# THE WINCHESTER SCRIBES AND ALFREDIAN PROSE IN THE TENTH CENTURY

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## Introduction

This chapter examines a group of scribes working in the tenth century and their special place in the narrative of Alfredian translation. Together these scribes copied an impressive number of manuscripts containing works in Old English, including the earliest extant copy of the annals now known as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the Old English translation of Paulus Orosius' *History against the Pagans*, the medical compilation known as *Bald's Leechbook*, and a copy of the Old English translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. While each of these works has at various times been considered to be a product of King Alfred's hand or the impetus of his court, recent scholarly advances have in many cases dismantled these claims, suggesting that many — if not all — of these works may originally have had very little do with the king.[1] This chapter will explore the role of a single group of scribes, probably located in Winchester, in fostering a certain vision of Alfredian translation in the tenth century, and, in particular, shaping the perception that the vernacular manuscripts produced by this scriptorium should be associated in some way with the West Saxon king and his dynasty.

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[1] For an overview of this discussion, see the Introduction to this volume.

Malcolm Parkes was the first to group together in the same scriptorium the Parker Chronicle (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 173), the Old English *Bede* (BL MS Cotton Otho B XI), the Tollemache or Lauderdale *Orosius* (BL MS Additional 47967), and a medical codex containing *Bald's Leechbook* and *Leechbook III* (BL MS Royal 12 D XVII). He also placed along with these vernacular works the Junius Psalter (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 27) and a copy of Isidore's *Etymologies* (Cambridge, Trinity College MS B 15.33).[2] The centre of this paleographical web is CCCC 173, which contains among other texts the earliest extant version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, now known as the Parker Chronicle. The entries from the beginning of the Chronicle through to year 955 were written by a group of scribes writing closely related scripts. It is generally agreed that this group of scribes were very working at the same location, with the close similarity between their hands being the result of a local or house style. The second scribe of this text (responsible for years 891 through 924 of the Chronicle) copied the Old English *Orosius* and the Junius Psalter and the third scribe (responsible for years 925 through 955) produced the medical codex and the copy of the Old English *Bede* found in Otho B XI.[3] These manuscripts were all made in the first half of tenth century. While there has been some debate over the number of hands evident in these sections of the Chronicle, commentators agree that they probably represent figures working within a single scribal community.[4]

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[2] Parkes, 'The Paleography of the Parker Manuscript', pp. 156–57, 163.

[3] These manuscripts are nos 52, 176, 300, 357, 479, and 641 in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*. See Voth, 'An Analysis', pp. 55–62, for a discussion of the dating of these texts and a hypothetical timeline of when the individual works may have been produced.

[4] These scribes were writing an early form of what would become a popular script now known as English square miniscule. While it is agreed that there was one main scribe responsible for the entries to 890 and another for

Parkes was also the first to comment on a 'historical' interest in this scriptorium and to locate it in Winchester. As he notes the first Parker Chronicle scribe seems also to have been responsible for copying a record for boundaries of land owned by a certain 'Ealhswith' into the *Book of Nunnaminster*; these boundaries are now generally held to refer to the land housing Nunnaminster (St Mary's Abbey), the foundation of which Ealhswith, the wife of King Alfred, has traditionally been associated.[5] The obit of Ealhswith is marked with a cross within the Parker Chronicle, as is the accession of Frithestan, a tenth-century bishop of Winchester, and the account of Alfred's hallowing in Rome. The name 'Frithestan' was also added to the fifth booklet of CCCC 173, and a metrical calendar containing the obits of Alfred and Ealhswith is found in the Junius Psalter.[6] While the import of these features has not been without debate, Gneuss and Lapidge's *Handlist* now lists all of these manuscripts as having a probable Winchester origin.

The four works mentioned above, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the Old English *Orosius*, the Old English *Bede*, and *Bald's Leechbook* above have all been tenuously linked at various times to an Alfredian project of vernacular translation, but due consideration has not been paid to the fact that early manuscript copies of these texts were produced within a single scriptorium in the space of one or two generations. Parkes saw a potential focus on history at this scriptorium, evident in the choice to copy the Chronicle, the Old English *Bede*, and the

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entries 925 to 955, Malcolm Parkes considered there to be two separate main hands in the entries for 891–924, while Janet Bately suggested that as many as five separate scribes may have contributed. More recently Christine Voth has argued that this section of annals are the result of the work of a single scribe (except for seven lines), with differences resulting from different stints of writing. For discussion, see Voth, 'An Analysis', pp. 55–56; Parkes, 'The Paleography of the Parker Manuscript', pp. 154–55; Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. xxv–xxxiv; Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule Script', pp. 147–79. Within this chapter, I have accepted the interpretation that there are three main hands responsible for copying the beginning of the Chronicle through to the year 955. However, the number of scribal hands present has no real importance for the argument of this chapter, which concerns the works produced by this scribal community collectively.

[5] Parkes, 'A Fragment of an Early-Tenth Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscript', p. 131. Dumville disputed whether these were in fact the same hand, but agrees that the scribe was probably from the same centre ('English Square Minuscule Script', p. 164). For the solving of the bounds, see Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, pp. 45–49.

[6] For discussion, see Parkes, 'The Paleography of the Parker Manuscript', pp. 162–63, 168.

