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*Monasticism in seventh-century Northumbria and  
Neustria: a comparative study of the monasteries of  
Chelles, Jouarre, Monk Wearmouth/Jarrow and  
Whitby*

Isabelle Renée Odile Charmantier

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**Monasticism in Seventh-Century Northumbria and Neustria:  
A Comparative Study of the Monasteries of Chelles, Jouarre,  
Monkwearmouth/Jarrow and Whitby  
by Isabelle Charmantier**

**Abstract**

This thesis studies a part of the monastic history of the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria and Merovingian Neustria. It is a comparative analysis of monasteries in the seventh century in these two kingdoms, focusing on four particularly famous houses, for which textual and archaeological sources are abundant. These four monasteries are those of Chelles and Jouarre in Neustria, and Whitby and Wearmouth/Jarrow in Northumbria. The aim is to determine the different influences which affected them, by analysing every possible aspect of monasticism. The influence of Rome and Ireland is evident on these monasteries. The main difference lies in the fact that Irish influence came to Neustria through the missionary Columbanus in 590, 40 years before it reached Northumbria with Aidan in 635. A close study of the various aspects of monasticism for these four houses leads to the following conclusions. In several aspects, Neustrian and Northumbrian monasteries have the same characteristics, some of which come from a similar and simultaneous influence. Thus, the emergence of the Rule of St Benedict in the four monasteries occurred at approximately the same time. Similarly, and for what is related to the cultural life, monasteries on both sides depended largely on Rome. However, on other points, it is clear that the Northumbrian monasteries were directly influenced by the Neustrian Columbanian houses. We find that the institution of double houses, such as Chelles, Jouarre and Whitby, came from Frankish Gaul. As for the layout the organisation, including both communal buildings and cells is the same. Finally, new privileges were issued by the Columbanian monasteries in the seventh century, which were imitated later on in Northumbrian monasteries, such as Wearmouth/Jarrow. It is possible to say that these similarities and influences from Neustria to Northumbria, which have often been underestimated, were due to the intense personal relationships between churchmen and monastic founders in both kingdoms.

**MONASTICISM IN SEVENTH-CENTURY  
NORTHUMBRIA AND NEUSTRIA:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE MONASTERIES OF  
CHELLES, JOUARRE, MONKWEARMOUTH/JARROW  
AND WHITBY**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>List of abbreviations</b>	5
<b>Introduction</b>	7
<b>Chapter I: Explanation of the parallels: the personal relationships</b>	20
I- The relationships between churchmen	22
II- The relationships between churchmen and monastic founders	32
III- The relationships within the families	38
<b>Chapter II:</b>	
I- The foundation of the monastery	42
A/ Aristocratic and royal foundations	42
B/ The economic aspects of the monastery	51
C/ Double monasteries	56
II- Archaeological aspects	61
A/ The excavations and the general layout of each monastery	61
B/ The <i>vallum monasterii</i>	67
C/ The buildings: cells or communal buildings?	69
D/ Material of construction: wood or stone?	77
III- The life of the monastery	84
A/ The Rule of life	84
B/ The organisation of double monasteries	92



C/ The cultural importance of the monasteries	95
<b>Conclusion</b>	115
<b>Appendices</b>	120
1- The problem of Whitby	121
2- Map: Monasteries in England in the seventh century	127
3- Map: The Kingdom of Northumbria in the seventh century	128
4- Map: Monasteries in Gaul in the seventh century	129
5- Map: The Kingdom of Neustria in the seventh century	130
6- Map: The different influences on Northumbria and Neustria in the seventh century	131
7- Chronology of the diffusion of the different influences in Neustria and Northumbria in the seventh century	132
8- The Kentish, East Anglia and Northumbrian royal families and their relations to monasticism in England and Northern Gaul	133
9- The origins of the monastery of Jouarre: the family tree of the founders of Jouarre as shown by the <i>Genealogy</i>	134
10- Plan of the excavations at the monastery of Whitby	135
11- Plan of the excavations at the monastery of Wearmouth	136
12- Plan of the excavations at the monastery of Jarrow	137
13- The monastery and the crypts of Jouarre	138
14-The monastery of Chelles and the area excavated	139
<b>Bibliography</b>	140

This thesis is the result of my own work. No material contained in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree in Durham or any other University. Material from the published or unpublished work of others are referred to in the text. This thesis is approximately 39 000 words in length.

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I would like to thank Professor Rollason for his help throughout the year, and my parents for their continuous encouragement and support.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**Hab:** ‘Historia Abbatum Auctore Baeda’, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vol. (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, pp. 364-387.

**HE:** ‘Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum’, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vol. (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, pp. 5-360.

**Life of Ceolfrith:** ‘Historia Abbatum Auctore Anonymo’, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vol. (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, pp. 388-404.

**Bede’s Life of St Cuthbert:** *The Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, ed. B. Colgrave (New York, 1969)

**Life of Wilfrid:** *Eddius Stephanus’s Life of Wilfrid*, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927).

**MGH SRM:** *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, 7 vol. (Hanover, 1888-1913).

**Vita Audoeni:** ‘Vita Audoeni’, ed. W. Levison, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum V* (Hanover, 1910), pp. 553-567.

**Vita Balthildis:** ‘Vita Sanctae Balthildis’, ed. B. Krusch, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum II* (Hanover, 1888), pp. 482-508.

**Vita Bertilae:** ‘Vita Bertilae Abbatissae Calensis’, ed. W. Levison *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum VI* (Hanover, 1913), pp. 101-109.

**Vita Columbani:** ‘Vita Columbani Abbatis Discipulorumque eius auctore Iona’, ed. B. Krusch, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum IV* (Hanover, 1902), pp. 64-152.

**Vita Eligii:** ‘Vita Eligii’, ed. B. Krusch, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum IV* (Hanover, 1902), pp. 634-761.

*Vita Filiberti*: 'Vita Filiberti Abbatis Gemeticensis et Heriensis', ed. W. Levison, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* V (Hanover, 1910), pp. 583-604.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The birth of Christianity in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria in the British Isles, and its development in the Merovingian kingdom of Neustria in Northern Gaul, in the seventh century, was achieved the same way, by missionaries, coming mostly from Ireland. Columbanus, monk at the monastery of Bangor in Ulster, and pupil of St Comgall, arrived in Gaul in 590, founded the monasteries of Luxeuil, Annegray, and Bobbio, and died in 616.<sup>1</sup> His coming marked the beginning of numerous monastic foundations, especially near Paris, in the Brie region, and these foundations flourished and multiplied after Columbanus's death. Similarly, the Irish missionary Aidan arrived in Northumbria around 635, and founded the monastery of Lindisfarne, which dominated the religious scene until the arrival of Archbishop Theodore at Canterbury in 669. Thus Irish missionaries were important in the two kingdoms, and had an impact on the religious life. 'In both England and Gaul Irish missionaries can be seen to have had astonishing power. They really do seem to have changed the way of life of many members of formidable aristocracies.'<sup>2</sup> However, the two events, the arrival of Columbanus in Gaul and that of Aidan in Northumbria, were separated by a gap of some 40 years. This interval resulted in the coming of Franks, already influenced by St Columbanus, in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.<sup>3</sup> This in turn led to the establishment of a Gaulish influence, which was itself derived from an Irish one, in these Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. 'England came under Irish influences not only directly, but indirectly, via Gaul.'<sup>4</sup> However, this Frankish influence was in itself very

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<sup>1</sup> *Vita Columbani abbatis Discipulorumque eius auctore Iona*, MGH SRM IV, ed. B. Krusch (Hanover, 1902), pp. 64-152.

<sup>2</sup> J. Campbell, 'The First Century of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England', *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, ed. J. Campbell (London, 1986), p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> This was nothing new. Franks were present in Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (mostly the southern ones), as much as Anglo-Saxons were present in Northern Gaul in the sixth century. See J. Campbell, 'First Century', pp. 53-54; E. James, *The Merovingian Archaeology of South West-Gaul*, BAR Supplementary Series 25, 2 vol. (Oxford, 1977), vol. 1, pp. 220-223 and p. 245, has shown the importance of trade between Gaul (and including Northern Gaul) and England, implying the presence of 'foreigners' on both sides of the Channel.

<sup>4</sup> J. Campbell, 'First Century', p. 64.

different from a pure Irish influence, as the Franks had adapted the teachings of Columbanus to their own traditions and culture. It is the aim of this thesis to analyse the reality and the importance of the Frankish influence on the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and more precisely on Northumbria.

The development of the Anglo-Saxon Church took place in five steps, according to J. Campbell, and it seems useful to recall them rapidly.<sup>5</sup> First, most of the royal houses were converted from c. 635, by the Italian mission first, and then mostly by the arrival of Aidan in the North. The second step was marked by the arrival of Theodore at Canterbury in 669, and the acceptance thereby of the authority of Rome. The third step saw the wave of monastic foundations, in the second half of the seventh century. The fourth step was the development of learning, and the beginning of the Northumbrian renaissance, at the very end of the seventh century; and finally, the fifth step, the increase in power and wealth of the Church.

This thesis is mostly concerned with the monastic foundations, the third step in the development of the Anglo-Saxon Church. We have observed that numerous monastic foundations began after the death of St Columbanus in Gaul, mainly in the years 630-660. These two parallel sequences, distant one from the other by several years, were connected. Italian influence has always been obvious in Northumbria: the *Life of Gregory the Great* was written at the monastery of Whitby; the main destination of churchmen such as Wilfrid or Benedict Biscop was Rome.<sup>6</sup> Even kings such as Aldfrith wished to visit the Capital of Christianity.<sup>7</sup> Yet, historians have pointed out more and more the importance of the role of Northern Gaul in the conversion of the English: 'The Frankish contribution to the missionary process, however, is not

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<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>6</sup> *Historia Abbatum auctore Beda (Hab)*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vol. (Oxford, 1896), vol. I, c. 2, p. 365 and *Eddius Stephanus's Life of Wilfrid*, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927), c. 3, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Hab*, c. 2, p. 365.

mentioned at all [by Bede] though Frankish clerics certainly played an important role in the conversion of England'.<sup>8</sup> The evidence for Frankish influence in the southern Anglo-Saxon kingdoms is obvious, because there were direct links. Agilbert, a Frank by birth, became bishop of Wessex after having spent several years in Ireland to study.<sup>9</sup> Aethelbert, king of Kent, was married to Bertha, a member of the Frankish royal family.<sup>10</sup> Royal women of these southern kingdoms used to enter the monasteries of the Franks, as, according to Bede, there were no monasteries in Kent or East Anglia to go to at that time.<sup>11</sup> This evidence shows that the southern kingdoms of England were directly related to the Frankish kingdoms. No such apparent direct links, or very few of them, as we shall see, exist for the kingdom of Northumbria. Were the Northumbrian monasteries, and particularly those founded in the second half of the seventh century, linked in any way to the Frankish monasteries?

Choosing monasteries to study the relationships between Francia and Northumbria was dictated by the fact that monasteries, apart from bishoprics, were the main institutions representing the Church in the seventh century. It is through monasteries that the Northumbrian 'Renaissance' took place. 'Monasticism lay at the heart of early English Christianity.'<sup>12</sup> The Gospels of Lindisfarne, Bede and his *Ecclesiastical History*, the saint's *Lives*, and all the surviving monuments were born from Northumbrian monasticism. To analyse Frankish and Northumbrian monasticism, we have chosen to base this research on four monasteries, two of them in Neustria and two of them in Northumbria. These houses are those of Chelles and Jouarre in Neustria and Whitby and the twin monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow in Northumbria.

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<sup>8</sup> R. Meens, 'A Background to Augustine's Mission to Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994), p. 5; see as well E. Fletcher, 'The Influence of Merovingian Gaul on Northumbria in the seventh century', *Medieval Archaeology* 24 (1980), pp. 69-86.

<sup>9</sup> Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (HE)*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vol. (Oxford, 1896), vol. I, III-7, pp. 140-141.

<sup>10</sup> Bede, *HE*, I-25, p. 45.

## Presentation of the four chosen monasteries

Taken in a chronological order, Jouarre was the first of the four monasteries to be founded. It was established by Ado, around 635. The date of the foundation is slightly problematic. J. Guérout concluded that Jouarre must have been founded at the same time as Rebais was, by Ado's brother St Audoenus.<sup>13</sup> The foundation of Rebais can be established by two documents, the first one being a precept issued by King Dagobert for the monastery of Rebais in 636. Unfortunately this precept is a forged one and dates from the Carolingian period. However, the second document, the charter delivered by Burgondofaro to Rebais in March 637 at Clichy, can be trusted.<sup>14</sup> The monastery of Jouarre was therefore founded at approximately the same date, around 635. The monastery was first housing men only and it subsequently became a double house, under the abbess Theodechildis, who was Agilbert's sister. The founder Ado was soon forgotten in the history of the foundation of Jouarre.

Whitby followed, founded by St Hilda in 657 on an estate of ten hides.<sup>15</sup> Bede's paragraph concerning the foundation of the monastery, called *Streonaeshalh*, comes right after the twelve gifts of lands donated by King Oswiu after the battle of the Winwaed, but without any obvious link between the two events.<sup>16</sup> Can it be concluded that Whitby was one of the twelve donations? According to C. Fell, the 'acquisition

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<sup>11</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-8, p.142.

<sup>12</sup> H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1972), p. 148.

<sup>13</sup> J. Guérout, 'Les origines et le premier siècle de l'abbaye', *L'abbaye Royale Notre-Dame de Jouarre*, ed. Dom J. Chaussy et al. (Paris, 1961), p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> Some historians have argued that the monastery of Whitby was not the *Streonaeshalh* talked about by Bede. As this would have interrupted the argument, we have chosen to explain the problem in an annex. See thus Appendix 1, p. 118.

<sup>16</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-24, pp. 178-9.

[was] quite distinct and separate from Oswiu's gifts'.<sup>17</sup> She bases this assumption on the fact that the two events are not connected grammatically in Bede's text, but one wonders then why Bede would insert a brief story of the foundation of *Streonaeshalh* in the middle of the account concerning the battle of the Winwaed and its consequences. Moreover, Bede specifies that the estates granted by Oswiu were of ten hides each, and we have seen that Hilda's estate consisted of ten hides.<sup>18</sup> Finally, Oswiu's daughter, Aelfflaed, whom he had consecrated to the religious life at her birth, entered the monastery of Hartlepool under Hilda, which links the King to the foundation of Whitby. Therefore it seems highly likely that the monastery was indeed part of the six donations of land in Deira, the other six being in Bernicia.

The next foundation was that of Chelles, around 657-659, just after King Clovis II's death. Chelles was actually re-founded by Queen Balthildis. Indeed, the site of Chelles, occupied from prehistoric times, had been chosen by Clothildis, Clovis's wife, to found a church dedicated to St George, and may be even a small monastery according to the *Vitae Balthildis* A and B, respectively a Merovingian and a Carolingian Life of the Anglo-Saxon Queen.<sup>19</sup> In any case, Balthildis used Clothildis's foundation to found her own monastery on top of it. B. Krusch, editor of the Lives of Balthildis, seems to think that Clothildis had only built a small church at Chelles.<sup>20</sup> However, Bede writes that Hilda wished to join her sister Hereswith in Chelles, and this would have taken place several years before the foundation of Whitby in 657.<sup>21</sup> Chelles was re-founded by Balthildis after the death of her husband, King Clovis II, in 657 but Clothildis's foundation was still existent in the seventh century. The texts of the Lives of Balthildis

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<sup>17</sup> C. Fell, 'Hild, Abbess of Streonaeshalh', *Hagiography and Medieval Literature: a Symposium* (Odense, 1981), p. 85.

<sup>18</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-24, p. 178: 'Singulae vero possessiones X erant familiarium'.

<sup>19</sup> *Vita Sanctae Balthildis*, MGH SRM II, ed. B. Krusch (Hanover, 1888), c. 18, p. 506; Marquise de Maillé, *Les cryptes de Jouarre* (Paris, 1971), p. 49, note 1.

<sup>20</sup> B. Krusch, p. 476; so did J-P. Laporte, *Le trésor des saints de Chelles* (Chelles, 1988), p. 1.

both agree with this view: in the *Vita Balthildis B*, it is written: ‘coenobium Kale sanctimonialium Virginum in pago Parisiaco, unde circumfluente Matronae fluminis decentissime edificavit’.<sup>22</sup> The word *edificavit* does not necessarily imply that she built the monastery from scratch, but also that she was strengthening the previous foundation.<sup>23</sup> In the second Life, Clothildis’s coenobiolum is also mentioned: ‘aeclesias in honore sancti Petri Parisius et sancti Georgii, in coenobiolo virginum in Kala prima construxit’.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it is said in the *Vita Bertilae*: ‘Quod coenobium pariter communi consilio tam in edificiis et officinis quam et sanctitatis exemplo mirifice exornaverunt...’<sup>25</sup> The use of the verb ‘exornaverunt’ would imply that the monastery was being embellished, reconstructed, and not constructed. As we shall see, no remains from the seventh century were found, except perhaps the church consecrated by Clothildis.<sup>26</sup> In any case, no trace of Bathildis’s reconstruction was found. But it is possible to conclude that Balthildis reconstructed her monastery over the old one. As C. Heitz points out: ‘l’auteur de la *Vita Balthildis* n’avait pas intérêt à insister sur l’importance du monastère bâti par Clotilde puisque son but était de magnifier la reconstruction de la veuve de Clovis II’.<sup>27</sup> Thus Balthildis’s biographer did not insist on Clothildis’s previous foundation so as not to diminish the credit of his saint.

Last of these four monasteries, Wearmouth and Jarrow was founded towards the end of the seventh century. King Ecgfrith of Northumbria, impressed by Benedict Biscop who had returned to Northumbria after twenty years of travels in the southern kingdoms of England and on the Continent, gave him 70 hides of land out of his estates

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<sup>21</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-23, p. 253.

<sup>22</sup> *Vita Balthildis B*, c. 7, p. 489. The *Vita Balthildis A* says: ‘id est Kale in Parisiaco, a Deo sacratas puellas, coenobium magnum virginum aedificavit’, *ibid.*, p. 489.

<sup>23</sup> J. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden, 1976), p. 366.

<sup>24</sup> *Vita Balthildis A*, c. 18, p. 506.

<sup>25</sup> *Vita Bertilae*, MGH SRM VI, ed. W. Levison (Hanover, 1913), c. 7, p. 107.

<sup>26</sup> J. Ajot and A. Bulard, *L’archéologie à Chelles* (Chelles, 1977), p. 33.

to build a monastery.<sup>28</sup> The building of Wearmouth therefore started in 674. Benedict Biscop went to Gaul to seek for masons to build him a church *iuxta Romanorum morem quem semper amabat*.<sup>29</sup> The church was built within a year and dedicated to St Peter. On another trip to Rome, Benedict brought back books, relics, paintings and a papal privilege for his new monastery. Impressed once again, King Ecgfrith gave him another forty hides of land, on which Benedict built the monastery of Jarrow, where the church was dedicated to St Paul in 685.<sup>30</sup> The two houses were to be considered as a twin monastery, linked as the two apostles had been: 'ut sicut verbi gratia, corpus a capite, per quod spirat, non potest avelli, caput corporis, sine quo non vivit, nequit oblivisci, ita nullus haec monasteria primorum apostolorum fraterna societate coniuncta aliquo ab inuicem temptaret disturbare conatu.'<sup>31</sup>

### **Choice of the monasteries**

There are several reasons why we have decided to concentrate on these four monasteries to analyse Frankish and Northumbrian monasticism. First of all, apart from Chelles, all these monasteries were founded by natives of their kingdom. Thus studying their foundations can show truly how the different influences, Roman, Irish or Frankish, affected the inhabitants and the religious life of the kingdom. The analysis would not have had the same effect had we chosen monasteries founded in the kingdom, but at the origin of an influence and founded by a foreign missionary, as was the case at Lindisfarne with Aidan or at Luxeuil with Columbanus.

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<sup>27</sup> C. Heitz, 'L'architecture religieuse - son rôle dans la création des espaces liturgiques', *La Neustrie - Les pays au Nord de la Loire de Dagobert à Charles le Chauve (VIIe - IXe siècles)*, ed. P. Périn and L-C. Feffer (Créteil, 1985), p. 162.

<sup>28</sup> *Hab*, c. 4, p. 367.

<sup>29</sup> *Hab*, c. 5, p. 368.

<sup>30</sup> *Hab*, c. 7, p. 370.

The second reason is that there has always been an pre-established conception of the relations of the two Northumbrian monasteries with the Frankish ones. Each of them seems at first sight to represent a period of Northumbrian religious history. Whitby, because of the synod of 664, and of the position in this synod held by its abbess, Hilda, seems to epitomize the Irish components of the Northumbrian clergy. Certainly, the report of the excavations of 1929 led to think that Whitby was organised as an Irish-influenced monastery should be.<sup>32</sup> As for Wearmouth and Jarrow, they have always been seen as prototypes of the Roman influence on Northumbrian soil, as Bede wanted them to appear. It might be that these ideas could be verified. Both were major houses in seventh-century Northumbria. As for the Neustrian monasteries, the first decision to choose them came from the fact that these two houses were also major monasteries in the series of monastic foundations in Northern Gaul. Moreover, Bede mentions Chelles, along with Faremoutiers-en-Brie and Les Andelys when citing three Gaulish monasteries to which the East Anglian women went.<sup>33</sup> It is strange that Jouarre, whose nuns took part in the foundation of Chelles, was not cited by the historian. The famous crypt must have existed by the time Bede wrote his *Ecclesiastical History*. This is partly why we have chosen to study Jouarre.

The third and last reason for choosing these particular monasteries is that they are among the ones on which a lot of information can be gathered. They are some of the best documented monasteries of the seventh century. The sources available include textual and archaeological evidence. Seventh-century Northumbrian houses benefit from more sources than monasteries of other kingdoms of England, for which information can only be derived from letters and charters. Historians have also studied quite extensively the problems related to these monasteries, and secondary material is

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<sup>31</sup> *Hab*, c. 7, p. 370.

<sup>32</sup> C. Peers and C.R. Radford, 'The Saxon Monastery at Whitby', *Archaeologia* 89 (1943), pp. 27-88.

therefore largely obtainable. Consequently, we have chosen these monasteries because a substantial amount of information was available, permitting a detailed analysis of the question. We have said that two types of sources are accessible: archaeological sources and textual evidence. All of the monasteries chosen have undergone excavations. Some of them present problems, that we shall see when analysing the archaeological parallels between these monasteries. It must be said, however, that for some monasteries, such as Chelles, no evidence of the seventh-century occupation of the site has been found. Also, increasing urbanisation has often prevented the excavations and full investigation of the sites. Therefore, one must rely on the textual evidence, in parallel with the excavation results. Often, the two types of evidence correspond, such as at Wearmouth and Jarrow, where the excavations have on all points proved Bede's narrative. Bede is one of the major sources for the historian studying seventh-century monasticism, with his *Ecclesiastical History*. The eighth-century historian provides information for both monasteries in England and on the Continent in the seventh century. However, one must be careful of Bede's lack of objectivity on certain points concerning monasticism. If Bede writes about monasteries, it is because they are an important part of the Christianisation of England, which is his main concern when writing his *Ecclesiastical History*. As J. Campbell points out, 'monasteries are not his main concern... It is clearly not part of Bede's design to record the foundation of monasteries, except in special cases or incidentally'.<sup>34</sup> The monasteries founded in seventh-century England are probably more numerous than Bede lets his reader know. Moreover, Bede was definitively taking position for the Roman party in Northumbria, and he might have ignored some aspects of Northumbrian monastic life in relation with Irish customs, or Gaulish influences. As we shall see for Wearmouth and Jarrow, Bede always stressed

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<sup>33</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-8, p. 142.

<sup>34</sup> J. Campbell, 'First Century', p. 51.

the relationships of the monastery and of its founder, Benedict Biscop, with Rome rather than with Gaul, although Benedict became a monk at Lérins and travelled to a large extent throughout Northern Gaul. Therefore, one must be cautious of the information given by Bede.

The other textual evidence is for the most part hagiographic. Some of the Lives actually date back to the seventh century, especially for what concerns the Anglo-Saxon sources.<sup>35</sup> Apart from his *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede also wrote the Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow. It has been argued, rather convincingly, that the anonymous Life of Ceolfrith was actually written by Bede, as an earlier version of the Lives of the Abbots.<sup>36</sup> One of the other hagiographical sources important for our study is the Life of Wilfrid, although written by Stephanus a century later, in the eighth century.<sup>37</sup> For the Merovingian sources, most of the Lives were rewritten in the Carolingian period, and the previous Merovingian Lives subsequently lost. The Lives of Balthildis are an exception, for we have both the Merovingian version and the Carolingian version. The Saints' Lives constitute our main source for Merovingian monasteries, these having been less excavated than Northumbrian ones. Some Lives are very useful for our purpose, such as the Life of Columbanus by the monk Jonas, written in the seventh century, and which deals with the saint's life but as well with the foundation of the monastery of Faremoutiers by St Fare and the monks of Luxeuil.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the two lives of Balthildis are useful, but other Lives, although related to our purpose, do not contain much information. This is the case of the Life of Bertilla, whose author seems to have been more concerned with the miracles than what we would

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<sup>35</sup> The *Lives of the Abbots*, the *Life of Wilfrid*, or the *Life of Cuthbert*, for example, are all seventh century hagiographical texts. *The Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, ed. B. Colgrave (New York, 1969).

<sup>36</sup> J. McClure, 'Bede and the Life of Ceolfrid', *Peritia* iii (1984), pp. 72-75. McClure bases his argument on the similarity of the historical approach in the two works, such as the inclusion of written documents.

<sup>37</sup> *Life of Wilfrid*, introduction, pp. ix-xiii.

<sup>38</sup> *Vita Columbani*, II-10 and II-11, pp. 127-131.

consider as useful information. These hagiographical texts must therefore be treated with care, as they often cannot be entirely trusted.

We have as well used the corpus available for the sculpture, notably R. Cramp's for Anglo-Saxon sculpture and E. Okasha's for the inscribed stones.<sup>39</sup> A corpus has been started in France as well, but unfortunately it does not for the moment include Chelles or Jouarre, or the other Brie monasteries that could be of interest for our study. We have nonetheless used the first volume covering Paris and its region.<sup>40</sup>

### **Purpose and method**

The purpose of this study, by comparing the four monasteries, is to find any parallels or common features in their organisation, which could lead to conclude that there was an influence of one on the other, or a parallel evolution, if such common aspects are found. Concentrating on only four monasteries allows to analyse every aspect of these houses, while the comparison with other monasteries, treated with less detail, is still possible. The work will be divided as such: the first chapter will explain why it should be possible to find parallels between Frankish and Northumbrian monasteries, because of the personal relationships between men and women of the Anglo-Saxon and the Neustrian kingdoms. The second chapter will analyse in detail the monasteries, so as to see how far this Frankish influence extended in Northumbria, or if it was just a parallel evolution in the two kingdoms. This second chapter, divided into three parts, will first analyse the foundation of the monasteries: by whom they were founded, what kind of house it was (nuns, monks or both?). Secondly, the physical

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<sup>39</sup> R. Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture in England - County Durham and Northumberland* (Oxford, 1984), 2 vol., E. Okasha, 'Hand-List', and 'A Supplement to *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983), pp. 83-118.

aspects of the monasteries will be examined, which involves looking at the archaeology and at the text evidence. If any common features are found, the question must once again be asked as to whether we have a case of influence or only a parallel evolution. Thirdly, the life of the monastery will be considered: how the monastery functioned daily, what was its rule of life, and what was its place in the cultural life of the seventh century. Such a study should show if the four monasteries were following a parallel evolution, influenced by the same factors, or if some of them were influencing the others. From these four monasteries, it might be possible to come to a general conclusion on Frankish and Northumbrian monasteries.

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<sup>40</sup> D. Fossard, M. Vieillard-Troiekouroff, E. Chatel, *Monuments Sculptés en France (IVe-Xe siècles), t.1: Paris et son département* (Paris, 1978).

## **CHAPTER I**

### **EXPLANATION OF THE PARALLELS: THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

We shall start this discussion by explaining how Frankish influence, and more specifically Neustrian influence, might have come to Northumbria in the course of the seventh century, through the personal relationships between the leading people of the church and the kingdoms concerned. It is interesting and unexpected at first to find Frankish influence as far north as Northumbria. As I. Wood pointed out, 'while Northumbria was probably too far from the northern shores of Francia to have been subject to Merovingian hegemony, and while there is no evidence for Frankish involvement in the christianization of Northumbria, unlike that of Kent, East Anglia, or Wessex, Frankish culture was one of the cornerstones of Northumbrian intellectual and architectural achievement in the late seventh and early eighth centuries'.<sup>41</sup> Special attention will be given to the four monasteries chosen, while putting them in the general context of the seventh century. The history of these four monasteries is closely related with their connections to Neustrian monasteries, and also to the ones in the southern kingdoms of England, which were themselves closer to Neustria. The aim of this chapter is thus to show how the four chosen monasteries fit in the complex relationships between Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and Francia, and how they benefited from these connections. The explanation of such links and their consequences on the series of monastic foundations could be viewed schematically in three chronological phases. First, the leading churchmen, who were also monastic founders in most cases, travelled to foreign kingdoms, mostly to Ireland and to the Continent, and acquired there new knowledge. Secondly, these men, when returning to their kingdom, transmitted their knowledge and their new ideas to leading people of the kingdom, that is, the aristocracy and the royal house. Thirdly and finally, these in turn started founding monasteries and spreading the knowledge brought back from Ireland or from the Continent by the

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<sup>41</sup> I. Wood, 'Northumbrians and Franks in the Age of Wilfrid', *Northern History* 31 (1995), p.10-11.

churchmen, among their own families. This is a rather crude and schematic way of viewing the whole evolution of ideas, and all three stages were often developing at the same time. It is generally not possible to divide the situation in time. However, it is useful to analyse it this way for the purpose of our study. Most of the churchmen were members of the aristocracy and monastic founders in any case, which blurs the very schematic overview just given. However, for practical reasons, we shall follow these three steps to explain how Gaulish influence might have come to Northumbria in the seventh century.

## **I- The relationships between churchmen**

### **Travels**

Travelling was a normal thing in the seventh century, and churchmen travelled often.<sup>42</sup> The main destinations, in the end of the sixth and beginning of the seventh centuries, were Ireland and Rome. Ireland was a common destination, especially for Anglo-Saxons, as 'in a period when travel by water was likely to be safer, easier and preferable to travel overland, the Irish sea is considered a linking rather than a dividing, factor between the two islands ... In Adomnan's late seventh-century Life of Columba, references to journeys to and from Ireland are a common occurrence'.<sup>43</sup> Ireland was close for an Anglo-Saxon, but we find as well Franks coming to Ireland for studying purposes. This was the case of Agilbert, later bishop of Dorchester and then of Paris, and designer of the crypt of Jouarre, who went to Ireland 'legendarum gratia

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<sup>42</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-27, p. 192: 'Erant ibidem eo tempore multi nobilium simul et mediocrium de gente Anglorum qui tempore Finani et Colmani episcoporum, relicta insula patria, vel divinae lectionis, vel continentioris vitae gratia illo secesserant.'

<sup>43</sup> E. O'Brien, 'Contacts between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the Seventh Century', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and Art History* 6 (1993), p. 94.

scripturarum'.<sup>44</sup> We also find kings going to Ireland and acquiring new knowledge there, although the original purpose of their stay was more often related to exile rather than any voluntary move to go and study there.<sup>45</sup> But it appeared to have been of benefit to Aldfrith, whom Bede cites several times as being a knowledgeable and wise king.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Dagobert II went to Ireland in exile with Bishop Dido of Poitiers.<sup>47</sup> From Bede and Aldhelm, we know that Ireland was famous for what concerned the studies of scriptures.<sup>48</sup> M. Herren has also shown that an extensive education in geography, astronomy, grammar or computistics could be acquired in Ireland.<sup>49</sup> Rome was the other main pole of pilgrimage and education. When Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid set off for the Continent, their main goal was to reach Rome. However, in the course of the seventh century, Gaul became once again another centre of knowledge apart from Ireland and Rome. The old monastic centres in southern Gaul, such as Lérins, Ligugé or Arles, had been mostly important in the fifth and sixth centuries but their predominance seemed to lessen in the seventh century. As I. Wood pointed out, it seems that 'an apparent decline in the quantity and quality of evidence' from the southern-Gaulish monasteries 'has sometimes been taken to imply a decline in monasticism itself'.<sup>50</sup> However, we still find Benedict Biscop becoming a monk at Lérins, for example. Lérins was one of the few important monastic centres in Gaul in the sixth century where people could acquire knowledge on the religious life. The monastery was founded

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<sup>44</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-7, p. 140.

