The case for a West Saxon minuscule

JULIA CRICK

Julian Brown's famous analysis of what he termed the Insular system of scripts[1] marked out a number of routes, now well trodden, through the debris of undated and unlocalized manuscript material from the pre-Viking-Age British Isles.[2] Ever since, the best hope for students of palaeography seeking to date and localize examples of early Insular minuscule has been to follow Brown's classification and identify them as Type A or B, Northumbrian or South-umbrian, and Phase I or II. Brown's schema, however, offered orientation rather than a map. As with any typology, it depends on a very few fixed points, them-selves unusual because of their lack of anonymity: gospelbooks from Ireland and Northumbria dated by the survival of rare colophons, manuscripts con-nected with St Boniface which show the operation of a unique editorial mind.[3] Although Brown's system has been successfully applied to the output of scrip-toria whose influences, practices, connections, even locations remain mostly unknown, complications inevitably arise. This article concerns one of them, the recycling in Phase II of a type of minuscule displaying the cursiveness and capriciousness characteristic of Phase I: Type B minuscule as illustrated by the script of St Boniface.

TYPE B MINUSCULE: CHARACTERISTICS AND EXAMPLES

Although the term has sometimes been applied to Southumbrian script in general,[4] in his published work Brown used Type B in a restricted context, when contrasting a looped, shaded, laterally compressed form of Northumbrian cursive minuscule, Type A, with a 'Phase I cursive of a slightly different type – Type B – that was used for the marginalia in the Oxford MS. of Primasius . . .

---

[1] For example, in his unpublished Lyell lectures: 'The Insular System of Scripts, *c.* 600 to *c.* 850' (The James P. R. Lyell Lectures in Bibliography, University of Oxford, 1977).

[2] 'The Irish Element in the Insular System of Scripts to circa A.D. 850', *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. H. Löwe, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1982) I, 101–19, repr. in *A Palaeographer's View: the Selected Writings of Julian Brown*, ed. J. Bately, M. P. Brown and J. Roberts (London, 1993), pp. 201–20.

[3] These have been whittled down still further by David Dumville's exposure of the fragility of the colophon in the Lindisfarne Gospels: 'A Palaeographer's Review' (forthcoming).

[4] Brown himself seems to have adopted this usage in his Lyell lectures: B. C. Barker-Benfield, 'The Insular Hand', *TLS* (27 January 1978), p. 100.

that were apparently written by Winfrith/Bonifatius before he left England for the last time in 718.'[5] He then described this 'Type B' as practised by Boniface.[6]

Type B is generally lighter than Type A, less compressed, and often more cursive in ductus . . . Notable forms are the zig-zag e, often used in ligatures, which is even more summary than the corresponding e in Type A; the g with a long, often unlooped descender and an ascending stem crowned by a long horizontal stroke on the left only; u written without a penlift; and an initial A of uncial form with an exaggeratedly long and sharp bow on the left.

Other noteworthy features include a tall-backed a resembling the Uncial and Caroline minuscule forms, cursive open a and q, a tendency to use round-backed d, theta-shaped e, and an extended top-stroke of t which tends to rise above neighbouring minims.

    To date, practitioners of this distinctive type of minuscule have been identified in three clusters spanning approximately a century. The earliest of these, three of Boniface's contemporaries, worked presumably in the first half or middle of the eighth century and wrote script barely distinguishable from that of Boniface except in aspect, ductus and ligatures.[7] Brown and Parkes agreed that Boniface had learned this script before his departure for the Continent in 718;[8] this would locate the script within Southumbria, probably within Wessex, given that Boniface was born, brought up and educated there. Brown identified a second group of comparable hands in Irish manuscripts, in the Books of Armagh (which he dated *c.* 807) and Mulling, noting particularly 'the looped ascenders, and the zig-zag e in ligatures, the tall g and the uncial a with an exaggerated bow which are particularly characteristic of Type B'.[9] Brown's final example of Bonifatian script ironically came from a period well

---

[5] 'The Irish Element', p. 112 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 213). Brown later localized IB more precisely, writing of 'early Northumbrian and early South Western minuscule (Types IA and IB, in my terminology)': 'The Oldest Irish Manuscripts and their Late Antique Background', *Irland und Europa*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 311–27, at 314 (*A Palaeographer's View*, pp. 221–41, at 225).

[6] 'The Irish Element', p. 112 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 213).

[7] M. B. Parkes, 'The Handwriting of St Boniface: a Reassessment of the Problems', *BGDSL* 98 (1976), 161–79, at 161–5, repr. in his *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London, 1991), pp. 121–42, at 121–6. One scribe appears in a fragment of Boniface's grammar at Oberkaufungen (E. A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, 11 vols. [with 2nd ed. of vol. II] and supp. (Oxford, 1934–72; hereafter *CLA*), supp., no. 1803), another in a fragment of Servius's commentary on the *Aeneid* at Spangenberg (*CLA* supp., no. 1806), and a third in glosses in the *Codex Fuldensis* (*CLA* VIII, no. 1196) added after Boniface (glossator A) had made his own annotations.

[8] Brown, 'The Irish Element', p. 112 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 213); Parkes, 'The Handwriting of St Boniface', pp. 166–79 (*Scribes, Scripts and Readers*, pp. 126–42).

[9] 'The Irish Element', p. 113 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 213). On the dating of Mulling, see 'The Irish Element', p. 114 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 215).

outside that which he had designated as Phase I,[10] when he recognized in a single ninth-century hand characteristics of 'hands of the 7th and 8th century which have been ascribed to the South West, including Boniface's own'.[11] It is this late appearance of the script which forms the main subject of this paper; indeed, I shall argue that its identifiable practitioners outnumber those known from the more familiar eighth-century examples.

