

Constructions of Christian Identity in the Northern Periphery: the Sawley World Map in Twelfth-Century England

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An exploration of the complex relationship between Christian constructions of identity and the idea of sacrality derived from the ancient Greco-Roman world, this article argues that Christian identity developed uniquely in a specific context, often intertwined with theology and mythology. The complex relationship between the two was crucial in the construction of Christian identity in the lands recently converted, and influenced the authors of world maps from the eleventh century onward. This study investigates how the pagan past and Christian present were incorporated in some world maps, such as the twelfth-century English Sawley map. Thus it offers readers a coherent analysis of early history-writing in northern Europe in the first centuries after conversion.

In the last decade there has been more interest in the connections between the formations of Christian identities and concepts of sacred places in northern Europe. However, this connection has not been sufficiently studied in the context of medieval cartography. In medieval cartography there are two main traditions for depicting the world: *mappae mundi*¹

MGH = Monumenta Germaniae Historica; Epp. = Epistolae; SS rer. Germ. = Scriptores rerum Germanicarum

¹ Katarzyna Zalewska-Lorkiewicz argues that in the Middle Ages, the term *mappa* was used indirectly to describe cartographic documents, whereas in classical Latin it always referred to objects made of cloth: *Ilustrowane mappae mundi jako obraz świata: średniowiecze i początek okresu nowożytnego*, Warsaw 1997, 8.

and ‘portolan charts’.² Cartographic descriptions of peripheral regions conflate historical narratives and cultural accounts. Therefore toponyms, ethnonyms and choronyms on medieval world maps are more reliable than literary texts for identifying geographical objects. These were interpreted not only in a geographical way, but also as cultural and religious descriptions. In geographical terms, a world map can look inaccurate and very simplistic and therefore must not be judged according to modern cartographic criteria.

Medieval world maps can be seen as mental descriptions of physical places, often having a religious background. They were never meant to be used as navigational charts, which appeared in the mid-thirteenth century in Italy, and later in Iberia. There is not much geographical accuracy in these maps. Rather, they were, in a sense, religious and secular encyclopaedias and were meant to illustrate different contemporary realities. Moreover, a *mappa mundi* provides an individual window into the medieval world, as well as a view of Christian geography. In some cases the authors of these maps were not interested in the representation of physical reality, but rather in that of a religious reality.

Beside the religious aspects of the world maps, the secular aspect of their creation must be considered. Indeed the tradition of making such maps originated in church institutions and clerical writings, but their visual language was adapted for use in medieval political thinking. In the thirteenth century, a new type of world map developed as an aid to maritime navigation. Known as portolan charts, they are characterised by a much more sophisticated system consisting of different groups of signs, starting with nautical signs, such as scales, the rhumb-line system and visualisation of winds; geographical signs for hills, mountains, lakes and rivers; conventional architectural signs for cities, castles and churches; the depiction of places with an individual iconographic tradition like Jerusalem or the tower of Babel; and, finally, signs indicating power like flags, coats of arms and insignia.³

² In medieval Latin, *carta/ae* denoted a document (usually a large-sized one); it was applied at a later date than *mappa* to portolan charts: *ibid.* 8–9. For a comprehensive overview of medieval world maps see Evelyn Edson, *Mapping time and space: how medieval mapmakers viewed their world*, London 1997, 2.

³ For medieval portolan charts see Philipp Billion, ‘How did medieval cartographers work? New insights through a systematic analysis of the visual language of medieval portolan charts up to 1439’, *Cartes et géomatique* ccxvi (2013), 33–45; R. J. Pujades i Bataller, *Les cartes portolanes: la representació medieval d’una mar solcada*, Barcelona 2007; and Tony Campbell, ‘Portolan charts from the late thirteenth century to 1500’, in J. B. Harley and D. Woodward (eds), *Cartography in prehistoric, ancient, and medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, Chicago 1987, 371–463.

The origin of the Sawley map

The Sawley map (see [Figure 1](#)), formerly known as the ‘Henry of Mainz’ map (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, ms 66, p. 2), has been variously dated from c. 1180 to the early thirteenth century⁴ and is regarded as the earliest surviving English map of its group, along with maps such as Ebstorf or Hereford.⁵ Initially, the Sawley map was dated to the beginning of the twelfth century, but because of geographic discrepancies between Norman toponyms and the appended text of the *Imago mundi* dated 1110, scholars suggested that the manuscript was compiled in the late twelfth or even early thirteenth century. The author may have been an Anglo-Norman map-maker in the encyclopaedic tradition of scholasticism combining classical, biblical and contemporary information.⁶ As for the provenance of the manuscript, scholars argued that it was made at Durham Cathedral Priory and then transferred to the Cistercian abbey of Sawley in Yorkshire as a kind of cover at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

It is possible that MS 66 included half of a manuscript from Sawley Abbey and half of another manuscript belonging to Bury St Edmunds, one of the richest Benedictine monasteries in England. According to M. R. James, the other two halves of the Bury and Sawley manuscripts were brought together as CUL, MS Ff. 1. 27. However, MS 66 has since been separated into MS 66 (Sawley) and MS 66A (Bury). The Sawley MS appears as the frontispiece to a copy of the eleventh-century encyclopedia, the *Imago mundi*, created by Honorius Augustodunensis. It also contains extracts from Pliny the Elder (d. 79 AD), Solinus (3rd century AD), the *Historia Anglorum* by Henry of Huntingdon (c. 1154) and other English writings.⁷

⁴ Gautier Dalche, *La ‘Descriptio Mappae Mundi’ de Hugues de Saint-Victor*, Paris 1988, 183; Danielle Le Coq, ‘La Mappemonde d’Henri de Mayence, ou l’image du monde au XII^e siècle’, in Gaston Duchet-Suchaux (ed.), *Iconographie médiévale: image, texte, contexte*, Paris 1990, 155; Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, *Fines terrae: die Enden der Erde und der vierte Kontinent auf mittelalterlichen Weltkarten*, Hannover 1992, 70.

⁵ C. Delano-Smith and R. J. P. Kain, *English maps: a history*, Toronto 1999, 37.

⁶ Patrizia Licini, ‘A full image of a cultural space: the Sawley *Mappa Mundi* as a global memory hypertext’, in U. Knefelkamp and K. Bosselmann-Cyran (eds), *Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung im Mittelalter: 11. Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes vom 14. bis 17. März 2005 in Frankfurt an der Oder*, Berlin 2007, 470–89 at p. 475; Paul D. A. Harvey, ‘The Sawley map and other world maps in twelfth-century England’, *Imago Mundi* xlix (1997), 33–4.

⁷ M. R. James, ‘Bury St Edmunds manuscripts’, *EHR* xli (1926), 251–60; *A descriptive catalogue of the manuscripts in the library of Corpus Christi College Cambridge*, i, Cambridge 1912; and *The sources of Archbishop Parker’s collection of MSS at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, with a reprint of the catalogue of Thomas Markaunt’s Library*, xxxii, Cambridge 1899.