<sup>45</sup> For example, Bede cites Oswiu and Oswald, *HE*, III-1, p. 127: 'Siquidem tempore toto, quo regnavit Aeduini filii praefati regis Aedilfridi qui ante illum regnaverant, cum magna nobilium iuventute apud Scottos sive Pictos exulabant, ibique ad doctrinam Scottorum cathecizari, et baptismatis sunt gratia recreati'.

<sup>46</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-26, p. 268.

<sup>47</sup> M. Herren, 'Classical and Secular Learning among the Irish before the Carolingian Renaissance', *Florilegium* 4 (1981), p. 121; see P. Fouracre and R. Geberding, *Late Merovingian France – History and Hagiography, 640-720* (Manchester, 1996), p. 88: the author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* writes: 'with the passing of time, however, king Sigibert died and Grimoald tonsured his [the king's] young son, named him Dagobert, and sent him to Bishop Dido of Poitiers so that he might undertake a pilgrimage to Ireland and placed his own son on the throne'.

<sup>48</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-3, p. 132.

<sup>49</sup> M. Herren, 'Learning among the Irish', p. 129.

around 410 by St Honoratus who later became bishop of Arles and, in the sixth century, it was more famous for the ascetic way of life led by its inhabitants than for any intellectual life which appears to have hardly existed.<sup>51</sup> At the time when Benedict Biscop went to Lérins, the monastery seemed to be declining but the name was still famous. Centres such as Lérins were being overshadowed and themselves influenced by the new foundations of Northern Gaul. As J. Campbell pointed out, 'in general when English historians have discussed the development of the English Church in the seventh century they have explained it largely in terms of Italian and Irish influences', but also in terms of southern Gaulish influence.<sup>52</sup> However it is now clear for most historians, after J. Campbell's studies, and those of others such as P. Wormald, E. Fletcher or P. Hunter-Blair, that Northern Gaul, and especially the kingdom of Neustria, took a large part in the shaping of the English Church in the seventh century.<sup>53</sup> One must try and understand the existing differences between Anglo-Saxon England and Frankish Gaul, and therefore the attraction and the fascination that this difference must have had on Englishmen. 'One knows the impression made by Notre-Dame on modern visitors to Paris. Similar emotions must have been produced by St Etienne on Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop when they were there in the seventh century.'<sup>54</sup> Wilfrid went to Gaul and was consecrated priest and then bishop there.<sup>55</sup> The ultimate aim of Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid was to go to Rome, but both of them eventually became monk or priest, and acquired part of their knowledge of the religious life in Gaul and in Gaulish

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<sup>50</sup> I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London, 1961), p. 182.

<sup>51</sup> P. Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede* (London, 1970), pp. 120-123.

<sup>52</sup> J. Campbell, 'First Century', p. 65.

<sup>53</sup> See among others J. Campbell, 'First Century', E. Fletcher, 'The Influence of Merovingian Gaul on Northumbria in the seventh century', *Medieval Archaeology* 24 (1980), pp. 69-86, J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983), H. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, I. Wood, 'Frankish Hegemony in England', *The Age of Sutton Hoo: the Seventh Century in North-Western Europe*, ed. M. Carver (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 235-242.

<sup>54</sup> E. Fletcher, 'Influence of Merovingian Gaul', p. 77.

<sup>55</sup> *Life of Wilfrid*, c. 9, p. 19 and c. 12, p. 27.

monasteries or in important centres such as Lyons.<sup>56</sup> Travelling for religious and educational purposes was therefore normal in the seventh century. In both these cases, Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid, both founders of Northumbrian monasteries, were not in a mission, but they were travelling for their own interests, which was to gather knowledge.

### **Direct links**

These travels had the consequence of putting Northumbrian men like Wilfrid or Benedict Biscop in a direct contact with Gaulish traditions and customs, through the men they met during their travels. 'Connexions were formed in the course of travel.'<sup>57</sup> What must be stressed are the personal relationships between the men who were important both in the Frankish and the English Church. Is it indeed a coincidence to find close parallels in the sculpture and the architecture in places far away from each other, as we shall observe for the crypt of Jouarre, the paintings' iconography of Wearmouth and Jarrow, and the Northumbrian crosses of the eighth century?<sup>58</sup> It is to be noted that Theodore, Wilfrid, Agilbert, Biscop, Hadrian, -i.e. all the men that had an important part in the series of monastic foundations in the seventh century- all met. Wilfrid and Biscop came to Gaul together, only to part at Lyons;<sup>59</sup> Wilfrid was consecrated priest by Agilbert, who was by then bishop of Paris,<sup>60</sup> and then bishop at Compiègne also by Agilbert.<sup>61</sup> P. Wormald even suggests that, having been with Agilbert, Wilfrid might have visited and stayed at Jouarre, but at this point it is not sure

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<sup>56</sup> For detail commentary on the journeys of Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid, see I. Wood, 'Northumbrians and Franks', pp. 11-14.

<sup>57</sup> I. Wood, 'Northumbrians and Franks', p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> see further on pp. 108-113.

<sup>59</sup> Bede, *HE*, V-19, p. 323; *Life of Wilfrid*, c. 3, p. 9.

<sup>60</sup> Bede, *HE*, V-19, p. 325; *Life of Wilfrid*, c. 9, p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-28, p.194 , V-19, p. 325; *Life of Wilfrid*, c. 12, p. 27.

whether or not the crypt was already under construction.<sup>62</sup> However, at Lyons, by this date, Wilfrid must have met the new bishop of Lyons, Genesisius, who was a close friend of Queen Balthildis.<sup>63</sup> Theodore, accompanied by Biscop on his way to England, stopped and stayed with Agilbert during the winter 668-9;<sup>64</sup> Hadrian for his part stayed with Burgondofaro, bishop of Meaux, and brother of Burgondofara, who founded Faremoutiers.<sup>65</sup> It is possible therefore that Biscop visited Jouarre or Faremoutiers, although nothing is recorded of his whereabouts in this period. Was his first project of founding his monastery in Wessex dictated by his having met Agilbert? It is also possible that it is during his stays in Northern Gaul that Benedict Biscop met the Abbot Torhthelm who would provide him later on with masons and glaziers for the monastery of Wearmouth.<sup>66</sup> Put in a chronological order for easier comprehension, we have the following sequence of events:

**615-620:** Fare founds Faremoutiers.

**around 630:** foundation of Jouarre.

**652-653:** departure of Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid for the Continent.<sup>67</sup>

**657-659:** Queen Balthildis founds Chelles.

**658:** Genesisius becomes bishop of Lyon.

**660:** Agilbert leaves Wessex and becomes bishop of Paris.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', *Famulus Christi, Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of Bede*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), p. 145.

<sup>63</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, c. 14, p. 501; see also the translation of her life by P. Fouracre and R. Geberding, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 108 and 114: Genesisius was her 'confidant'.

<sup>64</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-1, p. 203; *Hab*, c. 3, p. 366.

<sup>65</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-1, p. 203.

<sup>66</sup> 'Historia Abbatum auctore Anonymo', *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vol. (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, c. 7, p. 390. Because there are chances, as we have seen, that Bede was the author of this life, we shall call it *Life of Ceolfrith* instead of the Anonymous Life.

<sup>67</sup> P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, p. 156, establishes this date from the fact that Benedict and Wilfrid were in Kent when Honorius was archbishop and this latter died in september 653. Moreover, Wilfrid had left Lindisfarne a few years after 648 and had been in Kent for a year.

<sup>68</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. D. Whitelock (London, 1961).

**663:** Wilfrid is consecrated priest by Agilbert.

**664:** Wilfrid is consecrated bishop by Agilbert in Compiègne.

**winter 668-669:** Benedict Biscop, Hadrian and Theodore, on their way from Rome to Canterbury, spend their winter in Northern Gaul, with Agilbert and Burgondofaro. Does Benedict Biscop meet Torhthelm and visit Jouarre and other Columbanian monasteries? ✓

Unfortunately, these can only be suppositions derived from what seems to be common sense. Much of it is only assumption, as these are complicated links for which we do not have all the necessary information. It is all related to the passage of Theodore in Northern Gaul in the winter months of 668-9, accompanied by Benedict Biscop and Hadrian. However, it shows how a certain Frankish influence might have come to England, and in this case directly to Northumbria, through the relationships of Englishmen (Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid) travelling on the Continent.

### **Indirect links**

Frankish influence also reached the kingdom of Northumbria by indirect ways. This indirect link consists of the southern kingdoms of England which seem to have been more closely related to the Frankish kingdoms, essentially because of their geographical position.<sup>69</sup> By these southern kingdoms, we mean especially those of Wessex, East Anglia and Kent. Kent was the first Anglo-Saxon kingdom in which Christianity persisted after Augustine's mission. The first king of Kent to convert to Christianity was Aethelbert, and it is to be noted that he had married a Frankish

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<sup>69</sup> The closeness between the two sides of the Channel can be seen, outside of the monastic context, with finds of Frankish pottery in Britain. See H. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 35, and E. James, *Archaeology of South-Western Gaul*, p. 245.

princess, Bertha, daughter of the Merovingian king Charibert I.<sup>70</sup> Bertha had come with her bishop, of Frankish origin, Liudhard, and although they appear not to have had any involvement in the subsequent conversion of the king, it shows that Franks must have been present in Anglo-Saxon kingdoms by the end of the sixth century.<sup>71</sup> Kent was mainly christianised by the Roman mission of Augustine, but 'Northumbria owed much altogether to Kentish monasticism', perhaps due to the fact that Benedict Biscop had been abbot at Canterbury for a year before moving to Northumbria.<sup>72</sup> In East Anglia, the main link with the Frankish kingdoms was King Sigebert, who had been in exile in Northern Gaul for political reasons, and who had been baptised there.<sup>73</sup> As a consequence, when he came back to his kingdom as king, Sigebert called for a bishop to spread the Christian faith, and a Burgundian, Felix, took the see at Dunwich.<sup>74</sup> East Anglia was therefore in close relation with the Frankish kingdoms, and it is when speaking of this kingdom that Bede writes his statement about women going from East Anglia to the Gaulish monasteries. Two of the three Gaulish monasteries cited by Bede were in Neustria: Chelles and Faremoutiers-en-Brie. Hilda spent a year in East Anglia, while waiting to join her sister at Chelles. It seems therefore that East Anglia had closer links with the kingdom of Neustria than with any other kingdom in Northern Gaul. Northumbrian churchmen had relations with the kingdom of East Anglia: Ceolfrith visited East Anglia himself, so as to learn more about monastic practices.<sup>75</sup> In East Anglia, for example, it seems that monasteries for men existed, such as Burgh Castle founded by Fursa around 631, or the monastery founded under King Sigebert. Bede's

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<sup>70</sup> Bede, *HE*, I-25, p. 45. Charibert had a short reign (561-7), centred on Paris, which relates him to Neustria.

<sup>71</sup> K.P. Whitney, *The Kingdom of Kent* (London, 1982), pp. 109-111. The author asserts that Aethelbert deliberately called for a Roman mission to Christianise Kent, instead of being converted by Franks. Bertha and Liudhard must have at least accustomed Aethelbert to Christianity.

<sup>72</sup> H. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 148.

<sup>73</sup> Bede, *HE*, II-15, pp. 113-14; III-18, p. 162.

<sup>74</sup> Bede, *HE*, II-15, pp. 116-117.

<sup>75</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, c. 3 and 4, p. 389.

statement that there were no monasteries founded in England at that time seems to be referring to nunneries,<sup>76</sup> since in another passage of the Ecclesiastical History, he refers to the monastery founded under Sigebert, 'quod sibi fecerat'.<sup>77</sup> The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle offers further proofs that such monasteries might have existed in East Anglia, referring under the date of 654 to the foundation of *Icanho* by a certain Botwulf.<sup>78</sup> This monastery is also mentioned in the Life of Ceolfrith and it is one of the houses visited by Ceolfrith on his visit to East Anglia.<sup>79</sup> Thus it is possible that several monasteries existed in the southern Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, perhaps founded under the guidance of Sigebert whose wish was to imitate the institutions he had seen in Gaul, as Bede writes. D. Whitelock points out that there might have been 'unrecorded contacts between East Anglian and Northumbrian ecclesiastics', based on the fact that Bede had read a manuscript which was brought back from Rome by Bishop Cuthwine of East Anglia.<sup>80</sup> These contacts could have existed before Bede's time, in the seventh century. The Life of Ceolfrith also infers that Ceolfrith visited Kent.<sup>81</sup> Wilfrid sojourned in Kent as well.<sup>82</sup> This proves that such monasteries must have existed in Kent when all our evidence only points to double houses founded in the 670s. It seems that monasteries in southern Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were only male monasteries at that time, i.e. in the 650s and 660s. These monasteries seem to have been influenced by the Franks present in England, and therefore, Northumbrian men visiting East Anglia and Kent could have been in turn influenced to a certain extent.

Benedict Biscop's aim, when he returned from Rome with Theodore, was not to go back to Northumbria. It seems that he was abbot of Canterbury for a year before

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<sup>76</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-8, p. 142.

<sup>77</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-18, p. 162.

<sup>78</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 20. The monastery of *Icanho* may have been Iken.

<sup>79</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, c. 4, p. 389.

<sup>80</sup> D. Whitelock, 'The Pre-Viking Age Church in East Anglia', *Anglo-Saxon England* 1 (1972), p. 2 and p. 9.

Hadrian, who had been detained in Gaul by Ebroïn, mayor of the Palace of Neustria, came back.<sup>83</sup> In any case, Benedict's aim was to go to Wessex to found a monastery there, probably on a grant from King Cenwalh.<sup>84</sup> Wessex was a kingdom closely related to Northern Gaul, and mostly to Neustria. Two of its bishops were Franks, and they were both related to Authaire's family at Ussy-sur-Seine.<sup>85</sup> One was Agilbert, second bishop of Wessex, who, when Benedict was planning to settle there, was already bishop of Paris. As we have said, Benedict's desire to settle in Wessex was possibly derived from his meeting with Agilbert. The succeeding bishop, Wine, was English, but he had been consecrated in Gaul.<sup>86</sup> The second Frankish man was the fourth bishop of Wessex, sent to the king by Agilbert himself.<sup>87</sup> Leuthere must have been bishop when Benedict Biscop was planning to found his monastery, as he was bishop of Wessex from 670 to 678. According to J. McClure and R. Collins, 'it is conceivable that the West Saxon kings were linked to a Frankish Metropolitan see', as Canterbury seems often to have played no part in the nomination of the Wessex bishops.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, it is the king who always invited the bishops to come, and who threw them out of his kingdom when it suited him, as was done for both Agilbert and Wine.<sup>89</sup> The authors consider that Rouen, whose bishop was then Agilbert's relative Audoenus, would be 'most probable' as the Metropolitan see to which the kings were attached. Leuthere, however, was consecrated by Theodore of Canterbury, but the fact that he was Agilbert's nephew reinforces the view according to which the West Saxon kings would have been linked in a way to

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<sup>81</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, c. 4, p. 389.

<sup>82</sup> Bede, *HE*, V-19, p. 323.

<sup>83</sup> *Hab*, c. 3, p. 367.

<sup>84</sup> *Hab*, c. 4, p. 367, P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, p. 160.

<sup>85</sup> Marquise de Maillé, *Cryptes de Jouarre*, p.69.

<sup>86</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-7, p. 140.

<sup>87</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-7, p. 141.

<sup>88</sup> J. McClure and R. Collins, *Bede- the Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1994), expository notes, p. 389.

<sup>89</sup> Bede, *HE*, II-7, p. 140.

Neustria. It would be useful to know where Wine had been consecrated in Francia but Bede does not mention it.

Thus, it seems that, through personal relationships, Northumbrian churchmen came in contact with Frankish men and Anglo-Saxon men influenced by the Frankish customs. It is interesting to see how they were all related. Even in Northumbria, Benedict Biscop, Wilfrid, Ceolfrith were all linked in a way: Bishop Wilfrid was Benedict Biscop's diocesan, although, as we shall see, the monasteries had papal privileges protecting them from abuses of power by the bishop. Wilfrid had been Ceolfrith's abbot when this latter was monk at Ripon.<sup>90</sup> And Ceolfrith and Benedict Biscop were both abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, one having been responsible for the construction of Wearmouth, and the other of Jarrow. Thus, the transmission of Frankish ideas did not occur only by the churchmen's travels, but as well by the close relationships between themselves. However, it seems that these relations between men resulted in creating monasteries for men. Double houses began to flourish when these ecclesiastics came in contact with members of the aristocracy and among them, women.

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<sup>90</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, c. 3, p. 389.

## II- The relationships between churchmen and aristocrats/founders

It is most often hard to distinguish between a monastic founder, an aristocrat and a churchmen, as one person could be all three. Benedict Biscop, for example, was an aristocrat and a monastic founder, but he escorted Theodore and Hadrian, and travelled with Wilfrid, who were all churchmen. Benedict Biscop is one of the most important figures of seventh-century Northumbria, and it is normal that we should include him with the ecclesiastics, although he never had any priestly function. Wilfrid epitomizes the best the combination of the three functions, as he was an aristocrat by birth,<sup>91</sup> he became a priest and a bishop, but also a monastic founder. Wilfrid, much more than Benedict Biscop, was the most influenced by Frankish customs among other Northumbrian personalities who had travelled to the Continent, as he behaved like Frankish bishops, accumulating several functions at the same time, and ruling over a large see. Thus we see for example Audoenus, an aristocrat, brought up at the Merovingian Court,<sup>92</sup> chancellor of the king,<sup>93</sup> then Bishop of Rouen<sup>94</sup> while he was founding Rebaix<sup>95</sup> and helping found Jumièges.<sup>96</sup>

These churchmen, following the example of Columbanus in Gaul, influenced in turn the aristocracy. In Gaul, this was the obvious consequence of the influence of St Columbanus. As we have seen previously, the Irish missionary concentrated on preaching to the leading people of the kingdom. Columbanus affected people directly, as for example the three sons of Authaire, whom he blessed, or St Fare and her brother

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<sup>91</sup> *Life of Wilfrid*, c. 1 and 2, pp. 5-7, the author does not say explicitly that his parents were noble, but he mentions the women surrounding the mother during Wilfrid's birth, his father's estates, and the visitors sent by the king. Thus it can be concluded that Wilfrid's family was among the aristocrats.

<sup>92</sup> *Vita Audoeni*, MGH SRM V, ed. W. Levison (Hanover, 1910), c. 1, p. 554.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, c. 2, p. 555.

<sup>94</sup> *Vita Eligii*, MGH SRM IV, ed. B. Krusch (Hanover, 1902), II-2, p. 695.

<sup>95</sup> *Vita Columbani*, I-26, p. 100.

<sup>96</sup> *Vita Filiberti*, MGH SRM V, c. 24-28, pp. 596-599.

who were blessed by the saint in their childhood in similar conditions.<sup>97</sup> But it is the women who were mainly touched by this influence. Columbanus's teaching offered high-class women the possibility of expressing their faith without giving up the power corresponding to their high status. The double monastery was an answer to Columbanus's preaching to women.<sup>98</sup> The number of women who took the veil and founded a monastery in Frankish Gaul was high among the aristocracy. Thus we have Fare founding Faremoutiers,<sup>99</sup> Balthildis founding two monasteries,<sup>100</sup> and giving grants of lands to numerous others, Bertilla as a famous abbess of Chelles. It seems that Columbanus's teachings impressed men but also women.

We have seen that monasteries for men, influenced by Frankish Gaul, existed in the southern kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England around the 650s. In Northumbria, these houses were founded under the influence of Ionan monks such as Aidan. Lindisfarne, Ripon, Melrose, belong to this period. In the southern kingdoms, Frankish influence was already present through King Sigebert and his bishop Felix in East Anglia, Agilbert in Wessex, and the arrival of Benedict Biscop wanting to found a monastery in Wessex, around 669. With the exception of Hartlepool and Whitby, it is interesting to note that all the double houses, founded by aristocratic or royal women, were founded in the late 660s and mostly after 670. It is also interesting to note that this was taking place at the time of Theodore's arrival, accompanied by Benedict Biscop. It is possible that it is under the influence of all these men, some of them Franks, others Anglo-Saxons coming back from Northern Gaul and thus immersed in new ideas on monasticism, that women started founding their own houses, instead of going to the

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<sup>97</sup> *Vita Columbani*, I-26, p. 100.

<sup>98</sup> see J. L. Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels: the Careers of Brunhild and Bathild in Merovingian History', *Medieval Women*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1978), p. 32, S.F. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society - Marriage and the Cloisters 500-900* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 159-160.

<sup>99</sup> *Vita Columbani*, I-26, p. 100.

<sup>100</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, c. 7, pp. 489-90; c. 14, p. 500.

ones in Gaul where their sisters, mothers, or cousins were. In this they were helped by their contact with Gaulish monasteries. The monastery at Bath seems to be a good example of how a continental house, issued from the Columbanian movement, could help in founding a house in southern England, which would in turn have an impact on Northumbria.<sup>101</sup> The monastery of Bath was founded in 675, and the act of foundation is still preserved. It says that the monastery was granted by Osric, King of the Hwicce, to an abbess Berta (*Bertanae abbatissae*), and Bishop Leuthere figured in the witnesses' list. For Sims-Williams, 'Bertanae is the oblique form of Berta which is a Continental, not an English name'.<sup>102</sup>

In addition, in a late seventh-century charter of undoubted authenticity, the Frankish name of a nun, Flocburg, appears, and this name is only attested on the Continent. 'From the two charters taken together, then, we see a monastery founded at Bath in 675 by a sub-king of the Hwicce with a continental abbess at its head, who by 681 had an English successor, although the foreign element continued in the person of Flocburg.'<sup>103</sup> P. Sims-Williams brings this element together with the sending of books and nuns by Bertilla to Anglo-Saxon kings, as described in the *Vita Bertilae*:

'Cumque his et talibus probatissimis ageret moribus, christianitas fratrum sive sororum edificabatur, etiam et eius munificentia larga cuncti pauperes et peregrini consalabantur, tantumque fructum per eam magnum Dominus contraxit ad salutem animarum, ut etiam ab transmarinis partibus Saxoniae reges illi fideles ab ea per missos fideles postularent, ut illis de suis discipulis ad eruditionem vel sanctam instructionem, quam audierant esse in ea mirabilem, dirigeret, seu etiam qui virorum et sanctimonialium coenobia in illa regione construerent. Quam religiosam petitionem pro salute animarum non denegavit sed cum consilio seniorum, exortantibus fratribus, grato animo cum magna diligentia et patrocinio sanctorum seu et voluminibus multis librorum electas personas et devotissimos homines illuc direxit, ut per eam fructus animarum etiam in illa gente accresceret et cum Dei gratia multiplicaretur.'<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> P. Sims-William, 'Continental Influence at Bath Monastery in the seventh century', *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 1-10.

<sup>102</sup> P. Sims-Williams, 'Continental Influence at Bath', p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>104</sup> *Vita Bertilae*, c. 6, pp. 106-7

What seems to prove the rightful association of these two events is the presence in the foundation charter of the name Leuthere. This name appears in the column of the episcopal witnesses, just after Archbishop Theodore, and can therefore be associated with the foundation of Bath. Leuthere, third bishop of Wessex, was related to Agilbert and therefore was tied with Jouarre. 'Through his family ties with Jouarre, Leuthere must have been familiar with both', meaning Jouarre and Chelles.<sup>105</sup> With this in mind, P. Sims-Williams concludes that the nuns Berta and Flocburg at least came from one of the Frankish monasteries in the Paris region, and it can be added more precisely probably from the Brie region. Therefore, relating the two events seems logical, although there are no absolute proofs that might confirm it. In any case, this example shows how Chelles might have been related to several monasteries in Anglo-Saxon England, and how churchmen like Leuthere could be involved in the founding of double monasteries. This passage of the Life of Bertilla has often been used, and J. Campbell suggested as well that the first abbess of Much Wenlock who was called Liobsynde, which could be a Frankish name, could have come also from Bertilla's nuns sent abroad.<sup>106</sup> This extract of the Life of Bertilla offers one of the only proofs we have of direct links between England and the Columbanian monasteries of the Brie region. It appears that this connection can be extended to Northumbria, in view of all the relationships we have previously studied and analysed in this first chapter.

The impact of churchmen on religious women is present in all textual evidence. Thus we see Wilfrid encouraging Aethelthryth, daughter of Anna of East Anglia, and wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, to leave her husband, enter first the Northumbrian

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<sup>105</sup> P. Sims-Williams, 'Continental Influence at Bath', p. 7.

<sup>106</sup> J. Campbell, 'First Century', p. 58; the information concerning the first abbess comes from a dubious source, the *Testament of Mildburg*, and therefore this is a mere hypothesis.

double monastery of Coldingham, and then found her own house at Ely in 673.<sup>107</sup> Bede specifies that Aethelthryth trusted Wilfrid and that ‘illam nullum virorum plus illo diligere’.<sup>108</sup> A similarly close relationship between ecclesiastic and abbess is that of St Cuthbert and Aelfflaed, daughter of King Oswiu and abbess at Whitby after Hilda. Several passages in the Life of St Cuthbert show that the monk -later on bishop of Lindisfarne- and the abbess met frequently, and that Cuthbert had a certain authority and influence on her.<sup>109</sup> It is thus possible that Frankish bishops and men like Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid, staying in the southern kingdoms of England, had a similar influence on the founders of the numerous double monasteries.

The case of Hilda and the Northumbrian double monasteries is different from that of the southern kingdoms. It is indeed striking to notice that, if all the double houses in East Anglia, Kent, or Wessex, were not founded before the end of the 660s, three double houses in Northumbria (Hartlepool, Whitby, and probably Coldingham) existed by this date.<sup>110</sup> It is true that Hilda was a disciple of Aidan and that she supported the Irish party at the synod of Whitby,<sup>111</sup> but one must not forget the year she spent in East Anglia, waiting to join her sister at Chelles. Hilda must have been in East Anglia soon after Bishop Felix’s death.<sup>112</sup> Agilbert was then Bishop of Wessex.<sup>113</sup> Thus Hilda was in East Anglia, and in the south of England at the time when Frankish churchmen had been and were present, dominating the religious scene. It must be

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<sup>107</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-17 (19), pp. 243-44. The foundation date of Ely is given by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 22.

<sup>108</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-17 (19), p. 243.

<sup>109</sup> Bede’s *Life of Cuthbert*, c. 23-24, pp. 230-38, c. 34, pp. 260-64.

<sup>110</sup> The foundation date of Coldingham is problematic. The monastery was probably founded by Aebbe, sister of Oswiu, although it is not explicitly said in the texts that she, although the abbess, was the founder. This would place the foundation any time between the 640s and the 660s. The authors, like Bede, have always concentrated on the destruction of Coldingham by the flames, dated to 679 by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 23, but which in fact occurred after Aebbe’s death who was still alive in 681, Bede, *HE*, IV-23 (25).

<sup>111</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-25, p. 183.

<sup>112</sup> Felix was bishop of East Anglia when Sigebert came to power, i.e. around 630, and he died 17 years after having been bishop for 17 years (Bede, *HE*, III-20, p. 169), which brings his death around 647.

<sup>113</sup> We have seen that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 21, dates Agilbert’s departure from Wessex in 660.

remembered that double houses springing from the Columbanian influence were already founded in Gaul. Among one of the first ones was Remiremont, in Burgundy, in 625,<sup>114</sup> a date at which Felix would have still been in Gaul, and maybe in his native Burgundy. It has actually been suggested that Felix himself came from one of the Columbanian monasteries established in Burgundy, but, although it does not seem improbable, it is not supported by the texts.<sup>115</sup> It is therefore possible that Hilda was influenced and learned about double houses through the churchmen present in the southern kingdoms and through her sister who was in Gaul. Like Benedict Biscop later on, it was not Hilda's intention to go back to Northumbria, but, recalled by Aidan, she did, and might therefore have brought back the idea of double monasteries with her. Hartlepool was already founded at that time, since she succeeded Heiu as abbess. But it is nowhere said that the monastery founded by Heiu was a double house. Bede only specifies that Heiu 'prima feminarum fertur in provincia Nordanhymbrorum propositum vestemque sanctimonialis habitus, consecrante Aidano episcopo, suscepisse'.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, Hilda reformed the monastery when she took the position of abbess, and she did this following what she had been taught by learned men, 'doctis viris'.<sup>117</sup> Following this statement, Bede cites Aidan, but it can also be inferred that Hilda could have been following counsels from East Anglian churchmen. It is therefore possible that Hilda transformed Hartlepool from a simple nunnery to a double house.<sup>118</sup> We shall see that several features at Whitby, and especially the use of stone for the buildings, were close to Frankish monasteries and reflected Continental influences. Thus it could be that Hilda introduced the concept of double houses in Northumbria before it was followed in the

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<sup>114</sup> *Vita Columbani*, II-10, p. 127.

<sup>115</sup> D. Whitelock, 'Pre-Viking Church in East Anglia', p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-21 (23), p. 253.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>118</sup> This could be another explanation for the two stages of construction found during the excavations at Hartlepool, as we shall see later, p. 81..

southern kingdoms, where the habit for women was still to go abroad, although these kingdoms were closer in many ways to Frankish Gaul. Thus Northumbria could have been the first Anglo-Saxon kingdom in which double monasteries were established, the first ones being Hartlepool and Whitby.

### III- The relationships within the families

As we have seen, churchmen like Benedict Biscop, Ceolfrith, or Wilfrid visiting directly Northern Gaul and indirectly East Anglia, Kent or Wessex, played an essential role in the diffusion of Frankish influences in Northumbria. One of the other reasons accounting for the Frankish presence in the southern kingdoms of England was political: Merovingian kings such as Theudebert (534-48) and Chilperic (651-84) claimed to have overlordship on these kingdoms 'and may have had it'.<sup>119</sup> There was another factor helping the spread of this influence: the family ties between the Merovingians and the Anglo-Saxons. This was due as much to the royal families in England who were all linked, and related somehow to Frankish Gaul. Northumbrians were related to royal families of the southern kingdoms, who in turn had close relationships with the Merovingians. Marriages such as the one of Aethelbert of Kent with Bertha, daughter of the Merovingian King Charibert, at the end of the sixth century, still occurred in the seventh century and thus linked directly kingdoms like Kent with Frankish Gaul.<sup>120</sup> As I. Wood pointed out, 'Saxon women brought no prestige to Merovingian men, but Merovingian women will have enhanced the status of Anglo-Saxon kings'.<sup>121</sup> Thus, Eadbald followed the example of his father Aethelbert, although he did not marry a

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<sup>119</sup> J. Campbell, 'First Century', p. 53; see also F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 14 and I. Wood, 'Frankish Hegemony in England', *The Age of Sutton Hoo: The Seventh Century in north-western Europe*, ed. M. Carver (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 235.

<sup>120</sup> I. Wood, 'Frankish Hegemony in England', p. 239; *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 176.

Merovingian princess, but Emma, the daughter of Erchinoald, mayor of the palace of Neustria.<sup>122</sup> This shows the strength and the power of Erchinoald in Neustria at that time.

The East Anglian house had relations with both Northumbria and Northern Gaul. As we have seen, Hilda's sister, Hereswith, a Northumbrian by birth, was married to Aethelric, brother of Anna, king of the East Angles, and she was the mother of Aldwulf of East Anglia.<sup>123</sup> Hereswith was also a nun at Chelles. Hilda herself spent a year in East Anglia. Finally, Anna's daughter Aethelthryth married Ecgrith of Northumbria,<sup>124</sup> while one other daughter was a nun at Faremoutiers.<sup>125</sup> Also, as we have seen previously, Sigebert, king of the East Angles, had spent his exile in Gaul, where he must have been baptised around 630.<sup>126</sup> The royal family of East Anglia, thus related to the Northumbrian one, was itself closely related to the Kentish royal family, through the marriage of Anna's daughter Seaxburga to Earconberht of Kent. This linked the Northumbrians indirectly to the Kentish royals,<sup>127</sup> and we have seen that two kings of Kent were married to Frankish princesses: Aethelbert to Bertha and Eadbald to Emma. One Kentish king had a name derived from a Frankish name: Hlothere (674-85) is indeed the Anglian form of the Frankish Chlotar. It would be tedious and useless to go through all the marriages between Frankish, Northumbrian, East Anglian or Kentish royal houses. The family trees speak for themselves and are much clearer than any

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<sup>121</sup> I. Wood, 'Frankish Hegemony in England', p. 240.