Old English *Orosius*, but little attention has been drawn to the fact that not only these texts but also *Bald's Leechbook* have been altered, perhaps during the copying process, to strongly assert their association with the West Saxon royal house and often with Alfred himself.[7] In this chapter, I will suggest that the tendency to link these various works with the reign and reputation of Alfred the Great largely reflects the success of a conscious and consistent effort among a particular group of scribes, some of which probably belonged to abbey of Nunnaminster, to promote a certain image of Alfred and to associate his name with the production of the vernacular texts they copied, even when these probably did not originate during his reign. The following sections will discuss the four vernacular codices produced by these scribes and their actions in compiling these texts, before considering the wider place of this scriptorium and these translations in tenth-century Winchester.

## The Parker Chronicle and its Scribes

It is not clear in what form the earliest annals of the Parker Chronicle would have reached the hands of the first Chronicle scribe. The annals copied by this scribe seem to have been drawn from a variety of different sources, including works such as Isidore's *Chronicon* and Bede's Epitome, a chronological summary appended to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.[8] It is generally thought that at least some parts of the annals may have originated as diffuse notes added to Easter tables.[9] There is no clear consensus on where and how the earliest annals were compiled. Sir Frank Stenton famously suggested that a core of original annals were brought together in an unknown location in Wessex for a secular patron who was not a king, but this remains a topic of debate.[10] How this earlier material relates to the 'common stock' of annals (those present in all extant copies of the *Chronicle* and of which CCCC 173 preserves the earliest copy) is still largely unknown, but it is thought that the extant version of these original annals was probably the result of an extensive reworking.[11]

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[7] Parkes, 'The Paleography of the Parker Manuscript', p. 165.

[8] Irvine, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', pp. 348, 355.

[9] Irvine, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', p. 348.

Whatever their original form, the version of the annals found within the Parker Chronicle appears to work collectively to laud the achievements of the West Saxon royal dynasty and contribute towards an overarching narrative of the unification of England under West Saxon kings.[12] The contribution of the first scribe towards editing or compiling these annals is unknown, but members of the scriptorium probably played some role in shaping this material. The first scribe himself or herself seems to have tried to reinforce the relationship between the Chronicle text and the ruling family of Wessex through the inclusion of a genealogical preface and regnal list which immediately precede the beginnings of the annals. The genealogical preface tells of the migration of the first West Saxon king, Cerdic, to Wessex, and gives his (probably largely mythical) genealogy; the kings list complements this by listing all the West Saxon kings, culminating with Alfred. It is likely that this list had an independent existence prior to being attached to the Chronicle.[13] By positioning this regnal list right before the beginning of the annals, the compiler of these texts (perhaps our Chronicle scribe) establishes a dynastic reading of the Chronicle as relevant to the West Saxon royal house and Alfred in particular.

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[10] For discussion, see Yorke, 'The Representation of Early West Saxon History in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle'; Irvine, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', pp. 344–67, at 345–49; Stafford, *After Alfred*, pp. 39–46.

[11] See further Courtnay Konshuh's chapter in this volume.

[12] Irvine, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', p. 346; Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', p. 99. The idea of West Saxon kingship as divinely-sanctioned has also been seen in the numerous references to Rome within the Chronicle, not least the legend of the childhood anointing there of King Alfred by Pope Leo IV: Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', 664–65. Recent work by Leneghan and Cavill also explores the presence of imperialism in the Chronicle poems: Cavill, 'Kings, Peoples, and Lands: The Rhetoric of *The Battle of Brunnaburh*' and Leneghan, 'End of Empire? Reading *The Death of Edward* in MS Cotton Tiberius B I'.

[13] Irvine, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', p. 354; Sisam, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', 332–34.

During the stints of scribes two and three, who copied the entries for the first half of the tenth century, a theme of empire building becomes visible in the annals.[14] This portion of the *Chronicle* recounts the submission of various kingdoms in Britain during the reigns of Edward and Æthelstan.[15] It is during roughly the same period when these annals were copied, and perhaps following the stint of the second Chronicle scribe, that another addition was made to this composite manuscript, the account of the laws of Alfred and Ine, sometimes known as Alfred's *Domboc*.[16] This law text was not copied by any of the Chronicle scribes but is copied by two hands writing closely related scripts, generally seen as belonging to scribes within the same centre. Like the Genealogical and Regnal List these law codes appear to have been originally written to be a separate piece from the annals found in CCCC 173. The laws now form the third booklet of CCCC 173 but seem to have been originally inserted following the first booklet of the Chronicle, which details events from its beginning through the reign of Alfred, and ending with the campaigns of Edward the Elder.[17] The law text presents Alfred as a wise legislator in the biblical mode and begins with a lengthy preface invoking the laws of Moses, Christ, and the apostles. This text purports to be by Alfred himself, who speaks in the first person near its end, stressing his personal involvement in instigating the project and in compiling of the laws that follow:

> Ic ða Ælfred cyning þás togædere gegaderode ⁊ awritan het, monege þara þe ure foregengan heoldon, ða ðe me licodon; ⁊ manege þara þe me ne licodon ic awearp mid minra witena geðeahte, ⁊ on oðre wisan bebead to healdanne.

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[14] See further Cavill, 'Kings, Peoples, and Lands: The Rhetoric of *The Battle of Brunanburh*'; Leneghan, 'End of Empire'.

[15] See Leneghan's discussion, '*Translatio imperii*', 671.

[16] See Dumville, *Wessex and England*, pp. 136–39; Stafford, *After Alfred*, pp. 56–57. The laws are dated s. $x^{2/4}$ by Gneuss and Lapidge (no. 52). See also the chapters by Stefan Jurasinski and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe in this volume for more discussion of Alfred's *Domboc*.

