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Scandinavia enters Christian Europe

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It was not until the ninth century that significant numbers of Scandinavians were converted to Christianity, but some knowledge of Christian beliefs and rituals had reached Scandinavia much earlier. A few Scandinavians encountered Christians and their churches even before the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west, and in the eighth century the commercial links between Christian Europe and the Baltic region provided opportunities for some Scandinavians to meet Christian merchants and to visit the great Christian market at Dorestad. This trade also made it easier for missionaries to reach pagans living in the coastal regions north of the Rhine.

As early as the first years of the eighth century Willibrord, an English monk who had been working in Frisia, extended his mission to the Danes, probably travelling in a merchant ship to Ribe. He soon abandoned the attempt and sailed back to Frisia with thirty boys, presumably in the hope that some of them would eventually preach to the Danes in their own language. It was, however, over a hundred years before missionaries returned to the Danes. For the Frankish rulers on whose support missionaries like Willibrord depended it was more important to convert their immediate neighbours – the Frisians, Saxons and other Germans beyond the Rhine – than the more distant Danes.

Early missions

By the beginning of the ninth century the Franks had subjected and forcibly converted the Saxons south of the river Elbe. This made the Danes their neighbours, across the no man's land of Nordalbingia. The Danes were then ruled by Godfred, who actively opposed Frankish expansion, but in the succession disputes that followed his assassination in 810 some of the contestants, including Godfred's sons, continued to oppose the Franks, while others were prepared to come to terms with them – and one, Harald, actively welcomed their support. In 819 the Franks helped him to regain power in an uneasy partnership with

Godfred's sons. This made it possible for Ebbo, archbishop of Rheims, to lead a mission to Harald's part of the kingdom.

Ebbo's base was, however, not in Danish territory but at *Welaneo*, now Münsterdorf, under the shelter of the northernmost Frankish fort at Itzehoe on the river Stör. For most of his reign Harald was threatened by his partners, and in 826, in order to secure continued Frankish support he accepted baptism at Mainz, with the Frankish emperor, Louis the Pious, as sponsor. He returned to Denmark accompanied by, among others, a monk called Anskar, but a year later he was expelled from his kingdom and spent the rest of his life in exile.

It was some compensation for the failure of the Danish mission that in 829 a king of the *Svear*, who occupied what is now eastern Sweden, asked Louis to send preachers to Birka. Anskar was chosen for this task. After about eighteen months he returned having made a good beginning. His greatest success was the conversion of Herigar, described as prefect of Birka, who built a church on his own land. Ebbo appointed Gauzbert, a kinsman, as bishop of Birka, and Anskar was given the newly created see of Hamburg, which was soon raised to an archbishopric by the pope who also gave Anskar joint authority with Ebbo 'among the *Svear*, Danes, Slavs and other peoples inhabiting the northern regions'.

Anskar's position was, however, weakened in 835 when Ebbo was deprived of his archbishopric for supporting the deposition of Louis in 833. In 845 Anskar suffered a more serious setback when a fleet sent by the Danish king Horik sacked Hamburg and destroyed his cathedral. As Christianity had been preached as a religion of power and success, such a demonstration of failure must have raised doubts about its efficacy and may well have been responsible for the violent pagan reaction to the Birka mission in that year which caused Gauzbert to flee and seek a safer position as bishop of Osnabrück.

The year 845 nevertheless saw the beginning of a remarkable change in Anskar's fortunes. The immediate cause was a fatal disease that afflicted some of the Danes who attacked Paris in that year. Some of them, including their leader, Ragnar, survived long enough to return home and tell King Horik what had happened. Ragnar attributed his illness to the power of St Germain, whose monastery they had sacked. When Ragnar and many of his companions died, the king was so frightened that he had the survivors executed, and returned all the Christians captured in the raids on Hamburg and Paris to their own countries. If the sack of Hamburg demonstrated the failure of the Christian God to protect his own, the fate of those who attacked Paris was a significant counter demonstration that prepared the way for Horik's acceptance of Anskar.

