anderton 1999).

The relative sequence of the settlement of Southampton is broadly agreed. Southampton has witnessed at least three significant relocations of the centre of populations, relocations which have facilitated the preservation of the archaeological evidence for these sequences. It is clear that the major Roman settlement in the area was situated on the east bank of the river Itchen, at Bitterne (Cotton and Gathercole 1958). By the eighth century, the major centre of population had moved a short distance down stream and crossed the river to the site of “Hamwih” or “Hamwic”. The later Medieval town, however, was a mile or so further west, on the other side of the peninsula, with a castle and docks on the river Test. This relocation left the Itchen bank settlements largely unoccupied, save for the church of St Mary Extra, and a number of small agricultural steadings. The later Medieval settlement remains the centre of modern town, which now encompasses all of the earlier settlements and much of the land on either side of both rivers, for some distance inland (Morton 1992 20-79).

Turning to the specifics of the archaeology of the middle Saxon settlement, the numerous studies and reports mentioned above have allowed a generalised picture to emerge. In general, the settlement is estimated to be in the region of 45 hectares or more. It consisted of two planned north-south gravel streets that ran more or less parallel, with a network of similar east-west streets connecting them and running down to the waterfront. The areas between streets were divided into plots of land bounded by walls and by fence lines into a systematic, if irregular, grid. Within this grid stood buildings which, though numerous, appear to be of consistent design and are thought to have been built of timber, clay and thatch. The town was demarcated to the south and west by a broad ditch that was large enough to be an obstacle without being substantial enough to be considered defensive. The largest single building in the town seems to have been the church on the site of the modern church of St Mary, which shared its yard with the largest of the town’s cemeteries. It is assumed that the southern portion of the town backed onto an area of uninhabited marsh shown on early mapping (Morton 1992 23). Unfortunately, despite its obvious importance, the church of St Mary’s Extra has not been the subject of a detailed archaeological analysis.

Some features of the archaeology of the town are striking when compared to other contemporary sites in England. There is almost unparalleled evidence for craft production and specialisation. The estimated population is out of proportion with any contemporary sites (though see Samson 1994). Finally, coins are distributed peculiarly around Hamwic. Not only is there evidence of bone working in the town, but that evidence indicates that the bone workers had an extensive and varied choice of materials and selected their raw materials not just by species and anatomy but by age and sex as well (Driver 1984). Estimates of the population of the town have tended to increase as excavation has expanded the size of the known settlement (Morton 1992 55). Figures in the region of 2-3,000 would make it among the largest centres of population in Britain since the late Roman period, but this may be on account of the lack of evidence in other places (Samson 1994). Excavations in Hamwic have also produced vast quantities of coinage, with numerous discrete finds of series H sceattas. Estimates of this coinage suggest that perhaps as many as 5 million Hamwic sceattas were minted, suggesting a cash economy on an unprecedented scale (Metcalf 1988). Even if these estimates of coinage are overestimated their peculiar distribution also raises questions. The sceattas appear only as discrete small-finds, not as large hoards of coins, and none have been identified outwith the confines of the town. This suggests that not only were there impressive mechanisms to produce this coinage, but that mechanisms were in place to control its circulation after production.

In addition to the peculiar features suggested by the archaeology of Hamwic, there are a number of apparent absences from the town for which we must account:

- despite the continued arguments about trade, the real quantities of imported goods remain small and the nature of the exports can only be assumed
- despite repeated assertions of the importance of royalty and centralised control in the creation of the town the royal centre or administrative core of the town have not been identified
- the relationship with the Roman camp at Bitterne remains unclear, as does the subsequent move to Southampton proper
- above all for the purposes of this thesis, Hamwic has remained the subject of economic speculation, largely without reference to

contemporary religious affairs. No links have been established between these two, apparently coincident but independent phenomena

Any Hamwic case study raises peculiar logistical problems. It cannot be pretended that the following review is comprehensive. Important issues have been deliberately or inadvertently glossed over, so that the broad direction of the chapter will not be overwhelmed by the particularities of the site. In order to explore the familiar topics of the archaeology of Hamwic and the themes proposed here, we shall investigate Hamwic twice over. We start with existing scholarship, presenting the now familiar work of Hase on the development of the parish structure in Hampshire, before looking at the wider and narrower economic perspectives of Hodges and his critics. Thereafter we shall return to the site, exploring it with the novel perspectives developed in Chapters Four and Five and sustained in Chapter Six.

7.2 Previous Work at Hamwic

7.2.1 Hase on St Mary's Extra

As with Micheldever, Hase has attempted to map the mother church of the Southampton (1975 124-181). Though he is considerably more successful in identifying the location of the mother church, he does not succeed in taking the discussion much farther. As noted at Micheldever, even the precise location of the mother church and the bounds of its *parochia* do not resolve the problems posed in Chapters Two and Three, where ritual activities – such as the archaeology of the cemetery – were questioned and the routine of daily practice proposed as an alternative.

Once again, Hase's work on the ecclesiastical history of Southampton fits into a broader analysis of the development of pastoral care in England and farther afield (Blair 1988a, 1988b, 1994, 1995 1996b, 1992, Blair and Sharpe 1992, Brooks 1982, Cambridge and Rollason 1995, Rollason 1994). Indeed, Hase discussed the development of parishes in Southern Hampshire with an eye to this wider picture at a conference in 1985 (Hase 1988).

Hase argues that the parish of St. Mary's, also known as St. Mary's Extra (i.e. extra mural) and known in an earlier incarnation as "St Peter and All Saints", was the earliest church of the Southampton region (Hase 1975: 124-181). The *parochia* of this mother church stretched from the Test at Nursling to the east bank of the

Itchen. The date for the foundation of this church is presented on the available archaeological evidence to the second quarter of the eighth century (i.e. 725-75), although the parochia may be earlier and the mother church may have been refounded at this date. The parochia of St Mary's Extra lay in four parts: the intramural city, with its chapels; the city fields west of the Itchen in the vicinity of the parish church; and two heathland areas on the opposite bank of the river.

According to Hase, the other major Medieval parish of the Southampton peninsula area was South Stoneham. This parish covered areas to the north of the Southampton peninsula on both banks of the Itchen. There was no real village in South Stoneham parish, but hamlets existed at Portswood, Swaythling, Allington, and probably at Bitterne, with further isolated farmsteads at the other places. As with St Mary's Extra, the eastern portions of the parish across Itchen were sparsely populated wood and heathland.

Hase brings order to a complicated eleventh-century pattern of tenure by invoking the perspective of surviving Anglo-Saxon charters. The post-Domesday estate at Bitterne was prefigured by a late Anglo-Saxon estate at Stoneham, which was a royal estate from before a charter of 990x992. This large estate included areas that were later hived off, a process that accounts for the proliferation of boundaries and confusion of jurisdictions. As well as this large tract of land at Stoneham/Bitterne other parcels of land in the vicinity were probably originally within a royal manor, a case developed by investigation of the curious Domesday account of Southampton. Various small parcels of land, if added to the successive alienations of Stoneham and Bitterne, give us an original area for a royal manor comprising the city parishes, St. Mary Extra parish, and Stoneham. This large royal estate, which had almost entirely disintegrated by the mid tenth century, is the key to Hase's understanding of the earlier history of the area. He argues that the administrative centre of this estate, Hamtun, was not located by the mother church at St. Mary's, but at Bitterne: on the opposite bank of the Itchen. This complicated argument is important, since it has an immediate bearing on the early history and development of the port at Hamwic. Hase makes sense of Hamwic's apparent lack of defence by combining it with the evident lack of a central place that could have served as a royal palace (Hase 1975: 147). The question arises, where was the estate centre which archaeology has failed to locate at Hamwic? The Burghal Hidage, read in the light of what we know about a royal estate at Bitterne, gives us

some clues as to the likely answer. The Burghal Hidage, describing conditions at the end of the ninth century, gives a list of the places defended against the Danes with a statement about the amount of land ascribed to the burh. The amount of land depended roughly on the size of the fortifications. Where the relationship can be checked it is about 1 hide of land for every four or five feet of fortification. Hase uses this relationship to investigate the fortifications of Southampton and comes to the conclusion that the figures only make sense if Bitterne, the old Roman fort on the opposite side of the river from Hamwic was the political and military hub of Anglo-Saxon Southampton.

This interpretation ought to be demonstrable by archaeological analyses. However, Bitterne was an early site for speculative slum construction in the nineteenth century, and no scientific archaeological excavations seem to have taken place. Even so, the split is consistent with the apparent confusion in place-names associated with Southampton (Rumble 1980). Moreover, Bitterne lies within the later estate and parish of Stoneham. Given the alluvial – that is relatively stoneless – soils of this estate, a less apposite name could hardly be contemplated. An alternative explanation may be that it describes not of soil but a stone-built or protected settlement. Finally, Hase's Bitterne/Hamtun thesis presents a more convincing account for the abandonment of the early *tun* in favour of the later Medieval one. The Bitterne defences would have served well against most land-based attacks: the arrival of sea-borne Danes would have made such defences redundant.

In summary, Hase argues that although Southampton had little signs of royal presence in Domesday Book, it had a large royal manor some two hundred years before. Hamwic was undefended, but was not the administrative centre of the royal estate. The estate centre probably stood on the other side of the Itchen at Bitterne. The essential facts are that the whole region formed an early unit, and that this unit was centred on the lower Itchen valley on *both* banks of the river.

The split between economic and political centres is significant when one considers in particular the relationship between these two places and the mother church that served the parochia. Following an intricate analysis Hase locates the mother church at the modern site of St Mary Extra. This identification is only possible if one accepts that the name of the church changed at least once. The

earliest charters refer to a church of "*St Peter and All the Saints*", although there was no known church of that name in later centuries.

Hase's thesis can be updated to take account of recent archaeological research. The publication of archaeological excavations in Hamwic have brought to light the possible existence of another chapel, consistent in date with the Middle Saxon settlement, some 300 metres east of St Mary Extra's churchyard at the site labelled SOU13 (Morton 1992: 121-141). This possible chapel and cemetery, the most easterly site in Hamwic to produce positive results, provides a note of caution to the suggestion that St Mary's Extra must have been renamed. It is possible that, instead of being renamed, the lost name — St Peter and all the Saints — was associated with this other, previously unidentified site.

The identification of a church at SOU13 is ambiguous, based on an association between the building and an orderly cemetery that surrounded it. Post Medieval activities on the site mean that the precise features of the building are not clear. There is nothing but the most generic dating evidence associated either with it or with the graves in the cemetery, so the relationship between the two churches and the relationship between the church and cemetery can only be surmised. It seems reasonable to suppose that the building came first and the graves later, an interpretation largely supported by site matrices (Morton 1992 130-1). Just to confuse matters more, it would seem that the cemetery fell out of use and was overlaid by a gravel path, part of the wide road network that elsewhere seems to have been laid down at an early date (Cottrell 1980). A number of explanations are possible. On one hand, it is possible that the gravel of the path was redeposited through plough action. Otherwise there must have been a gap between the cemetery falling out of use and the road being built, which means a longer gap between the building and the road. This would push the date for the cemetery and church back by several generations before 700, in which case it would be hard to maintain that the building was indeed a church, since this would require a reinterpretation of the wider historical framework.

There is no efficient reconciliation of this divergent dating evidence. The only satisfactory reconciliation is to propose that, if the structure at SOU13 were a church, it would have to be a subsidiary chapel or early incarnation of St Mary Extra in some form. This would, to some extent, protect Hase's claims on the

superiority of St Mary Extra as the early mother church of the area, while not challenging the established framework of mortuary practices in the archaeology of the earlier half of the middle Saxon period.

The date of foundation of St Mary's is important to our understanding of its relationship to the port. On archaeological evidence, Hamwic was founded between 680 and 700. The switch to a new site began in about 900 or a little later. The church must, therefore, have been founded between these two dates. Hase demonstrates that a late date is untenable on archaeological grounds, arguing that the foundation of the church was simultaneous with the foundation of the port. This date is happily coincident with the establishment of other mother churches in Wessex (Hase 1994).

The data available to Hase when he wrote his thesis suggested that there were five early cemeteries outside the churchyard area of St. Mary's. All of these were relatively small and all were in the northern half of the town. Hase makes the almost universal interpretative error of ascribing these to pagans, while ascribing later burials with East-West oriented graves, without grave-goods, to Christians. Significantly all seem to have gone out of use early in the town's history; one having a later house built on top of a number of burials, the site of another being badly damaged by a number of eighth- and ninth-century cesspits. The likely date for the functioning of these cemeteries is therefore from the foundation of the town to about 730-750. Probably a few years elapsed between the closing of the burial areas and the cesspits in the later part of the eighth century. In about 730 or later, something happened that resulted in their closure, allowing the urban area to extend across its site. The obvious reason for the closure of this cemetery in the northern part of the town would be the opening of St Mary's and its graveyard near the harbour.

The pattern of abandonment and redevelopment is consistent, at least superficially, with the pattern we have already seen at SOU13. Once again the evidence is not strong, nor can we argue that the economic expansion of the town is to blame since the southerly site was right in the heart of what has been taken to be the economic centre of the town. It does, however, reinforce the view that the founding and expansion of Hamwic took little account of the existence of cemeteries, perhaps reinforcing the conclusions drawn earlier about the

complicated relationship between the early Medieval clergy and the disposal of human remains discussed in Chapter Two. Regardless of these complications, Hase proposes a date somewhere in the second quarter of the eighth century for the foundation of St. Mary's. Hase proposes the second quarter of the eighth century as the most likely date for the beginning of the use of St. Mary's. The dates 725-750 seem the most reasonable for the completion of the actual building, 680-725 the most reasonable for the first foundation.

Hase omits the complexity discussed earlier in this thesis about religious conversion and burial evidence. His position assumes a timeless ritual uniformity that was never and has never been a reality in practice. To that end discussions on the chronology of the foundation of St. Mary's, based on the chronology of local cemeteries, are problematic. The significant point is that St. Mary's Extra was an ancient church. As with the other ancient churches of this area, its *parochia* can be reconstructed, to some extent. This can be done more successfully than in Micheldever, where the influence of large monastic and episcopal estates have complicated the situation irreparably. St Mary's is very similar to the other known mother churches of Hampshire (Hase 1994).

The proposed early date of St Mary's Extra – a claim neither supported nor denied by archaeological evidence – and its probable rôle in the expansion of Christianity, only take us to a number of derivative and indifferent conclusions. We might assume, on the basis of St Mary's Extra's early age, that the population was exposed to Christianity at an equally early date. The occupation of the town would have lead to a more or less fixed contact for the residents, thus perhaps facilitating their own conversion. The extensive trade contacts of the town would have made it a suitable location from which clergy may have both entered the country from overseas and reached into the agricultural hinterland. Indeed, one expects that the hinterland population would come to the missionaries from time to time. These are relevant conclusions, but leave us uninformed as to the countours of the missionary encounter we wish to analyse. Even though the situation is much clearer than the Micheldever study presented earlier, the same impasse is manifest. As we have seen, simplistic assumptions about conversion and religious practices are untenable and archaeological analysis based on them are problematic. To repeat the point made previously, the mere identification of an early mother church

or parochia is not sufficient evidence upon which to base an archaeology of the impact of the clergy.

As with Micheldever, the resolution of this impasse is implicit in the materials that Hase uses to construct his own argument. The definition and construction of spaces, and the regulation of certain types of practice within these spaces through the mechanisms of literacy, reveal something of the missionary encounter that is neglected or rendered invisible by other approaches. As with Micheldever, the analysis of these practices is a fruitful exercise in the archaeology of Hamwic, but can be more thoroughly and thoughtfully explored when viewed in context with existing socio-economic accounts of middle Saxon Southampton.

7.2.2 Hodges on Emporia

If there is an historical topic more controversial or as thoroughly investigated as the development of Medieval tenurial relations discussed at Micheldever, it is the nature and development of the Medieval market economy. As with tenurial relations different orthodoxies have held sway at different times, but none have resolved the complexities of the issues satisfactorily, nor have they addressed fully the claims of previous scholarship. This is not the place to attempt a comprehensive historiography of the early Medieval economy, nor should the conclusions that follow be read within any particular frame of reference. Links exist between the economic superstructures proposed by the likes of Gibbon, Dopsch, Pirenne or Bolin and the religious phenomena examined here. In each case, the economic fluctuations described were co-terminous with periods of continued missionary activity, so any account that does not mention the religious context is at best incomplete. Nonetheless, religious phenomena are conceived of as external or coincidental to economic activities and the phenomena of literacy have gone without question. This is remarkable since there is an evident, if crude correlation between economic activity and literacy – though whether this is because of the relative survival of historical sources in literate cultures or because of a deep structural link between the two is a moot point. Numerous opportunities exist to shed light on the period by exploiting the complicated relationship between literacy and economics. In so doing, it is necessary to recognise the relative importance of the clergy as historical agents of literacy in each of these contexts.