[17] Parkes, 'The Paleography of the Parker Manuscript', pp. 150–51, 167. Parkes saw the merging of these pieces as 'suggest[ing] a conscious attempt on the part of this compiler, active some time during or after the reign of Athelstan, to preserve the tradition of the West Saxon royal house in its purest form.'

> [Then I, Alfred the king, gathered these [rulings] together and commanded to be written many of them which our ancestors held – those that pleased me. And many of them that did not please me I discarded with the consent of my counselors, and directed them to be held in a different manner.][18]

The presentation of this work further stresses the achievements of Alfred by placing Alfred's laws first, before those of his predecessor Ine, Patrick Wormald has pointed out a number of errors in the text and suggested that the copy of the laws found in the Corpus manuscript was not made for practical 'forensic purposes' but were intended as a historical document meant to uphold West Saxon leadership.[19]

Together the genealogical material and collection of laws would have effectively bookended the Chronicle text, strongly connecting the historical work with Alfred and associating him with Solomonic ideals of kingship. Whether or not the common stock of annals was compiled under the direction of the king, or with his patronage, remains unknown. However, the scribes responsible for the compilation and copying of this manuscript appear to have clearly intended to suggest such an understanding of the text to its readers. As will be seen, subtle revision for political purposes and the addition of carefully chosen surrounding material characterize the work of these scribes in the other vernacular manuscripts associated with this scriptorium.

### The Second Chronicle Scribe and the Old English *Orosius*

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[18] Jurasinski and Oliver, *The Laws of Alfred*, pp. 280-81 (text and translation).

[19] Wormwald, *The Making of English Law*, p. 172.

The second scribe's stint on the Parker Chronicle features groups of entries that appear to have been added in different settings over a period of time. These stints seem to show a process during which this scribe was becoming comfortable with the orthography and letter forms of the script; Voth has also suggested that this scribe may have been left handed, which could explain some features of experimentation in his or her script.[20] It was likely following this work in CCCC 173 that our scribe began copying a large historical work written in Old English — a translation of Orosius's *Historia adversus Paganos Libri Septem*. The original Latin *History* by Orosius was written in the fifth century and presents an apology of the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Empire. This work would have been valuable to an Anglo-Saxon audience as a world history and also as a source of geographic knowledge, as the Latin *Orosius* included a geographic preface introducing different regions of the known world, which sometimes also circulated separately as a geographical tract in the Middle Ages.[21]

The manuscript produced by the Chronicle scribe, now labeled as Additional 47967, is not the original version of this work, as it contains discernible scribal errors as well as a substantial interpolation (discussed below).[22] Where and for what purposes this text may have been translated into Old English continues to be a topic of discussion. At one point, this translation, along with the Old English *Boethius* and *Soliloquies* as well as other works, was widely considered to have been translated by King Alfred himself.[23] However, it is now generally agreed that the Old English *Orosius* was not translated by the same person(s) who completed the *Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*; instead, all that is known about the translator is that he or she likely completed this work in the late ninth or early tenth century.[24]

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[20] Voth, 'An Analysis', pp. 56–59; see also Omar Khalaf's chapter in this volume.

[21] Lozovsky, *The Earth is our Book*, p. 77.

[22] *The Old English History of the World*, ed. by Godden, pp. xi, 419.

[23] The twelfth-century historian William of Malmesbury lists the *Orosius* among the translations undertaken by the king: William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, I, p. 123. The view that this work was undertaken by the king himself continued to be popular through the mid-twentieth century.

While we do not know how this translation reached the hands of our scribe, it seems in his or her hands to have undergone a subtle refashioning in line with the political aims exhibited in other works produced in this scriptorium. As is well known, in both the Additional manuscript (the Tollemach *Orosius*), and in an eleventh-century manuscript and the only other full copy of the Old English text, Cotton Tiberius B I, the geographical preface found in Orosius' original text has been expanded to include a detailed depiction of two travellers' voyages in Northern Europe. This section of the text does not appear to have been written by the main translator(s) of Orosius' text but is an interpolation of a separate, originally independent source. The change can be easily observed in differences in style between the main text and the interpolated accounts.[25] While remaining uncertain, there is some reason to think that the section containing these narratives was first inserted into the main *Orosius* text during the production of the Additional manuscript by the Chronicle scribe, as both these accounts and the Parker Chronicle entry for 914, copied by the same scribe, use the term 'Iraland' to refer to Ireland. The other portions of the Old English *Orosius* use the term *Scotland* instead, as do the earlier annals copied by the first scribe of the Chronicle, suggesting this was perhaps a distinctive usage adopted by the second scribe.[26]

The first line of the interpolated passage positions these accounts (or at least the first of the two) at the court of King Alfred. Ohthere appears in the narrative to be personally providing the king with an oral account of his travels and homeland, with the section beginning 'Ohthere sæde his hlaforde, Ælfrede cyninge' (Ohthere told his lord, King

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[24] *The Old English History of the World*, ed. by Godden, pp. xi; Bately, 'The Old English *Orosius*', p. 342.

[25] While the previous Old English text of the geographic section is written in a descriptive, third-person style, this section is written instead as reported speech; see Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan in the Old English *Orosius*', pp. 32–33; Bately, 'The Old English *Orosius*', p. 316.

[26] Bately, 'The Old English *Orosius*', p. 342; cf. Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', 676.