The sack of Hamburg eventually worked to Anskar's advantage for he was compensated by being given the richer see of Bremen to hold jointly with Hamburg. He could consequently afford to make the gifts that were needed to gain access to the Danish court. This combination of circumstances resulted eventually in Anskar's reception on friendly terms by Horik, who allowed a church to be built at Hedeby. According to Rimbert, Anskar's successor as archbishop, the existence of this church stimulated trade as Christian merchants were encouraged to visit Hedeby 'without fear, which they could not do earlier'. This may, indeed, have been an important consideration in inviting missionaries to Birka and other trading places. Horik also helped Anskar to revive the mission in Birka. Horik's successor, with the same name, was also on good terms with Anskar. He allowed a church to be built in Ribe, and in 864 sent gifts to Pope Nicolaus II, who thanked the king but criticised him for refusing baptism.

Anskar died in 865. His *Vita*, written by Rimbert, is the most important source of knowledge about the ninth-century missions to Scandinavia. The next major contemporary source for Scandinavia and its conversion is Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum*, written 200 years after Anskar's death. Like Anskar's *Vita*, Adam's work is largely concerned with justifying the claims of his archbishopric to lead the church in Scandinavia; he had little to say about the tenth century. The dearth of information about the decades after Anskar's time makes it impossible to say whether the missionary work he had begun continued. In 936 a later archbishop, Unni, visited Birka and died there, but his purpose is not known. He may have been attempting to revive a lapsed mission, as Anskar had done earlier. Alternatively his purpose could have been to restore Hamburg-Bremen's authority over a church that had become too independent.

Unni's successor, Adaldag, consecrated bishops for Schleswig, Ribe and Århus in or before 948. His motive was not to encourage missionary activity but to have the suffragans he needed to maintain his archiepiscopal status. They did not necessarily ever visit Denmark, let alone establish sees. The only one about whom Adam of Bremen reports additional information, Liafdag, supposedly bishop of Ribe, is said to have preached in Sweden and Norway, which suggests that he was a missionary, not a diocesan, bishop. The suspicion that these three bishops did not occupy regular sees is reinforced by the fact that Adam does not name their successors. Odense is named as a bishopric in an imperial diploma of 988. It had been a pagan cult centre and was later a centre of royal power, and may well have been a base for a missionary bishop attached to the royal court, but there is no reliable evidence that there was a

regular episcopal see there, or anywhere else in Scandinavia, before the time of Knut the Great.[1]

Whether or not churches survived in Denmark or Sweden, there are several indications that the toleration of Christian missionaries shown in Anskar's time by kings of the Danes and of the *Svear* was continued by at least some of their tenth-century successors. One result was that some Scandinavians were prepared to accept that Christ was a god, if not the only one. As the German chronicler Widukind, writing about a century after Anskar's death, remarked: 'the Danes have long been Christians but they nevertheless worshipped idols with pagan rituals'.

Most conversions of Scandinavians in the ninth century happened in western Europe. Vikings as well as envoys or merchants, must have been impressed by the enormous wealth and elaborate rituals of the great churches in the Frankish empire and the British Isles, and when Viking leaders came to terms with Christian rulers they normally accepted baptism. These conversions were not all permanent, and one Frankish archbishop complained that converts who reverted to pagan ways were behaving 'like typical Northmen'. Some conversions were, however, sincere and by the beginning of the tenth century most of the Scandinavians who had settled in western Europe, or their descendants, were as Christian as their native neighbours.

During the tenth century there were in England some priests and monks of Danish descent, including three archbishops. Such men were naturally sympathetic supporters of missions to Scandinavia, just as two centuries earlier Christian Saxons in England felt an obligation to preach the Gospel to their pagan kinsmen in Saxony. The tenth- and eleventh-century English missionaries did not limit their evangelism to the Danes, they also worked elsewhere in Scandinavia, and were especially important in Norway. As that part of Scandinavia was outside the range of the earlier Frankish missionaries, virtually nothing is known about the progress of Christianity there in the ninth century, although it does seem likely that by the year 900, if not before, Christianity was tolerated in coastal districts there as it was by some Danes and *Svear*.

