

Holy Validation

Saints and Early Liturgy in Scandinavia

Sara E. Ellis Nilsson

During the conversion and Christianisation process in Scandinavia, from about 1000-1300, cults of new saints were formed that were indigenous to the area. The emergence of these new cults is similar to other newly converted areas, such as Central Europe, where the process of conversion often saw the making of new martyrs for the Christian faith. The promotion of these early cults of saints was tied into the Christianisation process of the country; that is the establishment of the official church in a region, including its all-important administration in the form of bishoprics.

The existence of verification needs of the new bishoprics can be seen through the formation of the cults of these new saints, which in turn helped validate the location or existence of the bishopric.¹ This article will address three of the new cults of saints that emerged in what was to become the Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala in 1164. These cults are noteworthy in that they seem to have been used in the legitimisation of the placement or continued placement of some of the new bishoprics.² The new saints from this region used in this type of holy validation are Sigfrid of Västergötland, Botvid of Södermanland and Eskil of Tuna/Strängnäs.

Identifying the establishment of early bishoprics

To begin with, traditionally, Skara, Sigtuna and Linköping are usually seen as the most important church centres in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.³ Furthermore, in order to clearly identify the locations of the earliest bishoprics in this area, the 'Firenze list', originally dated to 1120, is usually used. This list is the

¹ In this article, the terms 'validate' and 'validation' are used in the sense that the presence of a special saint and his/her connection to a specific location reinforce and show divine approval for the sanctity of that location. This connection includes physical – past visits or present-day relics – and theoretical – e.g. claims that a saint mentioned the importance of a particular location – aspects. On the significance of *loca sanctorum*, see, among others, Alan Thacker, 'Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the Saints', in Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe ed., *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 2002, 1–43, 40–43.

² There are other new saints from the Uppsala province which could be included in this category, such as Elin of Skövde. These saints have been chosen in particular as their cults developed early, they were associated with the Christianisation of their respective areas and they provide varying examples of types of saints for comparison: itinerant bishops and laypeople. For further analysis and discussion of all of the early cults of saints in the Uppsala and Lund provinces, see the author's forthcoming doctoral dissertation.

³ See Bertil Nilsson, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. Missionstid och tidig medeltid* (Sveriges kyrkohistoria, 1), Verbum Förlag AB: Stockholm 1998, 86ff.

earliest official record of bishoprics within what would become the Lund, Nidaros and Uppsala Ecclesiastical Provinces.⁴ It is thought that the information for the list might have originated in the Archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen who originally had control over the region, although the information could also have come from the parties interested in establishing a primacy in Lund over the Scandinavian region.⁵ Even before the establishment of the first separate archbishopric in Scandinavia and due to the Investiture Struggle in which Hamburg-Bremen sided with the Emperor, the Papacy was sympathetic towards creating a system of direct access to Scandinavia, for example through Lund. A list such as the Firenze List was necessary to keep track of the administrative divisions of the church, an essential task especially for the managing of tithes and establishing to whom important correspondence should be sent.

Some of the names of the bishoprics on this list are difficult to interpret and their geographical associations are erroneous, which indicates that the list is not entirely reliable and subject to some ignorance or an error in copying on the part of the scribe.⁶ However, it does give an indication of where the first bishoprics were placed in this area.

On the original list the names from what would be the Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala are as follows, ‘Scara. Liunga. Kaupinga. Tuna. Strigines. Sigtuna. Arosa’.⁷ The names are usually interpreted to be Skara, Linköping – understood to be a combination of *Liunga* and *Kaupinga*, Tuna, Strängnäs, Sigtuna and Västerås – originally Väster/West Aros (see Figure 1).⁸

These sees mentioned can be seen as missionary centres. Their placement would have been susceptible to change at any time; they were in a state of flux. The ecclesiastical administration, and its accompanying duties, could not work in the long-term unless bishoprics were fixed points. Therefore, every means possible could conceivably have been used to firmly establish bishops’ sees.

As a case in point, the see in Tuna, the site of today’s Eskilstuna, was terminated at a later date, while Sigtuna was moved to Old Uppsala in the 1130s. In addition, Växjö was founded in about 1170 and the bishopric in Turku (the mission bishopric of Nousis having been moved) in about 1220.⁹ With regards to

4 It includes all contemporary bishoprics from Scandinavia and is dated to 1120. See Göran Bäärnhielm, ‘Florensdokumentet, ca 1120. Översatt och kommenterat’, in Ingmar Jansson ed., *Gutar och vikingar* (Historia i fickformat), Statens Historiska Museum: Stockholm 1983, 449-451, 450ff; Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, ‘Kirkens etablering’, in Göran Dahlbäck ed., *Kyrka – Samhälle – Stat. Från kristnande till etablerad kyrka* (23. Nordiska historikermötet), Finska Historiska Samfundet: Helsinki 1997, 59-81, 63-65. ‘Kapitel 6’ in Nilsson 1998, 70-85. For an alternative dating of c. 1100, contemporary with the attempt to establish the Lund Archbishopric, see Tore Nyberg, ‘Adam av Bremen och Florenslistan’, *Scandia* 57 (1991), 153-189, here 158ff.

5 Bäärnhielm 1983, 449.

6 Nyberg 1991, 166ff.

7 Found in Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. Ashburnham 1554. Bäärnhielm 1983, 450. See also Nyberg 1991, 167.