Figure 1. The Sawley map, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 66, p. 2. Reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

The inscription with the name ‘Sawley’ is rubbed at the very top and confirms the provenance of the map. Some English copies were addressed to a certain Christianus, while others which were made in the later centuries do not mention the name Honorius, but Henricus, who appears as the editor of the book (‘qui hunc librum edidit’). It was emphasised that the author’s name could be explained as a scribal misreading, moved from one copy to another. Thus *Hon*, an abbreviated form of *Honorius*, became *Hen*, a similar form of *Henricus*.⁸ It was further thought that the author could be a certain Henry, probably a canon of St Mary’s Church, Mainz, or Archbishop Henry himself, who had charge of the church between 1142 and 1152. At the beginning of his ecclesiastical career, the archbishop was assisted by Anselm of Havelberg, who took part in the Wendish Crusade of 1147 as papal legate in order to ensure ‘peace and unity’ among the crusaders.⁹ Yet the so-called Henry of Mainz seems rather to be a fictional character or, if he did exist, he had nothing to do with MS 66. Therefore to call the work the ‘Henry of Mainz’ map is a misleading misnomer.¹⁰

Depiction of the far north

As far as the geographical details of the Sawley map are concerned, it is clear that northern Europe is depicted in a different way from on the Anglo-Saxon Cotton map.¹¹ There are two oval peninsulas located very close to one another. The western peninsula is called *Sinus Germanicus* and it looks like some kind of bridge connecting it to *Island*, which is located further north, at the edge of the world. The eastern peninsula has the inscription *Noreya* and is connected to an island named *Ganzmir*; the same name as on the Cotton map (see [Figure 2](#)). Eduard Moritz suggested that the *Sinus Germanicus* peninsula is Jutland, and *Noreya* is the whole of Scandinavia. Therefore, the gulf ‘sinus’ between them might be a depiction of the Skagerrak, the strait connecting the North Sea with the Kattegat.¹² A different interpretation was made by Haraldur

⁸ For the origin of the map see Harvey, ‘The Sawley map’, 33–42.

⁹ Delano-Smith and Kain, *English maps*, 34–6; Jay T. Lees, *Anselm of Havelberg: deeds into words in the twelfth century*, Leiden 1998, 60.

¹⁰ Harvey, ‘The Sawley map’, 33.

¹¹ For further details regarding the Baltic region in economic, political and cultural terms in the eleventh-century *Cottoniana* see Mihai Dragnea, ‘Mental geographies and cultural identities in the Baltic region during the eleventh century: the Anglo-Saxon Cotton World Map’, in Dumitru-Cătălin Rogojanu and Gherghina Boda (eds), *History, culture and research*, iii, Targoviste 2019, 13–28.

¹² This strait runs between the south-east coast of Norway, the south-west coast of Sweden and the Jutland peninsula of Denmark and connects the North Sea and the



Figure 2. The two oval peninsulas, *Sinus Germanicus* and *Noreya*, and the connected islands *Island* and *Ganzmir*. In the vicinity is *Cynocephales*: Sawley map.

Sigurðsson, who believed that *Sinus Germanicus* is Sweden.¹³ For Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, *Noreya* is Jutland.¹⁴

The influence of Old Norse can be detected on the Sawley map, which shows the word Norway in the vernacularised form *Noreya*. It is possible that the author of the map has combined some basic knowledge of Old Norse and Old English with rumours of an insular Scandinavia cultivated by the Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon geographical narratives.¹⁵ The form *Noreya* is composed of the vernacular *Noregr* and the Old Norse toponymic

Kattegat sea area, which leads to the Baltic sea: Eduard Moritz, *Die Entwicklung des Kartenbildes der Nord- und Ostseeländer bis auf Mercator: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Deutschlands*, Halle 1908, 5, 10.

¹³ Haraldur Sigurðsson, *Kortasaga Íslands frá öndverðu til loka 16. Aldar*, Reykjavík 1971, 39.

¹⁴ Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, 'Die kartographische Darstellung Nordeuropas durch italienische und mallorquinische Portolanzeichner im 14. und in der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* xcii (1974), 45–58.

¹⁵ For further details on the beginning of the cartography of Scandinavia and the Baltic region see Leonid S. Chekin, 'Mappae Mundi and Scandinavia', *Scandinavian Studies* lxxv/4 (1993), 487–520 at p. 487.

element-*øy*, which could denote an island.¹⁶ *Ganzmir*, the island connected to *Noreya*, appears with the same name on the Hereford map (c. 1300). The name might be a corruption of *Canzia*, *Scanzia*, *Scania*, *Scandia* or *Scandza*, all of them designating the southern-most province of present-day Sweden (Skåne). The connection between Scandinavia (*Scanzia*) and Norway (*Norwegia*) also appears on the ‘Lambert’ map in the Ghent codex (c. 1125). There, *Scanzia* is represented as a peninsula with narrow gulfs running up into Continental Europe on each side (see Figure 3).¹⁷

From antiquity to medieval times, the coastal areas stretching from the east coast of Jutland to the river Vistula must have been known as the *Sinus Codanus*. Thus, *Sinus Codanus* may be the first Latin name for the Baltic.¹⁸ According to Pomponius Mela (d. c. 45 AD), the *Codanus Sinus* is a ‘huge bay’ lying beyond the river Albis. In this large maritime space are located many islands. In Mela’s description of Europe, Albis is the Elbe, which flows into the North Sea. The large islands could be the ones grouped in the south-west of the Baltic, stretching from Jutland to the Vistula (Funen, Samsø, Zealand, Lolland, Falster, Møn, Rügen, Bornholm and Öland). Scandinavia is seen not as a peninsula, but as the largest island of this archipelago. A variation of *Scandza* is Pliny’s *Scatinavia*, which refers to the most famous island in the *Codanus* bay, beyond the *mons Saevio* (the mountainous part of Norway), which forms an enormous bay all the way to the Cimbrian promontory (Jutland).¹⁹ This corresponds to Mela’s *Codanonia* or *Candanovia*, described as the biggest and the most fertile island of the ones mentioned above, which integrates with its name the entire archipelago.²⁰

It is possible that *Codanus* was an archaic endonym that refers to the inner Danish waters seen as a river or bay. This is not the only time when an author used the term *dana* for a river. A first example is Procopius of Caesarea (c. 570 AD) who says that the river Po in northern Italy was also called *Eridanos*, because it begins in Celtic territory.²¹ When he mentioned

¹⁶ Scot D. Westrem, *The Hereford Map: a transcription and translation of the legends with commentary*, Turnhout 2001, 192–3.

¹⁷ Konrad Miller, *Mappe mundi: die ältesten Weltkarten*, Stuttgart 1895, 45.

¹⁸ Procopius, *History of the Wars: books 5–6 (Gothic War)*, trans. H. B. Dewing, New York 2007, i.18, p. 9.

¹⁹ Strabo placed the Cimbri on a peninsula somewhere between the Rhine and the Elbe. Later, this peninsula was equated with Jutland-Schleswig thanks to accounts from Mela, Pliny and Tacitus. For the migration of the Cimbri in the Augustan time see Rita Compatangelo-Soussignan, ‘Poseidonios and the original cause of the migration of the Cimbri: tsunami, storm surge or tides?’, *Revue des études anciennes* cxviii/2 (2016), 2–18.