Christian kings

The toleration of missionaries in the ninth and early tenth centuries prepared the way for the next stage of Christianisation, the formal acceptance of the

1 P. Sawyer, *Da Danmark blev Danmark* (O. Olsen (ed.), *Gyldendal og Politikens Danmarks Historie*, 3, København, 1988), pp. 239–45, 296–9.

exclusive claims of the Christian God, which meant the abandonment of traditional cults, or their reduction to mere superstitions, a dramatic break with the past that required the support of rulers. The first king to be baptised in Scandinavia was the Dane, Harald Gormsson, who proclaimed that he had 'made the Danes Christian' on the huge runic monument he had erected at Jelling (see Chapter 6). His own conversion, which happened in about 965, was widely believed to have been brought about by a priest proving that Christ was the one true God by a miracle involving an ordeal by hot iron. According to Widukind, writing in 968, the king converted, resolved that Christ alone should be worshipped as God, ordered all people subject to him to reject idols, and thereafter gave due honour to priests and God's servants. Some Danes continued to sacrifice to their old gods in traditional ways, but not for long; by the end of the century pagan forms of burial had been abandoned.

Harald was driven into exile and died, probably in about 986. He was succeeded by his son, Sven Forkbeard. Adam of Bremen claimed that Sven began his reign as an apostate and that the revolt against Harald was a heathen reaction. There is no evidence to support this and the fact that a church was built in Lund in or shortly before 990 suggests that Adam was mistaken. Sven's refusal to accept that the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen had any authority over the Danish church was reason enough for Adam to treat him as an enemy of Christianity. Adam had to admit, however, that later in his reign Sven was a Christian king, who contributed to the conversion of Norway and appointed an English bishop to preach in Skåne.

There is no doubt about the conventional piety of Knut, Sven's son and successor as king of both the Danes and the English. He was a generous benefactor of churches on the Continent as well as in England, and was the first Scandinavian king to visit Rome, where he prayed at the shrines of the apostles, and was received by the pope. He recruited several English bishops to work in Denmark and, presumably in the light of his experience in England, he began to create regular dioceses in Denmark, the first in Scandinavia. He apparently hoped to free the Danish church from the authority of Hamburg-Bremen and in 1022 he had a bishop of Roskilde consecrated in England by the archbishop of Canterbury.[2] However, Knut was later forced to recognise that such a breach of church law and tradition was unacceptable. When he died in 1035 the church in Denmark was well established and Hamburg-Bremen's claims were unchallenged.

2 N. Lund, 'Cnut's Danish kingdom', in A. Rumble (ed.), *The Reign of Cnut* (London, 1994), pp. 27–42.

There are indications that at least one Norwegian king publicly acknowledged Christianity earlier than Harald Gormsson. Early in the tenth century the Norwegian king, Harald Finehair, sent his son Håkon to be fostered in the court of the English king Athelstan. Although this arrangement was apparently made for political or diplomatic, not religious, reasons, it had important religious consequences when Håkon eventually succeeded his father. He was remembered as the first king actively to encourage Christianity in Norway and there may be some truth in the later tradition that he invited English missionaries to Norway. That tradition is supported by the recent discovery on Veøy in Romsdal in northern Vestlandet, of a churchyard that was possibly established a little before the year 950.

According to Snorri Sturluson Håkon encountered determined resistance in Trøndelag, which was then ruled by Sigurd, earl of Lade, who was prepared to acknowledge Håkon as his overlord, but not to accept his overlord's religion. Snorri's claim that Håkon abandoned Christianity and was given a pagan burial is supported by the skaldic poem *Hákonarmál* (see Chapter 6) composed in his memory after his death in battle against his Christian nephews. The poet described Håkon as a heathen who faced Odin's hostility in Valhalla because he had failed the god but was nevertheless accepted because he had not been hostile to the traditional religion. The implication of this remarkable poem is that Håkon had at least for a while accepted Christianity personally, but had not made any serious effort to impose it on his people. The skald, Eyvind Finnsson, was apparently contrasting Håkon's attitude with that of his less tolerant successors.