8 However, some scholars suggest that Liunga and Kaupinga refer instead to two bishoprics, Linköping or a ‘Lionga’ and another Köping/Kaupinga, for example the one on Öland or in Västmanland. For example, see Nyberg 1991, 167ff. Moreover, some also suggest that Arosa actually refers to Östra Aros, present-day Uppsala. Bäärnhielm 1983, 450-51; Skovgaard-Petersen 1997, 65. Nyberg is another who adheres to the thought that Aros is Östra Aros and that Sigtuna (from Adam of Bremen) was divided into three dioceses – Sigtuna, Strängnäs and Östra Aros – see Nyberg 1991, 174-179. Otherwise, the more general acceptance is that Östra Aros was first made into a see/archsee with the name of Uppsala in the 1270s.

9 Skovgaard-Petersen 1997, 65.

the Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala, it in itself was not created until 1164. The area was first under the control of the Archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen, apparently responsible for the official missionary work there, and then Lund from 1103. It is apparent that the area was in a constant state of development and consolidation.



Figure 1 – Map of the Bishoprics of the Medieval Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala

By the time the Skänninge Meeting took place in 1248, there were seven bishoprics in existence and they would remain so until the Reformation. These included Skara, Linköping, Strängnäs, Uppsala, Västerås, Vaxjö and Turku.¹⁰ This fact represents the culmination of the efforts to create a stable ecclesiastical administration in the region. A sense of permanence and continuity can be seen by the fact that the bishoprics at Skara, (probably) Linköping, Strängnäs and Västerås are found on both lists.

Sigfrid of Vaxjö, Eskil of Strängnäs and Botvid of Södermanland

Turning now to the cults of the three saints in question, according to all the variations of their legends, Sigfrid and Eskil were both missionary bishops, while Botvid was a native inhabitant of Södermanland who had converted to Christianity as an adult. All had ties to England – Sigfrid and Eskil had purportedly been sent from there as missionaries, while Botvid engaged in trade with the kingdom. According to information from their legends, Sigfrid, Eskil and Botvid lived in the eleventh century – a time of intense missionary work in the area. As will be seen, all of these cults were used in different forms of holy

¹⁰ ‘Kapitel 6’ Nilsson 1998, 71.

validation, including the legitimisation of the establishment of the official church in the newly Christianised area and tangible saintly support of the new ecclesiastical administration.

Sigfrid of Växjö

Firstly, the cult of Sigfrid and the establishment of the Växjö Bishopric appear to be intertwined. The complete version of St Sigfrid's *vita* was probably composed at the beginning of the 1200s, while the oldest version of his legend is from the 1160s.¹¹ The *vita* contains references to Sigfrid's beginnings in the Archbishopric of York and his early missionary work in what was to become the Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala. It describes his eleventh-century journey from England to Denmark – where he was welcomed – and thereafter to 'Värend' ('Waerendia')¹² described as the southern-most province of *Swecie*. He was divinely guided to a settlement that 'now is called Växjö'.¹³ In the mid-twelfth century, a second, stone church was built here and dedicated to him (and St John the Baptist). The Växjö version of Sigfrid's legend claimed that thenceforth Växjö had remained a bishop's see.

The cathedral itself was actually completed by the mid-1100s.¹⁴ This fact supports the bishopric's claim concerning the continuity of the church's presence in Växjö from at least the twelfth century. Moreover, Växjö asserted with some success (as will be discussed later) to have been the first see established in the kingdom of Sweden. In order to support this claim, a list of bishops was added to the legend which showed that the see was illegally transferred to Skara and then Linköping before being re-established in Växjö in 1170.¹⁵ This act coincides with the legend's composition and the completion of the cathedral.

Sigfrid's legend was developed and refined throughout the centuries, while several versions were composed in Skara, Linköping and Uppsala.¹⁶ Most

11 The *vita* is from 1206, based on MSS which include the Chronicle of Växjö Bishops and the *Gesta beati Sigfridi*. See Tryggve Lundén, *Sveriges missionärer, helgon och kyrkogrundare. En bok om Sveriges kristnande*, Artos: Helsingborg 1983, 175. (*Script. Rer. Suec.* III:2, 129 ff.). The oldest version of Sigfrid's legend is from the 1160s and connected to the legitimisation of Växjö. See also Nils Blomkvist, Stefan Brink and Thomas Lindkvist, 'The kingdom of Sweden', in Nora Berend ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2007, 167–213, 188.

12 Lundén 1983, 195 ll. 116–117.

13 *Ibid.*, 195, ll. 126–128: '...et in locum, qui/ nunc ab incolis dicitur Wexio, Domino ducente, peruenit'.

14 Lars-Olof Larsson, *Den helige Sigfrid. I kult, legend och verklighet*, S:t Sigfrids gille i Växjö: Växjö 1975, 7.

15 Correspondence with Anders Fröjmark, October 2012. See also Anders Fröjmark, 'Från Erik pilgrim till Erik konung: om helgonkulten och Sveriges kristnande', in Bertil Nilsson ed., *Kristnandet i Sverige: Gamla källor och nya perspektiv (Projektet Sveriges kristnande. Publikationer 5)*, Lunne Böcker: Uppsala 1996, 387–418, here at 404.

16 One of the earliest extant copies of Sigfrid's legend is a shortened version found in a mid-to-late-thirteenth-century Scandinavian breviary held by the British Library (BL Add. 40146). This particular version of Sigfrid's legend represents an early stage in its development. It has been suggested that this version is a summary of the actual legend *Gesta beati Sigfridi* from around 1206. See Toni Schmid, *Den helige Sigfrid I*, A.-B. Gleerupska Univ.-Bokhandeln: Lund 1931. According to Fröjmark (correspondence October 2012), some of the variations that developed in other dioceses are different enough that they can be classified as new legends and not a development of the original legend, e.g. Birte Carlé and Anders Fröjmark, 'Danemark, Suède, Finland', in Guy Philippart ed., *Hagiographies (Corpus Christianorum)*,

versions of Sigfrid's legend explicitly name the location that the saint favoured for the bishop's see in the area: Växjö (in *Swecie*). Moreover, the list of bishops attached to the early-thirteenth century Västgöta Law Codes (*Västgötalagen*) contains mention of Sigfrid, including the important information that his bones rest in Växjö.¹⁷ The resting place of a saint's remains marked an important cultic location. In many instances, saints decided where they wished their earthly remains to be buried by means of miracles. Pointing out where the remains of a saint were placed ensured a validation of the holiness of a place, as well as communicating a saint's acquiescence with the placement.