In one of the most frequently quoted analyses of Middle and Later Saxon economics, Richard Hodges has paid particular attention to the function of Hamwic

as an emporium within a pan-European network of trade and exchange (*inter alia* Hodges 1988, 1989a). Responding to the “New Archaeology”, and quite explicitly bringing many of its theoretical predilections to the otherwise impoverished “culture history” of Medieval archaeology, *Dark Age Economics* and its companion studies sought to answer old questions not so much with new evidence, so much as renewed vigour. The single biggest gap in Hodges's analysis is culture, either as a medium of symbolic exchange or as a lived experience. These oversights are felt most keenly in the cursory mentions made of religious institutions that seem to exist simply to provide an ontological cover for the swindle of power politics. Christianity is hardly mentioned, even though religious exchanges were evidently present in many of the contexts discussed. It is surprising that Hodges overlooks the rôle of literacy within economics, because thinking contemporary with his book was consistent with his argument. Jack Goody's work on literacy in the market place (Goody 1986) and Michael Clanchy's review of literacy in state formation (Clanchy 1993) would both have supported Hodges's claims on the origins of towns and trade.

Clanchy argued that the earliest bureaucratic practices in England can be recognised in the later Anglo-Saxon period and result from the political and military crises of Alfred's reign and those of his successors (Clanchy 1993). It is only since the publication of “Dark Age Economics” that this view has been challenged (Kelly 1990, Lowe 1998). This perspective could have been used by Hodges to support his contention that the ninth century witnessed significant developments in the modern political state. Hodges looked for evidence of the “expensive levels of organisation” that states require, such as bureaucracies to levy taxation (Hodges 1989a 186). He laments the failure of Carolingian administrators to develop these, a comment that might otherwise prefigure a critique of Charlemagne's limited bureaucracy. The “primary states” of western Europe only came into existence in response to that failure (Hodges 1989 188-9). “Secondary states”, like Anglo-Saxon England, only developed thereafter. Clanchy's view might have augmented his interpretation. This missed opportunity is entirely in keeping with Hodges's preference for archaeological theory over documentary sources, a preference that leads to a critical failure to engage with relevant historical evidence.

Hodges's neglect of literacy is further emphasised when one considers contemporary general theories of literacy. The work of Jack Goody and Walter Ong was introduced in Chapter Four (Ong 1992, Goody 1977, 1986, Goody and Watt 1968), where it was noted that they proposed similarly expansive general theories of literacy. Goody's work in particular would have been relevant to Hodges insofar as he describes the impact of literacy as an integral development to the economy, with particular reference to long-distance exchange (Goody 1986 45-86). Goody argued that literacy was at least an inevitable consequence of trade, if not a necessary precondition. The development of one contextualised and accounted for the other. One could imagine that such an argument would strengthen Hodges's perspective on the archaeology of the early Medieval economy. The growth of literacy, it might be argued, was concomitant with and in part dependent upon the expansion of trade. Thus, not only might the ninth- and tenth-century florescence of literacy be evidence for the emergence of early states, so it would cap the argument that this period saw the decisive shift from primitive forms of individuated social exchange to market-led generic trade.

Hodges's neglect of literacy has to be evaluated. Two hypotheses are possible. Firstly, he may not have recognised the potential of literacy to provide these conceptual mainstays. Alternatively, he may have decided to exclude literacy from his analysis quite deliberately. The former can be ruled out at first glance, since he mentions the importance of literacy at various points (e.g. 1989a 184). Indeed, the relationship between historical sources, the *locus classicus* of early Medieval literacy, and the archaeological record as an objective response to social stress is one of the dominant themes of the book. So, for example, he dismisses the value of documentary sources and literacy, emphasising the revolutionary potential of anthropological analogy and prehistoric theory-building as a more useful tool than conventional history.

The weakness is the consistently held view ... that because a few monks expressed their thoughts on parchment these early state societies were different from most others (for example the Mesopotamian and Mesoamerican states) (Hodges 1989 184).

This quotation is not simply revealing insofar as it demonstrates that Hodges had indeed considered the rôle of literacy in these contexts, but for what it reveals about his own partial reading of the anthropological literature. His suggestion that literacy is "only one element of cultural behaviour and [is] often determined by

socio-economic circumstances” (Hodges 1989 195) suggests that he does not, in fact, enjoy a comprehensive overview of the literature of state-formation in the Mesopotamian world. As we have seen, anthropologists have drawn on these archaeological contexts, relating literacy to the economic and political institutions of statehood. It is ironic that such a discrepancy should arise at this point where Hodges is himself most critical of historians and others who misappropriate or misunderstand anthropological research. The criticism he offers is valid, but as far as literacy is concerned it is true of his own research too.

7.3 Re-constructing Hamwic

Analyses of super-structural economics such as those proposed by Hodges (1988, 1989a, 1989b) hardly lend themselves to the identification of local practices or the lived experience of populations, let alone individuals. To adopt these vast scales of time and geography for the archaeology of archaeology of the breadth and penetration of literacy and the clergy would simply be to repeat the failings identified in Chapters Two and Three. Yet, with only one brief exemplary exception (Hinton 1996 102-104), the archaeological evidence of Hamwic has not been synthesised at a “human” scale. As with Micheldever there is an absence at the centre of the archaeology of Hamwic, caused not by a failure of theoretical inspiration so much as by the iron grip of new archaeology, of systems theory and the inescapable deficiencies of archaeological practice. This absence is characterised by the failure to ask simple questions of what life would have been like for the inhabitants of Hamwic. Given that the structures identified are themselves the product of human action, and given that Hamwic is quoted as the type site of economic activity, analysis at a human scale should not only reveal something of the nature of life in seventh- and eighth-century Hamwic, it should also provide material with which to investigate how these structures have themselves been structured.

In this section we shall review the archaeology of Hamwic. It will become clear that the interpretation of Hamwic as a centre of economic activity derives in part from the problems of contextualising a disarticulated and occasionally chaotic archaeological record. This difficulty means that alternative contexts for interpretation have been sought. Thus, the multitude of small finds make more sense at a grand continental scale than at a precise, localised one. Detailed comparanda from sites elsewhere in Europe are used, leading us effortlessly and

perhaps unknowingly into an overbearing economic logic that emasculates other significant research agenda, among them the archaeology of religion. It is an unlikely, but inevitable conclusion that the archaeology of Hamwic is better suited to the construction of high-level economic superstructures than the reconstruction of its own properties and peculiarities. The situation is not irredeemable. Four elements of the archaeological record can be used to reconstruct daily life at Hamwic. These indicate that structures of surveillance were implicit in the material conditions of daily life, regulating resources of space and physical property. Thus, the ditch, the street plan, the coinage and evidence from the site at Six Dials can be combined to investigate life at Hamwic without recourse to grand economic theories.

Although Hamwic seems like familiar territory for archaeological researchers, no more than 1 or 2 percent of the total area of the town has been examined. Not only are there large gaps in our knowledge, the many decades of research that it has taken to establish this little knowledge conspire to ensure that many of the fragments cannot be fitted together. Morton makes the point clearly when he laments the failings of the archaeological record that he was charged with synthesising (Morton 1992). Even the areas that supposedly contain data prove to be empty vessels:

The most serious gaps occur for SOUs 32, 34, 38 and 39. In the case of 32, short notes were made in probably 6 exercise books. Only one can now be found. In the case of SOU 34, any detailed notes that may have been kept have not been seen ... In the case of SOUs 38 and 39, short notes were probably written on the drawings, but these drawings are lost. Nor is every context described in the books that have survived (Morton 1992 16).

So, even before considering more complicated issues, it is clear that the archaeology of Hamwic is problematic. For example, rapid Victorian industrialisation of Southampton gave rise to many early records. So, a number of coins were found north west of St Mary Extra's church yard in 1825 (Morton 1992 4), while energetic Victorians like George Atherley, John Rushworth and Edmund Kell recorded, collected and published a variety of excavations and chance finds in and around the church. What can be made of these early accounts of unprovenanced coins? One of the important features of Hamwic is the distribution

and apparent regulation of coinage. If these coins came from unrecorded hoards, or from outwith the established boundaries of the town, then any arguments based on the nature and deposition of the Hamwic sceattas are undermined. Coins are only the most visible evidence. It is unlikely that ephemeral or even substantial features would have been recorded let alone reported by Victorian scholars. It is easy to be critical of this generation of Victorian amateurs, but such criticisms are true of relatively recent excavations too. Until the 1960's, excavators worked under an amateur regime, sometimes without the specialist local knowledge and familiarity that takes many years to establish. So, for example, the bone collection from Hamwic has only (relatively) recently been excavated with anything like the attention that modern zoo-archaeological analysis require. This makes comparison between assemblages problematic. So, even in areas "well" recorded, we cannot be sure that they have been recorded even-handedly or exhaustively. Some of the supposedly familiar parts of the town are in fact quite unfamiliar.

Another problem preventing a comprehensive overview of the whole site has been the difficulty in reconciling between narrow trenches. This is exacerbated on sites that are excavated at different times, with different staff, and under different conditions. This point can be demonstrated with the site of SOU 13, already mentioned, by virtue of its complicated relationship to SOU 4 and SOU 10 (Cottrell 1980, Morton 1992 101-104, 121-141). To start with, SOU 13 was excavated in three trenches, labelled A, B and C. Trench B, which was in fact two small trenches, revealed nothing of any merit, while A and C both produced evidence of human burials and at least one structure. This structure, which is most visible in the northern portion of the much larger trench C, may be related to a similar structure which shows up immediately adjacent in trench A. At the narrowest point these two trenches were separated by a 1-metre baulk. However, the recognition of the structure as a building depends on the connection between features 11, in trench A, and feature 139 in trench C (Morton 1992 122-124). Given the evidence, the interpretation does not seem unreasonable, but given that the "south-west sector of the trench was poorly recorded" (Morton 1992 129), and the fact that feature 11, the northerly foundation trench, was perhaps twice as thick as the southerly trenches, we can see that there is some difficulty in reconciling these feature.

Such criticisms seem niggardly, but the difficulties of hypothesising continuous contexts between discontinuous interventions are amplified with distance and with time. Thus, it is much more difficult to reconstruct the relationship between the gravel deposits of the road way identified at SOU 13, and similar deposits at nearby sites, such as SOU 10 and SOU 4 (Cottrell 1980, Morton 1992 101-104). The assumption that the three sites were connected by a single (if multi-period) road network is entirely plausible, but the phasing between the sites is convoluted. This is a singularly important question for the development of the town, since, as we shall see, the road network helps us answer questions about the nature of centralised authority in the settlement. In short, the very visible gaps in our understanding of the site do not just reveal incomplete knowledge: they lessen the utility of those small areas that are known.

At the heart of these problems, of course is the fact that Hamwic is only partially known. It is not simply the case that the total excavated area is a tiny fraction of the whole, but that the sample which is available for study is distributed unevenly across the whole settlement. Moreover, it has been created according to the needs of development and planning as much as by well-defined research agenda. There are four areas that are partly or wholly unknown: the area of the proposed waterfront; the northern portion of the town; the area to the south of the town beyond the boundary ditch; and the area of Bitterne/Stoneham manor. These include some of the most important features of Hamwic, so the dearth of evidence is more than inconvenient. It prevents a thorough understanding of Hamwic as a single functioning entity.

Each of these areas is important, but given what Hase proposed (1974 124-181), the area round Bitterne is surely the most significant. There have been a number of excavations in and around the Roman fort, revealing very little in the way of middle Saxon archaeology but given that much of this work was in the last century, this is hardly surprising (though see Cotton and Gathercole 1958). Pagan reports nineteenth-century finds in the Bitterne area, including a number of type H sceattas (Pagan 1988 61-2). If the relatively small number of sceattas from the nineteenth century is indeed connected to the failure of nineteenth-century scholarship to recognise or record the sceattas, then the 2 or 3 reported by Pagan might well have been increased to 20 or 30 actual or disregarded finds (Metcalf 1988 22). Given

Hase's proposition that Bitterne was an integral part of the parochia of St Mary's, and the most likely location for a royal manor, this lack of information is critical.

The problems do not end with extrapolation from small keyhole excavations to larger areas. The excavated areas reveal significant problems of survival. Any analysis of Hamwic has to acknowledge the serious post-depositional disturbance. Southampton was once the busiest port in the world, with extensive urban sprawl and intensive local development. The soil has not only been disturbed to make way for new buildings, large numbers of Victorian slums were built then pulled down to make way for modern ones, but the brick-earth soil has itself been exploited industrially. The Six Dials site is almost unique in the quality of its preservation of shallow features (Andrews 1997). Elsewhere only the deepest features survive, with only the foundations of larger structures, and deep pits recoverable. Few floor surfaces survive. Thus, there was little possibility of observing shallow stake holes, road surfaces, or fence lines that might facilitate a more detailed picture of Hamwic. Significant modern disturbance means that even those sites that have been investigated may tell us more about modern economics than early Medieval practice.

Why then is Hamwic so prominent in the literature? The answer can be found in Hamwic's numerous small finds. While almost all of the larger structures are either incomprehensible or destroyed, many thousands of discrete small finds have nonetheless been unearthed. Given that many of the excavations are small, the ability to describe larger structures is severely limited. The ability to describe small finds, however, is not hampered. Indeed, it may be said that the small finds represent the only part of Hamwic that can really be understood. Small finds create their own interpretative contexts, in which webs of comparison can be established without reference to the stratigraphic contexts from which they were excavated. So, the coins can be studied for their comparative similarities with and differences from other coins from other areas, without reference to archaeological strata. This comparative context of small finds analysis is as extensive or as limited as the intellectual resources available will allow.

Not surprisingly therefore the coins, though their contexts of discovery and retrieval may be recorded, are often deeply problematic and invite the creation of a much larger contextual arena, which includes the Islamic world and in particular

the Rhineland, East Kent and the Frankish ports of the Seine valley (Metcalf 1988 17-59). We may not know which context coin number 102 came from, but we do know that is connected with Kent, because it fits into type series “M” (Metcalf 1988: 48). We may not know exactly where in Hamwic an imitative solidus of Louis the Pious was found (Metcalf 1988 54-55) but we can look at numerous other examples of similar and related coins from the rest of the British Isles (Pagan 1988 71-72). Handled in this way, it is hardly surprising that Hamwic has been regarded as a port and place of production first and foremost. The small finds, lacking any other reliable framework, beg to be interpreted in this way. By taking finds out of their original contexts, economy is all.

Coins have been taken as an example, but are not unique. Glass, pottery, metalwork and animal bones have each contributed to an archaeology that is suffused with the economic language of production, exchange, consumption and surplus. Thus, in commenting on the glass Heyworth and Hunter build an analytical framework which extends from San Vincenzo al Volturno in the south, to Dunmisk in the west, including areas in the Norwegian Arctic, and the former USSR (Heyworth and Hunter 1998 3, 59). Such a wide geographic context invites speculation on long-distance exchange. As well as the trade cycle, the potential evidence of glass manufacture and processing is thoroughly examined. In this way, the glass is literally taken out of its original context and placed in a much more robust analytical material context that is saturated with economic overtones. The pottery is handled in the same way: Hodges has noted the proliferation in Hamwic of pottery from Northern France and has proposed a possible locus for production (Hodges 1991). This production centre, at La Londe, near Rouen, confirms another element in the economic pattern established for cross-channel trade and Northern European trade more generally. Sherds of Mayen ware, Tating ware, Badorf ware and Beauvais ware all feature, while the methods of production are studied in some depth (Timby 1988). Questions of trade, consumption and production permeate the discussion. Economic conclusions are inevitable.

The same is largely true of Hinton’s analysis of the Hamwic metalwork (Hinton 1996). Again, we may not know much about the original contexts of many of the finds, and even where they are well known, it may be difficult to formulate complex hypotheses on them. But, we may say something about their composition, or slot the finds into a much wider comparandum. Hinton offers some welcome

words of context where he attempts to speak of the social life represented in the finds. Arguing that the paucity of expensive metalwork in Hamwic is revealing in terms of social liminality, gender and ethnicity, he investigates the evidence at a scale close to the scale of analysis proposed above for the study of missionary work (Hinton 1996 102-4). Even so, the volume is suffused with economic concerns – an economic logic is the inevitable conclusion.

So, while the archaeology of the larger features of Hamwic has run into obstacles, the archaeology of the smaller finds is extensive and well understood. These smaller finds, lifted from their original, poorly understood archaeological contexts can be established in a very different contexts of production, exchange and consumption. This more secure context disregards the lived experience that these finds created and which created them. The routine drama of life is supplanted by a macro-economic logic of production, consumption and exchange. Of course, this substitution is not the result of an interpretative conspiracy, so much as the product of archaeological method in the context of planning-control archaeology in a built up area. Hamwic has been studied from an economic perspective, for that is the only one readily accessible.

It is important to stress that these comments are not a criticism of the archaeologists mentioned above, or their conclusions. Quite the opposite is intended. It is important to know about production and exchange in Hamwic. Nor should they be taken as a criticism of the units involved in these projects. Much of the work was undertaken under difficult circumstances, often un-funded, in conditions not of the excavator's choosing. These comments are more accurately read as a commentary on the practical history of late twentieth-century archaeology in the UK, especially in urban areas.

The purpose and conclusion of this long and depressing critique of the archaeology of Hamwic is to suggest that we really know very little of life in the town in the seventh, eighth or ninth centuries. Archaeology cannot identify particular working or craft areas in the town: but that cannot be taken to mean that such did not exist. For such an important port, it seems odd that we do not know where the boats landed. For such an important market, it seems odd that we cannot say where goods were exchanged. Hamwic, we can only conclude, was an industrial centre without an industrial area, a centre of population with no

residential zone, an administrative centre without administrators. What hope is there, then, of reconstructing life in such a hollow place? Only four elements of the town really survive this assault. The first three are features of the town in general: the fact that the town was enclosed, that it had a street plan, and that coins (probably) minted there were distributed peculiarly. The fourth element upon which a sustainable argument can be constructed is the only large area excavation site in the town: the Six Dials site (Andrews 1997).