The religious situation in Norway in the mid-tenth century thus seems to have been much like that described by Widukind in Denmark, with the significant difference that in large parts of Norway pagan burial customs were abandoned earlier than in the Danish kingdom. In the coastal regions of south and west Norway the proportion of burials furnished with grave goods was already declining in the first half of the tenth century. The survival of older forms of burial inland and in Trøndelag strongly suggests that the change reflects the success of missionaries who were encouraged, or at least allowed, to preach, and even to establish churches, in other parts of Norway. A list commemorating monks of the English monastery of Glastonbury who were bishops in the reign of King Edgar (959–75) includes *Sigefridus norwegensis episcopus*,[3] and there is no good reason to doubt that he was a missionary in Norway. It

3 F. Birkeli, 'The earliest missionary activities from England to Norway', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 15 (1971), pp. 27–37.

was in the same coastal districts that large stone crosses, up to 4 metres high, and rune stones with crosses carved on them were erected in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. Many of these were apparently placed in pagan cemeteries by, or in memory of, converts before there were Christian graveyards.

The early progress of Christianity in Norway has been obscured by the emphasis later put on the role of Olaf Tryggvason. According to Ari, who wrote a history of Iceland early in the twelfth century, Olaf was responsible for the conversion of both Norway and Iceland, and later writers followed Ari's lead. There is no doubt that Olaf was an active supporter of Christianity. It is not known where he was baptised, but he was certainly confirmed in England in 995 with the English king as his sponsor. A more reliable indication of his enthusiasm for Christianity than the traditions reported in the sagas is the fact that the court poets, who had earlier made great use of mythological kennings, began to show an aversion for such echoes of paganism in, or immediately after, his reign. It does, though, seem likely that any missionary activity that he undertook in Norway was to consolidate a process that had begun decades earlier. Olaf's main contribution to the conversion of Norway was his conquest of Trøndelag, whose rulers had remained obstinately pagan. It may have been this achievement that is referred to in the runic inscription on the island of Kuli, about 125 km west of Trondheim, commemorating a man who died after 'Christendom had been in Norway twelve winters'.

Ari gave a fairly detailed account of the conversion of Iceland, based on what he had been told by Teitr, son of Ísleifr, the first native Icelandic bishop. According to him, Christianity was formally accepted after a heated dispute at the *Althing* in the year 1000 (999 by our reckoning). The change was urged by Christian chieftains who had been baptised by Thangbrand, the missionary sent by King Olaf, but the decision was left to the pagan lawspeaker who declared that 'if we break the law in pieces then we break the peace in pieces too'. It was agreed that all men should be baptised. A period of transition was allowed in which Icelanders could offer sacrifices in private, eat horse-meat and practise infanticide, but 'a few years later this heathendom was abolished like the rest'. Ari exaggerated the part played by his own family and friends, and he oversimplified; knowledge of Christianity reached Iceland through many channels, from the British Isles as well as from an incompletely christianised Norway. Ari mentions a number of missionaries from various quarters, but does not credit them with any specific achievements. As in other parts of Scandinavia they were probably invited by different chieftains.

In Sweden Olof Skötkonung was later generally recognised as the first Christian king, but the traditional date for his conversion, 1008, must be too

late; he was already issuing Christian coins by 995 from Sigtuna, which had been founded about twenty years earlier and may have been a Christian settlement from the start. Christian rune-stones and pagan burials show that in Svealand Christians and pagans lived alongside each other throughout the eleventh century. Pagan cults continued to be celebrated at Uppsala, which was only 29 km from Sigtuna, until about 1080. The new religion was more firmly rooted earlier in Västergötland; the runic inscriptions suggest that it was widely accepted there at much the same time as in Denmark. It was moreover there, not in Svealand, that Olof Skötkonung was able to establish the first Swedish bishopric. This was initially at Husaby, a royal residence, but by the middle of the century it was moved to Skara, a transfer that is paralleled elsewhere. The sees of Lund and Bergen, for example, were originally at Dalby and on the island of Selja respectively.