Alfred).[27] The text of the Old English *Orosius* itself does not in any way necessitate this addition, already having provided a standard overview of the Northern European regions. I suggest that this portion of text may have been grafted in by the second Chronicle scribe specifically because it asserts the power of the West Saxon king and posits a flattering image of his court as a cosmopolitan centre, hosting various persons from far-flung locations. Given that a tradition of the king's scholarship and interest in translation would already have been known at the period when this text was copied (the second or third decade of the tenth century), the scribe may also have been motivated by a general desire to associate this grand work of translation — if only obliquely — with the king and his court. As will be seen, a very similar method will be employed by the third Chronicle scribe in his or her copy of *Bald's Leechbook*.

## The Third Scribe, *Bald's Leechbook*, and the Old English *Bede*

Unlike the work of the second Chronicle scribe, most of third scribe's entries in the Parker Chronicle appear to have been entered in a single stint of writing. These annals end in the year 950, with an additional annal for 955 perhaps added later.[28] The dates of these final annals suggest a gap of some time between the work of the second and third scribes on the Chronicle text. However, the third scribe writes the Chronicle text with a well-formed hand, and it has been suggested that this work was very likely completed following the copying of the other manuscripts by this scribe (*Bald's Leechbook* and the Old English *Bede*).[29] Although it is difficult to date these manuscripts with any precision, the fact that the Chronicle entries represent the early work of the second scribe and the late work of the third may posit these two figures as near contemporaries, with at least a partial overlap between their years of active scribal work.

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[27] *The Old English Orosius*, ed. by Bately, I, 1.16.
[28] Voth, 'An Analysis', pp. 29–30.
[29] Voth, 'An Analysis', pp. 59–61.

The earliest work now extant copied by the third Chronicle scribe is BL MS Royal 12 D XVII. This manuscript is comprised of a medical compendium divided into three books, containing altogether 128 folios of medical material. Since the manuscript was first edited in the 1860s, it has been recognized that the first two books must have originally formed a separate work from the third book, an independent collection of medical recipes. The scribe has included a colophon following the second book that names a certain ‘Bald’ as the owner of the collection. The colophon is written in Latin hexameters and is a competent example of Latin verse.[30] This text must have been found in the scribe’s exemplar, as it now appears sandwiched between the end of book two and the beginning of the final book. The first two books are commonly referred to by the title *Bald’s Leechbook*, while the third collection is known as *Leechbook III* due to its position in the Royal manuscript. This division can also be seen in the complementary nature of the first two books (the first of which deals primarily with external afflictions and the second with internal) as well as certain shared stylistic features found in these collections but absent from *Leechbook III*.[31]

Like the other vernacular texts copied in this scriptorium, the Royal manuscript is not the archetype of these texts. In the case of *Bald’s Leechbook*, there is evidence to suggest that the copy found in Royal 12. D XVII is quite some distance removed from the original exemplar of the text. The two books forming this collection have each been clearly carefully and meticulously compiled into a head-to-foot order, and both are accompanied table of contents listing the number of entries in each chapter and their content, a work of compilation that would have taken significant effort and expertise.[32] However, these table of content descriptions frequently fail to correctly identify the number of entries found in the chapters of Royal 12 D XVII, indicating a large quantity of additions and emendations following the creation of the original text.[33] A recent study of the manuscript by Christine Voth has underlined the existence of Anglian dialectical features in *Bald's Leechbook*; she suggests that the original text may perhaps have originated in a West Mercian centre, although this remains somewhat uncertain.[34] That an Anglian tradition of medicine existed in the ninth century is demonstrated by the Omont leaf, which appears to preserve the final folio of a head-to-foot ordered collection from the ninth century.[35]

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[30] The first line of the colophon reads: ‘Bald habet hunc librum cild quem conscribere iussit’ (Bald owns this book, which he commanded Cild to write). ‘Conscribere’ could emply either writing in an authorial sense or the copying of a text. For a discussion of the stylistic character of this piece and its possible relationship with the vernacular prefatory tradition associated with King Alfred, see Kesling, ‘The Artistry of Bald’s Colophon’.

[31] Oswald Cockayne, the original editor of these texts, recognized this division, writing: ‘The volume consists of two parts; a treatise on medicine in two books, with its proper colophon at the end, and a third of a somewhat more monkish character’: *Leechdoms, Wortcunning*, *and Starcraft*, Ip. xx. For more discussion of the relationship between these two books and the third collection, see Kesling, *Medical Texts*, pp. 23–30, 57–59.

Although both the time and place of the original creation of this impressive vernacular medical collection has yet to be discovered, the version of the text produced by the third Chronicle scribe appears to have been altered, perhaps at the time of copying, with the purpose of asserting a connection between the collection and King Alfred. Near the end of Book II, where the head-to-foot organization guiding most of the collection appears to falter, is a chapter dedicated to various internal ailments including diarrhoea and spleen pain that concludes with the statement 'þis eal het þus secgean ælfrede cyninge domne helias patriarcha on gerusalem' (all this Lord Elias, the Patriarch in Jerusalem, commanded to be said to King Alfred).[36] The chapter is acephalous as the manuscript is missing leaves at this point. However, from what remains of the text and the table of contents entry, these remedies can be seen to make use of ingredients sourced from the Mediterranean.[37] Scholars have connected these remedies to Asser's account of Alfred's illnesses and have suggested that these remedies may have perhaps been sent with the ailing king in mind.[38] Were this the case, these remedies would likely represent a translation of the original document sent by the Patriarch. In her study of the language of *Bald's Leechbook*, Voth suggested that the language of the chapter is West Saxon and that, unlike other parts of the text, 'not one prominent Anglian feature can be seen in Chapter 64'.[39] These factors suggest that this fragment was written in a West Saxon centre and was incorporated into an earlier, pre-existing collection, presenting a direct parallel with the Old English *Orosius* text. This chapter presents a depiction of a king apparently in dialogue with important foreign dignitaries, here the patriarch — an image very similar to that found in the *Orosius* interpolation. It is also noteworthy that both interpolations directly name Alfred, each time exclusively in lines positioned as framing pieces (in the case of the *Orosius* text this occurs as the first line and here as the last line of the addition). These introductory lines may well have been added during the production of the Winchester manuscripts in order to provide context and to make the connection with the West Saxon king more explicit.

