# A B C: How should we periodize Anglo-Saxon architecture?

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## The problem of 'first principles'

The publication of the third volume of HMT's *Anglo-Saxon architecture* in 1978 brought to a new stage a great enterprise begun 65 years earlier with Baldwin Brown's pioneer work of the same title. The enterprise had been one of trying to construct a typology of Anglo-Saxon architecture, and to discern in the process the different periods through which this architecture developed. In relation to such an objective considerable significance must be attached to HMT's comments in his preface: 'As I have worked on my task . . . I have become certain that the time is not ripe for firm pronouncement about the dates of more than a handful of . . . buildings . . . therefore in this volume I have laid aside the hope of achieving firm date ranges for more than a few churches' (Taylor 1978, xvii-xviii). These comments, however, are best taken not as a counsel of despair, but as a challenge. It is the intention of this paper to look at one aspect of the way forward.

In the first place it is perhaps worth stating why a way forward is important. The most fundamental reason is that we are studying Anglo-Saxon architecture as historians (in the broadest sense) and that a discernment of the underlying patterns of development is essential to our understanding - be it in the field of social and economic history, of technological history, of political history, of religious history, of the history of ideas, or of the history of art. Without chronology we cannot make comparisons; without comparisons we cannot discern patterns; and without patterns there is no comprehensible history. It is therefore not optional whether we continue our efforts to establish a chronology of Anglo-Saxon architecture - unless we wish to abandon the subject altogether.

The ways forward are perhaps multiple, but at the same time complementary. Two of them HMT has drawn attention to himself. First there is typological analysis (to which his third volume is devoted), and here there is perhaps still further work that might be done through the use of computing techniques. Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, there is the application of archaeological techniques to the study of individual churches. The most significant development of the past decade or so in the study of Anglo-Saxon architecture has undoubtedly been the growth of a specialized church archaeology. This subject is given good coverage in the other papers in the present publication and for this reason need not be further discussed here.

A third approach is the application of the art-historical method to Anglo-Saxon architecture. The distinctive tools of the art historian, style criticism and iconography, are critical implements to be added to those of the archaeologist and typologist. However, this paper is not perhaps the best place to expound upon this further, since both methods are the subject of recent publications elsewhere (Fernie 1983; Gem 1983).

What has seemed most important here is to go back to the problem of the first principles of chronology (especially since HMT has directed our attention so consistently to this area) and to look at some of the considerations that must precede the application of all particular methods.

HMT's own contribution to the definition of first principles he has summarized in his third volume (Taylor 1978, 735-7). The chronology of the fabric of Anglo-Saxon buildings must be established on the primary evidence of one or more of the following: contemporary historical documents; archaeological analysis of the upstanding building; or archaeological excavation of the site of the building. In other words, the chronology of each building must be established on internal evidence before it may be used in any comparative argument. The first principles as thus defined lay the foundations for an empirical approach to the chronology of Anglo-Saxon architecture, and must provide the most reliable framework for historical study. However, HMT has drawn attention to the difficulty of applying this approach rigorously while at the same time producing any very extensive results. Only a small number of buildings is dated by contemporary documents or by archaeological research and, whereas it may prove possible in the future to subject many more buildings to archaeological study, yet this study is more likely to produce relative chronological sequences than absolute ones.

The problem may be illustrated by reference to some of the major research projects of recent years. At Barton-on-Humber indeed it has proved possible to establish a good relative chronology and also to pin down the absolute date of the main Anglo-Saxon fabric by the scientific analysis of surviving timbers. But elsewhere, as at Brixworth and Deerhurst, scientific analyses of different materials have produced far more ambiguous results. It may of course be that scientific analysis will reach an ever greater degree of precision, and that further excavations will in addition produce important coin evidence (as at Repton), but this is at best an uncertainty. These intrinsic problems, coupled with the political and economic problems of actually funding large numbers of church excavations, must render very tenuous the hope of being able to construct in the forseeable future a chronology of Anglo-Saxon architecture unassailably based on empirical first principles.

But can the definition of first principles be extended in order to meet the actual situation we face? It may be argued that it can, and as a first step towards this we may examine the logical foundations from which any first principles must be derived. The empirical method, which has been discussed so far, rests upon *inductive* reasoning: that is, it argues from what is observed to general principles. It assumes that if, for example, we were able to carry out an archaeological and documentary examination of every known building with a double-splayed window, and if we were able to show thereby that all these windows occurred in Late Anglo-Saxon contexts, then we should be able to conclude that all double-splayed windows are Late Anglo-Saxon. But of course, although the conclusion may be true, the argument is not valid: all the windows

observed hitherto may indeed be Late Anglo-Saxon, but it cannot logically be excluded that someone will discover a previously unknown example which is Mid Anglo-Saxon. Without going into the problem of the validity of inductive arguments concerning the natural sciences, it is probably true to say that all inductive arguments about Anglo-Saxon architecture will conform to the above pattern, and that none of our general statements therefore will be necessarily true in the logical sense. Of course we may not claim that our general statements about Anglo-Saxon architecture are a matter of logical necessity; but it is still worth making the point because there may be a danger of our assuming that the inductive method is the only logical one for approaching the subject - whereas this is not the case in fact.

If we were to look at the problem of double-splayed windows not from an inductive but from a *deductive* point of view we might argue as follows: all double-splayed windows are Late Anglo-Saxon; this church has a double-splayed window; therefore this church is Late Anglo-Saxon. This in terms of logic is a valid argument - though to be sound the premise itself must be true, which brings us back to the problem of empirical observation. This particular form of deductive argument may not seem to take us very far in our concrete study of Anglo-Saxon architecture; but it may be used to show that logical validity is as much or more a matter of deduction as of induction, and that if we are concerned to use our empirical observations logically we are as entitled to set them into a deductive context as into an inductive context.