It is generally agreed that the internal space of Hamwic was clearly defined. The trench line of ditch has been encountered at various points on the western side of the town in excavated and surveyed features. Thus, at site SOU 169, a deep ditch was encountered in two trenches about 40m apart (Andrews 1997 22-30). At one point in the southerly trench, excavated features suggest that the ditch may have been bridged. A ditch, with very similar characteristics was also observed at SOU 89, some 250m south of the excavated ditch at SOU 169. In addition, geophysical survey farther south still produced anomalies consistent with a ditch or boundary (both in Morton 1992 30-31). This western boundary may have continued southwards turning through 90° to join a smaller southern ditch detected in excavations at the south-western part of the town (also Morton 1992 31).

Any attempt to populate Hamwic must begin with the ditch. A number of features are worth considering. Firstly, excavations on the eastern side, that is the town side, of the ditch reveal an intensive pattern of middle Saxon activity, including roads and buildings. In contrast, excavations to the west have revealed only the most ephemeral deposits, and little activity (Morton 1992 30-31). It is conceivable that this is simply a matter of preservation and the location of trenches. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that the ditch was not just a physical barrier, but that it also marked the extent of the town. Secondly, the ditch does not seem to have been accompanied by a parallel bank, suggesting that the purpose of the ditch was not primarily defensive. People entering or leaving the defined space of Hamwic presumably could only do so with the appropriate investment in time and energy to cross the ditch, or more likely through a supervised gateway. Thirdly, after a length of time, long enough for various natural deposits to erode into the bottom and sides of the ditch, the ditch was filled (Andrews 1997 22-30). The disappearance of the ditch did not provoke a westward migration of settlement. The boundary seems to have survived longer than the ditch itself. Hamwic was a

bounded entity, and must have been recognisable as such in the middle Saxon period. There was a marked distinction between outside and inside this entity, and a clearly described boundary constraining movement between the two.

The most extensive recurring feature of Hamwic is its metalled streets. There have been various attempts to clarify the street map. Gravel surfaces, identified as streets have been examined at almost 40 different parts of the town, of which a number were long stretches (*inter alia* Morton 1992 32-40, Andrews 1997 31-45). Such surfaces need not of course warrant the term street: some may be no more than short alleyways or open areas. Even so, Morton has proposed that at least 10 major thoroughfares can be identified, the majority running east to west, with two longer routes running north to south along the whole length of the town. It is reasonable to suppose that others are yet to be identified, or have eluded identification through post-depositional disturbance. This may be a particular problem in areas to the north east of the town, which have not been thoroughly examined.

Any account of Hamwic at the level of lived experience must take account of these features, both individually and collectively. Firstly, the streets did not happen by accident. They may have been established in one planned entity, or developed piecemeal. The layout is not exactly regular, and none are exactly parallel, which would argue against a formal layout at one time using surveying equipment. Nonetheless, there is sufficient coherence in the whole to warrant the proposition that all were laid out with some attention to detail. Even if they were not planned and laid out by one authority in one action, it is at least clear that the roads were continually maintained because surfaces were re-metalled, routes respected by subsequent buildings and kept clear of rubbish. So, the roads betray an organised investment in infrastructure. It seems reasonable to suppose that this investment was organised by royal or similar – perhaps clerical - authority. The identification of that authority as clerical or secular will be problematic, and perhaps anachronistic. So, not only did Hamwic have roads, it had some corporate body that facilitated their maintenance. Secondly, the provision of paths through the town means that movement in and round the town was constrained. As well as providing mechanisms for moving from one point to another the roads also deprecated or rendered impossible movement in alternative directions. The streets when seen in context with fence lines and walls, mean that certain forms of

movement and behaviour became dissonant – jumping over walls or cutting corner – while other imposed forms seemed natural. Thus, Hamwic was a controlled space within as well as being separated from the outside. Thirdly, although the road network is not known in full, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that certain points in the town were able to develop peculiar valences by virtue of their position on the street plan. The most obvious of these is the location of St Mary's Extra: situated at the junction of the main north south roads and the main east-west road. It is hard to argue that this was not a central point. Other less obvious nuances were also possible. Those areas out of sight or disconnected from the main thoroughfares may have been able to escape observation or surveillance, creating the conditions in which space could be constructed differently. In short, therefore, the streets are an important element in the reconstruction of lived experience in and around Hamwic, facilitating the differentiation and construction of space, and imposing an order for better or worse.

The sense of order and surveillance in the archaeology of Hamwic can be extended to the small finds, in particular the coins. Few these have been found anywhere else than in Hamwic: even finds in Southern Hampshire are rare though they do exist. Not only are they geographically distinct, they appear in huge numbers in Hamwic itself. Stray finds accounted for 127 sceattas from the 1-2 % excavated area of the town in 1988 (Metcalf 1988 17). Scaling this up to the rest of the town, perhaps as many as 5,000 coins of one denomination or another were lost in Hamwic in the early Middle Ages (Metcalf 1988 17). Although Metcalf considers this a “conservative estimate”, it is still a large number, suggesting a rapid turnover of cash within the town. Study of the minting techniques has led Metcalf to propose that perhaps as many as five million coins were minted in Hamwic, many of which may have been re-minted imported coins. These estimates, even if they are wrong by an order of magnitude, imply a huge amount of cash in the local economy. Coinage was prevalent in Hamwic.

It would be easy, if a little extraneous to pursue this with a long discussion on the possibility of a cash economy or the number of transactions, or local balance of payments. Each of these would, in some respects, tell us about life in Hamwic even at the scale of analysis proposed here. They must be borne in mind, providing another insight into the conditions of daily life. Thus, for example, such a large number of coins suggests that most of the population, visiting and resident, would

have been familiar with their use and been able to make the necessary equivalences between goods or services on one hand and an amount of money on the other. It also introduces the prospect of numeracy as a necessary pre-condition of engagement in the economy. The point to emphasise, however, is the rôle that coinage played in the regulation of life in the town. Not only were the coins produced *en masse* by an appropriate authority, they were controlled or managed in such a way as to prevent or render impractical their movement beyond the boundary ditch. Moreover, the apparent lack of hoards suggests either that people were not encouraged to collect large amounts of coins, or if they did they didn't bury them in the ground. Furthermore, the coinage itself was a medium of communication; not only did the coins bear the imprint of the dies, they also present a pervasive message. The authority that minted the coins thus intervened in all transactions, by providing an appropriate medium and guarantee of extrinsic and intrinsic value.

The coins of Hamwic speak about some form of civic authority. They confirm and extend the interpretation of the controlled and devised spaces of Hamwic's streets and boundaries. It is reasonable to suppose that the same body that maintained the roads also maintained the currency. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the various strategies for surveillance represented in and reproduced by the material conditions of life were not deployed by the same body.

The litany of problems with Hamwic emphasised the lack of consistent contexts and stratigraphy. It is hard to administer strict stratigraphic control when one context may be distributed across half a dozen trenches excavated haphazardly over a period of forty years. However, one particular excavation gives us a flavour, if not of the archaeology of the town, at least of the quality of deposits that might otherwise have been discovered. The Six Dials site, in north west of Hamwic was excavated more or less systematically over a nine-year period. This area, by far the largest single excavated area, covered an area of perhaps 5,000m², and has been published in a single volume (Andrews 1997). It would be wrong to extrapolate too eagerly from Six Dials to the rest of the town supposing that the town was homogeneous. Taken on its own, Six Dials only reveals something of one corner of Hamwic.

Six Dials reveals a consistent pattern of buildings fronting onto streets, with plots occasionally separated by alleyways, and occasionally backing into each other (Andrews 1997 46-9). The pattern of boundaries, apparently defined by series of fences or walls built into post holes or stake holes, did not divide the area into equally apportioned units. There was some evidence of units amalgamating, which would have upset such a pattern in any case, but it would seem that those situated on the north-south street were larger than those located on the narrower and shorter east-west street. That said, the boundaries on the east-west street appear to be laid out with more concern for the street line, all running broadly perpendicular to the slightly crooked line of the street. To sum up in the words of the excavator:

...although there was no strict regularity in the layout and size of the postulated properties, there was a degree of orderliness apparent from an early date, particularly in the east-west divisions, which might lead one to suspect some element of control in the arrangement (Andrews 1997 48).

As the preceding paragraphs will have indicated, it is not always wise to extrapolate from one area to the rest of the town. Nonetheless, a number of tentative conclusions may be drawn. It would be tempting to suppose that this degree of orderliness was replicated across the whole 45 hectares of the town. This need not be the case. However, it is clear that there was a body capable of dividing up space where required. Though this does not mean that the whole town was apportioned in this way, it does have implications for those living in the town more generally. The distribution of space was, at least in a general sense, within the remit of a centralised agency or individual. Secondly, the careful maintenance of property, by the establishment of these fence-lines and walls, is also revealing in so far as it suggests a particular concern with differentiated space and thus differentiated access to resources. These property divisions speak of ownership. So, ownership of property and rights over it were regulated. This has wider implications. It is hard to imagine property being valued at Six Dials and not elsewhere. In short therefore, the Six Dials property boundaries suggest that people in Hamwic had rights over things as well as each other.

In summary, Hamwic is difficult to understand without recourse to economic theories. A reliance upon exotic comparanda is partly the result of the way that excavations have unfolded in Hamwic, and partly the result of a desire among

archaeologists and others to make the most of the little that can reasonably be understood. Only four features of social life in Hamwic can be identified that do not directly derive from or pertain to these economic theories. These elements speak to us directly about social life at Hamwic at a human scale.

- The settlement was identifiable by virtue of a large ditch that clearly designated inside and outside areas. This constrained movement and controlled access to the town and its resources.
- It had some form of overall administration that evidently maintained certain parts of the town's infrastructure: specifically keeping the streets free of rubbish and maintaining their surfaces. Archaeology alone cannot identify such an authority. It seems reasonable to suppose that this was some fusion of royal and clerical interests, with clergy acting as arbiters in the town for a remote royal authority. The street system constrained movement within the town, and indubitably created new nuances in the production of space.
- Thirdly, the town was host to a well-organised financial regime that not only managed to produce and sustain vast amounts of currency, but was largely able to prevent or discourage the removal of coins from the town. The movement of currency was constrained.
- Finally, it appears as though the ownership and demarcation of property was an established norm in which the unidentified civic authority was possibly involved.

In addition a number of points can be imported from Hase's analysis of the ecclesiastical landscape of Hamwic, and which are relevant to our analysis of the missionary encounter here (Hase 1975):

- Hamwic was home to a mother church from the first years of the eighth century and perhaps several years before. This mother church served an area that included all of a large royal estate which reached some distance inland, covering the whole Southampton peninsula and areas on the opposite bank of the Itchen. Its dates are probably coincident with the foundation of the town.
- The historic core and manorial centre of Hamwic was not located within Hamwic itself but was half a mile upstream at Bitterne in the still fortified Roman settlement. This remained the principal manorial and royal centre in the vicinity throughout the life-time of Hamwic.

- Thus, the mother church was probably the leading political institution in Hamwic, at least on a day-to-day basis, with the royal centre being at arm's length from the activities of the town.

7.4 Coinage and literacy

7.4.1 Coinage, literacy and the clergy

It has been argued in Chapter Four that our definition of literacy should not be restricted to instances of reading and writing, but any instance where the discourse of literacy is activated. Consequently, the argument turns on whether or not the use of coinage activated the discourse of literacy. Yet, we know little about the precise contexts in which coinage was used in Hamwic, other than the broader archaeological contexts of coins. The argument is not therefore about precise historical incidents, so much as about a reasonable interpretation of the archaeological record. Given the evidence available, is it reasonable to suppose that the use of coinage could have elicited a discourse on literacy?

The connections between the clergy, coinage and literacy are drawn from the wider context of Anglo-Saxon England described in Chapter Five. Literacy fits within a broader pattern of enhanced and extended structures of surveillance in the seventh and eighth centuries that take a variety of forms, including the development and use of coinage. There is a subtle correspondence between the earliest appearance of indigenous coinage in England, the earliest law codes that seem to presume the widespread use of coinage, and a whole series of other archaeological changes. It is argued here that this is not simply a coincidence: coinage and literacy were part of a wider process that extended the mechanisms of surveillance available for royal authority. Literacy, of course, means that the clergy were involved in these structures of surveillance too – or at least they sought to present themselves as arbiters of these new structures.

There are two arguments that connect the clergy and literacy to coinage in the context of Hamwic. A simple, and more reliable position will be developed first, which sets literacy and coinage on separate tracks that converge on royal authority. Thereafter a more tentative argument can be suggested which, though more speculative in terms of how it interprets our available data, provides a possible vision of how these two paths may converge directly. The gap between these two

arguments can be located in an uncertainty over the precise nature of royal and clerical interests in Hamwic.

The robust and simple argument focuses on the activities of royal authority as the principal agent of change in Hamwic. This is the position taken by many commentators, such as Biddle (1983), Hodges (1989a), Wolfe (1999) and Yorke (1982) who argue that the establishment of the emporia at Hamwic, and by extension the creation of coinage, were the actions of royal authority. Thus, not only was the coinage a symbol and product of royal authority, but the various mechanisms for surveillance that we have studied were also created to serve the needs of the king. So coinage as a mechanism for surveillance expressed and extended the royal authority.

In parallel, the law code suggests that the clergy were also involved in justifying and extending royal authority, by using literacy. The law codes show that either the king wanted to use literacy to extend his position, or the clergy wanted to use literacy to justify their own influence with the king. More realistically, because we cannot adequately resolve the various motives and interests, there was a fusion or congruence of royal and clerical interests that resulted in literacy being deployed in the service of royal government. This may have been more discursive than real, but the practical effectiveness of the law code is beside the point. In either case, a connection can be established between royal and clerical interests in the extension and representation of royal authority through literacy.

On one hand therefore, we can see that coinage was used to extend and symbolise royal authority. On the other we can see that literacy was also used to extend and represent the authority of the king. These two propositions give us scope to rehearse an extended, though reasonably robust set of connections between literacy and coinage. The clergy had access to literacy. Literacy symbolised and extended the authority of the king. The king used various other novel means to extend his authority, including coinage. So, it seems fair to draw the rather sparse but dependable conclusion that literacy and coinage were two novel tools used to symbolise and extend royal authority in Hamwic and southern Hampshire.

The use of coinage can be thus connected to literacy insofar as both are in turn related to royal authority. Following this argument it seems reasonable to suggest that use of coinage could have evoked a consideration of royal authority. The consideration of royal authority may in turn evoke any number of possible discourses, *inter alia*, the recognition of literacy and illiteracy.

The connection between literacy and the use of coinage is thus robust in terms of available data, though attenuated in practical terms. Looking at this in more detail, the role of coinage would seem to be twofold. Firstly, direct control over coinage is suggested from the unusual distribution of a large-scale production of coins. This concentration of coin finds may be accounted for in a variety of ways, but one reasonable explanation is that something – perhaps a civic authority – prevented them from being exported. Thus, the distribution of coinage suggests novel surveillance practices. Secondly, the use of coinage in transactions, or as a symbolic exchange medium can be seen as a symbolic statement of the civic authority that produced it. The fact that coins were minted, that their value and movement was regulated, implies that the terms of economic encounters were guaranteed by reference to a higher authority. This fits with the laws of Ine that speak clearly about the presence of royal officials to oversee economic exchanges in other contexts (LI 25). So, the higher authority that guaranteed the transaction, without having to be physically present, was made symbolically at hand each time a coin was used. We know that literacy was also one of the tools used to symbolise royal authority, so the use of coinage could evoke a consideration of royal authority, which in turn may activate a discourse on literacy.

The Laws of Ine speak directly about the appropriate use of coinage. The archaeological record shows that this must have been a novel departure in the late seventh century, since there was simply no indigenous coinage in the years before. Thus, both coinage and literacy were tools in a new political and social order that must have been visible to the population of Hamwic. The very fact of the coincidence of coinage and literacy is important. At the very least, the chronological coincidence suggests a collision of discourses about social authority. The laws, which assume the existence of coinage and make repeated reference to it, suggest that the use of coinage was sanctioned and approved: that it was plugged into the same imagined world in which literacy was essential.

At the core of the attenuated connection between literacy and the use of coinage lies the agency of royal authority. A more direct connection may also be argued, though this is more speculative in terms of available data. It is worth remembering that archaeology has only barely begun to understand Hamwic, and even the small fraction excavated is poorly understood in many respects. Arguments that place too much emphasis on any given aspect of the settlement will remain provisional until that archaeology is better understood. If, however, we can posit that Hamwic's proposed civic authority was vested in the clergy rather than the king, then the use of coinage could make the connection between coinage and literacy seems more direct.

What grounds are there for supposing that the clergy were involved in the proposed municipal authority at Hamwic? Archaeology provides a number of tentative arguments. First and foremost is the apparent absence of secular authority, which seems to have been based at Hamtun/Bitterne. This may be disguised in post-depositional disturbance or ill-luck: no evidence is only an absence of evidence. But if there really was no secular centre at Hamwic, and if it really was based in Hamtun/Bitterne, then the nature of authority in the town must have been radically different. The location of St Mary's Extra at the main junction of the settlement may also be instructive, suggesting that clerical interests were central to the town. A claim that clerical rather than royal interests lay behind the organisation of Hamwic would transform discussions about coinage, the clergy and literacy in the emporium, though it cannot be supported without considerably more excavation and analysis.