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[32] For background on this text and its compiler, see Kesling, *Medical Texts*, Ch. 1.

[33] For discussion, see Voth, 'An Analysis', pp. 158–59.

[34] For discussion, see Voth, 'An Analysis', pp. 43–50, 158–59; Kesling, *Medical Texts*, pp. 45–49.

[35] This leaf is now Louvain, Université Catholique de Louvain, Fragmenta H. Omont 3. For a discussion of the possible relationship between this earlier collection and *Bald's Leechbook*, see Voth, 'An Analysis', pp. 115–17; Meaney, 'Variant Versions of Old English Medical Remedies', pp. 243–45. For more background on Mercian literary production, see Christine Rauer's chapter in this volume.

[36] BL MS Royal 12 D XVII, fol. 106$^{r}$.

The same scribe that copied this medical collection also copied another vernacular work, the Old English version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. The manuscript containing this scribe's version of the Old English *Bede* was severely damaged in the 1731 fire in the Cotton library and only 52 of its more than 200 leaves remain. There has been an extensive debate about the linguistic features of this text and whether the original version of this text was a translated at a Mercian centre.[40] Neither this debate nor the related dating of the translation has been fully resolved, but Greg Waite has cautiously dated the translation to the ninth century. He has also suggested that the manuscript created by the Chronicle scribe was copied from an exemplar 'markedly Mercian in character'. [41]

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[37] For discussion of this entry, see Meaney, 'Alfred, the Patriarch and the White Stone', pp. 66–70; Banham, 'Arestolobius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Bark that comes from Paradise', p. 462.

[38] Asser refers to Alfred as suffering from *ficus* as well as later a second severe but not outwardly visible illness (*Asser's Life of King Alfred*, ed. by Stevenson, ch. 74). It is generally thought that Alfred had haemorrhoids or perhaps Crohn's disease: Pratt, 'The Illnesses of King Alfred the Great', pp. 72–73; Craig, 'Alfred the Great: A Diagnosis'. See also Emily Butler's chapter in this volume, pp. 000-000.

[39] Voth, 'An Analysis', pp. 163–65; Voth also describes other stylistic and paleographic features distinguishing this section from other portions of the main text.

Like the other texts discussed here, the vernacular rending of Bede's history has often been associated with a broader Alfredian 'project' of translation.[42] In the late tenth and eleventh century, this text was associated with Alfredian authorship, as Ælfric names Alfred as its translator in his homily on St Gregory and it is included in William of Malmbsury's list of the king's works.[43] However, as has been widely recognized since the mid-twentieth century, the style of translation found in this work differs starkly from the looser, more transformative style found in the *Boethius* and *Soliloquies*. Like the other translations discussed in this chapter, its translator remains anonymous.  Unlike the texts discussed above, the Otho text of the Old English *Bede* is not the earliest extant copy of this text; an older version is found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 10, and even earlier excerpts survive as a single leaf (BL MS Cotton Domitian A IX). [44] Of these texts, the Otho codex remains the only one generally agreed to have been copied in Winchester.[45] In light of this, Sharon Rowley has remarked on the distance between Otho's text and any putative archetype of the Old English *Bede*: 'one must wonder why, if the translation were made as part of Alfred's program, his successors possessed a copy relatively far removed from the original, with a section of secondary translation and significant lacunae in Books II and III. Surely, if Alfred had commissioned or overseen this translation, his successors would have had access to a manuscript closer to the archetype'.[46] These considerations support the conclusion that the original work was probably translated outside of Winchester and likely outside of the direct influence of the king or his court.

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[40] For overviews of this discussion, see Rowley, *The Old English Version of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica*, pp. 41–44; Lemke, 'The Old English Translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum'*, pp. 113–21. See also Greg Waite's chapter in this volume.
[41] See further Waite's chapter in this volume.
[42] For discussion, see Rowley, *The Old English Version of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica*, pp. 36–46; Lemke, 'The Old English Translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*', pp. 113–20.
[43] Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. by Godden, p. 72; William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. by Mynors, I, p. 132.
[44] Gneuss and Lapidge date the folio of fragments found in British Library, Cotton Domitian ix, as ix. ex (after 883) or x in. (*Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, n. 330).
[45] Malcolm Parkes argued for placing the Tanner Bede also in Winchester. However, its place of origin remains debated; see Parkes, 'The Paleography of the Parker Manuscript', p. 157; Gameson, 'The Decoration of the Tanner Bede', p. 130.