Furthermore, one of the earliest complete versions of Sigfrid's *vita* states that Sigfrid himself chose his burial place (Växjö) through divine inspiration: 'Buried in that place that God has pointed out for him'.¹⁸ Again, this choice provided support for the holiness of the place.

Other sources, such as Adam of Bremen's *Gesta*, do not support the legend's claims of the importance or supremacy of Växjö.¹⁹ Instead, they provide corroborating evidence of Sigfrid's activities in Västergötland, including the baptism of King Olof Skötkonung, which should provide a closer connection to the Bishopric in Skara. This information presents an interesting problem: were there in fact two Sigfrids? However, it is more likely that there was only one missionary named Sigfrid who presumably was active in both areas. Both bishoprics also showed an interest in developing his cult. Sigfrid was then successfully appropriated by the proponents of bishopric placement in Växjö.²⁰

In addition, it would be misleading to give the impression that Sigfrid was only important in the one area in his legend. In fact, as mentioned, his legend states that he was responsible for baptizing one king Olov *Skötkonung* and his men in Västergötland (*Westgocie*).²¹ This story gives the area under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Uppsala its own version of an early narrative of royal conversion, such as those found in Denmark (Harald Bluetooth) and Norway (Olav Trygvason and, to some extent, Olav 'the Holy' Haraldsson). Moreover, it strengthens the idea of the ruling class buying into the new Christian faith and supporting it, creating a regional identity through a conversion legend. In fact, Sigfrid would eventually become one of the patron saints of the Swedish kingdom (mid-1300s).²² Despite Sigfrid's importance to the conversion story and the future kingdom, the primary focus was on Växjö.

Brepols: Turnhout 1996, 501–545, 524f; Fröjmark 1996, 404. The legend itself is assumed to have been written down in the late twelfth century, about 100–150 years after the events it purportedly describes. See also Larsson 1975, 13 f. Ellen Jørgensen, 'Bidrag til ældre nordisk kirke- og litteraturhistorie', *Nordisk tidskrift för Bok- och biblioteksväsen* 20 (1933), 186–198, 191; Lundén 1983, 177.

¹⁷ Larsson 1975, 7–8.

¹⁸ The text is in *Codex Laurentii Odonis*, thought to have been composed in the late fourteenth century. The text in Lundén (1983, 209 ll. 221–223) is as follows: 'Sepultus est in/ eodem loco, in auo [sic] sibi Deo donante/ pausam elegerat'. See also Önnersfors' edition (where 'auo' is 'quo'): Alf Önnersfors, *Die Hauptfassungen des Sigfridoffiziums. Mit kritischen Editionen*, Vetenskaps-societeten i Lund: Lund 1968.

¹⁹ For examples, including Adam of Bremen, see Larsson 1975, 13–16.

²⁰ Anders Fröjmark, October 2012. Skara also claimed to have his place of burial; however, Växjö's claim proved to be more successful.

²¹ Antiphon for third Nocturne: Lundén 1983, 203 ll. 222–225.

²² For further discussion of the political ramifications of Sigfrid's cult, both secular and ecclesiastical (as discussed in this article), see my forthcoming dissertation and Larsson 1975, 8–9, 14–15, 17.

Despite this connection to Skara and Västergötland, Sigfrid's legend can be seen as a form of identity-building for the area and, moreover, it claims that he was the first bishop of Växjö. If that was true, it would mean that Växjö was founded at least 100 years before the generally accepted date of 1170 and would support the claims made by the Växjö bishop's list. Furthermore, Växjö would be as important as Skara, a diocese with a long history. Despite these claims, however, the legend should instead be seen as a tool of propaganda in legitimizing the location of the bishopric of Växjö.²³

The fact that the composition of Sigfrid's legend and the official, final establishment of Växjö as a diocese in around 1170 seem to coincide lends support to the idea that Växjö needed a figurehead and a form of validation. Sigfrid fit into the missionary roll for this area well and, with its own local saint (or saints if Sigfrid's nephews are included), Växjö would be a destination for pilgrims. Furthermore, other ecclesiastical institutions important for the proper running of a diocese would be placed there, for example, the Cathedral Chapter, hospitals and a school. These establishments were an important part of the Christianisation of society – the running of the ecclesiastical administration required centres which in turn were prestigious and accorded a holy character.

In addition to the information provided by his legend, Sigfrid's continued importance to Växjö is supported by the existence of seals and art-work with his image. The earliest examples are from the thirteenth century. For instance, a canon in Växjö by the name of Bo used what appears to be Sigfrid's image on his seal in 1280.²⁴ With regards to images of Sigfrid, an early-thirteenth-century wooden statue from Hemmesjö Church (near Växjö) most likely depicts Sigfrid (Figure 2).²⁵

Unlike many missionary saints, Sigfrid was not a martyr. At a somewhat later date, but by the beginning of the thirteenth century, Sigfrid's legend included three nephews: Unaman, Sunaman and Vinaman, all priests or deacons who were martyred while preaching to the pagans.²⁶ As they were connected to Sigfrid's cult, their resting place was also important to the support of a holy location. They too were buried near Växjö and support the region of Varend as a holy one, with



Figure 2 – Statue of St Sigfrid from Hemmesjö (photo: Henrik Hultgren, Riksantikvarieämbetet, RAÄ, Sm. Hemmesjö gamla kyrka, Smålands museum, Växjö, 1962)

²³ See *ibid.*, 14 ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵ Hemmesjö was responsible for giving Växjö cathedral a prebend or providing for a prebendary. See further *ibid.*, 10. See also, *Medeltidens bildvärld*, Stockholm 2003, ID 910729S910727.