Using coinage is not the same as using literacy, but it could have acted as a reminder about the apparent re-constitution of the late seventh-century political order. This re-constituted political order included the deployment of literacy to symbolise royal and clerical authority, and to extend royal power. If we gamble on the clergy having a much greater role in the creation of that political order, then we increase the ability of coinage to activate a discourse on literacy. That tentative premise is unproven. If it ever were to be, then it would be reasonable to suppose that, the use of coinage could activate another, more direct discourse on literacy.

Thus, there are two possible arguments that relate the use of coinage to literacy. One is speculative, but makes a strong connection; the other is more robust but

makes a more attenuated one. A number of qualifications should be stated to reinforce and clarify any conclusions drawn from either position.

Firstly, to say that the discourse of literacy may be present in any exchange is different from saying that it was necessarily activated. We can delineate the broad terms of how a discourse may be activated, but not the precise narrative of how it was realised. This is no different from the archaeology of other social discourses, such as gender. Secondly, terms are defined at the outset that colour subsequent analyses. If the definitions of key concepts like literacy are disputed then the argument is altered. Thirdly, it is argued here that the clergy, through their unique access to literacy, enjoy a significant advantage over the lay population. This is different from “conversion” or Christianity. It simply identifies the wider context in which the religious message may have been delivered. It allows us to identify a facet of the missionary encounter, not a cause for conversion. Perhaps most importantly, the argument swings on fine details of the activities of royal and clerical agents. But, clergy and royal authority are in many respects interchangeable in this context: the precise distinction between clerical and royal authority is sometimes obscure. It is often impossible to be clear whether the discourse described here leads back to the clergy or to royal officials. In many ways it favours both.

Thus, it is reasonable to suppose that the use of coinage may have elicited a discourse of literacy. It follows, given our broad definition of the literacy event and a series of other qualifications presented above, that the use of coinage may be thought of as a literacy event.

7.4.2 Coins, inscriptions and sceattas

A connection between coinage and literacy may seem obvious given the inscriptions borne by much of the Anglo-Saxon coinage. However the Hamwic sceatta series does not appear to carry a recognisable inscription. The various images on the coins open a parallel, and potentially quite complicated argument about the interpretation of symbols, though this runs into complexities described in Chapter Four where the interpretation of symbolic meanings was discussed.

While the Hamwic coins may not reveal literacy in the sense described by Ricoeur, they do nonetheless reveal certain symbolic meanings. The images on the

coins, of faces, pecking birds and circles are difficult, if not impossible to interpret. The argument about the relative deployment of meanings and their social construction, however, remains open. We cannot identify the moneyer, but the conclusion that the civic authority used new forms of symbolic meaning to represent itself or intervene in social and economic exchanges seems unavoidable. That in itself does not mean that coinage could have made the population contemplate their illiteracy, but it does provide a context in which the two arguments connecting literacy and coinage make sense.

7.4.3 Craft Specialisation

Some commentators have argued that the development of Hamwic represents the breakdown of an earlier re-distributive economy in favour of stable and regulated exchange (Huggett 1986, Woolf 1999). They suggest that seventh and eighth century emporia saw the re-establishment of economic control by kings. Whereas an earlier generation were able to control the import of goods directly, and thus control gift-exchange, changes in the origin and form of wealth in the seventh century made the direct control of goods more difficult. Unable to regulate the distribution of “prestige” goods, royal authority restricted the location of exchanges and the medium of exchange, requiring the presence of royal officials. This view of emporia as a response to the decline of gift exchange is consistent with the argument presented here about surveillance, but could be extended further, since it suggests attempts to regulate a range of economic activities. This is important to the population at Hamwic because even though only a small portion of the total area of the town has been excavated, the archaeology suggests a variety of specialist crafts. Could there be a relationship between this tentative evidence for craft specialisation and coinage or literacy? To some extent, the simple co-incidence are grounds to suppose that they were connected. Could they occur together without being linked? An exploratory approach is, possible, so long as it is remembered that this is only intended as a tentative proposal.

Craft specialisation – meaning that a member of the community made their livelihood principally out of some particular craft activity rather than subsistence agriculture – requires an agricultural surplus, access to a market and raw materials. This need not impose a sedentary lifestyle, or permanent markets, but Hamwic has been reconstructed with a sedentary population of perhaps two to three thousand people. The regular influx of goods suggests that raw materials and food were not

hard to find (Driver 1984), moreover they imply that the rural population came to Hamwic, not the other way round (Bourdillon 1980). This suggests that goods produced in Hamwic were also exchanged in Hamwic: if not with the rural population directly, then at least with merchants that acted as “middle men” between the craft specialists and their market. Hamwic had all the necessary conditions for craft specialisation, but it depended on goods coming to and leaving Hamwic.

This does not link crafts specialisation with coinage directly. If, however, we argue on the basis of the numbers of coins produced (Metcalf 1988) that these were produced as a mechanism for exchange, then it could be argued that the two were economically interdependent.

Of course, this tentative reconstruction is contentious, suggesting that the economy was monetised, with a pseudo-capitalist means of production and exchange. Yet, the reconstruction is, to some extent, corroborated by historical sources. The laws of Ine, for example, specify the price to be paid for certain commodities (LI 55, 58, 59). This can hardly be taken as compelling proof – the reconstruction is only offered tentatively – but it does present one view of a relationship between coinage, craft specialisation, and through the laws, literacy.

A deeper structural argument can also be invoked to connect craft specialisation at Hamwic and novel means of surveillance. While much of the activity of Hamwic was undoubtedly connected with agriculture, the provisioning of so large a population must have presented a significant challenge. Perhaps the only way to provision such a population was by the careful management of resources to ensure that the necessary materials were in the right place at the right time. To some extent Hamwic is itself evidence of a greater facility in the management of agricultural resources.

Finally a third, discursive argument may be possible. The concentration of crafts and coinage at Hamwic appears as a radical departure in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, as does the size of the population. The population of Hamwic seemed to be living a new way of life, under the scrutiny of new masters, and with new methods of exchange. Contemplation of this new way of life as against folk memories and previous experience – even comparison with other contemporary

settlements outside Hamwic such as Winchester – may have brought a sense of the novelty. The changes described are significant but occurred over a relatively short period: the population must have known that there was something new and different about Hamwic. Even if they derive from different historical conditions, an imagined connection between craft specialisation and coinage is surely relevant. Once again, we cannot demonstrate this connection, but it seems reasonable.

Problems remain with the proposed links between Christianity, coinage and craft specialisation. For example, it is not easy to separate royal or clerical influence, even if the church not the king dominated Hamwic. One of the goals at the start of this research was to explore aspects of missionary work that did not rely on political interests of kings. Literacy appears to provide such a view, but in fact it takes us back to questions of royal authority. Also, it must be conceded that links are not strong, relying on correspondences that cannot be explained by coincidence alone. This risks placing too much emphasis on too little evidence. It is difficult to establish the degree to which the clergy were agents of the changes represented by the archaeology of Hamwic, or simply able to capitalise upon them. Even if the clergy were not responsible, they may nonetheless have been able to project an image of power. Documents like Ine's law code suggest that they certainly tried to create that image.

7.4.4 Literacy, craft and coinage

It is *not* argued here that coinage or craft specialisation were consequences of literacy. Arguments about the consequences of literacy fall foul of the social critique presented by Street and the historical critique of literacy proposed by Wormald and Clanchy (see Chapter Four, Wormald 1999, Clanchy 1993, Street 1995). It is the consequences of illiteracy that are important. In that sense, and with all the correctives and qualifications presented above, the use of coinage at Hamwic may be described as a literacy event. It can be described as such insofar as the use of coins may have activated a discourse of literacy. It may ultimately be possible to trace this back to the clergy directly, but it is certainly possible to connect them through royal authority. In addition, the use of coinage is linked to other aspects of the social and economic constitution of Hamwic. While we may not be able to tie all these different strands together completely, it seems reasonable to suppose that they were indeed inter-connected.

7.5 Hamwic and Literacy

7.5.1 Literacy and the early town

Much of what has been said about the relationship between coinage and literacy applies also to the relationship between the layout of the town and literacy. If we accept the argument in Chapter Four about the discursive role of literacy, the argument turns on the ability of the architecture of the town to activate such a discourse. As with coinage we know relatively little about the precise conditions in which Hamwic was constructed, so the argument does not concern precise historical incidents, so much as a reasonable interpretation of the archaeological record. Given the evidence available, is it reasonable to suppose that the very shape of the town could have elicited a discourse on literacy?

Superficially the answer is no – there are no documents outlining the various plots of land in terms of rights or ownership and so on. On first inspection, a connection will rely upon an interpretative archaeology of the town alone, and an appeal to our previous re-construction of the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England more generally. Arguments about the discourse of literacy are concerned with appearances rather than historical causation. So if we can connect the historical sources that reveal how the king and clergy used literacy, then we can make a robust, if symbolic connection, between how they imagined Hamwic and the reality upon which that imagination was based.

As with coinage, there are two arguments connecting the clergy and literacy to the shape of Hamwic. The first connects the shape of the town to literacy by an appeal to the influence of royal authority. At a very basic level, royal authority is a hinge that connects the two. As with coinage, though, if we change the balance of authority in Hamwic to favour the clergy, then we can develop a vision of how these two paths may converge directly. Changing the balance of power, in this way, can only be provisional, on the basis of what is known about Hamwic, so the conclusions drawn from such an exercise are exploratory.

Following our discussion of coinage, the robust and simple argument focuses on the activities of royal authority as the principal agent of change in Hamwic following a broad consensus of commentary (Biddle 1983, Hodges 1989a, Woolf 1999 and Yorke 1983). Thus, following established views, the streets, the ditch and the boundaries and institutions that they represent were the product of royal

authority. The material conditions of Hamwic both represented and actively constructed royal authority. Simultaneously, the clergy used literacy to help justify and extend royal authority. The precise mechanics of this relationship are obscure, but clerical and royal interests certainly overlapped. The convergence of royal and clerical interests resulted in literacy being deployed in the service of royal government. Again, precise arguments about the real and imagined impact of literacy are important, but do not alter the claim that a connection can be established between royal and clerical interests in the extension and representation of royal authority through literacy.

These two tracks are similar to the two converging tracks that connected literacy to coinage. The first suggests that royal authority produced and was extended by the ditches and the streets. The second reminds us that literacy extended and represented royal authority. Together we can develop an extended, though reasonably robust set of connections between literacy and the shape of Hamwic. The clergy had access to literacy that in turn was used to symbolise and extend the authority of the king. The king used various other novel means to extend his authority, including the creation of boundaries and the maintenance of roads. So, it seems fair to draw the rather sparse but dependable conclusion that literacy was involved in the extension of royal authority as materialised in the shape of Hamwic.

As with coinage, the material conditions of life in Hamwic are connected to literacy insofar as they were both manifestations of royal authority. Following this argument it seems reasonable to suggest that the physical architecture of Hamwic itself could have evoked a consideration of royal authority. The consideration of royal authority may in turn evoke any number of possible discourses, *inter alia*, the recognition of literacy and illiteracy.

The shape of the town – its streets and ditches – cannot be isolated from the practices associated with daily life in the town and the various interventions that have been proposed on the basis of the archaeology. The origins of these ditches and roads are less important than their subsequent impact. These may be interpreted in a variety of ways, but it has been argued here that, *inter alia*, the ditches and streets provided novel opportunities for the control of resources which were acted upon: the lack of settlement beyond the boundary ditch for one, and the

particular distribution of coins for another. It is also clear that the clergy and the king attempted to use literacy to inscribe the control of resources, as Ine's Law Code makes clear. One represents in the material conditions of life what the other imagined in writing. It is difficult to reconcile the laws with the archaeology of the town in precise chronological terms, so it is foolish to suggest that one was the result of another – but it is surely reasonable that these two accounts of practices associated with the regulation of life at Hamwic were connected in what they aspired to achieve, even if appearances are more important than reality.

If the king appropriated literacy to support and perhaps justify interventions in the daily life of the population, even if that were simply an extension to existing practices, then it seems reasonable to assume that the town ditch and roads were capable of activating a discourse on literacy too. As well as appropriating these existing practices, by choosing to commit them to writing, the king and the clergy took a small but important step towards restricting access to these practices to those who could read or write, their associates and retainers.

The connection here is attenuated, but robust in its reading of the archaeological record and established commentary on Hamwic. If, as an experiment, we were to shift the balance of power in favour of the clergy and away from the king, then the connection between clergy, literacy and the material conditions of life are foreshortened. As noted in the case of coinage, an ambitious reading of the archaeology of Hamwic is possible. Thus, the location of the church at the centre of the town, and the location of the proposed removal of the royal estate centre upstream at Bitterne suggest that the church may in fact have been more important in the town than has been recognised. These provide limited grounds for bypassing royal authority and claiming that the whole of Hamwic could have activated a much more direct discourse on clerical authority. But, this claim is based on a controversial reading of the archaeology of the town, which cannot be supported without more archaeological exploration and analysis.

In addition the same qualifications need to apply here as applied to coinage. To recap: the presence of a discourse need not mean that it was necessarily activated; the argument is predicated upon the view of literacy described previously; the argument speaks about the missionary encounter more than about “conversion” as

such; and the precise distinction between clerical and royal authority is obscure but in many ways it favours both.

Thus, there are two possible arguments that connect the organisation of Hamwic with the clergy and with literacy. Firstly, we can see that both literacy and the organisation of the town were both elements in the development and extension of royal authority. That means that the town may, through consideration of the expansion of royal authority, evoke the discourse of literacy. A more direct connection between literacy and the town may also be described, but only if we accept a controversial argument on the nature of clerical authority in Hamwic.

7.5.2 Hamwic and Winchester

Why, if the development of Hamwic was so marked, were there not similar developments in Winchester? Indeed, the fact that Winchester was the seat of a bishop in the seventh century would suggest that their influence would be considerably greater than in Hamwic. If the archaeology of Hamwic can reveal the impact of literacy, then surely Winchester should too? Yet, there is little evidence of redevelopment in Winchester in the late seventh or early eighth centuries, the Old Minster excepted. This seems to undermine the argument that ditches and roads in Hamwic were connected to the clergy or literacy.

It has long been argued that Hamwic enjoyed a special relationship with Winchester throughout the early Middle Ages (e.g. Addyman and Hill 1968 77, Biddle 1983, Morton 1992). Not only are they close geographically, a number of coincidences connect them. Although established at a very early date, Winchester is the county town of a county named after Hamwic. The growth of Hamwic in the seventh century coincides with a period of relative stagnation at Winchester, while the decline of Hamwic in the ninth century may be a mirror image to the expansion of Winchester.

Yorke has suggested that growth of Winchester can only really be traced to the ninth century, starting with the work of St Swithun, and continuing through the political and military prominence of Alfred and his family (Yorke 1984, see also O'Donovan 1973). Though not disputing a seventh-century date for the foundation of the Old Minster, and the diocese, Yorke argues that Winchester was largely uninhabited (Yorke 1982). The Old Minster was founded in a rural backwater with

little political or military significance: even in religious terms, Winchester was only of equivocal importance. Arguing for the relative importance of Southampton, she concludes that Winchester was not a place of special significance to the West Saxon kings of the seventh and eighth centuries.

Yorke's conclusion about the relative unimportance of Winchester suggests that comparison between Winchester and Hamwic is not as compelling as it may appear. If Winchester was not a royal centre, lacking economic or political importance, the dearth of evidence for any form of municipal authority is not surprising. If there were no population, there would be little need to intervene in the daily lives of the population to regulate activities, and thus little scope for the sort of reconstruction proposed for Hamwic.

Biddle takes a different view on the role of Winchester and Hamwic in the seventh and eighth century (Biddle 1983). He argues that the two centres were actually inter-dependent, with Winchester acting as a religious and royal centre, and Hamwic an economic one. Biddle points out that Yorke is prepared to dismiss Winchester as a royal centre, without offering any serious alternative account. The archaeology of settlements in and around Winchester, in particular the number of fifth to seventh century cemeteries, suggests a continuing occupation in the area, which must have been associated with some form of settlement (Biddle 1983 323). He argues that his model is consistent with the general pattern of the retention of Roman administrative settlements as centres of Anglo-Saxon government too. If this generalisation were true, Winchester would be an obvious candidate for a royal centre.

If Winchester were as unimportant in the seventh century as Yorke suggests, the foundation of the Old Minster and diocese seem anomalous. We know of other Roman centres that were home to diocese in the period, and that the foundation of minsters tended to exploit surviving Roman remains (Blair 1992, Bell 1998) so this may to some extent explain why Winchester appealed: but there are other Roman forts and towns in the area that may have been more obvious, not least the Roman fort at Clausentum/Bitterne. Yorke cannot account for this anomaly. Nor, for that matter can the burial of a succession of Wessex kings in Winchester be completely dismissed. Yorke's argument is threatened by inconsistency when she lays emphasis on Southampton as the centre for royal administration. As we have seen,

there is in fact little evidence of a royal residence or secular administration in Hamwic, precisely the same weakness that she finds in Biddle's model of Winchester. Ultimately, Yorke has to concede clear that Winchester was a centre of some importance in the period, even if the precise nature of the role is unclear.