<sup>122</sup> I. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 177; I. Wood, 'Ripon, Francia, and the Franks Casket in the Early Middle Ages', *Northern History* 26 (1990), pp. 14-15 and note 100; K.F. Werner, 'Les rouages de l'administration', *La Neustrie*, ed. P. Périn and L.-C. Feffer (Créteil, 1985), p. 42. As I. Wood points out, the evidence of Emma being the daughter of Erchinoald is late, but the name of her son (Earconberht) and of her grand daughter (Earcongota) may prove it. This resulted in the whole dynasty adopting the name of the mayor of the palace, fully or parts of it, during two generations. See genealogical tree, p.133.

<sup>123</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-21 (23), p. 253.

<sup>124</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-17 (19), p. 243.

<sup>125</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-8, p. 142.

<sup>126</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-18, p. 162.

<sup>127</sup> See K.P. Whitney, *The Kingdom of Kent*, p. 10.

detailed explanation would be.<sup>128</sup> What must be remarked upon is that in each of these royal families, it is the women mainly who were founding the monasteries and becoming abbesses, most of them when they were widowed. And in each family, we find members going to monasteries in Gaul, while others were staying in their own kingdom to found their own house. The example of Hilda and her sister Herewith illustrates this perfectly. The Northumbrian royal house was hence related to these Frankish influenced families of East Anglia or Kent, and it can be assumed that some of this continental influence reached the kingdom of Northumbria through this channel of connections between royal families.

Therefore, although Northumbrian connections with Frankish Gaul seem at first obscure and, at first sight, mainly connected to the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow (as the archaeological finds on these sites show), more can be found when one looks at the personal and rich relationships that were present between the kingdoms of Northumbria, Neustria, and the southern kingdoms of England, i.e. East Anglia, Kent and Wessex. Northumbria came in contact with Frankish influences through several exceptional ecclesiastics who had travelled abroad and come back to their kingdom to apply what they had seen in a local context, and through the intensely close relationships that existed between the royal families. Both factors were important, and one without the other would not have had the same consequences. Churchmen needed the aristocracy and the royal families to take an interest in these new influences so as to help them, and the aristocracy would not have come into contact with these new ideas without the ecclesiastics.

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<sup>128</sup> see Appendix 8, p. 133.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE MONASTERIES**

## I - THE FOUNDATION OF THE MONASTERY

### A/ Aristocratic and royal foundations

The four chosen monasteries were founded by members of the aristocracy or of the royal houses. This is a distinctive feature of religious communities founded in the wave of monastic foundations in the seventh century, which was already established in Gaul in the sixth century and before. If one reads Gregory of Tours, it is obvious that the Gallo-Roman Church of the fifth and sixth centuries was dominated by aristocrats and members of the royal families: most of the bishops, such as Gregory himself, came from the Gallo-Roman upper class, and the royal families were often involved in the ecclesiastical problems. Some members of the royal family were interested in monasticism, for example Queen Radegundis found a nunnery in Poitiers in 547.<sup>129</sup> As we have seen, Clovis's queen Clothildis, seems to have founded a small nunnery at Chelles.<sup>130</sup> Thus, the first Merovingians did take an interest in monasteries, but 'monasteries, like bishoprics, struck them initially as a Gallo-Roman preserve'.<sup>131</sup> Monasteries in the fifth and sixth centuries were mostly urban, or closely related to cities, as was St. Martin's at Tours or St-Croix in Poitiers. Therefore, the arrival of St Columbanus did not so much provoke the foundation of monasteries in Neustria rather than increased the development of monasticism. Even Columbanus's teaching, based on asceticism and austerity, was aimed at aristocrats. 'As much as any Frank or Burgundian, he propagated the idea of monasteries as local centres of aristocratic cultus, such as he had known in Ireland.'<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, ed. and trans. L. Thorpe (London, 1974), III-7, p. 168.

<sup>130</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, c. 18, p. 506.

<sup>131</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 55.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

Such monasticism did not exist in England, where Christianity was first introduced in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms through kings and their courts in the seventh century. However, this does not explain why the foundation of monasteries was reserved from the start to members of the aristocracy and the royal families. Indeed, this phenomenon only occurred in Gaul once Christianity was well established, four or five centuries after its birth. In Anglo-Saxon England, it is true that most of the population remained pagan, especially in remote areas, during the first century of Christianity. The Life of Cuthbert shows peasants scorning monks in the countryside.<sup>133</sup> ✓

Thus it could be that only the aristocracies were sufficiently christianised to start founding monasteries. But it could also be that Anglo-Saxons were mainly imitating the Frankish ways, following the Franks present in their kingdoms. It was difficult - or indeed impossible - to found a monastery without being in the upper class. It thus seems that reserving the monastic foundations to aristocrats and royals in Anglo-Saxon England came from an imitation of the Gaulish ways rather than having an ignorant and pagan population. In Northumbria, we find royal foundations or aristocratic foundations on royal land. The king was therefore always interfering in the monastic foundations. In Gaul, aristocrats could found their own monastery on family land, without any royal intervention.

The importance of the king in English monastic foundations was mainly due to the system of land tenure in Anglo-Saxon England. This is a complex problem that Eric John has explained thoroughly.<sup>134</sup> In early Anglo-Saxon England, kings used to give grants of land, as a reward, to their warriors. The king had to provide the land for the aristocracy. However, these rights, together with the land on which they were exercised,

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<sup>133</sup> Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert*, c. 3, p. 162.

<sup>134</sup> Eric John, *Land Tenure in Early England* (Leicester, 1964); *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies* (Leicester, 1966); 'Social and Economic Problems of the Early English', *Land, Church, and People: Essays presented to H.P.R. Finberg* (*Agricultural History Review*, 1971), vol. 18, pp. 39-63.

were not hereditary, and came back to the king at the aristocrat's death. The same system was later used for monastic grants. Aristocrats were given land by the king but in order to found a monastery, instead of a normal estate. This, in the late seventh and in the eighth century, will pose problems, since a monastery did not go back to the king once its founder was dead, and this had a consequence on the king's control on aristocracy. But in the beginning of the seventh century, this explains why a great proportion of land was royal in England, compared to France where only a small portion of it belonged to the king.

### Royal foundations

Chelles was a royal monastery, founded by Queen Balthildis. Balthildis was an Anglo-Saxon by birth, who came to Gaul as a slave. Bought by Erchinoald, mayor of the palace of Neustria,<sup>135</sup> she was wed to King Clovis II, probably around 648 as soon as the King came of age.<sup>136</sup> Balthildis became regent at the King's death in 657, through her friendship with leading men of the kingdom such as Audoenus or Eligius. Chelles, and the monastery of Corbie founded at the same time by the Queen in the years following the king's death, were entirely royal foundations, since they were founded by a Queen, on royal land. Similarly, Whitby was a royal foundation. Hilda was a member of the royal family of Deira: 'nam et nobilis natu erat, hoc est filia nepotis Eduini regis, vocabulo Hererici'.<sup>137</sup> As we have seen, it is highly likely that the land for the monastery of Whitby was granted by King Oswiu as part of the twelve gifts of land after the battle of the Winwaed. Therefore, Whitby, like Chelles, was entirely a royal foundation, founded by a member of the royal family on royal land.

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<sup>135</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, c. 2, p. 483.

<sup>136</sup> J.L. Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels', p. 47.

<sup>137</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-21 (23), p. 252.

The king or queen was an important element of the foundation of monasteries. It is often on land granted by them that the monastery is founded, even if it is founded by an aristocrat. It is said in the *Vita Columbani* that Columbanus's first foundations, Annegray and Luxeuil, were granted by King Sigebert.<sup>138</sup> However, Sigebert died in 575, and thus this raises a chronological problem. It has been concluded that the foundation of Luxeuil cannot have occurred before Childebert added the kingdom of Burgundy to his own (which was Austrasia), in March 593.<sup>139</sup> Therefore the king mentioned in the *Vita* is probably King Childebert. In any case, Columbanus's 'reliance on kings ... was considerable'.<sup>140</sup> This was an increasing phenomenon in Northern Gaul. Previously, kings had taken part in monastic foundations, but in a rather sporadic way.<sup>141</sup> After Columbanus, kings such as Clothar II, Dagobert I, Clovis II and his Queen Balthildis took an active part in the wave of monastic foundations.<sup>142</sup> For example, the monastery of Jumièges was founded by Filibertus in 654 on a land granted by Clovis II and Balthildis.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, Wearmouth and Jarrow were founded from the association of a king with an aristocrat. The grant of land came from King Ecgrith to Benedict Biscop, who was a member of the aristocracy. Biscop Baducing had been part of King Oswiu's retinue when he decided to leave everything to go to Rome.<sup>144</sup> King Ecgrith was at the origin of the foundation of Biscop's two monasteries, although, as the dedication stone at Jarrow shows,<sup>145</sup> the monastery seems to have been erected

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<sup>138</sup> *Vita Columbani*, I-6, p. 72.

<sup>139</sup> D. Bullough, 'The Career of Columbanus', *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings*, ed. M. Lapidge (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 10. ✓

<sup>140</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 63.

<sup>141</sup> On the involvement of Kings of the sixth century in monastic matters, see *ibid.*, pp. 55-62.

<sup>142</sup> These kings were based in Paris, and although they occasionally ruled over Austrasia (like Dagobert from 623) or Burgundy (Dagobert, Clovis II, and Clothaire III all reigned over Burgundy), they were mainly in Neustria, and of the Neustrian royal family.

<sup>143</sup> *Vita Filiberti*, c. 6, pp. 587-88.

<sup>144</sup> *Hab*, c. 1, p. 364-5.

<sup>145</sup> I. Wood, *The Most Holy Abbot Ceolfrid*, Jarrow Lecture 1995, pp. 1-2.

essentially by Ceolfrith, a member of the local aristocracy.<sup>146</sup> The dedication stone bears as well the name of the king, which shows its importance. 'It is the king, not the two abbots, who is the constant figure in all accounts of the foundation not just of Jarrow, but also of Wearmouth.'<sup>147</sup> A similar association of the king and the aristocrat founder took place for the foundation of Ripon by Eata, where the land was donated by King Alhfrith.<sup>148</sup> This association of an aristocrat and a king or a queen seems to have been very frequent in the seventh century, on both sides of the Channel.

### Aristocratic foundations

However, it appears that in Gaul the royal family had less influence on the monastic foundations which were much more an aristocratic feature. Jouarre is one of the many monasteries founded by aristocrats on their own land. The founder, Ado, founded Jouarre after he and his two other brothers had been blessed by Columbanus in their parents' home at Ussy-sur-Seine.<sup>149</sup> While Ado was founding Jouarre, his brother Rado founded Reuil-en-Brie on family land,<sup>150</sup> and Ouen, later bishop of Rouen, founded Rebais on royal land,<sup>151</sup> and helped found Jumièges and St Wandrille. The family of Ado resembles that of St Fare, founder of Faremoutiers. She and her brother were blessed by Columbanus in similar conditions, and while Fare was founding Faremoutiers, Burgondofaro became bishop of Meaux. If these foundations were undertaken on family land, the aristocrats were nevertheless closely related to the royal court, 'tied up with royal service and royal favour'.<sup>152</sup> Audoenus was first brought up at the Merovingian court and was chancellor to Dagobert I and Clovis II before becoming

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<sup>146</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, c. 2, p. 388.

<sup>147</sup> I. Wood, *The Most Holy Abbot Ceolfrid*, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-25, p. 182-183.

<sup>149</sup> *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 26, p. 209.

<sup>150</sup> This is not recorded by Jonas but by a later Life, that of Agilus, *Vita Agili*.

<sup>151</sup> *Vita Audoeni*, c. 2, p. 755.

bishop and helping found monasteries. Similarly, Eligius held the position of goldsmith at the court before his bishopric. The kings were thus still important in the aristocratic monastic foundations, if only to release the aristocrat wanting to leave the secular world. But it was particular to Northern Gaul to have the 'gentry' founding monasteries on their own lands, and this aspect cannot be found in Anglo-Saxon England. However, the fact that monasteries were a family affair made its way from Northern Gaul to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

### Family monasteries

This aspect of the monastery being a family matter was a characteristic of Merovingian Gaul. Monasteries belonged to a family, the founder was generally the first abbot, and the succeeding abbesses or abbots were often related to him. Founding a monastery could have practical causes: it was like investing in a land which could stay in the family. 'Property left to a monastery was less likely to change hands and, whatever the Church might say, a kindred could retain a certain ascendancy over a monastery founded by a forebear and further endowed by his heir.'<sup>153</sup> This was a well established fact in Northern Gaul which seems to have found its way to Anglo-Saxon England, where it had disastrous consequences at the beginning of the next century, according to Bede.<sup>154</sup> Jouarre is a good example of a family monastery, as the house stayed in the same family for years after its foundation. As the family tree shows, Ado was related to the abbesses who transformed the monastery into a double house, and to Agilbert who constructed the famous crypt.<sup>155</sup> This crypt now contains the sarcophagi of Agilbert, Theodechildis and Agilberte. The monastery was a family affair. Even at

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<sup>152</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 69.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>154</sup> 'Epistola Baedae ad Ecgbertum Episcopum', *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1896), vol. 1, pp. 416-17.

Wearmouth and Jarrow, we find this element. It is Benedict Biscop's cousin who becomes Wearmouth's abbot, to palliate for Benedict's frequent absences. Considering the high reputation of Benedict Biscop's monasteries, said to be following a rule close to that of St Benedict, Bede feels obliged to justify Biscop's choice of Eosterwine, specifying that it was not related to their family ties: 'Patruelis quippe erat abbatis sui Benedicti, sed amborum tanta ingenuitas, talis mundanae ingenuitatis fuit pro nichilo contemptus, ut neque iste monasterium ingressus, aliquem sibi prae ceteris ob intuitum consanguinitatis aut nobilitatis honorem quaerendum, neque ille putaret offerendum'.<sup>156</sup>

In royal foundations, this family aspect could take on another dimension. The monastery could become a royal burial house. This was the case at Chelles and at Whitby. The official Merovingian royal burial house was at Saint-Denis, but Chelles housed several relics which Balthildis acquired for the monastery.<sup>157</sup> The Merovingian royal family was in a way close to the monastery of Chelles: founded by Clothildis, re-founded by Balthildis, it is in Chelles that Thierry, son of Dagobert II, was brought up in the beginning of the eighth century.<sup>158</sup> Like Chelles, Whitby became a royal burial house for the Deiran royal line. King Edwin was buried at *Streonaeshalh*, as well as a great part of the Deiran royal family: speaking of Aelfflaed, second abbess of Whitby, Bede writes: 'in quo monasterio et ipsa, et pater eius Osuiu, et mater eius Aenfred, et pater matris eius Aeduini, et multi alii nobiles in ecclesia sancti apostoli Petri sepulti

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<sup>155</sup> See Appendix 9, p. 134.

<sup>156</sup> *Hab*, c. 8, p. 371.

<sup>157</sup> Balthildis tried to acquire the relics of St Eligius as soon as he died in 660, but she had to abandon the idea when faced with the opposition of the people of Noyon: see *Vita Eligii*, c. 37, p. 721. Similarly, according to a twelfth century source, it appears that Balthildis's son, Clotarius III was buried at Chelles, around 673: see J.-P. Laporte, *Trésor de Chelles*, p. 173. Finally, Balthildis acquired the relics of St Genesis, who was bishop of Lyon, and a close member of her retinue. It is St Genesis who went to get the nuns from Jouarre for the monastery of Chelles. Genesis died in 678. *Vita Balthildis*, c. 14, p. 501, *Vita Bertilae*, c. 4, p. 105.

<sup>158</sup> J.-P. Laporte, *Trésor de Chelles*, p. 3, citing *Monumenta Epternacensia*, MGH Scriptores 23, p. 62, year 719.

sunt'.<sup>159</sup> Even if in this case the monastery was royal, it shows once again how the establishment stayed in the family hands.<sup>160</sup>

Therefore, for the four monasteries chosen and for the monasteries founded in the seventh century wave, both in Neustria and in Northumbria, we have a similar pattern: monasteries were founded by aristocrats or members of the royal families, with the particularity of aristocratic foundations independent from the King in Northern Gaul. But in any case, these monasteries were always founded by members of the leading people of the kingdom. Another particularity shared on the two sides of the Channel is the fact that these monasteries seem to stay in the same family for at least the whole of the seventh century, and often enough into the eighth century. In Merovingian Gaul, the accession to the throne of the Carolingians will change most of the patterns. But it is clear that during the seventh century, the monasteries most often stayed in the same family as the founder, the succeeding abbots being brothers, nephews or cousins.

### Standard of living

In these monasteries founded by aristocrats, the level of life was automatically high. 'In both England and in Gaul noble monks and nuns seem often to have expected to be nobly housed and surrounded by rich objects.'<sup>161</sup> This can be seen through the wealthy objects found at Whitby,<sup>162</sup> or through the wealth of the crypt of Jouarre. The only exception to this rule was the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow. The Lives of the Abbots of the twin monasteries form a contrast with the Life of Wilfrid, or all the Merovingian Lives. They do not contain any miraculous episode, but only shows

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<sup>159</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-24, p. 179.

<sup>160</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-24 (26), p. 267.

<sup>161</sup> J. Campbell, 'First Century', p. 62.

<sup>162</sup> By wealthy objects, we mean mainly objects of personal use and adornments such as rings, brooches, buckles, and toilet articles such as tweezers and pins, see Peers and Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of

virtuous abbots devoted to their monastery. Unlike at Whitby, very few personal objects were found during the excavations: 'one stylus, one bronze stick-pin, and a plumb-bob from the main building at Jarrow contrast very markedly with the wealth of personal knick-knacks from Whitby'.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, R. Cramp remarks the lack of coinage or imported pottery like the ones found at Whitby.<sup>164</sup> Wearmouth and Jarrow were however occupied by members of the aristocracy. Indeed, a passage of the *Life of Ceolfrith* explains how, as prior of Wearmouth, Ceolfrith went back to Ripon after having had troubles with the aristocrats who had found his rule too harsh.<sup>165</sup> This proves that in the beginning of the monastery, some monks of aristocratic origin intended to live a life in relation to their status, which was not Benedict's nor Ceolfrith's aim, but which was the custom in all other monasteries. For P. Wormald, it is in this aspect of the twin monasteries that lies Benedict's success: 'what does then, emerge as remarkable is not his interest in Rome or the Mediterranean, but the extent to which this interest remained relatively unmodified by the values of the real aristocratic world around him'.<sup>166</sup> But Wearmouth and Jarrow were an exception to the rule in seventh-century monasticism.

Thus it appears that, following habits from Northern Gaul, monasteries in Anglo-Saxon England, and in Northumbria, were founded by aristocrats or royals. Whitby, in particular, seems to have been influenced by monasteries such as Chelles, a double monastery founded by a member of the royal family. Wearmouth and Jarrow

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Whitby', pp. 58-64, and R. Cramp, 'Analysis of the finds register and location plan of Whitby Abbey', *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. D.M. Wilson (London, 1976), pp. 455-57.

<sup>163</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monkwearmouth and Jarrow: the Archaeological Evidence', *Famulus Christi, Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), p. 17.

<sup>164</sup> Peers and Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of Whitby', on imported pottery, p. 80; on foreign coinage, p. 85.

<sup>165</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, c. 8, p. 390.

<sup>166</sup> P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 155.

followed the same pattern: the founder, Benedict Biscop, was an aristocrat, as were most of the inmates, but his monasteries differed from the model by leading a life closer to the Benedictine Rule. In a way, Benedict Biscop's monasteries, although built and constituted according to the century's norms, were in advance over other monasteries by its way of life.

## **B/ The economic aspects of the monastery**

Once the monastery was founded and established, and because the monastery was often considered as another of the family's estates, the founder usually tried to protect his monastery and to increase its possessions. We find this aspect on both sides of the Channel.

As we have seen, the original endowments of these monasteries were usually important. However, it was one aim of the founder to increase the lands as the monastic community was itself expanding. Balthildis, for example, did every thing to extend the power and importance of her foundation, by increases of land, relics or art objects.<sup>167</sup> Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith are another good example, as they expanded the land of the monastery by different exchanges with the king, extending it from the original endowment of 110 households to a total of 143 households at the time of Ceolfrith's departure to Rome in 716.<sup>168</sup> At that time, the monastery was housing 600 monks.<sup>169</sup> However, this is appears not to have been exceptional and the initial endowments Wearmouth and Jarrow received could be compared to that of Wilfrid's foundations,

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<sup>167</sup> *Vita Balthildis B*, c. 7, p. 489.

<sup>168</sup> *Hab*, c. 9, p. 373, c. 15, p. 380. P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, p. 186, comes up with a total of 150 hides, having counted 28 hides for the estate of Sambuce, where the text says 20. Perhaps P. Hunter Blair added up the estates of the river Fresca and Sambuce, whereas they were traded, not added.

<sup>169</sup> *Hab*, c. 17, p. 382.

notably Ripon and Sesley in Sussex.<sup>170</sup> The new element is how the founders protected the original and new acquisitions by privileges.

### Privileges:

The monastery's endowments could be secured by a privilege issued by the bishop or by the pope. Privileges existed in sixth century Gaul.<sup>171</sup> Two types of privileges existed: the royal immunity exempted monastic estates from certain royal taxes and obligations; the episcopal and papal privileges granted the independence of the monastery against avaricious bishops.<sup>172</sup> Most of the royal privileges benefited the bishops who were the main founders of monasteries: Chilperic complains that 'my treasury is always empty. All our wealth has fallen into the hands of the Church. There is no one with any power left except the bishops. Nobody respects me as King: all the respect has passed to the bishops in their cities'.<sup>173</sup> In the seventh-century, and particularly under Bathildis's reign, 'royal use of immunities effectively became the central element in Merovingian Church policy'.<sup>174</sup> The episcopal privileges flourished in Northern Gaul, and they guaranteed the independence of the newly founded monastery against the growing sovereignty of the bishops. Indeed, diocesan bishops remained responsible for the good order of the monastery, and could therefore control the election of the abbot. The power of the bishop extended often 'to the point of apparent tyranny'.<sup>175</sup> The first known privilege protecting the monastery against any abuse of power from its diocesan bishop was the privilege granted to Bobbio by Pope

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<sup>170</sup> I. Wood, *The Most Holy Abbot Ceolfrid*, p. 4. ✓

<sup>171</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 45

<sup>172</sup> I. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 294; P. Fouracre and R.A. Geberding, *Late Merovingian France*, p. 109.

<sup>173</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 45.

<sup>174</sup> I. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 197.

<sup>175</sup> P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 148.

Honorius in 628.<sup>176</sup> It is interesting to see that this first privilege occurred in an environment related to Columbanus. It was later confirmed by Pope Theodore, who specified its contents: the monks could choose which bishop they would refer to, when needed, and if the bishop did not satisfy their demands, they could appeal directly to the pope.<sup>177</sup> This new movement of privileges was followed by the monasteries related to Luxeuil and Bobbio, the most famous being the one established for Rebais by the bishop of Meaux, Burgondofaro, in 637.<sup>178</sup> This privilege excluded the monastery of any diocesan control. Rebais was founded by Ouen, brother of Ado. In this respect, one wonders if the monastery of Jouarre was also granted a privilege. J.-F. Lemarignier, basing his study on monasteries on the coincidence between the abbeys who received the ecclesiastical immunity in the seventh century and those who exercised the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the parishes in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, concluded that Jouarre must have been granted a privilege in the seventh century. In addition to this new wave of privileges, Queen Balthildis reformed the old monasteries so that they might follow the new monastic lines: the aim of this monastic policy was to give to monasteries such as Saint-Denis, Saint-Médard of Soissons, or Saint-Martin of Tours the same independence given to the Columbanian monasteries through

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<sup>176</sup> *Vita Columbani*, p. II-23, p. 145: Jonas specifies that this privilege excluded any authority from the bishop.

<sup>177</sup> P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 148.

<sup>178</sup> *Vita Audoeni*, p. 538. The privilege of Rebais is published by Pardessus, *Diplomata, chartae, epistolae, leges, aliaque instrumenta ad res Gallo-Francicas spectantia*, 2 vol. (1969), vol. 2, n. 274, pp. 39-45. The authenticity of the 637 privilege for Rebais is discussed by the Marquise de Maillé, *Cryptes de Jouarre*, p. 65. She explains the position of the different historians: V. Leblond and M. Lecomte believed it was a false, but W. Levison, L. Levillain and E. Ewig accepted it. J. Guérout concluded in his 'Origines', p. 65, note 8, that the act, in its general aspect is well an authentic charter from the seventh century, while certain parts of the text were transformed and included later on. For J. Guérout, the charter is a real one, and he proves it by comparing it with two other charters: 1/ It presents a vocabulary similar to the one in the privilege of 667 for the abbey Notre-Dame of Soissons, and the authenticity of this privilege was never doubted. It is to be noted that the abbey of Soissons was a daughter house of Jouarre. 2/ The vocabulary of the address, the preamble and part of the main part resembles that of the privilege for the monastery of Saint-Pierre-le-Vif in 659-660. Again, the authenticity of the privilege was never doubted. Therefore, it can be established that the charter for Rebais was a real privilege issued in 637 by the bishop of Meaux Burgondofaro.

privileges.<sup>179</sup> These major basilicas also had to obey a monastic rule, and the major shrines were taken out of the control of the bishops to be managed by newly appointed abbots.<sup>180</sup> The Queen favoured the wave of episcopal privileges and benefited from the support of the metropolitan bishops, who signed a great number of privileges during this period. It is therefore likely that Chelles, founded by Balthildis herself, had a privilege, although it is nowhere mentioned. Corbie, Balthildis's other foundation, did have a privilege, granted in 664 by the bishop of Amiens.<sup>181</sup>

In Anglo-Saxon England, the concept of protecting the monastery from the bishop's excessive authority first appeared at the synod of Hertford in 672, in a canon specifying that bishops were not allowed to interfere with a monastery's affairs.<sup>182</sup> In Anglo-Saxon England, the privileges were mainly issued by the pope. It is Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid who, from their trips to the Continent, brought back to Northumbria the first monastic privileges issued by the pope for their monasteries.<sup>183</sup> On his fifth visit to Rome, Benedict Biscop brought back, along with books, relics, and paintings, a papal privilege: 'Quartum, Benedictus non vile munus adtulit, epistolam privilegii a venerabili papa Agathone cum licentia, consensu, desiderio, et hortatu Ecgfridi regis acceptam, qua monasterium, quod fecit, ab omni prorsus extrinseca irruptione tutum perpetuo redderetur ac liberum.'<sup>184</sup> This letter of privilege was later on confirmed by pope Sergius: 'missis Romam legatariis, epistolam privilegii a beatae memoriae papa Sergio petiit, et accepit, instar illius, quam ab Agathone decessor eius Benedictus

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<sup>179</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, c. 9, p. 493. On Balthildis's *Klösterpolitik*, see J. Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels', pp. 67-72; and A. Dierkens, 'Prolégomènes à une histoire des relations culturelles entre les îles britanniques et le continent pendant le haut Moyen Age: la diffusion du monachisme dit colombanien ou iro-franc dans quelques monastères de la région parisienne au VIIe siècle et la politique religieuse de la reine Bathilde', *La Neustrie*, ed. H. Atsma, 2 vol., (Sigmaringen, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 371-94.

<sup>180</sup> I. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 204; J. Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels', p. 67.

<sup>181</sup> This privilege was analysed by B. Krusch, for his edition of the *Vita Balthildis*, pp. 477-478.

<sup>182</sup> W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the eighth century* (Oxford, 1946), p. 23.

<sup>183</sup> See list of papal privileges for Northumbrian monasteries in H. H. Anton, *Studien zu den Klosterprivilegien der Päpste im frühen Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1975), pp. 169-172.

<sup>184</sup> *Hab*, ch. 6, p. 369.

acceperat.’<sup>185</sup> Bede explains its purpose, namely to guarantee the monastery’s freedom and independence. Both the privilege and the letter of confirmation did not survive. Wilfrid and Hadrian both secured privileges at the same time as Benedict, and by the same pope.<sup>186</sup> P. Wormald tried to compare these three privileges to clarify the contents of the one issued for Wearmouth and Jarrow. It appears that the surviving text of Hadrian’s privilege is genuine, and information can be gathered from Stephanus’s *Life of Wilfrid*.<sup>187</sup> The main aim of these privileges was similar to the Continental ones, i.e. to protect the monasteries from the power of the bishops, especially from bishops interfering in the election of the abbot. Furthermore, P. Wormald specifies that Hadrian’s privilege resembled that of Bobbio, and that of Wilfrid ‘seems to have involved direct papal authority, as Bobbio’s did’.<sup>188</sup> Benedict Biscop’s charter of privilege belonged to a new movement which considered that episcopal power should be limited, and which involved direct papal authority. As we have seen, this movement started at Bobbio, before spreading to the monasteries connected to Columbanus and to Luxeuil, including the monasteries of the Brie region.<sup>189</sup> The question, consequently, is from which, Roman influence or Frankish influence, did Benedict Biscop get the idea of securing a privilege for his monastery? The same could be asked for Wilfrid and Hadrian. Bede’s accounts always stress the Roman influence, lessening as a result the effects of the Frankish one. But Wilfrid was as much, if not more, influenced by Northern Gaul as by Rome, and if Benedict Biscop brought back glaziers, architects and maybe books,<sup>190</sup> he could as well have brought back the idea of privilege that was booming in Northern Gaul. As P. Wormald writes, ‘it seems that even so “Roman” a

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<sup>185</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, ch. 20, p. 395.

<sup>186</sup> P. Wormald, ‘Bede and Benedict Biscop’, p. 146-47, W. Levison, *England and the Continent*, p. 24.

<sup>187</sup> *Life of Wilfrid*, p. 97.

<sup>188</sup> P. Wormald, ‘Bede and Benedict Biscop’, p. 148.

<sup>189</sup> See list of papal privileges in H. H. Anton, *Studien zu den Klosterprivilegien*, pp. 169-172. The monasteries mentioned are English, southern French, Italian, and from the Brie region.

treasure as this may have found its analogues in the Irish-influenced circles of Francia and Lombardy', that is to say, in the Columbanian monasteries.<sup>191</sup> We have seen that, during the winter 668-69, Benedict Biscop had most probably visited Jouarre, Faremoutiers or other Columbanian houses, and so had Hadrian at the same time and Wilfrid before them. The three of them are more likely to have taken the idea from these Columbanian monasteries than from Rome. Rather than being a Roman phenomenon, it seems thus that it was a Merovingian one, that Biscop, Hadrian and Wilfrid introduced in England.

### **C/ Double monasteries**

Chelles, Jouarre and Whitby were double monasteries. This meant that, unlike Wearmouth-Jarrow which only housed men, these three monasteries were constituted of both nuns and monks, with the particularity of being ruled by an abbess. Evidence for the existence of these double monasteries can be drawn from textual evidence, as for the three monasteries. *Streonaeshalh*, like Hartlepool, was a double monastery. This can be proven by Bede's writings. In several paragraphs, Bede mentions brothers, as for example at the death of Hilda: 'venerunt primo diluculo **fratres**, qui eius obitum nuntiarent, a loco, ubi defuncta est'.<sup>192</sup> As well, the story of Caedmon proves the presence of brothers in the monastery: 'In huius monasterio abbatissae fuit **frater** quidam...'<sup>193</sup> Similarly, the monastery of Chelles founded by Balthildis and organised by Bertilla was a double house. There are several hints in the Life of Bertilla that confirm that Chelles was a double monastery. For example, the hagiographer says of

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<sup>190</sup> see further on p. 98.

<sup>191</sup> P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 149.

<sup>192</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-23, 257.

<sup>193</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-24, 258.