Although partially destroyed, this manuscript provides important parallels with the other works copied in this scriptorium, in particular with CCCC 173. As in the case of the Chronicle, this vernacular work of history has been surrounded by West Saxon dynastic material. In the eleventh century, the manuscript containing the Old English *Bede* was extended with texts copied from the Parker Chronicle, including the Genealogical and Regnal List, the Chronicle text, and the lawcode.[47] Moreover, Greg Waite has convincingly argued that the original tenth-century copy of the Old English *Bede* found in this manuscript must have also included the genealogical material as well as the Old English preface, even before it was combined with the Parker Chronicle texts, although neither the Preface nor Kings List text survived the fire.[48] Waite discovered variant readings from a lost version of the Genealogical and Regnal List recorded in the collations John Smith made in preparation for his 1722 edition and identified these as consistent with the forms used by scribe of the main text of the *Bede*. These findings clearly indicate that the third Chronicle scribe copied the Genealogical and Regnal List before beginning to copy the Old English *Bede*. These texts may have been already found in the exemplar text used by the third Chronicle scribe, which would have in that case comprised a Mercian manuscript enriched with supplementary dynastic material.[49] If this is the case, this exemplar text would provide a valuable parallel to the CCCC 173, with its additions perhaps dating to the time of the first Chronicle scribe.

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[46] Rowley, *The Old English Version of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica*, p. 54.
[47] Further additions were later made to the same codex including the laws known as *II Æthelstan*, the Burghal Hidage, a note on hides and defense, the poem 'Seasons for Fasting', and a collection of medicinal recipes.
[48] Waite, 'The Preface to the Old English Bede', pp. 42–54.

As originally written, the content of Bede's history concerns itself mostly with the Northern and Eastern kingdoms of Britain and is thus not a text of particular relevance to a West Saxon audience. By associating this work with Alfred, however, the scribe would have implicitly connected the West Saxon house with a broader history of England. This same desire can be seen motivating other choices made by the dynasty, such as in the appropriation of Northumbria's St Oswald as an ancestor of the West Saxon line by Æthelstan.[50] Although now fragmentary, the Otho codex, taken alongside Royal 12 D XVII, suggests that in the mid-tenth century this scriptorium was still producing vernacular works and actively associating them with Alfred's line.

## A Tenth-Century Setting

While the first part of the Parker Chronicle may possibly have been copied during Alfred's lifetime, the following sections of that text as well as the other three works introduced above were copied in the first half of the tenth century, during the reigns of Alfred's descendants. It was during this same period that the West Saxon kingdom was involved in an aggressive military expansion across Britain and that a new imperial image began to be cultivated among the West Saxon kings. A new status as kings beyond Wessex was reflected in the titles used by rulers; charters during the reign of Æthelstan began to refer to the king as *rex totius Britanniae* (King of all Britain) and even as *basileus*, a Greek title used in the eastern empire and later in Byzantium for the Roman emperors.[51] While the specific connotations of *basileus*, and the term *imperator*, a title used more frequently in the time of Eadred, have been the subject of some debate there is a sense that Æthelstan and the kings following wanted to be recognized as some sort of *superrex*, a king of kings.[52] Beyond simply seeing themselves as rulers 'of all Britain', some scholars have suggested that West Saxon dynastic leaders of the tenth century may have been attempting to create the perception that a *translatio imperii* was under way, in which the West Saxon royal house would replace Carolingian Frankia as the imperial centre of Western Christendom.[53]

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[49] See further Waite, 'The Preface to the Old English Bede', pp. 85-86 and his chapter in this volume. Comments on the exemplar of Cotton Otho B XI were conveyed in personal correspondence.

[50] Foot, *Æthelstan*, pp. 204–11; Ortenberg, 'The King from Overseas', p. 31.

Alongside the advancement of this imperial image in the tenth century was a conscious promotion of the memory of King Alfred the Great by the West Saxon royal house. A careful crafting of the facts of Alfred's reign had already begun during his lifetime in texts such as Asser's *Life of King Alfred*. However, during the reign of Edward, Alfred's son, Alfred's body was disentombed from its place in the Old Minster, where it had lain alongside many previous rulers of Wessex, and moved to a prominent place in the large and newly constructed New Minster.[54] This move worked to effectively separate Alfred from earlier rulers, propelling his status as the founder of a new dynasty, one with claims reaching beyond Wessex. Æthelstan appears to have also asserted his ties with Alfred, and, in a story recorded by Williams of Malmesbury, Alfred blesses his grandson's future reign, showering him with gifts and making him a knight.[55] The continued importance of Alfred across the middle and later tenth century can be seen in the words of Æthelweard in his *Chronicon* (written in the late 970s or early 980s), who describes Alfred as 'king of the Saxons, unshakeable pillar of the western people, a man replete with justice, vigorous in warfare, learned in speech, above all instructed in divine learning.'[56] The growing emphasis on Alfred's learning, visible in this quotation, is most famously evident in the twelfth-century account of William of Malmesbury, in which he is presented as a scholarly and learned translator, who, for the benefit of his people, translated from Latin a substantial list of works.[57]

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[51] Both of these titles continued to be used intermittently by Æthelstan's successors throughout the tenth century. The term *basileus*, which was also used to refer to Charlemagne at the end of his reign, is also found in a gospel book that was given to Canterbury's cathedral by Æthelstan (BL MS Cotton Tiberius A.ii), see Foot, *Æthelstan*, p. 213; Gebhardt, 'From Bretwalda to Basileus', pp. 157–58.

[52] For discussion see, Gebhardt, 'From Bretwalda to Basileus'; Molyneaux, 'Why were Some Tenth-Century English Kings Presented as Rulers of Britain?', pp. 62–64; McCann, *Anglo-Saxon Kingship and Political Power*, pp. 55–59.