Early church organisation

The archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen had very little to do with the progress of Christianity in Scandinavia in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and could not claim credit for the conversion of any Scandinavian king. Nevertheless popes had given them authority over the whole of Scandinavia, and they were eager to demand their rights once the church was established there. Any ambiguity about the extent of the legatine authority given to Ebbo and Anskar was removed in 1053 when Pope Leo IX explicitly defined the archbishop's province as encompassing not only the *Svear* and the Danes, who had been named before, but also 'Norway, Iceland, Greenland and all the northern nations'.

The archbishops were, however, not free agents. Like their suffragan bishops, they were subject to the law of the Church and papal authority. The ecclesiastical hierarchy in Scandinavia was being created at a time of fundamental change in the western Church as reformers tried to free it from secular control and to have the superior authority of the pope fully recognised. Their efforts inevitably caused disputes in the Church and with lay rulers. The most serious conflict, between Gregory VII, one of the leading reformers who was pope from 1073 to 1085, and the German king, Henry IV, had important consequences for Scandinavia. Liemar, archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, supported Henry and was consequently deprived of his see by Gregory. This had little effect on Liemar's position in Germany, but the crisis encouraged the papal curia to consider reducing Hamburg-Bremen's authority by creating a Scandinavian archbishopric. This possibility was first considered by Gregory VII but

the change was not made until 1103, or possibly 1104, when Lund became an archbishopric with the whole of Scandinavia as its province.

Before Christianity was publicly accepted, missionaries must have depended on the protection and hospitality of rulers and magnates who were well disposed to them. Later, when kings were Christian, a royal retinue would normally include a bishop to perform liturgical functions and advise the king. It was some time before ecclesiastical organisation in Scandinavia conformed to the pattern of the Church elsewhere, with bishops permanently based in their cathedral churches, ruling dioceses with settled boundaries. This happened first in Denmark where, by about 1060, all the medieval sees had been established. It was about ten years later that the Norwegian king Olaf Kyrre founded sees in Nidaros and on Selja, which was probably transferred to Bergen before the king's death in 1093. He may also have founded the see of Oslo. In the predominantly Norwegian colonies in the west, episcopal organisation was also well advanced by the end of the eleventh century.

The early development of the Swedish sees is obscure, but by the year 1100 there were probably cathedrals in Linköping and Sigtuna as well as Skara, although diocesan boundaries were not then fixed. The network of Scandinavian bishoprics was not complete until the thirteenth century, but the progress made by the time Lund was made an archbishopric is remarkable testimony to the organising power of the universal Church.

By the end of the eleventh century Christianity had begun to affect all levels of Scandinavian society. Numerous churches had been built, many of them by landowners with clergy who were, in effect, their servants. Bishops were responsible for the consecration of churches and the ordination of clergy, and were therefore able to ensure that church buildings and their fittings conformed to the law of the Church and that clergy had at least a basic training in their duties; patrons of churches and their clergy were not free to design churches as they liked or to devise their own rituals. The first churches were timber structures that have left few traces but many were rebuilt in stone in the twelfth century. The remarkable similarity of these early stone churches with contemporary rural churches in England and Germany is a good illustration of the way the church contributed to the integration of Scandinavia with Europe. There are many others. The Church introduced a new language, Latin, and a new script, the alphabet, that were used for centuries alongside Scandinavian languages and runes. It brought new forms of worship that runic inscriptions, discussed below, and fragments of liturgical manuscripts suggest were already very influential in the eleventh century. Churchmen also introduced a vast and varied literature, including the Bible, lives of saints, letter collections,

chronicles and other forms of historical writing. These were used in educating future clergy and eventually provided models for native literature. In Norway and Iceland such writings were soon translated into the vernacular and written in an 'insular' script which reveals English influence.