Bertilla: 'Quasi ergo mater proprios **filios vel filias** diligebat cunctos'.<sup>194</sup> In chapter 6, the author writes: 'christianitas **fratrum sive sororum** eius pietatis exemplo edificabatur';<sup>195</sup> and at Bertilla's death, he writes 'multitudo **fratrum** lugentium illuc accessit'.<sup>196</sup> There is no doubt, therefore, that the monastery of Chelles was a double house. As for Jouarre, the evidence is not conclusive, but one must rely on the fact that the monastery was founded by Ado, and then overtaken by Theodechildis, and that nuns from Chelles, a double monastery, had originally come from Jouarre.<sup>197</sup> The monks of the monastery founded by Ado are nowhere said to have left; they might have therefore stayed under the rule of the new abbess. According to J. Guérout, the change of situation, from men only to double house, must have occurred when the number of women became higher than the men.<sup>198</sup> The striking part of this sudden change at Jouarre, which must have occurred very soon after the foundation, is that the name of Ado was forgotten. Indeed, it seems striking that the founder of the monastery did not have a sarcophagus in the crypt until the seventeenth century.<sup>199</sup> In the context of the Columbanian monasteries, it seems evident that Jouarre must have been a double house.

We shall see further on in this dissertation the way such a house was organized.<sup>200</sup> For now on what concerns us is the origin of these monasteries. The double monastery was previously thought to have derived from an Irish influence, as wrote M. Bateson, for example: 'its origin is directly traceable to Irish influence'.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> *Vita Bertilae*, c. 5, p. 105.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, c. 6, p. 106.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, c. 8, p. 108.

<sup>197</sup> see genealogical tree: Mode was the second wife of Authaire, who was Ado's father, and the aunt of Theodechildis. At the death of Authaire, Mode came to settle as a widow in Jouarre with her daughters and niece. This information comes from the *Genealogy*, a seventeenth-century document derived from a medieval *Liber Vitae* of the monastery of Jouarre. This *Genealogy* was found trustworthy by J. Guérout, 'Origines', pp. 10-14; see as well, Marquise de Maillé, *Cryptes de Jouarre*, p. 79.

<sup>198</sup> J. Guérout, 'Origines', p. 34 to 38.

<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>200</sup> see further on p. 92.

<sup>201</sup> M. Bateson, 'Origin and Early History of Double Monasteries', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* New Series 13 (1899), p. 137.

However, S. Hilpisch proved that St Brigid's church in Kildare, which was the usual example and prototype, was in fact the only known Irish example, and thus did not prove anything.<sup>202</sup> S. Hilpisch concluded that the double monastery was an institution which was born in Gaul. Undeniably, the first double monasteries appear in Northern Gaul after Columbanus's passage. The first one, Remiremont, was founded in 625, by monks of Luxeuil who instructed the nuns according to the teachings of Columbanus.<sup>203</sup> Faremoutiers was founded in 627 in the same conditions.<sup>204</sup> From then on, double monasteries flourished in Northern Gaul: Jouarre around 634, Chelles around 657. We have seen previously that these monasteries were born out of the desire of Frankish women to participate in the renewal of the church after Columbanus's stay in Northern Gaul. They 'represented the female response to the inspiration of Columbanus'.<sup>205</sup> Becoming abbess of a double monastery was an ideal solution for widows and virgins, and it gave women a ruling position they would not have found elsewhere.

This form of monasticism, born in Northern Gaul, made its way to Anglo-Saxon England, and to Northumbria first. Thus, the first double monastery to be found in England is that of Hartlepool. We have seen that there is a high probability that it was Hilda who transforms Heiu's house into a double monastery around 649. Hilda had just spent a year in East Anglia and her first desire had been to join her sister Hereswith at Chelles. Hence, Hilda must have been informed of the new developments in monasticism that were occurring on the Continent, where double monasteries had already been founded some 20 years before. We consequently have an influence between two of the four monasteries: Chelles and Whitby, the latter having been

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<sup>202</sup> See H. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 151, citing S. Hilpisch, *Die Doppleklöster, Entstehung und Organisation* (Münster, 1928), pp. 29, 31. See as well B. Mitchell, 'Anglo-Saxon Double Monasteries', *History Today* 45 (1995), p. 33, and D.B. Schneider, *Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life: a Study of the Status and Position of Women in Early Medieval Society*, Ph D Thesis (University of Cambridge, 1985), p. 15.

<sup>203</sup> *Vita Columbani*, II-10, p. 127.

founded under the inspiration and influence of the former.

These double houses were not well viewed by some of the ecclesiastics: Archbishop Theodore, upon his arrival, only tolerated them because it was already a custom.<sup>206</sup> Similarly, Bede disapproved of double monasteries, as can be seen by the long account he gives of Coldingham and its sinful inhabitants.<sup>207</sup> However, they were tolerated and they were important in the religious conversion of England. Abbesses of double monasteries were often figures of importance: the fame of Bertilla, as abbess of Chelles, reached the Anglo-Saxon kings, on the other side of the Channel.<sup>208</sup> Similarly, Hilda was an influential and important figure, having educated five bishops in her monastery at Whitby.<sup>209</sup> 'The institution of monks and nuns living in corporate unity and geographical proximity was the most important monastic importation from Gaul to Anglo-Saxon England.'<sup>210</sup> The presence of double monasteries such as Whitby in Northumbria is one of the best proofs one can get of the evident Frankish influence in this Anglo-Saxon kingdom. It also shows that, Whitby and Hartlepool being the first double monasteries in the whole of England, Northumbria was much closer to the Frankish kingdoms, and to Neustria in particular, than was thought previously. With its direct connections personified by Benedict Biscop, and indirect connections through the southern kingdoms and Hilda, Northumbrian monasticism was as much influenced by Frankish ascendancy as the other, more geographically close kingdoms of England.

Thus, what can be concluded from this part concerning the foundation of the

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<sup>204</sup> *Vita Columbani*, II-11, p. 130.

<sup>205</sup> H. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 151.

<sup>206</sup> J. Godfrey, 'The Place of the Double Monastery in the Anglo-Saxon Minster System', p. 346: the double monastery had been condemned by Justinian in 539, while Theodore mentioned his dislike for the institution in his Penitential (II. vi. 8.).

<sup>207</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-23 (25), pp. 262-66.

<sup>208</sup> *Vita Bertilae*, c. 5, p. 105.

<sup>209</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-21 (23), p. 254.

<sup>210</sup> H. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 151.

monastery, is that it can be observed that both the Northumbrian monasteries, Wearmouth and Jarrow and Whitby, and Chelles and Jouarre in Neustria, were founded by members of the aristocracy. Chelles and Whitby can be closely compared, as will be seen further on in the dissertation. Both of them were double monasteries and royal burial houses. It might be that this phenomenon of keeping the act of founding monasteries in a way 'reserved' to the leading classes of the kingdom came from a Gaulish influence. But it might also be that the Northumbrian aristocrats and members of the royal family, having been converted first, were more in a position to found monasteries. This aspect must not therefore be taken as a conclusive evidence for a sign of Frankish influence on Northumbrian monasteries. It seems that the two factors played a part in the leading role of the aristocracy in Northumbrian religious life. However, it seems on the contrary that the fact that monastic founders tried to secure privileges for their houses came from a Frankish influence, and more precisely from a Columbanian influence. It seems that at least three of the four monasteries had a privilege secured, although nothing is known for Whitby. The contents of these privileges - protecting the foundation against any abuse of episcopal power - are the same for each of these monasteries, and they are found first for those of Bobbio and Luxeuil. The same conclusion appears to be drawn for the introduction of double monasteries in Northumbria, since these double monasteries issued from the Columbanian influence in Northern Gaul. Thus, it appears that the foundation of monasteries in Northumbria, and more particularly the foundations of Whitby, and then of Wearmouth and Jarrow, owed much to Frankish monasteries such as Chelles or Jouarre.

## II - ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASPECTS

We have seen that certain points in the preceding chapter could lead us to conclude that there was an important Frankish influence on the two Northumbrian monasteries, and on Northumbrian monasticism in general. Analyzing the archaeological aspects of each monastery and putting them in parallel will help to discover any common feature (or lack of any) they might have had. It is difficult to generalize when presenting seventh-century monasteries. Each monastery had its own layout and buildings. The organised Benedictine monastery, centred around the cloister did not yet exist. Each founder organised his monastery as he wished. Moreover, the layout depended often on exterior factors, such as the presence of Roman ruins on the site. However, several points may be studied and found in common in each of these monasteries.

### **A/ The excavations and the general layout of each monastery**

All the monasteries chosen have been excavated. It must be observed that, for what concerns the seventh century, excavations on English sites seem to have been more advanced than on French sites. Thus, Wearmouth and Jarrow, and Whitby offer more archaeological conclusions than Jouarre or Chelles. This is possibly due to the intense urbanisation of the French sites, although Wearmouth is situated in an urban centre and the site was nevertheless excavated. It is also due to the fact that the English seem to be ahead in early Middle Ages excavations compared to France where the interest in these sites is only still emerging.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Merovingian archaeology in France has concentrated mainly on excavations of cemeteries, more than on monastic sites. see E. James, 'Archaeology and the Merovingian Monastery', *Columbanian and*

## Whitby

Whitby is probably one of the most extensively excavated monasteries in Northumbria. Several excavations have been undertaken since the beginning of the century. The first one took place from 1920 to 1928, under the supervision of C. Peers and C. Raleigh Radford. The area excavated was situated at the north of the remains of the medieval church. The method of excavation involved the scraping away of the covering earth to reveal the stone remains beneath and the finds, both considered as the priority. Therefore, no record of the stratigraphy was kept and a lot of the information was lost. However, a map of the excavated area was drawn by a professional surveyor who knew nothing of archaeology but who nevertheless drew a plan with every stone marked down, as is done in today's excavations. This detailed plan of the excavations was published in 1943 along with the report of the excavations.<sup>212</sup> It is from this plan that most of the interpretations are deduced. It was redrawn in 1976 by P. Rahtz, who made it clearer by leaving out what he considered as medieval features, such as most of the graves, and by lettering the buildings.<sup>213</sup> P. Rahtz himself carried out two campaigns of excavations in 1958, on a small scale,<sup>214</sup> and the last excavations were done by M. Johnson in 1989.<sup>215</sup> However, the 1920s excavations remain the most important and extensive ones, and most of the history of the monastery must be based on these. The general layout at Whitby, as shown from the 1943 plan, poses certain problems: it shows an area of dense occupation, in which drains and foundation stones are hard to distinguish from other stones. Most of the finds, discovered in the buildings, allowed the

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*Merovingian Monasticism*, ed. H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan, B.A.R. International Series 113 (Oxford, 1981), p. 33.

<sup>212</sup> C. Peers and C.R. Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of Whitby', pp. 27-88.

<sup>213</sup> P. Rahtz, 'The building plan of the Anglo-Saxon monastery of Whitby Abbey', *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1976), Appendix C, pp. 459-62.

<sup>214</sup> P. Rahtz, 'Whitby 1958 - Site Two', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 165, 42 (1967-70), pp. 72-3.

<sup>215</sup> M. Johnson, 'The Saxon Monastery at Whitby: Past, Present and Future', *In Search of Cult, Archaeological Investigations in honour of P. Rahtz*, ed. M. Carver (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 85-9.

dating of these as Anglo-Saxon.<sup>216</sup> From his 1989 excavations, M. Johnson emphasised the importance of medieval disturbance, as the whole area was covered with graves, some of which might be of Anglo-Saxon date according to R. Cramp.<sup>217</sup> This shows the difficulties posed by the lack of stratigraphy. Moreover, the cliff retreats at the rate of 20 cm per century, which means that the Anglo-Saxon monastery in the seventh century must have extended further than it does now.<sup>218</sup> It is however possible to see a certain organisation in the layout, as the buildings seem to be arranged along paths or access lanes, as was noted down on P. Rahtz's plan in 1976.<sup>219</sup> Thus, we seem to have at Whitby a complex but seemingly organised layout, with buildings on each part of paths, 'a roughly rectilinear layout very similar to that of an urban complex'.<sup>220</sup>

### Wearmouth/Jarrow

At Wearmouth and Jarrow as well, we have organised layouts but in a different manner. The big difference between the sites is that excavations took place to the south of the churches, both at Wearmouth and Jarrow, unlike at Whitby. At Wearmouth, trial excavations were carried out in 1959, 1960, and 1961. In 1962 and 1964, more extensive excavations were undertaken by R. Cramp. The site was cleared, and excavations took place regularly between 1966 and 1971. The difficulty for the excavations in Monkwearmouth was that the town extended up to 'within 20 feet of the south wall of the church'.<sup>221</sup> The extensive urbanisation of the medieval monastic site in the twentieth century resulted in the destruction of much of the stratification, and

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<sup>216</sup> Peers and Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of Whitby', p. 46. These Anglo-Saxon finds were analysed later on by R. Cramp, 'Analysis of the Finds register', pp. 453-457.

<sup>217</sup> M. Johnson, 'Saxon Monastery at Whitby', p. 89; P. Rahtz, 'Anglo-Saxon and Later Whitby', *Yorkshire Monasticism: Archaeology, Art, and Architecture from the 7th to the 16th centuries*, ed. Hoey, B.A.A. Conference Transactions 16 (1995), p. 6.

<sup>218</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>219</sup> P. Rahtz, 'Building Plan', p. 462.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*, p. 462.

therefore 'has rendered the constructional sequence difficult to determine in an absolute manner'.<sup>222</sup> Moreover, at Wearmouth, unlike at Jarrow, 'no traces of the medieval monastic buildings survived above ground'.<sup>223</sup> As we shall see, the method of construction is reminiscent of Roman or Merovingian work, but the way the buildings are clearly aligned on the church might represent 'an early phase reminiscent of Whitby'.<sup>224</sup>

The monastery of Jarrow, built some ten years later, was not built by foreign masons like at Wearmouth, but by the brethren themselves. Excavations at Jarrow began in 1954 by a trial excavation carried out by C. Raleigh Radford.<sup>225</sup> More trial excavations were undertaken in 1963 by R. Cramp, and regular excavations took place from 1965 to 1973.<sup>226</sup> Jarrow's general appearance is different from that of Wearmouth. The two sites do not have the same layout, and the only common point is that the cemetery is situated to the south of the church. The buildings have some similarities in the construction, but there is still a difference, as they were built by Merovingian masons at Wearmouth, and by Anglo-Saxon brethren at Jarrow. This indicates that there was no 'type' of monastery in the seventh century. Two monasteries founded by the same person might have had different aspects and layouts.

### Jouarre

For Jouarre and Chelles, it is impossible to establish a layout, although excavations have been undertaken on the two sites. At Jouarre, most of the excavations, from the nineteenth century until today, concentrated on the crypts, which are essential

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<sup>221</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. D.M. Wilson (London, 1976), p. 231.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>223</sup> R. Cramp, 'Excavations at the Saxon Monastic Sites of Wearmouth and Jarrow, co. Durham: an Interim Report', *Medieval Archaeology* 13 (1969), p. 21.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

for art history.<sup>227</sup> Excavations began in the nineteenth century, when the crypts were discovered. The cemetery near the basilica of Saint-Martin (the one containing the crypts) was excavated in 1864. The next excavations, directed by the Abbot Thiercelin, took place in 1869-71, and it is during this campaign that the little basilica and the crypts were discovered. Two plans were drawn, but no drawing of sections was done. Therefore, nothing much is known about these important excavations. In the twentieth century, several excavations were carried out at the time of clearing-up works, but still mainly on the crypts. The first campaign was undertaken in 1978-79, and concentrated on the crypt of Saint-Paul; the second campaign took place in 1985-89 on the crypt of Saint-Ebrégisile. They were followed by archaeological discoveries, mainly sarcophagi, and they allowed a better understanding of the crypts and their evolution in time. But apart from the crypts, the excavations did not help to reconstruct a layout of the seventh-century monastery.

### Chelles

Excavations have also been carried out at Chelles. The first finds were discovered in 1848. Excavations started really from 1965, and some ten campaigns of excavations were carried out from 1965 to 1985, mainly concentrating on the Merovingian monastery near the church of Saint-André.<sup>228</sup> In 1986, the city council of Chelles decided to reconstruct the 'hôtel de ville', and it was resolved that the

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<sup>225</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', p. 235.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 234-41.

<sup>227</sup> G. Duby, X. Barral I Altet, S. Guillot de Suduiraut, *Sculpture, the Great Art of the Middle Ages from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Century* (Geneva, 1992), p. 15: 'the foundation of many monasteries in Northern Gaul during the seventh century called for a great deal of building and carving. In many cases, little is known about the sculptured decoration of these monuments. So the crypt of one of the three churches of the monastery of Jouarre (Saint-Paul) comes as a fortunate exception'.

<sup>228</sup> D. Coxall et al., *Chelles: Fouilles sur le site de l'ancienne abbaye royale, 1991-92*, ed. D. Coxall (Chelles, 1994), p. 13. Merovingian archaeology in France has concentrated a lot on the excavations of cemeteries, more than on monastic sites. see E. James, 'Archaeology and Merovingian Monastery', p. 33.

reconstruction would be carried out in three sequences and that at the beginning of each, excavations would be accomplished. Thus, soundings were taken in 1986 by José Ajot, and the first campaign of excavations was carried out from May 1987 to January 1988, comprising around 700 m<sup>2</sup>; the second one took place from August 1988 to December 1989, and comprised around 900 m<sup>2</sup>. Finally, the third campaign, conducted this time by D. Coxall, took place in 1991-1992. The outcome of all these excavations is surprising and heart-breaking for the one who wants to study the Merovingian monastery. 'L'ensemble des fouilles, à l'emplacement de l'Abbaye Notre-Dame, entre 1968 et 1989, n'a révélé aucune trace de bâtiment de l'époque mérovingienne...La même constatation vaut pour cette campagne où seuls quelques tessons en remblais datables des VIe-VIIe siècles, ont été retrouvés.'<sup>229</sup> According to D. Coxall, a building was found under the church of Saint-Georges, and the archaeologist concluded that it might be Clothildis's church, used as a funerary church.<sup>230</sup> He insists that the monastery of Balthildis has not been found by the excavations, and that apart from Clothildis's remains, one has to wait until the end of the eighth century to find new remains, dating from the architectural program of Gisèle, abbess from 780 to 810, and sister of Charlemagne. Therefore, neither for Jouarre nor for Chelles can we establish a definite layout.

Consequently, it is difficult to establish any parallels in the layouts of these monasteries. One must look in the details of the monastery to find common features, and not in the general aspects.

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<sup>229</sup> D. Coxall, *Chelles*, p. 81-82.

<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81.

## B/ The *vallum monasterii*

One of these common features was the enclosure of the monastery, also called *vallum monasterii*. The function of this enclosure, which could have had the aspect of a simple wall or of a ditch, as in insular sites, was more to separate the monastic precinct from the outer world than to actually defend the monastery. The *vallum monasterii* was long thought to be a typical insular feature.<sup>231</sup> This is because it is well preserved on Irish sites, which have not been disturbed by urbanisation. These Irish enclosures often took the aspect of an earth bank and a ditch. However, from textual evidence, it appears that the enclosure existed in Northern Gaul, mostly as a wall. The enclosure at St Eligius's monastery of Solignac was a circular wall made of earth and hedge of ten *stadia*, that is 1800 metres.<sup>232</sup> Similarly at Faremoutiers, the walls must have been rather high, as a nun trying to escape had to use a ladder.<sup>233</sup> J. Blair showed in a recent article that there were 'more similarities than contrasts' between Merovingian and insular layouts.<sup>234</sup> However, J. Blair argues that Irish, English and Frankish sites 'followed a single broad tradition of development'.<sup>235</sup> The aim of this thesis is to show that, on the contrary, Frankish Gaul was subjected to Irish influence through Columbanus, and, a generation later, England was in turn subjected to Frankish influence. Therefore, it is logical to find enclosures in our monasteries in the seventh century. It could be argued that these enclosures first came from Ireland and through Columbanus into Gaul. In Gaul, J. Blair argues, some boundaries can be still visible with the help of aerial photography. As the urbanisation in Northern France has

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<sup>231</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', p. 204.

<sup>232</sup> *Vita Eligius*, c. 16, p. 682; see in E. James, 'Archaeology and Merovingian Monastery', p. 40.

<sup>233</sup> *Vita Columbani*, II-19, pp. 138-39, see E. James, 'Archaeology and the Merovingian Monastery', p. 40.

<sup>234</sup> J. Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters: a Topographical Review', *Pastoral Care before the Parish*, ed. J. Blair and R. Shraper (Leicester, London, and New York, 1992), p. 259.

destroyed most of the remains, it would be still possible to distinguish the monastic boundary through the encircling road around the towns.<sup>236</sup>

Archaeologically speaking, the *vallum* is not often found on sites. The only archaeological evidence found in Northern Gaul is a short section of a wall at the monastery of Nivelles.<sup>237</sup> However, as we have seen, when evidence of the enclosure cannot be found on the site, it can be found in the texts, as for the monastery of Jumièges: ‘ubi eius providentia construxit per quadrum moenia turrita mole surgentia, claustra receptionis mira, adventantibus opportuna’.<sup>238</sup> The enclosure seems to have been found at Whitby, although the excavators in the 1920s hardly mentioned it.<sup>239</sup> P. Rahtz hesitates between identifying the structure with a roadway or the foundation of a wall or ditch serving as an enclosure.<sup>240</sup> Bede does not mention the existence of an enclosure at Whitby. A boundary seems also to have been found at Jarrow. R. Radford’s trial excavations, situated to the north of the church, revealed what Radford interpreted as the *vallum*. This was cobbled foundations about 13 feet wide.<sup>241</sup> However, no other excavations were carried out to confirm this hypothesis, and so it is not possible to know if this feature was indeed the *vallum monasterii* of the monastery of Jarrow. As R. Cramp pointed out, it would be interesting to re-examine this feature, as the *vallum* is a monastic feature much talked about in the literary evidence but rarely found on the sites themselves. The river to the south of the monastery might have served as part of the boundary, just like the cliff might have at Whitby. In any case, for the four monasteries concerned, the boundaries are not actually mentioned by the

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<sup>235</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 264.

<sup>236</sup> *ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>237</sup> E. James, ‘Archaeology and Merovingian Monastery’, p. 40.

<sup>238</sup> *Vita Filiberti*, c. 8, p. 589.

<sup>239</sup> Peers and Radford, ‘Saxon Monastery of Whitby’, p. 82: they only remark that there was ‘no sign of boundary except at the North-East’.

<sup>240</sup> P. Rahtz, ‘Building Plan’, p. 460.

<sup>241</sup> R. Cramp, ‘Monastic Sites’, p. 235-36.

contemporary sources. From this point of view, it is possible to infer that this monastic feature, being so common, need not be brought up by the authors.

### **C/ The buildings: cells or communal buildings?**

Studying the buildings is important because it informs us of the sort of life the monks and nuns were leading. As we shall see later on, this is related to which rule was adopted by the monastery. Just as for the enclosure, information can be gathered through excavations and textual evidence. The simplest way of proceeding is to look at what the evidence consists of for each of the monasteries, before drawing any conclusions. The problem can be reduced to the question: cells or communal buildings? It appears indeed that the presence of individual cells on a monastic site would, at first sight, be reminiscent of Irish sites. Do we find these cells on Frankish sites? On the contrary, the presence of communal buildings would be a sign that the community was following a more continental rule, less affected by eremitical principles, and closer to the ideals of the Mixed Columbanian-Benedictine Rule.<sup>242</sup> Wearmouth and Jarrow are an evident example of this continental influence, whereas the site of Whitby would seem to represent the Irish counterpart. A similar problem rises for what concerns the material of construction.

#### Communal buildings at Wearmouth and Jarrow

At Wearmouth, apart from the church which is in part also of Anglo-Saxon date, three main buildings date back to the Anglo-Saxon period. The church and the buildings were built by Merovingian masons, thus reflecting a Frankish influence.

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<sup>242</sup> On the Mixed Rule, see below, p. 82.

Building B seems to be the most important feature revealed by the excavations at Wearmouth. It is a corridor, running from the south wall of the church to what might have been buildings in the south. It seems to have been covered by 'thin limestone slates'.<sup>243</sup> The parallel that comes to mind and helps one understand the function of such a building is the later palace of Charlemagne at Aachen, where the palace was joined to the church in such a manner. Also, 'it could have served the same function as a cloister walk: for reading, writing, and meditation'.<sup>244</sup> Bede mentions the presence of a refectory when he writes about abbot Eosterwine, who was abbot of Wearmouth: 'Eodem quo fratres ceteri cibo, semper eadem vescebatur in domo'. Similarly, and in the same passage, he mentions a dormitory: 'ipso quo priusquam abbas esset communi dormiebat in loco'.<sup>245</sup> The presence of a dormitory at Wearmouth is again mentioned in chapter 17 of Bede's *Lives of the Abbots*.<sup>246</sup> These two communal buildings have not been found by the excavations, and might be lying further to the south. It might be that the gallery (Building B) led from the church, through the cemetery, to the communal buildings. Cells are mentioned as well at Wearmouth, on three occasions, all of which are related to people dying: in chapter 8, while describing Eosterwine's death, Bede writes: 'Nam quinque relinquos usque ad exitus horam dies in secretiori se aede locabat'.<sup>247</sup> The 'in secretiori' seems to be referring to a place separated from the others, and, in the light of the other quotations, it could have been a cell. Indeed, when recounting Benedict Biscop's illness and death, he used twice the word 'cubiculum'.<sup>248</sup> Cells at Wearmouth seem to have been used for the confinement of ill people.

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<sup>243</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', p. 233.

<sup>244</sup> *ibid.*, p. 233-34.

<sup>245</sup> *Hab*, c. 8, p. 372.

<sup>246</sup> *Hab*, c. 17, p. 382.

<sup>247</sup> *Hab*, c. 8, p. 372.

<sup>248</sup> *Hab*, c. 13, p. 376; c.14, p. 378.

At Jarrow, several buildings have been identified by R. Cramp's excavations. The east room of Building A was recognised as a refectory. In the centre of the room was an octagonal stone base. R. Cramp concluded that, instead of being the base of a column that would have divided the room as was first thought, this might have been a stone lectern 'such as is found in many Middle Eastern monastic refectories'.<sup>249</sup> This possible link with the Middle East is interesting, as we will see in the next section of this dissertation.<sup>250</sup> It could be due to the relationships between Benedict Biscop and Theodore, and Coptic and oriental influences were also present in the crypt of Jouarre. Building B, subdivided into three rooms, was identified with a sort of cell that could have been used by the abbot or a senior monk, the large room being a place of assembly, while the south-eastern room would be the cell itself, with a sort of sink in the corner. As for the north-eastern room, it seems to have been a small oratory, with some sort of altar in the centre. R. Cramp compared this building with the large secular halls of the period.<sup>251</sup> During the last phase of occupation (dated by two coins of Eanred and Redwulf to the first half of the ninth century), Building D seems to have been used as a workshop for glass-making. However, in the period that interests us, 'the building can hardly have been a workshop, since the glass windows and the painted and plastered walls would have been quite unsuitable'.<sup>252</sup> In the light of Bede's statement about Lindisfarne,<sup>253</sup> R. Cramp concludes that this could have been a guest house for visiting laity.<sup>254</sup> Further down towards the river, there seem to have been small wattle huts serving as workshops, as one of them contained many pieces of glass.

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<sup>249</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', p. 236.

<sup>250</sup> See below, p. 108.

<sup>251</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', p. 239.

<sup>252</sup> *ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>253</sup> Bede, HE, iii-26, p. 190: 'Nam neque ad susceptionem potentium saeculi, vel pecunias colligi, vel domus praevideri necesse fuit...'

<sup>254</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', p. 241.

Thus, both sites seem to have had communal buildings -dormitories and refectories- either mentioned in the texts or found in the excavations. Cells were present on the two sites, as confinement rooms at Wearmouth and as workshops at Jarrow. One cell at Jarrow seems to have been used by the abbot or another person with a special status or function within the community (Bede?). Wearmouth, built by Frankish masons, seems to reflect exactly what a Continental monastery must have looked like. At Jarrow, built by the Anglo-Saxon brethren, one can see the Frankish and the Northumbrian influences mixed together. The buildings, as we shall see, were imitating the ones built by Gaulish masons, but their function (Buildings B and D) were closer to Northumbrian secular sites.

#### The problem of cells at Whitby

Evidence of both cells and communal buildings was found at Whitby, and these can still be seen on the plan of the excavations. It must be noted that, although none is mentioned for Whitby, a dormitory existed at its daughter house Hackness: 'Haec tunc in dormitorio sororum pausans'.<sup>255</sup> It can be assumed that if a dormitory existed at Hackness, than one might have been present at Whitby. There seem to have been several other communal buildings with a function for each. Through Bede, we know that there was a house for the new nuns who desired to be part of the community. There, they were instructed in the Rule and the way of life, until they were considered ready to join the group of nuns.<sup>256</sup> Also, there was a communal building for the sick and the dying: 'Erat autem in proximo casa, in qua infirmiores et qui prope morituri esse videbantur, induci solebant.'<sup>257</sup> However these buildings were not recognized in the excavations. Seven main buildings were identified in the excavated area. Building A,

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<sup>255</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-23, p. 257.

<sup>256</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-23, p. 258.

B, C, and D were thought to be cells (*domunculae*), or individual buildings, 'each occupied by a single inhabitant'.<sup>258</sup> The presence of daub was identified as partition walls that divided the huts into two sections, one for sleeping and one for living. Building E was identified as a guest house or a storehouse, probably because of the large drain running next to it, which suggested a communal building. Building F was also interpreted as a cell. Little was said on the other buildings lettered by P. Rahtz. Peers and Radford thus concluded that the buildings excavated were huts, or individual cells, the origin and function of which have puzzled historians and archaeologists.<sup>259</sup> The excavators tried to find parallels in other excavated sites, and their examples are all related to settlements of Celtic type, such as Skellig Michael, off the coast of Kerry, or Tintagel, which was still interpreted as a monastic site in 1943.<sup>260</sup> Parallels with Anglo-Saxon sites were also put forward, such as the typical example of Coldingham, for which Bede mentions cells in his *Ecclesiastical History*: 'Nam et domunculae, quae ad orandum vel legendum factae erant...'.<sup>261</sup> Similarly, Bede mentions the presence of a *cubiculum* at the monastery of Barking.<sup>262</sup> Other examples, excluding Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, may be referred to. Adomnan, in his *Life of Columba*, describes the sleeping quarters as *cubiculos*.<sup>263</sup> Archaeological finds proved as well the existence of cells: these were found on the site of Burgh Castle in East Anglia, which seemed logical as the monastery had been founded by the Irish Fursa.<sup>264</sup> It was therefore

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<sup>257</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-24, p. 261.

<sup>258</sup> Peers and Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of Whitby', p. 31.

<sup>259</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32-3.; it has now been proven that Tintagel was a secular site, see R. Cramp, *Monastic Sites*, p. 209; and C. Thomas, 'East and West: Tintagel, Mediterranean Imports and the Early Insular Church', *The Early Church in western Britain and Ireland, Studies presented to C.A. Raleigh Radford*, B.A.R. British Series 102 (1982), p. 18.

<sup>261</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-25, p. 265.

<sup>262</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-9, p. 222.

<sup>263</sup> A. and M. Anderson, *Adomnan's Life of Columba* (London, 1961), III-19, p. 504.

<sup>264</sup> R. Cramp, 'Anglo-Saxon Monasteries of the North', *Scottish Archaeological Forum* 5 (1973), p. 104.

possible to interpret buildings A, B, C, F and perhaps K, L and M as cells used by the nuns as living quarters.

Therefore, what convinced the excavators and archaeologists after them that these cells, which were then considered as living quarters, came directly from Ireland was the lack of these cells in Wearmouth and Jarrow, sites highly influenced by Merovingian Gaul and Rome. As a consequence, Whitby was seen as a typically Irish site, whereas Wearmouth and Jarrow were the type of Continental influence.

### Evidence of cells on the Continent

One can find evidence of the presence of cells on Continental sites. These cells were usually present along with communal buildings. No information can be drawn for the monastery of Jouarre, either from the excavations or from the texts. But it is possible to gather some evidence from the texts related to Chelles, and these help to explain the situation in Northumbria. Some of the communal buildings are mentioned in the written sources, and they correspond to the ones encountered in Northumbria, dormitories and refectories. For example, we know that there was a refectory at Luxeuil.<sup>265</sup> The study of the monastery of Luxeuil can be important to us as monks from Luxeuil helped build up all these new houses. As well, we learn that there was a dormitory at Faremoutiers.<sup>266</sup> As for cells, Bede himself describes individual ones at Faremoutiers, when Eorcangota tours around the monastery and visits 'in monasterio casulas infirmarum Christi famularum, earumque vel maxime, quae vel aetate propectae, vel probitate erant morum insigniores.'<sup>267</sup> The word *cubiculum* is also present in Balthildis's Life: 'Statimque divinus splendor in ipso cubiculo clarissime

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<sup>265</sup>*Vita Columbani*, I-15 and 16, pp. 81-82.