[53] Leneghan, '*Translatio imperii*', 660; Ortenberg, 'The King from Overseas', pp. 221–26.

[54] For discussion, see Marafioti, 'Seeking Alfred's Body', 203, 213; Nelson, 'Tenth-Century Kingship Comparatively', pp. 328–29.

[55] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. by Mynors, II, pp. 210–11. Although William's sources are uncertain, he claims to have relied on earlier sources and there is every reason to believe this is the type of story that Æthelstan would have liked to see circulating during his lifetime. For discussion of the 'ancient book'

It is within this political setting of the tenth century that the Parker Chronicle continued to be expanded and was supplemented with Alfred's laws, and when the second and third scribes of Parker Chronicle undertook the copying of at least three long prose works in Old English. As has been explored above, the manuscripts containing these works each feature additions meant to suggest the 'Alfredian', or at least West Saxon, nature of the texts they contain. Two of these works feature interpolations into the body of the text mentioning Alfred by name. The other two texts have been surrounded by dynastic material emphasizing their relationship to the West Saxon line, and, in the case of CCCC 173, again with Alfred directly through the inclusion of his law code. While there is no certain proof that these additions do not predate (if only briefly) our extant manuscripts, the fact that these additions feature in every vernacular manuscript known to have been produced by these scribes suggests a considered and well-integrated initiative. We should further remember that these scribes seem to have been consciously attempting to create a high degree of consistency of script between their various works, another feature suggesting a certain deliberateness about their production.

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on Æthelstan purportedly read by William, see Foot, *Æthelstan*, pp. 229–30; Lapidge, 'Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of Æthelstan', pp. 61–71.

[56] '[…] rex Saxonum, immobilis occidentalium postis, uir iustitia plenus, acer in armis, sermone doctus, diuinis quippe super omnia documentis imbutus': *Chronicon Æthelweardi*, ed. and trans. by Campbell, iv.3; trans. by Keynes, 'The Cult of Alfred the Great', p. 228.

[57] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, I, p. 123.

I would suggest that the depiction of Alfred in these texts better reflects tenth-century realities than those of the ninth. While Alfred may well have corresponded with the patriarch in Jerusalem and discussed geography with Norwegians, this depiction is particularly fitting within the more imperial context of the tenth century. Alfred's court hosted a variety of learned figures from various backgrounds, including famously Asser, a Welshman, and John the Old Saxon. However, it did not match the cosmopolitan nature of Æthelstan's court, at which he fostered the youth of foreign nobility and arranged marriage contracts between his house and foreign kings.[58] This later, tenth-century, court would have come much closer to embodying the type of global network hinted at in the additions made to the *Orosius* and *Bald's Leechbook*.

The manuscripts copied in Winchester could also be seen to reflect the idea of Alfred as a figure of 'divine learning', an image which was increasingly promoted throughout the tenth century. Within these texts, Alfred features as a figure with interests in every field of learning. In the *Orosius*, he appears as a type of scientist, collecting geographic knowledge about the whole world. In *Bald's Leechbook*, he is shown in personal correspondence with the Patriarch of Jerusalem, a figure and a location whose biblical and historical importance would be well-known to an Anglo-Saxon audience — and he is here depicted collecting for his people yet another type of knowledge, medical learning from the East. In the Parker manuscript, he is the author of a law code, one that explicitly reiterates its ties with both Solomon and Christ. There is a certain consistency within these texts which all seem to portray Alfred as the archetype of a wise Solomonic ruler.

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[58] During the reign of Edward, Eadgifu (Edward's daughter) was married to the Frankish king, 'Charles the Simple'. A decade later, after Edward's death, King Æthelstan arranged the marriage of another daughter of Edward's, Eadgyth, to Otto, the future King and Emperor of the Saxons. Æthelstan also fostered at his court Alain, heir to the Breton throne, and Louis, his nephew and the son of Charles the Simple. Later accounts also suggest that that sons of Constantin of Scotland and Harald Fairhair of Norway may also have spent some time at his court. For discussion of these events, see Foot, *Æthelstan*, pp. 46–55; Ortenberg, 'The King from Overseas', pp. 211–36.

Interestingly, with the exception of the preface to the lawcode, none of the manuscripts copied within this scriptorium contain prefatory material attributing authorship to Alfred himself, as is sometimes found in other works — the aim within this scriptorium seems not to have been to attribute 'authorship' to Alfred, but instead merely to ensure that these impressive works were associated with his reign. In this endeavour these scribes were undoubtedly successful, even if the perhaps more general type of royal patronage indicated in these texts was to be frequently misconstrued as signifying the king's personal authorship by later generations including Ælfric, William of Malmesbury, as well as scholars and readers up to the present day.

## The Winchester Scribes

As first recognized by Malcolm Parkes, a small group of persons, writing closely related scripts and probably in close collaboration, were responsible for the manuscripts surveyed above. It is possible that these persons were also responsible for the copying of other texts which have not survived. As has been seen, none of the works copied by these scribes are thought to be original texts, and there is no strong evidence to suggest that this centre was responsible for any extensive translation enterprise. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing the scale of these scribes' achievement; the copying of these long, complex works, spanning together hundreds of folia, suggests a deliberate effort towards the production of Old English texts pursued over decades. This scriptorium also seems to have been motivated by certain political goals and may well have had some sort of relationship, whether formal or informal, with the West Saxon royal family or court. It is worth pausing a moment to consider who these scribes may have been.