In the early stages of Christianisation missionaries said little about such theological subtleties as the Trinity or the Virgin birth and concentrated on the power of a militant Christ to ensure success in this world and salvation from eternal damnation in the next. Their main purpose was to demonstrate that their God was not just more powerful than other gods, but was indeed the only true God and that all others were demons. One persuasive argument was that Christ had triumphed in the rich and fertile parts of Europe with which many Scandinavians were familiar. The disruption of churches by Vikings must have raised doubts about Christ's power but it was explained by Christians as a divine punishment for their sins. Victories won by Christians were, in contrast, proof that their God was supreme. Miracles, such as the ordeal that convinced Harald Gormsson, and the impunity with which missionaries and Christian kings destroyed idols and defied pagan taboos were further proofs of the power of Christ. Significantly, it was not until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the concept of the suffering Christ took root in Scandinavia; before that he was depicted as a triumphant prince even on the cross.

Most of the early bishops in Scandinavia were foreigners; many of them from England or Germany. Some, who had experience of the workings of royal government in Christian kingdoms, taught Scandinavians to use documents as evidence of grants or other transactions. They were also largely responsible for the compilation of the first written laws and in doing so they began to modify traditional customs in accordance with the law of the Church, although church law was not always, or in all parts of Scandinavia, accepted. Novelties that were widely adopted included the rule that gifts could be made by the dying without the consent of heirs, and that all children, including unmarried daughters, were entitled to a legally fixed share of an inheritance, a rule that enabled women as well as men to give to pious causes 'for the sake of their souls'. The operation of this new rule is reflected in some runic inscriptions, although it was not generally accepted until the fourteenth century. Although laws were, at least in Norway, written down in the eleventh century they only survive in versions that were compiled or edited after 1100, but there is no reason to doubt that some changes were already being made under the influence of Christian advisers before then.

Runic inscriptions

The most abundant evidence for the progress of Christianity in Scandinavia before the twelfth century is provided by over 2,000 runic memorials that were made between the last quarter of the tenth century and the beginning of the twelfth. The late Viking Age fashion for monuments with runic inscriptions that were basically very similar began in Denmark and was probably inspired by Harald Gormsson's monument at Jelling, and continued longest in eastern Sweden where the majority of these inscriptions are found. The relatively late development of churches and graveyards in eastern Sweden gave this form of Christian monument a significance there that it quickly lost in western Scandinavia.

Most of the runic inscriptions in eastern Sweden are explicitly Christian, with crosses as part of the design or with invocations to God and, frequently, to God's mother. In Denmark, where conversion was effected quickly by a powerful king, there was no need for individuals or families to proclaim their adherence to the new faith – it was declarations of paganism that marked the rejection of the accepted norm. There are about twenty pagan inscriptions in Denmark, but only six in Sweden, and three of these are in Västergötland, an area much influenced by the Danes. The fact that most runic monuments in Uppland are ostentatiously Christian suggests that there it was the Christian faith that broke with tradition and needed to be marked.

The claim that many of these inscriptions reflect Byzantine influence is questionable. It has been persuasively argued that the religious formulas in these inscriptions all derive from the liturgy of the western Church.[4] There were, undoubtedly, many contacts between Scandinavia and Byzantium, or Kiev, which by the end of the tenth century had accepted Byzantine Christianity, but these did not in any significant way influence the development of the Church in Scandinavia which was, by the early eleventh century firmly linked with the western, Roman, tradition. The use of parts of the Roman liturgy in runic inscriptions, the earliest translations from Latin into a Scandinavian language, casts light on the methods of the missionaries, suggesting that Christian rituals were a vital part of the process.