<sup>266</sup> *ibid.*, II-19, p. 138.

<sup>267</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-8, p. 143.

coruscavit'.<sup>268</sup> It is because Balthildis was ill that she was in a cell. From the description of her behaviour in the monastery (she obeys the abbess, gives up her jewellery, and lives a simple nun's life) it is doubtful that Balthildis received a special treatment because of her status of Queen, unless she was ill. For Chelles, it is also said: 'Quod coenobium pariter communi consilio tam in edifiis et officinis quam et sanctitatis exemplo mirifice exornaverunt in quo quasi super candelabrum duae optimae lucernae positae ad edificationem multorum clarissime refulgebant.'<sup>269</sup> The expression 'in edifiis et officinis' is important, if one understands the meaning of *officinis*. In classical Latin, this word meant workshops, but it appears that in medieval times it was used to designate a little cell to pray.<sup>270</sup> In any case, it looks as if the text mentions here the existence of cells, that were used daily either as workshops or as praying places. From the texts directly concerning Chelles, we can only guess that the monastery had individual cells, apparently used for the sick and old. Therefore, Columbanian foundations seem to have had cells for daily uses next to communal buildings such as refectories and dormitories.

### Function of cells

The function of these cells seems to have been the same in the Columbanian monasteries and at Whitby and Wearmouth/Jarrow. These cells were not used as living quarters. If we go back to the examples of Coldingham and Barking, it is evident that the texts have not always been read properly. For Coldingham, Bede writes that these cells were built for the purpose of reading and praying, but he never mentions anything about the cells being sleeping quarters. As for Barking, the nun who is in the cell is ill but she sees the body of her abbess being lifted up out of 'domo in qua sorores pausare

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<sup>268</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, c. 13, p. 741.

<sup>269</sup> *Vita Bertilae*, c. 7, p. 107

solebant'.<sup>271</sup> This passage distinguishes the cell in which an ill sister might stay, and the usual dormitory where even the abbess seems to have slept. We have the same use of cells for ill people at Wearmouth. We have here an evident parallel with the function of cells in Frankish monasteries. The excavated cells at Whitby were not isolated but part of an organised layout, and they seemed to have had a specific aim. It must be noted that these cells must have been, if we are right in thinking that there was an enclosure, at the periphery of the monastery. Therefore the communal building found among them (Building E) could be the one in which future nuns were received and trained. Both at Hartlepool and at Whitby, these structures were 'backing against and eventually spreading beyond the *valla*'.<sup>272</sup> Other finds imply that book production could have taken place in these cells. The first Life of Gregory the Great was written at Whitby, implying therefore the presence of material for book writing, and proven by the presence of styli and of fragments of book covers, such as mountings of metal and three plaques.<sup>273</sup> It seems therefore that each cell could have had a specific function. These finds reflect specific feminine and religious activities. Thus, we have the picture of an organised monastery, with several communal buildings for the sleeping and eating quarters, and numerous little cells consecrated to the daily works of weaving, book-production, maybe cooking. In the continental manner, the cells might have been used for praying and reading, but there is no evidence for them being used for the ill, as they

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<sup>270</sup>P.G.W. Clarke, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1982), p. 1243.

<sup>271</sup>Bede, *HE*, IV-9, p. 222.

<sup>272</sup>J. Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters', p. 261. These structures might be regarded as an influence from the secular sites as we have analysed them in Annexe 1. Indeed, the small cells might be compared with the *Grubenhäuser*, although the function is not to be paralleled. The *Grubenhäuser* were also situated at the periphery of the main unit of the settlements, and we might have here an interesting parallel, which would once again prove the close relationship between secular and monastic settlements. The finds in Whitby and in Hartlepool come to confirm that the buildings could have previously been secular. Indeed, some finds from Whitby are related to weaving, and we have seen that the *Grubenhäuser* at Sprouston and at Yeavinger were places where weaving had most probably taken place. The parallel is too obvious to be ignored. See P. Rahtz, 'Building and Rural Settlement', *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. D.M. Wilson (London, 1976), pp. 70-81 on these buildings.

<sup>273</sup>Peers and Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of Whitby', on styli, pp. 64-5; on book covers, pp. 50-2.

were at Wearmouth. It must be remembered that only the north side of the church has been excavated at Whitby. To the south of the actual church are the remains of the monastic buildings of the medieval period. It is therefore likely that this is where the communal buildings were in Anglo-Saxon *Streonaeshalh*, just like at Wearmouth and Jarrow.

To conclude on this problem of the existence of cells, it must be stressed that these are found on every site, either archaeologically or in the texts. In the four monasteries, they were used either for the ill, for praying or reading, or as workshops. But on no occasion were they used as living quarters, unlike on Irish sites. It is difficult to establish whether this could have been a Frankish influence on the Northumbrian monasteries. But it is interesting to note that Northumbrian and Frankish monasteries had the same organisation in their layout, of communal buildings mixed with cells on the monastic site.

#### **D/ Material of construction: wood or stone?**

##### Wood and stone: two traditions

The issue of this problem is the same as the previous one. Wood represented the Irish customs in Northumbria, as the cells had, at least at first sight. This distinction between wood and stone, epitomizing two different monastic cultures, is present in the texts and in the archaeology. Irish sites were usually built in wood, as was done at Iona.<sup>274</sup> The fact that timber buildings were an Irish, or at least Ionan tradition, is supported by what Bede reports on the church of Lindisfarne: 'Qui [Finan] in insula Lindisfamensi fecit ecclesiam episcopali sedi congruam; quam tamen more Scottorum

non de lapide, sed de robore secto totam composuit, atque harundine textit'.<sup>275</sup> Timber buildings were therefore an Irish characteristic, but they were also a typical feature of secular buildings. 'Almost all the domestic buildings of the Anglo-Saxons were built of wood.'<sup>276</sup> The secular sites, where no stone building was present, prove this.<sup>277</sup> Two types of timber buildings seem to have existed: small dug-out houses (like the *Grubenhäuser*) and rectangular post-holes-built houses.<sup>278</sup> These features are present on excavated monastic sites such as Hartlepool, or Whithorn.<sup>279</sup> This once again emphasises the role of the secular influence on the monastic architecture and buildings.

The influence of secular buildings in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria can be paralleled with the importance of the Roman *villae* in Merovingian Gaul. Foundations on the other side of the Channel used as well their knowledge of secular architecture. Indeed, the first characteristic that one can observe concerning the Columbanian foundations is that whenever possible, an old site was used to build the monastery. A number of the new monasteries were thus founded on old Roman sites. This, of course, was for practical reasons, as the existence of previous buildings saved the monks from the effort of building anew. As E. James points out, this use of previous, mostly Roman, buildings 'makes it impossible to trace a clear line of development in the monastic layout in Gaul'.<sup>280</sup> This explains why the layouts of most seventh-century monasteries are difficult to interpret, and certainly not easy to generalize, but also why the use of stone was natural. Several extracts from Merovingian Lives can show this, for example: 'multas villas integras concessit', when Balthildis's hagiographer describes

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<sup>274</sup> J. Barber, 'Excavations on Iona, 1979', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 11 (Edinburgh, 1981), p. 365: 'Analysis of the scale of surviving structural timbers suggests the possibility that sill-beams with wattle, and presumably daub, were the main element of local structures'.

<sup>275</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-25, p.181.

<sup>276</sup> *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900*, ed. L. Webster and J. Backhouse (London, 1992), p. 67. See also P. Hunter-Blair, *World of Bede*, pp. 165-66.

<sup>277</sup> See Appendix I on the sites of Sprouston, Thirling, and Milfield, p. 124.

<sup>278</sup> *The Making of England*, p. 67.

<sup>279</sup> P. Hill, *Excavations at Bruce St, Whithorn, 1984 Interim Report*, p. 18.

the donations of the queen to the newly founded monasteries.<sup>281</sup> As well, when it is spoken of the foundation of Corbie, in the *Vita Balthildis*, the Carolingian author mentions the presence of *villae* on the site.<sup>282</sup> There are, therefore, plenty of examples of Roman *villae* turned into monasteries. It has been argued that the whole later Benedictine layout, centred around a cloister, derived from the traditional plan of the Roman *villa*.<sup>283</sup> The *villa*-turned-monastery, as E. James calls it, can only be found in Gaul, and thus this phenomenon is absent from the British islands. Therefore, stone buildings in Northumbria were a sign of Continental influence.

### Wearmouth/Jarrow

Bede himself, when describing the building of Wearmouth and Jarrow specified *iuxta Romanorum...morem*, thereby making the distinction with sites such as Lindisfarne. At Wearmouth, the buildings were erected by Gaulish masons: 'Nec plusquam unius anni spatio post fundatum monasterium interiecto, Benedictus oceano transmisso Gallias petens, cementarios qui lapideam sibi aecclisiam iuxta Romanorum quem semper amabat morem facerent, postulavit, accepit, adtulit'.<sup>284</sup> The Life of Ceolfrith adds that 'Benedictus mare transiens architectos a Torthelmo abbate, dudum sibi in amicitiiis iuncto, quorum magisterio et opere basilicam de lapide faceret, petiit, acceptosque de Gallia Britanniam perduxit'.<sup>285</sup> Unfortunately, the identity of the Abbot Torthelm, which is clearly an Anglo-Saxon name, is unknown.<sup>286</sup> There does not seem to be any known English abbot of any famous Merovingian monasteries. It would be

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<sup>280</sup> E. James, 'Archaeology and Merovingian Monastery', p. 34.

<sup>281</sup> *Vita Balthildis*, c. 8, p. 492.

<sup>282</sup> *ibid.*, c. 7, p. 491.

<sup>283</sup> E. James, 'Archaeology and Merovingian Monastery', p. 47: 'The fact that such a plan, when it was devised under the Carolingians, was arguably based on the commoner villa plans, is perhaps an indication that the villa-turned-monastery was a familiar feature in Merovingian Gaul.'

<sup>284</sup> *Hab*, c. 5, p. 368.

<sup>285</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, c. 7, p. 390.

useful to know the location of such a monastery, and to know its layout, which might have had some influence on the construction of Wearmouth. Benedict Biscop might have met abbot Torhthelm in his travels, which would imply that the monastery could be anywhere on the route Benedict used to go to Rome. It is unfortunate that we do not know the way he used to arrive in Lyons: could he have followed the Seine or the Loire before actually walking to join the Rhône? When St Columbanus was forced to go back to Ireland, he boarded the boat at Nantes.<sup>287</sup> Benedict Biscop might have used the same route, i.e. via the Loire. In any case, 'it is a matter of some note that a man with an English name should have been abbot of a monastery in Gaul at this date'.<sup>288</sup> It shows once again the direct impact of Gaulish influence on the monastery of Wearmouth. Building B's walls were constructed of limestone, over which a creamy mortar was poured, and 'debris from this building indicates that it was roofed with thin limestone slates and had lead flashing, and from the notable concentration of window glass alongside its walls its windows were glazed.'<sup>289</sup> Similarly, at Jarrow, both rooms in Building A and one of the rooms in Building B were floored with *opus signinum* in the Roman style. At both sites, windows had been glazed, by glaziers from Frankish Gaul, and most of the walls had been internally covered with a creamy plaster, which was still *in situ* in some places. Moreover, the west front of the Anglo-Saxon church at Wearmouth is still up and the method of construction, which is 'of roughly shaped rubble with a bright yellow mortar set lavishly over it, as well as the pink facing mortar of the internal wall-faces' is highly reminiscent of Merovingian churches of the seventh

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<sup>286</sup> W.G. Searle, *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum - A List of Anglo-Saxon Proper Names from the Time of Bede to that of King John* (Cambridge, 1897), p. 58.

<sup>287</sup> *Vita Columbani*, I-23, p. 97.

<sup>288</sup> P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, p. 166.

<sup>289</sup> *ibid.*, p. 233.

century.<sup>290</sup> Thus, what comes out of these excavations is that they demonstrate that the monks lived in 'large regularly built buildings, plastered inside and out, the inside walls being painted, the floors made up of an imitation of *opus signinum*, and the windows filled with clear and coloured glass'.<sup>291</sup> And this at both sites of Wearmouth and Jarrow. For E. Fletcher, this can be considered as 'a revolution in British methods of church and monastic architecture', brought about by the Frankish masons recruited by Benedict Biscop.<sup>292</sup> Wearmouth especially, entirely built by Gaulish masons and glaziers, strikes as being exceptional in seventh-century Northumbria. As E. James pointed out, concerning the lack of archaeological evidence in France, and referring to Wearmouth/Jarrow: 'ironically the only abbot's house and communal buildings of continental type (for men came from Gaul to build them) that we have excavated are in Northumbria'.<sup>293</sup> Wearmouth, and Jarrow to a lesser extent, appears to be the prototype of a seventh-century Merovingian monastery. Abbot Torhthelm probably came from one of the Columbanian monasteries.<sup>294</sup> It is thus possible that Wearmouth might resemble one of the monasteries of the Brie region in the seventh century. ✓

### Whitby

At Whitby, one can see the influence of Continental manners. As we have seen, the stones are difficult to interpret, and so are the remains of wattle and daub in the buildings, at least at first sight. The daub was burned. It was assumed by the excavators that the superstructure was set lime mortar, but none was actually found.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monkwearmouth and Jarrow: the Archaeological Evidence', p. 11. Yellow mortar was found as well at the church of Deux-Jumeaux, a site of interest for our dissertation as will be seen further below, p. 105. See L. Musset, 'Deux-Jumeaux, Résultat des fouilles sur le site de l'ancien prieuré (1958-1961)', *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie* 56 (1961-62), p. 481.

<sup>291</sup> J. Campbell, 'First Century', p. 52.

<sup>292</sup> E. Fletcher, 'Influence of Merovingian Gaul', p. 84.

<sup>293</sup> E. James, 'Archaeology and Merovingian Monastery', p. 46.

<sup>294</sup> P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 149.

<sup>295</sup> P. Rahtz, 'Building Plan', p. 461.

P. Rahtz put forward the suggestion that the wattle and daub came from an earlier phase of the monastery.<sup>296</sup> This hypothesis was confirmed by the excavations at Hartlepool in 1984-5. The excavations indeed 'revealed two periods of Anglo-Saxon occupation, defined by a change from earthfast to free standing structures'.<sup>297</sup> There were at least two phases of wooden construction before wood was abandoned in favour of stone.<sup>298</sup> The evidence from Hartlepool can surely be applied to Whitby as the two monasteries were closely related. It is possible that the change to stone footings might reflect a change from Irish to Continental customs. But there are two possible explanations for the earlier timber buildings. Either they represent an early and Irish phase of the monastery, or they represent an earlier secular settlement. The first hypothesis is possible, but between the foundation of the monastery (657) and the growing influence of Frankish monasticism marked by the synod of Whitby (664), there is little time for the construction and reconstruction of the monastery, twenty or thirty years at most, if we take into consideration that all Irish influence did not disappear at once. Moreover we have already established that Hilda was very much influenced by the Frankish monastery, essentially of Chelles. Why would she have chosen wood in this case? Therefore, the second option seems likely. Bede does not specify whether the site of Whitby was occupied or not: 'Quae post biennium comparata possessione X familiarum in loco, qui dicitur Streanaeshalch, ibi monasterium construxit'.<sup>299</sup> But it could be inferred that the place might have been a secular settlement transformed by Hilda into a monastic community. This would explain the presence of timber buildings, as we have seen earlier that secular buildings in Northumbria were generally made of wood.

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<sup>296</sup> op. cit., p. 461.

<sup>297</sup> R. Daniels, 'The Anglo-Saxon Monastery at Church Close, Hartlepool', *Archaeological Journal* 145 (1989), p., 158.

<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 160-81.

Whitby seems to epitomize the arrival of Frankish influence in Northumbria. It seems that if the buildings at Whitby were constructed in stone, it was a direct consequence of a Frankish influence on the founder Hilda. Had it not been the case, Hilda, who had been one of Aidan's followers, would have imitated her mentor and constructed her monastery with timber buildings, thereby imitating Aidan at Lindisfarne. More than the cells, the material of construction of the monastery defines its main influence, and the rising Frankish ascendancy in Northumbria. This latter is mainly represented by the buildings of Wearmouth, and of Jarrow to a lesser extent. Wearmouth, as we have said, must have closely resembled a Frankish monastery, and Jarrow would have represented the Frankish influence as it was interpreted and adapted by Northumbrian craftsmen. It therefore seems that for what concerns the physical aspects of the Northumbrian monasteries, they were first influenced by the Northern Gaulish monasteries, as can be seen both from the texts and from the archaeological finds. It is a shame that so little information, as well both textual and archaeological, can be gathered for the Frankish monasteries. If Jouarre is archaeologically known it is thanks to its crypt, but nothing else is known about the monastery itself. The same conclusion can be reached for Chelles. It is thus impossible to make a direct parallel between the four monasteries on archaeological grounds, but relying on the texts can bring some conclusions on the type of buildings which could be found on Frankish sites. From there, some conclusions can be reached, as we have just done. Although nothing can relate the four monasteries together, it is possible to say that Frankish monasteries in general had a great impact on the construction of Whitby, Wearmouth and Jarrow.

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<sup>299</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-24, p. 179.

### III- THE LIFE OF THE MONASTERY

After studying how the monasteries were founded, and how they were physically organised, one must see how these monasteries functioned in their daily life, to try to perceive any parallel in their activities.

#### A/ The Rule of life

##### The Mixed Rule in Frankish Gaul<sup>300</sup>

In the sixth century, the monasteries did not follow any defined rule of life. Each founder made up his own rule, according to what he believed and to the physical organisation of his monastery. Some rules were more famous than others and consequently adopted by other communities. One of these was the rule compiled by Caesarius of Arles, born c. 485. A monk at Lérins, he composed a rule which was adopted by Queen Radegundis when she and members of her family founded a nunnery at Poitiers.<sup>301</sup> However, the influence of Caesarius's rule remained confined to the south of Gaul. In the seventh century, the custom of each founder composing his own rule continued, and we see therefore Columbanus writing a rule for his monks at Luxeuil, Isidore doing the same at Seville, and Benedict Biscop at Wearmouth and Jarrow. However, these rules were very much influenced by two main new currents in the seventh century. Since Columbanus's influence resulted in the foundation of monasteries in Northern Gaul, it was to be expected that these monasteries would follow Columbanus's rule. Two main rules were written by the saint for his monks, and they

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<sup>300</sup> See F. Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich* (Vienna, 1965), and particularly the maps depicting the monasteries and their rules of life in the seventh century; and P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', pp. 142-143. ✓

<sup>301</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, IX-40, p. 530.

stressed the importance of obedience towards the abbot, as in any Irish monastery. 'With obedience he demands poverty and charity, silence and abstinence'.<sup>302</sup> However, at the same time, another new rule was influencing these Columbanian monasteries, and this was the Benedictine Rule. Benedict of Nursia, thus called to distinguish him from Benedict of Aniane in the ninth century, founded his monastery at Monte Cassino around 520, after having spent some years as a hermit in Subiaco. It is in Monte Cassino that he wrote his Rule of Life, the 'Rule *par excellence* of European monasticism in the Middle Ages'.<sup>303</sup> However, the Benedictine Rule was not widespread during the sixth century. The seventh century marks the start of the use of the Rule in monasteries, but never as the sole rule used. It has been the custom to oppose these two Rules of life, viewing Columbanus's as a stern approach of monasticism, and Benedict's as moderate and more appropriate for the monks' daily life. In fact, it appears that Benedict's Rule was promulgated by the Columbanian monasteries, and first of them, by Luxeuil.<sup>304</sup> This resulted in the expansion of what was known as the Mixed Rule. This Rule could still vary according to the founder of the monastery, but the two most important components were those of Columbanus and Benedict, mixed together to create a balanced rule. This is what Bishop Donatus did when he devised a rule for his mother and her nuns at Besançon in the 630's. His Rule consisted of a mixture of the Rules of Columbanus, Benedict and Caesarius.<sup>305</sup> 'The legislation of Columbanus was moral and penal in flavour, admirable as a guide to ascetics, whereas that of Benedict was a way of life, beautifully orchestrated to the

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<sup>302</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 64.

<sup>303</sup> P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, p. 125. For a detailed analysis of the Rule of St Benedict, see A. de Vogüé, *La règle de Saint Benoît* (Paris, 1972).

<sup>304</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, pp. 69-70; P. Riché, 'Columbanus, his followers and the Merovingian Church', *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, ed. H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan, B.A.R. International Series 113 (Oxford, 1981), p. 66.

<sup>305</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, p. 70.

needs of a community. They blended well.<sup>306</sup> Rebais is one of the Columbanian monasteries to have had for sure this Mixed Rule: the 637 privilege granted by Burgondofaro refers to the 'regula beati Benedicti vel Columbani', and further on, 'ad modum Luxoviensis monasterii'.<sup>307</sup> Similarly, the foundation charter and episcopal privilege granted to Corbie specifies that the monastery was to live under the mixed Benedictine and Columbanian Rules.<sup>308</sup> As we have seen, the monasteries of Corbie and Rebais were closely connected to Chelles and Jouarre, Corbie being the second foundation of Balthildis with Chelles, and Rebais being founded by Audoenus, brother of Ado founder of Jouarre. Chelles and Jouarre were themselves close, as the nuns from Chelles came originally from Jouarre. Under these circumstances, it appears obvious to conclude that both monasteries of Chelles and Jouarre followed the Mixed Rule as well. For Jouarre, Jonas, biographer of Columbanus, specifies that the monastery lived under 'regula sancti Columbani'.<sup>309</sup> The same is implied for the monastery of Faremoutiers.<sup>310</sup> The nuns of this monastery had been educated by the monks of Luxeuil, which appeared to live under the Mixed Rule, as we have seen. Thus Faremoutiers and Jouarre must have followed the Mixed Rule. Jonas's purpose was to glorify the life of Columbanus, and therefore it could well have been that the monasteries followed the Mixed Rule, but that Jonas decided to leave the Benedictine part out of his narrative. In the *Life of Bertilla*, first abbess of Chelles, it is written: 'in quo coenobio sub norma sanctae regulae ita admirabilem atque laudabilem habuit conversationem', which does not help us define if this 'sancta regula' was the Mixed Rule, but which implies that one rule was

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<sup>306</sup> op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>307</sup> A. Dierkens, 'Prolégomènes', p. 380.

<sup>308</sup> D. Ganz, 'The Merovingian Library of Corbie', *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism*, ed. H.B. Clarke and M. Brennan, B.A.R. International Series 113 (Oxford, 1981), p. 154; J. Guérout, 'Origines', p. 42.

<sup>309</sup> *Vita Columbani*, I-26, p. 100.

<sup>310</sup> *ibid.*, II-11, p. 130.

known throughout the Merovingian monasteries.<sup>311</sup> The 'sancta regula' might well designate the rule followed by the majority of the other Columbanian monasteries, i.e. the Mixed Rule. It is therefore possible to say that the Columbanian monasteries followed, in the seventh century, a Mixed Rule composed mainly of the two rules of St Columbanus and St Benedict. This phenomenon was typical of the Frankish church and in no way related to Rome. Benedict was Italian, but it is in the Northern Gaulish monasteries that his Rule was developed and supplanted the Columbanian rule later on.

### The Benedictine Rule in Northumbria

In Anglo-Saxon England, the custom, throughout the seventh century, was the same as in Frankish Gaul, i.e., that each founder made up his own rule according to the needs of his monastery and to his convictions. When she became abbess of Hartlepool, Hilda established a rule 'prout a doctis viris discere poterat'.<sup>312</sup> Among these men advising Hilda, Bede cites Aidan. At Whitby, she established the same rule as at Hartlepool. Nothing more is said of this rule by Bede, but the fact that Aidan counselled her leads to think that it must have contained many Irish traits. Bede stresses that equality in all things was one of the components of the rule: 'nullus esset egens, omnibus essent omnia communia'.<sup>313</sup> The information given by Bede does not allow us to know anything else on the rule followed at Whitby. We do not know what had been the major influences on Hilda when she composed it.

Similarly, Benedict Biscop composed his own rule for his twin monastery. It is said in the History of the Abbots that Benedict Biscop composed this rule out of the seventeen monasteries he had visited during his stay on the Continent: 'Ex decem quippe et septem monasteriis quae inter longos meae crebre peregrinationis discursus

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<sup>311</sup> *Vita Bertilae*, c. 2, p. 102.

<sup>312</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-21 (23), p. 253.

optima comperi, haec universa didici, et vobis salubriter observanda contradidi'.<sup>314</sup> This is a direct evidence that Benedict composed his own rule, extracting from the seventeen monasteries he visited the best of each, and applying it to his monastery. In this, he is comparable to St Filibertus in Gaul, founder of the monastery of Jumièges, who did exactly the same:<sup>315</sup> Filibertus 'quia perfecti viri semper perfectoria sectantur, coepit sacerdos Domini sanctorum caenobia circuire, ut aliquod emulumentum ex successione sanctitatis valeret accipere. Lustrans Luxovium et Bobium vel reliqua cenobia sub norma sancti Columbani degentia atque omnia monasteria, quas intra suo gremio Francia et Italia hac tota claudit Burgundia ... Basilii sancti charismata, Macharii regula, Benedicti decreta, Columbani instituta sanctissima lectione frequentabat assidua, sicque honestus virtute aromatum sequacibus sanctum monstrabat exemplum'.<sup>316</sup> Biscop did much the same, and many monasteries in Gaul might have influenced him. Among these monasteries, Lérins must have had some strong influence, as Biscop spent two years of his life there.

It was often assumed that the rule followed at Wearmouth and Jarrow was the Benedictine Rule.<sup>317</sup> The work of Bede shows that St Benedict's legislation was known at Wearmouth-Jarrow. In his *Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah*, which Bede wrote between 725 and 731, he makes a reference to it.<sup>318</sup> However, there is evidence that the Rule was known earlier than in Bede's time, and that it was known to Benedict Biscop. Biscop himself mentions the Rule in Bede's account, when he talks about the succession of abbots: 'Sed, iuxta quod regula magni quondam abbatis Benedicti...'.<sup>319</sup> Benedict Biscop's rule took from the Rule of St Benedict the regulations on the election of the

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<sup>313</sup> op. cit., IV-21(23), p. 254.

<sup>314</sup> *Hab*, c. 11, p. 374-5.

<sup>315</sup> see P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 143.

<sup>316</sup> *Vita Filiberti*, c. 5, p. 587.

<sup>317</sup> see P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, p. 197.

<sup>318</sup> see *ibid.*, p. 199.

abbot: he insists that the brethren must choose someone who is worthy of the position, and not someone coming from Benedict's family. Similarly, and on the same topic, Ceolfrith refers to the Rule of St Benedict ('iuxtaque regulam sancti abbatis Benedictis') when, in 716, he takes the decision to go to Rome and to obtain that another abbot might be elected.<sup>320</sup> Therefore, the Rule of St Benedict was partly followed at Wearmouth-Jarrow, at least for what concerned the election of abbots. However, this does not mean that the whole Rule was observed at the monastery. Benedict Biscop was like the other seventeenth-century founders in that he composed his own regulations. The other indication that St Benedict's Rule might have influenced Biscop's monasteries is a passage in Bede's Lives of the Abbots, in which he describes how Abbot Eosterwine participated with the monks in the manual labours as part of their daily monastic activities:

'ut ventilare cum eis et triturare, oves vitulasque mulgere, in pistrino, in orto, in coquina, in cunctis monasterii operibus iocundus et obediens gauderet exerci.'

'Saepe pro curandis monasterii negotiis alicubi digrediens, ubi operantes invenit fratres, solebat eis confestim in opere coniungi; vel aratri gressum stiba regendo, vel ferrum malleo domando, vel ventilabrum manu concutiendo, vel aliud quid tale gerendo.'<sup>321</sup>

We see therefore that the monks had to perform manual labours much like the ones which were compulsory in St Benedict's Rule of life.<sup>322</sup> Bede mentions cooking, every chore corresponding to farming (milking the cows, winnowing, and threshing, plowing the fields...). He also mentions hammering iron, which implies that the monastery had its own smithy.

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<sup>319</sup> *Hab*, c. 11, p. 375.

<sup>320</sup> *Hab*, ch. 16, p. 381

<sup>321</sup> *Hab*, c. 8, p. 371-72.

<sup>322</sup> A. de Vogüé, *La règle du maître*, 2 vol. (Paris, 1964), vol. 2, p. 224: 'ergo debet esset est post officia Dei et opera corporalis, hoc est manuum'.

It is interesting to find hints of the Rule of St Benedict at Wearmouth/Jarrow when, on the Continent, most of the Columbanian monasteries still lived by the Mixed Rule, and where the Benedictine Rule was hardly ever mentioned without its counterpart, the Columbanian Rule. Yet, this latter is never cited or referred to in the texts related to the Northumbrian monasteries. For instance, Wilfrid also lived by the Rule of St Benedict according to his biographer: 'cum regula sancti Benedicti instituta ecclesiarum Dei bene meliorabat'.<sup>323</sup> Stephanus claimed that Wilfrid had introduced the Rule in England, which seems logical, since Wilfrid came back to Northumbria earlier than Benedict Biscop. It is a strange coincidence to find that the two men who travelled to Rome through Gaul only mention the Benedictine Rule and not the Columbanian, when we have seen that they had been in these monasteries. We find also that the oldest surviving manuscript of the Rule of St Benedict, Oxford MS Hatton 48, is believed to have been written c. 700 in the Midlands, which could thus associate it with Wilfrid's wanderings during his exile from Northumbria.<sup>324</sup> It has been convincingly argued that the Rule of St Benedict was based on a previous Rule, composed by an anonymous author, called *Regula Magistri*, and which was composed around 500-520. Several theories have been put forward of which the most convincing one, supported by F. Masai among others, establishes that this Rule of the Master was written in Southern France, in a centre such as Lérins.<sup>325</sup> This Rule was the base for St Benedict's own Rule, composed a few years later. The *Regula Magistri* was then forgotten, replaced by the clearer and better written Rule of St Benedict. To summarise, we have, in the seventh century, a Mixed Rule -mainly composed of the Rules of St Benedict and Columbanus- in the Columbanian monasteries of Northern Gaul. At the same date,

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<sup>323</sup> *Life of Wilfrid*, c. 14, p. 31.

<sup>324</sup> P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>325</sup> A. de Vogüé, *La règle du maître*, vol. 1, pp. 231-32; D. Knowles, 'The *Regula Magistri* and the Rule of St Benedict', *Great Historical Enterprises* (London, 1963), pp. 171-72.

appears in Northumbria evidence that the sole Rule of St Benedict was known by two persons who had travelled to Southern France and through the whole of Gaul: Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid. It must be remembered that Wilfrid stayed in Lyons for a year, and that Benedict Biscop was tonsured at Lérins at the time when this monastery came under the government of Abbot Aigulf who came himself from Fleury (later St-Benoît-sur-Loire).<sup>326</sup> Lastly, we find the oldest manuscript of the Rule of St Benedict written in England in the seventh century and related to Wilfrid.

This leads to the conclusion that both Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid brought back the Rule of St Benedict from Southern Gaul. Had they been influenced by the Columbanian monasteries, one would find the name of Columbanus linked to that of Benedict. But this is not the case and it must be concluded that both the Columbanian and the Northumbrian monasteries discovered the Rule of St Benedict at approximately the same time (with a difference of a generation), without there being any influence on one side or the other. The difference lies in the fact that, in Gaul, a Rule drawn up by Columbanus already existed. For some reason or other (the harshness of Columbanus's Rule is generally put forward), this Rule was mixed with that of St Benedict in the Columbanian circles. This did not occur in Northumbria. However, one must remember that Benedict Biscop visited 17 monasteries, some of which must have been ones in the Brie region. Thus, he could have taken some parts of their rules -the Mixed Rule in this case- to include in his own rule. But the Benedictine Rule -or at least some aspects of it-, he got from Lérins.

Thus we do not have here an influence of the Columbanian over the Northumbrian monasteries, but a parallel evolution which occurred at the same period of time.

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<sup>326</sup> E. Fletcher, *Benedict Biscop*, Jarrow Lecture 1981, pp. 5-6: the arrival of Aigulf at Lérins in the 660s transformed the monastery's way of life from heremitic to coenobitic. It is highly likely that, from

## **B/ The organisation of double monasteries**

As we have seen, double houses were an important feature of Merovingian monasticism, transmitted to Northumbria in the course of the seventh century. These monasteries, containing both nuns and monks had invariably, as far as the sources show us, an abbess at their head.