The state of the archaeological evidence for Winchester in the seventh and eighth century makes any firm conclusions difficult. Yorke argues that it represents only ecclesiastical settlement (Yorke 1982 79), while Biddle interprets it as evidence of thegnly dwellings (Biddle 1975 309), and presents a complicated argument which suggests that Winchester may actually have been planned from an early date (Biddle and Hill 1971, Crummy 1979). Biddle argues, however, that the disagreement can only be resolved with excavation of the area he identifies as the secular core of Winchester at the site of the Anglo-Saxon royal palace (Biddle 1983 323). Recent work in Winchester, as revealed by the English Heritage Excavation Index reveal that such interventions as there have been in the last few years are not substantial enough to confirm or deny any of Biddle's suggestions (e.g. EH 2001 651667).

Yorke's criticism of Biddle is based largely on the lack of evidence for secular settlement, which is not in itself surprising given the subject matter. It is hard to see how an argument about the secular or ecclesiastical settlement of Winchester really could be decided by archaeology alone. Biddle's criticisms of Yorke point out clear anomalies that are less easy to explain, while her argument seems threatened by inconsistencies. Thus, Biddle's position seems more convincing, though until the royal centre of Winchester is excavated, it must remain provisional.

The positions of Yorke and Biddle to some extent explain why Winchester appears so different from Hamwic. Biddle's view – that Hamwic was a royal residence – implies that there should be much more activity in Winchester, the evidence of which has been hidden by later activities. Even so, Biddle's model of royal authority in Winchester does not suggest that Winchester was an emporium. Even if we accept the tentative argument that it was a royal centre, this still leaves some considerable grounds for supposing that the two were quite different. Ultimately, following Biddle, there would be no or only very limited evidence for craft production, control and regulation at Winchester, precisely because these

activities were pursued at Hamwic. The question is not, then, why are the two not more alike, but why was Winchester not an emporium. The answer to this is in part topographical. Hamwic, it should be remembered, enjoyed a unique double tide on a naturally sheltered coastal position. Winchester, though accessible to small boats, is certainly not coastal, a key distinction if the purpose of the emporium is indeed to regulate the importation and distribution of luxury or other goods. Winchester is not like Hamwic, because it never was, and never has been, a port of trade.

The Winchester/Hamwic relationship is unusual among emporia in Britain. An alternative analysis would ask the degree to which the literacy and surveillance can be identified in other emporia, such as Ipswich, London and York, where there seems to have been no obvious distinction between the trading settlement and the royal centre. All these towns have been excavated to a greater or lesser extent, and each hold out the realistic and imminent prospect of comprehensive publication. Such an analysis remains well beyond the bounds of this thesis.

Thus, Winchester and Hamwic present quite different the archaeologies. At first inspection, this seems to undermine the claims made here about surveillance and literacy, but in fact the differences can be traced to substantial differences in the natures of the two towns in the seventh and eighth century. If we follow Yorke, the differences result because Winchester was actually a rather small provincial hamlet, but Yorke's position involves the acceptance of a implicit contradiction. If, instead we follow Biddle, the differences are in part because we know so little about Winchester, but principally because Winchester and Hamwic had quite different natures. If the archaeology of Winchester were better known, then it may be possible to argue about the similarities and differences that the two centres may have possessed. In the meantime, until the Winchester excavations are more fully published, indeed significantly extended, it is hard to make any substantial claims.

As with coinage, it is not my intention to argue that shape of Hamwic was a consequence of literacy. Such an argument could be challenged on many grounds (see Chapter Four, Wormald 1999, Clanchy 1993, Street 1995). The discursive impact of literacy is more important. In this very precise sense the shape of Hamwic in terms of ditches and roads may be connected to literacy. It may ultimately be possible to trace this back to the clergy directly, but it is certainly

possible to connect them through royal authority. Comparison with Winchester seems to undermine the argument, but this threat evaporates on closer inspection.

7.6 Life, Literacy and the Clergy at Hamwic

The purpose of this thesis is not to be critical of archaeological practice or the weaknesses of archaeological evidence from Hamwic, so much as to suggest alternative interpretative schemes that may interrogate the archaeological record in new ways and lead to different conclusions. As with Micheldever there are problems with the evidence and its conventional interpretation, but there are also a number of opportunities. With Micheldever, problems related to an apparent neglect of archaeological theory, whereas with Hamwic derive in part from an over-zealous adherence to one particular interpretative gaze. Yet, the result is peculiarly similar. At Hamwic, the deployment of anthropological insights has tended to mask lived experience, or at least have prevented such questions from arising. The result is that Hamwic has not been interrogated for what it may reveal of the impact of the clergy on the population. Chapters Four and Five argued that the missionary encounter is best approached through literacy practices, a theme developed in Chapter Six. The last section sought to re-construct Hamwic, focusing our attention more fully on matters of lived experience, the scale at which, following arguments in Chapter Three, the missionary encounter ought to be studied. We now turn that gaze on what we have seen of the troublesome archaeology of Hamwic.

The exploration of the missionary encounter proposed in this thesis turns on the deployment of literacy practices. At first glance, the evidence for literacy in Hamwic is far from impressive. Few of the numerous small finds may be described in terms of the apparatus of literacy. A single implausible stylus is scant evidence for book production, a point which makes Hinton wonder about the evident poverty of Hamwic's churches (Hinton 1996 54, 99). Although the town is mentioned in historical sources, texts directly associated with Hamwic are few and far between, with none of the carved bone or inscribed metalwork reported from other Anglo-Saxon contexts (e.g. Carr et al 1989, Webster and Backhouse 1991 95). A decorated bone plaque described as a possible bookplate provides only the most ambiguous evidence for the literacy events described in Chapter Five (Andrews 1997 21). All in all, the archaeology of literacy at Hamwic seems meagre. Yet, as was argued in Chapter Four and demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six, arguments

that reduce literacy to the crude mechanical ability to read and write are ingenuous, failing to recognise the complicated discursive potential of literacy. Literacy practices are more sophisticated than reading and writing.

The archaeology of literacy narrowly defined in terms of the mechanical facility with reading and writing is of a different order from the archaeology of literacy practices conceived of more broadly. It is clear through the archaeological record that aspects of Hamwic are consistent with the intervention of the novel mechanisms of surveillance witnessed at Micheldever. These mechanisms of surveillance, which draw upon literacy's characteristic property of distancing, operate to adjust the geography of the town in spatial and temporal terms. Once again, it is in the production of space that this is most evident in the archaeological record, though other changes, such as innovations in the calculation of time cannot be ruled out. Yet in order to develop these themes it is necessary to shift the argument decisively away from the generalising hypothesis of economic systems. The human scale proposed in the last section is a necessary precursor to an archaeology of literacy practices, but cannot deliver it in its own terms. Once again, a privileged view of the historical case is required.

As with Micheldever, there are no surviving charters or texts to give us a direct insight into the operation of literacy at Hamwic in the eighth century or before. However, a thoughtful reading of the laws of Ine of Wessex provides some of the details that support the archaeology of literacy practices. Much of this argument repeats the case put Chapter Six, so only a summary need be attempted here. A number of salient features can be brought out and certain elements deserve fuller treatment at Hamwic than they received at Micheldever. In particular, the constraints imposed on trade, the rôle of coinage and numeracy, and the direct intervention of bureaucracy in the daily lives of individuals are all documented in Ine's law code and are consistent with the archaeological record. Together this inspires us to think positively about the archaeology of literacy practices at Hamwic. These complicated issues, while not answering blunt questions about whether or not the population was Christian, can be used to investigate more complicated and meaningful questions about the nature of the missionary encounter. It will be shown that a tension over the control of symbolic resources worked almost wholly to the advantage of the literate few, a group that was entirely

co-extensive with the Christian elite. The impact was greater in Hamwic because a larger population lived in relatively close proximity.

In addition, Hase's account of Hamwic encourages a more bullish appraisal of the rôle of the church in the early history of the settlement. If the royal centre of Hamwic were indeed across the water at Bitterne, then a whole series of questions may be asked about siting Hamwic and its relationship to the royal centre. Why was the trading settlement not situated by the defended estate centre? Why, for that matter, was the ecclesiastical centre for the whole Southampton peninsula, and both sides of the Itchen located in Hamwic, at a distance from the apparent royal centre? The obvious answer to this question is that the two were somehow complementary. Chronology is difficult here. Hase argues that the church was built in the centre of an expanding port, basing his date for St. Mary's Extra on the date of the town. St Mary's has not been excavated so it is not inconceivable that Hase's chronology could be turned on its head. In simple terms, given the lack of clear dating from St Mary's, it seems no less likely that the market grew up round the church than vice versa. Indeed, such an interpretation would be consistent with the confused chronology of the putative church described at SOU 13, since the cemetery there seems to pre-date the road network, which elsewhere was thought to be among the earlier features of the town.

Could it be that the port of Hamwic grew up at the doors of the mother church rather than at the gates of the royal estate centre? A lack of concrete evidence means that it is impossible to say one way or another. Even if this interpretation is far-fetched, the distance between Hamwic and the royal estate centre raises questions. It follows from this separation that St Mary's Extra was probably the leading institution in Hamwic, at least in terms of political weight, with royal officials being located some distance up stream. The distance between them is not great, so we must be careful not to overstate the case by supposing some great divide. Yet the situation is certainly curious and the implication of the separation of function could not have weakened the church's status in the town.

Royal officials must have been active in Hamwic, even if they were based upstream at Bitterne. While the legal officials alluded to in Ine's code may not have been regular visitors to the fields of Micheldever, one cannot but feel that such officials were an altogether more common feature of life in Hamwic. The street

system, the ditch and the coinage all speak of an active and localised administration, a point that, as we shall see, connects Hamwic directly to Ine's law code. In particular the regulation of prices and the establishment of currency, all present in the law code, must have been designed for a market place like Hamwic and been policed and enforced here if nowhere else. In that respect, the law code and the archaeology of Hamwic are in perfect agreement. Novel mechanisms of surveillance and administration, which also included the deployment of literacy, are in evidence in various different aspects of Hamwic. This regulation, while not necessarily invented by the clergy, was evidently appropriated by them to some extent. Again, as with Micheldever, life within the material conditions of that regulation provided the foundations for discourse on the virtuousness of literacy and the ineffable necessity of the literate specialists of the Christian clergy.

Looking more closely at the law codes it is clear that the same sort of correspondence between law and landscape that we noted in Micheldever can be traced in Hamwic. For example, the laws of Ine are clear about the demarcation of time and space. The middle Saxon landscape is appropriated according to legally sanctioned modes of behaviour. We have already seen the division of space within Hamwic mirror these legal constraints and sanctions.

A number of the edicts are directly relevant to life in Hamwic. Church buildings provide legal sanctuary to those who are to be flogged (LI:5). In Hamwic and its surrounding area those liable to be flogged would be well advised to head for St Mary's Extra, on the junction of two of the important roads of the town and perhaps was the most prominent. This may seem trivial but it reinforces the previous arguments about the demarcation of space within the town. It shows that these different parts of the settlement were not simply bland co-ordinates in Cartesian space, but that different places had different legal and social constitutions. In this we begin to see the production of discrete and socially composed places in Hamwic. As with Micheldever, this injunction to provide sanctuary is a double injunction. We see two different discursive models of the Church: it establishes the clergy as brokers of esoteric knowledge and the church as a place of safety. Thus, there is a distinct correspondence between the demarcation of spatial units in Hamwic and the literacy practices implicit in Ine's law code.

The demarcation of areas within the town does not simply stop at the doors of the church. The archaeology of property units is replicated in legal terms that we have already seen at Micheldever. For example, fighting in different properties is dealt with by different types of legal sanction (LI:6), while forcible entry is dealt with severely (LI:45). One can imagine that these different sanctions would also apply variably across different properties within Hamwic, with the Church marked out in particular. These injunctions include special measures for fighting “in open country”, a dispensation that seems peculiar in Michelever where just about the whole landscape may be termed “open country”. The archaeology of Hamwic gives us an idea of what that term might mean, since the settlement is clearly separated from open country by a large ditch. To that extent, Hamwic was part of a legal programme that encompassed a continuous but variegated surface, stretching beyond the ditch that marked it out from the rest of Hampshire. In this way, as well as being demarcated in physical terms by roads and walls and fence lines, Hamwic was marked out according to types of legally sanctioned or prohibited activities, with different penalties imposed according to those demarcations. The spaces of Hamwic were not simply divided in the physical sense we have seen in the archaeological record, but the whole settlement had been appropriated and reproduced in legal and bureaucratic terms. The literacy practices of the law code are replicated and extended in the divisions of space in Hamwic and vice versa.

As noted in Micheldever, the law code made specific recommendations for the maintenance or abrogation of property rights. Thus, ceorls were exhorted to fence their properties in case of damage from cattle or pigs (LI:40, 42, 49). In the form they are presented to us, it is clear that they pertained particularly to agricultural practices, to protect pasture and crops. Yet the subtle mapping of plots in Six Dials suggests that these injunctions, or equivalents were current in settlements also.

Other elements of the law code support and extend this proposed link between the material conditions of life at Hamwic and the literacy practices implicit in the law code. Thus, foreigners were restricted in movement across the landscape (LI:20). Applied in the context of Hamwic, this injunction connects with movement into and out of the settlement. As noted in Chapter Six, this was probably not simply a cordial measure to protect foreigners, but was also a means of supervising their activities. When placed in the context of Andrews’s proposal that Hamwic had a gate or other formal entrance (Andrews 1997 30), it might be

suggested that foreigners were expected to enter or leave the settlement, at least on its landward side, through a gate opening onto a road. One possible plank crossing of the ditch has been identified (Andrews 1997 23). In the light of the law code, and the consequences it threatens, crossing the ditch in the cover of darkness might well have been a treacherous activity. Restrictions to movement resonate in the law code and in the architecture of the settlement.

The restricted movement of foreigners is paralleled by restrictions on their activities. Both the law code and the physical architecture of Hamwic reveal the constraint of trade within the town. In the law code this is effected by the regulations pertaining to merchants dealing in the countryside, away from the gaze of the administration (LI:25). In the physical architecture of the town it is represented in two ways: firstly by virtue of the ditch that enclosed the town and secondly through the distribution of coinage. Even though the ditch was not maintained for long, the sense of the boundary that it created was evidently retained. As we have seen, the coins apparently minted at Hamwic are not found outside Hamwic: a remarkable feat when one considers the many hundreds of thousands that were certainly produced there, and the millions proposed (Metcalf 1988). A formal entrance, visually striking or not, would be an important element in the construction of space and could perhaps speak directly about movement from one legal domain to another. The coinage distribution suggests that the boundary was indeed monitored. This would be an obvious locus for the payment of taxes, the registering (formal or informal) of foreigners and the searching of cargo. Such activities cannot be directly identified from the archaeological record, but given the privileged view accorded to us by the historical sources they would be at least in keeping with such an interpretation. Thus, the constraint of trade demanded by the literacy practice of the law code corresponds to what we seem to see in the archaeological record and vice versa. This is an example of how literacy practices may be created out of the "choreography" of daily life.

If trade was confined to the town in this way and if we can sustain the argument that literacy was part and parcel of the technology of surveillance, this has implications for the whole countryside. Various arguments have been forwarded about the relationship between Hamwic and its hinterland and the nature of trade between town country and long-distance trading networks (*inter alia* Bourdillon 1980, Samson 1994, Morton 1999, Samson 1999b). Whether that relationship was

symbiotic or parasitic, whether it fixed small communities into continental trading networks, or simply allowed goods to circulate in discrete localities, the point is the same: that economic activity was undertaken under royal surveillance, a surveillance that may well have served the discursive and practical interests of the clergy too. Thus, not only would access to a place like Hamwic provide clerical missionaries access to the whole population of the settlement and its wider (or narrower) economic context, access to the mechanisms which regulated and supervised that economic activity may have appeared to give the clergy a semblance of authority over the right conduct of that activity. In that respect the missionary encounter, conceived of here as a tension over the symbolic space of literacy and illiteracy, might extend to encompass the whole economic system itself. Rather than simply being a context within which missionary activity might take place, the economy itself could become an agent of clerical discourse and a means of representing the transcendent benefits of literacy and the ineluctable pre-eminence of its vehicle, the clergy.

The discourse of literacy, present in the mechanisms of surveillance of Hamwic, had wider consequences affecting not just the local population but all who had dealings with it, either in person or at a remove. The agricultural workers who brought their goods to market, and the peasants who supplied them were all drawn into literacy practices. As noted in Chapters Four and Five, literacy practices depend upon draw together many more than simply those who read or write. A practical example of this can be visited in the vast quantities of coinage found in the town. As noted previously, Ine's law code makes specific recommendations about the value of certain commodities and the approved commutation of fines (e.g. LI:55, 32). In the case of Micheldever, where no coinage seems to have circulated, the impact of such an abstract equivalence seems academic. Yet the evident proliferation of coinage in Hamwic and the apparent constraint of trade to the settlement suggests a mechanism by which these clauses could be made operational even for the agricultural populace. This could be done by establishing a legally and physically defined place in which such transactions could be conducted. Thus, the literacy practices of the law code have implications far beyond the enclosed space of Hamwic.