The inductive method would have us observe every example of an Anglo-Saxon church and on the basis of our observations draw general conclusions: these conclusions we would have reasonable grounds for thinking true, though they would not be necessarily true. The deductive method would have us formulate an *a priori* premise and analyse what the consquence would be if the premise were true: we should then be able to observe Anglo-Saxon churches to see whether or not they provided reasonable grounds for supposing that our premise might be true. Either of these methods would be equally logical and, in view of what we have seen above about the practical limitations on advancing more than a limited way with inductive methods, there seems a good case for examining the possible applications of deductive methods in addition.

What is being suggested here is that if we assume a hypothetical general pattern to explain a class of phenomena, then we can examine the individual occurrences of these phenomena (or a representative sample) to establish whether these lit the hypothetical pattern. If they do, then we have good reason to think that the hypothesis is, as far as it goes, an adequate explanation; if they do not fit, then the initial hypothesis must be rejected and an alternative one formulated. The general pattern need not be one drawn directly from a prior examination of the architecture. Rather, it assumes that the architecture of the Anglo-Saxons forms an integral part of the culture of the period and that, if a framework is established based on an examination of other aspects of that culture, then there may be postulated a pattern which may (or may not) explain the architectural history as well. This general pattern may be termed a 'cultural paradigm'. The method is one which in fact has been employed, albeit not explicitly, in the study of Anglo-Saxon architecture since Baldwin Brown's day - which brings us to the A B C (Table 4).

## A survey of previous interpretative frameworks

The use of an alphabetical nomenclature as such for designating the periods of Anglo-Saxon architecture is of no intrinsic importance; what is of importance is the reason why Baldwin Brown first suggested a tripartite division of Anglo-Saxon architecture. The reason, however, is not altogether straightforward to discern since Brown's explanation is not without contradictions. In the 1903 edition of his work (p35) he admits that the tripartite division is a matter of convenience, but that the distribution of monuments between the three periods is based on the examination of the monuments themselves. In the 1925 edition (p3), however, he claimed that it was a careful analysis of the details of the buildings and a study of their history that had made it possible for him to draw up a general scheme for the chronology of Anglo-Saxon architecture (that is, the tripartite scheme), and that the fact that his division into three periods had not been seriously challenged suggested to him that it was valid. The change between 1903 and 1925 is between the claim that the tripartite scheme was a-prioristic and that it was empirical. It seems clear, however, that the 1903 statement was closer to the truth, and that in the intervening years Brown had become so convinced of its validity that he thought he had arrived at the scheme empirically.

If the A B C was a-prioristic and Brown was presenting a hypothetical explanation of the development of Anglo-Saxon architecture, can we see what reasons led him to formulate it in the particular way he did? Fortunately, yes, because the reasons are stated. A, the early period, ran from the conversion of Æthelbert of Kent to the first Viking attacks; B, the middle period, covered the epoch of the Danish wars of the 9th century; C, the late period, began with the monastic revival of the reign of Edgar and continued till the Norman conquest. In other words, Brown thought that, if the Christian Anglo-Saxon period was to be subdivided, then three principal events might be taken as landmarks: the Conversion; the Danish invasions; the monastic revival.[1] The positive significance of the first and last of these landmarks is obvious; the second seems of a different nature, that is, it is a negative factor. Here for the first time we have the Viking invasions brought in as an explanatory factor in the development of Anglo-Saxon architecture, and it has remained with us ever since. There will be a further examination of this below, and here it will be sufficient to note only how Brown himself used the 'Viking factor'. He did not use the Vikings as a terminus to bring one period of creativity to an end, and mark an hiatus before a subsequent period of creativity began; his intermediate period was not as negative as this. Rather he saw the intermediate period as one during which the art of building was checked 'but by no means brought to a standstill' (Brown 1903, 297): the Viking invasions might be a major factor, but throughout the period the architectural contacts established in the early period between England and the Continent continued. This is perhaps the appropriate point to say that possible Continental influence was another factor of the

Table 4 Comparative summary of principal chronological schemes for Anglo-Saxon architecture, and for contemporary Continental architecture (following Gem)

| | *Brown* | *Clapham* | *Taylor* | *Cherry* | *Fernie* | *France* | *Germany* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 550 | | | | | | Merovingian | |
| 575 | | | | | | | |
| 600 | | | | | | | |
| 625 | AI | period of Heptarchy I | AI | Early Anglo-Saxon | Early Anglo-Saxon | | |
| 650 | | | | | | | |
| 675 | A II | | A II | | | | |
| 700 | | | | | | | |
| 725 | | | | | | | |
| 750 | A III | | A III | | | | |
| 775 | | period of Heptarchy II | | | | Carolingian | Carolingian |
| 800 | | | | | | | |
| 825 | | | B I | | | | |
| 850 | B | | | | Viking invasions | | |
| 875 | | | B II | 'Obscure' | | Late Carol-ingian | |
| 900 | | | | | Late Anglo-Saxon I | | |
| 925 | | Carolingian | BIII | | | | Ottonian |
| 950 | | | | | | | |
| 975 | C I | | C I | Late Anglo-Saxon | | 'Proto Romanesque' | |
| 1000 | | | | | | | |
| 1025 | C II | | C II | | | | |
| 1050 | C III | | | | | Romanesque | Romanesque |
| 1075 | | Anglo-Norman | C III | | Late Anglo-Saxon II | | |
| 1100 | | | | | | | |

greatest importance in Brown's interpretation of Anglo-Saxon architecture, but that he did not explicitly use the periodization of Continental architecture' as a direct point of reference for establishing his scheme for the English material.