²⁶ It can possibly be dated to c. 1206, when the longer version of Sigfrid's Legend was composed. The Breviary fragment held by the British Library (BL Add. 40146) contains a summary of Sigfrid's legend which includes his nephews. This fragment has been dated to the second half of the thirteenth century; therefore, the story was added to his legend by this date.



Figure 3 - Breviary Fragment from Växjö (Fr 7015)
(photo: S. E. Ellis Nilsson)

Växjö being a natural location for the bishopric with a saintly confessor and three martyrs gracing the region.²⁷

To some extent, the liturgical fragment evidence supports the idea that Sigfrid's cult was used in legitimizing the bishopric's location in Växjö. The earliest fragments containing reference to Sigfrid and his *officium* are from the thirteenth century. Both are Breviary fragments, one from the Växjö Diocese and the other from the Strängnäs Diocese.²⁸ The fragment from Växjö contains music and antiphons for *Laudes* and Second

Vespers, including a *Benedictus* (Figure 3). The Strängnäs fragment is part of the *Liber ecclesie Torsan* or the Toresund Church Breviary, which is one of the oldest extant copies of Sigfrid's *officium*. The fact that the *officium* contains nine lessons indicates that his cult enjoyed a high rank even in Strängnäs by the thirteenth century.

Sigfrid also appears in a sequence in a Breviary fragment from the Linköping Diocese and in an Antiphonary fragment from the Uppsala Archbishopric.²⁹ Moreover, in the second half of the thirteenth century, Sigfrid's *officium* was included in a Breviary from one of the dioceses in the Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala, probably from Strängnäs.³⁰

27 The martyrs' heads were kept in the cathedral, while their bodies were buried at an unknown location. Several reliquaries of various shapes (e.g. a head, arm and foot) and sizes were confiscated in the sixteenth century. See Olle Källström, *Medeltida kyrksilver från Sverige och Finland, förlorat genom Gustav Vasas konfiskationer*, Almqvist & Wiksell: Uppsala 1939, 301–02.

28 The Växjö fragment contains part of Sigfrid's *officium* with musical notation in two columns on the *recto* and *verso* sides of half of a folio: Fr 7015 (Växjö). The fragment from the Strängnäs Diocese (Fr 25013), part of the *Liber ecclesie Torsan*, includes fragments of nine lessons (see also n. 54). Both the *Officium Sancti Sigfridi* from Toresund and the 'Additur reliqua officii S. Sigfridi pars ex ceteris codicibus' on the fragment from Växjö are edited in Önnersfors 1968, 64–80, 80–82. For a note on dating see also *ibid.*, 57. All fragment designations (Fr #) refer to the entries in the MPO-database at the Swedish National Archives (RA) in Stockholm.

29 Fr 25020 (Linköping) and Fr 20315 (Uppsala).

30 London, British Library, Add. 40146.

The fourteenth century saw the addition of Sigfrid's feast to a Calendar from the Linköping Bishopric.³¹ As Linköping was the main adversary in the establishment of the Växjö Bishopric could this acceptance of Sigfrid in the local diocesan calendar represent an attempt to control the cult? In the Linköping liturgy, there was an attempt to counteract the legitimizing arguments that Sigfrid and his cult provided for Växjö.³² Here, he is described as a martyr (which is odd) and his feast is *simplex*. In the late fourteenth century, in Strängnäs or Västerås, he appears again.³³

In the fourteenth century, when the Church was firmly established as an institution in the region, there is an example of a bequest to the cathedral in 1311 in St Sigfrid's honour as well as mention of the cult by King Magnus Eriksson in diplomas from 1342 and 1347.³⁴ These diplomas bring to light a general acceptance of the claim that Växjö was the oldest bishopric in Magnus' kingdom, although it probably was not actually the oldest continuously in existence. Moreover, they also reveal the promotion of Växjö as a legitimate bishopric on the part of the king. Furthermore, Birgitta's *Revelationes* relate that there was a well-used pilgrimage route to Växjö and a general familiarity with Sigfrid's legend.³⁵ These examples provide evidence of cultic success and the effective promotion of a bishopric's placement at a later date.

The example of Sigfrid shows that establishing a bishopric at Växjö was in some way controversial. Using a respected saint, such as Sigfrid, and appropriating him and his story was an effective mean of legitimisation. The bishopric was established and remained stable throughout the medieval period despite the fact that Linköping tried to prevent its continued existence.

Turning now to the cases of Eskil of Strängnäs and, then, Botvid of Södermanland, we'll see how a bishopric that was apparently established at an early date as evidenced by its placement on the Firenze List still needed validation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.³⁶

Eskil of Strängnäs

Eskil was purportedly a missionary and a bishop, who was active in and around Tuna in Södermanland in the eleventh century (fig. 1). Firstly, Eskil's *vita* was written a while after his death was supposed to have taken place. It tells of his missionary work and his martyrdom due to a pagan reluctance to accept his attempts to establish the Christian church in the area. The first indication of a

31 Fr 25599.

32 Fröjmark 1996, 404. Another idea is that Sigfrid was borrowed from Adam of Bremen's work and then added to an existing legend about the Varend martyrs, who were then described as his nephews. This theory also ties in to the idea that Sigfrid in Västergötland and Sigfrid in Varend were the same person. See also Schmid 1931. The important idea in any case is that Sigfrid was considered to be a real person and a saint by the medieval people.