The little that is known about the conversion of the Finns reinforces doubts about the influence of Orthodox Christians in Sweden. Burial rituals (but not the change from cremation to inhumation) provide the main evidence for the

4 P. Beskow, 'Runor och liturgi', in P. Beskow and R. Staats, *Nordens kristnande i europeisk perspektiv: tre uppsatser* (Skara, 1994), pp. 16–36.

process of Christian conversion in Finland. They show that Christian customs were first firmly established in the early eleventh century in the Kalanti-Laitila area in the northern part of Finland proper (Varsinais Suomi) that had long had close links with eastern Sweden. In the southern part of Finland proper, around Åbo, and inland in Tavastia pagan rituals persisted until the end of the twelfth century, and even later in eastern Finland and in Karelia. It is, however, only in Karelia that Orthodox influence, presumably from Novgorod, is manifest, but that was long after a Latin bishopric was established in Åbo, which happened by 1220 at the latest.

The runic inscriptions also show that in Scandinavia, as in other parts of Europe, women played an important role in the conversion. One stone in Uppland, erected by two brothers in memory of their parents, ends 'May God now help *her* soul well', implying that only their mother was Christian. It is significant that most of the monuments commemorating deathbed converts were erected by women. Five of the six inscriptions in Uppland in memory of men who 'died in white clothing', meaning that they had very recently been baptised, were erected by women. Monuments that refer to the building of bridges are further proof of the leading role of women in the process of conversion. Missionaries taught that to build a bridge was a meritorious act earning Divine favour. There are about 120 such inscriptions and a relatively large proportion were commissioned by, or were in memory of, women. Those commemorating women are especially significant for, whereas only one in fourteen of all inscriptions are in memory of women, a quarter of the 'bridge-stones' are.

It is noteworthy that women were responsible for the two inscriptions that refer to pilgrimages. One reads: 'Estrid had this stone raised after Östen, her husband, who went to Jerusalem and died away in Greece.' The other: 'Ingerun, Hård's daughter, had these runes carved after herself. She wanted to go east and to Jerusalem.' We do not know whether Ingerun's wish was granted, but that a Swedish woman could even plan such a pilgrimage in the eleventh century is itself remarkable. Pilgrims who returned home must have greatly enlarged knowledge of the outside world in their home regions.

Integration with Christian Europe

The main beneficiaries of the process of Christianisation that gathered pace in eleventh-century Scandinavia were kings. They gained the support of bishops and other clergy who belonged to an organisation that extended throughout most of Europe and was based on written law, with a relatively elaborate

machinery to administer it. By the year 1100, Scandinavian kings, especially in Denmark and Norway, had benefited greatly from missionaries who had experience of royal government in Christian kingdoms, especially England. Thanks to them, the authority of kings was made more effective by such innovations as written law and royal diplomas. The status of kings was, moreover, enhanced by the ideology of kingship and the rituals that the missionaries introduced. New forms of political organisation were developed in which bishops were not only royal counsellors but also effective, literate royal agents.

One of the most important results of conversion was the increasingly close contact with the papacy. Knut's visit to Rome in 1027 had little effect in Scandinavia, but fifty years later reforming popes had begun to claim direct authority there and to demand obedience to the law of the Church as they interpreted it. Between 1061 and 1100 at least thirteen letters of popes to rulers or bishops in Scandinavia are known. There were also visits to Rome by laymen as well as clergy. In 1100 a second Danish king, Erik Ejegod, visited the pope, partly to prepare for the elevation of Lund to an archbishopric, and partly to obtain papal confirmation of the canonisation of his brother, Knut, who had been assassinated in Odense in 1086, and was already recognised as a martyr in Denmark. It was to serve the shrine of this royal saint that Erik invited monks from Evesham Abbey in England. This was the beginning of a new and, before long, important network of religious communities and monastic orders that helped to bind Scandinavia ever more closely to other parts of Europe (cf. Chapter 13). The most momentous development was, however, the elevation of the see of Lund to an archbishopric by Pope Paschal II at the beginning of the twelfth century, marking a crucially important stage in the integration of Scandinavia in Christian Europe, a process in which the Church and churchmen had been the main, although not the only, agents.