Before discussing the present validity of Brown's paradigm, it is necessary to pass in review the chronological schemes that have been proposed by subsequent writers so that these also may be evaluated at one and the same time. Sir Alfred Clapham neither used nor criticised Brown's scheme, but introduced his own alternative (1930). His division was basically a bipartite one: the period of the Heptarchy from the Conversion to the mid 9th century; and the period of Carolingian architecture which succeeded the former and continued till the Norman conquest. The former period he further subdivided into two stages, the first corresponding to the 7th century, and the second to the 8th century and first half of the 9th. Evaluation of Clapham's scheme is difficult since he does not state his reasons for adopting it, which must be construed from the text as a whole. In the first place it seems clear that the scheme, like Brown's, was an a-prioristic one and not empirically based. Secondly, it would be fair to say that the paradigm implied, insofar as it is implicit rather than explicit, should perhaps be seen as a matter of convenience rather than as the product of Clapham's considered judgement. Yet it must be pointed out that the paradigm is internally inconsistent. The bipartite scheme is divided in the middle of the 9th century, and it is clear that this is intended to correspond to the interruption of the Danish invasions (Clapham 1930, 46-7). On the other hand, the later period is called Carolingian, which should imply that it corresponded chronologically with the Carolingian period on the Continent and began in the second half of the 8th century.[3] Thus we may extract two possible paradigms from Clapham's work, two that cannot in fact be used simultaneously. One of these suggests that the architecture of the Anglo-Saxon period may be divided into two parts sharply divided by the Danish invasions of the mid 9th century. The other implies that a division can be made corresponding to the development of the Carolingian style of architecture on the Continent which, it is assumed, transformed an earlier pre-Carolingian style of Anglo-Saxon architecture. Both these hypotheses, however, are open to objection, as will be seen later; but here it is only necessary to note that Clapham's use of the 'Viking factor' is radically different from Baldwin Brown's.

Among contemporary writers, HMT in 1965 revived Baldwin Brown's A B C periodization, only altering marginally the chronological boundaries between the three periods. However, while HMT does indeed quote Brown's rationale for the scheme (Taylor & Taylor 1965, 1, xxv), it seems that he does not use it for the same reasons. Brown was making use of an a-prioristic explanatory hypothesis with his A B C; but HMT, insofar as he has been following the inductive approach, has had no use for such a framework, and the A B C (with its 1 2 3 subdivisions) has become in practice almost entirely a shorthand for specifying dates: thus, for example, 'A 1' has become a shorthand for 'between *c* 600 and 650'.

Bridget Cherry, in her admirable essay of 1976, attempted to review the state of knowledge at the time of her writing, and did not herself seek to put forward a new synthesis. She did not, therefore, suggest a new scheme of periodization , but took the traditional approaches and criticized them. There is thus a reflection of both the tripartite scheme of Brown and the bipartite scheme of Clapham. The basic treatment is bipartite in that the material is considered under the headings of 'Early Saxon' and 'Later Anglo-Saxon', but there is reference also to an 'obscure' intermediate period between these, lasting from *c* 800 to 950. This ambiguity undoubtedly reflects the widespread misunderstanding caused by Brown's and Clapham's use of the 'Viking factor'; they meant different things by it, but have been taken as meaning the same thing by a conflation of part of the ideas of each. From Clapham has been taken the notion that the Viking invasions marked a clear break between an earlier and a later Anglo-Saxon period; from Brown has been taken the idea that the Viking period lasted from the end of the 8th century to the middle of the 10th. Thus a chasm has been created of 150 years or more between an early and a late period.

Most recently Eric Fernie, in his important new book *The architecture of the Anglo-Saxons* (1983), has unambiguously followed the deductive approach and has set up an a-prioristic paradigm for which he states his debt to Clapham. However, if it is Clapham's, it is so with a difference - not the least important being that Fernie argues closely his reasons for adopting his scheme. What does derive from Clapham is that the scheme is basically bipartite and that the two parts are separated by the Danish invasions of the mid 9th century. Where it differs is in calling the two periods Early and Late, and in abandoning the confusing 'Carolingian' label for the latter.

When it comes to Fernie's arguments for rejecting Brown's tripartite scheme in favour of Clapham's bipartite one, a further divergence in detail from Clapham's views can be seen. Fernie's arguments should be summarized here, however, not only for this reason but also for their intrinsic importance (1983, 90, 92). First, Fernie states his conviction that the Danish invasion represented a violent hiatus during which a decline in building activity should be expected, and that a bipartite scheme divided by this hiatus is the most natural one to follow. The implication of this is that Brown was wrong in believing that there could be cultural continuity through the Danish invasions; but against this view a good case can still be made *a priori* for thinking Brown was right. This will be considered further below.

Secondly Fernie argues that having a period B creates a vacuum effect; that is, that merely labelling the years 800 to 950 as a distinct period will have the psychological effect of making scholars wish to assign buildings to this period whether on good evidence or not. The real force of this argument is uncertain, though it does contain a point. On the other hand, it seems as likely that the very existence of the century and a half in question will tend to attract material whether or not the period is labelled. Conversely, if a label is refused, may this not tend by the same effect in reverse to expel material that rightly belongs?