²⁰ Mirela Avdagic, ‘The north in antiquity: between maps and myths’, in Dolly Jørgensen and Virginia Langum (eds), *Visions of north in premodern Europe*, Turnhout 2018, 59–80 at pp. 68, 69.

²¹ Mela 3. 31, 54, in Frank E. Romer, *Pomponius Mela’s description of the world*, Ann Arbor, MI 1998, 109.



Figure 3. Northern Europe on the Lambert map. Reproduced from Fridtjof Nansen, *In northern Mists*, 188.

a Saxon attack in Gaul in the sixth century, Paul the Deacon (eighth century) used a second name for the French river Rhône (*Rodanus*).²² The same name also appears on the Sawley map as a river which starts from the *Alpes* (Swiss Alps) and flows into the Mediterranean (see Figure 4). Most important is the name of the Danube, which appears

²² Paul the Deacon, *The history of the Langobards by Paul the Deacon*, trans. William D. Foulke, New York 1906, ii. 6, pp. 98–9.

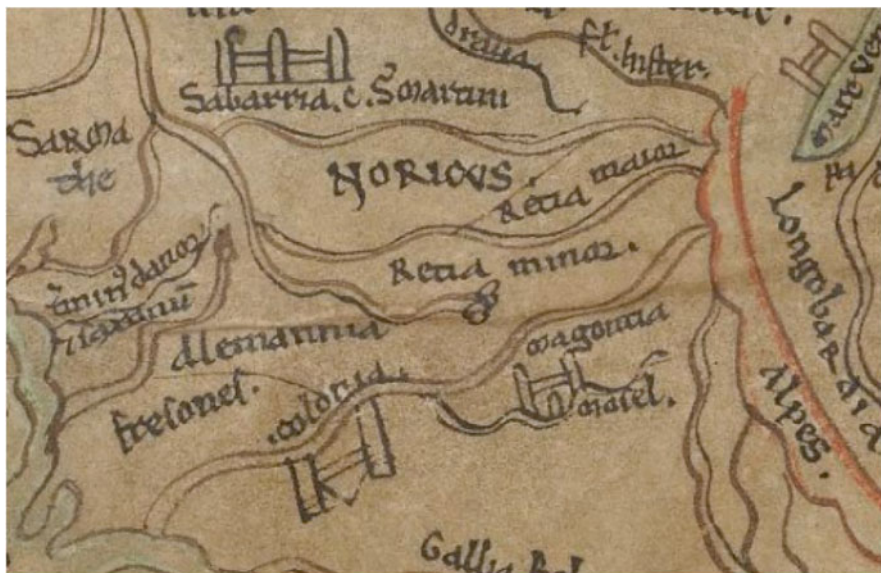


Figure 4. The Sarmatians, Frisians, *Alemannia*, the cities of Cologne and Mainz on the Rhine, and the Rhône: Sawley map.

on the map as *Danubius*. Therefore *Codanus*, used by Pliny and Mela, was not an original Latin term for the Danish *sinus*, but probably an Indo-European endonym.

In contrast to the inhabited Christian world (*orbis terrarum*), the surrounding sea was often depicted as a large non-human realm, called *alter orbis* by Pliny. On the Sawley map, *Sinus Germanicus* was drawn not as a terrestrial region, but as a maritime space, that is, the Baltic. The Baltic islands marked on the map are considered ‘*insulae extra orbem positae*’ (‘islands placed outside the world’). This does not mean that the entire population on the islands was not Christian, or was isolated from the Christian *oecumene*. In some islands there may not have been a religious and secular administration, but only small communities of farmers and merchants.²³ Between the tenth and the late eleventh century, on some Danish southern islands such as Møn, Lolland and Falster, the pagan Wends (especially the Rugiani from Rügen) organised frequent raids. Along with the raids, the Wends started to colonise some of the islands. There were Wendic settlements on islands such as Lolland and Falster, where no stone churches were built and the main activity was reduced to agriculture. This is

²³ For further details about the ethnic diversity of Scandinavia see Clare Downham, ‘*Hiberno-Norwegians and Anglo-Danes: anachronistic ethnicities and Viking-Age England*’, *Mediaeval Scandinavia* xix (2009), 139–69, and Jones Gwyn, *A history of the Vikings*, Oxford 2001.

confirmed not only by archaeological research, but also by the local toponymy. On Falster were found the remains of a Wendish shipyard, while on Lolland some settlements retain until the present day the Slavic suffix *-itze*. Kramnitze, Tilitze, Kuditze, Bilitze.²⁴ The Wendish raids along with colonisation especially on Lolland and Falster must have been disturbing enough for the Danish king Valdemar I (1157–82), who organised a campaign on the island of Rügen in 1168. The political and religious centre, Arkona, was conquered, all idols were destroyed, and the Rugiani were forced to accept Christianity ‘according to the Danish rite’. The Rugiani were not fully pagans, but unorthodox Christians. They followed an *aliena religio* which was seen as a sort of apostasy combining aspects of Christianity with pagan superstitions.²⁵

On the Sawley map, the direct connection of the Baltic Sea with the location marked *Island* might be explained by the fact that from 1056 the Icelandic diocese of Skálholt was a suffragan of the archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen. From about 1104 it became a suffragan of the new archdiocese of Lund and, from 1153, of Nidaros (Trondheim) in Norway.²⁶ By connecting Iceland to the *Sinus Germanicus*, the author of the map might have been emphasising the legitimacy of Hamburg-Bremen in *partes aquilonis* in general and in Iceland in particular. The connection between Iceland and *Sinus Germanicus* could also be a trade route from Iceland to the main ports located on the shores of the Baltic Sea (see Figure 5). In Iceland, between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, economic centres were reduced to several fishing harbours and seasonal marketplaces. From the twelfth century, Arctic Norway was one of Europe’s most important exporters of fish (cod in the form of air-dried stockfish). Iceland began to export preserved cod by the end of the thirteenth century.²⁷ Not only fish and homespun were exported from Iceland, but also mineral resources such as sulphur. The first evidence

²⁴ Nils Hybel and Bjorn Poulsen, *The Danish resources, c. 1000–1550: growth and recession*, Leiden 2007, 137.

²⁵ Mihai Dragnea, *The Wendish Crusade, 1147: the development of crusading ideology in the twelfth century*, London 2019, 11–12. It has been argued that the adoption of Christianity in northern and east-central Europe can be adequately described as a myth-making process. An essential action within this process was the inclusion of local saints in the Christian pantheon in all regions entering Latin Europe. For the links between local sanctity and the making of cultural foundation myths in medieval historical writing see Lars B. Mortensen (ed.), *The making of Christian myths in the periphery in Latin Christendom (c. 1000–1300)*, Copenhagen 2006.

²⁶ Nidaros became an archbishopric in 1152 or 1153, being independent of Hamburg-Bremen: Mihai Dragnea, ‘The cult of St Olaf in the Latin and Greek Churches between the eleventh and twelfth centuries,’ *Hiperborea* vii/2 (2020), 145–67 at p. 158.