Brown had found his final example of Type B in a ninth-century copy of Phillipus's Commentary on Job, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 426 (*S.C.* 2327), pt 1 (pl. V). He remarked on 'the elongated head of **g** and the elongated bow of uncial **a**', but he could equally have drawn attention to the use of open and Caroline-like **a**, round-backed **d**, theta-shaped **e**, and a **t** whose top-stroke extends above neighbouring letters, all features found in Boniface's script. Brown identified the same hand in three documents of Æthelwulf, king of Wessex, dated 838, 839 and 847,[12] (1) on the face of London, BL, Cotton Augustus ii. 37, a copy of Æthelwulf's agreement with Archbishop Ceolnoth at Kingston in 838, (2) on the dorse of another copy, BL, Cotton Augustus ii. 20 (pl. VI), in the note of the confirmation of the agreement at Wilton in 839 (S1438, MSS 3 and 1; see Appendix B), and (3) in a third charter, BL, Cotton Charter viii. 36 (S298), dated 847, which concerns land in the South Hams district of Devon.[13] As these documents survive in apparently contemporary form, they have been taken to suggest that the scribe of Bodley 426 was working in the second quarter of the ninth century and perhaps in Wessex.[14]

Brown's assumption of a single scribe, however, needs further scrutiny. Certainly, the charters provide examples of characteristics familiar from Bodley 426 – the **g** with a prominent head stretching above neighbouring letters, an **l** which descends below the baseline, and round-backed **d** – but they also contain differences significant enough to indicate that we may be dealing with the work not of an individual but of a school. Indeed, this notion finds reflection in work already in print. Pierre Chaplais, who first associated Bodley 426 with the three charters of Æthelwulf of Wessex, described the connection in terms of shared script.[15] Simon Keynes, whose discussion of Æthelwulf's charters provides the

[10] 'Roughly from the middle of the seventh until the beginning of the eighth century': Brown, 'The Irish Element', p. 106 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 206).

[11] 'Late Antique and Early Anglo-Saxon Books', *Manuscripts at Oxford: an Exhibition in Memory of Richard William Hunt (1908–1979)*, ed. A. C. de la Mare and B. C. Barker-Benfield (Oxford, 1980), pp. 9–14, at 13 (no. II.3).   [12] *Ibid.* p. 13.

[13] See *Facsimiles of Ancient Charters in the British Museum*, ed. E. A. Bond, 4 vols. (London, 1873–8) I.17, II.27 and 30.

[14] On these grounds Andrew Watson included Bodley 426 in his catalogue of dated and datable manuscripts in Oxford: *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 435–1600 in Oxford Libraries*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1984), no. 88: I, 16 and II, pl. 7.

[15] 'The Origin and Authenticity of the Royal Anglo-Saxon Diploma', *Jnl of the Soc. of Archivists* 3 (1965–9), 48–61, at 57, repr. in *Prisca Munimenta: Studies in Archival and Administrative History*

most recent and authoritative account, did not see the four pieces as the work of a single scribe, noting that 'it is a question of generic resemblance rather than one of actual identity'.[16] Nicholas Brooks had earlier suggested that at least three scribes were involved in writing the relevant parts of the documents, although he argued for a scribal connection between the two copies of the Kingston agreement.[17]

Indeed, although Brown, followed by Andrew Watson and later Jennifer Morrish,[18] posited a shared scribe, neither they nor Chaplais reported the evidence of the charters in any detail or discussed the palaeographical grounds for the identification. Had they done so, they would have had to account for the fact that in each case the scribe or scribes followed slightly different practices.[19] 3-shaped **g** is found in all four examples but, whereas this can extend leftwards for four preceding letters in Aug. ii. 37 and Aug. ii. 20, in Cotton Charter viii. 36 and Bodley 426 the head rarely exceeds the width of two letters. Different forms of the descending l occur in each. It occurs as a variant of the standard l in Bodley 426, has an ascender and does not loop fully under the succeeding letter. In Cotton Charter viii. 36 the lengthened l begins at minim-height, or just above, and descends below the baseline nearly to the length of other descenders. In Aug. ii. 37 the letter occurs as a variant of normal l, descends less far and has a pronounced angle. That in the Wilton endorsement is different again, starting above minim-height, falling below the baseline as much as the length of a descender, but again with a pronounced angle.

Some of the differences between Bodley 426 and the charters derive from little more than the use of more or less formal registers of script.[20] The script of Bodley 426 is mannered and calligraphic as might be expected in a bookhand. It employs prominent round letters – for example, **e** which is egg-shaped in ligature and theta-like elsewhere – and lacks the open wedges found in the three charters.[21] On occasion, the scribe of Bodley 426 adopted a cursive style, not only increasing the rapidity of the ductus but, like the scribes of the charters,

---

presented to Dr A. E. J. Hollaender, ed. F. Ranger (London, 1973), pp. 28–42, at 38–9. Note that Chaplais reported that the *script* was the same.

[16] 'The West Saxon Charters of King Æthelwulf and his Sons', *EHR* 109 (1994), 1109–49, at 1117–18.

[17] One in Aug. ii. 37 and the Wilton endorsement of Aug. ii. 20, another in Bodley 426 and a third in Cotton Charter viii. 36: N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066* (Leicester, 1984), p. 324.

[18] See above, p. 65, n. 14. J. Morrish, 'Dated and Datable Manuscripts Copied in England during the Ninth Century: a Preliminary List', *MS* 50 (1988), 512–38, at 513.