Thirdly and fourthly Fernie argues that the setting up of a period B both obscures the natural grouping of the buildings of the first half of the 9th century with those of the preceding Early period, and also artificially divides buildings in Wessex in the first half of the 10th century from those of the era of monastic reform in the second

half. This would be true only to the extent that the divisions between periods are regarded as hard and fast boundaries; but they need not be so regarded.

Last, Fernie argues that the setting up of period B was perhaps instrumental in forming the view that Late Anglo-Saxon architecture was essentially Carolingian in character, whereas Fernie believes that the architecture of the Late period should be seen rather in the context of the early development of Romanesque architecture in Europe. This, however, is quite unfair to Brown, for it was not he but Clapham who was responsible for the 'Carolingian' label applied to Late Anglo-Saxon architecture; that is, it arose with the bipartite and not the tripartite scheme, and can hardly be advanced as a substantial argument against the latter. However, Fernie is certainly right in saying that Anglo-Saxon architecture needs to be evaluated in terms of a more up-to-date appreciation of Continental architecture than was available to Brown or Clapham.

Within the overall structure of his bipartite scheme, Fernie suggests (1983, 90) that in the Late period can be discerned two stages of activity: the first during the years from Alfred the Great up to and including the monastic revival of the late 10th century, the second during the reign of Edward the Confessor (whether there was any lull in building activity between the two stages he regards as unproven). The development from the first stage to the second he proceeds to consider in terms of the emergence of what he calls an 'Anglo-Saxon Romanesque' style. He certainly does not thereby suggest that the Late period as a whole can be labelled Romanesque; only certain currents within it. However, whereas Fernie is right in seeking to focus attention on any possible relationship between Late Anglo-Saxon architecture and the developing Early Romanesque styles of the Continent, it may be felt that he has used the term rather too liberally and that confusion is likely to result. Fernie himself has indicated that although there are constituent features of the Romanesque style that may have their individual origins in the 10th century or earlier, yet it is not until the 1lth century that these constituent elements come together in a style that can be called unequivocally Romanesque. If, therefore, we were to consider the Late Anglo-Saxon architecture of Fernie's scheme under the heading Romanesque, we should be open to the same criticism as that levelled earlier against Clapham. That is, there is an inconsistency involved in seeking to use both the Danish invasion of England in the mid 9th century and at the same time the emergence of the Continental Romanesque style of the early 11th century in establishing a single bipartite paradigm for Anglo-Saxon architecture; there are in reality two distinct hypotheses involved here.

Having now surveyed the principal interpretative frameworks advanced by scholars from Brown to Fernie, a summary must be attempted of what may be learnt from them, and then suggestions must be made about a way forward. Common to the different schemes is their selection of factors which are taken as of such significance that they justify *a priori* the subdivision of Anglo-Saxon architecture into different periods. The principal factors that have been suggested are these:

The conversion of England to Christianity
The devastation caused by the Viking raids and the Danish invasions
The English recovery under Alfred the Great and his successors
The monastic revival
The second Danish period
The accession of Edward the Confessor
The development of the Carolingian style
The development of the Romanesque style

Among these it may be observed that there is a considerable divergence: some are political factors, some economic, some religious, some stylistic. Or, again, some are taken as having a positive significance and some a negative significance in promoting or retarding architecture. The confusion is considerable; but we should not neglect the attempt to sort it out. To achieve this, we may first consider how various hypotheses may be set up *a priori;* then some account must be given of how they may be tested empirically.

## Towards a new interpretation

### *Establishing cultural paradigms*

One of the weaknesses of the earlier attempts at interpretation that have been examined above is that they sought to set up a single paradigm while employing divergent, if not inconsistent, factors to establish the subdivisions within it. It may be contended, however, that any paradigm must be self-consistent, and that to attain this we must have in the first instance not a single paradigm but a multiplicity: that is, separate political, economic, religious and stylistic ones, and probably others as well. We should recognize that these are likely to be interrelated in a variety of ways, but we may only attempt a fusion into a single cultural paradigm if and when we have demonstrated an identical pattern in each area of culture. In the present paper an examination of all areas of culture cannot be attempted, but representative areas can be taken to illustrate what is involved - even if the treatment must perforce be rather superficial in view of the limitation of space.

First let us consider how an ecclesiastical-historical paradigm might be established. Consideration would need to be given to what factors in the ecclesiastical history of the Anglo-Saxons seemed most likely to have marked stages in their cultural development and, specifically for the present purpose, to have influenced architecture. Some of the following would certainly be important:

1 In the pagan period we should not expect to see any flourishing of ecclesiastical architecture in the areas of Anglo-Saxon settlement, but we might look for pagan cult sites and for a survival of Christian ones among the residual Romano-British population.
2 With the period of conversion to Christianity from the end of the 6th century and through a large part of the 7th, we might expect the beginnings of an ecclesiastical architecture formed by the experience of the missionaries from Italy and Gaul on the one hand, and from Scotland and Ireland on the other.
3 With the archiepiscopate of Theodore (668-90) and the consolidation of the administrative structure of the church at a national level, and also with the work of figures such as Aldhelm, Biscop, and Wilfrid, we might expect a growth in the provision of churches

and the development of buildings less 'missionary' in character but reflecting more the church's now established role in society. At the same time, in view of the Continental contacts of leading churchmen, and the Anglo-Saxon missions to pagan Germany, we should expect these buildings to show some acknowledgement of contemporary Continental architecture.

