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Short anonymous texts play an important role as disseminators of encyclopaedic knowledge in the Anglo-Saxon scholarly world. Such texts come in various categories: we can distinguish, for example, prognostications, medical recipes, lists of names (royal genealogies and episcopal lists), grammatical notes, computistical notes, alphabets, and encyclopaedic notes. The latter category is the most difficult to characterize and to delimit because of its heterogeneous nature, but, globally, it consists of short prose texts or lists, conveying factual information of an abbreviated or condensed nature about topics that can be classified as encyclopaedic. Moreover, encyclopaedic notes are nearly always anonymous, and do not appertain to other, longer texts in the manuscripts in which they are found. Examples are notes on the ages of the world, the measurements of Solomon’s Temple, the days of Christ’s ministry on earth, the amount of gold brought to King Solomon, and the relations between different weights and measures, to name just a few.¹

The manuscript context of encyclopaedic notes is varied. They often occur in miscellanies – books containing collections of texts and excerpts, often with a didactic purpose, which first appeared amongst Christian communities in third- and fourth-century Egypt, and became a hallmark of medieval scholarly culture.² In Anglo-Saxon England, however, notes are also found in manuscripts of complete major

works, to which notes were added, either as part of the compilation, or to fill left-over space after the main text(s) had been completed. So far, encyclopaedic notes have been identified in fifty-three manuscripts known to have been, or to have been written, in Anglo-Saxon England, but the search is still going on.\textsuperscript{3} Ranging in date from the early ninth century to the end of the eleventh, as a cut-off point for the Anglo-Saxon period, these manuscripts present evidence of a remarkably extended tradition of producing and disseminating notes.\textsuperscript{4}

Although it may be surmised that encyclopaedic notes were linked to the intellectual and possibly didactic processes at work in early medieval monastic and educational environments, the precise reason for their production, transmission and wide dissemination is not entirely clear, and leaves us with many questions about who compiled such notes, why they were copied, why they were worth copying, and what their purpose was. Much remains to be done in the study of texts, sources, analogues, manuscripts and centres of production; even the corpus of encyclopaedic notes from Anglo-Saxon sources has not been completely established, but so far more than 180 such texts have been found. Most of those are written in Latin; about one in three is partly or wholly in Old English. From the middle of the tenth century scribes began to convert Latin notes into Old English and composed new ones in Old English; notes are therefore one of the genres of texts which participated in the extensive vernacularization that typified the literary culture of Anglo-Saxon England from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. This paper aims to investigate the vernacularization of encyclopaedic notes in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, and to explore the types of variation that appear in the transition from Latin to Old English. It will become apparent that the vernacularization of the notes was part of a creative process symptomatic of the vividness of notes as didactic instruments in later Anglo-Saxon England.

\textsuperscript{3} ‘Manuscripts’ in the sense of numbered items in Gneuss, \textit{Handlist}.

\textsuperscript{4} While the earliest examples in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts date back to the very early ninth century, the genre or category of encyclopaedic notes is older, as is shown, for example, by notes in the manuscript of the Leiden Glossary (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Vossianus Lat. Q. 69, fols 7–47 (c. 800 AD, St Gall; Ker, \textit{Catalogue}, appendix no. 18; Bremmer and Dekker, \textit{Manuscripts}, no. 13)). See also R. H. Bremmer Jr, ‘Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Vossianus Latinus Q. 69 (Part 2): Schoolbook or Proto-Encyclopaedic Miscellany?’, \textit{Practice in Learning}, ed. Bremmer and Dekker, 19–53.