[19] Watson, *Dated and Datable Manuscripts*, II, pl. 7: *CLA* II, no. 234.

[20] On comparing book- and charter-hands, see M. P. Brown, 'Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 10861 and the Scriptorium of Christ Church, Canterbury', *ASE* 15 (1986), 119–37, at 119–20.

[21] For example Aug. ii. 20, second line of the first endorsement *Ætheluulf*; Aug. ii. 37, line 1 *appellatur*, Cotton Charter viii. 36v *on anne beorg*.

extending the head of **g** over as many as five preceding letters (109r9 *In euangelio*) and allowing descending **l** to fall to the length of other descenders and to loop under two or more succeeding letters.[22] However, even among the charters, the aspect of the script varies widely. In the Wilton endorsement ascenders and descenders are longer than in Bodley 426, greater space separates words and individual words are more compactly written, and the strokes look heavy and sinuous;[23] the script of Cotton Charter viii. 36, on the other hand, is tall, pointed, rapid, laterally compressed and delicate-looking, being written with a fine nib, while that of Aug. ii. 37 is tiny and flourished. The scale and letter-forms of this latter example, however, were distorted by the layout of the charter – a long thin strip of parchment; certain scribal tics suggest that the main scribe of Aug. ii. 37 should be equated with that of the Wilton endorsement on Aug. ii. 20.[24]

Other usages separate the script of Bodley 426 and that of the charters. *per* is abbreviated differently: the crossed form of the *per* abbreviation occurs in Bodley 426 and Cotton Charter viii. 36 but the scribe of Aug. ii. 37 resolutely adhered to the Insular hooked form.[25] Forms of **a** vary widely from the pointed or high-backed form in the Wilton endorsement, to pointed only (no open or high-backed examples) in Aug. ii. 37, pointed or open in Cotton Charter viii. 36, high-backed and open in Bodley 426. In Cotton Charter viii. 36 **m** and **n** have an extended last limb terminating in a foot, while in Bodley 426 the foot alone occurs, and in the Wilton endorsement we see only the extended last limb. Forms of **t** also differ. Aug. ii. 37 and Bodley 426 have the flourished rising-topped version seen in Boniface's own hand but the other two charters do not.[26]

---

[22] Script of this more informal sort can be found, for example, on 49r, 67r, 82r, and in the last few lines of other folios, for example 107v. Despite considerable change in the aspect of the script, at no point can this be attributed to the work of more than one scribe.

[23] The condition of the parchment – less worn and fuzzy – may have some bearing on the aspect of the script.

[24] Comparing the text of the Wilton endorsement which appears in both, one notices, for example, the distinctive spacing of letters in *adducta* and *in uilla*, the ductus of *eius* and *itaque*, and the cramped st-ligature in *Alhstan*. Aug. ii. 37, however, cannot be regarded as an exact facsimile of Aug. ii. 20 (for example, in ii. 37 the scribe favours **uu** over wyn and employs subscript i less frequently). It is notable that the script of the *æt Astran* endorsement underwent no distortion when copied into the smaller format of Aug. ii. 37.

[25] *per* does not appear at all in the Wilton endorsement in Aug. ii. 20.

[26] This **t** and, for that matter, the 3-shaped **g** should not be confused with the forms of those letters which Keller and Kuhn regarded as indicative of Mercian script: W. Keller, *Angelsächsische Palaeographie. Die Schrift der Angelsachsen mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Denkmäler in der Volkssprache*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1906) I, 20–1 and S. M. Kuhn, 'The *Vespasian Psalter* and the Old English Charter Hands', *Speculum* 18 (1943), 458–83, at 458–66. These have a hooked top-stroke which sits above the middle of the letter and does not extend above neighbouring letters. See also E. A. Lowe, 'A Key to Bede's Scriptorium', in his *Palaeographical Papers 1907–1965*, ed. L. Bieler, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1972) II, 441–9, at 447.

These observations point to two conclusions. First, the scribe of Bodley 426 had no hand in the copying of the charters, and second, more than one scribe – probably two – carried out the writing of these documents. Thus, this set of examples preserves the work not of a single scribe, as Brown deduced, but of no fewer than three scribes. This number rises still further if other late examples of script showing the influence of Type B are included, from both book- and charter-hands.

The first appears in annotations to the Blickling or Lothian Psalter (pls. VII–VIII), now New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 776, 'one of the two great Anglo-Saxon codices in America',[27] a fragmentary psalter whose medieval history remains unclear. Written in the eighth century in Phase II Half-uncial and glossed in the ninth and tenth centuries, the manuscript cannot be firmly localized within England before its association with Lincoln in the sixteenth century. Some commentators have argued for a Canterbury origin on the basis of decoration, others a Northumbrian origin on the basis of script, and a third group a Mercian origin in order to reconcile the evidence of script and decoration.[28] Of interest here are the Latin and Old English glosses entered marginally and occasionally interlineally throughout the psalter in a mannered cursive minuscule, for the most part in red ink but on 64r/v in black as well.

The idiosyncrasy of the script of these glosses has met with a variety of responses. Karl Wildhagen concluded that it pointed to a Mercian origin,[29] while Rowland Collins remarked that 'The peculiarity of the hand makes precise dating difficult.'[30] However, those whose eyes have become accustomed to the vagaries of Bodley 426 and related examples will find little difficulty in assigning at least a date to these glosses. Those in red ink were the work of a single scribe; those in black on 64r/v (pl. VIII) were also the work of a single scribe. Quite possibly the two may be equated; not only do they combine cursiveness and formality in a manner reminiscent of other examples of ninth-century minuscule but they employ an almost identical range of letter-forms. Both use cursive forms like open **a** and **p** and round-backed **d**, space-saving letters like descending **l**, majuscule **T**, and a distinctive attenuated looped 3–shaped **g** whose head extends leftwards above neighbouring letters. Other distinctive letters include a

---

[27] R. Collins, *Anglo-Saxon Vernacular Manuscripts in America* (New York, 1976), p. 60.