This phase of consolidation and accommodation to the structure of society we should expect to continue through the 8th century. For, even though there survives no connected written history following Bede's death in 731, there is other evidence from synodal acts and from ecclesiastical correspondence which shows a vigorous church life (though not without abuses) continuing, and remaining in contact with the church on the Continent.

4 English churchmen, first Boniface and then Alcuin, were among the originators of the reform of the Frankish church which took place under the early Carolingian monarchy, and they were also proponents of reform in the English church. Furthermore, there is specific evidence from Canterbury for a Carolingian-type reform of the community of Christ Church under Archbishop Wulfred in 813. There seems good reason to think, therefore, that the ideas leading to church reform and to a new Carolingian ecclesiastical architecture on the Continent may not have been unfamiliar in England from the late 8th century onwards.

5 The effects on the church of the Viking raids and then the invasion of the Great Army are difficult to determine. The earlier raids on the Continent coincided with the period of the greatest splendour of Carolingian culture. In England there is no reason to assume that the raids of the same period necessarily had a devastating effect on church life. From 866 onwards, however, the situation was transformed: the Viking settlement of Northumbria, East Anglia, and half Mercia must have disrupted the political and economic structure of the church, and without doubt some churches were destroyed and religious communities dispersed at the same time. But evidence for the actual extinction of Christianity in the areas of Scandinavian settlement is conspicuously lacking. Alfred the Great, when he speaks about the ravaging and plundering of churches and about the decay of Latin learning (Keynes & Lapidge 1983, 124-6), is a witness to the fact that the invasion and settlement had a negative effect also in southern England, but this is not the same thing as a complete hiatus in church life and culture; the church continued and its architectural requirements must have continued with it.

Alfred, whose reign coincided in large part with the worst of the Viking onslaught, was himself a promoter of ecclesiastical reform and of new building projects. This reform preceded the specifically 10th century reform movements on the Continent (Gorze, Cluny, etc) and belonged still to the Anglo-Saxon tradition parallel to the Carolingian reform on the Continent. It would seem artificial, therefore, to divide the late 9th century radically from the early 9th century.

6 The fundamental reorientation of church life in the post-Viking period came only in the second half of the 10th century, and was less a result of the cessation of Viking activity than a product of influence from the 10th century reform movements on the Continent. The monastic revival we know from documentary sources alone led to numerous architectural projects both for new foundations and for the restoration of old ones. This in itself should make the revival an important landmark in any paradigm for the development of Anglo-Saxon architecture. The force of the revival continued into the early years of the 11th century, by which time it was largely spent (Gem 1978).

7 The renewed Danish attack on England, leading to the accession of Cnut, must have had a depressive effect on the economy of the church (Gem 1975), but there is little evidence for any radical break in church culture at this time, and a continuation of late 10th century norms might be expected.

8 With the accession of Edward the Confessor the church was exposed to a new wave of continental influence that coincided with the early stages of the papal reform movement; some reflection of this might be expected architecturally.

In summarizing the development outlined here, it might be said that ecclesiastical history suggests a basic continuity in the Anglo-Saxon church, without any fundamental break caused by the Vikings or other factors. This, therefore, would not provide grounds for establishing a paradigm with rigid compartments, whether tripartite or bipartite. It does on the other hand allow us to see, perhaps, a number of stages within the continuous development, and some of these stages might be grouped together. A tentative grouping of the stages discussed above might be:

| | |
|---|---|
| *c* 600-750x800 | Period of conversion and consolidation |
| *c* 750x800-900x940 | Period of attempted reform parallel to the Continental Carolingian reform |
| *c* 900x940-1010x1045 | Period of successful monastic reform |
| *c* 1045 ff | Period of papal reform |

Whether Anglo-Saxon architecture in fact relates typologically or stylistically to this ecclesiastical-historical paradigm is a matter for empirical testing, and this will be examined further below. First, however, consideration must be given briefly to some other alternative approaches.

Another possible scenario assumes, not without some evidence, that cultural contacts existed between England and the Continent and that therefore the chronology of the succession of styles in Continental architecture may provide a paradigm. In outline the Continental development is this:[4]

| | |
|---|---|
| Until *c* 751 | Merovingian style |
| *c* 751-919 (in Germany) | |
| *c* 751-987 (in France) | Carolingian style |
| *c* 919-1025 (in Germany) | Ottonian style |
| *c* 980-1020 (in France) | Proto-Romanesque style |
| *c* 1020-1060x1100 | Early Romanesque style |
| *c* 1060x1100 ff | High Romanesque style |

In this scheme the dates given for the Carolingian and Ottonian styles correspond with the dates of the dynasties of these names. This may appear to involve circular reasoning, insofar as it seems to presuppose a link between political and stylistic events. The difficulty can only be acknowledged here, for it would take a longer argument to demonstrate the justification - that is, that it was indeed the direct patronage of the Carolingian and Ottonian courts that created the styles named after them. The dates given here should be regarded as only approximate stylistic boundaries.

A political paradigm indeed would seem a further possibility. One for this country might start from a basic division between the period of the Heptarchy and that of the unified kingdom of England, separated by the Viking invasion of the second half of the 9th century which destroyed the old political order. The two main periods might be further subdivided, with stages corresponding to, for example, the period of Mercian dominance in the 8th century, or to the rule of the Scandinavian kings in the early 11th century. However, this paradigm could not be developed very far unless we knew a great deal more than we do about the cultural policies of the political authorities involved; it is only in isolated cases (such as that of Alfred) that an assessment is possible.