²⁷ J. Barrett and others, ‘Detecting the medieval cod trade: a new method and first results’, *Journal of Archaeological Science* xxxv (2008), 850–61 at p. 852.

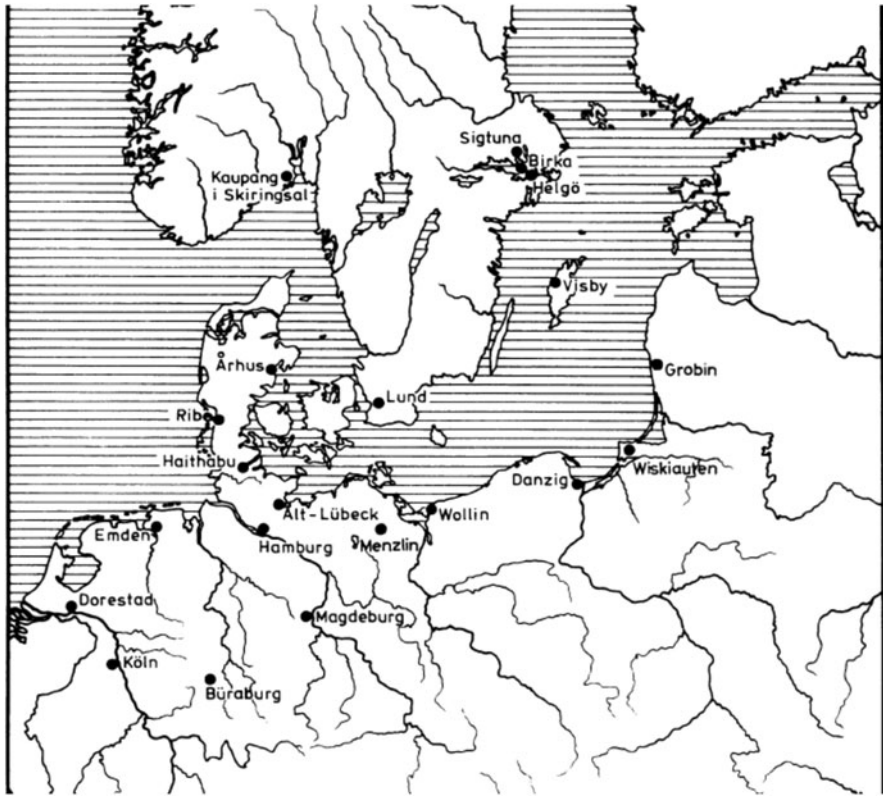


Figure 5. Distribution map of the main market places from the eighth to the eleventh century in the coastal regions of the North and the Baltic Sea. Reproduced from Herbert Jankuhn, 'Trade and settlement in central and northern Europe up to and during the Viking period', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* cxii (1982), 18–50 at p. 36. © Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

for Icelandic sulphur dates from the second half of the twelfth century. At that time, Bergen was the main port for goods coming from and going to various islands in the Atlantic which were under Norwegian political, economic and ecclesiastical influence (Shetland, Faroe, Iceland). After 1262, when royal rule was established in Iceland, the diocese of Nidaros already had the right to acquire sulphur. From that time onwards, not only Norwegians, but also English merchants started to export sulphur in large quantities.²⁸

²⁸ For further details regarding the export of sulphur from Iceland to Norway and other states see Natascha Mehler, 'The sulphur trade of Iceland from the Viking Age to the end of the Hanseatic period', in I. Baug, J. Larsen and S. S. Mygland (eds),

The first mention of the name of the Baltic Sea (*Mare Balticum*) was made by the eleventh-century German chronicler, Adam of Bremen, who is quoting Einhard.²⁹ However, the origin of the word *Baltic* comes from Pliny, whose narrative included information derived from Xenophon of Lampsacus (d. 354 BC). In the first century, *Baltia* or *Balcia* (called *Basilia* by Pytheas) was seen as an island in the south-west of the Baltic, from which amber came. In his *Natural history*, Pliny wrote that ‘Xenophon of Lampsacus tells us that at a distance of three days’ sail from the shores of Scythia, there is an island of immense size called *Baltia*, which by Pytheas is called *Basilia*.’³⁰

The medieval authors of *mappae mundi* made only limited use of the descriptions offered by Pliny, who mentions *Scandia* as being an island. These authors inherited the ancient idea of islands existing in the Northern Ocean which to them was *terra incognita*. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, historians from Normandy included the island *Scanza* of Jordanes in the topography of Rollo’s historical campaigns.³¹ Through them, the image of Scandinavia as an island survived into the late Middle Ages when it was identified with Denmark, Norway or other northern lands. Mythological and geographical details were mingled and writers managed to offer a full image of a cultural space, with a string of meaningful interconnected historical events.

In a modern sense, a peninsula is a territory bordered by water on three sides and connected geographically to the mainland, with which it shares the same infrastructure. In the twelfth century, this connection was not so complex. For instance, the depiction of Norway as a peninsula was based on religious or economic affinity, and not on geographical details. This does not mean that the authors of world maps were completely devoid of geographical information. On the contrary, they used their basic geographical knowledge to describe certain territories and people, in various relationships with those who commissioned the writing of the manuscripts. If Norway were depicted as a peninsula connected to Scandinavia, it could mean that the author of the map highlighted an alliance between the Swedish and Norwegian monarchies. According to the historiography, King Knut 1 of Sweden (1172–95) and his jarl Birger

Nordic Middle Ages: artefacts, landscapes and society: essays in honour of Ingvild Øye on her 70th birthday, Bergen 2015, 193–212 at pp. 193, 201, 206.

²⁹ For narrative accounts of the earliest exploration of Northern Europe see Fridtjof Nansen, *In northern mists: Arctic exploration in early times*, trans. Arthur G. Chater, Cambridge 2014.

³⁰ *Pliny’s Natural History* iv. 27, trans. John Bostock and H. T. Riley, London 1855, 342, 345. For more details about the ancient perception of the North see Oswald A. W. Dilke, ‘Geographical perceptions of the north in Pomponius Mela and Ptolemy’, *Arctic* xxxvii/4 (1984), 347–51.

³¹ Chekin, ‘*Mappae Mundi* and Scandinavia’, 490–1.

Brosa (d. 1202) maintained good relations with the Norwegian king Sverre Sigurdsson (1184–1202). In 1185 Sverre married Margaret, Knut's sister and daughter of Erik IX (1156–60).³²

The reception of ancient Greco-Roman history and geography

The Sawley map, as other medieval *mappae mundi*, shows the tripartite world of Asia, Europe and Africa, encircled by the so-called 'world ocean'. However this image reflects only some aspects of medieval oceanography. Medieval thinking relied heavily on the Bible. According to Genesis i.7, the ocean that encircles the earth is connected to the waters that were separated when God created the world and therefore are located above the celestial firmament.