[28] For example, Brown, 'An Historical Introduction to the Use of Classical Latin Authors in the British Isles from the Fifth to the Eleventh Century', *SettSpol* 22 (1974), 237–99, at 259 (*A Palaeographer's View*, pp. 141–77, at 153).

[29] He noted glosses 'in roter Tinte und schöner mercischer National- d. h. Kursivschrift geschrieben': 'Studien zum Psalterium Romanum in England und zu seinen Glossierungen (in geschichtlicher Entwicklung)', *Festschrift für Lorenz Morsbach*, ed. F. Holthausen and H. Spies (Halle, 1913), pp. 417–72, at 433.

[30] 'A Reexamination of the Old English Glosses in the Blickling Psalter', *Anglia* 81 (1963), 124–8, at 124, n. 1.

formal Half-uncial **N** whose first stroke descends below the baseline, tall-backed **a** (almost like a Caroline form), and a theta-shaped **e**. In addition, the loop of final **e** and **t** finishes in a marked downward stroke or toe, a feature found in other examples of ninth-century script. Tall looped ascenders occur on 64r/v and occasionally elsewhere, as does a form of **f** whose top-stroke comes towards the baseline to cause the letter to resemble a **p**. In both red and black glosses, mannered versions of Insular cursive ligatures occur: **tio** (4r) and **ti** (64r). Only two points beyond ink-colour distinguish the hand of 64r/v from that of the red glosses: the use of a cursive suprascript **u** and the tendency to finish the final descending stroke of **m** in a foot. We may conclude either that a single scribe was responsible for the stints in red and black ink or that two contemporaries trained in the same scriptorium annotated the manuscript.

The range of letter-forms of our glossator or glossators finds remarkable parallel in Bodley 426. The plate reproduced in Watson's *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries* shows the same forms of **a** (open or tall-backed), **d**, **g**, **l**, **T**, down-ticked final **e** and **t**, and even the mannered cursive **ti** ligature, as well as more common letter-forms like open **p**, theta-shaped **e**, and **m** with a foot on the final stroke. Not shown in the plate but evident elsewhere in Bodley 426 is a cursive suprascript **u** (for example, 93v20 *uenimus reuertantur*) which resembles that found in the glosses in M. 776. Both scribes used the crossed form of abbreviation for *per*. The hands differ in some details. For example, Bodley 426 has a form of **t** with a rising cross-stroke which extends above subsequent letters and which is not found in M. 776. However, if the charters associated with Bodley 426 are included in the comparison, almost all the features found in the Morgan glosses can be paralleled. The Wilton endorsement and Cotton Charter viii. 36, like the Morgan glosses, lack the rising-topped **t**. Other comparisons can be made. While the aspect of Bodley 426 (pl. V) bears comparison with the red glosses in M.776, the heavy, fluid script of the Wilton endorsement in Aug. ii.20 looks more like the annotations on 64r/v. The glossator of M. 776 wrote the abbreviation for *pro* by joining the bow of **p** and the hook of the abbreviation mark in a single stroke.[31] The same form occurs in Bodley 426, Aug. ii. 37 and Cotton Charter viii. 36.[32] Likewise all these scribes favoured a Half-uncial, or rather Capitular Uncial, form of **N** (with dropped cross-stroke) at the beginnings of sentences, the exception being the Wilton endorsement, in which **N** does not occur initially.[33] This accumulation of similarities with these charters of Æthelwulf certainly entitles us to date the early glosses in M. 776 to the middle of the ninth century. Whether it also

---

[31] A similar form occurs in Boniface's script: see, for example, St Petersburg, Public Library, Q.v.I.15, 63v15 *propris*.   [32] *pro* is not abbreviated in the Wilton endorsement of Aug. ii. 20.

[33] This practice is found in the work of other scribes such as the Canterbury scribe 4: on whom see Brooks, *The Early History*, pp. 168, 323–4 and 360, n. 70.

suggests a place of origin for the glosses or their scribe requires further examination (see below).

Three final identifications of Phase II script showing affinities with Type B minuscule must remain tentative. None employs the trailing-headed version of 3–shaped **g** but all have other features in common with the work of the scribes already discussed. The fragment of Felix's *Vita S. Guthlaci* in British Library, Royal 4. A. XIV, fols. 107–8, has open **a**, 3–shaped **g**, the suprascript cursive **u** (described by Lowe as sickle-shaped) and the form of abbreviation of *pro* with the hook following from the bow of the **p**.[34] Lowe assigned it a Winchester provenance by association with the manuscript with which it was bound, but Ker suggested that it could have been at Worcester by the twelfth century.[35] A fragment of Cassiodorus's Commentary on the Psalms, now Cambridge, St John's College Aa. 5. 1 (fol. 67), was copied in a fluent minuscule which exhibits the open **a**, theta-shaped **e**, 3–shaped **g** and rising-topped **t** of Type B.[36] The third hand of interest occurs in two charters already mentioned frequently, Aug. ii. 20 and Aug. ii. 37. This scribe entered the same text on the dorse of each: a second endorsement of the Kingston agreement made at a Church council *æt Astran*, held under the auspices of Archbishop Ceolnoth in 839.[37] In many ways this hand resembles the fluent, clear script of contemporary Canterbury scribes, notably that identified by Brooks as scribe 4, in which the letters are placed well apart;[38] the same aspect is found in Cotton Charter viii. 36. However, the endorsement *æt Astran* (pl. VI) not only contains the 3–shaped **g** seen in West Saxon examples (though here in a more modest form); it resembles the charter-hands in showing the deeply looped descending **l** and Bodley 426 in the open **a** and **q**, the high-backed form of **a**, and the tall upper-case **T**. This scribe did not employ the more extreme letter-forms adopted by contemporaries writing West Saxon documents, but the points of comparison between his work and that of the scribe of Bodley 426 deserve note.