As mentioned above, the appearance of the name Frithestan in two portions of CCCC 173 at least suggests that the Parker Chronicle and the other manuscripts closely associated with it were written in the bishopric of Winchester. This demarcation could include several possible centres, some of which were royal foundations, such as Wimborne or Wilton. However, the presence of three ecclesiastical institutions within the city of Winchester itself, something unparalleled at that time in England, is enough to suggest the possibility of that city as a location for the important and sophisticated scribal initiative we observe in these manuscripts. These ecclesiastical centres would have all been located close together within the town walls.[59] The earliest foundation, known as the Old Minster, had served as the royal mausoleum for the West Saxon royal family. This institution was then joined by two new monastic houses later known as the Nunnaminster and the New Minster. The foundation charters for these institutions date to the reign of Edward, Alfred's son, yet in both cases steps towards their foundation seem to have been taken before Alfred's death.[60]

The only firm evidence connecting this group of manuscripts discussed above with any of these Winchester institutions is with the nun's abbey of Nunnaminster. As mentioned above, the first scribal hand found in the Chronicle (or one nearly identical) is also found in a clause describing the boundaries of Nunnaminster abbey entered into the prayerbook now known as the *Book of Nunnaminster*. The boundary statement refers to Ealhswith in the present tense, probably indicating that she was alive when it was written, although it is possible that the extant version could be a copy of an earlier document.[61] The apparent presence of the first Chronicle hand in a book owned by Nunnaminster abbey suggested to Parkes that this scribe, as well as the other scribes involved in copying the Parker Chronicle, were members of that community.[62] David Dumville disputed this connection, arguing that in the first part of the tenth century the abbey of Nunnaminster may have been too recently founded to have had a fully formed scriptorium. He suggested that the hand responsible for the boundary clause in the *Book of Nunnaminster* more likely belonged to a priest from the Old Minster, who would have necessarily performed services for the women's community.[63] While Dumville's suggestion is possible, it also probable that a royal foundation of the importance of Nunnaminster may have involved bringing in some persons from established institutions who would have had scribal training.

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[59] For a drawing of tenth-century Winchester, see Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, fig. 1.

[60] Biddle, 'Felix Urbs Winthonia', pp. 127–28; Biddle, 'Winchester: The Development of an Early Capital', p. 251.

[61] For discussion, see Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar*, pp. 83–85. For the full text, see Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, doc. I.

Royal nunneries frequently had extremely close ties to the royal family and would be an obvious candidate for the type of politically-minded centre suggested by this group of texts. In the specific case of Nunnaminster, it is generally thought that Ealhswith retired there following the death of Alfred. The same institution also received Eadburh, Edward's daughter, as a young child.[64] Any effort to locate the three scribes whose works are explored above should, however, keep in mind the close physical proximity of the three ecclesiastical institutions housed within the city walls.[65] It seems highly probable that these works as well as those in the wider network of related manuscripts identified by Parkes could have been result of some level of collaboration between members of these various centres. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it is with the Nunnaminster that we have strongest piece of evidence for locating these scribes, which may suggest that an important collection of some of the earliest prose manuscripts in Old English were copied by women.[66] This community also seems to have owned the *Book of Nunnaminster*, a ninth-century devotional collection (itself frequently seen as a text made to be used by women), which is written in an insular script thought to have been influential on the script form practiced by these Winchester scribes.[67]

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[62] Parkes also identified a hand found in the Trinity Isidore with the marginal addition found on folio 41r of the *Book of Nunnaminster*. This addition contains the words *ora pro me peccatrice* suggesting a female scribe: Parkes, 'A Fragment of a Tenth-Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscript', p. 131.

[63] Dumville 'English Square Minuscule Script', p. 164.

[64] For discussion, see Yorke, '"Sisters Under the Skin?"', pp. 97–101; Yorke, 'Eadburh'.

[65] It was said that singing in the New Minster could be heard in the Old Minster. For discussion, see Quirk, 'Winchester Cathedral in the Tenth Century', p. 65; see also Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, fig. 1.

[66] The *Book of Nunnaminster*, apparently held by this community, is likely also the product of a female community. For a discussion of this collection and other examples of female book ownership and production,

## Conclusion

In his article 'Alfredian Prose: Myth and Reality', Malcolm Godden describes the association of vernacular prose translation with King Alfred as 'contemporary legend, a story that was consciously created and promoted from the king's lifetime onwards'.[68] This essay has explored a tenth-century chapter in this story. It has hinted at the way that external, often earlier works, may have been assimilated into the tradition of Alfredian translation in this period. More significantly, it has explored the role of scribes as important characters in the shaping and promotion of the narrative of the Alfredian project. Through these works we have observed the active and inventive side of scribal practice and perhaps also an instance of communal endeavour among a small group of individuals across decades.[69] Although these figures remain unnamed, they left a lasting impression on literary production in Old English and the history of Alfredian prose in the tenth century.

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see Brown, 'Female Book-Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England'; Kesling, 'The *Royal Prayerbook's* Blood-Staunching Charms', pp. 192–200.

[67] Dumville, 'Early Square Miniscule Script', p. 159; Parkes, 'The Paleography of the Parker Manuscript', p. 158.

[68] Godden, 'Alfredian Prose', p. 132.

[69] A parallel for this this type of community might possibly be seen in the scribes responsible for the creation of the Nowell Codex; for a discussion of this and other communal scribal endeavours from late Anglo-Saxon England see Thomson, *Communal Creativity*.

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