### Purpose of these monasteries

In Frankish Gaul, the double house was the feminine answer to the influence of St Columbanus. It permitted high-born women to participate in the series of monastic foundations and to assume moreover a high position, as abbesses. It provided women of the aristocracy, and particularly the numerous widows, with something to rule. It therefore came into existence because of the 'economic and spiritual needs of nuns'.<sup>327</sup> The cloister was one of the only alternatives to marriage, and it provided royal princesses a rank as high as in marriage and a governing position which they would never have had otherwise. However, their main motivation was definitively religious. Some women preferred to leave their husbands in order to enter the religious life. This was the case of Aethelthryth, wife of Ecgfrith of Northumbria, who consequently founded the double house of Ely.<sup>328</sup> These double houses could become important centres of learning, and the abbesses were often successful in increasing the reputation of their monastery. At Whitby, the first Life of Gregory was composed, and under the abbess Hilda, five future bishops were educated.<sup>329</sup> The most important of the Anglo-Saxon synods of the seventh century took place at Whitby. Similarly, Chelles seems to

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Fleury, Aigulf brought the Rule of St Benedict to Lérins.

<sup>327</sup> D.B. Schneider, *Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life*, p. 31.

<sup>328</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-17 (21), pp. 243-246.

<sup>329</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-21 (23), p. 254.

have been an important double monastery, with its abbess Bertilla sending books, monks and nuns to Saxon kings at their request.<sup>330</sup> We have often observed the similarity between the two double houses of Whitby and Chelles, and their cultural importance and success is certainly a major element of this similarity. Thus double houses were often successful and took an important part in the spiritual and cultural lives of the kingdoms. For D.B. Schneider, the rise of the double houses 'lies in the Germanic past'.<sup>331</sup> For her, the importance of the abbess can be paralleled with the importance of the royal aristocratic women in the Germanic societies, where women were in charge of the family's memorial cult. The author draws a parallel between this aspect of the Germanic society and the memorial cult of the royal family that took place at Whitby or at Chelles. This would explain the fall of the double houses in the ninth century, apart from the fact that they were destroyed by Viking invasions. These houses, in the ninth century, did not correspond any more to a Christian society. Thus these double houses gave the same opportunities to women issued from royal or aristocratic backgrounds, as their function in a Germanic society would have. This would explain why the double monastery, coming from Frankish Gaul, had no difficulty in being accepted and adopted in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and it is not found elsewhere than in these two Germanic societies.

#### Function of the male element

However, the main problem of these double houses has been to determine the function of the monks. No answer can be gathered from the texts concerning Whitby or Jouarre, but some answers can be found in the ones related to Chelles. This question has indeed troubled a lot of historians, who were wondering what was the role of the

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<sup>330</sup> *Vita Bertillae*, c. 6, p. 106.

<sup>331</sup> D.B. Schneider, *Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life*, p. 36.

men in the double monasteries. The original position, as supported by Stephanus Hilpisch or John Godfrey, showed that men were used for manual and hard labour, but also for the purpose of pastoral care, that is for preaching, and for giving the sacraments.

<sup>332</sup> This position was strongly disputed by D. B. Schneider in her thesis. She argued that women could perform the tasks confined to men, and that 'even if we were to accept that these double monasteries existed because the nuns needed the help of men, then we would still have to explain why these men -working men and priests- had to be monks'.<sup>333</sup> In the Life of Bertilla, several functions of the 'male element'<sup>334</sup> can be deduced. In chapter 6, the hagiographer writes: 'Cotidie pro salvatione animarum fidelium et recto statu sanctae Dei ecclesiae Deo hostias sacras suos iubebat offerere sacerdotēs'.<sup>335</sup> This passage of the Life is interesting because it tells us that the two daily masses were performed by priests, and the use of the possessive pronoun ('suos...sacerdotēs') proves that these priests were under the control and power of the abbess. Indeed, the author uses the verb 'iubebat', which means that this was an order from the abbess herself. Priests therefore had the same status, in relation to the abbess, as simple nuns and monks. Thus, one of the functions of the men in the monastery seems to have been the celebration of mass. Another extract shows how the brothers took part in the decisions of the abbess. When this latter received a petition from the Saxon kings, her monks encouraged her to send relics, books, monks and nuns to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms: 'cum consilio seniorum, exortantibus fratribus...' writes the author.<sup>336</sup> It seems, therefore, that the historians' first position in what concerned the functions of men in double communities was the right one. We have here men and

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<sup>332</sup> J. Godfrey, 'The Double Monastery in Early English History', *Ampleforth Journal* 79 (1974), pp. 19-42; and J. Godfrey, 'The Place of the Double Monastery in the Anglo-Saxon Minster System', pp. 344-350.

<sup>333</sup> D.B. Schneider, *Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life*, p. 16.

<sup>334</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>335</sup> *Vita Bertilae*, c. 6, p. 106.

when their function in the monastery is mentioned, it is related to pastoral care functions: consecrating sacraments and preaching in the countryside. It is possible as well that these men helped in the daily labours related to the monastery's economy, and they also helped in the government of the monastery.

The fact that men were present in the double monasteries for pastoral care purposes was important for Northumbria, as these double houses took an active part in the conversion. The Frankish structure of double monasteries was well designed for a kingdom which had just been converted to Christianity. As J. Godfrey points out, the Anglo-Saxons took the institution of the double monastery from Gaul and 'developed it according to [their] own needs'.<sup>337</sup> In kingdoms such as Northumbria, the double monastery provided women with an answer to their religious needs, without them having to go to Gaul, and provided, through the monks and priests, the pastoral care necessary to a newly converted kingdom.<sup>338</sup> Thus the importation of the double monastery from Frankish Gaul was one of the most important for Northumbria.

## **C/ The cultural importance of the monasteries**

### **1- The libraries**

In most cases, the first cultural act of a founder was to try and gather books for the constitution of a library in the monastery. A library was to be organised before the monastery could start having a scriptorium, for the good reason that the monks and nuns needed books to copy from, before beginning the copying. Moreover, books were

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<sup>336</sup> *Vita Bertilae*, c. 6, pp. 106-107. See full quotation below, on page 94.

<sup>337</sup> J. Godfrey, 'The Place of the Double Monastery in the Anglo-Saxon Minster System', p. 345.

<sup>338</sup> Parish priests did not exist at this point of time, see J. Godfrey, 'The Place of the Double Monastery in the Anglo-Saxon Minster System', p. 346. ✓

needed in a cloister for the meditation that is essential to a secluded life. It is difficult to assess nowadays the importance of seventh-century libraries, as most of the books, acquired or produced by the monasteries, disappeared in the barbarous invasions of the ninth century, the Vikings in Northumbria, and the Normans in Northern Gaul. However, it is possible from the texts to get an overview of the situation. As we shall see later on, there is textual evidence for book production in the Rhone valley.<sup>339</sup> It seems however that Rome was the central point for getting books, both for Merovingian and Northumbrian monasteries. However, Columbanian monasteries could have got books from Luxeuil as well, which seems to have been the case at Corbie. 'By 700, then, Corbie had a library strong in the classics of patristic literature and in some sermons that Luxeuil copied for other houses.'<sup>340</sup> It seems that the Frankish monasteries obtained books both from Luxeuil and from Rome. Luxeuil was in a way the mother house of all Columbanian monasteries. Since several of these were instructed at first by Luxeuil monks, it is not surprising to find books from Luxeuil in their libraries. However, Rome must have remained essential for the gathering of books. 'La plupart des manuscrits précarolingiens que Corbie posséda sont italiens, ils ont été apportés par des pèlerins et ont servi de modèles aux scribes.'<sup>341</sup> St Filibertus himself went to Rome to bring back books for his monastery at Jumièges.<sup>342</sup> The monastery of Chelles must have had an important library from the start since, during the abbacy of the first abess Bertilla, books were sent to Saxon kings who had asked for some:

'...ut etiam ab transmarinis partibus Saxoniae reges illi fideles ab ea permissos fideles postularent, ut illis de suis discipulis ad eruditionem vel

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<sup>339</sup> See paragraph on the libraries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, p. 97. ✓

<sup>340</sup> D. Ganz, 'Merovingian Library of Corbie', p. 161.

<sup>341</sup> P. Riché, 'Les centres de culture en Neustrie de 650 à 850', *La Neustrie, les pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850*, ed. H. Atsma, 2 vol. (Sigmaringen, 1989), p. 299. See as well, in the same volume, J. Vezin, 'Les scriptoria de Neustrie', p. 308.

<sup>342</sup> *Vita Filiberti*, c. 18, p. 594.

sanctam instructionem, quam audierant esse in ea mirabilem, dirigeret, seu etiam qui virorum at sanctimonialium coenobia in illa regione construerent. Quam religiosam petitionem pro salute animarum non denegavit, sed cum consilio seniorum, exortantibus fratribus gratio animo cum magna diligentia et patrocinio sanctorum seu et voluminibus multis librorum electas personas et devotissimos homines illuc direxit.<sup>343</sup>

This proves that there was an important library at Chelles and that it was famous enough to have been heard of across the Channel. This passage confirms Bede's statement about Faremoutiers, Chelles and Les Andelys.<sup>344</sup> It also means that, apart from Rome, England must have received books from the Frankish monasteries issued from the Columbanian movement.

The most complete information we have for Northumbria concerns the library of Wearmouth and Jarrow. According to Charles Plummer, the library Bede had access to contained about 130 authors.<sup>345</sup> It is often mentioned in the Lives of the Abbots that Benedict brought back many books from all his travels. Twice it said that he came back from Rome with 'innumerablem librorum omnis generis copiam'.<sup>346</sup> The second mention is a bit more detailed as it says 'magna quidem copia voluminum sacrorum'.<sup>347</sup> Benedict was proud and protective towards the collection he had formed by all his travels. While on his death bed, he was ordering his brethren to keep the library intact: 'Bibliothecam quam de Roma nobilissimam copiosissimamque aduexerat, ad instructionem ecclesiae necessariam, sollicite seruari integram, nec per incuriam fedari, aut passim dissipari praecepit.'<sup>348</sup> We know as well that during Ceolfrith's abbacy, the library was increased and more books were acquired: 'et bibliothecam, quam de Roma

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<sup>343</sup> *Vita Bertilae*, c. 6, pp. 106-107.

<sup>344</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-8, p. 142.

<sup>345</sup> see M.L.W. Laistner, 'The Library of the Venerable Bede', *Bede, his Life, Times, and Writings - Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Centenary of his Death*, ed. A.H. Thompson (Oxford, 1935), p. 239. On the Jarrow library, see as well J.D.A. Ogilvy, *The Place of Wearmouth and Jarrow in Western Cultural History*, Jarrow Lecture 1968, pp. 4-7.

<sup>346</sup> *Hab*, c. 6, p. 369.

<sup>347</sup> *Hab*, c. 9, p. 373.

<sup>348</sup> *Hab*, c. 11, p. 375.

vel ipse, vel Benedictus adtulerat, nobiliter ampliavit'.<sup>349</sup> Therefore the library of Wearmouth and Jarrow was an important one. It allowed Bede to become the great historian and theologian of the seventh century. From Bede's works, it has been deduced that most of the books of the libraries of Wearmouth and Jarrow must have been religious and patristic writings, like all the other monastic libraries of the seventh century. Bede mentions that Biscop brought back numerous books, but he does not specify which books. P. Meyvaert calculated that the works of Gregory the Great, which were in Wearmouth-Jarrow's library, would have occupied eleven volumes.<sup>350</sup> It is impossible to imagine how Benedict Biscop managed to bring back all those books to Wearmouth and Jarrow. It seems that most of the books came from Rome as the extracts from Bede and the anonymous *Life of Ceolfrith* let us think, since they both specify 'de Roma'. P. Meyvaert points out an error of understanding, according to him, which is made concerning Vienne, in the Rhone valley.<sup>351</sup> It is generally interpreted that the sentence describing Biscop's passage in Vienne referred to books being picked up by Biscop to bring them to his monasteries: 'Rediens autem ubi Viennam pervenit, empticios ibi quos apud amicos commendaverat, recepit'.<sup>352</sup> P. Meyvaert explains the error and his own interpretation as such: 'The proximity of the "libros...emptos" in the previous sentence with "empticios" in the next sentence no doubt explains why so many translators have tried to interpret this last word as if it referred to books acquired in Vienne. In fact, Bede is speaking here not about books but about servants or retainers. 'Empticius' was the technical term for a servant. What is Bede therefore saying is that on arriving at Vienne from Rome Benedict reclaimed the hired retainers he had

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<sup>349</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, c. 20, p. 395.

<sup>350</sup> P. Meyvaert, 'Bede and the Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 74-5.

<sup>351</sup> *ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>352</sup> *Hab*, c. 4, p. 367.

entrusted to his friends there'.<sup>353</sup> This interpretation of the passage is logical but does not seem to fit very well in the context. The word 'empticius' can indeed have two meanings, that of something bought, which in this context would refer to the books, or that of a purchased servant.<sup>354</sup> However, R.E. Latham and D.R. Howlett, in their *Dictionary of Medieval Latin*, refer precisely to this passage of Bede in their translation of *empiticius* by 'obtained by purchase'.<sup>355</sup> P. Meyvaert argues that there was no need for retainers from Rome to Vienne, as Benedict could do the journey by boat, and therefore needed no help to carry the books. It is strange that, if Benedict brought back rules from the seventeen monasteries he visited, he did not get any books from at least one of these houses. It is obvious that Benedict Biscop must have taken a few servants with him on his travels, but as they are not mentioned at all in the text, it seems a bit strange to find the author suddenly referring to retainers when he was just speaking of books. Indeed, it does seem that Bede was referring to books rather than retainers. 'We may be sure that so keen a bibliophile as Benedict would have observed the libraries of the monasteries he visited and must have picked up a good many books in this way by gift, purchase, or arrangement to have them copied.'<sup>356</sup> Although Plummer has recorded 130 different authors used by Bede in his writings, it is possible, and indeed highly probable, that Bede used 'inter-library loans', apart from the books brought back from Rome. Bede could have borrowed books from Lindisfarne or Canterbury, or even Whitby, since some archaeological evidence of copying activities were found at Whitby. Indeed, it is probable that Whitby was the source of information for Bede's account of the Gregorian mission, since it is at Whitby that the first Life of Gregory the Great was

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<sup>353</sup> P. Meyvaert, 'Bede and the Church Paintings', p. 64.

<sup>354</sup> Du Cange, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*, 10 vol., vol. 3 (Niort, 1884), p. 261.

<sup>355</sup> *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. R.E. Latham and D.R. Howlett (Oxford, 1986), vol 1, fasc. III, p. 775.

<sup>356</sup> J.D.A. Ogilvy, *Books Known to the English* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p. 5.

written.<sup>357</sup> As well, Hexham might have been a centre from which Bede could have borrowed and copied books, although it seems that Wilfrid was not much concerned with books.

Therefore, it is impossible to know much of the library of Wearmouth and Jarrow, apart from the fact that it must have been an important library, and that it contained mainly theological works. ✓

It seems that although the monasteries were just being founded, the constitution of libraries was one of the major concern for the founders. Most of the books were acquired from Rome, but it possible as well to discern some occasions when books came from Frankish monasteries to Anglo-Saxon houses. Rome was the main provider of books for both Northumbrian and Neustrian monasteries, but Northumbrian men, from their travels through Neustria, must have brought back some books from the Columbanian monasteries to Northumbria.

## **2- The scriptoria**

We shall not dwell on the evidence of the scriptoria as most of the evidence is relevant to the eighth century, and thus does not provide any valuable information for the seventh century. On the Continent, an Anglo-Saxon influence has been traced in manuscripts, but one has to distinguish two phases. First of all in the seventh century appears an influence in the script from Luxeuil, and then, in the eighth century, an Anglo-Saxon influence corresponding with the wave of Anglo-Saxon missionaries in Northern Gaul. For what concerns our period, only the Luxeuil influence is important. In monasteries such as Corbie, where monks of Luxeuil helped in Balthildis's

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<sup>357</sup> P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, pp. 150 and 189.

foundation, it is normal to see traits of the Luxeuil script in manuscripts dating from about 700.<sup>358</sup> It is however at the beginning of the eighth century that manuscripts began to be produced importantly in these monasteries. At Corbie, 200 manuscripts have been recovered from the eighth and ninth centuries, which is exceptional.<sup>359</sup> At Chelles, the scriptorium started developing around the second half of the eighth century, and the nuns' script dates back from this period, and not earlier, and thus is not relevant to our study.<sup>360</sup>

In Northumbria, evidence of writing in the form of styluses and of book covers was found at Whitby, but not much else can be said of a scriptorium which must have however existed since one member of the religious community produced the Life of Gregory the Great.<sup>361</sup> Similarly, not much is known of the scriptorium of Wearmouth and Jarrow in the seventh century. More is known of the book production: among the manuscripts written at Jarrow, one must not forget all of Bede's books. The Lives of the Abbots itself was produced at Jarrow. P. Wormald stresses the influence of Southern France on literary works composed at Wearmouth and Jarrow, which seems ✓ logical in view of what was concluded on the origin of the Benedictine Rule in Northumbria. This is based on the style of the Lives of the Abbots, which contain absolutely no miracles, and seem to belong to an older style of hagiographic writing.<sup>362</sup> Maybe Benedict Biscop brought back this influence from Lérins. It seems that the scriptorium was one of high quality. Indeed, among the books that Ceolfrith added to

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<sup>358</sup> J. Vezin, 'Scriptoria de Neustrie', p. 315 and D. Ganz, in the same volume, 'Corbie and Neustrian Monastic Culture, 661-849', p. 340: it is E.H. Lowe who identified the Luxeuil script in the Corbie copy of Gregory of Tours's *Historia Francorum*.

<sup>359</sup> J. Vezin, 'Scriptoria de Neustrie', p. 315.

<sup>360</sup> The Chelles nuns' minuscule was identified by B. Bischoff (and this theory was strongly supported by E.A. Lowe) in a manuscript written for the Archbishop Hildeblad of Cologne (785-819). This theory was confirmed with the discovery, in the church of Chelles, of relics label bearing the same insular script of the late eighth century. See J.-P. Laporte, *Trésor de Chelles*, pp. 116-128; and E.A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores VI*; B. Bischoff, *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, ed. and trans. M. Gorman (Cambridge, 1994), p. 18.

<sup>361</sup> Peers and Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of Whitby', pp. 50-51, and 64-65.



the library were three copies of the Vulgate ('ita ut alia tres Pandectes faceret describi'<sup>363</sup>), one of which is known as the Codex Amiatinus. This manuscript proves that there were scribes and artists in Bede's monastery who could produce a work of a very high quality. The Codex Grandior, brought back from Rome by Ceolfrith, most probably served as model for the Codex Amiatinus, which is 'a Late Antique sort of book'.<sup>364</sup> P. Meyvaert compared in detail the two codices, mostly through their illustrations, such as the Tabernacle or the image of Ezra, and he showed unmistakable parallels.<sup>365</sup> The Codex Amiatinus is characteristic of classical Roman or late antique art.<sup>366</sup> Moreover, the Italian uncial was present at Wearmouth and Jarrow, first in the Codex Amiatinus, and 'later developed to such a high degree of excellence by the scribes of Wearmouth and Jarrow'.<sup>367</sup> This uncial might have been brought back by Benedict Biscop from Lérins, or by Abbot John from Rome: 'sed et non pauca etiam litteris mandata reliquit'.<sup>368</sup> The Abbot John might indeed have come to Wearmouth and Jarrow with his own scribes. In any case, as for the Continent, most of the books issued by the scriptorium date back to the eighth century, to the end of the seventh century at the earliest. Wearmouth and Jarrow might have had a renowned scriptorium, but no evidence of manuscripts is obtainable before the eighth century. This is the case for the big Merovingian scriptoria, as we have seen above. The scriptoria of Corbie, or Chelles, did not start being famous before the beginning of the eighth century. The same evolution can be remarked for the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow.

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<sup>362</sup> P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 151

<sup>363</sup> *Life of Ceolfrith*, c. 20, p. 395.

<sup>364</sup> P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', pp. 151-152.

<sup>365</sup> P. Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', *Speculum* 71 (1996), pp. 827-883. ✓

<sup>366</sup> *ibid.*, p. 870.

<sup>367</sup> P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, p. 171.

<sup>368</sup> *Hab*, c. 6, p. 369.

Therefore, and for what concerns the libraries and scriptoria, the monasteries, Northumbrian and Frankish, depended essentially on Rome. The influence of the Luxeuil script in the Columbanian monasteries did not affect the Northumbrian monasteries, as far as is known. For Wearmouth and Jarrow at least (but almost no information is available for the scriptorium of Whitby or any other Northumbrian houses), the Roman influence prevailed on the Frankish one, at least in this area.

### 3- The decoration of the monasteries

The decoration of the monastery included mainly sculpture, but also paintings, as the text evidence shows for Wearmouth and Jarrow. In the pre-Viking period, stone sculptures were used only in an ecclesiastical context, and the craftsmen would be mainly in monastic houses.<sup>369</sup> We have seen for the case of Whitby that the secular sites did not contain any stone, for the buildings or for the decoration. It appears thus that workshops producing stone sculpture were first ecclesiastical. Decorating the churches, which were generally the main decorated buildings, allowed the illiterate monks to understand the Scriptures as if they had read them. Mention of such paintings is found in his homily on Benedict Biscop (apart from the Lives of the Abbots and the Life of Ceolfrith).<sup>370</sup> The paintings brought back by Benedict Biscop were clearly important to Bede, and that is why he devotes an important part of his text discussing them.<sup>371</sup> The pictures enabled the ones who could not read to understand nevertheless the message of God. In this, Bede's opinion of the importance of pictures as a means of transmitting religion was close to that of Gregory the Great as this latter expressed it in a letter to

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<sup>369</sup> R. Cramp, *Corpus*, vol. 1, p. 11.

<sup>370</sup> See P. Meyvaert, 'Bede and the Church Paintings', p. 63.

<sup>371</sup> P. Hunter Blair, *World of Bede*, pp. 173-174.

Serenus, bishop of Marseilles.<sup>372</sup> The decorations could be part of an iconographical program in the church, where the paintings would be related to the sculpture, on the walls and vaults.<sup>373</sup> Furthermore, decoration was a way for the elite present in the monastery to assert their wealth and power. The crypt of Jouarre is a good example of the will of the rich people to express their wealth through a religious building.<sup>374</sup> Finally, sculpture, according to R. Cramp is 'more valuable in some ways than the metalwork or manuscripts because it nearly always survives near its original setting'.<sup>375</sup> It must be noted that, in Northumbria and for what concerns the reigns of Edwin and Oswald, archaeological and textual evidences -Bede notably- show that Christian monuments were still erected in wood, following either an Irish or a secular tradition, as we have seen earlier on.<sup>376</sup> From the synod of Whitby, and with the travels of men such as Benedict Biscop or Wilfrid, stone churches were constructed, some of them 'with highly elaborate architectural decoration'.<sup>377</sup>

Some parallels can be drawn between our four monasteries, for what concerns their sculpture and paintings. It must however be remembered that the use of stone in itself was a sign of Continental influence.

### Whitby's stones

Twelve red inscribed stones were found at Whitby. Most of them were incomplete red sandstone crosses dating from the eighth century. Most of the inscriptions were in Anglo-Saxon capitals, and three of them in insular majuscule. Two

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<sup>372</sup> See op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>373</sup> See G. Duby, X. Barral i Altet, S. Guillot de Suduirant, *Sculpture*, p. 16.

<sup>374</sup> X. Barral i Altet, 'Le décor des monuments religieux de Neustrie', *La Neustrie, Les pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850*, ed. H. Atsma, 2 vol. (Sigmaringen, 1989), vol. 2, p. 221.

<sup>375</sup> R. Cramp, *Early Northumbrian Sculpture*, Jarrow Lecture 1965, p. 1.

<sup>376</sup> R. Cramp, *Corpus*, vol. 1, p. 1.

<sup>377</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 3.

of them were in Latin, but the language of the rest of them was uncertain.<sup>378</sup> These inscribed stones dating from the eighth century do not bring much evidence for our study. The amount of sculpture, other than inscribed stones, was important at Whitby. These were especially plain crosses. 'The surviving sculpture from Whitby is ... of great importance in the Northumbrian corpus of material, since it is so individual, and seems to reflect Continental inspiration in its origins.'<sup>379</sup> These plain crosses seem to reflect indeed Continental customs. The crosses are not decorated save from little incised ornaments and memorial inscriptions. R. Cramp concluded that this lack of decoration could have derived from wooden crosses, such as the one mentioned at the battle of Heavenfield, linked with the establishment of Iona.<sup>380</sup> However, the author also remarks that the 'fashion of plain crosses could have derived from else where', that is from the Continent, and especially from the region most affected by the Columbanian movement.<sup>381</sup> These plain crosses are indeed found in Merovingian cemeteries, where the plain stela seems to have been derived from the Celtic wooden one. We have thus here one more example of an aspect of Irish influence being adapted by Frankish monasteries, who in turn influenced Northumbrian new monasteries. These plain crosses are found in the Val d'Oise, which corresponds to one of the regions much influenced by Columbanus and his other Irish disciples. 'In summary it is a possible hypothesis that the plain funerary monuments from various sites which were decorated with only incised mouldings, with inscriptions or with simple geometric line patterns or rosettes, were not only inspired by wooden prototypes, but also by Continental monuments from an area where there is documented contact with Northumbria. It is in

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<sup>378</sup> E. Okasha, *Hand-List*, pp. 121-125.

<sup>379</sup> R. Cramp, 'A Reconsideration of the Monastic Site of Whitby', *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Insular Art, 3-6 January 1991*, ed. R.M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 68.

<sup>380</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-2, pp. 128-129; R. Cramp, 'Reconsideration of the Monastic Site of Whitby', p. 69.

<sup>381</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

fact where ... the Anglo-Saxon nuns were most active on the Continent.'<sup>382</sup> This statement sums up well the relationship between the Whitby plain crosses with the Frankish region influenced by Columbanus, and links the problem of the stone sculpture to the one of the buildings' construction material. Likewise, Northumbrian sculpture might have been influenced by two traditions: the Northumbrian one (use of wood) and the Continental one (use of stone).

### Wearmouth and Jarrow

We previously made a distinction between the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow concerning their methods of construction. A similar distinction can be made for what concerns the sculptures of the two sites. At Wearmouth it is possible to see both the Ionan influence still present in Northumbria, and the impact of the influence of the Frankish masons and glaziers came to build the monastery. The mixture of both is present in Wearmouth's porch, the only sculpture still *in situ*, which was built before 685. The decoration consists in a 'reptilian ornament on the door linings and on a fragment of internal closure screen'.<sup>383</sup> The interlace can be paralleled with similar patterns in the Book of Durrow and on some Pictish slabs, but it also found on a type which was popular in Italy.<sup>384</sup> The monastery of Wearmouth can be considered as a 'centre of innovation'.<sup>385</sup> It used stones as a new decorative material with traditional Celtic patterns as were found on metalwork and manuscripts. Pure continental influence is present in two lion armrests, which appear to have been part of benches for the clergy and the abbot, and which have been dated from the last quarter of the seventh century,

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<sup>382</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>383</sup> R. Cramp, 'The Furnishing and Sculptural Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Churches', *The Anglo-Saxon Church, Papers on History, Architecture and Archaeology in honour of Dr. H.M. Taylor*, ed. L.A.S. Butler and R.K. Morris, C.B.A. Research Report (London, 1986), p. 101.

<sup>384</sup> *ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>385</sup> R. Cramp, *Corpus*, vol. 1, p. 23.

which corresponds to the date of foundation of the monastery.<sup>386</sup> These sculptures might well have been executed by foreign carvers, since they are the only occurrence of such pieces of furniture. At Jarrow, 'there are found on surviving monuments neither the delicate animal and interlace patterns nor the monumental animals'.<sup>387</sup> The monastery of Jarrow seems to have had close links with that of Hexham, as there are similarities in the architecture of the churches and the remaining architectural sculpture.<sup>388</sup> In both of these monasteries, the Roman 'austere' influence is present in the architectural details. The presence of free-standing balusters at Wearmouth and at Jarrow constitute the only architectural link between the two sites and the Continent. As for the crosses, the origin of balusters might be in wood carving, and they were thought by G.B. Brown to have a Roman origin.<sup>389</sup> However, it can be established that these balusters, though found in Antique Rome, are also found in post-Roman Gaul in several sites. The most striking parallel is the one which can be established between Wearmouth and Evrecy, in the Calvados.<sup>390</sup> The interesting point is that Evrecy, like Wearmouth, is one of the components of a twin monastery, whose counterpart, corresponding to Jarrow, was Deux-Jumeaux. The two monasteries were distant of 45 km, and they were ruled by a single abbot Annobert.<sup>391</sup> The monastery of Deux-Jumeaux was founded in the sixth century by a local saint, Martin of Vertou, and later associated with that of Evrecy. The two monasteries prospered in the seventh and eighth centuries, as is attested by numerous texts, and were destroyed by the Norman invasions of the ninth and tenth

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<sup>386</sup> op. cit., vol. 1, p. 130; vol. 2, plate 123, n. 668-720.

<sup>387</sup> ibid., vol. 1, p. 24.

<sup>388</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monkwearmouth-Jarrow: The Archaeological Evidence', p. 7.

<sup>389</sup> R. Cramp, *Corpus*, vol. 1, p. 24, citing G.B. Brown, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture - The arts of Early England II* (London, 1925), pp. 257-59.

<sup>390</sup> see L. Musset, 'Deux Jumeaux, Résultat des fouilles'.

<sup>391</sup> It is interesting to note that this abbot, who united the two monasteries of Evrecy and Deux-Jumeaux under his government, seems as well to have introduced the Rule of St Benedict in the monasteries; L. Musset, 'Deux-Jumeaux, Résultat des fouilles', p. 470. See as well Fletcher, 'Influence of Merovingian Gaul', p. 80-81.

centuries.<sup>392</sup> The main sculptural parallel is based on similar incised baluster shafts that were found both at Wearmouth and at Evrecy.<sup>393</sup> These parallels could be one of the best precise examples of links and influences between Merovingian Gaul and Northumbria. Indeed, it would not come as a surprise if the abbot Torhthelm mentioned by the anonymous author of the *Life of Ceolfrith*, came from the twin monastery of Deux-Jumeaux-Evrecy! Thus, it seems that Frankish craftsmen introduced the balusters at Monkwearmouth, which were later on copied by local craftsmen at Jarrow and Hexham.

#### Late Antiquity and Coptic influences

Apart from the obvious parallels between the monasteries in Northumbria and on the Continent, some influences and common characteristics can be found between these houses. The main ones are the Late Antique and Coptic influences. At Jouarre, these influences are dominant in the decoration of Agilbert's sarcophagus. Agilbert's sarcophagus was sculpted in local limestone, which was normal for a Merovingian sarcophagus. What is exceptional is its decoration. The Marquise de Maillé wrote that Agilbert could have directed himself the carvers' work.<sup>394</sup> The whole decoration of the sarcophagus concentrates on Judgement day, and it is the first known representation in Northern Gaul of such a subject. Only two sides of the sarcophagus are decorated, one long and one small, as it was first designed to be placed in a corner of the crypt. On the long side of the sarcophagus are represented the people awaiting the Judgement, and it must be noticed that there is no distinction between heaven and hell, as will be the case later on. The people represented are acclaiming Christ with the attitude of the 'orants'

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<sup>392</sup> L. Musset, 'Deux-Jumeaux, Résultat des fouilles', p. 470-71.

<sup>393</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81-82, J. Campbell, 'First Century', p. 62; R. Cramp, 'Furnishing and Sculptural Decoration', p. 102.