Finally there is the problem of constructing an economic paradigm. Economic factors are profoundly important in determining the development of architecture, while at the same time they provide a bridge between the study of architectural history and the socio-economic concerns of many contemporary historians and archaeologists engaged upon the study of other aspects of society. Recent years have seen a considerable volume of research on the early and high medieval economy; but no consensus has yet emerged and it may be felt that it would be rash to attempt a synthesis here. This problem perforce, therefore, must be left on the agenda for the future, together with the task of constructing other paradigms to correspond with further aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture.

### *Testing cultural paradigms*

Even before we have got to the stage of working out an extensive series of cultural paradigms, it is necessary to say something about the way in which they may be used. In the first place it is essential to remember that any paradigm is only a working hypothesis until such time as it has been tested empirically; but how do we test it?

Returning to the outline of the deductive method given above, the paradigm can be set into the following form of exemplary argument: 'Culture forms an integrated whole and different branches of one culture will tend to fall into similar patterns of historical development; the church is a branch of Anglo-Saxon culture and falls into the pattern of development X Y Z; architecture is also a branch of Anglo-Saxon culture: therefore Anglo-Saxon architecture falls into the pattern of development X Y Z.' The empirical testing of such an argument is not designed to establish the truth or otherwise of the initial premise, it is intended rather to test the truth of the conclusion derived from it. To do this, what is required is that we should be able to show that the conclusion in practice provides an adequate account of the observed phenomena of Anglo-Saxon architecture (that is, of our typological and archaeological and stylistic data).

It should perhaps be pointed out that the premise of the argument does not require that the conclusion should always be the pattern X Y Z rather than something else. We might say, without changing the form of the argument, that the pattern of economic development was P Q R, and that the pattern of architectural development was therefore also P Q R. The point is that architectural development could be X Y Z and also P Q R at the same time, the quality of being X Y Z or P Q R not being exclusive of other qualities.

It is now possible to examine in relation to the empirical evidence two of the paradigms tentatively sketched above: that deriving from the history of the culture of the Anglo-Saxon church, and that from the history of Continental architectural styles which may have influenced England. The frameworks suggested by these are not identical, though they do have similarities, and each should require separate testing. For reasons of space, however, and yet without abandoning the general principle of separate testing, the two will here be examined in parallel - though without conflating them, it is hoped.

No-one would challenge seriously the contention that Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical architecture began with the conversion to Christianity and followed a fairly continuous development until the death of Bede or later. There is also fairly general agreement that the primary inspiration of this architecture must have come from the Continent, whether from Italy or from Merovingian Gaul, and parallels have not proved impossible to find in practice (for example, between the plans of early churches in south-east England and those in 5th and 6th century north Italy and Gaul). The question of Scottish and Irish influence has been more difficult to evaluate in the absence of adequate comparative material from these areas.

The second phase of the ecclesiastical paradigm is altogether more problematic. It has been suggested here that in the late 8th and early 9th centuries there was evidence for a movement towards reform in the Anglo-Saxon church related to the early Carolingian reform of the Frankish church. It has also been suggested that the policy of Alfred the Great at the end of the 9th century was still inspired by ideas belonging to the same current. Hence it may be argued that there was some sort of cultural continuity through the 9th century, which may have been disrupted by the Vikings but was not totally destroyed. If we turn to the Continental architectural paradigm we will find a remarkable parallel. The Carolingian architectural revival, begun in the late 8th century, continued through the 9th century and into the early 10th before it was finally dissipated; its extent, therefore, coincided precisely with the duration of the Viking period which impinged upon Carolingian culture but did not break it. Are we able to see, therefore, a parallel continuity in Anglo-Saxon architecture from the late 8th century and through the 9th? The problem here is

the absence of adequate empirical data - though the situation is beginning to change.

Especial interest would attach to the architecture of King Offa's foundations at St Alban's Abbey and at Winchcombe Abbey, and to the Cathedral church at York built by Alcuin and Eanbald. These would allow a picture to be formed of major building projects of the late 8th century - and the current work of the Biddles at St Albans may therefore be especially welcomed. For the 9th century, on the other hand, the current excavations at Repton have already started to fill the lacuna in our knowledge for Mercia, since Repton was certainly a minster of capital importance for its region right up to the Danish settlement. Here the Biddles have shown that an imposing mausoleum (probably that known to later tradition as the 'mausoleum of King Wiglaf', who died *c* 840) was incorporated into a church which itself was subsequently incorporated into the defences of the Viking winter camp of 873-4. The problem remains, however, whether the existing superstructure of the chancel, with the rest of the church belonging to it (Taylor 1971; 1979), is that which was in existence in 873, or whether it represents a rebuilding sometime following the English reconquest of the Repton area c917. If the church is indeed as early as the third quarter of the 9th century it is of major significance, for it exhibits many of the features of plan and decoration that traditionally have been regarded as typical of post-Viking architecture. If they are here pre-Viking it must reinforce the case for regarding the 9th century not only as a period of continuity but even of innovation.