The importance of coinage and its impact on the population of the town can hardly be under-estimated. Not only does it seem that civic authority intervened in

trade by supplying and guaranteeing coinage but this intervention extended to fixing prices for certain commodities by law and establishing rights to the reliability of resources. Hence, among other conditions of trade:

(LI:56) If anyone buys any cattle and he then finds any unsoundness in it within 30 days, he is to hand it back to the seller, or the latter is to swear that he knew of no fraud when he sold it to him.

(LI:59) The horn of a cow is valued at twopence; the tail of an ox is valued at a shilling; that of a cow at fivepence; the eye of an ox is valued at fivepence, that of a cow a shilling.

In this respect not only was movement round Hamwic controlled and customary laws applied, but certain specific activities were regulated too. Moreover, the prevalence of coinage represented the intervention of the administration through the medium of millions of miniature tokens. Debates about this coinage have tended to focus on market orientation and cash currency but these arguments miss an important point. In every context where sceatta coins were deployed, whether as capitalist anonymous trade or socially embedded exchange, the hegemony and discourse of the administration, and by extension of the literate clergy, was reinforced. Thus, the mundane drama of something as simple as coinage, by discursively recreating and reproducing the material conditions of life according to a given pattern, was embroiled in the missionary encounter. To this extent every single coin struck could be interpreted as an agent of conversion and every transaction agreed an encounter with the values of the clergy.

The law code depended upon a series of transactions identified in terms of abstract equivalences between material resources, socially constituted resources and abstract social relations. We have already witnessed these in Micheldever, but the point is worth emphasising at Hamwic where currency was not in short supply. The price of certain commodities is fixed in value, while fines or bonds could be supplied in units of the landscape or in cash. It seems unlikely that such transactions would have been practical in Micheldever where there is little evidence for the use of currency. By all accounts, such transactions must have been regular at Hamwic.

There is more to the use of these equivalences, however, than the expedient presence of cash. The law code quotes cash transactions as a matter of course,

assuming these to be the norm. Thus, wergilds, prices for commodities and various forms of compensation are calculated in terms of shillings as well as in terms of units of land. On reflection this is nothing short of extraordinary when one thinks of the history of coinage in Wessex. While there is evidence of imported coinage such as the Crondall Hoard, the suggestion is that such coinage was difficult to obtain and never plentiful. Yet the earliest surviving law code of Wessex presumes that coinage is available, or at least the values are understood for the purposes of trade and law. We are left to contemplate whether it is simply a stroke of good fortune that both the coinage and the law that talks about it appeared within a few years of each other. When seen in this light it might well be argued that the appearance of coinage was itself part of the broader picture of surveillance and representation that was driven by clerical access to literacy. The simultaneous arrival of indigenous coinage, indigenous law codes and clerical literacy is surely no coincidence at all. Coinage can be fitted into the same bureaucratic zeitgeist noted in other parts of Wessex. It is part of the same process that gave the clergy a monopoly over the symbolic resources of surveillance.

Pervading this discussion of surveillance lurks the parallel issue of numeracy. That numeracy skills are associated with primary education implies that it cannot be taken for granted in children in the same way as spoken language. This would imply that those with formal education, in this case the clergy, had a greater facility with numbers than their lay counterparts. The introduction of literacy made possible the transliteration of numbers, principally in Latin numerals, giving the clergy greater access to mathematics than to the laity. It is impossible to identify the relationship more coherently than that in the middle Saxon context, but the subject certainly merits more study. If it can be argued that the clergy also controlled or limited access to numeracy then the discursive toolkit of the clergy would be greatly enhanced and the superiority of clerical expertise compelling. In short, therefore, there are unanswered questions of numeracy implicit in many of the discussions about Hamwic. It is hard to see how this could not have been of benefit to the clergy, although the degree to which they enjoyed a monopoly of numeracy cannot be identified.

As at Micheldever, the surveillance of physical resources like property or space can probably be expanded to cover time. As noted in Chapter Five, the eighth century witnessed an attempt by the clergy to transform the calendar according to

Christian traditions. As noted in Chapter Six, a similar concern with time is represented by injunctions requiring or prohibiting certain activities at certain times. So, for example, children were required to be baptised within 30 days or a fine would be demanded (2). This injunction, like the establishment of the church as a place of sanctuary, is doubly discursive. On the one hand it speaks directly about the importance of baptism, but its legal promulgation also established the position of the clergy as producers and moderators of abstract forms of knowledge. Other injunctions speak less directly about the clergy, but hint at the desire of the clergy to re-negotiate the calendar. Martinmas, Easter and Sundays are marked out as special days in the calendar. This suggests that the clergy were keen to expand their activities into the regulation of time, using literacy to effect changes in the management of time as well as space and physical resources. This cannot be demonstrated archaeologically but can be supported by extension of the archaeological record. If the clergy were able to effect changes in the supervision of physical resources through the deployment of literacy practices, it is hard to imagine that they were not similarly capable of effecting these changes in time also.

As argued at Micheldever, there was much more to the correspondence between the laws and the material conditions of life than happy coincidence. Hamwic, when seen from the perspective of Ine's law code reinforces the claims of Chapters Five and Six that surveillance was the zeitgeist of the earlier eighth century. In some respects the case of Hamwic is exactly parallel to what was recorded in Micheldever. It was noted before that the laws of Ine appropriate space in terms of different types of behaviour, making certain areas appropriate for certain activities, prohibiting them in others, and marking boundaries between them. Thus, the demarcation of properties, the control of movement, the circulation and control of currency, and the maintenance of the road system at Hamwic were part and parcel of the same movement that created the law code itself. It is no coincidence that the law code spoke in terms that are relevant to Hamwic, or that Hamwic developed in ways consistent with the law: the two were interconnected. The laws, whose creation was a literacy event and which betray a broad sweep of literacy practices, were created out of the material conditions of life and in turn gave rise to those conditions. Literacy practices permeated Hamwic at the start of the eighth century and perhaps for several decades before that.

The space in and of Hamwic is clearly demarcated in a variety of ways. Firstly, the area of the town was clearly defined in physical ways. Evidence of the close relationship between the legal concept of the town and its physical extent can be seen, not only in the ditch that surrounded the town, but also in the very peculiar distribution of coinage. The suggestion of controlled entrance and exit and the possibility of tolls and inspections gains credence from all of these factors. Moreover, the constraint of movement and demarcation of space in the town has been presented. There is a clear parallel between the law code and the shape of Hamwic.

In describing literacy practices at Micheldever, it was possible to specify two interconnecting set of practices that reconstructed the material conditions of daily life, giving rise to discursive engagements in literacy. The first of these was the creation of boundaries, the second life within them. At Hamwic, the situation is considerably more complicated. The quantity of evidence and number of possible directions is so much greater. A set of practices can be identified, that crystallise the themes, but should not be taken as an exhaustive list.

- the creation and use of coinage
- the creation and use of the boundary ditch
- the creation and maintenance of the road network
- the demarcation of property

Each of these have been described above in terms of their relevance to literacy practices and as such any event in which they come into play might be described in terms of literacy events, the basic empirical unit of literacy identified in Chapter Four. These events are the hinges that articulate Hamwic at a human scale on one hand and the missionary encounter on the other. As such they facilitate the kind of discussion of the impact of the clergy proposed in Chapter Three.

The creation and use of coinage is not a single phenomenon, it is two distinct phenomena. The first of these is easier to identify in the archaeological record, even if there is no direct evidence of a mint at Hamwic. Whether the mint was in Hamwic or not is less important than recognising that at some point around 700 or shortly thereafter a decision was taken to supply coinage to be used at Hamwic, for that coinage to be regulated and for an agreed set of designs to be applied to the coins. Whether this was the work of a local craftsman or an imported moneyer it is hard to say. Whether the idea came from the king or a senior official, or whether it

was proposed by the clergy or by merchants is equally hard to say, though a combination of the first two seems more likely. The resulting coinage, however, was the result and necessary condition for the intervention of royal authority – perhaps a mixed clerical and royal authority – in matters of trade and exchange; an intervention that was expressed in novel forms. Clerical Christianity, which may have been involved in the creation and extension of these novel forms of surveillance, may, by association with royal authority, have been associated with the casting of these new coins insofar as its monopoly of literacy, and perhaps numeracy, gave it a monopoly over the surveillance of the resources which the coins would come to represent. The moneyers may not have considered it in these terms, but every coin they struck was a token of a new kingdom, a new political landscape, in which Christianity was a necessary feature.

The active deployment of coinage follows from that point. If the striking of each coin can be conceived of as a literacy event, then so can each context in which those coins were used. These are harder to describe archaeologically, but perhaps more important historically. As argued in Chapter Three, the key to understanding religious conversion is not the definition of authentic standards so much as the recognition of rationality. Knowledge of how to be an effective social agent and how to live can be invoked to investigate the "*structuring structures of predisposition*" on which social life is founded. By utilising the symbolic resources of coinage and transforming their physical and social assets into coinage, a symbolic resource in which the clergy had a particular interest, the population of Hamwic recast their wealth according to a model inspired by clerical interests. The argument has used the term coinage loosely, neither specifying embedded social exchange nor depersonalised anonymous trade. The case remains the same. The deployment and use of coinage in either of these ways may have been achieved voluntarily, or may have been made irresistible by law. It may even have been attractive to those involved. But by the early years of the eighth century, and perhaps for a decade or more before then, the material wealth of Hamwic had been symbolically appropriated for clerical purposes. We cannot write the archaeology of religious conversion with this insight, but we can at least shed new light on the missionary encounter.

A similar dichotomy exists in the creation and subsequent "use" of the boundary ditch. The creation of the boundary ditch can be described archaeologically as a

single event, or more likely as a group of discrete events. In creating a boundary ditch a group of workmen recast the local landscape to conform to a model of legal space in which movement was constrained and activities directed. It is not clear whether they followed an existing line, but it would seem that the ditch they cut did not last for long, even if the boundary survived. As we have seen at Micheldever, the establishment of the boundary at Hamwic coincided broadly with the establishment of boundaries elsewhere in Hampshire. The Hamwic boundary, however, acted in a different way to the Micheldever one. At Hamwic, the act of enclosure fostered a new relationship between the inside and the outside of the emporium, a distinction that fostered and was fostered by novel technologies and interventions of surveillance. Once again clerical Christianity, which also fostered these technologies, may, through its association with royal authority, have been symbolically associated with in the erection of this boundary through its monopoly of literacy, a practice that was deployed to enhance and extend surveillance. The workers that dug the ditch expanded a new political order in which the clergy were indispensable. The cutting of the ditch was a literacy event. Once established it became involved in numerous other literacy events that are harder to detect archaeologically, but are perhaps more important historically. As with coinage, the ditch enhanced and expanded mechanisms for control and surveillance, and thus played into the hands of the clergy whose success in part depended upon the extension of opportunities to deploy mechanisms of surveillance. Again, although this does not speak to us directly about conversion, it does provide a novel insight into the missionary encounter.

Altogether more complicated is the creation and maintenance of the road network. Once again the directed activities of a group of labourers coincided with an extensive demarcation of the landscape in terms of movement and administration. The paths laid down were in part the expression of a civic authority, but they also re-made that authority and justified to some extent interventions to raise tax and tribute. Clerical Christianity was well disposed to maintain and benefit from that civic authority and could only benefit from this activity since it justified by extension those mechanisms for surveillance that the clergy were able to deploy. Road building also built the structures that built the roads. This is quite different from conversion. Nonetheless it does represent an alternative sidelight on the missionary engagement according to the questions and criticisms marked in Chapter Three.

Demarcation of property is complicated but it is not hard to draw a link between these novel structures of surveillance with which the clergy may have been associated, and the perceived need to supervise property. By adopting mechanisms for maintaining their own resources the population recast their relationship to these resources in terms that were consistent with a bureaucratic zeitgeist in which clerical Christianity was deeply involved. Property boundaries and demarcation thus materialise and recreate a culture of surveillance and bureaucracy. As with coinage, the boundary ditch and road building, the demarcation of property should not be interpreted as evidence for conversion, but it does provide an opportunity to examine the missionary encounter.

In Hamwic, there was a direct intervention of bureaucracy in the daily lives of the population. Even those not involved in trade or production must have been drawn into this network of regulation and surveillance. Regardless of the volume of goods exchanged, or the degree to which such trade was influenced by long distance networks, the transient and indigenous populations would have recognised the exacting and ubiquitous interventions of novel mechanisms of surveillance. Co-extensive with this intervention were literacy practices that operated as the bureaucratic instruments of an incipient but burgeoning administration. Control over literacy practices lay exclusively within the hands of the clergy and so the mechanisms of administration were allied to the discursive practices of the clergy and were an integral part of the missionary encounter. We may wonder about the volume of goods and services produced in Hamwic: but one certain product was the knowledgeable social agent, who was familiar with the discourses of literacy and clerical Christianity.

7.7 Going over old ground: missionary encounter in Early Medieval Hamwic

Like the Micheldever case study this discussion has moved from the discursive practices of surveillance that informed the production of space and regulated life, to the archaeology of literacy through which the involvement of the clergy can be identified. We now complete the circuit by returning to the archaeology of the breadth and penetration of literacy and the clergy. The five concrete conclusions drawn at Micheldever can be reviewed and clarified.

- By associating the impact of the clergy with literacy practices we can use the archaeological record to introduce a degree of chronological control that could otherwise only be surmised.
- Literacy practices provide an important supplement and alternative to a conventional historiography of the coming of Christianity to Hamwic that has implications for the coming of Christianity to many parts of Northwest Europe.
- We can now see much more clearly than hitherto an important aspect of the missionary encounter, while rejecting simplistic generalisations of process or authenticity.
- The terms of the encounter described are limited to one aspect of the missionary encounter, literacy: there may be many other aspects that are now beyond our knowledge. This may take a different form in Hamwic than it did in Micheldever.
- It is possible to specify the relationships between elites; in particular the symbiosis between royalty and clergy, a relationship that has hitherto defied analysis.
- However, our discussion of the impact of the clergy has led us back to a discussion of the interdependence of royal and clerical interests. This echoes the positions of Mayr-Harting and Stenton described and criticised in Chapters Two and Three.

The aim of this thesis has been to bring anthropological insights to bear on the impact of missionary clergy on Anglo-Saxon England. In so doing I have stressed the need to identify the structuring structures within which conversion was made rational; practices that arose from the encounter between missionary and missioned. It is for that reason that we moved from the conventional archaeology of cemeteries and associated ritual as a metaphor for understanding the missionary encounter to the impact of literacy practices as a more realistic, if more complicated, strategy. By moving in this direction, we can begin to view the missionary encounter from the perspective of discursive practices for the whole population rather than the isolated activities of a clerical elite. What does this conceptual shift reveal about the encounter between the population of Hamwic and clerical Christianity?

One of the strengths of the Micheldever case study was the opportunity it afforded to identify the impact of the clergy in an area not particularly well known to

archaeological research. This is less true at Hamwic since the archaeology of the town and its more extensive historical record provide chronological supports not available at Micheldever. The dates, however, do not depend on the foundation of St. Mary's Extra, or the putative church at SOU 13. The development of technologies of surveillance exists independently from these two foundations. Moreover, it is clear that the arrival of literate Christianity in Hamwic was not simply a matter of the leaders and their retainers. Within a very short time the population of Hamwic were involved in an ongoing, if unresolved, engagement with the clergy, through such factors as the use of coinage and related strategies for surveillance and control that rose out of literacy practices. The clerical elite, by virtue of their monopoly of literacy, retained an unassailable advantage in the ensuing tension over the control of symbolic resources. This advantage was not simply a technical one, but was also discursive. By invoking a discourse on literacy, the clergy had the wherewithal to cast the remainder of the population into the rôle of illiterate. The laity was thus forced into a relationship of dependency with the clergy who consequently secured their own continuing influence.

As with Micheldever, identifying the terms of the encounter is not the same as providing detail on how the encounter was played out. Clerical discourses on literacy were related to religious conversion. This hints at the rationality of conversion which Horton emphasised in a different context (Horton 1975a, 1975b). This takes us close to the recommendations of Chapter Three. This pre-discursive rationality has been overlooked in other accounts. To portray the relationship between clergy and laity purely in terms of literacy, however, would be reductive, a fault that we sought to avoid. Structures of surveillance, informed by literacy practices, provide archaeological evidence of one of the many possible encounters, but surely not the only one. Hamwic was home to the mother church of the whole Southampton peninsula, a church that retained its community status until late in the Middle Ages. Hamwic was very probably host to another church of early date. Indeed it is not inconceivable that the town grew up around the churches that stood there rather than the other way round, as was assumed by Hase (1974). If this is the case then we might conclude that the discursive importance of literacy as opposed to other discursive practices was rather less important at Hamwic where the numerous clergy must have been more active than in Micheldever where they were seemingly in short supply. Even if we could be sure that these two

churches were mapped accurately and confidently in the middle of the port it is difficult to perceive the impact of the clergy upon the population, or the positions that they may have adopted with a population that must have been, in part, non-Christian - at least in the first generation. Even if we had a rich historical record, we would be forced to look beyond it because of the interpretative impasse that clerical sources necessitate. Though there may have been many tools available to the missionaries in Hamwic at the start of the eighth century, the discursive practices of literacy remain the only method we have to specify and describe the relationship between the clergy and the laity. That relationship might be described in the first instance as the relationship between literate and illiterate populations.