33 Fr 25596.

34 In the latter, mention is also made of Sigfrid as one of the patron saints of the kingdom. Larsson 1975, 8-9.

35 *Ibid.*, 9-10.

36 Both of these local/regional saints were eventually accepted and promoted by ecclesiastical institutions throughout the Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala. Moreover, both Eskil and Botvid were important to the Strängnäs and Västerås Bishoprics after the dissolution of the Tuna Bishopric.

missionary named Eskil in the area around Tuna is found in the writings of Ailnoth, an English monk who lived in Denmark in the early twelfth century. Furthermore, a church was built presumably by the end of the eleventh century and a monastery was founded in Tuna by 1185.³⁷ However, Eskil's legend was apparently not composed until the 1280s.³⁸ It describes a successful mission, which enjoyed the support of a king by the name of Inge, but also an organized movement among the local populace against the missionary activity. This movement replaced the Christian-friendly king Inge with one known as *Blodsven* or *Blotsven* who was responsible for Eskil's death.³⁹

Eskil's see was located at Tuna (today's Eskilstuna) which is included on the Firenze List mentioned above. The see was later moved either to Strängnäs or Västerås, both of which are also found on the list. The abolition of the Tuna Diocese and the subsequent deliberation of whether to move its area of jurisdiction to Västerås or Strängnäs would have coincided with this move. This change presumably occurred before the Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala was established in 1164.⁴⁰

It is probable that the Tuna Diocese was abolished before or around the time of the legend's composition in the late thirteenth century, as the legend specifically names his place of death, Strängnäs (*Strengengenes*).⁴¹ The idea that Tuna's jurisdiction was moved to Strängnäs is supported by the fact that Eskil's martyrdom takes place at Strängnäs in his legend.⁴² The saint legitimizes the placement of the bishopric, even at this late date.⁴³

37 See Toni Schmid, 'Eskil, Botvid och David', *Scandia* 4 (1931), 102–103; Blomkvist, Brink and Lindkvist 2007, 183. The monastery was founded by the monks of the Order of John the Baptist. Graves from the eleventh century have also been discovered nearby. Traces of Viking-age habitation were also discovered during the excavations, including two 'guld-gubbar' (gold figurines) from the eighth century. Moreover, the excavations in the monastery area discovered an older, late-eleventh-century church underneath it. See Sune Zachrisson, 'Från Vendeltid till Vasatid. Redogörelse för de byggnadsarkeologiska undersökningarna av Eskilstuna kloster och slott 1961–62', *Eskilstuna stads museer årsbok 1963* (1963), 17–74, here at 17, 26, 41ff, 50–51.

38 Blomkvist, Brink and Lindkvist 2007, 188.

39 Fourth reading from Eskil's *Officium*. Edited in Tryggve Lundén, 'Brynolf Algotssons samlade diktverk', *Credo* 27 (1946), 73–124, 96. Similar variants to this story are also found in Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* (ninth century), in the story of Anund in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta* (eleventh century) and the episode about 'Blotsven' in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* from Iceland (thirteenth century). Cf. Schmid's discussion of the different versions of Eskil's legend, including one partly preserved version on a fragment from the fourteenth century (referred to there as A1036 XIII), which contains the name 'Blotsven'. His complete legend is also found in *Codex Laurentii Odonis* and in a Strängnäs Breviary, both from the late-fourteenth century. Schmid 1931, 103–104, esp. fn 109.

40 Discussion and correspondence with Anders Fröjmark, October 2012, in which he puts forth the idea that Aros was a later addition to the list and should have replaced Tuna, which the scribe did not understand (by 1120). In other words, Tuna was transferred to Västerås, which is entirely plausible. An opposing idea that has been put forward by Nyberg is that the Aros on the list was originally Östra Aros (present-day Uppsala) and that the see moved westwards to Västerås (West Aros). See Tore Nyberg, 'Adam av Bremen och Florenslistan', *Scandia* 57 (1991), 153–189, here 174f.

41 Fourth reading from Eskil's *Officium*. Edited in Lundén 1946, 96. See also Schmid 1931, 104–105. And, 'Vita Sancti Eskilli', Erik Michael Fant, Erik Gustav Geijer and Johan H. Schröder ed. (*Scriptores rerum Suecicarum medii aevi: Jussu regis augustissimi 2*) Zeipel et Palmblad: Stockholm 1828, 397–399.

42 Blomkvist, Brink and Lindkvist 2007, 188.

43 There is no extant record of his body being translated to Strängnäs; therefore, the cult was presumably divided between his place of burial (Eskilstuna, near the monastery of the Order of St John) and Strängnäs. See also Fröjmark 1996, 401.

Other geographical places are also tied to Eskil. For instance, Fors (Eskilstuna Fors) Church is mentioned as Eskil's place of residence in his legend, while his place of burial is at Tuna.⁴⁴ This discrepancy in the legend has also led to the speculation that the bishopric was actually located in Fors.

Furthermore, one of the few extant images of Eskil from before 1300 is a statue from around 1200 of a bishop, presumably Eskil, which was found in Fors Parish indicating support of a cult there.⁴⁵ The other statue is from Länna Parish, also in Södermanland, firmly locating Eskil's cult in Strängnäs Diocese (Figure 4).⁴⁶

The earliest liturgical reference to Eskil is in a twelfth-century missal fragment. Unfortunately, the exact provenance of the Missal has proved hard to determine beyond the general 'Uppsala Ecclesiastical Province' category.⁴⁷ It is possible that the Missal was in use in the original diocese of Tuna before its dissolution.