The Sawley map belongs to a much wider family of spatial visual representations and ideas found not only in cartography, but also in architecture in both Western and Eastern Europe. Some examples can be found in the Byzantine churches, where the dome representing the heavens above the four directions of the earth (four angels) was often built above the intersection of the transepts and nave. Byzantine churches thus expressed the same symbolic spatial concept as the medieval world maps, namely a microcosm of earth and heaven.³³

Beside the geographical details of the Sawley map, there are some interesting symbols which needs to be discussed. The geographical details maintain a certain proportion and represent spatial point data with a symbol, whose area varies. The symbols used are circles, bars, squares or even pictographic symbols, all drawn in different colours. The methodology of proportional symbol on the maps has been discussed in detail by cartographers.³⁴ On the Sawley map seas are usually depicted in green, rivers in violet. Relief is represented by red lobed chains, while certain settlements appear as double towers, or ramparts.

The sizes and shapes of islands depended on non-geographic factors and therefore the authors of these world maps have tended to transform the image of space into a personal opinion about the world. There are scholars who suggests that this tendency could be used as a learning or memory tool for some special locations and therefore the world maps can be placed 'within the medieval realm of wheels of memory'.³⁵

³² Kasper H. Andersen and Jeppe B. Netterstrom (eds), *Dronningemagt i middelalderen: Festschrift til Anders Bøgh*, Aarhus 2018, 258.

³³ Mieczysław Wallis, 'Semantic and symbolic elements in architecture: iconology as a first step towards an architectural semiotic', *Semiotica* viii (1973), 220–38 at pp. 224–8.

³⁴ T. A. Slocum, *Thematic cartography and visualization*, Upper Saddle River, NJ 1999.

³⁵ Naomi R. Kline, *Maps of medieval thought: the Hereford paradigm*, Woodbridge 2001, 13; Elizabeth Rodini, 'Art, memory and maps', in J. B. Friedman and K. M. Figg (eds), *Trade, travel, and exploration in the Middle Ages*, New York–London 2000, 392–4.



Figure 6. The island of Delos surrounded by the Cyclades: Sawley map.

Places depicted at the centre of various medieval world maps are not monastic houses where the compiler of a map might live, but rather symbolic biblical centres. Jerusalem, the main biblical city, was not shown in the exact centre of the Sawley map, but above, on the right, framed in a vertical rectangle, and represented by an icon that appears to be a temple (see Figure 1). In the centre are other classical locations such as the sacred island of Delos. This was drawn as a large circle surrounded by the smaller islands of the Cyclades (see Figure 6). A similar depiction is the island named *Orcades* (the Orkneys), located in the north-west, between *Sinus Germanicus* and *Britannia insula* (see Figure 7). Both Scandinavia and Iceland as islands, and Norway as a peninsula, are clearly linked together as the main locations in the north, at a reasonable distance from the *Orcades*. All these locations that make up the northern European space are visibly linked to the territories of the Holy Roman Empire (for example, Saxony, where the archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen is located).

Mela's *Codanus* is the 'huge bay' lying beyond the river Albis (the Elbe), which also flows into the North Sea. Therefore the author of the Sawley map does not call the bay *Sinus Codanus* (the Danish bay) but *Sinus Germanicus*, emphasising German ecclesiastical sovereignty over the Danish Church. From the middle of the tenth century until 1104, the diocese of Lund was a suffragan of Hamburg-Bremen. In 1104 Lund became an independent archdiocese, initially covering Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In 1154 the archdiocese of Nidaros (Trondheim) was founded, which included the Norwegian dioceses of Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, the *Orcades* (Orkney) and the Hebrides. In Sweden, the diocese of Sigtuna was symbolically transferred in 1130 to the former



Figure 7. The Orcades depicted like the island of Delos, close to Frisia, Great Britain and Ireland: Sawley map.

pagan centre of Uppsala, and in 1160 became an autonomous archdiocese of Sweden.³⁶

Between *Sinus Germanicus* and *Orcades*, in the west, is a square territory, which bears no name. Looked at closely it seems that *Orcades* is not depicted in exactly the same way as the Greek island of Delos. The first difference is related to the number of small circles drawn around the two islands. Delos has twelve circles, *Orcades* only nine. The second detail is that in the case of Delos, the circles are grouped at a similar distance from each other and from the large circle in the middle. In the case of *Orcades*, however, the

³⁶ David Fraesdorff, 'The power of imagination: the Christianitas and the pagan north during conversion to Christianity (800–1200)', *Medieval History Journal* v/2 (2002), 309–22 at p. 322.

circles are disproportionately grouped and at unequal distances from the main island. If Delos is placed in the middle of the sea, at a considerable distance from the mainland, *Orcades* is relatively close to the shore.

To the west of *Orcades*, at a distance somewhat similar to that of the two small peninsulas, there are two long, narrow islands of almost equal size. The first one is *Britannia insula* (Great Britain) and beyond it, *Hibernia*. What is interesting is that on the Sawley map, *Hibernia*, which is Ireland, is depicted as a kind of geographic doubling, placed in parallel with *Britannia*. Between them is a partially-erased drawing of lower clarity, symbolising another circular island, with two small circles on each side. This small circular island could be a previous placement of the *Orcades*, the Hebrides, the Isle of Man or the Faroes (see Figure 7). It is possible that the small circular island was erased because it was touched many times by those who consulted the map. Repositioning it at a larger size and indicating its name could underscore the religious importance that Orkney had for readers.

Contact with the Northmen and changing views of the other

The island of Delos may symbolise a geographic centre of the world, which transferred the identity of the ancient Hyperboreans who live ‘beyond the north wind’ (Boreas) to the Scandinavians, Celts, or Anglo-Saxons.³⁷ However a major problem that ancient Greek authors faced when it came to Hyperborea was its location. Hyperborea was not a real physical location which could be reached by sailing or walking, but rather a mythical realm with a symbolic identity. The mystery about the location of this realm also intrigued Greek authors, starting with the Homeric period. As the etymology of the name suggests, the location of Hyperborea was related to the identification of the northern wind, Boreas. Many of the Greek writers who lived between the eighth and fifth centuries BC first located Hyperborea in Thrace or north of Mount Haemus, in present day Romania, or above the Caspian Sea.³⁸ For some Greek writers, Hyperborea was seen as a land that should be explored with the help of the human mind. This was largely due to the fact that they had limited geographical knowledge. They did not deny the existence of a land that they had never visited and

³⁷ Licini, ‘A full image of a cultural space’, 475–7; Richard Henning, ‘Die Anfänge des kulturellen und Handelsverkehr in der Mittelmeerwelt’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, cxxxix (1928), 1–33. For more details about the island of Delos as a sacred place see George St Clair, ‘The birth of Apollo in a floating island’, *Westminster Review* clii/2 (1899), 185–93.