As was the case with Micheldever, it would be quite wrong to suppose that the development and reification of literacy practices are coterminous with the “conversion of Hamwic”. It has been my intention to argue that the social sciences are poorly equipped to deal with questions of personal revelation. They can only provide contextual detail, revealing and analysing the means by which religious sentiments are mediated, monitored, and maintained in certain circumstances. This discussion of Hamwic should not be seen in terms of the “authentic conversion” of Hamwic, nor even should it be appropriated to the language of historical process. Such generalising accounts of historical process belittle human agency, particularly in matters as discrete as belief. The conclusion is considerably more subtle and precise than either of these formulations can support.

The broad conclusion is the same as for Micheldever. Collectively, and individually the population of Hamwic were brought into an ongoing engagement with the ownership and negotiation of material and symbolic resources, an engagement that encompassed the material conditions of living, the production of space and the reproduction of practice, and which can be visited in them. This engagement, materialised in the discursive practices of literacy, was made real in bureaucratic surveillance. Situated within this discourse and dominating it were the interests and ambitions of a clerical elite. Concomitant with their association with the control over resources and in addition to any other mechanisms for representing Christian practices by the first half of the eighth century, the clergy had created an hegemony in Hamwic.

Again, the point about hegemony reminds us that there is more to discourse than meets the eye. Literacy was insinuated as a matter-of-fact, taken-for-granted subject, the exercise of which was essentially beyond question. The analysis of literacy practices, and their part in the production of the space and the reproduction of practice is instructive for what it reveals about the relationship between the early Medieval clergy and existing structures of power, in particular the king. As has often been noted, the locus of identifiable clerical activity revealed in historical sources focused on the person of the king and his immediate retinue. It has long been pointed out that the king and his retinue were necessary to the ambitions of the clergy (Stenton 1971, Mayr-Harting 1991, Higham 1997). It has not been clear, however, whether the king received any material incentives additional to the spiritual ones that accrue from baptism. Perhaps even more directly than in the case at Micheldever we can supplement the vague, but unspecified, theories of ritual elaboration and sanctification, or association with Roman glory, that are regularly quoted but seldom expanded. Literacy, in association with certain forms of bureaucratic surveillance, however, was the unique property of the clergy. Thus access to the clergy did not just give access to a new model of kingship, it provided the necessary mechanisms for remodelling power relations and securing vast, otherwise unrealistic territories. The fullest extent of these new mechanisms are seen most clearly in the confines of Hamwic, where civic authority – a fusion of royal and clerical interests – could intervene in the day-to-day existence and exchanges of the population.

These conclusions are not simply of relevance to the Micheldever or Hamwic, but have implications for the rest of the country and the rest of Northwest Europe. There were specific conditions in these contexts which mean that the processes visible here may have existed, but may no longer be in evidence elsewhere in the country.

Such extrapolation is risky: we are well advised to avoid it without good cause. A couple of salient features are worth considering however. The ownership of literacy practices remained with the clergy for more than a millennium and the symbolic language of education still draws heavily from its religious heritage. Thus in all cases where literacy practices are evidenced, in the early Middle Ages and beyond, we may draw a conclusion of their proximity to religious sentiment. Thus in diverse parts of western Europe, where trade and exchange, surveillance and

control were modelled on similar lines as at Hamwic, we may begin to discuss a relationship to literacy and thus to Christianity. Economic theorists and archaeologists who work on the early Middle Ages have not recognised the potential of literacy practices and bureaucracy to inform interpretations of the archaeological record and connect it to the activities of the clergy. To that extent the archaeology of the impact of the clergy is just waiting to be written.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

The heavens proclaim the glory of God
 And the firmament shows forth the work of his hands
 Day unto day takes up the story
 Night after night makes known the message
 No speech, no sound, no voice is heard
 Yet their span extends through all the World
 Their words to the utmost bounds of the Earth
 (Psalm 18 (19) 1-4)

The word of God, we are told, can barely be contained in language. The psalmist articulates an ecstatic vision of redemption in which the good news of salvation is revealed, not by word of mouth, but through the lives of the faithful, the rhythms of time, the order of the universe and the magnificence of nature. Even times and places uncreated are replete with the immanent majesty of an implicit creation. Of course, archaeologists look upon the experience of salvation with an altogether more immediate sense of historical realities. The psalmist doesn't anticipate what happened in rural Hampshire or the intrigues of Aethelberht's *imperium*. The archaeology of the impact of the clergy is written about real times and real places: it cannot be an exercise in metaphysics. There is little common ground between the highly-charged mystical rhetoric of the psalmist and the mundane secular commentary of scholarship. The visions are not so much competing as incommensurate.

But there is perhaps more in common than meets the eye. Archaeology is attuned to the complex interactions of human behaviour, seeking meaning in structures beyond words. Purposeful action, meaningfully constituted, is disclosed through material culture, and is reproduced through those same material conditions of living, while *no speech, no sound no word is heard*. Anthropology does not dismiss cosmology lightly. Prophecy can be a means of comprehending the universe as well as a technology for social reproduction. To proceed we must ask why this vision was appropriate, what structures of practice could make it compellingly real, *day after day, night after night*. The social sciences needn't do

violence to the psalmist's revelation, if subtle methods are employed. The psalmist provides a basis for his own ethnography.

8.1 Summary and Reflection

This thesis has come a very long way from the frustrations outlined in Chapter One and examined, expanded and engaged subsequently. Before going any further, it would be useful to review the argument up till now. With the whole argument in focus, the original problems appear in a new light.

At the outset, a broad dichotomy was noted between the means by which historians and archaeologists approached the history of the spread of Christianity and the way that conversion and salvation are presented in religious discourses. This dichotomy was explored more specifically in Chapter Two where conventional accounts of the coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England were questioned, on one hand, for their failure to look beyond the social functions of religious institutions, and on the other hand, as anachronistic stances on a dynamic and historically-constructed entity. It was recognised that archaeological evidence provides the best route to escape the interpretative impasse of historical sources, but that this could only be taken further if simplistic generalisations of ritual uniformity such as changes in cemeteries were abandoned. In Chapter Three, the complexity of the problem was realised, with explanations of how the views implicit or explicit in the writings of historians and archaeologists have been criticised and discarded by anthropologists. A more subtle understanding of religious phenomena in general and conversion in particular was the result of this enquiry, emphasising the role of rationality and charisma. The absence of these phenomena in the historical sources should not be interpreted as an absolute historical fact, while a more shrewd analysis of the archaeological record should draw on the impact of the missionary encounter upon social practice.

An alternative insight into the impact of the clergy was proposed and refined in Chapter Four. It was noted that the clergy enjoyed a monopoly over literacy, but that literacy should not be viewed as a neutral technology, but as an instance of social practice. The concept of literacy as a form of social practice coincides neatly with the recommendations of Chapter Three, so an archaeology of literacy was proposed as a way out of the interpretative bind of historical and archaeological scholarship. A preliminary reconnaissance in Chapter Four gave

way to three large-scale analyses: Chapter Five considering the role and impact of literacy practices in Anglo-Saxon England more widely; Chapter Six focussing on the impact of literacy practices in an area around Micheldever in upper Hampshire in the seventh and eighth centuries; Chapter Seven focussing on the impact of literacy practices in Hamwic. The contextualised emergence of literacy practices in these three different studies was used as a means of identifying and developing the analysis of the missionary encounter between clerical Christianity and indigenous populations. This demonstrated that the whole population — literate and illiterate alike, for these terms are not terribly meaningful — were drawn into an engagement with the clergy through the clerical monopoly of the resources that literacy could muster, control and represent. Clerical hegemony through literacy was noted at varying dates, but even in rural Hampshire, conventionally among the last areas to be converted, that hegemony can be dated to the first half of the eighth century.

The first chapter of this thesis outlined problems with how our psalmist's vision of salvation has been handled by researchers, and how insipid conclusions had resulted from both crude cynicism and unthinking acceptance. How should a middle course be steered? Can one even be found?

In the pages between, we have seen that a convincing answer is only likely to be delivered if we look beyond ritual to the broader practice of social being. The archaeological record allows this insofar as it presents the material conditions of daily life, even if in a partial and relict form. Yet even this has not been enough: only a broadly-based inter-disciplinary approach can really make the most of the available evidence. The unity of the social sciences must not just be assumed, but actively employed.

For Medieval Christianity, at least in Anglo-Saxon England, subtle changes in practice can be visited through an investigation of the practices associated with literacy, over which the clergy had a monopoly. This archaeology suggests that literacy was active in two ways: partly directly as a means of controlling resources, and partly discursively as a means of reinforcing the virtuousness of literacy as against illiteracy. This does not reveal the beliefs of the populations, but it does take us beyond the politically driven histories and archaeologies that are current. These reduce religious phenomena to ideology, and thus fail to present a coherent

or convincing account of the impact of the clergy. The archaeology of literacy allows a clearer insight into the operation of the missionary encounter.

This archaeology shows that, at least by 700, and perhaps for some time before, the population of Hamwic were drawn into an engagement with the clergy based on tensions over the symbolic resources which literacy afforded. This means that the missionary encounter was about more than just kings and their retainers, as some have argued. The same relationship can be demonstrated for Micheldever in upper Hampshire, though perhaps a decade or more later. These complementary accounts both show a regulated and ordered landscape had emerged by 750. The lag between the two may be a feature of the evidence used: the Hamwic dates have been built up over a long period of study; the Micheldever ones are less secure. In comparing the two, we are not really comparing like with like. Yet, even if the dates are open to question, the relative chronology is at least satisfying. One would expect a lowland settlement busy with traders and immigrants, and with a church (or two) of its own to be more open to the influence of the clergy than a sprawling upland estate with more attenuated lines of communication and a more settled population. A gap of a generation or so, which is suggested here, seems not unreasonable.

An early eighth-century date, or possible late seventh-century one is not perhaps so surprising for the impact of the clergy in Hamwic, nor are the dates for Micheldever particularly unexpected. However, the method by which they have been derived is important. For reasons presented in Chapter Two, the historical sources with which these dates accord should not be depended upon to reveal a reliable account of conversion, partly through lack of knowledge, and partly through purposeful selectivity. The dates derived in this way are considerably more convincing than the laconic references in Bede or the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Thus, the clergy really were active in Hampshire in the early eighth century. This has implications for the rest of the country, suggesting that the early Medieval clergy were not simply happy to reside in their monastic retreats, but were present in the countryside too. It is tempting to extrapolate all too eagerly to the rest of the country, but this conclusion at least seems sustainable.

This methodology also allows us to move between scales of analysis without losing the complexity of experience of the utility of scale. Literacy practices and

the material conditions of social being are neither the property of over-arching social structures, nor are they the private property of discrete and exceptional individuals. They are, however, active in the production of the individual, while at the same time are produced by these same individuals. Crude processes of institutionalisation can be avoided, while individual experience mapped more widely. We need no longer defer to simplistic accounts of Christianisation.

8.2 Prospects for further work

There is considerable scope for the ideas present in this thesis to be developed in a number of different directions. The two case studies presented here in the light of a third more general study represent what is possible in Anglo-Saxon England: but much more work is possible in other kingdoms and other parts of Wessex to turn these glimpses into a more substantial vision. The connection between literacy practices, clergy and archaeology is relevant to other parts of the early Medieval world, not least Carolingian Europe and the Scandinavian world. It provides an opportunity to re-examine previous work on the development of literacy in Medieval Europe more generally, with the relationship between Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the early modern world viewed through an important but often neglected social phenomenon. Furthermore, by introducing the archaeology of literacy, it opens up the possibility of a new insight into the operation of the social phenomenon of literacy in other times and places, far removed from Anglo-Saxon England and the Middle Ages.

Other areas of Anglo-Saxon England provide the most obvious locale to expand and refine the model of the influence of the clergy and literacy proposed here. It is clear that literacy is a repeated theme in the art history of the period, with a discourse on literacy presented most clearly in images of the saints or God in postures of literacy: holding books, reading from scrolls, writing texts (see Webster and Backhouse 1990 for numerous examples). The case becomes stronger into the eighth and ninth century with the deployment of coinage that bears writing in wide circulation and the gathering momentum of written texts — though it is a moot point whether these can be viewed in the same light. The study of charters in other areas may, nonetheless reveal quite different patterns. Moreover, the situation in Hamwic and Micheldever bears no evidence of continuity from the late Roman period: a more northerly or westerly case study may provide a much more

complicated picture. To that extent, this thesis really is only a preliminary account with a great deal more to be done in many more locations.

Of course, the relationship between clergy and literacy and the spread of Christianity was not unique to Anglo-Saxon world, but was a feature of the whole of the early Medieval world. There are complicated issues to be resolved for Southern Europe where literacy practices were continuous from Late Antiquity, even if they were subject to considerable variation. In particular, however, the recognition of the importance of literacy in the spread of Christianity holds real promise to investigate the development of Christianity in Northern Europe. The missionary encounter in the Germanic world has been written largely from the perspective of power politics (e.g. Cusack 1998, Fletcher 1997). The possibility of other forms of engagement, such as the practices of literacy, raises interesting possibilities, in particular in the Scandinavian world, where one commentator has recently called for a new theoretical engagement in the study of runes (Andrén 2000). The importance of runes in the coming of Christianity to Scandinavia certainly deserves closer scrutiny in the light of the argument presented here. Other contexts, such as the Christianity in Eastern Europe, may also benefit from this sort of analysis.

This thesis also implies that a fresh insight is possible into the relationship between clergy and laity in Medieval Europe long after 750. As well as arguing for a much more sophisticated insight into religious phenomena it enquires as to whether the questions asked are sustainable given the surviving evidence. Medieval Christianity should not be reduced to the political transactions of ideology. It is greater than that, even if it sometimes fails to deliver the technology for understanding the world that is claimed. A critique of literacy can also be sustained. Attempts to understand literacy outwith its social context will fail to comprehend the complexity of the issues that are presented here. Literacy is more than the mechanical ability to read or write. In Medieval Europe, it was deployed to support and transform mechanisms of surveillance, and led directly back to the interests of the clerical elite. That relationship persisted long after the Reformation, into the early modern world and beyond until the development of mass literacy at the end of the nineteenth century.

There is no reason why these insights should be restricted to the Medieval world. Other periods and places may be able to utilise the archaeology of literacy to good effect - perhaps better effect than presented here. Indeed, it follows from the argument presented above that we should look for the impact and creation of literacy practices within broader social milieux, which at times will be reflected in and constituted by the material conditions of social life. Literacy practices, literacy events, communicative practices and textual communities may be identified in diverse areas, informing and perhaps changing attitudes to other phenomena. Literacy remains a core concern for archaeology, whether as a container for thought, a metaphor for apprehending the archaeological record or an historical phenomenon in its own right. Archaeology can only benefit from responding to the opportunities and disadvantages this brings.

The archaeology of literacy is situated within a broader archaeology of language that starts in the Palaeolithic with the proposed origins of speech and thought (Mithen 1996), and ends in the present with the "post-gutenberg" age of computer-aided interaction (Harnad 1991). In a very small way, it contributes to that history, but it also provides some insights as to how archaeologists might begin to understand the impact of computing and other forms of literacy on social behaviour. When the time comes to write an archaeology of computing, the role of practice and the discursive potential opportunities it offers should be foremost.