With regards to the thirteenth century, Eskil's feast day was added early on as a *festum terræ* ('regional feast') to a Calendar from (most likely) the Linköping Bishopric.⁴⁸ Moreover, Eskil's feast was added to many thirteenth century Calendars from Västerås Diocese (Dalarna), Skara, and Uppsala (Stockholm, Vallentuna and possibly Gävle).⁴⁹ In the case of the fragment from Stockholm, his feast is high ranking with nine lessons.⁵⁰ In addition, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, Eskil can be found in a Missal fragment used by the Dominicans in the Turku diocese and in another Missal fragment used in the Uppsala Archbishopric (in Uppland) with a high ranking feast of nine lessons.⁵¹



Figure 4 – Statue of St Eskil from Länna Parish (photo: Peter Tangeberg, RAÄ, Sö Länna kyrka, 1995)

44 Fifth reading from Eskil's *Officium*. Edited in Lundén 1946, 96.

45 *Medeltidens bildvärld*, ID 930814S930815.

46 See also: *ibid.*, ID 930506S930503. Further support for the establishment process seems to be apparent in ecclesiastical art. The early statues of bishop-saints from the Uppsala province are all shown seated (thirteenth century), while the later representations are often of standing bishops. A possible interpretation of this development is that the bishop's role was one of an institutional representative in the early Christian period in Scandinavia. In other words, the most important aspect of their lives was of administration and not as martyrs or triumphant saints. (Discussion with art historian Nicolas Bock at the *Cuius patrocinio tota gaudet regio* conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia, October 18–20, 2012).

47 Fr 9635, Botvid is also found on this fragment.

48 Fr 25621. For further discussion of this donation and its political significance, as well as the secular and ecclesiastical political development of Eskil's cult in general, see my forthcoming dissertation and Schmid 1931, 102–103, 107, 114. Magnus Collmar, *Strängnäs stifts herdaminne, 1, Medeltiden*, Södermanlands museum: Nyköping 1977, 23–24.

49 Fr 4540 (Västerås Diocese), Fr 4540 (Västerås Diocese), Fr 27682 (Probably Skara, but as it is for Eskil's *translatio*, it could also have been Strängnäs.) and the Vallentuna Calendar (Uppsala Diocese). Fr 25598 (Stockholm) and LUB Fragment 117 (Gävle). Lund, Lunds universitetsbibliotek, Fragment 117.

50 Fr 25598. Eskil was also added to the Vallentuna Calendar at a later date, with an 'IX' added slightly later in the early thirteenth century which indicated the number of lessons.

51 F.m.I.115 (Dominicans, Finland), Fr 25601 (Uppsala). The Finnish fragment can be found at: <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fd2011-fra0115> *Fragmenta Membranea*, National Library of Finland: Helsinki, July 17 2013. See also: Toivo Haapanen, *Verzeichnis Der Mittelalterlichen Handschriftenfragmente in*

A diploma issued by Pope Gregory IX mentions St Eskil's church in Tuna and that it was donated by Bishop W. of Strängnäs.⁵² This donation was ratified by Archbishop S(tefan) of Uppsala, with the consent of the King (Knut) and regent (Birger Jarl), who had also donated property to the church. Another diploma, issued by Bishop Isar of Strängnäs, uses Eskil's *translatio* day to date a certification of donation.⁵³ Both the donation and dating are indications of the growing importance of Eskil's cult in Strängnäs Bishopric throughout the thirteenth century.

As a reflection of the veneration for Eskil, the settlement near which he had his mission, Tuna, was re-named Eskilstuna by the end of the thirteenth century. It is probable that this renaming was one of the steps taken in the formation of the cult – lessening the blow of re-locating the control of the saint's cult to the bishopric in Strängnäs by renaming the old, abolished see in memory of its local saint.⁵⁴

Botvid of Södermanland

Botvid was, according to his legend, a layman who had converted to Christianity in the eleventh century in the eastern part of Södermanland in Sweden.⁵⁵ Not long after, Botvid was martyred by one of his slaves, who he had originally set free. Similar to Eskil's legend, the *vita* of St Botvid also provides its audience with a description of unrest and a picture of an age of transition in the late eleventh century in about the same area. The earliest known MS of Botvid's *officium* comes from the second half of the thirteenth century and is probably a revised version of a twelfth-century original.⁵⁶ Therefore, the information found in this legend was probably written down about 200 years after the events supposedly took place, which indicates that some of the details could have been embellished and others added in order to validate decisions that were being made at the time of writing.

der Universitätsbibliothek zu Helsingfors, Helsingfors universitetsbiblioteks skrifter: Helsinki 1922.

⁵² DS 839 (Sept. 6, 1231): *Svenskt diplomatarium huvudkartotek över medeltidsbrev*, Stockholm 2005.

⁵³ DS 1252 (Oct. 7, 1298): *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Again, there is no indication that Eskil was translated to the cathedral in Strängnäs which suggests a form of joint cultic control.

⁵⁵ The Södertörn peninsula.