³⁸ For more details on the location of Hyperborea in ancient Greek writings as well as the identification of the Hyperboreans with the Celts see Timothy P. Bridgman, ‘Celts and Hyperboreans: crossing mythical boundaries’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* xxii (2002), 39–55.

about which they had heard only rumours, but tried to describe it in literary terms. They used information from the Homeric period about Greek mythology, which they interpreted according to the context of the time. Perhaps the most relevant example in the Classical period is the poet Pindar (c. 518–438 BC) who, in his account of the visit of Perseus to Hyperborea, stated that ‘neither by ship nor going on foot’ could someone find ‘the marvellous road to the meeting-place of the Hyperboreans’.³⁹

For Roman writers who lived between the first and the third centuries AD, *Aquilo*, the equivalent of Boreas, blew from the North Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. However, a clearer identification of the Northmen with the Hyperboreans took place with the help of late antique Byzantine scholars. In their writings they elaborated a sort of Delphic fairy-tale and moved Hyperborea ever farther away to Scandinavia. A relevant example might be Procopius, who substituted for the name of *Scandia* that of the legendary island, Thule. This literary tradition was acquired by medieval Latin-speaking authors during the high Middle Ages. The identification of the Northmen with Hyperborea and Thule did not disappear in Byzantium either. In the *Alexiad*, written in the mid-twelfth century, the Byzantine princess Anna Comnena (1083–1153) placed Thule at the North Pole, where the Vikings originated.⁴⁰ Much later, Johannes Bureus (1568–1652), royal librarian and adviser to Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden (1611–32), claimed that the ancient wisdom of the Hyperboreans was preserved in the runic alphabet.⁴¹

In the geographical relocation of places of historical significance, religion played an essential role. Adam of Bremen was the first author to connect Northern history and geography to Christian rhetoric. The genealogy of the Northmen, described as ‘barbarians’, goes back to Carolingian tradition about the Saxon wars. Later, this label was inherited by the new Christians (Saxons as well as the Scandinavians) and applied to other pagans from the Baltic region like the Wends. Adam’s work seems to be a compilation of texts from the Bible, Roman historians and geographers (Sallust, Martianus Capella, Solinus), classical poets (Vergil, Horace, Lucan), early Christian authors (Orosius, Bede), Frankish writers (Einhard, Gregory of Tours), the annals of monasteries (*Fuldenses*, *Corbienses*) and the hagiographies of Ansgar, Willehad or Rimbert.⁴² On

³⁹ Pindar, *Pythian* 10. 29–30, <<http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg003.tlg002.perseus-eng1:10>>.

⁴⁰ Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, trans. Elizabeth A. Dawes, London 1928, 63, 68, 159, 320.

⁴¹ For the use of runes in the early modern Scandinavian and English presses see Robert W. Rix, ‘Runes and Roman: Germanic literacy and the significance of runic writing’, *Textual Cultures* vi/1 (2011), 114–44 at p. 118.

⁴² For more details on the rhetoric of Otherness during the expansion of Latin Christianity into the North from the ninth to the early thirteenth centuries see Linda



Figure 8. The head of the barking dog at the tip of Italy: Sawley map.

the Sawley map, in the Mediterranean, at the tip of Italy, is the head of a barking dog bearing the inscription *Scylla*. Below are six circular drawings. Above *Scylla*, not so far from *Sicilia*, is another drawing representing a mythical sea creature named *Charybdis*, as can be seen from the inscription beneath it (see Figure 8). In Greek mythology, Scylla is a female sea monster, with six dog's heads ringing her waist. She was well known for her ferocity, attacking passing ships and seizing sailors with each of her heads. Over time, the place where Scylla dwelled has been associated with the Strait of Messina between Italy and Sicily.⁴³

We know that in most of the medieval world maps, the central position of Jerusalem as a sacred location made possible the spread of its holiness to neighbouring lands. The model was taken from the holy island of Delos, the symbol of spirituality in ancient Greece. If we go further to the edge of the map on the left, we have the *terra incognita*, which has an extreme climate and usually is inhabited by monsters, legendary animals and

Kaljundi, 'Waiting for the barbarians: reconstruction of otherness in the Saxon missionary and crusading chronicles, 11th–13th centuries', in Erik Kooper (ed.), *The medieval Chronicle*, v, Amsterdam–New York 2008, 113–27 at pp. 117–18.

⁴³ Asa S. Mittman and Peter J. Dendle (eds), *The Ashgate research companion to monsters and the monstrous*, Farnham 2013, 120–1.

exotic peoples.⁴⁴ The wild nature of the north is manifested not only because of the extreme cold weather but also because of the customs of peoples inhabiting it. Perhaps the most famous inhabitants are the Amazons, who are placed in *Amazonia* outside a high mountain range. Inside it is *Hyrkania*, a historical region to the south-east of the Caspian Sea which over the centuries belonged to several empires, Median, Achaemenid, Seleucid, Arsacid and Sasanian. According to Pliny, the Amazons lived in the valley of the River Terme, on the southern coast of the Black Sea. A little below can be seen the toponym *Mare Cimericum* (Cimmerian Sea), also known as the Bosphorus, and the Straits of Kerch. Beyond the Cimmerian Sea there is *Albania*. Across a long river are the *Anthropophagi*, an ancient tribe of cannibals located by Pliny beyond the Borysthenes (Dnieper), in northern Scythia (see Figure 9). Geographical, cultural and religious details were highlighted in colour so that they could be more easily read. Red is the colour that has been best preserved, and can be found in drawings that represented mountains, cultural and religious boundaries, or various mythological descriptions. For instance, close to Borysthenes is a red inscription *Terminus Asiae et Europae*, which emphasises the border between Asia and Europe. Beyond a mountain range there is the same red inscription and then the river Don (*Fluvius Tanais*). West of it, after the land of the Gryphons ('Hic habitant Griffes, homines nequam'), embraced by another mountain range, are the *Cynocephales* (see Figure 2). They are depicted in a near-identical location on the Hereford map.

According to Adam of Bremen, the Amazon women lived in *terra feminarum*, on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. The 'women's land' is located close to Estonia and the island of Björkö (Birka), the Viking Age trading centre where goods from Finland and Scandinavia could be found. Not far away, in the territory of Kievan Rus', live their male offspring, the *Cynocephali*. On the Sawley map, they are located in the vicinity of *Dascia et Russia* (Dacia and Russia). The inhabitants of the neighbouring realm, called *Albania*, are, according to Adam, the *Alani* or *Albani*, who, in their own language are called *Wizzi*.⁴⁵ Given these reports, the realm inhabited by *Cynocephali* would be the easternmost arm of the Baltic Sea, that is, the Russian territory with access to the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga. The *Wizzi* of Adam are the *Wilzi* or *Lutici*, a Wendish tribe located between the Warnow and the Oder rivers, up to the Peene. For Adam, Gotland is an island that has no religious significance, but rather an economic one,

⁴⁴ For more details regarding the description of the North in the medieval world maps see Asa S. Mittman, *Maps and monsters in medieval England*, New York–London 2006.

⁴⁵ *Adami gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. J. M. Lappenberg, MGH, SRG, Hannover 1876, iv. 17, 19, 25, pp. 165, 166–7, 173.



Figure 9. The *Amazones* and the *Anthropophagi*: Sawley map.

due to trade across the Baltic Sea and the status of competitor to Birka. The German author placed it geographically correctly, near *Scania* (Skåne) and *Gothia* (Götaland), and not in the vicinity of the British Isles, as *Orcades* appears on the map.⁴⁶

The sacrality of Delos has its origins in Greek Olympian mythology. On the Sawley map, both *Orcades* and Delos are surrounded not by other smaller islands, but by dog-heads (*Cynocephali*) (see Figure 2). In Greek mythology, there are patterns in which dogs are closely related to commerce and the gods. Delos was considered a sacred island first because it was the birthplace of Apollo and his sister, Artemis. Second, the island hosted several sacred locations which had religious (sanctuaries, often placed on top of the mountains) and economic functions (ports). It is likely that one of the main sacral symbols of Apollo and Artemis was the dog, and the wolf. In the Greek myths, Artemis and Apollo were born in Delos, on a mountain named Kynthos which includes the dog-stem. The sanctity of the two spread to surrounding Greek cities. For instance in Argos, Apollo was called *Lykios* or *Lykeios*, which could be translated as

⁴⁶ Ibid. iv. 16, pp. 163–4.