Thus seven, possibly eight, later scribes appear to have written some version of Type B script. Of these, the three charter-scribes were certainly working in the ninth century: in, or after, 838/9 (in the case of the scribes of S1438) and 847 (the scribe of Cotton Charter viii. 36). The scribes responsible for the bookhands can be dated only by analogy. Bodley 426 and the glosses in M. 776 are written in script whose aspect is reminiscent of ninth-century examples:

[34] *CLA* II, no. 216.

[35] See N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), no. 250 (p. 320).

[36] *CLA* supp., no. 1679: this item has long been classed as an example of Phase II Type B by Professor Michael Lapidge in his unpublished teaching material.

[37] Brooks, *The Early History*, pp. 146 and 198–200. See also H. Edwards, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*, BAR Brit. ser. 198 (Oxford, 1988), 157–9.

[38] *The Early History*, pp. 168, 171 and 360, n. 70.

mannered, set, stylish.[39] The other two examples, however, could easily carry an eighth-century date. They postdate the development of Phase II cursive minuscule and so might tentatively be assigned to the latter part of that century.

TYPE B: ORIGINS AND LOCALIZATION

Type B script merits attention not only as a long-lived script but as one which can probably be localized. Although it has come to be regarded as the archetypal Phase I minuscule from Southumbria, Brown clearly regarded it as only one of the varieties of minuscule practised in eighth-century Southumbria. He drew attention, for example, to the different sort of Southumbrian Phase I minuscule found in Bishop Waldhari's letter of 704 or 705.[40] Brown placed Type B firmly in the western part of the region, that part with which Boniface himself is most closely connected. The preceding discussion suggested that Type B exerted strong influence on several ninth-century scribes, some writing West Saxon dialect or diplomatic. Why this should be remains unclear but, whatever the explanation, whether the similarities result from continuous scribal traditions or conscious imitation of a disused script, they amount to a case for a localizable West Saxon minuscule.[41]

Both Brown and Parkes associated Boniface's script with the south-west. Malcolm Parkes accepted that Boniface could be equated with a scribe 'who worked both in south-west England and on the continent'.[42] Brown, in 1984, noted that 'The handwriting of St Boniface ... is probably the earliest surviving example of minuscule from South West England.'[43] A few years earlier he had made reference to 'hands of the 7th and 8th century which have been ascribed to the South West, including Boniface's own'[44] and cited an example of the hand 'no doubt written before Winfrith-Boniface left South-West England in A.D. 716 [*sic*]'.[45] On more than one occasion, he remarked that Phase I minuscule, A and B, resembles Irish hands such as those found in the Books of Mulling and Armagh[46] and referred to this script as 'the oldest known Anglo-Saxon minuscule', noting that examples included 'some from Northumbria and some

---

[39] Cf. comments on M. 776, in particular, above, pp. 68–9.

[40] 'The Irish Element', p. 107 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 207 and p. 191).

[41] Previous attempts to identify Mercian hands have met with little support, perhaps because of the deficiencies of the localizing evidence: Keller, *Angelsächsische Palaeographie* I, 20–3 and Kuhn, 'The *Vespasian Psalter*', pp. 458–83. Lowe, for example, identified so-called Mercian hands in Northumbrian manuscripts: 'A Key', pp. 446–7.

[42] 'The Handwriting of St Boniface', p. 179 (*Scribes, Scripts and Readers*, p. 142).

[43] 'The Oldest Irish Manuscripts', p. 314 (*A Palaeographer's View*, pp. 224–5).

[44] 'Late Antique and Early Anglo-Saxon Books', p. 13.   [45] *Ibid.* p. 12.

[46] 'The Irish Element', p. 113 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 213) and 'The Oldest Irish Manuscripts', p. 314 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 224). See also *A Palaeographer's View*, pp. 179–200, at 191.

from the South West'.[47] Indeed, discussing the writings of Aldhelm and Boniface he remarked: 'The South West seems to have had an established tradition of its own before the end of the seventh century; and its self-sufficiency may be judged by the fact that Boniface only heard of Bede's existence after his death.'[48]

In order to clarify what should be understood by the designation the 'south-west', it is necessary to look at the circumstances of Boniface's education and at the *Vita* written within thirteen years of his death by an English priest, Willibald.[49] This describes Boniface's entry into a minster at Exeter where he channelled his adolescent energy into study and later teaching, until he outgrew the intellectual resources of the house and moved to Nursling, near Southampton.[50] Willibald, never having met the subject of his hagiography, naturally cast his account of such a distant place and period in conventional terms. Consequently, his narrative lacks authority and detail. It gives no indication of when Boniface acquired scribal skills, whether in his formative training or in a more advanced stage, and little idea of what level he had attained before his move to Nursling. However, Willibald outlines plausibly enough a life spent almost entirely in Wessex before 718. Apart from a brief visit to Kent on a commission to Archbishop Berhtwald (692–731) and a period spent in Frisia investigating the possibilities for missionary activity, Boniface apparently resided in Wessex. This is where he would have learned to write. Thus, by the south-west we should understand Greater Wessex: the westernmost reaches of West Saxon influence in the early eighth century.[51]

The later examples of Type B present greater problems of localization. Chaplais, Brown, Watson and, most recently, Michelle Brown have supported a West Saxon origin for Bodley 426 and the three charters of Æthelwulf, invoking the West Saxon content of the charters and the similarity with Boniface's hand.[52] An alternative hypothesis, for which a certain amount of circumstantial evidence exists, favours Christ Church, Canterbury. Both arguments need to be rehearsed briefly here in the context of the additional material identified above.