<sup>394</sup> Marquise de Maillé, *Cryptes de Jouarre*, p. 272.

of late Antique Rome, hands and arms lifted up in the air. The little decorated side of the sarcophagus represents a Majestic Christ, and it is mostly this side which has attracted the attention of art historians. The striking element of this carving is that the symbolic animals, representing the four Evangelists and encircling the Christ, do not look at the Christ. On the contrary, they look away from him, which is something unusual in the art of the Middle Ages. 'This is a peculiarity which occurs only in an Early Christian mosaic at Salonica and in the paintings in Egyptian and Cappadocian basilicas.'<sup>395</sup> It seems that on the same sarcophagus, one finds two different influences, one issued from the art of the Late Antiquity, and the other from the Coptic paintings. We therefore have for the sole sarcophagus of Agilbert an entire iconographic program, centred on Judgement Day and the glory of Christ. The sarcophagus must be related with a stele hung today above Agilberte's sarcophagus. It appears that this little sculpture belonged to the tomb.<sup>396</sup> It represents a person bare foot, which must be identified as Agilbert, standing beside an angel holding a censer, which is the symbol of the prayer for the dead. This little stele obviously concludes the iconographic program elaborated by Agilbert: on the long side of the sarcophagus, the Judgement Day; on the little side, God in glory; and finally Agilbert being brought to God by an angel. Again, this stele seems to have Coptic origins, as another stele much like it lies in the Copenhagen Museum, and is identified as Coptic.<sup>397</sup> Two major influences are thus to be identified in the crypt of Agilbert. The first one seems logical. Agilbert, being a member of the Frankish aristocracy, was still very much influenced by the Late Antiquity. Thus, the whole crypt shows it. The capitals are an imitation of the Corinthian and composite capitals of Ancient Rome, the columns are in pink marble, the

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<sup>395</sup> J. Hubert, *Europe in the Dark Ages* (London, 1969), p. 77.

<sup>396</sup> Marquise de Maillé, *Cryptes de Jouarre*, p. 272-3; M. Vieillard-Troiekouff, 'La sculpture en Neustrie', p. 239.

<sup>397</sup> M. Vieillard-Troiekouff, 'La sculpture en Neustrie', p. 239.

sarcophagus represents people praying as orants, in the manner that was in use in the beginnings of Christianity. However, the other influence is not expected in a Merovingian crypt. J. Hubert was the first one to discern the Coptic influence and this theory has been admitted by all historians and archaeologists. The problem to solve is to know how such an influence could have come to Jouarre. As we have said, the sarcophagus is carved in a local stone, so it could not have come else where than from Jouarre. G.R. Delahaye thinks that it was done by a workshop that was related to the abbey.<sup>398</sup> According to him, the workshop had to be linked to the abbey for economical reasons. However, a much more seducing hypothesis has been elaborated by historians who linked together the crypts of Jouarre with the Northumbrian crosses of the seventh century.<sup>399</sup> J. Hubert first suggested that the workshop was probably an itinerant one, *en route* towards England. 'The origin of the Jouarre carvings and that of the famous sculptured crosses of Northumbria and Ireland raise the same problems and - we should stress this point - the same uncertainties.'<sup>400</sup> The 'famous sculptured crosses' are those of Ruthwell, Bewcastle and Reculver, who share with Agilbert's sarcophagus the links to the Late Antiquity and the Coptic regions. On the Ruthwell cross, this mixture of Late Antique and Coptic influence is particularly visible on the scenes involving the figure of Christ, such as Christ with Madeleine at his feet, or Christ with two tamed beasts at his feet. The way Christ is carved, pictured as the 'youthful, long-haired Christ known to the early Christian world' links the Ruthwell cross to a workshop that must have had its origins near the Mediterranean.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> G.R. Delahaye, 'Les sarcophages de plâtre exhumés autour des cryptes de Jouarre (Seine et Marne)', *Cahiers Archéologiques* 40 (1992), p. 33.

<sup>399</sup> J. Hubert, *Dark Ages*, p. 81; Marquise de Maillé, *Cryptes de Jouarre*, p. 273; C. Heitz, *La France pré-romane - Archéologie et architecture du Haut Moyen Age, IVe siècle-an Mille* (Paris, 1987), p. 100; M. Viellard-Troiekouff, 'La sculpture en Neustrie', p. 237.

<sup>400</sup> J. Hubert, *Dark Ages*, p. 81.

<sup>401</sup> K.E. Haney, 'The Christ and the Beasts Panel on the Ruthwell Cross', *Anglo-Saxon England* 14 (Cambridge, 1985), p. 216.

Similarly, these Northumbrian crosses are linked in a way to the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, where one finds the same influences as described above for Jouarre. 'Picturas imaginum sanctarum quas ad ornandam aecclesiam beati Petri apostoli, quam construxerat, detulit'.<sup>402</sup> The paintings were an important part of what Benedict Biscop brought back from his journeys. They are described in some details, and have held the attention of many art historians. The paintings were mentioned in the Life of Ceolfrith, but very briefly, and in more detail in the Lives of the Abbots. One must conclude that they were important for Bede to describe them in detail. The problem for the art historians has been to determine how such *picturae* could have arrived in England. P. Meyvaert concluded, on the grounds of Bede's renowned and very precise vocabulary, that the pictures were real ones, and panel paintings.<sup>403</sup> As well, he calculated that the total number of panels brought back by Biscop from his fifth and sixth visits must come to 'well over a hundred'.<sup>404</sup> The paintings at Wearmouth contained a variety of representations:

- the Virgin Mary and the 12 apostles;
- scenes from the Gospel story;
- scenes from the visions of St John's Apocalypse.

R. Cramp made interesting parallels with the Northumbrian crosses and St Cuthbert's wooden coffin.<sup>405</sup> The iconography of the twelve apostles and the Virgin Mary is indeed represented on the long and one short side of St Cuthbert's coffin, and can be found on the crosses at Easby, possibly Otley, and Rothbury. And scenes from the Gospels

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<sup>402</sup> *Hab*, c. 6, p. 369.

<sup>403</sup> P. Meyvaert, 'Bede and the Church Paintings', p. 66-68. The other options that existed were that Benedict Biscop could have brought back small-scale prototypes, which were then converted into large-scale paintings at the monastery; or illuminated manuscripts intended to serve as models, and then enlarged on the walls. P. Meyvaert established his conclusion that the paintings were real ones on Bede's commentary of the temple of Salomon, in which the monk talks about paintings in terms of panel paintings (*in tabulis*). From there, P. Meyvaert concluded that the pictures brought back by Benedict Biscop were panel paintings.

<sup>404</sup> *ibid.*, p. 74.

appear on the Ruthwell and Rothbury crosses. R. Cramp links the sculpture on both of these crosses with the sculpture found at the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow. She also draws a parallel between the Apocalyptic scenes mentioned by Bede for the pictures, the Apocalyptic Christ on the Bewcastle and Ruthwell crosses and the St Cuthbert coffin. All these conclusions drawn by R. Cramp could be linked with conclusions in the same vein drawn by J. Hubert concerning the parallel in the sculpture between the crypts of Jouarre and the Northumbrian crosses. For all these, Coptic and Middle Eastern influence has been remarked upon. The missing link that comes to mind is Theodore, from whom the influence could come.<sup>406</sup> Theodore having met Agilbert, the crypts of Jouarre benefited from it. The same thing might have happened with Benedict Biscop, who also met Theodore. But is it possible that one man might be responsible for all these influences that can be found in the most different and unrelated places, or so it seems at first glance? We have seen earlier on how personal relationships could bring influences to a kingdom or another, and thus it is possible that it is through Theodore that these Coptic and Late Antique influences can be found both in Neustrian and Northumbrian monasteries.

The paintings at Jarrow were different from the ones at Monkwearmouth. They represented:

- scenes from the story of Christ;
- a series illustrating concordances between the Old Testament and the New.

For these as well, R. Cramp tried to find parallels in the sculpture, but the only possible cross where Old and New Testament scenes are paralleled is at Masham in Yorkshire.<sup>407</sup>

Indeed, for R. Cramp, the 'decorative scheme' of Jarrow is more easily paralleled with

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<sup>405</sup> R. Cramp, 'The Furnishing and Sculptural Decoration', p. 103.

<sup>406</sup> Theodore came from the Eastern Mediterranean –Tarsus- and must have been therefore influenced by Coptic art, or at least must have been acquainted with it.

<sup>407</sup> R. Cramp, 'The Furnishing and Sculptural Decoration', p. 103.

that of Hexham rather than Wearmouth.<sup>408</sup> Once again, one can see the difference in the two monasteries, Jarrow being less touched by exterior influences than Wearmouth. This was due to the fact that, Jarrow having been founded by Northumbrians themselves, it was probably more integrated than Wearmouth in the art and culture of other Northumbrian monasteries.

Thus if one takes this analysis in chronological order, one discovers that the Late Antique and Coptic influences are first found at Jouarre on Agilbert's sarcophagus. The last we hear of Agilbert is in 673, and we do not know the date of his death.<sup>409</sup> In any case, the crypt of Jouarre is built by Agilbert before his death, at the end of the seventh century. Benedict Biscop brought back his paintings to Wearmouth and to Jarrow after 674 and 681, dates of the foundation of the houses. The Codex Amiatinus has been dated from the end of the seventh century, between 689 and 695-700.<sup>410</sup> Finally, the Northumbrian crosses have been dated from, at the earliest, the eighth century.<sup>411</sup> Thus we can establish a chronological order of the influences, which could be schematised as this:

Jouarre → Wearmouth/Jarrow → Ruthwell/Bewcastle

To conclude on this part on the life of the monastery, several influences must be distinguished. The only pure Frankish influence one can find in the way these monasteries functioned in their daily life is related to the double monasteries. The double monastery was an important import from Neustria to Northumbria, as it helped this kingdom fulfil two needs at the same time: the religious needs of aristocratic

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<sup>408</sup> *op.cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>409</sup> On 10 March 673, Agilbert signed the the foundation charter of the monastery of Bruyères, and this is the last we hear of him. See Marquise de Maillé, *Cryptes de Jouarre*, p. 75.

<sup>410</sup> R. Cramp, *Northumbrian Sculpture*, p. 1.

women, and the pastoral care of a still mainly pagan population. However, it appears that for what concerned the cultural life of both Northumbrian and Neustrian monasteries, these houses depended more on old traditions, such as the ones found in Southern Gaul or in Rome. Indeed, we have seen that the Rule of St Benedict appeared in both circles independently, although at the same period of time. Both Northumbria and Neustria came into contact with this Rule through the old monastic centres of Southern Gaul. For what concerned the libraries, Rome was the main source. Once again, they depended on an old centre, which could be relied upon to have all they needed to form a decent library. The great scriptoria of these monasteries did not develop until the eighth century, but the few books they issued were written in Italian uncial, and were imitating Roman illustrations. Finally, for what concerned the decoration of their monasteries, it seems that Northumbrians and Neustrians were in turn influenced by the passage of Theodore of Tarsus in their monasteries, bringing in a Coptic mixed with a Late Antique influence.

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<sup>411</sup> R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Art of the Codex Amiatinus*, Jarrow Lecture 1969, pp. 3-5.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of this study, what can be concluded on the Frankish and Northumbrian monasteries and on the different influences which affected them?

First of all, it must be noted that Roman influence was still important, and sometimes even a rising influence on these monasteries. In Northumbria, as in the rest of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, the importance of Rome was just beginning to be recognized. This was due first to the travels of Northumbrian men, Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid, whose main destination was Rome. Secondly, Bishop Wilfrid was also the first Englishman to refer to the Pope for his problems concerning his episcopal see. Finally, the arrival of Theodore of Tarsus as Archbishop of Canterbury in 669 was a proof that Rome was interested in what was happening in the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms and wanted to remain the main authority there. It must be remembered that the first mission to christianize these kingdoms was decided by Gregory the Great. However, we find areas in monasticism where both Northumbrian and Frankish monasteries were affected in the same way by the Roman influence. For instance, Rome was still the main place from where to get books. A good part of the cultural life of these monasteries came from Rome. We have seen that monastic founders such as Benedict Biscop or Filibertus did not hesitate to go themselves to Rome to collect the books they needed for their monasteries' libraries. Similarly, Late Antique influence appears in the sculpture and decoration of monasteries in both Northumbria and Northern Gaul, as in the crypts of Jouarre, in monasteries such as Wearmouth and on the Northumbrian crosses. In the arts, this Late Antique influence was associated with a Coptic influence found in the same crypt of Jouarre, and on the Northumbrian crosses.

The second influence which marked both Northumbrian and Neustrian monasteries at the same time is that of southern French monasteries. It has always been thought that these were declining in the seventh century, but it is rather that the rise of

new monasteries such as the Columbanian ones in Northern Gaul overshadowed them. These monasteries were still important in European monasticism. Their fame from the fifth and sixth centuries had not faded, as we find Benedict Biscop, a Northumbrian, deciding to stay in Lérins to be tonsured, or the rule of Caesarius, composed in the sixth century and used by Radegundis for her nunnery at Poitiers, still used in the rules made by the seventh-century founders. However, it seems that the main achievement of centres such as Lérins or Arles was to have harboured the writer of the *Regula Magistri* in the fifth or sixth century, before St Benedict himself copied the *Regula* and composed his Rule from it. These monasteries were the ones which spread the Rule of St Benedict to the Northumbrian monasteries and to the new Columbanian foundations. Thus, the Rule of St Benedict came to be known through these old monastic centres in Southern France. English travellers to Rome such as Wilfrid in Lyons and Benedict Biscop in Lérins, discovered the Rule of St Benedict in these centres, and brought it back to Northumbria as the Rule of St Benedict, without having it mixed with any other rule. As for the new Neustrian foundations, most of them had been founded by monks of Luxeuil, living by the Rule of St Columbanus. In Northern France it is through these monasteries that the Benedictine Rule appeared in monasteries. Thus, we have here Northumbrian and Neustrian monasteries discovering separately the Benedictine Rule in the second half of the seventh century but adapting it differently to their own monasteries.

So far, thus, we have seen two main influences which affected Northumbrian and Neustrian monasteries in the same conditions and at the same period of time. We could therefore conclude that there was a parallel evolution. However, there is a difference in these monasteries. Both kingdoms saw a series of Irish missionaries, but at a different time. The Irish missionaries started coming in Neustria with the arrival of

Columbanus in 590, whereas the same event, led by Aidan, occurred in Northumbria some 40 years later, in 635. This gap in time led to the following development: the Frankish monasteries, following the important ascendancy of St Columbanus, integrated this influence as a new form of monasticism, the Columbanian movement, which resulted in a movement of monastic foundation from the 620s onward. This new form of monasticism had the particularity that it was initiated by Franks, and not Irish. In this, the Columbanian monasteries must be differentiated from the other purely Irish monasteries founded in the seventh century in Northern Gaul such as Nivelles, or Péronne. These were founded entirely by Irishmen, and they did not involve the Frankish gentry and aristocracy as the Columbanian monasteries did.<sup>412</sup> As a result, this new form of monasticism began to influence the southern kingdoms of England, where the women especially, in need of monasteries, migrated to the double monasteries born out of the Columbanian movement. Thus, when Aidan arrived in Northumbria in 635, a certain Frankish influence existed already in some southern Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, such as East Anglia, Kent and Wessex. Moreover, travellers going to Rome such as Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid were passing through Northern Gaul, and discovering directly what the Columbanian movement was. From both these direct and indirect influences, Northumbrian monasteries became acquainted with and influenced by Frankish influence, which was in itself a consequence of Irish, Frankish and Roman influences mixed together. The main import from these Columbanian monasteries to Northumbrian monasticism was the double monastery, which appeared first in Northumbria before any other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. This is an indication that Northumbrian monasticism was as much affected by Frankish and Columbanian influence as the other kingdoms of England. This was not obvious, as it could have

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<sup>412</sup> A. Dierkens, 'Prolégomènes', p. 388: 'Il apparait en tous cas peu probant de placer Péronne, Fosses ou Nivelles dans le même groupe de monastères "iro-francs" que Luxeuil ou les abbayes féminines de la

been concluded that the kingdom of Northumbria, situated at the extreme north of England, would not have had so many exchanges with Frankish Gaul as the southern kingdoms had. But on the contrary it seems that the distance was not an obstacle. The Frankish influence, as well as the two previous influences, came to Northumbria through Northumbrian men and women who were intensively involved in the religious life of their kingdom, and who were directly connected with their counterparts in the southern Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and in Neustria.

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1

### The problem of Whitby

Several hypotheses concerning Whitby need to be discussed and explained in relation to the analysis. Two points have been raised by the historians and archaeologists concerning the monastery: first of all, does the site of Whitby correspond to the *Streonaeshalh* Bede talks about? And secondly, is Whitby a secular or monastic settlement? It is necessary to answer these two questions so as to prove that Whitby can be included in the monastic study we are carrying out.

One of the main problems attached to the name and site of Whitby is the question whether the site at Whitby is the *Streonaeshalh* Bede writes about. It is evident from the finds and the archaeological discoveries that, in any case, there is at Whitby an important Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Several interesting theories have been put forward in these last years about the site of *Streonaeshalh*. According to several historians, notably C. Fell and L. Butler, the original monastery would be situated at Strensall, a village situated at the northern outskirts of York.<sup>413</sup> The idea is appealing and is based on two arguments, of which the first one is obviously the resemblance and the same root of the two Anglo-Saxon place names, Strensall and *Streonaeshalh*.<sup>414</sup> The second argument, even more convincing historically, is to do with the relation of *Streonaeshalh* with the royal Deiran house and therefore the royal centre of York. It is true that Whitby is far away from York, and that Strensall, so close to the city, could well fit the function of a royal burial place which

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<sup>413</sup> C. Fell, 'Hild, Abbess of Streonaeshalh', *Hagiography and Medieval Literature: a Symposium* (Odense, 1981), pp. 82-5; L. Butler, 'Church Dedications and the Cult of Anglo-Saxon Saints in England', *The Anglo-Saxon Church*, ed. L. Butler and R. Morris (London, 1986), p. 49, note 11.

<sup>414</sup> A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, English Place-Name Society, V (Cambridge, 1928), p. 13, on the etymology of Strensall and Whitby in relation to the Anglo-Saxon name of *Streonaeshalh*.

the monastery of *Streonaeshalh* had. All the evidences seem however to favour the site of Whitby as the monastery of *Streonaeshalh*. Bede mentions the fact that *Streonaeshalh* was situated thirteen miles from the site of Hacanos.<sup>415</sup> If, as C. Fell does, we take Hacanos for modern Hackness, then Whitby is indeed thirteen miles from Hackness, which is a further indication in favour of Whitby.<sup>416</sup> To go back to the place-name evidence, Bede says of the name of *Streonaeshalh* that it meant 'sinus Fari', that is, 'the bay of the lighthouse'.<sup>417</sup> It has been argued, after the discovery of a Roman signal station at Scarborough, that a series of lighthouses and signal stations were lined on the coast and therefore the site of Whitby could have been one of these stations.<sup>418</sup> In this case, this would make the case for the monastery to be at Whitby self-evident. However, it is the archaeological evidence which is the most convincing at the moment. There is no archaeological evidence for *Streonaeshalh* being at Strensall, although there is a Roman fortress 'close to the church on the other side of the River Foss'.<sup>419</sup> No Anglo-Saxon remains that could be related to a monastic settlement have so far been found. On the contrary, there is plenty of archaeological evidence to suggest the presence of an Anglo-Saxon settlement at Whitby. One evidence for *Streonaeshalh* being at Whitby is a stone plaque inscribed with an epitaph to Aelfflaed, Hild's successor as abbess in 680.<sup>420</sup> There being no archaeological evidence defending the case for the monastery at Strensall, we shall leave aside this theory and concentrate on the settlement at Whitby.

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<sup>415</sup> Bede, *HE*, IV-23, p. 258: 'Distant autem inter se monasteria haec XIII ferme milibus passum.'

<sup>416</sup> C. Fell, 'Hild', p. 83.

<sup>417</sup> Bede, *HE*, III-25, p. 183.

<sup>418</sup> P. Ottaway, 'Filey Roman Signal Station', *Transactions of the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society*, 30 (1994); 31 (1995), pp. 8-10. I thank Chris Constable, from the Archaeology Department in Durham who gave me this information, who derived it from Tyler Bell (Queens College, Cambridge).

<sup>419</sup> P. Rahtz, 'Anglo-Saxon and Later Whitby', *Yorkshire Monasticism: Archaeology, Art and Architecture from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries*, ed. L. Hoey, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions, XVI (1995). p. 2.

Once this problem is solved, another question arises: what, apart from the stone plaque mentioned above, proves that Whitby was a monastic rather than a secular settlement? This question might well have been asked for our other monasteries as well. The difficulty of identifying secular from monastic sites is an issue discussed by all historians and archaeologists.<sup>421</sup> 'The problem arises from the expected similarity between the archaeological traces of religious and secular sites.'<sup>422</sup> For example, one of the distinctive features for a monastery could be the enclosure, the *vallum monasterii*. However, it has been found on secular sites such as Sprouston.<sup>423</sup> The layout is generally not uniform for the monastic sites in the seventh century. Therefore, for every site emerges the question whether the finds and buildings correspond to a religious or a secular community. The question arose for the site of Hartlepool, for example: 'It is clear that we have here buildings of what is now a common Anglo-Saxon type, but whether they are part of the monastery or part of secular *vicus* is impossible to determine'.<sup>424</sup> The same question and doubts occurred to the archaeologists excavating Whithorn,<sup>425</sup> or Barking.<sup>426</sup> Secular and monastic settlements were generally closely linked. Indeed, monasteries in the seventh century were founded by members of the aristocracy. Often enough, they established monasteries on their own lands, sometimes on pre-existing settlements. Therefore, it is hard to distinguish the difference and the

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<sup>420</sup> E. Okasha, *Hand-list of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1971), see Whitby DCCCXXXII, p. 125; Peers and Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of Whitby', pp. 40-2.

<sup>421</sup> On the difficulty of identifying monastic from secular sites, see K. Dark, 'Celtic Monastic Archaeology: fifth to eighth centuries', *Monastic Studies* 14 (1983); J. Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters: A Topographical Review', *Pastoral Care before the Parish*, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, London and New York, 1992), p. 259; and R. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. D. M. Wilson (London, 1976), p. 249.

<sup>422</sup> K. Dark, 'Celtic Monastic Archaeology', p. 17.

<sup>423</sup> I. Smith, 'Sprouston, Roxburghshire, an Early Anglian Centre of the Eastern Tweed Basin', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 121 (1991), p. 274.

<sup>424</sup> R. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', p. 222.

<sup>425</sup> *Whithorn 2 - Excavations 1984-1987, Interim report*, p. 9.

<sup>426</sup> K. Mac Gowan, 'Barking Abbey', *Current Archaeology* 149 13 (5) (September 1996), p. 178.

exact time when the settlement went from being secular to monastic<sup>427</sup> or if the two settlements could be associated.<sup>428</sup>

To see if Whitby could be a secular settlement, one has to compare the site with known secular settlements in Northumbria. Most of the sites excavated are situated near the royal sites of Bamburgh and of Yeavering. Among them, we have especially looked at the sites of Sprouston<sup>429</sup>, Thirlings<sup>430</sup>, and Milfield.<sup>431</sup> These sites appear to have similar layout and similar structures. They are first distinguishable by the structures called *Grubenhäuser*, sunken-floored huts which mostly appear to have had the function of storage.<sup>432</sup> Next to these *Grubenhäuser* were buildings, always in timber,<sup>433</sup> of some importance and forming the principal unit of the settlement. These sites seem to have approximately the same layout, and one of a special purpose. The archaeologists refer to the passage in the *Ecclesiastical History* where Bede refers to Edwin 'equitatem inter civitates sive villas aut provincias suas cum ministris'.<sup>434</sup> All these estates were geographically near the royal sites of Bamburgh and Yeavering, and they were the centres of production used whenever the king and his retinue were travelling through the region and staying at one of these royal sites. Now if one considers the site of Whitby in relation to these secular sites, there is no possible geographical comparison. As we have said earlier, Whitby would have been too far away from the royal place of York to act as an agricultural producer, and there do not seem to have been any other royal

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<sup>427</sup> see R. Gilchrist and R. Morris, 'Monasteries as settlements: religion, society, and economy AD 600-1050', *In Search of Cult*, ed. M. Carver (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 279-280.

<sup>428</sup> R. Cramp, 'Anglo-Saxon Settlement', *Settlement in North Britain 1000BC-AD 1000*, ed. J. C. Chapman and H.C. Mytum, B.A.R. British Series 118 (1983), p. 278: it appears, for example, that the monastery of Coldingham was 'twinned' with a secular fortified site.

<sup>429</sup>I. Smith, 'Sprouston', pp. 261-94.

<sup>430</sup>O'Brien and R. Miket, 'The Early Medieval Settlement at Thirlings, Northumberland', *Durham Archaeological Journal* 7 (1991), pp. 57-91.

<sup>431</sup> R. Miket, *The Milfield Basin, Northumberland: 4000 BC - AD 800* (PhD Thesis, Newcastle, 1987)

<sup>432</sup> I. Smith, 'Sprouston', p. 276; see as well P. Rahtz, 'Building and Rural Settlement', *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. D.M. Wilson (London, 1976), pp. 70-81 on the 'sunken-featured buildings'.

<sup>433</sup> see P. Dixon, *The Making of England*, p. 67: 'Almost all the domestic buildings of the Anglo-saxons were built of wood'.

<sup>434</sup> Bede, *HE*, II-16, p. 118.

estates near by, that could have housed the king on his travels. Moreover, as we have seen earlier on in the thesis during the detailed analysis of the excavations, the buildings at Whitby are of stone, and most of all, the finds do not correspond at all to an agricultural estate. Therefore, the comparison with the known secular sites do not help us define Whitby as a monastery.

There is a feature that appears to be exclusively monastic in the seventh century, and which is present at Whitby, and that is the presence of inscribed stones. These are numerous at the site of Whitby, found mainly at the area of the north transept.<sup>435</sup> E. Okasha reports twelve inscribed stones. All of them are incomplete crosses, and most of them are of red sandstone, implying therefore that they are from the site.<sup>436</sup> Of these twelve inscribed stones, most of them have uncertain language, as the inscriptions are illegible today, except from two which have a Latin text,<sup>437</sup> and three others bearing an Old English name.<sup>438</sup> The script of the inscriptions is sometimes insular majuscule, but mostly Anglo-Saxon capitals, reflecting therefore a rather high level of culture. As C. Fell points out, 'control of two alphabets as well as two languages is demonstrated in the elegant runic and Roman, English and Latin inscriptions on bone and stone'.<sup>439</sup> This rises the problem as to whether literacy was confined to the church in the seventh century and whether it was 'one of the normal hall-marks of a monastic site'.<sup>440</sup> Vernacular literature such as *Beowulf* might have existed but it has to be observed that

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<sup>435</sup> see E. Okasha, 'Hand-List', on Whitby, pp. 121-5, and Peers and Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of Whitby', pp. 33-45.

<sup>436</sup> R. Cramp, *Early Northumbrian Sculpture*, Jarrow Lecture 1965, p. 1: sculpture 'nearly always survives near its original setting'.

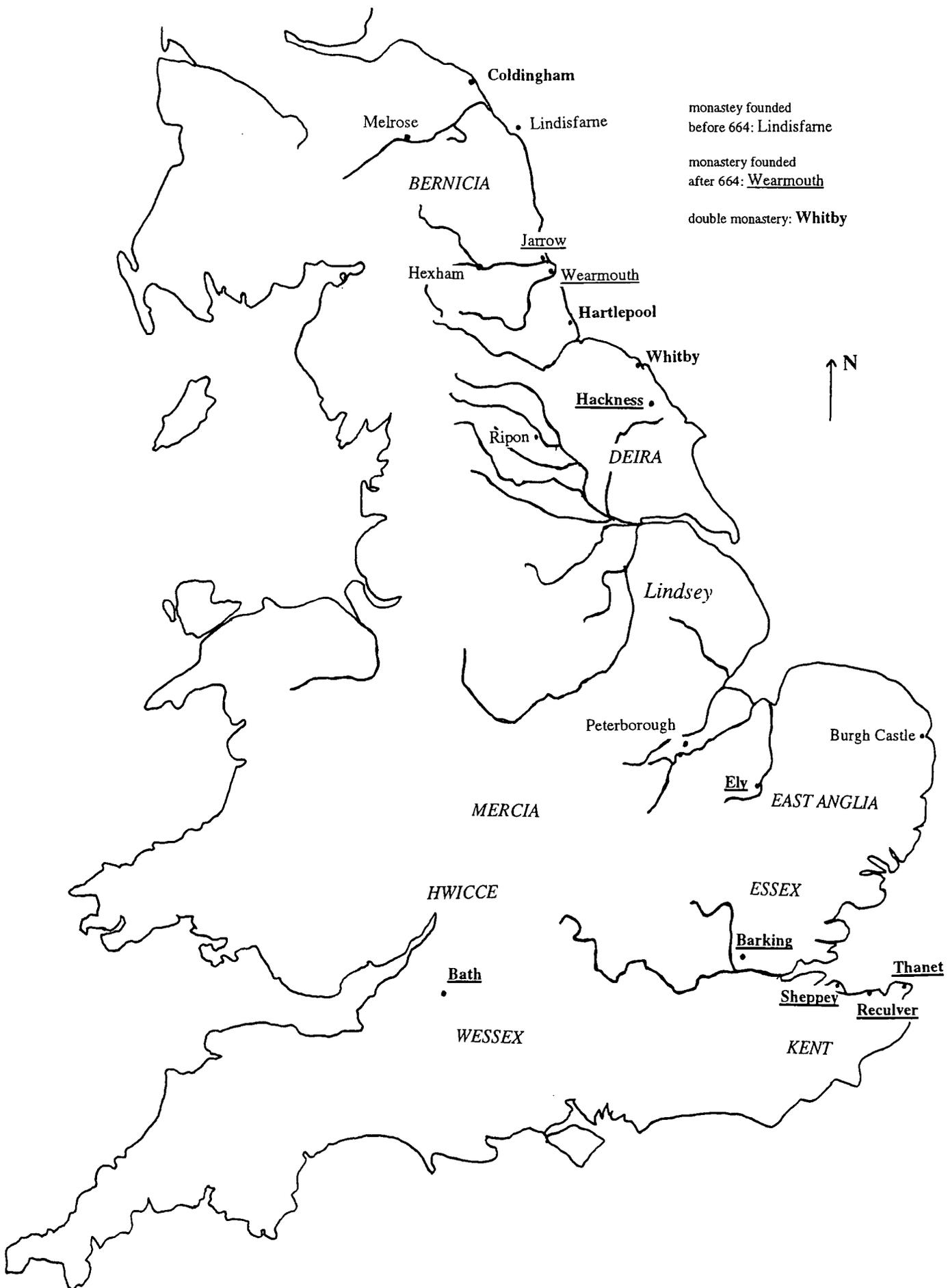
<sup>437</sup> Whitby III: Peers and Radford, 'Saxon Monastery of Whitby', p. 44; Okasha, 'Hand List', pp. 121-2; one of them is has a memorial formula, the legible part of which is HICRE meaning probably HIC RE[QUIESCIT], that is 'here rests...'. The other inscribed stone is the one dedicated to Aelfflaed.

<sup>438</sup> Whitby IV (Abbae); Whitby VII (Eomund); and Whitby XIV (Cynburg?).