‘wolf’. In a hymn to Artemis, one of her epithets is *skylakitiss*, ‘protectress of dogs’. At Brauron, a deme of ancient Attica, her priestesses celebrated a festival called *hieron kynegesion*, ‘festival of the dog establishment’.⁴⁷

The dog and the wolf, as sacral symbols for Apollo and Artemis, shared similar attributes, such as loyalty, trust, strength in battle, but also revenge, ferocity and cruelty to enemies. These attributes proved to be useful tools for medieval Christian authors when describing certain people outside the Christian community. The *Cynocephali* were ultimately derived by medieval authors from the work of Julius Solinus, the third-century adaptor of Pliny’s *Natural history*. Therefore, the identity of non-Christians was constructed by the missionary writers whether by persuading many of the utility of Christian identity or by assimilating pagans to Christian identity by military means. In some medieval world maps the *Cynocephali*, for example, were associated not only with the Northmen (heathens or Christians), but also with unbelievers like Muslims.⁴⁸ The *Cynocephali* are first located in the extreme north in the seventh-century *Cosmography* of Aethicus Ister, who argued that the cynocephalic St Christopher (d. c. 251) came from such a race. *Cynocephali* are also located in the north in some later world maps such as that of Beatus (d. c. 800), the Hereford map (c. 1300) and the works of the Persian geographer, astronomer and physician, Zakariya al-Qazwini (d. 1283).⁴⁹ In *Gesta Caroli Magni*, Notker the Stammerer (d. 912) stated that the term *cynocephali* was used by Charlemagne to describe the Northmen,⁵⁰ known for their sporadic brutal attacks on the island of Lindisfarne in the ninth century. An interesting case is that of Ratramnus (d. c. 868), a Frankish monk of the Benedictine abbey of Corbie, who was concerned about the possibility of encountering the *Cynocephali* in his travels to the North. His records are also relevant because he highlighted the human origin of *Cynocephali*, giving the term a pejorative meaning. Furthermore he saw them as being not mythical creatures, but rational humans who domesticated animals.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Morris Silver, *Taking ancient mythology economically*, Leiden 1992, 159–61. For more details about some Greek-Roman patterns in other Indoeuropean mythologies see Mihai Dragnea, ‘Slavic and Greek-Roman mythology: comparative mythology’, *Brukenthalia Acta Musei* iii (2013), 20–7.

⁴⁸ For the image of non-Christians in medieval art see Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, demons, & Jews: making monsters in medieval art*, Princeton 2003.

⁴⁹ David G. White, *Myths of the dog-man*, Chicago 1991, 60, 63.

⁵⁰ *Taten Kaiser Karls des Großen: Notkeri Balbuli Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, ii. 13, ed. H. F. Haefele, MGH, SS rer. Germ. n.s. xii, Berlin 1959, p. 76.

⁵¹ Ratramnus of Corbie, *Epistola*, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH, Epp. VI, Karolini Aevi 4, Berlin 1925, 155–7. For further details on the description of *Cynocephali* and the possibility of converting them see Scott G. Bruce, ‘Hagiography as monstrous ethnography: a note on Ratramnus of Corbie’s letter concerning the conversion of the *Cynocephali*’, in Gernot R. Wieland and others (eds), *Insignis Sophiae Arcator: medieval Latin studies in honour of Michael Herren on his 65th birthday*, Turnhout 2006, 45–56.

As the world evolved, through exploration, evangelisation and trade, the dog-headed men would come to be located in ever more obscure and unknown regions related to some ecclesiastical centres. *Cynocephali* were seen as a separate *gens* from all other Christian populations. Thus the link between disobedient subjects and dogs was used in the context of the religious and political apostasy of the Wends, who, like the Danes, killed Christians. In northern Europe, the fidelity of some populations to the Christian secular and ecclesiastical power consisted in the payment of tribute and tithing. This functioned as a kind of law that decided the religious status of those tributary populations.⁵² The Wendish uprising starting in 983, led by the Obotrite prince Mstivoj, had less to do with pagan resistance and more with the refusal to pay the tribute, although rebellion against the Saxon nobility was also without doubt a rejection of the Christian faith. Mstivoj was not really a pagan. Prior to the uprising he would have received at least the sign of the cross, and possibly aspersion with holy water from a priest, probably Bishop Wago of Starigard/Oldenburg (974–83), a theological procedure which may have indicated entry into the catechumenate by an unbaptised person, over whom prayers would have been read in order to drive away the devil.⁵³ This could be explained by the fact that on the eve of the uprising, Dietrich of Haldensleben, the Margrave of Nordmark (965–85), opposed marriage between the Obotrite prince and a niece of the Saxon duke, Bernard I (973–1011). The margrave claimed that ‘it is only right that the high-born niece of a great prince should be married to a man of exalted rank and not, indeed, be given to a dog’.⁵⁴ This is not a singular case. The early eleventh-century German chronicler, Thietmar of Merseburg, called the Wilzi/Lutici ‘greedy dogs’ (*‘avaris canibus’*), because they attacked the diocese of Brandenburg, and killed its bishop, Dodilo (968–80).⁵⁵ Another association between *Cynocephali* and a northern population was made by the missionary bishop and martyr, Bruno of Querfurt (d. 1009). In some of his accounts of the martyrdom of St Adalbert (d.

⁵² For the Wendish apostasy see Henrik Janson, ‘What made the pagans pagans?’, in Tsvetelin Stepanov and Georgi Kazakov (eds), *Medieval Christianitas: different regions, ‘faces’, approaches*, Sofia 2010, 11–30, and ‘Pagani and Christiani: cultural identity and exclusion around the Baltic in the early Middle Ages’, in Jörn Staecker (ed.), *The reception of medieval Europe in the Baltic Sea region*, Visby 2009, 171–91.

⁵³ For posthumous baptisms and catechesis in medieval Scandinavia and Rus’ see Fjodor Uspenskij, ‘The baptism of bones and Prima Signatio in medieval Scandinavia and Rus’’, in L. P. Slupecki and J. Morawiec (eds), *Between paganism and Christianity in the North*, Rzeszów 2009, 9–22.

⁵⁴ *Helmoldi presbyteri Bozoviensis Cronica Slavorum*, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, MGH, SRG, Hannover 1937, i. 16, p. 34.

⁵⁵ Thietmar, *Chronicon*, ed. R. Holtzmann, MGH, SRG, Berlin 1935, iii. 17, p. 118.