The case for Canterbury has some attractions. The main text of Aug. ii. 20

---

[47] 'The Oldest Irish Manuscripts', p. 321 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 234). Earlier, Brown had cited the Palatine Paulinus of Nola as a Northumbrian example: above, p. 64, n. 5. See T. J. Brown and T. W. Mackay, *Codex Vaticanus Palatinus Latinus 235: an Early Insular Manuscript of Paulinus of Nola Carmina* (Turnhout, 1988).

[48] 'A Historical Introduction', pp. 258–9 (*A Palaeographer's View*, p. 153).

[49] *Vitae Sancti Bonifatii*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SS rer. Germ. (Hanover, 1905), pp. 1–58, at 1, trans. C. H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (London, 1954), pp. 24–5.

[50] *Vitae Sancti Bonifatii*, ed. Levison, pp. 6–9, trans. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, pp. 28–30.

[51] For the history of the region, see F. Barlow, 'The English Background', *The Greatest Englishman: Essays on St Boniface and the Church at Crediton*, ed. T. Reuter (Exeter, 1980), pp. 11–29.

[52] Brown, 'Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 10861', p. 120.

was copied by a Canterbury scribe and, although its endorsements and its copy, Aug. ii. 37, were written in a very different kind of script, the Canterbury origin and destination of the main text could be taken to imply some connection with that centre. Bodley 426 bears a fourteenth-century Canterbury shelfmark (St Augustine's) and the decoration of M. 776, in the absence of firm localizing evidence, has been compared with work from Canterbury. However, the case begins to look less secure when it is examined more closely. While Bodley 426 belonged to St Augustine's Abbey,[53] Aug. ii. 20 comes from the archive of Christ Church, and Cotton Charter viii. 36 from the Old Minster, Winchester.[54] Secondly, the script of the endorsements of Aug. ii. 20 and of Aug. ii. 37 does not resemble that of Canterbury scribes of the early ninth century, who were writing in a distinctive but entirely different manner.[55] The contrast is clear in London, British Library, Stowe Charter 17 (S 293), a charter of AD 843 in which King Æthelwulf granted land in Kent to a thegn, Æthelmod, and which survives in contemporary form, written in the pointed hand of a Christ Church scribe which lacks the supple ductus and distinctive letter-forms seen in our examples.[56]

Thus, although Aug. ii. 20 and Aug. ii. 37 were housed in Canterbury archives, their endorsements resemble not contemporary Canterbury script but that of the Winchester charter, Cotton Charter viii. 36. Moreover, the documents which Chaplais compared with Bodley 426 concern West Saxon interests and reflect West Saxon forms. The Wilton endorsement of the Kingston agreement found in Aug. ii. 20 and in Aug. ii. 37 contains what Chaplais identified as a West Saxon formula.[57] Cotton Charter viii. 36 shows West Saxon diplomatic and, in its boundary clause, West Saxon dialect.[58] Brooks suggested that the script was produced by a West Saxon scriptorium, perhaps that of Sherborne.[59] While the West Saxon origin of a ninth-century charter issued in the name of a West Saxon king cannot be taken for granted, in this instance dialect and diplomatic point in the same direction and make this hypothesis the most economical.[60]

[53] On the verso facing 1r, in a rough fourteenth-century Anglicana hand, appears the shelfmark D. .III. G. .IIII. which corresponds to no. 137 in the late-fifteenth-century catalogue of St Augustine's (Dublin, Trinity College 360): *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover*, ed. M. R. James (Cambridge, 1903), p. 204.

[54] Chaplais, 'The Origin', p. 57 (*Prisca Munimenta*, ed. Ranger, p. 38).

[55] Brown, 'Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 10861', pp. 129–33. See also Brooks, *The Early History*, pp. 168–70 and J. Crick, 'Church, Land and Local Nobility in Early Ninth-Century Kent: the Case of Ealdorman Oswulf', *Hist. Research* 61 (1988), 251–69, at 252–3 and 264–6.

[56] A. Prescott in *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600–900*, ed. L. Webster and J. Backhouse (London, 1991), pp. 256–7 (no. 232).

[57] Chaplais, 'The Origin', p. 57 (*Prisca Munimenta*, ed. Ranger, p. 38).   [58] *Ibid.*

[59] *The Early History*, pp. 324–5.

[60] On the question of the issuing authority of these documents, see Keynes, 'The West Saxon Charters'.

