

## Abstract

The present thesis focuses on the importance of the written word as a ruling device of the Anglo-Saxon kings. Due to the availability of historical evidence, the studied period begins in 597 with the arrival of Christian missionaries from Rome and ends prior to the Norman Conquest in 1066. The kings' approach to the written word is analyzed on the basis of surviving literary and iconographic evidence, i.e. on documents composed for or by the rulers, and on the visual images of the rulers as portrayed in surviving manuscripts.

The first chapter provides a historical background necessary for the correct interpretation of the examined texts and portraits. This section is aimed at the main concepts discussed in the thesis: medieval authorship, medieval kingship, and the spread of Christianity within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The second chapter offers the analysis of written documents and focuses on the texts composed within the scope of King Alfred's educational and religious reform. The close reading of the OE translations demonstrates the king's use of the texts as didactic tools mainly serving to promote religion and learning within the kingdom. The key texts are Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, Augustine's *Soliloquies*, and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*; an additional context of the king's life and priorities is provided by Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and Asser's *Life of King Alfred*. The third chapter explores the subsequent kings' attitude to the written word through a close analysis of their portraits and the manuscripts in which they are located. This section is concerned with the period from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century and focuses on King Æthelstan, King Edgar, King Cnut, and also Queen Emma. These rulers illustrate the later development of the written word used as a ruling device and their portraits document the arrival of more practical and self-centred uses of texts.

## Key words

medieval kingship, medieval authorship, a linguistic analysis, Old English, Anglo-Saxon iconography, Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, Christianity, monastic reform, *Pastoral Care*, *Soliloquies*, *Consolation of Philosophy*, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, *Life of King Alfred*, Asser, Bede, King Alfred, King Edgar, King Æthelstan, King Cnut, Queen Emma, Queen Ælfgifu