997), the pagan Prussians were described as having dogs' heads ('capita canum').⁵⁶

Christian identity formation and sacred places

The Sawley map is oriented to the east: the words *Oriens* and *Paradise* can be seen at the top. The oval map is graced with four angels in each corner which emphasise the apocalyptic events preceding the Last Judgment. In Christian eschatology, the four angels symbolise the nations which are in the four corners (winds) of the earth and they appear after the Lamb has broken the sixth seal.⁵⁷ In the Book of Revelation (xx.7–10) it is stated how Satan is to be imprisoned for a thousand years, and how, on his release, he will gather 'the nations in the four corners of the Earth, Gog and Magog' to a final battle with Christ, his saints and angels (see Figure 1).⁵⁸ The compiler of the map may thus be looking forward to the Apocalypse and Christian judgement, emphasising the end of space and time, when there would be no need for geographers and any kind of maps where certain locations were linked. Furthermore the angel in the upper left corner points a finger at the red square, inside which the names Gog and Magog appear.

Over the next centuries, when the doctrine of the holy war took more effect in the north, this apocalyptic battle also involved military orders. A miniature from Heinrich von Hesler's (1322) *Apocalypse* shows the German knights of the Teutonic Order in the battle against the evil Gog and Magog (Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, HB XIII 11,

⁵⁶ S. Adalberti Pragensis episcopi et martyris Vita Altera auctore Brunone Querfurtensi, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, MPH s.n. 4/2, VA 1125, Warsaw 1969, 3–69 at pp. 31–2. For more details on the description of the Prussians in the hagiography of St Adalbert see Miłosz Sosnowski, "Prussians as bees, Prussians as dogs": metaphors and the depiction of pagan society in the early hagiography of St Adalbert of Prague', *Reading Medieval Studies* xxxix (2013), 25–48. The narratives about the martyrdom of St Adalbert also described the Prussians as wearing ritual dog-masks while they practised a sort of demonic cult. See Ian N. Wood, 'Categorising the Cynocephali', in Richard Corradini and others (eds), *Ego trouble: authors and their identities in the early Middle Ages*, Vienna 2010, 125–36.

⁵⁷ 'And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other': Matthew xxiv.31.

⁵⁸ Adele J. Haf, 'Earle Birney's "Mappemounde": visualizing poetry with maps', *Cartographic Perspectives* xliii (2002), 4–24. Jewish tradition envisaged a similar system in which the four chief angels, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel, 'preside over the four quarters of the globe': Peter Jensen, *Die Kosmologie der Babylonier*, Strassburg 1890, 163.

fo. 153v).⁵⁹ The manuscript is considered one of the most important primary sources regarding the ideology of the order and the concept of Christian kingship in the first part of the fourteenth century. The author, also a member of the order, presents the struggle of the knights against the enemies of the German Church, which took various forms (pagans in Prussia and Lithuania, Jews, Orthodox, possibly supporters of the papacy, various rebels, etc.). It is an eschatological vision influenced by the Sibylline books, in which the victory of the last Roman emperor against Gog and Magog and the forced conversion of the pagans and Jews appears. In the battle with his enemies, the emperor (possibly the one from the miniature) is assisted by knights; he appears as the legitimate ruler of the two worlds (temporal and spiritual). If the Teutons had been represented in their traditional clothes, they would have been likened to the Templars or other orders obedient to the papacy.

By the twelfth century, Jerusalem was seen not only as the centre of the world but also as the heart of spirituality and a sacred destination of humanity, just like Delos was in ancient Greece. Medieval world maps show various regions as of different natures and therefore their intentions are to transmit hidden knowledge conveyed in biblical quotations. The author of the Sawley map appears to have had strong eschatological expectations, since he uses a religious name for an island depicted in a similar way to Delos, the holy birthplace of Apollo the Hyperborean and one of the traditional Greek centres of the world. The author's audience thus included those who looked to the future in an eschatological manner.

During the second half of the sixth century, the Orkneys, inhabited at that time by the Picts, were targeted by the Celtic missionaries guided by St Columba (d. 597).⁶⁰ In the ninth century, the Vikings from Norway invaded the islands and made them the headquarters of their expeditions against Scotland and England. The Norwegians continued to control the islands until 1468, when they finally passed to Scotland.⁶¹

Between the ninth and tenth centuries, most of the clerical writings regarded the Viking invasions in Britain and Ireland as being a divine retribution. The wild Vikings may therefore come from a *terra incognita* inhabited by *Cynocephali*, like the Orcades. This perception of the Northmen is confirmed by a ninth-century tombstone from Lindisfarne which seems to depict the Viking attack of 793. The tombstone was erected over the grave of a victim of one of the Viking raids on the island in which its

⁵⁹ Arno Mentzei-Reuters, 'Heinrich von Hesler – von Thüringen nach Preußen: Facetten deutschsprachiger Bibeldichtung, 1250–1350', in Thomas T. Müller (ed.), *Der deutsche Orden und Thüringen Aspekte einer 800-jährigen Geschichte*, St Petersburg 2014, 44–74.

⁶⁰ Geoffrey J. Marcus, *The conquest of the North Atlantic*, Woodbridge 2007, 22.

⁶¹ Karen Larsen, *History of Norway*, Princeton 2015, 43.

monastery was destroyed. A Last Judgement is carved on the other side.⁶² Therefore, on the Sawley map, the *Orcades* appear close to *Britannia insula* and *Hibernia* and have a direct navigable corridor showing what the Scandinavian world meant to the author (see Figure 7).

The symbolic attributes of sacrality are closely related to the imaginary. In this case, *Cynocephali* are not Christian Scandinavians, but the pagan Vikings who frequently attacked Christian lands. They were therefore depicted separately and placed very close to Scandinavia, in a peninsula which could be Jutland. On a runic stone in Jelling (central Jutland), the royal seat of the first Danish kings, the name Denmark appears for the first time. The stone was placed in about 950 by King Gorm the Old in memory of his wife, Thyra. Gorm ('Worm' in Latin) is described by Adam of Bremen as a 'savage worm' ('crudelissimus vermis'), because he was 'hostile to the Christian people ... set about to destroy Christianity in Denmark, driving out priests of God from its bounds and also torturing very many of them to death'.⁶³

Northern Europe was seen not as a marginal area, but rather as a mental periphery, in contrast with the Christian *oecumene*. During the twelfth century the connection between ancient mythology and theology was common. Often, the construction of Christian identity took place to some extent on the skeleton of Greco-Roman history and mythology. This is obvious, since the Greco-Roman world was the fertile ground upon which the Christian faith sprouted and spread. In other words certain myths and legends had not been separated from reality in medieval Christian thought. Of course, this complex mechanism varied depending on the political and economic context of the time. Some attributes of ancient gods were assimilated by Christian writers and used as tools in the construction of a Christian identity. Superstitions were easier to follow than the teachings of the Church. This was common in the northern regions, which did not have a long Christian history. This measure had the role of both strengthening the fragility of Christian faith in the northern dioceses, and emphasising the ecclesiastical authority of the archdioceses to which they were subordinated.

⁶² Michelle P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: society, spirituality and the scribe*, Toronto 2003, 85.

⁶³ *Adami gesta Hammaburgensis*, i. 57, p. 39.