This consideration, the absence of any evidence to localize Bodley 426 before the later Middle Ages, and the striking similarity between these hands and that learned by Boniface in Wessex a century earlier, point to the conclusion that the scribes of the charters and Bodley 426 were trained in a West Saxon tradition.[61]

Other late examples of this script cannot be localized precisely. The dialect of the glosses in M. 776 might be expected to provide a place of origin but philologists have not been able to arrive at a consensus, perhaps because the glosses offer insufficient material with which to work; very few of these glosses are in Old English (see the Appendix, below) and opinions about how to transcribe them differ.[62] Sweet, assuming from the manuscript's early modern provenance that M. 776 had been written near Lincoln, concluded that the glosses were East Mercian.[63] Wildhagen noted a mixture of Anglian, Mercian and Kentish elements together with some West Saxon which led him to place the manuscript either at Canterbury or on the West Saxon/Mercian border, perhaps at Dorchester.[64] Sherman M. Kuhn, citing these and other commentators, concluded: 'The early glosses in the manuscript also point to Anglian territory. They are predominantly Mercian, with some West Saxon admixture.'[65] In the circumstances, the glosses of M. 776 can only be localized by comparing them with the palaeography of the West Saxon charters discussed above.

My last examples of the Type B script can be localized no more successfully. The Guthlac fragment carries no indications of localization before the twelfth century. The Cassiodorus fragment came from the binding of a twelfth-century manuscript from Ramsey, a house founded more than 150 years after the copying of the Cassiodorus.[66] The charter-hand which appears in the second endorsement on Aug. ii. 20 and Aug. ii. 37 records the witnesses at the synod held *æt Astran* under the auspices of Archbishop Ceolnoth in 839. The site remains unidentified, except as a location within Southumbria. Simon Keynes has noted that there was a strong West Saxon element at the meeting (the bishops of Winchester and Sherborne occupy an unusually prominent position in the witness-list) but that this could reflect political influence as well as geographical location.[67] The scribe who recorded the transactions certainly differed

---

[61] By coincidence, Kuhn had cited Aug. ii. 20 and Aug. ii. 37 as evidence that in ninth-century Canterbury 'the old Mercian officials of Kent were quickly replaced with West Saxons': 'The *Vespasian Psalter*', p. 481 and n. 3.

[62] See Collins, 'A Reexamination', pp. 125–7, although his reporting of Brock's readings is not entirely accurate.

[63] 'We have no further clue to the origin of the MS., but there is every reason to believe it was written in Lincoln, and that the glosses here printed are in the East Mercian dialect of the first half of the eighth century, or possibly earlier': *The Oldest English Texts*, ed. H. Sweet, EETS os 83 (London, 1885), 122.   [64] Wildhagen, 'Studien', p. 434.

[65] 'From Canterbury to Lichfield', *Speculum* 23 (1948), 591–629, at 609.

[66] Lowe, *CLA* supp., no. 1679.

[67] *The Councils of Clofesho*, Vaughan Paper 38 (Leicester, 1994), 25 n. 107.

from most Canterbury scribes in the production of some letter-forms, but no clear conclusions can be drawn from this: we may speculate that the scribe was trained in Wessex or was familiar with the work of scribes from that area, probably contemporaries.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study I have suggested that the type of minuscule used by Boniface in the first half of the eighth century was still being practised in Wessex a hundred years later. This phenomenon was not confined to a single scribe, as Brown had suggested, but can be traced in the work of at least six, possibly as many as eight, individuals. Two of them, the charter-scribes identified by Chaplais, wrote in a specifically West Saxon context. Four others (five if the glosses in M. 776 were written by more than one scribe) appear in unprovenanced books and must be localized by the very striking analogy with the first two. A further hand also appears in two of the same charters, in the report of the meeting held *æt Astran*. At present, all early localizing evidence associates the script practised by these scribes, as with that learned by Boniface, with Wessex. This second conclusion relies in part on an argument from silence: the absence of evidence sufficient to place any of these examples outside Wessex. However, what localizing evidence there is coincides to a remarkable degree. Until the discovery of examples of late Type B minuscule which bear indications to the contrary, we can retain as a working hypothesis the association of Type B with Wessex.[68]

---

[68] I am indebted to the staff of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, for access to M. 776, to the Finance Committee of my Department for a grant to help me get there, to Simon Keynes and Michael Swanton for advice on the charters and on the Old English glosses respectively, and to David Dumville for extensive discussion of all aspects of the argument, which improved it immeasurably.

APPENDIX A

The early glosses in M. 776

The glosses in M. 776 have been scrutinized by a series of investigators from Brock onwards.[69] The most recent and thorough work was done by Phillip Pulsiano and appears in his doctoral dissertation, forthcoming as a book, in which he printed all the glosses, Latin and Old English.[70] Sweet edited almost all the Old English glosses written by our scribe(s), Brock distinguished, by the use of bold type, glosses written in red ink, but no printed source identifies all the relevant annotations written by other scribe(s); they are therefore collected below.

Most are not full glosses but an abbreviation of *diapsalma* (for example, *dia*), signifying a pause.[71] Other Latin glosses are indicated in bold type and Old English in underlined bold.

Folio	Psalm[72]
64r	**IX.10**, IX.11, IX.13, IX.15, IX.17, IX.18, IX.19, IX.21
64v	**IX.23, IX.26, IX.28, IX.29, IX.30**
1r	**XXXI.4**, XXXI.5, XXXI.6, XXXI.8, **XXXI.9**
1v	XXXII.3, XXXII.7, XXXII.9, XXXII.11
2r	XXXII.14, XXXII.17, XXXII.19
2v	XXXIII.3, XXXIII.11
3r	XXXIII.16, XXXIII.21
3v	XXXIV.6, XXXIV.12
4r	**XXXIV.14**, XXXIV.15, **XXXIV.21**
4v	XXXIV.23, XXXIV.26, XXXV.4, XXXV.5

[69] E. Brock, 'The Blickling Glosses', *The Blickling Homilies, with a Translation and Index of Words together with the Blickling Glosses*, ed. R. Morris, EETS os 58, 63 and 73 (London, 1874–80; repr. as 1 vol., 1967), 251–63. See also Sweet, *The Oldest English Texts*, pp. 122–3 and Collins, 'A Reexamination'.