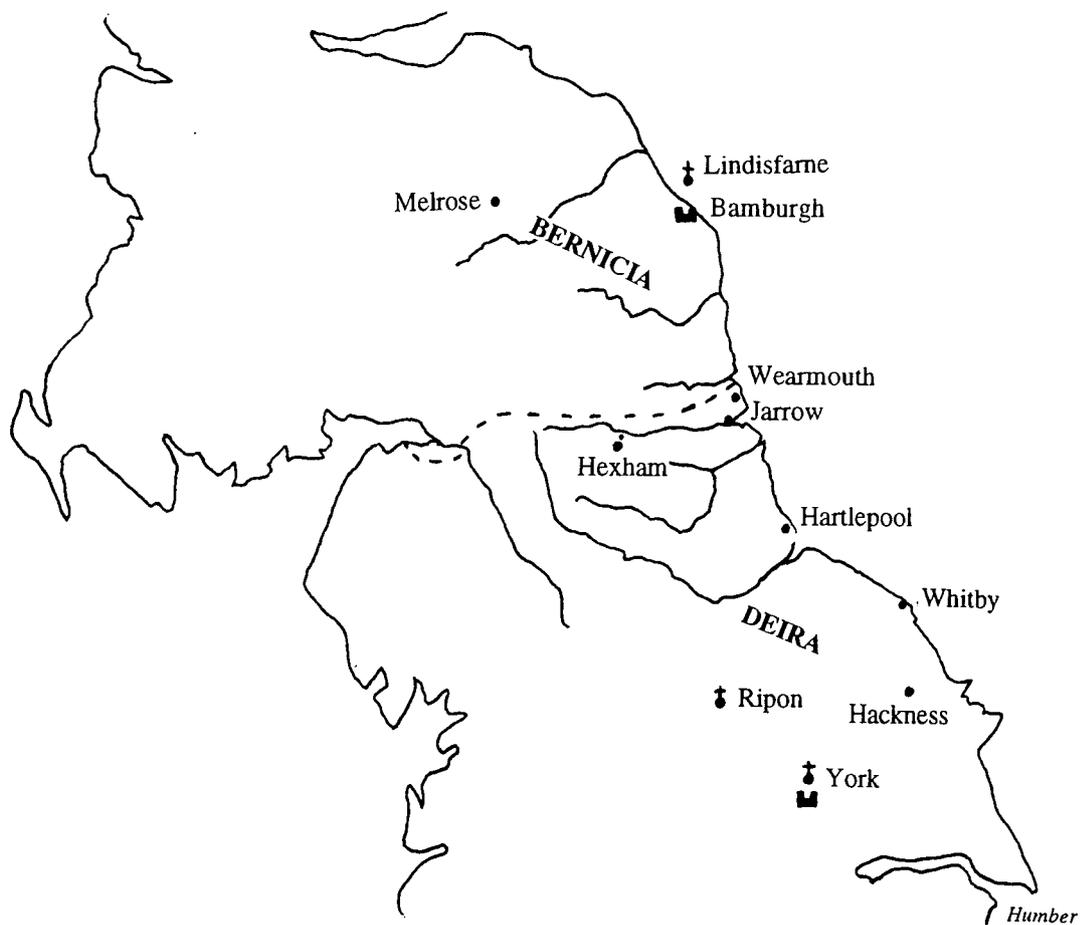
<sup>439</sup> C. Fell, 'Hild', p. 99.

<sup>440</sup> R. Cramp, 'Anglo-Saxon Monasteries of the North', *Scottish Archaeological Forum* 5 (1973), p. 108; on the question of literacy in the early Anglo-Saxon period, see S. Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 36-62, and the article by P. Wormald hereafter.

**Appendix 2**  
**Monasteries in England in the seventh century**



Appendix 3  
The kingdom of Northumbria in the seventh century



- ✚ Bishoprics
- Monasteries
- Royal residence
- - Hadrian's wall

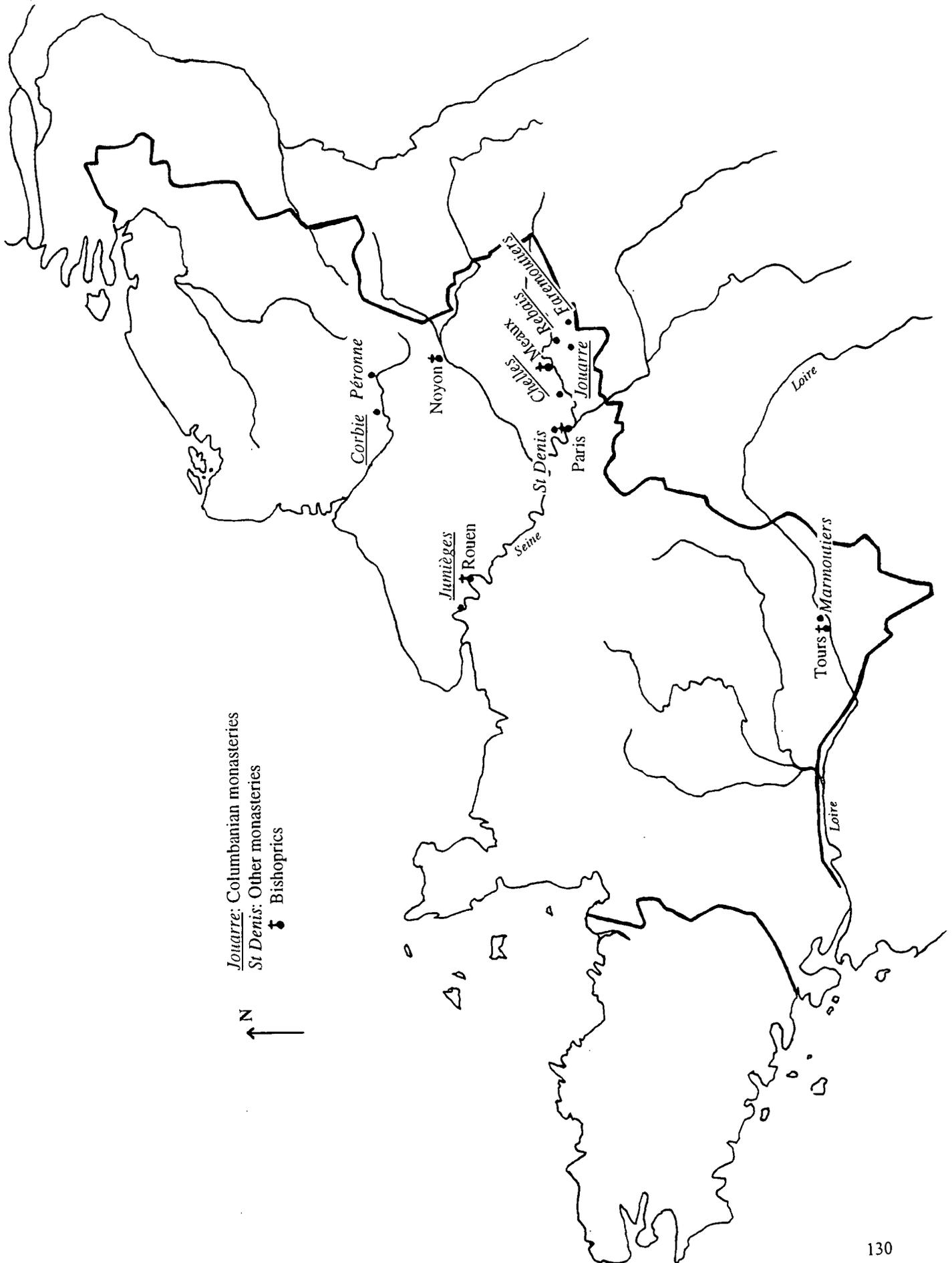
Appendix 4  
Monasteries in Gaul in the seventh century



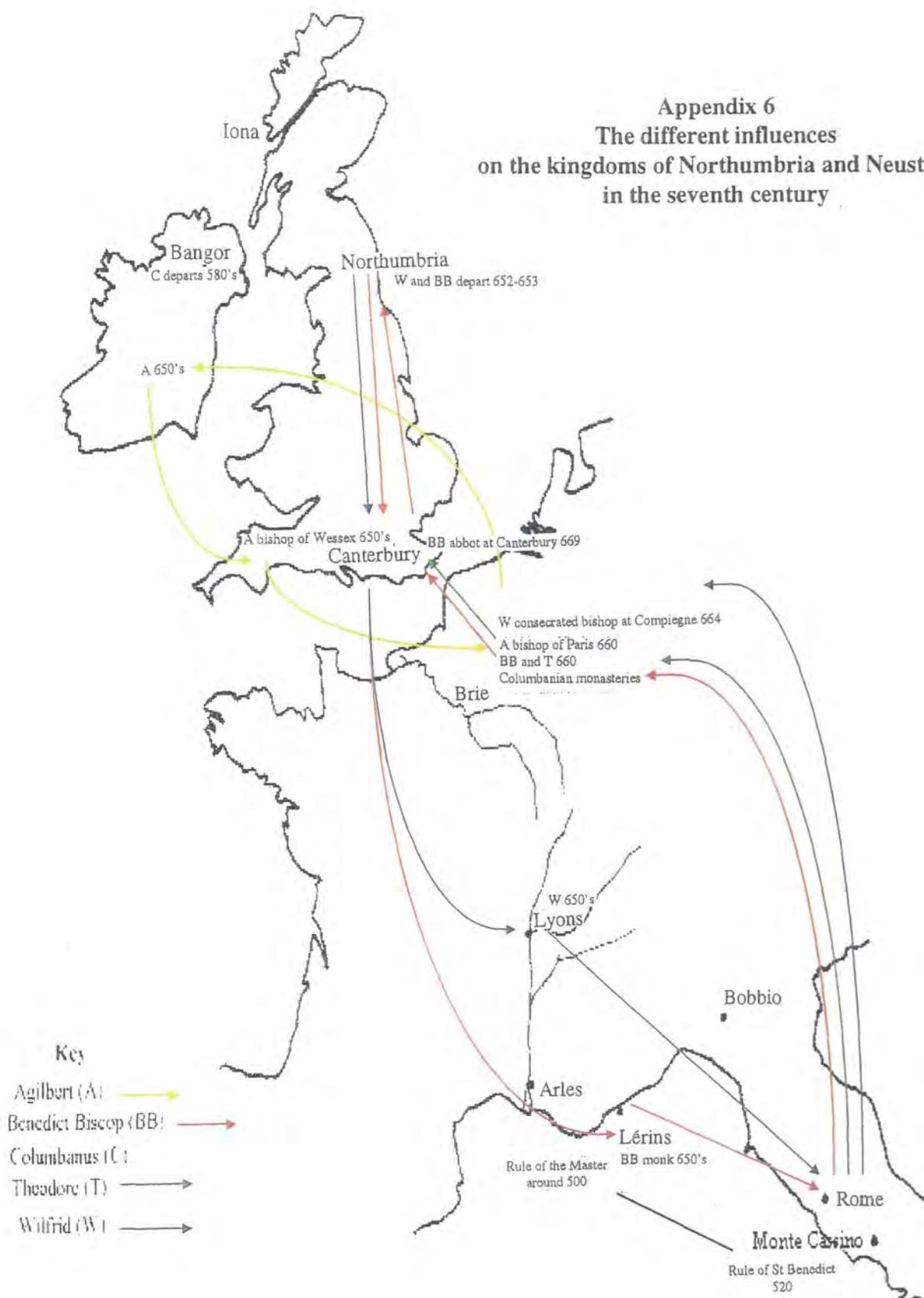
Jouarre: Columbanian monasteries



Appendix 5  
The kingdom of Neustria in the seventh century



## Appendix 6 The different influences on the kingdoms of Northumbria and Neustr in the seventh century



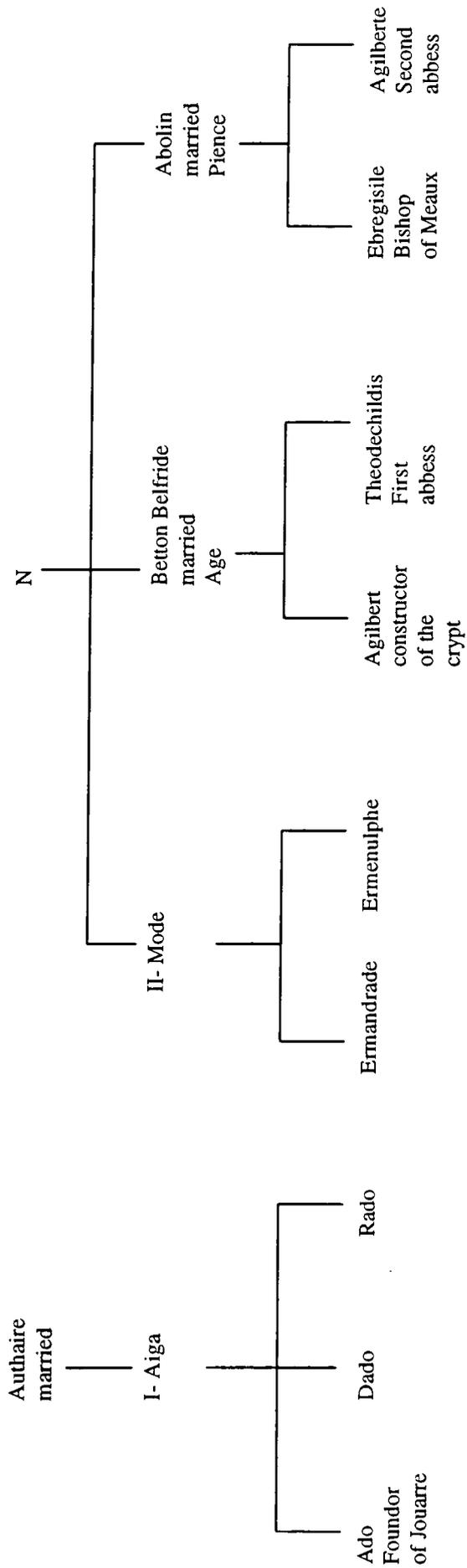
**Appendix 7**  
**Chronology of the diffusion of the different influences**  
**in Neustria and Northumbria**  
**in the seventh century**

date	Neustria (and Northern Gaul)	Northumbria
590	Arrival of Columbanus.	
610	Columbanus and his followers meet aristocrats, like Authaire's family at Ussy-sur-Seine, or St Fare' family.	
625	Foundation of the first double monastery, Remiremont.	
630's	Diffusion of Columbanian influence through the monks of Luxeuil and the aristocrats who have met him. Start of the monastic foundations wave. Birth of the Mixed Benedictine-Columbanian Rule.	
635	Foundation of Jouarre.	Aidan comes to Northumbria and founds Lindisfarne.
652-3		Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid leave for Gaul and, ultimately, Rome.
650's 660's	Spread of the influence to the other aristocrats and members of the royal family.	
c. 650		Hartlepool becomes the first double monastery in England.
c. 657	Re-foundation of Chelles.	Foundation of Whitby.
660	Agilbert leaves Wessex, and becomes bishop of Paris.	
663		Wilfrid is consecrated priest by Agilbert, bishop of Paris.
664		Synod of Whitby; Wilfrid is consecrated bishop by twelve bishops at Compiègne, among whom Agilbert.
670's 680's		Northumbrian churchmen come back to Northumbria and transmit their knowledge to members of the leading classes. They bring back the Rule of St Benedict.
674		Foundation of Wearmouth.
681		Foundation of Jarrow.



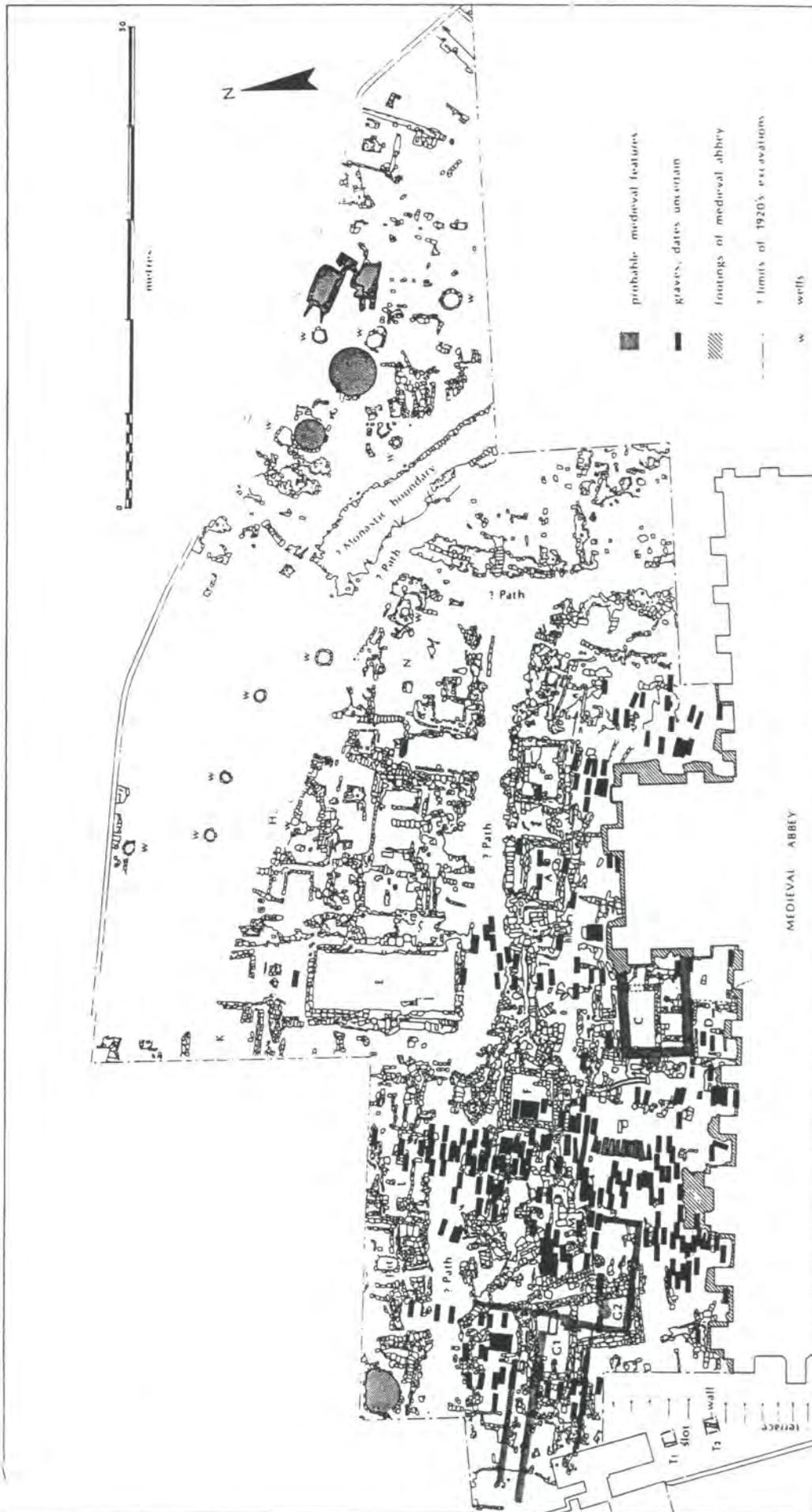
## Appendix 9

### The origins of the monastery of Jouarre: The family tree of the founders as shown by the *Genealogy*



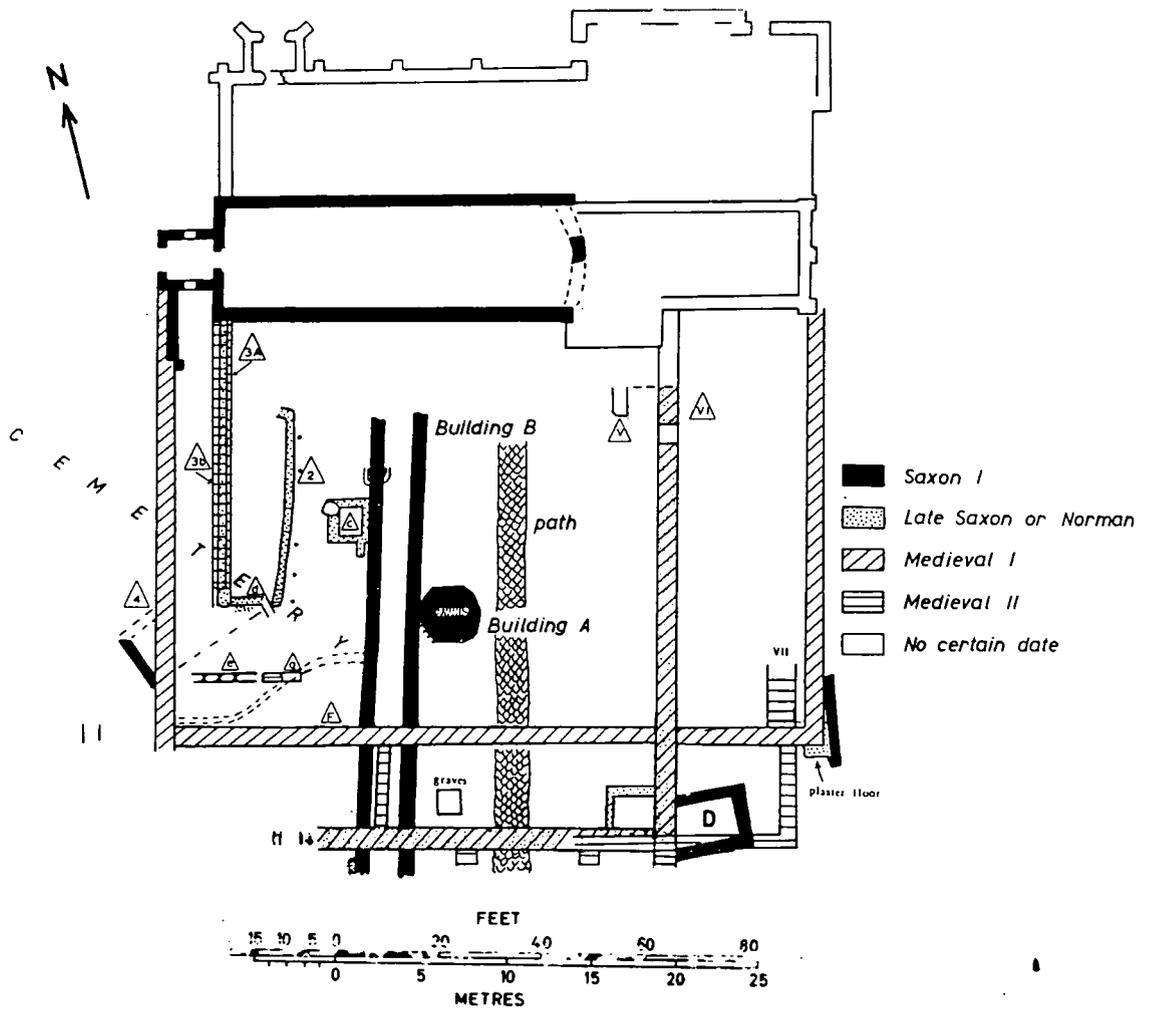
source: Marquise de Maille, *Les Cryptes de Jouarre* (Paris, 1971), p. 69

Appendix 10  
 Plan of the excavations at the monastery of Whitby



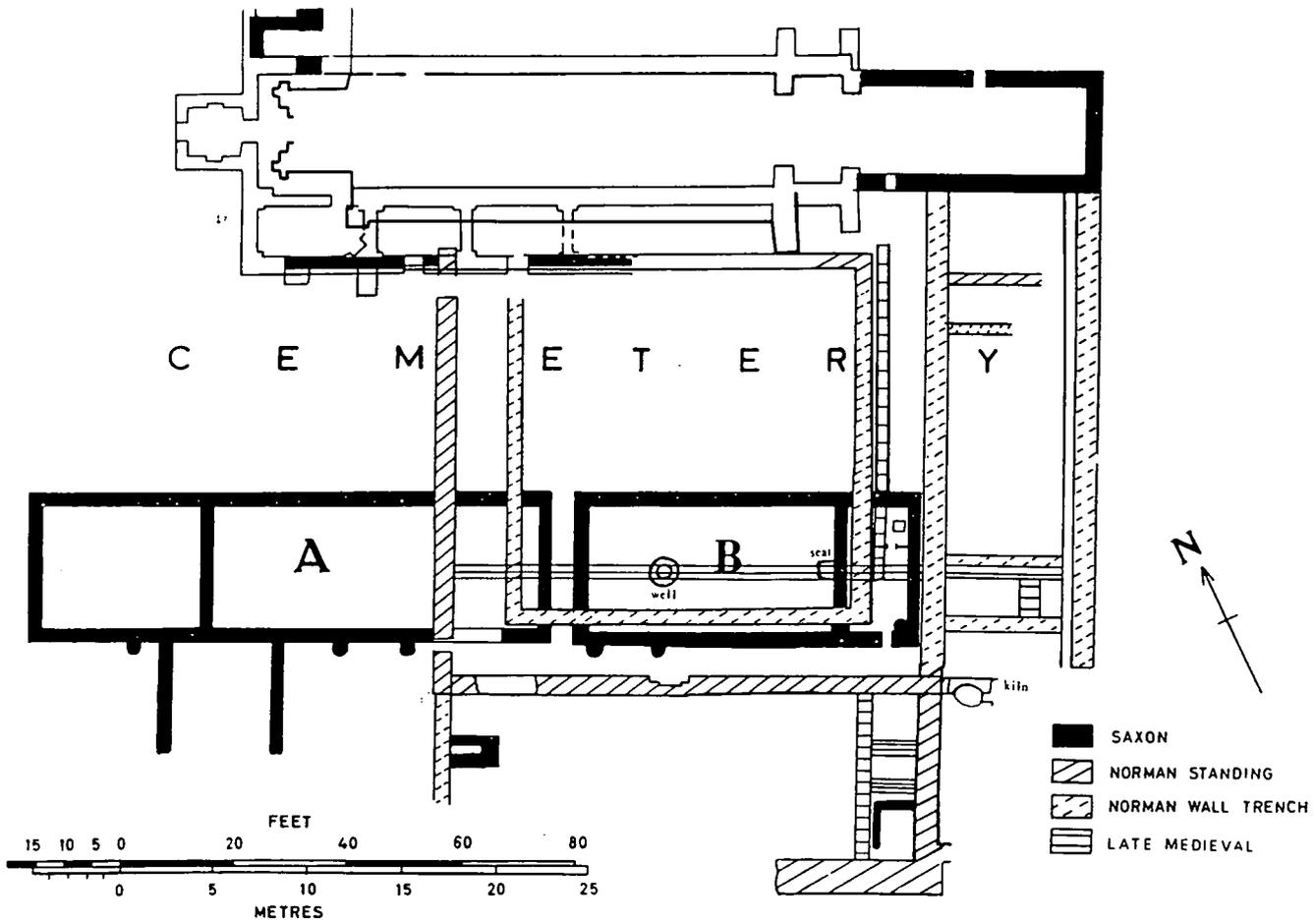
Source: plan established by P. Rahtz, on which M. Johnson put back the graves to emphasize the medieval disturbances. M. Johnson, 'The Saxon Monastery of Whitby: Past, Present, and Future', *In Search of Cult, Archaeological Investigations in Honour of Philip Rahtz* (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 86

Appendix 11  
 Plan of the excavations at the monastery of Wearmouth



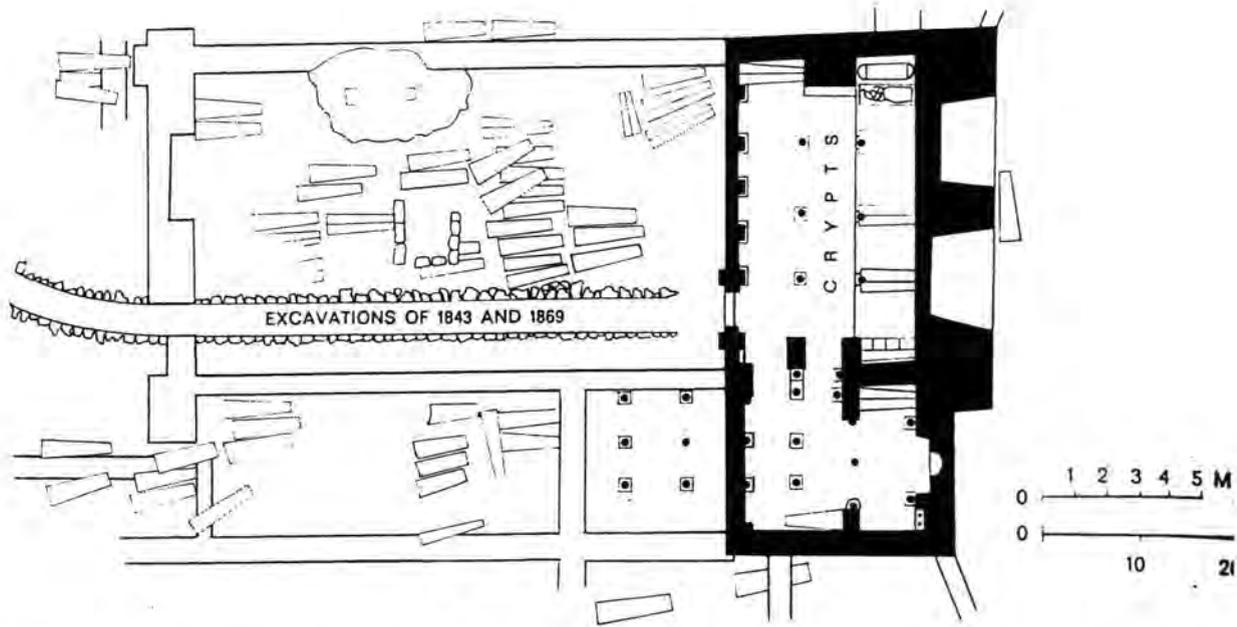
source: R. Cramp, 'Anglo-Saxon Monasteries of the North',  
*Scottish Archaeological Forum* 5 (1973), p. 117.

Appendix 12  
 Plan of the excavations at the monastery of Jarrow

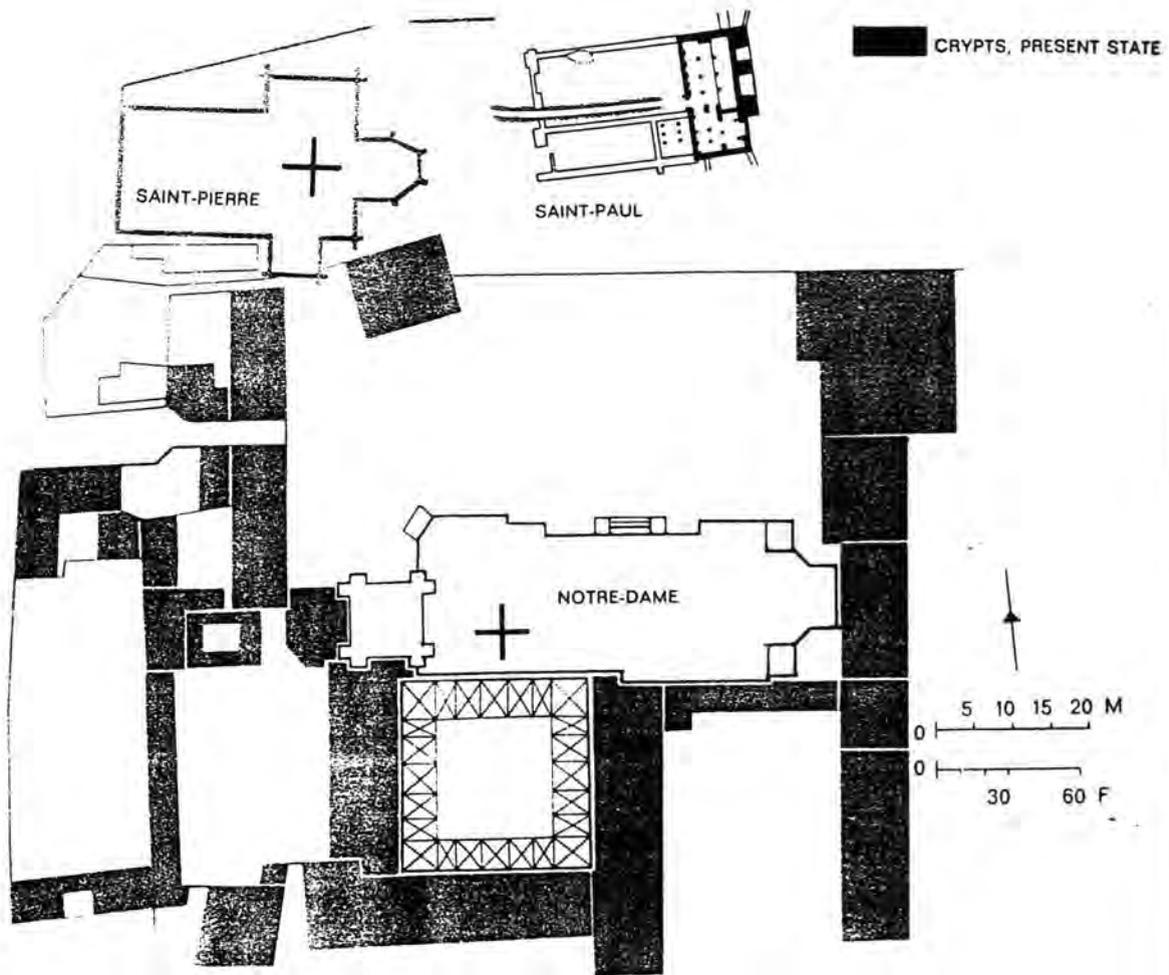


Source: R. Cramp, 'Anglo-Saxon Monasteries of the North',  
*Scottish Archaeologica Forum* 5 (1973), p. 120.

Appendix 13  
The monastery and the crypts of Jouarre



340 A & B - JOUARRE. CEMETERY CHURCH (ABOVE) AND ANCIENT CHURCHES OF THE ABBEY (BELOW).



Source: J. Hubert, *Europe in the Dark Ages* (London, 1969), p. 304.



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