⁵⁶ It is included on a fragment from the Toresund Church Breviary in the Strängnäs Diocese (Fr 30838, Södermanland). This *Liber ecclesie Torsan* contains the oldest extant copy of Botvid's legend (mid-thirteenth century). See Schmid 1931, 108; Tryggve Lundén, 'Sankt Ansgars, Sankt Botvids och Sankt Davids officier', *Credo* 27 (1946), 149–183, 161ff. See also Blomkvist, Brink and Lindkvist 2007, 186–187 & fn 175. The Breviary fragment, which includes nine lessons, is edited in Alf Önnersfors, 'Das Botvidoffizium des Toresundbreviers', *Eranos* 67 (1969), 144–165. And it is mentioned in Ann-Marie Nilsson, 'Saints' offices in the fragments', in Jan Brunius ed., *Medieval Book Fragments in Sweden. An International Seminar in Stockholm, 13–16 November 2003*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien: Stockholm 2005, 184–209, 195. For further discussion of the legend and its dating, see Oloph Odenius, 'Botvid', in John Granlund ed., *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid*, Allhems förlag: Malmö 1957, 192–194; Önnersfors 1969, 145; Fröjmark 1996, 405–406. A short note about the legends of the Toresund Church Breviary – including Botvid's and Sigfrid's – is also found in Carlé and Fröjmark 1996, 517. For a discussion of fragments and offices in Sweden, see also Nilsson 2005, 184–187.

Botvid's legend as found in his *vita* indicates that two different bishops found it important to consecrate a church dedicated to Botvid, which was built on his brother's land. The year was supposedly 1129 and the bishops are identified as Henry of Uppsala and Gerder of Strängnäs.⁵⁷ It is uncertain who Gerder is or even if he existed; the Firenze List does have a Strängnäs and a Sigtuna, but no Uppsala in 1120. Despite this fact, it is important to note that those who wrote the legend wished to emphasize that a bishop of Strängnäs endorsed the cult at an early date.⁵⁸ With regards to the details of the translation of Botvid's relics in the 1170s, the presence of an Archbishop from Uppsala (Stephan) and a bishop from Strängnäs (Vilhelm) is verifiable.⁵⁹ Botvid's relics were controlled by Strängnäs as is demonstrated in Bishop Ysar of Stängnäs sending Botvid's relics to Bishop Lars in Linköping in 1292.⁶⁰ Botvid's importance to the bishoprics of Strängnäs and Uppsala is apparent from these findings.

Although the earliest known version of Botvid's legend is quite late, the first reference to him as a saint in the fragmentary liturgical material is from the twelfth century. This first appearance is found in a Missal from what was the Västerås Bishopric, possible evidence of competing bishoprics – Strängnäs-Tuna-Västerås.⁶¹ His name was also added to the Litany of Saints in the Uppsala Archbishopric in the twelfth century.⁶² A *Rituale*, also from the twelfth century, from Jönköping (Linköping Bishopric) and a Calendar entry – where his feast is listed as *simplex* on July 28th – probably from Linköping Bishopric, as well as a martyr notation in the Vallentuna Calendar (Uppsala Archbishopric) from 1198 complete the twelfth-century material.⁶³

The fragment material reveals a saint venerated by a number of bishoprics throughout the Uppsala province by the end of the twelfth century. Moreover, in the thirteenth century, Botvid's name has been included in new Calendars from the bishoprics of Västerås (Dalarna) and Uppsala (Stockholm and Uppland).⁶⁴ One of the calendars from the Uppsala Diocese (Uppland region), to which Botvid's name was added, indicates that he is an important saint with nine lessons.⁶⁵

As mentioned, Botvid's martyrdom was believed to have occurred during a period of unrest, at least according to his legend and foreign sources.⁶⁶ There were apparently several kings vying for control of the area – some sympathetic to the new religion and some not. Botvid's cult provided another holy individual for the burgeoning church in Strängnäs, although Västerås and Uppsala also seemed to

57 According to the legend, this event took place in 1129. 'Vita sancti Botvidi', Erik Michael Fant, Erik Gustav Geijer and Johan H. Schröder ed. (*Scriptores rerum Suecicarum medii aevi* 2) Zeipel et Palmblad: Stockholm 1828, 382. See Schmid 1931, 107; Blomkvist, Brink and Lindkvist 2007, 187.

58 Schmid identifies Henry as a certain 'Henricus Sictunensis', see Schmid 1931, 107.

59 The life and activities of Bishop Vilhelm of Strängnäs (1171/2–1190) are also important for the dating of Botvid's legend. He was responsible for the donation of Eskil's church in Tuna to the monks of the Order of St John. See Collmar 1977, 23–24.

60 DS 1061: *SDHK*. See also Schmid 1931, 108.

61 Fr 4549. See also Nilsson 1998, 83.

62 Fr 9635, Eskil is also found on this fragment.

63 Fr 28049 (Jönköping), Fr 25621 (Linköping?)

64 Fr 25624 (Västerås), Fr 25598 (Stockholm), Fr 25601 (Uppland).

65 Fr 25601.

66 Adam of Bremen. See also Blomkvist, Brink and Lindkvist 2007, 186–187.

fully endorse the cult of this layman as well. While Botvid and his legend did not specifically endorse the location of a see, the fact that a layperson performed posthumous miracles and aided in the Christianisation of the populace was important. His cult attracted interest primarily in Strängnäs, Västerås and Sigtuna/Uppsala; however, the latter's interest might have been an example of an archbishop wishing to control the veneration of the region under his jurisdiction.

Beyond the Bishopric – Popular Regional Cults

By the end of the thirteenth century, a cult in honour of Eskil had spread throughout the ecclesiastical province and had been officially sanctioned by several bishops as evidenced by his feast's inclusion in diocesan calendars. This fact indicates that a successful liturgical cult had been established. Moreover, the fragment evidence shows a liturgical presence for Eskil in the new Västerås Diocese, as well as in dioceses nearby. These included Skara, as well as churches under the jurisdiction of the Uppsala Diocese.