[70] P. J. Pulsiano, 'Materials for an Edition of the Blickling Psalter' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, SUNY Stony Brook, 1982).

[71] Robert Weber reported in his apparatus other witnesses which carry *diapsalma* annotations: *Le Psautier romain et les autres anciens psautiers latins* (Rome, 1953). They include fifth- to eighth-century manuscripts of French and Italian origin, together with one from Corbie: *CLA* I, no. 23, *CLA* IV, no. 472, *CLA* V, nos. 520 and 616, *CLA* VI, no. 772, *CLA* VII, nos. 970 and 985, *CLA* VIII, no. 1104 and *CLA* XI, no. 1601.

[72] Taken from *Le Psautier romain*, ed. Weber.

Folio	Psalm
5r	XXXV.9
5v	XXXVI.6, XXXVI.11, **XXXVI.13**
6r	XXXVII.4, **XXXVII.6**, XXXVII.8, **XXXVII.9**
6v	XXXVII.11, XXXVII.13, XXXVII.19
7r	XXXVIII.4, XXXVIII.6
7v	XXXVIII.6, XXXIX.4
8r	XXXIX.6, XXXIX.9, XXXIX.11
8v	XXXIX.13, XL.4
9r	XL.7, **XL.8**, XL.10
9v	XLI.4, **XLI.7**, XLI.9
10r	XLI.10, XLII.1, XLII.4
10v	XLIII.3, XLIII.6, XLIII.9
11r	XLIII.17
11v	XLIII.22, XLIV.3
12r	XLIV.6, XLIV.8, XLIV.10, XLIV.15
12v	XLV.4, XLV.8
13r	XLV.10, XLVI.3, XLVI.5, XLVI.8
13v	XLVII.4
14r	XLVII.9, XLVIII.5, XLVIII.8
14v	XLVIII.13, XLVIII.14, XLVIII.16, XLVIII.18
15r	XLIX.3, XLIX.6
15v	XLIX.8, XLIX.11, XLIX.15
16r	L.4, L.6
16v	L.11, L.14, L.18
17r	LIII.5
18r	LIV.20
19r	LVI.4, LVI.7
20r	LVIII.6
21r	LIX.4, LIX.6, LIX.7–8
21v	LX.5, LX.6
22r	LXI.3, LXI.5, LXI.9
24r	LXV.4
24v	LXV.7, LXV.9, LXV.12, LXV.15
25r	LXVI.2, LXVI.3, LXVI.5, LXVI.7
25v	LXVII.4, LXVII.9
26r	LXVII.11, LXVII.15, LXVII.17, LXVII.20
26v	LXVII.28, LXVII.32, LXVII.33
27r	LXVIII.5
32r	**LXXII.19**
33v	LXXIV.4, LXXIV.6, LXXIV.8, LXXIV.9
34r	LXXV.3, LXXV.4, LXXV.8, LXXV.10
34v	LXXVI.3, LXXVI.6, LXXVI.10
35r	LXXVI.16, LXXVI.18

40v	LXXX.7, LXXX.8, LXXX.11
41r	LXXXI.2, LXXXI.4, LXXXI.5
Folio	**Psalm**
41v	LXXXII.9, LXXXII.13, LXXXII.16
42r	LXXXIII.5, LXXXIII.8
44r	LXXXVI.2, LXXXVI.3, LXXXVI.4, LXXXVI.5, LXXXVII.3
44v	LXXXVII.6, LXXXVII.8, LXXXVII.10, LXXXVII.11, LXXXVII.13, LXXXVII.16
45r	LXXXVIII.5, LXXXVIII.8
46v	LXXXVIII.35, LXXXVIII.38
47r	LXXXVIII.46, LXXXVIII.49
57r	**CV.28**
59r	**CVI.29, CVI.34**
61v	**CVIII.24**
62r	**CXI.10**
65v	**CXVII.13**
66r	**CXVII.24**
73v	**CXIX.4, CXIX.5**
74r	**CXX.3**
75r	CXXIV.5?
75v	**CXXV.4**
76r	**CXXVI.4, CXXVII.3**
76v	**CXXVIII.4**
77r	**CXXX.2**
77v	**CXXXI.11**
78v	**CXXXIV.13**
79r	CXXXIV.21
80r	**CXXXVI.2**
82v	CXXXIX.6, CXXXIX.9, CXXXIX.12
83r	CXL.2, CXL.5, CXL.7
85r	**CXLIII.13**
88r	CXLIX.6
88v	rubric (three lines in small red minuscule, irrecoverable under UV)

The scribes of S1438

The Kingston agreement of 838 survives in three related contemporary copies.[73] The description supplied by Brooks can be represented in a table using the following sigla:[74]

A – Brooks' scribe 4: Christ Church, Canterbury

B – The scribe of the Wilton endorsements: a presumably West Saxon scribe writing Phase II Type B minuscule

C – The scribe of the *æt Astran* endorsements: a scribe writing a variant of Type B cursive which shows some affinity with the aspect of Canterbury script.

MANUSCRIPT		HANDS	
		Endorsements	
	Main text	*Wilton*	*æt Astran*
a. Cotton Aug. ii. 21	A	Absent	Absent
b. Cotton Aug. ii. 20	A	B	C
c. Cotton Aug. ii. 37	B	B	C

---

[73] See discussion above, pp. 65–7.
[74] *The Early History*, pp. 323–5.

79