For the late 9th century and beginning of the 10th there are one and possibly two monuments of major significance that have been examined archaeologically in recent years and that may belong in part to this period. About one of these, St Oswald's Minster in Gloucester, founded shortly before 900, another paper is published in this volume (see p 188). Suffice it here to remark that the plan in general relates to both pre-Viking and post-Viking buildings elsewhere in England, while the western apse relates to Continental Carolingian types (such as the contemporary church of Reichenau-Oberzell, *c* 888x913). The other major building is Deerhurst, not far from Gloucester. Here we still await the final publication of the archaeological research programme of some years ago (Rahtz 1976; Butler *et al* 1975), and especially the revised radiocarbon determinations. But in advance of these, there seems to be an important piece of dating evidence provided by the animal-head sculptures that decorate many of the archways. D M Wilson (cited in Taylor 1978, 1057) has commented that the metalwork parallels to these sculptures are 8th and 9th century and certainly not later than 900 while it may be argued further that the specific similarity to the Alfred Jewel suggests a late 9th century date. If the main fabric of Deerhurst (as rebuilt on an essentially earlier plan) is indeed Alfredian - or, more probably, the work of Ethelred and Æthelflhed - then to find so accomplished a work of architecture at this date is again an indicator of a more lively 9th century tradition than has been allowed by proponents of the Viking-catastrophe theory.

Of the developments of the 10th and 11th centuries more than a summary consideration is not here possible, but a few points perhaps stand out. On documentary evidence we can point to a body of material that corresponds with the monastic revival (Fig 96), and it seems that the period was one of considerable architectural activity. It is difficult, however, to make comparisons with the Continental centres of the reform, such as Fleury, Ghent, and Gorze, since on the one hand these Continental buildings are themselves largely unknown, and on the other hand we have neither surviving nor excavated any of the major monasteries founded on *new sites* in England (Ramsey Abbey would be the prime case for excavation). Nonetheless, we do know about the architecture of such major sites as Winchester Old Minster, Glastonbury Abbey, and St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, and these allow certain comparisons with the paradigm derived from Continental architectural styles. The second half of the 10th century on the Continent was one of divergent currents: in Germany the emergence of the Ottonian style; in France the attenuated survival of the Carolingian style and then the revival in the decades around 1000 that started the development to Romanesque. The English buildings in question, simply by their decision to retain old structures on the site and to add to them - rather than to pull them down and start again - display their distance from the major Ottonian and proto-Romanesque projects on the Continent. Furthermore, where clear Continental influence is manifest, as in the great westwork of Winchester (Biddle & Kjolbye-Biddle 1981, fig on p 167; Kjolbye-Biddle 1975, fig on p 93), it derives from a model that is essentially conservative and Carolingian (such as the westwork of Werden-an-der-Ruhr, begun *c* 876-7, dedicated 943). The evidence is lacking therefore for thinking of the late 10th century in England as a period of dynamic architectural change, and on the Continental stylistic parallel it might best be classified as 'late Carolingian' - though this would not be an appropriate term to introduce into general currency in an English context.

The final major stage in the ecclesiastical-historical paradigm was the period during which the English church was transformed by the influence of the papal reform movement both before and after the Norman conquest. The documentary evidence again witnesses to the considerable body of architecture in this period (Fig 96), and the survival rate of this is excellent, at least for the post-conquest period. Such a survival of dated buildings allows us to see the direct influence of the new Romanesque architecture of the Continent upon England at this time, and thereby helps validate the stylistic paradigm. The Romanesque influence in the post-conquest period is obvious and uncontroverted; but it is apparent also in the pre-conquest period in such buildings as Westminster Abbey (begun *c* 1050 under the patronage of King Edward (Gem 1980)), and perhaps also the lower parts of the crossing of Stow church (rebuilt probably in the 1040s and early '50s under the patronage of Earl Leofric),[5] where native Anglo-Saxon themes were developed in a Romanesque vein. How far this Romanesque influence had spread in England in the pre-conquest period, however, remains too large a problem to be debated here.[6]

## Conclusions

It has been possible here to refer to only one or two key buildings the examination and interpretation of which seem to correspond to a development of Anglo-Saxon