Furthermore, Eskil was mentioned as the local saint of importance in *Södermannalagen* (the Law of Södermanland) written down in the early fourteenth century.⁶⁷ According to the law, anyone caught working on Eskil's feast day in Botkyrka Parish would be subject to punishment. Botkyrka Parish was located in the eastern part of Strängnäs Diocese. This law-entry either indicates a particular reverence for Eskil in that area or a definite disregard by the parishioners for the no-work ordinance accorded his day. If the latter, it could indicate a competition between the cult of Botvid and Eskil in the area – Botvid being the other important saint of the diocese and presumably, based on his legend, from this area. Either way, the entry suggests that Eskil's cult was also supported by the bishopric. This case is similar to Sigfrid's in that a local saint has found its way into a region's laws, thereby indicating cultic importance. However, unlike Sigfrid's case, Eskil's bishopric at Tuna was dissolved and his cult was used to validate the greater importance of Strängnäs – a place of martyrdom seemingly being more worthy than a place of inhabitation for housing a bishopric.⁶⁸

With regards to Botvid, his popularity continued on into the early fourteenth century, with liturgical works from the bishoprics of Linköping (Jönköping) and Skara (Värmland) also including his name.⁶⁹ In addition, this Calendar from the Linköping Diocese (probably from Jönköping) indicates that his feast had a high rank in the diocese, with nine lessons.⁷⁰ Thus, the fragment material also shows that Botvid's cult was important to the Diocese of Linköping at an early date – and before the cults of Linköping's more well-known saints were active. One of Birgitta's revelations (*Revelationes*, ch. 72) involves Botvid, indicating that Botvid and his cult were definitely known outside of Strängnäs or Västerås by the mid-fourteenth century. Furthermore, the fact that Botvid had

67 Punishment if one worked on his feast day in Botkyrka Parish. Schmid 1931, 108.

68 Further discrepancies between the two cases exist. Växjö could have been dissolved, as its own list of bishops claims, but then later restored. In addition, Sigfrid was not a martyr, although his nephews were.

69 Fr 25620 (Jönköping, Calendar) and Fr 29694 (Skara, Antiphonary).

70 Fr 25620.

been one of the laity would have added to the attraction of his cult with that group.⁷¹ Botvid became a popular saint throughout the ecclesiastical province.

Although Botvid enjoyed a popular cultic following throughout the Uppsala province by the end of the thirteenth century, it is hard to see that he, or Eskil, played any large part in actually validating the initial establishment of a diocese. Instead, Botvid's cult was endorsed by a number of dioceses. Some of these seem to have laid claim to the cult with the intention of promoting the importance of one diocese over another, as in the case of Västerås versus Strängnäs when the Tuna Bishopric was to be dissolved and the administration moved to one of these two sees.⁷² With regards to Eskil, his position as a bishop and early missionary would have made him more attractive to the official church, especially the bishoprics.

Summing Up – Validation of Bishoprics

As we have seen, the bishoprics in question – especially Växjö – actively used saints in validating their placement or importance. By incorporating Varend and Växjö into Sigfrid's cult, the diocese had a strong case for their preferred placement of what was probably a new bishopric against opposition from Linköping in particular.⁷³ Similarly, Eskil's cult and the story of his founding a see at Tuna had the potential to promote the continuation of a bishopric there; however, instead it was most likely used to validate the move to Strängnäs (place of martyrdom), as opposed to Västerås (geographically close but distant in terms of his *vita*). In addition, the cult of Botvid can be seen to have had the full support of the Strängnäs Diocese and, in turn, it validated the diocese. Furthermore, all of the saints discussed in this paper and their cults contributed to regional differences in the Swedish bishoprics.

This saintly validation does not necessarily have to be present at the time of official diocesan placement, as has been discussed in this article. Instead, the legends of these saints incorporate details which offer an ongoing legitimisation of such placement for all future generations, for example Eskil's place of martyrdom located in Strängnäs.

71 The fact that Botvid was a member of the laity also explains in part why Botvid's cult was not used to motivate the placement of a bishopric. However, his cult was responsible for the placement of a parish church, Botkyrka, in which his relics were housed. Furthermore, another local saint, Elin, was a lay-woman from the Skara Diocese whose legend contained important details which were needed in the edification of a newly Christianised populace. Her cult will be more thoroughly examined in my forthcoming doctoral dissertation. See also Sven-Erik Pernler, *S:ta Elin av Skövde. Kulten, källorna, kvinnan* (Skara stiftshistoriska sällskaps skriftserie), Skara stiftshistoriska sällskap: Skara 2007.

72 Strängnäs was, of course, specifically chosen for other reasons than being the supposed place of Eskil's martyrdom; however, the connection with a saint would have been significant and legitimising. It should also be noted that Tuna was an early, stable centre of Christianity, while Strängnäs seems to have been important in terms of secular rule (location of the 'Ting') albeit with a strong pagan presence. A bishopric needed to have close connections with the local Ting in the early period. Another possible reason for the relocation and amalgamation is that Tuna and Strängnäs were founded by two different Church groups – one English and one German. See Jan Arvid Hellström, *Biskop och landskapssamhälle i tidig svensk medeltid* (Skrifter utgivna av Institutet för rätthistorisk forskning grundat av Gustav och Carin Olin), A.-B. Nordiska Bokhandeln: Stockholm 1971, 86f.

73 In about 1170.

There are additional examples of indigenous saints from this area that were used to support the location of bishoprics, such as King St Eric. Thus, it seems that new, local saints were somehow required in the newly Christianised region. These saints were also utilized in other forms of validation, such as the endorsement of Christian teaching.

Sara E. Ellis Nilsson, MA
Department of Historical Studies
University of Gothenburg
sara.nilsson[at]history.gu.se