FOUR FIGURES

Figure 6.1 Location of Micheldever Hundred Study Area from Klingelhöfer 1992 (Fig 2.1)

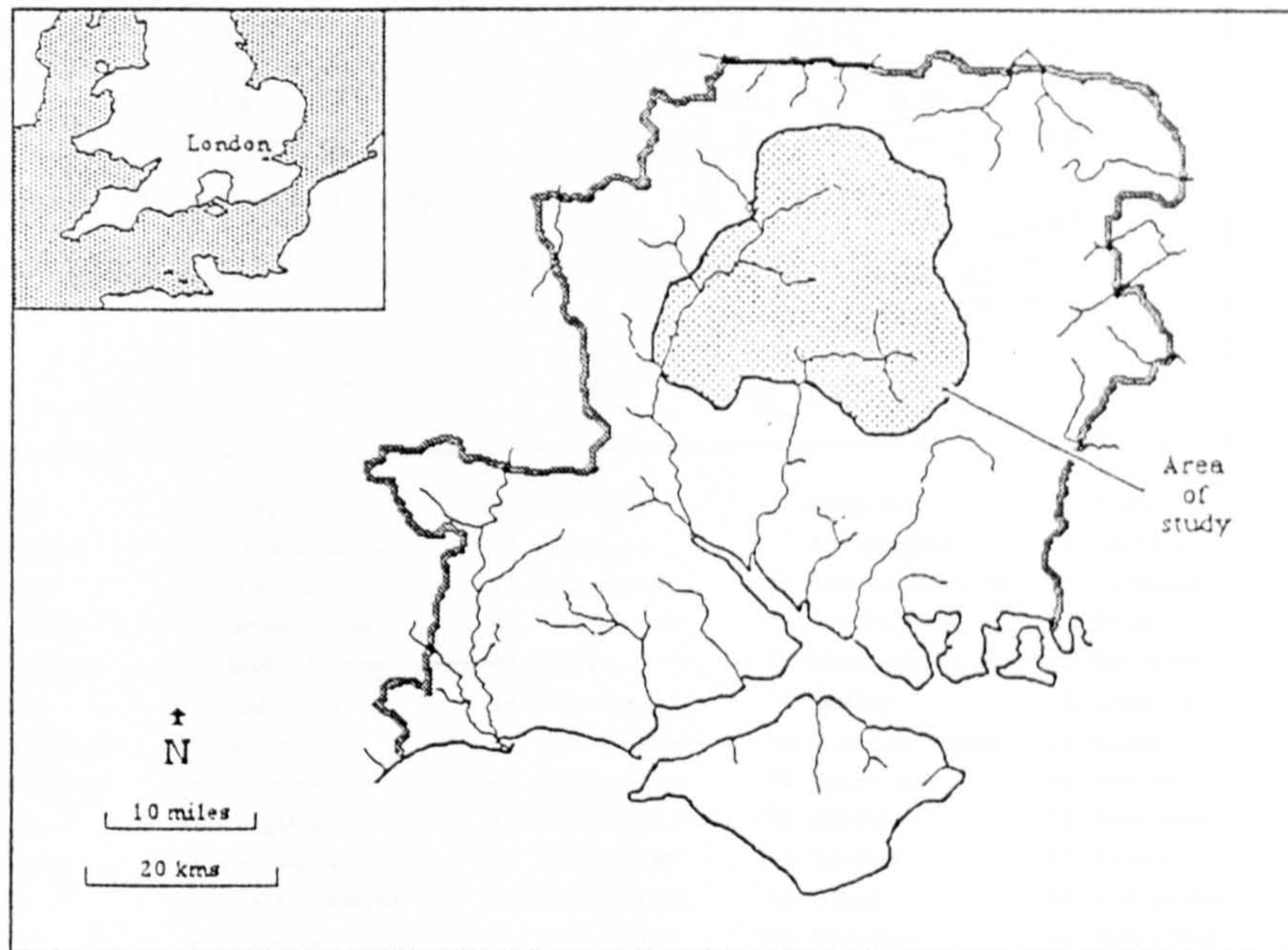
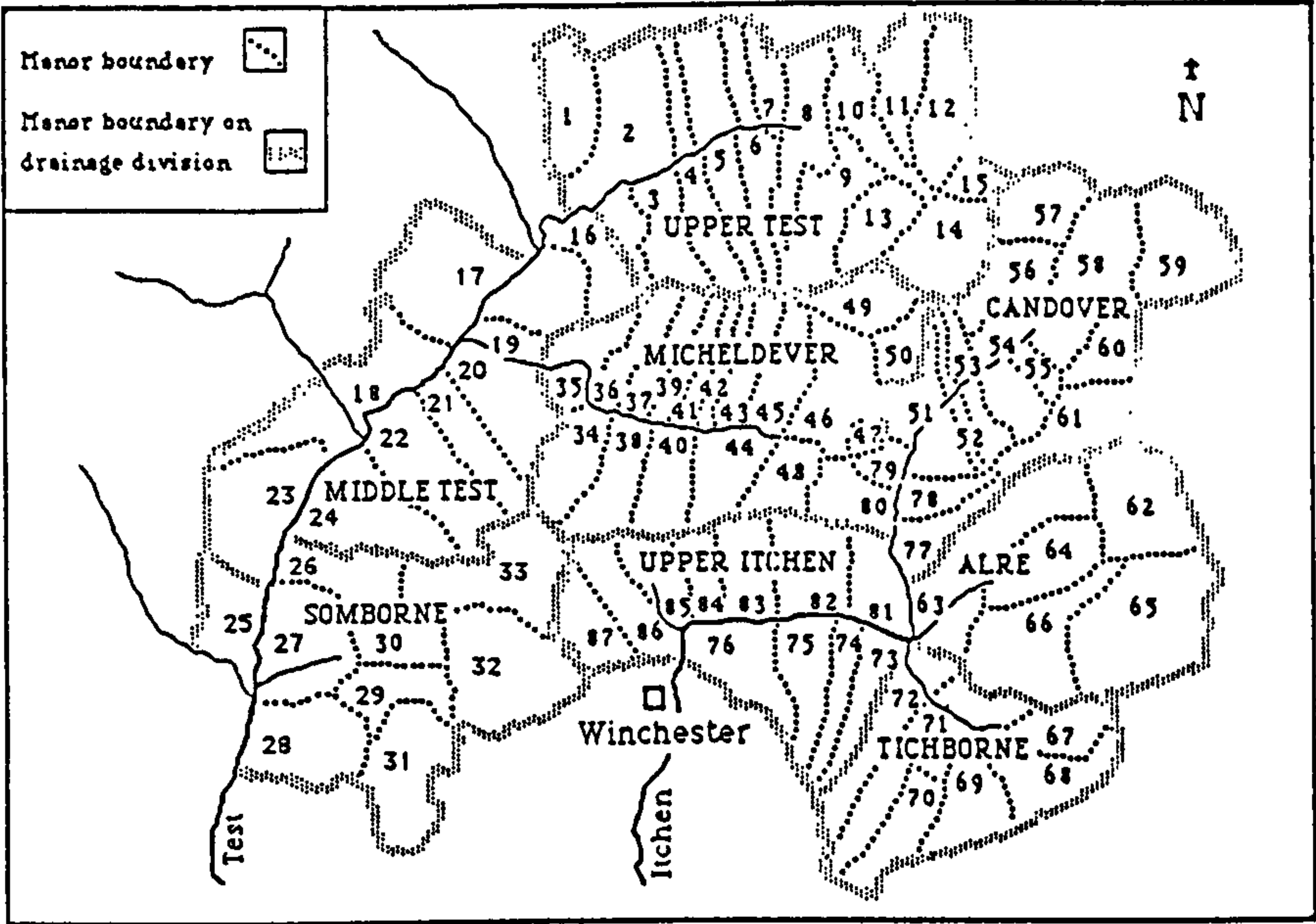


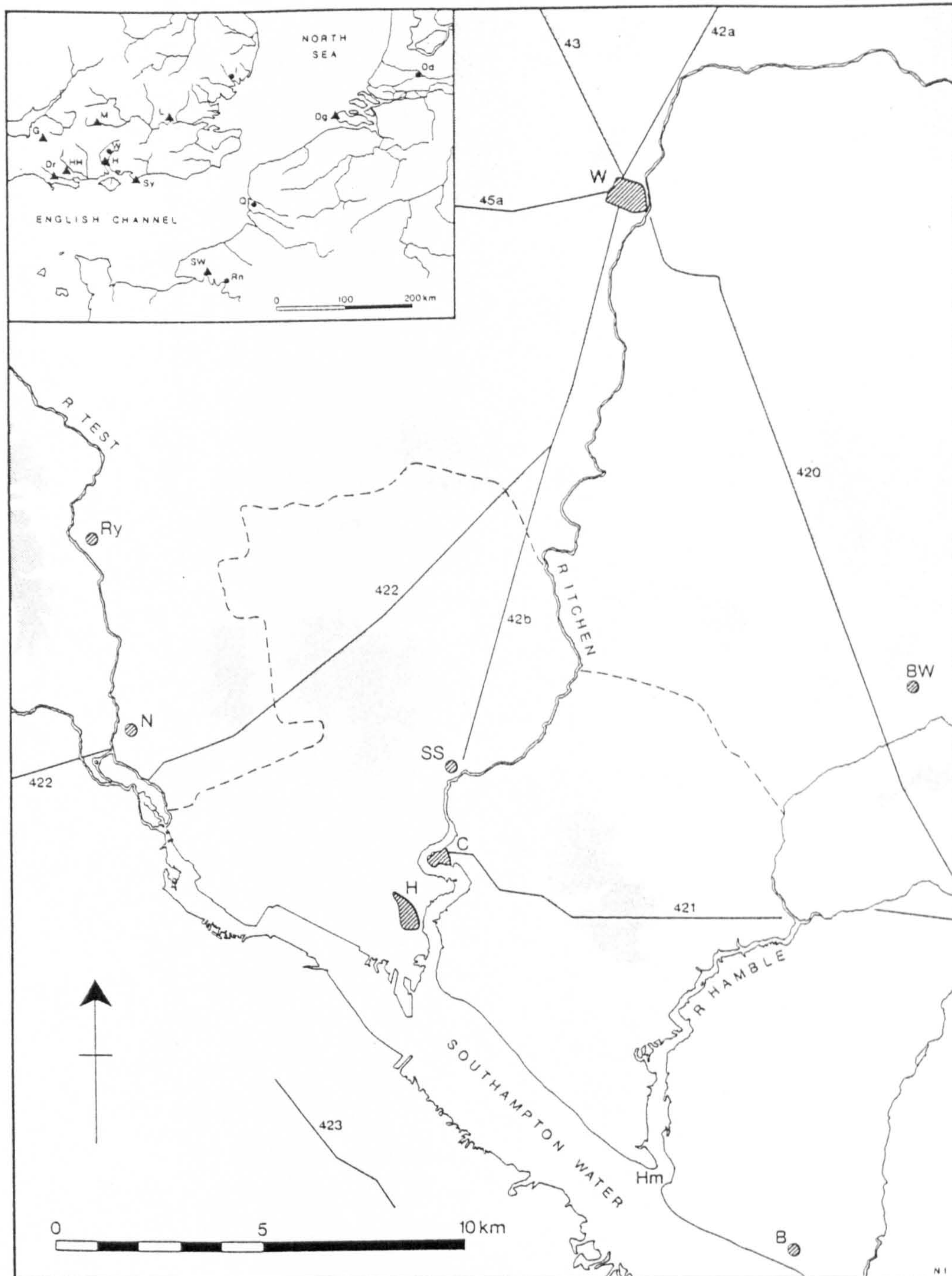
Figure 6.2 Location of Micheldever Hundred Study Area from Klingelhöfer 1992 (Fig 3.1)



- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Bradley | 18. Wherwell | 35. Bullington | 52. strip of Northington | 70. Beauworth |
| 2. Whitchurch | 19. Bransbury/ Drayton | 36. Norton | 53. Chilton Candover | 71. Cheriton |
| 3. Freefolk | 20. Barton Stacey | 37. Cranbourne | 54. Preston Candover | 72. Tichborne |
| 4. Laverstock | 21. Newton Stacey | 38. Wonston | 55. tract in P. C. | 73. Ovington |
| 5. Southington | 22. Chilbolton | 39. Hunton | 56. Nutley | 74. Yavington |
| 6. Overton | 23. Longstock | 40. Stoke Charity | 57. Farleigh Wellop | 75. Avington |
| 7. Polhampton / Quidhampton | 24. Leckford | 41. Weston Colley | 58. Ellistfield | 76. Easton |
| 8. Ashley | 25. Houghton | 42. Godwinsdown | 59. Herriard | 77. Abbotstone |
| 9. Steventon | 26. Stockbridge | 43. Northbrook / Micheldever | 60. Bradley | 78. Swarraton |
| 10. Deane | 27. Kings Somborne | 44. Southbrook / Micheldever | 61. Wield | 79. Totford |
| 11. Oakley | 28. Compton / Brook | 45. West Stratton | 62. Medstead | 80. Northington |
| 12. East Oakley / Wooten St. L | 29. Asley | 46. East Stratton | 63. Alresford | 81. Itchen Stoke |
| 13. North Walton | 30. Little / Upper Somborne | 47. Burcot | 64. Bighton | 82. Itchen Abbes |
| 14. Dummer | 31. Farley Chamberlain | 48. Popenholt | 65. Ropley | 83. Martyr Worthy |
| 15. Kempshot | 32. Spersholt | 49. Popham | 66. Bishops Sutton | 84. Abbots Worthy |
| 16. Tufton | 33. Crawley | 50. Woodmancott | 67. Bramdean | 85. Kings Worthy |
| 17. Middleton | 34. Sutton Scotney | 51. Brown Candover | 68. Hinton Ampner | 86. Redbourne Worthy |
| | | | 69. Kilmeston | 87. Littleton |

Figure 7.1 Location of Hamwic Study Area from Andrews 1997 (Fig 1) 2

C= Clausentum/Bitterne, H=Hamwic, W=Winchester



The location of Hamwic and other places mentioned in the text. Stippling represents land above 50m OD. Numbered lines are Roman roads (after Margary 1967). Broken lines approximate to the land boundary of the Mansbridge hundred. In the inset, triangles mark the find spots of Series H sceattas.

Key: B Brownwich, BW Bishop's Waltham, C Clausentum, Dd Dorestad, Dg Domburg, Dr Dorchester, G Glastonbury, H Hamwic, HH Hod Hill, Hm Hamblemouth, I Ipswich, L London, M Marlborough, N Nursling, Q Quentovic, Rn Rouen, Ry Romsey, SS South Stoneham, SW St Wandrille, Sy Selsey, W Winchester.

Figure 7.2 Sites and places studied in Hamwic from Andrews 1997 (Fig 2) 4

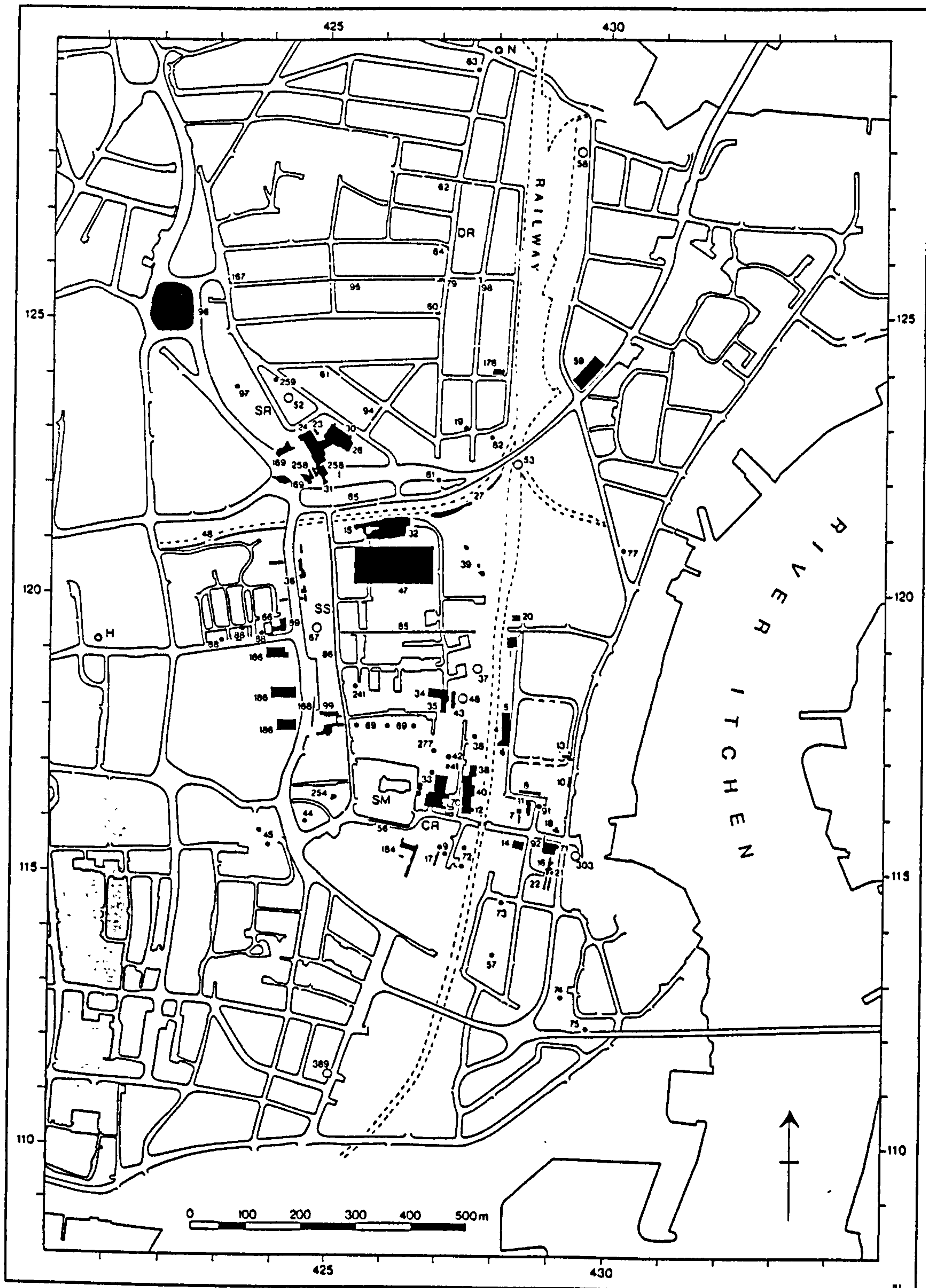


Figure 1 Sites and places mentioned in the text. 'SOU' prefixes are omitted from the site numbers and 'SU' prefixes from the outer grid numbers. Key: CR Chapel Road, DR Derby Road, H Houndwell, N Northam, SM St Mary's Church, SR St Mary's Road, SS St Mary Street. The stippled area represents the western half of the later walled town (compare pl 3).

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Abbreviations:

Arch. J. = The Archaeological Journal; ASSAH = Anglo Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History; BAR Brit. Ser. = British Archaeological Reports, British Series; BAR, Int. Ser. = British Archaeological Reports, International Series; CBARR = Council for British Archaeology Research Reports Series; CDAS = Committee for Dark Age Studies at the University of St Andrews; EAA = East Anglian Archaeology Monograph Series; OUCAM = Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monographs Series; Oxbow = Oxbow Books Monograph Series; Parergon = Parergon: the Bulletin of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (New Series); PHFCAS = Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society; SARCR = Southampton Archaeological Research Committee Reports Series

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