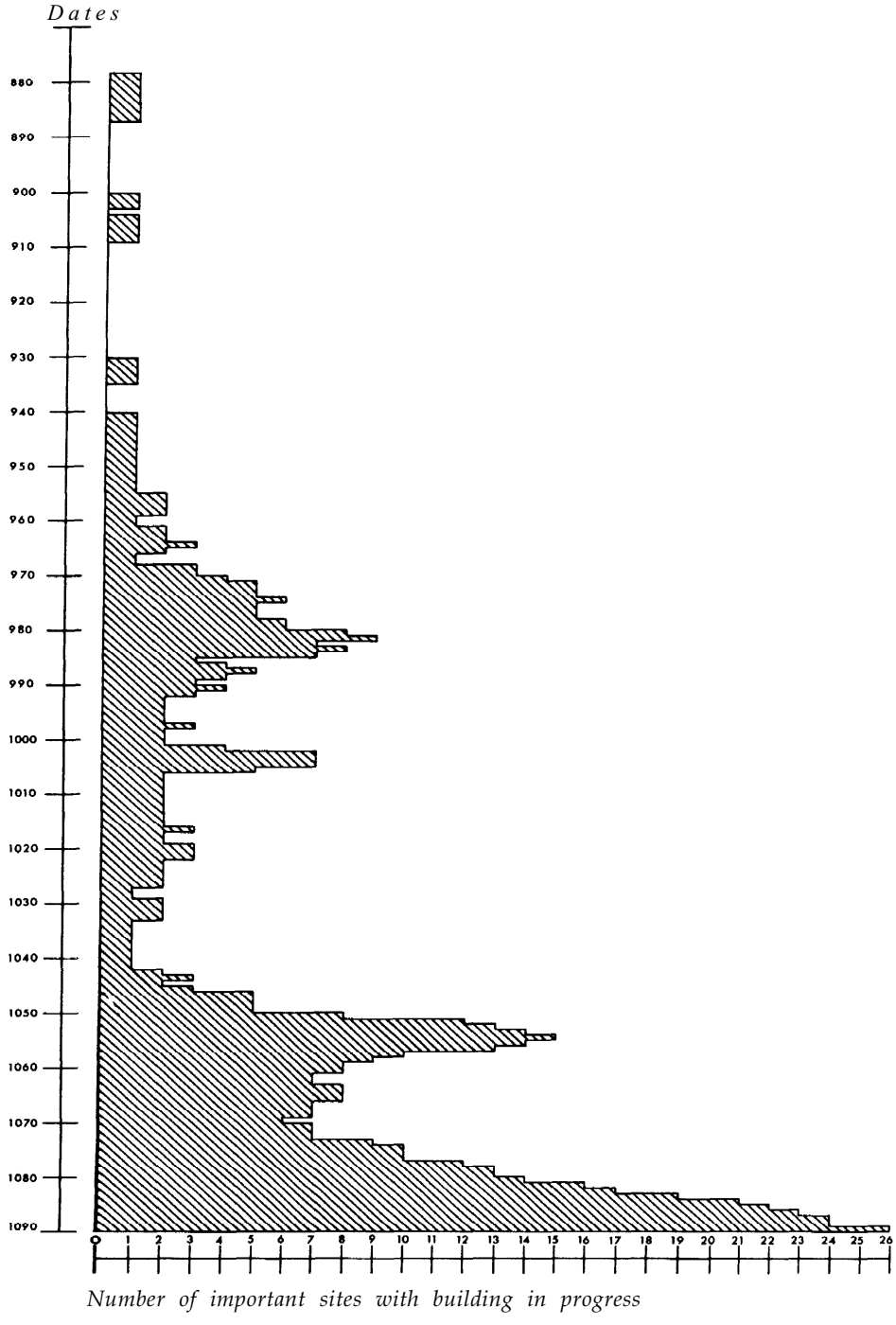


*Fig 96 Graph showing the number of ecclesiastical building projects in progress between 870 and 1090 as recorded in the documentary sources. Classes of information included are: i, building projects whose dates are known precisely (where only one terminus is known a five-year period is assumed before or after that terminus as appropriate); ii, building projects whose dates are known within a fifteen-year margin; iii, building projects which are inferred from the establishment of a new religious foundation on a virgin or abandoned site. The documentary evidence is discussed* in extenso *in Gem 1974*

architecture conformable to the cultural paradigms here outlined. The process would need to be pushed much further and in greater depth before we could claim to draw reliable conclusions; but enough may have been said to indicate that this is potentially a worthwhile approach.

Nothing much has been said here about nomenclature, both because this would have been a distraction from the main issues, and also because the premature labelling of periods can give an illusory impression of finality. This is not to say that we need necessarily abandon using the letters A B C in the way that HMT has done - that is, purely as a chronological label - although it may be wondered whether their usefulness has not now been outlived, and whether we might not do better now to speak of actual dates. As to the labels Early, Mid, and Late Anglo-Saxon, it would seem only sensible to agree to abide by the definition of these terms current among archaeologists, and not seek a different definition when applying them to architecture. Thus they will apply respectively to the 5th and 6th centuries (Early), the 7th and 8th centuries (Mid), and the 9th to 11th centuries (Late). This will not only avoid confusion but will allow us if we wish to use these terms neutrally, without prejudging the periodization of Anglo-Saxon architecture.

It would be appropriate, however, to end on a different and more positive note. HMT in his work over the past years has consistently drawn our attention back to the question of first principles, and has laid the foundations for an unassailably sound empirical approach. What has been said here presupposes this empirical approach as fundamental: it has been attempted above to extend our concept of first principles to allow further approaches which are equally logical; yet these further approaches can perhaps only ask the questions that the method advocated by HMT will provide the data to answer. Nonetheless, the ideas outlined here are not entirely of secondary importance. The aim of our study of Anglo-Saxon architecture is to deepen our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon culture as a whole and it seems, therefore, highly desirable to find ways in which we can work simultaneously with both the empirical data and their cultural context. Thus we may be able even now to reach some general conclusions about Anglo-Saxon architecture, albeit provisional ones, rather than deferring this central historical task to an indefinite future.

## Notes

1 The further subdivision of Brown's main periods is here passed over. Except in the case of period C they have little conceptual significance.

2 The periodization of Continental architecture as understood by Brown is, as might be expected, considerably different from the modern understanding which rests upon research carried out since Brown's day.

3 In Clapham's day it would still have been acceptable perhaps to make no distinction between Carolingian and Late Carolingian or Ottonian architecture on the Continent, and hence to have applied the unqualified label 'Carolingian' to a period continuing to the end of the 10th century. However, the Continental examples of Carolingian architecture actually quoted by Clapham (1930, 77–85) are mostly structures of the late 8th and 9th centuries – above all St Riquier.

4 The development suggested is that which seems to the author most probable. Other writers will be found to have adopted a slightly different phasing and chronology for the Romanesque.

5 The piers of the crossing at Stow are attributed to the mid 11th century on stylistic grounds. This might bring them into conjunction with the rebuilding of the church attributed to Earl Leofric by Henry of Huntingdon (*Historia Anglorum*, **6**, ed T Arnold, Rolls Ser, **74** (1879), 196: this is a local source and for that reason perhaps more reliable than the text of Florence of Worcester which is anyway corrupt at this point) and the re-endowment of the chapter by Leofric and Godgifu (Robertson 1939, 212–17).

6 For a further discussion see Gem 1984.

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